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Aurora, 1989

Eastern Kentucky University, English Department

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AURORA

AURORA

1989

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Contents

H. Inness Probizanski, story	1
Angela Phillips, poetry	9
Tom Puckett, poetry	13
Kristin D. Abbott, poetry	18
Jacque Moore, story	19
Donna Brockman, poetry	30
David W. Reed, poetry	32
L. Roe, story	35
Connie Sue Baker, poetry	46
Kg Scalf, poetry	49

Small Bare Feet

by

H. Inness Probizanski

Spurred on by visions of teachers and multiplication, he picked up speed, bare feet skimming over the dust and weeds and rocks of the old mining road. The trees and vines overhanging the path were a blur, and the only sound in Arlee's ears was the rush of wind and the rush of blood, mingling in the late afternoon sun.

Arlee's race had begun at the head of this road in a small, two room house. With a bounce and a whoop he vaulted off the top step of the wooden porch, his feet already pumping before they hit the ground, three feet down and several feet out.

An only child, he lived with his parents. There were no neighbors, no playmates, no dogs, cats, or pets of any kind, no television, and worst of all no radio. Even his cousin Tom who lived in town had a radio. There were no other houses within half-a-day's walk, over several dogpaths and mountains away. For company he climbed the trees and watched the birds, (there were many), and squirrels, (there were few).

He slept in the living room on a small, steel cot of unknown origin, and lay looking out of the window at the field across the creek. There had once been a sawmill there, but now it belonged to the stickweeds and briars, punctuated only occasionally by scarce glimpses of rusting brown machinery.

He fell asleep at night watching the rim of the sun creep behind mountain ridges that were his sole companions.

As Arlee sped down the road, sweat ran down the front of his face and fell on the thin mantle of dust that covered his T-shirt. Streaks and whorls of dust lay on his chest beneath the cotton, sifted through the fabric and swirling across his skin like shifting tattoos.

Stumbling once, he caught himself. Sheer determination, (and the vision of his Mother holding his torn jeans in one hand and a switch in the other), overcame the effects of gravity. Arlee knew he would not get another pair, but that he would have to wear them with patches, and patches became loose when the Fall winds began to blow. Come Winter, not only would Arlee's nose become red and raw, but his knees also.

The smell of harsh diesel fumes in the air wrenched Arlee's mind into the present. He had reached the end of the dirt road and the beginning of the gravel. Here the mountains opened up a little, and the road was smoother, though steep, on into town some several miles away. He slowed to a trot. Behind him dust plumes rose into the trees.

It would be around the next curve, if he weren't too late. He tried to run again, knowing the driver wouldn't wait for him, but the gravel kept his speed down to a frantic shuffle. In his mind he could see the bus doors closing as he rounded the bend. He began to trot on the balls of his feet, his face squeezed tight against the pain of the sharp gravel.

The huge machine was sitting on the shoulder of the road as he rounded the bend. Beneath the shade of a huge black oak, the bus hummed and

shook, throwing out grey clouds of smoke and the smell of hot rubber tires. Long and blue, the bookmobile shimmered in the air, vibrating from the engine and the energy; the energy of all the books, stories, and pictures inside. It was a can on wheels, thought Arlee, a can filled full with the smells of fading yellow paper and library paste, of dim inky pictures that tossed your thoughts headlong into Summer, with no room for thoughts of Fall and school and homework.

It came twice each year, rolling in like clockwork, or the migration of the birds. Once at the beginning of June it came to dispense the books, and once again at the beginning of August, to gather them all up and stow them away until next year. To miss it the first time was to miss it forever. No books were given in the Fall when school began.

Mounting the steps through the hissing hydraulic doors, Arlee squeezed his eyes shut, chasing away the flickering dots of light in the dim shade. The odor of books filled his nose, and he began to think of what he would like in the way of companions. A book on caves, he thought, to burrow deep underground with, beneath the fallen leaves and rocks to where he could smell the moist earth and explore hidden rivers and rooms; or maybe a book on airplanes, (with full-color illustrations), to take him soaring above the clouds into cool, blue air where he could look down at the tiny speck of his house.

Arlee flinched as he looked up and saw two large glaring eyes staring back at him. For a brief instant, he thought they were two funny-side up eggs, and he fell backwards against the windows of the closed doors.

"I was just about to leave, you know," came wheezing voice from beneath the eggs, "so hurry

up, find what you want, and bring it to me. Just filling out the card will take you five minutes what with writing your name and all, and I've already stayed longer than I'd like. I can't drive these roads after dark, my eyes ain't what they used to be."

Arlee inwardly agreed, and nodded his head. Two fried eggs weren't much in the way of eyes, and it would be awfully hard to drive with them at night. He smiled to himself as he jumped up from the tiny stairwell and slid past the drive into the back. Behind him the startled driver slumped deeper into his seat, and muttered something to himself about addled children and dinner.

Counting the teardrop-shaped lights above his head, Arlee made his way down the aisle. The lights resembled those found on the tailfins of his uncle's chevrolet, only clear and small. Studs and rivets filed down from the ceiling in neat lines, disappearing behind the tops of the shelves. Bare of paint, the worn wood tilted in precarious angles, held up partly by braces and partly by the weight of the books. The closeness of them filled Arlee's head with the smell of sticky pine and splinters, a smell that would cling to the books on lazy afternoons as he sat cross-legged and hidden atop some ridge.

Arlee knew the organization of the bookmobile by heart. Over here, faded romance novels with torn covers read by moonlight and giggling girls, hidden behind blankets - there, how-to-books: Teach Yourself Electronics, and long for some wire and batteries; Learn Carpentry at Home, and yearn for a hammer and nails; Learn Spanish or Latin, confuse everyone and get strange glances; Learn to Dance, and get whipped; Learn to Draw the Human Figure, and ge

whipped again, only worse. Arlee stayed away from the how-to-books.

The back of the shelves was where he wanted to be. Lit by the struggling sunbeams that worked their way through the dusty double windows, the back rows were filled with his sort of books. Here were the adventures and perils that he would eat, drink, and breathe throughout the hot Summer. These were his favorites, and he knew that if he were given the chance, he would struggle home with them all in his arms, to gorge himself until he burst with strange tales of the world's wonders.

