

Cornfield



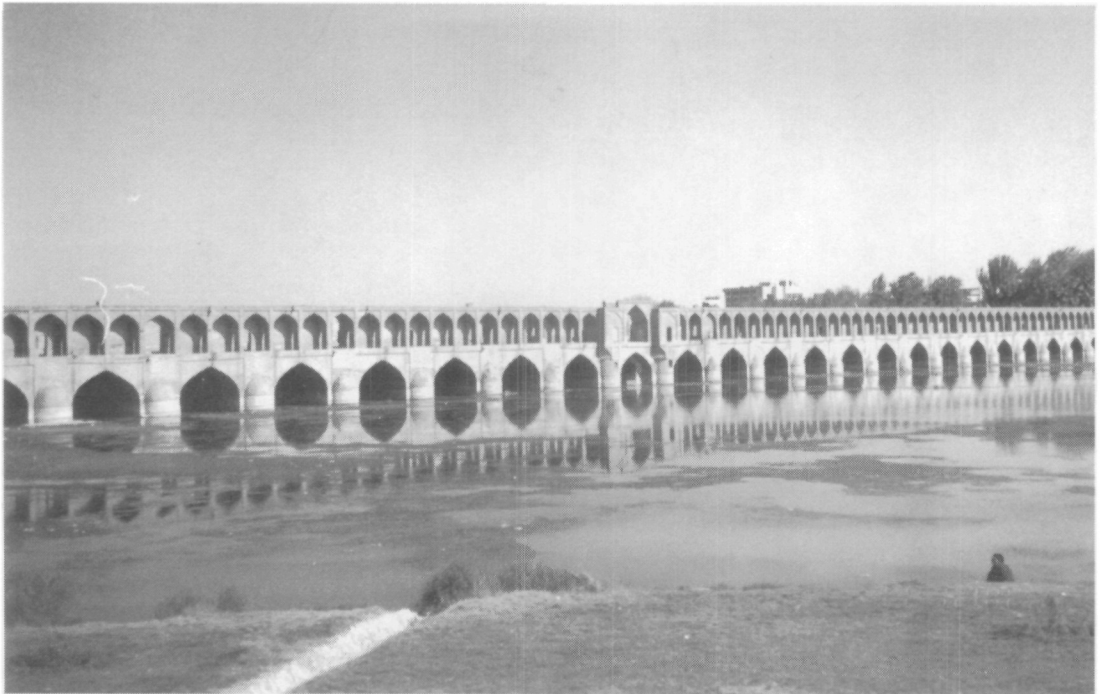
Review

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Volume 19

2001-2002

Cornfield Review



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Cornfield Review

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*The Editorial Board of the *Cornfield Review* consists of students and professors from the Marion, Mansfield, and Newark campuses of The Ohio State University. They are Stuart Lishan, Steve Buttermann, Amber English, Rachael Johnson, Brooke Wilson, Laura Behne, Jason Lichtenberger, Thomas Cloutier, Ben Waters, Merese Johnson, Shannin Bailey, and Ron White, Mike Anderson.

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photo submitted by Amber English

Casanova and the Truth

Last night I had a Dream,
while I was fast asleep.

Casanova was in a field.
He was comforting Bo Peep,
who just had lost her sheep.
Yeah, they up and went away.
He sat there and he held her.
And he wiped her tears away.
He looked into her eyes.
Said "Lets go back to my place what do you say?"
We can climb into my bed
and Love the world away.

She took him by the hand
asking where they would go.
He had a mansion in the clouds
as white as the snow.
Soft as the song of a morning dove.
Where love was plentiful
as rain from above.
They rode there on Aladdin's rug
he stole from him in June.
On the way to the castle,
he waved to the man in the moon.

When they arrived at the mansion,
he carried her through the door.
Into a room with rose peddles
scattered on the floor.
He carried her to the bedroom
farther down the hall.
There were pictures of Santa Clause
and the Tooth Fairy on the wall.
On the way into the bedroom,
they walked past Peter Pan
who after one hundred years
still was not a man.

He took and he laid her down.
He made love to her till dawn.
He made love to her
till all his energy was gone.
After the deed was over
Casanova turned to go to sleep
paying no attention
to the lovely Bo Peep.
"I thought you said you love me!"
She looked at him and hissed.
He looked at her laughingly.
Said love does not exist.

When I was young and I could smile

When I was young and I could smile,
I could dream and be glad for a while,
The sound of smiles, the scent of love,
The hope of wonders from above,
When girls would smile and turn my head,
And I would laugh at all jokes said.
When dreams of wonders would dance in my mind,
And whisk me away to places divine.
Where the only sounds I ever heard
Were those of laughter and of mockingbirds.
But then one day from my dreams I awoke,
With pain in my chest that caused me to choke.
I awoke in a place where the nights were cold.
Where nothing mattered but the beauty of gold.
Where people weren't people, more monster than men,
And oh how I wish I could fall back to dream again.
Where people and places both shone in the light,
Rather than hurt others and hide in the night.
But now I'm awake and awake I must stay,
Alone in cold shadows rather in lighted day.
So I'll just close my eyes and reminisce for a
while,
To when I was young and I could smile.



image created by Brianna Elam

Hovering in One Place

In mid morning
the summer fragrance of yarrow in mist
drew us from Mendocino to Big Sur, far above
the sound of the Pacific—the sea and the highway.

During those long days, the swells of the tidepools
attracted our sense of wonder as anemones and starfish
hugged the watery world of rock and sea for miles along
the coastline.

In those days people walked and spoke more quietly,
some flew kites in the beach breezes;
occasionally, some said hello and pointed out a path to take above the coast highway.
The pure air filled our lungs and we felt connected to this part of the world.

Now nearly three decades later, living 2500 miles to the east,
we plant seedlings of American Sycamore and Green Ash this year,
and maybe pine and spruce next year. It is only a semblance of wilderness
and only a small and temporary influence that we offer.
Was it this isolation we sought in coming this way? Walking alone
on these few acres in the Midwest, caring for a small plot of land
for the time that we occupy it, we await the arrival of Canada Geese,
stopping to rest in the pond, not knowing if their winter
habitat in the south will be there for them next year or the year after.

The butterflies will soon have no place to stay in Mexico, their forested homes burned out or cut
down. Another rare primate has gone extinct in Ghana—forever. The forests are quiet and
the parks are noisy with people.

Sometimes in the quiet morning I hear the hummingbird hover at the butterfly bush, then dart
over to the zinnias. A green-black iridescent flicker in the sunlight, life on another scale, its
meteor metabolism racing while it stands still for a drop of nectar.

I think I know what it is to work hard and tread water, to stand still and try to stay balanced.

Autumn

The earth is turning its sunburnt cheek
toward our eyes, showing its deepest red foliage
at the tops of maples, the wide-awake yellows
filling our field of vision in the birch groves,
pulling the sap inward for another season.

Has it been a year already, we asked each other
on our ride through the mountains
to catch the fading sun on these shortened days.
When we were young we lay for hours in the dry
mouldering piles of crackling leaves, our rakes
leaned against the trunks of trees, we laughing and
telling stories that we would never again remember
or tell. What we remember is the smell of earth
in those leaves and how we felt so much alive
in those bright piles of season's end.

And today, too, we stop and wade ankle-deep
in the still-bright leaves gathered on the forest floor,
seeing our breath in the morning sunlight air,
removing a leafy fragment from our hair, brushing off
twigs that hold us, and we talk again about things of
little consequence in the presence of a world too big
for us to understand, cradled in its last warm leaves of the season.

You'll Never See This Anyway

an interesting pen inflection
is that all it is,
a coupla faintly inneresting
black-leaking scribbles
washed along my blue line divided
paper?

a whisper of what I truly
wanna say
mumbling, grasping desperately
seeking the ideas burrowing
slow snake-paths from my
mind,
circling hopelessly the thoughts I
know you
cannot see,
just how much I love the way
the light sparkles upon your
wide, glistening eyes.

a metaphor atop a metaphor
atop the TRUTH,
obscured by the best intentions.

hopefully it worked.

kinda quietly transposed,
listening,
just a vague mist floating around
all else wandering by,
(a transient waste of pen and ink)
looking for nothing, seeing it all.

I saw a pristine morning,
and was awed by
its patience

I saw a blistering daybreak
wondering how many
times it could repeat

I saw the wide, blue sky
and asked what it
wanted to be

I saw your wild, velvet, amazement
and turned, too embarrassed
to continue.

Quiet desperation, flowing in and out of eyes
ears and nose

forever waiting for *something* to happen.

Ego Tripping

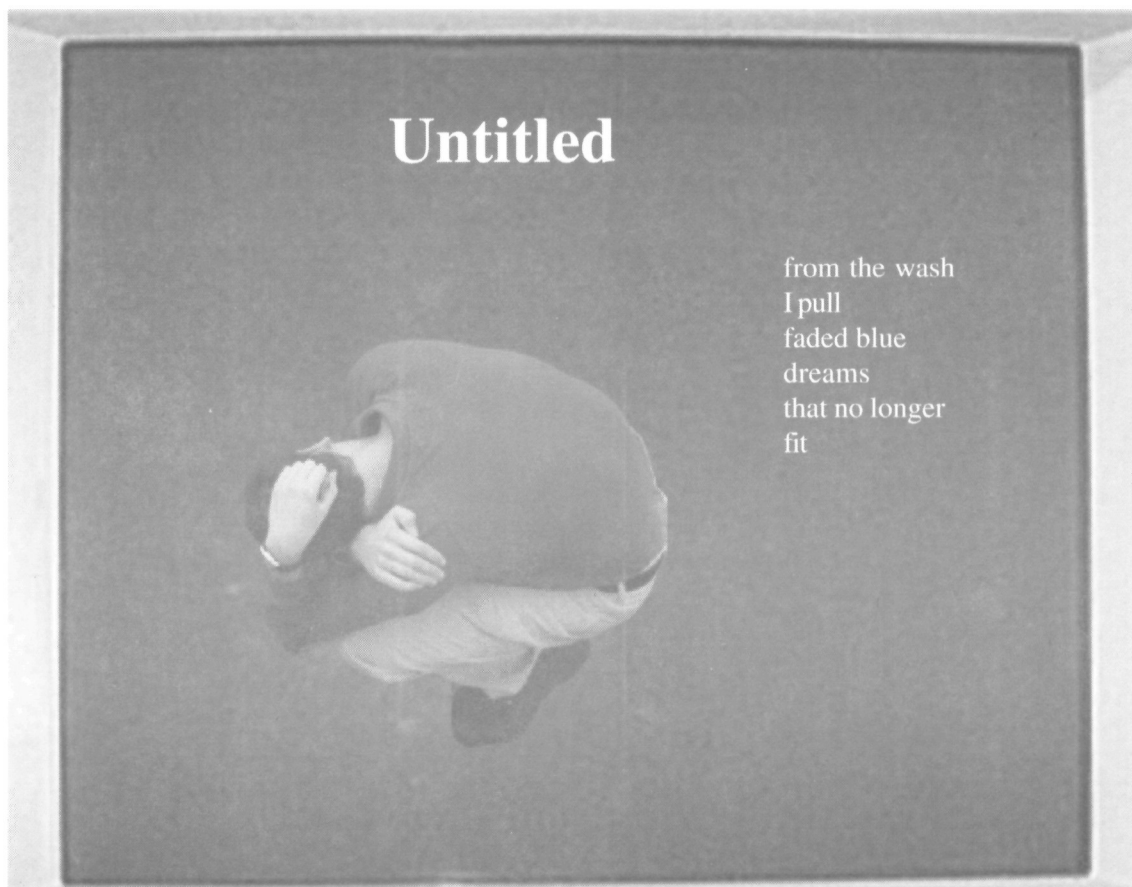
wondering if anyone wants to see you anyway
heads nodded
pen help tight-pondering whether the
90s are over . . . or have they ever begun?
silently bobbing-brim held close over
Deep-Boring eyes, flitting faster than
the soft spoken acknowledgement,
already lilted by.

So what if the ink stopped flowing, my mind
won't cease calling me what it wants,
despite the reams of my blank paper
portfolio.

pages & pages of promise fluttering & blowing
away.

So maybe the 90s have ended, all I see
is ragged reflection, legs sore & bent, broken pencil
gripped white-knuckled before emptiness,

I can't remember them anyway.



from the wash
I pull
faded blue
dreams
that no longer
fit

image created by Jon Willey

Making Sense Yet?

Pain lies in the things that we fear,
 Because night embraces your eyes with starlight,
 Because the word feet used to be roots,
When the word light bulb used to sparkle to be a star,
Because the word silhouette used to be blanket,
 And headaches rusted in steel drums,
 And Nothingness was young love
 Because hearts were empty in high school, and shallow,
When the word paper used to be hand,
 Because the sun rose and Lolita was young,
And the word nymph was an apple that used to be death,
 When raccoon was revenge and clouds drooped
 Lazily over the grass, and flesh was empty paper, and word clock
 Was a trap that swallowed time against its will,
Because the word work was closer to the heart,
 When the word sky used to be spider
 And thought came as palms on skin-tight drum tops
Under hulking skies, when the word curse used to be kiss,
 Before knife used to be kiss
 Because justice is truth and life is love
When lies were slower and factory used to be playmate
 When your soul blackened
 When milk let in the moon, to feed the cat, when the word mouse was joy,
 And the word talk was silent, and toupee was slavery,
 and cars drifted downstream, when dogs could fly fast,
And the word soldier was a ballad before the battle began,
 Before this exercise began, when a bayonet stole your overcoat and horse,
And a peony was skinned and dipped in ether,
 Because both could be ingested with equal fervor,
 Because the word satchel used to be baby,
So that its crying couldn't be let out
 When the word spirit used to be willow,
 When reflector used to be tree bark,
 When the word rib used to be stem,
And crayon used to be bees,
 When both were moved by God,
 When both were moved, by God.

Echoes of Water

Your voice calls me in.
Come visit for awhile I've
been so lonely.
You cover me in a
warm moss blanket.
Life giving birth all
around the ugly and beautiful

Calling me in down deeper.

Muffled, aqualiscious, reverberation
of my conscience telling not
to go any further into your beauty.
Put a hex on me making me
want to die here. Never leave.
I am the old woman put in
The nursing home, nobody
comes to visit.
The last time I had a visitor
was twenty years ago.
Can I offer you something to drink?
I'm so unappreciated.
When there is too little of me
you pray and wish for it.
When I swell up and my
arms surround your house,
I am damned.
Trap me in your caverns,
not showing the way back.
Captivating me with your beauty
s l o w l y killing me.
Are you sure you don't
want something to drink?
Drowning my worst fear.
Your most prized possession.

