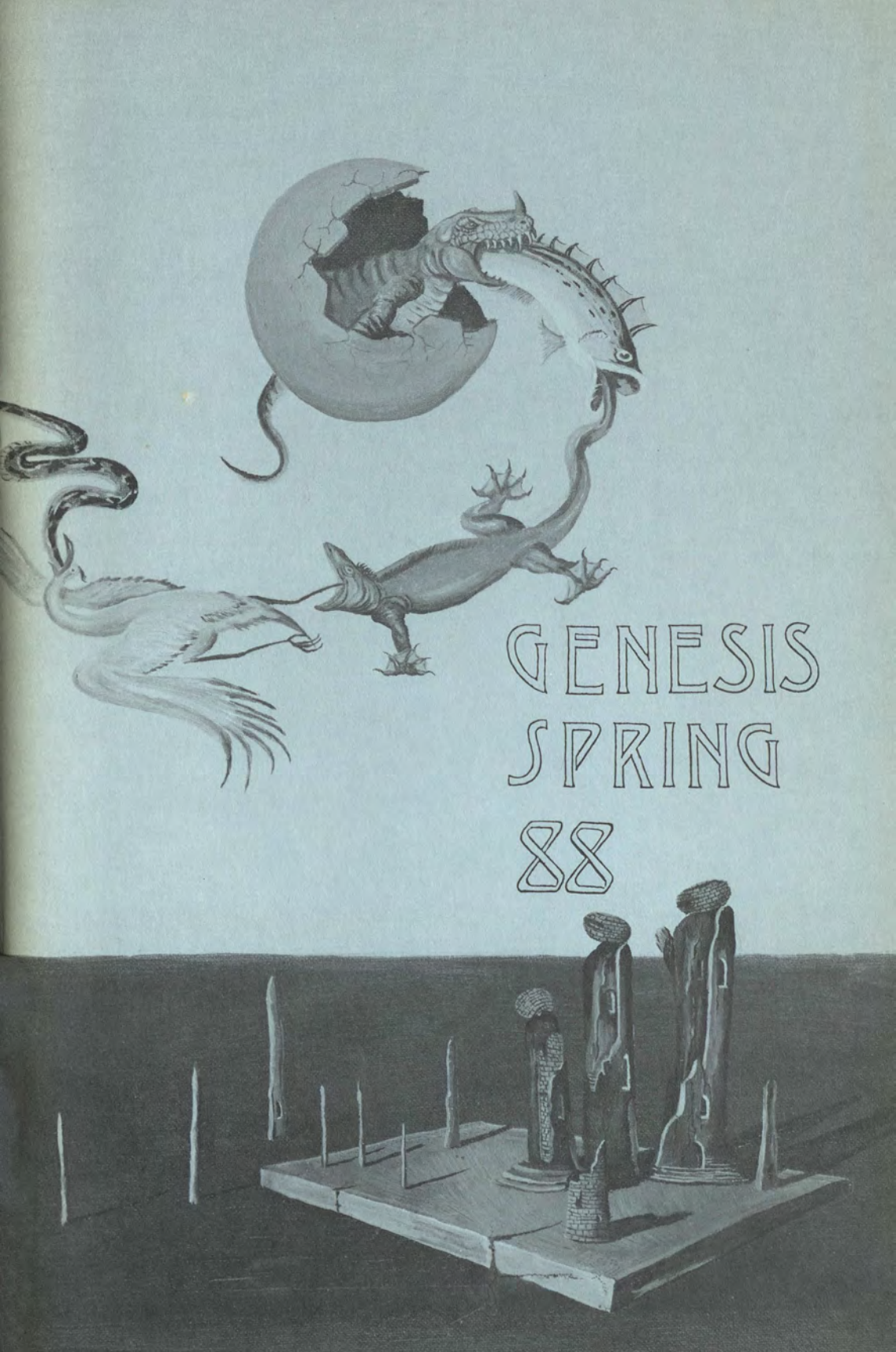
GENESIS
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Invitation to Artists and Authors

Artwork is invited from all persons who have been students at any time during the last eighteen months prior to submission. Any type of artwork may be submitted. All artwork will be reproduced in black-and-white. Artists are asked to submit no more than ten pieces for a given issue; artwork should not exceed 26 inches by 32 inches. Please identify each piece on the back with its title and your name. Enclose a cover sheet with your name, address, phone number, title(s) of your artwork *and* a 25-50 word bio. Submissions not accompanied by a bio will not be considered. Artists will be notified as to acceptance prior to publication; they will also be instructed as to how artwork will be returned. Submit work to GENESIS, Student Activities Office, University Library, 815 West Michigan Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46202.

Manuscripts are invited from all persons who have been students at IUPUI at any time during the last eighteen months prior to submission. Manuscripts of essays, fiction, non-fiction or poetry, on any topic, may be submitted at any time to GENESIS, Student Activities Office, University Library, 815 West Michigan Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46202. All manuscripts are considered by a student editorial board. Authorship is not revealed to the board until a manuscript has been accepted.

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Marilyn Amy Adrian

The Failing of Phillip's Heart

Timothy J. O'Conner

Phillip Razeack paced back and forth in the psychiatrist's office. He wrung his hands and his body was bent forward with worry.

"Look, doctor, there's got to be some kind of medicine, some treatment, something that can help. I mean, it's happening all of the time now, I can't control it." He sat down across from the elderly doctor and looked at him desperately. His jet black hair was streaked with newly acquired gray and damp with perspiration. His face was pale and drawn, his lips moved nervously and his eyes darted rapidly about.

"Last night, my wife caught me listening to the refrigerator. Jesus Christ, I was listening to the motor of the refrigerator with a stethescope! At 2 A.M.! My son hates me because I burnt out the motor of his Acro-Bird flying doll. I spent two hours at work sharpening pencils with an electric sharpener. Two hours! My boss is convinced that I'm crazy. So is my wife."

It had been nearly three months since Phillip had undergone the operation. He had been admitted to the hospital with chest pains. Being athletic and only 32 years old, he was shocked when tests showed massive heart disease. The doctors told him that he needed surgery. They didn't mention, however, that an artifical implant might be necessary. In fact, they had not anticipated that he might need one. As it turned out, though, his heart was too badly damaged for repair, and the chief surgeon immediately called for the prosthetic implant.

It was called the ultimate artificial heart. Its design was relatively simple. The prosthetic itself was little more than a four-chambered rubber container that acted much like a real heart. The power for the unit came from a chemical battery which strained chemicals, mostly acids, from the digestive tract and reacted them with metals obtained from the blood. While the concept was fairly simple, the plumbing was a bit complicated. The end result, however, was a perfectly reasonable blood pump. It sped up and slowed down when cued by the brain. It was a self-contained unit and functioned much like a real heart.

The only difference between a prosthetic and a real heart is in the sound that they make. While a real heart makes little audible noise, a prosthetic heart hums loudly enough to be heard and, at higher activity levels, whirs and clicks as alloy valves open and close. This is where Phillip's problem began.

"I can't even go to sleep," he told the psychiatrist. "I try, but I just end up listening to this damn motor. I keep expecting it

to stop. Last week, I took my son to a football game. When the crowd started cheering, I couldn't hear the heart. I was sure that it had stopped. I got so panicked that I left Phil there alone. He's six years old and I left him so I could run out to the parking lot to listen to the damn thing hum."

"That's when you started carrying the stethescope," the doctor said.

"Yes. It gives me peace of mind," Phillip said. "People look at me funny, but I don't care. They don't understand."

Phillip left the small office and went down the green tiled corridor to the elevator. He entered the car and pushed the first floor button. But, when the doors opened, he didn't get off. Instead he pushed the button for the sub-basement. The car moved downward, and when the doors opened this time, he stepped out.

Phillip found himself in a large open area. The combination of dim lights and the low ceiling made the room he was in appear to go on forever. Dust hung lazily in the air and the floor was damp and mildewed. He heard a low hum and followed electrical conduit and ductwork to find the source of the noise. After a brief hunt, he found what he was looking for.

The source of the noise was two huge generators which provided power to the building. They sat on concrete platforms and were surrounded by a chain-link fence. Each was as large as a truck and they emitted an unsettling blue glow from their innards. Phillip stood for a moment, cocked his head and listened. The hum from the power units was loud in his ears and he was transfixed by it.

After a moment, he shook himself from the trance-like state and set his attention on finding a way around the protective fence. There was a small gate, and he tried this first, but it was locked securely. He noticed a small gap at the bottom of the fence, and he attempted to pull it in such a way that he might slide under it, but it wouldn't budge. Now frustrated, he set his sights on the top of the fence. There was a two-foot space between the top of the fence and the concrete ceiling. The top of the fence was slightly barbed, and this gave him pause, but he decided to chance the points. He began to climb the fence, but he couldn't fit the toes of his shoes through the links. He sat down quickly and took off the shoes. This time, he made it to the top and hardly noticed when he cut his ankle on one of the barbs. He climbed down the outside and turned to look at the generators.

Now closer to them, he could tell that each unit was about 15 feet long and 8 feet tall. They were covered with dull gray paint and surrounded by the acrid odor of ozone being emitted by the high voltage transformers. Phillip took a cautious step toward the closest generator and laid a hand on it. The heavy vibration sent chills through his spine. After a moment, he dug out the stethescope hidden in his coat pocket, put the earpieces in his ears and gently placed the amplifier on the generator. The already loud hum of the units, now amplified, thundered in his head, and the shock caused him to bite his lip, but he didn't stop listening.

He began to imagine that the noise was filling his whole body and then overflowing, flooding the entire building with its smooth, even, eternal hum. For a brief moment, he wasn't afraid. He stayed there for a long time, his head resting on the generator, his mind, like his heart, filled with mechanical sound.

Back in the psychiatrist's office, Phillip was again trying to explain his feelings.

"Look, doctor," he said angrily, "this is not an obsession. I have good reason to be upset. Hell, I've burnt out six pencil sharpeners in three days. The motors are so cheap, you wouldn't believe it. I've burnt out two more Acro-Birds since my son's birthday. This mechanical crap, it wears out," he pounded his chest significantly. "I can hear it, it's wearing out." He turned away disgusted, tears of frustration in his eyes.

"Look, Phil, can't you and your wife take a few weeks and get away?" he asked. "Sometimes it takes a while to recover from the type of surgery you've had."

Phillip slid back in his chair and looked out the window.

"No, that's no good," he said. "This damn thing makes too much noise." He thumped his chest again. "We haven't even made love since before the operation. With my luck, this thing would stop humming while we're doing it." He ran a hand over his completely gray hair. "I've got to do something, doctor. It's wearing out."

Phillip left the doctor's office and began driving. He drove for three hours before reaching his destination. He stepped out of the car and walked toward the huge dam that he had heard about. The enormous concrete structure was surrounded by a breathtaking mountainous landscape. Trees of every variety populated the forest, birds danced in the air, and water trickled through the dark limestone of the foothills. The scenery, however, escaped Phillip. He scarcely looked about as he walked to the entrance of the dam's hydro-power plant, which was contained within the dam itself. He walked quickly, animated with purpose. Occasionally, though, he stopped and pulled the stethescope from his pocket, listened briefly to his chest and then continued onward.

He stopped at the maintenance desk and obtained a visitor's pass which would allow him to wander freely within the dam. He had no desire to sightsee, however. He headed directly for the hydro-generators deep within the dam. He got lost several times within the massive structure, but finally found what he was looking for.

There were 20 generators, each as big as a house, in the cavernous bowels of the dam, and Phillip stood in awe. Though he was aware of the enormity of the units, he was struck not by their size, but their sound. The hum they made was almost tangible. He was buffeted by the waves of sound and he felt as if he might be shaken apart by the power of them. His teeth chattered together and his bones literally rattled. The outrageous hum surrounded and permeated him. He shouted as loud as he could and laughed gleefully when he couldn't hear himself. He ran among and between

the generators, laughing and shouting. This was real power that could last forever, and he reveled in it. His puny battery operated heart was forgotten as he danced about, inundated by the sound that made him live.

When he had fully exhausted himself, he began to make his way out of the dam. He walked lightly and smiled at the few people that he passed. He didn't stop once to listen to his heart. He left his visitor's pass at the desk and was almost out of the dam when he heard two men talking. He caught part of their conversation and slowed his stride to hear more.

"Jeff," said the taller of the two, "I've got 20 generators down here. One or another of them is always on the blink."

The shorter man said something that Phillip didn't hear, and the taller man responded angrily.

"You kidding me?," he said. "None of those units run longer than four months without breaking down. They're running constantly, they wear out quick. Anything would, that kind of constant use."

The men continued talking, but Phillip did not hear them. He fumbled nervously for his stethescope as he rushed away from the dam.

* * * * *

Phillip held his breath and gripped the arm of his seat as the plane began to take off. Once in the air, he relaxed a bit and laid his head on a pillow, listening to the steady hum of the plane's engines. Often, he put the stethoscope to his chest and listened intently, which earned him strange looks from other passengers. He dozed off once, with the listening device still in his ears, and had a dream that some villainous force had stolen his heart and replaced it with a clock, the mainspring winding rapidly down. He woke suddenly and clutched at the stethoscope.

He hadn't told anyone the reason for his trip. They wouldn't have understood. He could have gone to one of the atomic power plants in the U.S., but he found out that the ones in France were larger, and he hoped, louder. Phillip stared out the window of the plane and hummed.

Afraid, or Greeting a Woman on the Street

M. Todd Fuller

Looking up
from pavement,
I saw eyes
holding me,
transparent me.
I flutter my
invisible voice
clutching
to make a sound
loud enough,
loud enough
to accomodate
the gesture
of her smile
holding me.
Suspended
by time
passing by
a figure—
long lashes,
long legs—
I kidnap her
in the passionate
rapture of imagination.
Stepping from my screen,
she walks
past me,
not seeing herself
against me;
me holding her nakedness
against me.
"See me! See me!"
see me
watch her feet
pass my bent eyes,
covering
cold concrete.

