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1973 Spring Quiz & Quill Magazine

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Quiz
&
Quill
1973

Quiz & Quill 1973

Published by
QUIZ AND QUILL
HONORARY
of
Otterbein College
Westerville, Ohio
Established 1919

Editor-in-Chief:
Dennis R. Drennen

Associate Editors:
William Temple Orr III
Patrice Perry



DEDICATION

The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood . . .

Joel 2:31

The 1973 edition of *Quiz and Quill* is dedicated to the environment. In the crisis we are facing the words of the prophet Joel seem to be coming true. As the problem grows worse the editorial staff hopes that every person who reads this edition might dedicate themselves to helping conserve the beauty and resources of this world.

drd

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LITERARY AWARDS

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First Award Dan Budd
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Honorable Mention Tony DelValle

General Poetry Contest

First Award Dan Budd
Second Award Julie Kinney
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Honorable Mention R. Steven Graves

Humorous Writing Contest

First Award Dan Budd
Second Award Julie Kinney
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Second Award R. Steven Graves

Roy A. Burkhart Religious Poetry Contest

First Award R. Steven Graves
Third Award Richard W. Saylor

Photography Contest

First Award Terry Curtin

Cover Contest

First Award Donald Ford

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The doors of mundane perception close,
Opening to a universe
Which ascends the concrete mechanisms,
The senseless motions,
Of fragile, forgotten existence.

Wrapped in winter's warmth,
Sanctuary strikes a quietly defiant stand.
She towers above the mountains
Surrounding her serenity.
Her beams, hardly her only strength:
Purpose holds against climate,
Against forces too ambitious to warrant attention.

SANCTUARY

Dan Budd

The flame of her soul lights the atmosphere
Carefully created by the meticulous mental brushes
Of yearning imagination:
Softly decorated furnishings
Reflecting the hearth's even flame,
All engulfed by her essence
Animating every plank, every chair,
Every step which rises to a balcony
Even Juliet would envy.
Each object absorbed with the love
Chaste in dream alone.

But solitude is no strength either:
Outside, footsteps circle,
Clustering at each frosted pane,
Gazing with a secret longing
Before turning toward the path;
Silently, yet expectantly,
Waiting for the invitational command.

As calculable as the earth's ellipse,
her offering eases down a
narrow slope. Rhythmic and solitary,
the burden of her blood slides toward an
unknowable bondage.

All she may risk rides with her
silent seed. What gambles he, flesh
within flesh, whose single stream
of chalky undulations could
father a city?

PERIPHERY

R. Steven Graves

NEVERTHELESS

Only the pulse, and not the heart has changed.
The cycles of the blood are chosen
and whirled by immigrant silhouettes who,
in the wheels of your thought,
are frozen.

As a favor, you fed them and housed them
with sympathy. Mirrors toward your passion
turned inward, a hint and a whisper
that an image you wear,
like a fashion.

To whom have they turned –
The poet, the artist and the dancer?
Now friends ask if you have loved
just to hear the way you answer.

R. Steven Graves

*Honorable Mention
Quiz and Quill
General Poetry Contest*

RAMBLINGS

Of grass green
Sky blue
And roses red,

Of lovers two
Hearts one
And love pure,

Today is now
Yesterday gone
Tomorrow then.

Then is tomorrow now
Yesterday then
Today gone.

dennis r. drennen

PACE

Rhythm of a heartbeat,

Music from a soul

Singing

Constantly.

Singing . . .

Singing

Melody of mindsong aching to be freed,

Tuneless, voiceless,

Flowing through the blank thoughts

Chanting,

Chanting,

Harmonizing softly,

Whisper, whisper

Breathing

Toneless

Tempos

Trapped.

Patrice Perry

INVITATION

Dan Budd

Let us walk through the forest's gate
to a place where no one has been:
Past the marketplaces of squirrels and robins,
across the rabbit trails which tunnel
under the bush
To the stream where we build a dam
of stones and stocks,
And jump into the water like the
first day of summer.
Let us baptize each other until we are soaked,
sitting on a bumpy, muddy bed,
Stopping the barges of leaves
as they glide on the water
Creating crowns of golds reds and browns
for our own private christening.

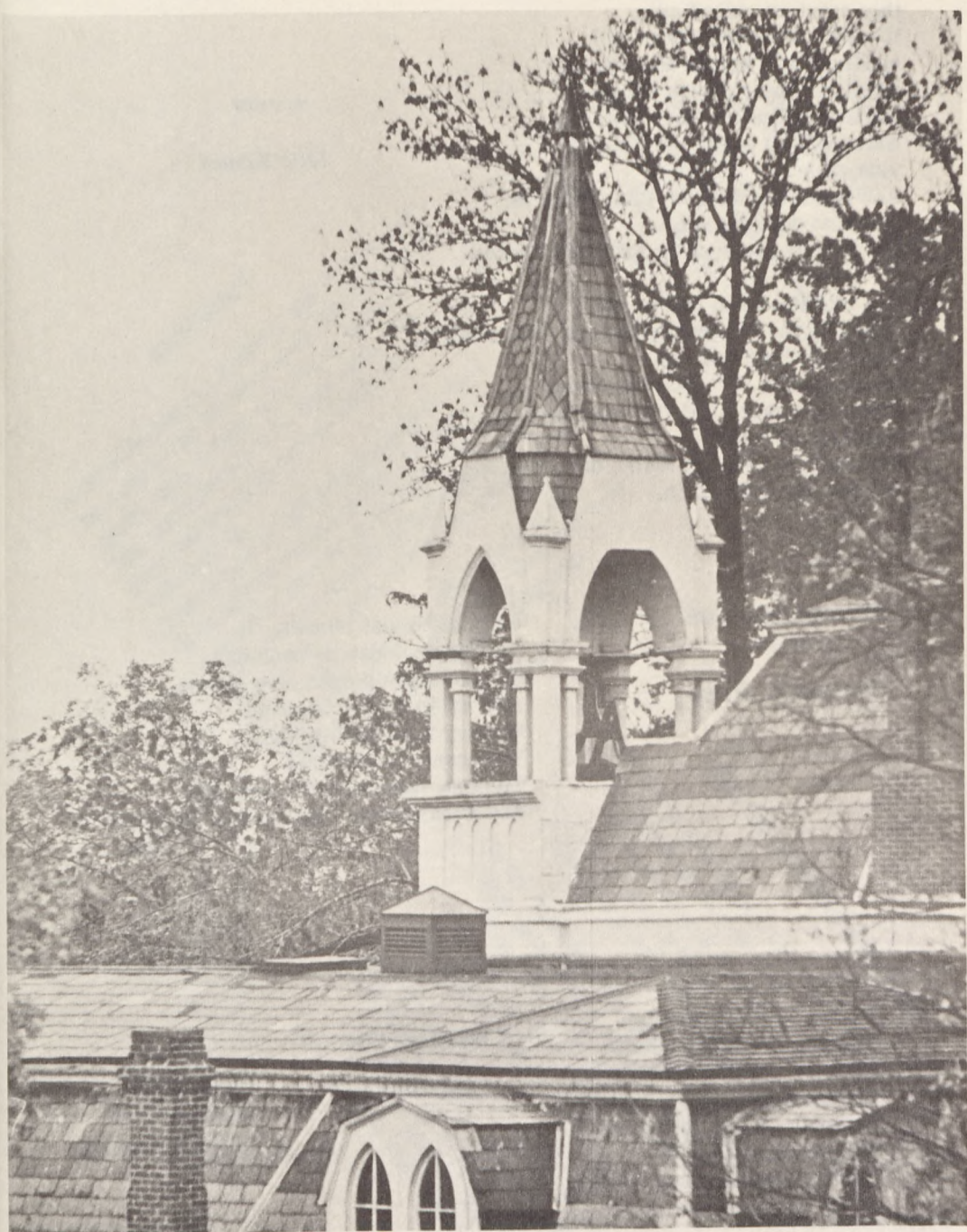
Peyote,
O you, simple mushroom,
What two-fold joys your resins bring.
One a grace, the other better,
Make a captive heart to sing.
Lightly tripping through the valley,
Flying high above a hill,
Turn my soul loose to wander –
Come and lead me where you will.

Ray Danials

... AND PERHAPS THERE WILL BE PEACE

Eric Osborn

When I am but a withered man,
And days of youth are past –
When ambition turns to dust,
And passion burns to ash –
When there's nothing left to take,
And I have all to give –
Perhaps I can stop existing,
And then I can learn to live.



this creature called man.
it's like it's been winter and
suddenly it's spring and you feel
like everything makes sense.
but not really. it's just the sun
warming your brain and glazing
your sight.
And man beholds everything there is.
but what does he see?
the flowers are smarter than man himself.

marrow

Julie Kinney

it's like it's been lonely and
suddenly there's people helping each other
and everything is good.
but not really. it's just the deeds
hiding the cause and the tongues
blinding the hearts.
and man the creature walks on.
but man the soul cries.

TO GOD FROM ME
a prayer

Richard W. Saylor

Lord God,
Help me to just be me;
To live each day as each day
To treat each person as a person
And not to be so obsessed
With my wants and wishes
That cause me to miss
The real importance of each day
And each person I experience. So be it?
Me

To run in silver sunlight,
To sing in moonlit glen —
To hold a gentle loved one,
To know you have a friend —
To ease all the sorrows,
To end all the strife —
To live in peace and freedom
Is all one needs in life.

NECESSITIES

Eric Osborn

(untitled)

To you who solicit the taboos
of some jealous diety, listen:
The sun, caught in the fiery
sprawl of dusk, and
Rhythms in the blood that command
engendering flesh
know no other redemption.

R. Steven Graves

AETERNUS

Nature belongs to mankind, yet is precious
because it can be destroyed. The Universe
gazed upon in fear and awe is eternal.
Man possesses a trait from each. His
physical being is mortal while his soul is
everlasting.
Intertwined in this relationship is art.
It is an expression of life and once
created it must never be lost. Destroy it
and a part of oneself is destroyed with it.
Conceived by man, it relates human ideas
and ideals.
Nature, art, man and the Universe, all
speak in a language of their own: all have
depth, soul and a reason for being.

Margaret Fagerberg

THE DELINQUENT EPIPHANY

Oh, you'll find me at Otterbein College,
That jovial palace of mirth -
Where pleasures abound
But no one is found
Pursuing a mental rebirth.

In all fairness, I ask you the question,
What more is your college career
Than cousing with smarties
And gaining approval of peers?
I'm glad that my life will be ordered,
Decisions might boggle the mind
And force me to think -
(Then how could I drink?)
Oh, the bliss when you're pleasantly blind!

R. Steven Graves

Third Award
Quiz and Quill
Humorous Writing Contest

Roy A. Burkhart
Religious Poetry
Contest

THROUGH A STAINED GLASS, DARKLY

Spirits mingle with Spirit:
The holy, hovering among us,
Not Circumscribed by a name,
Is consumed by our seeking, like
Oxygen in its oath to a flame.

R. Steven Graves

First Award

PEOPLE AWAITING FLIGHT

A black priest with contented assurance –
A living
A businessman with skeptical eyes –
Another questioning
searching
A grandma reading a book –
Another lady reading news –
impeccable
Two young ladies busily chatting –
concerned
A man playing with his camera –
anxious
And yet another eagerly reading –
possessive
disturbed
All in the microcosm of the world.
Waiting for a plane –
A flight into life.

