5-1-1981

Aurora, 1981

Eastern Kentucky University, English Department

AURORA

AURORA

1981

STAFF

Karla Ballard

Susan Gerald

Kathy Gambrel

PATRONS

Harold Blythe
Harry Brown
Sylvia D. Burkhart
Robert E. Burkhart
Glenn Carey
William Dohmen
Richard D. Freed
Andrew Harnack
Ordelle Hill
James Libbey
Walter Nelson
Josephine Nims
Bonnie Plummer
Peter Remaley
Norma Robinson
Jan Schmidt
Kathleen Smith
Barbara Sowders
Dorothy Sutton
Charles Sweet
Isabelle White
Robert Witt

Aurora
Box 367, Eastern Kentucky University
Richmond, Kentucky 40475

TABLE OF CONTENTS

RAINMAKER

Paul Hicks

There was water in the air that clung to my face and nostrils, but it never rained a bad rain. In summer when the dust between my toes was hot, it rained. But not a spitty asphalt, steaming rain. A long piercing rain that ran down the black tar paper and fell off into mud. It rained enough to make the yard a lake and to push old boards and tree limbs down the creek toward the end of the hollow. It rained enough to make the hay lie down in the fields for just a while and it rained enough to make puddles for the calves to drink from. It hung in the air and rolled over on the barn roof playing jungle drums on the tin. And in the dark it rained enough to make me fall off to sleep with a faint hum in my ears.

Up off the hills behind the house the thunder came down through the trees and shook the windows, and in the sky, especially at night, there were long yellow flashes that made the fourth of July look like so much puffery. In the storms that blew down from off the farthest hills, came the thunder and the bright slashes that lit the wall of my bedroom. The wall beside the mirror. And in all the storms in all those early years, the light would dance off the wall and mirror, but it never rained a bad rain. Until September. And in September, for the first time that I recall, it rained a bad rain.

On the bed. The bed in my father's room in September. How the storm was coming from somewhere way off. How I could hear it bubbling and roaring in the distance. That night when the hay was lying down in the fields. I remember how my father clutched the Bible to his chest. I saw

it rise with each cough. And how the thunder th was building up off the horizon mixed in with th sounds of the room until it became a medley of heaving thunder. Until my father was coughing thunder.

And they came from Grayson and Vanceburg, and up the river from Keaton, dripping mud on th kitchen floor. Leaving their coats, still wet and musty, hanging on the backs of the chairs when they went in. When they went into my fathe bedroom. I watched them as they trudged down th hall; an endless procession of hobnail men in rough brown boots dropping wedges of red clay and yellow mud on the light beige hallway rug. Dripping rain. In big, round wet spots. Their huge rough hands, calloused from scythes and axes and hard oak plow handles, dangled loosely at their sides, and I thought that their knuckle would drag the ground in places where the floor sagged on the firebrick pillars. Thick dark hairs sprouted from the backs of their hands and fingers. Hands that were often buried deep into the bottomless pockets of the blue bib overalls.

Torsie was in front of them and he stopped before the door. Raising his hand, he tapped at the door, then slowly pushed it open and ducked his head inside.

Chairs sat round the room in an odd fashion. My mother, sitting before the window by the bed, looking out into the drizzle that washed down the window; the rest of them scattered around the room, leaning up against the chest and walls.

I crawled in through the slightly open door and lay quietly on the old rag-woven rug beside the closet. Smells came out the open closet door into my face; moth balls and damp shoes and coats that had hung in the back for years. The

half light of the hallway pierced in through the door and arched down onto the floor. Out past my mother's head lightning cut the sky from time to time, and as they talked, on past dusk and into the late evening hours, the bright yellow flashes lit their faces and threw the patterns of their bodies all around the room.

Their voices peeled in the night. And my father's coughs rattled the wicker chairs and windows and pushed me down into the softness of the worn rags and the deep smells of the dark air.

"Well, doctors don't know everything," said a voice from one of the dripping men who leaned against the chest.

"That's true," agreed another of them swinging his arm over the back of a chair.

"Why, hell yeah," It was Torsie. He had a deep, hollow-sounding voice that mixed in with the walls and furniture and seemed to come from everywhere, "Them doctors are just like radio weather men. They come out and say there's a fifty per cent chance to rain. Now ain't that just the most foolish thing you ever heard? I mean if there's a fifty per cent chance it will rain and a fifty per cent chance it won't, then all they're really saying is that they don't know what the heck it's going to do."

"Yeah," said old Job, from Vanceburg. A quiet spooky type who would walk up black paths in the middle of the night. "And doctors are the same."

"Sure they are," Torsie went on, "They told Jenkins, down by Piney, that he wouldn't live to see another winter. And that was four years ago. And damn'd if I don't think he'll outlive us all."

They laughed. But just a little, and not enough to disturb the room. I could squint out the window up off the hills and just make out th outline of the moon dropped in on the tarred ove clouds.

"Ah, God only knows these things," said another of the pithy hobnail men, and the darkness closed quickly in around his words, choking them off into silence.

It was quiet for a long time and my eyelids tried to close, but I wouldn't let them. The rain had started falling harder and the spattery sound of the drops hitting the roof filled in the gaping spaces between the chairs and bed and the closet where I lay.

"That winter corn of yours down on the poin looks good this year," someone said from far off as I pushed my eyelids up and fought to come bac to the rag-woven rug.

My father coughed, and he tried to say something, but the words were muffled by the sudden peel of thunder that came in through the walls.

"Yeah, it's the rain this year," said Torsie "The best year I can remember for rain. Not too much or too little or anything. Just enough to feed things. The clover was good."