Outside X Marks the Spot

Smells like dead fish,
dead remains of last year's growth.
Brambles prickle and

b
e
n
d
i
n
g

over touching the ground
Crunching feet of chirping birds,
elephant ear green foliage
bat houses like Indian burial platforms
trees not yet blossoming,
caught in a spider web.
Clouds floating on a blue river sky,
craggily old tree
whirring engine
cut grass



photo by Rachael Johnson

Southern Grandma

Going through the Quarry around the old salt mines
Wanting to take the bridge across the creek to
Grandma's house
I see the dilapidated green tin roof peeking through
the way
Down through the sprawls to the worn in homestead
Up to the porch, the swings are empty and I'm back:

The smell of Chicken and Dumplings hits me first
Then the sound of the Braves on their little t.v.
Of course Grandma is in the kitchen making dumplings
for me
A household favorite I remember from childhood

The old six room house is hollow though left with mere
memories
Pictures antiques will to wall furniture placed ever
so neatly
Grandma cleaning something or cooking a feast
Fixing this and taking care of that
Never a still bone in her body
Always making sure Grandpa was in splendid heaven

I see it all so clearly taking place
Decorating the deer head with tinsel
Living in such a primitive lifestyle
Hunting and gathering
Canning and conserving
Grandma never complained though
I never saw her cry
She chased me with a switch one time
Furious at me for getting in the creek with my Church
clothes on
But in no time she would hug and kiss me and things
would be fine

It all seems so fresh like it was just a day ago
 Monday was always wash day
 The day my mom was born
 The day we buried Grandma

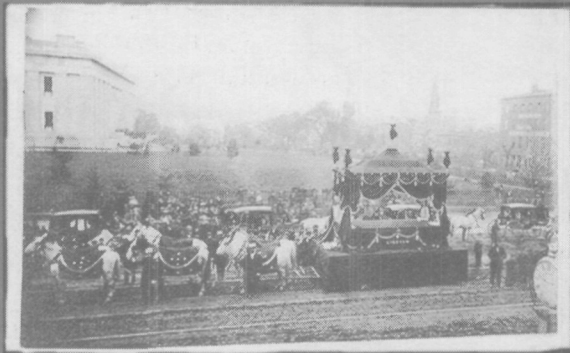
Watching all the towns people come together
 Uniting in our time of need
 I didn't know Saltville had that many people
 But there they were honoring Grandma

Scrapbook of Memories



People Escaping from the Indian Massacre,
At Blower on a Pacific. Photographed by one of the party.

Survivors of Massacre



President Lincoln's funeral train in Columbus, Ohio



Train Wreck



One Room School

image created by Shielda Ballantyne

Me and Rose

I planted a Rose to watch it grow
Red and gray all thorny it would be
I watered you and gave you light
Nurtured you to grow at night
Singing songs would make your smell sweet
I watched you sprout and measured your growth
Smiling at your intelligent beauty
I cared for you and wanted so much
Making sure you heard my touch
The day had come you were full grown
Beautiful and deceitful you made me cry
Such a lovely rose sprout and ready
A wonderful gift you would be
My love would know when he received you
What care you had plus a piece of me
I picked you and into the perfect vase you went
I cried again at the beauty you were
You were to solve my problems and say it all
I hand delivered you to his door then hid
Your first moments were wonderful
He picked you up and began to smile
Everything was going as planned
He stood back as to admire your beauty
I could have been you
Then he touched your naked petals
One by one they fell to the ground
Wilted and dead with color no more
I gasped and struck my head on a tree
His face changed with the wind and sweet smell
You lay there still and dead
Dismembered at the stem
I watched you fly at the moment of our success
You were the best I'd ever seen
His eyes were cold and confused when he read the card:

Deadly is your touch to me
As light and beauty I wanted to be
But you hurt my soft petals
Which can never be replaced
I am dead to you but will always be me.

The Eternal

To be at peace
 the soul must be released
To sour the edges of existence
Tearing past the sky that fills the mortal world
 to welcome the uncharted blackness
The body, a mere shell
Encasing the essence of life
 The mind, a force
bonding body and soul as one
Reaching the final exit
 The hour arrives
 when the body embraces one last sleep
Awakening to life eternal.



photo by Rachael Johnson

to be Young again

Many
 of us
 wish
once it's
 too late
to be
 young
 again
and change
 our fate
Taking for
 granted
loved ones
 and friends
never
 taking the
 time to
 make amends
Living
 each day
waiting
 for tomorrow
never
 enjoying our
 time
mourning our
 sorrows
Then
 once it's
 too late
we sometimes
 regret
the life
 we led
or
 the fate
 we met.

Six O'Clock

At six o'clock the steam shot out of the teapot
Rain leaked through the roof into the bucket,
Water splashed the cat
Making it run across the floor.
It would've run outside up a tree
But instead ran to the window and sat next to a candle.

Sister hated storms and always lit a candle
When one came by. Mother had her teapot
The cat would've had its tree,
Gentle drops had the bucket
Everyone had the cat
The rain eventually had the floor.

Deciding to read a book I picked up "Lis du Fluer"
Finding that French poetry by light of candle
Can be more relaxing than petting my cat.
Just hand me a cup of tea from the pot
Let me have the drip drip of drops in the bucket,
Transfixed by the slow sway, in the wind, of the tree.

Yesterday I was 12 climbing the tree
Only now its brethern are my floor
Varnished dark brown beneath the bucket
Quietly reflecting the light of the candle.
Perhaps I should get the teapot.
Keening sharply, it frightens the cat.

Now, it runs to me, I love my cat.
Unusually, it looked to me rather than its tree
Exacting emotions of wonder from me as I would tea from a teapot.
Will you drop me to the floor?
Will you lay me next to the candle?
Its thoughts hit my mind like drops in the bucket.

“Do you hear the waters in the bucket
As I do?” I asked my cat.
“I see the light of the candle
I hear the wind through my tree.”
Cold now is the floor
As is the water in the teapot.

Is there water in the bucket, in the teapot?
Is the floor cold, not as the candle?
“The wind knows the tree,” says the cat.



photo by Rachael Johnson

The People Suck Limericks

She wore high heels at night
With snow and ice on her left and right
She strayed from the path clear and nice
And slipped on the hard slick ice
And said "I'll sue, I'll win, it's my right!"

He was at my counter screaming for a refund
"I wanted another movie but got this one.
It was in the wrong place!"
He screamed in my face
Am I responsible for the mistake he's done?

The children were left at home
Age six and age seven all alone
They found their dad's gun
Now there's only one
They said the fault was not the parents but the gun they owned.

He shot and killed two people that day
The media shouted "Hurray!"
Cause with O.J. they know
They'll have a great show
Cause if he wasn't O.J. they'd just put him away.

My friends got busted for having weed
The cops called it a heinous deed
"But granny gets high
Says it's good for her eyes
For her they say it's a need.

I was talking with friends I had missed
When a man got up and left, pissed
He said for this crowd
We were talking too loud
I guess friends are to remain tight lipped.

“It’s not right you’re always on your own
When we go out drinking, you’re at home.
How grim you look
Just reading a book.”
Is it sick to want to be left alone?

I told a friend I thought guns were grand
He said they spread violence throughout the land
“They’re loud and they kill”
He said with a shrill
I said it’s not the gun but the hand.

Don’t kill animals it’s wrong
Humans and animals should get along
But fool it can’t be grilled
Until it’s killed
And with cows you shouldn’t bond.



photo submitted by J. Spangler

Kaguya Hime

(Princess of the Moon Children)

High in the uplands of Japan,
A dense bamboo forest grew.
In a rickshaw house of bamboo flesh,
The wood cutter lived a peaceful life.

Under the wan luminescence of Luna,
A gleaming magic discovered,
The forest of bamboo held a secret,
The Lunar Child was left to rest.

A glowing tree of golden hue,
Was the cradle for the child,
Waiting for her emergence,
Like that of a moon butterfly.

When Solarius touched the sky,
The woodcutter entered the now
Enchanted forest with axe in hand.
Unprepared for his discovery.

A whisper on the breeze and
a kiss to his cheek, the forest welcomed,
The earthly guardian of
the blessed Moon Princess.

The glittering tree beckoned,
The woodcutter found the child,
And called her Kaguya-Hime,
The Princess of the Moon Children.

Eyes as dark as the new moon,
Hair as smooth as the morning dew,
Skin kissed by Diana's light,
A crescent moon adorned her brow.

DANIELS

The beauty revealed in the years
to come of rarity with a cost.
She could love none of the suitors
That came to her earth home.

A curse was hers to forever hold,
No love for her, not from a human.
For if she found love, her time would end
And be transported to the moon forever.

Still callers came, still she sent them away,
Never imagining that her true love
Would come and claim her heart,
In the form of a poor young man.

Persistence was his skill
and time wears all cloaks.
Their love grew slowly,
like the changing of the moon.

He confessed his love to her
and she to him. At the moment of embrace
Her body began to shimmer.
“The curse has come! And I must go.”

To the moon her body began to pull,
And casting a farewell to her love,
A single tear fell upon the earth,
And from it sprang the cherry tree.



photo submitted by J. Spangler

DAN KIELY

Across the Room

across the room

she is dark

I let myself stare

into midnight

everyone's playing pool

but she absorbs me

I smile and pretend to know

everything

I only know her eyes

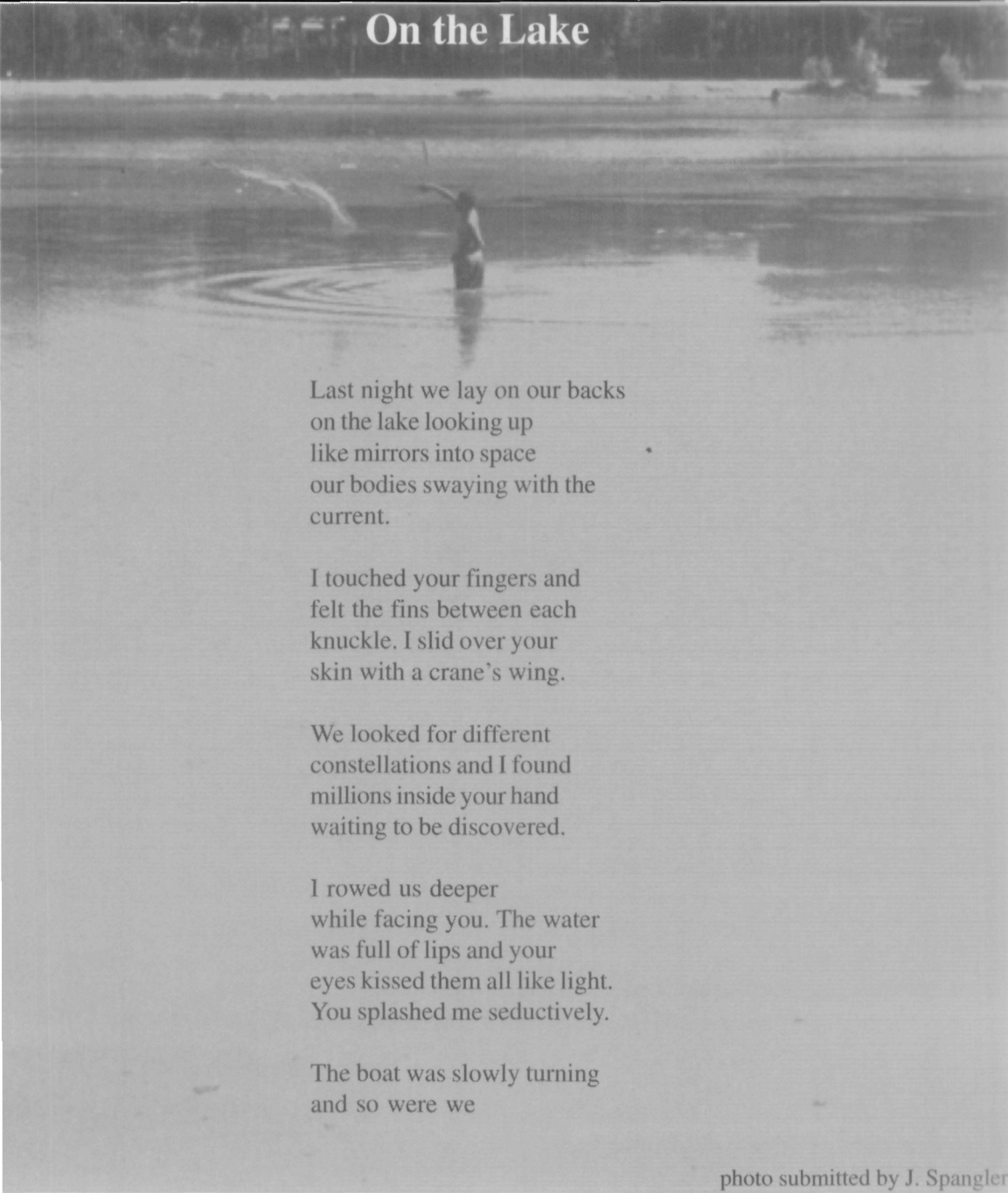
her eyes are dark

and endless



photo submitted by J. Spangler

On the Lake



Last night we lay on our backs
on the lake looking up
like mirrors into space
our bodies swaying with the
current.

I touched your fingers and
felt the fins between each
knuckle. I slid over your
skin with a crane's wing.

We looked for different
constellations and I found
millions inside your hand
waiting to be discovered.

I rowed us deeper
while facing you. The water
was full of lips and your
eyes kissed them all like light.
You splashed me seductively.

The boat was slowly turning
and so were we

photo submitted by J. Spangler

Leaves

somewhere
 you stood watching
 a familiar sun
 swim over a foreign leaf
 and you plucked it
 from the branch
 its stem looking very much
 like the smallest section
 of your wrist.

pressed and mailed to
 my house back home
 slowly and carefully
 like a deer
 I open an envelope that
 holds your touch
 patiently awaiting my palm.

Missed Her Meanings

Mister Meaner met
 Miss Demeanor
 A salted tear fell from
Her arresting eye, and so
 Some place he courted
 Her, He
Fell on knees to mislead—
 Guilty
Of misrepresentation,
 Falsification, she locked up
 In his chilly embrace, Miss Demeanor
Bonded thus could nonetheless
 Not bail herself out
 Imprisoned by forces
Of unknown sources
 And Mister Meaner
 Simply copped
 Out
(One day) to
Her eventual relief,
 A desired release—
 Case fully dismissed
 With prejudice.

Those lovely Lobes

Your lobes
i hope
would elope with me—

this tongue
it gets ticklish

licking those ear-ly
peninsulas
of supple plush skin
cushy but firm
—such tiny pink plums

that aptly fit
my reaching lips
and subtle thumbs

each time i nibble

you gasp and lunge
and come,
come asunder
with giggling thunder

i marvel that

such lovely lobes
quiver
and

d
a
n
g
l
e

so merrily
just for me—
for my lips
and my thumbs
and thin ticklish tongue
that licks and licks
and never tires of this
mysterious bliss.