Of course he could only have three.

Up in the front of the bookmobile the driver coughed, startling Arlee out of his trance. The driver sat perched on the edge of his seat like a stout giant bird, staring and waiting and occasionally gunning the tired engine into fits of exaggerated and prolonged spasms.

Quickly Arlee reached down beneath a shelf and grabbed a large tattered book with a biplane on the cover. Spinning around, he jumped and snatched another thick book, this one with a battling stegosaurus and triceratops trodding amid a prehistoric jungle.

While walking slowly toward the driver, Arlee's attention was grasped by the glimmer of a golden earring. With a swift tug, Arlee rescued the one-eyed pirate by shoving him tightly under his arm between the dinosaurs and the biplane.

The rubber floor mat under his feet was warm, and the tiny ridges raised goosebumps along his back. As he walked, he stared at everything, studying it. This would be the last time he would see so many books until he returned his new

friends. All too soon they would be exchanged for textbooks filled with strict ratios and percentages, and a few short stories squeezed in-between sentence diagrams.

"Let's have them," the driver roared, his voice amplified by the close sheet-metal walls. "Here's your pencil, and here's the cards to fill out. Put the name of the book on top of each, and your name on the bottom. Leave room for me to stamp the date in the middle, and if you need help tell me quick, so's we can both get out of here."

Arlee was already busy, cataloging all the sights and sounds of the bookmobile, placing each into it's proper slot, to retrieve them later from memory and gaze at them.

"Are you deaf, boy!" yelled the driver. "Can you write? Because if you don't start writing I'll never be out of here before dark! I should have been gone half an hour ago, so if you want those books you'd better hurry and get moving!"

Spurred by the thought of his books being wrenched from his hands and returned to the shelves, Arlee grabbed the pencil from the driver's hand and began to write.

After all three cards had been filled out, Arlee gently positioned the books under his arm, just so, and handed the pencil back to the driver.

"I don't know why we still bother to come out all this way," sighed the driver, "you're about the only person I see out here, except for a few old women a couple of miles back, who stagger down from Bull Creek to get an apronload of romance novels. If they ever quit, let me

tell you, I'll be the first person to recommend dropping this route, and then you'll have to go into town to plague the librarian there. There won't be anymore road work for Charlie Wilson, let me tell you."

Arlee gazed up at the driver serenely. That was ridiculous! No books? That would be impossible, like not being able to wade because the creek disappeared, or not being able to climb into the top of a beech tree and spit down to the ground because the branches vanished. It could never happen.

"Get on out of here, boy," wheezed the driver, "you're touched with somethin' and I hope it ain't catching. I got no more time to spare."

He jumped out eagerly as the door hissed open and a new wave of moist heat came rolling into the stifling cab. As soon as his feet hit the dirt, the huge machine began it's slow, arthritic turn back toward town. Blasted by a wave of heat and smoke, Arlee stood and stared after it, listening to its squeals and grunts long after it had disappeared.

Arlee stared at the books under his arm and smiled. Slowly he began to think of what the driver had said, of how fragile this pleasure was, and of how he depended so much on the old women he had never seen struggling down that path, a steep path that would become more and more difficult each year. Any year, next year, might find the road too tough or too long for them to travel, and that would be the end of it.

He struggled to think of it as a cloud passed over the sun and threw his face into shadow.

Sliding from under his arm, a book fell and lay in the dust. From the front of its cover shone a buccaneer's scarred smile, and a golden earring glittering in the sun of the Ivory Coast. Suddenly he could feel the hustle and bustle of rolling dinosaurs and hear the sputter of a squadron of planes. By the time he had reached down and straightened up he was smiling.

Slowly at first, and then gaining speed on the gravel, he raced back up the road, the dust parting and flying beneath a pair of small bare feet.

chance encounters
for Frankie Addams

by

Angela Phillips

passing on the street, our eyes ever meeting
and our souls a link wanting,
but never a word is spoken
chance encounters leave us alone
with so much more needed to make
a body a home.

i sit and stare today into a gray November sky
(is my gray your gray?)
asking the snowflakes who i am and them whispering
you are you. i cry i must be more than me. and i
rise and
look through the mirror darkly.

stepping through the looking glass, i merge with
myself
and find that this is all there is. Nothing less
at least
but, too, nothing more. And with another chance
encounter,
the me of we is left empty and by myself, but not
alone.
I'll write the things I want to say.
and you will sleep at the bottom of my heart.

Framed

by

Angela Phillips

Pictures on the wall,
fixed facsimiles on film of forgotten friend's
Framed memories kept behind glass
in a place where time will always stand still-
Doing hard time.
No bail can be paid to go back to smiling days.
Hands tooled with life
 chip away at the rock solid clock
without rhyme or reason to make sense out of me
ways.
So on we go until we stop
where nobody knows if that smile was a flip-flo
But captured in a flash
we arrest the reality of now
And the future believes of the past
what is on the wall,
framed and hung for
the crime of passing time.

Vicious Life Cycles

"... Anything that is careless enough to get caught in
my web.

I have to live, don't I?"

E.B. White's
Charolette's Web

by

Angela Phillips

Creepy, Crawley

Spinning, Reeling

A beautiful woven death-trap

Of silken threads so fine--

"Anything to sustain this life of mine"

The dew falls

Dripping, Clinging

Creating beauty in brilliant and sunlit facets.

Glimmering, Shimmering

in the crisp morning breeze.

Sitting on the silken threads so fine

you wait--a graceful preyer.

A fly lands

Struggling, Tangling

No chance for escape

Give up the ghost

Shroud the victim in silken threads so fine.

"Anything to sustain this life of mine"

Among the silken threads so fine.

You dine and drink the blood red wine.

Thunder Thighs

by

Angela Phillips

As sole claps
pavement
in steady rhythm
Fat tumbles together-
The rumble of thunder thighs.

Whale Song

by

Tom Puckett

The sea is our womb, loves,
and life is ever-deepening.
The young are swimming sweet laudanum sleep,
fair Luna plays on the bay.