They drifted off into talking about the crop and my eyes pushed closed.

I woke with my face pressed into the rug and the smell of fresh coffee crawling around the roo Down the hallway there was a light on in the kitc and my mother was gone from the seat by the windo But the hobnail men still sat in their chairs scattered about the room.

"Yeah, that was a good year, but it was better for beans," one of them said, "Not near so much rain as last year and not quite as much as this year. Perfect for halfrunners."

I heard cups clang on a tray and could make out my mother moving down the hall. I edged up into the closet under the long tails of coats and the frilly lace that hung from Sunday dresses, and I curled up in the darkness to keep from being seen when my mother returned with the coffee.

Deep up in the closet I could hear the rain more easily as it sliced away at the roof. And waiting for my mother to return, I remembered a dream I had dreamed in the short sleep that I had stolen on the rug. Through the bending spirals of water, through the deep puddles that spider-webbed the road, I clutched the mane of a dark grey horse. I held on with all the strength in my short fingers and felt the rain blind me as the horse charged on through the night. Any my father's arms were around me as we dashed the puddles and smelled the rain and the mud that flew up off the horse's hooves.

"Yeah, but this one might turn out to be a real storm," a hobnail man outside the closet said.

And in the dream I tried to ask my father how much further before the big grey horse pulled up in the yard, but every time I opened my mouth, the rain seeped in and choked me. And my father's arms were wet and cold around my shoulders.

My mother came into the room and without turning on the light passed round with the tray of coffee cups.

And at last, in the dream, I could not even open my eyes for the rain. All I felt was the wet rain and the grey horse moving underneath me. But after we had galloped forever I heard my fath over my shoulder coughing and choking on the rain trying to speak.

In the darkness of the room my father coughe and the hobnail men shook with the force of it.

"Not much longer," he struggled to say in th dream, "Not much further." And the big grey hors rocked on through the rain.

I slid back out of the closet and onto the rug again, and in a few minutes my eyes were closed in sleep and the dark grey horse was movin underneath me again.

When I woke the second time there was movement in the room. And noises. The hobnail men were standing up from their seats and saying sleepy, mumbly good nights. I squeezed my eyes together to force the sleep from them and sat up tight against the wall away from the light of the door. I was quiet and listened to them sliding the chairs around and clanking the cups and saucers back onto the coffee tray. And then my mother pushed open the door and led the hobnail men back down the hall toward the kitchen.

The room was empty now and silent except for the tart hum of the rain and the occasional roll of thunder. Or perhaps it was my father coughing and not thunder at all. But we were alone in the room. And I watched him. I watched him without making a sound so that he would not know that I was watching. In the occasional flash that lit the room I could see his face, grey muscles stretched and pulled tight, his leathery skin

taunt across his cheeks and forehead. And when the room was dark again I saw his chest rise and fall, the heavy Bible lying on it. I heard him cough and heard his labored breath, raspy and thick. After some while I grew tired, or afraid, and crawling out through the open door into the hallway, made my way to the kitchen.

In the hallway by the kitchen I could go unnoticed sitting in the cupboard where my mother kept her jars and canned goods. It was dusty in the cupboard and not at all pleasant and soft as the closet in my father's room. But I crawled into it without being seen and curled up around the year-old peaches and preserves with just a crib bed view of the kitchen table where they sat.

"But he says he's feeling better than last week," my mother said.

"Yes, he does look better than last time we were here," said one of the men who leaned back in a chair beside the stove.

"Well, it's like the Good Book means," said Torsie, "In there when Jesus said 'Physician heal thyself.' He's a good man and God will take care of him, no matter what a bunch of doctors think."

"Well," she started to answer him, but my father coughed heavily and called out from the other room. She excused herself and went off down the hall toward the bedroom.

When she was gone Torsie looked across the table at Job, "He looks bad don't he?"

"Yeah, he does. I never seen a man look so tired and wore out of life."

"Me either. And I'll tell you too; enough rain for the corn is one thing to ask, but plucking a man right up off his bed of . . ." My mother started back down the hallway. "Well," he went on, "that's a whole different matter."

"Yeah," said Job, "but it's still a shame."

My mother came back into the room and sat at the table again. They talked for a few minutes longer and drank the last of the coffee.

"Well, I'd better be going, it's getting pretty late," said Torsie, rising from the table.

"Yes," the others echoed him and pulled their coats from the backs of the chairs where they had dripped dry onto the floor. My mother opened the door and said good night to each of them as they passed.

And out through the open door, out past the porchposts and the dark and dripping eaves, I saw the roadway leading down the hollow, lit up in the lightning. All down along the fenceposts that went over into the bottoms, and then on up off the farthest hills, the hay was bent over and driven down into the mud. And the thunderous whine of the rain came in through the open door and filled up the kitchen. I could see it out beyond the door, curling down through the night and falling over into the ditches on the road. And I could smell the bad rain in my nose, and I could feel it burning away at the inside of my eyes. And in the room, my father coughed, and out the door the thunder rolled, and it is all that I remember. Seeing the hobnail men walk out the kitchen door into the rain.

ACE LIGHT

Upon the palm of her hand
I staged my world;
As it revolved, I stand
Intrigued at what ensued.
Its vastness and mystery
Me totally imbued.
Furtively, I stepped inside
Its enigma to resolve.
The scenes of action in stride
Every emotion exemplified;
Thrilled by every sensation
I glanced at love and groaned,
For such stunted elation,
Shrouded by gloom
Obscured the pageantry view.
Into the dimness I stumbled.
A prop to kindle Venus,
And pre-emptorily none to soon;
The tapor as a genius.
The metamorphosis of the candle flame
Whetted my curiosity nearly insane.
The gloom that once prevailed
Preserving concealed light
For this great plight,
Tormented not the latter
But escaped as in a shatter.
The piquant ace glow,
That etheral show,
Today at twenty eight
An energy does animate;
Disturbs the external sphere, too
The mysteries to construe.

