Perceptions
Perceptions

"If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite."

William Blake

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COVER: Barby Shaw

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THE LOCKSMITH

He walks or sits
folded inside himself,
a self-seal envelope
marked return to sender.
The tiny shop smells of metal,
a scent his hands will carry
to his grave.
He is a dead-bolt lock
without a key.
in his dreams he hears tumblers
trying to align,
feels ideas spreading bright
from his in-grown shoulders,
but always, he awakes
before the key is turned.

Thelma R. Hall

I AM

I Am many things
I Am only me
Humble
Free
A single glance
Touch the Sky
The Universe
Beyond
A Tree
Behold
A Community
Eons old
A field of Goldenrod
Not for man
Just there
Forever
A Bird's song
For tomorrow
Brings a mate
Time goes on
I will not
Today is mine!

Wade Niles

POST GRADUATE CLASS

When I lived just
down the road, this
was wooded land,
tall pines,
and underbush,
where now a brick
and glass building stands.
I look up from my
desk, on a bird's-eye
level with a tree
branch; Six, no seven
years later, still
doing homework.

Janet Thomas Braswell

CASEY'S SECOND CHANCE

Spring training time was close at hand
for Mudville's hapless nine
And all the players had agreed
on contract terms they'd signed
Except for good ol' Casey,
who was holding out for more
Despite his batting slump that cost
his team the year before.
The Mudville owner met with Casey
on an April day
to learn how much his fallen star
expected him to pay
The owner told the press, "There won't
be much to talk about.
I can't believe that man expects
a raise for striking out!"

Yet who could doubt that Casey held
the key to Mudville's fate
As he walked grandly through the door
to re-negotiate?
Unsmiling Casey spoke his piece
He said, "I've got it planned
To stay at home this year unless
I'm paid nine hundred grand."
The owner smiled and said, "I've
got some news that just won't keep.
We've signed a rookie from Spokane
who plays both good and cheap.
He seldom blunders when at bat
so, Casey, my advice
Is practice hard at home this year
'cause you've just struck out twice!"

Donna Finson

FOR SPANKY

I may grow up and out someday
I may even just grow old
But never will I grow to plant
The seed that youth has sown.

These are my cardboard boxes
And my big aluminum pans
My closet door to write upon
And puppet shows with hands.

So race to fight your blazing fire
Go be that circus clown
Operate upon your dog
And run a big touchdown.
Then place in mine your little hand
Let me introduce to you
A dreamer dreaming dreams as big
As liquid sky is blue

For I still sail the stormy seas
On Spelling homework boats.
I fold and lick until it sticks
And "Hippopotomous" floats.
"Hippopotomous... h-i-p..." sink.

T. K. Buchanan
WE ARE WOMAN

Thank you Doris D.
I heard you.
You touched me.
Opened my senses
Let them free.
I know you.
You know me.
Our souls have yearned
And learned
And lived to see.
As I dig my way out
You're leading me.
I know about hostility
My man wants to Preach.
Not me!
I want to write and laugh
talk dirty, if need be.
Bring the world to its knees
If that's what it needs.
Yes! I heard you Doris D.
You shared with me
Taught me to see.

Shirley Miller Jones

ONE WOMAN'S FATE

The daydreamer writes and the story unfolds-
A fairytale of daydreams, all too realistically told.
What are their meanings? Only Freud could relate-
As the saga unending continues to date.

Once upon a time, a woman — a person unknown —
Walked through a garden she didn't own.
There was life all around her; pure, clean, loving and kind —
And that's where she lost everything — including her mind.
She tended the garden, watched it flourish and grow,
While she became wrinkled and ugly — much like a troll.
That's when it happened and she left the estate,
Thinking the garden would always be safe.
She left the tending to others and searched for the lost,
But never bothered to weigh all the cost.
As chance would have it, she did make a find,
But could never come back, being now captive of time.

And so this endless tale continues for those who dare
To stay in the garden and tend it with care.
But, if they too should decide to escape —
Down the road not taken — to meet their fate —
At least they go now with one factor known:
You can never return to a garden not owned.

Dot Danchetz
A SNIPER

It was November of the year 1976 when the Israeli Army invaded Southern Lebanon. The Lebanese people were divided between those who helped Israel because they were paid lots of money, and the republicans who remained loyal to their country; thus, many families were grievously divided.

This is a story of an incident that happened to a friend of mine who was a republican sniper. I caught sight of him two years ago in a street in Beirut, the capital, as I was walking to my father's work place. We sat down in a cafe and began to chat about the situation there when he told me a story which made me think about the people I had killed. It started out as usual with a chanted countdown until smiles turned into frowns, for flying at the flame?

"A SKY THAT KNEW NO GRACE"

A seemingly routine expedition we have seen them before
Often taking them for granted along with the need to explore
To delve into the last frontier so we might win the race
but instead there was a tear that streaked a nation's face

It started out as usual
with a chanted countdown
Lift-off was wonderful
until smiles turned into frowns

A major malfunction occurred
something was very wrong
a flash of horror then blurred
along with the need to explore

Who is more foolish, the moth or I

Will our fates be the same?

She has flown too near and burned her wings.
Now helpless, the poor moth expires.
Will I be drawn to where the cosmos sings,
To perish in heavenly fires?

Nagib Andros

"My right arm was bleeding and I had only a pocket gun which I held in my left hand. I raised my helmet above the wall making it look like the figure of a man. The enemy sniper was tired at it and made it fall to the street below. Thinking that he had killed me, he stood up on the other roof. In this moment, I stood up and fired at him and made him fall to the street. I had a strange feeling, I didn't know if it was happiness, disgust, fear, or pain. I had killed men before, but I had never had that feeling in my life. I was going to walk away, but something in my heart dragged me down to see the man I killed. He was facing down, so I reached out with my left arm, turned him over, and saw my brother's face."

Christa Chandler

"A SKY THAT KNEW NO GRACE"

Who is more foolish, the moth or I

For flying at the flame?

She at the candle,

I at the sky,

Will our fates be the same?

She has flown too near and burned her wings.

Now helpless, the poor moth expires.

Will I be drawn to where the cosmos sings,

To perish in heavenly fires?

Don Cockrel
INNOCENCE . . . LOST AND FOUND

E. to Gary

A poet and a young man sat on the grass in a land out of time.
Over the careful horizon loomed
stone by stone, cathedral by cathedral,
a quiet castle—silent but for the chiming of the winds
carelessly molding its surface.
The poet watched as the young man gently captured a star
from the heavens; then, with the firey light briefly
illuminating his features, he let it float freely back.
Elves shyly sat away from them, strumming melodies
on flower stems—singing to accompany the mushrooms and
the waterfall, liltin g and healing.
The poet plucked a flying phrase, and had it lie quietly
upon the page—again observing the young man, who now
sketched pictures with moonbeams lying about.
Here there were many happy lifetimes spent.
One sunlit morn the poet opened her eyes
to find Camelot missing.
Accepting, she shrugged and turned to find her friend,
who smiled at her
with starlit eyes.

Emily Clements

I HAVE A RAINBOW

I have a rainbow for you.
You looked like you needed one, so I stretched to
the sky and bargained something precious for it.
Here it is.

Colors O.K. for you? You have the softest smile and
the most kind eyes, I just had to get it for you.
It will go with what you’re wearing and pretty much
everything you have. See... it’s all I have that you
need...all that I can give you. Unless, of course...
you’d accept my heart.

I saved it for you. Well, I didn’t exactly save it for
you. O.K., It’s a little used, and it’s not in the
best of shape. It breaks at the drop of a hat, but
it’s a good heart, and it’s dying to be yours.

