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Eastern Kentucky University, English Department

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Wizard



AURORA



AURORA

1980

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AURORA

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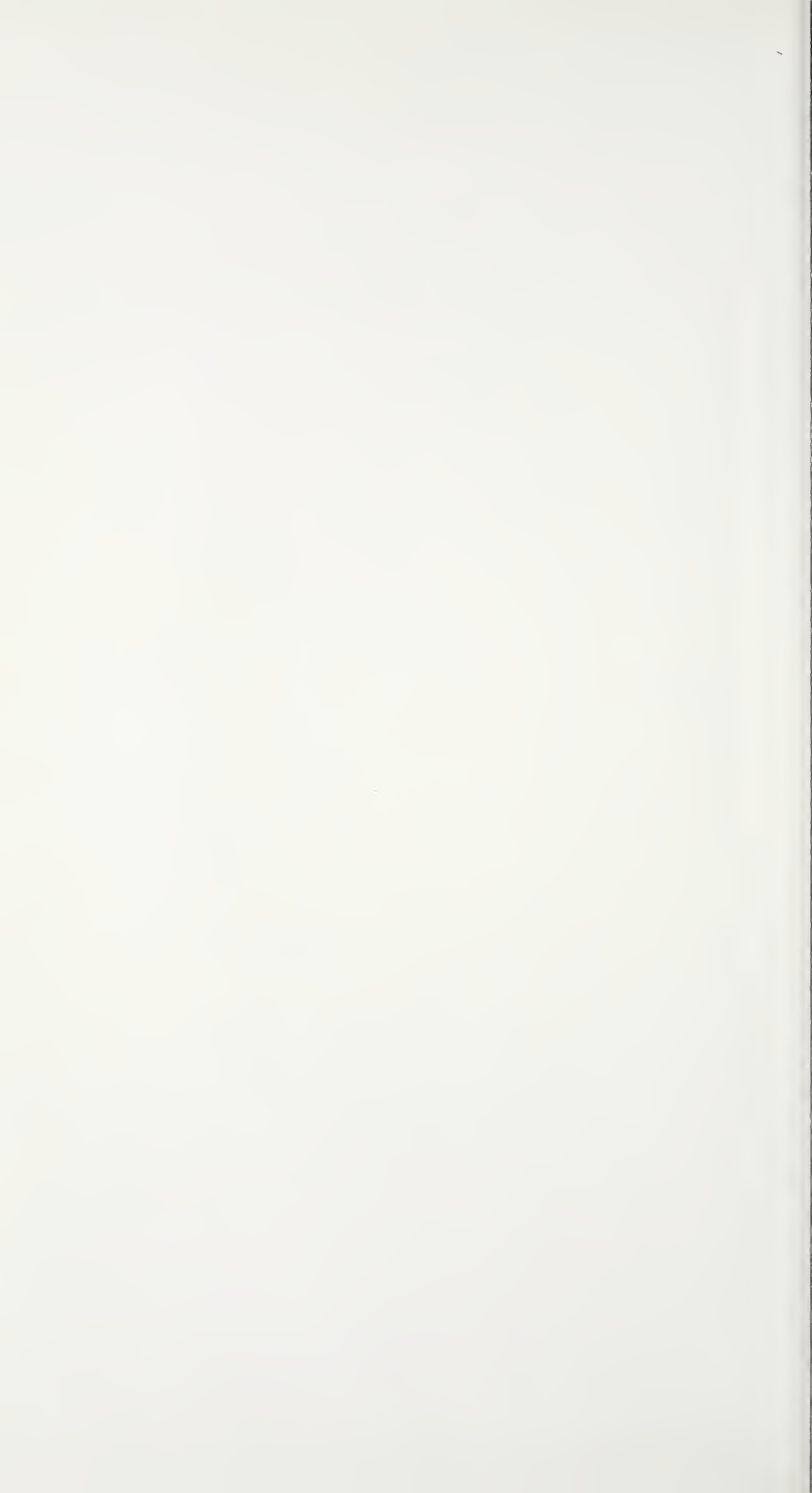


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Who Would Be Content

*If I should lose my eyes tonight, I'd utter not a cry,
For I have seen the azure span of a soft Kentucky sky.*

*If I should lose all means of sound, and never hear again,
I would not grieve for I have heard the cadent rain on tin.*

*If I should lose all sense of smell, it would not be my death,
For I have known the smold'ring scent of winter's frozen breath.*

*If I should lose my sense of taste, I think I'd not lament,
For I have eaten sweet black bulbs from fleshy, rain-drenched stems.*

*If I should lose all feeling, it would not matter much,
For I have known your kindness, and I have felt your touch.*

Patti Renee Wilson

A Time for Tea

*The world is full of cranks
and crackpots and madmen
and lights that never burn,*

*of heralds that never sing
of anything but fools;
wheels that never turn.*

*The days are filled with light,
nights are emptied out into the street;
as soundless as the rush of fogs
that brush against the stranger's feet.*

*The world is filled with cranks
and crackpots and madmen,
jumping from the North Bridge every week,
and brittle nice old ladies in their parlors,
pouring sugar into tea.*

Paul Hicks

The Mime Beneath the Yellowed Sheet

*He called a yellow sky to ask the time
and counted backward in his mind
to wait the second coming,*

*the Jew awaits the news,
and laughs with no remorse
while counting red umbrellas;*

*the vaguely sorted laughs of children
filter through the window.*

*Gershwin plays a falling rhapsody,
the flies flick from blind to blind
to keep the solemn time*

*and the smell of yellowed linen
chokes a lifeless mind
which lays beneath the sheet.*

*Underneath, the painted smile
changes with the changing light*

*and waits again, a hollow christ,
without an answer from the sky
that goes on without moving*

and never tells the time.

Paul Hic

Virtues

*But the virtues are so seeming
the times so unredeeming
in your eyes I can see the gleaming
of the love you hide in dreaming*

Pam Dix

Black, Starless, Moonless Night

*The black, starless, moonless night
settles on me,
envelopes me.*

*Sleep seethes into my weary,
maddened mind
embracing the darkness,
making me blind.*

*Taking with me
some ripened fruit,
the face of a lover
the song of a flute.*

Pam Dixon

James Robert Ballard, Jr.

*Maxwell House spittoon, and wooden, rubber-tipped cane.
Shuffles, stumbles, and tobacco-stained undershirts, (the kind Sylvester
Stallone wears), balding, freckled head, and lively, brown eyes.*

*Unshaven stubble, weekly bath (on Saturday, of course), calloused
hands, recorded 1890-1978.*

*Original edition book of mountain life—
moonshining, country stores, gravel main-highways, farm labor that
led to lifetime love.*

*Married Kansas Mae McIntosh in her prime of sixteen, and made her a
mother barely two years later. She **must** have been thought barren.*

*Father of three strapping boys and one strong woman, who've all faced
life's worst many times.*

*Country simplicity, like the intricate patterns of his wife's hand-pieced
quilts.*

Karla S. Ballard

Opposing Views

*Books are living, breathing
things that jump up and
smack you in the face
when they're in good shape.*

*Paper, drawn from wood's gut,
ink from India and black as Dracula's
soul, and hard pages of cardboard
opening to flood you with hot words.*

Karla S. Ballar

Silence

*Even with **Desperado** in the tape player,
and my hairdrier running off and on*

*—No silence quite like that of yelling conversationally
at you over the racket
—and there's no answer
You've gone*

*You ARE gone
and will I always yell to make a noise
that cuts the silence in half?
—Halves that mate and
grow vaster, more void
than any silence with
you breathing in it.*

*No silence quite like that of stopping my chatter suddenly
to find that I was talking to myself again
To suddenly remember that you aren't HERE anymore
to answer back.*

*I'm deafened sometimes,
by the silence of your absence.*

Chris E. Neuhaus

Meditation Chapel

*I used to come here to
meet people; to bless the
silence and coolness
I used to flee here to escape the pressures of
matching your pace
and the frenzy in your hard brown eyes.
I come here, trying to forget you, kill time
and the bearing of the place
is a smack in the face:
"YOU!" "BABE!" "SWEETIE!" echoes from the resounding slap
the familiar hush
the musty, woody smell
The pouring of light through blue glass
and again the sharp touch of a rootbeer brown splinter of glass
that I touched
and travelled away from countless times
only to return to leave my fingerprint again
Only to wish you would see me
Only to wish that all the nightmares you ever
inspired in me
weren't coming true . . .*

Chris E. Neuhaus

Nakedness

*Nakedness
is not a
visual concept
rather it is
a feeling
experienced only
by the clothed
when they realize
they've been left
with nothing but
themselves.*

