

5-1-1986

Aurora, 1986

Eastern Kentucky University, English Department

Follow this and additional works at: http://encompass.eku.edu/upubs_aurora

Recommended Citation

Eastern Kentucky University, English Department, "Aurora, 1986" (1986). *Aurora*. Paper 19.
http://encompass.eku.edu/upubs_aurora/19

This Newsletter is brought to you for free and open access by the Literary Magazines at Encompass. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Aurora* by an authorized administrator of Encompass. For more information, please contact Linda.Sizemore@eku.edu.



AURORA



AURORA

1986

Staff

Eric Cash
Cecilia Crosby

James Warren
Lauren Willoughby

Patrons

Harry Brown
Robert Burkhart
Sylvia Burkhart
Martha Grise
Ordelle Hill
Nancy Lee-Riffe
James Libbey
John Long

Donald Mortland
Walter Nelson
Peter Remaley
Kathleen Smith
Barbara Sowders
Dorothy Sutton
Charles Sweet
Shelby White
Robert Witt

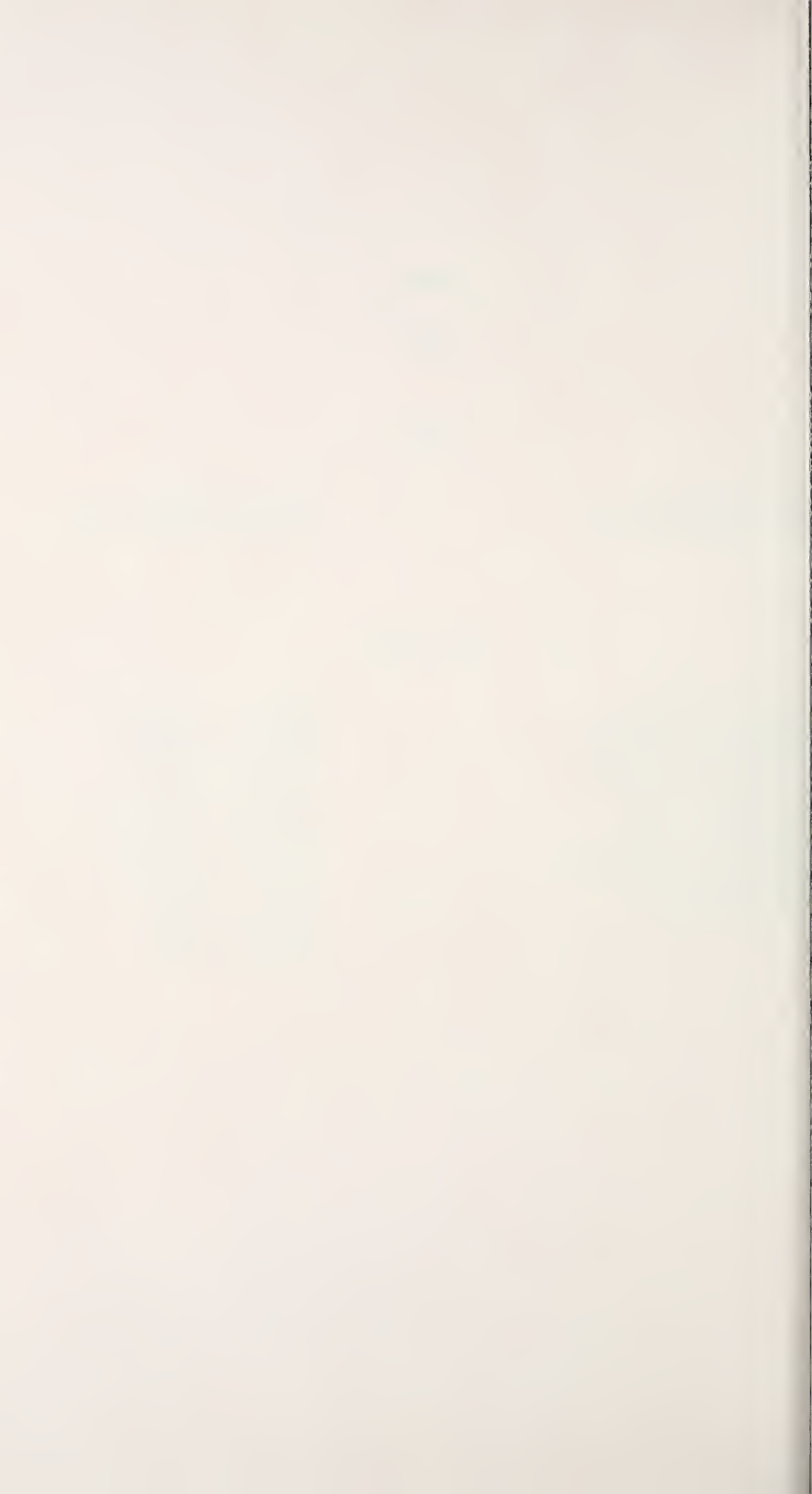


TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Amy Farley.	cover
Lauren Willoughby, story.	1
Sharon Proffitt, poetry	12
Carolyn Jacobs, art	13
Dee Dee Day, art.	14
Eric Cash, story.	15
Randy Plowman, art.	23
Laurie Turner, art.	24
Eric Cash, poetry	25
Thomas Haerberlin, poetry.	33
William Dozier, story	35
Randy Bucknam, art.	45
Ty Noe, art	46
James Warren, poetry.	47
Mark Kidwell, art	53
Randy Bucknam, art.	54
Michele Remaley, story.	55
Bruce Buchanan, poetry.	63
Phil Mason, poetry.	66



Jerry B. & the Angel

Lauren Willoughby

My foot had gone numb again. I stomped it with the other one. My mother shot me a stern look and returned her attention to the evangelist. My legs swung idly against the pew, trying unconsciously to dissipate the restlessness detonating through my body. From my eagle's perch in the balcony I could inspect most of the people in the barn-like church. It could hold thousands and probably did that night. The pews of the main floor had every square inch peopled. The side balconies were full. Only the back balcony had not filled to capacity. Where I sat there I was nearly the furthest from the evangelist to still be in the church, which was exactly where I wanted to be.

It seemed mine were the only unenraptured pair of eyes following the strutting and preening evangelist back and forth across the stage. He was short and burly and spoke with a Texas-British accent that lessened as he voice grew in excitement, which it did frequently. His words started in an accented, staccato monotone that built in pitch and speech until he ran out of breath. His point made, he would lean back, hands on hips, head cocked, as if observing his effect on the audience, and then spout into another tirade. And so it was that the Reverend Jerry B. Falkner, superstar of the revivalist circuit (affectionately know as Jerry B.), preached the gospel to us all. I wished I were home with Dad.

"Quit looking around!" my mother hissed.

I could not help it. After an hour of Jerry B. I could follow his words only for a minute or two at a time. The church was hide-'n'-seek heaven. Thousands of nooks captivated my imagination. I took up once again my favorite church game, spy.

She winked at me as she silently crawled along the uncovered heating shafts suspended from the ceiling beams. She slipped like a cat onto the left balcony. Immediately laser fire burnt a hole in the wall two inches from her ear. Crouching for cover behind the pews, she ducked around to the center of the back balcony, fired a grappler rocket at the apex of the beams and arced down the long center aisle to drop off at Jerry B.'s feet.

The counter spy hopped the railing from the right balcony and stumbled onto the stage. They chased each other round and round the pulpit, over the organ, through the staid-looking contemporary Christian rock band, and into the forest of gaudy flowers which would have been more appropriate at a funeral. Jerry B. took no notice, not even when my spy stopped running long enough to pinch his cheek. He whirled then as if confronting her but was only making another Point, shouting at the audience. The spy and the counter-spy faded away like mist in the sun, not from Jerry B.'s efforts but from own boredom.

"Stop fidgeting!" Mom fussed.

Four hours is an eternity to sit through a sermon, especially at the age of thirteen. But I would rather be with Mom than down in the Youth Church. Counting rows of pews and numbers of bodies in the pews is always a challenge because it is easy to lose track. Speculating about individuals becomes more interesting, but after a while they all look alike (except for the ones in

the Hallelujah section): men in their suits, solemn-faced and uncomfortable-looking; women in their knee-length floral print dresses, hair pulled high on their heads, curls kept rigid in a framework of hairspray. Thinking of all the hairsprayed heads under one roof was enough to boggle the mind. The hair glistened as if coated with a fine spray of jewel dust. I could smell it; the source was probably my mother's head near my right shoulder. I leaned sideways to get a good whiff. There was no telling how many hours could be logged up from all the women there who had made themselves beautiful for Jerry B.