T. K. Buchanan

WHEN I WAS ONE AND SIX

I remember
Looking up
At the stars,
Trying
In my childish way
To fathom the depth
Of what was there.
I remember
Thinking
If I could
Reach up
Just one time
And touch
A star,
Then I would know
The answer
To everything.

--Betty Maine
WINO POICES
Can you hear the voices my son?
What voices old man?
The voices of your ancestors
The warriors that rode the plains
With courage and confidence
The ancestors that hunted
The great buffalo
And worshipped
The natural aspects of the world
The people that lived by
Hand and skill,
And, once upon a time,
Followed the seasons
Where they willled.
Now their voices
Only echo
Down the mountainsides
On the breath
Of the wind
That whispers
Through the trees.

Chris McMichael

OUTLAW HERO
Outlaw-Hero.
Slinger of guns.
Lover, wanderer.
Killer, preserver.
Ride your fast horse far and wide
Across the desert
Of late-night TV.

Bob Terrell

CASTER OF THE FIRST STONE
Commander Martin Terrance dreamed often of the early days on Canusin, in the days before godhood.

He dreamt often of the days when he and Shelna had first begun to swim in the pool behind Shelna's hunt. Its cool, inviting waters had more than once freed him from the bounds of Canusin's oppressive gravity. There, he was free.

Shelna's equal in the water, just as he would later be her superior on land. They would sometimes romp and play in the water for hours. When they emerged, the tiny beads of water--interspersed with the syrupy-like secretion which coated her skin--glistened in the radiation of Canusin's two suns, and he forgot all about gravity that was two times earth-normal, and missions uncompleted. Those were his happiest days on Canusin, in the days before godhood. He sometimes, often, wished he could regain them, but that was far beyond his means. Even a god has his limits.

His elevation to god was something which he, like all truly conscientious members of the Interplanetary Development League, had tried his damnedest to avoid. But this newly discovered planet, with its lush, tropical climate and strangely intoxicating women, had broken down all resistance almost immediately. He had been on so many other worlds, and had resisted temptation so many times that he was surprised at his susceptibility to this planet's charms. As always, his original mission objectives had been clearly outlined: scout the planet's natural resources, develop an alliance with the native inhabitants, teach them to exploit their world's wealth, and, most importantly, introduce them to the Religion. The only religion. Surprisingly, though, Canusin had very little in the way of natural resources. It was more mineral-poor than any inhabited planet he had ever been on. There were none of the heavy metals that the Interplanetary League so desperately needed, and only enough food to support the native population.

This world had a rigidly balanced ecosystem, one which the slightest shock could throw out of kilter. Thus, he was left with a seven-year mission, no radio contact with the rest of the League (and this far out, not even ore freighters dared to venture), and a native population that practically worshipped him.

Small wonder that he decided to become a god.

Any member of the development team found it easy to become worshipped as a god on these little backwater planets. After all, to someone who still hunted with wooden spears and clubs, the technology of the League must surely seem like magic. A well-armed native--well-armed meaning carrying a heavy club--might occasionally kill enough to feed his family for a few days. But a man armed with one of the League's blasters could wipe out an entire herd of animals in less than a second. With his arrival on Canusin had come a new bounty. The people, now growing fat and satiated, had every reason to look upon him as their god. And he, having nothing better to do with his time, was willing to play the role to the hilt, if only for a little while. But he soon discovered that such power was addictive.

Godhood definitely had its advantages.

Shelna was made his consort (though, of course, he could have any woman he desired worthy to make love to him). He lived a life of luxury. And soon, when he became completely acclimated to the atmosphere and used to its gravity, he no longer needed the survival suit he had worn in the early days. For 15 years he served as god of the people, basking in the glow of their worship. He never made contact with the survey ships which passed by every five years or so. He never thought of mineral wealth, or exploitation of resources, or missions abandoned. He never thought of the Grand Inquisitor.
But the Grand Inquisitor thought often of him. His job was to deal with those who took the responsibility of godhood upon themselves. He had seen many good men go astray, and Commander Martin Terrance was no different from any of the rest. He had had his eye on this one for some time, in fact. He could smell the weakness through the strongest facade, and he knew Martin to be the type to give in to temptation. However, he never expected for his resignation or forced removal from the League.

He had recommended him for several promotions. Martin had risen quickly through the ranks until he was given the honor of posts, a planetary surveyor. Even then, he had resisted temptation for a while. But the Grand Inquisitor knew he could not resist forever. He felt it better to let sin reveal itself rather than squelch it before it got started. So Martin had enjoyed unprecedented freedom in his dealings with native populations.

The Grand Inquisitor had given him just enough rope, and he had hung himself. Thus it was that on the morning of June 24, 2485, he found himself in orbit around Canusius. He could imagine harking in the glory of his godhood, secure in the knowledge that he had his followers to protect him, content that he was out of range of the League’s peculiar brand of justice. His delusion of power would be his downfall, of course. That’s the way it always worked. The Inquisitor could imagine Martin’s once pudgy little body having grown firm and muscular because of this planet’s high gravity. After all, fat men made lousy gods. Martin would not have to be merely defeated; he must be humiliated in front of his worshippers, killed and strung up for all to see. Only then would these natives see that there was no god other than the one and only true god. Only then would they be saved.

He teleported down to the most likely spot, the village where he had detected the highest population concentration on the planet. He immediately noticed several huge statues, all with faces strangely reminiscent of Martin’s. Being careful to remain out of sight, he scouted the village until he came to a hut standing beside a pool of crystal-clear water. In the pool was a man with conspicuously pale skin swimming with one of the native women. Their nude forms romped and played, paying him no heed. He switched off the device which warped light rays around his body, making himself visible once more. Then he spoke and the god turned to see his conqueror.

How could he have forgotten the Grand Inquisitor? He felt the same fear, mixed with awe and respect, that he had always felt in his presence on earth. For a moment he panicked. The Inquisitor’s long, red robe flowed in the brisk wind, and beneath the clinging folds rested Martin’s once pudgy little body, basking in the glory of his godhood. He abandoned the tactic of running in favor of a pool of crystal-clear water, in which he swam, revealing a pool of crystal-clear water.

He took Martin’s once pudgy little body, basking in the glory of his godhood. He abandoned the tactic of running in favor of a position on the ground before him. He spoke and the god turned to see his conqueror. He brushed his face with ease and walked up to the man, who had stumbled and fallen. He abandoned the tactic of running in favor of prayer. He looked up into the Inquisitor’s face, and said, “Dear father, please forgive me, for I have sinned. I have held myself to be a false god.” Martin disappeared in a flash of brilliantly hot light which emerged from somewhere beneath the Inquisitor’s robe.

The god was dead. The Inquisitor felt a white-hot knife of light slice into his body, destroying the teleporter. He turned to see Shelsa, who held Martin’s blaster, pointing it at him. With a speed which belied his great size, he lurched forward, snatching the gun from her and crushing it with his prodigious strength. She knelt before him, as did the other natives, and began to chant the name they had once reserved for Martin. The Inquisitor’s injuries were not to be immediately fatal, for his physically enhanced body could withstand much. In time, however, they might kill him. And he could not return to a League planet, because the remnants of his teleporter lay in pieces on the ground before him. He was trapped here, for no ship would come for quite some time. Inquisitors were given their own sweet time to take care of things. So he looked at the planet, and at his worshippers, and made the inevitable decision. He could remain, here in luxury, for a long time. Perhaps forever. Or until a rescue ship arrived. Or until he died.