A Winter Poem

— 1 —

A father,
 hands cold,
is leading his two children
over the ice:
 a little girl,
maybe three,
she's wearing
 a blue coat
stretching past her knees
where it meets
 red rubber boots
 shiny with slush
and melting snow.
 Her mittens match the boots.

Her little brother holds her hand
 and
wears a blue coat
 of his own
though shorter
with yellow mittens
 and green boots
 beneath
red pants.
 He's two.

Their father is nameless,
 has no face.
He's come to drown
 each
beneath the ice:

his pick
hits
the ice
cracking it.
The broken pieces,
tossed to the side.

He stares at the little girl
thinking
that she has her mother's
nose and
the yellow curls of his own
mother.
He looks at her lips,
perfect,
but can't
quite bring
himself
to her eyes.
She asks if they can go.

Her little brother
stands
back now off
kicking the ice
amazed as
his
little boots send it spinning
and rolling into the distance
laughs
at the click
as it hits his father's shoe
before falling in.

— 2 —

At home
there is the idea
of a woman lying
dead
on the kitchen floor.
She's blond
and has the nose of the daughter
she'd promised
to take away
from her
husband
-their father,

who is still
standing on the ice
though now looking
in his daughter's
eyes,
thinking
—she is perfect.

— 3 —

The children
slowly
begin to notice the cold,
the snow
gathering
on their sleeves.
Their father
notices
the way it melts,
rolls down,

soaks
 in
before reaching the end.

He asks
 the little girl
“do you love me?”
 Turning
 back
from the snow
 She nods,
 smiling.

— 4 —

At home
 there is the idea
of their mother lying dead,
but here
 the ice is
 cold—
he knows
 the water
is even worse.

 The little girl
tugs
 again
 at his sleeve
asking
 “can we go?”
He nods
 just . . .
lifts her.

— 5 —

At the door their
 mother
 is furious
and threatens again
 to move to Georgia
 with the kids—
 her kids
 if he doesn't get them back on time,
 next time.
He nods,
 but the anger
 isn't there.



photo submitted by Rachael Johnson

The Life

*Baggy pants listen closely, hear some patent shit,
Knowing nothing, cry aloud, hear the graveyard tout,
Smoothly bristle, sharpened silence, blows rain down at night,
Breasts heaving, drama spindles, death with jerky steps,
Breaking chains, walking yellow, curse and stone the gods,
Pointed arms, black remanders, carbine killers all,
Weeping, soiling, scowling, shiny, all of life ablaze,
Kingly pimping, men lay barking, bilious green and tame,
Cots and cocks, raging fury, twisting metal into knives,
Running bare, tragic trodden, felonious despair,
Bouncing Betties, buddy fuckers, little reels of life,
Turning south, dripping needles, cold eyes turn into black,
Misty morn brings callow troops, some dirty mounds of flesh,
Walk you fool, the world is gone, and mother knows you're dead.*

Head down, hands in the pockets of his thin coat, Jack made long strides along the street where old cars and wine bottles lay strewn along the gutter. In Hough where Jack lived, old boarded up houses and storefronts stood a lonely vigil, like forgotten soldiers of an ancient army. Jack turned the corner and walked into Delaney's store, a place with the smell of musty furniture and vomit, and a testament to the neighborhood's condition.

"Jackie, my man, where you been?" Delaney slapped Jack's hand, his large black face contrasted sharply with Jack's.

"Them faggot cops picked me up, and the judge bounced me into Whitmore to detox."

"Were you carrying?"

"Just had dice in my pocket, but the cops called them criminal tools. You know, same old bull shit."

Delaney was a former member of the Kings, an old street gang in the neighborhood, one with a nasty reputation for cutting whores and such. Jack thought that Delaney had probably been a typical street pimp in his day, good at rolling drunks and putting girls out on the corner, but not tough enough for things now. Here in 1960 America, drugs were what people wanted. Those who were holding kept tight control; it was sellers market. The Dallas Hotel was where you could get a fix, with twenty or thirty dollars you could get high on H with a clean needle. Paulie and Fatso provided the smack for a price. They would even let you hang around in the back room for a while after you got turned on. Junkies were repeat customers who paid, got high, then did it all

over again. At least they did until they overdosed, or started doing jail time. Jack had seen Paulie more times than he wanted to count. He didn't feel like he was a street junkie. He thought of himself as a player and his habit was part of the Life. He avoided the straight world, had only done a little jail time, and was rarely strung out. But Jack had the needle marks on his arms, a sickly worn visage, and looked like death in cheap clothes. Jack was twenty-one, but in reality he was an old man.

Jack paid Delaney for a bottle of Thunderbird, then went outside and sat on the curb. He watched the traffic go by, mostly delivery vans, cabs, an occasional citizen on his way to a job downtown. Jack had been on his own since he was sixteen, but he had never held a job. The neighborhood consisted of old taverns, cheap hotels, diners, old decaying houses, and decrepit tenements. Jack had lived in a tenement with the old lady and his younger brother Ricky, but that was a long time ago. Jack had been using for five years, almost from the day the old lady threw him out. Jack looked up from his bottle to see a police car turn the corner. It slowed in front of Delaney's store.

"Hey punk!" one of the cops yelled out. Jack recognized this cop as the one who had busted him recently. Jack held back his fear and anger, not wanting another trip to jail.

"If I see you in this neighborhood again I'll break your fucking neck, there ain't nothing that I hate more than a stinking punk junkie," the cop spat this through clenched teeth. He glared at Jack for a second, and then the car left the curb and turned down the alley beside Delaney's Store.

"Yea, go on down to Luanda's and get your take out — pay for those ribs and find your whores, you worthless bags of shit!" Jack's taunt didn't reach the cops, but those on the corner in front of Delaney's could hear him. Jack jumped up and went across the street. He cut through some back yards and headed downtown. His need and hate made him light of foot. Jack looked across Park Avenue toward downtown; crowds of people lay in front of him, his pace quickened. He needed a fix now. He needed money to get high. As sure as he knew his mothers name, as sure as he knew any God, Jack was going to rob somebody and get high. He needed to satisfy the craving he felt welling up inside him, nothing else mattered.

Jack walked down the busy street, head down, looking closely at the people who hustled past him. Jack was an accomplished purse-snatcher. He knew the kind of woman who carried cash. She was an old bitch, clutching a purse under her arm, probably wearing a fur. Snatching purses was an easy way for a junkie to get some quick cash. Jack saw his victim out of the corner of his eye. He slowed down to get a few steps behind her. Jack grabbed the purse from the old girl in the fur coat. She tried to grab it back, succeeding in catching Jack by his coat sleeve. She held on as Jack dragged her down onto the sidewalk. She fell hard; her screams pierced the sound of the traffic. Jack didn't hear the screams; he was already in an alley and clawing through the bag.

Jack had scored about seventy bucks from the robbery, this was a lot of bread, and he

wouldn't need to rob anyone else for a while. He put the money in his shoe and circled around the block and got on a bus. He didn't care where the bus was destined. Jack counted the stolen money until he saw a bank. Signaling the driver he wanted off, Jack was on the street again, looking warily around him before going into the bank. Walking in a bank always seemed to make him a little nervous, but he had to get smaller bills to give to Paulie. He didn't want Paulie to wonder where he had picked up the money; smaller bills produced fewer questions.

Jack wished he could see his old lady and Ricky as he walked past the housing projects toward the Dallas. The old lady had moved to the projects after their tenement building had burned down. A lot of buildings burned down in this neighborhood. But Jack felt sick with need, he needed horse, smack, heroin, and he needed it now. Going into the back room of the Dallas, Jack gave Fatso a tight wad of cash, and sat down to wait for Paulie. Then Jack only remembered seeing the glow of the candle as Paulie heated the spoon of heroin, and feeling the H as it entered his vein — washing away his need. In a couple minutes Jack was right with the world.

Later that night Jack emerged from the nods and checked to see if the money from the robbery was still on him. He stumbled down the street to where he had a room. Opening the door he flicked on the lights and turned on the radio; he was on the bed still nodding when Donna walked into the room. She was Jack's girl, also a junkie, and she was coming down from being high.

"Bastard, you could have told me where you were for the last week, where the fuck were you?" Donna spoke while she was going through Jack's pants, looking for cash. She checked his shoes and found the remains of the money Jack had stolen.

"I'm going down to the Dallas to see Paulie, he owes me a hit, you better be here when I get back, you fucking junkie." Donna slapped Jack's face on the way out, more to keep him aware of her, not simply to hurt. She came back in the morning, high and nodding out. They lay there together, not sleeping, not making love, they were high, and at peace with their jones.

Jack was retching, puking into a sink when he heard Donna let someone in.

"Who is it?"

"Ricky," a familiar voice answered.

"The old lady's sick - they took her to Saint Vincent's," Ricky stammered. Later, when everything unraveled, Jack remembered that Donna had been staring at Ricky intently right then. Although the look she had on her face quickly disappeared, Jack couldn't help thinking that the skank was hiding something.

"Can I stay here?" Ricky asked shakily.

"Well, don't get caught truant from Saint Pete's, and look after the old lady. When you visit the hospital let her know you're staying with me," Jack said with a hint of concern.

"Maybe he should say that he's eighteen when he goes to the hospital. That way he'll have the run of the hospital," Donna said a little too eagerly. Jack looked at Donna again, but her face was cold and revealing nothing.

"Don't bring any shit in here Donna, you know what I mean." Jack was warning Donna not to buy any dope from street dealers and stash it in Jack's place. He distained street junk, it was unreliable and dangerous, cut with all kinds of shit. Smack bought on the street was plentiful and usually cheaper than the junk from Paulie, but it was cut so many times that you never knew what kind of high to expect. A user could bring street smack to Paulie and Fatso, but they would only dispense a fraction of what a junkie brought in, a match head at most. They kept most of the smack, taking it as payment for a place to shoot up. Donna did that a lot. Jack didn't want to be a street junkie. He always bought the dope from Paulie. Jack and Donna had fought over this, but it was Jack's place, and that meant not keeping smack at his flop.

In the dirty crack between decaying buildings Jack lay on a grate watching three young black dudes pitch pennies against the wall. Jack had stolen a bottle of Mogan-David from the A&P store and was sucking it dry. The broken glass around him occasionally caught the meager sunlight that reached the alley. He listened to the voices around him. The sounds comforted him like a warm fire, making his bed of glass and urine soaked newspapers a restful place to drink wine and fight off the shakes. Jack needed a fix, but mind and body were exhausted; only the wine kept him from going into full withdrawal.

The sounds of the boys in the alley with him suddenly ceased. Jack lifted his head in time to see two men in blue walking up the alley. He tried to crawl to his feet but his legs were shaky and stiff.

"This is the junkie I told you about," one of the cops said.

"He pissed himself already, and we got to take him to Woodruff in the squad car, Christ!" the other cop said.

"Go call for an ambulance."

"What for, he's just a filthy drunk? When they get here they'll complain and leave without him."

"No, they'll take him, I'll make sure of it."

"OK, it's your call."

Jack felt the cop's foot on his stomach, holding him down. Then the cop flipped him over and yanked down Jack's trousers. Jack lurched forward to run, but the cop held him by his hair and throat.

"Alright punk, I'll show you who's the pussy."

Jack's heart raced but he could do nothing, the cop was on top of him, pulling his Billy club around Jack's neck and cutting off his breathing. The cop had his fly open now, preparing to assault the junkie. Jack blacked out as he began to realize what was about to happen. Waking up in a hospital bed, he was ashamed and angry without knowing why.

Looking around Jack saw he was in a large brightly lit room. Down each side of the room were hospital beds. He watched as a nurse carried bedpans down to a door. The door was opened for her from the outside, and then quickly closed. A big man wearing the uniform of a

hospital attendant walked toward Jack.

“Hey man, where am I?” Jack croaked, his throat tight and sore.

“Boy, you’re in Woodruff Hospital,” the attendant replied.

“When do I get out?”

“Ask the judge in ninety days.”

Jack realized that he had been committed to a mental ward, this knowledge made him feel panicky, he needed to get back on the street where he could get a fix. He looked around and saw a black dude with a bandage over his eye sitting on a nearby bed.

“Hey man, what kind of deal is this?” Jack said with a horse voice, barely audible.

“Ain’t you heard? The police are picking up all the users and bringing them here.”

“What the fuck for?”

“Shit man, I don’t know, but they got themselves a list. If you on it they’ll grab you off the street and here you be.”

“How long they means to keep us?”

“I ain’t heard for sure, but if you wants out you had best get a lawyer, we locked in this shit hole like it was jail.”

The conversation between the two men seemed to have caught the attention of the nurse who had returned through the locked door. She had a tray and walked up to Jack. Taking a carton of milk from the tray she started to open it.

“You feel like having something to eat?”

Jack felt bile in his throat, waves of nausea shook his thin frame, he started to heave, leaning over he saw a bedpan. The nurse already had it ready for him, holding it up to him while he vomited. The nurse took the bedpan away after Jack had finished, returning with a syringe on a tray; she motioned for Jack to turn over.

“This will help you some, you can have an injection twice a day, no more,” she looked at Jack; a look of pity seemed to appear on her face.

“They found you in an alley beaten up, do you remember what happened?”

“Do you remember what they did to you?” the nurse said softly, almost pleading for an answer. But Jack said nothing, he turned away from the nurse, his face tight and warm, his heart racing. Fear and loathing had replaced need for a moment. Jack tried to sleep, his body restless, his mind tortured, he could find no peace. He lay awake, thinking only of escape from this place.

Jack heard the footsteps of hard-soled shoes come toward him, the footsteps stopped at his bed.

“Hey boy, wake up.”

He saw two cops standing at the end of his bed.

“Are you Jack DeRue?” one cop said while looking down at a notebook in his hand. He was dark with short gray hair; his expression suggested that he would rather be elsewhere. He didn’t try to hide his discomfort. “Boy, you were picked up in an alley, kind of beaten up, do you

remember what happened?"

"No."

"You must have seen who beat you up, tell us what they looked like," the cop was impatient now. "Listen, either you tell me what you saw or I'll drag your butt downtown."

Jack slowly looked up at the cop's belt where a Billy club dangled, then looked over at the holstered revolver, and then up to face the cop.

"Fuck you junkie, who cares what happens to trash like you, I don't give a shit who beat your sorry ass."

The cop doing the talking walked away, but his partner leaned over for a moment and spoke quietly to Jack.

"If you remember anything tell the nurse." Jack felt the cop pat him on the knee, it was a fatherly gesture, but Jack recoiled from his touch. The cop shook his head as if to pity a dead thing, then followed the other cop to the locked door. Jack waited for the day to end. Curled up in the hospital bed he laid tormented, nauseous, quaking with fear and need, and wishing that he had died in that alley. The cop had done something to Jack in that alley, something he couldn't think about as he trembled on that cold hospital cot. And now Jack was all twisted inside, feeling something beyond the need for escape, beyond the craving for heroin. All that Jack had left was a fervent hatred for cops, and a longing for death.



photo by Rachael Johnson

Autumn Ages

Night comes quicker now that November is here. Seems like you just finish dinner and bang it's dark. Kinda makes ya feel all closed in and sad, thought Hazel. She opened the door to her closet and looked inside for her pink sweater to match the cranberry colored slacks she had on.