Mother had made even me wear a dress. She wore her best outfit and had carefully applied her make-up, not too much make-up, of course, since this was church. Eye shadow was forbidden since God never made women with colored eyelids. He did, on occasion, give them red lips and cheeks and dark eyelashes, thus Mom was liberal with lipstick and rouge, and she always gunked on mascara.

Four hours was enough to tire even Jerry B., I think. He would stop occasionally in the middle of an invective and leave for a few minutes through a door behind the pulpit, like a boxer to rest between rounds. His gospel band played while he was out for the count. I had seen a few members of the gospel group earlier in the lobby; they worked the booth selling Jerry B.'s library of sermons on cassette, for only \$5.95 each. I was more interested in the religious comic books, key chains and wall-hangings, but I saw enough of the singers to recognize them. They had the stamp of the Religious American Youth -- squeaky clean-cut with nice teeth and impossibly white smiles, their eyes kind and blank. Jerry B. came on stage two or three songs later and picked up where he had left off, or picked up somewhere

else entirely. He had the right -- he knew he was a star.

A charismatic man to many, he wasn't much to look at, but his voice could be as velvety as the night and contain numerous inflections. His accent, British and Texas, was an enticing mix. Everybody was a brother or sister to him. He often used his brother and sister acquaintances help in preaching his sermons -- he mimicked them.

"Brother Faulknuh," he mocked in a whiny falsetto, "I jest don't understand. I paid my tithes faithfully...I jest don't understand why my prayers aren't answered." Jerry B. turned slightly for his role, asking in a fatherly, benign tone, "And what do you pray for, Sister Betty?" Whimpering Betty replied, "To make things easier. I thought Christians weren't supposed to have any problems." Jerry B. laughed in scorn and rounded on his audience. "The Lord's way is never easy. You think the Lord's way is easy? The Devil's way is the easy way. It isn't easy to be a Christian because Satan is working in this world today-uh!"

He belonged to that excitable guild of preachers that tacks an "uh" at the end of everything. He strutted like a banty rooster across the stage, chest puffed out, head high. I wondered if his nose had ever been not parallel to the ground. When Jerry B. whirled and roared I startled out of my daydreams and felt intimidated, but at least I was insulated by being at the back of the church. I pitied those on the front row who took the blunt of his condescension.

Finally the service was winding to its close. We had only to sit through the healing and the laying on of hands. I murmured in dismay

at the city-block length line forming all the way back to the end of the aisle. Jerry B. touched the heads of everyone, repeating some phrase. One of three were "slain in the spirit," swooning dead away straight back into the arms of the waiting rearguard of elders. That was interesting. I made bets with myself about which would be "slain" and which wouldn't. I was disappointed for the ones who weren't slain. They looked disappointed, too, like they were getting off a hyped-up carnival ride that hadn't panned out. I knew Mom wanted to go fall at Jerry B.'s feet, but I think she was afraid to leave me to my own devices. Soon even dead-away fainting became boring. (How jaded are the tastes of the American Youth!) At last the final fainter rose and rushed to his seat.

It was time to pray then. Jerry B. commanded all Christians onto their knees to pray over their pews. Mom turned around and faced the back wall to pray with Jerry B. Like me there were a few still seated, but their numbers lessened as he threatened that hell and damnation would eventually consume all non-believers: Jerry B. was a 100% man. The force of being seated alone in a sea of backsides made me get down on my knees, but I faced the pew in front of me and stared at the hymnal.

It was time to leave! I hurried Mom through the lingering crowds. Other people looked as enervated as I felt, but I'm sure for different reasons. Each looked as if given a holy sword, he or she could scour all sin from the world. We had almost made it to the doors when Jerry B.'s voice halted us.

"Stop!" he commanded. Everyone did. "An angel of the Lord has just spoken to me. There is a young lady among us who has doubted the work of the Lord here." There were gasps of dismay.

Mom looked at me suspiciously. "She will receive a visitation from an angel soon." That floored me. I felt my heart pound painfully down to my feet and back again. Not me, I pleaded. I knew that if an angel popped into my room tonight I would die like a shrew mouse held in a human hand. I had not doubted God, I told myself fiercely, just that cocky, arrogant evangelist: I prayed to God, not to Jerry B.

Mom didn't say much on the short drive home that took forever; she just gave me those sidelong glances. She even sang she was so happy. Her prayers had been answered -- someone with more authority than she would knock some religion into her rebellious teen-ager.

"This is the day, this is the day that the Lord hath made, that the Lord hath made," she sang.

Oh please, not now, cried half of my brain. The other half was pleading and groveling. Oh please, please, God, please don't send any angel -- I'll never make fun of another preacher again!

"We will rejoice, we will rejoice and be glad in it, and be glad in it..."

I turned around constantly to make sure that nothing with a glowing halo was presently occupying our cramped back seat.

No response descended from the starlit night into our little Vega, at least not one directed to me. Mom could have been hearing something quite wonderful if the look on her face was any indication of anything as she sped along. Good news for her probably meant bad news for me. The driveway was only seconds away and I yearned to leap from the claustrophobic car.

But as soon as I slammed the car door shut, shadows from trees in our front yard seemed to stretch out to engulf me. Watching Mom groping around in her purse for the key, I fervently wished that Dad had left the porchlight on and that the crickets would stop twanging on that ominous note and that the rustle I heard from the bushes was only the neighbor's cat. Oh, just to get into the house; to be inside and unexposed, invulnerable to an angelic, gigantic hand that could come swatting from the sky.

Mom tried one key after another. I hopped on one leg and peered out of the corners of my eyes into the carport. The wind picked up and lifted my hair from my neck like a cold hand, making my teeth chatter, my legs shift into a stationary job and my breath hold in my chest like behind a dam.

Click. Finally.

I sprinted in after Mom and snapped the safety lock before inhaling. What a relief to breathe in safety. Or was it? The walls seemed to vibrate with a watching silence, watching me. I hung up my coat for an audience of gaping chairs, sofas and lamps.

"Want to split a Coke with me?" Mom called from the kitchen in her now-that-I've-let-you-stew-we'll-talk-about-it voice. No, I didn't. My bed and sleep were just what I needed. I could put in one last plea to God, lick my wounds in peace and drift off to dreamland where no angels dwell. "No thanks, I'm really tired, going to bed."

"Night," she said.

My bed was not the safe harbor I had envisioned, as I fancied I could see things

moving in the hallway. I turned out the light finally and was blessed with total black before my eyes adjusted. My room slowly phased into view as a balance of black, silver and grey.

Creak. Rustle. The door to the attic was in my closet. Did I hear a tapping on it? Was something moving around under my bed? Please let it be a mouse. Coiling shadows gathered in one corner and as I concentrated they grew blacker and spread out until they enveloped the whole room. Blinking restored grey and silver to their proper proportions.

Oh, Lord. I pulled the covers over my head and began to chant (No angels, no angels, no angels, Please!) until my air became stale and I had to risk poking my head out for a second to breathe. What if a huge, glowing angel stood beside my bed? Would an angel want to kill me?

I hastily recovered my head. Would an angel knock politely on the covers and invite me out for my scheduled visitation? (Please, no angels...)

I alternately dove under the covers and came out gasping for air for what felt like hours until I think I finally drifted off, not entirely sure where waking ended and sleep began. I was running down our hallway, which is quite short, but the livingroom lay before me as at the end of a long tunnel. Every running leap advanced me only a millimeter or so toward my goal. The glow from the livingroom lamp beckoned me on. Mom must be there, and I was compelled to talk with her.

Not even winded, I smiled with pride at the rigorous pace I set for myself, varying my stride, pumping my legs faster until at last I broke into the livingroom. Mom sat upon the

couch, her legs curled under her, nibbling away on a slice of deep-dish, supreme pizza.

Wordlessly she offered me a piece. Mmm, my favorite. Everything on it but anchovies and green olives. I passed it under my nose, enjoying the spicy pungency. "Eat," Mom said. I closed my eyes, drowning in the sheer delight of Italian sausage and mozzarella cheese melting into my taste buds. It was much too good to eat quickly, yet too good not to. "Mom, thish ith delishith," I sighed. She said nothing.

I opened an eye to find that Mom was no longer Mom, but a Dr. J-sized, gold-glowing angel with Jerry B.'s face. "And the righteous do not eat of temptation!" he thundered and snarled in the voice that was exclusively Jerry B.'s. That pizza had not hit the carpet before I was back in the hall, running as if a demon were after me, and as far as I was concerned, there wasn't much difference.