Kevin Heumann
IT'S ALL MINE!

I alone
am responsible
for my well-being:
for all of my feelings,
and my reactions,
for all of my joys and sorrows,
for whatsoever I may meet
from day to day.
I alone
am sovereign
of all of my life;
there is no one else
who has this responsibility.
It's all mine!

Marilyn Bedsworth

¡ES LA MÍA!

Yo solo
tengo la responsabilidad
para mi bienestar:
de todos los sentimientos,
y las reacciones,
de todas las gozas y tristezas,
de cualquier cosa que me encuentro
de día en día
Yo solo
soy soberana
de toda mi vida;
no hay ninguna otra persona
que tiene esta responsabilidad.
Es la mía!

Marilyn Bedsworth

EPHPHANY

Rush of wind,
Bending trees,
Blooming boughs,
New green leaves.

Overhead an arch of blue--
Once again the world is new!

Mary Jane Nickelson

TO A DIAPASON

Ivory fingers, upon ivory keys,
Fall softly like the snow upon the ground,
And play a silent melody, a sound
That only hearts can hear and dreams can seize.
It is an ageless rhapsody, composed
Upon a moment's frenzied reverie,
Whose origin can ne'er be traced by me,
Whose mysteries no sage has yet disclosed.
Though timeless it may be in its refrain,
It sings a different name to ev'ry heart.
And the name I find within my heart's domain
Lives musically and never shall depart--
A lyric that arises from within--
A melody whose name is Carolyn.

Robby J. Spriggs

ROSE OR ESOR

An animated extended feature
A life-long cartoon
Walking upside down continually
While the world watches
Laughing
I try to right things
And a rock falls from above
Crushing the inspiration
I almost felt
Or I slip
And fall from a cliff
Or see my confidence
Slapped into
The side of a wall
But I continue
Looking for a real
Life-long sweet smelling
Soft-feeling
Right-side-up
Rose

Kimberly Kitchens

CHRISTMAS '85

Here, in a sleepless breath of night
By a pasted blinking light
With the home-fire's crackling sound
And the family all bedded down...

Now it's even later still
An tempest sleep clashes with will
As I lay counting minute's blinks
Excitement builds and stomach sinks...

Inasmuch as I love the life I live
Inasmuch as I choose this most ripe gift
I live to give You something in return.
I have waited all night for a miracle
A cleansing of my soul by Your reborn birth
I stand here unafraid... and not alone.

Here, before my eyes this spiritual
Man changed from beast to beautiful
And I forgot I could not fly
And soulfull, silvered, took to sky.

T. K. Buchanan
ON KARMA

Have I loved you long enough,
Hard enough?
Probably not.
But I tried,
Through years of dullness,
Days of brightness,
Months of anger,
Lifetimes of joy,
Over and over.
Again, the trying,
Striving for perfection
Through a thousand incarnations
Doomed to the trying
Karma-tied until it's perfect,
And keeping secret
From the cosmic order
The individual hidden wish;
So long as imperfection means
Ourselves
Doomed to repeat
Our loving,
I hope
That I never do really
Get it right.

Barbara McMichael

ASCENSION

Come with me now to the end of our days
Through sunshine's warmth and winter's cold, hard hail,
Together we shall penetrate the haze
That clouds the unknown shadows of our trail.
Upwards through the windswept mountains of life
Among foothills of youth, just you and I
Will now follow our trail, husband and wife
And soon make camp beneath a starlit sky.
A new day dawns, we mount the trail as one,
And others join us now in upward climb
To walk with us 'till other trails beckon;
In high alpine meadows we leave our prime.
On up the steep slopes of old age we go
At last to stand atop the peak...and know.

Chris McMichael

UNTITLED

As the wind and rain
Whipped about
The water churned
Black with doubt

A hidden scream
Swelled and died
Amongst the turmoil
A lonely frightened soul
Hidden from light
By dark and evil clouds

With energy fading fast
The small white hands
Grasped for substance
To fight the dark waters
Holding to the broken boat
Begging for life

A beam of light
From above the clouds
The hands are lifted
Slowly the lost soul
Lifted from the water
Above the clouds
Leaving the sin to churn
In evil turmoil
Alone for eternity

Kimberly Kitchens

WHY DO WE?

We talk,
But nothing is said;
We look,
But nothing is seen;
We reach out,
But nothing is found;
We cry,
But nothing is changed;
We scream,
But nothing is heard;
We give,
But nothing is returned;
We receive,
But nothing is given;
We write,
But nothing is read;
We read,
But nothing is learned;
We hear,
But nothing is remembered;
We feel,
But nothing is felt;
We hate,
But nothing is hateful;
We love,
But nothing is loved;
We die,
But nothing is buried;
So why do we ... WHY DO WE ?

Bob Terrell

SONNETS

Sonnets, so simple, and easy to write--
That's what I thought when I sat down to start.
A quatrain? A couplet? That's all the parts?
I'm ready to go, 3 a.m. last night.
Russell, I'll kill you, if ever again
You force me to write like that old Shakespeare.
I realize his style was valued as dear,
Half asleep on the floor, here in my den.
An epic, an ode, much simpler for me:
This sonnet, it seems as tough as shoe leather:
Ideas flown, no source from the weather,
I think my classmates will surely agree,
Sonnet, to you I will be no puppet:
Three quatrains and a silly old couplet.

J. Miller Gilbert
hoqgerel

A cross-eyed cat and a three-legged dog
Sat in a back yard talkin' to a spotted hog.
Said the cross-eyed cat, "I'm in a mess, you see
'Cause my eyes're so crossed, can't even climb a tree.
I see some things here and some things there
I know which is which, but I can't tell where."

Now the dog spoke up and said, "What about me!
With only one back leg, can't even mark a tree.
I used to run rabbits and an occasional cat
but with these three legs, I can't even do that!"

The hog had listened to all their woe
And thought it was time to let them know
That it ain't all bad for a cross-eyed kitty,
And a three-legged dog can be sittin' kinda pretty.

When you take a good look at the woe all around,
You better count your blessing anywhere they're found.

Hog asked the cat, "When a dog chases you
And you look for a tree, do you see one or two?"
Cat answered back, "Why Hog, I see three!
So how'm I gonna know which is the real tree?"

Hog turned to the dog, and said "Dog can you run?"
And Dog answered, "Yes, but it ain't much fun!
I run so slow I can't even catch a cold."

Hog answered back in a voice loud and bold,
"If the truth were known and the tale well-told,
That you can run at all is worth pure gold.
For a three-legged dog, it's not how fast--
It's that he runs at all that makes him first class.
Now quit your bitchin' and say 'By God,
I'm the fastest dog alive with the name Tripod!'"

Then Hog said, "Go and have some fun!
Let the cat and the dog have a damn good run!
When you both tire out like a worn-out fiddle
Let the kitty make a jump for the tree in the middle."

Jim Kline

INTROSPECTION

In the background of many lives,
Always demanding your will be done,
Seven children, but a single wife,
Though she tells me of other ones.
This fog of years clouds my view;
I don't see with very clear eyes.
Dear father, who in Hell were you,
To arouse hatred in one such as I.
In fact, your name becomes mine,
And so fervently I may hope
To not cross the crooked line,
And hang myself on your knotted rope.
In death, at least, you nourish life,
As you never did with child and wife.

Kevin Heineman

FOR THE KLAN'S MEN
AT E.H.H. 11/85

Ghosts in white sheets
Haunt the dark
During the day.
Flying a flag of
Blood, white, and blue.
They turn unseeing eyes
Upon those souls
Who try to escape
From graves of ignorance.