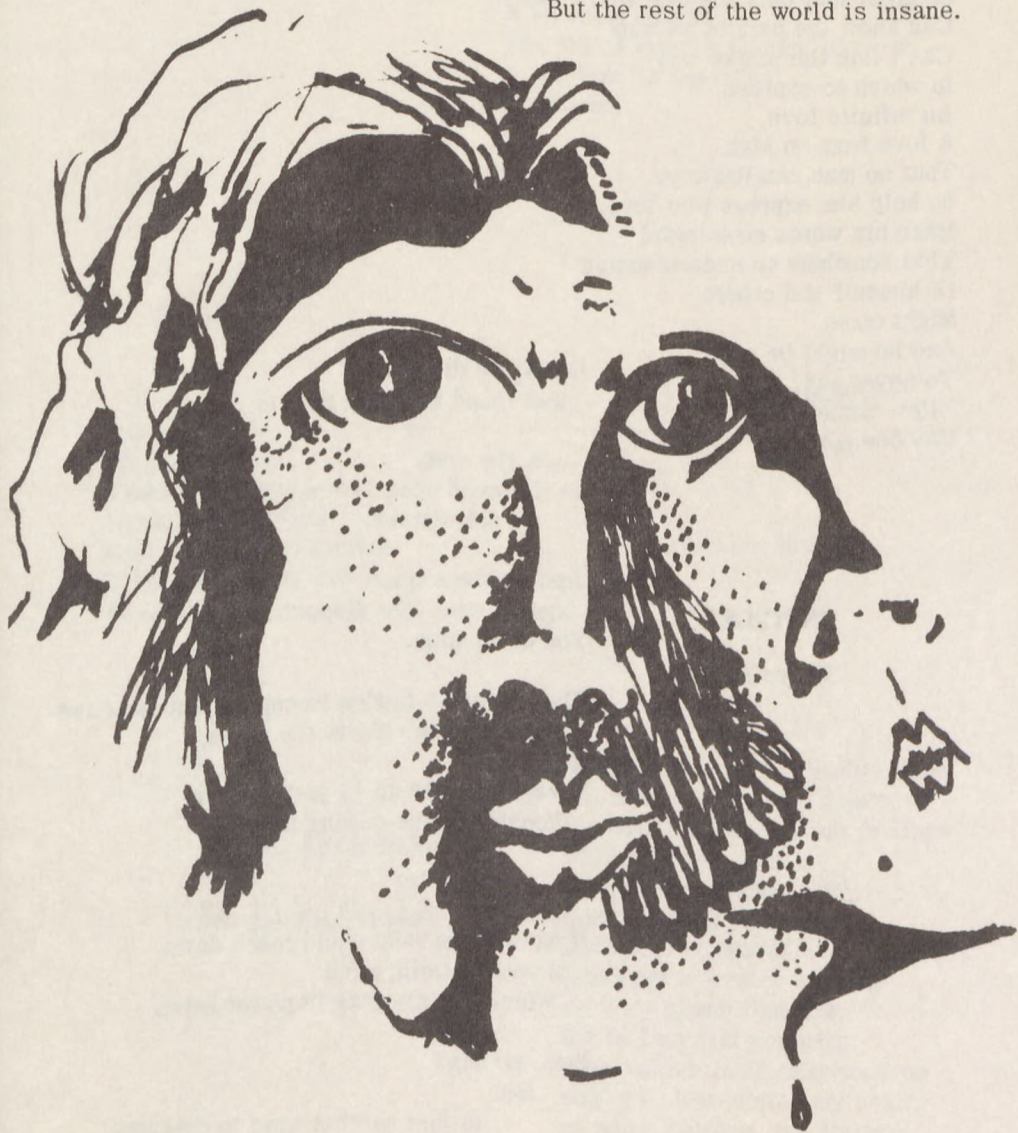
Richard W. Saylor

Third Award.

LETTERS FROM AN ASYLUM

Eric Osborn

I dream a dream of pleasant fields,
Of clear and cloud-free skies –
I dream a dream of happy folk,
With clear and fear-free eyes –
I dream a dream of honest men,
With tongues that bear no lies –
I dream a dream of peaceful days,
When no soldier's mother cries –
I dream a dream of quiet times
When there's no more the pain
Of knowing that I'm the madman,
But the rest of the world is insane.



TRIAD

Ray Danials

An experience about to close.
A time within you – without you.
Love's memories come back,
Times playful.
The woods surrounds me,
but the din of people invades.
The creek lapping its bank as it runs and falls,
and the roar of cars.
Faint bird chatter undertone
And thoughts of you.
Brown, depressing tree tangle saved only from
wrath by green pregnancy of spring.
Life without you.
In the distance small voices in happiness.
Yes, we had our times –
A jet roars overhead.
The sky is gray, a blanket of frown
A wind chills the trees
I'm alone.

When He said,
“It is finished,”
It had just begun,
The Glories of God
Were now at hand for man
In all his sin and evil
To attain.

“IT IS FINISHED”

dennis r. drennen

TWO BEGINNING

Joe Humphreys

through the light of the fireplace
the shadows begin to dance.
the hard edge before our feelings
begins to melt away.
the embers glowing softly
bring out to us their heat.
your arms embraced about me
gives out a greater warmth.
my body glows like fire,
the feeling that you give.
your sacred touch embraces me
you're endeared unto my heart.
as each, beloved, we are two,
but together, are we one?

A FRAGILE FIXTURE AT THAT

Time falls victim to time:
Matter to energy – energy to matter
Simultaneously,
Sending all to separate places.
Groping through the dust
Hiding in pseudo-Gothic chambers
Sensing a despair once escaped.
Hypothesizing cures that erupt into initial hope
And cool, disappearing behind the haze.

Questions find vacuums,
Solutions find dissention and disagreement.
So what leaves the soul?
Hands empty are said full.
How does one work with the unknown?
How does the sculptor shape unseen stone?

Circle draws in towards circle:
Edge to center – center to edge
Continuously,
Causing caverns to close upon themselves.
Entrance becomes hindered by a strange eversion
Pleased with its blanketed confusion.
It probes the outside for comfort
Tests cures that simmer tediously
And cool, forming yet another tier.

Reality collapses,
A fragile fixture at that.
Who sees this phoenix die?
Hands full are so by lie.
Is numbness the source of this fight?
Is blindness the cause of this feeble fright?

Opposites melt into opposites:
You to me – I to you
Eventually,
As All becomes Nothing.
Fighting for definitions,
Clinging to hand-me-down shoes
With holes in their soles,
Creating cures that cringe and cower
And cool, yielding in that final confusion.

Dan Budd

THE ULTIMATE CONCERN

Faith – the ultimate concern –
What does life mean? Why am I here?
The phrases bounced off my head as
the lecturer defined religion and
spirituality in neat packages of much-
argued and discussed symbolic phrases.

My swirling question went to the depths
of the mind to wrestle with the “true”
meaning and discover some ultimate
truth to add meaning and peace to my mind.

I felt my soul reach into the depths of hell
looking for the answer.
And, then, I sent it the utmost limits of
heaven
 only to have it waver once again
into the loneliness in between.

I walked about as a crazy person asking, “What is it?
Can you tell me? Where are the words to answer it?”

Until as if in a faint, I laid down in a field of
rich green grass as the evening sky prepared
itself for the night.

Unmoving until what seemed to be ages of time.

Then awoke as from a death in the cool quietness
of the midnight hour.
And I saw the stars and endless universe before me.
I felt the weight of it upon my chest and
groaned from the pain of it.

Suddenly the pain changed and I felt one and whole
and I knew then the life-force – the ultimate concern.
No longer were words needed to define it.
I was free and whole and smiled calmly as then the
answer was spread out above and through me
in a sacred spirituality.

Deb Shuey

Bodies falling from the sky,
Fingernails and eyes.
Bodies forming heavenly shrouds
Faces turn to clouds.

THE WORLD: TOMORROW?

Minds floating throughout space,
The end of mans human race.
Pulsating hearts and failing minds;
The end is near, follow the signs.

Joe Humphreys

In and out the music flows
Everyone listens, but nobody knows
Heaven is here, earth is there.
People can't see, eyes just stare.

Mountains flow, oceans fall,
Demons follow, devour its all.
Sun is burning, sky is clear
Peace my brother, end is near.

Fish are flying, eagles swim
No one listens, GOD it's him.
Earth is cracking, people sing.
Love my people. Just one thing,
News is out, death no more.

VAN GOGH

Deb Shuey

Third Award

Quiz and Quill

General Poetry Contest

Van Gogh – he said,
Was very much like myself.
Swirling clouds of madness danced in his brain.
(I understand somewhat because
I myself have felt the passion of a deep
madness within my soul.)

Van Gogh – he said,
turning his enchanted blue eyes to me,
– fought to keep his madness under
control. – You can see it in his paintings.
(I looked and shook my head to agree.
The very trees writhe with the pain of it.)

I have felt the madness and I
struggle to keep it beneath else.
He bowed his head and I leaned
over to touch him with my lips.
He looked and me and then responded
to my kiss.
And – his madness left him for awhile.

DIALOGUE WITH A SENIOR

So you are really leaving!

(A look of incredulity crossed my face.)

It's hard to believe.

(His raised eyebrows questioned Why?)

You know what I mean, don't you?

(Pushing his hair back, he shook his head no.)

After being stalwart rocks for us

struggling underclassmen —

You are slowly eroding to pebbles.

(It was quite clear he did not understand what I had said.)

That is — seeing that you are now

entering the turbid (I apologized for this banality and went on.)

stream of life.

Can you explicitly — or even implicitly —

(Memories of calculus influenced that, I noted, and he looked slightly pained.)

from the depth of your painstakingly-gathered knowledge why we — your humble understudies —

(I bowed my head as if a humble understudy and he looked amused.)

should continue this route and

graduate as you inevitably will soon,

singing the immortal strains of the

“Otterbein Love Song”? (He laughed and admitted that he didn't even know the words.)

Probably not. (I said spitefully.)

Oh, well, I guess I really didn't want

to know why anyway. (I interjected nonchalantly as he appeared to be unhappily confused.)

I'll probably be asked the same question

when I'm a grand old senior. (Here I

pretended to be a “grand old senior” to the best of my ability.)

And I'll no doubt be unable to answer —

With the same furtive hunt for those elusive words.

So — I'll excuse you.

Deb Shuey

Ray Danials

A duck call across smooth water,
Moon shimmering in quivering beaches,
You rise to the call – satin and charcoal
in the blackness. Standing at the
window half you – half shadow –
Looking back – looking to forever.
I have lost you to eternity – I feel you
leave my heart
you have gone.

Across black rock and green lichen,
Under pine and birch, rustling low brush,
You sit before me staring to your sea
To approach is walking into a picture –
then I feel you again. You have returned
To live your present
For awhile.

The water giggles around us,
Sun shining low paths about us,
You dodge and laugh a clear ring to the air
Running innocent through the shallows
Your spirit is in my smile
Your love is in my happiness
You have come to be mine
To stay here.

My heart cries out – I'm lonely.
My mind tells me – I'm confused.
My spirit says – I'm dampened.

WHERE DO I TURN?

The answer becomes evident:
To him who gives the heart a companion,
To him who gives my mind understanding,
To him who gives my spirit new life,

TO HIM.

In my lonely, confused, and dampened state,
I turn to God –

HE CLEARS IT ALL

AN APPEAL FOR HELP

Richard W. Saylor

Droplets stream down the pane
Creating half-dreamed images
In a mad dance always downward.
Images of people or things that have
always been there in the mind,
are now, and
always will be there to plague the self.

Tired, red-rimmed eyes turn to him.
A stranger he thought he once knew
looked back opaquely, devoid of sensation.
Sightless, mindless, shallow.
Chastising him for being so weak.

The need — yes — the need was so strong,
He muttered, but there were no others.
I didn't want to be alone.
Alone where droplets will appear
To haunt me of other days.
She at least helps me to forget awhile.
Other things could help me to transcend —
but only for a short time. And I *do* need her!
He painfully rationalized.

She again turns to him, the light goes off,
And they lie in silence
as droplets stream down the pane.

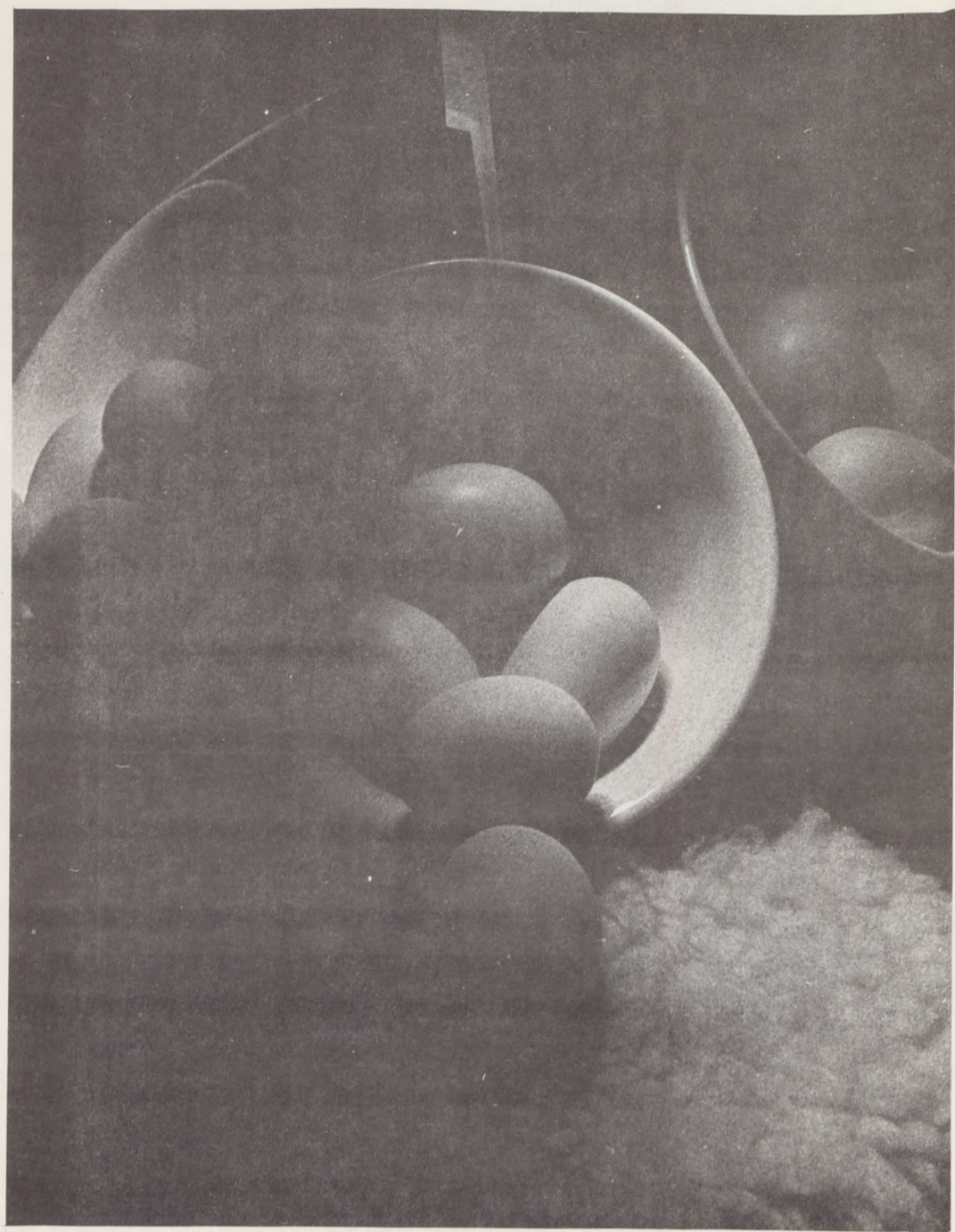
I SEE WHAT WAS TOMORROW

dennis r. drennen

IMAGES

Deb Shuey

I see what was tomorrow
Rapidly becoming today,
And I'm not ready,
Because tomorrow is the future
And somehow I look toward tomorrow
As a kind of plastic object
That is not really there,
But a mirage;
So when that mirage becomes real,
And the heat of life
Melts the plastic of tomorrow,
Reality appears
And I must find that one thing,
Me.



