

SUSQUEHANNA UNIVERSITY



the  
apprentice WRITER



Carla Huber  
The Agnes Irwin School  
Ann Miller

# Introduction

What you are reading is the fourth issue of THE APPRENTICE WRITER, which annually showcases the best writing, photography, and artwork we receive from secondary school students.

As I've repeated in the first three issues, we mean this publication to be used as a teaching tool, so we encourage teachers to reproduce whatever seems appropriate. I also want to encourage future submissions (we received over 3,500 entries this year) from any student attending high school in the Middle Atlantic States.

We are distributing copies to nearly 3,500 schools this year. Susquehanna University and Ottaway Newspapers are committed both to this project and to writing excellence, and we believe this fourth issue of THE APPRENTICE WRITER will be as

practical and enjoyable as the first three issues.

We welcome submissions of poetry, short fiction, essays, interviews, feature articles, editorials, photographs, and artwork by students in grades 9-12. Send material to Gary Fincke, Writing Program Director, Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove, PA 17870. The deadline for submitting is March 15, 1987. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for return of photographs and artwork. We will announce acceptances on April 30, 1987. We also invite teachers to submit short essays on the teaching of writing.

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SUSQUEHANNA UNIVERSITY  
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# Sandoway

he so young & raw in his crewcut  
& dress blues, grinning so proud  
at the camera w/his arm around her  
slim waist in the Hong Kong  
miniskirt,  
& he on the dunes & waves w/wide  
shoulders & slim buttocks  
frisbee w/her sweet & soft in the  
yellow cotton two-piece,

& then the proud trips to Bangkok  
for the tiny lace frocks & sheets  
& to the ancient brown carpenter  
who built the cradle of teak  
that quiets all our babies,

& then the insanity that was my grandmother  
swallowed itself, & mother flew home  
& her swelling belly  
could not stay the fear of death  
but I was born in Rangoon  
premature & tiny, at the dirty city  
hospital, w/o mosquito netting  
& it was the April heat  
my new life nearly wilted  
& then we left to strengthen  
my soft & thinning limbs  
at Sandoway  
where breakers crash  
& nearby  
the sun comes up like thunder

Cathy Wagner  
Catonsville, MD  
Dr. Blankenburg  
Ms. Thomas

# Cannon Hill

and they rode off into the sunset,  
the orange, acrylic sunset,  
the neon dusk.  
Somber and sensuous,  
and the horses were  
transfigured  
into vanishing points,  
and the clouds rolled,  
forward up to blue.  
folded peach rows,  
husky, deep-throated clouds.  
the horses were  
transfigured  
into vanishing points  
and so they ran after  
(the clouds hanging like  
meringue sheets off an  
azure bed, upside down)  
they ran after the  
vanishing point.

Keith Kessler  
Vienna VA  
Mrs. Von zur Muehlen

# Black

The car  
moves like a turtle  
we go  
a seatbelt makes  
a big black slit against my body  
my dress

Arriving at the studio  
my black patent leather shoes  
so shiny  
I want to put crease marks  
in them

The old ladies are staring  
I am sitting on a velvet chair  
a camera covered with black

He positions me  
my back  
it aches  
sit straight!  
smile!

A hair out of place  
the black comb  
pulling  
tugging at my hair

The bulb flashes  
Where's my mother  
I can't see  
I am blind  
My world is black  
like a curtain drawn across a window.

Cindy Kerr  
Baltimore MD  
Roland Park Country School  
J. Brown

# The Child

Their camera gave birth today.  
A small, round roll of film  
was ejected.  
It was a quiet newborn.  
An infant with a  
remarkable view.  
The child remembered pictures--  
the twenty-four it'd been shown  
in the womb.  
After the child was born  
the relatives took it to  
the psychologist.  
When it got home,  
it told them stories  
of the pictures.  
But this child was different.  
It was a quiet one.  
It spoke without words.

E. A. Dupuis  
Berkeley Heights, NJ  
Governor Livingston Regional High School

We drove to the college in silence. Only the radio served as a backdrop for my thoughts.

"Don't forget to mention that speech award you won. When was it again?"

Jolted roughly by those words, I looked at my mother. She had been reminding me of things to mention all morning.

"Freshman year. It was the forensics contest."

After a while the scenery, a few trees and clouds, began to lose its charm. I fiddled with the radio. My mother shifted in the driver's seat and cleared her throat nervously.

"I just want to stress how important this interview is," she began slowly. "Sometimes I don't think you realize this. If you don't get into this college, it's State University. Then what will your Aunt Linda say? You know she can't let me forget that Julie's in that big Ivy League school in Connecticut. What's it called?"

"Yale."

"Well, yes. And remember, your father and I raised you for better things. Don't let us down now. We've worked too hard to be disappointed now."

She turned the wheel, firmly steering the car out of the exit on to a city street.

Where did I go wrong? When I was younger, it seemed to come so easily. Now everything was coming down on me.

The city was turning into a wooded suburb. We were getting closer. My hands were sweating. When I was young my hands never sweated. I wiped them on my skirt. I can't carry on an intelligent conversation. People think I'm thick. I think of what my friends say to me now, "Gee, sometimes you are so dense, Carol. What's your problem?" They used to look up to me, my friends in fourth, fifth grade; they said, "I wish I were like you. You're so smart." What happened to me?

"We're going to be there in ten minutes. Don't worry. Just be yourself."

My mother, what a comfort. Be yourself. I wonder what she would do if I went into that interview and told the Admissions officer how stupid I was; how I couldn't read my oral report without stuttering and mispronouncing words. Maybe I should tell him about the time I failed my Algebra test because I was too proud to admit I didn't understand any of it. Now that's being myself. Maybe I'll tell him how I wish I was three years old again and how the best years of my life are over. They've been over for seven years now. I'll tell him how I dream about those happy times when the days were always golden and my parents approved and were proud of me. Those were the days when I was somebody. I was the first kid on the block to walk, talk, and read. I was the child wonder. "The kid shows big promise," my neighbors said. "She'll go far." My parents smiled proudly and agreed.

I looked over at my mother. Her mouth was set in a tight line and the frown lines around her eyes and mouth were deep. We were turning into the drive. We were here. I wiped my hands on my skirt again.

We found the building with no problem. At the door my mother said, "Don't disappoint me now. I don't deserve that from you."