Chris McMichael

BETH

At the age of eight, Beth followed her mother outside on
a cool spring morning. They walked over to a cardboard box
behind the wash shed. Her mother started to take out of the box
paper and junk that needed to be thrown away. Beth could see
that some of the paper was in tiny strips and wads. As her
mother lifted some old newspapers, Beth saw they were all
curled up into a small cluster looking like miniature piglets.
They were the cutest little things Beth had ever seen. Beth's
mother was disgusted and appalled; to her they were nasty baby
nice. Beth wanted to keep them. Her mother ordered Maggie,
Beth's older sister, to fetch the shovel. Beth knew what was
coming and began to beg and plead with her mother.

"Oh please, please, mamma; I'll take good care of them,
please." Her mother refused the compromise, as she pushed the
dull blade of the shovel towards the tiny pink bundles.Beth began to sob louder.

"Please mamma, don't; they're just babies." She screamed as
she ran over and grabbed at her mother's right arm. It was too
late. The few tiny pink creatures that teetered on the edge of
the spade had been tossed into the creek. Beth's mother was
laughing at her, making it even harder for Beth to understand her
mother's barbaric actions. By this time Beth was hysterical and
screaming even louder.
"How can you do that? They're just little babies. They're so cute. When I was a little baby you wouldn't have gotten rid of me like that." Her mother couldn't stop laughing. Beth was confused and brokenhearted as she watched her mother take the shovel and mutilate the rest of the baby mice and throw them into the cold, cold deep.

Fifteen years later Beth had just given birth to her second child, a nine-pound, twelve ounce girl. Beth had followed the doctor's advice and had been fitted with a good protective intruterine device, an I.U.D. the doctor had called it. She thought she was protected against pregnancy. She was totally baffled when she started waking up sick every morning. The morning sickness turned into a constant-never ending problem. Beth called her doctor made an appointment.

"After a few tests, the doctor came in and said, "Beth, it's positive; you're pregnant."

"Free at first in shock, she began to cry. "How could this have happened?" she asked her doctor.

"You told me there was only a one percent chance in ninety-nine that I could get pregnant."

As Beth drove home, she could hardly see the road for the steady stream of tears. She was pregnant with her third child with a new baby and a three-year-old son at home, and she was sick. She was sick in her stomach and in her heart. Finally, unable to take care of her children, Beth called the doctor again and made another appointment. When he saw her weakened condition, he became concerned about a possible miscarriage. Beth was stunned but obliged to listen as the doctor spoke.

"You live so far from the hospital, Beth, that if you lose this baby, you'll probably bleed to death before you get here. Go home, talk to your husband about having an abortion, and let me know what you decide; I'll take it from there."

Beth's husband had been raised believing that a man worked from sun to sun, but a woman's work was never done.

"Beth you can't be serious," he said. "Something's wrong with a woman who doesn't want to have her husband's children."

"Beth said, "Yes that's right. I'm sick and the doctor is also concerned with my state of mind."

Beth's husband began to argue. "I had to go through boot-camp preparing for the army when I didn't want to."

"Beth said, "Yes, and you would've gotten out of it if you could have." Beth's husband finally agreed to the abortion, but he just couldn't understand.

The doctor and three nurses had been waiting at the clinic for Beth to arrive. She was led into a back room and given a paper gown to put on. She was told to lie down on the examining table and put her legs into the stirrups. Looking around the room, she saw a cart; on it were two jugs--one had a hose leading from it with a long nozzle at the end. A cold chill ran through her body. Somehow she knew what the apparatus was for. Although she was convinced she was doing the right thing, her fear couldn't be controlled.

The doctor came in and told her he had to scrub her out. No matter how much soap he used, the sponge felt rough inside her. The scrubbing seemed endless. Although Beth had been given shots of something to make her groggy, she could still feel what was going on below.

The nurses were called in; two of them stood on either side of Beth to keep her from falling off the table, or from trying anything. The third nurse assisted the doctor and wheeled over the cart holding the two bottles. Beth in her drunken state said, "Wait, I'm not asleep."

"The nurses laughed. "You want to be asleep don't ya' honey? You'll be ok."

Beth felt the long nozzle go deep inside and press against the mouth of her womb. She closed her eyes tightly and felt her body tense with the loud noise of the vacuuming suction coming from the machine. She could feel a slow pulling deep inside her belly. The pulling became stronger and stronger, until finally something tore loose and she heard it plop into the cold, cold deep.

Shirley Miller Jones

COME AGAIN,

When I'll want to see you
Without hating your youth,
Beautiful eyes, and smooth, smooth skin.

Come again,
When I won't mind listening
Without jealousy to your endearing thoughts of her--
With her youth, beauty and sexual liberties.

Come again,
When I can look at you
And believe instead of hate
Your kindness and your thoughtfulness.

Come again,
When I can see you and not wish for time long past
When I won't hate my age and my inhibitions
When I'll be at peace with self and life's dreaminess.

Come again,
When I won't want you,
Time,
And all life might have been.

Barbara T.
SLEEPING TREE

O Sleeping Tree, so calm, so tall and straight, in your Winter slumber you so patiently wait.

For the first breath of Spring to come and warm the air, and to make you break forth in rare beauty so fair.

Fret not, O Sleeping Tree, that season is almost in sight when warm air will be present even through the long, dark night.

Tiny green leaves will then soon appear there will be no doubt that your renewal is here.

Then in your full greenery rustled by a gentle wind, you catch my full attention and I look at you and then,

I hear the pleasant song sung by you and the breeze, a song unknown and unequalled by all the other trees.

The breeze then grows stronger, and then very, very soon, every twig, leaf and branch in harmony sing the same tune.

The song continues on and soon it will be heard, by the small animals around, and also by the birds.

You will then offer your branches to all of those that come, they will then look you over and some will make you their home.

A Robin on one limb there another supports a Jay, when assured of your stability & strength I'm sure that they will stay.

The Raccoon, the Squirrel, the Owl with his 'hootin' call, will come for an extended visit because you befriend them all.

Thoughts of Winter's chill the ice, the snow and strife, will then soon be forgotten as you so joyously teem with life, Because the warm currents have come and prompted you to sing, the happiest song of all sung only in the fullness of Spring.

Roger W. Brady

BLANK

For you I had written a note not shown, About a longing that now must not be known, As somehow I have fear, it would cause a tear. And if given . . . Not forgiven.

Mary Musulin MacNade

AUTUMN SONG

All day I have held something sorrowful in my hands, trying to smooth misshapen curves even while my hands worked with other things than pain. The ache pressed against my palms, warm as tears, insistent, invisible, invading veins until the blood despaired into a heart that could not cleanse the sadness. Griefs are always hardest to evict. I tried to say, since ghosts explained are vanquished, what sad thing I held. It might have been a dead love, or dying, or only the phantom of a summer day when fruit was ripening, and bright leaves brittle as the bones of changing women did not yet mourn the chill caress of blue October's winds.

Sally Russell

WE HAVE BEEN VISITED BY THE HAWK

And the sweeping grace of its flight concealed at first the thunderbolt mission; we did not suspect the agony, the life bleeding, ripped in shreds. We stagger and moan. Oh God, we can be told this is necessary, this is the way that life revolves, but small creatures huddling beneath the silent deadly gliding find that explanation no comfort at all.

