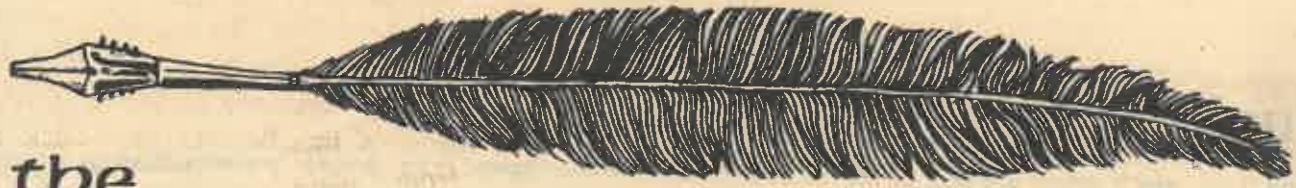


SUSQUEHANNA UNIVERSITY



the apprentice WRITER



\$1

Steve Savad

Introduction

This is our second issue, which means this part of the publication can be much shorter. If you read our first issue, I hope you will find this one to be even stronger; if you are seeing THE APPRENTICE WRITER for the first time, I think you will discover the same excellence in the writing and photography that we did.

I want to say again that we mean this publication to be used as a teaching tool, that we encourage teachers to reproduce whatever seems appropriate. Likewise, I want to encourage future submissions (we received about 2,500 entries this year) to a publication that is devoted exclusively to the writing of high school students and is distributed to over 3,000 high schools throughout the Middle Atlantic States.

Susquehanna University and Ottaway Newspapers are both committed to writing excellence. We believe that this second issue of THE APPRENTICE WRITER will be practical as well as enjoyable,

encouraging even greater participation by student writers and artists in our third issue.

We welcome submissions of poetry, short fiction, essays, interviews, feature articles, editorials, photographs, and artwork by students in grades 10-12. Send material to Gary Fincke, Writing Program Director, Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove, PA 17870. The deadline for submitting is February 15, 1985. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for return of photographs and artwork. We will announce acceptances on April 25, 1985. We also invite teachers to submit short essays on the teaching of writing.

THE APPRENTICE WRITER is published through the generous support of Ottaway Newspapers, Inc. and the printing facilities of THE SUNBURY DAILY ITEM.

THE APPRENTICE WRITER
Number 2 1984

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LOGO DESIGN

Carolyn Gienieccko

THE APPRENTICE WRITER is published annually by Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove, PA 17870, and Ottaway Newspapers.

Hush, December

We went with
something to buy
but nothing in mind,
and the rain came down as ice
from an aimless sky.
We drifted on a wet, black road
to see how pointless we could be,
and aimed ourselves in no direction,
surrounding each second
with a ring of light.
Sometime this ride would
be a memory
and nothing more,
and nothing more
than that.
Now a moon
comes through the trees
as a circle of frost
under shivering leaves,
and we have come back empty-handed
to stay.

Allison L. Blyler
Ridge H. S.

On Watching A Downy Woodpecker

I know with the
side of my mind
that puts everything in its place
that I have many more important things to do.
But autumn air has frozen me
to this spot,
beneath the pastured dogwoods,
he hops on a poplar trunk
with illogical upside-downness,
claws clinging tighter than any vine.
And I hold my breath, so he
won't hear my presence
and spread his wings
to be gone in a single rustle,
like a paper checkerboard
made in boredom on an
autumn afternoon and left to
blow away.
And I shift my feet ever so softly.
There are dogwood leaves in my hair,
causing the important things
to fade.
The evening shadow and dawn-feathered
bird on the poplar trunk finally
hops right side up.
I am chilled like a rose bush
the morning after a frost,
but pastured-branches are holding
me in their grasp, and
I am hypnotized.

Allison Blyler
Ridge H. S.
Basking Ridge, NJ

Patricia Lee Gauch

A View

What a
leafy, chilly
thing it is
to be on a bench
with a streetview.
Here is where
I learn
that people can cross
without looking
and live.
That woman, crossing now, has
one small leaf
stuck to a sweater-thread.
Another wears
only spring colors.
Autumn now,
you fool, read the air.
A capped man
reads it for her.
"Mighty cool," he says,
"The garden died this morning."
In the frost, I assume--
sappy zucchini frozen into long green rocks.
He looks at me, sideways.
What a glance, old man.
To him I must seem just
young and hungry
with my teeth
in an apple.

Allison L. Blyler
Ridge H. S.

Notes on An Old Store

It used to be something else.
Now these floors
and shelves of Kellogg's Cornflakes,
Delmonte Beef Stew,
smack of newness,
plastic and business.
But the beams
are oak, brown and old
with original cracks
stretching up
to a young ceiling.
The owner wears bifocals.
"Here's background for you," he says,
and he holds an old ad--
Somebody's Grocery-Seventeen Something.
"We're keeping up," he says,
so I call him proud,
but comparisons fail.
He doesn't seem a man
with use for them anyway.
He'd put them in a grinder,
or barrel them.
He'd hide them
among cardboard boxes
and bags
in one of the corners
he's known for years.
"Sure," he says,
"We've been here forever."

Ridge H. S.

Allison L. Blyler

After The Crash

After the crash
 Mommy sagged
 Glasses skewed crazy-angle on the dashboard
 Hard asleep.
 No Fish n' Chips after all,
 thought I, irrelevant.
 And placid pieced the street together
 around the cobwebs on the windshield.
 Mom! A primal dismay
 crowded the silence
 out of my ears, babbling
 it is too close, I have never seen a car
 so close before.
 Speaking through clenched gates, for fear
 I'd find myself
 bleeding or broken
 Don't disturb!
 A black lady ballooned into the window
 from nowhere,
 Scary thick gauze clamped my eyes,
 (Wigs off, nodded-forward heads in the back)
 She lay
 Bent too far the wrong way and groaned--
 horrible sound!
 Where are I'll close my is she
 Won't someone call me a brave girl?

The frog deep down
 makes jabs,
 hurls broad hands and rails
 compels me
 shout!
 I do not--
 Gliding down the bright halls,
 scaring my bitten face out at
 passersby
 I deny the chamber in my mind which offers
 Mommy
 sagged and smocked in tiny blue diamonds.

Ms. Paula Roy

Eva

Eva lies on the floor
 With her hair spread out in the sun.
 Eva knows what she wants.
 She falls asleep
 And dreams dreams about the sea.
 And the things that live there.
 When she awakens,
 The sun has moved away
 And she is stiff and cold.
 The Luxury is gone.
 She huddles in a ball
 Shivering, and contemplating
 The strangeness of her situation.

Mr. R. Goimarac

Randi A Hansen
 Hempfield Area H.S.
 Irwin, PA

Nightmasks

shudder in the cold
 half-aspirin moon
 is so ice that
 fingers burn curl
 into knots
 from reaching
 white print on the sky.
 I am smog-breathed
 shivering
 and white-lighted
 from the moon and
 city lamps
 luminous on poles
 like eerie
 near-dead stones.
 Lights in buildings
 are stamps
 pasted in
 glow patterns
 straight-lined and
 irregular
 like my breath
 pushed through
 non-air.
 The moon is alone
 in the night-empty sky
 so cold.

Ms. Eileen Wall

Gabrielle Myers
 Pascack Valley H. S.
 Hillsdale, NJ

Tyrant

I have a secret
 Insanity
 Lurking in the shadows of my mind
 He hides from me sometimes
 But he can't evade himself
 The spiny body cowers in a dark corner
 Hollow red eyes glowing in a contorted face
 He talks to me sometimes
 But I can't understand
 The hysterical voice tears through my head
 My private demon
 I have a secret
 Insanity
 Hiding between myself and reality
 He toys with me sometimes
 But he can't fool himself
 A head twisting wildly with mad laughter
 Like a rider clenching the reins
 On a beast he'll never stop
 He lies to me sometimes
 But I know the truth
 The small round mouth twisting
 My secret Mephistopheles

Ms. F. Goldwater

Elizabeth Walsh
 Long Beach H.S.
 Long Beach, NY

Driving Past

We put our yellow boat into Lake Waban two weeks before it closed. Long before summer ended, the burnt, weary lifeguards pulled the rowboats and the diving rafts from the water, turned them upside down on the beach for the winter. But the days stretched long. My brother and I sailed in the afternoons. In the still, late summer haze puffs came few and slowly across the lake and I lay in the rocking pool of water on the bottom of the boat. The sun filtered pink through my eyelids. When a fleet of ripples came across the water, my brother sprinkled water on my face until I sat up. Sometimes we were moving quickly enough to turn and catch it, but more often we paddled furiously futilely with our hands or just hung over the edge, and watched the ripples drift quietly past, and lay down again.

We kept the rudder and centerboard in the trunk of the car, because at night, the bored summer boys would untie the moorings and take the boats for midnight sails under the low fat moon.

I learned how to drive last summer. Thirty hours of movies about singing truck drivers and retired racecar drivers; antique car collectors; stoned drivers leaving a wake of fallen orange safety cones, saying:

"Like wow, and I always thought I was in control when I was driving high;" flying limbs of dummies without seatbelts, slow motion, scattered glass.

I tested for my license at the Watertown registry where the motor vehicle officers are sympathetic and don't carry weapons. I had not looked forward much to my mobility, but who can help savoring the potential for motion and speed and for distance without bound?

I take back roads, neighborhood roads from our house to any place else. My mother says that the straight ways feel faster to her, more direct. We've never argued the point. It is just a small thing which separates us. When I drive, I take back roads. My road to the lake runs behind the Brown School. My brother went to sixth grade there. Last year, it was closed due to declining enrollment. Its windows are mostly boarded and some broken. But the town leagues still play softball in the lower fields in twilight during the summer.

One early afternoon, after lunch, I turned onto that road that runs behind Brown School. Swaying spots of light and shade moved across the gravel, and I knew there would be wind on the lake. A faint cloud of smoke or dust crept low across the road. This cloud was hardly visible; it formed a sort of haze on the lower part of my windshield. It floated from behind a high hedge

growing out into the road. I came upon it quickly, though I was not driving fast.

The houses, shuttered, shingled, slept safely away from the road. As I passed the hedge on my right, I saw a large white car tilted away from me. It had run over a low rock wall next to the driveway onto the dusty ivy covering the yard. It was frozen there, at that angle, awkward as a fallen refrigerator. The car hummed and smoked. Below the right rear tire lay a pile of stones dislodged from the wall. Squarely in the window, staring out at the road, at me, was a woman's white face, white hair. I remember that although her eyes were open, they had no color; their lurid whiteness leapt out at me. Her mouth was a spot of salmon color in her desert face. Her hands fluttered on the steering wheel. I looked at her and she seemed some pale, trapped insect.

The rudder and the centerboard were in the trunk and my brother was waiting for me to come and pick him up. I drove past. We were going sailing, on the lake; we would swim out to the boat because the lifeguards had already put the launches away, but the water was at its warmest now, almost tepid. We would catch the last puffs across the lake, in our yellow sailboard.

And I drove past the Brown School lower field where my brother had learned to play kickball and to cross the street safely, out onto main roads, and into town. My brother was waiting at the library, swinging his green backpack. He slid in next to me and turned on the radio, loud. We drove to the lake.

When we came out of the water, the sun was just behind the trees. We did not bring towels, but we were not cold in the still air. We did not change and our wet suits made dark stains on the seats. I drove home and took back roads again. We forgot to turn the radio on, so we rode in silence and the fading light. We turned down the road behind the fields at Brown School and lights shone in the windows of houses and there were cars on the street and in the driveways. In the front yard of the house with the tall hedges and the dark ivy, the stone wall was missing a piece and a pile of stones stood neatly stacked. The car was gone. In the driveway, a boy about five years old bounced a ball up and down. He wore a striped shirt; I could not tell the color, twilight had reduced the bright colors to greys. I drove by and turned left at the corner for home.

Leslie Tamaribuchi
Phillips Exeter Academy
David Weber

The Sparrow

I must have been about eight or nine. My family and I were visiting my grandparents for the weekend. I was sitting with my grandfather on his back porch and was starting to get bored. We were watching a flock of eight sparrows pecking at something on the lawn. My grandfather does not have much respect for living creatures. He worked as a butcher and has killed and slaughtered hundreds of animals.

My grandfather told me to bring him my BB gun. I knew what he was going to do. I went to the living room and picked up the gun from where I had left it, still loaded. My father was in the room and asked me what I was going to do. I answered him. He told me not to give the gun to my grandfather. I walked to the back porch and handed my grandfather the gun. I wanted to see what would happen.

My grandfather cocked the little rifle. He stuck the barrel through an open window. He sighted the gun on the nearest bird and slowly squeezed the trigger. The BB shot from the receiver through the barrel through thirty feet of air into the nearest little sparrow. The bird toppled over. The rest of the flock went right on pecking.

I opened the door and raced outside. Seven sparrows flew

away. One sparrow did not. I ran over to the bird and carefully picked it up. It was warm. It was still alive. I looked at it more closely. Dark red blood oozed from between the sparrow's soft brown feathers onto my hand.

"Bring it to the cellar," said my grandfather. I followed him down the cement steps leading from the outside to the basement. I wondered what he was going to do. He walked over to the furnace and opened the door. "Throw it in," he said. I stood there and didn't move.

"Throw it in!"

Slowly, I stepped toward the furnace. I glanced down at the small, helpless bird that was bleeding in the palm of my hand. I looked up at the orange and blue flames in the furnace. I raised my hand and shook the sparrow into the hungry flames. I quickly turned my head and stepped away. Then I went upstairs and washed the blood from my hands.

Craig S. Buterbaugh
James Madison H. S.
Vienna, VA

Mrs. Bernis von zur Muehlen



Susan Mackey

So This is Infatuation?

A world of intangibles
mingling with words that neither of us is listening to,
save for the crackle of pleasantries
floating down the hall.
Let's forget these obligations
Maybe I should apologize to the world.
No one deserves the burden of a paranoid fool.
(Yet I am secretly inclined to think, maybe...possibly...
what if?)

What if we didn't hide our thoughts, closing the shutters
and deadbolting the doors, but instead saw each one
spray-painted fluorescent pink in the clouds?
forms definition revision tradition
no

I'd like to blot melodrama from my list.
There are times I sit and think; just that.

You will not dissect me.
Trite, trite, trite, INUTILIS DICTU,
our remarks drip like weary misting drizzle into the
abyss of unknowing.
Define this variable:
and the variable is distance.
And the constants, feeling and pain.
not $x^1 + x^2$, but the obscure logic of eyes
that meet like a compass needle pointing to N.
"beautiful words" are well and good
but my thoughts are dry
and expression, wood
life is a chewed up pen cap

Emily Greenley
James Madison H. S.
Vienna, VA
Bernis von zur Muehlen

Angst

Who are you
 When all you can do
 is stare at walls and
 try to make them breathe?
 What do you do when
 you lean out windows
 and hear the world speak the
 gibberish of car,
 jet, people?
 Do you
 try to write of a
 black, thick night
 belching and crying?
 Oh, poet (or thoughtful one),
 you are grayed in,
 You cannot drink them in.
 You cannot swallow the
 drunken woman who stutters
 and slobbers or the
 ignorance of rich girls dressed in
 innocence and
 trying to be sexy,
 or a man
 whose anger is like
 the stale garbage:
 bursting, surrounding stench:
 you cannot
 swallow them into
 yourself or the poem.
 You are grayed in.
 When you cannot dig and bury yourself underneath
 and pull it in with you,
 then the dream is lost.

Mrs. Jane Cole

River Scene for Huck

Mississippi slaps its walls at every turn
 Gleeful, swift, mocking immobile arms of land;
 Pebbles click, spiral to the bottom
 bouncing rings against the banks where
 drunken roots sprout wildly
 bugs make bugs
 toad tongues flap, get caught on things:
 the sharp-edged grasses.
 A lone boy shoves for the center of the river,
 devoid of dreams.
 He left his mind behind with the smoke of a smothered fire.
 Some images persist--rusty saws, sacks of rocks
 Blue crabs tiptoe near the coast
 Snails and sticky things glunch around
 Wind, on an inhale, coats them with debris--
 Juicy leaves, nuts.
 As the boy works his paddle,
 Mud-people complain,
 Accidentally eating smaller relatives.

Alison Gant
 Kent Place School
 New Vernon, NJ

Andrea Shen
 Westfield H.S. Springfield, VA

Squirrels in Hartford

Scratching plastic feet
 in bed clothes
 I remember
 as I fed the sunned squirrels
 two porches up
 in our Hartford rented
 white mansion.
 Orange-autumned
 early mornings
 before
 Nursery school and
 Father's law school and
 Mother's and Michelle's oatmeal,
 the squirrels
 scratched
 my windows, my eyes.
 Tickling my fingers whitely
 squirrels chewed,
 and when the sun
 iced the tallest oak
 it was either
 breakfast
 or spring

Mary Lee Ruddle

Lisa Pelletier
 Northwood H.S.
 Silver Spring, MD

Beercans

You can find them
 where the pocked faces
 of NO HUNTING signs
 stare dimly
 from the fenceposts
 leaning into autumnal shadow,
 where a boy with a .22
 once skittered
 a Schlitz can up
 the path,
 his only kill
 bullet-ridden
 and bent,
 hardly noticed now
 amid the oak leaf litter;
 so rich with loam
 and the dark power
 of moist duff
 that mushrooms emerge,
 fashioned like ears
 pressed to the cool
 forest canopy.
 Listening closely,
 they might hear
 a chamber being loaded,
 then silence
 taking aim.
 Pointblank.
 Dead center.

Rick Wilson



Steve Savad

On Being Chic

*She is
a mascara-minded maiden
who carefully applies multi-
layered lips to her almost
empty face. Tiny pores
open wide to absorb
the bottled skin and
suddenly a new soul
slides into once-innocent eyes.
Laden lashes
blink at boys to be men,
shadowed smiles show
straight teeth
telling twisted truths.
Her tinted tossed
tresses catch the dim*

*starglow of neon lights
and shimmer gold-plated
and light-bulb bright.
She wears her dreams hugging
narrow hips and suffocating
thin thighs, and she always
collects fabulous phony
fantasies to pad her personality,
but sometimes she just melts
into a sticky pink blob on
the sidewalk in front of Bloomingdale's.*

*Marisa Schwartz
Roslyn H.S.
Roslyn, NY*

Mr. Vincent Razzore

Altered States

If my dad hadn't been such a great singer, or my mother's parents hadn't been the party-giving type, I probably wouldn't be alive. We are all children of fate, victims of circumstance. I often look at my life and wonder if things would be the way they are if, perhaps, one event had been altered.

For example, what would have happened if my father hadn't showed up for the party my mother's parents gave? Actually, that almost happened. See, my grandfather planned a picnic for his family and a small group of friends. Earlier that afternoon he realized he had forgotten to provide entertainment for the guests. Fortunately, he remembered the name of another family whose son sang in the church choir. It was pure fate that John Scanlon had just arrived home after painting the neighbor's house. My dad accepted the singing job with the understanding that he could wear his painting clothes. He went, sang, and thirty years later they have four kids, a house, three cars, and a dog.

Just think--what if my dad had had a sore throat and couldn't sing, or if my mom had been put off by his paint-speckled clothes?

Everything important seems to happen by accident. I met one of my closest and dearest friends by accident. Kim had just moved here with her husband, Larry, and her baby, Caleb. She had been attending my church for some time, but our paths never crossed. One evening she needed a babysitter while she and Larry went to a church meeting. She called the church to get the name of a teenager trustworthy enough to care for Caleb, and the secretary gave her my name. From that point on we grew together to form a bond of friendship which cannot be broken.

If I had been busy the night Kim needed me to babysit, would we have ever met? What if Kim didn't have a baby? Would we still have been so close? The questions are endless; the answers, however, are extremely limited.

Fate even seems to direct the important life decisions we make. I've recently been mulling over the possibility of college. Should I go? Do I have the money? However, the foremost question in my mind has been: What do I want to Be??? That question has been answered by another accidental event.

One afternoon my friend, Marie Hoefler, and I stayed after school to make up an anatomy exam. Marie hadn't been feeling well when we started the exam, but as time went on she felt increasingly worse. She began to turn a pale green and started to breathe heavily. I went to her to see if she was all right, but she was oblivious to everything around her. We sat together for what seemed like hours. I kept talking to her (sometimes yelling because she couldn't hear me) and taking her pulse.

The teacher and the other students were running around trying to contact parents, ambulances, and coaches. I, on the other hand, felt as if I were making a difference to Marie.

I followed the ambulance to the hospital and went with her to the emergency room. It turned out she was hypoglycemic, and soon would be feeling all right after proper treatment. (Smile)

I learned many things from that experience. But the most important thing I learned was where I want to go in life. I need to

give personal attention and care to other people. I am convinced that nursing is my career.

If I had been absent the day we took the makeup exam, I would never have helped Marie. Why didn't Marie go home if she felt sick, instead of taking the test? When I turn these questions over in my mind, I see fate as a block pyramid. The blocks are set in a pattern for a specific reason, and if one of the blocks is taken out, the whole pyramid falls down.

Fate also plays an important role in many stories I saw a movie last night in which a man was being stalked by a gang of hoods. In one scene the gang was going to shoot him through the window of his apartment while he was undressing. They aimed and fired, but at the precise second they fired the man bent down to pick up a sock. What luck!!

I think about that kind of accident often. Of course, this was only a story, but narrow escapes of this kind occur daily in real life situations. What caused that man to pick up his sock that second? Why, why, why? I keep asking myself: Why do things happen the way they do? It appears I have no apparent answers so I turn to other resources.

My mom tells me everything usually works out for the good. I think about that, and it makes no sense to me. Would it have been good if that man hadn't been wearing socks that day, and thus hadn't had anything to pick up? I quickly dismissed her answer.

My brother tells me it does not matter. He says I should not waste my time worrying about things I have no control over. Well, that is a silly attitude. Why, if people didn't try to control the uncontrollable, our government would be run by coup instead of elected representatives. I dismissed his suggestion as well.

My anatomy teacher tells me the only reason things happen the way they do is because we create the circumstances with our subconscious. So, what we really want or need to happen, happens. That sounds good, but not quite tangible. What if I really want and need fourteen-thousand dollars? Does that mean I would automatically win a lottery?

I've come to the conclusion that I'm the only one who can satisfactorily answer my questions.

I was conceived and born, and will be a nurse (if I don't get shot through a window, first, that is!) because it happened. It wouldn't matter if I weren't me, because I wouldn't know who Kelley Bush Scanlon was anyway. I would be Joe Smith, only concerned with the microcosm of Joe Smith.

As far as my choice of career, friends, and marriage partner, I really don't have control over the way these decisions will come about, but I do have control over my own faith, and I trust that in addition to the bad in my life, there will at least be an equal amount of good. After all, my father did make it to the party.

Kelley-Bush Scanlon
Springbrook High School
Silver Spring, MD
Mrs. Carol L. Reinsberg

Untitled

*Did I ever tell you?
I have a mind of my own?
I keep it on a leash.
But I take it out on the weekends.
And, we roast marshmallows on an open blaze,
and he fetches a stick for me.
Then we take long walks,
and I let him chase rabbits.
He is very good.
But now he is gone,
He has broken his leash!
He's probably off having fun, with all the girls.*

Fred Jordan
Bensalem H. S.
Bensalem, PA

Mrs. A. Sneeringer

Church Step

*Outside the
United Methodist Church
a yellow jacket
two-steps
over stone,
meets the rot
of old apple,
and sips.
He tips in flight
around the steeple.
Inside there are
bee wings
in dust
under the pews.*

Ridge H. S.

Allison L. Blyler

Only Hurt Turning Hard

Fourteen hours in a car is just too long. I mean, Cadillacs are supposed to be comfortable, except when the entire family--six in all--decides to cram into it. This is what my family did for vacation, except it wasn't a vacation. We visited relatives in Michigan, and well--that's just not the same. I clung to the door and tried to read, but then I got a headache. The smooth glass window felt cool on my temples. At least Daddy let us enjoy air-conditioning. He's like that. When you spend money on luxuries, it's stupid to waste time trying to conserve them.

My mighty-man-of-a-father stands six feet four and a half inches tall, and his voice is that tall, too. Its stern tone leaves the listener stiff with alarm, if not trembling with fright. People see him, at first, as a monster with chocolate-brown skin and a lean, strong body, one without a heart, as if he could peel your skin off and not care. But over the years, the few I've lived, I have learned to tame his temper, and I've even been the reason for his showing his dimples, half-an-inch in depth on occasion! Looking into his black eyes, I am unafraid, encouraged to go on and do what Daddy calls 'making it.' So does everyone else, but from Daddy it means something more.

It had become a family ritual to stand in a semi-line in front of the ragged door to my grandmother's dusty house and wait our turns to be hugged and greeted. I was next to last, and last was my father. On my turn, I smiled sweetly while my grandmother (we call her Mutdear, which is her name) wrapped her soft obesity all around me and smothered me with her affection. Then, Daddy, known as "Brother" to his family, came and she squealed with pride. I noticed that she had those same dimples and charcoal black eyes. As she hugged him, his height was nothing in her arms.

Her house inside was like its shell. An old painting of "The Last Supper" dangled lopsided on the wall, like the shutter outside that threatened to crash to the ground. The sunken, smelly couch swallowed me, as the weeds and dandelions choked the grass outside. It needed mowing and Daddy probably would have done it had he not been cleaning her rusted fan. She had no air-conditioning, no ventilation, no illumination, except for the pale yellow that seeped through thin curtains. Dust covered the fan like the ivy that grew untamed by the driveway. This house once sheltered a mother and twelve children. Where was the strength, the foundation? My eyes scrutinized every pore of the rotten room and found one hope. There was a ragged picture of a man, beige and tattered at the edges. He was handsome, more so than my father, and his dimples showed without his smiling. He reminded me of a king, one with great power and ability. He had sired twelve children, fed them, clothed them, and built for them a decent home. This man raised my Daddy and planted in him the strength he had been given by his daddy, and so on back along the family line. I was no boy, but Daddy was giving it to me so I could make it. I didn't have dimples either, but I had stern black eyes and a lot of strength. I looked at the picture again and frowned, not out of anger or in thought, just to frown and maybe feel something.

I smelled bacon and butter biscuits, but I didn't think Mutdear was cooking. I could tell the place must always have smelled like that, mixed with dust, mildew and age. The more I thought about it, the more I wanted fresh air. I looked at my mother. She hated to see Daddy putting so much time, hard work, and love into cleaning that fan. She was always so protective, never wanting anyone to be hurt. How did she expect us to grow strong? Women, Daddy would say, are weak because they're afraid of being strong. I wasn't afraid. I was going to make it.

"Need some fresh water?" I blurted, trying to sound matter-of-fact. Somehow, though, my voice cracked.

"Yeah," his was strong.