I looked at her. If I got into this college would she smile and be proud of me again? And what if I didn't get in? It would be just another disappointment. Well, they were used to disappointment by now. Wordlessly I sat down and waited to be led into the Admission Director's office.

It was almost four when I got out of that office. I had arrived at three.

"So, how was it?" demanded my mother. I didn't answer. In silence I walked to the car. She followed. She must have caught my mood because she didn't ask anything else.

The drive back was filled with my mother's chatter and, of

course, the radio.

"You were in there for a full hour!" she exclaimed. "I'm sure that means something. Did you remember to tell him everything? Of course you did! No wonder you took an hour. It's a wonder it didn't take more than that. I wonder why he didn't come out with you. You must have just bowled him over. Well! I guess we can expect your acceptance letter any day now, hmm? I wonder what we should do for dinner."

I let her babble on and on. Let her enjoy herself. She doesn't have to know that I spent thirty minutes of the interview crying soundlessly into my sweaty hands. The first thirty minutes were spent in senseless babble about awards, failures, childhood, sunshine, and how I can't stand life now. The man must have felt surprised when I started talking and crying. That is, before he felt pity.

"I just knew you'd make a good impression. You were always so brilliant as a child. Your father will be so happy and Aunt Linda will turn green."

I wondered if I should tell her about the interview and decided against it. The rejection letter should be in the mail now. Maybe I'll get it next week.

I changed the radio station and my mother kept talking. Maybe I can be a farmer, I thought, looking at the clouds, or maybe a dancer.

Angie Liem  
Irvington, NJ  
Mrs. Harriet Marcus

## **The House is Pregnant**

*The house is pregnant!*

*For the ninth time...*

*Fertility,*

*Celestial word.*

*For the ninth time...*

*Love is making party.*

*Love.*

*Always there.*

*Give an opportunity*

*To a miracle.*

*Nine times, nine!*

## **La Casa esta Embarazada**

*La casa esta embarazada!*

*Por novena vez...*

*Fertilidad,*

*Celestial Palabra.*

*Por Novena vez...*

*El amor esta de fiesta.*

*Amor,*

*Siempre alli.*

*Dale oportunidad*

*A un milagro.*

*Nueve veces, nueve!*

Sorayalexandra Galindo  
Binghamton, NY

# Untitled

Mr. Alona opens the door and I walk into the Alona's house once again.

"Hello, Jonathan, the kid is upstairs."

I look at Mrs. Alona walk by and return her greeting.

Dick, the father, begins to tell me what I am supposed to do, where they are going and where the number is. All the usual stuff.

Finally he stops. By this time Mrs. Alona has finished being busy in the kitchen and is standing next to her husband. "Remember, the number for emergency is 911." They open the door and depart.

Why do I babysit?

Panic begins to rise as he shuts the door. What is the neighbor's telephone number? What's the number for emergency? Oh well, nothing ever happens anyway. I turn around and walk up the stairs.

After babysitting there for four years, I still don't know the name of the Alona's son.

"Hi, kid."

He is sitting in a high stool, playing with "old Mac." He is here every time I come in. I believe he only stops to sleep, go to the bathroom, or play Lego. I wonder what he does when he goes to school, if he is in school.

I sit down and watch him lose at Frogger. As he tries to get the frog across the road, through the treacherous river and onto the lilly I cheer him on.

Time begins to pass.

How many times can you lose at Frogger? My jaw is hurting. I stop cheering.

He keeps losing. My head hurts. Brat! The "splat" of the frog getting run over by trucks. My stomach aches from lack of food. Why couldn't they make the sound gorier? "Splat!"

I stand up.

"Here, you can play."

I play and lose for a while.

"Hey, kid, let's play Lego."

He yelps in anticipation and stands at the door like a dog waiting to be let out. The door is opened and he bounds down the stairs while I straggle after him.

There he is, as usual, in front of the basement door. He always waits for me to open the door and turn on the light so that the Giant Ant living in the basement will get me first. Nice kid.

I pick up a toy gun from the counter. "STAY BACK!" He backs off and looks from behind a corner. I open the door and peer slowly around.

"Aaah." I tumble down the stairs and roll around on the floor, knocking over some Lego buildings and crushing others beneath me. "Help me, kid, help me! Bang, bang! Help!" With previous hidden bravery, the door opens, the light flicks on, and he comes running down.

"Where did he go?"

His eyes are bulging and his body is shaking.

"You scared him off. I guess he knew he couldn't take both of us on. Don't worry, he won't be back."

We sit down and survey the damage.

The Lego city covers the entire floor. There are houses, small buildings, cars, people and even fire hydrants. The east section of the suburbs is in disarray. The damage will take only a short time to repair and then we'll begin work on the skyscraper.

The skyscraper has accumulated yet another story. I look over at the kid and see his eyes are watering. "We can play T.V. games now, if you want." Immediately his eyes brighten and he jumps up. Tiredly I look at the clock.

10:00!!! He was supposed to be in bed an hour ago. "Get to bed, Kid." He runs upstairs with the dogs bouncing after him to undress and change.

I get to the first floor. Freedom! In the kitchen my hunger will

be satisfied. There is a loaf of bread on the counter. My mouth waters. I walk into the dining room, get a chair, bring it into the kitchen and set it down. I sit down to devour the food.

"Read me some stories."

What? Come on! I get up after only eating two pieces of bread and walk upstairs into his room.

"Which one?" Loser.

"I don't know, any one."

It's like this every time. I pick a book off the floor and read it. Who ever heard of a kid's book being fifty pages? "Read me another." Sigh. I begin reading the next one. Sixty pages!

Five stories later I get up and leave.

"Hey, turn on my night light."

Was that my stomach rumbling? I turn around and plug the light into the wall. I get up and leave.

"Hey, come back, I want to give you something."

My stomach is really beginning to smart. What is it this time? I stomp back into the room.

"Come here."

I walk to the bed. "Come closer." I bend over the bed. What!

He reaches up, wraps his arms around my neck and kisses me. "Good night."

I leave the room and shut the door; then open it slightly, just the way he likes.