Of course the hall pulled its stretching routine and the angel was gaining on me, the glow growing brighter from behind just like a car about to pass on the road on a dark night. Faster, faster I urged my legs. If I could reach my room and shut the door in his face, I would be safe. But the room at the end of the hall began to shrink away. The angel with Jerry B.'s face closed in behind me. I heard murmured invectives but could not understand them.

As I ran it occurred to me that hallways don't stretch and that an angel would have no trouble netting one lone sinner if he truly wished. I skidded to a stop and stood by my bedroom door, tense but determined. The angel slowed uncertainly until he stood before me. "What do you want from me?" I demanded.

The angel's eyes shifted around but his mouth continued to erupt into muttered spiels. Only now and then could I distinguish a word. "What are you doing here?"

The angel backed away. I took a step forward and the chase was on. I had a night's worth of fear and stale air and an interrupted pizza binge to take out on that angel. I chased him with merciless glee toward the livingroom, but somehow I ended up in my bedroom, and he had disappeared.

I sat up in bed, pushed my hair off my sweating face. I felt like I had run a marathon. Simultaneously I noticed the glow from the livingroom lamp and Jerry B.'s voice, very low but insistent, coming from down the hall and from beside my bed. My heartbeats drowning out Jerry B. for a second, I worked up the courage to peer over the edge of the bed and met nothing more unusual than the heating register. The voice continued to drone.

Quietly I felt on the bedside table for my old Girl Scout knife and pulled out its tarnished blade. Cautiously avoiding every step which I knew would make a creak I crept down the hall. I paused before entering the livingroom, then headed in knife first.

There was Mom, curled up on the couch, asleep. Scattered on the floor were several envelopes with the messages "Personal" and "Important News For You -- Open Immediately!" emblazoned on them in mimeographed splendor. Mom had been corresponding with the preachers again; Dad would be upset. "Don't you send them any more money!" he'd ordered. Well, I wouldn't tell. I noticed one return address belonging to Jerry B. himself.

The small tape recorder lay propped against the wall next to the livingroom heater shaft. The tiny, tinny voice of Jerry B. issued forth. I gently clicked him off in the middle of something about forbidden fruits. Thinking about food made me hungry for that pizza I'd barely had a taste of.

"Mom, wake up," I whispered, tapping her shoulder. "Mom, it's time to go to bed." She blinked, smiled, gave me a night-night kiss and stumbled down the hall.

I gathered up her letters and set them under the magazine rack and put volume I of Jerry B.'s library of sermons on cassette back into its plastic case. Then I headed into the kitchen and selected a frozen pizza from the icebox -- Italian sausage. It wasn't Pizza Hut, but it would do.

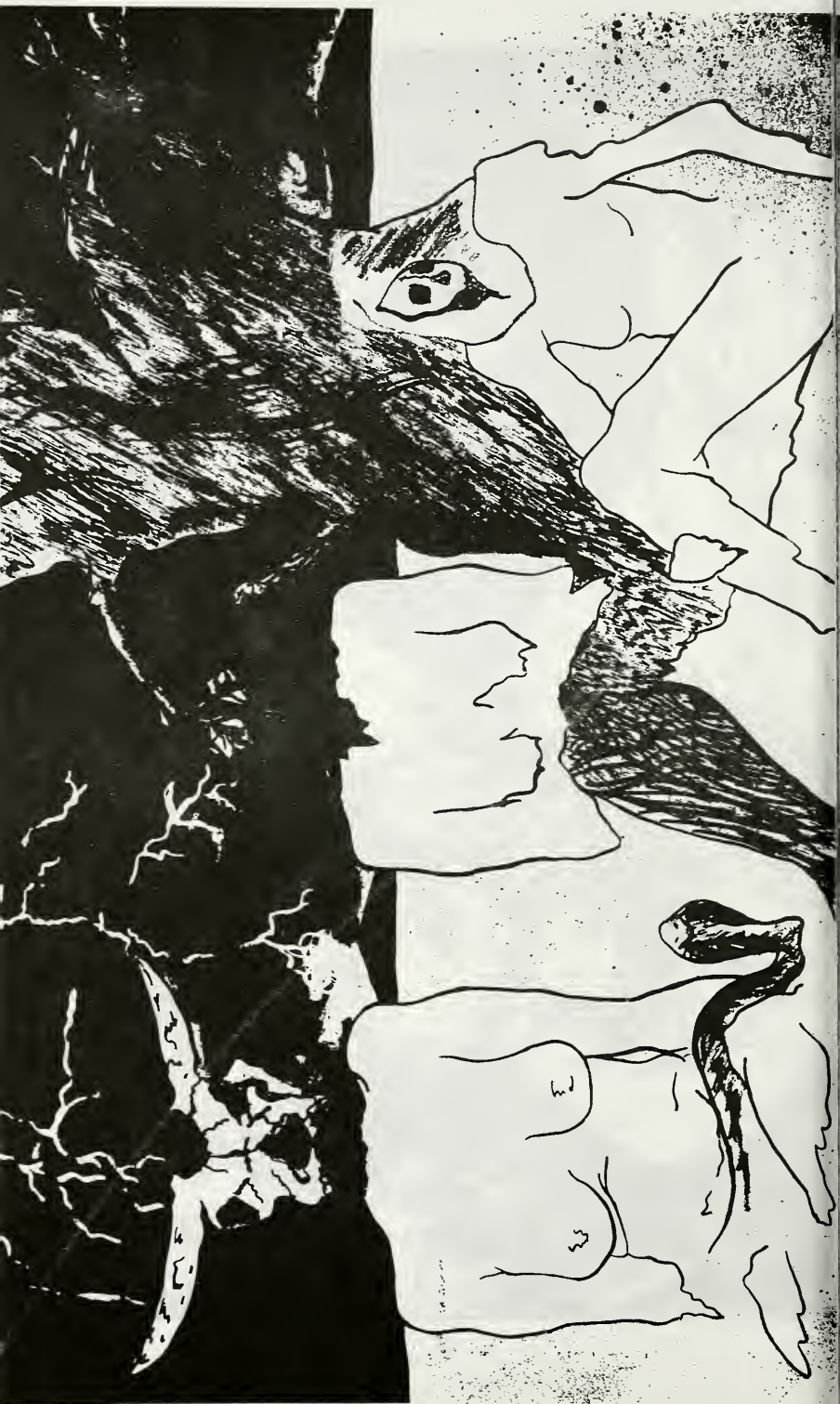
Late Summer

Sharon Proffitt

The stars are singing again,
and the moon is feeling high.
Flowers are blooming in the sand,
summer is drifting by.

Rain is playing on the tin,
and I am wondering why.
Leaves are waving in the wind,
hello, or goodbye!





Art's Image

Eric Cash

Imagine looking at a bright light, let's say the 100-watt variety. Stare at the bulb for thirty seconds, then close your eyes. Lonnie was like the imprint that seems to linger just an inch above the point where your nose begins.

The man was always somewhat fuzzy in the memory's table of contents. He was filed away in my mind just shy of fear and slightly beyond fantasy. I couldn't seem to shake him. He even filled my dreams. More so than did the Home Economics teacher with the big breasts and the Linda Carter smile.

Lonnie was the kid in high school that never was a kid like everybody else. He knew things that most people could not fathom. He could read a Bradbury novel without having to go back over each paragraph a second time to make sense out of it. He knew all about birth control from the woman's side.

What his brains didn't get him out of, his muscles could. He stood about six feet tall, towering over the world of the five feet nothing dwarfs like myself. In the weight room, when most of us cringed at the sweaty smell that oozed out of the hard wood floor, he seemed to drink it in as though he were drawing power from it. I had considered myself in fair shape lifting 110 pounds. Lonnie lifted near twice this amount, and probably could have gone higher if he had possessed the desire to do so. I never really did discover his limit. I don't really think that he did.

I only saw Lonnie in a fight once. He was simply too big for anyone to want to get mad at. He was not a violent person by nature, in fact, the solitary fight that he was involved in had something to do with the honor of one of the girls who hung out with one of the local dopers. Lonnie hit him once, the guy looked confused for a second, then hit the ground like a strange mixture of lead and jello.

I never pretended to call Lonnie a friend, yet somewhere deep down within him, down past the macho exterior, I think that he once considered me a little more special than the other worshippers that clung to his every move. When all was quiet, and all of the people were gone, he would tell me of his dreams. Why he chose me for this honor, I can't say. I really have no idea. Perhaps he saw me as no threat. For the life of my soul, I couldn't think of anyone that was a threat to Lonnie. To this day, as I tell this story, I haven't found a reason.