"C'mon." I motioned for my little sisters to follow me, and happily they leaped from their bondage in those collapsing chairs.

"Mia, you're so pretty," Mutdear smiled stroking my hair as

I walked by. "All my pretty grandbabies."

"Thank you," we chorused, but I was offended. I wasn't a baby anymore.

We found a semi-clean bucket and poured scalding hot water from the faucet into it. I added ammonia for extra-strength and Spic-n-Span for the bubbles. Daddy had to have it that way. Boiling hot water and ammonia for power and bubbles to make it look good.

Joy, my baby sister, was climbing up on the counter after some hard candy. That kid had never been shy or afraid. I wondered, and then knew that she would make it in this world. I stuck a piece in my mouth and lugged the bucket halfway across the kitchen floor. The biggest room in the house was the kitchen. My sisters remained, stuffing the stale candy into their mouths, pretending to love it. I made it over to the doorway, where I stopped. I heard Daddy speaking in a broken voice, and on the smudged white wall I could see the shadows of his hands moving. He'd stopped scrubbing the fan, and now his calloused hands were a form of gentle expression. I listened for pieces of conversation.

"A highway?" my mother asked. "And they're destroying the whole block?"

"Yeah. They say it be faster to come through here to Detroit," came Mutdear's reply.

"Wimps," Daddy muttered bitterly. "I wish I had the time to fight 'em. We'll get you a place, Mutdear. You don't deserve this messed-up one anyway."

"Hush, Brother, don't be mad. It's only hurt turning hard," Mutdear comforted.

"Just let me think." The shadow got up and walked out.

We'd been there for over an hour. The fan was cleaned, a few shrubs trimmed, and the living room made a little more pleasant than it had been on our arrival. But in six simple months it would all be torn down. And what about Mutdear? Daddy knew. My sisters and I stood around the car, hinting of our enthusiasm to leave, while my mother talked with Mutdear. Where was Daddy? I looked around and spotted him under a tree in the far corner of the yard. He was staring in the other direction, concentrating on space. Then I knew that something was wrong.

When I was only ten years old and had to be rushed to the hospital for an appendectomy, Daddy had stared into space. He did it to be strong, I think. It was like the time he spoke at his grandmother's funeral. There was my Daddy, as brave as any warrior, saying the most moving things about our great-ancestor, and as long as he stared at the door, he shed not one tear. It wasn't until he looked at his sister that he weakened. That's why I forgave myself for crying before the appendectomy. We're all entitled once.

When Daddy turned around, I looked right into his eyes and something ripped inside of me. Daddy's black eyes were melting brown, burning with hot tears. He couldn't be weakening, he, who was always my strength! I stared as hard as I could into those brown eyes daring them to affect me. No way, my eyes were so hard and cool that tears could only sizzle briefly on them before freezing. They'd never reach my cheeks. Not now, not later, not ever. I was going to make it, and like Daddy taught me, it was going to look good.

"It's only hurt turning hard," a voice haunted my mind all the way home. We'd return in three months to get Mutdear. She would come live with us and sleep in my bedroom. I had offered it. Besides, I had been dying for a basement-bedroom anyway. Things would get tougher later, I knew, but I would be ready. For now, I could just remember Daddy's dimples drawing the wet from his cheeks when I had offered my room. Satisfied for now, I stared through a tinted glass window at the purple skies as we rode home.

Monica Griffin
James Madison H. S.
Vienna, VA

Bernis von zur Muehlen

In a Day's Work

When he woke up that morning, Munsen knew something was wrong. It had something to do with his face. . . . Yes, something was definitely wrong with his face. It felt weirdly tight, and when he went to look in the mirror--when he looked very closely--his suspicion turned to fear: there were tiny yellow dots swarming all over his skin. No, some were yellow--others were pink, or red. But Munsen wasn't about to get overly concerned; he had had purple ones on his face last week. Surely yellow ones weren't half as noticeable. . . . At work last week, everyone had stared at him--probably because of the little purple dots. Of course, everyone always stared. Always. They thought he was weird. A day never passed without someone scrutinizing him. Sometimes, he even thought the little dots had eyes. . . . But that was being paranoid.

Munsen laughed aloud, then frowned; it really wasn't funny; he could lose his job if the dots kept appearing. (Maybe they were just overgrown atoms!) Or he could be sent to some health clinic far away in the Swiss Alps, which would be disastrous; bearded doctors with beady eyes and flashing lights on the ends of gleaming silver instruments would poke, probe, examine every inch of his face--perhaps his entire body. (And what if one of the doctors was a woman!) Munsen shivered. They would write ACUTELY WEIRD on his file. It would be written down forever in medical history. . . . And if he did have some strange, dreaded disease, wouldn't everyone avoid him? He'd have to be put in a plastic bubble like the little boy in the magazine he had read the other day. How tragic.

He washed his face but the dots remained. At work that morning, no one SAID ANYTHING; they stared. Everyone stared at Munsen--the people on the street, the traffic cop, the liquor-drinking ladies in black velvet evening gowns lounging in the sky on billboards that made him blush, the elevator operator, and especially his boss: she was a woman.

"Munsen, don't flinch so," she said to him that morning. She said that every day. In his mind, he repeated those words: Munsen--don't flinch so.

"Well, then stop staring at me like I'm weird," Munsen retorted angrily.

"But, I'm not staring. Stop being so paranoid."

"Don't tell me you don't notice! Don't tell me!"

She wrenched at her long hair with frenzied fingers and cried, "Alright, I won't tell you I don't notice what I can't see!"

"No, you don't notice what you really do see."

But she had stomped out of the office. He looked around at a field of bulging, bulbous eyes--all out on fat, thick, sticky stalks. He could have plucked them.

When Munsen woke up the next day, he had no hair. He was bald. The dots were gone, he noted, but he was now bald. If it wasn't one thing. . . . That's when Munsen realized that more than half his life was finished--gone--done with--and he had accomplished nothing. He wanted to cry but couldn't when those purple dots had first appeared, he had cried and they had become even purplier. Besides, it wasn't right for a man in his station in life to just start crying at the drop of a hair or two.

He dreaded going to work. He never did anything, anyway. It suddenly struck him how weird it was to get up every morning

to go to work to get stared at to come home to collapse. And he felt very deeply for all humans everywhere who went to work every day. Very, very deeply--so deeply he nearly cried, but being brave, he must give it a try--hair or no hair. As soon as he walked outside, the neighbors snickered or chortled over their breakfast cereal. Little girls and boys walking to school giggled as Munsen went by, red and embarrassed. He went scarlet when the billboard ladies laughed at his bald little head. Now, he couldn't face his boss. She would really think he was weird. Oh, this was terrible, and it could only get worse. . . . Perhaps he should go home, call in sick, and wait for his hair to grow back.

It took three days for that to happen. Each day his boss called him at home.

"Munsen," she asked calmly, "Is everything alright? I hope you're not coming down with the flu."

Munsen faltered, feeling old. "I'm--I'm not feeling very young, that's all," was the hoarse reply.

"What? I can't hear you."

"Don't yell!"

"I'm not yelling, Munsen. . . . Are you ill?"

Damn her questions! "Please don't scream like that! I'll be in sometime soon!"

Munsen banged the phone down, feeling strong and manly.

What did it matter if he lost his job? Half his life was over.

"What happened?" his boss asked the next day.

Munsen was determined to play it cool. He smiled suavely, but an uncontrollable giggle slipped out. That blew it; he felt silly. "I was bald," he answered miserably.

His boss cackled, displaying her fine, white teeth. "Oh, yes, and I was a vampiress yesterday! You were bald? Oh, Munsen, don't be absurd! You weren't bald three days ago."

"Four days ago," he corrected.

She stared at him, incredulous. "Hair," she said, pointing a long finger at him, "cannot grow back in four days, Munsen. That's just plain weird. I won't hear it."

"Well, mine did." He was starting to tremble. Again he felt very very deeply for those millions of people all over the world who--

She sighed and handed him a folder stuffed with papers.

"Here. This'll take your mind off everything, Munsen. We have an important project to start work on; our company is currently working on a new kind of dot remover, and a new hair transplanting technique."

Munsen began to cry. Looking a little troubled at this, she put down the folder and walked away--somewhat uneasy, but suppressing a laugh.

Kathryn Nevin
St. Andrew's School
Middletown, DE

Dr. John Garrick

Insane

Tape recorders play

Tunes of Life

Brick walls

Show stop signs

How to reach the Sky.

Curtains hang in

Halls of Death,

Covering mistakes by

Mortal tiles.

Cards slide across

Tables, numbering

Populations of refrigerator

Magnets.

Metal legs walk

Across ceilings.

Heidi Ness
Dallastown Area H. S.
Dallastown, PA

Dust Covers

A thin film of grey

shrouds stationary ghosts

as stillness reverberates and fades.

My eyes meander to bare outlets

beneath uncluttered shelves,

to the frozen clock pendulum,

and locked windows behind drawn shades

where flies have ceased to buzz.

Flecks of light sift like spectres

and a single footprint remains crushed

into the plush rug.

Kimberley Spire
Fayetteville-Manlius H. S.
Manlius, NY

Dr Walt Fibiger

Miss Anne Wilson

Cliff Hanger

Tom Wolfe, in his colorful chronicle of the seven Mercury astronauts, described THE RIGHT STUFF as being a rare combination of guts, razor-sharp reflexes and reckless determination. It went beyond sheer bravery (any jack-ass can put his life on the line if he really wants to) beyond macho. It was...the right stuff.

After reading Wolfe's book, I became obsessed with that phrase "The Right Stuff." For me it became a way of life. Did I have it? Was I one of those lucky few? A member of that elite cadre of sole possessors of "that righteous stuff?" I had to know. I found out last summer.

My parents, in their infinite generosity, last July gave me an all expense paid trip to California. All I had to do was agree not to let them hear from me for a month. Wanting to get the hell out of the area as much as they wanted me out, I consented.

It was a bike trip, San Francisco to San Diego. Eight kids, two adults, one month. It sounded great; four weeks of nothing but sunny California days and starry California nights and, in fact, it was.

Until Monterey.

Monterey is a beautiful town on the California coast located about sixty miles due north of Los Angeles. This town has some of the nicest beaches you'll ever want to see. White sand, most of it deserted, stretching for miles up and down the coastline. Now Monterey's beaches are located, in some areas, a few hundred feet below the rest of the town. That is, there are cliffs leading down to the sand and if you were smart you descended to the beach via the steps which the state had so thoughtfully provided.

If you were smart.

I wasn't. I didn't HAVE to be. Do you know Why?

Because I had the right stuff. You remember, that indescribable macho quality that only a select few possessed. Who the hell needed steps when you had the right stuff?

Steps are for fags. Guys with the right stuff CLIMB down to the beach. Which is exactly what I proceeded to do. I hopped the little metal fence that overlooked the edge of the cliff and started my descent.

Now this wasn't a "cliff" in the true sense of the word. It was more like a great wall of dirt. Very little foundation. Loose. Slippery. Dangerous.

I had descended about twelve or fifteen feet when I realized the predicament I was in; I couldn't go down any farther, the cliff was too steep and IT WAS MADE OF DIRT, REMEMBER! No handholds, just gravel. For almost two-hundred feet. Suicide. Back up the way I came? I had practically slid to the point where I was then, and there was simply no way I could slide back UP the cliff. It was pretty simple, really: I was trapped--cut and dried, no question about it--trapped. I couldn't go up, nor could I go down nor was I capable of any lateral movement.

An hour went by.

Then another.

Then people started to take notice. As the beach began to get populated (I had started early in the morning, you understand). I observed heads starting to turn in my direction. Then crowds, similar to the ones that develop under suicidal men poised to jump from the tops of New York City apartment buildings, started to gather. Then the lifeguard came.

"EXCUSE ME, ARE YOU HAVING SOME DIFFICULTY GETTING DOWN?" He had one of those hand-held loudspeakers.

This was, I think, the understatement of the year. "Are you having some difficulty getting down?" I had to laugh. If I didn't find a way down soon I was a deadman, simple as that.

You would think, then, that I would have breathed a long sigh of relief when this lifeguard, a man trained in all facets of search and rescue, offered his assistance.

It was, however, assistance I had to turn down. Why?

Because I had the right stuff. That indescribable quality which

only a select few, etc. etc...to admit that I needed help was to deny to myself that I had "that righteous stuff."

People that know me pretty well all can vouch for at least one undisputed aspect of my personality, and that is that I am prone to making dumb statements sometimes.

"That Breckman sure does make some dumb statements sometimes," they say. Point well taken. But no remark of mine before or since can compare with my response to that lifeguard that sweltering day in July when I almost had to kiss my sweet ass goodbye:

"NO PROBLEM HERE!!" I yelled back.

Was I crazy, or what? I mean, just think about that remark for a second. There I was, on this twenty story gravel cliff, looking down on a landing pad composed of solid rock about two-hundred feet below me, SCARED OUT OF MY FRIGGING MIND, actually looking death in the face for the first time in my life (and no, you don't see your life flash before your eyes. I didn't, at least. It took all my concentration and force of will just to keep from pissing in my pants) and then, just when it looks like I may actually make it through this thing after all, I have to go and deny myself my only chance of survival.

"NO PROBLEM HERE!!"

We're talking about a sick kid, ladies and gentlemen.

"IN THAT CASE, CAN YOU PLEASE GET OFF THE FACE OF THAT CLIFF IMMEDIATELY. IT'S VERY DANGEROUS UP THERE."

No, really?

"YES SIR!" I boomed.

I figured that gave me about three minutes in which to do something. One hundred-eighty precious seconds to get myself out of that jam or face a humiliation I was too crazy to tolerate. I had to make a decision. Fast. I looked down at the fifteen or so people below me. My eyes focused in on the anxious face of the lifeguard, megaphone in hand, his gaze trans-fixed on me; standing on a six inch gravel ledge twenty stories above the sand. HE WAS WAITING FOR ME TO DO SOMETHING! I had become the main attraction. The man on the tight-rope. I would have to prove to him that I was in complete control of the situation (by getting the hell off that cliff) or else a rescue squad would be sent and down would pop that rope-ladder.

Three minutes.

It was then that I knew what I had to do.

I've heard it said that a drowning man will grasp at straws. Truer words have never been spoken.

I took a deep breath, caught one last glimpse of the onlookers down below, bent at the knees and jumped. Straight up, arms flailing like a madman. I WAS the drowning man, grasping at the face of the cliff.

I was never really 'big' on religion. Sure, I had a Bar-mitzvah, but that really didn't mean anything. I'm convinced that 99% of all kids do that for the money, anyway. All in all, I'm pretty much an atheist.

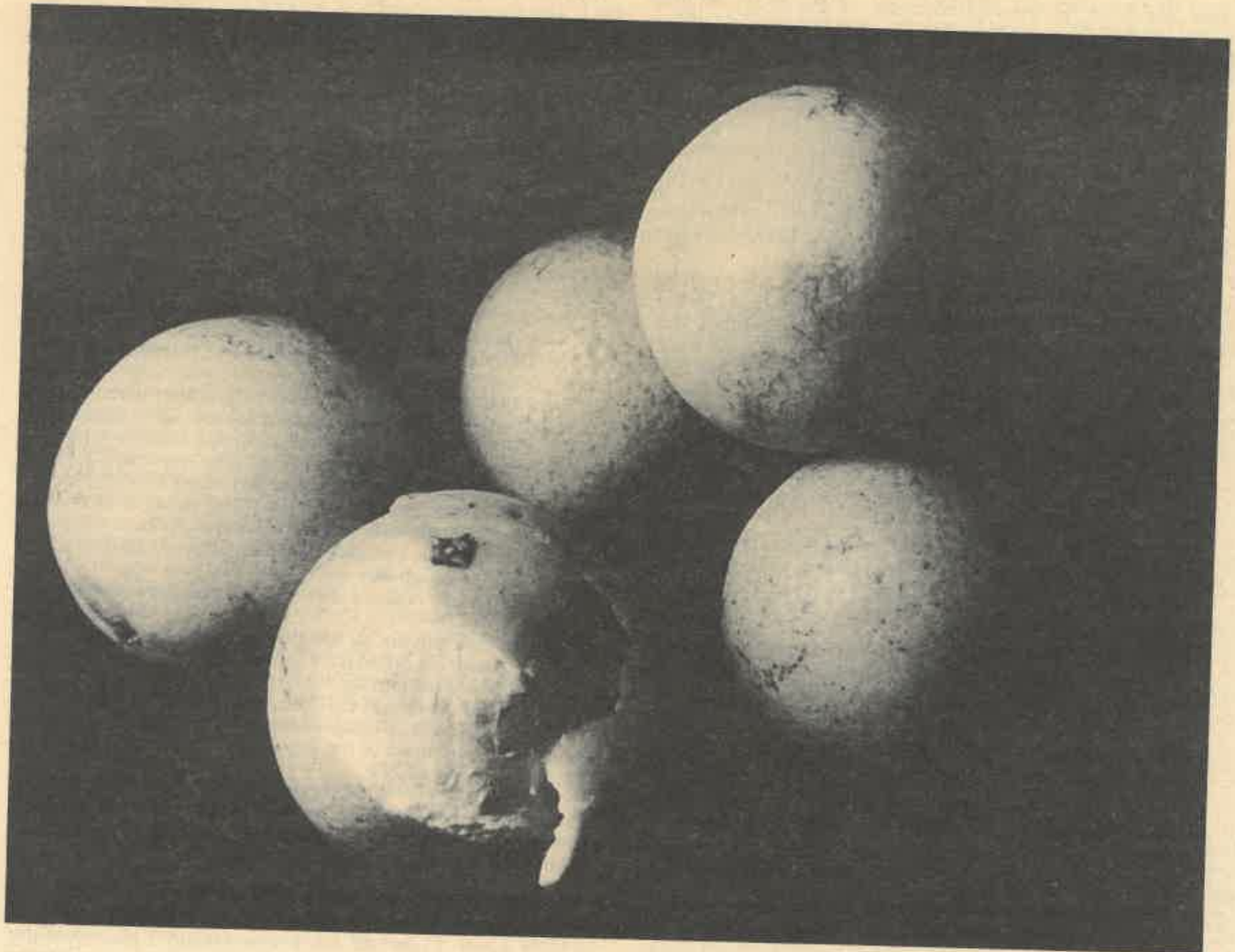
Not then, boy. In that brief instant when I was suspended in mid air, clawing maniacally at air and gravel, I was not only a Jew, I was also a Moslem, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Krishna--you name it. I was praying to every god I could think of. I was making up gods. Atheists are only atheists when they're not in imminent danger of having their guts splattered all over the rocks two hundred feet below.

My fingernails dug into the gravel and the rest is, even to this day, still a bit foggy. Evidently in that one instant of maniacal flailing about my hands had found support enough to pull the rest of my body up and over the top of the cliff.

Then I started to cry...

David Breckman
Moorestown H. S.
Moorestown, NJ

Ms. Turnbull



Susan Gorman

Love in the Clouds

On my back
In spring green grass
That is scented in hopes
Of honeysuckle.
The sun's rays, warm
And lemony,
Reflect dreams
And wishes of you.
As two knees buckle
And fall to the ground
Beside me are you,
I, suddenly in your arms.
The clouds drift by
Like waves over sand.
They cover the blue
Like the touch of your hand.

Our relationship lies
Gently and peacefully.
As we roam gardens and pastures,
A lady bug tickles my skin
And I stir from my slumber
To find a lone flower at my side;
And to my amazement,
Fingering it gently,
I bring it gingerly to my ear
As the echo rings softly
I Love You.

Reagan Brenneman
Conestoga Valley High School
Lancaster, PA

A. Darlene Boggs

Happy Endings

Mr. Dugan's is a typical principal's office. There are sparkling bay windows that overlook the tennis courts and huge palms covered with glossy fronds. His desk is wide and has several neat stacks of papers that, I think, are used as decorations because they never change. A blonde woman and two ugly little girls with plastic smiles leer at me from gilt frames. I wonder if he has the pictures turned away from himself because he'd get sick if he had to look at them all day. Some girls are messing around on the courts. I think one of them is Katy Hammond, my girlfriend. She's got blonde hair that's hard to miss. An imitation leather chair with cheaply carved armrests is behind the oak desk. I think Mr. Dugan is probably insecure and that's why he has such a huge chair, so the person in my place will feel in awe of him. It's not working, Mr. Dugan.

Glancing at my father I realize he dominates any room he's in. He's pretty tall but that's not it. I'm tall, too, but I'm not a dominating person. His face has deep lines carved in it like a mountain crag. His hair is still thick even though it's mostly gray. His eyes gleam from beneath thick eyebrows like black lakes in musty underground caves. My grandmother thinks I look just like him, but I don't. The features are the same but my expression is different; I think. I hope.

I saw my father looking wind-tossed once when Mom was dying, but every other minute of his life he's been immaculately dressed, clean shaven, every hair in place. I'm glad I'm not Mr. Dugan right now.

"Mr. Curtis, I understand about your meeting, but I felt Shane's problem was a little more important." The principal is trying to get him to listen but I know it won't work. My father won't care what Dugan has to say, especially since he doesn't agree that I'm more important.

"And I understand also, Mr. Dugan. But couldn't this wait until my meeting was over? Those are important people you forced me to leave at my office. Now they have to rearrange their dinner plans. I just don't see why it couldn't wait. His voice sounds loud but he isn't really yelling. It's just like that, thundery.

"I didn't realize that you'd consider this so unimportant. I'm sorry I broke up your meeting. I'll just make this as short as possible so that you can get back to all those important people." Mr. Dugan is pretty sarcastic. That isn't going to make my dad listen either, though. Usually it just makes him more upset.

"You are making me out to be an uncaring father and I'm not: I care about Shane, and I am extremely concerned about this. I just don't see why it couldn't have waited an hour or two." His voice has become lower and the color creeping into his neck is fading. I think Mr. Dugan is sorry he was so mean before. I would be. My dad can make you apologize for anything—even things that aren't your fault, like being born.

"That's not what I called you in to speak about, so let's just drop it, OK?" A curt nod from my dad and Dugan starts in on the real problem.

"Shane, maybe you can explain to your father what you did today."

No way, Mr. Dugan. You can't sucker me into being the messenger with bad news. I'm dead enough already. "If you don't mind, sir, I'd rather not." My father glares at me for an instant, and his face is a thermometer creeping back up to 90. What insolence!

"All right, then. We had an unplanned fire drill today in school, courtesy of your son and another boy. Which..."

"Where's that other boy now? Why is Shane the only one in trouble?" You can't get out of it that easy dad, and neither can I.

"He's being dealt with separately when his own parents can be present."

"Why couldn't you call them first instead of interrupting my meeting and my day?" Shut up, dad. We all know exactly how much of an inconvenience I am. Stop beating it into us. We know already.

"I thought we were going to stop discussing that aspect of this, Mr. Curtis, but if you must know, his parents are out of town."

"I'm sorry. Go on."

You're not sorry and you know it. You aren't going to stop until we're totally smothered in it. Meeting, meeting, meeting, that's all we're going to hear. Sure, you can sit there and sneer at Mr. Dugan with that idiotic self-satisfied smile. He knows you're a big executive and he's only a high school principal.

Maybe he could care less. You never thought of that, did you?

"As I was saying, this little trick caused a serious interruption in the school day, and also wasted the time of the fire department that responded."

That was hysterical. Dugan was even more excited, then. "I don't know where the fire is."

"Yes, I think all the children are out."

"Mrs. Smith, are you sure you've only got twenty-one out of twenty-three. Please count again." He scurried around like the rabbit in ALICE IN WONDERLAND. "I'm late, I'm late." What was he thinking about. I just about died laughing, me and Mason both. All those firemen going in with gas masks looking for a fire. God, it was funny while it lasted.

"We were all put to an extreme inconvenience merely because Shane was a little tired of the routine here at St. Michael's. Isn't that what you said before Shane?"

"Not exactly that, Mr. Dugan, sir." Idiot! Blazing, blaring idiot. You don't go around telling a person's parents every wise ass remark he makes to the principal. Some things are secrets. Stupid, dumb, jerk, I hope my father sues you.

"Then what exactly was it, Shane?" My father always hated my name. He wanted to name me James, after himself, of course. Mom wouldn't let him, though, and whenever he gets mad he says my name with a sneer, as if he were saying something dirty and gross like puke or urine. I hate it when he does that. I think Shane is a hell of a lot better name than James. There must be ten million Jims in the world. Even the Waltons have one which tells you how bad it is. Shane is cool like that guy in the book—tough and cool.

"I don't know, sir. I guess it was sort of because I was bored. I don't know, really."

I have to call him sir all the time. I remember when I was little, my friends all called their father's daddy and I could never get used to calling him sir. When I'm in a real bad mood and I don't care what he does, I call him Dad just to bug him. I think he's kind of like Mr. Dugan with his awe-inspiring chair. He needs to be reassured of his position at every turn. Too bad that's not working either.

"You guess, sort of! What sort of answers are those? I want to know why you'd ever think of pulling such a damn idiotic stunt, right now!" Now his voice is thundering because he's yelling. The thermometer is at about one million degrees. I think Mr. Dugan is embarrassed again. I sure am.

"I did it because I'm an idiot, sir." I love to bug him. Especially when I can embarrass him in front of other people. Now he looks dumb; I just look like a wise-ass kid. I just wrote my life sentence, but I don't care. Some things in life are worth a little pain. Baiting my father is one of them. He pretends he doesn't care. The volcano is bubbling right under the cap of the mountain, now.

"This isn't getting us anywhere, Mr. Dugan. I suggest we skip all the preliminaries and get right to the point. What are you going to do about my son?"

I stare straight ahead, but I can still see Mr. Dugan and my father in my peripheral vision. Mr. Dugan is still sort of gaping at me, and I wonder if he even heard those last comments. He must have...

"Well, as you know this is not the first time Shane has been in here. He practically spends more time in my office than I do. But this is the first time you've been here."

"Indeed? I hadn't noticed."

Doesn't my father know sarcasm is ugly? I love to be sarcastic, though. Maybe I got it in one of my genes straight through him. Oh, that I could be so honored. I did get the same physical parts he has, though, so maybe it's possible. One of the few things I am grateful to him for is my looks. Girls go crazy over Italian boys with black eyes. His are blacker, though—harder, too. Mom loved him a lot. Maybe she first fell in love with his eyes, or maybe his thick black hair. She always told me I was beautiful. She was, too. We should have taken better care of her, though. She broke apart like an expensive crystal vase the first time she was under pressure.

"I wish you'd be still and hear me out. I think this is important even if you don't." I don't know whether Dugan means that or maybe he thinks it's what he's supposed to say. Someone check the script, please.

The black eyebrows rise a little in a question.

"Here's what I propose."

At last, the word of God has come again!