JIMI

Mike Emler

Blue – the notes glide
Lugubrious ambivalence
Wailing in tension
Bending slowly
They pull the notes up
Gut wrenching.
Rhythm pounds
Like a giant's heartbeat
Pulling my soul apart.
Tiny scraps to be scattered
And brought back again,
Looking through his gray window
He sees the energy of life
Drawing picture in song
Where no pictures are seen.
Tonight he will stand
In arclight halos
He will play
And the children
Who listen to his soul
Will live one more dimension
Listen to their lives speak.
The bright star
Burning so quickly
Intensely
Searing my soul.
Now lies cold
But scars live
In profound pain
That stays in profound joy
Blues man.

My heart bleeds for you,
as your autumnal beauty rots on the ground.
The pleasure of your presence
is lost to jump piles and bonfires;

And another five months looms in exposure and solitude.

My lovely one, who weeps in the breath of winter,
for whom do you shed your pity?
You drop such vivid tears upon the earth
as if to attract the eyes of those below.
Your stark shadow haunts the peaceful facade of evening
and disappears into the bowel of the night.

**TRIBUTE TO
THE OAK II**

Tanya Davis

Your beauty is my ecstasy.
I have no need for you
except that of an eye's contentment
and a heart's delight.

Stand silent and release your grace
upon those too blind.

THREE

Mike Emler

Voices in the distance
Fog hidden shapes move
Around the cold waters
Standing, running still
Lower in the brown crust
Cut deep in silence speak
Words of love lamented
Like some demented hero
Of a Gothic love sonnet
Perishes.

The rhythmic seconds jerk
Out there we hear them
Only when they move past us
On their pointless rounds
Around us growing
Larger
Farther away, beyond grasp
Grow to hours
Forever gone

Arriving alive, we think
Sitting on sweating haunches
Discussing the latest
Flatulations of our dieties
Thou a thief art
To steal from our words
Our bowels yearning
To be filled on that
Ambrosia

On his fogbound island
He talks to witless gulls
Circling far above the prophets
Land only as they drop
Dropping collectively
The day is dung

The prophet knew
Rumbling
Pretending ignorance of
Mudbath principles
The flesh – it can only feel.
The mind realises its prophet

BLAB-OFF

Julie Kinney

Miss Venus is hanging her wash on the line
oh my God hers are whiter than mine –
Saturday's affair broke up real late
They forgot to chew Certs before the big Date –
take 2 Aspirin and go to bed
Maybe i'll wake up & find myself dead.
Glory Hallalujah!
Listerine goes marching on.
The last day they saw me i wore my new bra
And, for the first time, no one said 'ha ha' –
my girdle's killing me – what do i do?
Use Ultrabrite toothpaste & Scope mouthwash too
Gets rid of bad breath & germs & goo
& all your friends pay attention to you!
The women are nice & the babies are darlin'
but when will they learn not to squeeze that damn Charmin?
i sure like match-making: it's lots of fun
i'll fix Man from Glad with Mrs. Olsen.
'try it – you'll like it' i once heard them say
now i need Alka Seltzer to wash it away.
Mine eyes have seen the glory
Of the Super-Tough bic pen.

TV goes marching on!

Second Award
Quiz and Quill
Humorous Writing
Contest

CHILDREN

Mike Emler

Child of the days
Crying thinly in hushed tones
Hidden in chasms of shadow
Cast long across the land
Tall mountains reach
Touching a sky of slate
Megaliths built of flesh
Towering walls
Cries of a billion stones
Cowering pitifully
The storm king
Presses forth his mighty arm
And makes them insane
They will climb the quivering masses
Battered by the shrapnel
Of celestial holocaust
They will claw upward to his eminence
With lost child whimpers echo
Pause to stare behind
In mute horror
At a mighty planet strangling
Glory men, strong, running frightened
Their children running from their arms
To die in walls of flesh
No better.
Aimless forward motion
And they see darkly
The deepening drifting sands
Blown to cruel frenzy
Scouring the limbs of mighty trees
Now in gaunt nakedness
Listen to the waning cries
Of birds trembling with death
Spring winds blown stale
The storm king laughs in hollow contempt

ISOLATION

Cindy Hupp

A tree, bereft of beauty in its winter
stillness
Sears the sky, slashing through the gray,
Black and helpless in truth, but relying
upon its facade of dominance –
A black sleep on life's horizon.

I see myself in this tree.
I, too, in the loneliness of winter am
Unable to enter into Spring and life.
I am, in truth, as naked as the tree,
As much as I would like to depend
upon the leaves of Spring to cover the
Starkness of my soul.

A tree and I –
Time erases the problems for my tree
Nature will cover it with the leaves
of summer –
Beautiful, as life should be.
I cannot rely on time, I have only
Myself, my mind, my soul.
But I must not wait too long for the
Spring.
I must not wait to be real.

HOMECOMING I

Tanya Davis

The hunter came prancing, pouncing, parading unto my ground,
And,
still yet repairing the destruction of
the prior year's benevolence,
I turned my face away.

Remembering his assault and his weapon
upon my virgin soil,
the ripened crop of twenty years so quickly withered,
my valleys left barren by the rapist's hands,
His passing went unacknowledged.

Forgotten were the churches and campaigns
as we married with the aesthetic,
grafting pleasure upon pleasure
and criticizing all in which we took part.

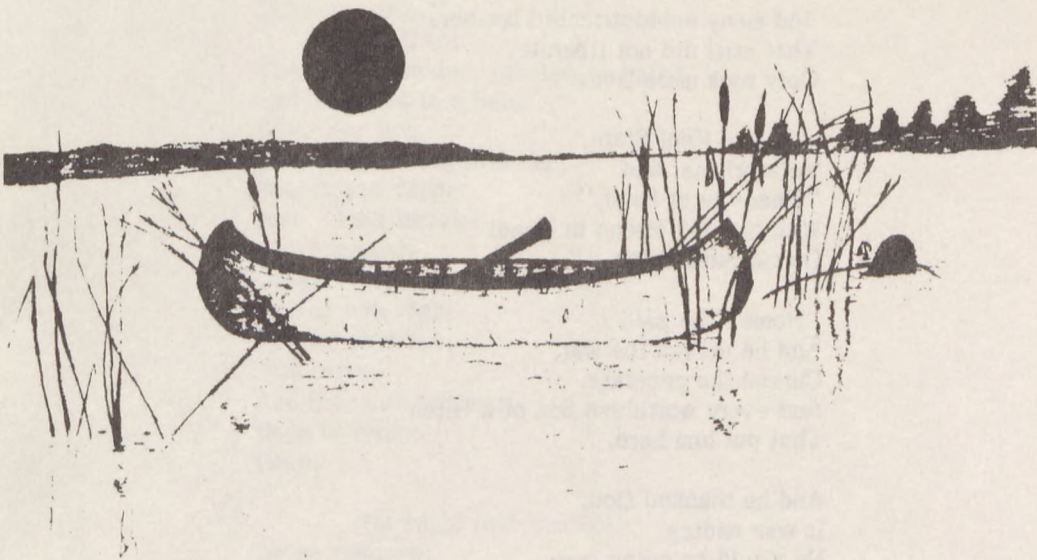
The naive can fall but once
And the hunter's folly becomes bittersweet.
No sympathies are owed to the intelligent unrighteous;
only justice prevails at the end of his search.

Having once lost the war,
I need look no longer.

MOVING

dennis r. drennen

We're all moving
In the stream of life,
Going from one bank
To another.
We're knowing good and bad,
Maybe hiding the bad
Behind memories of the good;
Being blinded by
The passions and emotions
Of times past,
Not knowing the reality of now.
Yes we move,
We know much, live much,
And hide much,
Maybe we're all just riding
A streetcar named Desire.



RETURNING

"Home," he said.
For "Peace with honor" had been achieved.
Years of endless terror,
Years of endless dying,
Years of endless frustration
Were coming to a close.
Soon he would return
From the honorable dishonor
That he has been an unwilling part.

There were no knights in shining armor,
Not in this war,
Fighting for the fair damsel's honor;
No, and there was no cowboy
In a white hat;
Nor the honor of the North
Freeing the Black man;
Nor was there any singing,
"Over there, over there;"
Nor the pride of Pearl Harbor
That spurned us on
To Glory throughout the world.

Instead, there was My Lai,
And hundreds of civilians, dead,
And napalm, "smart bombs,"
And many sophisticated bombers
That still did not liberate,
Only took more lives.

And Kent State,
Moratoriums, and
"Peace is at hand,"
With air raid sirens in Hanoi
On Christmas day.

"Home," he said
And he cursed the war,
Cursed the generals,
And every worthless Son of a Bitch
That put him here.

And he thanked God,
It was ending,
He would be going home,
Ready to see his family.
Why didn't he ever appreciate them before?
"I'm going to tell them," he said.

And his love,
She had pledged in every letter
That she would wait:
He wanted so badly to hold her,
Take her in his arms,
Feel her body so close,
"Soon," he said.

For the ceasefire is initialed:
Only till Saturday night.
Peace will reign,
Hostilities will stop.
He'd been there nine months,
Four days to go, nothing could go wrong.

"Incoming," He heard the dreadful sound.
"Incoming . . .
Incoming . . .
Incoming . . ."
And the shells were falling,
And the hell he thought escaped
Soon was all around him;
Fire, debris, bodies strewn everywhere.

"Why can't they wait?
What good will it do?"
He cried, he screamed.
"Saturday, come.
I'll tell them,
I'll hold her,
Take me home."

The shell hit,
The room crumbled, inhaled, exhaled,
And exploded in a belch,
Devouring him.
The shrapnel dug into him,
Deeper and deeper,
And "Home became

A memory,
More distant, further removed,
And he saw them
Waving good-bye,
With tears
And love and sadness,
Hope of return,
Gone.

He could feel himself
Being removed.
He joined every gook he shot,
Every person who had died,
"Oh, God,"
He uttered
And, he returned.

dennis r. drennen

FLASH

silent scene:

a man with a beard
 brown, it is
and a grin on his worn face.
an unusual warmth has crept
 onto his features, creating
 an almost uncomfortable
 happiness as
he beams down at a
baby held in the dark woman's contented arms.

and oh! the music
is peaceful is
quiet and happy
is smiling and
glowy for this
man-of-the-earth!

glance:

at a boy hiking through
 dense and rich woods
 through crisp mountain air
barefoot and free
long-hair and happy
(the one-room school) on
 mountains and valleys of
 life and
at a man with a beard
 brown, it is
and a cornpipe in his broad mouth
and a smile on his face with a
dark woman by his side and
a boy to his name

and oh! the music
is fresh and alive is
clean and crisp is
rolling streams with
sunshine!