These days are old, loves
and this world is nearly full.
The dance is swift at hand.

Forget but a moment the lamps that glisten
beyond, upon the shore.
You sing for a lover who will not listen
and waste the light to mourn.

The ocean is a wash by morning,
Tides forever roll away.
Come and make love. I will teach you a song
Younger than Earth by a day.
Let those without song,
Without love and sorrow,
Build up their granite tombs,
While the thrusts of our passions ripple the belly
Of the timeless, celestial womb.

Tarot Divinative

by

Tom Puckett

Magician- with your secret signs
Aligned in myriad mysteries;
Washed in the flickering, golden light-
Channel of virtue and wisdom.

Spin your shining spell upon
The fiery orbit crystal.
Prick the shifting sands of gloom
Like a single, keening thought.
Show me the rainbows in elm-grain,
And solemn memories in stone.
Grasping for Heaven, find the mastery of Earth,
And by my hand divine.
Sing in me, muse!

Language is symbol and image is myth;
The truest words unspoken.

I am the fool!
I am the laughing, wretched fool,
Dancing upon the precipice.
I am the heckling, bouncing jester
Bridled with vexing bells.
Tipping the cask to the setting sun,
My skullcap wearily nods.

I shall drink with the Priestess high,
Her crown is the ringed moon.
Brimming cup of living milk,
Reflective lamp of Isis on her breast.
Praise the Gods of mystic wisdom
Who call me to this shrine!
Fertile link, mytic bride
She will whisper secrets through the night.

I am the harvest virgin!
Born of a September song-
Nine pentacles and seven cups
I carry on the hermit's path.
I am the green-eyed, laughing fool
Who will not heed the hierophant.

Each of us all, our secrets must attempt
To divine from some higher, prevailing grip.
Each of us bound by rules unnamed-
Your title, my vision, one and the same.
Each to our destined niche we lie,
Belly up, nude to the sky
Circling on the vast zodiacal disc.

La Danse Macabre

by

Tom Puckett

Shimmering hues of Autumn's high altar
Speckled with harvest sunbeams;
Diana's haven, where children of rainbows
Gather with psyche aglow.
A wand'ring minstrel charms the air
With draughts of a sensual liquor;
Whispering leaves assent.

Evening falls, and sends the troupe climbing
Forested, rocky inclines,
Pausing upon the purpling slopes
To spy, embrace and smile.
Life, by the spell of the lotus-bloom
Becomes a weirded dream;
The form is lightly misted.

Summoned by Bacchus, they cast again
Into the high pavillion.
The rhymes of a poet ring from the grave;
Stoke the towering altar-fire.

Then through the night they danse themselves
'Round a hollow, flaming log.
Soldiers, fays and glitterati
Washed in a crystalline fog.
The scent and the howl of All Hallow's eve
Bedevil the mirthing clan.
Glistening bubbles gather skyward
Borne on the rippling smokestream.

The jester, when at last he sleeps,
Murmurs oft aloud;
With cries of pleasure tears himself
From tranquil pools of myth.
With careless nod, he drifts again;
The full-moon forest swoons.

Happy times, and sacred places--
They vanish like a whisper.
The dearest friends of revelry's cup
Fade with the first taste of dew.
Smoke and ashes, soul and song,
The merry troupe disbands.
Scatter, chill and dissipate
As flesh and embers shall.
Yet memories dance away from dust
Like a silent, raindamp prayer.
Alive, the vision swaggers:
Sylphs and spirits ringing tight
'Round the hollow, flaming log.

The End

by

Kristin D. Abbott

Silent tracks of discipline
Flew smoothly, quietly
As the train of thought
Gathered inseparably.
Tracing time before the
Darkness finally arose.
The time for glory to
Come to all those
Deserving.
And it came and was gone
Before it was known.
And the sun exploded
While the land and sea moaned.
And time passed along
With the thoughts.
Then death and destruction
Forever evolved.

712, again

by

Jacquie Moore

Slam! The door served as a sounding board for my roommate's obviously infuriated mood. I didn't care. I rarely cared for anything anymore. All I knew of emotion was trapped, frozen in the day of my demise. It occurred entirely on a Monday. How opportune! Even if I had knowledge of my death before it transpired, I am positive that I could not have chosen a more suitable time.

I recollect my final hours with a vividness that would put reality to shame. Awakening in a confused mood, I noticed an unfamiliar lightness radiating above my shoulders. Glancing quickly into the mirror quelled the sudden surge of fear that my head was missing. Deliberating for a moment and ultimately deciding that this unusual sensation evolved from the large quantities of alcohol consumed the previous evening, I popped a couple of aspirin and bopped to my first class. I often pondered upon the reasoning behind forcing an English major to take irrelevant classes such as this first one of mine, but I never wondered more than on this particular morn. Slithering in and seating myself, I spread my gaze over the classroom. A certain loneliness coupled itself with my prior confusion.

"Not another Dickinson lover in the house," my mind announced sleepily.

"Finally awake, huh?" I asked dryly.

"Yes," my mind snapped stuffily.

"Yes, there's probably not another English taste bud for miles," I, at last, agreed, feeling the loneliness seep out. Although my mind was a snob, it still was my best friend.

"Good morning, students!" A voice rudely interrupted my mental banter. Looking up, I observed the absolute epitome of geology, my professor. His hair greased to one side, and there was a nervous twitch in his stubbled lower jaw.

"I wonder what we are going to learn today," my mind whispered.

"I hope not too much; you feel sunburnt," I whispered back. We both giggled, remembering only the first of several zombie-makers.

"Today we are going to study the moon's influence upon the Earth's tides," the professor sadistically spat, connecting his eyes with mine.

"Oh God," my mind moaned. For some odd reason, I didn't see it coming, but my mind did. Out of that mad stare sprang the largest wave I had ever felt.

"A tsunami!" My mind screamed as the wave crashed.

"Now," the professor drawled demonically and lurched into his lecture. A sudden strange fear enveloped me, and my hand fixed around my pen in a tight convulsive motion.