"Obviously, Shane should be suspended from the basketball team and be in detention for quite some time. But I'm wondering if something more drastic might be in order since this is far from a first offense."

Try not to be so cool, Mr. Dugan, OK?

"What do you mean by more drastic?" My father leans forward, almost eagerly.

"Suspension from school for two weeks and no more athletics at all this year."

No way, Dugan, sports are important. I'm going to states in track this year. Next year I'm going to win. My father knows. He'll tell you what sports mean to me. I can almost feel the burst of speed that pushes me over the finish ahead of the rest. Dad'll tell you. He knows.

"I think that sounds fair. How about you, Shane?" My father's eyes are gleaming, practically twinkling. He's having the last word, winning the last trick with an ace of trump. He always does, doesn't he?

"I don't think so, really, sir. I mean it wasn't that terrible, was it? If I knew it'd be this much of a problem, I'd never have done it. Can't you just suspend me? Or kick me off basketball?" I'm trying to plead without whining, but I don't think it's working so well.

"I was wondering when this would hit you, Shane." Dugan's voice is smug. My father's eyes are laughing. "What you and Mason did was totally irresponsible. You disrupted the entire school for no reason, and as I've said before, this is not the first time. I think the punishment is rather fair, myself."

First time, first time...the food fight on lunch; chemistry lab, a disaster; the applesauce on Mrs. Grant's chair-- they all come flooding back. I'm sorry, I won't do it again. I'll call you sir. Just let me stay on track. I'm sorry I said your name was dumb. I always liked Jim-Bob. Rush of victory, panting and pushing. Knowing I won. Let me win please.

"I'd appreciate it very much if you would just let me run track. I was going to states, you know."

"Shane, you heard Mr. Dugan. he thinks it's fair, I think it's fair. There's always next year. Now, I think it's time we were going." He can't wait to get back to the important people in his office, but he has to wait.

Please don't leave. I'm sorry I was so mean. I don't really believe those things I said. Let me have track, please. States, Dad: I'll bring home a medal, I'll make everyone proud to know a Curtis. Just think, Dad. I'll be good. I swear. Let me have this one thing I want, please.

"But, Dad." He glares at me. I've been told to shut up so why am I still talking? I don't care, I don't care! "Please, Mr. Dugan, I need to be on track. I promise I won't screw around for the rest of this year or next year. Please."

"Shane, don't embarrass yourself with begging. Come on." Dad's almost at the door.

"Maybe I should reconsider. It seems to mean a lot to your son, Mr. Curtis. Maybe if he promised to be a proper student for..."

"I swear, Mr. Dugan. I'll do what you say."

"I don't think that's necessary, Mr. Dugan. On the contrary, I think you were exceedingly lenient with my son. He should be glad you haven't expelled him by now with all the crap he's pulled here. Why, I'd have gotten rid of him long ago."

"You would have, too, wouldn't you? If only I weren't your son, you'd have thrown me out. You hate to have me around because I don't grovel like those pigs you work with. Now you want to get rid of me. I hate you so much it's hard to imagine! I hate you, I hate your job and I hate this school! I wish you'd just get it over with and kill me like you did Mom instead of this slow torture."

I can't believe I said that. He hits me hard and, falling, I can see those ugly blonde girls again. They're probably the happiest kids in the world.

The nurse's office is typical, sterile and dumb. There's posters on the walls, pictures of monkeys and giraffes commenting on life's ironies. I hate people who think monkeys are human. They're animals and they have no idea what it feels like to get up on Monday and face an angry boss or an unforgiving father.

I had almost forgotten, but now I realize what the throbbing is on my cheek. Dad has stayed in amazingly good shape for a big businessman. Still packs a pretty powerful right, don't he, boys?

I bet I'll have an excellent cut to show off. Mason will be mad. His father probably only grounded him for a little while. Being

punched out by your father in front of the principal beats grounding hands down.

My eyes are feeling pretty weird, I think I'm crying. God, my face hurts, almost enough to convince me that's why I'm crying.

The nurse pokes her head around the door. "Are we feeling better, young man?" What an idiot. Of course we're not, young nurse. Young nurse, that's a joke.

"A little bit thank you." Who can say, though? What did I feel like before? I wonder. What time is it anyway? The fire was at 10:30 and Dad got here about noon. Must be about 1:30 or 2:00. I wonder if everyone knows. Did dad go home?

"That was a nasty bump you got. We'll have to be more careful when we walk, won't we?" She smiles sweetly, stupidly.

I wonder if I really look like I'm five years old. This joker seems to think I am. What does she mean, anyway--when I walk? Probably, it's public relations. I can see the headlines, 'Prominent Area Businessman Beats Up Son As Horrified Principal Looks On.' Can't have that now, can we, Dad? You've really got all the bases covered on this one. But maybe I'll call the papers and give them the story. That'd be something to see.

"Your father is waiting. Can I send him in?" Sure, go ahead. He can always break a leg or two if he feels like it.

"If you don't mind, I'd like to see him." Oh Shane, there's still hope for you in public relations. You must get it from good old dad, you lying hypocrite. I hope that stupid nurse has earplugs. She's not going to want to hear the ugly things to come. Maybe she can stick some cotton in her ears.

"Shane?" his voice sounds unsure, a little quivery just for that one second. Like he doesn't know if I am here. Then, it's back to the purposeful business one.

"Look, son, I'm sorry I hit you, but Mr. Dugan has kindly agreed not to mention it, so if you wouldn't either...I mean, you know what people would say."

"You're not sorry at all. You're just scared. Scared I'll tell people and ruin your image. Scared I'll tell people what I said to make you do it. Aren't you, Dad? Just plain dumb scared." I had managed to sit up before he came in and now I felt pretty dizzy. It'd be just great if I fainted right here on him--big finish, you know.

He doesn't know what to say. For the first time I can remember, he's lost.

"Shane, you don't know what you said, you don't realize." He's mad again and that's better. Mad I can handle.

"I know exactly what I said and what it meant. Mom hated dinner parties and meeting important people. She hated the way you picked her friends and the way you treated me. She used to cry when you weren't home. But you didn't care. You just kept driving her till she broke all apart. Then you knew, but then it was too late. Then she was dead. You killed her, just like you'd kill me, if you could." Panting for breath I have to lie down.

"I don't know why you are doing this now. I didn't kill her and you know it. It wasn't my fault at all. I loved her, Shane. But what am I apologizing for? I know it wasn't my fault. Lots of people have breakdowns. If she hated it so much, she should have said something or never married me in the first place. She loved me like I loved her, and don't ever say anything else to me or anyone. Do you understand?" He points a square finger at me...like a curse.

Yea, sure, dad. I get it. We'll even pretend to ourselves. Mom died just like any normal 34-year-old woman, right? Old age, probably. I'll go along with it, dad. Public relations, right?

"Yes sir, I understand."

There is a silence stretched between us with nothing to break it. I need to say something. It's always like this when he's done yelling at me for something. We both sit down and say nothing. Rather exciting.

"What did Dugan say?" At last something to slide between us even if it brings another storm.

"What did who say?" Oh, dad, you're back to your old great standards.

"Mr. Dugan, sorry sir."

"I don't know if I remember that well. I was a little upset, you know." He looks sort of friendly, but then he always is when he wins. It's too bad he doesn't know he never wins. I always have the last word whether he hears it or not. I'll go along with him, though, humor him a little.

"Why were you upset?" Such innocence! It's hard for even me to accept.

"Shane, I was worried."

Black Clouds

"Upward levitation jets at fifteen units," ordered the Professor.

"Check," replied James as he ran his fingers rapidly over a keyboard, causing the time machine to rise several hundred feet into the air.

"Activate stasis field."

"Check."

The world stopped as seen through the screens aboard the time machine. Everything blurred slightly and became absolutely still.

"Fire dimensional laser units."

"Check."

A rainbow of colors appeared before the ship.

The Professor's voice quavered slightly as he gave the final order, "Engage reverse timestream thrusters."

James was too nervous to reply with the customary "check"; he simply pressed the required buttons on the keyboard and waited in nervous anticipation, watching the temporal indicator.

The Professor's hands whirled into motion as he ran them across a series of knobs, buttons, and levers, directing the machine through a maze of chromatic light that swirled counterclockwise around it. He sweated and cursed and sighed with relief for what seemed like an eternity as first one color became more prominent and then another, as they swirled faster and slower, and as the machine shook with the weakening of the stasis field. Then it was over.

"Now!" shouted James as the indicator read one thousand.

With more strength and speed than one would think that Professor possessed, he stamped on the black pedal that would free them from the time stream. The swirling colors quickly slowed down and then disappeared. The sight that was revealed on the screens was shocking.

"Pro... Pro... Professor," stuttered James, "i... it can't be."

"Perhaps it's not," he replied skeptically. "It's too blurry to be certain; disengage the stasis field."

James did so but the sight didn't change; it only became clearer. They had traveled back through time to see how mankind had come to exist on Earth but they were totally unprepared for what they saw. Below them was a huge city of towers and domes with crazy spirals and buildings of insane colors and weird shapes. Among them walked creatures that looked like the goblins of legend.

"How could such an advanced civilization be here, before man ever existed? And how could it have disappeared without a trace?" asked James incredulously.

"I don't know," replied the Professor, "but we shall investigate. Start the temporal advancement, semi-stasis sequence, power three."

This would send them forward in time at a rapid rate while it scanned the area and produced images of the "typical" center

of civilization for that particular time on the machine's screens. It was dangerous, however, because during the process the stasis field could not be kept at full power and so the machine might suffer effects from the stresses of the time stream.

"Ready," said James as he punched the sequence into the keyboard.

"Then begin, and video-tape all images that appear on the screens."

"Check."

What the two scientists saw before they turned to their own time was enough to snap one's sanity. They saw the goblins' civilization grow further and further advanced. Then suddenly the images were obscured by black clouds that filled the screens. When the black clouds dissipated the entire civilization was gone and all that was left was vast and endless swamps.

From these emerged lizards who, over the generations, grew bigger and more man-like. They built huts of wood on the swamps, then connected the huts, and then built them up higher and more elaborate in fashion. They soon built tunnels into the swamp and then mined its floor, found metal, and used it for tools and weapons. Their civilization reached the heights humanity would reach and then continued advancing until the black clouds suddenly returned. When they cleared, the world had once again changed.

Now the Earth was covered by steaming jungles in which dwelled the apes. They soon began to evolve until primordial man walked the land. They continued to advance and become more human until the world appeared as it had before the two scientists left. Then all movement stopped.

"We've returned to our own time," said James.

When the two scientists returned to their laboratory, they realized that something terrible had happened. The semi-stasis field had not worked as well as they had hoped and so the videotapes, as well as some of the other equipment, had been destroyed by the stresses of the time stream. It was certain that no one would believe their fantastic tale without the concrete evidence that the tapes provided but that did not concern the two scientists greatly; they regretted the loss of the tapes because it would make their research far more arduous. They intended to find out the meaning of what they had witnessed.

A few weeks later James called the Professor on the phone; he seemed terribly frightened.

"Professor," he said, "I think I know what it is!"

"You sound upset; what have you found?"

"I obtained access to some top secret files and discovered an experiment that the U.S. is currently involved in to examine the evolution of life. They built a huge dome-like structure in the desert. Inside it they created conditions that could give rise to life and used temporal acceleration drives to speed up evolution within it..."

"What! They can..."

"That's right, they know how to alter the time equilibrium also but that's not important. Professor, they had success! The life they created became highly evolved and the government became afraid that it, they, would become powerful enough to break through the dome (which is made of mithril-alloy-2BqS7 and is 400 feet thick). The creatures already knew their world was not natural and that there must be something outside its boundaries, controlling the conditions within. The government panicked and destroyed all life within the dome. Then they created a different environment and started over.

"It's happened three times already and now they're starting it again!"

"My God, James. Imagine a race of incredibly advanced aliens performing the same experiment on a planetary scale."

Just then the radio (which had been playing when James called) caught the Professor's attention. A voice from it said, "We interrupt your program to bring you a special bulletin. Astronomers are bewildered by tremendous masses of black clouds that have seemingly come from outer space. They are surrounding the Earth at an incredible rate and..."

Adam Scalettar
Wantagh, NJ

Mrs. Rosen

Ellen Burns
Scranton Prep
Scranton, PA

Mr. Vincent Vanston

Happy Endings (Continued from Page 15)

Like we believe you, too. "Why? I always come out OK, don't I?" That was good, maybe next time he'll belt me harder to just see if he can really hurt me.

"I didn't really mean it. It was just spur of the moment...an impulse. I said I was sorry, didn't I?" I wish he would calm down and have just one conversation without all this yelling. I bet that idiotic nurse has a tape recorder on.

"I didn't even mean about that anyway. I meant track. Am I still off?" Please say he changed his mind because he felt bad for me. I need track. Oh God, I swear I'll go to church...

"He said the decision was up to me."

If you screw my life up just so you can have a little gloat, I'll never feel sorry for you again.

"So, what did you tell him?" I'm trying not to sound too concerned but I'm dying inside. I can see that gleam. I know he said I'm off. Just to get back at me.

"After all, it's only one year, Shane."

"You really suck, sir!"

Similes and Metaphors Running Rampant at Two A.M.

When time creeps like a sleepy reptile
gliding lazily across a sun-drenched rock,
When cotton-candy moonlight flows
coolly through the stencil windows onto
the floor in perfect cookie-cutter shapes,
mixing with every fiber of the rug,
When thoughts bounce off the four walls
of my mind like multicolored ten-cent
super balls bought by restless children
whose small, dimpled hands try in vain to catch them,
I lie here; my body detached from my mind,
my hands looking like someone else's in
the golden light of the bed lamp
(the metallic sound of nothingness
ringing in my ears like snow
falling on a sleeping dog)
And, if the morning ever comes,
I wonder--
Will I have to vacuum the leftover moonlight
from the rug?

Ann Gress

Jennifer Horner
Kingsway Regional H. S.
Swedesboro, NJ

Far From Home

(for Helen Stepniak, 1892-1981)
In the middle of the afternoon
laughter darts out of the TV
and circles about the room nervously.
Buffeting the pale wall prints and sallow tile,
it barely stirs the single strand of crepe
still hanging from last month's K of C party.
Again she's parked and poseyed
in the sun-stained dayroom,
her lap salted with crumbs.
Pockets swollen with wilted Kleenex,
pink slippers curled
like a still-born litter.
Above her, the wall clock turns
another jaundiced shade,
its hands murmuring with each
endless sweep.
She moves her lips,
but says nothing.
She finger-traces the frail blue irises
that blossom on her forearm from last night's fall.
Gazing off across the linoleum,
the faces of grandchildren drift back and forth
across the floor like rain-stale newsprint
left behind for kindling in an abandoned house.
Its screenless porch door
opens and slams
opens and slams

Springfield, VA

Rick Wilson

Standing
on the edge of the quay,
no light
flashes upon the water
for me.
Fog in my mind
darkens my eyes,
silently screaming for a
distant sound.
Rippled river yellows,
rising for a breath of breeding,
and drowns.
Stillness overcomes me in
the night.
I listen to the rising water
moan.

Mr. R. Quatrone

Gary Pfefferkorn
Passaic H.S.
Passaic, NJ

Sunday Night, November

This feeling towers
cathedral-like
in the throat:
We stand in the doorway while
damp twigs make
patterns in porchlight
on our faces,
One rag-leaf
burns
against the overhead bulb,
an edge of fall
crumbling off.
The house is old.
It has sheltered so many
that we make no difference
harbored here in the dim and hush,
while the rain sifts past.

Ridge H. S.

Allison L. Blyler

The Argument

Different shades of black are scattered throughout my room.
Occasional drops of rain hit against my window.
We have all gone to bed, but no one is asleep.
My body is exhausted. Why can't I sleep?
The familiar hum of the house tries to comfort me.
I should feel better.

Maureen Garrity
Lebanon, PA

Sister Maryellen Whitaker



Troy Goodline

Country Road desolate
Barren trampled dirt
Tracks people
Gone and people yet to come
Country road framed in
Soft luscious dew--
Drenched grass
Country road lining
Trees that tell the fate
Of innocent passers
And stragglers wandering

Life

Far from home
Country road brushing past
Empty mailboxes huddled
Close together protecting
Against oncoming storms
Empty mailboxes alone
Whimpering and whining
Pitiable as the bone-chilling
Wind blows her chilly moan

Dallastown H. S.

Heidi Ness

Valentine's Day

Chad Burnwick used to be well-controlled and content. Happy with his grades, his extracurricular activities, and his girlfriend, Carolyn, (not necessarily in that order). He lived a life not unlike that of other Buchanan High School juniors. Until Valentine's Day.

On February 14 at 10 a.m., Chad was sitting in the HI'S EYE (school newspaper) homeroom chatting with two fellow reporters, Melanie and Sue. The three were gabbing about the senders of the Spanish Club flowers that the girls had just received; and Chad pictured Carolyn's jubilant reaction to his pink-petaled gift. Right then, an Art Club messenger handed Chad a heart and arrow.

"Who's it from?" asked Melanie, practically ripping the note open. Chad read it and blushed loudly.

"It's not signed," he stammered, "but I guess it's from Carolyn." Melanie laughed at Chad's very red face.

"I loved the carnation you sent me," cooed Carolyn to Chad over the phone that evening.

"I liked the valentine you sent me, too," replied Chad. "I knew you liked me, but I never thought you considered me a 'sexy hunk.'"

"I didn't send you a valentine."

Chad spent three minutes convincing Carolyn that he didn't know who the valentine was from; two minutes convincing her that he hadn't led on another girl; one minute convincing her that another girl hadn't led HIM on (this was easy); four minutes convincing her not to rip up the flower; and ten hours recovering from the previous ten minutes.

Strangely enough, Chad wasn't as studious as usual the next day. In math class, he wondered if the girl in front of him was the "secret admirer;" they did get along, and she was intelligent and discerning...In physics, he imagined his cute lab partner to be the one; of course, she didn't USUALLY use words like "cuddlebuns," but she did TALK to him occasionally. Any female who had talked to or smiled at Chad at any time during the past six months was a possibility--indeed, any girl who didn't flee from his very presence might be the one. That evening, after taking a ten-minute cold shower, Chad, neglecting his homework, mapped out his "strategy" for the next day.

First, he made a painstakingly detailed analysis of the heart-sender's handwriting. After two hours of close study, he ascertained that the writer was right-handed (judging by the way a little heart was crossed with an arrow), that she knew how to print, and that she owned a blue pen. Next, he scrutinized the style and grammar of the message for clues about the secret admirer's personality. Chad soon determined that the girl had an interesting vocabulary and that she loved to use compound adjectives. After studying those adjectives 45 minutes longer, "huggable-hips," completely exhausted, fell asleep.

Wednesday, Chad put his plan into action; he would collect samples of girls' written work, take them home, and compare them to the valentine. In HI'S EYE class, he groped through Melanie's handbag. Just as he found a piece of paper...

"What are you doing in my pocketbook?" asked Melanie.

"I want to use your lipstick," replied Chad.

"Wouldn't surprise me," quipped Sue.

"Well, be sure to ask first next time," said Melanie, turning around to resume another conversation. Chad slipped the paper, which he'd cleverly been palming, into his pocket.

In algebra, Chad tried desperately all period to glance at the paper of the girl in front of him. He finally succeeded. Unfortunately, the teacher, who frowned upon this kind of peeking during tests, flunked Chad instantly.

In physics, Chad asked his lab partner for her lab notes so that he could "study for a test."

"WHAT test?" she asked.

"The one next month," he replied.

"Didn't you take your own notes?"

"I lost them," he replied.

"But didn't you write up the lab? It was handed back two days ago."

"I lost it."

"But what about that ditto the teacher gave us which lists the results of everybody in the class?"

"I..."

"I know, I know!"

Chad's lab partner handed over the notes.

That night, Chad, disregarding the physics assignment, English essay, and history research paper due the next day, pored over the seventeen writing samples he'd ingeniously gathered. Most he eliminated early. For example, the sentence structure of the physics notes was nothing like that of the valentine. Chad was almost in despair--but then, he got to Melanie's paper.

Entitled, "Description of a Snowstorm," Melanie's essay featured dozens upon dozens of adjectives (many of them compound!) not to mention a romantic style. Although the paper was typed, Chad easily imagined Melanie's handwriting to match that of the valentine exactly. Also, hadn't Melanie been especially anxious for Chad to open the valentine? And hadn't she practically encouraged him to search her purse? She MUST be the one!

Thursday was difficult for Chad. He couldn't concentrate on anything. The rooms were too hot.

After about 37 hours, the 2:45 bell rang. Chad combed his hair and casually dashed to HI'S EYE deadline, where he and Melanie could "talk." Melanie was there, but the room was too crowded; so Chad worked on newspaper assignments. His headlines and captions were particularly insipid that day.

Eventually, the crowd thinned. Chad was figuring out which approach to use when suddenly Melanie walked over to him. "You've just been assigned to co-write the 'relaxation' feature with me," she informed him.

"How was it assigned to me?"

"I asked for you. We better go out to the hall to talk about it."

Melanie sauntered out the door, and Chad floated close behind. The hall lights were off.

"The article's basically about how BHS'ers relax," said Melanie.

"It's kind of a follow-up 'stress' story, and it's too big a job for just me."

"What have you found out so far?" inquired Chad.

"Well, our poll shows that most students go to movies and stuff--nothing unexpected. But I also got some much more interesting information when I talked to the biofeedback expert in town. He was great! For instance, did you know that human physical contact, although repressed in our society, alleviates stress a lot?" Melanie stepped closer. "It works because electrical current actually flows between the two bodies."

"R...Really?"

"Here, let me show you." Melanie gently took Chad's hand. "You see? The doctor also says that kissing is especially relaxing because the lips are the most electrically sensitive--"

Chad grabbed and kissed Melanie...

...When he woke up, Chad didn't realize he was lying in a hospital bed with a mild concussion. His parents informed him that he had somehow violently banged his head against some lockers. Nobody was quite sure how he'd done this, but rumors abounded. Apparently, Chad had been unconscious all Friday, and was waking up just now at 7:30 p.m. "Damn!" he thought to himself, "I guess Melanie ISN'T the one..."

Meanwhile, Carolyn was writing a letter, when Robert entered her house.

"How are you," she purred, kissing him.

"Fine," said Robert. What are you doing?"

"Finishing my 'dear john' letter to Chad. I REFUSE to date that skirt-chasing two-timer."

"Well, hurry up," laughed Robert, "or we'll be late to the concert."

Carolyn decided to end the letter with a little drawing of a shattered heart. She was about to cross it with a shattered arrow, when suddenly she remembered something. So, switching the Flair to her left hand, she crossed the heart with a sweeping blue stroke.

Andrew Elby
Westfield H. S.
Westfield, NJ
Ms. Paula Roy

Untitled

I walked up the driveway carrying my book bag with the night's homework and my gym bag with sweaty socks and muddy sweats from football practice. Lights were on in the house, so I knew that someone was home. I came in the side door and announced my arrival.

"Hello, anyone home?"

There was no answer but I could hear the muffled sounds of my sister's radio through her closed door. I figured she was in one of her "moods," so I decided not to bother her. Instead, I headed for the kitchen to get something to eat.

Minutes later I heard a car door slam, and I knew my mother was home. She came breezing through the side door carrying her attache case and a bag of groceries.

"Hi, Ricky."

"Hi, Mom."

"How's practice?"

"Awful. I'm beat. Those last sprints were wicked."

She walked into the front hall to check the day's mail.

"Worked you hard, huh. Where's your sister?"

"Upstairs, I guess. Can't you hear her radio?"

"She's always leaving her room with it on so I can never tell if she is up there."

"What's for dinner? I am starved."

"How does meatloaf sound?"

"Great," I answered as I sat down to read the morning paper.

"Up, young man. I want you to go make your bed and then wash up for supper. Tell Leslie dinner will be ready in about fifteen minutes."

"Just a sec."

"No--Now--Go."

"Sometimes that woman can be a real pain!" I said under my breath as I trudged up the stairs. The light from under Leslie's door cast a thin line of light in the dark hall. I rapped on the door and walked in.

Her stereo was blaring and I expected to find Leslie at her desk. Instead, she lay on her back doing situps.

"One and two and three and..."

"Shut-up, Ricky, and get out."

"Boy, we're touchy tonight, aren't we? Why are you doing sit ups?" I asked as it was obvious she had been doing them for a while.

"Because I feel like it. O.K.? Now will you get out?"

"O.K., O.K., I'm going. Mom said dinner would be ready in about fifteen minutes." I closed the door behind me. She was definitely in one of her "moods." It seemed they were becoming more and more frequent. Leslie hardly ever smiled and spent almost all of her time in her room. Mom and Dad have repeatedly asked what's wrong, but she always says nothing. As I headed toward my room, I began to think that Leslie looked kind of thin and, well--a little peaked. And what was she doing situps for in the middle of dinner time? That seemed weird.

My worries about her, however, were temporarily pushed aside as picking up my room became top priority. Eventually the whole incident faded from my memory. A few days later, I was collecting dirty laundry for Mom, and I remember that two of my shirts were in Leslie's room. I headed toward her room and when no one answered the door, I walked in. Her room was in its usual immaculate state. I opened her closet door and began thumbing through the hangers. The shirts were nowhere to be found, and as I turned to leave I noticed an old laundry basket.

Instead of soiled clothes, it contained empty bags of cookies, chips, and 'Doritos.' But what really caught my attention were the dozen or so empty boxes of laxatives.

I didn't even have time to formulate any conclusions because I heard my sister's approaching footsteps. I tried to throw the wrappers back into the basket but it was too late, she had already seen me.

"My God! JUST WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING? Get out right now! Who gave you permission to go pawing through my stuff anyway? I can't believe this. Get out of my room this second!"

"Hey, just a second. I was only looking for my shirts when I stumbled over this stuff."

"That's BULL! I don't want to hear any of your excuses--Now LEAVE!" she yelled as she pointed to the door.

"No, you can hang on a minute. Do you want to explain this stuff?" I demanded lifting up the basket.

"I don't have to tell you anything."

"You do if you don't want Mom to know about it."

Panic and fear seemed to grab her, but her mind was fast at work. "I'm sure mom would love to hear about your little joy-ride in the car last week."

"You can't prove anything," I said in defence.

"Yeah, but you know darn well she'd believe me. Now leave."

I had no choice. She had me in a corner. I left and headed back to my pile of laundry. I knew I should have told. Taking laxatives didn't seem to be normal. I began to wonder if that basket and her disposition were related.

Several days later while in the library doing my physics homework, my friend, Brenda, was reading a magazine.

"Oh, my God! Check this out."

I leaned over her shoulder to look at the magazine. On the page was this picture of a person or what was left of a person. It was a girl in her underwear and she couldn't have weighed more than eighty-five pounds. All I could think of were prisoners in the Nazi concentration camps--human skeletons.