Jonathan Lave  
Pittsburgh, PA  
Shady Side Academy  
Mrs. Eldridge

# Untitled

*the answer to the question is:*

*no-one cares if it rains anymore  
because the books are here  
to keep us dry.*

*the answer to the question is:*

*no.*

*because the voice of the rain  
is like a song to me.*

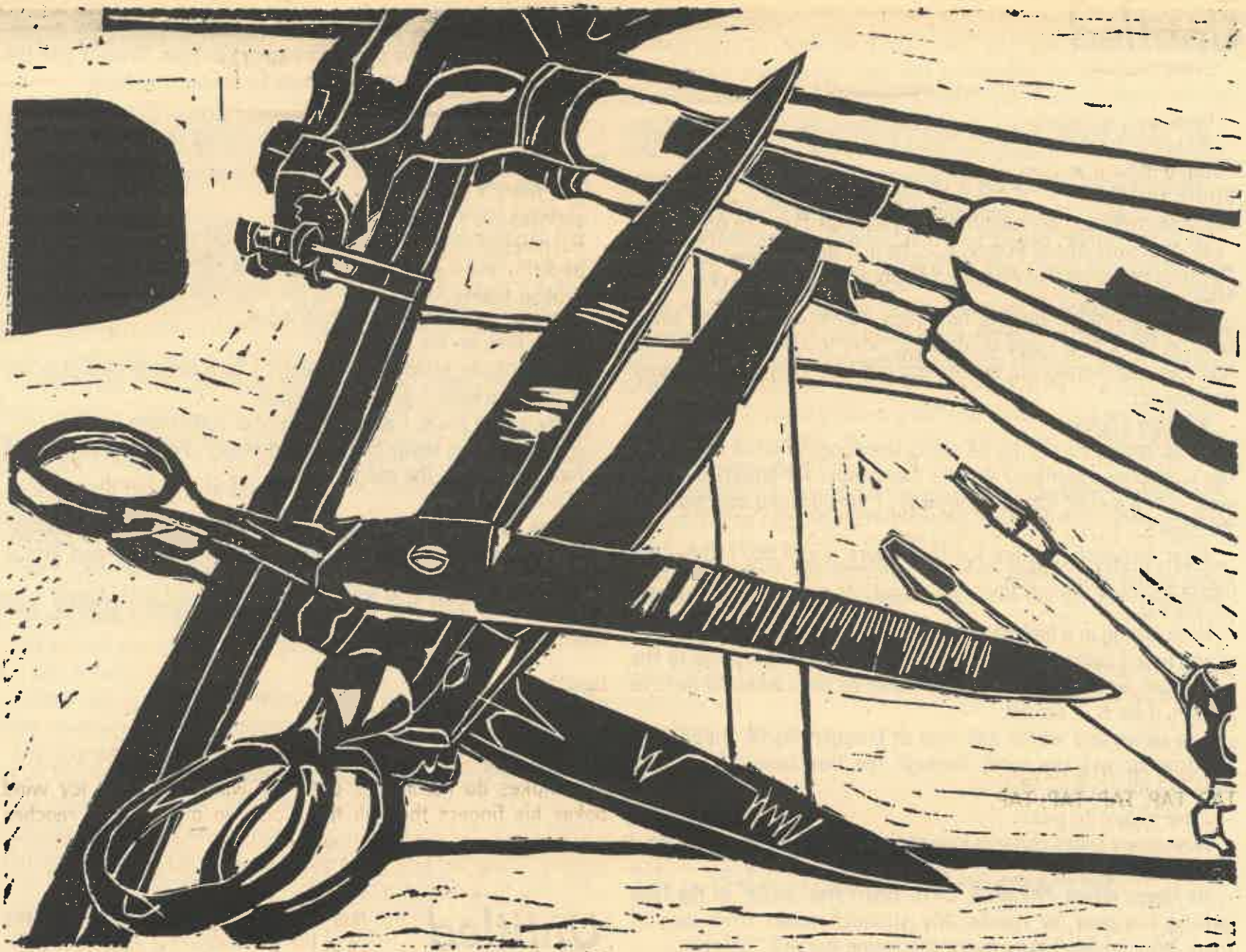
*i want to feel my skin soften  
under wet silver brushes  
as the city dust slides away.*

*i want my father to carry me  
across the street  
and look down while the rain  
makes dents in the puddles.*

*i want  
to play in the rain,  
hear its dance on the roof at night,  
and watch the city breathe again.*

*the answer to the question  
sounds like the rain.*

Rose Fitzpatrick  
Fairfax, VA  
Oakton High School  
Nancy West



James Polahar  
Kiskiminetas Springs School  
James Nagle

## Taps

TAP, TAP, TAP  
TAP, TAP  
TAP

This story is good.  
I'm so excited.

It's about a guy I met in a dramatic situation;  
but it wasn't dramatic enough to make a great story.  
So I made him try to kill himself,  
now it's a great story,  
now I'm excited.

TAP, TAP  
TAP, TAP, TAP

I like typing a story I'm enthusiastic about. It gives me a chance  
to see it one more time.

TAP, TAP  
TAP

RIIING!

Where's that phone?

I twist my torso to the right.

There it is.

"Hello"

"Yes, is Dr. Branston there please?"

It's a man with an Indian accent.

"Sure, hold on a second."

"Mom, it's for you."

"O.K. honey, be right there."

I lay the receiver down.

TAP, TAP, TAP

TAP, TAP, TAP. TAP

She picks it up and walks it over to the desk across the room.

"Hello" she says.

"Yes it is."

TAP, TAP, TAP

"Yes I do."

TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP

"O.K., yes."

TAP, TAP

"It's about her A.I.D.S. patient," says my step father.

I turn around and see him staring intensely at my mother from  
the sofa.

"O.K."

"O.K., yes."

I turn to my mother. Her forehead is wrinkled and her eyes are  
fixed on the air, hanging on the Indian's words.

"It's her A.I.D.S. patient, he's died."

I turn back to my typewriter.

TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP

Damn, where did I put that correcto-type?

"Yes. O.K., who's on duty?"

"Who's on duty?," she repeats.

"It's the A.I.D.S. patient, isn't it?" he says.

TAP, TAP

"Dr. Katz? O.K., I talked to him."

TAP

"Have you told the family?"

TAP, TAP

"O.K., I have the number."

TAP

"I'll do it."