Julie Kinney

tinted glare:
of boy (free) and
long-legged girl
of dark glances and hidden
smiles and

of a silent wrathful man
with a beard
brown, it is
and a rifle
... watching

and oh! the music
the music is
silent waiting
for the echo of an
eternal pain-scream

flash:
of a man
with a beard
white, it is
standing in the dew and
free sun
crying by a grave with
anguish-sobs wrenched and
hidden from within as
the rifle slides from his hand . . .

and oh! the music
ebbs from every blade
of sorrow in the valley
and fills the wind
with mourning

for the barefoot boy

free

for the bearded father

of-the-earth

for the silent laws
of darkest death

Julie Kinney





YESTERDAY, TODAY,
and
TOMORROW

i looked for You
yesterday
under the big tree
in the garden.
where did You
go?
Your book was
still there,
open to the page where
the child
dies.
did the death of
the storybook child
affect You
as it did
me?
i didn't find You,
and i left,
feeling slighted and
very much
alone.

i looked for You
today
in every face
i saw along
the street.
i'm sure some people
got the wrong
impression.
i smiled and said
"hi!"
in apology.
i didn't find you,
but i
wish i had.
there was
so much to
tell You –
i was bursting with
words eager
to be said.
You would have covered
my mouth with
Your hand and
You would have laughed
and told me to
slow down:

the world would
wait
forever.
but You weren't there,
and all those lovely words –
waiting to be born –
died a disappointed
death.

i'll look for You
tomorrow
'though i don't
expect to find
You:
You've gone
idontknowwhere.
i have the feeling
You'll never come
back.
i'll never again
see Your smile and
sunbleached
hair.
never again will
You hold my hand in
the darkened theater and
pass me Your handkerchief
when the heroine
dies;
never again will
i feel Your arms
around me just
holding me,
sending loneliness
away.

i don't
expect to
see You,
but still,
i'll look.

Diana Bargar

EYES OF THE DAUGHTER: A QUARTET

I

A child — a child he longed for above all else. And not merely the issue of his own loins, but a witness to a union made perfect, a consummation of flesh and spirit. The earth's cycles which summon both birth and death stand no man outside their gyre; in their sixth year of marriage, his wife conceived and they rejoiced in their encirclement.

II

Winter had settled in like an overdue guest; naked trees knelt in a wind which slapped and sliced your face if you walked against it. Several logs grappled with a flame which jabbed at them in the hearth; they spit and hissed as the bright heat broke their dry bark. Their child grew, and deep within her she felt its marrow dance with the rhythm of the fire before them, into the heart of the night.

III

Days passed into weeks and weeks into months. The crust of the land was saturated with soft snow, thawed by the morning sun which glistened like a diamond. The hour of birth drew near, and the mother concealed the restlessness as you might hide an awkward secret. This was their child, she mused, the pinnacle and procreation of their marriage, regardless.

IV

The child could neither know nor utter just what difficulties the mating of its seeds had long ago triggered. The mother was warned years ago that, due to a disease buried in her blood, any pregnancy was inadvisable if not dangerous. Her husband was not told until after she died in childbirth. His eyes were dark and moist as he listened, the infant clutched carefully in his arms. And where, he muttered proudly, is there another woman like my wife?

R. Steven Graves

A DEAD EVENING

Somehow it just wasn't a night for studying, I had tried to get into those books for over an hour and just found myself gazing out the window dreaming about everything but Herman Melville and *Moby Dick*. There was no way that I could concentrate so I decided to take a walk across campus. It was really cold, the wind-chill factor was something like twenty below zero, but I figured that maybe I could run into someone and we could kill the rest of the evening together. It wasn't until I had come to the entrance of the graveyard that I realized I had walked completely across campus without seeing a living soul. The campus was so dead that I was convinced the only place there was any excitement was among the tombstones.

I entered the cemetery with such great expectation that my heart was pounding. Here, at last, must be the place where all the action is. Walking along the road, however, I was met with dead silence; the wind wasn't even blowing.

"I might as well go through this place since I'm here," I thought out loud so that I might hear something. I was really disappointed at the prospect of a boring evening.

The moon was bright enough, with some help from the street-lights, to cast some eerie effects on the graveyard. I was concentrating on the crunch of stones under my feet when I realized the mausoleum was beside me; I had walked the length of the cemetery. Dejectedly, I started up the main road thinking about the work for me back in my room. I got up to the crossroads in the middle of the cemetery and was somewhat startled; sitting under the big pine tree was an old man in a tattered overcoat. Though I had never seen him before, he seemed vaguely familiar in his overcoat and grey shirt (I couldn't tell if it was a sweatshirt or not). There had been a rumor about an old man who was bothering co-eds so I was kind of hesitant in approaching him, though he had never been known to bother men. I ventured a weak, "Hi."

"Huh? Oh, howdy," he kind of mumbled and I wasn't sure that's what he said.

"Kind of cold sitting under a tree on a night like this, don't you think?" I was really sorry I had bothered him.

"Naw, not really," he answered. "Cold don' bother me none. 'Been doin' this fer years, not ever' night, jest when I gits res'less. No one else down here ever wants to git up. That's the trouble, folks figger once they're here they don' need to move. Well, I jest can stay in that place so long till I got to git out."

I was really confused now and asked him where he lived.

"Oh, I got me a plot down there 'long the lower road, there. It ain' much but it's cozy 'nuff fer me. I was a student up there at the college, s'pose you are, and I was in a accident. That was about seventy-eight years ago, I think. Anyway, they just kind of dug a hole and dumped me in, kept it real quiet. My folks probably

figgered I run away from school, never did get on with 'em too well, anyway."

"You went to school here seventy-eight years ago?" I could hardly believe my ears. "What was it like?"

"Well, it weren' so big. Heck, we only had a couple o' small buildings, none too fancy. We used to run over to that little place, Flintstone I think they called it, to git likker. We weren' 'lowed to drink in town. They was talkin' 'bout startin' a Women's Christian Temp'rance Union to stop folks from drinkin'; that was one o' the funniest things on campus. Well, anyway, one o' the guys brought his family's horse up fer a weekend and we run over to one o' the girl's houses and borrowed her folk's buggy and headed fer Flintstone. Comin' back we hit a chuck and I was throwed out o' the buggy. I got hurt purty bad and was dead before they could get me back. That's why the college kept it so quiet, we broke a lot o' rules and the officials didn' want no trouble."

He really sounded like he had gone to school here. "What else do you remember about the school?"

"Well, I guess we had fun. We always complained a lot. You know, havin' to be off the street by a certain hour. That was ridiculous, at home my folks let me run all night if I wanted to, but come here, I had to be in by half past nine, girls by nine. 'Cept weekends, we got a extra hour then.

"Used to walk down there where the park is with the girls. Weren' 'lowed to touch them on campus. Weren' natural to walk around like that, a certain distance apart, so we'd head down there and have a good time. I know it's not like that now. Las' week, fer instance, there was a guy and girl layin' in the grass down by my plot. They was hollerin' and carryin' on so bad I had to git up to see what was goin' on. I guess they still have some o' them rules, though, 'cause it was colder that a witch's nose in January that night and they still was messin' around. That's one way to keep warm I guess. College still don' let you mess with the girls?"

"No, they don't," I answered. "Well, I'm really getting cold so I guess I'd better head back to my room. It's been good talking to you. I never did catch your name."

He replied, "Nikalas Thenood."

dennis r. drennen

MARGINAL EROTOCISM

I am convinced of this: That margins are a creation of English professors for the sole purpose of having someplace to write nasty comments and make picayune grammatical corrections.

Think about it. Why do you allow margins to push your copy towards the inside of your page? You have no doubt been brain-washed into thinking that this is proper. Not so! The existence of these naked spaces is almost un-American if not sacreligious! Let us look at the problem more closely.

There is only one practical application of the margin and even then one only needs it on the left side of the page. The reason for this is so when the manuscript is placed in any one of the myriad of psychedelic theme folders available at the local drug-store, one will still be able to read it without having to remove the manuscript from its glossy cover. This would create quite an inconvenience, especially with books, both paper- and cloth-bound. Think of the discomfort of carefully slipping the text out of its jacket each time you wish to read it. The cover might get lost and you would have to make good with a cut-up paper bag or some such ingenious creation. Or the copy might get lost. In this case, there is nothing really to worry about since you can fill it with an old block of wood and place it on the bookshelf with no loss of "Oh, so you've read So-and-so's *Whatcham'callit?*" when friends you want to impress stop by to impress you with something.

Alright, so we have found a very good reason for the existence of the left margin. But what about the upper, lower, and right ones? What, pray tell, is their usefulness? Let us begin with the upper and lower margins.

These two nude spaces are there due to technical aspects which at this time are unavoidable. When one inserts a sheet of typing paper into the typewriter, it is to the advantage of the typist (should he ever want the first few lines of his manuscript to be legible) that he bring the paper up so that it can be grasped by the bar that stretches across the top of the cylinder 'round which the paper travels. If this is not done, then the typist runs the risk of having his first few lines of type blurred, since the keys must not only make an impression upon the paper, but must also press the paper back against the cylinder. This latter job would be an overload, since there are not many typewriters that make typing easy, let alone add another task to the job. So it seems that the upper margin is necessary. One could, of course, get around this inconvenience by somehow lowering the bar closer to where the paper emerges from beneath the cylinder so as to squeeze the type closer to the top of the page. However, most

writers are not mechanics. Those who are would be strange enough to attempt this.

Now what about the lower margin? Well, my friends, a similar problem is encountered here. That is, when the bottom of the page is reached in the typewriter, one may find the paper slipping out at an angle. This will cause the last line or so of the page to travel on a downhill slope toward the lower right-hand corner of the page. This can be very distracting to a reader, and unless one is writing about how he broke his leg skiing, it is not a good device to use. Then there always enters the forbidding footnote. With no lower margin, there is not room for the little devil. One can easily get around this problem by allowing a separate page for footnotes at the end of the manuscript. Some professors will let one get away with this, some will not. It is all a matter of how much trouble they want you to go through.

So, thus far, we have found practical advantages to the existence of the left, upper, and lower margins. But what about the right one? What can be its use? Well, as far as themes and essays for professors are concerned, there seems to be one use and one use only: To provide a space in which the professors can make comments about the content of the manuscript. There is not one other reason. The existence of the outside margin, the right margin, does not enhance the readability of the text. The only thing one must watch out for is the possibility of leaving half a word hanging on the edge of the page. Especially without room for a hyphen. Horrors!

To date, there is just one lone rebel to the cause, Witness the uneven right margin in Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*. Throughout the book, the margin skips gleefully in and out in uneven merriment. What a joy it is to read such a daring exploit! But this is just a beginning. Soon I hope there will be numerous uprisings in the margin world. Right margins will provide the start as they creep closer and closer to the edge of the page. Upper and lower margins will sneak towards their respective edges as modern technology overcomes the minor problem which necessitates their existence. Maybe, some day in the distant future, some obscure inventor will find a means to do away with the left margin as well. Then and only then will the world, and English students too, be rid of this terrible trauma.

Should this occur, however, it will have to be carefully watched. Who knows what type of old-time professor may be caught behind the locked door of his office or study reading an old paper with those naked margins glaring up at him, and his nineteen-cent Bic pen readied to clothe them.

Be done with the middleman, my friends!

Cover your margins now!!!

Dan Budd

PERHAPS . . .

Once upon a time there was a young man named Alan who was neither so young as to be a child nor so mature as to be a man. He was a free-lance artist who traveled at will, stopping in a town only long enough to paint and sell a few things. Although he had never stayed anywhere more than a few months, he had a reputation which spread before him like a red carpet, making him welcome everywhere. The people who knew him liked to pretend that he was either a character out of Tolkein's trilogy on a vague journey to Happiness, or a kind sheriff who couldn't even be nasty to the bad guys who consistently busted up the saloon.

Alan was on his way to the Hill town. He was so glad that he was almost running, even if the hill was steep. He had so many friends, so many good memories of this town. He did not hope to merely relive these memories; so exceptional was the Hill town that it held the promise of more. Alan was so close to the town that he knew every change of wind, every mood. In fact, his experience in learning the Hill town's moods had made him so dependent on this knowledge that he vowed never to paint in a town until he knew what the town was about. How else could he portray it accurately?

He had no sooner gotten to the outskirts of the town than he stopped. He was no longer smiling, but stood as if dazed. The Hill town, heretofore somnolent and rather dull, was seething with dissatisfaction. It seemed nervous, pressured, groping. He was alarmed, but instead of turning back he ran through the town as if he'd just been robbed and was in pursuit of some extraordinary culprit. The exhilaration of being there again and finding such a cryptic mood completely unglued him. His only recourse was to go to the home of his friend, J., who had an uncanny way of understanding him. Realizing that he should go there gave Alan a great deal of self-control, and he proceeded to J.'s without hesitation.

J., of course, was glad to see him, yet seemed distant and preoccupied. Being a professor, he was always trying to approach things with logic, and when he asked Alan if he had noticed anything peculiar when he came into town, Alan knew that J. was getting ready for a little deductive game. As Alan related to him all that he had experienced upon entering the Hill town, J. seemed to liven up.

"Now," he said, "can you deduce a possible cause?"

"Well," he faltered, "if it's that noticeable it must be something basic, not foreign, to the town."

"And what is most basic to a town?" J. inquired.

"People!" he cried, prematurely hoping that he had the answer.

"Keep going!" ordered J.

"Perhaps a division, a rift between people," he ventured. J.

was laughing at Alan's naivete.