Sally Russell
**AUTUMN**

Autumn breeze flows softly by,
Bringing scent of burning leaves,
Memories of old and new drift on wings of a sigh,
Harvest in celebration to begin,
The end of old, the planting of the new,
Warm hearths with cheerful fires,
Time to share life's many gifts,
Time to grow happily together.

Bob Terrell

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**THE CHILDREN: AN ECLIPSE**

My daughter runs in the dusk among the pines, a fae;ty child her long hair flying in the beckoning wind.
At four, she who grew like a seed in my body now shoots up tall like a small sapling too tall to easily hold.

And what of the others? children I did not bear their shadows play among the trees; they run after her in the fading light laughter on their faces as they pout or shouting her voice calls and they answer.

I would gather the children around me my arms reach to hold them all safe but the light shifts, I panic and now never will I catch up.

Ann Magruder Bowen
COME HELL OR HIGH WATER

Rhonda Traylor

The storm had been ceaseless. A thick, gray fog had settled heavily upon the region, seeming so vast and impenetrable that I imagined, for a moment, that it might have covered the whole earth. So inopportune and lingering was the mist, that one in a less than rational mood might have argued that it was attempting to shield the earth from Heaven's view. The viscosity of this somber shroud, as I peered through the living room window, greatly decreased my range of sight, making me doubt the existence of anything that lay beyond my vision.

An occasional bolt of lightning was all that interrupted the reality of the gray infinity; and it, too, was instantly after its own grayness and by the all-devouring mist. Meanwhile, the sky which had rumbled so thunderously earlier in the day, now hummed lowly and irritably, as if in sullen protest of a doom which he was powerless to alter. I pulled the drapes together and went back to my armchair, where I waited for Carl Helmins to arrive. And I had been friends from the moment we had met as freshmen in college. I doubt whether we were drawn together by any particular affinity for each other, as much as by the certain kindred morbidity which separated us from others. At any rate, we had been friends some ten years, and I learned to tolerate in each other even the oddest of eccentricities. For the majority of those ten years, we had met with weekly ritual for the purpose of competing in a game that, for some reason, had become the purpose of our association. It was the high-witted and painfully time-consuming game of chess.

Neither of us particularly liked the game; but still we played it. It seemed to me (and whoever reads this account may find such a thing completely incorrigible) that we played the game for lack of an alternative. That is to say, we had no other choice but to play the game. For lack of an alternative, we had no other choice but to play the game.

Nonetheless, on this particular evening, Helmins was late. So, to pass the time, I sat and read sporadically through a volume of the collected poems of William Butler Yeats. One particular poem, "The Second Coming," especially intrigued me and sent my imaginative reeling.

Just as I mused on the last lines of the poem, I again became aware of the thunder outside. Once again, as if in the throes of death, it bellowed in agonizing fury. I looked up toward the window to see a crooked finger of 'blinding light poke-probingly through the foggy gray pall outside. At that moment, the doorbell rang.

I opened the door and stood face-to-face with Helmins, who was drenched from head to toe and looked dejected-pale. He stood there for a moment in the fury of the downpour, staring straightly yet somehow obliquely into my eyes. His eyes were as cloudy and gray as the fog outside, and no less oppressive. They seemed wide with a knowledge unknown to me. I felt that if I watched a moment longer I would forever be lost to the coldness of those drenched gray pools. Blinking, I looked away.

"Come in out of the rain, Helmins," I said, then stepped aside to let him enter.

He seemed not the least bit anxious to leave the storm, but slowly stepped inside. As I took his coat, I became aware of an unusual crook in Helmins' neck—a defect I had never noticed before. Perhaps it had always been there, but it was difficult to believe that I could have overlooked the slight, yet unnerving profile at which he now held his head. I almost mentioned the curious abnormality, but elected to keep to safer topics.

"I know it's raining outside, Helmins," I said, noticing that his clothes, too, were thoroughly saturated, "but how the devil did you get so wet? The driveway's not that far from the house."

"I ran into a little problem on the way over," he said, his voice gurgling as if submerged in water. "Glen Bridge is out due to flooding; so I had to walk the last half-mile."

"You idiot! It's no wonder you're soaked. And your voice sounds horrible."

"Or worse," he gurgled.

The decrepit visage of Helmins, I was convinced, was due to incontinence on my part. Helmins finally consented to change into dry clothes. When I returned from upstairs with a pair of my old sweats, I noticed on the game table a large black box. It was of rectangular shape and seemed so old that I could not even begin to estimate its antiquity. As I lifted the lid from the table where Helmins was changing, then returned to the black box. In the dimly-lit room, it had, I now saw, emitted a darkness of its own—so black and gloomy as to be almost impossible. As I traced a line in the box, I found myself in front of the table, and inserted it into the lock. Despite the ancient rust, the key turned easily—like a screw through soft wood. Then there was a click. It was brief and sounded almost like the beginning of an imperishable giggle. I slowly lifted the lid. The rusty hinges cracked like old bones sleep, and slowly green light poured haggisly, like convulsing blood from the opening in the box. The perversion odor issuing forth in the green light smelled like fragrant poison. That is to say, it was sweet in the nostrils, but the lungs like an all-consuming fire. When the black box was fully open, I could see, through the fading green cloud, the various pieces of a most archaic chess set.

I first removed the board, which consisted of alternating squares of ebony wood and aetheric ivory. Then I removed each fantastical character of the chess set. Inversely, each piece I removed, since I drew from the box was a phantasmal opposite to its white counterpart. Of the white characters, few were of exceptional design. The pawns all bore the visages of cherub-like children. The king was an old man, and his queen, withered, emaciated woman. The rest were of the conventional Renaissance design.
The black characters, however, were demonic manifestations of primal fears—raving phantoms of darkest depth: the hags, the ghouls, the roving golems and pearls. The paws were unmistakably those of the legend of the night—a quest of the ancient. And the weapons were skeletal mounted on huge locusts with scorpion tails.

The last figurine I placed upon the board was a parable of himself. On one side, he was a pleasant-looking, kindly sort. He wore a long robe, a modest crown, and a kind smile—all with the color I had always known. The mirror's reflection.

He glared at the board like a furious demon, lifting his head and staring at me from the threshold of the bathroom. A thousand needles pierced my flesh. It was much like the feeling one gets from walking into a strange, dark room and turning on the light.

I drove the car off onto the shoulder off the road. Helmins was out there. I was on the defensive. I found myself staring directly into his own eyes in a mirror's reflection. Upon my seeing him, Helmins walked to the side of the table opposite me. He was staring at the board.

"Let's get this over with," I said jokingly as I had almost every other time. "Yes, let's," he gurgled in a sepulchral tone as he sat down.

The solemnity of his reply made my stomach writhe uneasily. Nonetheless, I made the initial move, and the contest was underway.

Almost immediately, I was on the defensive. I found myself playing the worst game I had ever played. Unfortunately for Helmins, I had turned completely to mush and was arrayed in a flow of white and black. The entire fifty acres of forest land encompassing the house seemed emptied of all inhabitants, save a faint whisper which chanted a Paleolithic warning. As we walked towards my car, I noticed, with horror and fascination, that Helmins appeared to fade in and out of the mist as if he were becoming a part of it.

I rode in on utter silence. The dirt road had turned completely to mush and grabbed at the wheels like the hands of a thousand crowning fiends. Finally, a sound shook through the awful silence.

"Stop the car," Helmins slurred gravely. "But we haven't reached the bridge yet."

Helmins looked at me. Even the whites of his eyes were now gray.

"Let me out," he snarled, the phlegm bubbling audibly in his throat.