TAP, TAP, TAP

(Continued on Page 7)

(Continued from Page 7)

"Thank you, goodbye."  
TAP, TAP  
I stop and turn to them.  
BUUUUUUSH  
My mom releases her breath letting her lips flap like a horse.  
"Yes, that was about Rodrieguez, he just died."  
"He was going to die, wasn't he?" my step-father says.  
"Yea, I was expecting it."  
She stands and walks toward the sofa.  
"It's for the better, isn't it?" he says.  
"He pulled his respiratory tube out and they didn't put it back in."  
"He pulled it out?"  
"He pulled it out, and they didn't put it back in."  
"So it was suicide," he said.  
"Well maybe," she walks around the sofa to the bookshelf.  
"It's for the better, isn't it. Was he conscious?"  
"He was pretty drugged up and his respiratory tube was pretty uncomfortable shoved down his throat. He may not have known what he was doing."  
"It's for the better, isn't it?"  
She walks back to the sofa.  
"Yes, he was going to die."  
I turn back  
TAP, TAP, TAP  
"He was on 70% oxygen."  
TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP,  
"That's pretty high isn't it?"  
TAP, TAP, TAP  
"Yes he was going to die."  
TAP, TAP  
TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP  
TAP, TAP  
TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP  
"I have to call the family."  
TAP, TAP  
She moves to the phone.  
TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP  
"Mike, would you stop for a minute?"  
"I sure as hell can."  
I get a sudden feeling of comic relief. I get up and then flop down in the sofa next to my step-father.  
Now we're both staring at her on the phone.  
She lets out another deep sigh and dials.  
"Hello, is Mr. Rodrieguez there?"  
"Hello, Mr. Rodrieguez, I've called to tell you your son just died. His lungs stopped and he died."  
...  
"You can call the hospital for more information, the staff is there."  
...  
"The medical examiner will have to be informed by the staff and he'll probably want the body."  
...  
"No, you'll get it back quickly for burial."  
...  
"You're welcome, goodbye."  
She hangs up and lets out another deep horse-sigh.  
"They were expecting it," she says.  
"Why will the Medical Examiner want the body?," he says.  
I get up and go back to my typewriter.  
"Because it was an A.I.D.S. patient."  
TAP  
"That's political isn't it?"  
TAP, TAP, TAP  
"Oh definitely, the Medical Examiner . . ."  
TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP

TAP, TAP  
TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP  
TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP  
TAP, TAP, TAP  
TAP  
TAP  
someday i too will die  
and there'll be no more  
sadness  
happiness  
beautiful eyes and soft skin  
broken hearts  
no more  
death

TAP, TAP, TAP  
TAP, TAP  
There, finished.  
My lungs deflate and the air rushes out of my mouth.  
ZIP  
I pull the page out of the typewriter and read the last paragraph.  
"Damn."

Nathan Potter  
New York, NY

## The Station

I sit in the dark in my car. It's 6:15 PM and the train is late. Snowflakes do kamikazes onto my windshield. The icy wind pokes his fingers through the cracks in my car and reaches down my spine. The Christmas wreath on the ticket office window is losing its bow, and evergreens, wrenched out by the wind, are blown down the tracks.

A piece of newspaper has wrapped itself around one of the lights. It pulses and flutters in the wind, causing ghostly shapes to appear on the opposite wall.

A young businessman in a tan coat and brown fedora comes very close to a businesswoman with black hair. It almost looks as if he will kiss her, but he stops himself. He pulls away and walks towards the tracks. He stares down at them and pounds his fist into his hand. The woman stares at his back. He returns to her side and starts to talk about something that appears important to both of them. Suddenly the man pulls the woman close to him and, almost casually, kisses her. He pushes her away, looks at his watch, walks towards the tracks, and stares down into them again.

A guy who looks like a college student paces back and forth like an impatient tiger at the zoo. His cheeks and nose are red, and he has wrapped a red scarf around his mouth. He looks at his watch for what seems the twentieth time and holds his ears to protect them from the wind. For an instant he stops pacing and turns sharply around as if an idea had struck him; then he resumes pacing.

In the car to my right, a woman is sleeping. She looks as if she has been waiting for a longtime.

To my right a young woman in a neon orange hat sits in her car and sips something hot from a mug.

A depressed-looking, hunched-over adolescent boy with acne appears on the platform, but prefers to be alone and slinks out from the lit and sheltered platform into snowy darkness until he is no longer visible.

I wonder about all of these people; I wonder if they can see me, and what they would think if they knew I was taking notes about them. I look at my watch and wonder what has happened to the train.

Stuart Dyer  
Haverford, PA  
The Agnes Irwin School  
Ann Miller



Danielle Michaelis  
Burke, VA

## The New Royals at Forres Castle

by PEOPLE's Special Correspondent

Scotland's new King and Queen, the Macbeths, are determined to make the royal seat, Forres Castle, once gain a social center of radiant elegance. That's what those closest to the charming, warm-hearted, young couple tell me. Macbeth's dazzling rise to power--Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawdor, and election to the throne after King Duncan's brutal murder--all within a year, has amazed the world. The new king's brilliant military record made him a leading candidate for the crown, of course, but those "in the know" tell me that much of the credit belongs to his delightful wife!

Even those who admired the late King Duncan--and they are becoming increasingly hard to find--would be the last to claim that he brought much in the way of glamor to the throne. "Good, but dull. That says it all," one told me. "But the Macbeths are exciting. Scotland is in for surprises!"

King Duncan's murder by two of his valets, themselves killed by Macbeth while resisting arrest, continues to baffle the authorities. The flight of the dead King's sons--Malcolm to England and Donalbain to Ireland--has given rise to the worst kind of gossip in court circles.

"Well, I mean to say, it looks bad, doesn't it. His Majesty merely wanted to talk to them. Thought they could assist us in our investigations," said Macbeth's press secretary and general factotum, Seyton. "So unnecessary. And it looks so bad in the foreign press. Here in Scotland we understand the sort of problems that crop up in these old families. To be perfectly honest, the Duncan family tree--well, it wouldn't be the first time. I could tell you stories about the Duncans that would curl your hair!"

But turning to happier thoughts, King Macbeth and his lovely lady are determined to make Forres Castle once again a center of gay amusement. Even yesterday's shocking murder of the King's long-time friend, Banquo, was not allowed to interfere with last night's gala banquet. So it's sad to have to report that, despite the best efforts of Lady Macbeth (always a perfect hostess and prepared for any occasion!), the party broke up early.

"My dear," a well-connected palace observer told me in confidence, "it was a shambles, an absolute shambles. To start with, the king insisted on serving haggis--all part of the new 'Scotland for Aye' image they're trying to project. Seyton's idea really, and not one of his better ones, I think. Haggis, if you don't know, and I hope you don't, is oatmeal and chopped liver and other unmentionables boiled in a sheep's stomach! Just smelling the foul stuff would make one ill for a week. Of course, no one ate any. We were just pushing it around on our plates and waiting for the roast boar, when the King had some sort of fit."