Lesia Kirsch

Four O'Clock

*I wrote of waiting once before
you read my poem and laughed
you said it was just like me
to be so impatient—
lingering because I had to
not because I wanted to.
Waiting with anticipation is not
the same as staying heartlessly
because you are expected to.
My impatience is
—you know—
different this time.
Perhaps it is that I wait for you
and even more, because I want to.
I'm glad you read my poems
hurry next time.*

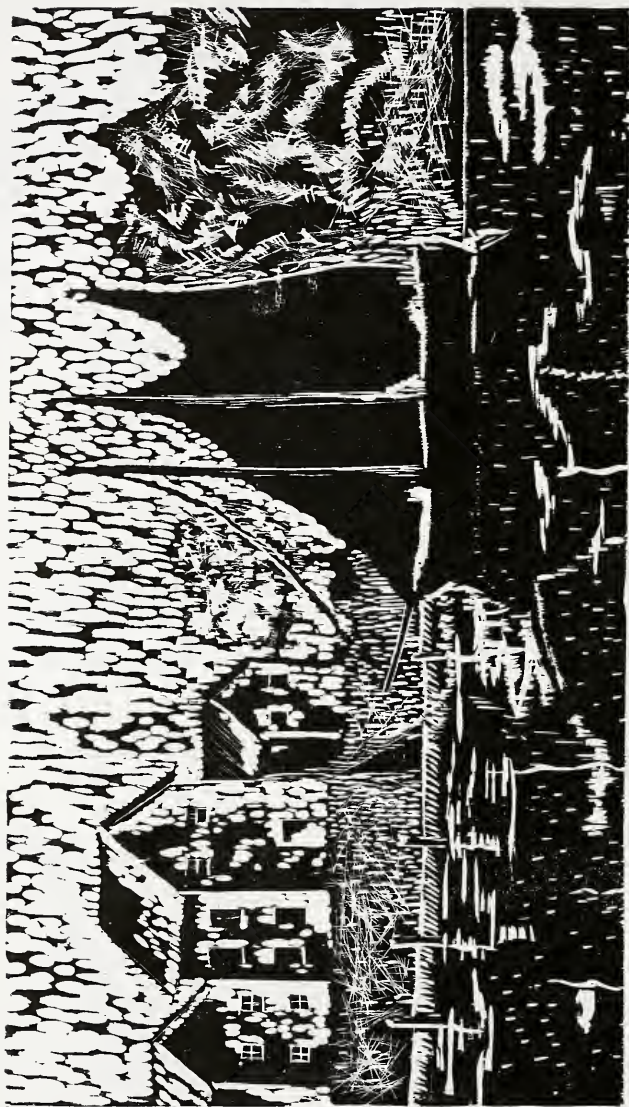
Lesa Kirsch

Thunder

*The thunder in the distance clears
our minds
We become full of justice and wear
our righteous lines
The thunder comes closer but our
minds adjust
Instead of a noise we now look at
it as a must
The lightning now strikes, it burns
our minds
We are hurt, full of sorrow and
feel denied
We ignored that thunder when the
lightning was somewhere off
Now that it's home it scorches
our hearts*

Sondra J. Turner





The Stargrip

by S. L. Silva

The control deck of the Starship fairly pulsed with the non-committal routine of dogged technology. Circulator units persistently 'breathed' in good air while reprocessing the bad. Thermostats watch-dogged cabin temperature with solid diligence to preset tolerances. Monitors and readouts clicked, beeped, and buzzed, alternately vying for attention. The overall effect of this was a mindless tonal symphony.

Various devices inside, and throughout, the ship constantly conveyed their findings to visual readouts at control deck consoles, while various devices outside the ship placidly awaited internal instructions. Motors hummed, telltales flashed, readouts played numbers games, and printers idiotically recorded it all. The 'dummies' danced while the 'brain', the computer, complacently pulled their strings to a programmed puppet show. But even the 'brain', as emotionlessly and flawlessly as it performed, had a master. If the master told it to go, it would go. If the master told it to stop, it would stop.

To the forepart of the ship's cabin, and seated at the center console, slumped the still form of the master. He lay at his post stretched across the console, his arms crossed, his face hidden in the crook of his right arm. He was, to put it succinctly, the handsomest, the healthiest, the oldest, and, oddly enough, the youngest man in the world. Most certainly he was an oddity. In a simple experiment gone awry he, and his ship, had inexplicably transcended the barrier of Time and, in a blink of the eye, found himself in system orbit — five years later!

At a medical monitor two consoles to his right that dutifully stated his condition (through surgically inserted implants) was displayed his name — Richard P. Decker. And above that, in muted red lettering, MEDCOMP: STARGRIP IV. The medical monitor printed out the status of all his various bodily functions leaving out two things its vast memory had no understanding of — his reddened eyes and tear streaked face.

Richard P. Decker lay unconscious across his console in the grip of a fitful nightmare. Familiar and now frightful scenes of recent events flitted painfully within his mind like a perverse requiem. All set to a hauntingly echoed, "It's simple! It's so damn simple!"

Over One Hundred Fifty years of space travel had seen the exploration of the solar system. Huge and cumbersome carriers ploddingly transported resources back to a badly depleted Earth, from the farthest reaches of the system. Spectacular, tall towered cities dotted

the Moon and Mars, and civilization had placed a firm foothold in the Asteroid belt. And yet, in all this time, no clear solution had been found enabling man to reach out to the Stars. The Solar System had become frustratingly small place.

Disease was a thing of the past, poverty was a curious situation found only in the history books, and worldwide unity had become reality. A fit and healthy people faced eagerly toward the stars only to be halted by the vastness of the gulf separating Sol from his neighbor. Like a spoiled child who has had a favorite toy set out of reach, Humankind gazed at the stars with fanatical intent. They wanted passage, and they wanted it now!

At the turn of the Twenty-Second Century, a research team conducting an experiment designed to prove the physical existence of other dimensions went haywire leading to the accidental discovery of the first plausible star engine. At the time, it seemed a Godsend.

Basically stated, the 'engine' enveloped itself (and whatever was attached physically to it) in a 'field' of sorts. Then, it would match itself to any section of space coordinated to it and instantaneously exchange the two — somewhat like taking one point A, matching it to one point B, then placing point A in B and point B in A. Just how this was achieved no one was really certain. Although no two scientists could be found with concurring hypotheses, of one thing they were all certain — that the 'engine' should be drydocked until fully understood. There was that mysterious 'field', but of what the 'field' was comprised they had no idea.

The public, on the other hand, felt differently. Several drone ships equipped with prototype star engines had successfully traversed the length of the Solar System in one nearly instantaneous 'leap'. And that was all the public need to know. They knew that it worked, they didn't particularly care how.

"You're feeling rather old this morning too, aren't you?" he asked the sun as it lifted a slumbrous eye above the horizon. He knew that 'slumberous' wasn't an accurate term to use in connection with the sunrise, it just seemed to fit—after all, that was how he felt standing at his office window watching the city below stretch and waken itself in the dawn—slumbrous. He had spent another long evening with the computer running mathematical models of his research into the star engine. Another frustrating and fruitless attempt at delving into the mysteries that surrounded its operation. 'Frustrating!' he thought, 'My God what an understatement!' Placing the tips of his fingers to the small of his back he pushed in while, at the same time, leaning backward trying to excise the pain he felt there. "I'm old for sure," he said, "I just

can't seem to get away with spending all night at the terminal anymore."

"Eh? What's that?"

Turning from the window he saw his colleague sitting up on the couch apparently awakened by his verbal ramblings.

"Good morning, Pritchard!" he said, "Did you enjoy my couch?"

"I'm sorry sir!" Pritchard spoke up, "I came in earlier this morning and couldn't find you anywhere. So, I, uh . . . stopped to leave you a note and, well . . . here I am."

"Don't apologize," he said, "it's really not necessary between friends you know." Moving from the window he sat down into the chair behind his desk and eased back into the cushions. "How was South Africa? I see by your tan that the spring weather there agree's with you, but how about why I sent you? How deep has Decker Jr. gotten himself?"

Pritchard's face sagged a bit, the memories of the past month brought fully into focus by the otherwise innocent question. "Deeper than the Trench, sir, as they say. Dr. Decker's set himself up as some kind of 'messiah to the stars!' People are flocking in from every continent to hear him speak."

"And just what is it exactly that he tells them?"

"Well, in a nutshell, he states that, and this is a direct quote, 'Through the Divine Grace of God the door to the stars has opened unto me!' A slight gleam appeared in Pritchard's eyes, "'Take my hand brothers and sisters and I shall lead you, just as Moses led his own people, to Glory Everlasting!' How's that for an indication of his intent?" Pritchard asked, the glow in his eyes slowly diminishing.

"Very good indeed!" he said leaning forward across his desk now fully involved, "But how do you feel about all this?" He fixed the younger man with a stare, "Do you recall an incident at a place called Jonestown?"