"Men," he gestured by opening his left hand, "and women," gesturing with his right. Alan was puzzled by the seeming inanity of this statement.

"Seriously, Alan," he continued, "think of the consequences of a war between men and women. And the mobilization has already begun."

"Come on, old friend," he chided, "things can't be at that stage."

"If I explain in detail," J. admitted, "I might bias your opinion. So observe, then make a judgement. I feel you will come closer to understanding what's going on than those involved."

Alan trusted his friend and could see the merit in his proposed method. He was genuinely concerned to see if he could find evidence to support what J. had suggested was wrong and to document whether this was responsible for the change of mood in the town — Alan's town. He began to keep a diary of all things pertaining to this matter, hoping that by careful observation and reporting he could come to some conclusion and achieve that understanding to which J. had referred. Even if the matter was not strictly personal, it would, nonetheless, receive his full attention because he was so acutely sensitive.

FRIDAY

J. knows a middle-aged teacher, Miss H., who had wanted a portrait done. He asked me to show her my sketches and I was glad to have someone, especially a woman, from whom I could ply information about J.'s so-called "war".

I went to see her today. She is rather tall with slightly graying hair and a queer smile which reminds me of someone who has discovered a secret and is content to keep it to herself. She didn't seem to be involved in the "women's rights" movement. As we fell into conversation I timidly asked her why she wasn't involved, expecting her to chide those women for rebelling against the men she had never had. I was completely surprised by her lack of criticism.

"I've never had a man, never have been at the mercy of one nor had one at my mercy. And Alan, this was by choice, not by chance."

I couldn't believe her so content, with no malice. I remarked that perhaps those without the strength to make such a choice, or those without a choice . . .

"You," she interrupted me, "are assuming that women are at the mercy of men to ask them to marry and must become acclimated to their fate if this never happens. You can't judge a woman by looking at the man, especially if there is no man. Then you might see the woman as an individual, not as an extension of men." She smiled brightly as if to underscore her ideas, consented to have me paint her, and gracefully stepped out of the room.

This first encounter has left me stunned, partially because I

have never known a single woman to be happy. Even the divorced women I know are only unmarried long enough to find another mate. Miss H.'s attitude is refreshing, yet threatening. But how can a lone woman scare me?

WEDNESDAY

I have spent the past few days in retreat and J., quite alarmed that I might lose contact with the society of the town, begged me to help him entertain a mutual friend. I consented so that J. would not be left in a lurch. The afternoon was progressing quite smoothly when J. was called to the phone and I was left alone with our friend. He was quite jolly, in fact so jolly that I didn't know when he was serious and when he was joking. He was surveying the room when his eyes rested on a large, earthenware pot sitting in the corner. It was quite handsomely decorated with designs that J.'s wife had done. Our friend remarked that since it was too short to be an umbrella stand and too tall for flowers, it really had no business there. I commented, half-defending it, that the design was quite professional.

"That redeems it not," said our friend. "If it serves no purpose, it is not needed."

I rationally remarked that it did serve to brighten up an empty corner.

"Yes, and block the way to the bookcase. If a house *must* be brightened up, why not with something useful? Women! always putting things in the way, just so we men will trip over them."

I was almost goaded by his narrow-mindedness, the artist in me defending a fellow-artist.

"Besides," he said with an air of infallibility, "what do women know about art? They invest their time and *our* money in what they call "appreciation of the arts". But how many women are famous artists?"

I wracked my brain until I felt despondent; the number was small indeed.

"Women," he added, "have always enjoyed without having to put forth any effort."

I was frustrated now, as I always was at this point of an argument, and was only able to stammer an answer.

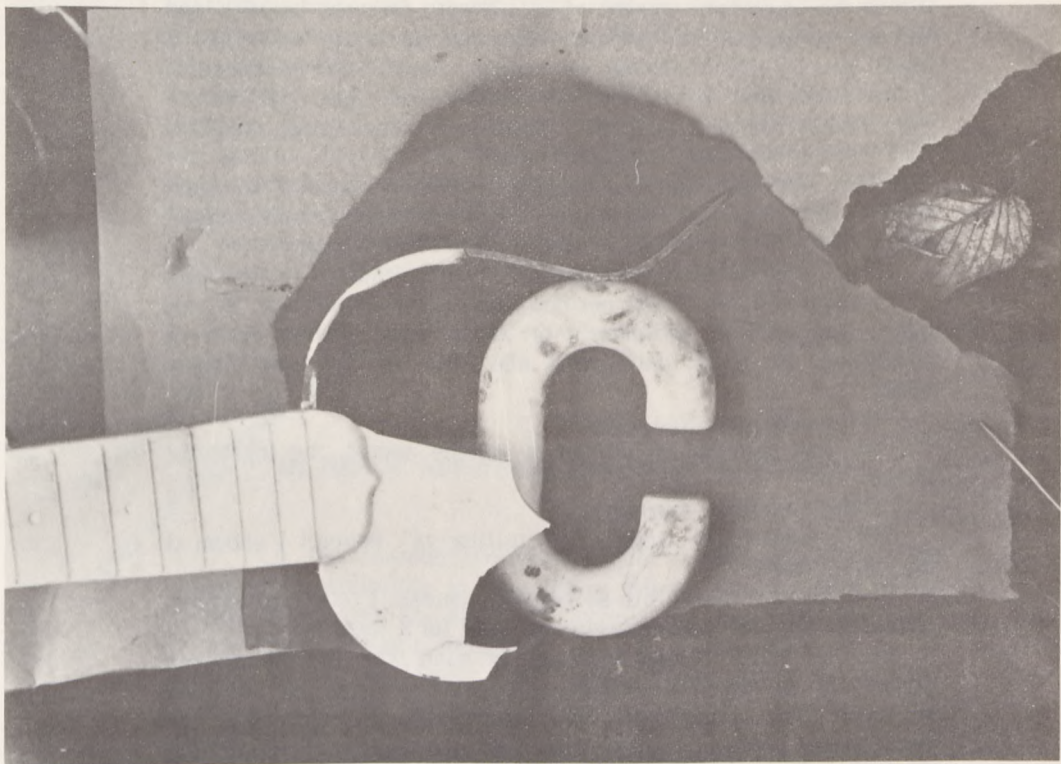
"It takes effort to appreciate, to enjoy."

"A woman's time wasted while the household collapses around her."

That threatened feeling was returning, and also a feeling of guilt as I had a latent flash of insight that this friend was not unique in his beliefs. I was ready to lash out and call him an ignoramus (of all things!) when J. returned, saving me from embarrassment.

THURSDAY

I was exasperated after the encounter with the friend, so later that night I went to a small, dark tavern to hide from the lime-light of introspection and just relax. I was trying to figure out why I felt guilty. It was almost as if I had nothing to defend —



what had I been defending, anyway? The thing — the pot? Or the person — the artist? Had my defense failed because the artist was a woman? Why had I let this interfere? I was distraught; I had my chance, but blew it. Analysis could do nothing but make me miserable now. Suddenly there was a thud next to me, a man, about thirty, with the golden brown curls of a cherub. He looked sullen, like he had been drinking quite heavily and was on the threshold of a crying jag. To my surprise, he looked me right in the eye with sober deliberation.

"That damn Marie! That damn Marie!"

I couldn't help but ask who Marie was.

"Marie," he said, "is one of those women who has no respect for a guy at all. You give 'em what they want, and they act like it's never what they wanted at all. I work fourteen hours a day and on week-ends. All for her. And what does she do? Take a lover. As if I didn't already do enough. As if I was inadequate! In the first years of our marriage money was tight and I didn't want her to worry. I wanted to prove to her that I was capable. And what do ya' know, she insults me."

I felt sorry for him, momentarily driven to think of someone other than myself, but I could see that pity would do him no good since the hurt he was feeling was a mask for his anger.

"Have you talked to her about it?" I enquired.

"I never see her. If I'm not out chasing the extra buck, if I *am* home, she's at the neighbor's or taking some sewing class or something. At least that's what she tells me, but now I know better."

"Does she know you know?"

"No, but I intend to let her in on the secret, the ingrateful hussy."

"Don't you love your wife?"

"Of course, idiot. Like I was telling ya', haven't I shown it all these years?"

I could not condemn his self-righteousness. I felt like I'd been cornered, so I left immediately and went for a walk.

All the while I was walking my mind was like a popcorn popper full of ideas. I recalled J.'s words to me on my first day in town: 'The mobilization has already begun'. This man was emotionally armed to attack his wife and she would be at his mercy as he had been at the mercy of her opinion of him and therefore had tried to over-achieve. The friend was armed with nothing but cynicism and insults which were not even based on the reality of women as people. How easy it is, I thought, to resort to sexual differences as a means of defense when we can't communicate on a person-to-person level. We never put blame where blame is due, always thrusting it somewhere else. If things continue in this vein, war cannot be avoided.

MONDAY

Oh, how right J. was. It's been three weeks since I first arrived and things have deteriorated beyond the point of hope. At least J. thinks so. He lost faith so quickly when he saw that war

was inevitable. I tried to mediate, to draw the two groups back together again as is their destiny; the women called me a spy, the men, a traitor. I am helpless until one of them stops being so obstinate. Tonight I am giving them one more chance. I cannot endanger J.'s professional position any longer by remaining in his home, nor can I continue to live where I cannot function. If tonight's meeting with the organizers of the groups proves enlightening, perhaps a truce can be arranged. If not, having considered the best interests of all those involved, I think I shall leave.

Evidently this meeting wasn't successful because open hostilities broke out the next day. One of the men found Alan's diary and sketches on the outskirts of Hill town, just where the hill was the steepest.

Someone left a bundle of the diary and sketches on J.'s doorstep. He couldn't bear to open it right away; the memory was too painful. Finally, he sat down and slowly leafed through the diary, looking for a letter. There was none. He thought he might find a clue somewhere in the sketches. Most of them were of Miss H., except the last one. J. couldn't decide if the figure in the last one was male or female. Perhaps it doesn't matter.

Kathy Sachs

Second Award
Quiz and Quill Prose Contest

MYTHS OF APPETITE: TREATIES WITH GOD

I

" . . . the common people laid hold of the man behind the teaching, saw divinity in him, felt a redemptive intention in his coming among men, and adoringly surrendered themselves to him." In his study of *Man's Religions*, John B. Noss comments on the origins of lay Buddhism, revealing perhaps how the Buddha achieved a posthumous mythic stature among his followers. The celebration of Christ's coming to earth which occurred after his crucifixion is certainly a parallel phenomenon. The historical Jesus was undoubtedly a walking, breathing, contemplative human of the highest order, a paradigm of man's potential. His elevation to divinity was in part spawned by the common man's adoration of a more highly evolved human being; he exemplified a "Son of God" to men who were lesser but likewise "sons of God." God, after all, is Spirit, and to approach Him as only a stern patriarch is to unjustly and inaccurately limit Him. Jesus understood this, and for his insight is honored with a mythic stature analogous to the Buddha's.

II

Myth is the highest order of truth, not fact. The Christian myth is as beautiful and enduring an elucidation of metaphorical truth as any tale substantiated by the Greek pantheon. The historicity of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ is a peculiar obsession of narrow theology possessed by an attempt to "prove" that it has a monopoly on the market of truth. The historicity of the Buddha and of Lao Tzu are almost incidental embellishments to Buddhist or Taoist modes of thinking. Perusing Scripture with a myopic desire to affirm a static faith is like reading Shakespeare's *Richard III* as a factually accurate historical narrative. Shakespeare incorporates the spirit of the man and builds a play which, thematically, has little to do with the historical Richard III. Myth is a discursive process of ordering chaos and providing a divinely ordained system in which man pursues meaning. Myth is poetic truth, not verifiable fact.

III

The idea of God as Spirit engenders a notion not often contemplated in Christian circles. Spirit is movement; it is intrinsic, it is supra-rational, it connotes a mystical, inward flow of being which spirals from a source within an organism. A tree, a flower, and a child grow to a peculiar rhythm which is natural to and spontaneous within the organism, and they do not have a structure imposed upon them by some arbitrary force. If God is Spirit, which is the internal catalyst of growth, how may He also reside in the universe simultaneously as an arbitrary creator, fashioning from the outside as if He were building mere artifacts? Perhaps this is symptomatic of Christianity's view of man as lord over nature, and not so much part of her.

Little wonder man is alienated from himself. Christianity tries to assuage it not by cultivating an awareness of the rhythms in our blood, but by dependence on a sovereign will which imposes an order on nature from without rather than within.

IV

When St. John tells us that God is Spirit, he has reached the limits of language; he points toward Lao Tzu's assertion that "The Tao which can be understood is not the ultimate Tao." St. John says God is a Spirit, not the omnipresent Lawgiver of Hebrew legend, but a Spirit, the most inclusive matrix within which all things are suspended. But each object in our matrix is not rigid and confined but porous and yielding; as it floats in the substance of Spirit, it is also permeated by Spirit.