"I really think that if everyone had just ignored it and gone on talking, it would have been so much better. One expects top people to be occasionally--well, let's say 'too well-served.' But the King kept shouting that he saw something in the corner (though that's not surprising, the way people throw their food around). The King became quite agitated and finally told everyone to go home. We all got up. Then the Queen told us to sit down, so we did that. Then she told us that the King has been having fits for years. (That's wonderful news, I must say!) Then the King calmed down--and then it started all over again!"

The popular Irish Ambassador, Rory McCarthy, remembers the party quite differently. "Och!" he told me, "you don't want to believe anything you hear or half what you see at court. The gossip and back-biting you wouldn't believe. It was a lovely party, and the haggis was delicious, and everyone had a grand time entirely. And didn't I do a fine night's work for the Irish Tourist Board. Donalbain, now--there's a shrewd lad. Off to Ireland, taking advantage of the off-season rates. And a warm welcome we give to all!"

Was Donalbain involved in his father's murder? Ambassador McCarthy refused to discuss the matter. "I'm too stupid to follow politics--ask anyone. But travel, now that's something for everyone. Go to Ireland, I tell my friends. Go abroad--broaden your mind, get some culture. Don't shilly-shally! Just pack and go! It's grand for your health. Look around--there are people dying these days that never died before! So go to Ireland--take the waters, make a retreat, go on a pilgrimage, see the Horse Show, stay on for the trout fishing. You'll thank me, I promise you."

"Och, but who listens to an old blatherskite. I wouldn't have my job if I wasn't kin to Himself, I don't deny it. No one pays heed. Didn't I bend the ear off a fellow down Fife way only a week ago, trying to get him to take the wife and kids on a trip. 'Go to Ireland,' says I. 'Go where you please. It's a little known fact, but abroad is very healthy this year.' But would the great omadhaun listen to what I was saying to him? Not a bit of it!"

"Occupational disease, there's a lot of it going around lately. Takes people different ways. There was poor Banquo's lad, Fleance--he was so addled by seeing his dad killed that he ran away from safety, and there's some say he'll not stop running this side of the Tay. Others don't seem to be able to see what's going on around them or listen to what's said to them. A young lass like yourself, now, in your line of work--asking questions and poking around in dark corners--you'd be a rare listener. I'm thinking that there's a darling article on the Dublin Horse Show that's crying out to be written by a lass like yourself."

Is there any truth to the whispers about the King's health? Royals are very touchy on such subjects, but I can confirm to People's readers that the Queen's new physician is a leading specialist in insomnia and related problems. It may be significant!

Finally, a really sensitive subject. What about the rumors that the King is taking an unhealthy interest in the occult--visiting fortune tellers and clairvoyants? I put the question to a former governess of the Royal Family and her answer was a great comfort.

"The Macbeths have always been deeply religious," she said "interested in spiritual things. Especially his Majesty, even as a boy. You might expect a professional soldier to be--well, materialistic in his outlook. But that was never the King's way. He's always been very open to forces from the Other Side. He's always relied on Unseen Powers. Of course, he does what he can to help Them along, but I think that's so manly in a man, if you take my meaning. And with his dear Lady at his side--always so charming and resourceful and helpful--I don't think there's anything he couldn't do!"

So let the gossip mongers bite their tongues! Scotland looks forward to dramatic days under these story-book lovers, the Macbeths.

Alison Buckley  
Thornton, PA  
Mrs. Coghlan



## In and Out of Town

Long before Grandpa's  
book was on the shelf,  
a little time before my  
father's, before my book  
was even thought of,  
fields have guarded  
this land. Even the  
town had other things  
to do. The field's crest  
gathered in front of  
more, each one rolling  
on the other, fertile  
kittens at play. Deller  
blood was already sowed  
deep into the neighboring  
field. Grasshopper  
generations had lived  
and died in the cold  
earth.

When the town came,  
finally,  
it slithered along,  
barely tempted to  
challenge the field.  
Inscribed in a cloud  
-book,  
somewhere,  
the field kept her  
birthright,  
claiming nothing but  
warm springs,  
lazy summers,  
colorful autumns,  
bitter-hard winters.

The Old Home Place  
echoes now with  
hammering and sawing,  
sparkling new houses  
attacking once-  
playful cat hills.  
Human hands are  
aged,  
weathered.  
And,  
in the darkness  
of silence,  
a piece down from  
the red barn,  
the field cries her  
babies to sleep.  
They  
have nowhere  
to go  
anymore.

Heidi Ness  
Dallastown, PA  
Dallastown Area High School  
Miss Anne Wilson

## Shells

page 9

We collected them  
on the beach  
and the fat kid  
filled his shirt  
with them  
and put them  
on his sand castle.

It was dark  
we put them  
in a bucket  
in the hall and  
they smelled  
so we put them back  
in the ocean.

I suppose they  
were happy  
although  
they probably couldn't  
tell the difference.  
I can  
people speak differently  
now I have  
an accent and spell  
things differently.

Claudia Jellett  
Middleburg, VA  
Foxcroft School  
Donna Denize

## Night

Six year old night was one of purity.  
You felt only fright  
under the craggy glances of the tree  
that left you damp in sweat.

What curdled in the pools of  
the thickening darkness?  
Father seemed to know  
and told you endless

stories of creatures who dwelled in caves,  
sang red-eyed and breathed in sparks.  
On certain nights  
huddling through the enclosing dark.

when you walked a block alone  
your tight flesh writhing crazily  
you feared what was not seen--  
unknown

while your father sat asleep in the bedroom  
with the TV on  
his simple darkness lying on his eyes  
like two familiar and well-worn stones.

Leigh Cheng  
Potomac, MD  
Ms. Pfeiffer

# The Tenth Tape

An easy way to find out about someone is to look at her room. Take mine, for example. It's one of the only things my mother doesn't nag me about because it, at least, is usually neat. The walls are plastered with posters, some so old and faded my parents can't read them, and some glossy and new and still curling down at the corners. Zubin Mehta has the place of honor above my bed, and Stanley Drucker, Loren Kitt and Mitchell Lurie in concert dress are scattered around advertising clarinets and mouthpieces. Next to my window there's a big white space where my mother jokes that someday there'll be a picture of me. I have it designed in my mind: I'll be posing for the cover of my first recording, a tall girl with waist-long golden hair shining against a black gown. I smile at the image and get up off the carpet where I've been sitting. My two clarinets stand waiting, their silver keys glowing molten in the hot morning sun.