Pritchard shook the glaze from his mind thinking back to massacre he had studied in Sociology. "I know what you're getting at, sir, and yes this could very well be the same situation. I remember hearing the man speak, he was so—magnetic! And yet I know him! I know Dr. Decker, I've worked right alongside of him for years! He was never like he was when I saw him up on that stage! The change is incredible! I'm sorry sir. I was there only to observe but I couldn't help myself! It's just that . . ."

He waved his hand through the air as if 'shooing' off some annoying insect, "Forget that!" he said. "You know what the psychologists fear about the psychic abilities that lay dormant within us all. Take the average person alone and those abilities amount to almost nothing. Get an auditorium full of people totally intent upon one ideal and the psychic effect is overwhelming!" He paused for a moment then

continued on in a lower tone, "Get the amount of people that Decker Jr has following him and the single-mindedness, the fanaticism that can be created is staggering! I imagine it to be too much for anyone, no matter how objective they may be."

Pritchard sat very still upon the couch barely aware of what the other was saying. Instead, he was remembering the month just past. He remembered attending Richard Decker's speech in Johannesburg's outdoor coliseum. 'My God!' he thought, 'There must have been Five Hundred Thousand people there listening to the star engine's creator speak!' He remembered feeling an almost palpable compulsion sweep over him to follow Decker as he spoke of 'Glory Everlasting' and the stars. He remembered wanting very much to prostrate himself before the man and beg to be one of the first to be led into heaven. 'He's a smart man, Decker is!' he thought, 'He knows how badly we wish to travel to the stars, he couples that with religion and we become helpless, mindless acolytes.'

"Finally," the other one went on, "Man has reached a point where he truly learns from his mistakes. Not one new product is allowed to pass through this institution until we know everything that can possibly be known about it," He stood up from his chair and walked back to the window. "And now," he went on, "through one man's perverseness we're being forced to give that up on what may very well be the most dangerous invention since the Atomic bomb of almost two centuries ago."

Pritchard came up off the couch, wavering where he stood. "Sir, what can we do?"

"At this point—nothing. I never should have let that man out of my sight Pritchard, knowing him as I do. But now we have lost our opportunity to stop him. It's all up to the Prime Minister now. She's a very persuasive young lady perhaps, with luck, she can sway the public back to our side. We can only hope that she can."

Pritchard stared down at the rug then back up to where the old man stood gazing sightlessly out the window. "I don't mean what 'we' the institute can do sir. I meant to ask what can you personally do?" He paused a moment wondering what the old man must be feeling. Anguish? Torment? "After all he is your son—Dr. Decker."

Under the weight of public pressure the World's Government commissioned four 'cruisers' to be equipped with the new star engine. Christened the 'Stargrip' series they were to become the pride, and shortcoming, of humankind.

Of the four crews manning the starships two were chosen by lottery to undertake the exploration of Sol's nearest neighbors. The two

remaining starships to be utilized in further testing and experimentation of the star engine.

The big day arrived and Stargrips I and II, fatefully floating in earth orbit, began their leapfrog journey across the gulfs of space promising to return a year hence. In one nearly instantaneous 'leap' the starships cleared the confines of the solar system and humankind smiled greedily at its new toy—the Universe.

Several months later, a team of scientists working with Stargrip IV came up with a brilliant idea. They found, in the star engine's unique ability, the perfect opportunity to study occurrences at near light speed transitions. "By use of the on-board computer," they said, "we can program a series of 'leaps' crisscrossing the solar system, making each 'leap' occur sooner than the last until we have a near light velocity transition taking place. Furthermore" they went on, "since there will be no relative motion on the ships part its mass will present no problem. It's simple!" they said, "It's so damn simple!"

Unfortunately, like the exhaust of the automobile engine, the ozone destroying spray of aerosol cans, the pollution of the world centuries before, and a thousand other such incidents, no one outside of scientific circles particularly listened or cared. They all had faith in the men and women who had handed them the stars on a silver platter.

Stargrip IV was summarily refitted with special computer systems, jam packed full of recorders and detection devices, and shuttled into earth orbit. Its sole occupant one Richard P. Decker, Jr., the frankensteinian creator of the star engine. From his position at the pilot's console on the control deck he transferred the ship to the appointed place at the system's rim, patched the ship's controls into the computer, and sat back to watch the show.

In order to record the full extent of the phenomena, the 'velocity' of the transitions would be increased over a twenty minute period. Within the ship the computer set its programming into motion, an internal timer was set to zero, and Stargrip IV began its crisscrossing journey about the solar system.

The ship, with all its advanced systems, performed flawlessly. At T plus NINETEEN MINUTES, FIFTY-NINE SECONDS, Stargrip IV inexplicably traversed the time barrier, and the world ceased to exist.

The development of the star engine had placed the universe in man's grasp, and a loaded gun to his head. They had learned the 'what' of it, but had not taken the time to find the 'how'. As the ship's transitions approached light velocity the strength of the mysterious 'field' created by the star engine had increased with each 'leap'. When Stargrip IV transcended the barrier of Time the excess field strength

had been left behind with no where to go. The 'field' being unnatural to this Universe then manifested itself, in a form of pure energy, into the only mechanism with which it was familiar, the star engines of the remaining three Stargrips—I and II in the vicinity of the star Proxima Centauri, and Stargrip III, docked at its landing bay on the earth. In a coruscation of blinding light the Earth supernovaed, and, like the fusion on a bomb, exploded the Sun.

As the system's rim, five years later, serenely floated the last of the Stargrips. Within, protected against the radiation of a hugely expanded Sol, slumped the unconscious form of Richard P. Decker, Jr.. He was to put it succinctly—the handsomest, the healthiest, the youngest, and, oddly enough, the oldest man in the world. Most certainly, he was the only man in the world.

On a viewscreen to the left of the still form shined a star in a heaven of stars named Proxima Centauri—approximately 4.5 light years distant. In the vicinity of this star two pinpoints of light blared blindingly into brilliance only to fade just as quickly. Richard P. Decker, Jr., in the grip of a nightmare, noticed nothing, the computer however, recorded it all.

Thoughts of Black and White

*My thoughts begin in black and white.
As they flow through my mind,
They gradually become more colorful.
With this color they gather warmth and meaning
Bringing my reader to understand
The entire brightness of my message.
The brightness radiates on the page
Warming the spirit of my verse.
But, at times I do not wish my words of warmth.
I want, rather, the cold cruelty of the world
To echo through my words.
At these times it seems almost sadistic
To warm and brighten the words that
To so many people mean sorrow or death.
That is when my thoughts remain black and white.*

Barbara Simpson

A Message to Critics

*They say my rhymes are styles of old
For present men do not write this way:
My subject—tales already told,
My form they call passe.*

*My verse is neither free nor blank:
'Tis written with a pattern set.
My fancy words like "mirk" and "dank,"
My readers soon forget.*

*They say my verse should have no rhyme
For rhyming is considered trite.
They say my ways should keep with time
To make my form turn right.*

*I am told to make my meaning clear:
I am told to call a rose a rose.
I am told to follow with my peers:
My thoughts of old must close.*

*But with my style and rhythm and rhyme
I send my message to my friends.
And if they made my way a crime
Only then my verse would end.*

Barbara Simpson

Affection

*The tender touch you long to give
But prudence bids you not
To do what your heart pleads you to
Or what conscience says you ought
Internal struggle builds until
All your strength is drained
And you hate yourself for reaching
Yet more if you refrained.*

Tim Van Sant

New Start

*I woke this morning full of hope
for a better day than yesterday
which wasn't asking much.
Sound sleep had escaped me
and my tossing offered little solace
For the cares of the day.
But the dawn often promises a new chance
as I hoped it did this morning
just one more chance.
The world outside was white with snow
as though it had been cleansed of its color
in respite of brown days.
And I prayed my cares would be so cleansed
in respite of my blue and gray days
ready for a new start.*

Tim Van San

Time and the Dreamer

*She was but a dreamer
 He was satisfied
They stayed together,
 laid together,
 By the fireside.*

*She went away to be someone,
 To set her spirit free
As time went on
 And life went on
She soon began to see:
Life is love, but love not life
 And dreams keep love alive
When dreams become reality,
 No one can survive.*

Kathy Dolbov





The Ballad of Pete Rose

*Cincinnati, Ohio, he was born,
The son of a laborer; young but worn.
Into his hand was placed a ball,
with a cowhide cover, ten cents in all.
Eight years old, and loves the game,
Eager to play, and baseball's the name.
He sets many goals in which to fulfill,
And knows in his heart, he surely will.
Bats .300 his very first year,
It seems the beginning of a great career.
Fifteen years later, his 3000th hit.
His body grows old, but still physically fit.
Then comes that time when he must depart,
Dollar signs linger inside of his heart.
His love for money is the one to blame,
For his love for the game will never remain.
Cincinnati, Ohio, he was born,
The son of a laborer; young but worn.
Into his hand was placed, not a ball,
But a certified check, three million in all.*