The first encounter I had with Lonnie occurred after a basketball game, the one right before Homecoming. We lost 75-57, and the loss was all but a shock. We had always had a lousy team. I was playing Mr. Nice, waiting for Linda Phelps, my steady at the time, to powder her nose. Actually, her nose was the farthest thing from her mind. We both had downed too many Stroh's.

I was leaning against the cold, red tile of the concession stand, feeling half-embarrassed and half-annoyed at this duty doled me by the rules of high school manners, when Lonnie tapped me on the shoulder. I was looking the other way. After the initial shock, I managed to squeak out a greeting.

"Hey, Lonnie."

"Yeah. Do you want to know why we keep losing all the time?"

"They say it's because our team sucks."

Lonnie shook his head, grinning. "I tend to agree, but it's those damned cheerleaders. They like to bounce too much."

"Maybe."

"I'm right. The whole team's desperate, and they like to bounce too much."

"Yeah, but..." I stopped in mid-sentence. Lonnie was serious. Deadly serious.

"Why do women want to act that way? You want me to tell you why?"

I was suddenly aware, through the beer-waves rising in my belly, that I would hear his answer.

"Cause they're whores, that's why. Cause they're whores."

"Sure."

"What are you doing tomorrow at five?"

I was confused. "What do you mean? At five, well I..."

"Meet me outside the gym. I need to tell you some things."

Before I could answer, he was gone.

Linda emerged from the bathroom, her face pale and her hair dripping water. She had been sick. After showing considerable concern, I took her home. On the drive back, I alternately

cussed at my plight of having to face Lonnie after school, and having lost the chance to make out because of too many beers and vomit hardening on the floor of the ladies' powder room.

I tried to sleep that night, and even after the room stopped doing circles faster than a record store single might, I found Lonnie's face in every corner of my tiny room, making the aspect of losing the night to dreams impossible. It must have finally overtaken me, however, for in the morning I awoke in cold sweat.

I arrived at the gym ten minutes early and found Lonnie sitting in front of one of the graffiti-covered entrances. He seemed to be immersed in thought, so I coughed to announce myself. Lonnie looked up slowly, his eyes coming to rest square upon mine. I looked away.

"I didn't expect that you would come," he said, standing in a seemingly practiced, single push.

"Why shouldn't I?" My nervousness showed, I knew this, and I was ashamed.

"Most people are scared of me. That's why. It's fine to hang around good ole Lonnie when there is a crowd, but meeting Lonnie alone scares people. Am I right?"

"I never knew anybody that has ever talked with you alone."

"You see?" He began to laugh. I, for the first time, knew that his intent was not bodily damage.

"So what's the deal?"

"Ken...that's your name isn't it?"

"Yeah."

"Well Ken, I wanted to challenge you to a game of chess."

"Chess? You're kidding."

"Why not chess? You got anything better to do?" He smiled.

"I thought that you wanted to tell me something."

"I do."

"Why all of the dramatics?"

"What dramatics? Anything dramatic was invented by you, not by me." He smiled again, and I noticed how crooked his teeth were. I noticed how his face seemed to be physically pushed together as though a weight had been dropped on his head. I began to hate the image this man had pushed on the people at the school. Must all be bluff, I thought, how else could this ugly man be so popular? I began to pity this man, the idol of the entire student body. My mind seemed to become detached.

Lonnie pulled one of those pocket chess sets out of his jacket. The set was of the order of the buck-and-a-half plastic things with magnets on the bottom of the miniature pieces, except on closer inspection I found each piece to be metal and intricately formed. This set could not have been purchased in any store. He noticed my scrutiny and looked at me dead-to-point in the eyes.

"I'm an artist, Ken, I made these myself." He picked out a king from the pile of pieces that rested inside one of the hollowed halves of the

back of the board. "This one is patterned after Richard the Lion Hearted. Do you know who he is?"

"I was an 'A' student in history. I know. These are great."

"I hate school, Ken," he said. He seemed to take on a blank look, a look like that a funeral director has after the ceremonies. He looked sort of amused, sad, and wise. "I'm an artist. I just wanted someone to talk to for real, that's all."

"I don't understand."

"I don't get along with teachers. I don't get along with anybody when I'm alone with 'em. Can't keep a girl for more than a week. You looked smart. I need someone to talk to, but I can't risk losing my image."

"Why me? Why this way? Why all of the strangeness?"

"Have to keep my image."

"But..."

"No more questions. Do you like physics?"

"Not really, but I can get along in class."

"Let's play chess and talk physics."

We played three games and Lonnie the Brute, Lonnie the Stud, Lonnie the Social Median of our high school, proceeded to explain the finer points of Einsteinian Physics to me.

Lonnie and I met each Thursday at five o'clock, by mutual agreement. We met outside the

gym on warmer days and inside if it rained or was too cold. The discussions we held could have filled three Bible-sized volumes. Lonnie knew seemingly every aspect of every subject, and was neither hindered in discussion by my ignorance, nor angered by it. We talked and played chess for almost a year. Any question that I posed him, he answered except for two, of which he would never entertain my interest. In all of the time that I knew him, he would never speak of his home or his parents.

I tried to follow him one day, but this ended in failure when he caught me and stated in a level tone, "You're a nice guy, but if you ever follow me again I'll rip your throat out."

The next Thursday he did not show up for the meeting and I assumed that the chess games were over. However, more out of luck than any effort on my part, he brushed against me in the hall, apologized and the meetings resumed. I never tried to follow him again.

Lonnie and I, at least in my opinion, were becoming quite good friends, until three weeks before graduation when he disappeared without a word. At first, I was angry, then finally decided that his image must have been at stake somehow because of graduation, and accepted the disappearance. Perhaps, despite his intellect, he had not quite cut the grades. It would have destroyed him to be looked down upon by the class. I understood this and went about the rest of the semester without his company on Thursday evenings.

Ten years have passed since the time when I knew Lonnie, and I suppose that I would be considered a success by most people. I studied

astronomy at college, sparked by many questions that those discussions over chess posed. I owe Lonnie my career in a great sense. It pained me at times to think of what end his image might have brought to.

I considered Lonnie a failure. A few years after my graduation from high school I discovered that Lonnie was a drug dealer in our area. This was perhaps the reason for his departure. Maybe the heat was on. This I suppose I'll never know.

A month ago I happened upon a what-not shop in the more expensive part of town. Sitting in a display case, half-hidden by paper flowers was a tiny chess set, a set that I would never forget. The price tag read seventy-five dollars, and the set was pretty well scarred up. I thought for a moment, finally deciding to purchase it. Seventy-five dollars was a small price to pay for a man's life work. Perhaps he had to sell it to pay a month's rent for some run-down flat. Maybe the image had finally destroyed the art within him, as has happened too often these days.

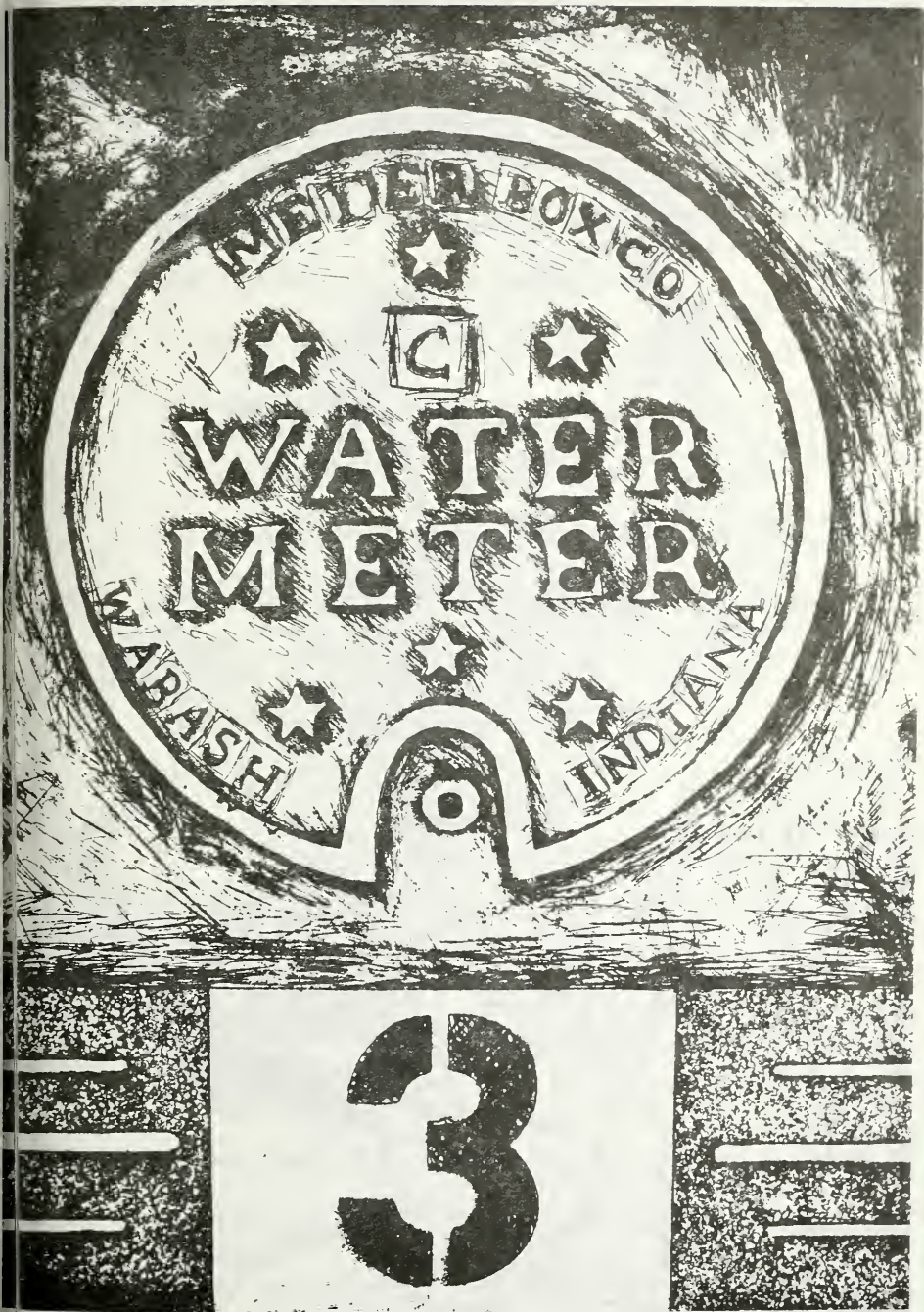
"May I see the chess set?"