"I can't control..." my mind cried at the onslaught of torrential waves. I became worried. My mind was an experienced swimmer, dealing with mental floods all of the time. This time, however, it was struggling, more than likely due to too many spiked beverages. I watched

incredulously as blue notes were scribbled furiously by my own hand. I had no control. My professor, much like the moon was in control. He twirled and dashed about the room in a crazed orbit as my hand wrote on and on. Drippingly, the former tsunami leaked out of my nose, at last, tamed.

"Are you all right?" I asked my mind.

"Yes," my mind panted from atop Mt. Ernest Hemingway. The water lapped greedily higher and higher up the mountain's rigid sides.

"Why is the water getting higher?" I asked, nervously wiping my nose.

"Because of his twisting about; stop him, please!" My mind begged. Peeking downward, I noted that the close of the hour was close at hand.

"Class dismissed," a whirling voice whipped. Jerking, I dropped my pen and rubbed my abused hand.

"Thank God," my mind proclaimed weakly.

"Yes, thank God," I agreed, ignoring the physical fatigue of my hand and gathering my books in a fevered frenzy lest my hand's moon should decide to return.

"Are you going to be all right?" I asked again, scampering out of the building.

"I have to be; we can't stop; just try not to hit me too hard for a while," my mind streamed.

"O.K." I agreed, understanding the gravity of the situation. Slugging along, I had to

constantly stop to shake the sidewalk loose from my boots. I don't correctly remember if this was the rightful cause of my slothful gait, but I do know that it was upon this trek that I first saw it. Clip! Clop! Clip! Clop! The queer sound caught me unawares, and I shot sight over my left shoulder. There was a brilliantly ornate black carriage rolling down University Drive.

"Oh, how magnificent," my mind gasped.

"Yes," I concurred. The carriage was of usual height and width, but it was elaborately decorated. Perched on every corner of its solid frame were figures of carved ivory, swathed in white web-like material, holding golden trumpets erect.

"I wonder if that's for homecoming," my mind stated.

"I don't know." I replied, still enrapt with the splendor of it. There was a dusky stallion in the lead. A most powerful looking creature, he tossed his head as his bit was pulled sharply, sending the gold and jade colored tassels tied to his mane into a spry jig. Stopping my uncautious step and turning full circle, I stared. The carriage slowed and stopped beside me. Out of nowhere, fear creeped up my legs, and I felt my eyes widen. Turning, I resumed my pace at a quicker clip. Clop! Clip! Clop! Clip! I spun around and reeled backwards. The carriage was not even an inch at my heel. Now, true fear clawed my thighs. This carriage was definitely following me. Racing to the Wallace Building as swiftly as the molasses-like sidewalk would allow, I thought about the carriage.

"It probably was just going your way," my mind offered rationality.

"On the sidewalk?" I countered, feeling slightly perturbed at my mind's pandering to unlikely logic. Huffing and puffing up three flights of stairs, I collapsed gratefully into my selected seat. Everyone stared. For a Monday, the class was suspiciously empty.

"Did you study for the test?" A sarcastic voice plowed into my midsection.

"Test!" My mind screamed, clamboring down Mt. Ernest Hemingway. Of course, I hadn't studied.

"No," I monotoned.

"Good pre-noon to you all," a fat voice calculated. Straining around, I watched my professor waddle to the podium. Blue books in hand, he offered a superior smile. His teeth shone a fake whiteness, and I had to look away to avoid blindness.

"Why didn't you tell me about this test?" My mind sniffed, shivering and standing in a puddle of left over tsunami.

"I forgot," I mumbled, staring at the circled date on my syllabus.

"You have the entire hour; I suggest you make the most of it," my professor sneered as he thumbed through the little blue monsters for the first row. By the time he reached my row, my mind had filed away the confusion.

"Where is that philosophy folder?" My mind screeched frantically.

"Are you going to be able to handle this test?" I queried quite concerned.

"We can't stop now," my mind replied flatly.

"Well then look under H for most hated class," I offered.

"Jacquie?" My professor questioned as he handed me the tightly bound blue book. Putting away my schedule of weekly class meetings and accepting my fate from his beefy paw, I picked up my battered blue Bic biro. A fly lighted on its bald tip.

"I heard a Fly buzz- when I died-" My mind preached.

"Oh, stop the melodramatics, Emily!" I blurted. My professor raised an eyebrow in my direction. I lowered my sight, and the questions on the first page of the blue book leered at me.

"Take me on!" My mind courageously roared, thrusting forward its dripping file of philosophical studies.

"You got it!" The questions shouted, showering the common ground with rounds of dialogue. The soaked folder fell in pieces to the rueful observation of my mind. Flying behind a boulder of grammatical rules, my mind began to throw down exclamation points.

"Make my day!" My mind blared, climbing a participle that happened to be dangling nearby, to the top of a sentence fragment.

"You got it!" The questions sniggered, loading and firing a bazooka full of Socratic inquiry. It was a direct hit, and I watched helplessly as my mind tumbled into a dark subconscious recess.

"Miss Moore?" A force was shaking my shoulder. Glancing up still in a sleep state, I rubbed my eyes at the professor. The room was empty except for myself.

"Is the test over?" I yawned.

"Yes," the professor clipped as he clicked shut his briefcase and wobbled out of the room. My head was pounding, so I remained still for a moment.

"Are you all right?" I ventured, closing my eyes. There was no reply, and a sick feeling lighted on my shoulder. Standing and scrambling out of the room, I raced down the stairs consumed by nothing except the burning lumpy sensation of vomit rising a cartiledge ring higher with every peck of the pesky sickness. Leaning against the clamminess of the nearest wall to swat at the sickness, I saw it. The ominous black carriage that had followed me earlier was ricketing down the second floor of the Wallace Building. People were everywhere but no one noticed this monstrosity lurching toward me. A scream struck down the vomit and lodged behind my teeth. Halting before me, the black stallion pinned me to the wall with his somber stare.

"Get to your next class; we can't stop!" A weak voice sounded loudly in my head. Hugging the wall, I crept past the horse and carriage. Before me the hallway stretched and swelled. I swallowed hard. Finally, having put miles between me and my fear, I leveled myself away from the wall and peeped back. The carriage was gone.