Johnny Casper

Lady Lazarus Come Forth

(dedicated to Sylvia Plath)

*Bitch-goddess, Medean viper, Mother Earth Citadel
I read with psyche-bruised fervor
of your azalea paths and sea shores.
Your apocalyptic musings shook my filial complacency
exorcising hidden, unspoken contempt.
See me, Electra, as I am your presumptuous protege.
Will I transcend the myth completely?
Or continue to grasp at single words
and piecemeal phrases.
To compose a psalm to a censured poetess.*

Martha Clayton

Night

*Silent, scattered light,
flecked through bended weeping tree,
plays on the shivering lake
a symphony of dance.*

*Fleeting, feather clouds
rival an amber moon;
their battleground the sky.*

*Wind too gentle-still a breeze—
breathes in the trees
a living whisper.*

*Night, still and sure,
nestles in a lost world,
on the restless earth.*

Deborah L. Slorach

Reality

*While once secluded in a world of quiet,
I sit and not a word did speak,
Thoughts did flow, passing the trailways of my mind,
I dreamt of maybes and considered possibilities.*

*Following so long this period of seclusion,
Time came that it must be broken,
Gathered my things together and opened the door.
What's this?
People! . . . Ah, but they were not in my prior world,
Only in my mind, as I desired them to be,
But here they are, as they are, not as I'd like them to be.*

*We are all individuals in this world so vast,
Comes times, some times that our world must pass,
And we must open the trailways of our mind,
Allow others entry into our little world,
And accept this world as it really is,
Not as our dreams wish it might be!*

Mark A. Purcell

Love's Sweet Dream

*I looked unto your eyes
A warmness so fluttered—
My heart dripped wets
And bestowed us lovers.
Your touch sang love
Your kindness teared sharing
In rapture of pleasure
Those arms embraced caring.
And thus my heart
In all its sorrows
Entwined our love
Forever of morrows.
For love's sweet dream
Togethared our wish
Cupid delivered swiftly
One arrow of bliss.*

Kevin Gorman

Lonely Captive

*Your days are nights, your story is never read,
Your world is in darkness where footsteps never tread.
Loneliness seems to be your very best friend,
Like the dust blowing away upon the wind.
You're proud words never to be read or to be spoken,
A prisoner of time whose mystic spell can't be broken.
Who will come along and set you free?
Or will you be a prisoner trapped in eternity?
You're like the blind who have never seen the sun,
fighting a losing battle that can never be won.
You're a lonely voice crying out in the dark of night,
Never confronted, always out of everyone's sight.
Your path is dark and barren, a road never taken,
Trapped in a sea of loneliness, never to awaken.
Eyes that are lonely, eyes that often cry,
Like a Martyr, with no reason to die.*

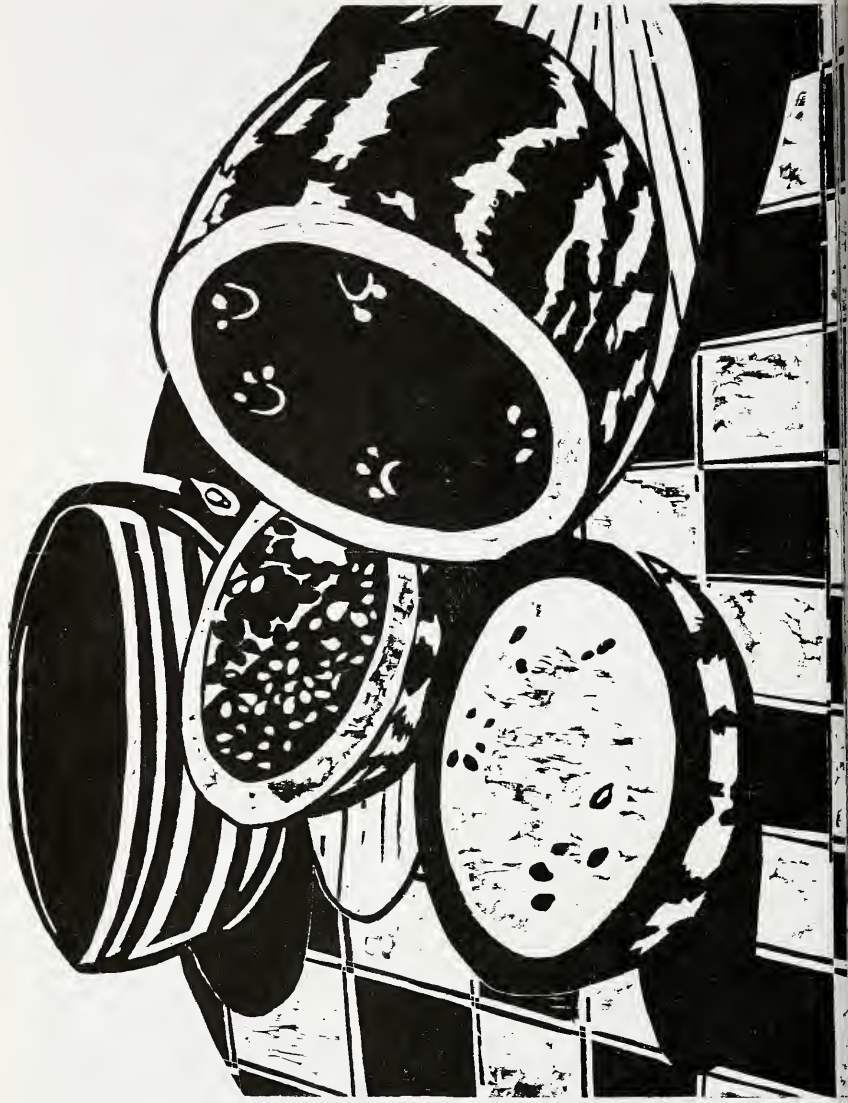
Rick Roberts

Salvation

*The botanist, less stain and sin
With pot and spade and soil begins
To put his little seed to bed.
He lays its rounded, green beanhead
Upon soft pillows of rich brown loam,
And marvels that by powers unknown
Is hidden inside the embryo,
And what each part must undergo
To break the ground and split the sky.
Incredulous, the botanist sighs,
Then, with warm blankets of sand and clay,
Tucks in his sleeping protege.
But, as all small ones whose goal is sleep,
The babe must have a final drink.
And as its mother once was nursed
By gentle rains, the changeling's thirst
Is quenched by gentle human hands
That hold the sated water can.
And when the botanist's task is done,
He sets the pot near sinking sun.
"Now, grow!" he says in tones supreme
That make the faithless heart to dream.
But as he turns to take his leave,
A sorer sight eyes can't perceive.
His tools adorn each obscure zone,
His pockets, torn by source unknown.
His countertop with soil is strewn,
His fingernails, brown crescent moons.
His smock, besmirched by soddened ground,
His magic green thumb, turned to brown.
Puddles of water and earth conspire
To incite his good wife's fervent ire.
For even as he walks away,
His very soles the proof convey.
If cleanliness is next to godliness,
I fear that Hell awaits the botanist.
But, somehow, I think, his soul will be saved,
When either in the sun or shade,
His small green wonder throws back the sod,
Yawns, and stretches its arms toward God.*

Patti Renee Wilson





October Blue

by Paul Hicks

Out back of the house there was a well that had dried up centuries before. An oak bucket sat on the brim. Rotted. Autumn wind moved the leaves in the poplar grove that grew up to very near the windows of the study. It was Harper's house: Harper-the-hanging-judge. Pure hell back during prohibition. Some thought he had bootlegged on the side and sent all the others up so he could rake in more business, but no one ever proved it if he did.

"It's politics these days," he was saying, saliva trickling down his chin. "Nobody's got any guts nowadays. We used to stick by our guns when things got tough. No more."

"I wouldn't know," said Burchett, "I gave up on the damn bunch when they gave away Korea. Never should have done that." Staring at the frayed rug.

The Judge grunted his agreement. "Lost a boy over there didn't you?"

"No."

"What was his name . . ."

"Howard. No. He went over on Okinawa."

"Oh," the Judge said, suddenly removed from it all, "I forget sometimes. Getting up there in the years." It was true enough. He was ninety-four and hardly spry.

They sat silent for a long time. The Judge brought out the cigar tin. He always told Burchett that they were the best from down Havanna, but they were King Edwards with the labels taken off.

The Judge grunted and offered the box to Burchett. "Damn communists make good cigars, I'll give em that." He heaved back with another grunt and sat the box on the brandy table to his left. They lit the cigars and sucked them deeply to get them smoking.

The cigars tasted green. Burchett tried to blow smoke rings like always, but couldn't. The Judge sank even deeper into the tattered leather of the old chair. He peered out through the smoke like an old toad and tried to remember what he had been saying before. "Damn communists make good cigars, I'll give em that." He thought he had said it once but wasn't sure. It didn't matter. Burchett wasn't listening; still trying to blow rings.