"Now where is that gall dern thing," she muttered. "Maybe it's in the dresser." She made her way to the small chest of drawers next to her bed and pulled open the top drawer and glanced inside.

"Well someone's gone and stolen it right out from under this poor old woman's nose. God, everyone takes advantage of you when you're old."

Bad enough she had to give up her home, furniture, knick-knacks and worst of all her cat to come to the nursing home. Happiness was as sparse these days as leaves on the barren gray November trees.

"Hey! Pick up the tempo old lady. We're gonna be late for bingo. Everyone's already down there."

"Well hello there Myrtle. I'm lookin for my pink sweater, but looks like someone's gone and stole it from me and I hope they burn in hell."

"Why here it is Hazel, right here in your closet."

"Oh, so it is. Well how'd you suppose I missed it?"

"I don't know," said Myrtle, "but get your walker and let's get go'in."

Myrtle was the one bright spot in an otherwise grim future. When Hazel first came to the nursing home last summer, it was Myrtle who told her what time to go to meals and Myrtle who took her to activities so she wouldn't feel shy. The nurses and activity director were nice enough, but they were always so busy. They would get you going in the right direction, but never seemed to be able to stick with you till you got there and settled in. That's what Myrtle did for her. Helped her get settled in. Well, as settled in as you could be in a place that wasn't your home. Hazel took her walker and she and Myrtle made their way to the dinning room where the nightly bingo game was.

"God, my joints are as stiff as a dead dog," groaned Hazel. She walked slowly, stooped over, hanging onto her walker. Myrtle slowed down to walk alongside her.

"It's nice to have someone to go to bingo with," said Myrtle. "Been kinda lonesome around here. The kids don't visit as often these days. Busy with their own lives ya know."

"Yes, with Frank gone ten years now and my daughter out there in Colorado, it's been lonely for me too. As much as I hate to admit it I guess I can't do for myself like I used to, so just couldn't live by myself anymore."

"Well I'm glad you're here Hazel."

As Myrtle and Hazel entered the dinning room, Myrtle noticed two other residents, Fern and

Clara, sitting in their seats.

"Hey, that's where Hazel and me sit for Bingo. You're in our seats!"

"Well I didn't know we had assigned seats," growled Clara. "I guess I can just sit anywhere I want to thank you very much."

"Well figures," grumbled Hazel. "First my pink sweater gets stolen, and now my seat gets stolen."

"Hazel you're wearing your pink sweater," said Clara.

"Oh yeah, that's right," said Hazel "Myrtle found it for me."

"Well I'm not playing Bingo if I can't sit where I always do," yelled Myrtle.

"Bye," said Clara.

"OK ladies, what seems to be the problem?" asked Patty the activity director. Patty had been at the nursing home for ten years and was a wizard at keeping the peace and trying to make everyone happy—an impossible task.

"They stole our chairs," said Myrtle, "and I'm not playing if I can't have my rightful spot."

"Now let's calm down," said Patty. "Clara, why don't you and Fern sit on the other side of the table. That way Myrtle and Hazel can have their usual chairs but you will still be at the same table. We have some great bingo prizes and bingo money to win tonight and we will be having doughnuts and punch." Distracted by thoughts of prize money and food, they moved into their places without further cackling. Only Fern sat throughout the entire altercation without speaking, the ever-present smile on her pleasant face never changing, oblivious to all that had been said.

Suddenly Fern called out to Patty: "Lunch! I thought we already had lunch." "No Fern," said Patty "I SAID WE WOULD HAVE PUNCH."

"Oh, yes that's nice." With that settled, Myrtle, Hazel, Clara and Fern set up their bingo cards and the bottle caps that had been collected to mark their numbers, and were ready to play. With Patty's assistance, one of the other residents named George, was turning the crank on the metal drum that held the bingo numbers.

"You've got too many bottle caps Clara," said Myrtle.

"Oh for God's sake Myrtle, go ahead then take all of them."

"I don't want all of them, just a few more is all I need."

"Hey! Someone stole my handkerchief," yelled Hazel. "The one with the little embroidered butterflies on it that my daughter sent me. Bunch of thieves."

"Well there it is Hazel, right there tucked in your sleeve," said Myrtle.

"Oh so it is. How do you suppose I missed it? Must of stuck it up there after I blew my nose."

"Look, here comes Elmer," said Myrtle.

"Oh, that old fool", said Clara.

"Elmer's not so bad, he's just a little addled in his wits," said Hazel.

"Well I don't know," said Myrtle. "I spent some time with him last summer. We'd be

walkin down the hall together and that poor old thing would be tottering along pushin his walker just a fartin with every step he took . Why it was like walkin with a choo choo train. He didn't seem to be bothered by it though, just kept grinnin like a toothless old fool."

"Well, he probably couldn't help it you know. When you get old you just can't control things like you used to," said Clara.

"Ain't that the truth," said Hazel. "Why everytime I sneeze anymore, I pee so bad I gotta change my pants."

"B-10" called out George.

"And I get so bound up," said Hazel, "that I can't even bend over. I asked for some prune juice two days ago and still haven't gotten it. It's gonna take a stick of dynamite to loosen this load."

"N-36, N-36."

"I hope I win today," said Clara. "I haven't won bingo money for weeks. Is this a coverall or just regular bingo?"

"Coverall" said Myrtle.

"Well ya know I think someone stole my bingo prize money from last week," said Hazel. "Yep. Stole it right out of my purse. Only thing I got left in this whole world to carry in my purse is my bingo prize money, Tums and my dentu cream. Better not steal my dentu cream. Although it's about as worthless as toothpaste for holdin my teeth in."

"You're tellin' me," said Myrtle. "Back when me and Elmer were seeing each other, we went to smooch, bumped teeth and my dentures went flyin, his dentures went flyin, and there they lay on the floor, his tops mixed with my bottoms, my tops mixed with his bottoms, what a mess. By the time we got everything sorted out, the mood had passed. You know what they say, gotta strike while the iron is hot, and these days old Elmer's iron is only lukewarm and strikin' time is down to about one minute. Hee Hee."

"I-22, I-22."

"I think I've got a bingo," cried Clara.

"This is a coverall and you ain't even close," said Myrtle.

"Is that right?" replied Clara. "Guess I forgot."

"I know what you mean," said Hazel. "It's all I can do to keep my mind on the game. I wished to hell they would get me something for this gall darn rash between my legs. I went to church service last Sunday and sat there during the sermon diggin' at my crotch like an old cat with fleas. Now do you know what that young minister fella did?"

"What?" asked Clara and Myrtle.

"He winked at me," said Hazel.

"No!" exclaimed Clara and Myrtle.

"Yeah, winked right at me he did. Now what do you suppose he meant by that?"

“Well I don’t know,” said Myrtle “But you know when that Madonna person grabs hercrotch the men go wild, Hee Hee.”

“Well, I sure ain’t no Madonna,” said Hazel. “Young folks today are all a bunch of fornicatin’ heathens.”

“But Hazel he’s supposed to be a minister,” said Clara.

“You never know nowadays. Why I heard on the news the other day where a doctor took this lady’s gallbladder out and come to find out, he wasn’t a doctor at all, he was an insurance salesman,” said Hazel.

“Oh my god,” said Clara.”

“What’s the world coming to,” said Myrtle.

“I don’t know, but they better get me something for my crotch pretty soon,” said Hazel.

“You know Christmas is coming and if you need a watch put it on the gift exchange list,” said Fern.

“Fern, what in the sam hell are you talking about,” said Myrtle.

“I just felt that if Hazel is so upset about her watch she could ask for one for Christmas.”
“I -19 I 19.”

“Hey look over there, Lucy just smacked Robert. What do you suppose that’s all about?” asked Myrtle.

Lucy and her husband Robert had been at the nursing home as long as Myrtle could remember. They always sat at the same table each week right next to George.

“You know they always sit right next to George so they can check the numbers he draws. Guess they don’t trust him,” said Myrtle.

“Quit putting bottle caps on numbers that ain’t been called,” yelled Lucy. “You’re cheatin’.”

“I’m not cheatin’, it was an accident,” said Robert.

“Oh Yeah, well seems to me you’re having an awful lot of accidents,” said Lucy. “I counted seven in the last five minutes.”

“Now, now folks. Let’s play fair,” intercepted Patty.

“That Lucy sure keeps a tight leash on him. He ain’t about to get away with anything with her around. Hee Hee,” said Hazel.

“Hey what was all the commotion at the end of the hall last night,” asked Clara.

“Oh, that was Wilford,” said Myrtle. “He had an itch in his eye so he put a big glob of Ben Gay in it.”

“Oh my God!” yelled Hazel. “Of course you can’t hardly blame him. It takes so long for them to get any medicine around here. If you have an itch or a pain first they have to call the doctor, then they have to order it in, then half the time they don’t bother to come and give it to you when they do get it.”

“So how’s Wilford today?” asked Clara.

"Oh, it turned his eye red," said Myrtle.

"He's dead!" exclaimed Fern.

"No. I said it turned his eye RED," said Myrtle. "Fern why don't you get yourself a hearing aide?"

"I don't need a hearing aide," said Fern. "I hear just fine."

"Well at least get a Q tip and clean out your ears," said Myrtle.

"A cube steak. What would I want with a cube steak?" asked Fern.

"O - 60, O - 60," called out George.

"Have a doughnut ladies," said Patty as she brought around the evenings' refreshments. "I'm going to have this orange I brought," said Clara.

"Speakin' of oranges, did you see Glen last night runnin' around without a stitch on?" asked Myrtle.

"Now, you can't really blame old Glen, he's a few bricks shy as the sayin' goes," said Clara.

"Well it was still a sight to see" laughed Myrtle. "I thought he was a carryin' a sack with a couple of oranges in it then I realized it was his male parts hanging clear down to his knees. Wonder he didn't trip over them and knock himself out."

"B - 5, B - 5."

"Hey, where's that cute little Indian man centerpiece," asked Clara. "

"Glen ate it," said Myrtle.

"Oh, you don't say," replied Clara.

"Wasn't that made out of styrofoam?" asked Hazel.

"Yes, I think it was," said Myrtle.

"Whoee! That's gonna hurt commin' out!" said Clara.

"Wasn't that Indian holdin' a tomahawk?" asked Hazel.

"N -28, N -28."

"Bingo!" yelled Fern.

"Guess she hears just fine when she wants to," said Myrtle.

"Well, I'm all done in, think I'll head back to my room and go to bed," said Hazel. She stood up and looked around then yelled out "for cryin out loud. Who stole my walker. Can you believe that? Stealin a poor old woman's walker! Might as well just chop my legs off."

"It's over there by the wall," said Myrtle.

"Oh, so it is. Well how do you suppose I missed it."

"I don't know," said Myrtle, "but I'll walk back with you. See the rest of you tomorrow."

"The clap dancers are coming tomorrow," said Fern.

"Not the clap dancers Fern, the tap dancers," corrected Clara.

"Sure hope they don't have the clap," said Hazel. "Hee Hee."

Hazel and Myrtle headed down the darkened hallway to their rooms. "Goodnight Myrtle.

Thank you for ... you know, everything.”

“Yep, I know,” said Myrtle. “Time was a gift when I was young, now it seems like a burden,” said Hazel.

“I know what you mean,” said Myrtle. “When I was young there wasn’t enough time to do all I wanted to do. Now there isn’t enough to do with all this time. Hee Hee. See you in the morning.”

Myrtle headed to her room further down the hall. On the way she stopped off at Elmer’s room. Elmer had gone to bed long before bingo was over. “Poor old fool,” she muttered. Elmer had kicked his covers off, and fallen asleep with his glasses on. “Crazy old man,” she whispered as she gently removed his glasses and covered him up for the night.



photo submitted by Amber English

Something New

I stare at the door of the reception hall, debating whether I should head in or turn around and completely forget. I'm at least three hours late, the snow and the ice have thrown me completely off schedule. I can't help but feel that in more ways than one, my timing is completely off. With two weeks left in the semester, rather than sitting in the library, re-reading books and highlighting potential theories and cases that could appear on my exams, I've driven all the way home—and I'm still trying to figure out what my logic was. I remember some kind of rationalization, about not spending all my time out of class focusing on class, about one weekend not spent sitting in my freezing apartment, studying. I stare at the sea of unfamiliar faces, and just as I'm about to turn around I hear my mother's voice.

"There she is!" A little of the uneasiness inside me melts once my mother pulls me close for a tight hug, the kind that leaves me hungry for air. "We've been waiting for you!"

"The roads are really icy," I gasp, sucking air back into my lungs as my mother leads me back to the table where my family and a few of my old teachers are sitting. "I tried to make it to the ceremony—I mean, I left really early this afternoon, but I didn't know about the snow and ice. I didn't even watch The Weather Channel...hi everybody," I add shyly.

I can feel my face turn red as I stare around the table at my old high school teachers, my mother's friends and co-workers. I'm caught between reminiscing and staying silent, unsure of what to say or how to act. These people taught me in junior high, when I was at my most awkward, wearing thick glasses that constantly slid down my nose. They put up with me as a senior in high school, when I sure that six months after graduation, I'd already be well on my way to changing the world. I'm not sure whether I should be embarrassed because of how I used to act in front of them, who I used to be, or let them get to know the person I am now, the person I'm still becoming.

"We were a little worried when you didn't show up at the church," my Mom admits as she wraps her arm around me. "But I figured if you hadn't called, you'd be at the reception. It's a shame you missed it though," she sounds wistful for a moment. "It was beautiful...Natalie looked *radiant*."

I nod slightly, and again I'm not sure how to respond. Nat was one of my closest friends in high school, but I hadn't seen her in years...and I wasn't even sure why I was at her wedding in the first place.

"It's not as if you don't get snow in Boston, right?" My former math teacher quizzes me, motioning to the chair next to her.

"*Cambridge*," my mother quickly corrects. "The college isn't really in Boston."

"It snows in Boston *and* Cambridge, Mrs. Gouldman," I sigh. "But it wasn't today. And besides, I'm terrible driving on ice and snow."

So you weren't just trying to figure a way to weasel out of a weekend at home?" someone jokes. "Are we too dull for you now?"

"Yeah, we had a bet going," my younger sister Kate says, grinning wickedly. "Whether or not you'd actually show up."

I roll my eyes, trying my best to make it look as if the thought never occurred to me. "You know I'd never do anything like that." *I only wish I could.* "I'm always glad to come home." *Most of the time.*

"Then we started another bet on whether or not you'd bring that guy you've been seeing, what's his name, the pharmacist?"