Joe Miller

PERFECT WOMAN

Perfect woman
Devours her young boy lovers
After copulation
Perfect woman
Swallows her own off-spring
After birth
Perfect woman
Victim of insomnia
After sleep
Notice the resemblance
The American Indian
Some survivals
From a savage state
Cannibalism
Food for thought
Perfect woman
Eats her sons alive
After which
She kills her husband
Divine King
And is buried alive with him

Matthew Alan Painter


15

PARADISE FOUND

James L. Clem

The sun is warm upon my back. This is going to be another beautiful day. Awakening from a restful sleep, I stretch my arms and look around. In the distance, I can see the mountains. There are mountains on each side of us. I say 'us' because my wife, Eve, is still asleep at my side.

She is so beautiful. I do not know how she came to be any more than I understand my own creation, but I expect my Lord could explain it. I remember His saying that I seemed lonely. I do not understand how that could be either, for I know that He created each of the animals for me, even bringing them one at a time, and asking me to name them, for they were to be my companions. They were each, also, gifted with beauty beyond my humble expressions for they were created without any type of blemish and would be the ancestors of more of their kind than the stars which shine each night without exception.

In and beneath the trees whose leaves are strangely beginning to change color, there are birds and other animals also noticing that a new day has begun. Squirrels and rabbits are coming out of their homes to gather an early breakfast. The birds awake with a song on their lips producing a melody more pleasurable than even the roar of the great waterfall which I can discern in the distance. The wind is picking up a little, rustling the leaves of each tree in this vast forest, endeavoring to harmonize with the other voices of nature. It is to this type of symphony that Eve awakes.

* * * * *

"Well, Dr. Pope, we've made it."

"Indeed we have, Mr. Damien," replied the older man. "This is where it all began and by the end of the day, we'll have uncovered the evidence to prove it."

* * * * *

Awakening to the majesty around her, she turns to me and smiles. Admiring her radiance, I return her good morning gesture. As our eyes lock, we gaze at each other for what seems a long time. As my eyes search hers, my heart is as her eyes admit that she feels towards me as I feel towards her. Together we rise and head in the direction of the river. No words are spoken; none are needed. We understand each other; we are of one mind. We were created to be the perfect mates of each other.

* * * * *

"OK, Damien, let's get going. We'll start digging right about here."

The two men begin with enthusiasm, but after a short while it becomes evident that they're only getting in each other's way. So to ensure any real progress, Dr. Pope offers a suggestion.

"Damien, we're not getting anywhere like this. Why don't I set up camp and let you continue without my inhibitions?"

"All right, Professor, you're the boss."

* * * * *

We walk slowly, hand in hand, enjoying the warmth of the sun and at peace just being in the presence of the other. The roar of the falls is growing louder as we become ever nearer to our destination. The Euphrates is now in sight and another thing I notice is the smell of fish frying over an open fire. As usual, our Lord has preceded us and left breakfast preparing itself. Where He has gone now, I do not know. Perhaps He has gone for a walk along the bank or into the nearby woods or perhaps there are others, like Eve and myself, whom we have not met and He has now gone to prepare breakfast for them. All I know is He will be back in the evening just to talk with us. He comes and watches with us, as the sun goes down beyond the mountains. I notice, too, that the animals come and that they seem to love Him even more than they love us; but most important of all, I notice that He watches Eve and me and that He is concerned about us. Time and again, He has asked me: "Are you happy?" and yet He seems not to listen to my words as much as He seems to reach into my heart and divine the answer. Maybe that is why He said I was lonely when I didn't even realize it myself.

An idea comes to mind and I say to Eve, "Our Lord will return when the day grows cooler. After we have eaten, let us pick fruit so that He may be refreshed."

Dozens of types of fruit-bearing trees grow in this garden our Lord calls Eden, so Eve and I went in different directions. We would pick apples, bananas, cherries, grapes, plums, pineapples, apricots and many more. Our Lord said we could eat the fruit of any tree in the garden except the one in the center for He said we would die if we ate from it. So we took care to avoid it.

* * * * *

"Professor, I think you better come and take a look at this." Damien said with a voice that couldn't hide his exhaustion.

"Really, Damien what is it?" asked Dr. Pope as he quitted his effort at lighting a fire and started toward the pit where his younger colleague had been toiling ceaselessly beneath the midday sun.

"Well, I'm not sure, sir. It's just that the color of this dirt has become a much lighter shade of brown."

"Are you sure? About how deep are you?"

"I guess I'm almost seven feet and as for the dirt, I wouldn't even have mentioned it if it hadn't been such an abrupt change."

"Seven feet, you say? Yes, that would be about right. Seven is God's number of completion. Dig down another foot or so and see what you find.

Damien did as he was told, returning to his job with renewed vigor and within just a few minutes, he let out an astonished exclamation.

"Professor! I. . . I've. . . I've hit sunlight."

* * * * *

Later that day, when I met Eve again, she seemed somehow different, changed. Then I recognized the fruit in her hand and exclaimed, "What have you done?!"

"I have eaten of the forbidden fruit," she said. "And I know that it will not make us die. Instead, it has opened my eyes and I see clearly for the first time. If anything, it has made me even more like our Lord."