The Judge shivered as a cold breeze blew against the window. It was October and the trees were all naked except for the old beech up on the point behind the Judge's. It never seemed to lose its leaves, like the Judge, it just got old and crusty. He was settled comfortably into the chair now, and watching Burchett he became a bit chilled. Thinking about yelling for Luther, the hired boy, to come build a fire, he leaned

up from the chair but changed his mind.

“Okinawa!” It hit him suddenly what they had been talking about. “Now that was a battle! Then we were tough, no two ways. The Big One! God we was something.” He breathed out. A long windy breath. Cigar smoke bellowed from his lungs.

“Those boats would land and just as soon as the gate dropped, out they’d come; those Marines. And the Japs would open up on ’em and mow most of them down before they even stepped up on the beach.”

The Judge paused, and smiling ruefully, he leaned forward toward Burchett parting the blue haze with his once huge, now withered hand.

“You think it mattered?” he said. “Ha! not a damn bit!” he barked, settling quickly back into the chair. “Those squint-eyed Japs would shoot a whole boat load of our boys and still yet, there’d be two boats more on the wave behind that one.”

Burchett stopped trying to blow rings. The Judge puffed his cigar and thought about the wave idea. He liked it.

“The waves,” he chuckled, “A boat load of Marines on every wave in the ocean. That’s what those damn squint-eyes were seeing. Sooner or later our boys had to make it up that little hill. That’s what it was you know, just a little hill out in the middle of the Pacific. We were tough, no two ways. Still, there was enough Japs. Jap under every rock on that hill.”

It was a fine analogy and he liked it more than a little. “A Marine on every wave and a Jap under every rock.” It seemed he had heard a phrase like that somewhere before but he couldn’t quite catch the thread of it. He muttered it again and passed it off in the smoke.

Burchett sat quietly, slumped back into the small over-stuffed settee. The high winged side hid his face. He choked a bit. From the heavy smoke hanging around their heads. He thought of his son charging up a rock covered hill somewhere out in the middle of the Pacific, thousands of miles from the Judge’s house, thousands of miles from home. He closed his eyes and watched the Japs, the squint-eyes as the Judge called them, peering out from behind the rocks as the boy charged up the steep grade toward the ridge. He never did make it all the way up.

“Ha!” the Judge barked over something he sat quietly pondering. Burchett never knew what the Judge was thinking.

It was getting dark outside, and colder. Luther brought in a load of wood. It was pine; Burchett could just barely make out the smell through the cigar smoke. Luther dropped the load into the box by the back door and walking down the hallway to the study, he peered in through the doorway. The Judge sat withdrawn into the chair, eyes closed, bourbon glass shaking slightly in his hand. Across from him

Burchett sat with his head slumped over onto the high wing of the settee, cigar dangling loosely from his mouth. Luther stared a few seconds, and smiling, he turned and padded off down the hallway and out the back door. The screen door slammed behind him.

"Ha!" the Judge said, coming back from where ever he had been for the last few minutes. "We took 'em, Burchett, we took that hill! Our boys went stormin up that hill time after time after time. And boy God! we took it."

He slammed the glass of bourbon onto the table and bent quickly forward, almost into Burchett's face. "That, Burchett," he paused dramatically, "Is essential. Essential. By God, THAT is essential!"

The heavy smell of bourbon on the Judge's breath drove Burchett back into the settee. He crossed his legs and tried to meet the Judge's gaze.

"I don't know," said Burchett meekly, "It all seemed kind of useless in a way."

The Judge sighed deeply and slumped back. He picked the glass of bourbon up off the table and repositioned a cushion behind him.

"No, Burchett, that little hill out there in the middle of the ocean was essential. Very essential." He closed his eyes again.

Burchett felt uneasy. He uncrossed his legs and choked down another swallow of bourbon. Coughing, he stammered slightly, "Well, I guess. Essential . . . in a way." He sat the glass on the floor next to the settee.

They were quiet for a long time.

It was dark outside now. Across the hill about six miles a train sat motionless, poised on the track at the station in Olive Hill. Inside one of the boxcars toward the back of the train two old bums shot craps against the inside of the car. It was cold for October, and it would be a long winter. In the darkness of the Judge's study blue smoke swirled to the peck of the poplar branches against the window and the roof. The Judge thought of calling for Luther again, but again didn't. He stirred a little, and lifting the glass to his mouth, he drank and sat it back on the table.

"What ever happened to that boy of yours. What was his name . . . Howard?"

"Killed."

"Oh. I forget sometimes. Getting old, I guess."

.....

Two hours later Burchett was at home in bed listening to his wife breathe, the animals moving about in the barn out behind the house. The wind still stirred uneasily outside. He listened to it for a long time. It

seemed to him he had left the window open in the other bed room so he slipped quietly out of bed and into the hall.

Wind blowing gently into the room ruffled the lilac curtains and chilled the air. Burchett tightened the old yellow robe around his waist and crossed to the window. He stopped before it and glanced aside to a huge oak chest that stood by the bed.

He thought of the Judge. The smell of the Judge's breath was still in his throat. "Essential" he had said, and Burchett had sheepishly agreed, "Essential . . . in a way."

The top drawer was filled with old letters and pictures and odds and ends of all sorts. Burchett pushed them around until he found the small black leather case, so old the corners were worn to a rough brown. He opened the box and fingered the frayed velour lining. Gently, he fondled the tiny heart and shiny star, and stared numbly out the window into the darkness.

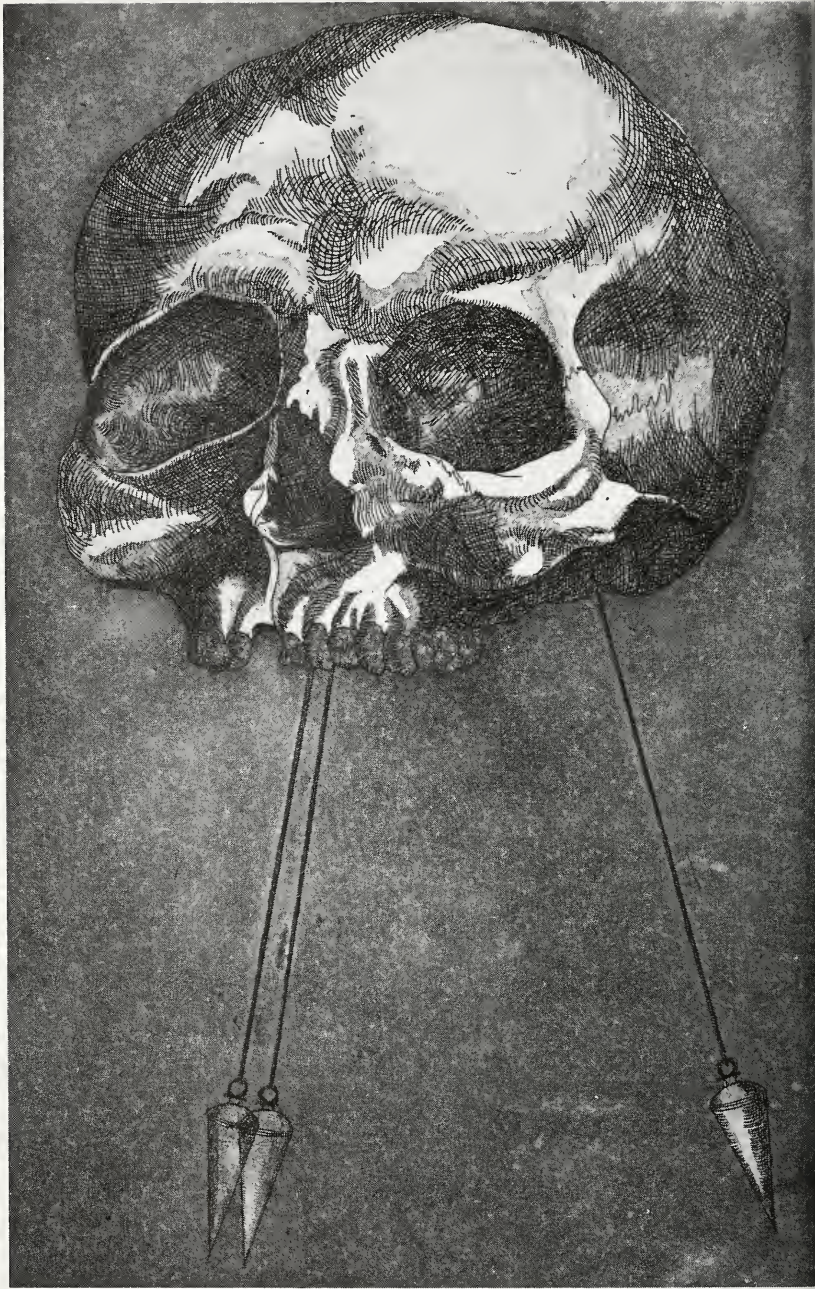
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Luther came into the study and built a fire in the fireplace. Light jumped around the musty old walls. The Judge still sat in the arm chair, slumped over as though he were dead. Spittle ran from both sides of his mouth. An empty glass sat on the table beside him. The room reeked of stale cigars. Luther picked up a last smouldering butt and crushed it out on the fireplace hearth. When the fire was going good, he covered the Judge with a blanket and, stealing half a bottle of bourbon, went upstairs to get drink.