"Where did it go?" I asked my mind.

"I don't know," my mind sneezed, wheezing through deep wounds made by Socratic inquiry.

The door to my classroom was open, and I plodded over to my desk. I heard a faint cough and a ripple. It was my mind, and I knew not whether it lay in blood or water. No one paid any attention as I thumped my books down and took my seat. My chair was still warm from its last occupant, but for all of its warmth, it couldn't combat the icyness of the other students. A blue cloud of resentment hovered heavily.

"Good afternoon, students!" A nasal belt strapped me from behind. Peering up, I noted the entrance of my instructor. His head was lost in the ever thickening blue cloud, but I could still see his red rimmed eyes. They were lustfully evil. Outside the clock chimed the quarter hour, reminding me of the large Catholic church back home. I had gone to a funeral there once, and I fancied that I could hear the sweet strains of organ music.

"I felt a funeral, in my Brain-" My mind coughed, spewing blood onto a misplaced bundle of algebraic equations.

"You'll be all right; don't talk like that," I comforted, feeling fear tap dance on my stomach.

"I have a sore throat, but I still am going to teach," my instructor's eyes spoke by opening and closing with every third syllable. I lowered my gaze. The blue cloud was leaving a kind of residue on my books, and a puddle had formed over the word Classical. Touching it, I drew my hand away quickly. It was like liquid fire. Scanning the room, I noticed that the blue cloud was expanding, filling every crevice with its ungodly residue. Even the professor's nasal blastings were cushioned to a whisper. I lay my head down onto my open notebook.

"Please," my mind whimpered. I could feel the residue collecting in the valley between my shoulder blades, running up my back, and funneling into my ear. Slowly, ever so slowly, resentment was soaking into my mind. Hearing a defined click, I jerked my head upright. Class was over, and the blue cloud was billowing aimlessly out of the door. I closed my eyes in silent thanks.

"Just one more class!" my mind cruelly croaked. I was struck silent. Never before had my mind addressed me in such a harsh manner. Apparently, resentment had salted its wounds. I opened my eyes. The room was empty except for the professor who sat by the window. He cocked his head at me and walked over. His shirt was rumpled, and his tie slightly undone.

"Going to pick up your test?" He blared. Blue tendrils poofed out of his mouth and curled around my neck.

"Yes, I drug out, swiping away the wispy blue tenticals. I had almost forgotten about that test. Centuries had passed since I had taken it. Standing was difficult, but I managed. Leaning over to pick up my test, I saw for the first time, a composite of scores on the blackboard.

"Fourteen failures!" I exclaimed. Hurriedly, I shuffled through the papers. Jacqueline Moore trumpeted out at me along with a rather large crimson colored fifty-three. Staring I tried to find the humor in it. There was none. I looked again because sometimes a nine can look like a five. That, however, was not the case this time. I shifted my weight and dropped back down into my seat.

"Do you realize what you have just done to me?" I asked the professor as he sauntered past my desk. The coughing inside my head grew louder.

"Going to get over it?" He impassively belted. I couldn't speak, but an expressive shake of my head was enough for him to reply with an uncaring shrug of his shoulders. Tears pinched the backs of my eyes and spilled out onto my desk.

"This is so stupid!" I shouted, making a before unnoticed man jolt. I looked pleadingly at the stranger. His sunglasses made his soul impenetrable to my probing, but I knew he cared simply by the way he sat. I felt better, and the coughing eased. Mopping up my desk and face with my shirt sleeve, I stomped up to the blackboard. The composite mocked me. Grabbing the nearest eraser, I scrubbed the board, paying extra attention to the F that loomed larger than life.

"Going to put a hole in it." My old first grade teacher's voice played back on a memory tape. I giggled a little girl giggle somewhere inside of myself. Turning, I watched the students file into the room. Their faces glowed in an odd whiteness which contrasted a quick flash of darkness at the side of my sight. Scoping in the direction of the movement, I discerned the tail of the horse and the black curtain that guarded the driver from my scrutiny. Curiosity made me look deeper at that curtain. It was a beautiful ebony velvet with some sort of a design sculptured into it. I imagined that the driver must be both gentle and kind if he were swayed by such beautiful things.

"Are you ready for class?" A voice sliced the hypnotic pull of the carriage.

"Huh?" I asked. My head felt funny, and I scowled at my friend who was smiling at me. Looking back over for the carriage, I viewed nothingness. Sadness smacked with an open palm.

"Where did it go?" My mind gurgled gruesomely.

"I don't know," I answered, walking over and taking my seat. My body felt stiff. The professor bounded in and began his lecture, but I couldn't hear. The death rattles inside my head were magnifying.

"Bitch," a harsh expletive was driven my way. Twisting around, I locked eyes with my friend. Sitting there and looking as goofy as he always had, he had uttered the title. There was no bandstand and no grand fanfare, but at that moment of connection, I died.

"Because I could not stop for Death, he kindly stopped for me," the professor quoted. Hearing the whinny of a horse, I looked up at the black carriage that sat patiently in front of my desk. The curtain was more dazzling close up. Swirl upon swirl, the design made me dizzy. Someone inside drew the curtain aside, and I leaned forward. An unusual smile reflexed upon my face. There was no fear.

"Hardly the Conquerer Worm, huh?" I whispered. The silence filled my head was all the reply that I needed, and I stood.

A Dream

by

Donna Brockman

A dream, she came
on azure blue
from the depths
of an echo she spoke
and I, prepared to
descend to her world-
awoke.

Cool Cascades

by

Donna Brockman

Cool cascades of monotone morning
fall in prisms of
light
urging the floor to life.

Truth

by

Donna Brockman

I saw Death last night.
Her white shroud of infinity
rustled so close that
for a moment I peered
over the edge of reality
to breathe the air
of another world.
But it was not me
she wanted-
and so set me back
in the blackness of time
to wonder how long
the real hell will last.

Summer

by

David W. Reed

Cool blew the breeze of Summer
The crickets rubbed one anothers' legs together,
A song of nature and a waning season.