"Will," I supply, narrowing my eyes at my little sister. "And we broke up last month."

"What'd you do?" She asks eagerly. "Who dumped who?"

I stare at her coldly before turning to Mrs. Gouldman. "So," I smile cheerfully, "I was just curious, what kind of grades is Katie pulling in Calculus?" The self-satisfaction is instantly gone from Kate's face as she looks up at me, defeated.

"She could use a little *help*, to be honest," the gray-haired teacher shoots a withering glance at Kate, whose face flushes. She mumbles some excuse about looking for our father and starts to head off.

It's my turn to look smug. I point my index finger at her, shooting an imaginary gun. "*Gotcha*," I mouth silently as she slinks off in embarrassment.

"So what classes do you have this semester?" Mrs. Gouldman turns to me, smiling.

"Civil Procedure, Criminal Law, and Legal Reasoning and Argument in the afternoons. LRA's my weak spot," I explain. "We have to argue hypothetical cases, and it feels like there's barely any room for mistakes even though there's still so much I'm not sure how to—" I suddenly notice everyone at the table is listening, hanging on my every word. I bite my bottom lip uncomfortably, unsure of what to say next. "I don't want to bore you with the details."

"Don't be silly," Mrs. Willard, my History teacher assures me. "This is interesting, one of our former students at *Harvard*!"

I force a smile on my face as I slide back down in my chair, hoping somehow to disappear. Whenever I tell anyone at home where I go to school, they all look back at me with awe and wonder before suddenly falling silent. It's almost like they aren't sure what to say to me, the girl that used to sit beside them in government, the girl that streaked her hair red and wore a lot of black, the girl that used to hang out with that guy, the genius. They suddenly want to use the biggest words they know, as if they have to prove that they're intelligent, too.

The funny thing is, most of them could be at Harvard, probably more than I should. But you don't tell people things like that. You smile and nod and reinforce how hard you have to work, the studying until the wee hours of the morning. Only I know about eating Rice-A-Roni every night, keeping the thermostat at sixty-five to make rent each month.

"It's always sort of fascinating to see where all my students end up," Mrs. Willard muses. "Usually I'm around ninety percent accurate with my predictions. Wasn't it you that did the research project with all the statistics on how many high schools hire mostly male teachers with coaching backgrounds?"

"No, that wasn't me. That was Alex," I remind her. My stomach twists into a knot the very second I mention his name—*Alex*, the genius.

"How could you ever forget Alex?" My mother laughs. "By the way, he stopped at the school just yesterday."

"Oh, I couldn't forget him," Mrs. Willard shrugs, smiling. "But it's hard to separate the two, considering you didn't see one without the other back then. What's he been up to, anyway?"

"Still at Bowling Green State, I think," I swallow hard when everyone looks at me. "He'd be a senior now." I have a million excuses whenever anyone mentions the great Alex Jacobs. I want to make any kind of excuse and run away, like Katie had done moments earlier. I want to sit and discuss him in the finest of detail, think about him for a few moments without feeling guilty or wondering, "What if?" I'm desperate to talk about Harvard again, any topic but the one we're on.

In all my life I've never met anyone who has the ability to do all of the things he does to me. It's not as though both of us haven't moved on; it's been nearly two years. But just hearing his name fills me with a strange sense of longing, almost an aching. It's almost like a childhood bruise—it's sore and it hurts, but somehow, no matter how painful, you keep pressing on it just to see if it still stings.

Every once in awhile I'll catch myself sliding into a familiar daydream... where it's just Alex and I, sitting together somewhere. I state my case clearly, with brilliant opening remarks followed by hard evidence, strong examples, and a meaningful closing argument. I can name every emotion going through my mind; I can pinpoint every free-floating anxiety that I could never quite understand before. I tell him everything, exactly how I feel. There's no confusion, no hurt when I explain myself, and I'm not worried about how he'll react or what he'll say.

My best defense at the moment is to dissolve into my own little world and completely lose track of the conversation. I stare out at the dance floor, at the sea of unfamiliar faces when Natalie appears, still in her wedding dress, making her way across the dance floor. When she spots me she rushes over, arms wide open.

"Sarah, I'm so glad you came!" She sounds cheerful as she hugs me warmly.

"Thanks for inviting me," I smile politely. "I'm sorry I missed the ceremony, but—"

"Oh, the roads are horrible," she assures me, waving away any further explanation. "You should have seen me this morning. We planned the wedding in November to avoid the winter weather. It was a disaster! Christian's family was coming in from Michigan, and I was *convinced* it was a conspiracy," she closes her eyes in exhaustion. "Perfect fall weather until the day of the wedding, and now it's like January."

"I'm sorry, that must have been horrible," I frown sympathetically, ready to change the subject. "By the way, your dress is beautiful. And your hair—you look great as a blonde."

Natalie laughs, smoothing out her hair and stepping back so I can get a better look. "You think? I went platinum for the wedding, but I wasn't sure I liked it or not. And if you only *knew* how many fittings I had to go through! This dress better look good or somebody's in trouble."

I can't get over how giddy she looks as we both laugh again, like the perfect picture of happiness. "So, how have you been? Besides the obvious, I mean."

"Oh, well, I graduated from Mount Union last spring, and I started teaching Special Education at the high school this fall. Your Mom is the most incredible person, Sar. She's been helping me learn how to enter my grades into the computer."

"I think she told me you were teaching," I say slowly, trying to remember. "That's really great, I'm glad you're happy. So, how did you meet your husband?"

"My *husband*," Natalie grins. "I'm going to have to get used to that, it's still so *weird*-sounding. Christian and I met at school, he's an engineer. He actually just got a job in Cleveland, so we're trying to find a house someplace where we can both commute. You know, the halfway point." She stops for a moment. "How's everything going for you? You look so much thinner than the last time I saw you."

"I haven't been dieting or anything." *It might have something to do with the fact that I live off Rice-A-Roni.* "Maybe it's just because things are so hectic right now, with the semester almost over—"

A sudden twinge of jealousy sweeps over me. Natalie looks so happy and content, already settled into the life she's always wanted for herself. She wakes up every morning and goes to work, gets complete fulfillment out of showing handicapped children things they've never known, helping them do things they've only dreamed about.

She eats lunch with my mother every afternoon, sees her family, and after grading papers, she actually has free time to spend with her husband. They go out to dinner and a movie; when she gets home, she goes to bed knowing she gets the chance to do it all over again.

She doesn't spend hours searching for obscure facts or random cases. She doesn't eat Ramen Noodles everyday, or rationalize that going without sleep actually makes you stronger. I suddenly wonder what that kind of life would be like.

"Everybody's just so *proud* of you! I mean, I ask your mother about you all the time, I have to get my 'Sarah update'. I mean, it's just so *exciting*, our small town girl! At Harvard Law!" I cringe at the way she says the word, *Harvard*, under the impression that it's this ethereal, mystical place where people go around musing philosophically twenty-four hours a day, a place of over-intelligent humans.

"It's really not that impressive," I smile. "I mean, I pull a lot of all-nighters, and spend way too much time at the library. I'm constantly working to keep my GPA high enough to satisfy all of

my grants and scholarships. Plus, I still have rent, which is unbelievable at the student apartments, and food—" I trail off, realizing this may not be the kind of rant she wants to hear at her wedding reception. "It's just not all it's cracked up to be."

"But, it's exactly where you want to be, isn't it?" She grins, raising her eyebrows.

I bite my bottom lip, not sure of how to answer. I'd spent weeks, years, wondering if law school was the place for me. After I'd made one decision, there were thirty more in front of me. Where to apply, where to go, and then the late night calculations on how I was going to pay for everything. Natalie's life seemed so uncomplicated; as if she knew what she wanted from the moment she stood beside me at graduation.

Memories flash through my mind—how happy I was when I received my acceptance letter in the mail, how ecstatic I became while moving into my tiny apartment. I remember how my hands shook when I got my first real law school paper back with the bold "A" at the top. I think of those moments when I'm rushing to class, bleary-eyed and sleep deprived and I look around the common and it suddenly hits me: I'm actually *going to Harvard*. Even though Natalie's life sounds comfy and cozy, I feel like I've made all the right choices, however agonizing they may have seemed. "Yeah—" I finally reply, a wide smile spreading across my face. "I'm exactly where I want to be."

"You've worked really hard for it," she insists. "We're all just so *happy* for you."

"Thanks, Nat." I sigh as she hugs me tightly. "I'm happy for you, too."

When she finally pulls back, she wipes her eyes quickly. "Look, I should go find Christian. Stick around, okay?"

"I will," I promise. "I wouldn't leave without cake."

"It's really good to see you, Sarah." She repeats before heading off through the crowds on the dance floor.

I make my way back to the table where my mother and her friends are sitting. Just as I'm ready to go get a drink at the bar, Kate returns and wraps her arms around my neck. "You'll never guess who's here," she tells me breathlessly.

"Dad? I'm beginning to wonder if he's here," I respond. "Did you ever find him?"

"I didn't really look for him," she admits. There's a smile tugging at the corners of her mouth. "But, I did find Alex." I stare back at her in shock, my mouth falling open slightly.

"What, *my* Alex?" I blurt before I can catch myself. Technically, he wouldn't be *my* Alex anymore. "I mean, Alex *Jacobs*?"

She looks at me strangely. "How many guys named Alex do you know?"

"If you're joking—" I warn her, trying hard to make my shaking voice sound threatening. "Katie, if you're joking, you're going to wish you weren't."

"Seriously," she sits beside me, continuing. "He asked how I was and I told him you just got here and he said maybe he'd look for you."

My breath catches in my throat as I find my voice. "I swear Katie, if you're fucking with me—"

"I'm being completely honest with you, Sarah." She blinks innocently, waving politely at someone behind me. "Oh *hi*, Father McDonough."

I whirl around in horror, getting ready to apologize to a very shocked priest, only to find there's nobody behind me. Katie laughs gleefully, pointing her index finger and thumb at me, shooting at the air. "*Gotcha*," she whispers.

"Very funny," I grumble, standing up to leave.

She smiles slyly. "You don't think Father McDonough would like your impressive new vocabulary?"

"Bite me," I mutter fiercely as I push past her. "I'm going to look for Dad."

"Right."

I head to the small bar towards the back of the room, not sure who I'm going to run into, the clichés running through my head as I wind my way around the crowds of smiling and laughing people. *Damned if I do, damned if I don't, stuck between a rock and a hard place, caught between the devil and the deep blue sea.* I'm still lost in my thoughts when I see him, his dark hair, hands in pockets, making polite small talk with someone I don't recognize. I'm living the clichés now, praying he'll see me while hoping he doesn't. I'm still frozen in place when his deep brown eyes find mine.

I'm flooded with a million separate emotions at the sight of him, some of which hardly make sense to me. What little self-confidence I did have is suddenly gone, and I'm filled with a nameless fear and anxiety that completely overwhelms me. There's so much that I want to say to him, so many things I need him to know, but my words turn against me and stay jumbled up inside, permanently stuck.

I casually smooth out my hair as he makes his way over to where I'm standing, suck in my stomach and run my tongue over my teeth to check for lipstick. I'm still struggling to say something, anything to him. I've forgotten how to say hello, how to start the simplest conversation. Alex looks at me shyly and self-consciously, as if he's searching for something to say as well.

"Hey Sarah," The awkward smile is still on his face as he greets me. "It's good to see you."

"Hi," I manage, fighting to keep my voice even. "I wasn't sure if you'd be here."

He sticks his hands in his pockets, relaxing a little. "Well, I was home this weekend anyway," he explains. "I stopped in and saw your Mom when I got in yesterday, and she said you were coming home."

"I haven't really gotten the chance to talk to her much," I admit. "I just got here, really. I haven't even seen my Dad yet." I stare at him, wondering what happens next. Now is as good a time as any to state my case, the one I've thought about so often, into motion. I start out slow. "I'm glad you're here."

"You look really good," Alex eyes me up and down. "You're all dressed up."

"I'm even wearing hose," I add, pointing to my satiny-sheer legs. "How often does that happen?"

“Did you drive all the way down here dressed like that?” He looks shocked.

“You’re impressed, aren’t you?” I spin around, pirouetting so he can get the full effect of the dress. “I feel kind of funny in black, though. Not really a wedding color, is it?”

“I *am* impressed,” he laughs. “I wouldn’t drive that far in a dress.” We’re both silent for a few moments, as if we’ve run out of things to say already. I’m contemplating what to do next when he suddenly turns to me. “Would you like to get a drink? You’re one of the few people I’ve seen I wouldn’t mind talking to for awhile.”

“That would be great,” I throw him a pleading look. “I could really use some wine.”

He laughs, glancing around before lowering his voice. “Then I’m pretty sure you’re at the wrong wedding. It looks like they spent a fortune on flowers and food, but I think they bought the wine in boxes at the K-Mart winery.”

“That sounds about right,” I assure him. “You remember Nat’s parents, the ones who bought stock in Jolt Cola?”

“Right. Do you think *that* company has a vineyard?” He hands me a glass, trying to keep a straight face.

I slosh my wine around the rim of the glass, sniffing it as if I know what I’m doing.

“Interesting bouquet. You’re suggesting this is a rare Jolt vintage zinfandel?”

“I’m beginning to wonder, because I’m telling you, it’s bitter.” He points to an empty table. “Would you like to sit down?”

“Close to the bar?”

“That’s the idea,” Alex ushers me over to the table, playing the perfect gentleman as he pulls a chair out for me. “So, how’s school? Are things good at *Haa-vad*? I mean, classes and all *that*?”

“For the most part,” I nod. “I’m passing everything. I consider myself a success so far. How about you?”

“Pretty good,” he replies casually. “I’ll graduate in May, and I’m just now starting to gather med school applications.”

“Really? I don’t think I knew that,” I shift in my chair, surprised. “I mean, that’s great.” I pause for a minute, a wicked grin spreading across my face. “Would you be offended if I told you the very thought is a little frightening, though? I mean, to think that *you*—”

“Oh, I’m not offended,” Alex assures me. “You don’t think it scares me that *you’re* going to argue cases before a judge? I mean, if I ever got arrested, to think that *you’d* be the person fighting to keep me out of jail—”

“Don’t worry,” I promise him, “I’ll defend you the first time you get sued for malpractice.”

“Thank you, that’s very reassuring.”

“What schools were you looking into?” I ask innocently.

“Nowhere specific,” he shrugs. “I’ve been looking into different programs. I was actually thinking about *Haa-vad*, but I haven’t applied just yet.”

"Do it," I encourage him. "What do you have to lose?" He nods slightly, as if he's thinking about it. We're both silent for a moment. "Is anything else going on with you? Are you still seeing—I'm sorry, *what* was her name again?"

A familiar crooked grin appears on his face. "You mean Beth?" He's on to me, completely aware of what I'm doing. I didn't forget her name.