Burchett went back to bed and left the window open.



31
1944



Impression

*A watery sun has long since shone down
beams of autumnal light.*

*In shaggy tones of brown and grey
my willow tree
bears witness to the rhythms of the wind
beating a bony staccato—
fingertips of the roof of my house.*

*Winter wind
doing a waltz through the snow,
a whispery dancer, 'round the eaves
and under the door.*

*Never missing a beat
as it spins an old tin can
down the road.*

*“Come dance with me!”
Dance with me!” whispers the wind,
“Stop sitting there, shivering like an old woman.
Let me show you the world dressed in diamonds and lace,
and sing for you a silent symphony
of new-fallen snow.”*

*Still, I think of you often dear friend,
Your presence is easily there;
with the flowers and the mountains,
whispering in the wind*

And smiling in the morning sun.

Terry Spurrier

Song for a Summertime friend

*The sun came up this morning
and awakened me with a smile.*

*Thoughts of you came flowing in
like the gentle wind
that was flowing through the curtains.*

*It was the kind of morning
like mornings we used to spend.
I would walk in*

*And find herbal teas fragrant in the air,
incense, books, and green living things;
smiling—
for a gentle peace was everywhere.*

*Sometimes I feel
it's as if we were passing stars—
and having passed a shine,
then whispered past
and from within the circle of each others light.*

Terry Spurrier

Contained Within

*Handle me gently
For I will break.
I am like a fine glass
Within a sturdy bottle
That has been shaken with force.
Although my exterior remains the same
Inside I am crushed,
And if you listen intently
You will hear my broken sobs —
But only if you move me.*

Lane Patrice Butler

Most Likely To Succeed

(On Reading the Bell Jar)

*She's a very bright girl
And knows where she's going
Miss popularity
And certainly all-knowing*

*Always involved
But don't break the rules
Been on the dean's list
In all of her schools*

*Such a success
And oh so well-rounded
Her family and friends
Are all so astounded*

*This intelligent young lady
Is very confused
Her charm and good looks
Can't always be used*

*She'd like to let loose
And cheat and rebel
To sit back and watch
But she'll never tell*

*For her family and friends
Would never condone
Such abnormal behavior
She'll suffer alone.*

Tammy Lusby

Nighttime Journeys

*Night drifts silently upon us
Promising, deceptively, a quiet time
Lullabys in hush, hush tones
Of past come to mind.*

*Snuggled among warm covers
A familiar, friendly bed
Clouds of soft, soft pillow
Beneath a tired head.*

*The day-weary body falls gladly
Into a dreamfilled sleep
Knowing that deep, deep within
His spirit has appointments to keep.*

*This soul-spirit begins to stir
Soon as he shuts his eyes
Then comes to life at the stroke
Of gentle rhymic sighs.*

*His spirit is a genius
Working at a steady rush
Colors, sounds, emotions, smells
An artist with his brush.*

*His duties take him
Far and near
Some distasteful
Some quite dear.*

*Tangles unfurled, loose ends tied
Our spirit approaches dawn
Lights on a rested body
And smiles thereupon.*

Marla Smith

The Mountain Lake

*Silence . . . broken only by the soft
splash of the paddle as my canoe
glides over the lake.*

*The water ahead is calm, almost mirror
smooth, and on it the far shore is
reflected in shimmering images.*

*The small trees by the water's edge
yield to more stately firs as the
land rises up.*

*Here and there, rough grey and white
rock ledges appear amid the green
of the mountain.*

*Above, the sky meets the mountain
in a light blue color which becomes
ever so slightly darker as I look
higher.*

*Behind me the gentle wake from my
craft rolls toward the land.*

*The sunlight makes it sparkle like
diamonds with flashes of white and
blue that nearly blind my eyes.*

*I am alone on this mountain lake
and, awed by its beauty, all my
troubles dim to insignificance.*

Paul T. Stevenson

Puzzling Paradoxes

*The rolling hills lay ravished in their robes of rusty red,
And softly slithering leaves invited wanderers to their bed.
The wind would gently whisper, then arms would gently sway
And seemed to beckon me to come to a new world far away.*

*I climbed those rolling reddened hills and felt within me rise
A newer, freer spirit, somehow closer to the skies.
The burdens of the day grew light, I knew that God above
Upon these reddened rises showered shadows of His love.*

*For is not beauty there because some leaves go to their grave?
And is this not like Jesus, God's Son Who came to save?
And how can death give way to life? It seems a battle won.
Perhaps these trees give insight to the Resurrected One.*

*In mind I climbed another hill; its sides were bathed in red.
Upon its crown a mangled Man lay beaten, grotesque, dead.
Yet all my hopes lay in Him that as in His third day,
I live to die, yet die to live in a new world far away.*

*So fear not when the Autumn comes, O Death, where is thy sting?
Because of rolling reddened hills my heart within can sing.
No longer feared, Death drops his head and slowly slips away,
His biting poison neutralized in the light of that new day.*

Basil Clark

Come

*Come,
come take a chance on me.
I don't have any given name;
but the one you'll give me
when we hold each other tight.*

Virginia Maria Eversole

Spring 79

*as the days grow longer
and the nights grow shorter-
Winter turns into Spring,
and Spring into Summer.
as the birds sing their love
songs, they mate.
the seed was sown last Fall;
and neither of us were there to see it.
The flowers are blooming this Spring . . .
and so are we.*

Virginia Maria Eversole

Actress

*I feel like an actress
Playing a role in a show;
Just playing a part,
Unconscious of my own
True feelings and torments
It is a good shelter
Until the people are gone
And the show is over,
And there is no one there.
No one to congratulate you
Or send you roses and cards.
I take off my face
And see myself;
There is nothing there.
But sadness and tears;
Frowns that stare
Back at me from the mirror,
And I wonder where I went wrong.
So until my next performance
I put away my make-up,
Hide myself under the covers,
And cry.*

Anita G. Stewart

Grandmother

*What is it like not to know your own mind?
Not to know the night from the day.
What is it like to be of old age?
The small shallow eyes, the silver light hair;
With nothing behind them to answer my stare.
Oh great elder, wiser than me;
Why do you act the way you act; see the way you see?
"Am I home?
Who is there?
Is someone there?"*

*What is it like to have to be dressed;
To have to be walked, and to have to be fed?
Is this what you worked for all of your life?
Is this life's reward for your effort and time?
To die senile and wet in your bed?
Oh Grand Mother, Mother of mine.
Why are you like you are?
Your broken spirit of hope and life;
The feeble attempt you make to speak.
The sight of your wrinkled skin;
Your haggard countenance.
What did you do to make life seek revenge?
May death soon release you into eternity;
But what may the future hold for you then?*

Anita G. Stewart

Why?

*Why?
Did you come into
my life
bright and burning
and
turn out to be
wax
like everyone else*

Cathleen Huffman





David

by Stephanie Temple

Madame Braudswaid peered from behind the gauze curtain. Her eyes narrowed and then she nodded and the maid let them in. The tall door opened. In came the soldiers, in, in, in dirty uniforms and bedraggled boots. Two were injured and cradled their arms. The crisp lieutenant smiled at Babbet and made a mud-covered bow.

"We are so grateful for the use of your home, mademoiselle."

"Paris owes you her life. American soldiers will always be welcome."

She smiled warmly, and the maid by the door smiled too.

"Perhaps you will accept the hospitality of my home," said Madame, signalling to the maid. "I am sure we have something in the kitchen."

The soldier smiled again. "That will not be necessary Fraulein," he told her. He unslung his machine gun and opened fire.

.....

"That's not fair!"

"Whadda ya mean it's not fair?"

"Yer dumb Germans tricked 'em!"

"Well? It's war-time isn't it?"

"You still tricked 'em, David. They weren't wearin' German uniforms or anything!"

"Oh don't be stupid! They didn't make yer barbies let 'em in. It was yer barbies that opened the door. You know you can't trust Germans."

He was right. I knew he was right. That's why I was mad. His G.I. Joes were always invading my barbies and I never knew whether they were Americans, Germans, or Japanese surgically treated to look like Americans. Once they had even been Gestapo and all my barbies had been hung.

I frowned and my brother frowned too.