My mind is in confusion. It doesn't know what to believe. My Lord said the fruit would make us die, yet Eve has partaken and she still lives and says that she is now even more like our Lord.

With confusion still reigning in my mind, I take the fruit and eat of it, hoping that it will answer the questions I don't dare put into words.

Instantly, my eyes are opened and I know that I have also changed and I see many more things in a different light. Then, suddenly, I hear a voice which I immediately recognize, a voice saying:

"Adam, Eve, where are you?"

* * * * *

The tiny opening located seven feet beneath the surface of the ground which failed to prevent the escape of a shaft of bright light had been enlarged enough to enable the two men to jump through landing about ten feet below. As they rose slowly to their feet, they found themselves inside the mouth of a cave, an opening in the face of a great cliff with the next plateau of solid ground being a drop of several hundred feet below.

The two men stood transfixed, inches away from a plunge of certain death, their eyes wide with wonder, their minds searching their now seemingly limited vocabularies for words with

which to describe this breathtaking view of a forgotten paradise. This is a sight which they will always remember, until the day they die, and also into the life beyond.

Slowly, as if groping for words of a foreign language, Damien attempts to speak.

"Professor, is this. . .?"

"Yes, Damien," the older man replied still savoring this masterwork of creation. "This is the 'mythical' Garden of Eden."

The two men turn slowly and head deeper into the cave for in all reality, there was no other way to go. Deeper into the mountain they go, following the well-constructed, natural path which is strangely illuminated by gems embedded into the hard rock of the walls. The gems were of unique, geometrical design acting as mirrors reflecting the sunlight outside the cave from gem to gem even down into the very heart of the mountain. After continuing cautiously for some time, they found themselves in the mouth of anoth cave, this one located on the ground-floor level of the Garden of Eden.

They continue on into this forest of beauty, this Xanadu of creation, their minds not capable of accepting this dreamland of a place. All around them, there is a symphony of voices. Then they begin to identify the individual sounds. They recognize the roar of a great waterfall, although still quite distant, they hear the wind rustling the leaves of many trees in a vast circumference, and even attempt to isolate the songs of birds, although confusing many with the songs of various insect choirs. They notice, too a euphoric peace, a feeling of . . . coming home.

As they walk on with no particular destination in mind, the unmistakable smell of fried fish comes and lingers around them. They decide to head in that direction. After a short while, they not only find the source of the odor, but find another man there preparing it. He motions for them to be seated and then serves them the fish. He watches as they eat and when they have finished, He begins to speak.

"John Paul Pope, your home is ready. You will return with Me, but you, Adam Damien, you have been chosen from among all others for one last task. While the world above you enters into its final war, the Battle of Armageddon, which will be fought in the valley of Jezreel, you will remain here. This war will have no winner. It will destroy all of My creation except this garden and all that exists therein."

"John Pope, you will come with Me. Adam Damien, you must lie down and when you rise again, your life will begin anew."

The sun is warm upon my back. This is going to be another beautiful day. Awakening from a restful sleep, I stretch my arms and look around. In the distance, I can see the mountains. There are mountains on each side of us. I say 'us' because my wife, Eve, is still asleep at my side.

THE VINTAGE

A taste, just one taste,
   for your vessel is full,
   too long rested, untouched.
You've tapped the lesser vintages;
   the bottles lay sour and dry.
But this one,
   this greatest and richest of all,
   this one you hoard,
   locked and guarded in your deepest keep,
   deep in the bowels of your fortress.

Pale, fresh, golden light
   that rests in your cellar,
   star breath and earth soul.
You hide the perfect vintage,
   dreading its loss,
   yet enjoying it not.
Looking for it, longing for it,
   yet fearing to break the seal.

What is it you fear from me?
That I would drain the jar,
   leaving it barren and dry,
   or leave but the dregs,
   bitter to the taste?

I can only promise
   that I'll drink no more
   than you would give,
   nor spoil that which I leave.

Come let us climb to the high tower
   and there share a drink.
One sip frees the spirit
   and a jar can last two lifetimes.
There is enough, and more.
Too much to drink alone,
   too valuable to waste.
Pour it out and let us drink
   a toast to the Universe.

C. B. Saylor

THE PATIENT KITTEN

I am a scraggly kitten
searching for scraps
of the conversation.
People push me away as they walk by.
My honest curiosity annoys them,
entangles them.
Yet even a kitten bites when stepped on.
So I flare,
with the ferocity of an
awakened lion,
when faced with injustice.

Teresa A. Hagan

THE BREAKDOWN

a snapping line
white sheets
silent screams
blank walls
clenched fists
quiet halls
staring eyes
alcohol smell
invisible tears
nylon straps
tearing nails
a cracking egg shell

Teresa A. Hagan

MELTING MEMORIES

Yesterday,
I opened a bag of M&Ms.
The orange ones
Reminded me of you.
The way you're always
So bright and cheerful,
So warm and sunny.
And I wanted to save them
For myself,
To remind me of you
Whenever I saw them.
I put them on my dresser
As a memoir of you.
The day was warm
And they melted.
Not in my hands or mouth,
But on my dresser.
And now the chocolate puddle
Still reminds me of you,
And how I let you
Slip away from you.

Mary Ann Blandford

BROKEN STRINGS AND UNRHYMING MELODIES

A strain of discord
and unpleasing sharps
a symphony of broken strings;
an orchestra of morose
bleating and empty sighs;
comparable to the
symphony of broken hearts
or lost souls or
the opera of
lost anticipation.
Guileless fools play here
in a pit of salted tears.
And bitterness conducts
in stiffened gestures of death.
Anguish is his baton
and the music is by
the MASTER--
Unrequitted love.