"What happened to her?"

"Says here that she has anorexia nervosa."

"Anor-what?"

"Anorexia nervosa. According to this article, it's a psychosomatic disease. Um...let's see...it usually afflicts teenage girls. Apparently they starve themselves to death. My cousin knew someone with it. It says here that over 10% of its sufferers eventually die of either heart failure or malnutrition."

"How pleasant! Can I see it when you are done?"

"Yeah, sure."

When Brenda finished with the magazine, she tossed it over to me.

"What page is it on?" I asked, as I flipped through the pages.

"Somewhere around 200."

It began on page 208 and my eyes flew over the pages. Within minutes I knew the symptoms of this Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia, which is another eating disorder. The articles said that Bulimia is when a person goes on eating binges which can last hours or even days. After the binge, bulimics rid their body of the food through self-induced vomiting and the use of laxatives. It went on to say that both anorexics and bulimics are obsessed with their weight and they are constantly exercising. They also tend to eat alone and will hide any evidence of their binges.

What really grabbed me was that these conditions were often accompanied by mood swings, withdrawal, and depression. Leslie immediately popped into my mind. Could she possibly have this bul- or what ever it's called? As I read on, Leslie seemed to fit the description perfectly.

"Ricky, hey Ricky. Gosh, where were you? You looked a million miles away."

"Not really, just thinking, I guess," I answered, "We better get back to study hall. We only have a few minutes till the bell."

As I walked back to class, I decided to confront Leslie about this no matter what. I didn't want her to be in that 10%.

My friend, Roger, dropped me off after practice and Mom was at the kitchen table reading the evening paper.

"Hi Mom."

"Hi, Ricky. How's school?"

"Where's Dad?"

"In on the couch. He's probably asleep."

"...and Leslie?"

"Where else--in her room. I am really starting to get worried about her. Her behavior has taken a 360 degree turn. Even your father has noticed."

I only nodded. If you only knew the half of it, Mom, I thought, as I went upstairs to talk to Leslie. By the time I reached the landing, I could hear the shower over Leslie's radio. When I reached the bathroom, I stuck my head in, "Hey, Les, I just wanted..."

Leslie wasn't in the shower but, instead, she was hanging over the toilet throwing up. When she looked up, her face was as white as a sheet and she looked terrified. I just stood there in disbelief. I was positive now; Leslie was bulimic.

She jumped up, washed her face off, and hastily began to explain.

"Oh, hi, Ricky. Must have eaten something at school. You know, cafeteria food. I'm O.K. so quit looking at me like that, O.K.?"

"Leslie, don't lie to me. Tell me the truth. You were making yourself sick, weren't you? Although, I think I already know why. You see, Brenda gave me this crash course on Bulimia today. And now that I am an expert, I have diagnosed you as a bulimic."



Melinda Halpern

"What are you talking about? Someone hit you too hard today in practice? A little fuzzy-headed, huh?" she asked with a laugh.

"It's not funny. I'm gonna tell Mom. She has to know."

"Tell Mom? Why? Listen, Ricky, it's no big deal. I have a stomach ache. Mom won't believe this stupid story about bulimia or whatever."

"I think she will. She already knows there is something wrong, but she doesn't know what. I have to tell. I've put this off far too long. Have you looked at yourself lately? You look like hell..."

"Thanks. You really know how to charm a lady. Ricky, you can't tell Mom, please. I'm begging you. She won't understand. It will only upset her. I won't do this any more. I promise," she said pleadingly.

Guilt spread through me. There were so many times she didn't squeal on me, but this was different. She really needed help. I didn't want her to end up in that 10%.

"I don't know, Les?"

"Come on. I'll be good. I promise. Please don't tell."

"I give you one week and if I catch you doing anything funny, I'll go right to Mom and Dad."

"It's a deal. Thanks." Relieved, she retreated back into her room. But I didn't feel relieved; I knew she wouldn't change. I was only putting off the inevitable; Leslie needed psychological help. I went to bed with a lot on my mind.

Suddenly, I sat up in bed. Who was that? Another groan came

out of the night. I fumbled with the light and opened the door. Leslie lay in the hall clutching her stomach. Her eyes were shut and her teeth clenched. My parent's bedroom door swung open and my dad appeared in his bathrobe.

"What's wrong?"

"I don't know. My stomach. It hurts something awful," Leslie managed to get out.

Dad bent down, "Let me see."

"Oh, Daddy, it hurts. Help me," and she began to cry. I just stood there as I realized what was happening. I should have told Mom and Dad weeks ago. I quickly began to mumble a short prayer.

"Ricky, help me get her in bed." We got Leslie settled and Dad went to get dressed. Mom and I stayed with Leslie.

"Hang on. Daddy will be ready in a few minutes."

My father came to announce that he was going to get the car. Mom and I helped Leslie downstairs, bundled her up and put her in the car with Dad and soon they were off to the hospital.

I felt terrible. My sister was sick and I was partially responsible. My mother was upstairs getting dressed because we planned to follow Dad to the hospital. I climbed the stairs hating what I had to tell her.

"Mom, can I talk to you a minute..."

Eileen Benoit
Skaneateles H. S.
Skaneateles, NY
Elizabeth Patton

The 20th Cube

"No! Let him try it!" Chris screamed at his friend, Lenny.

"But it's dangerous, man," Lenny yelled back at him.

"It's not dangerous, Lenny, and I CAN do it," Charlie said, with perfect calmness on his young, freckled face.

"Charlie, you've been betting us for months that you could do it, and every time, it's been too much for you, and you end up losing your allowance to us," Lenny said to his twelve-year-old friend, trying to get him to change his mind.

"It doesn't matter, man," he continued. "Just forget it."

Charlie then barked, "I don't care what you say! Ten bucks down on the table and I'll do it!"

Chris quickly pulled a ten out of his left pocket (which he had cashed in for his month's allowance, in quarters), and flopped it onto the table with a smile, knowing that his money would be doubled in the next few minutes.

He then looked to Lenny, and with uncertainty on his face, asked, "You in?"

"I'm sick of this crap! Just don't do it, Charlie. You don't have to prove anything to us. It's just a stupid trick," Lenny yelled. He turned his glance back to Chris.

Chris backed down from Lenny's stare, and yelled, "Yes, he DOES have to prove something. To me, he does! He'll never do it, and he should learn to believe that. Besides, I need the money," Chris finished, and laughed heartily.

"You're a real prick, Chris!" Lenny yelled, and ran out of the kitchen, disgusted.

Charlie, who had been sitting quietly at the table, not absorbing the bitter conversation of his two older friends, got up and went to the freezer. He pulled open the door and the cool air shot toward him while he pulled out a tray full of ice cubes. Chris sat at the table and smiled. He loved to watch Charlie screw up, and he especially loved the money. Charlie put the tray of ice cubes onto the table and went to the cabinet to get out a large bowl.

"You gonna try 20 right away, or do you wanna practice first?" Chris asked Charlie as he put the bowl on the table.

"No, I'm going for all twenty right away. No Problem," Charlie said.

He sat down at the table, facing directly across from Chris. As he was doing so, Chris emptied the tray of ice cubes into the bowl. One of the ice cubes bounced out of the bowl onto the table and rolled methodically off, hitting the floor.

"Oh, hell!" Chris shouted, and was about to step on it when Charlie reached down and picked it up.

"Don't worry about it. I'll put it in dirty," he assured Chris.

"All right," Chris said, plunking the last ice cube into the bowl, and pushing it in front of Charlie at the other side of the table, "do it."

Slowly, Charlie started to stuff the freezing cubes into his mouth. His cheeks puffed up enormously, bulging with the shapes of the cubes. Chris, as always, began laughing hysterically. On the 11th cube, Charlie's mouth began to numb, and his teeth began to sting with the cold. The first ice cubes began to slide to the back of his mouth, almost going down his throat. Then, it started to hurt. Chris continued laughing, stopping momentarily every few seconds to get another look at Charlie, whose cheeks were now hilariously deformed. As the 18th ice cube was being forced into Charlie's mouth, Chris stopped laughing altogether.

"You've never gotten this far!" he said. He looked down at the bowl, which had only two cubes left in it, almost half melted.

The nineteenth went in with a little trouble, and Chris screamed, "Holy hell!"

He couldn't believe it. Charlie's eyes were now watering with extreme pain, and he wanted to scream himself. As Charlie picked up the 20th, Chris watched in silence. Just as he was about to force it into his mouth, Charlie's brain told him that he could stand the pain no longer. With the 20th cube just inches away, Charlie's mouth let go. The nineteen ice cubes and ropery spatters of saliva shot from his mouth like a cork from a bottle of New Year's champagne, some of which bounced along the table into Chris's lap, some of which hit the far wall, shattering like glass. (One just happened to hit Chris between the eyes.) Charlie started to cry immediately, mostly in pain, but somewhat from disappointment. Chris sat and rubbed the spot on his forehead where the ice cube had struck. He giggled.

"That was pretty damn close, Chuck!" he said, grabbing the two ten dollar bills, and getting up, "but no ceegar!"

He stuffed the money into his left pocket once again.

"I would have done it if they weren't so cold! I could do it with rocks!" Charlie yelled after Chris, who was now walking out of the kitchen.

Chris turned around and said, "Well, you practice, and when you come up with another ten dollars, call me."

Chris turned and walked out of the kitchen, thinking of how he would spend his twenty dollars.

Every night after the ice cube incident, Charlie took Chris up on his word, and practiced the trick with rocks that he found in his driveway, filed down and polished up to the shape of ice cubes. Every night he would practice in his room, door locked, so his mother or father couldn't walk in on him. The first night, he easily did seventeen. The next night, eighteen, and by the end of the week, he could easily do twenty. Now all he needed was the money, and he had only acquired 50 cents, so far. Charlie desperately wanted to show Chris tomorrow, but Chris wouldn't even consider coming over to watch him unless he had ten dollars to bet. Charlie suddenly came up with an idea. Since he would obviously win the bet, his parents wouldn't even notice the ten dollars missing from their "extra cash" box in the back of their bedroom closet. He would simply relace it when the bet was over.

Chris called up Charlie again at 8:00 that night, and told him he was ready to try again.

"So, you're ready to lose another ten, huh, Chuck?" Chris said in an acidic tone of voice.

"Just shut your stupid mouth and get over here," Charlie yelled into the receiver and slammed the phone down. Charlie had really had enough.

Chris arrived ten minutes later with a fresh ten dollar bill clutched in his hand and a wide smile on his face. Charlie led Chris to his room because his parents were home, and that would be the safest place to do it. He locked the door behind him and walked over to the place on the floor where the bowl of rocks, soaking in warm water, lay. He sat down, Indian style, and Chris did the same.

Chris put his ten dollar bill on the carpet in front of the bowl, looked up at Charlie and said, "Well?"

Charlie pulled his father's ten out of his sock and put it lazily on top of the other. He looked up at Chris and hesitated a second, "Let's do it," he said calmly.

He reached down for his first rock, slowly. Just then the phone in the room rang, breaking the silence. Charlie ran for it, and answered quickly, "Yeah?"

"Hey, Charlie."

"Oh, hi, Lenny," Charlie said with a false tone of happiness in his voice.

"I was wondering if..."

"Sorry, Lenny, haveta go. Chris is waiting for me to do 20"

"No, man! Don't do it," Lenny screamed.

"Call ya later, Len," Charlie said sadly, and he hung up.

"What'd he want?" Chris asked from across the room.

Charlie answered sharply, "Nothing!"

A minute later, Charlie was reaching down for his tenth rock. His mouth had already begun to disfigure, but no pain came to him. Chris had begun to laugh loudly. The fifteenth rock went in easily and Chris once again stopped laughing. The 16th, 17th, and 18th went in just as easily, and Chris yelled, "You just might do it, you bastard!"

Charlie slowly pushed the nineteenth rock in and Chris got onto his knees and stared blankly at the last rock as it rose up to Charlie's mouth.

The front doorbell rang, and Mr. Alley got up from his La-Z-Boy, putting his index finger between pages 666-667 of Stephen King's THE STAND.

"God damn it," he whispered as he got up, for he was at one of the best parts of the story. The doorbell rang again just as he was about to turn the knob. "Oh, Lenny, come on in. Charlie and Chris are up in his room pl..."

Lenny bolted past Mr. Alley and ran for Charlie's bedroom. He grabbed the knob solidly and went to turn it, but it wouldn't move.

"Unlock the door, Charlie!" he screamed.

Mrs. Alley, who was doing the dishes, turned to where the yelling was coming from, and walked to the living room to ask her husband what was going on, but he was already mounting the steps toward Charlie's room

Kathy's Problem

"Hello."

"Hi, Kathy. This is Lisa. How's it going? I was wondering if you'd like to come with us to a movie or go roller skating at the mall."

"Well, no, I've really got to stay home and do my work. Maybe some other time."

"Are you okay? I mean, come on. Tomorrow is the last day of school. You shouldn't have any homework, and besides, we'll be celebrating the last time we have to go to the Middle School. Let's go have some fun. All you've done all week is mope around. I think the country life is getting to you. Come on!"

"No, I'm really busy. Thanks anyway. Maybe next time, okay?"

"Oh, all right be that way if you want, see if I care. Bye, have fun. I know we will."

Maybe I should have gone, Kathy thought. After all, it would have taken my mind off school and my problems. I should have said yes and had some fun. No, I guess not. This way I have more time to think about what I have to say. Yeah, I made the right decision; at least I think so.

She stood in front of the picture propped up against her mirror and cleared her throat. "Well, I won't see you very much now, but maybe over the summer we could do something together before you leave." She stopped and started again slowly. "I think of you as a very good friend of mine, and, well, I have to ask you a question. Or maybe, is it that I have to tell you something. Well... No, no that sounds dumb. I have to make it more subtle and casual. I can't make this sound as important as it really is. I've got to think of a better way."

For weeks Kathy had been trying to decide how to ask her friend, Miss Martin, a very important question or maybe just a statement. She had gone through it many times before but still couldn't decide how to say what she wanted to say.

She remembered when she first saw Miss Martin. When Kathy walked into class, there appeared to be no teacher in the room, just a young person studying at the desk. She didn't even look old enough to be a teacher.

Some class this is going to be, Kathy thought. I can't even tell who the teacher is. It's so loud in here. I hope it isn't this loud all year.

At first, it was loud in the class and Kathy tried to get into a different class, but she was now glad that it hadn't been possible. She gained a great fondness and respect for the teacher and had fun in class. At the beginning of the year, she had thought that having fun wouldn't be possible and she was glad she had been wrong. She brought herself back to the present and thought about her problem. She thought of asking her friends to help her solve her problem, but that seemed hopeless since they didn't understand or seriously consider any problems. Even her best friend, Lisa, who was understanding, didn't seem to have the qualities that might help her. She became angry because she couldn't rely on her friends and the only one she felt she could really talk to was Miss Martin.

She imagined herself with Miss Martin near the waterfalls talking about many things. They would sit and talk freely while watching the beauty of nature surrounding them. But right now she had a contrary problem that she couldn't figure out. She felt like a volcano waiting to explode. This feeling had an emotional effect on Kathy which Miss Martin herself had noticed and asked if anything were wrong.

She remembered the day that Miss Martin had held her back after class to talk with her.

"Did you get all the notes Kathy? You seemed to be in a different world. Is everything okay?"

"Yes, I'm alright. I just had something else on my mind."

The whole problem had exhausted Kathy. She wondered if she could face tomorrow without having the problem solved. She wished that tomorrow would never come. She knew tomorrow would come and that she would have to face her problems. The easy way out would be not to speak to Miss Martin on the way out, but she didn't like giving up and not fighting the battle. It would be like pleading guilty for a crime she hadn't committed. She wanted to fight. She fell into a deep sleep, knowing that one decision was behind her.

Morning brought more complex decisions. How, she thought, am I going to fight? She didn't even know how to say what she wanted to say. She didn't even want to think of what the possible reaction could be to what she might say. The ride to school brought no escape--just anguish. She imagined herself with Miss Martin at a fair going on the rides, playing the games, talking and having fun. She could see them winning a big stuffed animal, a goldfish and a rabbit at the various booths.

The roar of the diesel engine brought her back to reality. The bus seemed to be a police car taking a murderer to his trial. As she entered the building, the bell rang for the start of homeroom. The anticipation and worry built as bell after bell rang sounding the end of each period. Finally, the last bell rang, and it was time for Kathy's judgment.

Kathy approached Miss Martin's room, but was intercepted by Lisa.

"Where are you going?" She said with a smile. "Don't go home. Come down town with us and do some celebrating."

"No, that's okay. I've already made plans. Look, I'm in a hurry so I have to go. I'll give you a call later on. Bye."

She continued on to Miss Martin's room, and, with some apprehension, entered. She saw Miss Martin standing at her desk and walked over to her.

"Oh, hello, Kathy. I hope you have a nice summer. Do you have anything big planned? Any trips or anything?"

"Well, not really. We aren't planning to go anywhere."

"I'm sure you'll have fun, anyway--lying in the sun, swimming, and participating in sports. I'll bet you'll keep real busy." Kathy's head started spinning and she had to hold onto the chair to keep her balance. "What is it Kathy? Are you okay?"

"Oh, yes," Kathy said, "I just wanted to say good luck and I hope to see you over the summer, and well, you see...well, I have to ask you, uh, never mind... I have to go or I'll miss my bus. See you later," she yelled, running out of the door.

"Bye, have a nice summer," Miss Martin yelled after her.

Kathy boarded the bus very slowly and moved toward the back seat. She slumped into her seat thinking, 'Why did it have to happen that way? Was I really supposed to tell her?' She turned toward the window and gripped the seat. She opened the window quickly for she felt she needed air. She looked down at her pencil, now broken in half and threw the two pieces out the window. Someday, I'll tell her, she thought, maybe.

Colleen Gannon
Skaneateles H. S.
Skaneateles, NY

Elizabeth Patton

The 20th Cube (Continued from Page 22)

Lenny yelled once more, 'Let me in!' He then stood back a step, and charged with his shoulder into the door. The thin wood around the bolt gave way, and the door flew open, slamming itself into the bedroom wall, and came back again, coming to a stop against Lenny's shoulder. Lenny stared at what was on the floor in front of him. Chris was kneeling over Charlie's lifeless body. There were rocks scattered all around them, and, in a puddle of warm water that the twenty rocks had been soaking in just ten minutes ago, lay the two ten dollar bills.

"He did it! He did it! All twenty of 'em! I couldn't believe it!" Chris screamed with a tint of insanity in his eyes, "then he tried to smile. They shot all over, and some went down. . ."

Chris stopped for a second, and then a scream burst out of his throat as he smashed down on Charlie's chest with both fists. A

small brown rock shot up into the air and a final gasp escaped from between Charlie's purple lips. Another scream broke the deadly silence. It was a woman's scream.

Lenny turned to see Charlie's parents staring in shock at their dead son. A tear fell from Lenny's cheek.

Chris mumbled under his breath, "If he hadn't tried to smile...He did it, Lenny!"

Chris then shrieked, and watched as Lenny turned and walked from the room, wishing the world could be fair. . .

Danny Rankin
Pascack Valley H. S.
Hillsdale, NJ

Eileen Wall

Somebody Better

It was a frigid Tuesday in the first week of December, and I stepped off the crowded 4:30 bus in town and made my way to the Phillip Dance Center. Darkness had come earlier than usual and the air was sharp and unfriendly. I sprinted along the bustling streets which were already decorated for Christmas. "Jinglebells" was playing and light flurries of snow floated in the wind. As I quickened my pace, the bulky dance bag which I had slung over my shoulder thumped heavily against my back.

When I reached the studio, I opened the door and passed into a more agreeable atmosphere. As I ascended a long flight of stairs, the thundering of ten pairs of tap shoes and the distant tinkling of a piano filled my head. These sounds were as familiar and pacifying to me as a mother's voice to an infant. All the worries of my day waited outside the door in the chill of the night.

After hanging up my belongings, I changed into a silky, black leotard and tights. I liked to wear black because it made me look thinner. Then I pulled my hair into a bun which accentuated my dark eyes and gave my appearance a certain severity. Before slipping into my worn toe shoes, I tightly wrapped a bandage around my right knee which was weakened by injury and lack of rest.

Entering the dance room, I was overwhelmed by the heavy odor of perspiration, and the large picture window at the end of the room glistened with condensation. At the end of the barre, my best friend, Lisa, was stretching her leg. She had seemed distant for the last two days, but I attributed her mood to fatigue.

"Hi Dee, what's up?" she mumbled impassively without even turning to face me.

"Not much. Sorry I missed you after school, but I had to get this knee looked at."

"Oh, how is it?"

"It's getting stronger, I guess."

"Really?" She turned and looked at my knee with her expressionless grey eyes and turned around again. She dramatically tossed a whisp of sunstreaked hair out of her face and resumed her exercises. Her body was in perfect condition. The long legs and her lithe upper body were slim and toned. As I studied her physique, I began to inspect my own legs which now seemed too muscular in comparison with hers.

I gingerly began warming up my knee, facing Lisa's back. She still did not speak.

"...What's the matter with you? We're supposed to be best friends remember? Are you mad at me?..."

Her childlike pout was beginning to annoy me, and I felt like giving her a good smack. I was about to say what I thought when I was interrupted by the sharp voice of Toni, one of my ballet instructors. She was a young woman of about 30, but her sharp nose and high cheek structure made her appear older. Her slick black hair was in a tight knob on the top of her head and her makeup was overdone. But she was my favorite teacher despite her sharpness and grave appearance.

"Class, we'll begin at the barre with our usual series in double time."

She nodded to the pianist and began tapping out rhythms with a wooden stick as she moved down the row of girls making corrections.

My body moved through the exercises it had been programmed to do after long years of daily repetition, and my feet struck the floor in unison with twenty others creating a single dull thud.

But as the series progressed, the exercises became more intricate. Hot droplets of sweat played on my back and cheeks while my breathing became rapid. I could see Lisa at the end of the room. Her movements were precise and seemed effortless. She executed 16 jumps, each as perfect as the next. Her legs hugged in the air and her landings were cat-like. My first eight jumps were "nicely done" as Toni said, but they progressively became less accurate.

"...Come on, work harder...you have to be better than..."

The muscles in my legs began contracting painfully and I gasped for breath. My knee throbbed under the stress, imploring me to stop. But I had lost control to the jealousy which had me in its grip. Finally, my body refused to cooperate and I fell out of a turn with a loud crash.

"Very sloppy!" Toni scolded. "I expect better from you!"

I rested my head and elbows on the barre. My chest heaved uncontrollably, and I was soaked with perspiration.

"Sit down. What's wrong with you tonight?"

I moved away from the barre, mopping my forehead and falling into a frustrated heap on the floor.

"Lisa, those turns were very well done," Toni said in her business-like voice.

Everyone turned and looked at Lisa, who just smiled bashfully. I felt a tightening in my stomach. She actually got a compliment! I considered myself lucky to be corrected. Then I noticed that Lisa was staring at me. She was composed and barely moist. I couldn't stand it.

"...Why is it so easy for her?...She takes fewer classes than I do and she's better..."

I hated her but I hated myself for hating her.

"...Lisa, why won't you talk to me? We've been friends for eight years. We shared so much...Why are you better? I hate you!..."

I was overwhelmed by exhaustion. Pain had invaded both my body and my mind. I blinked fiercely trying to prevent hot tears from brimming over.

After class, Toni called me into her office. There were five other girls present and one of them was Lisa.

Toni began. "Now, I have some very important news which may have an effect on your dancing careers. In two weeks, some friends of mine from the New York Academy are coming here to audition people for their company. If you are accepted by them, you will later audition for the New York City Ballet. This is a personal favor, and you are very lucky. But, out of all of you, they're only choosing one so I'd suggest that you try your very best."

"...So that's it! Lisa must have known about this already. This is a terrific chance and I'm her most serious competition!..."

After explaining the details concerning the competition, Toni dismissed us.

Everyone left the room and I was about to when Toni called me back. She shut the door and stood facing me, placing her hand upon my shoulder.

"Diana, I want you to listen to me and listen good. I know I've put you and Lisa in a tough situation, but you two are the best I have. I'm sorry it has to be this way, but this is dance...this is life. Now I want you to do your best. Honey, you're not Lisa, and I want you to stop trying to be. Lisa's a fine dancer but you've got a style, a unique spark that's all your own--and you know I wouldn't say it if I didn't mean it."

I didn't know what to say. I didn't know if I believed her.

"Now go home, get some rest, and come see me tomorrow at 4:00. And not a word of conversation to anyone, hear? I wouldn't want to spoil my image. Her expression became grave once more."

I couldn't believe what I had just heard. When I arrived at the dressing room, Lisa was combing her blonde, waist-length hair. I actually felt awkward approaching her. I thought it best not to bring up the audition.

"My mom will be here soon. I guess I better hurry!" I tried to sound cheerful.

"Oh well...um, my brother's coming for me."

"But we always get rides together! Lisa, why are you mad at me?"

"Who said I was mad?" she asked, seeming surprised.

"It's the way you've been acting lately." I was exasperated. "Well I'm not. Listen, I have to go. I'll see you in school tomorrow."

"Why don't you call me?"

"Well, I promised Jenny Harper I'd call her tonight. Don't worry. I'll see you tomorrow!" She bounced out of the room.

"...Who the hell is Jenny Harper? What about me? Don't you care anymore?..."

As I stood outside in the deserted street waiting for my ride, an overwhelming sense of loneliness pervaded my soul. The wind gnawed at my face and I zipped my coat to the very top. I thought about Lisa, and I remembered way back in fourth grade when our mothers enrolled us in ballet together. We both wanted to be prima ballerinas. We had it all figured out. When we both became famous dancers in New York, we were going to share a great big apartment and everything would be terrific. We were so naive then.

After two weeks of rigorous preparation, the appointed Saturday arrived and I woke up at 5:00 a.m. It was still dark, and the only sound was the low drone of the furnace. My alarm was set

Her First Sermon

A painting of a child sits on my desk. A cathedral around her, she stands looking toward the priest. Her hands are clasped at her chest, delicate hands, thin and white and frail. Her hair is the color of sand shining through clean shallow water, her eyes are an infinite blue. Her complexion is like that of a porcelain doll: its striking paleness is interrupted only by flushed cheeks, but a hand-painted flush, perfectly proportioned. She wears a white dress which is too big for her; the sleeves are folded over and droop down past her thin elbows because of her hands being clasped at her chest as they are. An old bonnet is tied loosely about her narrow shoulders and her fingers clutch the knot at her throat. She wears no jewelry, her hair is mussed. Her lips are the slightest hue of red and are unmoving. She does not smile.