"Oh alright, we'll do it again."

.....

"Where ya goin' tonight?"

My brother, tall, slim, more yellow than honey, ran a comb through his hair. He wore blue-jeans and a purple suede jacket with fringe. The breadth of his shoulders made him look older than eighteen.

"There's a Pink Floyd concert in Knoxville tonight."

“Oh.”

Now knowing much about rock music I had no reply. I wondered why I bothered to ask. Mom called from the front porch, David's ride was waiting beyond the honeysuckle tree. I felt like asking David why he put up with Sam. Nobody else in school would. But David let him tag along, and occasionally they went to concerts.

I heard my mother echo my thought.

“Now you be careful David. If Sam does something you don't like you get out of that car and call us.”

David smirked.

.....

It felt wild to be in all this open space. My aunt's yard covered little more than an acre but to us, used to paved curbs and parked cars, it was the Ponderosa. David was the eldest and biggest and we younger ones had little chance at all. I was holding my own okay but my smaller cousins seemed to be in over their heads.

When the sun set we were still playing, the darkness only made it more fun. Then I tripped over a foot tall fence guarding my aunt's pansies. Annoyed, I was forced to go for first aid as the blood had soaked my sock. David was still in charge.

Suddenly there was a wild shriek. I beat the grownups to the porch and there we stood watching this ghostlike thing trail my brother at a dead run. We froze amazed and the pair rounded the house my brother wailing like a lyric soprano. They came around again and the apparition let out a high pitched giggle. My mother's face lengthened about a foot. Finally the jolly ghost threw off its sheet and my father fell, rolling, on the ground.

.....

I never heard the telephone ring that night. I am a light sleeper but I was awake and on my feet before it rang. Halfway down the stairs I heard my sister catapult out of bed. She can sleep through an earthquake.

When the phone rang, my mother was already there, she'd just slipped her hearing aid into place. It was chill for August and I hunched myself into the velvet chair facing my Mom.

“What? No, why can't you tell me? He's not well . . . what? . . . but I'm Mrs. Kenton . . . hold on.”

Daddy limped to the phone. He was on pain pills and had forgotten his crutch.

“Yes, this is Mr. Kenton.”

I leaned forward and watched his face. It was blank.

“There’s been an accident,” he told my mother.

“An accident! Where? Is David hurt? Can we get there?!”

Daddy looked at the phone. His eyes moved. “What?”

Mama pursed her lips and hissed “Is he hurt?!”

“no.”

I breathed again and began prying my hands from the arms of the chair.

“Thank God.” Mama closed her eyes.

“He’s not hurt, Daddy said again staring at the phone, laying it aside, “He’s dead.”

The house blinked. Dad went on, his lips fumbled, “They were driving along the interstate and just went off the road. Into a ditch. The rest are fine but David was thrown out.”

The muscles in my arms hurt, I remember fighting back some smothering force that hurt my throat.

“They said he was dead on arrival.”

Mama screamed.

.....

David and I lay head to head under the Christmas tree. We were very small and it was dark. I squinched my eyes and saw the lights blurr into a million stars. I signed.

“Wouldn’t it be great if we could be real tiny and walk around under here?”

David laughed and felt for a present.

“I bet it’s a G.I. Joe.”

“It’d be like being in a space ship or on another planet.”

“They always buy me G.I. Joes . . . I know what yours is.”

“I don’t want to know. Don’t tell me.”

“It’s a-”

I clapped my hand over his mouth. “I don’t want to know!”

The Heart

*The heart they say, is an organ
It sifts the blood for us too,
Without the heart we cannot live
They tell me that, is it true?*

*I cannot begin to see
When people seem to say,
My love he broke my heart
When he left me alone one day.*

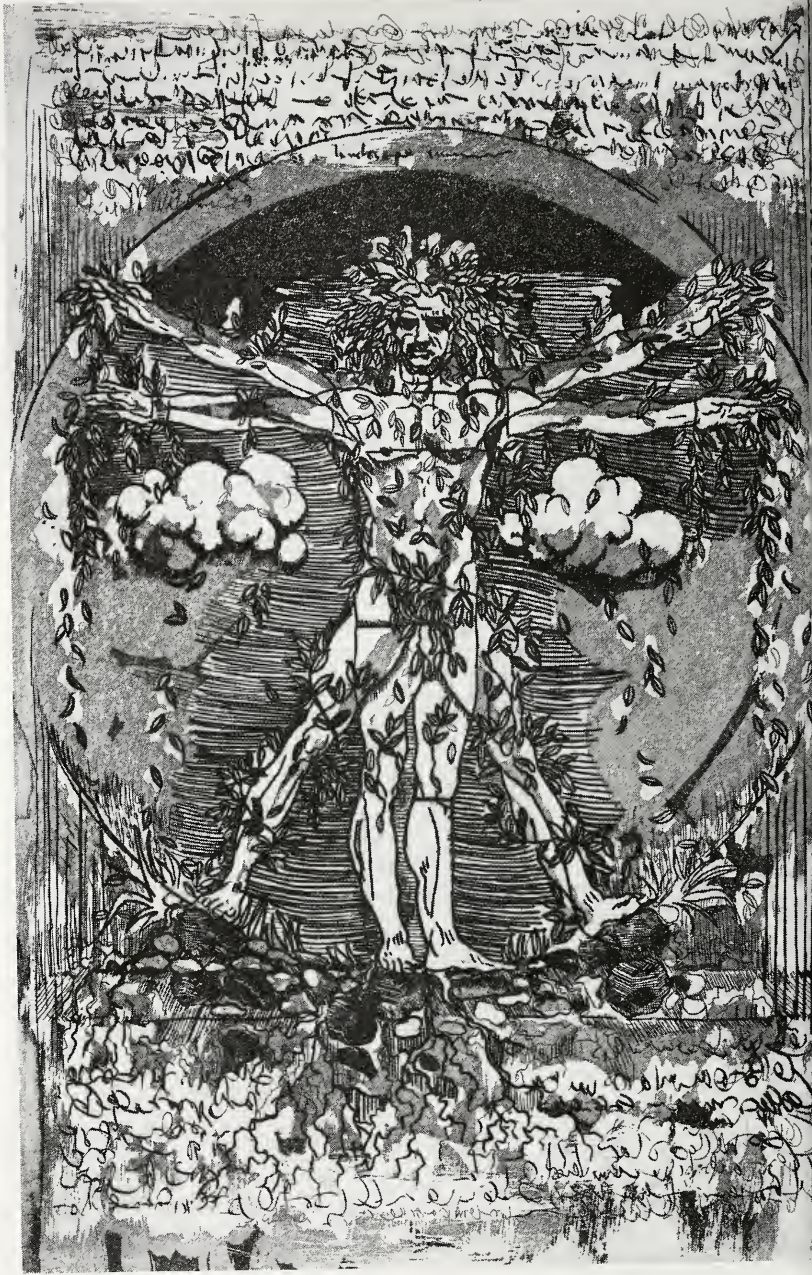
*But if the heart is an organ
Has it no bones to break,
So how can this be—a broken heart
Is this not a mistake?*

*I guess a broken heart
Is when a love has gone,
Is it a loneliness feeling or is it a pain
That we find in our chest at dawn?*

*Please tell me ole maker
What is, this heart?
Do we really need it to live
Or can we take it out and part?*

Carolyn L. Scott





At Ropes End

by James H. Jennings

"But I just had K.P. this morning!" came the stocky black's response to his being chosen for the least thrilling duty of camping.

So Mark had pulled K.P. this morning, but who hadn't already? Reluctantly I turned to the troop historian who is my brother, "Alright, Jerry, you've got K.P. tonight instead of Mark."

It was a somewhat confused and angry exclamation that returned from the brown haired eighth grader. "What?"

"Yes, you. Go on and help Chris with the dishes."

Chris was one of the two newest members of our little troop. He was also black, and one who was always co-operative and helpful. The other new member was Steve. He was a tall, strong, revolting seventh grader who sometimes gave us trouble when his dad, the assistant scoutmaster, wasn't around.

"Sure, Joe, but this is the second time for me and he has only done it once," came Jerry's reply.

Later, I asked myself why I had reversed my decision. I had no fear of Mark, but something was causing it. The answer became elusive when I tried to bring it to light.

In reflection, it is found that Mark, who is from a low-middle class family, has felt mistreated since he came to our troop. Minor problems were blamed on his being of a minority. One example is his fouled up records when he transferred to our troop. Dad had promised to try to get them corrected, but hadn't gotten to it. Mark began to blame the lack of clarification on his race, not the scoutmaster's forgetfulness.

Getting back to the present problem, whether it be new or a continuation, it is seen that our small troop is going on a winter campout. We have reserved the Nature Cabin on one of the Council's reservations. The cabin is located near the tree houses that overlook Gimmee Gash Gully. The entire area is a tree farm and is covered by a forest of several species of deciduous and evergreens.