Cindy M. Brown

ONE ROOM SCHOOL

Artice Middleton Thacker

On my way to visit an old classmate, in the Kentucky mountains, I passed the one room school that I attended from first through fifth grade. As I eased my automobile onto the rickety bridge, the old, gray sagging school seemed to stare at me, its gaping windows looking like vacant eyes. An intangible sadness crept over me, and I reminded myself, "Those days are gone forever and best forgotten."

Many people recall the "old days" with pleasure and speak nostalgically of the country charm of the one room school, and how they long to return to those teaching methods. I wonder if their school experiences were like mine.

We had to walk miles to school. Some children lived nearby, while others weren't as fortunate. In winter I arrived with fingers and toes aching painfully from the cold. Being young in age, my legs were often very tired from the walk.

The school was a spacious room with large windows on each side, allowing light to filter in. The school did not have electricity, and on overcast days, we strained our eyes to see the pages of our textbooks. At the far end of the room, the chalkboard was mounted to the wall, with the ABC's taped above it, yellow and curling at the edges with age. The teacher's desk stood in front of the chalkboard, with long benches arranged around it. Each class took their turn on the benches, while the teacher taught the basic subjects. Meanwhile the other pupils remained seated at their desks, engaged in studying. The desks were arranged in rows along each

side of the room. Many generations of initials had been carved onto their surface, and the ink wells were filled with wads of gum or chewed tobacco. The pot bellied stove graced the center of the room, with ashes spilling out the bottom onto the mud encrusted, wood floor. Chunks of coal, covered with dried, brown tobacco spit, lay beside it.

Double doors led outside to a barren playground. In winter it was clay mud, and in warm weather it became very hard and dry with cracks running through it. Tree stumps and roots projected out of the ground throughout the clearing. Two outhouses stood along the creek that ran in front of the school, the waste seeping into the gurgling mountain stream. They had a foul odor, and during warm weather, housed scorpions, spiders, and occasionally snakes. They were very drafty in cold weather.

I recall a classmate falling partially through the diamond shaped hole, inside the outhouse. The teacher sent her to the creek, in the bitter cold weather, to cleanse her shoe. The children burst into gales of laughter, while the small girl sobbed loudly from the terrifying experience, her bony, little shoulders trembling, as her cold fingers tugged at the hair clinging to her tear streaked face.

The boys had hewn a hole in the door of their outhouse, allowing them to observe outside activities while attending to other business.

If a pupil needed to visit the outhouse during class, he did so without disturbing the teacher. Our system was to leave a book by the schoolhouse door, to inform others that the little house was occupied. With approximately

sixty pupils, and only two privies, it was sometimes difficult to have your turn. It was a matter of getting your textbook to the door first without striking the pupil re-entering. I have seen a textbook sail clear across the room, and slide to the door only a fraction of a second ahead of another book. Besides developing quick reflexes, it greatly improved one's pitching ability.

We carried our lunches to school in brown bags, or used lard buckets. Some of the most common foods brought were: baked sweet potatoes, cornbread and onions, jelly in a bisquit, small jars containing milk, or a piece of pork. There were children who didn't have anything, and were sometimes accused of stealing another child's lunch. Chet was most often accused. Sweeping his straw colored hair away from his crossed eyes he smiled into the eyes of the teacher, revealing a missing front tooth, and emphatically denied it. His quivering smile was a facade to hide the hurt and humiliation of the accusation. He bore the brunt of many accusations, the same as his mother. Rumors circulated throughout the hills that she was a witch. I believed my mother when she assured me there were no witches, and thought it was silly when folks dropped a dime in their churns of buttermilk to drive away evil spirits. Nevertheless, when I encountered her, I began to breathe rapidly, and my heart pounded, as her china blue eyes transfixed me.

At times the children relayed their superstitious beliefs to the teacher, which often left him chuckling. I recall Clarence, a self-centered, obnoxious boy, becoming enraged at the teacher's taunting laughter. He retorted, "This night I hope you are witched into a hoss, and rode to death fore morn!" The teacher laughed

hysterically, as the boy sat there writhing in anger, his black eyes bright with fury.

There were huge rocks and cliffs near the playground. Some children played on them, looking like mountain goats, the way they perched on the ledges.

Lofty pines, giant oaks, beeches and birches surrounded the clearing, yielding their fruits to the small animals and us. We chewed the waxy, pine flavored rosin that oozed through the bark of the pine trees. We peeled the tender bark from the young birch trees, and chewed the minty sap from it. I recall lying on soft beds of moss, breaking open hazelnuts, hickory nuts, walnuts, and beechnuts, to pry out the tasty nuggets inside. We enjoyed the mountain tea berries and sour clover that grew in the underbrush. Laurel, Ivy, and berry laden Holly bushes lined the ridges of the creek, with clumps of willows growing near the water's edge. We use to wade through the icy cold stream, carefully sidestepping the slippery moss covered stones, and crawfish. The "minnows" and "sungrannies" nibbling at our ankles soon sent us scurrying for the banks. Farther down the creek, in a well secluded spot, was a place called the "Green Orton hole." On hot September days, the boys spent their entire lunch hour at the water hole, smoking rabbit tobacco weed, "mooning" each other, skinny dipping, and comparing the size of their genitals to determine who God had most generously endowed.

We enjoyed most of our playtime by using a lot of imagination. We didn't have any play equipment, therefore we played many group and singing games. We used grapevines to swing on. Occasionally a child was injured when a vine broke from a tree.