I've just finished my weekly hurry-you've-got-a-lesson-in-two-hours practice, trying to at least somehow cover up all the awful things I've forgotten during the week. As I pile my stuff into the huge blue bag that goes with me to every lesson, I can feel my insides tumbling around as they always do on Saturdays at 9:30—even after four years Mr. Jones scares me a little.

My first lesson with him was the easiest to prepare for, because I didn't. My band director had desparingly sent me to Mr. Jones to work on a solo for a piece our junior-high band was playing in a competition. I wasn't really interested in studying the clarinet seriously, never having practiced hard for more than half an hour. But a week before the contest, my director convinced me to try "just one" lesson. And so one Saturday afternoon I knocked unworriedly on Mr. Jones' door.

When he let me in, I stared around curiously. The one room was a dim studio, lit by a single lamp on a rickety rattan shelf. His rusted-over music stand reminded me of scrap metal in the dump nearby; his music lay in heaps on the floor. Thousands of reeds were strewn over a low table, some floating in greying paper cups of water, others lying half-finished in small mountains of sawdust. A bookshelf on the opposite wall was crammed with books on various abstruse technicalities of clarinet playing. In a corner, his instruments lay polished against the brown dust of the rest of the room.

If his apartment didn't impress me, Mr. Jones in his unusual way did. I was a short eighth-grader, but he barely reached my forehead. He glared up at me as I shuffled through the decrepit doorway, his bushy black eyebrows angling down to an incisive beak. His nose was perpetually wrinkled, his features lifted high in an irritated wince. His mouth was the most impressive—the hundreds of tiny, powerful muscles that formed his embouchure jumped spasmodically with his thoughts. When I finished playing, my hands quivered a little more than usual. He said nothing for a few minutes. His lips tightened and relaxed; the corners of his mouth twitched. "You'll never be a Stanley Drucker, but with luck, well, I can make you into something." I looked around again at the dingy room. The lamp flickered and went out; Mr. Jones swore softly. I decided then that, somehow, I would prove him wrong—I would be one of the best.

I am especially nervous now because today I find out if I've been accepted by the School for the Arts. The School has a lot of status with wind players in this city—students of the School are written up in our newspaper all the time, and people from different states come to hear their performances. I remember filling out my application: wet, smooth black ink against dry white paper; hoped-for acceptance versus dreaded rejection. I made ten audition tapes, thinking each time that "the next one'll be better." Finally I brought them to my lesson to hear Mr. Jones' judgment. He listened to each one while I looked away, too ashamed even to glance at his easily-readable mouth. Finally the last notes ground into silence. "Use the first one," he ordered.

"But it has too many . . . technical mistakes!" I protested.

"That's true, but there's something even worse about the last tapes."

"Uh . . ." I tried to remember. "Did I mess up the trill at the end?"

His nose wrinkled more than usual and his brows arched downward. "No, Kristin! The last ones were boring! You got tired of playing the same thing so many times, and the audience can always tell when that happens. Above all," his muscles shook, "music can't be boring."

When I finally reach the fifth-floor landing in front of Mr. Jones' apartment for my lesson today, the girl who goes before me is pushing out the door. "Hey!" she shouts, "How's life with you?" Not waiting for a second, she charges on. "Watch out for HIM today. He's in the most rotten mood. He yelled at me non-stop. And look . . ." She holds out a page of a Berg sonata, one that I played last year. It's a tangle of black notes, flung together in dissonant variations on a Bach theme. It's more of a technical etude, not requiring much musical expression. Red pen marks scratch the page painfully, and a corner of the cover is ripped. "It was a fight, let me tell you."

I give the music my best "down the nose" look and reluctantly agree. "Looks awful," I say, and try to sneak towards the door.

"Good luck!" she calls, running down the steps. She and her frenzied monologues are as much a weekly institution for me as the flights of crumbling stairs and the moldy wet-wood smell of Mr. Jones' studio.

When I enter he's sitting in the more comfortable of the two chairs, holding his clarinet in one hand and toying with an old ligature with the other. He's usually running around fixing something, and the stillness makes me queasy. I slouch over to the other chair and open my case, pretending I've forgotten about the School results. "Begin with the Mozart," he commands, and I know he's going to make me suffer through an entire hour lesson before telling me.

I play the notes, but I can't really concentrate. At the end of the second shaky movement, he sighs, exasperated, and I stop. He reaches over to the reed table and unearths a wrinkled piece of stationery, already covered with dust. He shoves it into my hand and looks away. I take a deep breath and read:

Dear Ms. Graham:

We regret to inform you that . . .

I crumple the form letter, viciously destroying its computer-print, and stuff it in my case. I slam the top shut and glare at it for a few seconds. Then I have to ask, "Did any of your other students make it?"

Mr. Jones' mouth jerks uneasily. "Well, that's not really important right now. The main thing is that--"

"No, I really want to know," I interrupt.

"One did, Alicia Adams. Very unexpected. She has a kind of natural talent that I don't see very often. Rarely practices. Do you know her?" I shake my head. "You've probably seen her; she had a lesson earlier this morning." I nod, not really hearing. Then I stand up abruptly, and, stacking my music and picking up my clarinet, I run outside, needing to get away from the mildew-ing odor of failure.

The hot afternoon stings my damp eyes as I stumble out of the building. A girl is sitting on the curb next to a load of books and a clarinet case. As I pass her in a rush, she stands and waves. "Kristin, wait up!" I turn, and it's the girl with the lesson before mine, jogging after me. "How was your lesson?" She looks at me with a little surprise and touches me on the arm. I jerk away. "That bad, huh? Listen, I'm so embarrassed, but I forgot to ask you before I left, and I promised Jenny that I would. We're having a kind of party with all of Mr. Jones' students and we wondered if you could, maybe, come."

"Well, I don't know. I'll have to ask my parents," I tell her, knowing they'll let me.

"That's great! Look, here's my number. Call me sometime before Saturday night." She rips some paper from a page of the

(Continued on Page 11)

# The Tenth Tape

(Continued from Page 10)

Berg sonata and scrawls a phone number in fat, blue handwriting. She sees me eyeing her mutilated music, and laughs, "This isn't my favorite piece either," and for the first time, I think that we might have something in common. "Well, here you go--see you later." As she walks away, I look at her in the light, a nameless face I've always ignored. I notice that she's a little shorter than I and that she has short black hair. I look down at the phone number in my hand:

Alicia A.--253-9457.