All but five of the active members have dared to brave the elements with the scoutmaster and his new assistant, Dan.

When supper was completed that night, I had to choose the first two to do the dishwashing duty known as K.P. to Scouts.

"Gary, you and Chris have K.P. tonight. Chris, if you remember, even though you are cook, you have to do K.P. at least once to get your merit badge."

All the boys had worked well together today. Each had pulled his share of the load. The only flare-up revolved around the mattresses and the cots.

"I claimed this bunk and the bottom mattress on the truck." It was

Gary arguing with Steve.

"It don't matter, I put my gear there before you did; anyway nobody's got that bunk there so you can have it," was Steve's reply.

"Yeah, and if anyone gets that pad, I'm gonna' pop 'em up side the head," replied Gary.

"That's enough of that talk Gary. Just get your gear out of the truck and in here with your mattress, then there won't be any problem of you poppin' somebody's head. Got it?"

"Sho' nuff do. I'm going mah-stah. I'm goin'."

The night passed quietly and we rose to a chilly cabin and breakfast. The day's schedule included forestry instruction and rappelling.

"Hey Mark, you 'n Steve got K.P. this meal while Gary and Jerry get more water."

"Yeah, yeah, K.P. Why always me, Joe?"

"It's not always you, and besides you haven't had it yet. So don't complain."

"Sure, you don't got to do K.P. or any of this. All you got to do is jus' boss us around all the time. Yeah, we know."

"That's enough of that Mark," said the scoutmaster. "He's pulled more K.P. than you can imagine, he has been in a few more years than you. It's not called bossing either, he's the senior patrol leader, and it's one of the priviledges of staying in long enough to get to the top. So come on over here and let's get these dishes done."

It's the same argument every campout, "he's bossing us" and "he doesn't do any work." Yet, what Mark doesn't realize is that I've had over six years of camping when I had to pull K.P., dig latrines, and get water and firewood.

So with a dejected, "Yes sir," Mark got up from the table. Ever then he still added the usual comment, "When I get to be senior patrol leader, I'm gonna' sit around and boss everybody else, tellin' them what to do."

With that, dad and I looked at each other and smiles.

Upon returning from the afternoon's activities, all took a hand in replenishing the depleted woodpile with split wood from a ten foot ash log found in a nearby brush pile.

After supper the scoutmaster spoke up as he cleaned the remnants of the evening meal off his plate with a dinner roll. "Man, these veal cutlets are out of this world. I'm sure glad you put 'em on the menu."

"They sho' was. Mama always fixes 'em at home," said Gary.

"Hey, Gary, this can become another troop tradition along with baked beans!"

"Sho' nuff?" came the reply from the dumpty assistant patrol

leader.

“Hey Mark, you ’n Chris take K.P. tonight.”

“But I just had K.P. this morning!”

“Alright Jerry, you’ve got K.P. tonight instead of Mark.”

“What?”

“Yes, you. Go on and help Chris with the dishes.”

“Sure Joe, but this is the second time for me and he’s only done it once.”

It still bugged me why I had taken Mark off K.P. and put Jerry on. No reasonable explanation was to be found. Could it be I was favoring Mark because he complained and blamed his problems on his race? It seemed so. This was the only solution that would fill in the missing part of the question.

I didn’t have any more time to puzzle out the situation as Dan brought out his rappelling gear and everyone went down to the gully. We decided to rappel down one bank and try a traverse across the creek afterwards.

“Hey Joe, would you grab this line here? Yeah, now pull it down the hill, O.K. Each of you guys get a carbine and a loop to make a diaper sling. You remember don’t you? We did it at Johnsonville last month. No, take it on either side. Now take up the excess here. That’s right. Clip the carbine left to right on each loop. Then adjust until it’s comfortable.” These were Dan’s instructions as we got ready to descend to a point on the creek bed downstream from our position.

His final instructions to each were, “Just loop the doubled rope around the carbine twice, grasp behind with your left hand and guide with the right, don’t hold on! No, let go with the . . . now easy . . . good. You got it now, keep on going.”

“Hey Mark, you aren’t afraid to go over the drop off are you?”

“Who me? I ain’t gonna’ go near that!”

“It’s only ten feet. Nothing to be scared of.”

“Sure, Joe. But it’s an overhang too.”

“O.K. Mark. Go as far as you want. I can’t make you do it. But just think of all the fun you’ll be missing.

Everyone, it seemed, forgot about their weariness and aches to enjoy the fun, either just watching or participating. It was then that Dan spoke up. “Joe, why don’t you rappel down at this next tree and take one end of the rope up to that tree over there so we can have a traverse.”

“Sure thing. Give me a second to put my sling back on . . . alright.”

This simple forty foot crop was nothing. One overhang, the rest a slope. At the overhang my boot slipped as I bounced over and knocked several icicles off. As they clattered the short distance to the creek bed below, it aroused a cry of alarm from above.

“Joe! Hey Joe! You O.K. down there?”

“Yeah Mark, just some icicles, nothin’ to get hyped up about.”

Why the concern? Earlier in the cabin he was ready to fight over getting K.P. twice in one day. Well, no time to ponder the question now. I’ve got to get this line to that tree up there.

“Line clear.” I shouted to let Dan know he can release the rope and let me take one end up the rise.

“How’s that?” I quizzed Dan.

“Find. Come on back and help us tighten it up and let me give it a try.”

“On my way.”

Once checked and approved by dad and Dan I crossed the creek again. I called to the rest while suspended thirty feet above the frozen creek, “It’s great out here you guys. Who’s next?”

Jerry nervously clipped his carbine to the rope after receiving the all clear sign and the rope was retightened. Cautiously he eased himself off the edge to swing freely by his sling.

He breathed much easier as I unclipped him from the line that kept him suspended above the ice below. Steve and Gary also chose to cross in like manner. Both had had similar experiences and were not afraid. The last to elect to go was Mark.

As he transferred his weight to the line it gave considerably more than with the others.

“Hold it Mark. Let’s tighten that rope a bit. They left some slack in it,” was dad’s word of caution.

“Try it Mark, it looks good now.”

“O.K. Dan. Here I come Joe. Ready or not.”

“I’m ready.” I called as he slip half way out with a push and the force of his weight. The last half, however, wasn’t going to be as easy. The twenty feet remaining would require all the strength of his arms. With only five feet remaining a major problem arose.

“Mr. Jackson,” whispered Dan. “This line’s slipping and he isn’t to the other side yet.”

It was Mark that spoke next. “I’ve gotta’ rest a second. It ain’t easy pullin’ your own weight by just your arms.”

“Grab hold here and see if we can hold that knot still while he catches his breath,” was dad’s urgent reply.

I had seen dad and Dan go for the rope and guessed what was happening. “It isn’t much farther Mark, just another foot or two and I’ll pull you up. Besides that, think of the warm cabin and snack waitin’ for us up the hill.

By then the two adults and Chris had begun pulling on the rope to ease the strain on the loosening knot. I began urging him on even more

to climb the short distance to the safety of the ground.

“Hey, come on now. It’s gettin’ dark and we’ll never make it back up the hill if you hang out there any longer. Don’t forget, at night that wind picks up and blows down the wash, and it’ll get pretty chilly where you are right now.”

With the three countering Mark’s weight on the other side, my nerves were as tight as the rope was. “Come on Mark, we haven’t got all night you know. I’ll help you get up, just grab my hand.” At that I grabbed the secure knot at the tree and leaned out over the edge toward him. “Mark, let’s go, now!”

Evidently he caught the urgency and strained at the rope to get within my reach.

“Come on Mark, you can make it!” It was Jerry and Steve in unison pleading to him from behind. At the same time, Gary called, “Come on brother, it’s just a little further.”

“Pull, Mark, and push with your legs on the rope. Now Mark! Pull!” The call came from the other end of the rope. Just a voice, it was too dark by now to see dad and Dan.

Mark lay panting on the ground, free of the relaxed rope. I sat beside him as the three gathered around the reassure themselves he was safe.

“Line clear, dad, Dan. He made it.”

“No more . . . ain’t goin’ . . . never again,” was all he could say for a few relieved moments.

All is resolved between Mark and myself as we talk jokingly of that close call. Dan has resolved to use safety lines on such instances in the future and double check the knot.

Dad has apologized to Mark for his forgetfulness and cleared up his messed-up records. All is now calm, except for minor problems, and Mark and I have a better understanding of each other’s feelings.

The Beginning

*when you
look at me
and smile
it seems as if
the whole world
suddenly fills
with sunshine
and love.
when you
look at me
and laugh
it seems as if
I'm seeing a
rainbow
slowly forming
with a multitude
of colors
shining in your eyes.
when you
lie with me
in Love
it's a whole
new beginning
for me.*

Lisa Gay