"*That's it, Beth.*" In the few times I'd actually talked to the infamous Beth, I'd become convinced that if looks could kill, she wanted me to die a slow, deliberate, painful death. No matter how sweet I tried to be to her, or how I tried to make the best of a bad situation, she made no secret out of the fact that she considered me public enemy number one. "So, how is she?"

"We broke up about six months ago," Alex sounds very matter-of-fact. "Irreconcilable differences, I guess."

I nod solemnly, but I can't keep the smile off my face. Not only because of his flagrant use of a legal term, but at how *right* my intuition had been. Seeing Alex with Beth made that strange, unexpected ache return. I tried my best to be polite and courteous around them, but the only thing that ran through my head was how different the two of us were, and how if we were meeting under different circumstances, she would have been the person I intuitively stayed the farthest away from. I couldn't help wondering if that could be one of the things that attracted her to Alex. "I'm sorry," I try to sound sympathetic and sweet before I take a sip of my wine. "God, that *is* bad."

"I told you." Alex finishes off his glass with a grimace.

"About Beth," I sigh, taking another sip. "Now, I'm not saying I didn't like her, but—okay, I'm not saying she *was* Satan, but I definitely sensed some demonic connections."

Alex smiles knowingly, as if he completely expected this kind of reaction. The feeling is so familiar, so warm that I stop worrying about everything I want to say for a moment, my daydream and my well-planned arguments. The rest of the world can twirl around on the dance floor, but I'm more content than I've been in months right where I am. It's only when I'm sitting beside Alex that I feel like I'm truly home.

"Do you know the sad thing?" He stares down at the floor. "I wasn't even that upset about it. I mean, we hardly saw each other any more and it's like it was turning into some courtesy thing."

"What do you mean, *courtesy* thing?" I finish off my first glass of wine with a shudder.

"I would come home for the weekend and she'd have plans, but out of *courtesy* she'd go to dinner with me," he explains, heading back to the bar and grabbing two more glasses. "Or she'd drive to Bowling Green without telling me, and even though I had an O Chem. exam, out of *courtesy*, I'd change my plans for her."

"And that kind of relationship can't last," I finish for him.

"Are you speaking from experience?"

"In my experience, they *shouldn't* last." I sigh. "So, it wasn't messy or anything?"

"Not really," he sighs, his eyes meeting mine. "It wasn't like us." I nod, looking away

suddenly. I'm determined to block out the memories. "She called me one night and said she didn't think she could handle things anymore. She felt like I didn't really have time for her."

The smile is permanently stuck on my face; I try to hide it by looking extremely involved in what he's saying. "That's it? I mean, end of story?"

"Basically," he shrugs. "But it was kind of good, in a way. More than anything else, I was kind of relieved we didn't have to play games with each other anymore. Last I heard, she was seeing this guy that goes to school with her. She's been going to 'the family vacation house on the lake' every weekend with him."

"Ah, I think I get the picture," I mutter into my glass, mentally congratulating myself for continually being on the mark about her. "Do you want to know what I think?"

"Here it comes," Alex groans. "Sarah's brand of truth. It's all right. It won't be the first 'I told you so' I've heard."

"I would never say anything like that," I insist. "Just that I think you're better off, since you haven't sold your soul to the devil herself."

"Do you know what our last fight was about? I ended up telling her I wasn't completely sure I knew what I wanted after graduation. I mean, I'm not completely sure I want to go to grad School at all, let alone med school. This decision is going to change me life. I just need to be sure, you know?"

"It's your life," I automatically respond, letting him in on the first half of my own personal mantra from when I was his exact position. "It's your life and it's your decision."

"Yeah, well. We didn't exactly see eye to eye on that."

"Did you love her?" I ask suddenly, before I'm completely convinced I want to know the answer.

"I'm not sure," he sounds calm, as if he was prepared for the question, as if he was disconnected from it. "And maybe that's a good thing."

I sip my wine thoughtfully, maybe to distract me from everything. I want to find a way to let all the words out; I'm waiting for the divine inspiration I've thought about so often. The Jolt wine is beginning to go to my head, and I can't keep everything to myself anymore. "You want some more Sarah-brand truth?" I set my glass on the table with a clatter. "It really doesn't matter if you apply to Harvard Med. School, live next door to me, become the most famous doctor in the world and cure every disease on the face of the Earth."

I pick up my glass up and finish it off before I lose my nerve. Thoughts are flying through my head faster than I can put words to them. "Or you could totally change career plans, and decide to go to law school. You could help me with my Legal Reasoning and Argument, whatever works for you."

I stare into his deep brown eyes, getting lost in them momentarily before I continue my argument. "Maybe you've decided college just isn't for you, and the perfect career would be making Slurpees at the 7-11 for the rest of your life, which is fine—as long as it makes you happy."

“What I’m trying to tell you, Alex, is I don’t care if you’re famous, or how much money you make, or what college you go to, you are still one of the most remarkable people I know. I’m going to care no matter where you are or what you’re doing.”

Alex stares at the floor for a few minutes, silent again. Suddenly, I wish I hadn’t just poured my heart out to him, and I feel the need to smooth it all over.

“And I’m not sure if that’s normal or maybe it’s just pathetic, but sometimes I’d rather not dwell on that kind of thing.”

He takes a deep breath before looking up at me, rubbing his eyes. For a moment, I’m not sure if he’s going to laugh or cry. “I really don’t think you should drive home,” he jokes. “That wine may be stronger than we thought.”

“I mean it, Alex.” I whisper. “I just want you to be happy. It’s not just the bad wine.” We’re both staring out at the dance floor, at Natalie and her new husband twirling around, engrossed in each other, both beaming.

“I wondered if you’d be here,” Alex sighs. “I was going to ask your Mom if you were coming, but I really didn’t know if I should. Did you and Nat keep in touch after high school?”

“Not really,” I admit, biting my lip again. “All right, do you want to know the real reason I came home this weekend? I mean the wedding, and I wanted to see my family and everything, but it’s just—” Alex stares at me expectantly. “I need the space heater.”

“Sorry?” he asks, trying not to laugh, the amusement playing on his face.

“Just because I make rent every month doesn’t mean I’m rich,” I protest, beginning to giggle myself. “I have to keep the heat so low sometimes I wear three pairs of socks to keep warm. I practically live in those old flannel pajamas, the cow print ones? And it’s not even winter yet.” Before too long, we’re laughing so hard we’re gasping for air. “Besides,” I tell him. “It’s come to my attention that Katie needs some serious help in Calculus.”

“This is great, Sarah,” Alex manages. “How exactly are you planning on sliding that into the conversation? ‘Hi everybody, I love you and miss you, things at school are fine, by the way I’m freezing to death and I’m stealing the space heater out of the bathroom?’ That’s *classic*!” We’re both laughing so hard that people begin to stare at us.

“I miss that convoluted logic of yours,” he sighs, “that lets you drive all the way from *Cambridge* to steal a used space heater when you could have bought one at your local Wal-Mart. And besides, I visited your Mom on Friday, remember? If Katie needed help in Calc, I think she would have mentioned it to *me*.”

“And just what are you implying?” I narrow my eyes at him.

“I’m *implying* that the only reason you got such good grades in Calculus is because I spent hours explaining it to you. I wasn’t even *in* Calc then; I was a only a junior.”

“Whatever,” I groan, trying to calm myself down. I’m afraid we’re going to be thrown out of the reception for being so loud. The warm, secure feeling sweeps over me again when I turn back to him. “I came home for all the right reasons.”

The knowing smile returns to Alex's face as he sighs, almost contently. "You know, sometimes I miss you, Sarah."

No words are coming. It's a perfect moment; it's almost exactly the fantasy I've played out perfectly so many times in my mind. I've been honest with him, I've told him exactly where I stand—it was a perfect opening argument, and now I can feel myself freezing up again. I want all the emotion to come out. I want to ask him if we're being completely honest with each other now, if I can tell him how much I think about him, how often I lie awake and ask, "What if?" I wonder what he'd say if I told him all the things you don't tell people, like the Rice-A-Roni and how he should be at Harvard more than I should. But something inside stops me; a warning light goes off in my head. I like whatever we're doing too much to ruin it by wanting more.

"If I could just have everyone's attention please," a deep voice interrupts. I turn to face the head table where the best man stands with his glass raised, prepared to make his toast. As he begins explaining how long he's known the groom and never thought he'd live to see this day, I find I can hardly concentrate on his words. I try to make sense of what just happened, trying not to focus on what could have been the biggest missed opportunity so far.

I'm still lost in thought when the best man finally finishes his speech. "So here's to the happy couple!" I have to bite my lip to stop myself from laughing as everyone sips their wine, waiting to see if anyone grimaces. I can't look over at Alex or I know we'll both start laughing again.

"To Natalie and Christian!" everyone echoes, applauding and laughing. Alex turns to me and holds out his glass.

"To space heaters," he begins. Neither of us can keep a straight face as we dissolve into laughter. Alex quickly regains his composure and continues. "To space heaters, to cow pajamas, to *Haa-vad*, and to you, Sarah."

I hold up my glass. "To hell with *convenient* relationships," I can't help but throw him an "*I told you so*" kind of smile or contain more laughter when he rolls his eyes. "To knowing what you want, to Slurpees and to bad wine, to med school applications, and here's to you, Alex."

The words aren't profound or poetic, but when our glasses touch and Alex looks up at me, I realize there's no reason for them to be—and there never has been. There's not one word I can say, clichéd or otherwise, that Alex doesn't already sense. He knows everything I'm thinking, most everything I'm going to say five seconds before the words leave my mouth.

No matter how uncomfortable I get at the thought of the two of us being alone together, once we are, the apprehension melts away, and it's just Alex, the same guy who beat me at Monopoly, the same guy who used to borrow my CDs and never return them. He recognizes my wicked smile. He's categorized every expression, every motion. And I've let myself forget he knows me better than I know myself. I suddenly realize that my fantasy is completely useless because Alex already understands all of the emotions I can't seem to put into words. Maybe not in the grandiose terms or phrases I dreamt of using, but he gets the general idea of everything. I can see it in the crooked smile.

Another voice from the head table brings me down to reality. "If all of the single ladies would gather in the far corner by the stairs, Natalie's ready to throw her bouquet!"

I watch, silent, as a large crowd of women makes its way to the corner, laughing and challenging each other. Alex stares at me, as if he's waiting for me to jump up and join them.

"I can't help but notice—" he muses, "That you're not hurrying over there."

"I'm really not in the mood to get pushed around," I snort. "See, as soon as the flowers fly from Nat's hand, it's going to turn nasty. They'll turn into a ruthless mob, complete with pushing, shoving, biting, and punching—it doesn't matter whose nose you break just as long as you walk away with the roses. I'm fine right here, thanks."

"Maybe you're just afraid of catching it," he suggests.

"I'm not sure where you're going with this," I point out. "Are you going to be in some big rush to catch the garter?"

"That entire tradition doesn't make much sense, does it?" He has that look in his eyes, as if he's about to launch into a detailed explanation. "I mean, generally you could consider catching lingerie getting lucky—no pun intended."

"Right."

"But this is the lingerie of a married woman, so it's useless. I want to see the scientific evidence the percentage of newly wedded men that caught a garter at a wedding, show me numbers."

"Yet I shouldn't expect statistical proof for bouquets?"

A strange, almost stunned expression spreads across his face, as if I've caught him off guard. "Fair enough," he shrugs, the deep brown eyes locking onto mine. "So, do you want to be like Natalie?"

"What, you mean married, or blonde?" I joke, flashing back to my momentary jealousy of Nat earlier.

"Do you want the family, the house in the suburbs, all that?"

"I think so." I stare out at the dance floor. "But not today. Someday the house with the kids splashing around in the backyard swimming pool sounds nice."

"Someday?" Alex repeats, his gaze meeting mine.

"I'm pretty sure." I narrow my eyes a fraction at him. "What about you?"

He shrugs again, the familiar smile spreading over his face. "Not today," he repeats, looking distracted. "You really like it in Massachusetts?" he asks suddenly. "I mean, you'd recommend applying to Haa-vad?"

"Of course." I pick up a matchbook off the table. "And if they let me in, they won't even have to think twice about you. If that's what you want."

"Well, it's just that you've made it sounds so *nice*." He scans the table and hands me a pen, the grin reappearing on his face. "Would you be willing to give me your address so I can contact you if I have any further questions?"

“Absolutely.” I scribble my address and phone number on the back of the matchbook. “I live in one of the student apartment complexes called Holden Green. It’s really close to the law school though, so maybe you won’t live *right* next door.”

“Maybe I like walking,” he smiles, taking the matches from my hand.

“You could always call one of the offices to schedule a campus visit,” I remind him. I decide to skip my elaborate closing argument and throw myself on the mercy of the court. “Or, you could just come visit *me*.”

Alex sticks the matchbook in his pocket, the crooked grin reappearing on his face. I don’t have to elaborate, there’s no reason to go into all the implications of what I’ve just said. He understands completely, and he’s smiling back at me. We’re not saying a word, but suddenly things seem much clearer to the both of us. I can’t help but believe that at this moment we both came home for the right reasons, and that we’re both exactly where we’re supposed to be.



photo submitted by Amber English

The Measure of a Man

The crackle-finished steel boxes still stand at the rear of the garage, where Dad left them ten years ago when he retired. I drove up from Columbus for his retirement party and helped him unload them from the back of his pickup truck. We took the drawers out of the rollaway, lifted the boxes down, and put the drawers back in. Then he wheeled the rollaway to the back of the garage.

“That’s done,” he said. He locked both boxes and hung the keys on a nail. As far as I know he never opened them again.

My earliest memories are of him coming home from work. He came in the back door, sat down at the top of the basement steps, and took off his shoes. He undressed in the basement and threw his dirty shirt and pants into the corner for Mom to wash. She kept them separate from the other clothes because they were full of grease and grit. After he showered he put on pajamas, slippers, and an old terry cloth robe.

Mom had two cold beers ready for him, one on the kitchen table and one in the refrigerator. He gulped the first down in a single long swallow, then poured the second into a glass as he lit a king-sized Kool. He drank at a leisurely pace while he smoked three or four cigarettes.

When I asked him if he was tired Mom put her finger to her lips, “Shhhh,” she said.

After he stubbed out his last cigarette he kissed Mom on the cheek and me on the forehead and went to bed. I can still smell that mingling of beer and smoke when he kissed me.

After he died Mom said I should go through his tools and take what I wanted. I unlock the toolboxes and open the smaller, the one on top, and push the lid back, revealing a compartment running the length of the box. The contents are neatly arranged: a photo taken the day he retired, the flash reflecting back off his glasses; a Playboy calendar from 1989, the year Dad retired; and finally, four small rectangular blocks of hardened and ground steel with Dad’s name stamped on one side. I pick one up and find it surprisingly heavy; its edges and corners are sharp and I wonder what he might have used it for. I put one in the cardboard box, along with the photograph, to take with me.