She is late for church even though she ran all the way, and the mass has already begun. She cannot get to a pew because she is afraid to make a disturbance. She must stand against the cold stone wall just out of the way of the imposing wood doors, where no one can see her. She is frightened, for she has never been late before. She always comes in with her family and sits in a pew far down in the front near the altar, but now she stands alone, shivering in the shadow of a harsh stone arch. The priest's strong pure voice resounds throughout the seams of the church and lingers a moment, becoming trapped in her nook formed by the arch and the closed doors. The dankness of the place is tangible and coats her lungs as she breathes. The eerie, foreign words hang in the air, one after the other. She hugs herself to the rough stone and longs to be outside where the sunlight can touch her.

She looks forlornly to a bright spot in the cathedral, a small stained glass window above her head. Something pretty catches her eye. A bright shard of light is shining through the window. As she is admiring its colorfulness, the little cherubs in the pattern suddenly come to life as if awakened and begin to float and fly gently down to her, contained in the liting beam of sun light. A pattern casts down on the icy grey floor just in front of the toes of her worn shoes. She stares in wonder and breathes deep the perfumed wind of grasses and wildflowers which blows her hair back. She hears a delicate music, one so irresistibly

beautiful that she must reach out to touch it. As a note floats by, she catches it and it ripples fleetingly through her fingers. The beam of sunlight moves gradually up her toes and up her body, warming her and removing the dampness and darkness of the cathedral, and finally rests on her face. The warmth envelopes her and she becomes the light and her spirit is lifted from her body.

She drowsily opens her eyes and outstretched before her are fields and fields of wildflowers. She drifts for a moment and then she is barefoot, running up a grassy hill covered with tiny flowers. She stops to examine a flower which seems to be a dot, but looking at it closely reveals to her a universe of minute complexity and delicate design. She is running again, and her hair flows behind her as she runs, her spirit bathed in warm light which radiates from an unseen sun.

She wavers for an instant, and then finds herself jumping from stone to stone in a small brook, its clear water bubbling with delicate white currents. The light dances on the water and purple butterflies play on the small waves.

The music returns, and she laughs and begins to float upward and upward past clouds and clouds--higher and higher she goes until she touches a raindrop, and she feels wonderfully drowsy and airy and begins to float down, down, down.

She is peaceful, the perfume wind lulling her, and she is among the kaleidoscope cherubs again. They weave around her softly and carry her down through the small stained glass window and sown to her nook in the immense cathedral. Her worn shoes feel the grey stone floor. She stands for a moment looking down at her toes. Her mind clears and she looks up quickly, but the stained glass window is perfectly still, the tiny cherubs frozen in a silent colorful eternity.

The voice of the priest gradually penetrates her solitude and she remembers where she is. But the mysteriousness of his words do not frighten her now. She smiles peacefully and she feels within her a joyous music.

I can no longer see the painting on my desk for the room has grown dark.

Vanessa Elder
Oyster Bay, NY
Dr. Richard Sullivan

Somebody Better (Continued from Page 24)

for 8:30 but I was wide awake. I rolled onto my back and laid studying the ceiling. I thought about the audition and pictured myself doing stupid things like ripping my tights or falling on my face. I shuddered at these thoughts and pulled the quilt over my head. I also remembered Lisa. We hadn't really spoken in a whole week except for a few brief hellos at school.

...Why are we growing apart? I never did anything to you. Is it my fault that I'm good?...

At 8:35 I got up and dressed. After this, I sat at the kitchen table staring into a bowl of cereal. My mother entered the room in a terrycloth robe, and her hair hung down her back in a long braid. At 35 she still wore her hair long in the style of her Indian ancestors. She sat down across from me and lit up a cigarette.

"Dee, you have to eat something."

"Mom, I just can't."

She sat back folding her arms thoughtfully and exhaled smoke through her nose.

"Why hasn't Lisa called you lately?"

"Uh...She's just been really busy I guess."

"Too busy to talk on the phone? That's a change."

"Well, you know, we've had a lot of homework. Um...I better be going." I jumped up and searched for my keys.

The audition went better than I had expected. Everything looked great and they seemed to have liked me. I went home with high spirits even though my knee ached. I was so confident because they told me I was "superb." I only saw Lisa once and I had quite forgotten about her. That night I sat in my room watching TV eating a piece of cake. These were two activities I rarely indulged in, but I considered it my reward. I didn't go out because Toni said she would call at 8:00.

I thought about Toni with her tired eyes and black dancing

skirt. She used to dance in New York, too. She was my age when she went there, taking her vitality and big dreams with her. But there was always somebody better, and now she teaches people like me hoping to live her dreams through us, because we're all she has left.

The abrupt sound of the telephone startled me. My heart beat rapidly as I stood staring at the ringing phone. With a trembling hand I lifted the receiver expecting to hear Toni's voice.

"Hello?"

"Dee, it's Lisa! I made it," she squealed. "I'm going to New York right after graduation. I wanted my best friend to be the first to know."

...Oh, I'm supposed to be thrilled!...I hate you!...

My arm dropped to my side, my hand still clutching the receiver. Lisa's chattering was still audible. I slammed it down wishing to put an end to her voice permanently.

...But...but...I thought...

I sat on my bed in a state of shock. I spotted the small gold picture frame on my dresser which held a picture of Lisa and me. As I gently picked it up, my tears fell onto the two of us in our little pink tu tu's. We were both seven then and it was our first recital. We were supposed to be rosebuds. But Lisa's turned up nose and wide smile seemed to mock me, and I flung the little picture frame across the room where it landed in the corner with a crack down the center of the glass.

I looked at my dark hair and eyes in the mirror, but all I could see was Toni looking back with her tired expression and black dancing skirt. I covered my face with my hands....There's always somebody better....

Mary Jane Kalafut
Scranton Prep
Scranton, PA

Mr. Vanston

Sundays

It once seemed to me that Sundays were always sunny. Once a week, I ran out into the bright morning, shoes and face scrubbed and shiny, and my round brother wobbled out after me. His baby's hair resisted combing, as it still does, and stuck out spiky on top of his head. Our parents followed us more slowly to the car and we drove to church, a place attractive mostly for its candy-cane-striped jungle gym.

I felt an infinite security, knowing that even when the rain beat hard on the roof Saturday night, I would wake up in the morning to see the dark spots on the driveway shrinking. The black door would infallibly creak open and let the cat out to pursue early morning rabbits in the yard.

One night the rain came down like stones on the roof. I woke to a more gentle pebbly tapping of drops and the grey rain led me to believe that it was only, after all, an unusually long Saturday evening shower. But the quality of light could not be disguised by the rain. It was morning.

In confirmation of this, Dad was reading the dry sections of the paper, while the cat lay near the stove on top of the wet pages. Mom had made hot chocolate and we drank it together, I on her lap.

Mom dressed Peter and me for Sunday; but I wore boots instead of my black church shoes. Peter was carried to the car and I was hurried, umbrella-sheltered, close to Dad's wet raincoat.

The ride was uncomfortably wet. The umbrellas and I sat in the back and dripped. We reached church and the parking lot seemed huge behind the foggy car windows. Dad stopped the car and when I opened my door, I could see the wet pavement, glistening black and writhing. The grey translucent bodies of earthworms stretched and coiled as far as I could see.

I was home from school last weekend. As I lay in my own bed in my own room at home, Sunday morning, I could smell the warmth of the oven from upstairs. While I slept, Mom had baked brownies for me to take back to school as she does everytime I go home, now.

I heard Mom's step on the stairs.

"Let's all go to church this morning," Mom said, fully dressed, from the dim edge of my bed. "Dad's making eggs for you; they should be done any minute now."

She got up and shut the door behind her. I looked over at my clock; it glowed faint in the half-light: 8:30.

"Eggs," Dad was yelling. "Eggs, eggs!" His voice carried down the stairs through the closed door.

I pulled on a pair of jeans, opened the door, and went upstairs to soft boiled eggs with runny insides that have always stuck to my throat. I broke the yolk of my egg, watched it drip like pus from a blister and run over my plate.

Mom had come back from a conference Saturday afternoon and she turned the breakfast talk to the women she had met. They were all the "nicest ladies," but their children were divorced and living with older women or younger men in the back woods of Maine or in holes in Cambridge.

Mom's face twisted with the pain of being a mother and with a sympathy for other mothers. She looked at my plate and at me.

"I guess you can never tell," she sighed.

I pushed back Dad's sleeve to see the time. It was late. I left the table to change. I was standing in my closet in my socks looking for a pair of shoes when a hand rapped hard on the door to my room.

"Come in." When I came out of the closet holding my shoes, Mom was standing inside my room. Her face looked still as a winter lake.



Melinda Halpern

"You father works very hard every day; I wonder if you could cheerfully help him with the dishes." There was no wonder in her voice.

"Fine, Mom." I bit my lip to stop the corners of my mouth from twitching. The door was open when she left.

"Fine, Mom." I said to the open doorway.

I finished the dishes while Dad went upstairs to put on a tie. It was time to go to church. The car ride was silent. Mom and Dad were teaching church school, so I walked into the sanctuary by myself. I shook the withered hand of the faded, flowered greeter.

"Good morning," she quavered.

I took a seat at the end of a pew. I didn't listen to the words and it was as if I were alone in a very quiet room. The sun filtered in stripes through the long shutters onto the faces of the congregation.

Along the short slope behind the Academy Building facing the academic quad, a host of ancient forsythia are blooming. Seldom cut, they spew their blossoms like fountains arching up and out, the tips of limbs bending back to touch the ground again.

Children play beneath the boughs. I hear them on my way to early Sunday dinner calling out to each other like birds. After dinner, their voices still chirp and call in the twilight, and I must walk past the bright cascades to my room, and then work late into the night when children are asleep.

Leslie Tamaribuchi
Phillips Exeter Academy
Exeter, NH

David Weber

More Than Ice Cream Left Me Cold

Last night a really cute girl waited on me. I walked into Friendly's at 11:00. I could have taken any seat in the room, but since I was scared to see anybody I knew, I slipped into the four-seater booth at the very rear of the restaurant. I sat with my back to the front door. The fluorescent light barely cast my shadow on the dark brown plastic table. It was so dark that the sticky spots blended in with the fake wood grains. The ventilation system was broken, or maybe it was because I was crammed into the corner of the slick vinyl seats, so it was stuffy. I suffocated slowly on the stale ice cream odor masked by disinfectant and generic lavatory air freshener.

This really cute girl waited on me. She tried as hard as she could, and succeeded, at keeping her face frozen, but she couldn't hide her body. What a body and what a command of that sweet voice. So crisp. Not a sound emitted out of place, not even a stray breath slightly whistling on her pale pink lips or on her smooth pointed tongue. I gave her my order for a sundae. I wanted the chocolate syrup hot and topped with extra nuts. She snapped a nod, "yes," and lazily, but with true erect poise, like her body hung from her shoulders and naturally curved into the arched back, she strolled away to fill my order. I knew it was a mistake to sit in the back facing the wall. I couldn't see the girl. I didn't want to switch sides because my intent would be obvious to the whole world surveilling every one of my moves. My hands were on the sticky table and I had had to brace myself from sliding off the greasy seat. I wanted that girl.

Blonde hair, blue eyes, white skin that reddens instead of

tanning, serving in Friendly's right nearby. What a find! She looked a year or so younger than me. Not so bad. A sophomore or junior in high school. Willing? The contemplation of a positive answer made me approach uncontrollable emotions. She delivered the sundae exactly as I had ordered it. I was so tempted to change sides of the table so I could watch her. The spun glass hair, blending in with the swirling condensation from the open freezer, flowing over the two gallon drums of ice cream. The top of a fresh barrel of vanilla, poured smooth, glowing the same tone as her translucent skin. I scratched my gritty finger-nail across the finger-print plastic wood grains through a congealed puddle of chocolate fudge swirl dusted with scouring powder.

I finished the sundae. The greasy heartburn crept up from my bellybutton into my chest. I glanced at my digital watch. "11:25.06." Closing in five minutes. Time to make my move. I slid out onto the waterstained linoleum floor. I spun around to face the counter and black windows sucking the light out of the horizontally decorated room. She wasn't there. On the shiny table I left \$2.50 in two wilted wrinkled dollar bills and two crusty quarters. Two dollars and four cents for the sundae and a forty-six cent tip. I went home to watch TV.

Michael Cammer
Mamaroneck H.S.
Larchmont, NY

Mrs. Freeman

Computers and Romance

Who'd ever think that I'd have a boyfriend like Eric? I never did—we're so different. He loves rockets and 747's. I love birds and butterflies. He's determined to be an aerospace engineer. I think I want to be a journalist, or an actress, or a poet. Eric enjoys going to computer conventions and science fairs. I like to take in Broadway plays and poetry festivals. His idol is Neil Armstrong. Mine is Elizabeth Barrett Browning. . .

Though Eric and I have been going out for over a year, I'm surprised that we're still dating. We clash over everything from food, to music, to literature. Right now he's reading COSMOS. I'm reading ROMEO AND JULIET and dreaming of Romeo.

I always dreamed of a prince—with Robert Redford's looks, Paul Newman's finesse, and Richard Gere's body—who would carry me off into a sunset. Instead, I have Eric. Now, if you have a passion for bespeckled, 6'3" walking computers, you'd love Eric. But I, as a petite romantic, find he often falls short of my ideal.

The day before my sweet sixteenth birthday, for example, I dreamed of what wonderful gift Eric might have gotten for me. Roses? A box of Godiva chocolates? Elizabeth Barrett Browning's SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE? The book was what I really wanted. The next day Eric presented me with a flat package wrapped in plain brown paper. No ribbon. What else could it be but SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE?

Oh Eric, I mused, we'll sit shaded under the giant oak in the park. I'll read love sonnets to you all afternoon. "How do I love thee. . ."

I tenderly loosened the package's folded flaps. . . "let me count the ways. . ." Eric was grinning proudly. "I love thee to the depth, breadth and. . ." I groaned. He had bought me a computer software kit.

"This is my present?" I asked.

"Since your family's getting a Commodore 64 soon," Eric explained, "I knew you'd need some programs for it."

"Oh, practical." I had pursed my lips. I should have known

better than to expect something romantic out of a facts and figures guy like Eric.

At times I seriously consider ending our relationship. After we saw AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN, I practically waltzed out of the theater. The movie had been my "Prince Charming" fantasy.

"Wasn't that a beautiful story?" I turned to Eric. He had a bland expression on his face.

"That was terrible! We should've gone to see '2001' again."

At that moment, I felt like dumping Eric and his scientific mind. But I just sighed and turned away.

I sigh when Eric doesn't live up to my romantic expectations—and I sigh a lot. I know it's not Eric's fault that he doesn't understand why I have a yen for moonlit strolls, candlelit dinners, and evening picnics with champagne and pat. According to Eric, night air is damp and shivery, dinner at McDonald's is nutritious and inexpensive, and eating in the dark is impractical.

In spite of all our difficulties, Eric and I have stayed together through a mixture of strong chemistry and endless compromise. Last month, Eric surprised me with the suggestion of a trip to the National Gallery of Art. I loved it. We strolled hand-in-hand past the gallery's great portraits, hugged by the arched sprays of marble fountains, and kissed behind the carved stone of intricate Florentine sculptures. Eric didn't say anything scientific all day. I was elated. So I decided I would learn some "computerese." I was soon using my birthday present.

But the romantic in me still searches for a prince in Eric. Often I dream of gentle cloud wisps drifting in lavender skies, high above a sparkling Venetian canal—Prince Eric and I in a gold-leafed gondola—the capped gondolier singing "O Solo Mio." My Eric turns to me from the glistening water, "Hey, Kris, look at the photons refracting off the water!"

Tina J. Yee
Northwood H. S.
Silver Spring, MD

Reflections

Jane carefully put away the crimson blouse that her mother had set out the night before, and took a plain, pale-blue blouse out of her closet and laid it on her bed. She walked over to her dresser and picked up a pink plastic comb and tried to work it through her thick brown hair. This comb was a poor substitute for her own brush, a brown thickly-bristled tool that glided through her hair with ease. It must have been misplaced during the move. She put the comb down and looked up at her reflection in the mirror. Her skin looked pale so she rubbed her cheeks vigorously with the palms of her hands. Satisfied with the result, she looked beyond her reflection, and at the mirror itself. It was an oval-shaped piece of glass bordered by a pale-green wood frame with tiny pink roses. It was once grandma's, but now it was hers. She remembered exactly where it hung back at the farm.

"Janie, your breakfast is ready. You'd better hurry or you'll be late for your first day!" her mother called from downstairs.

"Coming, mom."

Jane quickly slipped on the blue blouse, a light-gray skirt, and a navy wool blazer with a yellow emblem on the upper left pocket. She rushed down the steps and into the kitchen.

"Good morning, mom!"

"Good morning, dear. I'm glad to see you so excited. I thought maybe you'd be a little nervous, your first day and all."

"I guess I am a little nervous, but only because I won't know anyone. What I do know is that I'm going to love Wilford Academy"

Wilford Academy. Jane stopped chewing her bacon for a moment while the name gently rang in her ear. It sounded so much more exciting than Center City Public, the school she used to be bused to. She gulped down a small glass of juice as she got up from the table and grabbed a dull-gray jacket from the back of her chair.

"I'm gonna be late," she said cheerfully. "Gotta go. Love ya, Mom."

Jane kissed her mother as she scooped up her books and ran through the living room to the door.

Jane stood in front of the huge marble staircase outside the school, almost afraid to set her foot upon the first step. A sudden push from behind interrupted her thoughts, and Jane turned around quickly to discover two rather attractive, older-looking girls snickering behind her. The sharp lines of their faces were accented with heavy make-up and they reminded her of the Christmas back in the country when her mom's cousin Liza, who modeled clothes in a big city, came to visit. She had the same dark foundation that gave her skin an orangy tint, and two deep red streaks lined her cheekbones. Her hair was dirty-blond in color, and tossed in a careless way. Jane could remember laughing when Liza left the room, but she could also remember her mother explaining that most people think that Liza is beautiful. Jane agreed that the shade of red on her cheeks was beautiful, and the blues and purples on her eyelids were beautiful, but it was the make-up that was beautiful, not Liza.

The snickers brought Jane back to reality. The two girls were looking down at her shoes. One of the girls toosed her curly blonde hair and proceeded up the steps. Jane looked down at her soft brown Hush Puppies, and then up at the girl whose shiny red shoes reflected the sunlight. Jane reached for the tiny brass knob that would open the door to a whole new world, when a tall good-looking boy crossed in front of her, and reached the knob before she did. Remembering his manners, the boy stopped and held the door open as Jane walked through the ancient oak doorway.

To her left, Jane noticed a huge marble fireplace with Wilford Academy engraved over the mantle. She slowly traced the letters, her finger gliding across the smooth cold surface. She turned to her right and saw a spacious wood and glass cabinet filled with what seemed like millions of shining trophies. Every sport imaginable was represented by the proud golden figures posing atop colorful pedestals. The golden sunlight streaming in through the glass door played upon their bodies, and they appeared to be smiling, opening their arms invitingly. And Jane smiled.

A loud ringing interrupted her thoughts, and warned her that she was late for the assembly. She walked straight ahead into a large auditorium filled with noisy students. There were signs marking the four sections. Seniors, Juniors, Sophomores, and finally Freshmen. Jane scanned the Freshmen section for an empty seat, but found none.

"Follow me," said a voice behind her. It was the girl with the red shoes. Jane noticed that the crowd had quieted down as she followed the girl who headed toward the section marked "Seniors." Jane felt rather important as she and her new-made friend approached the two empty seats at the end of the aisle. Suddenly, a foot darted out in her path. Jane saw it, but she was somehow unable to stop herself, and she tumbled to the floor. She could feel the heat in her cheeks as she climbed to her feet to the rhythm of mocking cheers. She quickly spun around to view the culprit, and found the boy who had held the door for her chuckling madly.

"There must have been a buckle in the carpeting," she said apologetically, trying to convince herself more than the others. Jane took her seat and the laughter died down as the principal began his speech.

"Welcome, students of Wilford Academy, to our sixty-third yearly session. We extend a special welcome to our Freshmen whom we know will benefit from their four years of education here at Wilford."

The principal was a small man, plump and practically bald. His pompous attitude was not only reflected in his voice, but magnified by the tiny silver microphone attached to his lapel.

"We here at Wilford are proud people. We are proud of our faculty, proud of our staff, proud of our alumni, and most of all, we are proud of our student body."

His speech quickly bored Jane, and having temporarily recovered from her embarrassment, she began to look around. The room she was in was massive. The walls and ceiling were painted white, and the floor was carpeted in a deep rust. At the front of the auditorium was a large stage, an American flag on one side, and the Wilford Academy banner on the other. In the middle was the wooden podium where the principal stood. Hanging above his head was a felt banner with Latin words which Jane did not understand.

"In fact, seventy percent of our graduates become doctors, lawyers, or maintain some other respectable position."

After the stage, there followed about forty rows of students. Jane looked through the Freshmen section. A few of the girls were whispering among themselves, but most were paying attention to the principal. These seemed in direct contrast to those in their seats with their arms folded across their chests, bored with the same speech they had heard for the past three years.

"Our students here at Wilford are the best, and the reason that they are the best, is because they give all they have. The combination of our excellent curriculum, and the will of our students to be the best they can be results in a well educated person. Now I know that all of you want to be the best you can be. Is there anyone here who doesn't want to be the best he can be?"

The girl with the red shoes had noticed that Jane was not paying attention, and glancing at her name tag she said, "Is your name Jane Homer?"

"Yes," answered Jane, rather startled.

"Well, the principal is taking roll, and he just called your name. You'd better stand up and answer him."

Jane jumped up nervously.

"Yes sir," she said.

Jane was shocked by the sudden burst of laughter that arose from the crowd. She turned and looked at the principal. His face was all red, and the rolls of fat under his chin shook in fury. Jane realized what had happened, and after uttering a meek apology, she took her seat.

"As I was saying," continued the principal, clearing his throat, "I expect this year to be no different from the rest. I know that this year's seniors will continue to set an example for the underclassmen."

Jane could feel the tears swelling in her eyes, and she felt the same way that she did that morning during the summer after her eighth birthday. The day started off the same as any other. . . Every morning she got up early, and threw on a pair of shorts and a T-shirt and rushed downstairs to find her dog, 'Fluffy,' waiting in the kitchen. And every morning they took the same route for their walk. Down the dirt road, once around the lake, and back home again. Jane would sit on the bank with the warm sunshine hitting her back, while Fluffy frolicked in the shallow water. . . but after she got dressed, she rushed down the stairs to find her mother in the kitchen. Mother said that while she was sleeping, God came and took Fluffy to Heaven, and. . .

Jane heard no more. She hated Heaven, and she hated God for taking Fluffy there, and the tears streamed down Jane's cheeks. . .

Pizzeria: July 22

A little girl and her grandmother come into the pizzeria
 You can tell she's her grandmother because she calls her
 "grandma."
 They ask the man behind the counter if he's got
 Fresh coffee made
 And a soda.
 He says, "yeah, yeah,"
 And gets the drinks.
 After they sit down, the girl asks for her bubblegum.
 The grandmother takes a piece of gum from her pocketbook
 --I put all the things we bought in my bag.
 She also takes out a package of cigarettes
 --Go back to where I got these and get some matches.
 The little girl pulls at the vending machine by the door
 --You can get matches from here.
 The grandmother says no
 --Go back to the man I bought the cigarettes from
 And ask for some matches.
 The girl goes.
 The grandmother is wearing a baggy white housedress
 With blue and green print flowers
 She has no stockings and varicose veins.
 When the girl returns the grandmother lights up
 And smokes as the girl drinks soda.
 Where we went today. If your mother knew we walked
 Along that highway, that big road. . .
 --Okay. I'll say we went for a long walk to, to. . .
 --Don't say where to. It'll just be our little secret.
 The girl's shirt is blue
 She's very fair
 And she nods at her grandmother over her straw.
 They leave the pizzeria
 And walk past the Shop Rite that feeds its customers
 Both of their right feet angle out
 As they go into the shrubs beside the road.

Susan Knobloch
 Ocean Township H. S.
 Ocean Township, NJ

Mr. Bruce Richards

She kept her head down so the kids around her wouldn't notice. It seemed like hours before the bell that ended the assembly finally rang.

"Well, I'd just like to say in closing, Wilford is a very respectable school run by very respectable people, and if you don't think that you are going to like it here, then don't come back tomorrow. Because if you don't like it here, then you're not one of us, and we don't want you. Don't forget, classes begin at nine o'clock sharp tomorrow."

Most of Jane's section already had their coats on and were heading for the door by the time the principal finished. Jane took tissues out of her purse and wiped her eyes. Then she grabbed her books and coat and headed for the door marked, "exit." It seemed the faster she walked, the farther back the door moved. She finally reached it, and she moved quickly into the main lobby. She passed the old cracked marble and the wooden case filled with mocking figures chanting, "You're not one of us." She stormed out the door and down the steps. The cool September breeze dried her tear-stained face, and a saddened expression slowly turned to one of determination.

"I have to be one of them!" she thought.

The walk home passed by quickly, and Jane rooted through her purse for the house key. She opened the door and went into the house, carelessly plopping her books on the couch. There was a note on the kitchen table.

Trudgery

Are your shoulders really
 hunched,
 bunched up tensely,
 or is it an illusion caused by
 flowglowing hair?
 (Or does carrying twenty pounds
 of books in two hands--
 that's two pounds a finger--
 cause muscular strain?)
 Those fingers should be sliding,
 gliding
 over piano keys,
 not squooshed under
 icy differential equations.
 Perhaps lugging,
 tugging
 a stack of brick-books
 is wonderful exercise, but
 I'd much rather see you
 shoulders down,
 floating towards me,
 arms free,
 ready to wave,
 flow,
 flap,
 fly,
 or possibly even free
 my hindered hands
 with spindly fingers,
 than trudging away
 flowly,
 muddily,
 and (except for your books)
 alone.

Andrew Elby
 Westfield H.S.

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"Janie, hope your first day was great. Gone to the store, be back in an hour. Love, Mom."

She ran upstairs to her room, closed the door, and looked in the mirror. Jane didn't notice how the delicate pink roses fit so finely in the green wood. For the first time, the mirror did not bring back some memory of the farm. Jane only noticed how badly the antique mirror clashed with the modern furniture in her room. She reached under her bed and pulled out the make-up that Liza had given to her that Christmas. Liza was one of them, and Jane was determined that she could be, too.

Coat after coat, she globbed on the orangy foundation. With each layer, she felt she was one step closer to being one of them. She took out the blush and tried desperately to imitate the harsh lines which she remembered seeing on Liza's cheeks. But, as she began to stroke the dark purple powder across her eyelids, her eyes once again filled with tears. She fell to her knees in frustration. She just wasn't one of them. She picked up the small glass bottle of foundation and flung it at the hideous image reflected in the mirror. A loud crash followed, and the orange base slowly coated the stray fragments of mirrored glass till remaining in the green wood frame.