Now we too are at the limits of language, and can articulate our thoughts only by analogy. Spirit is the process and catalyst of our being, we depend upon its rejuvenative flow. God is Spirit, and cannot be contained by finite human attributes like mercy, justice, anger or love. The God behind our myths, or masks of God, eludes our most earnest definitions.

R. Steven Graves

TOUR

Once you get to Morristown it's an easy drive. 'Course I know it's all interstate up to Morristown, but you think that's easy drivin'? Easy, maybe; boring, for sure. Now this road that goes northwest out of Morristown is two-laned and curvy. That's easy drivin' 'cause it gives ya somethin' to do instead of just sitting there with your arm lopped over the wheel and your foot holding the gas while the other falls asleep.

Yeah, out ole 315 you got a chance to do some real drivin'. Some of them big hulking trucks and busses some folk call cars git lost tryin' to track their way up that road. It just ain't made for them.

Now just git in a nice, small sporty job and buzz with that road, away from Morristown. Slide into those turns and blast out on those straightaways. 'Course you can have just as much fun drivin' kinda slow 'cause that ole road's got you in its palm anyhow. In fact, you might want to poke along 'cause the scenery's so nice. All along the road, pine trees tower over you, makin' a kinda green tunnel to drive through. And there's even a place (just one mind you) where you can pull over and look out at the trees and some of the taller buildings in Morristown. Out beyond, the mountains sit wrapped in green robes and white nightcaps. They ain't so big, but they look better than any mountain you ever saw or are goin' to see . . . And you better look good, 'cause that's the last chance you'll git. Oh sure, you can catch glimpses of them before that and later on, but this is the last time you'll git to see them nice and clear. Providin' there's no haze, that is.

Well, most folk turn around here. Some go on, and turn back after a few miles. Pine tunnels don't seem to excite them, I guess. I never really seen where it goes my self. I don't even know if it goes anywhere in particular. I think it might go down the other side of the mountain into Stanton, but I never got that far. And I never bother with maps, either.

Mostly, now, I never go far at all. Haven't since I got my store twenty or thirty years ago. Every day, 'cept Sundays of course, I open my place at eight and sell to all the folk around here what they need to survive for a while. What I don't have, I order for them. You see, I got a sort of monopoly goin' for me. The nearest store is thirty-four miles away. Some of my orders take a while, but folks here are patient. I remember Mrs. Townshend waited a good two months for some special material for a dress she was going to make for her daughter. I called her when it came in. She drove over to git it and thanked me for all my trouble. *My trouble?* Hell, I didn't do much. It was those folk out east that was doin' all the trouble.

Off to the side of my store, my wife keeps a little snack shop. She fixes sandwiches and coffee for folks to munch on when they

got the time. She don't do nothin' fast. No, you order a simple ham and cheese and you best be plannin' on spendin' a good five or ten minutes waitin' on it and another twenty or thirty to eat it. Yeah, to eat. My wife'll watch you, and if you eat too fast she'll tell you. And if you persist, she'll tell you to leave and take your plate with what's left — no charge. Folks around here know better, but outsiders are bound to git surprised.

One fella came by a couple years ago and ordered a grilled cheese with onion and a black coffee. Well, when I saw him sitting there, drummin' his fingers on the table and squirmin' himself on the chair, I knew he was in for it. My wife did too. She was watchin' him while the sandwich was cookin'. She brought it over to him with the coffee, backed off a few paces and watched him. He started wolfin' down that sandwich and coffee like he was in some eatin' contest. Well, she just stepped over to him and told him he'd git gas if he didn't slow down. He said it wouldn't bother him. She said it bothered her. He said it was none of her business. She said he could take his grilled cheese and coffee and eat it elsewhere.

Boy, did he look startled! He was so shook he picked up his food and went out the door sideways. Fact is, this happens to most outsiders. All of them really. Sometimes they calm down and stay to finish their food. Most time they leave in amazement. All but this one pair.

Fact is, they amazed us.

* * *

"Yes, Mr. Shafer. What can I do for you?"

"Nothing, sir. I just wanted to give you my two-weeks notice."

"You don't like working here? Not enough pay?"

"Pay's alright — I like working here as much as one can enjoy work. I'm just leaving."

"Well, now, mind if I ask why?"

"No. I'm moving out of the area."

"Where?"

"I don't know for sure."

"Well that's a hell of a way to go about anything. You're quitting a good job to move to an unknown destination?"

"Right."

"What if this place doesn't exist?"

"Oh it exists, sir. We just don't know where."

"I see. So you're just going to look around until you find it."

"That's correct."

"I really hate to lose you, Shafer. I suppose there's no way I can persuade you to stay? A pay raise maybe?"

"I appreciate your offer, sir, but the time has come to begin the search."

"You've got this all planned out, I take it?"

"Oh yes. Been planning for it the past two years, ever since Kay and I decided that was what we both wanted, aside from a few other items. I've been working here while she finished college, saving as much as I could. You know, TV dinners aren't all that terrible."

"If you say so."

"I do. Anyhow, we're going to look until we find this place and . . ."

"Ok. ok. I'm not going to pry any further. I'll have your final check ready when you leave."

"Thanks a lot, sir."

"Sure thing."

* * *

They just came rollin' in, you see, in one of them foreign sport jobs. They sat there talkin' for a while, starin' around at my place and the rest of the town. Then they got out and strolled around a bit lookin' and pickin'. All of a sudden, the girl got all excited 'bout somethin', hopped up and down and yelled for the guy. He came over, took a sight at what she was pointin' at, nodded his head and smiled. Then he pecked her on the forehead and they came inside.

My wife went up to see what they wanted. The young man asked her what did she have. My wife read him the menu and he looked at his girlfriend. He ordered two chocolate shakes, a chicken sandwich, a cheeseburger, and one order of french fries with some ketchup. Well, my wife went back to fix it up and watched them. They just sat there talkin' kinda excited. Then the young man got up and went out to his car and came back with a map. He opened it up and the two of them studied it, leanin' over the table, 'til my wife brought their food.

The young man asked her where this particular road led to. My wife said she didn't know. Said I wouldn't know either since neither of us traveled much past the lookout anymore. The young man thanked her and smiled at his girlfriend.

Well, here's the amazin' part: These two strangers — strangers, mind you — sat there for close to an hour eatin' and gabbin'. An hour! No strangers ever done that before no matter how many there were of them. Well, after the shock, my wife smiled, went over to them, and told them the meal was on the house. She then proceeded to explained the matter.

* * *

"You're going to what?"

"I said: I'm going to quit my job in June."

"Refill my glass, will you Joan? Now, let me get this straight — You walked out of college into a secure, well-paying job, in your field no less. You seemed to be pleased with it; never missed a day, right? And now you're going to just give it all up?"

"That's right. Could you replenish mine too, Mom? Thanks."

"Your ole dad is a bit confused. Would you care to enlighten him as to why?"

"Sure. You see, Kay and I are going to look for this cabin. We know what it looks like and everything, and even if it isn't exactly that way, we can fix it. All we need to do is find it."

"That all? How do you propose to look for this place?"

"Drive around until we find it."

"Refill, dear?"

"Yes, please."

"I know . . . you too."

"The turkey and dressing were their usual excellent, Mom."

"Thank you. Glad you enjoyed it. Want some dessert?"

"Hold it, Joan. Let's finish this first."

"Over dessert. It's prune whip, your favorite."

"Alright. I'll have a small dish."

"Matt?"

"The usual, Mom."

"Now, Matthew. How long do you plan this project of yours will take?"

"I don't know. Maybe a week, maybe the rest of our lives."

"And how do you plan to eat? Where will you stay when your savings run out? What about gas and other maintenance on that little washing machine you call a car? Thought any about that?"

"Oh yes. I have this idea for a book I'm going to write. It's not going to be any literary masterpiece, but I'm going to sell it to a publisher and we'll live off the money for a while."

"And after this big burst into authorship, then what?"

"I'll continue to write. I'm taking my camera along. Maybe a travelogue, huh?"

"Maybe. A very big maybe."

"The prune whip is very good, Mom."

"Thanks, sweetie."

"Well, I can see I'm getting nowhere. What do Kay's parents think of all this?"

"They don't mind too much."

"Too much? What did they say?"

"'Be careful.'"

* * *

These two younguns and my wife sat there and blabbed for a good hour or so. They asked all sorts of questions about the town, the people, the area, how much traffic comes through — things like that. My wife seemed real pleased with them. When they left, she came in to me and told me all about the whole thing.

A couple days later, they came in all excited. They wanted to know who owned the land just this side of the crest off 315. I said I didn't rightly know at the moment and told them to check at the city building around the corner. They thanked me and left.

Well, they were back 'bout two hours later even more excited than before. Seems that land was under some old homesteader act or somethin' like that and they could git the land for free. I asked them why they wanted it so bad. They said they wanted it to be a surprise for my wife and I and that they'd be back tomorrow to order some stuff they'd be needin'. Then they trotted off to that car of theirs and practically flew away.

* * *

"I know it's there."

"I believe you."

"When I close my eyes, I can see the whole thing. Inside and out, I can see everything just as it is, and should be. Someday I'll find it, I know."

"I know you will. And I want to be there to help you look. I want to be part of it, if you wouldn't mind. You see, I have a vision a lot like yours. Before, it wasn't quite as clear and vivid. Just now you filled in the blanks. So, if we're looking for the same place, we'll both be there eventually. And it would make things a lot easier if we searched together. A lot more fun, too."

"I don't know, Matt."

"Ok. Listen: I do not want to hear any cliché reservations. If you're going to back off, I want you to have some damn good reasons. And another thing: No one is going to lure you away without a short and concentrated outburst from me. I love you. And I'm not going to let you go too easily. I mean that."

"When do we go?"

* * *

They ran up a bill like I'd never seen before. When it got fairly high, I asked the young lady how they planned to pay for all the stuff. She said somethin' 'bout a book her boyfriend was writin' and that she was going to be a dance teacher. Wouldn't be more than a month before things got settled in, she said. I said I hoped not.

Well, I got my money alright. Don't know whether it was the book or the dance lessons — both sounded a bit far-fetched. But they kept up on all their bills, so it ain't none of my business to pry.

They finally got done with whatever they had to do and came into town to get my wife and I to show us. So we followed them out ole 315 past the lookout and then down this rabbit trail they later called a driveway.

It was beautiful.

* * *

"What you've been saying all evening shows a definite disillusionment with present-day society."

"Realization would be a better word."

"I don't think so."

"Oh? Who knows better, you or I?"

"I believe that you are looking too subjectively at your condition and not objectively enough. Since I am capable of the latter, I believe that at this moment, I am more capable. Therefore, if you don't object, it seems to me that you are not all here. As the ancient Egyptians would say, your soul is not with you. It has taken a vacation, so to speak. What you need to do is search out your soul. Find out where it is hiding."

"It's hiding?"

"Yes. Also, you have become somewhat of a zombie. You are, or seem to be at least, physically here. You seem to be enjoying yourself. But you are not entirely here, entirely human."

"I see. And how would Your Wisdom suggest I go about the rebuilding of my tortured psyche?"

"Well, there are some books I could suggest you read. But what you need to do is begin thinking again. That is how you can rediscover yourself. You need to call back your soul and make amends."

"That's all well and interesting, and above all quite entertaining. But you've got it all wrong. You see, I have not lost my soul, nor has it gone on some Valhallian vacation. My soul is ahead of me in time. Like your eyes see ahead of your body, so my soul is ahead of my present physical presence. It is waiting in the place where I should be and will be some day. All I have to do is find out where it is and devise a means of reaching it. My soul is patient; it will wait for me to catch up."

* * *

We'd go to their place every month or so and just sit around talkin'. Maybe we'd play a little cards; maybe sip on some wine and eat cheese by the fireplace; maybe play some silly games we'd invent right on the spot. My wife and I grew to really love those kids.

Well, it was just a year later when my wife died. Matt and Kay were so nice to me, bringin' me good things to eat and keepin' me company, that I wanted to do somethin' real nice for them. So I asked if they wouldn't take over the snack shop and get it back into shape. They thought that was a great idea. And so did I.

You see, now I can show Matt how my shop operates. That way, he'll be able to take over for me whenever I go.

You see, their cabin use to be ours, too.

Dan Budd

Second Award
Quiz and Quill
Short Story Contest

THE ALEXANDER CURSE

I tell this tale, not that it may be repeated publicly, but that my sons and their sons may safely guard themselves against that which will plague them for as long as our line continues. I am Sir Walter Hugh Alexander, Laird of the Alexander barony surrounding Ayre county. My good friend and confessor, Father Henry Kerr, sets down these words for me and my heirs though he'd rather see me burn these pages and the Castle Alexander itself in hopes of ridding the world of this evil. I'll not act so, however. I'll not destroy my home and my family's title. For then the bastard, my brother would win. And I'll go to hell myself before I'll see him victor.