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OCTOBER

I wish I loved again
The way I did in October
It was so new and wonderful.
It was all me and all for me
It was ok.
It was ok for once, for me to have
For me to take.
Just for me.
Now I'm different.
Life is different.
I'm too emotionally dependent
On my family
Not sure enough of me
To depend on myself.
I'm such a coward to hide
Behind my children's faces.
So afraid to reveal the real me.
And where does God go to get away
When I have these fits
Of abandonment?
I wish I cared for life again
The way I did in October.
In my far-away-places mind
There are dreams
I may not find.
Try? You know I will.
A new beginning
A new thrill.
Talent? I have plenty.
Confidence? I haven't any.
But what a chance!
A new creation
A new romance
With time and nature.
I believe in true adventure.
I want to love life again
The way I did in October.
To run with you and
Play with you is something
I can imagine.
Most people our age
Would think it old fashioned.
Who are they to judge me
And pass on to me their actions.
For I am young at heart.
And you, life, are my
Burning passion.

Shirley Miller Jones

LOVE POTION?

The Rhinestone Cat
with gleaming emerald eye,
Would wonder at,
and question why?
Are all of us
afraid to die?
I don't know.
The Rhinestone Cat
who shines like ice,
Would ask if life
is worth the price?
Will all we do and
say suffice?
I couldn't say.
The Rhinestone Cat
wears a smug little grin,
It seems to sit
and gloat.
The Rhinestone Cat
is just a pin
that Aunt wears
on her coat.

Christa Chandler
PLAYING LIFE

Life games are complicated
And good partners
Are hard to come by
I've been shoved between
Red Rover and
Principles on the board of time
And I've passed go without a dime
It seems I'm always waiting.

I want to make a bid one day
But I get tired of trying
To find out who is holding trumps
And making points with scrabbled words
That only good players decipher.
If I could be the dealer once
I'm sure that I could deal
A good hand when the ante's up
To someone else who's waiting.

Donna Pinson

UNEXPECTED

Lying in bed, without sleep, without you,
I hear old age creeping near me in the dark.
I try for bravado but
I am unprepared for this Other Woman

who's always there. Turning on lights
can't make her go away. My arm and my flesh
in the lamplight fail me. God
is strong, and Jesus loves me but, Jesus,
will other men? Sleep

snows at last drive back the hag
and in the morning I can't see where
who is hiding, patient in the mirror,
waiting fearfully for love.

Sally Russell

I HAVE A LONGING

I have a longing for perfection,
Sweet order that will not slide again to chaos
Of home or heart or head.
In mad disorder I pursue it,
Sorting the aspects of my life like Psyche's grain
Into their neat and lovely piles,
Yet feeling through my flesh's fingertips
The piles repile and move themselves
Quick with some life that will not obey my touch.

Nor will my touch obey my hunger.
My hands are clumsy; smoothing out your soul,
Fraying the fabric of love like cloth
Against the grain of even your sweet gentleness.
And still I will not let it be.
Except sometimes when your kisses or your laughter
Calm my soul, and I can for an instant
Let imperfect order or ordered imperfection
Rush like water falling through my self,
And joy and fear quiver into a rainbow on the rock.

Barbara McMichael
THE COOING OF THE TURTLE DOVE IS HEARD IN OUR LAND

Delicate white-petaled blossoms
Gently cupping the stamen
Inviting the bee,
Bright clusters of daffodils
Joyously welcoming spring.
Paint beginnings of buds
Up and down the branch
Resistant heralds of life.
Scattered purple flowers
Creeping along the ground.
Returning robins,
All messages of hope
Sent forth to stir the soul.

How can we take such loveliness
And hold it in our hand,
And fill the heart's deep longing place
With the sure knowing that You are
Creator God of all the earth,
Who fashioned all of us
And proclaimed it good,
How can we consider spring
And life upon this earth,
And thrust out all the hope
The weary heart enfolds,
To consign instead
The work our hands have wrought?

Scattered missiles
Up and down the land;
Risen beginnings of hate
Planted in secret places,
Airing messages of doom
And we are damned,
You, O Man, and I, Creator Man,
Who fashioned all of this,
Don't spin our work
And proclaim it good.

STATUS ALPHA

Night so sly and stealthily slinking
Cast its spell upon my thinking.
Down to darkness I am damned--
Without a panic,
Sinking sinking.

Down Cocytus I am sailing
With tainted souls that are wailing.
Demons laugh on every side,
And close behind are
Trailing trailing.

All about me fires are flaming;
Brimstones, all my friends, are maiming.
Orcus feeds on my dismay,
And on the souls he's
Claiming claiming.

On Phlegathon the flames are reeling
And seem to me somehow appealing,
As I sink beneath their gyre
Towards the fate they're
Sealing sealing.

Down Acheron I find Charon rowing;
And it is I that he is towing
With others who are surely dead.
Our tears of woe are
Flowing flowing.

Melodies so madly ringing;
Damned dirges, incubi singing.
O eternal, horrid night!
It is my doom you're
Bringing bringing.

Loathsome lyrics I am learning
While towards the music slowly turning.
Singing now with blood-red eyes
While my friends are
Burning burning.

Upon the Styx I am swearing
Allegiance to the flames a'flaring.
The pact is signed; the book is closed.
All rationale is
Tearing tearing.

Symbols sealed in words of rhyming.
My psyche screams at Death's bell chiming.
The sun lies just beyond the banks,
And over the hills is
Climbing climbing.

One river left so swiftly streaming.
Things are not what they are seeming;
Lethe has delivered me...
I was only
Dreaming dreaming.
INSOMNIA

My head aches this morning
in hangover proportions,
though not from too much drinking.
Intemperate night-time thinking
spawned this pain,
too much dreaming,
too much scheming,
and forgetting in the dark again
the sphere will always roll,
thank God,
out of my control.

Janet Thomas Braswell

Sally Russell

pearls

Pearls the price of my pain
lie reflected in a velveted compartment.

Outside, the world is slowly
dying to umber before my eyes;
And, as surely as brown leaves fall
and the flash of the sun fades
to the soft luster of the moon, I know
this will be your last gift to me.

Pearls the silence of your smile
these are the tears I will not cry.

Janet Thomas Braswell

RESOLUTION

She spits words out like nails
Hard, sharp, pointed, piercing
Cringing, I brace not wanting to be hurt again
Nervously I await the next onslaught
They come and I am slaughtered again
Punctured in a hundred thousand ways
But then I stop and realize the choice is mine
To act or react
Do I take these words attaching them to my being
And thus be wiped out, wounded
Attaching her rejection of my sense of self worth
Feeling like an unlisted number in the telephone book
A zero, a nothing, a nobody
Yet I know my worth
Created in the image of my Maker, my God
His child, precious, esteemed, valuable
Remembering who I am and that she too is His creation
I choose to view her words as verbal vomiting
And rather than cringing, afraid
Go forward with towel and pail to serve
To care for her as one who is ill
And as I serve her
Am I not healed.

Robbie A. Latham

THE EDGE

You clung to the edge
That most wouldn’t even peer over.
The fringe of the unknown
was your playground,
the gift of words yours
to mold and carve
into creations of
dark beauty.
Where are you now
Shaman of a generation past?
Have you ventured into
The realm that we all
must eventually inhabit?
Or are you hiding somewhere in our midst?
Observing from a safe distance,
The world whose edge you
once dangled from.

Chris McMichael
MY FATHER

My father was born in 1902 in a small town in southern Germany. My father's father worked for the railroad and my mother was a teacher. My father was 10 when the war ended in 1918. His father thought he was old enough to wield a shovel and help the firemen keep the stokers filled with coal so that the trains could punctually pull into the station. It was the pay negligible, and father would have blisters all over his hands. I once looked like a chimney sweep all covered with black, greasy soot; but he was happy doing a man's job.