Carla Mascaro
 Scranton Prep
 Dunmore, PA

Mr. Vincent Vanston

Grudge Match

Hello, Stephen? Yes, it's me. I know it's been a while, but I needed to talk to somebody. Are you still writing those short stories? Good. I have a story I want to tell you. I'm telling you because you could publish it, and because only you would believe it. This is no joke; what I'm going to tell you is true. It started last week, at promotion time. . . .

I was working late last Friday night at the company when Phil Bennet stopped by my office. He was another executive, and we were both competing for the chairmanship. We were also the only ones not waging a bloody executive battle for a position. Going about business as usual, we were able to remain calm while chaos reigned around us. He was even leaving Saturday to vacation for a week before the final decisions were made: I had mentioned needing a vacation, too, and he said that he would let me borrow his cabin in the woods over the weekend. He had never mentioned owning a cabin, but I jumped at the chance to get away from my penthouse for a while. He gave me directions, wished me well, and left to catch his Bahama-bound plane.

After I finished work, I bolted back to my room at the Tower, threw a few outdoor things into a pack, and headed out. It was getting dark, but I could still see without my headlights. It was a beautiful sunset, the blood-red sun sinking into the trees, setting the whole forest aflame with a smoldering crimson fire. Turning off the highway, I followed a small road until I came to the woods.

An orange dusty road wound through the woods, as if a giant child had left a trail of sand to follow home. The dust did not rise into a choking cloud as I drove by, but rested lethargically where it was pushed by my Jeep's tires. I paused by a small wooden bridge to admire the diamond sparkle of a stream in the light of the new-risen moon. Further downstream, I could see black swans swimming in a quiet pond. I drove by quietly to avoid disturbing the tranquility of the scene.

As I drove over the bridge, I was disturbed by the change of scenery. The virgin forest transformed itself into a vulgar parody of the vegetation it was. The undergrowth choked the trunks and reached for the boughs as the overgrowth choked the moonlight. The forest grew darker as I drove on, the Jeep's headlights struggling to penetrate the cloak of blackness. I was forced to steer by feeling for the edge of the road. Finally, reaching a clearing, I saw the small stone cabin. Walking to the cabin across the soft sand was tedious, but a pleasant change from the excitement of city sidewalks. The door was open, so I stepped into the dark interior.

The main room at first seemed sparsely furnished, but as my eyes adjusted to the darkness, I realized that this was an illusion brought on by its impossible enormity. Even with my vision corrected for the dark, I could not see any walls other than the one behind me. As I turned to face it, I saw my car through a small niche next to the door. I gasped in disbelief; the only part left above the sand was the roof. Staring in shock at what remained of my Jeep, I groped for the doorknob. It was gone. Not the doorknob, the door. The entire entrance through which I had just passed was gone as if it had been erased off a blackboard.

My mind tried to make sense out of what was going on. Perhaps I had become disoriented due to the darkness. I scanned the wall in search of an exit, but to no avail. The damp stone mocked my every attempt to get out. I was trapped, and the only hope seemed to lie in the blackness which eclipsed the room.

I stepped forward with the air of a warrior going to battle an unseen foe. I am not a panic-prone person, but my first experience in this cabin had opened a whole new doorway into fear. As I stepped into obscurity, I heard strange shufflings and creakings. It sounded as if the room were rearranging itself around me. Searching constantly, I noticed that the room went on for a long time. The sensation of walking on a treadmill with scenery rolling past on a printed screen filled my head. The only difference was that this scenery did not end or repeat. The basic pattern of cold damp stone caked with dirt was constant, but I never passed a familiar point.

I plodded on, going over my dilemma in my mind and becoming more confused. Surely there had to be a reason behind this, but for the moment it eluded me.

Suddenly, something grabbed my foot and pitched me forward onto the floor. Layers of dust cushioned my fall and I hurriedly scrambled clear of whatever was there.

Peering through the gloom at my tracks, I saw what had caused my fall. A ring of iron, now rusted from long exposure to

the damp atmosphere, inhabited the center of my footstep. I cleared away the surrounding dust, and found a seam in the floor. Perhaps I had stumbled on an escape route. As I opened the trapdoor, there was a rushing of air, like I had opened an airlock. There was a small wooden ladder placed under the door and I resolved to try it, if only for a break in the monotony.

As I descended, I noticed a change in the air quality. The air was drier and the dust, free from the heavy moisture, drifted about. There was a little more light, enough to see comfortably by, but not enough to show a way out.

I reached the bottom of the ladder, despite its creaking protest, and looked around. I was in a small room with a stone floor. On two of the four walls was a door, one opposite the other. One was large with metal bands, held shut by a metal bar as thick as my arm. The other was smaller, unlocked, and rather inoffensive. Choosing the easier route, I walked to the small door. Not wanting to be hasty, I stopped and put my ear to the door. The only sound was the quiet whisper of a breeze, and the gentle smell of wildflowers drifted through a small crack. My heart raced with the prospect of being free.

Throwing the door open, I lept forward, and stopped. The field that I had imagined lay before me dead and decaying. A fetid breeze blew by driving me to my knees. Looking out across the wasteland, I saw the ground ahead explode. Damp, black soil infested with white grubs covered me, but I barely noticed as I stared open-mouthed at the monstrosity before me.

The creature slowly rose from its hole, unveiling itself to me, like the artwork of some twisted sculptor. First the body, pale and bloated like a corpse, washed up on the shore; then it opened its eyes and they burned like the witch fires in early Salem. Last was the mouth, dripping saliva from blackened teeth. Its tongue snaked out and lapped up the grubs which hadn't crawled back into the soil. Pulling itself loose from the dirt with an obscene sucking sound, it lurched forward like a grossly distorted image of a caterpillar.

Intuitively, I knew that there was no longer a door behind me, so I circled to the right of the slow moving creature. Glancing behind me, I saw that the door was gone, as I predicted. Turning to face the hole it had lain in, I noticed a tunnel leading underground. The pit was filled with excrement, but I dove for the tunnel in desperation. I made the opening, stood up, and ran for the other end. Too late, I realized my mistake. This tunnel led to the creature's lair.

Scanning the cave, I saw only a pile of leaves near the entrance and a pile of rocks toward the rear. I heard the worm sloughing down the corridor and started piling the leaves in the entrance. Fumbling for my lighter, I groaned as I found it nearly empty. I spun the wheel and prayed. Sparks flew, but no fire. Again and again, I tried and was rewarded with a small pale blue flame. The thing was nearly upon me, so I thrust the lighter into the pile. I thanked God and Cricket lighters for 1001 lights as the leaves caught and the flame spread. The worm was caught in the burning pile and as I backed off, it let out an inhuman scream. Stumbling over the pile of rocks, I saw what might be another way out. The rocks had come from the ceiling and there was a hole that could be enlarged. Digging was difficult with the heat and smoke, but I managed to create an opening large enough to crawl through.

I found myself back in the room with two doors, only now one was gone. Sitting down in a corner, I began to compose myself and study the acts. I knew Bennet was behind this, but how he did it was unclear. I also didn't know why he was trying to kill me. We got along fairly well, and had often enjoyed a late snack while sharing our views on many issues, past and present. We had a lot in common, considering that we were from different covens. He couldn't have used witchcraft, he wasn't that powerful. My gaze fell on the barred door. I wondered what secret he was hiding in there. Creeping to the door, I listened. My heart sank, and I recoiled in horror. I had heard the sound which wakes small children, screaming in terror. When I was young, I had imagined the sound that the boogeyman would make. It was the sound of slime, long claws scraping across charnel floors, a long forked tongue licking yellowed teeth in anticipation of an easy kill. That sound had given me many nightmares when I was young. Now, that nightmare was behind that door.

Calming myself, I continued my train of thought. Bennet was obviously trying to kill me, but why keep that monster locked up? My intuitive feeling was telling me to take a chance on that door. As I looked around, I saw that there were no other alternatives, anyway.

Grandpa's Workshop

Winter is coming soon. The winds will rattle cold at the casement. The ice, silver like a young girl's locket, will glaze the front steps. The snow will drape the lands in folds of white. There will be lace-frosted windowpanes, gutters with icicles like prisms hanging. And inside, warm crusty slices of fresh-baked bread, fluffy blankets to snuggle in, and the fireplace blazing. But the warmth of a fireplace in winter is not enough. I need the warmth of summer: the rough weather-beaten feel of an old barn door warmed by the sun, and the smell of sawdust, turpentine, and fresh paint.

Oh, how I miss the summers in Grandpa's workshop in the barn: the swallows that built their nests in the rafters, the musty smell of walnuts in burlap sacks, the box of brown flat stones on which Grandpa painted birds--stones that were smooth, so smooth and warm to the cheek.

In the afternoons, when the sun flamed yellow, Grandpa pattered in his shop, the sunlight from the window glazing his tanned forehead. He dabbled with his paints or carved little toy wagons and doll furniture out of scraps of wood for my sister and me.

I loved watching Grandpa work. I'd stand by his side, my elbows perched on the edge of the workbench, my chin cradled in my hand, while he painted hummingbirds on smooth stones, flat as a river bottom, or sawed pine boards into little pieces, clouding the air like whirls of summer dust, or painted little hats of newspaper that my sister and I used for dress-up.

And if I tired of watching him, there was always his collection of canvases, frames, and old tools to look at. Grandpa had stacked against the wall, his canvasses of birds: the Baltimore oriole nestled among the apple blossoms, the goldfinch clinging to the purple cap of the Canadian thistle, the barn swallow perched on the rim of his nest ready for flight, and the mallard duck preening the emerald richness of his neck feathers. Against another wall, leaned his picture frames: the deep red cherrywood, the fresh tan pine, the honey-yellow oak, in sizes as small as a barn window pane, and others as large as Grandma's hall mirror.

Grandpa's collection of tools spanned the wall above his workbench. There were hoes, dandelion-pickers, trowels, spades, rose-cutters, and an old mule harness with tarnished brass bells that I used to shake to get Grandpa's attention, and he'd talk about the birds he was painting, the robins, who ate

the fallen fermenting mulberries and wobbled around us if drunk. He'd chuckle, "...those fat robins gobbling down those mulberries." Then he might tell me something about his boyhood, "You know, when I was a boy, my brothers and I used to sleep in the attic and on winter mornings we'd find the snow had drifted in on our blankets."

Cloudy days, when the sky was unsure and would shower rain in surprise, were the best days to be in the shop. Outside, the rain fell dotting the dusty earth, running in the ruts and between the stones, swelling the gutters full. The winds caught the barn doors, slamming hard against the side of the barn, played see-saw with the trees and rumbled the shop roof.

Inside, it was warm and washed a quiet grey by the windowlight. The window, once heated by the flaming sun, was now chilled enough to leave the imprint of my nose. I'd climb on top of the workbench to be near Grandpa as he worked. He'd whistle a tune like "The Hoco Moco Isle." "...the first white man from any land on the Hoco Moco Isle was Pat McShayne..." Then I'd come in with,

'Oh, won't you come down to the isle
of Hoco Moco, Carico!
See me ride a jumbo, Kiliyumbo!
Bring along your mother dear
the cannibals are hungry here."

The swallows, our balcony audience, would peep out from their nests in the rafters.

Often I've thought I'll have a workshop like Grandpa's. I'll find an old house somewhere that has a barn behind it, just right for turning into a shop. I'll spend my summer afternoons there like Grandpa, painting my own pictures--but in words instead of pigment.

You see, when winter comes, when the wind rattles cold at my casement, I remember an old barn warmed by the sun. Winter is my time of discontent, but remembering brings back the contentment of an old barn with swallows in the rafters and misty rain-wet windows to press my nose against. It brings back Grandpa.

Amy King
Northwood H. S.
Wheaton, MD

Mary Lee Ruddle

Grudge Match (Continued from Page 30)

I worked the bolt loose on the door, but the low moaning roar that rattled the hinges almost made me put it back. Steeling my nerves, I threw the door open, and nearly collapsed with fear.

Seven-foot-tall shoulders, forearms like steel cables with pile-driver fists, the rows of evil spikes running in tandem along its back, paled in comparison to the massive ram-like horns coiling around its primal cranium. Light from a single dying torch glinted off its multi-faceted scales, forming miniature rainbows which soon died in the atmosphere of horror. Roaring again, it raised its upper body into a centaur-like position and faced me. Even as I instinctively backed away, I could feel a wrongness about it. I felt sure that no mere door could hold back a demon of this size. Glancing down, I found the final flaw. No shadow. For all of Bennet's scheming, he forgot to add a shadow element to his illusion. I walked past it, even as it faded back into its own plane, and picked up the tome that it had been protecting. Now I knew how he had pulled off such a large scale spell. A

powerful book of magic can work wonders.

Having the book changed everything. All I had to do was look up a teleport spell and I was out. Once the source of power is removed, a spell dissipates quickly. The house sank into the sand and joined my Jeep in oblivion. What's gone is gone, and even magic can't alter that.

Yes, I got the job. You should have seen Bennet's face when he came back from vacation. What? No, I don't hate him, I might even have done the same thing. I didn't say anything about the cabin. I told him that the Jeep got totalled and that I didn't go. Sorry, I would love to let you borrow the book, but I left it at Phil's during tonight's party. I don't hate him, but I do hold a grudge.

Donald J. Perry
Ocean Township H. S.
Oakhurst, NJ

Mr. Richards

Whirlwind

I crept up to it
 A familiar stranger
 Knowing there was no danger in the darkness
 A squish of mud under my feet
 Raindrops clinging on chains
 Touched by my curious hand
 Seats shiver
 Bare in the lonely night
 Like a shedding tree
 Abandoned by little thieves
 Pushed and shoved
 Shoved and pushed
 A whirlwind through my mind
 Stirring the past
 But day and night are not the same
 Dawn leads the way
 Crickets encircle us like ghosts
 A dark wind pushes the seats
 Turns the pages of calendars
 I shiver a little to think
 We are both getting old

Fayetteville-Manlius H. S.

Tracy Alderman
 Fayetteville, NY
 Dr. Fibiger

A Life

One day,
 Johnny left his math book in his locker,
 because he was in a hurry,
 because he wanted to see the game on TV.
 So he called Mary to get a math book,
 And Susan was visiting Mary from a nearby town
 And Johnny met Susan
 And they became friends
 And they became closer friends
 And they tried to go to the same college
 And they did
 And they got married
 And they had a family
 And they became grandparents
 And they retired
 and they had a wonderful life
 And they died.

Mrs. Fine

David Rettew
 Moorestown NJ

Fool of the Seasons

You were just joking, not being yourself.
 But the alarm clock screamed
 And I was separated from Autumn by stained glass.
 And the vapors swell on the midnight street.
 Your eyes cascade down my face and caress my spine
 And I smell Christmas.
 And I sprint home and try to dream
 And I wake three days later to the alarm
 clock's singing.
 There are no more sunspots
 And I see Autumn through crystal
 And the only color of a mirror is that which
 it reflects.
 And I pass an ambulance at a graveyard
 on the way to my parents
 And my mother forgot how I hate sausage.
 My nephew miswords a phrase
 And I trip over that loose board on the porch.
 And, once more, I explode into the middle of Autumn
 And the alarm is set.
 But the colors around a mirror can change
 And I am a fool of the seasons.

Hampton, NJ

William Ward, Jr.

Green Bottles

At home we used to have
 a window where bottles green and empty
 rested on the sill
 On a bright day when the sun
 broke through the glass and smiled
 like golden-honey on the floor
 I'd like to peek, one-eyed
 through the glass
 green as late summer clover
 and bright as a new penny,
 and dream

Mary Lee Ruddle

Amy King
 Northwood H. S.
 Whaton, MD

Relic

The worn, peeling bench
 Houses a remnant of times past.
 Hunched over, head in hands,
 Tattered wrappings flutter in breeze.
 Lined, fragile mask speaks
 Of forgotten joys; latent, cold passions.

Mrs. Robinson

Brenda Davis
 Fairport H.S.
 Fairport, NY



Lisa Rydju

Mom and Me

The overhead light glares down on the kitchen, reaching into corners and out the windows to catch all the hiding places in the night. Mom and I sit at the marble-topped counter on oversized wooden stools, eating quick-made spaghetti, squash and French bread. We eat hastily, the steamy delicious bread once a foot long, now is two inches. She always has meetings, tennis, group therapy or raquetball to go to: Mom doesn't have much time for cooking anymore.

I commute now, but I'm not in college, not yet. I commute between parents. Dad lives in one house, Mom in another, and I shuttle between them. I can tell the days of the week by whose house I'm in; school days with Dad, weekends, Mondays and Wednesdays for dinner with Mom. So, it's Monday for I'm at Mom's and we have to rush through dinner.

"You're staying with me this weekend?" she asks me. Mom hardly ever demands anymore, she asks. Time was when "you're eating here," and "wash the car if you want to use it" had replaced "please" and "will you." I would argue for my own plans and as usual, I lost the discussion, but won a compromise--I got the car.

She seems to have softened, these years since the move, when she nutshelled feelings and locked doors on painful emotions. Then, her house was grandmotherly clean: tables polished, floors waxed, rugs Hooverized. But these days, the dog can lie on the couch without fear of a rolled newspaper and mud tracks darken the kitchen tile.

But Mom and I were not always peaceful. She'd call me at Dad's when I was busy with homework, "just to say hi" or to cry that she missed me. I didn't stop solving my math problems or reading when she called. I listened to her ramble, mumbling my answers but not really paying attention. Finally, she'd say, "You're busy, aren't you. (Silence) I'll let you go, then."

Many times when Mom came to pick me up for dinner, she'd walk from room to room, throwing a pillow back on the couch or straightening a picture on the wall--remembering. Sometimes she'd take a memory home to her house. One day a picture of me and Mary, the next her favorite blown glass apple, but

usually something would go home with her.

"Damn, does your mother have the pheasant serving platter over there?" Dad exclaimed. Mom never had a house; she was always "over there" according to Dad. The day I found my miniature glass rocking horse on her shelf, I asked her, "Where could you possibly have found this?" She had forgotten it was a gift to me.

I was tossed between conflicting loyalties, the unwanted unpleasant memories of muffled shouting and slamming doors were locked out, Mom with them. Mom and I drifted apart.

This summer my sister and I decided to live with Mom, and for those two months, living so far from my father's house, my warm yellow room, I felt stranded. My new blue room was a stranger to me, without my posters, my books, or my stuffed animals. There was room only for the necessities, a bed, chest of drawers, and a desk. This room in a way reflected me--I had no room left in me for Mom.

As the summer passed, while I was at Mom's, I discovered why she sneaked pictures from home and called so often. I was homesick, too. Often after a hard day supervising the playground, frustrated by the children and hassled by my co-workers, I could complain of Adam's blaming me for a project gone astray and Laura's crying for her teddy bear, and Mom would listen to me, even if she'd had a hard day, too.

Some days when Mom came home tired from the office, I would have dinner ready. I would wash the dishes without complaint, and I wouldn't even ask for the car.

Now, when Mom and I sit down to dinner in the kitchen under the glowing light on Mondays, I tell her about my silly physics lab and how I tripped over the lunch table while looking the other way, and we smile, and understand.

We try not to hurt anymore.

Ann Riesett
Northwood H.S.
Silver Spring, MD

Mary Lee Ruddle

It All Balances Out

Annie has opened the front door, so I step inside. I ask where Paul is, and before Annie can speak, he comes down the stairs quickly. His eyes are red and his lips seem slightly swollen.

"Ta-dah," Annie says, forcing cheerfulness. She is 23, five years older than Paul.

Last night, their mother died. Finally, I should add. She spent the last five months decaying under the careful supervision of two older doctors.

This evening, Mr. Thedrich is at the hospital with boxes for his wife's belongings. In her private room gifts and familiar objects from home accumulated. She had vases, plants, a latch-hook pillow Paul made for her, magazines, stuffed animals from Annie, and calligraphy from her husband. Tonight Mr. Thedrich is cleaning out the room.

At 5:30, when Paul called me, he was on the phone at the hospital and sobbing very gently. I felt uncomfortable on the other end and considered hanging up. But I just stayed quiet until he stopped crying. He had asked me to come over tonight because he said he would probably want to see me.

Now, Paul is reaching for his coat on the rack beside me.

He says, "I want some fresh air, Julie. Do you want to take a walk?"

Annie is stroking her hair and in a soft, tired voice she says to Paul, "Please don't stay out long."

Paul locks his arm around mine and we walk out into the chilly air. We are walking slowly. I am letting him lead, but I don't think we are heading anywhere in particular.

"At least all the funeral b.s. has already been taken care of. Dad arranged it a month ago, can you believe," Paul says.

We walk in silence. I think the raw air is making him feel better. Occasionally, he turns his head to kiss my temple.

"Thanks for hanging around tonight," he says with a small smile.

"May I bite your nose? I ask.

The first joke I played on him was after watching a movie on TV at his house. We were walking out to the car talking about the film's theme, which was revenge. I told him that once, to get even with my sister for setting my hair on fire, I tried to give her cancer. I said that every night, I snuck into her room and dusted an open sore on her arm with a crushed saccharin tablet.

"She couldn't get that cut to heal until I finally stopped two months later."

"Jesus," he said, staring blankly at me.

On the road near the curb is one of those chalk outlines the police draw around a dead body.

"Looks like Mom wasn't the only one that bought the farm last night," Paul says, lacing his words with sarcasm.

"Paul, don't be so flip, all right?"

"What?"

"Well, look . . ."

"Oh, pardon me. Don't let me offend you. You've been through so much and know so much about it."

I detach myself from his arm and stand still. He stops and faces me. He is waiting for me to shout back something. Instead of yelling, I consciously level my voice.

"Come on, Paul, okay?"

He stares at me, and I watch his face soften. He looks down the street, then back at me.

"I didn't mean to be flip," he says. He is embarrassed. I shrug and say "don't be embarrassed," so his face flushes red.

Paul blushes when he feels guilt, ashamed, or nervous. I was with him during the most embarrassing moment of his life. It happened in public—in a restaurant—and was the kind of thing people comment on by saying, someday you'll look back on this and laugh. It's been two years since it happened, and anytime I bring it up with Paul he doesn't laugh. He just says, "dammit," and turns red. Then I laugh, because I think it was funny.

It was the night after his birthday and my gift was dinner at this expensive enough Chinese restaurant. I was paying hard

earned cash, and Paul kept eating like a pig. Almost midway into the meal, Paul shoveled a spoonful of rice into his mouth and immediately sneezed so hard, I thought he gave himself a hemorrhage. Our table was smack-dab center, and about eight people, including myself, got spewed with rice. Everybody in the dining room turned around to stare. Paul kept making these involuntary grunts and snorts, and I couldn't stop laughing. As soon as he stopped choking, he walked—ran to the door, and refused to go back inside.

"Just pay the check, Julie, please."

(laughter) "Aww, come on, Paul. . ."

"Just pay the damn check, please, okay?"

I kept laughing in the car, and it made him mad. I'd settle down and get quiet, then start to chuckle before tumbling into a fit of laughter. And he'd say, "dammit, Julie!" and I'd apologize.

I got my money's worth that night, though. Anytime we go out to eat I always ask him to quiz me on the Heimlich maneuver, just in case.

We are outside his house again. My feet are freezing. Before we go back inside, we kiss awhile. His face is cold, and I realize how numb my own cheeks are.

"I think you're getting chapped lips," he says. "Don't lick them in the cold air. I'll give you some Blistex when we get inside."

I hold onto Paul's gloved hand with my mittened one as we shuffle into the toasty house. Paul bounds upstairs, coat still on, and I can hear him going through the medicine cabinet in the bathroom.

In a minute he is back, extending his forefinger smeared with ointment.

In a low, raspy voice he asks, "Do I get to put it on?" I laugh as Annie comes in from the kitchen.

"Quit leching around," I say and swipe his finger across my lower lip before rubbing the Blistex in myself. Annie drapes her arm across my shoulder, then slides over to Paul to drop a quick kiss on his cheek.

"Dad called while you were out. He's bringing a pizza home; Julie, have you eaten?"

"Not yet," I answer, taking off my coat.

Paul hangs both our jackets on the rack before disappearing into the kitchen. He calls out that he's getting a Pepsi and do I want some.

"Yeah, please," I say and Annie adds, "Me too, Paul." She sort of maneuvers us both over to the couch, and we sit down. The sound of Paul cracking ice comes from the kitchen.

"You both do well together," she says, nodding her head. I'm not sure how to reply, and unsurely, I thank her. She pats my knee, still nodding her head and says, "Yes, I know that right now you're probably holding up a lot of his weight, but he'll be bouncing back from this so soon. You'll see."

Now I am nodding my head, and decide this was just a little pep-talk. I want to tell her it was unnecessary, that she is unaware of the weight Paul has held up for ME. I want to say, that in the end, it all balances out.

But Paul is coming out of the kitchen with the drinks. He is carrying the glasses on a dinner plate and Annie is rolling her eyes. She clucks her tongue and shakes her head.

"He couldn't grab just one of the five-thousand serving trays on top of the fridge, oh noo. . .," Annie teases.

Paul smiles and hands Annie a glass. Then he reaches for the last two glasses before sitting beside me. As he places the drink in my hand, I smile.

"Thank you, Paul."

"You're welcome, Julie."

Trace Tavares
James Madison H.S.
Vienna, VA

Bernis von sur Muehlen



Susan Gorman

Churchyard

*In the niche
of church
and tree
light fades
as though diffused
through black wing feathers.
It mixes and dims
with old herb-colored shadows
and leaf-dust lead.
Like the curve
of headstone tops,
my lips curl and hold
in a passive arc.
I think
in dense word-pictures
more opaque
than webs in bell-towers
of ancient churches,
or bark on a
two hundred year-old oak
with bones for branches.*

Allison L. Blyer
Ridge H. S.

An Afternoon Rain with Beethoven

The afternoon rain patters on the window to the staccato beat of my Beethoven sonata, PIANISSIMO. Across the keys I race my fingers to follow the shower of notes on my music sheets. Like a cool, trickling stream, the music I play floats me away from the gloom outside. Four years ago, when I was still studying piano, it seemed it was always on a gray-drizzled Monday afternoon like this that I had my lesson with Miss Howe. The November rain drowns me in memories of one day's lesson...

Though it's drizzling outside, I let Mom run ahead; I follow reluctantly. For the past week or two, I've been arguing with my parents that I want to spend more time with my gymnastics, or ice-skating, or schoolwork. Just last night, Dad agreed, but I'd have to tell Miss Howe. Today, I'll tell her I'm quitting my piano lessons.