She came to me hungry-eyed.
The night was Summer--Hot and sleepless.

One sleepless night oft' brings another.
One, warm--feeling of passion and belonging.

Others afterwards cool (cold), lonely.

As the Phoenix rises from its own ashes to
soar above the world,
Beyond touch, but not out of hope
And the nights of a ripe Autumn.

22 ° Libra

by

David W. Reed

The wind blows wild and warm against my face.
I step to the edge and lean against my intuition.
Passion has taken control: the time is ripe.
The stars smile in pleasure and the joke.

The twine glides smoothly through the caribeaners.
At first I have control of my descent;
But excitement builds, I loosen my grip on the rope.
I fall faster.
The freedom is exciting-- is adventure.

Quickly I give a tug with my right hand.
The rope burns into my side as I bounce to a stop.

Breathly I look around.
The winey smell of nature sends my soul soaring above
my decent.
The rope anchors my flying fantasies.

Sweating, I release reality to fall.

The Sirens and Muses have composed a melody of Rose'.
I bring the cup to my lips.
My ears listen and are gladdened.

Falling faster now, the world is a blur.
A sultry wind burns a smile on my face.

I have reached the end of my rope.

I am indeed free to experience.
A calm, coolness overtakes me as I plunge into the
waters.

Hunting

by

David W. Reed

Dawning clear and moist; a lily raises
its head to smile at the East.
A quail struts her plumage across a mossy log.

Hungrily a hunter watches.
His palms sweat and mouth waters.
It's Spring.
He must wait for the golden Autumn--A mature bir

Ruffling her feathers,
The quail drums her mating call.
Autumn is two years west.

His finger itches.

The mountain stream runs and gurgles full of
rainbows and browns.
It's their season.

With rod and Royan Coachman, he practices an
art form of the Romantics.

Basic Cure

by

L. Roe

"Daddy!" we screamed frantically, "wait!" Too late. He already had the truck's gears thrown in reverse. The wheels churned backwards. We watched in horror, screaming, jumping up and down. Our arms waved spasmodically in the air. Five kids crazed with horror could not be that hard to miss. Why didn't he see us?

The vehicle ran over the back legs of our German Shepherd, Lobo. Evidently, the crunch, thud of bones cracking woke our father from his daze. His gaze, out of the window, passed over each child. It was as if he were counting to make sure it had not been one of us who had been crumpled under the narrow tracks of his truck. He flung the truck into forward. Once again grinding Lobo's bones into the pavement. We stood. Numb.

Slowly we moved toward the vehicle of destruction. Everyone knew what was under the truck, no one wanted to witness it. One by one, we dropped to the ground and peered under the truck. Lobo lay still. He whimpered like a small child.

By now, Dad had pried his overly large torso from the Datsun. His six foot four body stooped so he too could look at Lobo, grunting as if he were annoyed the dog had delayed his fishing trip. He reach and grabbed Lobo by his front paws and dragged him from under the truck. Lobo howled in pain. Nobody said anything. "Well, he's not dead..." Dad grumbled. His large muscular body tensed. He seemed to have no

compassion for the animal whose life he had altered.

"Y-You did that on p-purpose!" Linda, the youngest of the kids sniffled. "Y-You did it on p-purpose!" She stumbled across the yard fleeing to the sanctuary of the house.

Linda was always the emotional one... She never minded showing how she felt. She was the only one bold enough to accuse Daddy. Linda was small for her age, seven. She looked as if she were four or five.

The rest of us knew Dad was annoyed by Linda's outburst by the way he smacked his lips together and mumbled that he was going to go find something to put the dog on. We also knew what would happen if we said anything... So, we stood uttering no words, executing no actions. He rose and stalked across the yard to the garbage bin. We stood like trees next to Lobo, trees in shock... swaying with the winds of bewilderment.

Moments later, Daddy returned with a heavy cardboard box. He scooped Lobo onto it and pulled the makeshift sled into the grass.

"W-What are you g-going to do w-with him?" We asked almost in unison.

"Guess we'll have to use some Basic-H," Daddy said.

Basic-H, was the latest product Daddy had decided to make a million selling. It was a thick blue liquid substance...somewhat like Dawn dish washing detergent without the good smell. Daddy used Basic-H for EVERYTHING. If we fell and skinned a knee, we used Basic-H. If we had a headache, we were given Basic-H. It was used for cooking, bathing, killing roaches and other

varmit as well as for washing clothes and tooth paste. Basic-H was THE cure-all of the century... Daddy was determined to make everyone Basic-H Believers. The only other thing Dad believed more strongly in was God... No one came within one hundred feet of our house without being asked to try the Miracle Solution, or come to church.

Dad reached into his truck and came out with a spare bottle of Basic-H.

"Here, put some of this on him. He'll be all right." With that, Dad curled himself back up and slid behind the wheel of the Datsun. He pattered off to his favorite fishin' hole, never looking back at the scene on his front lawn.

My brothers, sister and I, ranging from age eight to thirteen, stared down at Lobo. We were dazed. If Mom had been home, we could have asked her what to do. But we were on our own for at least four more hours. Lobo tried to rise but the pain overcame him and he slumped back down on the box.

"What we gonna do?" DJ, the eight year old asked.

"Maybe we outta call a vet," I ventured to say.

"Don't be silly," said Jr. He was twelve. We considered him the scientific one. He knew a lot about everything. "Let's operate!" Jr was "into" operating on small helpless animals. He taught us how to operate on frogs, while they were still alive... He also showed us how to freeze grasshoppers and bring them back to life by rubbing them until their body temperature rose again. Afterward, he found, they would eat their

own legs. It was a gross procedure, but fascinating just the same...

"We can't operate on him." said Kate. She was the oldest. She was also a tell-a-tale. "You are a gross pervert, Jr. We're going to do what Daddy said...and if you don't do what he said, I'm goin' tell!"

Together, we pulled the makeshift sled into the carport. I was instructed to find a bowl large enough to hold at least a gallon of Basic-H solution. Jr, was in charge of finding gauze. He usually had some handy for his experiments. DJ, was to find a stick for a splint and Kate, of course, was the supervisor.