My father was a rogue in his younger days and he sported much with the women of the towns before he wed my mother and settled down. He had, from those days, a bastard son of whom my mother was not overly fond and in the end she made my father put the boy in a monastery, to be raised as a priest. He was then forgotten and my parents devoted themselves to raising me and my young brother, Robert. I remember when I was fifteen of hearing that my brother had run away from the priesthood upon learning his lineage from the doddering old abbot. My father seemed worried and made some effort to find my half-brother,

without success. We heard some tales of his running with robbers and committing foul acts but these did not concern me much. At twenty-one I was knighted and as oldest son I began managing the barony. My mother died when I was twenty-three and my father retired to the great hall to live the rest of his life in his memories. I, myself, knighted my brother when he became of age. He left home soon after to serve our good King Robert the Bruce and I envied his freedom, for I found my life most boring. In those days I only had news of my brother once. A witch was discovered in the town and she had to be duly burned. As I put the torch to her pile she spoke to me, her voice thick with hate: "Your brother shall deal with you, Alexander." she said. I must have looked astonished for she laughed with a vengeance and screamed, "Oh, yes, we have him now!" And she laughed until the flames rose up and then she screamed as she burned.

Until I was thirty I lived the life of any highland Baron. I married and was blessed with a fine, strong son. My father was quite old and seemed very near death. Then one evening I rode home to find the entire household silent. The servants looked at me with hope but they never spoke. I entered the hall to see my wife and child standing in fear before a tall man. He wore no tartan but he was dressed in a dark cloak and he was holding my father's claymore which used to hang over the fire in the hall. I had never seen him before, but I knew who he was for, though he was older, our features were the same. He was, of course, my half-brother, Malcolm. My wife ran to my side, cradling our son.

"Good evening, young brother," he said. "None in our house seem anxious to welcome me."

His tone was not good and I found that on first sight I despised him. "What do you here," I said, "This is not your home."

"But you are wrong, I am eldest son. It is mine by rights!" As he spoke his voice rose and broke in fury. I suddenly thought of all the years he had known this and yet went homeless. Hate for me and my family gleamed in his eyes.

"I demand my place here!" he screamed at me. "I will have it or I will take it," and he raised the sword he held. Then our father stepped into the room and his old, angry voice addressed Malcolm.

"You have no place here, man. You have turned from God and killed and you are evil. You are no longer my son." Then the old man took the sword from Malcolm and struck him across the face and though my half-brother shook with rage he could do nothing to the man who was his father.

So he looked at me and said, "I have the devil's power. I shall take this house from you or I will destroy it." And he ran from the room and was gone.

We did not hear from him again. But, when a year later, my father was dying, the old man called me to his deathbed and said, "He will be back, my son. Your brother will be back, now that I am not here to stop him." His voice was weak but his tone was grave. "He is evil and he must be killed when he returns. You

must kill him with my sword. I bore him and it is my sword that will slay him."

My father died in my arms. I knew that Malcolm would return when he learned of our father's death. But his speed surprised me for that evening as I held my father's claymore in the red firelight I heard a footstep behind me and I turned to see him standing at the other end of the hall, cloaked in black and holding an ax.

"I have come to claim my own," he rasped. Then he ran forward with the ax raised and I met him halfway with my father's sword. The crash of weapons was tremendous, but no servants came to help me and the house was silent but for the sound of sword ringing on ax. He fought like a demon, swinging the ax with powerful strokes and I was hard put to hold him at bay. He began to chant as he fought and the words made me shudder for he was calling on the devil's aid. And, as if answered, he swung the ax harder and faster and I was driven back. Then I saw the claymore reflect the fire's light and I felt a strength in my arms that was not my own. Malcolm saw the glow too and he stopped his chant as he felt his father's strength and mine. He must have feared greatly then. He turned to run and as he turned I struck and his head fell from his shoulders to the floor and his body collapsed over it.

I made a costly error then. For, in his death I pitied him and, rather than burn his putrid body I had him buried in the crypts beneath the castle. I did not think when I had this done. He died with the devil's strength in him, so he is not truly dead.

Malcolm is alive in his crypt. I have heard him trying to push up the stone that seals him. I have listened to his cries, cries from a head that has no body. The priests can do nothing for, being once a priest himself, Malcolm is too strong for them. I fear to open the crypt for I don't know how to kill him a second time and leave him truly dead. I have chained my father's sword to the tomb and that has stilled him. He is quiet, but Malcolm and his head and his ax are still alive in the crypt. And he wants to get out.

Sir Walter Hugh Alexander 1319

An Extract from the Will of Sir Duffus Alexander

. . . but, my son, you must leave the Castle Alexander to inherit your birthright. We have lived under the yoke of evil too long. Seal the ancient family crypt and hide it so that we may forget the black spawn who cursed our family. And then leave, never to return

Signed by the Grace of God and
in the Year of Our Lord 1599
Sir Duffus Alexander, Laird
of the Alexander Estate

Excerpts from the Diary of Sir Ashley Alexander
Tuesday, November 12, 1787

Today I moved myself and my family into Castle Alexander. It is the first time the ancestral home has been inhabited for over a hundred years. We felt quite proud as we walked through the great hall of the old castle. Mildred and the children made a ceremony of lunch by crowning me lord of the castle. We are all quite enchanted with it. The place, however, is quite run down and I shall have to have workmen come in and make quite a few repairs. Mildred had the servants working all day cleaning the kitchen and bedrooms. The rest can wait, she said. I am only sorry that my son Richard is away at school. He would be taken with our new home.

Friday, November 15, 1787.

The workmen arrived today and I put them to work on the first floor of the castle. I am having an architect come in and draw up plans for putting a new wing on the west end of the castle. It has become quite apparent that we cannot live in the castle itself for it is damp and drafty. I have found many Heirlooms on the first floor. Old-fashioned arms dating back to the 12th century. There are also a number of books and manuscripts. Mildred says they are useless but I intend to have them repaired and use them to decorate the great hall.

Friday, November 22, 1787

Work on the upper floors is progressing and now Mildred and I have our own rooms. Mildred insisted that hers adjoin the children's room. Work on the new wing begins next month. I wasted half the morning in trying to translate an old manuscript. The Latin was very poor as it was dictated to a half-educated cleric by an old ancestor. It tells of a fantastic tale and a family curse that I found quite ridiculous. I never even bothered to finish it. I am sorry to say that my forefathers weren't as civilized as I had thought them to be. I suppose they were a superstitious lot. But I have more pressing matters from Parliament

Monday, December 2, 1787

A construction crew started on the new wing today and the workmen in the castle continued working on the dungeons and the lower rooms. About midday they accidentally broke into an old room that was apparently sealed ages ago. It appears to be an old family crypt and I was fascinated as I examined it. I found one old tomb in particular that was quite interesting. It stands out in the center of the floor and it has an old sword chained to the top of it. It appears to be an old claymore. It is a beautiful piece with a gem-encrusted hilt and I am having it sent to the jewelers to be cleaned. It will look well hanging over the hearth in the great hall. I can't imagine what it was doing chained to the top of the stone coffin. I am having the room cleaned and will use it as a point of interest to show to my guests. I received a letter from Richard and he said he would be home for Christmas. We are all anxious to see him.



Tuesday, December 3, 1787

Mildred and the children were frightened by strange noises last night. I did not hear them myself as I am quite a sound sleeper. They said they heard scuffling and muffled cries from downstairs. I was inclined to disbelieve them until one of the workmen told me that some of their equipment had been disturbed. They had to **start** cleaning the secret room over again this morning. I think we might have prowlers. I intend to keep by Spanish pistols and my rapier at my bedside tonight and Mildred is sleeping with the children. If the prowler comes tonight I shall be ready for him.

Wednesday, December 4, 1787

I am shaken beyond belief. My wife and children have been killed. Horribly murdered! I awoke in the middle of the night to a deadly silence. I took a pistol and my rapier and went to the children's room. I was shocked to see the carnage. They had been hacked, chopped beyond recog - I cannot describe it. It is too much for me. Investigators have been here all day questioning the servants and the workmen. I have sent word to Richard to come home as soon as possible. Guards are posted around the hall tonight. I do not think they will find anyone. I am reminded of the curse I read of in the old manuscript. I am sitting by the fire in the great hall with my weapons. Waiting. I think the fiend will be back and I will write till he comes. My rapier gleams in the firelight. But not so much as the great claymore that I found in the secret room. I am tempted to hold that instead of my foil and the Spanish pistols. I hear noises from below. The murderer is in the house and I am ready for him.

A Letter from Richard Alexander

My Dear Friend Jonathan,

I am much grieved at the horrible death of my parents so I will not write much. I have decided to leave Scotland and go to America. I cannot stay in a place with friends but no family. I refuse to live in the old castle where my parents and my young brother and sister were killed. I am having it shut up and I am taking my possessions and my fortune to America to start life anew. You are my closest friend Jonathan so you are the only one who knows of this decision. I will write to you often and tell you of my new life.

Your Very Good Friend,
Richard Alexander
December 21, 1787

An Article from The London Times Sept. 4, 1863

Late yesterday afternoon, a young couple was found horribly murdered in an old castle just outside of Ayre in Scotland. Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Alexander, an American couple on their honeymoon, were hacked to death in Castle Alexander, late last night, according to surgeons who examined the bodies. The newlyweds were to have spent their honeymoon in their ancestral home. Scotland Yard has not yet been able to supply any information concerning the murders, but residents in the vicinity have been

warned to keep their doors locked at night. The bodies were discovered by Mrs. Helen Ferguson who had been hired by the Alexanders to

I am Stephan Alexander. I have spent several months gathering all of the information you have just read. I originally came to Scotland to trace my family history. Family trees aren't that important to me but I don't have to work for a living and I had nothing better to do so I thought it would be interesting.

Then I stumbled over a few of the facts that I have listed. They intrigued me and I searched until I found more facts. At first I didn't believe any of it. But as the evidence grew I found myself forced to accept the impossible.

There is a curse on the Alexanders. Malcolm Alexander is alive in his death. None of the accounts have been falsified. The only one I haven't been able to prove is the story of Walter Alexander. If he lied, however, then so did the others. And I know that they did not. Alexander families were murdered in 1787 and 1863. The murders were similar in all respects.

I have been to the Castle Alexander twice during my investigations. Both times during the day, of course. The first time I found the sword. The second time I went down into the vault and listened at Malcolm's crypt. And I heard him stir! I panicked then, I ran from the house in fear. But I am not afraid now.

I intend to put an end to the curse of Malcolm Alexander. Tonight I will wait in the great hall, as did Ashley Alexander. But I will hold the sword, as Ashley did not. I hope that with the ancient claymore and with fire I will be able to destroy the curse for good. I pray that I can.

Should I fail, the curse may die anyway. For I am the last of the Alexanders.

Stephan Alexander 1972

Epilogue

Stephan has asked me to finish this for him. He says he does not want to remember what happened that night and I think that it would be best for him if he did not. I am Stephan's doctor. He was found one morning outside the smoking ruin that had once been the Castle Alexander. There had been a fire. Stephan was in a state of nervous shock. He has recovered much of his old vitality since then and he'll soon be well enough to leave my care.

Stephan never tells anyone of what went on in the great hall that night. He only laughs and says the curse is ended. I don't really know if there even was a curse. I do know that much of Stephan's story is true. And I know that among the ruins of the castle they found a charred skeleton with an old sword jammed between the ribs. And I know that it had no head.

I am not going to draw any conclusions from this. I am only going to draw Stephan's story to an end. For all things must end. Even curses.

Jim Wallace

THE NIGHT WATCHMAN

The night watchman rolled over in his sleep and dreamed

. . . He could see the man ahead of him running and leering over his shoulder at him and he wanted to run too, to catch him and beat him and end this nonsense and he struggled to run, his back and shoulder muscles taut and straining and his arms pushing but he couldn't run and his legs kept plodding, plodding along down the dimly lit street between the canyon walls of dirty brown-stones that rose everywhere that he could see and everywhere that he could think about. The man ran and he walked but the man was always there and leering over his shoulder at him and he was conscious of faces looking out of the windows of the buildings at him and he wanted to tell them it was all right. But he would look at the windows and there was no one there and he would look at the man and he would be running and leering and he was only walking, plodding, and he would look at the windows again and there was no one there and the silence of the street lamp bothered him, he wanted it to shout. A great blast of wind swept through the canyon and almost knocked him down and a car came screeching around a corner and pulled up beside him and three men jumped out and ran to him and knocked him down and dragged him into the gutter and jumped and stomped on him and left him bloody and broken and he looked at the windows and saw all the faces and he said "It's all right." And behind him he began to hear the man laugh a mocking, leering laugh that grew and grew until his temples pounded and his stomach churned and his lungs burned . .

. . .

He awoke with a start and sat up on the cot. A chill ran through him that shook him violently and he rose from the cot to look at himself in the mirror. "Jesus shit," he muttered as he turned from looking into the wild, frenzied eyes and wiped the sweat off his face with a crumpled handkerchief he pulled from his back pocket. He staggered out of the room and walked unconsciously towards the safe, only aware of a helpless, unexplainable guilt that gnawed at him. He came to the safe and saw its door standing open and he saw its empty insides and he vomited. Then he sat right there and wept, and he knew.