Late for the Sky

George A. Dunn

for my father

> Mortals dwell in that they await the divinities as divinities. In hope they hold up to the divinities what is unhoped for. They wait for intimations of their coming and do not mistake the signs of their absence.
>
> Martin Heidegger

I.

Some nights, if the sky was clear, he would gaze up at the mist
of starlight shivering out beyond the great reach of the city.
  His eyes would roam languidly across the specked darkness,
  but they would never sojourn:
    just an abashed "hello",
    then a slow, measured
      retreat.

His was not the thirsty gape of nascent lovers
who repose in the moonlight,
drinking the narcotic sky in wide salacious gulps.
  Nor could his artless gaze ever be mistaken
    for the scalpel-eyed squint
      of an astronomer:
    he knew nothing of the minutes and degrees
    that creased the limpid garment of heaven;
      he described no constellations,
        sought no auguries.

But still the night sky called him in his simplicity, its voice
inchoate and faint, his guileless and ever faithful.
  Drawn up into a wistful glance, he would listen heavenward:
    as the stars
      withdrew
        again, as always,
    into the steadfast indifference
      of their glimmering

        silence.

II.
Tragic Interlude

The man speaks:

Under this mute canopy, existence swoons
helplessly to the obstreperous rhythms
of birth and death, conquest and travail.
Shadows chasing light, light chasing
shadows: the terrain of their strife is
every wasted longing and every crippled
limb.

The chorus replies:

What, if not the steady pulse of the heavens,
can gather these clamorous destinies into a
lilting cadence?

What, if not the perduring sky, can cradle
the seasons in their spin?

The man speaks:

Or are we too late for the sky?

III.

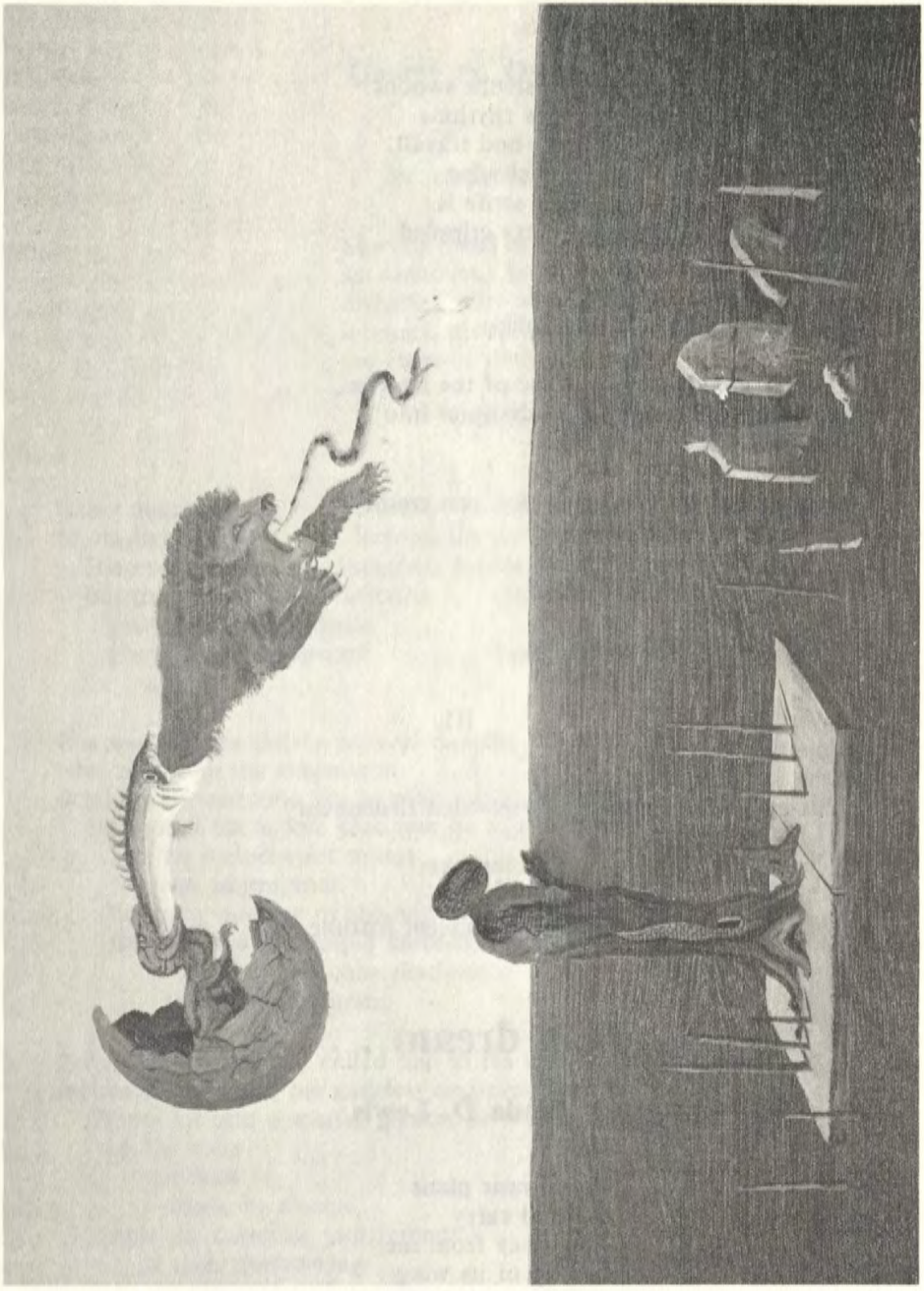
Some nights,
if the sky was clear,
  his eyes would graze the bejeweled firmament
    like a pilgrim
      caressing a shattered keepsake:

      the last legatee of an evanescent fortune.

In a dream . . .

Linda D. Lewis

I saw your plane
lift and carry
you away from me;
the tip of its wing
grazed my mouth
and scraped away
my smile.



Genesis/Revelation Michael Clément

Recoil

Cecil L. Sayre

"Are you waiting for Don?"

I look up from my lunch at the man standing beside my table. "Yeah," I say, nodding.

He brings his right arm up from his side until his fist is level with my face. The movement lasts an eternity. The man's hand is inches away.

I see the gun, but there is no time to react.

He pulls the trigger.

I grab and grab with my hands, but whatever I grab slips through my fingers, insubstantial, like sand or water. I raise my head and shake the cobwebs from my mind. Millions and millions of grains of sand are before me. Rolling over, I sit and watch the waves of the ocean spill onto the beach. Where am I? What was I trying to grab? The answers escape me.

There is nothing but beach as far as I can see. No palm trees, no people. Simply beach, and the ocean.

Standing, I begin walking inland to search for some sign of civilization. I can't remember how I got here, then I can. Something about waiting for Don. And then the man and the gun. I stop and run my hands over my face, panicing. Yet there aren't any wounds, or scars. I'm so dazed. Lowering my gaze, I finally realize I'm naked.

"Hey you," someone says. Behind me, by about 10 feet, is a kid in wet swimming trunks holding a large beachball against his chest. "You know you ain't suppose to go around on this beach nude? This ain't no nudist colony, man."

As he talks, I slide a hand over my private parts. The kid looks alot like Robbie, a surfer who used to be a partner of Don and mine. "Uh, could you tell me where I am?"

"Why? You looking for someone?" The kid drops the beachball revealing the .38 he is hiding behind it.

I step once, twice, backwards.

Don. Don. I never should have argued with him. Am I waiting for Don? That's a stupid question. Don is dead. And I know that, so why did I say yes?

I wake slowly. I'm stretched out under some newspapers on a park bench. A cop is tapping my shoulder with his billyclub. A lousy cop!

"C'mon, bud, time to quit sleeping."

Rubbing my eyes, I rouse myself to a sitting position. I haven't shaved in weeks. My clothes are rags. But I'm alive again.

"You can't stay here," the cop tells me. "You're going to have to go somewhere else, off of my beat." He rocks back on his heels, towering above me, his hands on his hips.

I stare at him blankly, lost in my thoughts. I figure I must be in purgatory. More likely, though, I'm asleep in the cafeteria, dreaming.

"I said, 'Move it, bud!' " The cop is getting mad. "I'm not going to let you sit here, you filthy bum! Or are you going to tell me you're waiting on someone, eh? Is that it? Are you waiting for someone, another bum, maybe?" He leans down and leers in my face.

"No!" I scream, jumping to my feet and running. I don't hear the cop shout, "Halt!"; all I hear is his weapon fire. I'm sent sprawling forward, landing hard on the sidewalk, face down. Blood pours from my chest.

The cop stands almost on top of me. He cocks his revolver. The next bullet he fires goes into and out of my brain.

I am knocking on the apartment door before I am even aware of it. I stop immediately. Half-turned from the door, I am ready to leave when the door opens.

"Hi," she says, her voice warm like sunshine. She's six, or seven, possibly eight. A little girl in pigtails. Don's child.

"Hi," I say, whisper. "Are you alone?"

She nods emphatically. "Yes, sir!"

I hurriedly consider it. It's got to be safer than anywhere else, I decide. I ask her, "Would you like some company?"

Another emphatic "yes."

She leads me by the hand into the living room and sits me in a soft, worn chair, probably her father's. She runs back and closes the door, then returns. Standing in front of me, she is sweetness and innocence.

"Would you like to play some of my games with me?"

This time I nod.

"Well, then," she says, "wait here." She runs off into another room where I can hear her moving around, hunting for her game.

Breathing deeply, I relax. I still don't understand where I am or what's happening. This is the strangest nightmare ever. But at least now I can relax.

The little girl rounds the corner back into the living room. She's carrying a large toy gun. Her hands barely fit around the base of the pistol. She's smiling, moving a step at a time towards me.

As the girl draws nearer, I notice the gun isn't a toy. She struggles to bring the gun upward so it's pointing at my chest and not at the floor.

I feel sorry for her. I want to grab the gun by the barrel and help her raise it to my chest. I want it to end quickly.

The girl's smile breaks into a series of giggles.

Don warned me when I shot him I would regret it. Lord, if he only knew how much!

The steam from the cup of coffee pries my eyes open. I'm sitting by myself in a booth in a small diner. Outside, it is night. Besides the waitress and the cook behind the counter, there are three other people in the diner. There's a couple snuggling in a booth, several booths away from mine. I am facing them. At the counter is a truck driver. He's chatting with the waitress. I sip my coffee.

I'd like to think everything's okay. Everything seems okay, but I know better by now. Don. I have to blame it on Don. I killed him, that's my fault, my mistake; the whole thing is my mistake. After several successful robberies with Don, I got greedy. So, following the robbery of this diner, I shot Don and took his share of the money, along with his share of the money from the other robberies. I got greedy, I wanted more than I was getting, so I shot my best friend for it. The guilt, though, that has put me into this terminal nightmare, I have to blame on Don. I have to blame someone, someone, as I repeatedly die.

A telephone rings behind the counter. The waitress answers it and listens. She holds the phone away from her head. The waitress shouts, "Is there anybody here named 'Don'?"

I remain silent. I keep my head down and stare into my cup. The waitress walks to me, her high heels click-clacking on the tile floor. The cold barrel of a gun is pressed against my left temple. Everyone has a gun trained on me, the couple in the booth, the truck driver, even the cook while holding a spatula. Everyone.

As the bullets hit my body, the confusion begins to make sense. I believe I understand.

I spill my coffee and fall across the table.

The ham sandwich tastes good. I am in the cafeteria, at the same table I had before. I'm back where I started from, and hopefully not leaving. What a dream! A dream—I guess. Maybe I was wrong and didn't understand. I hope so, God.

"Are you waiting for Don?"

I look up from my lunch at the man standing beside my table. Against my will, I find myself saying, "Yeah," and nodding.

He brings his right arm up from his side until his fist is level with my face. The movement lasts another eternity. The man's hand is inches away.

Ah, shit, I think. Hell.

The Invitation

M. Todd Fuller

On a desolate September evening
you invited me to take you,
again.

I draped you in black cape;
I fed you
and poured into your hungry blood.

You invited me.

You crouched in a 4 a.m. alley
gnawing silver labels from green bottles,
absorbing shadows hidden
from the street lights.

You invited me.

I pricked you, smoked you
and pinned you to skeleton's breast
and you invited me.

I laid with you in sweat,
took the walls and blinked at you—
two eyes in the walls,
and a thousand staring at your naked flesh.

You tried to scrape me off your skin
ripped fingernails
hollowing the bags of your deaf eyes.

I laughed behind your back
I begged you a room with
a bare flame
crawling in your empty chest.

You invited me.

Gesture Debbie Ham

The Trunk

Jackie Schmidt

Its rusty key resists my twist
with a creaky moan.
The humped lid swells then opens—
an old wound, seeping and painful.

Saddle oxfords worn and cracked from youth
leather creases deep as memory
strings knotted as our heart's discarded innocence.

Spiked heels dyed to match this brocade dress,
mauve, still pinned with ivory ribbon of a rose corsage
from a night of basketball hoops
strung Irish with crepe.

Four-leaf clovers pressed from Genesis to Revelation.
The lucky patch that grew beside my rock wall
was my secret.
A young sorceress—I gave them away to chosen friends. . .

whose names, without faces now, fill the yearbook,
promising forever friendships and praising qualities
in me I only wished I had,
but admired in you.

Yellowed pages signed "With love, Michael"
remind me of summer hikes and pine-earth,
you shirtless, beads of sweat on tanned shoulders.
You loved me then—
and now—through a letter
sealed in the tender soreness of an old trunk.

On a Rainy Sunday Afternoon in January

Amy-Jeanne Ade

I laid on the bathroom floor today
while my five-year-old painted my face
in make-up.
I asked her if I would look pretty or ugly;
she replied that I would look different.
Then we put on my high heels and slow danced
while Van Morrison moondanced
through the house.

We call this making memories.

Nancy's Hand . . .

Linda D. Lewis

"lizard skin," the boys called it,
and avoided her like fruit gone bad—
Nancy, awkward in her long, home-sewn skirt
and heavy woven braid, that tied her up
like a rope of twisted taffy.