As the owner fished it out of the display case, he began, "This set is something special, you know. The pieces are all designed after famous historical figures."

"I know, its a one of a kind."

"Sure is, its been numbered and been engraved by the artisan."

"Excuse me?" I took the set from his hand. I flipped the latch, opening it. A tiny silver metal tag was enlaid along a portion of the inner trim. It read number 752, and a fancy "L" had been pressed into the small tag. "I'll take it," I said, realizing that this time the art had survived the image.





Schedule 1 Depression

Eric Cash

Before I laid me down to pray
unto the Lord God gleaming missile
and his brothers in my back yard
I took a schedule 1 narcotic
to ease the Lutheran pounding
fists upon the temple doors
and soon knew I'd made a mistake
when I saw dear old Dad's face
hanging in mid-air among
his Californian dug golden lies
of palm trees and hot tubs
and then the walls turned white
and begun to breathe much too fast
and a buzzer blurted out into
the Lysol darkness a bit too late
and the blond-haired kid
behind those ugly white curtains
wouldn't play that guitar badly anymore
and my shaved cock quivered

between the nurse's frigid fingers
and the Candystriper understood
with a smile and returned
after visiting hours
to warm me a bit
and then the walls became clear blue
and I was in the park
looking for four leaf clovers
and the virgin took my hands
and told me of his perfect
three-point landing between
her thighs and she was happy
and oh so sorry
and he drove a Corvette
and she was gone
and I sat beneath a splotched-white
statue of some Civil War murderer
and played out Al Pacino's last
scene in The Godfather
smoking a cigarette
feeling so tough

pretending not to care
and then I awoke shouting Helen's
name and remembered that she was only
so much disjointed protein
under an abortion clinic
and I reached out for my lover
and found an untouched pillow
and knew I'd have to settle
for the telephone again
and decided to flush that bottle
of schedule 1's down the commode
and tried to ignore the mirror's
red-eyed stare of confusion
and tried not to laugh too hard
when Miss Jehovah's Witness 1986
knocked at my door and asked for
a 50¢ donation in trade for a
pamphlet that would brighten my life.

To Sentimental Women

Eric Cash

Gracefully stretching flower
 (lustfully dripping dew
to soft spongy greenness
where Byronic children
once skipped singing
songs of beautiful women
who await their return
from battle dreaming
of staunch swords
with glistening eyes,
voices that greet silver
harmony when the door
thrusts ajar and in like
toads unable to defecate,
they enter, o-o-o-)

open.

Re-birth
(Haiku Ochite)*

Eric Cash

His thumb-pricked dreams spilled
Over a rose stem held too
Tightly in anger.

The thorns drove his flesh
Deep with raging circles, a
Failed dream pushing back.

He had drawn out the
Sun's eternal breath, till
Petals dried chalky.

Final darkness fell.
Under neon light He watches
Careful new starts grow.

*Falling Haiku

Aquarium Daze

Eric Cash

Fat Lord Mister Whale Catfish
glides placidly onward,
his fins idly waving like a
limp patriotic flag touched
ever-so-slightly by a lusty
Virginia Sunday morning breeze,
his long black plastic whiskers
brushing lightly against the
electric-cold-glass prefabricated walls
that mark his boundry,
keep him safe.

Tiny Store-Bought Flash-Silver Catfish
swim with their ally,
their bodies wedged tightly between
the Scylla brother and the
Charybdis coolness of clarity
lining the thin-water-road of survival,
their shiny borrowed computer chip tails

clicking quickly in pace above the
fertile-hero-tramped gathered gravel
their Odyssean fathers laid,
stirring no dust.

Snarling Silent Stiff-Red Crab
waits patiently in the corner,
her claws twitching eagerly in
anticipating of Cajun delight
served without a restaurant-pressed-bib
(a messy, messy, messy dream),
her territory well guarded in
the 360 degree (and then some) sight of
antenna-stalked-beaded searching eyes
trained by difficult past
into not seeing.

Together they rule,
together they game,
together
they scavenge the bottom,
feeding on carcasses

of other brothers,
brothers picked at,
brothers who tumble bleach-white-dead
in the silent, raging current,
sinking, as if drawn at last
together
once perished,
into rotting piles of
distended mouthed cries and
mangled spawn.

Together they live in their Aquarium Daze,
together they ignore the sunlight beyond
their dirty glass walls,
together
they pretend innocence
and feed
and feed
and feed...

Tall Trees

Thomas A. Haeberlin

Tall trees patiently growing
Trying to reach the heavens
They should not know
Their dreams in vain
Yet someone has told the weeping willows.

Is Life Our Own

Thomas A. Haeberlin

If Life our own
or only Death's friend
That sets us up--
for our untimely end?

Nature's Game

Thomas A. Haeberlin

Raindrops skipping in the lake's face

Daring fish to surface

And the distant thunder heard--

Muffled laughter at this silly game.

Voices of Silence

William Dozier

"Good afternoon; afternoon. Well, I believe that we are certainly ready to begin, but first things first. Please allow me to introduce our humble selves to the few of you fine ladies and gentleman, boys, and girls, whom we have not already had the pleasure of meeting."

A moist, umber tongue surreptitiously dabbed the stray bits of clay and dirt from the one corner then the other of the mud-smearred mouth as bristly jaws worked mechanically up and down, up and down, reducing the mouthful of soggy earth to a more digestible proportion; therein followed a flaring of the throat as the masticated clay and dirt strained passage through the gullet. Soiled fingers (with dark-lined nails) pressed another clod to the quivering lips, and, in one bite, gritty teeth had engulfed it. Accompanying the jaws rhythm was a sweet, wet squelching, and escaping the cracked lips, a thin ochre stream dribble over the bristly chin before being wiped away by a wooden sleeve.

Madame Blavatsky, Madame Blavatsky
Where Are You?

Being a diverting tale boasting a host of black-hearted villains, a couple of dubious heroes, and a single, goodry moral as written by the sure hand of the author

Average reading time: 9 min.

"My name is G. T. Burford, and squatting beside me is my highly esteemed associate, his

honorable Monsieur Blavatsky, son of the internationally celebrated Madame Blavatsky, the preeminent theosophical scholar of the occult and arcane knowledge, and authoress of the world-renowned The Voice of Silence."