Bob Spencer

DEAD WINGS

Johnny was jerked out of bed suddenly at 4:30 in the morning by his mother. She was upset about something or other, and made little attempt to conceal her anxieties from her ten year old son.

"Johnny Johnny, are you awake? Okay, then, listen carefully, Johnny. Aunt Nellie was just rushed to the hospital. She's very, very, sick, and so your father and I are going to have to leave you in the house for a few hours. Okay, Johnny? Now, say a Hail Mary for Nellie and then kiss your mother good-bye."

He did so, and then hopped back into bed. He was too tired to take all this seriously, but in the morning, he realized the terrible news he had heard. Aunt Nellie was in a hospital. It wasn't really a surprise. Aunt Nellie had been drinking heavily for two years now, and the doctors had warned her it had to stop. Johnny's mother kept saying she drank because Uncle Jack, his father's brother whom Johnny had never met, had left her. They were supposed to be very happy together, and then one day Uncle Jack just got up and left. That was the day Aunt Nellie started drinking. And now Nellie was in the hospital

It was 9:30 when Johnny finally convinced himself to eat some Corn Flakes. He always chose what cereal he was going to eat not by what tasted better — they were all pretty awful — but by what cereal box was the most interesting to read. He had two bowls that morning, and by then it was still only 10:45. He knew he was in for a long, dull, dull, day. He got up from the breakfast table and walked aimlessly to the front kitchen door. It was turning out to be a real sunny day, and Johnny thought how it would be really cool to fly on a day like this. He was serious about wanting to fly not airplane fly, but fly-fly! . . . bodily, on his own wings. One time, about a month ago, he took \$3.00 that his Uncle Bob had given him for his first Holy Communion, and bought 10 pounds of bird seed. His mother was furious, and violently punished him. She said he should have bought clothes, or a ball and glove, or a book on how to spend money, or something useful. But Johnny couldn't understand that. He wanted to fly. It was his own little dream. And someday he would make it real.

Johnny was jolted from his daydreaming by a knock on the door in front of him. Through the screen he could see a tall, slightly gutted-bellied figure, who had his eyes on top of the screen to see if anybody was in.

"Why are you just standing there when your Aunt Nellie is off in some hospital with some kind of goddamn attack!" shouted the voice through the screen. "Can't you put yourself to better use?"

The boy was taken aback for a second, a bit angered but more baffled than anything else.

"How d'ya know about Aunt Nellie? What's she to you?"

"Don't be silly, boy," the stranger said as he let himself in.

"We all know about Aunt Nellie, now don't we?"

The visitor was forty-ish, not a handsome man, but he obviously had been at one time. His face was firm and rigid and his complexion made him appear to be constantly drunk. The most peculiar thing about him, Johnny thought, was the way his eyes seemed to penetrate into whoever he was speaking to at the time.

"You're Johnny Meyers, boy, ain't ya?"

"Yes, sir."

The man suddenly slid into a full smile.

"You're the boy who went out and bought that goddamn bird seed — nearly killed yourself, didn't you?"

"No sir!" snapped the boy. "Well, I mean I *did* buy the bird seed, but I did *not* nearly kill myself!"

"Well, well, let's forget it . . . people tend to exaggerate these things, so let's let it go. You got some cereal?"

"Corn flakes, sir."

"Corn flakes! . . . well, well, little kids still eat those goddamn things." He paused, not really knowing what to say next.

"Mind if I borrow some?"

Johnny led him into the kitchen and poured him a bowl. He got a little clumsy and he let the milk spill over.

"I'm sorry, sir, my hand — "

"It's all right, it's all right," the man said as he wiped the table and himself with a dish towel. He bowed his head, said grace, and began to consume his flakes. He didn't bring the food all the way to his mouth — rather he brought it within a respectable distance and sucked it in.

"You believe in God, boy?"

"Yes sir . . . yes, I do."

"Good . . . that's good. That's how I used to be, and it was a fine way to be! And I'll bet you read these goddamn cereal boxes, don't you?"

"No," he said quickly. "No, I don't. That's a stupid thing to do — I *never* read them!"

"I see," the intruder said with a slight laugh. "Well, I read them and I read them all the time. And I like to tell people that I read them. That's something to be proud of! Don't ya think so, boy?"

Johnny didn't respond, he just kept looking at him.

"I'll bet, too, that you're up on all the baseball statistics, aren't you?"

"Yes! Baseball's very important to me."

"Who do you think'll win the pannant?"

"The Mets!"

"The World Series?"

"The Yankees!"

"Most valuable player?"

"Wilt Chamberlain!" — Johnny caught himself. He played the stranger's game and had lost. He expected the man to laugh at him, but for some strange reason, he didn't.

"Now why do you tell people baseball's important to you when it ain't?"

Johnny fumbled around with the words in his mouth.

"I know *something* about the game a little not much"

"How much?"

" Nothing."

"When I was your age, I knew a hell of a lot about painting. I could name you the top artists of any major European country since 1840. And even some of the minor ones, too. And I could paint pretty good myself. My one dream was to go down the Riviera doing nothing but painting all the people I saw. You got a dream, boy?"

"Well, sort of. I sort of got a kind of a . . . well, a kind of a dream."

"What's that, boy? To be a fearless quarterback?"

They both laughed. They were speaking on the same terms now and they knew it.

"No, no I sort of want to . . . I want to fly!"

It took Johnny a lot of courage to say that, but he somehow sensed that this man would not laugh or scold him. Johnny looked at him directly and without apologies, and he knew the man understood.

"Flying? Well, that's quite a dream, boy . . . it's a hard one, too; you'll have to work hard — real hard at it."

"I'll work!"

"No doubt in my mind that you will, boy. And you'll suffer. You know you'll suffer, don't ya?"

"Yes, sir I know. But I'm ready."

"Good, good But you're young you're so young!"

"I'm not young, sir. I'm ten years old!"

"Oh, excuse me, I didn't know that"

The man was silent for a moment, looked down at his cereal bowl, and then, after a strained effort began to speak.

"When I was about as young as you, I made up my mind that I would be a famous painter. And I would make myself a little better than the next guy My mind was set; I had made my plans. I never worked at anything else. During the summers while my brother made \$130 a week washing dishes, I sat on the front porch painting. When I was 18, my mother demanded that me and my brother pay \$10 a week rent. My brother did it with no sweat — I moved out. The following year I met a beautiful girl that I wanted to paint all my life. She was amused by my sensitivity, I guess, and we were married. But she was always No. 2 with me — my painting was always first. She couldn't understand that. She couldn't understand why my brother was feeding his kids better meals and putting better clothes on 'em, while I sat and painted. She was gonna leave me she said, and I loved her, and I could never let her leave. So I took a job in a department store warehouse where you spend 10 hours a day putting a goddamn toy on a goddamn truck, and you use your mind trying to figure out how you're gonna talk the boss into letting you take two 15-minute breaks instead of one. That little enterprise lasted two months before they discovered I wasn't a good enough man to spend my

life loading trucks. And then there was another enterprise and another, and another — and I never painted, and I never had time to sit down and tell myself who I was and why the hell I was doing what I was doing. I wanted her happy. I thought that by tearing myself down I could build her up. But you can't give another person anything worthwhile when you're not at peace with what you're giving yourself. So I left her. I left her three or four times. But I always came back. She just couldn't understand. I never wanted to leave her, but I *had* to paint."

There was a long, tensed silence. The man slowly looked up at Johnny and suddenly his face lost its gentleness and became very bitter. Johnny became afraid.

"And you . . ." the man said. "You're the little kid with all the ideas about flying . . . you think you're ever gonna fly? You think you're gonna stay in this goddamn house and grow wings? You'll be too busy trying to learn baseball scores that you're not even interested in! You'll be too busy to learn how to fly."

"That's not true," Johnny blurted out, fighting back his tears. "I'm gonna fly . . . nobody believes me, but I'm gonna fly!"

The man's manner suddenly became very gentle again.

"Sure you will, boy," he said sincerely, trying to help. "Sure you will."

The man got up and began to wash out his cereal bowl.

"Say . . . I know a fella by New Orleans who owns about 32 acres of clear land. We could go down there sometime and get you practicing on how to fly."

Johnny was numb for a second.

"You *mean* it? You really mean it, sir?!"

"Sure, there's no reason why you can't start on your life now. I've got a little matter to clear up here first, but by next week, I'm sure I'll be free."

Just at that moment, the door slammed open and Johnny's mother, his father, his grandmother, and his Uncle Bob all rushed in. His dad saw the stranger first, and Johnny got up to explain to his father who the man was, but his father pushed him aside and glared at the stranger.

"Your wife is dead. Ten minutes ago. She wondered where the hell you were."

Johnny looked up at the man. It couldn't be, he thought. This beautiful, good man just couldn't be Uncle Jack! For a short second, Johnny could see the great hurt in the man's face. It lost all its color and he seemed to slightly jerk forward, sharply, for a moment . . . but he recovered quickly and grew firm and definite inside.

"She wondered where *I* was! Well, if you ever see her again, tell her *I* was on the Riviera!"

Johnny's father grew angry. "That little lady was your *wife*! And you destroyed her."

"She was my ex-wife."

"You tore that good woman apart day after day; she was breaking her back wondering how she was gonna put a meal on the table, while you were full of good times!"

Johnny's father was scolding the stranger much the same way he scolded Johnny. He thought how odd it was that his father would treat a grown man just like he treated Johnny.

"You haven't got one thing to your name, your wife kills herself, and you stand there blaming us!"

"Will you get out of my way, please?" he said.

"Listen to him for once," Johnny's grandmother said. "All your life you've had some ridiculous idea that you were going to be important — Big Jack Meyers! — you were going to be the man we would all look up to!"

Uncle Jack was getting real tense. His expression was locked on his face.

"Your brother kept his mouth shut when he was young — he was too busy working hard to brag about all the things he was gonna do! And he's got something to show for it now!"

She put her arm around Johnny, apparently meaning that the boy was what his father could show.

"I can't believe all this has happened . . . you were the apple of my eye . . ."

All the while Johnny was thinking how hot his grandmother's arm felt.

"Don't excite yourself, Mom," Johnny's dad said. "He's not worth getting aggravated over."

There was a long silence. Nobody wanted to say anything. Finally, Uncle Jack stopped staring at the floor, looked up, and spoke quietly.

"No one here is smart enough to know he's a fool. That he is no life, no substance. I tried to *live* — I didn't want to accept that this was the way it had to be. I didn't feel that —"

"Would you go, please?" Johnny's grandmother said. "Would you just go?"

Uncle Jack looked at her for a long time. Then at Johnny's father. His hand trembled and it looked like he was about to speak. He thought better of it, and began to walk towards the door. Suddenly his face grew angrily bitter — just like the way it looked when he got upset with Johnny. Only this time, it was worse. He jerked himself around and loudly stormed back into the kitchen. Everyone seemed frozen for a second. Jack grabbed a steak knife that was lying on the table and made a blind, mad leap at Johnny's father.

"Jack, don't!" screamed the grandmother, but it was too late. Jack was already on him; his arm was about to press the knife into his victim's chest when Uncle Bob quickly grabbed Jack's wrists, squeezed the knife out of him, and locked him in a painful headlock. Johnny's grandmother starting pounding on Jack uncontrollably, with closed fists, and was screaming. "You've killed your wife and now you're gonna kill me!"

With the help of Johnny's grandmother and mom, Uncle Bob began pushing Uncle Jack towards the outside door. Johnny could see that his uncle was weeping now, almost to himself, but very distinctly. The boy's grandmother kept saying over and over, "You're gonna kill me like you killed *her*!"



And with one big shove, Johnny's uncle was thrown out the door. Immediately, his relatives ran back into the kitchen to see how Johnny's father was. Johnny looked out the window shutters and momentarily saw his uncle stumbling down the street, his head bowed, his face all wet; he was totally defeated. He had almost killed Johnny's father, and yet, Johnny still wanted to run out and put his arms around the man. He wanted to tell the stranger that everything was going to be all right, that he understood, that the whole world was wrong. But Johnny didn't run out. It was almost lunch time and he would be yelled at if he left the house. Johnny made up his mind at that moment that he would soon run away from home. He would run to New Orleans and learn to fly; he would grow his wings, and be a little bit better than what he saw around him.

At that moment, his mother shouted to him from the kitchen.

"Johnny, get washed and fix yourself up, we're going to Aunt Gracie's."

Johnny was pleasantly surprised. He hadn't been to Aunt Gracie's in over six months. They had a pool and a swing set. He would get to swim in chlorine water! Suddenly he wanted to swim more than anything . . . he wanted to feel wet all over.

"You can't swim at Aunt Gracie's if you run away from home," he giggled to himself, as he ran upstairs to find a pair of bathing trunks . . .

Tony DelValle