Spring afternoons of playground—
her troubled eyes sought mine,
and I would choose her first for my team,
force a smile, and link her to me.

Twenty years later . . . a Red Rover reunion,
Nancy parked her Continental and spoke of real estate.
She stood tall and slender in clinging rich blue silk;
her thick golden curls accentuated gestures
of flawless arms and hands.

The men clustered round her like ripening grapes,
each bursting to be picked and anxious for a chance
to hold Nancy's hand.

David Scheve

George A. Dunn

"There's nothing to it," said David, but I was unconvinced. He sensed my trepidation.

"Don't think about it! Do it!" he finally exclaimed and with no further warning he lept from the cliff.

The last time I saw David, so many years later, he was holding down a house, a wife, a kid and a job.

We sat and talked . . . and I remembered:

He had flown through the air, crying like a bat, and—when I opened my eyes—he was swinging from a tree branch fifteen feet below.

Cut to calendar pages tearing in the wind. Fade to suburbs, lawnmower, wife gardening in the front yard. . .

David—you magical bird of malice, you poet of undulating motion—is it true that even you could live suspended in air for only so long?

"You scared the shit out of me!" I hollered.

But you heard nothing but your own triumphant laughter; you could see no farther than your next big leap.

So happy landings, David—my brother, my friend, my fellow fool.

Hoosier Centenarian

Jackie Schmidt

A Collection of Profiles of Some of Indiana's Oldest Residents

INTRODUCTION

Only one out of every ten thousand Americans alive today has lived to celebrate a hundredth birthday. Currently in Indiana, 568 can claim that distinction. The national figure of 25,326 is up from 13,216 in 1969; the prediction is that it will continue to rise as the number of older adults increases.

Indeed, the prospect of interviewing some of our Hoosier centenarians is fascinating. How does one perceive life when looking back on a century of change? Which events stand out as significant? Is our world changing for the better or worse? Is it true, as the old adage goes, that the first hundred years are the hardest?

As I began to search for previous writings and research before beginning the interviews, I discovered that much had been written about aging in general but very little about centenarians specificly. Even the Indiana Department on Aging could only guess that the state figure was "over 135," a number derived from a 1986 questionnaire sent to Indiana area agencies. My search eventually led me to the Administration on Aging in Washington D.C., and they, in turn, directed me to Philip R. Lerner, a statistician for the Social Security Administration in Baltimore, Maryland. My persistence had paid off. Within seconds and at the touch of his computer, he supplied me not only with pertinent figures but also with a study begun by SSA in the early '60s.

From 1963 to 1972 representatives of the SSA conducted 1,127 interviews with centenarians which were published in thirteen volumes and titled, *America's Centenarians*. Fortunately, for future study, the interview questions had been standardized. In 1973 SSA's role was expanded to include disability and welfare programs, and the consequent shortage of personnel caused the interviews to be discontinued.

It was not until the early '80's that Osborn Segerberg, using current interviews as well as the previous SSA collection (a total of 1,200), attempted to draw meaning from the data. His findings were published in *Living to be 100*. He concludes, according to an endorsement by Rene Dubos on the book's back cover, "that in the U.S. as well as in other countries, centenarians are much more numerous than commonly believed . . . and great longevity does not depend on wealth or spartan discipline, but chiefly on pleasant, reasonable habits, a cheerful attitude toward life, and a keen sense of humor."

The major factor contributing to longevity appeared to be the ability to deal successfully with stress. Ninety-five percent of the interviewees had a high degree of order in their lives—"organized lifetime activities/goals." The study indicated that even in their advanced years fifty-two percent still lead highly organized lives. Hard work was another prominent trait among those questioned, as well as a commitment to God, religion, and the Bible.

Segerberg's book deals primarily with the effects which behavior and attitude, rather than the genetic factor, have on the individual's ability to live to be 100. There is still much disagreement regarding the influence of heredity on longevity. In his book he refers to a gerentological saying: "Nature deals the cards but the individual plays the hand."

I was eager to listen to those among us who had played the hand for a century, who had witnessed and endured 100 years of changes, and I often found myself holding onto their words like cherished bits of delicate old lace that time had woven into intricate patterns. I was reminded of the words of Ramsey Clark: "People who don't cherish their elderly have forgotten whence they come and whither they go."

The challenge to cherish becomes greater every day. Recent shifts in family structure have loosened the bonds between the young and old. An unfortunate loss! Our parents and peers provide us with models; thus we learn our roles as child, parent, worker, friend. But who better to teach us how to age, how to approach life's end, how to face one's death, than those elders among us who are dealing with the experiences themselves?

It would be a sad commentary on society's progress if in moving forward we were to forget where we have been, and if in the constant search for new resources, we were to pass over one of our nation's greatest riches—the wisdom and experience of our elders. This collection of profiles of Hoosier centenarians is my opportunity to profess my belief in the infinite value of our elders.

> For the young man is handsome, but the old superb . . . .
> Fire is seen in the eyes of the young, but it is light that we see in the old man's eyes.
>
> Victor Hugo

INTERVIEW WITH CENTENARIAN BLANCHE EVANS

"I'm a little off today," Blanche warned me as we began the interview. "I can tell when I'm off, but I think the sunshine will help. I love to wake up in the morning and see the sun shining."

Anticipating my first question, Blanche volunteered, "I was born February 13, 1886. I was 100 on Friday the thirteenth. That was last year. I'm 101 now."

She glanced at an old photo. "That's not me," she insisted. "It's my sister." She looked back at me. "I've lived so long, lost so many of them, outlived them all."

I asked how many brothers and sisters she'd had. "Seven. There were eight of us. We lost two. My mother had the sweetest little baby girl. I just loved her. Took care of her. She was still a baby when brain fever took her. Oh, I cried and cried when that happened, but I was always close to God."

"When I was just big enough to walk, the minister would come to our house for dinner. I remember pulling my little rocking chair into the parlor and setting it right next to him after dinner. He'd laugh and say, 'Here comes Blanche. I know what she's after.' I wanted to ask him questions. He said I could ask more questions that he didn't know the answers to of anyone he knew."

Blanche remembers being close to death as a child herself. "I had membrance croup. Oh, I was bad. They thought I was going to die. The doctor came out and asked my daddy if he had any lime. There was some in the barn. He told daddy to boil some in water and make me drink it. I was just starting to talk. I said, 'I'm a little boosing baby.' They all laughed. 'I'm a little boosing baby!' "

"And the lime helped?" I asked.

"Well, I'm still here a hundred years later!"

She remembers being a healthy child after that. "My brothers and sisters and cousins always called me 'Fatty.' During recess at school, I always wanted to play ball on one of the teams, but they never wanted 'Fatty' to play. I went to a one-room school house. Just one teacher—a big man. During the week, I lived with my Grandma Coffee, because she lived near the school. On the weekends I went back home. My grandpa was an invalid, and grandma and grandpa had my aunt who was a mute living with us, and the school teacher roomed at their house, too. I can't remember his name."

It was Blanche's job to bring breakfast to her grandpa. "He loved berries. But I got so mad, because if he got a seed, he'd just spit it out. I learned to climb trees in the orchard to get cherries and other fruit for grandpa. People would come by and call me a little bird in the tree top. Fruit is my favorite food. Maybe that had something to do with me living so long. We lived on a farm and ate good fresh food all the time."

Blanche had a boyfriend who was going to be a teacher, but he "took sick and had to drop out of school." Later she married a young man, Steve Evans, who worked on her brother's farm. "He just fell in love with me. Course, he wasn't my first choice."

Steve was a druggist. At one time when the family lived in Ellettsville, Indiana, he owned his own drug store. Blanche cooked and served lunches there. "I worked behind the register, too.

Sometimes we thought employees were putting money in their pockets, so I worked the cash register and put a stop to that."

But the most important thing Blanche recalls doing in her life was teaching the Bible. "I was always teaching Bible classes. Once when we lived in Texas, I taught a whole class of little Mexican children. And I was in Bible clubs and church groups and church choirs. I sang alto. There were four of us that visited and sang at different churches."

Her daughter, June, remembers her mother being very strict. "I wasn't allowed to go to movies or dances or bowling allies or skating rinks. In those days there were traveling skating rinks. People brought the floors in sections and set it up under a tent. When I got older, she let me do a little, but she was pretty strick."

When June decided to marry, Blanche tried to stop her. "I called the minister and told him not to marry them, because he didn't have his divorce from his first wife."

June interrupted, "Oh now, Mother, he did, too. You just didn't like him."

Blanche hesitated. "Well, he's always been so good to me, but he was a stranger in a way then. You never know."

"Now Mom," June persisted, "It's worked out pretty good. How long we been married?" Before Blanche could respond, June answered emphatically, "Forty-one years!"

"Well," Blanche conceded, "they had their lives and I had mine. That's just the way it was."

The screen door flew open, and one of Blanche's great-granddaughters came running in from school. As she posed for a picture, Blanche laughed. "They don't call me great-grandma. They call me grandma-the-great."

I asked Blanche who she considered the greatest influence in her life. "I'd have to say my two children, Kenny and June." She began to cry. "The hardest thing that I ever had to do was to give up my boy."

June explained, "Kenny never married. He and mom had always lived together, and when he died three years ago, Mom took it hard."

Blanche relived the still-fresh pain. "It was a terrible heartbreak. He was such a good person. It was just so hard to lose him."

Blanche's favorite Bible verse is "Come unto me all ye who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." She recited it for me, but thought she had transposed some words. After the second try, she nodded her approval.

"You know, I never thought I'd live to be over a hundred. God just put me here and left me."

"Emery," I began, "you must have done something right in order to be a hundred and still look so young."

Sensing the implication that he must have made some deliberate decision to endure a century, he replied sharply, "I'm not sure I ever wanted to! I'm not gonna live forever, you know. It might seem like it, but I'm not. I'm gonna die; that's all there is to it. I'm just subject to die. The longer I live, the more subject I am to die." There was a long pause. The topic was too serious to interrupt; I remained silent. Finally he took a deep breath as if to resolve that he had said all he cared to say about that, then establishing his control, he asked the first question of the interview: "Did you know I was an auctioneer most my life?"

Before I could respond, he began the details of his chosen profession. "I had checked it all out before I asked my dad. He was easy to convince. He took me to Farmersburg [Indiana] and put me on a train to Chicago. I got off on State Street and caught the Interurban headed west. Got off at the school's office, signed up, and paid my dues. Five weeks later I graduated."

"First thing I did when I got home was go see my friend J. D. Harrison. He took the course back in 1910 and 11. He said, 'I think we're gonna make a team.' He was right; we worked together for years. He got out of it before me. He worried too much, finally died."

"I was nearly eighty when I retired. I was lost when I quit, wasn't satisfied, just wasn't satisfied. I always enjoyed being in front of the crowd, pulling my pranks, making them remember me. I was lost when I quit. But I was afraid they would just expect too much of me in my elderly years. I just had to give it up."

He speculated on the importance of his profession. "Joining up with Harrison was good for me. We worked hard and had fun at the same time. We always tried to make it enjoyable for the crowds. Helping ourselves while we enjoyed life."

I asked him if he had married. "I lost my second wife. You know, it's been so long I can't even tell you what happened to my first wife. I must have made her mad or something. We stopped living together. Weren't married too long. I had two children by my second wife—a girl and a boy."

The person that most influenced his life was his grandfather, Gaston. One vivid memory of his childhood causes him to recall the importance of his grandfather's praise. "My dad usually did the farming, but he had signed a contract to work as superintendent on a road construction job. I had to take over the farming, and I was just a boy. I was in the barn hitching up the team of horses and my grandpa came in. He said, 'You're doing a fine job. Do you know that?' I said, 'No.' He said, 'You've been paying close attention to the way your Pa hitches up those horses. He does a good job at it and you do too.' I was so proud. Boy, he was a grand old man. He was a grand old man. Yes, he was!"

Emery especially enjoyed going into Sullivan with his gramps on business. "Everybody knew him. They'd say, 'Howdy, Gaston.' He'd always just answer, 'Do.' If there were two people that greeted him, he'd answer, 'Do, do.' Oh, I loved him. One time he took me in the carriage to the Democratic rally. I'll never forget it. He was a strong Democrat. I got my happy way from my grandpa."

As a boy Emery was also close to his older brother, Homer. "Mom and dad were always afraid that we'd go back by the pond. They warned us never to go back there because the water was over our heads. One time Homer talked me into it, and when we finally came back up to the house mom wanted to know where we'd been. We told her we were at the pond. 'Take down your pants,' she said. Boy she gave us a good one. 'When your dad gets home you'll get another one,' she said. We never got spanked often, and that was the most memorable."

"We lost . . ." He paused and squinted.

"Lost what?" I proded.

"Lost Homer. It came on real quick. Membrance croup. Dad tried everything to keep him from doubling up. Couldn't get the doctor there quick enough. We didn't have no automobiles then, and we lived two and a half miles from Fairbanks. He was just nine. It was awful I had to lose him. Just awful. My little cousin died of it about a year later. Those were hard times. Dad tried everything."

"My dad was a good man. A smart man. One thing I was real proud of was a well my dad designed. He dug a well in the horse lot, and had a pump put in where he put the windmill. When the windmill started blowing, the mill moved and pumped the water to the house. When the water got up so high, there was another pipe to take it to the milk house to cool the milk we milked from the cows. When that water got so high, another pipe took it to the horse tank for the horses. It was real fancy. Dad came up with that idea. For those days, it was real fancy."

The family's first car is also a sharp memory, though the year is a bit fuzzy. Emery's dad and two other townsfolk ordered cars exactly alike. There were E.M.F.s. Emery joked that it meant "Every Morning Fix-it." "When we went to pick them up, there was one poor man the company sent along to teach all of us how to drive them. I was just big enough to sit up behind the wheel."

"Was that the most exciting thing you remember as a child?" I asked.

His reply seemed to sum it all up very well: "It just all was so much—my whole life. So much has come and gone. I can't decide now what was so important at the time. Or what mattered the most."

I assured him that was understandable and that I could hardly imagine what it must be like to sift through a hundred years of memories.