I will never forget the day of John's accident. He firmly grasped the vine, gave a spine tingling yell, and swung far out over the edge of the cliff. The vine swayed with his weight, and falteringly, ripped from the tree, showering small branches and golden leaves aroun us. His gleeful cry was still echoing through the crisp autumn air when our classmate struck the soft, pungent earth below. Someone began scrambling down the rocks to summon the teacher. The frail body lay very still. The forest became deathly quiet, even the birds seemed to hold their breath apprehensively, along with us, as we watched the color slowly ebb from the lad' face. Suddenly, a soft groan escaped through the clenched teeth, as he gritted them against the wad of Red Ox tobacco he always had tucked inside his cheek. His eyes rolled, and his thick lashes fluttered, as he spoke in a barely audible voice, "Damn!?* I swallowed my tobacco juice!" He suffered a few cuts and broken bones and was taken to the nearest hospital, many mile across the mountain.

We also used cut lengths of vine for jumping rope. This was such fun until you missed a skip, and felt the sting of the vine against your legs. The impact could knock a small child off her feet.

Another favorite game among older pupils was called "springboard." A plank was laid across a log with a pupil stationed on each end of the plank. By jumping alternately, each pupil was propelled into the air. This game frequently resulted in ankle sprains.

The older boys enjoyed building tall stilts and walking around the clearing, dodging roots and rocks, whooping and yelling as they went.

The teacher called us back to class by yelling "Books!", the children joining in the chorus as they raced for the building. The bell in the steeple had been broken for many years.

On cold days, the pupils played inside. Their favorite indoor game was "Funeral." They improvised a casket by pushing two benches together. Someone was chosen to portray the corpse, while the other children went into outrageous demonstrations of grief, falling on the corpse, wetting his face with their tears and kisses. This was customary at a real mountain funeral. Cliff was always chosen to deliver the eulogy. With peculiar gesticulations, and panting breath, he sashayed back and forth behind the casket, wiping perspiration from his brow with his ragged flannel shirtsleeve. Pausing now and then to squirt a stream of tobacco juice toward the coal bucket, in a gasping voice he castigated and admonished his congregation about their tainted and wicked ways. Shouts of hallelujahs and amens echoed acquiescence.

However, when he began to speak of the deceased, his voice softened in solemnity, and the eulogy was so heartrending, even the delicate lips of the corpse turned down in the corners and quivered. One had to admit the little fire and brimstone preacher had a certain elan, even though our parents called this sham blasphemy.

Not only was Cliff admired for his ministerial qualities, but for the courage he displayed in accompanying his father on his dangerous expeditions through the forest, laden with sugar and corn for running off a new batch of moonshine.

Frequently the weather was so cold, all of us huddled around the stove, the smaller and less aggressive children shivering on the outside of the huddle.

Along with homework, chores were assigned such as sweeping the floor, which was a stifling chore after our supply of oily sawdust had diminished; fetching coal; dusting erasures, which often ensued into playful erasure fights, the pupils returning to class with dark eyes peering out of white faces and chalk dusty hair. The water was carried from nearby homes. The water pail set on a table in a corner, with a dipper hanging over the side. The water usually wasn't fit for consumption. It often had saliva floating on the surface, a way some pupils had of harrassing the teacher.

The teacher was a heavy set man with a big, bellowing voice. One leg was shorter than the other, causing him to walk with a slight limp. He wore spectacles, framed by bushy eyebrows. He had a habit of chewing his tongue constantly, or ingesting Tums, with a grimace, letting the white saliva drain from the corners of his mouth. When I stood beside his knee to read, he became angry, because of my inability to concentrate. I was fascinated with the mass of hair growing in his ear canal, wondering why there was so much of it. I stood at eye level with it, and it was difficult to divert my gaze from it.

I was terrified of him, and with good reason. He always carried a hickory stick, which measured approximately four feet in length. It was used, not only for pointing to the chalkboard, but for rapping pupils on the head when they misbehaved. The lick usually left a bruised knot on the victim's head. He also had a willow switch that lay on the chalk tray. He seemed to derive pleasure in standing a pupil in front of the class and striking him across the back with the switch, leaving ugly whelts and bruises. Another favorite method of punishment was to stand pupils in the

corner until their feet tingled from numbness. If you didn't understand your lesson you were struck with the switch or sentenced to sit on the dunce stool, and not allowed to step down until you had admitted your stupidity to the class, and heard their response of laughter. The most humiliating method, of course, was forcing a pupil's nose into a drawn circle on the chalkboard, symbolizing an animal's rectum. When this punishment was administered to me, I kept telling myself it was only a chalk circle. If I had allowed my mind to stray from this thought, I think I would have wilted into the cracks of the floor. The older boys were brazen enough to erase it with their nose, which only resulted in more punishment. They retaliated by setting nails underneath the tires of his jeep, or deflating them. There seemed to be an endless vicious circle of punishment and retaliation. I can't recall any good results stemming from these cruel and unseemly methods of punishment, only bitterness, psychological scars, and learning phobias.

I will never be able to look at the one room school without it having a profound emotional effect on me. I will always be reminded of the hardships we endured, and I shall never cease to be thankful that my children have schools with modern facilities, nourishing food, and teachers who discipline with love and understanding, who make learning enjoyable and eagerly anticipated.

PICASSO FLAT

Tinsel and tinder, and a light for the fire
a song for the back woods,
a screen for the lair.

I've seen them and sung them
and I've put them to bed
while gold dust and cold rust
died away in their heads

Cancer and candor, all are the same
and a friend is a person
who remembers your name.

I've seen them and sung them
to the big streets and back,
now it's here in the woods
with a one-room flat.