Cast of Characters

G. T. Burford.	Bill Murray
Monsieur Blavatsky	John Huston
Tom.	Paul Newman
William.	John Clease
Ned.	Robin Williams
tribesmen.	your friends and neighbors and mine

Cornstalk legions rattled passively as a petulant wind fell over the ridge and wound its way through the broad hollow to a small knoll rising arrogantly from the level creek bottom. Sanguine sage grass (whose color echoed in the surrounding woods), attenuated iron weed, and browning thistle proffered obeisance to the rushing air laden with musky pollen, wood smoke, and the fluted voice of Cloudy Creek, and across the uncropped pastures of fescue and clover streaked neon flashes of blue blazer amid grey crawdad chimneys and the rutted cowtrails leading around the conical knoll; an amorphous crescent of onlookers had collected at the eastern base of the mound, leaving their mounts, wagons, rigs, and coaches tethered to the woven wire fence where several bicycles lay carelessly abandoned, and atop the mound, two, blue-grey figures were etched against the burnished aternoon sky, the standing man gesticulating wildly and speaking in a sonorous voice to the slack-jawed crowd while the other gentlemen, ancient and wizened, shakily

squatted in the speaker's shadow and gracefully wiped clean his own smeary mouth.

"Today, many of you good people have traveled great distances, overcome encumbering obstacles (not unlike your pioneer forebearers), in order to play your role in the mainstream of this great nations' history here at the farm of Gosiah Sparks, centered in this incomparably picturesque country-side (locally referred to as the 'slashes')."

Sharing a severe countenance, plebian and patrician were loosely assembled before the knoll. All eyes squinted towards the mound's apex save for the boys scrambling along the crescent's periphery with their yelping beagles and hounds, the boys earnestly fishing with twisted fox tails for crawdad, and the finishing school girls, dressed in navy, absently fidgetting with their brushed curls; all sensed the slashes' baggy support beneath their feet save for those of the crescent's center seated in one of the thrity-three folding chairs (graciously provided by a local funeral parlor), and all felt the benign warmth of an Indian-summer day save for the cloaked photographer hidden beneath his tripod. In a cheap, green-checked suit and white skimmer, the speaker beckoned the audience's attention with eloquent gestures as the old man stared blankly into the audience with luminous eyes, all the while drawing handful after handful of soil to this lips.

"Truly, we are a most fortuitous people to be living in such an exciting and wonderous epoch. The Indian problem has been solved, the country is unified by both rail and wire, and the United States has assumed her rightful position as world leader after overcoming the contemptible Spanish Empire. America has come to recognize

her Manifest Destiny, and old Uncle Sam has unselfishly taken up the white man's burden to elevate the inferior peoples and races of this world. Every single American should be proud of our great heritage, and upon entering the twentieth century, we come to realize that progress, and her handmaiden science, have eliminated the old frontier. Edison's incandescent bulb and Bell's telephone are already being put to wide use, and just last year, the Wright Brothers' flying machine carried all mankind aloft into another frontier, the aerial frontier. Today, you good citizens of Bunch County will be scientifically carried to an as yet unexplored frontier of science--the frontier of time."

And then, at that moment, M. Blavatsky interjected a vociferous belch, but Burford recovered handily and continued unruffled.

"Through the grace of science and providence, M. Blavatsky has been blessed with the gift of divining past events by consuming a given location's soil and thereby evoking the inhabitant spiritual vibrations (a vibrational pulsation of such an elusive quality, that only M. Blavatsky's power is able to detect its presence) to take possession of his body, and then speaking through M. Blavatsky (acting as the medium), the spirit reveals the mortal events of its earthly existence. Employing his highly attuned occultabilities, M. Blavatsky will, once and for all, incontrovertibly determine the actual identity of the moundbuilders and just how and why this mound, that we are standing upon, came to be built. It has been hypothesized that the moundbuilders were descendants of a Toltecat colony, or perhaps the remnants of a vanished white civilization, or they may have been the Lost Tribe of Israel; well we shall soon see Speak M. Blavatsky, speak o' spirit! Speak!"

And then it looked as if Burford whispered something to M. Blavatsky . . . " (and make it good, old man)"

Hey, my name is Ned, hey! I get off on hearing a good story. Hey, do you know one, eh? I like flint too. Hey, do you have any, eh? I am a proud member of the Bunch Tribe, the moundbuilders. Hey, I'm just one of the Bunch, heh, heh. Me, I'm no common warrior, uh, uh. Hey, like I am the storyteller of my tribe, hey. Each and every day I recite the stories of my people for one and all to hear; the Bunch have not written language, uh, uh. Hey, like I am the memory of my tribe, hey!

Hey, I like feint, hey! Each and every day as I recite the stories I make points and scrappers and axes for one and all to use; flint is hard and slick and it cleaves so cleanly. Hey, do you have any, eh? My people bear no shame, uh uh. Hey, like the story of the Bunch is proud, hey. We are moundbuilders; let me, Ned, recite the story of the first mound. Hey, listen, eh?!

Hey, it was one of those sundrenched morns between solstices. Me, I was sitting outside my hut chipping out a wedding axe of some dead-green color and reciting "The Invasion of the Man-Eating Shrews" to no one but myself for I was all alone, when up walks William wearing one of his notorious, awestruck expressions, and me, I knew things were never going to be the same again, uh, uh. Without so much as a "How are you?" or a "Good morning." William interrupts my narrative with, "Ned,

I have experienced a truly profound revelation," hey!

And I said, "huh?"

Hey, he said, "I spoken with God for a span of twenty minutes this morning," hey!

And I said, "Who, William?"

Hey, he said, "You know, God, the omnipotent, omnipresent all-father. The unmoved mover. The maker, shaker, and breaker of all things. The alpha, the omega; your creator, your final judge," Hey! And I said, "Oh, that God."

"(hold 'er right there, old man.)"

Folks, we are pausing for just a moment while M. Blavatsky recharges his power. (start eating that dirt, fool.) But let me take this opportunity to make a very special announcement. For a limited time only, M. Blavatsky is offering his amazing services for hire at an extremely nominal rate. How, you may ask, could he serve me; well, ladies and gentlemen, in many ways. In the case of a will contest, M. Blavatsky could visit the gravesite of the deceased and determine the deceased's true wishes or if a builder is considering a site, M. Blavatsky will inspect the site and make dollar-saving recommendations from his test of the area. All interested parties should speak with me at the conclusion of today's demonstration. (stop eating), and I see we are ready to begin again, so speak M. Blavatsky, speak o' spirit (and watch your damn' language; there's kids 'n women out there)."

Hey, William was a pretentious, old prick, hey! He wouldn't answer to Will or Bill or Billy, uh, uh. Hey, like William would only answer to William, hey. And William was always tinkering with metaphysics. Hey, each and every day he was generating and cultivating all sorts of incomprehensible and unheard of things like feudalism and separate but equal and the wheel and trickly-down economics and state's rights and Manifest Destiny and spontaneous generation, but so long as William performed some small measure of work, us, the Bunch, would good naturedly oblige his eccentricities; after all, many of his ideas weren't very bad entertainment, uh. uh. Besides that, he was Tom's brother.

Hey, William was obsessed with his newest brain child, God. He had thought him up just the day before, and ever since that moment of divine inspiration, William had gone about our village offering his ontological and cosmological arguments to one and all as proof of his creation's existence.

Hey, William said, "Ned, he has revealed all things unto me. I now understand why men are born into the world to suffer and die," Hey!

And I said, "Why is that William; to get to the other side?"

Hey, he said, "Ned . . . Ned, Ned, Ned, Ned, man was created for the singular purpose of building--the mound," hey!

And I said, "Building--the what?"

Hey, he said, "the mound; a huge earthen mound that shall rise up towards heaven as testimony of our tribe's piety and equally shall it serve as a monument to the greatness of the Bunch," hey!

And I said, "But William, how can you, just one man, ever hope to build such a thing?"

Hey, he said, "The labor shall be shared by each and everyone so that all may take pride in the construction of the mound," hey!

And I said, "And what of our crops and what of our hunting and what of our gathering, eh? When one and all are laboring to complete this mound of yours, who of the tribe will be free to do these jobs--the very same jobs that Tom, himself, has or dired to be done by the time of his return, eh?"

Hey, he said, "Tom is away, and woe be unto any and all who would dare to thwart his most sacred task that is above such menial chores. Pfit! We begin our work tomorrow, Ned," hey!

As I watched William turn away and go about the village proselytizing one and all, I grew anxious for Tom's return, and rubbing my thumb against an unfinished point, I began to wonder why men are born into the world to suffer and die.

Hey, I awoke with a start, hey! Those poor idiots were starting up their damnable foolishness again for the third day in a row. Hey, the air was filled with slappity, slap--slap of their bare feet, slapping against wet clay, hey. Wiping the sleep out

of my eyes, I looked out the door out of my hut and there in the morning light was the Bunch, every single man and woman and child, jumping up and down for all they were worth, packing the earth into a solid mound. Hey, that is every man except for William, whom I hadn't spoke to in a week's time, and Tom, whom I hadn't seen in over three weeks, not since he'd left to explore new territories, and of course me, Ned, who had earnestly ignored the epidemic of madness presently attacking the Bunch, hey!