He smiled, "Ain't many ever will find out what it's like either."

INTERVIEW WITH CENTENARIAN LENA LOVETT

The tiny room at the nursing home held few belongings, so the small leather chair was easily sighted under the nightstand. "Mrs. Lovett, may I sit on this stool during our interview?" I began. She nodded.

As I drew the small piece near her, she explained, "That was momma's little stool. She lived to be 94. We were always very close."

Lena's momma had set an example that had shaped this centenarian's life. She taught Lena at an early age that family and friends stick together. "I was an only child, but when I was barely a year, momma's mom died, and momma took her little baby brother to raise. She raised us like twins. I called him my uncle/brother. Momma use to say I was the first baby she ever loved, but she had to find room in her heart for little Clarence, too. And she did. Her heart was big enough for both of us and more. Momma's dad moved in, too. I called him Grandpoppy. There was just always room."

Born in Bethel, Indiana, Lena moved at an early age with her family to Andersonville. Most of her life has been spent there. "Six or seven years ago, I had to sell the house and move here [Rosewood Manor I Nursing Facility in Muncie, Indiana]. I was thinking just this morning how I sold my seven room house and moved here in this little 2 X twice, as I call it. But I like it. These are my friends here. Oh, you'll find one or two silly wits, like you might find anywhere, but all in all it's very nice, and you have to take life all in all, don't you? It's all made up of pieces—like that quilt."

She pointed to a quilt at the foot of her bed. "I wonder a lot about who took all my quilts." Lena and her mother had spent many hours of their lives together piecing quilts to give as gifts for weddings, anniversaries, and graduations, but they had also kept several favorites for themselves.

"My cousin—God rest her soul—when I was in the hospital, darned if she didn't sell all my quilts! Kept the money, too! She's dead and gone now, but I can't help but—and she kept the money! Momma and I worked years on those quilting frames." She paused. "I never will forget it, even if she is dead and gone. Dirty trick. They were mine. Mine and momma's. They were important to us."

It was not just Lena and her mother that had passed the days on those frames. Lena had taken in a neighbor lady who had been left penniless after her husband's death. "She had to stay someplace. Poor thing was nearly as old as mamma—and no money."

Lena's spirit was obviously a nurturing and caring one; that led me to my next question. "Did you and your husband have any children?"

"We had one daughter. She died in infancy. Well, actually there never was any life there. She was born dead at home. The doctor never even let me see her. He felt it was best for me. He thought it would make too many memories. Momma told me she was so tiny, a little round head just like I'd had when I was born, and dark hair."

Dispite the loss of a child, Lena always seemed to have others to care for. "We raised my husband's niece. Her dad died in a fire. He was a fireman and breathed poisonous fumes fighting a fire in Muncie. His wife worked in a little store and couldn't care for both the children, so we took the little girl to raise. I had 'em all some of the time—off and on when the mom was having a hard time. When things would get real tough on them, they'd just all stay with us 'til she'd get back on her feet. Little Mildred always lived with us though, just like our own. I lost two of them together. My husband died in 1956, and one week later, I lost Mildred. Right after that, Mildred's husband died. They just been married a short while. So close together! Momma and I buried 'em all."

"I'll never forget momma standing in the cemetery. She stood there real quiet for a long time then said, 'Now look, there's Art [Mildred's father] right under those trees. Then Mildred and her mother right over there, and Mildred's husband just across the way in the young soldiers section. They're just right together where they can all stay in touch.' My momma was just standing there in that sad cemetery using her imagination, thinking. I'll never forget that."

Lena and her mother remained together until her mother's death. Even after burying her mother, she continued to live alone for years. "Then I went into a coma one day. Nobody at the hospital seemed to know what to do to help me. Someone called on a new doctor, right out of school. They thought he might know some new fancy stuff the rest of them didn't. He sat down next to me and traced his hand over my face and arms, and I just opened my eyes. I guess he had the right touch. I was his first patient—Dr. Gardener. Last time I saw him he said, 'Lena, I'm pushin' you. You're gonna reach 101.' "

"It's wonderful that you have lived so long and done so well," I responded.

"Oh, if I can keep well, I want to go on, but if not, I'm ready when the Lord calls me." She concluded our interview with the life's philosophy that was not only professed, but lived out for more than a century:

> "I've always tried to live right, to treat folks the best I know how, to be good to everyone, to live like a Christian woman."

INTERVIEW WITH CENTENARIAN ADELE MYERS

One of Adele Myers' earliest memories is the tapping of her grandfather's cane as he felt for the slop bucket that was kept under the kitchen table. That recollection is ninety-nine years old; she was only three at the time. Now Adele is 102, and her mind is inundated with memories. During our interview, she sifted through more than a century of experiences, sometimes considering the questions for several moments before answering, sometimes firing pointed questions back in response to the ones I had asked.

Adele's father fought in the Civil War, and her uncle died in it. They were "Northerners, of course." She was born on January 11, 1885 in Nebraska, and her family moved to Kansas before she started school. She made two more moves—one to Tennessee and one to Indiana—where she completed eighth grade, her final year of schooling.

She remembers puzzling a teacher in the one-room schoolhouse. "She'd say she could always tell who knew the answers by the expression on their faces, because they'd smile and look at her or just look down. But I puzzled her. She could never tell by my face." She was also a "poker face" during the spelling bees that were held at the church.

Spelling is still important to her. Because she is nearly deaf, it is sometimes necessary to spell the word slowly as she watches lip movement. "Adele, what makes you happy?" I asked.

She squinted; I repeated; she quessed, "Did you ask me what happened?"

"No. Happy."

She shook her head.

"Spell it," her daughter, Helen, suggested.

"Adele." I touched her arm. "Happy. H-A-P-P-Y."

"Lemon pie! Got any?" She laughed heartily.

I was determined, "What else makes you happy?"

"Custard." She laughed again, knowing she had gotten the best of me.

"My mother made me be happy about things." She became suddenly serious. "She was a good woman, a friendly person, I know that. Everybody liked her. I remember when she was on her death bed, all the neighbors took turns sitting with her. Everybody liked her."

Helen appeared with a slice of lemon pie. "We spoil mom," she confessed as she handed the treat to Adele. "And we worry to death about her. She's always been in such great shape until lately. She keeps falling. We've sent her to the hospital a couple times, but I don't like it. Just confuses her. She wants to die at home, and I want to let her."

Adele looked up. "My daddy never let me get away with stuff I shouldn't. Once I picked up a little pan down the street and brought it home, and when my daddy found out it belonged to the neighbor-lady, he got mad and made me take it back to her. The

lady felt sorry for me and said I could have it, so daddy let me keep it then."

One of her grown grand-daughters interrupted with a kiss. She shouted into the small amplifier attached to Adele's hearing aid, "Tell her the story about the two boys and the arrow."

After hearing the request repeated several times, Adele understood. "I used to tell the kids about two boys I saw one time. They were riding double on a horse, and an Indian shot an arrow at them. The arrow went through both their shirts and pinned them together. Didn't even graze them; just pinned their shirts together. I remember Indians when we was living out West. One time one came to the door and asked for a piece of bread. My mother made the best bread. It tasted like cake. That Indian wanted a piece of momma's bread."

She recalls another Indian experience that occurred when she was older. "I was working as an assistant in a hospital. There was an Indian there. They don't believe in God, you know. They worship the moon or something. I decided I'd try to tell him about God. He got mad and shoved me into the wall. I shut up. Shut my big mouth, huh? Wouldn't you? I did."

Hospital work wasn't her only employment. She also worked in a canning factory and as a wallpaper hanger. Her daughter, Helen, explained that her mother hung wallpaper until she was ninety years old. Adele understood and added, "The men would come watch me. Wanted to see how I did it. I used a long-handled brush. I worked all my life. When my children were small, I just worked at home. But I worked all my life."

Adele had seven children. Two died when they were young. She now has 26 grandchildren, 65 great-grandchildren, and 19 great-great-grandchildren. "She's just always had a good attitude," Helen reflected. "Looked on the positive side of things. After dad died she did a little traveling. Kind of enjoyed herself then, but life wasn't easy for her. It was her attitude that got her by."

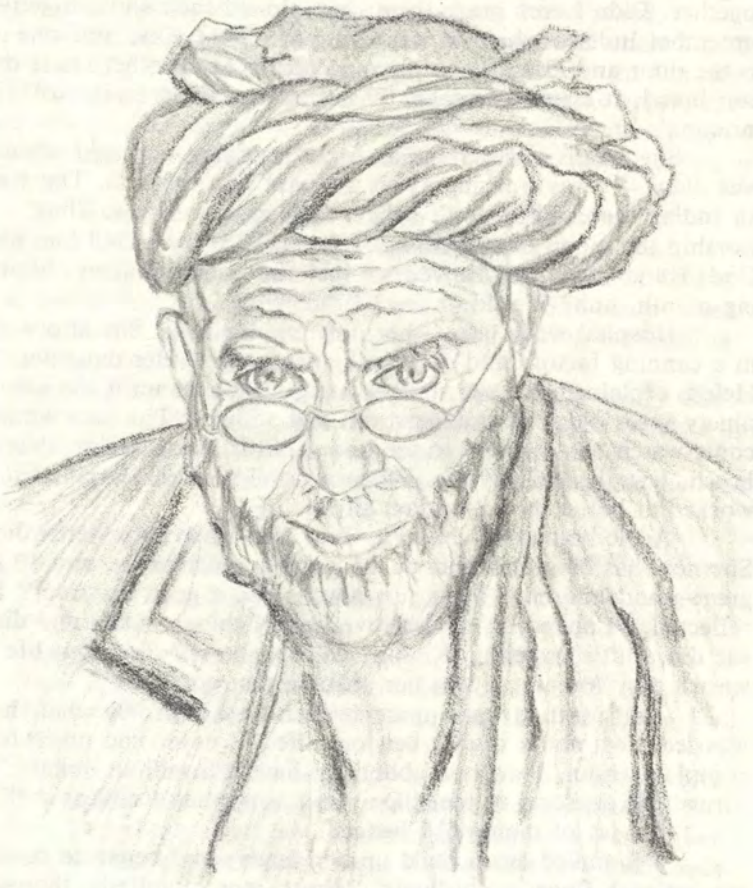
That attitude was apparent when I asked Adele what she had worried most about during her long life. "I never had much to complain about. I worried about not having a million dollars." She turned the question to me, "Do you know what a million is?"

"A lot of money," I hedged.

She smiled again, held up her fingers and began to recite, closing each finger accordingly, "Units, tens, hundreds, thousands, millions, billions, trillions." She looked back at me. "NOW do you know what a million is?" she asked again. We both laughed.

I have saved the most obvious question for last: "Adele, how did you live to be 102 years old?"

Her answer was short and quick. "God alone knows that."



Untitled Carol Carson Schilling

Connections

S. G. Robinson

Tossing and turning, wanting to sleep.
I close my eyes and drift backwards in my darkness.
In the foreground is a white frame house,
Secured with a mass of sturdy trees.
I wander closer to the fixture.
I hear a swishing of a broom cleaning all the debris from the sidewalk.

The smell of cookies, yes, sugar cookies,
baking in the oven, engulfs me.
As I peer through the kitchen window,
There are noodles drying on the table.
What a feast we are going to have.

In a flash, I find myself on the front porch swing.
I am talking to grandma,
Telling her my past, present, and future wishes.
I touch her wavy hair and a tender smile crosses over her face.

Then, in another flash, my grandfather appears,
Walking down the road with his lunch pail in one hand,
And a shiny new quarter in the other.
He gives me a huge bear hug and presses the coin in my hand.
How wealthy I feel inside.

Darkness is complete now.
I feel so loved in the depth of my soul.
At last, peace for the moment.

Doom Hand

Bill Ross

Doom hand
Father hand
I feel your thickness swing into me—
A meteorite on a pendulum stick,
I pull from you easily, sometimes
Other times, I twist like a fish hooked

You keep me awake
A bomb threat—tick, tick, tick
Your slience is so loud—
A monster chime stuffed with the gut
Of some green winter god.

The Real Meaning of Life

Michael Hess

1. Contact

He wandered aimlessly in the night. It was nothing new for Ernie Jones. Aimlessly was the way Ernie wandered through many things, whether it was through the night, through the day, or just through lunch. In truth, Ernie never really knew where the hell he was going, and it was just as well, because he was never really going anywhere.

This night was to be different though. Tonight, Ernie *was* going somewhere. Though he wasn't in on the secret yet, on this night Ernie was going to be contacted by aliens, and taken away to another planet.

But that's a while later. Just yet, Ernie was still trying to cope with wandering aimlessly through the night, among other things.

But his father was foremost in his mind at the moment, as he trudged down the road that divided his father's wheat field. The sweet smell of early fall wheat permeated his brain. The smell reminded him of his agricultural prison, and of the conversation he had had with his father earlier in the evening.

"But Ernie," His father implored him, "how could you possibly want to leave your dear mother and I to run the farm alone? You know I can't do as much these days in my old age. And what about your mother's corns?" His father had been in particularly good form that evening.

"But Dad," Ernie had objected as usual, "You know how badly I want to go to the big city. I've got places to go, things to see."

"Oh well," his father had sighed, rather more deeply than necessary, "I guess it won't bother you too much if your mother and I, who've raised you from a baby, work ourselves into the grave, and have to leave the farm to some stranger who'll probably grow marijuana or (sniff) something."

For some reason, Ernie had felt an unaccountable desire to clean off his boots. Instead, he had just put them on and gone for a walk.

Ernie wanted badly to see the big city in person. He knew that Skokie, Illinois must hold all the attractions of the big cities he'd seen on television. Fast cars, big money, short skirts, McDonald's. He was just aching for all that excitement.

As he walked, he thought about the city, he thought about

the farm, he thought about his life, he thought about the blue and green lights that had strangely taken up a position hovering over his head. He tried to make sense of it all, but somehow he just couldn't seem to make the red and green lights fit in anywhere.

So he did the easiest thing and decided to ignore them.