There was no question in the family's mind that when father was 16 he would go to school. He would work for the railroad. Grandfather didn't want him to be a stoker, so father apprenticed to a station master working the signals. Long, hard hours and studying in the evenings, until one day father passed the test and became station master in a small depot. Working up the bureaucratic ladder, he became manager for a large station in my hometown.

When I had passed my 9th birthday, I could hardly remember when I had been warm or when I had had a full belly. Father had been an air raid warden for several months, and it was his duty to stay outside and summon help if a building collapsed. The sirens with their dreaded, soul-twisting sound would barely finish calling its message of doom, when the bombs would fall from the sky. Many nights, I tried to sleep curled up in a chair. Sometimes the sound and fury of the exploding bombs would not let up. Mother and some of the other tenants would be praying in the corner. Pat, double-chinned Mrs. W., 76 years old, kept muttering, "Please, I don't want to die down here; let me die in peace in bed." Mrs. F. and her six-month-old baby were huddled in another corner of the cellar. All were trying to escape the fury that rained death and destruction from the skies. So far we had been lucky—only broken windows and damaged tiles on the roof. Some of our neighbors had not been this lucky. Their possessions had gone up in an inferno of intense heat and flame, or they had been killed or buried alive in the rubble.

The gates of hell opened up on one of the coldest nights in January of 1945. My world such as it was and I had known, came to an abrupt end. This night on the 28th of January the reaper found his prey. It was one of the coldest nights and supper was cold—potatoes left over from lunch. The electricity was shut off early that evening, and the candles had been lit for hours. We sat silent, morose in the living room, our coats and blankets pulled around us. Father would have to work, mother would fix a basket and send him to his office where we'd have a wonderful time. What would those wailing nights be! Sometimes we shifted to a standby track, and I clambered aboard with the engineers and helped him switch the train.

The tentacles of the war machine had not yet invaded my world.

One day in early 1942 father put on his railroad's uniform with the red stripes down the sides of his trousers, and he had to go to the Eastern Front. Father was sent to a large railroad station in Poland which had an unpronounceable name. But for the rest of the family it meant that the war had landed squarely on our doorstep.

I remember on my way to school passing houses with black drapes on the windows which meant only one thing; a husband or brother or son had been killed on the Eastern or Western Front. Each time I saw another of these dreaded drapes, I prayed silently, "Please let the day never come when we have to hang these awful shrouds on the window." Father wrote as often as he could and hoped this nightmare would soon end. The weeks turned into months, and every day longer lines formed in front of the stores, and there was less food to buy and less coal to keep the houses warm. The radio told us to be patient, that the food and supplies were going first to the front; and I knew father would do his best to get them there. Father returned to us in 1942, but he was a changed man.

Deep lines had formed on his forehead, the ready smile was seen less often, and our walks and picnics were no more. What had father seen on the Eastern Front to make him change so much? It was 1945; allied bombing raids had become a daily occurrence. The Americans made their bombing runs during the daylight hours, the French and English devastated and terrified us at night. The Eastern Front was no more, the allied forces were holding across the Rhine, and yet the political fanatics with their ideology were still urging and threatening everyone to make greater sacrifices. What more could we do? Air raids were now around the clock and we tried to survive this insanity in basements and root cellars.
NINEVAH REVISITED

How painful
To walk
Into worlds
Where we don't
"belong"
Forgetting
That He walks
In all
The places
Of His world,
Which is to say,
In all of life.

---Betty Maine

SONANT STAGE

Webbed into a sonant stage
I wove me here myself
Fighting time, embracing age
Emotion neatly shelved

When this life comes together
I will tidy up my smile
My heart all clothed in leather
Out of pain... and out of style

I'll glance your way o'er freshend drink
Or take your hand to dance
You wanted me, once, you think
I never stood a chance

Weakend, wounded, awkward child
You'll find me in my grace
All mounted on your silver steed
And whisk me from this place.

T. K. Buchanan

FRAGMENTS

Fragments of poems trickle
through the mind, unbounded;
like the glinting of a gravelly stream,
thoughts ripple past. You may try
to freeze words like blocks of ice
in the mind, but they seep out
like moisture dripping from cracks in
the steep rockface beside the road:
Like water through a sieve,
words run through your fingers,
onto the page.

Janet Thomas Braswell

FOUR A.M.

The earth seems to be
the only questing being.
The deepest woods
are upon us now.
The shimmering light flows around us
as we sleep in our nests.
The moon now resides beneath
frosty waves,
and the ancient tree
grows to the heavens.

Ed Waller and Chris McMichael

Lisa Daughtry
THE DRAGON DANCE

I want to dance the dragon dance again,
Bold spear in hand among the summer flowers,
Hot smell of grass in nostrils tinged with dust.

He, sneezing flame to singe my heart again,
Our separate feet in motion, one, of six:
Backward and forward, side to side in unison,
The dragon's grace.
His head is huge; green scales, green leaves
That pattern slanting light and shadow, play.
And, oh, his eyes are fierce and hot.

Well, once they were. But now he sleeps,
Or rots,
Replaced.
Gray light is unreflected.
Gray metal cannot dance.
Tame enemy, created uncreates.
The guarded treasure turns to clay.

I want to dance the dragon dance again.
I wait for dragons rising, flesh and bone, and fire,
To burn the soul to gold, refined in that fierce heat,
To love the dragon while we slay him,
Resurrected,
Like comets going to the stars to come again
In eighty years or so, scattering the gifts of heaven
From their tails as dragons do, machines do not.
The bones within the dancing feet grow old in eighty
Or two thousand years;
Flesh softens, falls away.
Dear dragon, rise, slay pettiness in multigraph.

A fabled beast, banners streaming on the wind,
An enemy to cherish,
Unique,
Uncomplicated;
I want to dance the dragon dance again,
Bold spear in hand among the summer flowers,
Hot smell of grass in nostrils tinged with dust.

Barbara McMichael

THE RIVER OF MY MIND

No mere lifeflow,
But too fast dream.
Blowing, flowing
Swirling, whirling
A forward surge,
A backward urge,
Stroking on my side,
Against a strong tide.
Oh, when may I just paddle,
Float lazily, diddle, daddle
Find an island . . .
Beach on some sand.

Mary Musulin MacWade
EARTH MOTHER

Visit the Earth Mother:
When Life is uncertain,
Go see Her in the Spring,
She will teach you about Love.
It's time to take a mate,
And raise the next generation.

Visit the Earth Mother:
When Life is out of control,
Go see Her in the Summer,
She will teach you to set a pace.
It's time to take Life easy,
And play in the rain.

Visit the Earth Mother:
When Life is growing cold,
Go see Her in the Fall,
She will teach you how to save.
It's time to put away the harvest,
And enjoy Life's rewards.

Visit the Earth Mother:
When Life has gotten old,
Go see Her in the Winter,
She will teach you about memories.
It's time to reflect,
And know you are but part of Her.

Visit the Earth Mother:
For She is part of you.

Niles PILGRIMAGE

An afternoon summons.
The world is stirring
from winter's chill and fertile sleep.
A woman sheds house, husband, children,
seeking the woods and flowing river,
needing beneath bare arching branches.
the river-spirit of wind and song.
Far she wanders,
to where the bent bridge bowed long ago
to the river-god's seasonal rage.
Kneeling, she gathers from the shore
a graceful script of driftroot
and a shell-like stone, smooth and gray.
An abandoned roadbed leaves the river,
strays to crumbling chimneys,
and lonely daffodils, faithful yet.
She chooses a bright nest of flowers
and snaps a thin length of twig
from the quince's riches of thorns and rubies.
At twilight she is going home down the main road,
her hands shining with an afternoon's eternal gifts.