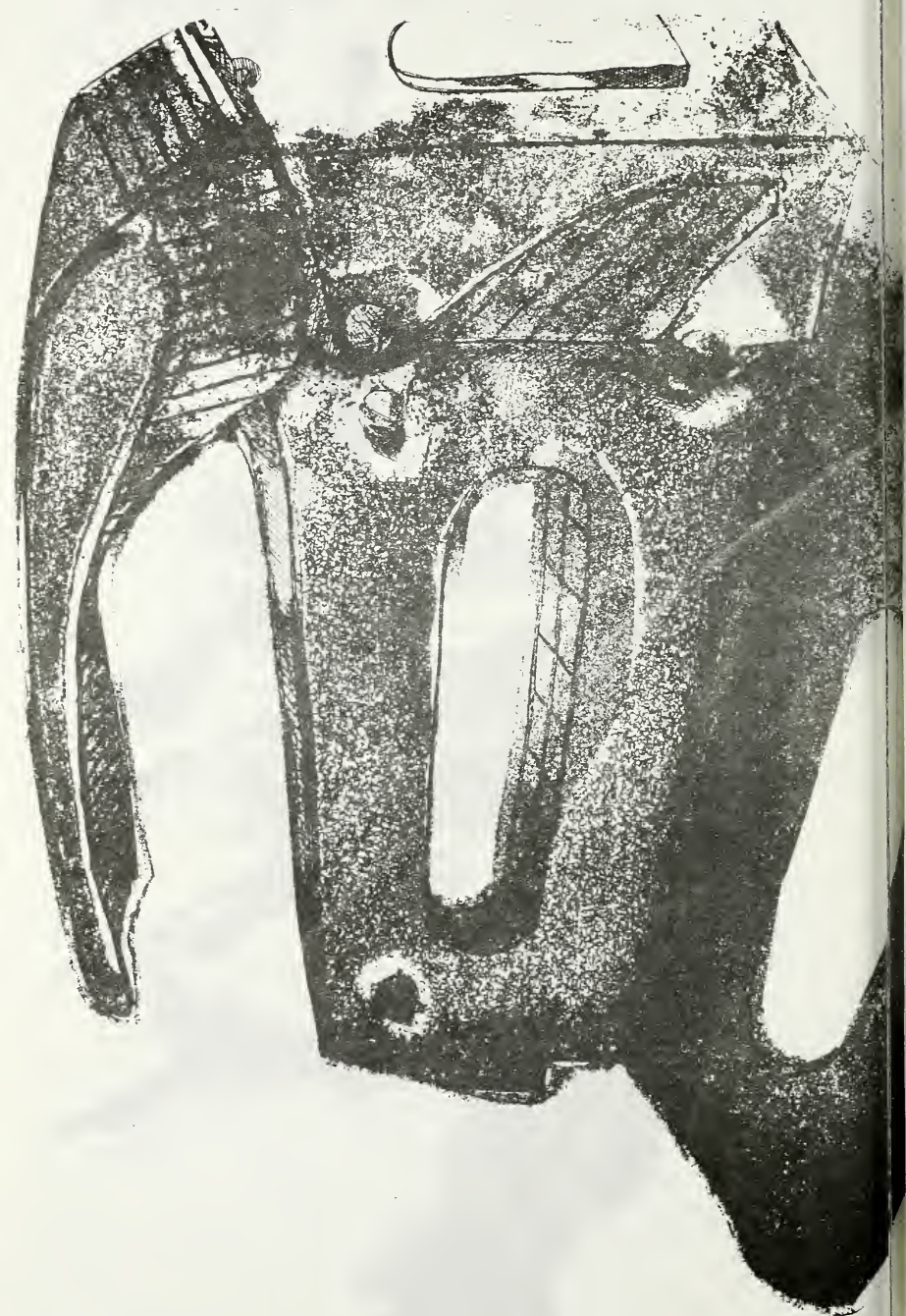
Hey, Tom was our chief, Mister President, the chairman, hey! He had led the Bunch for nearly thirty years and his career was almost as outstanding in its accomplishments as some of the tribe's more legendary chieftains of the past such as Gertrude the Great and Chief Estelle. Hey, by overcoming his innate laziness, Tom had come a lot further than most folks had expected of a man, hey. About the only drawback to Tom's office was his brother, William. Hey, William held neither job nor office, but nevertheless he affected the role of monarch and king; there was a lot of bad blood between Tom and William, hey!

(whoa up there, old man; can't you stick to the script?) Please, I beg your indulgence ladies and gentlemen. M. Blavatsky's powers have waned and so once again, we must pause and allow him to recharge. Let me remind you that at the conclusion of our demonstration, M. Blavatsky will be autographing purchased editions of his Mother's book The Voice of Silence. And, yes, we are again ready to challenge the frontier of

time. Speak M. Blavatsky, speak o' spirit, speak
(and stick to the damned script)!

Hey, I tore out of my hut and across the compound to where William was standing under a large oak, hey! But as I topped the mound, the Bunch closed in around me, each and everyone jumping up and down with their arms in the air, and thirty-one pairs of feet slappity, slap-slapping the ground and then they were asking me to recite my stories. Hey, that was a rare request indeed, hey. So, running over my repertoire I chose a heroic edda, The Life and Times of Chief Estelle. Hey, and they began chanting my words in chorus and jumping in time to an easy rhythm and pretty soon the mud is packed and a party is sent down to the creek bank for more mud and dirt, so all that day we danced and the mound grew, hey. And William stood under the oak with a self-satisfied smile which vexed me sorely. Hey, I thought, let Tom handle it, hey!





Light Shedding Darkness

James Warren

Eyes penetrate
the darkness
light sheds
a deeper black

Aunt Libs
grannie patch
quilt covered eyes
cry in the night
slated vision
Cyclops crunch
sleeping munchkins
small leprachauns
not under roofs
yellow, blue, purple
dotted mushrooms
shielding from giants

red heat sprays
chicken squawks
body running
headless
wings whipping
blood sprays
the hatchet head

small boy
laying on green vinyl
Momma! Momma!
-Mommies here
but the balloon
-which balloon
the red one
with frayed string
floating up

ragged brown
cardboard box tied
-go to sleep

iced mind
sleeps endlessly
closed
not seeing
never touching
no smell
three years
glazed warmth

Games of
Lost in Space
Land of the Lost
reach my dry creekbed
my hickory tree
casting clouds
catching grasshoppers
fighting apemen
casting spells
not throwing rocks
in my tree house
without boards
I tumble and fall

Around winding stairs
climbing, clinging
over broken planks
along angular paths
pointing toward infinity
moving in blindness
hands toiling for legs
onward, upward
past remains amiss

through the darkness
Grandmother
dressed in lavender lace
with lavender hair
pumping peddles

frantic fingers
send notes
penetrating
dangling in stars
I reach
foundation falls
creaking boards crack
send me to her tomb
grabbing emptiness
shot shatters
Silence

Shot for Dad
I cried
when I felt
crimson stains drop
his face
those eyes
longing, staring, crying
blooded tears
my hickory tree
a squirrel
torn by my bullet
dad loaded
he stared
not dying
just asking

Darkness
tightening my neck
no tears
stone coldness
filling my veins
closing my brain

Yes
when daddy asked
could I swim
so he tossed me
in the green skum
the storm
the water

the rain
my tears
flowing up
or down

hands tied
with fear
moving motionless
toward mankind
blocked glass box
no exit
no entrance
faces casting
gawking glances
through clear tomb
a scream spreads silently

Disturbed they call a man who sees red
instead of white

James Warren

when all who die
have bowed their heads
to their polyester god
and cried tears gold
because the sun won't rise
on their fleeting passions
and their children lie in coffins
made of dollars Black
-like the poor chimney sweeps
and all is gone all except
for those who saw red instead of white

Out of the Light

James Warren

out of the light I awoke
and bred with darkness
to create the hallowed light of day break
and turned and asked why
to live in darkness would be grand
or to live in light so nice
but to be hallowed darkness of the morning
with an edge of color
peering into the light
Is the life of the poet
given by the muse

the cross on state bank

James Warren

as shadows fall
leaving the light
a cross falls
on state bank
outside the window
of a friend
inside the window
makes pains
of crosses
on a white wall
with the candles
not melting
down the wax
the conversation dies
with the light
and the spotlight changes
to yellow
the hypnotic cross
of some untold secret
in the shadows
by a telephone pole
after the light turns
red
and the crosses
flicker
on the red wall
after shadows fall
I go
and the cross
stands on
State Bank wall





The Babysitter

Michele Remaley

Calm, she must be calm. It's all been taken care of. Her fingers, which had gripped the arms of the leather chair until her knuckles turned white, slowly began to loosen as a black cloak of indifference wrapped her mind. You know nothing, the mind instructed itself. She continually repeated this thought until she began to believe it.