Miss Howe's flushed, wrinkled face greets us at the door. Bubbling over a new piece she's found for me to learn, she hurriedly pulls me by the hand into her living room. Somehow, her glowing face and sparkling voice don't seem to fit with her slight, shuffling limp and thinning white hair. She's probably poured all her energy to her fingers, which were "made for the piano."

"First, let's whiz through your arpeggios. I've found a beautiful Beethoven sonata for you, my favorite piece," Miss Howe announces. She waves me to the piano bench and takes her seat beside me. I scatter my music on the music rest; the books and sheets spread across the width of the grand piano: CLASSICS TO MODERNS, PIANO LITERATURE, GUILD MUSICIANSHIP BOOK. My "Guild" book opens itself to the pages of arpeggios that I've been laboring over for two weeks. Miss Howe raises her hands to the keys with mine and counts aloud as we begin to play: "And one and two and three and four—one and..." Watching both the book and Miss Howe, I twist and stretch my fingers to strike the correct keys. "No! No!" shouts Miss Howe above the racket, "remember the F's and C's are

sharp!" I'm not exactly whizzing by. By now, Miss Howe's smile has disappeared. Frustrated as much as I am, she demonstrates the arpeggios, pounding them out, FORTE!

After my ordeal with the arpeggios, Miss Howe scatters from the piano to the two-foot high stacks of music lining her living room wall. From the last stack, she finally pulls out a wrinkled, fading booklet covered with a tangle of notes, chords, and trills. As she hurries back to the piano, I wait nervously on the bench, wondering whether this is a good time to tell Miss Howe. I won't need a new sonata after today. But Miss Howe bustles over and seats herself beside me. She props the sheets on the music rest and smooths them out patiently with her wrinkled, fading fingers. "Listen to the soft, playful melodies in this one that grow into crashing chords and scales. Beethoven's my favorite." Should I tell her now, I wonder...

But she begins to play. Clear and silvery, the staccato notes dance. I watch Miss Howe, with her eyes closed and head lifted high, sway with the music. The melody crescendos into spirited scales as quick as my pulse, then gradually diminishes to fade-away chords. Miss Howe lets her fingers linger on the last chords. Turning to me, she says, "This piece may take a bit more work than others, but I know you can master it beautifully with time." End of lesson. I gather my music.

Now, those sheets are piled high in dusty stacks. Stacks of music from my six years of piano. And now, two years later, I'm remembering Beethoven and Miss Howe because Mom just told me Miss Howe is in the hospital. She has a brain tumor.

The six years have faded, but not one afternoon. That afternoon of gray-drizzling rain and Beethoven. I hope Miss Howe can still hear Beethoven clear and silvery.

Rosa Hwang
Northwood H. S.
Silver Spring, MD
Mary Lee Ruddle

A Class "A" Hotel

Cork Station is black.

From Limerick to Cork, one takes a black train; upon arrival one disembarks onto a black cement floor. The station is huge; even with two trains and six buses lined up inside, it still feels like a black auditorium. Here and there, black vending machines offer candy that one can eat on black iron benches. Men in black suits mill around, waiting for their black buses. There's even a black photo booth, where one of the hexagonal 50p pieces will buy you three black and white mug shots.

I followed my parents through this cheerless place to the bus station on the other side of the black hall. Dan, my father, searched the bus map for the Glenvera. We were going to splurge tonight on a class A hotel and I was very excited.

At the far end of the bus section, two attendants were busily mopping blood off the floor with dirty rags. I wandered over to inspect the crime and to stretch my legs.

There had been a fight in the early hours of the morning between two drunks. They were both in the hospital now, nearly dead. I wondered briefly what their families must have thought, but I soon forgot about it, as I hungrily eyed the black vending machines.

Sally, my mother, called to me, and I followed my parents, busily munching a Cadbury Crunchie. We walked for about a mile through the streets of Cork to the Glenvera. When we arrived at the gate, I stuffed half of the candy bar into my pocket and stared at the hotel. Instead of majestic stone walls rising over the neighborhood like a modern-day Tara, the walls were a yellow-brown cement, like those of the NH State Prison. Inside, a man with a tic directed us to our room. "Tis one o' ta auld marternity rooms," he told us. "Tiss yousta ta be an orspital."

Asbestos dripped from the pipes, but that didn't bother me. I couldn't see why Sally was so uptight about it. Why, we had a big square of asbestos around our stove pipe at home. It wasn't as if it was going to kill anyone or anything. I didn't like the spiders much, though, or the cracks in the ceiling where things could drop out on me when I was in bed. Dan was worried about athlete's foot.

Sally stayed in the room while Dan and I walked to the P.T.E. (Post and Telegraph of Erin) office to call home and see how my grandfather, Phil, was. It was Father's Day. The lady at the desk handed Dan a stack of 5p pieces about six inches high, all of which he had to feed into the pay-phone slot one by one. He had finished dialing all of the international codes when he turned to me and said:

"This is going to take a long time. Maybe half an hour. Run back to the hotel and see how your mother's doing, and have her find out what time tea is."

I walked slowly back to the hotel, which was a mile or two away. Phil had cancer. Dan was going to call him to wish him happy fahter-in-law's day and see how the latest lab tests had gone. I didn't understand what was wrong, except that Phil wouldn't wrestle with me after dinner any more; he was too tired. We'd called the wrestling matches "reading the Bible" to fool Sally.

I had gone to visit him once in the hospital. I'd been really worried about him then, but I wasn't any more. He'd come home before we'd left for Ireland a month earlier, so I knew he'd be okay.

Sally and I sat on the Glenvera steps, sharing my candy bar and waiting for Dan. A man walked by with a cane. He shuffled

along, bent over at the waist, like he was trying to touch his toes all the time. He turned into the pub across the street.

Dan walked down the street. I felt shivers on my spine. His walk was somehow stilted, as if he would be needing the cane next. I waved to him, and I heard my mother suck in her breath beside me.

"Phil's left us," he said. I didn't believe it. He was going to be okay. When I last saw him, he walked onto the porch in his blue and green plaid bathrobe to say goodbye to us. He couldn't be dead. He wasn't emaciated like all the cancer victims whose pictures were in the old LIFE magazines. He was 6'3" and very strong. A week before we left he'd been on a ladder, chainsawing branches off the elm tree.

All this passed through my mind as we sat there on the steps. The hunchback left the pub and continued down the street. My parents talked in hushed tones that I couldn't understand. I thought about "reading the Bible," and how it used to annoy Sally because it stirred me up before bedtime.

I don't know how long we sat there, but Sally said that we should go wash up before tea. In the bathroom, with the yellow stained sink, I noticed with surprise that my face was blotched with tears.

At tea, along with the usual ham, the Glenvera served baked potatoes. They reminded me of the first words I spoke in nursery school. We'd been there for about a month, and the teachers worried that I'd never learned to talk, when I astounded every one by saying, "Me an' Phil been plantin' potatoes."

When we were back in the room after tea, my parents shoed me out to the garden. The Glenvera garden wasn't much, but it reminded me of the field at home--Phil's field, it was called, to distinguish it from the rest of the land, which belonged to the whole family. The hotel garden was just a bunch of tangled grass, except for a few scruffy red rose bushes along the stone wall. At home we had wild salt-water roses. They were the only kind of flower Phil liked.

I picked some roses and brought them back to the room. Sally put them in a dirty glass from the bathroom and placed them on the mantel. We had a fireplace at home. Once Phil and I used the bathroom mirror (which we'd pried off the wall for the occasion) to watch the reflection of a chimney fire under the mantel.

As I lay in bed that night, gazing at the long cracks in the ceiling, I thought about Phil. He'd had to lie in bed for the longest time. Even though I was three thousand miles away, I could smell the Captain Black pipe tobacco and see the front bedroom where he spent his time. How different it was from this room--an ex-maternity ward with a dirty grey rug.

The front room at home had a bright yellow rug in it. I tried to picture this room decorated in pink and yellow, right after a baby had been born. But then I thought of all of the babies who had died in here--probably quite a high percentage. The Glenvera wasn't so different after all. There were cracks on Phil's bedroom ceiling as well.

The next morning we left the Glenvera and walked back to the station, and Dan bought me a Cadbury Crunchie at one of the vending machines. Cork Station was kind of grey.

Katharine Ford
Phillips Exeter Academy
Exeter, NJ
David Weber

How to Write an Expository Paper

I have always hated it when a teacher assigned an "expository" paper. Usually, everyone would go home and write a long and boring "how-to" essay. These papers almost always wind up at the bottom of the teacher's bird cage or in the kindling pile by the fireplace.

Therefore, I'd like to offer this outline so that other students can avoid this indignity by being able to write a better paper.

The first step is to reserve at least six hours in which to do the paper. Start as soon as you arrive home by eating lots of potato chips, pretzels, ice cream, or any other junk food. This is to give the brain lots of energy.

Secondly, you should engage in some sort of physical activity to get the worries of the day out of your mind. Two of the best activities are either playing football or fighting with your sister (or brother). Be sure to hit them with the hand opposite your writing hand so not to impair it for later. Better yet, use a baseball bat.

Since you'll be tired from all this preparation, go and take a nap until suppertime. Also, don't start too soon after eating, or you'll get a cramp.

Wait at least a half an hour after you eat and commence. The first step is to put on a record to help you think. I have found that Talking Heads and The Police are two groups easy to think to.

Now comes the crucial part: starting the paper. The following schedule must be strictly adhered to!

While the first side of the album is playing, sit and daydream while you try to think about something on which to write. Flip the record after the first side is done. While the second side is

playing, you should read a comic book or another chapter in the novel you are currently working on. (If you're not currently working on a novel, now's a good time to start). This step will help to clear your mind of unwanted thought.

After the whole album is done, go call your sweetheart. Talk until your parents tell you to "Get off the %&* PHONE!!" This may be a very long time if your parents aren't home or if you have your own telephone. If this is the case, allow a few extra hours in which to do your paper.

Go get a snack after you hang up.

The next step is my personal favorite, because of its many options. It serves to give you lots of ideas. If it is Sunday night, go and watch "One day at a Time" and "The Jeffersons." If it's Monday, watch the football game; Tuesday, "The A-Team;" Wednesday, "The Fall Guy;" and Thursday, "20/20." If it is Friday or Saturday night, go out and party. Come to think of it, you can go party any night.

Now you are down to the last step: writing the paper. Since it's at least 11:30 by now, write the paper while you brush your teeth. Go to bed.

Don't be disappointed if the next day your teacher says, "This is trash!! It sounds as if you spent five minutes on it!!" Look on the bright side: if you did spend five minutes on it, at least you have clean teeth.

Brion Levine
Bellefonte High School
Bellefonte, PA
Susan Robb

A Day of Whales

It was a grey day, and the air was ice. My father had brought us to desolate wintery Wellfleet, Cape Cod--just the three of us--my sister, Dad, and me. Dad turned off the main road onto Lieutenant's Island Road, exclaiming, "Look at the sky, girls. And be thankful it's not high tide, otherwise, no whales for us today." On both sides of the island lay marsh which would quickly soak up high tide and drown the road.

The whales had died on greyed-yellow marsh: the tide had been sucked away and had left them. We had read in the CAPE CODDER that some men had slashed these beached whales.

Dad took a left off Lieutenant's onto a dirt road. At the abrupt end of the road, surrounded by swaying marsh grass, we stopped. The first one out of the car, I skipped along the path to spot these whales. But there was only marsh-desert. Thin clouds hung, all a grey watercolor on grey paper. I ran ahead while Dad and Michelle lingered behind with the camera. I galloped, hoping that, "maybe, just if I'm lucky," I might see whales darkening the horizon. My body shivered. I saw them. Black mounds, scattered black. "They're over here!" I screamed.

"Okay!" Dad yelled. As I jogged closer, I smelled the whales, a round, full smell echoing in waves of stench.

Covering the marsh were whales, with deep slashes, a leather orange, some of their heads hacked from their bodies. The tight ribs spoke of dry, rigid wounds. Frozen cuts that, even after being picked at by gulls, screamed their mean slices. I looked at their heads. The eyes were missing from the sockets. Disgusted, I stepped backward onto a head and pushed it into the wet grass.

Michelle and Dad hurried to my side with the camera. "Yeah, the

gulls have been here, but (Dad snapped his camera) you can see that they haven't been here for a while. Wonder why? (Snap) Gulls always finish (Dad snapped again) what they start."

"Dad, it feels as if the sky is sitting on me," Michelle whispered. "Sad," he said.

"Why did they cut the whales?" asked Michelle. "There's that one's head, beside you. . . watch it!"

Dad sat on a whale. I touched it. It felt like a smooth worn tire. Straddling the whale, he tried to saw a tooth off. Scratch, scratch, scratch. He dug deep into the mouth to wrench the root out. Bump, bump, bump, with his heel, he kicked the jaw to loosen the tooth, but it wouldn't budge. He began to gouge again, his knife covered with old blood. He pushed the knife into a puddle to wash it, but it fell in. "Damn." It was gone. He put his fingers into the lip of hardened skin that circled the weakened tooth. Like a dentist's tools, his fingers scraped the root, grabbed the bottom of it and forced the tooth out. He held it high in the air, over my head. I couldn't see it for it was the same color as the sky.

I looked toward the bay. The marsh seemed to be the whole stretch of earth with whales and marsh and whale heads and marsh. Dad slid off the whale. We stood silent. For a moment Dad looked sad, and then we turned toward the dune. I lingered behind with the camera.

But I didn't take any pictures.

Lisa Pelletier
Northwood H. S.
Silver Spring, MD

Mary Lee Ruddle



Alvin Tucker

Strawberries

My feet pounded on the sidewalk. One, two, three--jump. Up and over the fence. Around, around the corner. I was fast. Yes, the fastest! I could hear Sam and Jean behind me, but I was in front. The laces of my new red sneakers were flying. Whew. Fly, fly! Around again, again. Don't slip, Lisa, no. Good. You're ahead. Keep going. Beat 'em. Back over the fence. Watch it, now. Jump! Okay, now fly to the finish. You're the fastest. Yes. The wind blew in my face. The fastest. Yes. Here you go. Yeah! You won again.

I bent over, gasping for breath and staring at the ground. Here come Sam and Jean. They fell behind me in the grass and tumbled over each other, giggling. "You always win."

"I know."

When I looked up, there was Ronnie. He laughed at me; his white, white teeth flashed as a breeze blew his dark bangs up and back, revealing the twenty seven freckles Sam had counted just yesterday. Hands on his hips, he squinted at me and the twins in the grass, panting.

"Hey," I breathed.

Ronnie's hair fell back over his face as he left. The three of us stared after him as he raced down the block.

"Come on," I yelled, starting to run. Grudgingly, Sam and Jean followed.

We caught up several yards down the block and turned the corner with Ronnie. Sam and Jean poked at each other and tried to step on my heels. Ronnie wasn't talking, and, imitating him, I put on a serious face and walked like a wooden soldier.

"Hup, two, three, four." Sam and Jeannie fell into step, and we marched down the block, following Ronnie. Then he stopped in front of old Mr. Kitchner's house.

Mr. Kitchner had a beautiful garden, the most beautiful in the whole neighborhood. The grass was a plush, green carpet which we were continually reminded not to walk on. He had creeping ivy climbing the brick house almost past the windows. Mr. Kitchner looked to be about one hundred years old, but everyday he worked in his little Eden. He knelt among the delicate purple and pink flowers growing in bunches along the sidewalk. Mr. Kitchner's garden changed with the seasons. In the spring his bushes sprouted little red berries. In the fall his giant yellow and orange marigolds appeared in brilliant bouquets. But summertime was for the strawberries. Neat rows of green lay quietly and inconspicuously to the left of the house, and as the weeks of spring evolved into summer, tiny white flowers turned to green and then red, ripe strawberries. I had never tasted them,

though. Mr. Kitchner would pick them just as soon as they were ready and then sit on his back porch eating, sharing them only with the birds.

But today Mr. Kitchner was not outside in his garden. His windows were closed, his curtains drawn. The tiny pink flowers were still, quietly waiting in the grass, their leaves studded with drops of morning dew that sparkled and glittered in the light. The sun was high and hot and the strawberries were out, big red berries shaded under cool leaves. They looked good and full of sweetness, so plump and juicy you wanted to pinch them between your fingers.

"Yaaaa!" Ronnie screamed and ran. He jumped through the flowers and fell on his knees in the soft grass. Savagely, we plucked up each strawberry, tearing at the leaves and stuffing our pockets with the fruit. Then down, down the sidewalk I ran with my shirt folded up over my berries and fell into the grassy lot around the corner. We laughed all afternoon, stuffing ourselves with strawberries. Each bite was a burst of flavor, sweet and sour together on my tongue. I lay back in the tall grass, my eyes closed, and breathed the sweetness into the air. Shirts and faces stained with red, the twins continued to giggle as we rolled in the grass, giddy with laughter and the deliciously sweet strawberry taste.

The next day, I was headed out to play when my mother stopped me. "Don't be too loud outside today. Mr. Kitchner died last night and his family is very sad."

Looking at her, I felt the sickeningly sweet taste of strawberries in my mouth. I ran to the bathroom and gargled. "What's wrong with me?" I thought. "Mr. Kitchner was old, a hundred years old. I never hurt him. Ronnie was the one who started it. I hate Ronnie. Mr. Kitchner should have shared with us before, anyway." I gargled again. The strawberries were still there, mingling with the minty taste. I started to brush my teeth furiously. Then through the open window, I heard the twins laughing. Looking out, I saw them tumbling in the grass, the sun shining down on them. Ronnie was there, too. The wind lifted his hair as he shouted at the twins in play. It blew back the curtains and into my face.

"Hey!" I yelled out the window. Quickly, I wiped my mouth on a towel and ran out to join them as they played in the grass.

Lisa Stewart
Winston Churchill H. S.
Potomac, MD

Mr. Donald Jeffery

Factors of Discrimination

She was standing on the steps of the old theater. I watched her intently, thinking back upon my childhood and those who had peopled it, wondering what they would have thought of her, a stranger in their midst. How clearly I could picture their stares, uncompromisingly direct as they would note the sallow skin set over her wide, Asian face, and the heavy brows drawn low over dark, slanting eyes. No face such as this would have existed among their friends and classmates; to them she was alien and outcast. I slowly let the mirror drop back into my purse, letting the anger and resentment flow freely through me, and with them the memories. . .

I was five and running. The sky was overcast, and the streets were black and menacing. But it was a different kind of darkness I ran from that day. Behind me, I heard them laughing. They screamed out sing-song parodies of foreign words, throwing them at me like stones. And like stones they fell upon me. They were meaningless but had too much meaning. And the eyes, those beautiful blue and green eyes were twisted grotesquely into mocking shapes of ones all too familiar to me. "Mommy, why are children so cruel?"

I was seven and running. But this time was different. This time someone ran beside me. Her name was Jenni, and she was Filipino. We ran without thought across the playground, jumped off the swings and over the see-saw, stumbled on rocks, ran under the monkey bars. The sun was shining that day. Suddenly a commanding voice from high above (Why do all commanding voices come from high above?) called out to us, stopping us in the midst of our play. A blonde, blue-eyed girl was sitting atop the monkey-bars, staring at us.

"You're sisters aren't you?" she demanded imperiously.

"No, no we aren't."

"You're lying! I know you are!"

Yes, yes, of course we were lying. Even though I was Korean and she Filipino, we were always sisters.

The scenes flowed past in a torrent, many of them from long ago, from a time before I had learned of the words, "prejudice and discrimination," before I had learned to dredge up these faded memories from my past and color them too brightly, and hate them too intensely. I had never been a part of this land; I belonged to another world. I was different, superior. So I built walls between the people of this land and myself, and a belief of Asian superiority to shelter me from their coldness. I found solace within a cage of glass, but in the end I found myself cut and bleeding from the shards of my ignorance and defiance, more battered than I had ever been by their words.

(And then I was eight, sitting at my desk, stiff and withdrawn. I had no sight for the other children. The teacher had just asked me about the Korean language. A tiny smile touched my mouth. "I always understand what my parents say. I understand Korean PERFECTLY.")

Slowly the waves of memory receded, leaving me trembling, shaking my head. A vision of red and blue rippled from the wind,

and from my joy and the dreams which moved it. The flag of the Republic of Korea. . . It was draped across the front of an old building, a theater. I was all too aware of the reason it was displayed. A troupe of Korean dancers had come to the city. Subliminal excitement and expectation coursed through me. This was a dream come to reality--to see them dance, to be surrounded by those like myself, to go. . . home.

Never had the world appeared with such clarity before my eyes. I had made up my mind: this would be a night I would not forget. This would be a night I would not forget.

Every detail is unmercifully clear. I can see myself now, climbing up the marble stairs. My father held the door open for me, and I stepped across the threshold into another world.

There was darkness. Then, gradually, forms appeared, then individual people. I stood uncertainly in the dim light. Some of the audience were dressed in street clothes, others in brightly colored oriental silks. Slanted eyes looked up at me. These were much too slanted and narrow; they were no more than diagonal slits, and their faces were much flatter than my own. I judged them unmercifully. Their hair was too coarse and too bluntly cut, and . . . slowly, slowly, a feeling began to grow within me, a waking shock and recognition which made me fumble in confusion.

(Why are children so cruel?)

Suddenly, a small boy ran toward me, jabbering with his sing-song voice in a tongue foreign to me. But no, he did not speak to me, but rather to his father who was standing behind me. I was helpless, uncomprehending.

"Excuse me." My voice, my words sounded strange in the hall; the syllables were vulgar and unmusical.

Their eyes, their dark, slanted eyes rested upon me, questioning, wondering. I shoved past them clumsily.

(I always understand. I understand Korean perfectly.)

I found my seat next to my parents'. The room was crowded, and there was nowhere to look. I could not cast my eyes upon this sea of faces; I was afraid that they might meet someone else's eyes, afraid that she would speak to me, afraid of my shame because I could no understand.

I became aware of a piece of paper clutched in my hand: the program of the evening's events. I unfurled it cautiously and began to read, squinting in the dim light. The words were strange, the symbols unfamiliar; it was black ink splattered at random onto white paper. Beside me, my mother was absorbed in her reading.

There was no place to turn, no place to hide. Throughout the evening I sat, as I sit even now in remembering, withdrawn, unmoving and unspeaking, waiting for the night to end, waiting to forget.

Melissa Lee
Phillips Exeter Academy
Exeter, NJ

David Weber

Changes

Mother and I stood waving by the storm door as the car backed out of the driveway. Ray grinned and waved goodbye through the windshield as Dad drove him off to his new life at college. As I climbed the stairs to his room, almost forgotten memories ran through my mind.

"Go upstairs and make your beds," Mom ordered that sunny Saturday morning, years ago.

"I don't see why we have to make our beds," my brother grumbled, "they'll only get messed up at night anyway."

"If you want to finish up faster, why don't you both do one bed, then the other?" Mom suggested. We looked at each other, smiles lighting our faces, and raced up the rest of the steps.

My bed was fast work—just a few flips of the blankets. As we approached his room, a grin crossed his face.

"Follow me!" he cried. Ray ran into the room and dived onto his bed—with me, shadowlike, just one step behind. We bounced on the bed as the room filled with our mirth. Finally, laughter spent, we lay sprawled on our backs on his double bed as our breathing slowed. The strong mid-morning rays leapt through the window panes and bounced off the sun-yellow walls, bathing the room with warmth and setting the room a-glimmer from the drifting mirrors of dust. The room was a clutter of meticulously-made model ships and fighter planes, well-worn books, and discarded clothing. Displayed proudly above the headboard hung Ray's Apollo moon-landing photos. Eyes closed, I breathed in the comfort and serenity of the room; my nostrils filled with the light familiar scent of old blankets and strong sunshine unique to the room.

My brother's voice startled me from my reverie, "Do you know what I am?" He sprang up with a blanket over his body.

"What?" I said, puzzled.

"Ameba. Amebae," he explained earnestly, dropping the blanket, "are microscopic—you can't see them with your eyes.

They're blobs of protoplasm and they change shape—just like Play-dough. Do you know how they eat?" he questioned guilelessly, a twinkle in his eye.

Sitting in the middle of the glowingly peaceful room, I fell into his trap, "How?"

"They surround their prey and ENGULF them!" he cried, throwing the blanket over himself again. "Ameba! I'm an ameba, and I'm going to eat you up!!"

I shrieked and moved to the edge of the bed as he lumbered towards me. "Ameba, ameba!!" he exclaimed.

Somehow in the following tussle, he managed to wrap the blanket around me. I lay curled up on my back under the cloth. Peering through the holes, I dimly saw Ray towering above me.

"Am I dead?" I asked the shadowy figure.

"Yup," he replied, sitting back with a satisfied grin on his face, "no doubt about it—you've just been eaten by an ameba."

Eight years had passed since then. As I stepped into his room, the rumbling of the car driving away echoed in my mind. The sun was striking the walls. Still the same color, the walls had taken on a new look. The once-beloved moon-landing photos had lost their luster and were now overwhelmed by the new imagery of magnificent spacecrafts soaring through deep space and landing dramatically on new worlds. The bed had been made and the room cleared—clothes put away, model crafts left forgotten to gather dust in the closet, and books taken along with their owner. Lying back, eyes closed, I took a deep breath and smiled. Yes, that at least was still there, the old familiar scent came to me in the midst of change—it was faint but still there.

Loretta Chen
Winston Churchill H. S.
Potomac, MD
Mrs. Carol Blum

The Gift

Christmas Day came and went, and Johnny received a thirteen-inch color portable television because of the exceptional grades on his last report card. Johnny was thankful to his parents but not overly so.

By February Johnny had found a great interest in his television. When he came home from school, he would eat a snack, then sit down to watch a cartoon or a popular game show. Then it was time to eat dinner and do his homework. The evening offering of television shows did not interest Johnny at first, but as time wore on, Johnny discovered the sudsy world of sizzle in nighttime soaps.

During March, Johnny became enthralled in the real life drama of police squad rooms and hospital melodrama.

April brought sitcom's along with its showers. He mirthfully awaited these inconceivable, sometimes too silly shows, which often left him tittering in delight.

In the latter part of May, Johnny was completely devoted to television. His latest marks showed a drastic drop. The marks shocked his parents, and they insisted that he study much harder. Johnny complained it would interfere with his TV watching schedule; nevertheless he studied. Soon the school year was over and Johnny passed all his subjects.

Summer became a part of everyone's life—except Johnny's. When all the other children ran, swam and played, Johnny did not. His life took a strange turn which involved him and his thir-

teen-inch television. He ate all his meals before its all-too-brightscreen, fell asleep by its iridescent glow and never strayed far from its commanding presence.

Queer as it may seem, Johnny began to converse with the television characters and became more and more drawn into their world.

Then one day Johnny was not in front of his color TV, nor was he seen by his parents again.