But for all his persistent efforts to ignore them, the green and yellow lights eventually demanded his attention, as they were now flashing in a curious manner and making as if to land. As they landed, Ernie suddenly became aware of the fact that the yellow and indigo lights were attached to a spaceship of enormous proportions. Not enormous in the way that an aircraft carrier is enormous, but enormous in the way New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Muncie, Indiana would be enormous if they were all stacked on top of each other.

Ernie's sudden urge to run was overcome by the urge not to.

The ship didn't land completely. If it had, it would have wiped out a large portion of his father's crop. Instead, it hovered about ten feet off the ground, and reached the rest of the way down with a shiny cylinder of about five feet in diameter, which settled on the ground in front of Ernie.

The sight of such an incredibly large object standing on one small leg made Ernie want to lean in sympathy.

There was a brief period during which nothing happened, followed by a rather longer period during which nothing continued to happen. It was as if the aliens were giving Ernie a chance to adjust to his new perceptions of reality. At least, that's what Ernie thought. What they were really trying to do was show off.

Among his many other crowded thoughts, Ernie was vaguely surprised at the fact that no police or military had yet made an appearance. The authorities had in fact spotted the ship on radar, but were having terrible trouble deciding on the proper procedure for handling the appearance of a city-sized object in a formerly unpopulated wheat field. It was not covered in any of their manuals, and by the time they had finished discussing all the implications, such as, should a census be taken, should taxes be levied, and most importantly, did it have any really good nightspots to offer, the object had once again disappeared.

As of yet, Ernie was still waiting for the aliens to make their move, which eventually they did. As Ernie watched, the cylinder slid open, revealing a figure that was surprisingly human in form, if one could ignore the extra eye and dorsal tentacles (or were those horns protruding from his forehead?). The figure was dressed in a suit which somehow seemed to radiate a field of expensiveness and taste. Ernie wondered if his eyes were playing tricks.

Ernie hesitantly spread his arms in a universal gesture of welcome, and attempted to communicate. "Welcome," he said very slowly and deliberately, "Can- you- un- der- stand- me?"

The alien smiled smugly and replied in perfect unaccented English, "Are you Mr. Ernest T. Jones?"

This was not exactly what Ernie had expected and could only

nod in his shock. Light music with a snappy rhythm began swelling in the heart of the ship, and the figure announced, "Congratulations, you're the next contestant on . . ." He paused and allowed the music to reach the breathtaking crescendo it had been trying to reach, then finished, "The Meaning of Life, the gameshow where you try and answer questions concerning philosophy, religion, sex, politics, and other trivia."

2. The Trip

The trip to the planet Fomalhut V, the home of that mega-smash-hit gameshow "The Meaning of Life," was for the most part uneventful, and Ernie spent the greatest part of his time being a happy tourist, which is of course to say, he annoyed nearly everybody he met.

The only thing worth mentioning that happened in transit was when a strange reptilian creature appeared at the door of Ernie's cabin to give him a briefing on how to play "The Meaning of Life."

Ernie had always loved gameshows. Many an hour he could have spent using his brain or doing something constructive, he spent watching "The Price is Right," or "Wheel of Fortune" instead, and so he nearly sent the little reptilian creature who had introduced himself as Krakiss, away on the grounds that he probably already knew just about everything there was to know about gameshows.

It is perhaps pertinent to note here the fact that, for the most part, human or alien, people are usually wrong about what they think.

But Krakiss had insisted, "Sssorry Jonesss. It'ss part of the ruless that I tell you the rulesss, since the producers asssume you've sseen the sshow a hundred timess already . . ." He stopped abruptly as a look of indignant surprise carromed across Ernie's face. "What sseemsss to be the trouble?"

"Of course, I've never seen the show before, we don't get that kind of show on Earth. All we get are Earth shows," he objected.

Krakiss was clearly disgusted. "Of all the beingsss, I have to get one from a backwater, barbarian planet that doesn't even get Galactic Cable Holovission."

Ernie decided against asking what holovision meant. "There's no need to be rude Mr. Krakisss, just tell me the rules and have done."

"Alright, here's the ruless. Answer the questionsss correctly, and you win pointsss. Answer them incorrectly, and we take points away and your opponent gets to try to sssteal. And there will be no physical violence unless absolutely necessary."

"Violence? When could violence be necessary on a gameshow?!"

"My good man, don't tell me that you don't have violence on your sssilly little planet."

"Listen, we've got plenty, but what would make it necessary on a gameshow?"

"The obviousss thingsss, Man. A dirty look from your opponent, frussstration at not knowing any of the anssswersss as your opponent runsss up the ssscore, or anything elssse that really getsss on your nervessss."

"Well I don't think I shall have any problems with that, I'm the peaceful sort."

"Oh?" Replied the creature, clearly disappointed. "Well, that'sss all, if you have any quessstionssss, asssk the wall. It won't answer, but on the other hand it'sss incapable of being annoyed." With that, Krakiss turned and left.

Ernie was glad that not all the aliens were like that. He had found many friendly aliens too. Some had even offered to show him around, and all he had to do was sign a little piece of paper, saying something about a share of his winnings from the gameshow. Ernie wasn't sure. He was too happy about finding friends to bother reading those pieces of paper.

Ernie was a little worried about this violence thing, but he was more inclined to believe that the creature had been pulling his leg. Who had ever heard of violence on a gameshow? He was nervous, but he could hardly wait.

3. The Game

"Five, four, three, two, one you're on. . . ."

Ernie could hardly contain himself as the theme music to The Meaning of Life blared from the massive studio P.A., causing the studio audience to go wild, and the galaxy at large, to settle into it's armchairs for a good half hour of entertainment. As the music reached a peak, the announcer broke in. "Ladies and gentlemen, beings and creatures of all kinds, it's time once again for that fabulous gameshow, The Meaning of Life, the show where knowledge is money, and anything can happen, and here's your host (rolling of drums) . . . Mr. Brebe Goog!"

Thunderous applause shook the studio, as all hundred and fifty thousand members of the studio audience voiced their happiness in being here today. In the middle of it all, Brebe Goog rolled up onto the stage in a swift and graceful motion.

"Thank you, thank you, . . . hello everybody and welcome to our show. We all know that I'm Brebe Goog, but who are these folks over here? I'd like you to meet our contestants for today. On the right we have with us Warb Zxtlkmd. He's from the constellation of Horologium, and has degrees in Philosophy, Theology, and basic Drivel, from the university of Rigel III. Warb, what do you do for a living way out there in Horologium?"

"Well Brebe, I'm a part-time minister for the Church of The Ultimate Rightness, and in my spare time, I compose jingles for commercial advertising."

"Well that sounds very fulfilling, I can see where your degree

in Drivel might come in handy. And our other contestant, claims he's from way out on the Eastern Spiral Arm, from a planet called Earth. He also says he digs in dirt for a living, and his name is Ernie Jones. That's a strange name, Ernie, I hope I pronounced it right. How'd your parents ever come up with a tongue twister like that for a name?"

"Well Brebe, it's really a funny story . . ."

"Yes, I'm sure it is," he cut in. "And tonight, our contestants will be playing for the opportunity to win this fabulous VACATION FOR TWO. Tell 'em about it, Vort . . ."

"Yes, Brebe," came the unseen announcer's reply. "The winner on our show today will win this wonderful vacation for two to the sunny resort world of Spica, the planet where a day without sunshine is unheard of, and the natives are friendly. Yes, Spica, the planet with three suns in orbit around *it*. Our winner and a guest will be flown there on the luxury space cruiser Good Sportsman II, and will stay in all the most expensive hotels. He will also be given unlimited credit within the boundaries of the planet. They say a day on Spica is like ten billion years on any other planet, and they're right . . . Brebe . . ."

"Thanks, Vort. Here's how we play the game. Iwillaskaquestionandwhoeverthinkshehastherightanswermustjumptwofeetintotheairandhangtherewhenyouarecalledonyouwillbegiventensecondsinwhichtoanswerthequestionifyouarecalledonandfailtoanswerthequestionyouwilllosehowevermanypointsthequestionwasworthandyouropponentwillbegivenachancetoanswer. Any questions?"

Ernie had a definite question about this hanging bit, but when he jumped up to ask it, he was surprised to find himself hanging two feet in the air.

"Hold on there Ern, we haven't even asked the first question yet." At which Ernie, to his surprise, dropped back down to his feet, just by thinking about it.

"Okay, our first round of questions are worth ten points apiece, are you ready? Good. Here's our first question: how many angels can dance on the head of a pin?"

"Mr. Zxtlkmd, you were hanging first, what's the answer?"

"I don't know, Brebe," answered Warb, confidently, before Enrie even had time to think about jumping, let alone, answering the question.

"That's absolutely correct, ten points for you, Warb. Next question: How was the universe created?"

Ernie was sure he knew the answer to this one, but once again, Warb was just too fast for him.

"Warb?"

"I don't know, Brebe."

"Ten more points for you, Warb. Next question: Who was responsible for the political theory which states: All sentient beings are created equal, except for small, purple, furry sentient beings, which are, of course, slightly less equal?"

This time, thinking he had finally caught on, Ernie was the first in the air.

"Ah, Mr. Jones' turn, Ernie?"

"I don't know?" He replied hesitantly.

"Then why did you jump? I'm afraid we're going to have to subtract ten points for that one, and give Warb a chance to steal. Warb, do you know the answer?"

"Yes, Brebe, that would be Morgle Forgle, and might I just add that Mr. Forgle was recently found dead in his apartment under very mysterious circumstances, involving a blender, a yardstick, and a measuring cup?"

"No, you certainly may not. And now, we've come to the end of our first round. So far, Warb leads it by forty points, but as you fans know, anything can happen, and probably will. Our second round of questions will be worth twenty points apiece. Here's the first question: You've got this really luscious babe on the couch, and you really want to make it with her. What do you do?"

When Ernie noticed that Warb was as puzzled over this as he was, he decided to hazard an answer.

"Yes. Ernie?"

"I don't know," he answered.

"That's absolutely correct Ern, putting you back up there in the positive numbers, and back in the game, with ten points. Next question: If a chicken and a half can lay an egg and a half in a minute and a half, how long would it take a chicken with a wooden leg to kick a hole in the side of an atomic converter?"

"Warb?"

"A millenia and a half, because nebulae are too thin."

"Right, the score is now fifty to ten. Next question: If two Zunkish waterfowl mate in the winter season, how many offspring are they likely to have?"

"Warb?"

"Would it be three, Brebe?"

"No, it most certainly wouldn't, it's up to you Ernie, any idea? No? Well I'm not surprised, it was, in fact, a trick question. Zunkish waterfowl have only one gender, and therefore, cannot mate. Poor creatures. Their young are formed by magic. It is again thirty to ten, and that's all for our second round. And I think it's time to pause for a commercial break, before we enter our third and final round."

As the commercial began playing over the studio monitors, Ernie took his first opportunity to really look around. The place was huge, and the studio audience filled with more shapes and sizes than Ernie had ever thought possible. He was struck suddenly by the apparent hopelessness of his position. What if the rest of the questions were about specific things, like that question on politics had been. Ernie felt that he was at an unfair disadvantage. So many things were possible in a universe of such varied life forms? How could he know all the things that these beings knew? How could he answer questions about things and people he'd never even heard of?

He could only hope that the rest of the questions would be more general.

Suddenly, he had no more time to think. They were back live, and he knew he had to concentrate on the questions at hand, or lose out completely.

"Welcome back," said host Brebe Goog, "it's now time for our third round, in which all the questions are worth thirty points apiece. But remember, these are the most difficult questions, so think carefully before jumping to conclusions, if you'll excuse the pun."

"First question: What does the expression 'It's in the mail' really mean?"

"Whoooa, somebody scrape Ernie off of the ceiling. Mr. Jones?"

"It means you've been pretty busy lately, what with the kids having the flu, and taking the dog to the vet's, the house needed cleaning, and you just haven't had the time to get around to it, and maybe you'll send it sometime next year."

"Another thirty points for Ernie, who takes the lead for the first time, forty-thirty. Next question: Who led the Megalon Armada in its attack on the slushie worm creatures of Betelgeuse II?"

"Warb?"

"Wasn't that Guck Blug, Brebe?"

"No, in fact, it wasn't. If you recall, Blug was on the side of the Slushies. Ernie, now's your chance to break this game wide open. Who led that ill-fated armada?"

This was exactly the type of question Ernie feared, so all he could say was, "I don't know, Brebe."

"Yes, you're absolutely correct, it was Admiral I. Dono, and you now have a commanding lead going into the last question of our last round today. With the score seventy to thirty, here's our last question: Why?"

This was a toughie. Both contestants hemmed and hawed over it, contemplating the broadness of the question, and trying to narrow it down to some specific answer. Warb showed no signs of enlightenment, and eventually, Ernie decided he knew the answer after all, and jumped accordingly.

"Ernie, for the game and the trip to Spica . . . Why?"

"Why not?" Answered Ernie authoritatively.

"That is absolutely correct . . . and it looks like you, Ernie Jones, have won the trip to . . . but wait . . ."

Ernie was busy doing a victory dance that he had seen many football players doing on TV, when suddenly, he was knocked from out of mid-air, and hurled to the ground. Before he even had a chance to react, he was pinned to the floor, Warb on top of him.

"It appears as though Warb has pinned Mr. Jones to the floor. What do you say judges, was violence really necessary?"

The judges' decision came back unanimous.

" 'He was clearly losing' say the judges, and that's good

enough for us, right folks?" The crowd went wild. What an exciting show it had turned out to be. "Sorry Ern, maybe next time."

"But . . ."

"Got any words of wisdom for our audience tonight Warb?"

"Yes Brebe, I'd just like to say that it just goes to show, ignorance is no excuse." Words of wisdom that everyone could live with.

There was little more to it.

With little or no ceremony, Ernie was ushered out of the studio, and straight back onto the ship. He objected that he'd like to stick around for a while, and the network objected that he didn't have any money to spend, and was therefore out of luck.