Paul Hicks

THE WEDDING MARCH

Top hats and silk cravats
and blue-stained glasses that
filter the smile from my eyes

and dawn comes to Boston
dull smudges in the sky.

The music box tinkles some delicate waltz
waiting for the coming hour;
on the gatepost there's a wreath
of tiny scarlet flowers,

the marionette twitches at the end of his stri
and the ballerina on the music box
twirls while she sings.

Mozart plays a nocturne on the dressor
from an open jewelry case,
and there's a note upon the mirror
beside a cold, unfeeling face.

And dawn comes to Boston
dull smudges in the sky,
and there's a high tide down at Gettysburg
with twelve miles on the road
to reach the oceanside.

Paul Hicks

SENESCENCE

The world smells of stale cigars
in damp rooms

of days wasted drinking wine
to wet the dust of June;

the sunlight notches days upon the post
while I sit in a worn room
going old and stiff.

Watching out the window
at the traffic light,
changing red to green without a car in sight.

Paint curdles thick
upon the musty basement walls

and I twitch with the turning of the fan
and the sprinkling of sunlight
in the hall.

Paul Hicks

WAXING PHILOSOPHICALLY

David Jarvis

I shouldn't have to do this, Jack told himself.

He was sitting in a room that was too small and too hot, on the visitor's side of a desk covered with papers and books. The desk seemed to say, See? The Doctor's busy. He doesn't have time for you.

I mean, I'm a good enough writer, thought Jack. And everybody on the staff knows it, too. The editor liked my piece on street violence.

So why, he demanded himself, am I still doing two-bit "human interest" interviews like this?

"I opened my first wax exhibit in New York in the forties," Dr. Alderson was saying. His tone was slow and fond, like a grandfather repeating an old, old story that's been heard again and again. "Now those were the days for good horror movies! They had monsters then, good monsters. Now, all the time, all you see is sickos, sex crazies, and all that. They don't know how to make a good horror movie anymore."

While he rambled, Jack pretended to be writing furiously. Actually, he'd started out with full intentions of doing just that. But as the questioning had progressed, he'd ambled from word-for-word reporting to brief notes and then given in finally to bizarre doodling. He was presently completing a hilarious caricature of Dr. Alderson.

"So what made you decide to come out here t our little town to build your biggest wax museum" Listen to me, Jack thought, feeling a little queasy. "Our little town," indeed! As if eithe the town or his crummy exhibit really were worth anything in this finite plane of existence. And beside that, it's getting awfully hot in here.

"Well, you know, the city gets a little too big sometimes. . . I'm not as young as I used to be, I guess. . . " Dr. Alderson smiled, but his smile, thought Jack, was like the ones on those wax people out there in the museum. Something didn't ring true in what he was saying.

"And, of course, we have a quite profitable tourist trade in this area, also," suggested Jac Now both of the men wore mannequin grins.

He thinks we have something in common, reflected Jack. My newspaper and his wax exhibi they're the two major institutions in this town. And he thinks that means something.

Both of us are in the business of freezing people. We freeze them on paper, he puts them on wax, and people look and say, See what techno logy can do!

Dr. Alderson began to expound upon the difficulties of maintaining wax statues in a climate like theirs and Jack completed his hidden portrait of the good doctor with a remark able pair of elephant ears.

The buzzer interrupted them. "It's a new shipment of supplies," explained the Doctor, a little nerously. "Wait here, I'll take care of it."

He disappeared through the back door into darkness and Jack was left in the stuffy office with his thoughts.

He thinks it means something but it doesn't, Jack thought, continuing his internal discussion of the Doctor's probably opinions. The town, the paper, the museum--do they mean anything to this world? No way--just paper people and wax monsters.

My God, why doesn't he put an air conditioner in here?

Right then, Jack decided he wasn't going to hang around any longer. Just a quick word of explanation to the Doctor, he thought, and I'll be on my way. . .

But when he peered through the back room door his whole being was filled with horror at what he saw.

Dr. Alderson and two men in uniforms were unloading large bundles, from five to six feet long and wrapped in some sort of dark material, from a parked truck onto a large table in the back room. A few had already been uncovered, no doubt to inspect their condition.

They were dead human bodies.

Jack realized, a trifle cynically, that his analogy of putting people on wax had been a little too close. Almost simultaneously he realized that, in the interest of furthering his own existence, he should leave. Fast.

He changed his mind about giving an explanation (believing the Doctor would understand) and, spinning around, he fled back through the office and out into the hall which led to the museum.

The exhibit was closed that day because of the heat. But Jack had been allowed, by Dr. Alderson, to come through the main front entrance earlier. And now he fully intended to make it back out the same way.

The first room he came to was the American History Room, just as it had been the last one that Dr. Alderson had shown him before their interview. They were called rooms, but that really wasn't quite correct; the various sections were separated by partitions, the overall effect being that of a large maze one could easily wander in for days unless he knew the sequence. In this particular room, Jack passed a large number of wax gentlemen in colonial clothing who appeared to be signing some sort of document. None of them looked up to observe the would-be reporter who was dashing through their midst.

Jack knew that Dr. Alderson had to be close behind. In his haste he knocked somebody, maybe Hamilton, possibly Jefferson, onto the floor. He didn't pause to look back, but instead plunged on into the Music Room.

After looking around for just a second, Jack tore a cello from somebody's hands (it looked like Bach, but Jack didn't think Bach played the cello) and threw it at Alderson, who was just rounding the corner. Kicking Liszt out of the way, Jack whelled a grand piano at the Doctor.

"Jack, don't!" yelled Alderson. "I'll pay you, just don't tell. . ."