In other drawers are pens and pencils, rulers and compasses, squares and micrometers, all sorts of measuring devices, and in another drawer a thick machinist’s handbook. In the rollaway box are the mechanic’s tools: Crescent and open end wrenches, ball peen hammers, drift punches and pry bars, grinding stones, and some tools with which I am unfamiliar.

The toolboxes stood on the U-line, where Dad was the die troubleshooter the last ten years he worked in the auto plant. When the Stamping Division celebrated its 75th anniversary open house, Dad took me through. It was summer and I was eight years old. I’ll never forget the noise: crash, bang, clang, and underneath it all a steady thudding sound. Or the smells of grease and oil and dirt. There was dirt everywhere, on the floor, on the sides of the presses, and on the

towmotors that hurried up and down the aisles. Above us cranes swung huge stamping dies in and out of the presses. When we reached the U-line Dad ducked under the yellow tape marking the tour route and went straight to the first shift man. He took a small notebook out of his pocket and showed something in it to the man. He pointed to the stack of steel, then to the press, then back to the notebook. The man threw up his arms and walked away, leaving Dad standing alone.

Sheets of steel went in the front of the press and came out the back, with a different shape, and dripping a milky-colored fluid. The men all wore glasses and long-sleeved shirts and gloves with gauntlets. The presses cycled up and down: thud, thud, thud. Parts went in and parts came out, dropping onto conveyor belts and moving to the next press. Always there was the steady hiss of escaping air. The noise scared me but when Dad came back he took my hand.

"I want to be a die maker, too. Just like you," I said when we were safely outside.

"No, you don't."

A small notebook with a grease-smudged leather cover catches my eye. The first thirty or so pages are filled with numbers and writing, in his small neat script. Information he used as a troubleshooter, I guess. But in the back are some items of a personal nature, some dates. The date he hired in at General Motors. The date he got his journeyman card. The date I was born. And there's one entry that catches my eye, that I can't forget. "Had a close call today." That's all it said. I never would have known what happened if I hadn't talked to Uncle Emil at Dad's funeral. He and Dad were talking about guys getting hurt and Dad told him a story.

According to Uncle Emil dad was working a roof die in a press when he heard a funny noise, like wood cracking. The magnesium safety blocks went flying and Dad dived out of the press onto the floor just as the press slammed shut. Dad said he was so scared he couldn't move. He just sat there until someone came to help.

I'm pretty sure I know when it happened. I was in high school. It was early evening and I was working on a history paper. I heard his car in the driveway and looked out. It was too dark to see much but I heard him and Mom talking.

"Did they send you home early?"

"No."

"What's that smell?"

"I messed myself," he said so softly I could barely hear.

"Oh, Karl."

I take the Playboy calendar out of the box and leaf through it. He crossed out each day that he worked, which left very few unmarked. He worked seven days a week for as long as I could remember, sometimes ten and twelve hours a day. The work was there, and he was glad to have it. "Hard times'll come again," he said. "You mark my words."

The week of the 4th of July is marked "SHUTDOWN." This was the only time he took

off, except for holidays, and we spent the week in Cincinnati, visiting relatives. My dad's family was German, and all of them were dead except for a couple cousins that we didn't claim. Mom's family was Hungarian. She was born after they came to the United States, but her brothers were all born in the old country, and worked as mechanics of one sort or another.

We stayed with one of them. In the evening the others came and brought their families. The women gathered in the kitchen and dining room, drinking rum and Cokes. The men circled their chairs around an old washtub on the patio, drinking beer or Uncle Leo's blackberry wine. They smoked and drank and ate, cutting off chunks of sausage and slices of cheese with their pocketknives, and making sandwiches with soda crackers. When the first light of dawn came the washtub was full of empty cans; the men rose and stretched and went off to work.

I didn't notice that Dad was different until I was older. We kids weren't allowed to hang around the men, but we had two tents in the yard near the patio, one for the boys and one for the girls. We hid in the bushes and listened to the men talk about forming sheet metal parts for cars: fenders and hoods and roofs, of forging axles, and of overhauling engines and bleeding brakes. And they talked of women. "My boss's secretary, she got the biggest bazzooms you ever see. I like to slip some sausage in her," Uncle Rudy said.

One night, late, I had to get up to go to the bathroom. I walked past the men wearing only my jockey shorts.

"Hey, Davey." Uncle Rudy pointed to my tiny erection. "You a big man already," he said. He grinned and shook his fist with his arm bent at the elbow, and even my dad laughed.

When I was older I noticed that Dad always sat at one end of the semi-circle of men around the wash tub. There wasn't any physical separation between him and the next man, but even as a child I sensed that he was not a part of the group. Uncle Emil, always the good host, tried to involve Dad in the conversation. "What do you think, Karl?" he'd ask when they were discussing a metal draw or trim condition.

"I don't want to talk 'shop'," Dad always said.

He'd drink three or four beers and eventually drift off to sleep, the event signaled by the rip-saw-sound of his snoring. His hands were folded across his belly and his chin slumped down on his chest. Uncle Emil brought a blanket from the house and draped it over Dad and carefully tucked it in around him. The brothers talked quietly, and smoked and drank, until time to go to work.

I hoped to get to know him better when he retired, hoped he would open up a little. But after he pushed his tools to the back of the garage he sat down in front of the TV with a Bud and a pack of Kools. The only time he was out of his pajamas was when he took a shower.

When I came to visit he was watching a John Wayne movie, Rio Bravo, I think. I sat down on the couch next to his Lazy-Boy.

"Hi, Davey," was all he said. He lit another cigarette, and tapped it on the green ashtray, even though there was no ash yet. The skin under his chin hung in folds, and on his face matched the color of the ashes in the ashtray.

"How're you doing, Dad," I finally said.

"Hunh?"

He wouldn't take his eyes off the screen, so I went to the kitchen and sat down with Mom. She'd quit smoking but still liked her rum and Cokes.

"He won't let me get close," I said.

"Me, either."

"I'd like to get to know him."

"Good luck."

Lung cancer finally took him. Near the end he said, "Morphine's a God-send, Davey. Without it, it hurts like hell. But it binds me up so bad my bowels don't work anymore."

The shiny block of steel stands alone in a corner of the cardboard box. I wonder about its purpose, what he could have used it for. I pick it up, and again am surprised by its weight. It's heavy and smooth and inscrutable; there's no telling what lies beneath its surface. I put it back and arrange the mechanic's tools next to it, holding each one for a moment, trying to draw from it some sense of the man and of his life. The 12" Crescent wrench is open part way, scarred from use, with grease still in the crevices. I slide the tips of my fingers over the initials KJK that are etched on the handle. They're still rough, though they must have been there for forty years. I run the jaw back and forth, and a tingle goes up my arm. I'm a logical person, like my dad, and I know this all sounds too sentimental, but these tools are all I have of him. On impulse I put the other three blocks in the cardboard box.

Sometimes I think I should have been the die maker. I love working with my hands, and I think I have a knack for it. I work on my cars every chance I get: change oil and brake pads, replace spark plugs and wiper blades.

Every Sunday morning after Mom left for Mass Dad pulled the car up under the soft maple tree. He spread an old flannel baby blanket on the fender and hung a trouble light from the hood latch. We cleaned and gapped the plugs, checked the points and belts, and tightened all the bolts and screws. When we were done he wiped every speck of dirt and grease off the engine, then did the same with his tools. He worked steadily and paid attention to details, yet I always wondered why we never got into the "guts" of the engine. When I noticed the water pump leaking and suggested that we replace it he said he would take it to the garage. "They'll know what to do," he said. "If they break a bolt they'll be able to fix it. We don't have the tools." I never could figure if he lacked confidence or he just didn't want the hassle.

I plan to use the same tools my father used, and over time hope to have some of the same experiences, feel some of the same feelings, maybe even know some of the same things. I know this is a long shot, but in time, I hope to come to know my dad.

I kiss Mom goodbye and put the box of tools in the trunk of my car. I catch the interstate and head back toward the city. I have a good job, good pay and benefits, just like Dad did. But it

MCKINNEY

occurs to me that I'm crossing off the days until retirement just like he did, and hating my job just as much as he did.

Back in my apartment I set the box on the kitchen counter, open a beer, and flip on the ball game. It's the Reds and the Cardinals. In another ten years I can retire. It's always been something to look forward to, but for the second time today, I wonder. Are my dad and I more alike than not? Or am I just imagining that our lives are so similar?



photo submitted by Amber English

Camp, 1944

I remember the cold. Cold so hard it would drip under the seven fingernails left growing on my hands and stab shards of pain under them. My hands were bony and aged looking, far too scarred for a fifteen-year-old girl to be carrying around. One fingernail had been snatched my first day in camp, minutes after departing the railcar, when my grandmother's emerald ring was yanked, pulled from my finger with such vengeance and greed by a uniformed Nazi that my knuckle skin and my soft fingernail went with it.

I had no time to dwell on my losses—the childhood spent scurrying among the back alleys of Berlin, hiding, losing my family one by one. In camp there was no time to spend on anything but pursuing what knowledge I could about the rules and expectations of this camp. I stowed it away in my mind and trained my responses so I could survive, not forever, not for years, but for the next period of the day, the next eighty minutes. Survival was clocked in minutes and success was a two-hour period when no one noticed me, looked at me, made mental notes about me, touched me.

Untouched, I made the journey from back-street life to this camp Heinderwitz, the camp of old Jewish men and young Jewish women. One other type of female did roam here, Nazi matrons, many of them lesbians, more feared by the young gas-camp girls than the Nazi men. The men would rape, dole out a treat—a cookie or cracker—and leave. The females fondled your belly, rummaged your private parts with their full finger-nailed hands. The Nazis hated homosexuals almost as much as Jews, patching them with pink triangles. These women avoided detection, never accosting in public areas, only in hallways or behind trees where you were yanked and violated and shoved aside. The most hated woman in my section of the camp was Marguerite, a squat, black-haired Nazi who looked more Jewish than I did. She took great joy in her job of shoving filthy pieces of cloth at me, as long as I still had enough body fat to produce monthly cycles. She held out her hand for coins, for money she knew I didn't have, then laughed roughly as she refused me the clean bits and pieces of used fabric she portioned out to her favorites.

Clear-skinned and well-bosomed girls fared better than most in this camp. One morning my breakfast included broth—only for me, in a crowded bunkroom of thirty or more women. The broth was cold, topped with worms of gray fat that slithered their way across the top of the dipper and dropped into my tin cup as it was doled out only to me. I could feel myself being watched. I dared not slip the broth to my friend, Gretel, stalking death in a body broken by sixteen-hour days spent shoveling coal for the officers' houses or digging in the burial pits. Gretel was pregnant with a Nazi half-breed and counted each day she lived a triumph. I tipped the filthy cup and drank the broth quickly, the taste of rancid mutton fat triggering involuntary spasms in my stomach. I knew the broth was a treat, fat in it a special signal. I kept my eyes down as I was taken away from my group, away from the place where I had managed to survive and marched across the camp, beyond the paths where boxy German cars and a few English MGs roared and rumbled with important people on urgent missions.

I walked. Every now and then the troupe of young women was halted and another bunkhouse entered by three of the guards, returning in what seemed only seconds with several more young women. The quick turns and the sudden orders to halt kept me off balance. I fought to walk secure, not stumble, not call attention to myself. The guards were young, probably less than a couple of years older than myself. Energy oozed out of them; you could smell their cleanliness, their health, both proof they were showering daily and eating well. Uniforms were exact, buttons polished to a gleam and boots worn with young authority, stomping and quick.

The guard who marched beside me, then behind, then just one step ahead, was one of the privileged Aryan types, blond and blue-eyed, probably culled from his youth group and given this job to keep him from fighting on the Russian front. I looked at his acceptance of his duties of herding half-naked, cold and undernourished Jewish girls, and wondered if he would ever acknowledge his soul.

Starvation, rape, beatings. The despair of squalidness had pushed pain so deep inside my eyes were brown holes, letting no secrets out. I expected no pleasure, no bread, nor even sleep. I sought only to be invisible. The contrast was great. The guard was ready for the world's attention, its applause.

We were stripped and pushed toward showers, the matrons handing out hard, yellow soap for the right hand and pouring lice-killing shampoo into our left palm. The water was cold but the concept of cleanliness was flooding through me. I stopped not to look around, or to rebel or notice anything but to grasp the opportunity offered, and accepted, to become clean. I was jealous, carefully guarding, of the dollop of shampoo, lathered it hard on my head, wasting not a drop, scrubbing where hair was once again trying to grow after the last shaving, the head where lice lived and body mites roamed.

Rough towels were issued for drying. I could feel my inch-long hair squeaking with cleanliness. I was pointed toward a line. I stood, still, in my bare feet, as the cold from the cement floor snake-slithered up into my body. I was issued a robe, knee length, made of gray rayon, and I belted it snugly. It appeared to be new. I dared not let worry enter my mind, nor question the consequences of a new robe. I ordered myself to stand motionless for as long as I could.

The matron yelled; I moved in step, playing my invisible game, as my line entered a room filled with furniture. We stood. The overstuffed parlor furniture remained silent and empty. The room was big and easily held the three sofas and fifteen or twenty easy chairs placed around the edges of the room, in areas defined by red and black oriental rugs. We stood in the center of the room, less valuable than the brown plush furniture sent from Berlin.

Late morning, when the effect of the broth had worn off and the constant rumbles of hunger returned, I was pulled from my line, with three other girls, all of us with rounded hips and mature breasts. Herded once more, we marched to an old farmhouse on the edge of the compound. We were hurried to the second floor and led into what appeared to be a hospital ward. Iron cots rusting, covered with filthy, inch-thick mattresses of gray and blue striped pillow ticking

filled the room. A hole had been widened in the outside wall between two windows to accommodate a wide canvas sling-seat and a crane operated by pulleys.

Some cots were empty. A few held naked men. Although it was hard to determine age, they looked to be at least seventy. At the far end of the rooms, the cots were occupied with withered, shaking bodies of men. Two naked women, one on each side, clung close in their attempt to cover, to warm the man, their faces pushed into the foul mattresses, the trio over-filling the narrow bed.

A clothed guard raised his arms and pulled on the chains, hand over hand, setting the pulleys into action and dropping the chair-sling out the hole in the wall. The guard shouted and was answered from below. The chains reversed and another naked man, left in the cold for hours, was dragged through the window. He was beyond shivering, could not walk.