* * * *

She rang the doorbell. After a moment's pause, the wooden door was jerked open quickly by a middle-aged woman.

"Oh, please come in. I'm just about ready," the woman said breathlessly while ushering Tina in.

"Just make yourself at home while I go and get Mike," Mrs. Pearson said as she scurried around the corner.

Tina found herself standing in a formal living room. The chairs were made of heavy walnut with baby blue velvet cushions. A loveseat, that matched the chairs, was against the far wall. A leather chair completed the seating in the formal room. Tina slid carefully into the dark leather chair.

"Hurry up Mike," the woman hollered as she came back down the hall. She tossed Tina a quick smile as she grabbed a light jacket from the closet.

"Now, I shouldn't be long, Tina," she began. "I'm just meeting my husband for lunch. The number of the restaurant is tacked up on the bulletin board in the kitchen in case you need to reach me. I have already fed Mike so..."

Her voice trailed off indifferently. Mrs. Pearson walked briskly over to the hall.

"Well, come on," she said to the hall. "Your babysitter's here."

A bashful looking boy of about ten walked slowly into the room. With sandy-colored hair, dark eyes, and a slightly turned up nose, he was a cute kid.

"This is Tina," his mother informed him.

"Hi Mike," Tina said.

"Hi," Mike returned softly.

"Before long you'll be good friends, I'm sure." She then turned to Tina, "He's a little shy but he gets used to people rather quickly. He's allowed to play outside, ride his bike, or whatever as long as he checks in with you every now and then." She then grabbed her purse, rummaged through it and finally discovered her keys.

"Now, you be good for Tina, okay?"

Mike smiled and nodded his head.

"Great! Well, I guess I'll be off, thanks again, Tina." Mrs. Pearson then disappeared out the door.

Tina quietly removed her blue jean jacket as she stared at Mike. The car growled as Mrs.

Pearson backed the Mercury Lynx out of the driveway. Both Mike and Tina watched her drive up the hill and out of sight.

"How did you get here?" Mike asked bluntly.

"I drove," Tina responded.

"Where's your car?"

"I parked in the back of your house since I drove over here on the old road."

"Old Road?"

"Yeah, the road running along the back of your house," Tina explained. "Nobody seems to know the name of it. It's just there. Not many drive on that road."

Tina smiled at Mike. God, how she hated kids. But her mom told her it was downright disgraceful to snub her nose at a chance to make some money. So, here she was. Tina wished fervently that for some reason the luncheon would be cancelled. She wanted to go home.

"Wanna play?" Mike asked her hopefully.

"That depends. What do you want to play?"

"I don't know."

"Well, what kind of games do you like to play?"

"How about Monopoly?" Mike said eagerly.

"Naw, what about a card game?" Monopoly, Tina thought scornfully, like the kid knows how to play Monopoly.

"Okay. Do you wanna play war?"

What she really wanted was a t.v. She was missing All My Children. "That's fine."

"Let's play in my room," Mike said.

Tina got up, crossed the living room, and followed the boy down the hall. At the end of the hall, the door to Mike's room was open. As Tina approached she saw that the center of the door was covered with baseball cards. The kind you get with bubble gum. His bed was parallel to the opposite wall. He had a wooden nightstand next to the bed. The digital clock read 1:08. Hopefully his mom would be home by 2:30.

Mike sat Indian style in the middle of his room. He was dealing the cards.

Tina got an ace and a joker. Much to Mike's delight, he got three aces and the remaining joker.

Tina began by placing her first card down, which Mike pounced upon with a nine of spades. To Tina's aggravation the game seemed to go on forever. They both laid card after card until Mike finally got bored and realized it could take all night before someone won.

Tina gathered the cards and returned them to the nightstand. The neon clock said 1:31. One hour, she told herself. Tina turned around in time to see Mike shrugging his jacket over his shoulders. He had already put on the little Keds tennis shoes with velcro tabs.

"What are you doing?" Tina asked.

"I'm going out."

"Not without telling me where you're going," Tina responded sharply.

He then proceeded down the hall leaving Tina in his wake.

Smartass kid, Tina thought angrily. "I said not till you tell me where you're going. Come back here!"

"No."

"What?" Tina screamed.

"I said, I won't come back there. I'm going out," was Mike's flippant answer.

Tina flew down the hall, "Like hell you are!"

As Mike reached for the doorknob, Tina grabbed him by the collar and jerked him backwards.

"I said NO!"

"Let go of me," Mike screamed as he spasmodically twisted and turned trying to get loose. Mike then pulled back his right foot and slammed his shoe into Tina's knee.

Stumbling backwards, Tina grabbed her throbbing knee cap while Mike made a quick dash to the door. Tina's right hand connected with the brass umbrella rack standing by the coat room door.

The little asshole, Tina thought wildly as she raised the umbrella rack high above her head. Then with both hands she smashed the rack into the base of Mike's neck. A sickening crack ripped the air as Mike slid onto the plush

carpet. Tina was frozen. She leaned heavily against the front door as the umbrella rack slid from her limp hands.

"Mike," she croaked to the listless body.

"Mike, answer me!" With a burst of energy she grabbed Mike's shoulders and turned him over. His head lolled at an awkward angle while his eyes stared through Tina and beyond.

Christ, she had killed the kid. Now what was she going to do? Panic! Her hands began to tremble violently. Stop! her mind screamed. Then with an effort she began to relax. She knew what must be done. Quickly, she replaced the umbrella stand and set about her work.

*

*

*

*

Tina heard the car before she saw it. The engine died abruptly. Then the car door opened and slammed shut, followed by the click of Mrs. Pearson's heels as she approached the door.

Tina jumped up and crossed to the door as Mrs. Pearson entered.

"Hiya!" Tina smiled brightly.

"Hello, how's everything?" the woman asked as she put her purse down on one of the chairs.

"Fine, Mike is out right now."

"Oh, was he good?"

"An angel," Tina answered.

"Good," the woman smiled.

"Yeah, he left about thirty minutes ago to ride his bike. I'm expecting him to check in soon."

"Well, sometimes he loses track of time. And you know kids, they just don't seem to understand how it worries us when we don't know what they're doing."

"Yeah, anything can happen," Tina responded as she put her coat on.

"Well, I'm glad I got a hold of you to watch Mike."

"My pleasure."

Standing patiently in front of Mrs. Pearson, Tina retrieved her keys from her purse.

Mrs. Pearson walked Tina towards the door.

"I charge \$2 an hour. I hope that's okay with you," Tina said.

"What, oh, yeah," Mrs. Pearson blushed. "I almost forgot," she said awkwardly.

Mrs. Pearson fished a ten dollar bill out of her purse. "Here ya go, keep the change and thanks so much Tina."

"Sure, thank you, call me anytime you need a babysitter," Tina said brightly as she walked out the door.

Tina walked around the brick house slowly. She climbed into her Chevette, started the car, and backed carefully out the driveway.

Tina then shifted into "D" and began down the narrow road. She stuck her Madonna tape into

the cassette player, rewinded to the beginning of "Dress you up" and turned the volume up.

A smile slowly lifted the corner of her mouth about a mile down the road. She casually glanced over at the bike wheel jutting out of the embankment.

Ten dollars, she thought, not bad.

MK9.49

Bruce Buchanan

The whore -
Does intend
To impart desire.
I need more,
A friend,
For I'm salted with fire.

Pilgrims' Hope

Bruce Buchanan

Out of the place from which they began,
They'll follow their path as long as they can.
And if hills do meet them
And the rain does beat them
They can then know,
While they go
That the sun will greet in time
Those who leave the paved street for a rhyme. . .

Winter Wedding

Bruce Buchanan

To a winter wedding
Some friends were heading,
Not really because they cared,
But more because they dared
Not stay at home
While there was a party or a reception to roam.
But before arriving and with subtle guile,
Each practiced their smile
In a mirror,
Which made not their consciences clearer.
They then raced quickly along,
Not hearing the song
Of the wind simply saying
He was not touched by all their playing. . .

Winter in Kentucky

Phil Mason

There's an eerie stillness about

The children all indoors do pout

The frost-laden ground creaks under foot

The tobacco crops long been cut

The trees are all barren and bleak

Water is now frozen over the creek

Clouds dominate the sky

The heating bills are so high

The rolling hills are a blanket of snow

The cattle all huddle together in a row

But nary a Kentuckian does care

Basketball fever is in the air