We met back in the carport about ten minutes later. Kate informed us that she had examined Lobo. Both legs had been crushed but the skin had not been broken. Therefore, we didn't have to worry about blood. We started our medical work. We were determined to "fix" our dog.

"Humpty Dumpty set on a wall." DJ chanted.

"Yes, and Lobo, our dog laid under a truck..." Jr chimed.

DJ stopped chanting to listen to Jr's version.

"Lobo, our dog, lay under a truck... Both legs were crushed, oh what dumb luck... All of his masters and all of his friends, used Basic-H to put him together again!" Jr and DJ snickered. Kate and I were appalled.

"Shut up, Jr," Kate screamed, flinging a we gauze at him, "can't you just shut up?"

Jr. quieted down. We started pouring the last bit of solution over Lobo's useless legs. The warm blue concoction drained into the box. It seeped, like a slow river, through the cardboard and onto the concrete. A stream of midday summer sun had found a way to invade the interior of the "operating room". The warm laser beam of light made the concoction twinkle like a magic potion. Lobo lay still as if he too thought this Miracle Cure would work. Even though we knew one bottle of Basic-H was expensive, costing about seven dollars a quart, we used the whole bottle. After all, if one capful cured a cold...surely broken legs required at least one bottle...

At first, Lobo looked miserable lying there in the concoction. Then, his eyes began to close and his breathing became more steady. We took this as a good sign. He looked sleepy. He must not be in pain anymore... the Cure was working...

We covered him up snugly with an old blanket. Trying to make him as comfortable as possible. We sat with him awhile, but became restless. We finally drifted away from the box and began to play. Kate disappeared into the house to play Barbie with Linda. DJ began to try and catch grasshoppers.

"I've got to do an important operation", Jr announced, "I'll need a nurse..."

I promptly volunteered my services.

Jr had found a bull frog in the damp weeds that grew beside the house. It was the largest as well as the ugliest bull frog he had ever managed to capture. Jr laid his latest victim on a board which was about eight inches wide by ten inches long. He explained that this would be the operating table and instructed me to hold the

frog in place. From his pocket, Jr pulled a plastic box which contained several large stick pins and a sewing needle. The box also contained two razor blades some thread and a package of matches.

"What are the matches for?" I asked.

"To sterilize stuff, Dummy."

"Oh..."

He laid the frog on its back and began to pin it to the board by its feet. The frog squirmed. His yellow belly heaved and sighed, waiting for the razors sharp edge. The more the frog wiggled, the harder Jr pushed the pins. When Jr was satisfied that his patient could not get free, he lit a match and began to sterilize the razor. After the blade cooled, "Doctor" Jr began his "life saving" procedure.

I knew that the doctor took his operations seriously, so I didn't utter a word throughout his work. He managed to slice his patient open with one swift flick of his experienced wrist and pin back the skin exposing the delicate vitals. He poked around inside for a while looking at important organs. He pointed out the heart and intestines to me. He was careful not to damage anything. Jr had been studying organ transplants...He said he was planning on trying to perform one some day...

"Look at the stomach!" he said excitedly.

We looked at each organ cautiously. We watched the blood flow through the tiny veins. We explored until Jr got bored and declared it was time to close up. I was allowed to stitch the patient closed.

The doctor examined the stitches. He was pleased with my work. The patient was unpinned and turned over on his stomach.

We waited to see what would happen. The frog, in a dazed stupor sat, wondering if it was safe to move. He finally took a trial hop. Jr was extremely satisfied...the operation was a success! He gathered up the frog and gleefully announced that he was going to take him to "post-op".

Post-op was the temporary lab Jr had set up in our tree house.

"Go get the Basic-H bottle", he demanded, "we need an antiseptic. Meet me at the lab!" He yelled over his scrawny shoulder. He scurried off to the lab.

I gawked at him. Amazed at his knowledge, surprised at his agility as he leaped over the large rocks and stumps which were sprinkled throughout the back lawn. He held the patient close to his chest as he made for the lab.

He was always in control when he was experimenting or performing an operation. Most of the animals he operated on lived. No wonder he thought operating on Lobo was a good idea... I just could not figure out how cutting Lobo's stomach open would help his legs...

I found the bottle next to Lobo. Lobo was still asleep. I bent down and stroked his head. He opened his eyes to thank me for my concern. Lobo's eyes were blood filled. He wagged his tail pathetically in recognition, whimpered and lay still again.

"You'll be all right." I promised. "We used Basic-H..."

I fingered the Basic-H bottle, wondering if the chemical really would cure Lobo. He looked so alone and tired... His tongue dangled. Maybe he needs a drink of water, I reasoned. I banged through the back door of the house immediately tumbling over some of the fishing equipment Dadd had left near the door. I stumbled out later with a cup of water which I poured on Lobo's tongue. He lapped at the water without opening his eyes or raising his head.

"What's taking you so long?" Jr yelled from the lab. "Hurry up or you'll miss this!" he warned.

I scooped up the bottle, apologized to Lobo for my hasty departure and race-car-ed across the yard toward the lab.

"What took you so long?" Jr demanded again.

"Na-thin."

"Give me that bottle."

I tossed the bottle at him and slumped down on the floor Indian style to think. Occasionally, I flipped a glance toward Jr.

Jr popped the cap of the bottle open and began to sop the last bit of Basic-H out with a Q-tip. His eyebrows were crinkled together in thought and his lips twitched every now and then...

"This-a help him heal better," he said.

"Do you think Lobo's gonna die?"

"What?" He was only half listening.

"Do you think Lobo's gonna die?"

"Probably not..." He began to hum his version of Humpty Dumpty.

I was tired of playing nurse. Jr noticed my restlessness, and began to tell me about the latest encyclopedia he was reading. I became engulfed by his detailed description of each chapter. He gave special attention to the chapter on spiders... He knew I was terrified of spiders. He made each detail as vivid as possible.

"The tarantula is one of the biggest spiders in American." He paused to make sure I had heard him. "About as big as Daddy's hand..."