HER! I can't believe it's she who beat me. The street seems narrower than usual, the houses dirtier, the air thicker. I run down the street, pushing through the heavy air. At last I come to the subway and descend into the calming darkness.

At home, my mother is waiting for me in the kitchen with lunch. I'm surprised to see her there--she's usually out when I get home. I make my face blank. "Hi," I say casually, and head for my room.

She stops me, understanding why I don't want to talk. "Oh, Kristin!" she says. "I'm so sorry!" Her wide arms go around me, and I stand wrapped in her warmth for a moment. Her floral perfume is as stifling as the wet smell at my lesson, and I pull away, kissing her on one plump cheek.

"I'm tired, Mom. I have to rest a few minutes."

In the morning I take up my clarinet and undo the tiny buckles to open its case. I pick up the first two joints, but the cork that connects them is fat and swollen. It squeaks like an irritated cat when I try to stuff the parts together. After a fight, I manage to jam them into one piece with a big glob of cork grease. Under the accusing eye of Loren Kitt I fit the rest of the instrument together and find my book of scales, dog-eared and minus a cover. I've had it forever--the first pages are smeared with Mr. Jones' explanations of major and minor keys. I've never found scales very exciting, but today each note wants to stand still; the music tastes dead in my mouth.

"Music can't be boring," Stanley Drucker lectures from the wall. Where is Alicia now--is she practicing her scales? Determined, I lift my clarinet, heavy and awkward in my hands, and begin again.

The letter is a black splotch in my thoughts. Mitchell Lurie mocks me, "You'll never be one of us." Frustrated, I stop my g minor halfway through and play a long, hard note, but it can't drive him out of my mind.

Holding my clarinet, I walk over to the mirror. My eyes are red and wet, my hair stringy and brownish. I remember my space on the wall and glance at it for inspiration, but it stares back at me, empty.

When I get out my music the next afternoon, I'm sure that playing will be easier. I skip my scales and start on my solo, but it sounds too much like my tenth tape. Even without an audience I can feel the flatness. I tell myself, "Practice tomorrow"--after all, what's the use of wearing myself out when people like Alicia get by on "natural talent." Zubin Mehta glares at me; ridiculously, I continue.

The next day I put off practicing as long as I can, but finally start late in the evening. I feel stifled in my closed room--it seems smaller, tighter than usual. The air is dense; my breaths are not full enough to bring any life to my playing. At last, throwing the clarinet on the bed, I stomp out.

On the way to my escape, the TV in the basement, I run into my father. "Taking a break?" he asks, a little surprised, since I've been in there less than an hour. But it's a calm question, assuming that I just feel a little tired and will be back with my clarinet in a few minutes. He would be shocked if he knew that, after years of trying to convince him that it was absolutely the

most important thing in my life, I was feeling bored with my clarinet.

"Not really, just stretching," I tell him, and sneak back to my room. All that work, and someone with a little bit of "natural talent" makes me want to quit? I look at my walls. Isn't this where I belong, with music?

The phone saves me and I run, throwing my door open, to get it. "Hello?"

"Oh, hi Kristin. This is Alicia. I hope you don't mind my calling, but the party's soon, and I thought you might've lost my number." I consider slamming the phone down, but decide to be a little more mature. I make an "I'm listening" sound in the back of my throat. "Anyway, can you come?"

"Well, I . . . really don't think my parents will let me," I lie.

"Oh, you've got to convince them!" she yells. "We need you to bring a date, anyway--Mr. Jones only has two male students, and they're both, well . . ."

What will I do Saturday night if I don't go? Sit around trying to practice, knowing that she isn't? "All right, I might be able to persuade my mom," I say reluctantly.

"Great! Wonderful! Listen, it's at 9:30 and bring some cookies or chips or something . . ."

We talk for a while, and finally my mother calls me. I know she's curious, since I usually don't have long phone conversations when I could be practicing. "Kristin! We're having lunch now!" she shouts from the kitchen, and I hang up. I look at the clock beside the phone--I haven't thought about the clarinet for twenty minutes.

"Who was it?" Mom asks. I wonder what to tell her--another clarinet player? the stupid kid who beat me in auditions? a friend?

"Alicia," I say. "Alicia Adams. I'm going to a party at her house on Saturday." She grins, and I know she's thrilled that I'm finally doing something more social than sitting locked in my room with a clarinet.

"That's great, Kristin! What are you going to wear? Should we go out and buy something?" At first, I want to tell her no, this party doesn't mean anything to me. But maybe if I look a little different, I'll feel different.

"Okay," I say, "sure." She rushes to collect our coats before I can change my mind, and we wave goodbye to my father.

Home again, I go right to my room. Without my clarinet and music, my arms feel light; without my heavy long hair, my head is buoyant. I stare at myself in the mirror: I look so different. Then I have an idea.

I leave and come in again, pretending I've never seen this room before. I look at the posters hanging over every scrap of wall except one. Zubin Mehta, Mitchell Lurie, Drucker, all are the most successful musicians, child prodigies grown up into still-amazing adults. Mr. Jones in his shaggy little room has no place here. I remember my own imagined "poster" on the spot of blank wall. With my hacked-off hair, I'll never look like that. I wonder if I can ever be musically what I'd hoped to. The faces stare down at me like a group of perfect Alicias. "You'll never be a Stanley Drucker," Mr. Jones told me. Maybe, after all, it's true.

I look again at my white space. Could Alicia ever fit there? She looks even less like a "portrait of blond elegance" than I do. But maybe Alicia doesn't need a place on a wall--maybe her talent is enough.

My clarinets now rest in a corner, waiting for me to find the time to play them. I leave the space on my wall, smooth and clean. My mother still jokes that it's waiting for a picture of me. "Doing what?" I ask her.

"Oh, I don't know," she answers. "Anything."

Anne Gowen  
Vienna, VA  
Mrs. Bernis von zur Muehlen



Meredith Golomb  
McLean, VA

## Final Scenes

The wanderer with canvas skin  
and war-torn sandals circulates,  
burdened with a sign  
that reads, legalize Hubris.  
His brow is blood-smeared  
and the eyes below are lifeless caverns.  
(This is not the end.)