But Jack was gone, on into the Room of Philosophers, and after that, into the Room of Scientific Achievement. In his fear and excitement he continued to make a mess of just about everything. Not only did he cause Edison to

drop the light bulb he was holding so proudly, but he knocked Einstein into the mushroom cloud of his own atomic bomb. Only moments before he had accidentally run into Rousseau, causing him to fall onto Voltaire and remain in a rather unnatural position.

Somehow, all of the statues seemed to look different than they had the first time Jack had seen them. He had the bizarre idea that they were watching him, and slowly, an unsettling question was coming to prominence in his mind: how many of them were wax, and how many were part wax and part something else?

But, oh God, what a story this was going to make!

The next room was Religion.

Jack took a flying leap over the Baby Jesus and narrowly avoided the Three Wise Men. Struggling for balance, he pushed Moses into the Red Sea. Twelve men were having dinner, forming a scene Jack had seen pictures of before. He didn't stop to say Grace but vaulted briskly onto the table and over, knocking aside the Holy Grail as he went. As he left the room a waxen figure suspended high on a cross stared sadly after him.

That's when he reached the Monsters.

He knew this was his last stop. This was the first room. It was Alderson's favorite, and therefore the biggest. Darkness obscured everything, as a result of the heavy curtains that Jack knew covered the thick glass doors. At the moment, he couldn't remember exactly where the doors were. But he could still dimly make out the grotesque creatures, some cinematic and some the product of Alderson's own imagination, that lined each wall.

If this were a movie, Jack thought, Alderso would come rushing in here and I'd be standing perfectly still and silent and dressed in one of these creatures' clothes and Alderson would pass me, mistaking me for an exhibit. Unfortunately, this isn't a movie and I don't think that would work.

"All right, hold it!" shouted Dr. Alderson. He was somewhere in the darkness behind Jack, but Jack couldn't find him. Looking ahead he could see Dracula, the Frankenstein Monster, a the Wolfman. They didn't seem to offer any cons- lation, but then again Jack doubted that they would interfere much. He stepped lightly betwee them, keeping his eye open for anything he could use as a weapon.

"I knew you'd come here," came a shout. It seemed a little farther away this time.

"Makes sense, doesn't it?" panted Jack. "This is the way out!" Jack knew then he'd made a grave mistake: he'd revealed his positio. Glancing about wildly, he suddenly noticed some- thing strange. All of the figures stood upon pedestals, but directly ahead of Jack there was one pedestal that remained unoccupied. Now, why should that be? he wondered. He didn't remember noticing it before. There was an identification plate at the base, but the darkness made it impossible to read.

Maybe it's the Invisible Man, thought Jack, suppressing a giggle.

A glint of steel flashed and Jack realized the pedestal wasn't completely empty. Just as he was scooping up the knife and turning to make a stand, the Doctor turned on his flame thrower.

"What do you think you're doing?" cried Jack. He twisted desperately to avoid the blaze and, turning, saw the monsters of his childhood outlined in great leaping shadows all around him.

Falling upon the empty pedestal, he could now read the nameplate at the base, and as he did so, realized that he could not go on, that there had never been any point in trying in the first place.

"Get back, get back," shrieked Dr. Alderson, but he had pushed the flames too close. Jack was melting now, slowly at first, then rapidly into a great bubbling mass of liquid wax that coalesced into a bright puddle near the plate that could be seen clearly to read: JACK THE RIPPER.

"What a waste," sighed the good Doctor. "I really must learn not to make them so independent."

And with that, he began to clean up the mess.

CHILD OF GOD

Eyes put in by a sooty hand
Glow warmly in a pale face,
Topped by a mass of golden locks
Cut short for convenience's sake.

Inquisitive eyes seek all about,
And probing fingers follow.
She gazes out of yesterday
But never sees tomorrow.

A child forever lost in youth,
Her prison is secure.
No one can pick its timeless lock;
No one has found a cure.

Her mother's eyes are dark and sad,
Her father's unbelieving.
Hers alone are bright and gay,
And yet so all unseeing.

Never will she read or write.
Never will she speak.
She has no purpose in this life--
But love, to give and keep.

Angela M. Whitenack

THE PATH OF LIGHT

Did you ever see the path of light?
It's very much like a scribble.
Sideways it looks like a mountain range,
Or like a ball in a dribble.

Ilona Wix

ESCAPE

Night breaks into day,
And in the bed I lay
Alone
No one's at home in my head.

Morning stretches to noon;
The blankets, they entomb
My soul.
Seems I've lost control altogether.

Reluctantly I wake,
For in the light I ache.
Sleeping
Prevents the weeping of my heart.

Susan W. Willis

YOU

You are the sunshine, bright flowing
The soft shadow, cooling.
Once gushing like a river in dark pines
Now silent as a swan.
In a crystal pond among the eel grass
You change in a season or a moment.
Coming always to be different
Than you had been before.
Laughing, dancing, mourning, crawling
Changes rack your countenance
You are sunshine, bright flowing all in splen
gra

P. G. Hobbs

TOYS

The crayons lay broken in an old cigar box.
The pages of the coloring books are yellow with a
Scattered on the floor are the wooden building bl
Idly, the rocking horse stands in the corner.
Wrapped in a gown of webs,
the doll stares sadly from her place upon the tru
Jack sleeps cramped within his faded box.
Silently, the music box lays upon the window sill
Greyed by dust, the little toy bear gazes forlorn
at his reflection in the empty goldfish bowl.
The rusted tin soldier stands posted near the doo
guarding these forgotten treasures.

Regina Reynolds