"They bite and leave gigantic fang marks on the victims body..."

I shivered, picturing the wooly humongous black spider with one inch fangs dripping with milk white venom... a spider at least a foot long as well as a foot wide...

"After being bit, the victim withers, turns white and dies." His eyes gleamed. I wondered how much of what he was saying was the truth...

"The pain from this spider is so great, not even Basic-H will help heal it..."

My eyes widened and I cowered. If Basic-H couldn't cure it, what could? I started to sweat. My brain wanted more information... I needed to know as much as possible about this spider...

"They mostly live in Texas."

My mind eased...

"But sometimes, they are found around here... Just like the one crawling down the wall over there behind you..."

I shrieked and bolted from the lab. Jr doubled over howling with laughter like a hyena who had just found the carcass of a wilderbeast. His laughter hounded me into the house.

Both Dad and Mom were home by now. Dad looked up as I vaulted through the door.

"How's the animal?" he asked rather grimly. He was soaking the days catch in a Basic-H and water bath.

"I-I don't really know..." I stammered. I watched as he began to clean the fish...

"Did you'll do what I said, put some Basic-on him?"

"Yes sir..."

"Then he'll be all right."

He began to tell Mom what had happened. He said he had not heard our screams, didn't know the dog was under the truck. He said he figured Lobo would be all right, after all, we used Basic-H...

Mom nodded. She seemed to think that Lobo had only a flesh wound... They both seemed to think that. Mom was always calm, no matter what. She was the wisest woman I knew. However, when it came to anything that dealt with Daddy, she would just nod, knowingly and position her mouth in a sideways smile...

"His legs are crushed..." I quietly said.

"How do you know?" Mom asked.

I told her that Kate had said so, adding that Jr wanted to operate...

Neither took me seriously. No one seemed to care... For some reason, they all thought the Miracle Cure which had been smeared on or consumed by our bodies, in order to cure some disease or ailment would work.

I gazed down on Lobo's limp body the next morning... The summer air felt cold... Everything felt so cold... The Cure had failed.

Everyone, except me, seemed shocked that Lobo died.

The Basic-H is still on the back shelf of the laundry closet collecting dust... No one mentions what happened... People often stop by our house now. They wonder if Dad has lost faith in the Basic-H Cure... Well, yea... but now he's pushin' a new cure-all... Vitamins...

Velvet Death

by

Connie S. Baker

He kissed my eyelids and I fell into a deep
pool that was velvet and I went
under without air, without a care.
I drowned in velvet, hot pinks and blues

my eyes gazing over beautiful hues
of pink and blue
soft and warm
sending me into a state of mind

that was velvet. That is the way
I want to die, surrounded
by pink and blue, but only
if it's velvet.

Canvas of Life

by

Connie S. Baker

The sea is so calm, but darkness settles in
as I stand on the pebbled beach.
Melancholy starts to splash against the shore
of sand and the shore of my soul.

Alienation takes over my being
while I ponder my purpose.
Finally, my destiny is unveiled
and painted upon the canvas

of my life is nothing; so starkingly blank.
I shutter to think that I'm empty,
but the canvas is blank, like me.
Dressed in my white gown I walk into the water,
deeper and deeper. I am engulfed,
becoming a dot on the canvas of the sea.

Encomium

by

Connie S. Baker

Alligator purses and crocodile tears
evaporate in the emerald mist.
As the dark drops blanket the land
smothering it in sweet wetness

that only the gods radiate.
Dominating forces that rule the night,
guiding stars and people's dreams
of long silk dresses and satin boudoirs.

Glasses overflowing with sparkling champagne
while the mind is defoliated of senses.
Infinity lingers in the party room
as the waltz slowly comes to an end.

Intoxication pickles the minds of all
and most definitely the breath.
Freethinkers soar to the light like dragonflies
as the inflammation of drunkenness grows.

Sea nymphs swim in pools of alcohol
making the obligatory remarks to the host,
who adorns himself in royal purples and golds.
Paid for by the proletarian class

who works the fields for his own glory.
The last waltz is played as the last
guest exits the room, but the party still
remains...

Notes From Florida
(Vacationland)

by

Kg Scalf

Today beautiful today
sunshine breezy clear blue wonder of a day
I've been exploring!
Cruised up highway 41 and found the country.
Rural ranches, fishermen's marshes, stilted houses,
fresh vegetable stands, pristine pine forests,
Priceless uncarved Earth!
Somehow alive--between ocean and city.
Once we invade and slice and form and take
Mother Nature
She wilts and dies--never to return--Gone Forever.
Take take take! There is Money to Make make make!
Perfection cannot be recreated.

I stop at calm Pine Island peninsula
alala
a lazy happy picnicing people place
where the barbeque is simmering, the music is up
loud,
where the good spirit is flowing, and the gentle
ocean is a playground.
People wade the friendly waters up to half a mile
out here.

Back on the road toward the central farmlands
I wonder how long before the bulldozers and
the cigar chomping fat cats
come and contract and subdivide and sell
the invaluable?
I wonder how many understand the principle
To reap one must first sow?
I see how many (and sometimes myself too)
reap reap reap and rip and tear and waste.
I know too many who don't care.

Back into the city
Busy roaring people fed machine-or is it mac
led people who gaze at the majestic power of
skyscrapers
jutting the skyline?
Maybe it is the beauty of the fighter pilot
which keeps us
in awe of ourselves?

Wine Dream and You

by

Kg Scalf

A wayfaring college student finds
a holy place to rest
and is aware of a revered moment
of peaceful found bliss

I am this devoted wanderer
I have slipped inside the warmth
of a wish
...and my wild irish rose runneth

Your Kiss

by

Kg Scalf

So another day passes
like a fragmented foreign particle
in the eye of intelligence and a matter
for precious people.

The unfolding
the bonding

the awakening
before futility becomes reality.

Beyond second opinions I heard you.
I screamed of you inside my head
Traacherous moments
a teacher in spite of
Measured moments
I dreamt of you alone in my bed.

Seldom have we met
in times like this
Seldom have we touched,
I want your kiss.