Before he knew it, he was back on the farm. He had been gone for a total of one week, and he didn't feel that his consolation prize, the home version of "The Meaning of Life," was going to be enough to explain to his parents where he'd been.

Gathering of Thorns

George A. Dunn

Some wounds won't heal, they walk,
wearing their scorn like an evening gown,
hateful delicacy
for hire.
Listen to a fantasy. It goes like this:
  you break through her cunt, right on through
  to her heart; you wash her chamber clean with
  warm healing ejacula; redemption
dripping
down her leg.
Her breast displays a tattooed rose,
a gathering of thorns,
  but, she says,
  there is no story here for you, mister.

Baloney

Linda D. Lewis

Did you ever, for no apparent reason,
get unduly indignant because no one
had bothered to take a telephone survey
to see how you liked your baloney,
round or sandwich-shaped, particularly
when you were almost positive
that all of your friends had been
contacted as to their preference?

Yolanda Charles Wyatt

Espie's Love

Troy L. Riser

"I'm in town," she is saying, "and I need to see you." Her voice is clear, close, without the hiss of long distance static. She's in a telephone booth, I think, her breath fogging the glass. "We need to talk this time," she says, "really talk."

There is a mirror hanging on the wall of my study, a full-length antique with beveled edges, and in it I see a man creeping up on middle age, going soft, balding, a telephone to his ear, about to commit adultery.

"Espie," I say, speaking her name in a low voice, glancing at the doorway. "It's good hearing your voice. I missed hearing your voice."

"I've missed you too, Chris," and she breaks off for a moment. "I can't believe I'm doing this. I have a husband. I'm married. Happily married."

"I am too. So am I," I say, fumbling for a pen and a piece of scratch paper. "Where are you?"

'I'll meet you at the Alberton," she says. "Like old times."

The Alberton Hotel. Candlelight and bright, white linen napkins folded like miniature party hats. On the high, ornate, pressed-tin ceiling a single chandelier dulled yellow from cigarette smoke and age. A waterbed too soft and rolling for sleep, slapping at the sideboards, bigger than a playground sandbox.

"Perfect," I say. "Time?"

"Whenever you can get away."

"Four o'clock?"

"Four, then," she says, nearly a whisper. "I'll wait at the desk."

"We'll talk," I say, writing down a name, a name of a hotel, and a time. "The telephone's no good."

I hang up, my fingers lingering on the smooth, curved plastic.

"Babe?" my wife calls from the kitchen. Sarah enters what we call the study, belly big from the baby we made together. Her movements are ponderous and deliberate, top-heavy. "Who was that?"

I don't answer. I sit down.

Sarah straddles my lap and loops her arms lazily around my neck and nuzzles me, tickling my cheek with her eyelashes. I concentrate on an imaginary point above her shoulder.

"So serious," she says, "so quiet today." Sarah's eyes are close to mine, so dark, almost black, shot with splashes of gold. I shake my head and bury my face in the hollow of her neck and shoulder, tasting salt and musk perfume. I hold her, not saying anything, taking her in. Sensing my mood and I hope to God not my thoughts, she dismounts carefully and kisses me on the forehead.

"I felt the baby kick, here a little while ago. I came in so you could feel her too, but I guess I wasn't fast enough."

"Him," I say, forcing a smile, gripping the armrests hard, squeezing.

"*Her*," she says, laughing. "I *know*."

"That was an old friend called just now. I have to go out here pretty soon. He's in some kind of trouble." Think of a name. "An old frat buddy of mine." Think of a name. "Bunbury," I say. "Keith Bunbury. You may've heard me talk about him."

Sarah forms the name silently with her lips, feeling for an echo.

"What kind of trouble?"

"Woman trouble," I say, expelling breath like a laugh. I rise from the chair and cross to the bar and pour drinks: wine for her, scotch for me. I hand her her drink, and she settles back on the sofa, crossing her legs carefully.

"Oh," she says, "that kind of trouble." She sips thoughtfully from her glass, holding it by the stem. "Why you? College was a long time ago."

"Not that long ago."

"You know what I mean. What's he want you to do? Hold his hand for old times' sake!"

"It's not like that," I say, picking out the rocking chair to sit in. I rock and rock. "He's having an affair with a woman we both knew from school." I cradle the drink in my hands, propping my elbows on the armrests thoughtfully. "It was me who introduced them."

"I see," Sarah says, "so you feel partly responsible."

"Partly."

"Was she pretty?"

"You couldn't call her pretty, not in the conventional sense. She was too skinny to be what you'd call pretty." I finish my drink, and shudder at the harshness of the stuff going down. "She had a thing about her though," I say, looking down into the bottom of the empty glass. "A kind of intensity."

"What's Keith's wife think about all this?"

"She doesn't know, but he thinks she suspects. That's what he told me."

"Why do you think he's doing it? I mean, why risk everything for what sounds to me a trip down memory lane?"

"I don't know. I don't even think he knows. I'd guess it's because people have this thing about lost promise."

"Did you know her well?" Sarah asks.

—Chris, remember when I said I wanted us to live together?

—Yes, I remember.

—Remember I said I wanted to marry you if it worked out?

—Yes, I remember.

—When I said I loved you?

—Yes.

"No," I say, softly. "I didn't know her well at all."

"You never did tell me her name. I just keep thinking of her as some faceless Other Woman."

"Elaine, Elaine something."

Sarah sets her glass aside on the lamptable, rises with effort, and heads for the door. She pauses at the doorway to lean back, hands on hips, until I can hear the popping of her spine.

"I hope things work out all right for your friend," she says, and she is gone.

I hear the muffled clash of dishes in the kitchen.

I walk the thinly-carpeted floor to the stereo and leaf through the albums leaning against the speaker stand. I select an album, holding it with the flat of my palms on the edges, fearful of dust or fingerprints, and put on some Janis Joplin, *Me And Bobby McGee*. I lower the needle arm and turn up the volume and bring her voice alive against the walls. I think of Janis Joplin's ashes spread out over the ocean. I listen for a while, standing. I make ready to leave.

"Home early?" Sarah calls as I open the front door, shrugging on my coat.

"Not too long." I hold the door half-open and look at the patterns in the wood. The wind is cold.

"The roads are slick tonight," she says, wiping her hands dry above the sink, her back to me. Sarah turns, tossing wadded papertowels absentmindedly into the wastebasket. "You won't do me or your friend any good if you wind up in a ditch somewhere."

I nod and smile and walk out, shutting the door quietly, softly.

Espie's back is to me in the lobby. She is pacing back and forth, a cigarette held deftly on the ends of her middle and index fingers, watching the main entrance. At the sight of her the blood rushes to my head leaving me giddy and my heart is racing, pounding, my knees packed with grease and I feel warm, flushed, and I come up behind her and take her by the crook of the elbow and she isn't startled, not surprised at all, the most natural thing in the world and I turn her like the pivot and spin of a dance and hold her, squeezing her tight, breathless, and I can feel the sharp jutting of her shoulder blades and the knobs of her spine through the thick wool of her sweater.

"I didn't think you'd come," she says, and her voice is muffled against the padded layers of my parka. "Not after last time."

"I couldn't *not* come," I say, shrugging helplessly.

We break apart and I grasp her by the shoulders, with her hands on my waist like they've always belong there. Her hair is different, cut short and feathered back, businesslike. A stray streak of lipstick marrs her white, uneven teeth, as if she had been jolted putting it on. She looks away from my stare, and her profile is sharp and aqualine, all angles and planes. I can see faint crowsfeet around her eyes through the makeup.

"You've changed, too," she says.

"Did you reserve a room?"

She shows me the keys.

"The old room?"

She doesn't answer. She links arms with me and we walk to the elevator. The elevator is an old one, with an iron latticework inner-door needing to be closed by hand. I press a button and we stand back and lean against the wall, holding hands, listening to the tinny bell ping as we go up.

The room is smaller than I remember. It has a faded elegance, the furniture real wood and overstuffed. The framed prints on the walls are landscapes, with titles no doubt like *Cabin In Winter*, or *Running Streams In Autumn*. The bed dominates everything, with a high canopy covered with mirrors. Mirrors on the ceiling, Christ.

Espie crosses to the windows and draws the heavy, imitation-velvet drapes closed. A bar of sunlight streams through a gap in the curtains, filtering through the icy glaze of the windows. The light is gray, neutral, indifferent. I move to turn on the lights.

"Leave it dark," she says.

"I thought you wanted to talk."

"Who are we kidding?"

I take off my coat and drape it over one of the chairs. I sit on the edge of the bed, feeling it give, and take off my shoes and socks and sweater. I hear the slick peeling back of sheets and feel her weight settle on the bed.

"Make me warm," she says, and I stand up and take off my pants and underwear and I'm undressed and I slide between the sheets and press against her. Her skin is smooth and cold.

We make love, our bodies slipping into place like the meshing of well-worn gears, and I am become a piston, an automaton, a machine. Part of her, pounding, biting, tasting blood and she hisses through her teeth and sobs and scratches my back with long, unpainted fingernails and I stop.

Espie lies under me, tense, questioning—afraid, I think. I soften and shrivel inside of her.

"What . . . what?" Her voice is tight and loud in the dark.

"It's no good," I say, rolling off. I swivel on the bed and put my feet on the floor. Thick, spongy carpet. I stand up and move for the door and grope for the light switch.

"Don't," she says, and I can hear the rustle of clothing.

I turn on the light.

Her skin is pale under the light, and there are dark smudges

under her eyes. Loose hair falls over her brow in sweaty disarray. The frilly, black-lace bra and panties she is wearing look stark and foreign. I can count her ribs. I look down at my suddenly pathetic belly and the chest that was once banded with muscle and the legs like breadsticks that used to take me like the wind for miles.

I turn the light off and go back to the bed. I curl next to Espie for warmth. I hear her breathing and the rustle of blankets as she reaches for her long, menthol cigarettes on the nightstand. The lonely click of a plastic, disposable lighter. The thoughtful intake of breath.

"You love her, don't you?"

"Yes."

"She you?"

"I think so."

"What about me? You love me?"

"Yes," I say, "probably forever."

The glowing tip of the cigarette brightens in the mirros overhead. I burrow deeper into the blankets. Warm.

"Why are we whispering?" she asks.

"People always whisper in the dark after sex."

"I don't love you," she says, and for some reason I think her eyes are wide open, staring at the ceiling.

"I know. You told me once."

"I don't love my husband, either. He's just steady."

"Steady."

"I think I've always been in love with the idea of being in love."

She stubs out the cigarette. The ashtray clatters hollowly on the nightstand.

"Romance," she says with a dry laugh.

I turn on my side and I can see the outline of her face in the dim light. I place a hand over her breast without passion.

"Let's wrap this thing up," she says. "Let's say goodbye."

I nod and get up, feeling drained and logy, like a soldier at the end of a forced march under the July sun. I take a long shower, working the tiny hotel soap bar to a sliver, not wanting Sarah to smell traces of Espie and wonder and guess.

I say goodbye to Espie at the door, cupping her face in my palm. I look into her hazel eyes that seem to change color with her moods, blue to gray to green, and kiss her lightly on the lips. Her kiss is closemouthed and dry, like the brushing of a feather.

The drive home is uneventful. My eyes water from the cold. Have to have the heater fixed.

"I'm home," I call as I open the front door. I hang up my coat on a hook in the foyer, feeling inane. *Lucy, I'm home.* Ricky Ricardo, Jesus.

"So tell me," she says looking at me intently, "how did things work out with your friend?"

I look Sarah in the eyes, straight in the eyes.

"I talked him into dropping it. I told him it wasn't worth losing his wife over."

"Any kids? Something like that'd be really hard on kids."

"Wife, kids, house, car—everything."

"I think you did the right thing," Sarah says, crossing her arms. "Want anything?"

"Something to eat," I say, smiling.

She goes to the kitchen. I walk to the study and pour a glass of whiskey without water on ice. It's totally dark outside now and the sapling I planted just outside the window is frail and skeletal, bending to the wind.

Sarah brings in a tray of sandwiches and places it on the coffeetable, leaning over carefully. She straightens abruptly, grasping her stomach.

"Quick," she says breathlessly, grasping my free hand. I splay my fingers against the warmth of her and feel the heartbeat loud and familiar. Sarah laughs an easy laugh and yes, yes, yes, listening with my fingertips I do feel something, the kicking of our baby boy or girl it doesn't matter, and I laugh and take my wife by the hand and lead her upstairs, turning off the lights behind me as I go.

Inclination

Jackie Schmidt

Just a slight bent
a fine edge
a modest slant
a petty preference like
    mauve to rose
    satin to taffeta
    sandcastles to snow angels
    lilac to lavender
    cashmere to angora
    vanilla to lemon
    harp to violin
    cross-stitch to needlepoint
    and poetry to housework

Drowned Clock

Cecil L. Sayre

she slips
from the edge
of the tub
and only
the noose
about her
neck
quickens
to catch her

hanging her

from the stainless steel showerhead
like a drop of water never to fall

over the wet palm of the full moon
drowning in the bottom of the tub

her once
ivory body
black
as the clock's
ebony hands
reaching
for mid-

night

she casts
shadows
through
the starlight
onto
the yellow
tile walls
long
after
the time
of death

pirouetting endlessly
above the closed drain

Another Side of Annie Carol Carson Schilling

Gold

M. Todd Fuller

Gold was not precious enough to capture you.
You wanted dawn, and a painted sunset.
But all I had to give you was gold.