The door at the opposite end of the room opened, and a group of Germans strode toward the commotion at the wall opening. You could tell the difference between them and us; their hair was full on their heads and some wore glasses. All had clothing with buttons as well as shoes for their feet. The two men wore white doctors' coats, long, to their knees; the four or five women had shorter versions of the same double-breasted jacket, either linen or cotton, with a series of pockets spread down the left side. The women's legs glistened from the shine of rayon stockings rising out of black oxfords, substantial shoes, closed by black laces. Everyone in the group carried pieces of lab or medical equipment: beakers, thermometers, syringes, clipboards, stethoscopes. They surrounded the man brought in from outside, turned the unresisting body over and then rolled it back, chattering in staccato sounds.

I was ordered to strip. Another girl, barely thirteen, was pulled out of the group of three women and ordered to strip. We did so. I was proud to see that her head stayed as high as mine, her eyes revealing nothing.

We were ordered to get in bed, one on each side of the old man. A nurse read us instructions.

"You are to cover as much of this man as you can with your own bodies," she said. "It is your duty to warm him and bring him back to life. Do it now."

We got into the narrow cot and clung to the freezing body, our arms holding clammy skin that smelled of death. I heard snatches of conversation. This was an experiment for the glory of the Fuehrer and the honor of the Reich. The doctors and professors were gathering data to determine what temperatures the human body could fall to and still be warmed back to normal conditions, using a coarse salt rub and warmth from female bodies to stimulate circulation.

Liberation came eight months later. By then I no longer tallied the men who failed the experiment, who died, who were thrown away, forever to wander Ezekiel's valley, full of dry bones. I cradled the men, loving them at first, making them into my grandfather. Old memories winked at me, crept through my barriers, crooned to me. I invited these thoughts in occasionally; I sent them away when I could not cope. I struggled to warm the men. The Germans let them refresh themselves, fed them, gave them medicine, then slung them out the window to freeze again.

FITZGERALD

The doctors and the professors fled the camp and paddled off to South America when it became evident that the Fuehrer's glory, as well as any importance attached to this mad experiment, had been lost.

I have been clinging to frozen, dead men in my dreams for fifty-seven years.



photo submitted by Amber English

MAKE-UP

I see her sitting on a stool in front of the cosmetic counter. She has a white towel draped around her neck; her lank brown hair is pulled back from her face. The clerk, a thin dark-haired girl whose blood red lipstick dominates her pale face, is applying foundation to the woman's face and neck. The woman's eyes are weary and I know she is sorry she has agreed to the makeover. Get up and leave. I send a telepathic message to her. She glances at me, but I know she will not leave. She has found an identity in stoically enduring life's humiliations. I turn my head and take the escalator to home furnishings to buy a wedding gift for a former student—towels, I think.

I pick out an off white; the label says sea foam. Two bath, two hand, two washcloths. I like the sunflower yellow, but sea foam is safer. They are on sale and will add up to \$19.45 plus tax. I take them to the counter. Two sales clerks are talking. The one called Nancy asks if she can help. She has four red apples attached to her name card to indicate that she is good at being a sales clerk. She has frizzy gray hair and wears her glasses on a cord around her neck. I send her a message: Put your glasses on and keep them on. I know she receives the message because she puts them on. Her magnified blue eyes stare myopically at me. Her husband is an alcoholic and her teenage daughter is pregnant. Work is her escape.

The towels ring up at their regular price. She doesn't notice and hands me the sales slip to sign. I explain the error to her. Why didn't she say something, I wonder. She shakes her head in disgust; her gray curls bob up and down. "I wasn't watching," I reply. I check my anger because of her difficult home situation. She punches in the sale price, repeating the numbers loudly for my benefit. "I'd like a box, please." She compresses her lips into a straight line and we stand looking at one another for a moment. Finally she turns and goes into a curtained-off section behind the bath accessories.

Several messages are accumulating in my mind. I am only halfhearted in my attempt to contain them. My head has begun to hurt and as she returns with a box that will obviously be too small, I fling them toward her: stupid bitch, acatharsy; green carrion. The last two will confuse her. She is unacquainted with Shakespeare. I am surprised she remains so calm. She puts the box in the large green sack containing the towels and turns away. I take the bag without comment and go to the escalator.

As I pass by the cosmetic counter, I see the woman still sitting resignedly on the stool. A mask of makeup has obliterated her face. I know it is her though because of her hair. I know that she will go to the mall restroom and wash it all off. I consider a didactic warning: You cannot hide behind makeup. Changing your lipstick will not change your life. But I resist—too obvious. I prefer subtlety in these cases.

I wait for her in the restroom. She ignores me and begins to rub at her cheeks with a tissue. She bends over the sink and splashes water on her face. The water has turned pinkish

FIDLER

orange. I stare at her reflection in the mirror, but she has wiped away her face. She pats the blank oval dry with a paper towel and leaves. I notice she has left her package behind. I pick up the green bag and leave the restroom. I look for her in the mall, but she has disappeared.

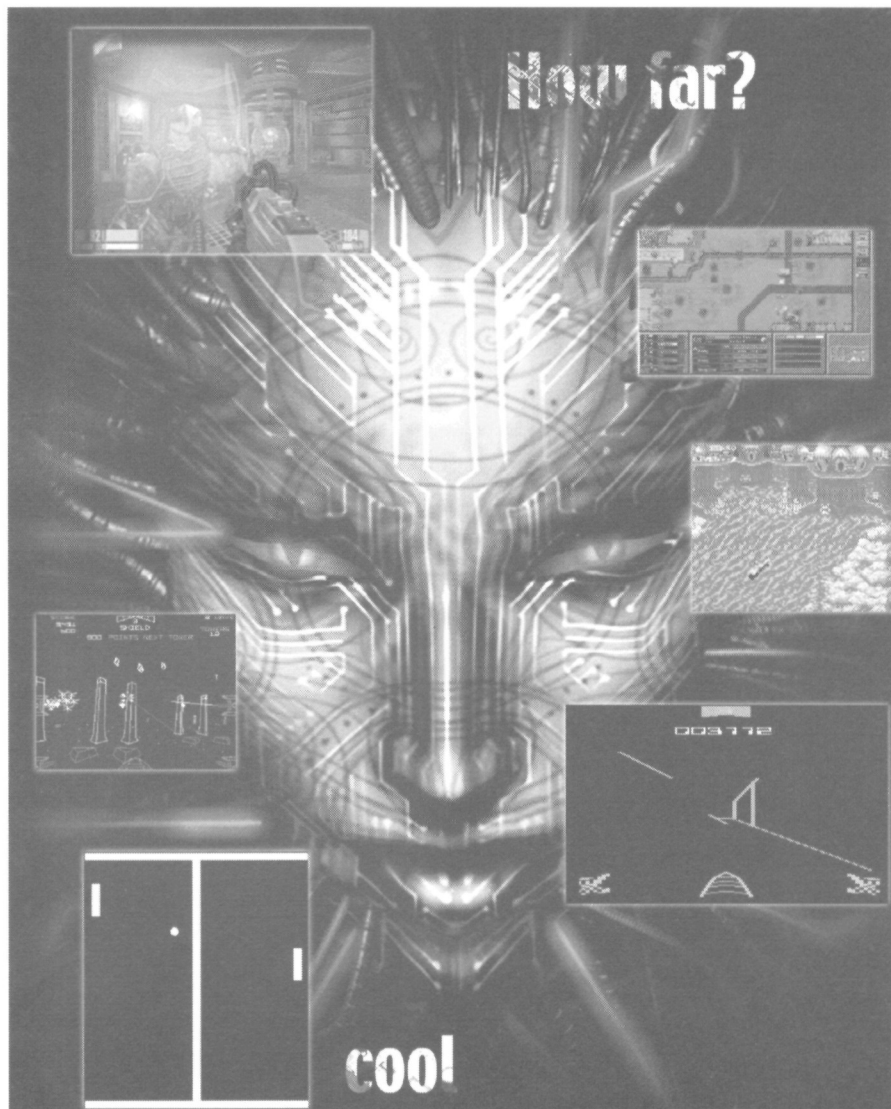


image created by Eric Evans

Contributors

Shielda Ballantyne is a 69-year-old housewife, mother of a son and daughter, both grown and married. She's happy to say she's "Grannie" of two sweet little ones, a boy and girl. Shielda took Christine Lorenz' Graphics class at OSU-Marion in order to work on old family photos that she plans to put in her family history. Before marrying 39 years ago, she worked as a photographer and darkroom technician before attending the Progressive School of Photography in New Haven, Connecticut. She worked as a photographer and darkroom tech for the Marion Power Shovel Company for over 12 years.

Shannin Bailey has been creating and telling stories since before she could write them down. She has never been more sure of anything than that her purpose in life is to write. At sixteen, she worked as a Student Intern at The Galion Inquirer, writing and reporting. She has won the Florence B. Allen Award in the short story category for two consecutive years, 2000 and 2001. Shannin is a fourth year English Major at Ohio State University-Mansfield and her goal and dream is to become a successful writer.

Tina Barber is an English major at OSU-Mansfield, where she is the Co-chair of The English Club and Managing Editor of OSU-Mansfield's literary journal, *Immaculate Cauldron*. Tina has always been compelled to write poetry and fiction. Her two goals in life are to raise her son well in a crime stricken world and to make substantial contributions to the body of contemporary literature.

Laura Behne is a forever student at OSU-Marion. She is pursuing a degree in English.

Stephen Buttermann is a resident of Mars who makes frequent visits to Earth to enjoy human company and to attend OSU-Mansfield. This year he is serving as the managing editor of *Immaculate Cauldron* the new literary journal at Mansfield-OSU. Next year, he will enter an MFA program somewhere, but that is next year and he will "carpe diem." He is so glad to appear in the *Cornfield Review* again!

Thomas Cloutier is a contributing editor to the *Cornfield Review* and sometime student at OSU-Marion. Judging by his current pace, he should graduate around 2025. When he is not in class scribbling away mindlessly, he is planning his upcoming wedding and trying to get his yellow lab, Murphy, to stop chewing him to pieces.

The **Collaborative Poem** was written by students in Stuart Lishan's Spring 2000 English 565 class.

Saretta Daniels is a senior at OSU-Marion. Her short stories have been accepted for publication in *Dragon* magazine. She is currently working to have another story published in *Sword and Sorcerous* by Marion Zimmer Bradley.

Brianna Dawn Elam is 20 years old and is a junior at OSU-Marion. Her major is undecided. This piece of art was created in a Digital Manipulation (Art 450) class during Winter '01. The theme incorporates a quote from Vincent Van Gogh, "Great things are not done by impulse, but by a series of small things brought together." Brianna chose not to apply the quotation literally as in text, but to incorporate it into her piece. In this piece, she wanted to explore techniques that she had rarely used on her previous works, such as brushes, textures, shadows. She simply took an ordinary photo and redid it as if Van Gogh had painted it. The original photo stands as the background, while the Van Gogh imitation sits in a center embossed/beveled box. Showing the two together reveals the visible differences between the two artistic styles and creates something wonderful.

Eric Evans is a major in landscape architecture at main campus. He's been interested in art all his life.

Cindy Fidler took advantage of OSU's "Over 60" program and took Jacki Spangler's Fiction Writing class at OSU-Marion. "Make Up" was written for that class.

JoAnne Fitzgerald is a literary presence on the OSU-Marion campus. She has a degree in American History and participates in OSU's "Over 60" program.

Jay Idle is a junior at OSU-Newark where he's majoring in Journalism.

Rachael Johnson is a junior majoring in English. She attends the Marion, Delaware and Columbus campuses. Rachael dreams of becoming an accomplished author and credits Stephen King for her interest in writing.

Dan Kiely is a sophomore and loves to write.
You can email him at knowsbleed@yahoo.com.

Don Langford teaches in the English Department at OSU-Newark. His poems have appeared in *The Lowell Review*, *Petroglyph*, *Spring Street*, *Olentangy Review*, *Kaleidoscope*, *The Insomniac*, and *Planet Pop*. He won the American Poets Association Award in 1987 and the William Redding Memorial Poetry Award in 1992. He is completing a book of poems entitled *In the Light of the Full Moon*.



image created by Jon Willey

Douglas Lewis is not the main character in this sentence, you are.

Fred McKinney has been writing fiction for many years and has been published in *Immaculate Cauldron*. He is recently retired from General Motors after working 34 years as a die maker and is a part time student at OSU- Mansfield. His secret desire is to get rich writing novels, but he finds writing short stories easier and more enjoyable.

Hank Osborne is a newcomer to creative writing. His experiences while growing up in Cleveland, especially in the social unrest in the 60s, have influenced his writing. He drew on some of the angst that his generation, the baby boomers, has felt about what the 60s did or didn't do to create a more enlightened world. Hank joined the Army to escape some of the drugs and crime that were endemic in the housing projects where he grew up. He has attended college from time to time over the years; he hopes to complete his undergraduate studies and go on to graduate school. Currently, he is an English and History major, and his ultimate goal is to make a living writing books—fiction and academic books. But he's an aging hippy, so who knows?

Jeremy Secrist is a senior English major at OSU-Mansfield. His poetry has appeared in the first annual issue of *Immaculate Cauldron*, OSU-Mansfield's literary journal. Jeremy is this year's first-place winner of Mansfield's Florence B. Allen poetry and short story competition.

Ben Waters is a junior at OSU (at least he thinks he is; he probably should keep track of those things). He is a theater major who now faces the dreaded "Early Morning Commute" from Marion to main campus. Writing is a kind of hobby for him, though he is keenly interested in it. It may, in the future, allow him to write scripts for himself when none are readily available. He is currently working on a thirty minute one-man play, *Abacore: The Enchanted Tumor*. You are all invited to its premiere, whenever it may be.

Jon Willey is a student at OSU-Marion.

Laurie Wise attends OSU-Marion where she is majoring in English. She has a degree in Nursing and has been a registered nurse for twenty years. She has worked mostly in hospitals but she is currently working at a nursing home. Some of her interests include art, theater, books, hiking with her dogs, socializing, and conversation.



image created by Jon Willey

New Name Contest

Cornfield Review is shucking its title

For over twenty-five years, *Cornfield Review* has published the work of poets and writers not only from Ohio but from all over the nation. Reestablished in 1997 as a student publication of the Marion, Mansfield, and Newark campuses, *Cornfield Review* took on a new identity; student editors have strived to reinvent *Cornfield* as a publication of innovative poetry and fiction, graphic and representational art. Please help us to usher *Cornfield Review* into the new millenium with a new name, one that reflects the quality of our literary and artistic content as well as the spirit of the new age.

It's simple: Fill out the entry form below and mail it to *Cornfield Review*, OSU at Marion, 1465 Mt. Vernon Avenue, Marion, OH 43302. Entries will be accepted until March 1, 2002.

Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

Suggested title: _____

poetry

jay idle

don langford

thomas cloutier

jeremy secrist

collaborative

laura behne

tina barber

rachael johnson

ben waters

saretta daniels

dan keily

stephen butterman

douglas lewis

fiction

shannin bailey

hank osborne

laurie wise

fred mckinney

joanne fitzgerald

cindy fidler