A year passed and, on the anniversary of the day he received his television, his parents were watching Johnny's old thirteen-inch color portable. A family-oriented sitcom, a night time soap and a game show came and went before their oblivious faces, and neither really knew what they watched. Their unawareness of what they saw was apparent when they did not realize who the child was in all the commercials, as the voice-over stated, "BUY OUR THIRTEEN-INCH COLOR PORTABLE FOR YOUR CHILD THIS CHRISTMAS AND HE WILL NEVER BE THE SAME!" The little boy was shown watching a commercial in which he watched himself watching a commercial.

Johnny no longer needed to watch television. Now he was television.

Glenn A Johnson
Westhampton Beach H.S.
East Quogue, NY

Mrs. Richford



Purnell Wright

A Contrast of Similarities

So there he was, clinging desperately to the small life preserver floating near my boat. He looked up at me and understood why. He knew how much I hated him and resigned himself to his fate. For a long time I just looked down at him. He was really a pathetic sight. Though it didn't matter what he looked like because we were about a mile and a half off shore on a beautiful summer day with no one else in sight.

I knew the water couldn't have been very cold, but he was shivering. I kept him a few feet away from the boat with a gaff and toyed with him like a fish on a line. He thought I planned to leave him out there. I didn't want to be like that, to just leave him without any goodbye; I wanted to be friends.

We floated there in the warm sun. I held him gently with the gaff and began to introduce myself properly to him. I told him my full name and where I lived and about what a friendly, sensitive person I really was.

He bobbed gently there and through twisted lips told me his name and about himself. It was surprising to see how open and honest someone can be when he is a few inches away from drowning. I was impressed.

We talked on and on: for hours the conversation flowed. We talked about everything we could possibly tell about each other. We talked about other people we knew, girls, parents and politics. I felt so good knowing that we were finally getting to be

true friends. I confessed that I really admired him and sometimes wished I had some of his qualities.

Shivering, he was still floating there by the side of the boat, but he kept talking about almost everything that came into his mind. I thought it was good of him to have such an interest in conversation with me. Somehow the dialogue turned towards our friends, and I decided to tell him why it was so important that the two of us should be close friends.

I asked him if he remembered a certain girl whom we had both come to know very well over the past summer. His face fell, though it was somewhat fallen even before I brought her up. He didn't seem to remember all the details of the story so I told him.

There was a time when this girl and I were happily involved with each other and I was so happy. Everything in my life was carefree and perfect. Then my new "friend" came into the picture. I was beginning to bring the picture back to him. This girl fell victim to his easy conversation and sense of humor. Things in my life weren't so nice anymore. I hated him, but he seemed to like me; he said he wanted to be my friend. Apparently, he didn't know what true friendship was, and I decided to prove a point to him and to get even with him for stealing my girlfriend.

All of us: that is, the girl, he and I were members of a yacht club and had boats. I began to enact my plans. He and I began to talk to each other; then we became better acquainted. We started doing things like fishing and going to different places together. We made a good team, he with his way with conversation, dark eyes and dark hair, and me with my more serious way and blonde hair and blue eyes. We were practically the dynamic duo, and everywhere we went we had a good time. I didn't lose sight of my revenge, and I still hated him for not being his true self. I could see he was a fake, and anyone that knew him for more than a few weeks told me the same. Soon, when he began to trust me, I knew it was time to make my move. That brought us out here.

Many hours passed; he was still in the water, holding on to that tiny life jacket. The sun was beginning to set, and the day seemed as beautiful as when we had left in the morning. His skin was beginning to shrivel up now. His face and lips were blue, and once in a while violent chills tore through his body. The hot sun had burned his back and arms, and now he was in extreme pain. I sat on the side of the boat holding him off with the gaff and we continued to talk.

The conversation began to drag as the sun was getting low. I told him it was time to get going now, and he started whining ceaselessly. I started up the boat and said goodbye to my new friend. I pulled away from him slowly so he wasn't hurt by the propeller. As I drove away, I waved back in a friendly, happy sort of wave. He raised his arm weakly back to me. I thought it was a nice gesture to wave back; and I was beginning to feel guilty as I left him behind. I knew there had to be something I could do for one of my best friends, so I went back to where I had left him. As I pulled alongside of him he began whimpering again. I was feeling sorry for him now, so looking around the boat I found some things to give him. I just couldn't understand why he didn't thank me. I left him a can of soda and some sun tan lotion.

Scott Hart
St. Peter's Prep School
Jersey City, NJ

Dr. Kennedy

Two Worlds

Friday afternoon. I squirm in physics, my last class, vaguely listening to the teacher explain vector equations. The static over the intercom interrupts class: "The football team will face the mighty Eagles on home turf tomorrow afternoon. Game time: two o'clock. Be there!" I watch my clock. Three more minutes. No more classes until Monday. The bells echo through the halls. It will be a big night. The most important game of the season triggers chitter-chatter excitement and party talk. I am caught in a whirl of crowded halls, friends, and "What-are-you-doing-tonight?" At my locker, I stuff my knapsack with folders and books for the weekend's study. A note is stuck in my locker.

"The gang will be at MacDonalds after school. Do come!"

Patty

Someone slams a locker. Voices chatter on about tonight's parties and tomorrow's football game; plans to see a movie or to cruise and hangout. Voices fade. I linger at my locker, holding the note.

"Patty knows I work on Fridays. . ." I slam my locker and head through the quiet leaf-strewn courtyard to the student parking lot and my car. The school doors have closed, and doors open to another world, a restaurant thirty-five miles from Silver Spring. . .

"Restaurant!" I remember shouting, "in Manassas?" My parents proudly announced their sole ownership of this now-family-run business.

"I hope we're not moving," I declare. "it's my junior year, Mom."

"We'll commute," explained Mom.

Today, I drive to my working world Thursday nights, Friday nights, and Saturday afternoons. Two worlds--Silver spring and Manassas--thirty-five miles apart. I come home from school and put on my uniform--dark blue pants and a white oxford shirt. I leave enough time to wash the school day off and reapply my face for work. Hurriedly, I grab a granola bar, rushing my sister, Lisa, to the car to drive to the restaurant.

From the quiet suburb of Silver Spring, I battle offensive drivers who cut in and out of lanes, eighteen-wheel tractor trailers, and the stop and go of traffic jams. Route 495. I race around the

snaky curves listening to the radio rock the latest music. Route 66. Fair Oaks Mall whizzes by. The median blurs. Lisa sleeps. I exit at Centreville. WPRW, the radio station announces the birthday cake winner. I know it's four o'clock. I'm on time. The single lane highway snakes toward Manassas. As I turn into the shopping center, I'm greeted by THE HONG KONG RESTAURANT. The orange flourescnet sign flashes: OPEN.

"A table for two," I joke walking in. Mom kisses me, then Lisa. Three Chinese lanterns dimly light up the long dining room. Soft relaxing music plays. I walk to the back booth and throw my books on the family table, reserved.

The smell of roasting barbeque pork draws me into the kitchen. I kiss Dad who is carefully turning over each piece of meat, sometimes dripping red barbeque sauce on the black oven doors where it sizzles, bubbles, and smokes. Dad then bends over the steaming wok and stir fries Chinese vegetables. His face glows red from the heat. The smell of roast pork, the hum of the fan, and the vapor from the steamtable warm me.

We prepare for the Friday night customers. Dad slices the beef and pork; dices the celery, green peppers, and carrots; and deep fries breaded pork and chicken. Mom fills the teapot with Oolong tea and lays out red dinner napkins. I wash the afternoon dishes. Lisa de-shells the shrimp and washes rice grains. And we stack delicately Chinese red designed plates, ricebowls, and teacups. Ready. Our strategy set: Dad and Lisa in the kitchen; and Mom and I in the dining room.

I take my place behind the cash register. The smell of "char su" drifts through the dining room. Two huge fans, a hand-embroidered picture with one hundred silk birds, and three delicate hand-painted Chinese lanterns reflect our little orient.

And in Silver Spring across the Potomac River, my gang plans their night while sitting in MacDonalds. How far they seem from this world!

Helen Shueh
Northwood H.S.
Silver Spring, MD

Mary Lee Puddle

Madam, I'm Adam

The man in the room with me now is God. He is a middle-aged man of about five foot eleven, short beard (light brown) and matching, balding hair. He is wearing a blue three-piece suit and when I asked Him about His appearance, He said something about "Time and Class Standards." He seems to be the real thing, and He proved it to me by performing a number of Miracles before my very eyes. He instantly changed the score of a baseball game I turned to on the television; and when I asked, changed the accent of my neighbor while I talked to him on the telephone. And after a few more incredible feats of Miracle status, I came to believe His claim of Lord Almighty status. And so I asked.

"Could you make me into the Greatest Writer of All Time?"

He smiled, "that's why I'm here. But you need to be more specific."

More specific! How much more could I get? Well, I found that easy. "Make my writings into the ultimate reality, where whatever I write becomes the way it is, and so would be the preferred reading of people the world over."

Because I am typing this story out as it occurs, He paused before answering as I typed that last line (and this) out.

"Done?" He asks. "Good. Ready or not..."

I was. And with a shimmer of fingers in the pale light of a seaside summer afternoon, He transforms my fingers into the Writers of Truth.

"How does it feel?" He asks as I madly typed out my thoughts.

"Fine, just fine... Thank God..."

"Oh, you needn't call me that anymore. That is just the nickname I earned down Under. You can call me Luke from now until forever... That's short for Lucifer." He smiled a most cynical smile.

"Um..." I typed, as my thoughts spilled and leaked out my fingers.

"You guess right! I AM who you are afraid I am! And of all the things you could have wished for, you wished WRONG. Tally-Ho!" And with that, He walked out of my house and into my life.

And as I type my reality out, the world as I see it, I realize what an extraordinary gift I have. I can type out things as they actually are, transporting exactly what I see or think to my readers mind. Oh, what things I will write, what fame and wealth I will gain!

But one thing still bothers me. That cryptic comment that God (I mean Lucifer, IF He is...) made as He left. But if He is who I'm afraid, then wouldn't He have asked for half my Soul as down payment? But He didn't make me pay for my Writer's Dream in any way, so He MUST be God. I think...

But wait... Something feels different as I type... My hands feel detached, light, separated... No that's not it! What is it??? I pause to think... But No!!! I cannot, for my hands will not stop typing...

Scot Fraser
Gladwyne, PA

Mrs. Ceil Frey



Alvin Tucker

On the Window

*Venetian blinds stretch across my window;
close little horizons,
one
on top of
the other--
a ladder
fading into a dream
towards the beckoning blue.
Out from thee darkness,
I climb towards the sky.*

Miss Harding

Elizabeth L. Bloomer
Annandale H. S.
Annandale, VA

Thanksgiving Treat

*The cry which I heard
breath escaping turkey's throat
on Thanksgiving day.*

Gail Ciociola

Tya-Mae Julien
Arch Bishop Kennedy High School
Ambler, PA

Unfinished Lives

Memories flash
 Yet this is my first time in Dresden.
 Cobwebs, dust, musty odors,
 Broken windows, cracked floorboards,
 Stillness.
 A shadow appears.
 A tall woman,
 Mud-stained bathing suit, a crooked smile.
 Memories flash, then
 She speaks
 But I do not understand.
 She motions for me to follow
 The winding staircase.
 In a long, narrow hall
 She vanishes through a door.
 It creaks open after her.
 I enter.
 Memories flash
 A fourposter bed,
 Rose wallpaper,
 Maple dressing table,
 Sandalwood scent.
 She points to a photo:
 Two females.
 One, a crooked smile, a blue dress,
 The other, braided hair, a missing front tooth,
 A koala bear.
 Visions dance before my eyes.
 The two in the photo
 Horseback riding.
 An older woman calls to them,
 "Deborah, Johanna, kmmen sie hier!"
 The shadow glides to a closet;
 The door opens.
 A dusty book floats onto the bed.

I turn the crumbling pages.
 Many photos,
 One article.
 I decipher its meaning:
 Sunday, August 7, 1763,
 Deborah and Johanna von Klop
 Killed in boating accident--
 Johanna's body found,
 Deborah's lost in the Elbe.
 A thought strikes me,
 Something I half-believed
 Since I was young.
 Sisters. Me. Her.
 My soul came back;
 Hers did not.
 What does she want?
 Reading my mind,
 She points to me.
 I do not want to die.
 I run to another room.
 A four-poster bed,
 Violet wallpaper,
 Pine dressing table,
 Jasmine scent,
 A koala bear.
 I turn. She's there,
 Anger in her eyes.
 I trip and tumble down the stairs.
 Blackness surrounds me.
 "Deborah, Johanna, kmmen sie hier!"

Jennifer Fischetto
 Long Beach H. S.
 Long Beach, NY

Ms. F. Goldwater

Lab: Annelida

Their last sight,
 so starkly silver--
 Watch the confused
 remnants
 generate new heads, tails,
 lives, start to see--
 Snip again.
 A belaboring bulge on a tray.
 Once,
 one fool grew two heads,
 an over-stared anomaly until he
 pinched off into two worms.
 Poor remnants.
 Those that don't

sprout fast enough,
 do they skid into the
 garbage can
 at the end of the day?
 There in the dark,
 amid thankfully indifferent
 paper towels and smashed test tubes
 remnant may stealthily
 (with fierce intent)
 burgeon slowly forth.
 Nursing its tender edges as it goes.

Andrea Shen

Westfield H.S.



Steve Savad

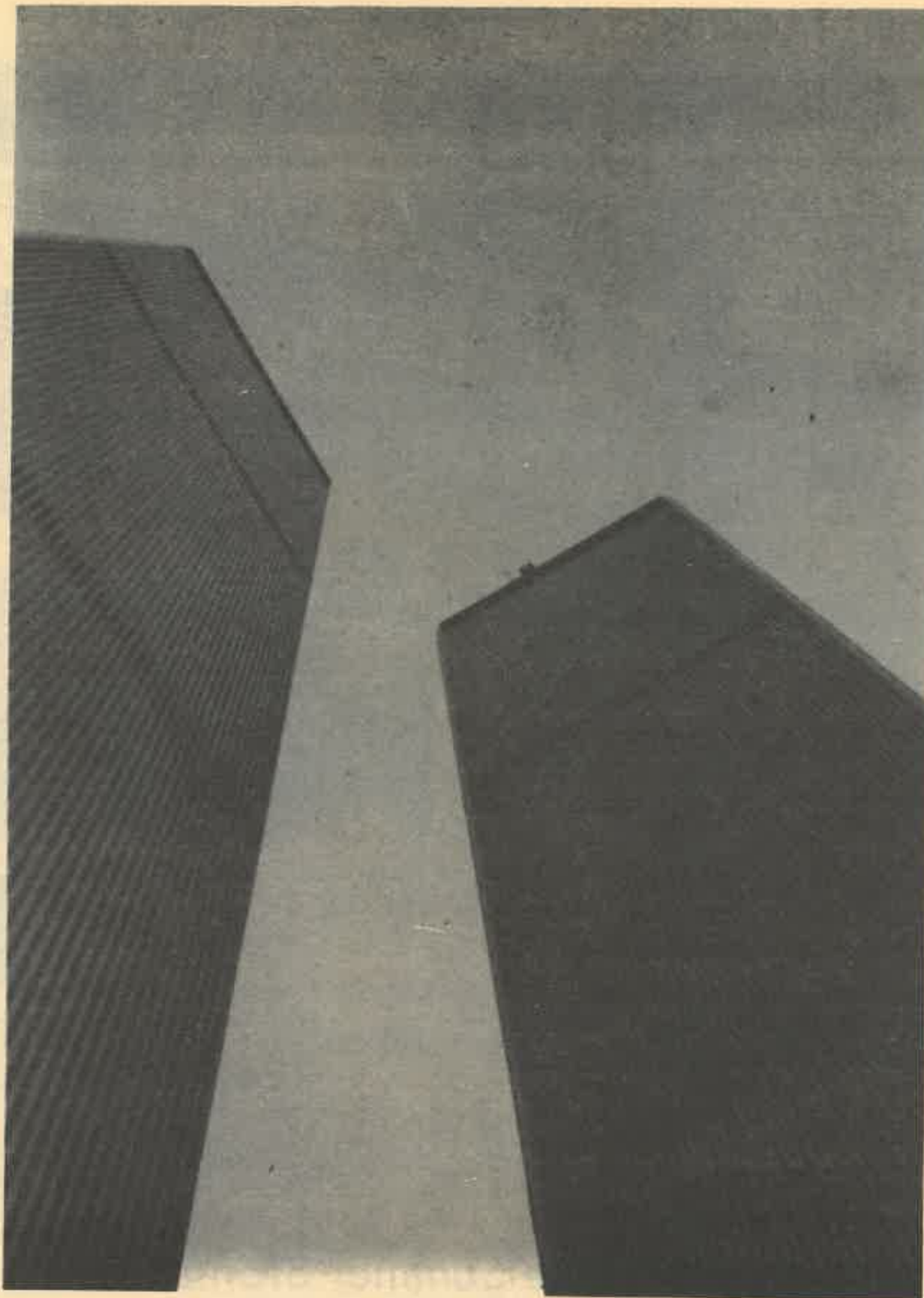
When the Summer Storm

When the summer storm
 raced off the day
 and flooded
 the entire marsh
 for five days,
 ripping out
 thick stalks
 of cord grass,
 the periwinkle
 (with colors
 of a swirled pink sunrise)
 clung, fist-tight
 to a blade of grass.
 When the clouds
 raced off the marsh,
 the real August came

in its summer yellow
 and sun-drenched
 the marsh three days.
 A boatload
 of sixth-grade
 mainlanders
 trooped the marsh,
 a young fist
 snatched the periwinkle
 storm-quick
 from a blade of grass.

Rosa Hwang
 Northwood H.S.
 Silver Spring, MD

Mary Lee Ruddle



Brian Bittigreg

Winter-Time

I could read a book by the night-snow's light
when the fine stuff
is blown off the roof-tops like smoke
and spring is just a matter of days.
I could easily shave in an icy morning
when the mirror reflects
my reddened ears.
I could warm up my trusty diesel
to move this white motherlode
back and forth
making a snowy right of way.
Out in this snowy battlefield
my plow blinks into

an already depleting pile of snow.
The job's almost over
I ease a smoke
as the light of morning
rush-hour creeps
into the cleared intersection,
and I
sit hoping
that spring never comes.

Montvale, NJ

David Deim
Pascack Hills H.S.

The Fashion Freaks

All right, I said, sounding cheerful sarcastically. Time for school.
 I whined, I don't know if I want to go through with this, Mom. It was bad enough having to bring that Korean exchange student around for a whole day last year, and he's a person.
 It'll be fun, my mother chirped enthusiastically. Think of all the attention you'll get.
 I'm trying not to, I murmured, imagining the narrow-minded judgments and unpleasant reactions I was about to face. There is always a problem of imbalance of attention at school. Too little is bad, but too much is worse.
 I grabbed my backpack and my jacket and went upstairs to get IT.
 I have to introduce you as something, I told it. How about Hugo--the newest, most stylish, modern fashion designer in the entire world?
 Yeah, I like that. I gestured Come on, and we were off.
 I paid no attention to the gaping mouths and bulging eyeballs from other cars as we drove to school. But when I stepped out of the car and motioned for him to follow me, I immediately sensed the instant crowd behind me. The unveiling had occurred.
 Hugo stood next to me. My brain ached from straining to pick up every whispered reaction, but the blatant comments overwhelmed all the rest.
 Jeez, what's that?
 Isn't she the weirdo who brought that foreign exchange student in last year?
 Who does she think she is, and what does IT think IT is?
 What the . . . ?
 Omigod, are you dying or what?
 Much of the awestruck population just stared.
 What's that pink thing around his eyes?
 He's so short. What a freaky thing he's wearing. It wraps around his body, so how can he move?
 I've heard of all variations of punk hair cuts, but turquoise and steadfast horizontal is a bit ridiculous.
 Everything is ok except for the polka-dotted rhinoceros skin. At least it could be in coordinated colors or something. I don't think chartreuse and fuschia go together at all.
 Where'd you get it? my friend Beth demanded. How come you didn't tell me? I told you when Joey was coming down from Maine, didn't I? How could you keep something so important from me?
 I found him in our backyard, I said softly. I don't know how he got

there. My parents are working on that problem. He must be from another world or something.
 I didn't speak softly enough, though. The ever-growing crowd managed to spread different versions of the story at the amazing rate of about 300 people per minute.
 Did you hear that? She thinks it's from outer space or something.
 This girl is a looney case.
 Susie's been trying to convince me that she's ok. Oh well, just blew that one.
 Look, the creature's making queer noises and movements.
 He was trying to be friendly. I knew that when he made the low rumbling noise and squirmed jerkily from side to side.
 You actually let that monster sleep in your house?
 First she claims that it comes from another planet and then she accepts it as one of the family. What a nut.
 I'm sure my mother will write the Board of Education and complain about unnecessary exposure to crazy people in public schools.
 We should definitely start a petition right now.
 It might be too late to spare us the damage.
 They all started to back away.
 You know who he really is? I exclaimed, trying to regain their interest. His name is Hugo and he's the most prominent fashion designer alive today. But if you're too stupid to appreciate it--hey, what can I do?
 After a short silence, the mutterings began again.
 What a body suit! I have to get one.
 That's awesome hair!
 Hugo spent the day with me in school. His popularity was overwhelming.
 The next day I saw avid attempts at imitating the pink sunglasses and tight tubular body suit. The turquoise, steadfast, horizontal hair didn't show up for about a week. The polka-dotted skin wasn't attempted for two or three.
 The day after Hugo's appearance he departed as mysteriously as he'd come. The ripple effect of his visit to school continued until the results were hardly noteworthy. But they were there.

Marielle Palombo
 Winston Churchill HS
 Potomac, MD
 Carol Blum

Clashing Symbols

In my junior English class, we studied Arthur Miller's THE CRUCIBLE closely. Very closely.
 It all started when my teacher succumbed to a rampant disease-symbolism addiction. All the English instructors have it, but mine had a dangerously advanced case. She forced us students to extract hidden meanings from rocks, shrubbery, and slimy jellyfish-like creatures that seem to whisk a dead boy off a beach. That's page 140, LORD OF THE FLIES, Mobyphobe Publishers, which specializes in churning out paperback editions of required readings. The company's books are specially printed with unremovable ink splotches on most of the pages.
 I remember one short story in which a fire hydrant symbolizes a midget's loneliness. I wonder what the dog represents.
 Anyway, one day I grew tired of searching for what I considered to be bogus symbolism. When the teacher had finished explaining that Fred's life is represented by a half-used bottle of

Alka-Seltzer, I was foolish enough to suggest that maybe, just maybe, this isn't symbolism.
 The entire class gasped. Three girls in the back crossed themselves. Another girl screamed and fainted. "Heretic! Heretic!" yelled a fifth.
 While I was being tackled (in case I should fly), the teacher pulled out her holy thesaurus and began to purify the room against dangling modifiers, unparallel structures, and math teachers.
 Realizing that the situation was hopeless, I loosened myself from the grips of the four boys holding me down and pleaded insanity.
 By posting a full confession on the front door of the school, I atoned for my sins completely.

Andrew Elby

Billy

"Hi, Billy? It's Lisa. I've got a problem: my parents just went shopping and I've got to be at work in twenty minutes. Can you please give me a ride?"

"Sure, sure. Give me a few minutes and I'll be over."

Billy is a wonderfully unique person, not like any other I have ever met. His personality is contagious; he is always high-spirited and jovial and he has the uncanny ability to always produce a smile on a person's face. He has the knack to transpose a person from tears to laughter, from heavyheartedness to elation. He brings out the brightest, most positive qualities in everyone around him, and he has such a sharp sense of humor that one finds it hard to do anything but appreciate him.

On many occasions, Billy has gotten me out of difficult situations, including one incident last year when I had two major assignments due on a Monday and I forgot about them until the preceding Sunday afternoon. I called him in a panic, repeatedly emphasizing how stupid, lazy, and absentminded I was for procrastinating. Billy recognized this subtle hint, and came over to my house to help me finish.

Not many people would believe Billy to be a serious person when they first see him; he is coated from head to toe in light brown freckles and he always has a huge grin on his face, though, in fact, he is very serious when the need arises. I remember the day my brother Jay was outside in the snow with his friends, Billy, and me. Jay ran up our kitchen steps to hide from the bombardment of snowballs. As he tried to catch one, his hand went through the glass pane of the door. Blood began to splatter all over the snow. Billy was quickly at his side, helping him into the house, picking the glass out of his hand and bandaging it before I had a chance to move. I was still in shock from seeing the blood.

I walked down the stairs in my house as Billy was walking in, wearing, of all things, a rubber nose with glasses and a fuzzy black mustache. He stood in the center of my foyer as if noting was out of the ordinary and casually said, "Are you ready?" I could not hold it back any longer; from the moment I had seen him enter the house, laughter inside of me was waiting to bubble

over. I laughed so far I could not catch my breath, which made me laugh even harder. His poker face finally broke down, and he giggled that giggle that causes a chain reaction in those around him.

Trying to appear gallant, he held the back door open for me as we walked out, though it is quite difficult to be anything near gallant while clad in a huge rubber nose. The giggles beginning again, we left the house and approached his car.

"Billy, may I drive?"

"Uh, I really don't know, Lisa . . ."

"Oh, come on. You know I can drive well. You've seen me before. Please? I promise I'll be careful. Honest."

"Ok. Here are the keys. Just be careful."

"Don't be nervous. Just take off that nose."

As soon as I turned on the ignition, Billy's teasing began.

"Oh no. Now you've done it. I'm dead. You broke the car. All the lights are on," referring to the brake and seatbelt lights on the dashboard, though as I shifted the car into gear, he smiled and put a Police tape, one of my favorites, into the cassette player.

Turning onto Roosevelt Boulevard, Billy's mimicking of my mother began. "Lisa, look! You're too far to your right. You're going too fast; please put on your brake. I knew I never should have agreed to ride with you. We're going to get into an accident. I know it. I can feel it. I'm taking my life in my hands. You just changed lanes without using your turn signal. See?"

"Lisa, go easy. Please don't hit the island with the wheel. I can see it in the morning paper--Girl and boy stranded on Boulevard Island--I haven't eaten dinner yet. I wanna go home."

He actually had his eyes closed during my next turn.

"If you hit the woman with the feather hat, it's ten points!"

"Thanks, Billy. I really appreciate this. I didn't make you too nervous, did I?" I asked as I unbuckled my seatbelt and unlocked the door.

With his body quivering in mild convulsions and his eyes rolling back in his head, he said, "N-n-n-no, n-n-not m-m-m-much."

Laughing some more, I thanked him again and waved goodbye as he drove away and I walked into the store.

Lisa Gardner
Philadelphia, Pa.
Mrs. Schultz

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