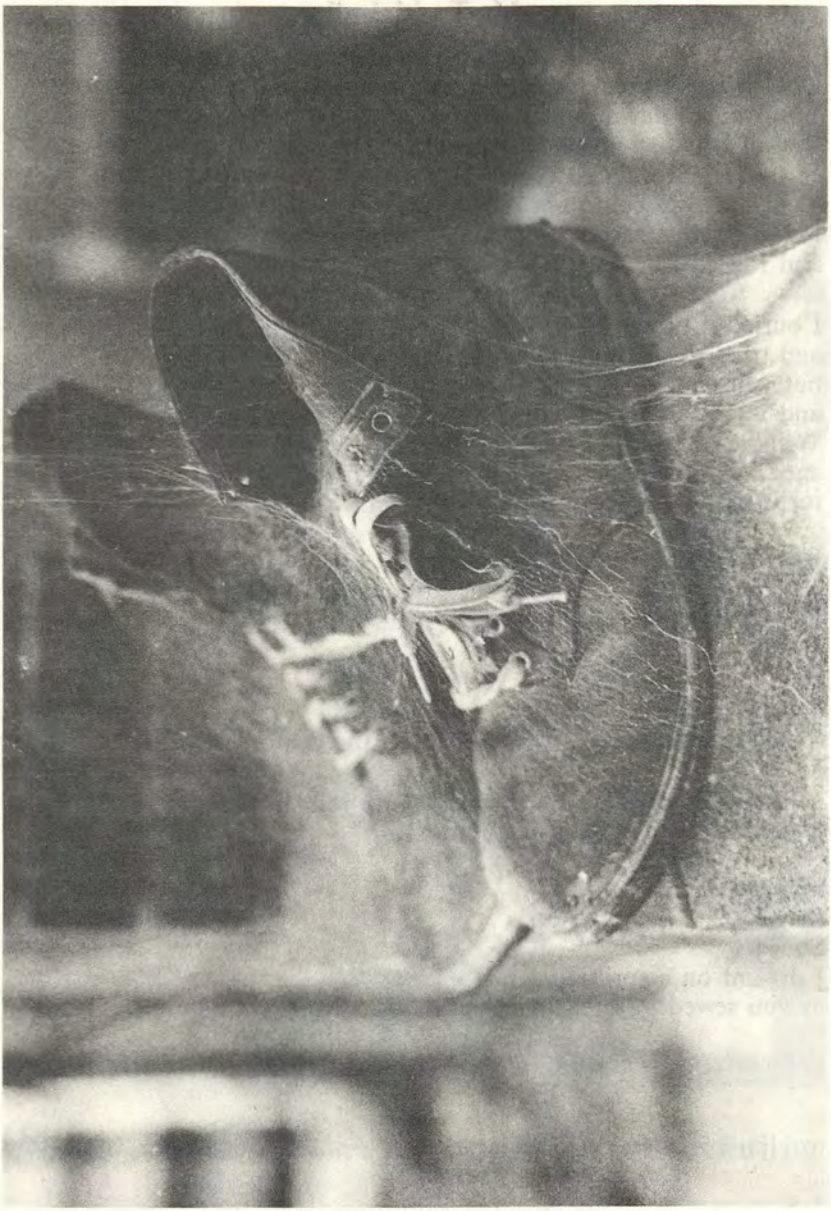
You said gold could not tangle you
into a depthless knot of royalty,
and I cried for me.

I buried it beneath a grave
and tried to kiss you a sunrise on canvas
but you danced with another son,
and I sank to appease the pictures you held as beauty.
Wrinkled were my hands and thoughts,
aged by colors,
tortured by my deprivations.

I desired to give you something,
red as the fire sun, blue as the distant end of dusk;
I found that perfection on a day with wind
seducing grey sky.

When I held you with fire,
I touched you with a tremble tear on the lips of my poetry.

You held wonder in the amazement of your mind,
and tickled the moment with a kiss,
the covenant of
innocence
that covered our passion.
So
I dreamt on a springtime eve,
as you sewed a sunbeam's thread into a rainbow.



Laid Off Sybil Hall

Total Recall of A Pretend Bedbug

Barbara Bogue

I looked forward to the 25th Reunion of the Graduating Class of 1960. We who graduated from Muncie Central that year were of a vintage crop—maturing to the full bloom of adulthood in the finest Bearcat tradition. We told ourselves we were the best. Some of us were, I guess. I watched, from the sidelines, as people filtered through the door . . . a kaleidoscope of images and colors reflected within the mirrored ball suspended from the center of the Hotel Roberts' ballroom. Anticipation rose and fell within me like an out-of-kilter barometer each time a new person signed in. It was rumored that Trinka Small would finally make it to this one after failing to appear at the previous four. She would probably sign in as Kathryn North, her married name, but I would always remember her as Trinka Small.

Even now her name brings a smile to my lips. The irony of her name always struck me in an amusing sort of way. It really never fit her 5'10" slender frame that stood out from the crowd in those innocent days of the '50's. Twenty-five years have passed since we went our separate ways. I moved out of town after graduation and changed addresses as often as I changed my attitudes on life back then. Several times during those years I received forwarded mimeographed Christmas letters. Even the signatures, typed Dr. and Mrs. Phillip North, seemed alien to the Trinka of the past. I finally acknowledged several of her letters . . . letters proclaiming gifted children, a husband accomplished in the medical field, and for Trinka, stints of work as an R.N., as well as her position as president of the Women's Guild in Harrisburg, Pa. But they could not have been composed by the Trinka I knew. Never.

A few more bodies sauntered in. I scanned the faces looking for Trinka. No luck. I could hardly wait for Trinka to reaffirm my convictions that we had been special back then, and that the specialness still existed, setting us apart from all of the other middle-aged "dorks" coming through the door. Who were they anyway? Bald headed men with dun-lap disease. You know, the belly-dun-lapped over the belt. Former football players who wouldn't give me the time of day back then but who now leacherously surveyed my body with sidelong assaulting glances as they passed. Women with fallen breasts and frosted hair smiled forced, stiff "hello's" at everyone in sight, squinting at hastily scribbled nametags as they searched for a familar name. Meaningless "How-are-you's" mingled with hollow "Fine's" and unenthusiastic "Wonderful's" punctuated by brief silences before

the next expected query of "So what have you been up to?" began. Their voices became a hum of "he-did's" and "she-said's" as I listened to the drone of disco music with its background of heavy bass.

When Trinka does show up, I decided, everyone will finally recognize the old "Fric and Frac" team of yesteryear. It all started in the 7th grade. We became inseparable that year and remained that way through our senior year of high school. Our immediate attraction to each other was obvious. We were eye level, heads and shoulders above the rest of the students. We were the tallest and the gangliest. Our heads always arrived five minutes before our bodies, as we tried to appear shorter by constantly slumping. It never worked. Someone would always yell out "Stretch!" or "Hey, Trinka Tall" to her or "Zig Zag Zimmi" to me. My tag was due to the last name of Zimmerman that went with my first name of Brenda and also the fact that I was very near-sighted. I needed glasses in the fifth grade but didn't get them until the ninth. I was always walking into walls or saying "excuse me" to street signs when I bumped into them. Trinka never had that problem. She had 20-20 vision and a class act to fit. Even her clumsiness had a grace to it.

Our other common physical feature was being skinny. Trinka, however, had beautiful clothes that were tailored for her long lean body. Me, I wore my older sister's clothes. Unfortunately for me, my sister had a rear end and I didn't. There was always a large empty lump jutting out from the back of my long straight skirts. And Trinka never seemed to notice that I only had two skirts and three blouses to rotate. She had a different outfit for every day of the month and seemed to enjoy my "oh's" and "ah's" of compliments to her each morning before classes.

After the height and skinniness, our physical appearances parted ways. Trinka had beautiful clear skin, professionally cut hair, clear brown eyes that saw the world without squinting or pulling the corners of the eyes up "Chinese" fashion, teeth white and even and checked by a dentist regularly and, most precious of all, a large beauty mark on her right cheek . . . next to a dimple. I became extremely agitated with anyone who referred to it as a birthmark. So it was large. It was a wonderfully, strategically placed beauty mark that accented her natural beauty perfectly. She seemed oblivious to the differences in that area. I had chronic acne, bushy eyebrows, a tooth broken off that sat square in the middle of my face, and hair that was "styled" by anyone in the family who walked by with scissors in their hands. Once, five different people wacked on it. My great uncle drew lots that time for the bangs' section and when he got through, I had a crew cut in front. It did wonders for my large forehead and those comma shaped eyebrows.

I guess another big difference between Trinka and me was our families. She lived on the northside of the tracks and came from an "educated" family. Both of her parents had attended college and fully expected their children to do the same. Trinka's

father was an executive at the Chevrolet plant in town. I didn't really know what that meant at the time, except that it resulted in Trinka having a closet full of clothes, her own room with a telephone and her own private line. It also meant two bathrooms, one upstairs and one down. I loved to spend the night with her. I wasn't invited too often because of the distance between our homes and the fact that her parents had a busy "social calendar" that most often prevented them from driving me to the South side of town on Saturday or Sunday mornings. But those times when I did get to go were very special to me.

The evening would begin with dinner. We called it supper at my house. The table was set with crystal and china and lots of silverware. Trinka warned me the first time to watch her so that I would know what utensil to use. A maid would serve the meal. They were formal dinners and the conversation and attitude were expected to match. Once, I forgot and put my elbows on the table. Trinka's mother leaned over and said, "No elbows on the table, please," punctuating the "no" and the "please" with equal force to her voice. My face must have turned beet red. I looked sideways at Trinka who seemed to be bursting with suppressed laughter. I looked back at the stern, reproachful look on her mother's face. I sat stiffly through the rest of the dinner, praying that I would not make any more social gaffes. Even then, Trinka had the amenities that I would learn only much later in life.

Trinka's family was serious about proper conduct in life, as well as at the table. They wore the right clothes, said the right things . . . with the proper grammar of course . . . went to the right church, the large Methodist one downtown, and always seemed to be and do the right thing. I think my passport into their home was my intellectual ability. Trinka and I were both on the honor roll all through school and made straight A's in everything. We also were involved in the same extracurricular activities. The ultimate achievement of acceptability at Central High was belonging to Violet Club, an unauthorized social sorority. Trinka was inducted into it in the tenth grade. I became a member in my senior year, with Trinka providing me, when I pledged, with all of the gum and candy that was required to be on my person at all times should a member "request" it. Trinka probably never divulged her charity to me, but when it came my turn to have a meeting, Trinka insisted that I have it at her house and no one in the chapter ever seemed to wonder why or even ask me about it.

I guess that offer must have resulted from Trinka's one and only venture into cultural shock when she stayed at my house one weekend. For one thing, Trinka and I had to share a twin bed, as my sister and I shared a bedroom. Another obvious discomfort for Trinka was *the* bathroom, located on the main and only floor of our small four-room house which squatted, peeling paint and all, beside the alley at the rear of a lot. It was a converted garage. She seemed dismayed that it was impossible for us to spend long hours primping in the only "john" available.

Poor Trinka. She also had to divert her eyes a lot to avoid my stepfather, the "buddha," who sat ensconced on his throne, the most comfortable chair in the small living room, wearing only boxer shorts and drinking beer, one after another. My stepfather was not one to care about appearances and had told me before Trinka's arrival, "It's my home, don't tell me what I can do in it!" Mom worked days as a waitress in a tavern. She came home late the Saturday night that Trinka stayed. My stepfather was already drunk by the time Mom arrived. She was loaded. Although at the time I had thought that Trinka and I were safely enshrouded in the bedroom listening to my meagre collection of 45's, their shouting and swearing soon overrode even Bill Haley and the Comets and came blasting through the paper thin walls. Their bellowing became louder and louder, accented by slaps and crashing sounds of thrown objects. Trinka's face had turned to a bleached white and her eyes were huge. I remember telling her the only thing that I could think of . . . that Mom had T.B. and it had created an imbalance in the brain that made her act that way. Then Trinka asked me what my stepfather's problem was. I told her that my mother had contracted the disease from him, so naturally, he acted weird too. Trinka quit asking questions. Her father picked her up very early the next morning.

Despite that slight splinter in the framework of our friendship, Trinka and I remained the closest of friends. Part of the bond of our friendship was our senses of humor. We discovered life together in that sheltered atmosphere of the '50's. In the ninth grade, Trinka and I remained "pure," although curious. We had not yet tried smoking, drinking, cussing and, of course, never sex. The first time we tried cussing, we were standing in Trinka's front yard under the massive elm tree. I suggested it.

"Let's cuss."

"Why?" Trinka looked at me, her glorious beauty mark even more vivid in the sunlight that day. Her beauty never ceased to impress me.

"Just to see what it feels like," I answered.

She looked down at her feet for a few seconds, then looked all around.

"O.K., your turn first."

So I started in. I went through "shit," "damn" and "hell" and then I was at a loss. I surely had a subconscious vocabulary of four letter words in my repertoire from all that I had heard at home, but they never surfaced. Trinka seemed to be hesitant, nervous and fidgity. So I repeated them all again with more force and clarity. She gave me the funniest look. For some reason, I turned around. Her mother stood behind me, her lip curling up on one side and she let out a sigh that sounded full of disgust. She walked away, muttering to herself. I looked back at Trinka. She had a smug and self-righteous look on her face. She seemed to realize that I was studying her. She began to stammer, her face

turned crimson. "Where did she come from? I swear I didn't see her." I tried to believe her, but I didn't suggest cussing again.

The other attempts at discovering life were through being crazy. Sometimes during my few visits to Trinka's, we would lie awake in her big bed at night and pretend to be two bedbugs talking. One night in particular stands out in my mind.

"Look at that huge mountain over there," I said, and pointed to a big crease in the rumpled sheet.

"Don't worry, it's no hill for a climber. And besides, you'll get your reward on the other side," Trinka said. She plucked at the sheets and sniffed the air, as we supposed bedbugs did.

"And what is that?" I asked, turning my head from side to side, wrinkling my nose and pretending to anticipate the elusive "pot of gold."

"Something befitting your station in life," she said and then smacked her lips and rubbed her hand together. "Ummm, good. Potato chip crumbs, what else?"

"Trinka," I said, remaining in my bedbug character, "you know Darkness is our god and the Universe is the crumpled bed of humankind. How insignificant our life is as we scavenge for food in a hostile environment, fending off heavy bodies in the night and fanatic, frantic housewives by day—demons who seek to destroy us."

"Lighten up, Brenda," she said. "We're just bedbugs, O.K.?"

Trinka went to sleep after that encounter into fantasies of the mind. I lay awake and felt the heartbeat of that bedbug beating within the recesses of my soul.