Sally Russell

PROSTITUTE

I am a prostitute
I sell myself short
of what I really am
and yet you love me
in spite of what
I appear to be
You protect me from
the pimps
and brutal beatings
I allowed to happen
I prostitute myself
because I can NOT sell
anybody else
I don't know why
I let the lousy pimp
use me for his needs
years after the fountain of youth
has been misplaced
It is not for men
I do it
It is not for money
Certainly not for show
Actually it's quite simple
I don't know
where else to go
I didn't plan
my life this way
Things happen
to make us veer
away from the road
and because of it
I know my way
around the streets
You saw me standing
on a corner
where I didn't belong
I'm glad you picked me up
You saw more than
make-up and long legs,
more than the lingerie
I fancy so much,
more than the silk and lace
I wear, longing to be touched
in my heart
It is ok to love you
because of what I am
Jesus loved a prostitute
He showed her
a way out.
He would do no less for me
Jesus sent you
to my dim corner
I saw you from the window
of my red light district
revealing his heart
in your love

Donna Pinson
EPITAPH FOR AN AVIATOR

Something flew out of the darkness to collide with the windshield of my automobile this evening. A vague impression of feathered wings and small body flashed in front of my eyes, and then my ears heard a dull thump as aviator and safety glass briefly met. Then it was gone, swallowed back into the darkness from which it had come.

Relief flooded through me. My glass and metal bubble was unbroken. Then I realized that the mass of feathers that had just rebounded off my windshield like a basketball from a backboard had been a living creature, a co-inhabitor of the world in which I was driving.

It is not a good realization. In fact, it's heartbreaking. My only consolation was in the fact that I was traveling at a rate of speed sufficient to do more than merely injure the creature.

What had happened to me? Could my first reaction to this tragedy have actually been concern over my unliving steed instead of over the living being who crossed its path? Had the callous world at last hardened me to the plight of my animal brothers? I had to admit that my love for animals was one that had been ignored somewhat in the recent past.

Practically every day I see the evidence of the battle being waged along every roadway that mankind has plastered across the globe. Ribbons of gray and black smattered with the blood of innocents. It saddens me to see creatures once full of life scattered among roadside garbage. It is a sadness that I have denied for many years. I guess this has been my way of coping with this horror of the modern world.

An infinitely large portion of my childhood was devoted to animals. I spent endless hours pursuing any magazine, book, or other form of information that dealt with the inhabitants of land, sea, and air. My walls were literally covered with posters and pictures cut out of magazines of a multitude of mammals and birds. Everything from kingfishers to timber wolves to blue whales found a home pinned to the plaster of my room. Even a vast majority of the fictional literature I read (which was considerable) dealt with creatures of the wild. When asked the basic questions about a grown-up career, "naturalist" was my only answer.

Often I envied them in their oneness with the natural world. Their freedom was the stuff of which my dreams were formed. The only thing I couldn't, or maybe the word is wouldn't, understand was why the race I was born to was constantly at odds with my precious animals. Domination or extermination seemed to be the majority of mankind's ways of dealing with his animal neighbors. As time marched onward in my life, I sadly began to lose my intimate contact with the world of animals. The content of my books turned increasingly away from animal topics when I got around to reading at all. My future as the world's leading naturalist quickly faded to more unsure ideas about the future to come. My posters were replaced with everything from beer ads to automobiles. The freedom of the wilds was lost in the excitement of growing up.

The night I crossed paths with a hapless aviator was the point at which full realization of my loss at last became apparent to me. I had lost touch with something that will always have its fingertips on my life. The caring has to be there; it cannot be denied. I now know what has been missing in my life. I thank you, oh winged messenger. In this clash between machine and nature, maybe nature was truly on the winning side.

Chris McMichael
**EMPTY SKIES**

Attacked by Irving's *Undertoad* I flee
And stumble onto gracefilled still green eyes
They iced through mine and emptied out a voice
Crying to sell my soul for empty skies.

In the twilight I sing the stars to sleep
And just at dawn I sweep the clouds away
And look to the horizon where I know
I'll hold you without obstacle today.

At night if stars are restless I will wait
And conjure winds to blow day's clouds away
If the clouds bring rain I'll pray for rainbows
And meet you on the promised flawless day.

We'll love in empty skies where none sees
One day perhaps they'll notice breathless blue.

*A sign of danger, a feeling of inescapable doom
defined and described by John Irving in his
novel of biblical importance, The World According
to Garp.*

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**BALLAD OF MT. QUAKER**

The sea was calm, and all aboard
Were in their hammocks nestled.
I myself stood on the deck
And with my soul I wrestled.

On the curve, in the East, the clouds rolled in,
My arm began to ache.
A storm, my bones were telling me,
A storm my ship couldn't take.

"All hands on deck!" I yelled below
To rouse my fellow mates,
As they scrambled above none could know
The dealings of their fates.

The seas now swelled (to thirty feet!)
As we feebly batooned down
The hatches, which were none secure,
It looked as if we'd drown.

My boat did reel, and creak, and crash,
And rock both stern and bow.
The gale was blowing with all her might,
As Mother Nature'd allow.

Screams of anguish, screams of fear
Above the wind I heard.
A cold and senseless, untimely death
Was all we were assured.

"Man overboard!" The mate hollered out
As I ran to the edge of the rail.
I wondered what I'd tell his kids:
He was a good man, Edgar Hale.

Soon Solley, and Wilkins, and even ole Jake
Wore awash in the cold clammy drink.
And the boat had a crack, from the front to the back,
We'll go down....was all I could think.

6:15 on my watch, I marked the time well
As I bailed like a pump to no use.
The stern broke away at the close of this day
And I looked at my mate, Mr. Bruce.

"Mr. Bruce", I began, "I'll tell you I'm sorry,
For sailing us all to our maker."
A smile, a salute, as we sank to our end,
And the end of our vessel MT. QUAKER.

I awoke to the smell of those pancakes I love....
A dream! Thank God...just a dream!
I sprang to my feet, ran down to the galley
For my usual coffee, no cream.
"Mr. Bruce", I did ask, "how's the weather today?"
As the sun beamed down on my feast.
"O.K.", he replied, "save for one small detail,
A Storm, 'round sundown, from the East."

I choked on my toast... A dream? NO! A warning.
And I won't question from whom it came.
"Hard about, Mr. Hale!" Back to port we did sail,
While the weather was nothing but tame.

On my watch that night, in the dim harbour lights
In my face rained that stormy dream maker.
Here safe in the berth, I thanked God I'm on Earth
And not drowned on my schooner MT. QUAKER.

J. Miller Gilbert

PREFRONTAL LOBOTOMY:

[an Ode to A dYinG InJUN]

Helium, Hilium, Dillium, Dumb*
I fell off my bed and broke my thumb.
It hurt real bad,
and made me mad.
Helium, Hilium, Dillium, Dumb*
Quickery, Quackery, Quirkery, Quack*
I fell off my bed and broke my back.
The pain was supreme.
I thought I would scream.
Quickery, Quackery, Quirkery, Quack*

Stevie Blemmins
(East Wing, Room 253)
Submitted to Dr. Spatula,
In partial Fulfillment of rehabilitation therapy requirements.

Steven McNeilly