Anyway, Trinka and I remained virtuous throughout those years. We neither one smoked, drank or discovered sex. We made a vow, in fact, never to date guys who did any of those things. That is probably why neither of us ever dated. Instead, we concentrated on our studies. I floated through those years, losing myself in books and the promise of an occasional, rare weekend at Trinka's. I never discussed my homelife with her. To do so would have shattered the illusion of a "normal" life that I had created for myself.

Toward the end of our senior year, Trinka and I were co-chairpersons of the Spring Fantasy ball sponsored by the Violet Club. It was held in the ballroom of the Hotel Roberts. Trinka asked a guy who was in college, a friend of her brother. I asked a fellow senior at the last minute. His girlfriend had broken up with him two days before the dance. It was me or nothing, I suppose. Trinka wore a long gown of ice blue silk with matching dyed slippers. Her eyes seemed to sparkle with confidence and her dimple flashed beside the beauty mark. I stood beside her in awe, wearing a dress that I had bought at a rummage sale. It was wrong for the season, red heavy velvet with shoe-string straps. I borrowed Mom's red suede mules to wear with it. I also went without my glasses that night. Everything looked magnificent . . . Renoiresque blurs of pastel gowns and white dinner jackets whirled by me. I was glad

that I had finally earned enough money to get my front tooth capped. And Trinka had taught me how to pluck my eyebrows. My face had cleared up some and my bustline had filled out. But I knew that I would never have the natural beauty of Trinka. I didn't mind. She had everything to go with it.

Trinka and I and our dates were to lead the grand march into the ballroom that night. Unfortunately, I fell down the flight of stairs on my way to the restroom. Whether it was my blindness or Mom's too large shoes, I'll never know, but I landed on my non-existent rear and both straps of my dress broke simultaneously, as well as one of the heels on Mom's shoes. I groped and stumbled my way to the restroom to assess the damage. With two borrowed safety pins from the attendant, I pinned the straps in place. I removed my torn and tattered hose and threw them away. I knew it was no use. I was a mess. I padded barefoot back to the entrance and informed Trinka and our dates of my dilemma. Trinka and her date did a beautiful job of leading the grand march without me. I never saw my date again the rest of the evening. Trinka did come by a couple of times and, in what seemed a half-hearted manner, offered to sit with me. But most of the time she was busy with her date and told me on one of her brief visits that she thought this was "it." Phil North was the guy's name. She married him several years later.

After Trinka began dating Phil, we didn't see each other much. But we both cried at graduation, saying our goodbyes and good lucks to each other. She was going on to nursing school in Indianapolis where Phil was a pre-med student. I was moving to Florida to try to get acquainted with my real Dad who lived there and to find a job. We made vows to keep in touch and always be friends. I hadn't seen her since.

"She's here, Brenda. I just heard someone say that Trinka just came in." My husband was nudging me with his elbow.

I jumped up and ran to the entrance of the ballroom just as she was coming in. It was Trinka all right, same as ever, surrounded by women all talking at once.

"Trinka!" I yelled over the heads of the other women. She didn't appear to hear me. Her dimples were still paying homage to the beauty mark. She looked stunning. She didn't seem to have changed much at all.

"Trinka, it's me, Zig Zag."

That must have gotten her attention. She sent an appraising look my way, then smiled with one corner of her mouth at some point over my shoulder. I looked behind me. No one was there. I looked back to make sure that she had seen me. She was now talking to a woman standing next to her. I plodded through the semicircle of admirers until I was finally standing next to her.

"Trinka, how are you? I can't believe it after all these years. I just can't believe it."

She looked over briefly, still looking over my shoulder like someone does when they have seen a guy's fly undone and wants to

ignore the fact. She went back to her conversation with the other woman whom I finally recognized. She had been a cheerleader in our class and had married a man who was now a prominent lawyer in town. She had lived in Trinka's old neighborhood.

"Trinka," I ambled on, interrupting the other woman's conversation. She was saying something about how much she had enjoyed their last visit together and how much they had always had in common.

"Trinka," I continued, "remember all those crazy times we had together?" My mouth seemed to take over my brain. "Crazy times, practicing cussing, pretending we were bedbugs . . . our first dates. We were really something then, weren't we?"

The other woman and Trinka were both looking directly at me now. Finally Trinka spoke. "Oh yes, how are you, Brenda? Yes, I think I do remember your staying at my house a couple of times. We had some good times as kids, didn't we? But I don't recall bedbugs." She gave a nervous sounding laugh. "Excuse me for a moment, will you? I promised Jane I'd join her group." Her voice sounded just like her mother's used to—clear and cool with frost around the edges. I couldn't believe my ears. But then she turned to the other woman as they walked away and said, "Honestly, I hardly remember who that was. Bedbugs. Really."

Who that was, I thought. That was, and is, me . . . Zig Zag Zimmi, the string bean from the South side of town who idolized you. The bushy eyebrowed klutz who envied you for the completeness of your life, with no flaws or cracks. I watched as she walked away with a group of women who were known as "The Clique" in school, all northsiders. She looked good with them, as though she had always been a part of them.

"Wasn't that Trinka?" My husband was standing beside me, watching me.

I sighed, "No, it was Kathryn North," I brushed away a tear sliding down my cheek with the back of my hand.

The sound of the Platters came over the speaker singing, "Oh, yes, I'm the great pretender. . ."

"Wanna dance, sweetheart?" Charlie asked in his best Humphrey Bogart voice.

I let him lead me to the dance floor. The flickering lights flashed over the faces of the dancing couples, giving momentary life to immobile expressions.

"It's a shame that I didn't get to talk to Trinka much. Think she would have been impressed?" I asked, as Charlie guided me smoothly across the dance floor.

"Oh, I don't know, honey. What's to impress, really?" He held me closer. "You licked the Big C, you got your law degree at 40, you have traveled the world . . . and you got me, babe." He started humming the old Sonny and Cher song and then gave up competing with the Platters.

The dance floor was crowded now, but Charlie continued to guide me around and through the wooden figures who seemed to be

shuffling without rhythm, staring sightlessly into space. Trinka and her husband were among them. They passed close by. Although in the arms of her husband, Trinka seemed detached and stiff. But then I looked closer. A tear trickled down her cheek. She looked up and our eyes locked for a second. I felt for the first time that there was a sense of total recognition and even wistfulness in those eyes. And then she looked away, breaking the mood. Charlie began dancing me toward the door. "Ready for a nite cap, good looking?" he asked.

It dawned on me that maybe it was possible that Trinka did not have it all. Maybe she never had. Perhaps I had made her look good at times. But then, I'd never really gotten to see her bad times either. I scanned the crowd, hoping to get one last glimpse of her. I didn't see her anywhere. It was time to go.

"Yes, Charlie, it's time," I said as we headed for the exit and a nite cap at home.

Grandpa

Cecil L. Sayre

sitting in his chair
with only one eye
half-opened
he tries rocking me
to sleep
in the oval cradle
of his brown vision
slightly worn
slightly faded

free as a tear
lost amid
his wrinkles

i escape
into his mouth
and sleep
within his talk

Flood at the Natatorium Kemp Smith

July

Jackie Schmidt

Now is the time for us to walk
along the summer path
to harvest berries.
I know each turn.
Don't mind the briars;
I'll untangle them.
Stretch out your shirt
into a bowl so I can fill it.
Soft ground near the pines is a place
to rest and sample ripeness.
How can the smell of moist earth
and wild grasses be forgotten
once we've become a part of them?

Susann

Cecil L. Sayre

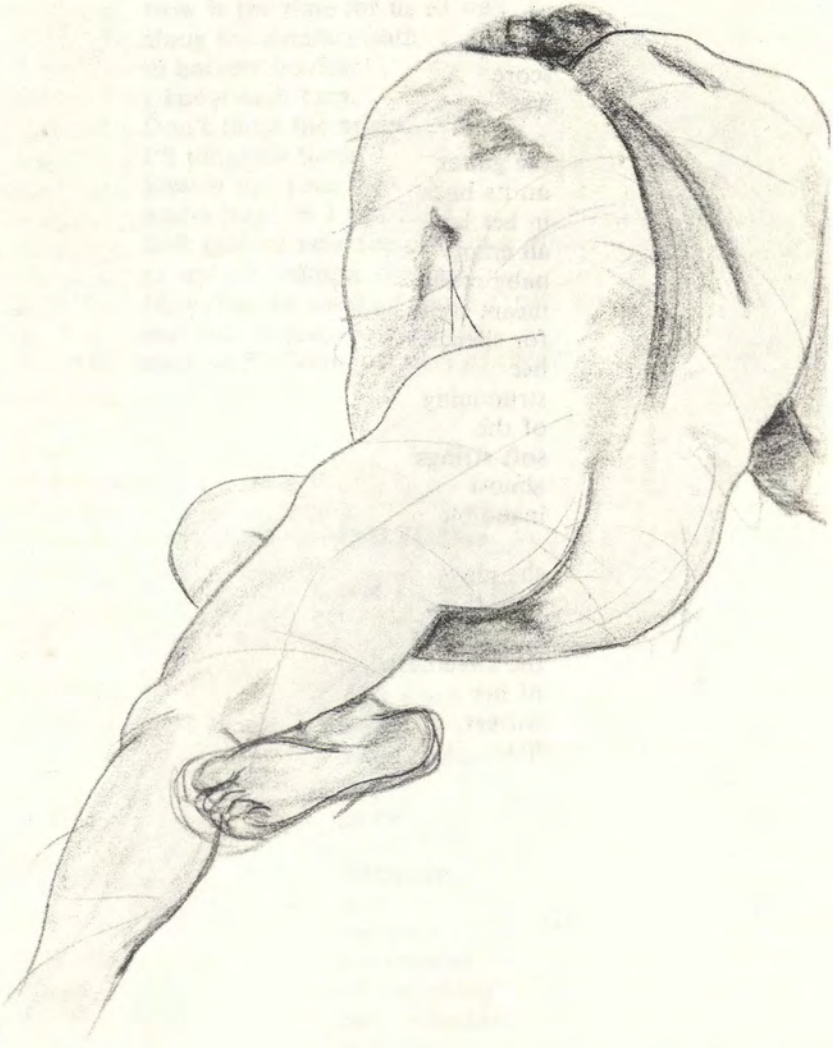
how
does a girl
with
broken fingers
play
guitar:

delicately,
as if
she were
the remains
of something
once valuable,
perhaps
a vase
shattered

what
is left
are the
individual
notes
and you
must imagine
what
the entire
score
was

the guitar
on its back
in her lap
an empty
baby cradle
meant only
for silence,
her
strumming
of the
soft strings
almost
inaudible

she plays
everything
that evokes
the sweetness
of her
former
life



Stephen Ann McGriffin

Biographies

Amy-Jeane Ade: In silence, I hear, and closing my eyes, I see. I dream of waves breaking on a beach. I drive east in the morning, watching the sunrise more intently than the road.

Barbara Bogue: My name is Barbara Bogue . . . I'm a Creative Writing Major . . . because I like to type ellipses . . . and because I must try to understand . . . the human experience . . . in all of its complexities.

George A. Dunn: My favorite novelists are Michael Ondaatje and Milan Kundera. My favorite poet is Cecil L. Sayre. Check out his stuff in genesis sometime. I used to have a thing for William Hurt, but I'm over it now. Addendum: As this issue of genocide goes to press, Michael Ondaatje has just been selected as one of the three finalists for the prestigious Ritz Paris Hemingway ["It was hot; I needed a drink"] Award for the 1987 novel *In the Skin of a Lion.* Congratulations, Michael!

M. Todd Fuller: I have too many stimuli and not enough paper.

Mike Hess: Six cups of coffee, three donuts and a pack of smokes, and I'm still trying.

Linda D. Lewis: I'm a Brownsburg wife, mother, secretary, and part-time student. While rearing three active teenagers, I expend a great deal of effort playing hide and seek with SPARE TIME. When I am finally IT, I read and write. My poetry has appeared in various publications.

Timothy J. O'Connor: I am currently a junior in the School of Liberal Arts, and hope to graduate in the Fall of 1988.

Troy L. Riser: I am an English major at IUPUI. I live with my family in southern Shelby county. Please omit the preceding two sentences and allow the work to speak for itself.

S. G. Robinson: I am married and have one son. My hobbies include fishing, hiking, gardening, bird watching, and reading, when I'm not attending psychology classes. I'm still asking the same question I asked as a young person: "What do I want to be when I grow up?".

Bill Ross: I am concerned with a major crisis in our food chain. I have noticed that Hostess Fruit Pies, Ding Dongs, and Twinkies are more expensive at "convenience" marts (i.e., Village Pantry, Petro Pantry, etc.), than at major food stores such as Cub's or Kroger's. People are wasting money on snack-cake convenience!

Cecil L. Sayre: "Kick is seeing things from a special angle. Kick is momentary freedom from the claims of the aging, cautious, nagging, frightened flesh. Maybe I will find in yage what I was looking for in junk and weed and coke. Yage may be the final fix."

—William S. Burroughs, Junky

Jackie Schmidt: I'm in my last semester of my Senior year, soon to be "academically anointed."

Amy Adrian: Student of the Herron School of Art

Michael Clement: No comment at this time.

Sybil Hall: Sybil is a senior at Herron School of Art majoring in art education. She has a great interest in art as a healing process and hopes to attend graduate school and pursue a career in art therapy.

Debbie Ham: I enjoy painting and drawing. I would like to illustrate children's books. Remember: look for beauty in everything.

Ann McGriffin: Student at the Herron School of Art.

Carol Carson Schilling: I have a B.A. in French from I.U.P.U.I. I am married and have two elementary school age children who are teaching me, among other things, how to tell a boy grasshopper from a girl grasshopper. I seldom remember a name the first time, but, I never forget a face; I love faces.

Kemp Smith: I'm one of those students who went back to school after 15 years in business, turning photography from a part-time hobby to a full-time profession—which has really opened my eyes to see things around me.

Charles Wyatt: I'm a Herron student, and would like to work in the animation field when I leave Herron School of Art.