The barbarian, naked and grinning,  
carries his sandbag muscles about.  
He wears a loincloth of human flesh  
and polishes his sword with the King's shroud.  
What doesn't kill me,  
he growls, makes me stronger.  
(This is not the end.)

The mother clutches her infant  
to her swelling bosom and smiles proudly.  
The babe, yellowed and stiff,  
has long since suffocated in its blue blanket.  
That's a beauty baby boy,  
she croons, baby beauty.  
(This is not the end.)

The young punk with his deadman's boots and  
mutilated hair  
is screaming obscenities into  
a disconnected microphone.  
godbitchhellldamncrapassbastards  
He has cheated himself  
out of his inheritance.  
(This is not the end.)

The trader rings his golden bell, tingles  
it hypnotically above his throaty call.  
Nickles for a dime, the trader  
shouts, dimes for a quarter.  
The quarters he will sell for a dollar,  
and for the dollars he sells his soul.  
(This is not the end.)

The pimp is smiling wide, to better floss his teeth.  
His girl is dressed in a nun's habit this time.  
you got something i want, the pair chorus,  
i got something you need.  
They barter themselves with each  
other. It is an even trade.  
(This is not the end.)

Four wolves devour the general's corpse.  
His last words: Dulce et decorum est  
pro patria mori.  
Blood pools thickly around him;  
now he is an island.  
His rigid hand grips four slack leashes.  
(This is not the end.)

The thief has reformed. There is nothing worth  
stealing and no way to hold on to it anyway.  
Now he is an escape-artist in the circus.  
They haven't built the lie  
that can hold me yet, he boasts,  
safe behind the bars of  
his latest imaginary cell.  
(This is not the end.)

The joker is in fits, cackling and howling  
and rolling about gasping for breath.  
It's all a joke, he says,  
I'm dying of laughter,  
and the hollow echoes of his laughter  
just make him laugh all the more.  
(This is not the end.)

The witness sits silently,  
covering his head to  
hear/speak/see  
no evil, while inside,  
he whispers his lies  
like mantras.  
This, I tell myself,  
is not the end. This  
is not the end. This  
is not the end. This  
is not  
this is  
this  
not this  
is not

Behrouz Montakhab  
Potomac, MD  
Ms. Pfeiffer



Joshua Preven  
Larchmont, NY

## Kate, Spinning

Kate's long-boned hands were sticky with melted ice cream. She wiped her fingers on her apron. The apron was light green, with white lettering which read "The Creamery." The green apron strings flapped untied about her waist; Kate hated knots.

"I'm so bored," Lisa groaned from the cash register. "Nobody's been in here since all those people came in around seven."

"Yeah," Kate said, cramped behind the counter. She drummed her fingers on the formica and stared at her ragged cuticles. Her eyes were brown and fierce, ringed with eyeliner, the only makeup she ever wore.

Kate rattled the ladle in the half-empty tub of strawberry syrup. She scooped out a ladleful and twirled it over the countertop, watching the trickle of pink drips.

She slipped the ladle back into the tub and sprang out from behind the counter, her long angular body uncoiling. She flung herself down into one of the swivel chairs and kicked off her tennis shoes. "I'm violating the employee dress code," she thought. Her pale mouth quirked into a narrow smile.

Pushing at the floor with one bare foot, Kate began to spin round in the chair, red-brown ponytail flying out behind her. Her pointed face flushed pink, and her eyes glittered at the chair squawked in protest. She spun faster and faster, until the counter and the cash register and Lisa's bewildered face all melted together into a blur of light. She heard Lisa's shriek: "Kate, you're gonna fall!" and she was in mid-air, her head pounding with dizzying joy. The light cracked into sparks of purple and orange.

As her vision cleared, she stared, disoriented, at a huge expanse of pastel green. Then she realized that she was lying sprawled on her back, looking up at the Creamery ceiling. "Never noticed it was green before," she thought. "How gross."

Lisa, short round Lisa, seemed towering, a monolith of apron with a pink-cheeked face. "Oh my gawd," she murmured, her mouth a round O of surprise. "Are you o.k.? I can't believe you did that!"

"I didn't plan on falling off," Kate said, easing herself up on a bruised elbow. Wincing, she reached up to feel the swelling lump where the back of her skull had hit the tile floor.

The glass-paned door banged open, and Rich hurtled into the shop. "Of course," Kate thought. "It's nearly nine. He's come to close up, and now I'll get it." Lisa, who had been hovering solicitously over Kate like a worried partridge, darted behind the counter, apron flapping.

Rich looked over at Kate. "What the hell are you doing on the floor?" he snapped.

"She fell off that swivel chair," Lisa said from the cash register.

"What . . . ? You hit your head." He squatted down beside Kate and looked over with bleary eyes. Kate could imagine his thoughts: "Headlines in the Medford Observer: Ice-Cream Parlor Employee Sues Boss over Swivel Chair Slip-Up." He ran his fingers through his floppy sandy hair then rose to his feet. "You o.k.? You want to go to Emergency or something?"

"No, I'm all right," Kate said and stood up. She twisted the strings on her Creamery apron, waiting for what would come next.

Lisa cleared her throat. "Umm. Rich, can I leave now?"

"Yeah, sure," he mumbled. Lisa pulled on her rainslicker and started for the door, then turned back toward Kate. "Katie, if I were you, I'd put some ice on that bump. You just take a couple of cubes and wrap them up in a washcloth or maybe a dishrag and--"

"I know, o.k.?" Kate said from behind clenched teeth. Lisa scurried out the door.

Rich slid his squarish body down onto one of the fake wrought-iron chairs. He lit a cigarette. "How'd it happen, you falling off that chair?"

Kate leaned back against the counter and crossed her bony arms on her chest. "I was spinning around in it." She smiled to herself, remembering.

Rich tapped his cigarette on the edge of the ashtray. "Now, let me get this straight. You were spinning around in one of those chairs--" he motioned toward the counter with his cigarette--"like a six-year-old kid?"

"You've got it," Kate said. She pushed a wisp of hair from her eyes and gazed out the window. Once, when she was six, she and her friend Jeff had held hands and spun in circles round her back yard until they collapsed on the grass, shaking with laughter. Then Kate had thrown up in her mother's nasturtium bed.

"I always get caught," she thought. There had been her two and a half years at Boston University, which ended when she spraypainted "The world is round. It turns me on." all over the grimy brick front of her dorm. The spraypaint had been glorious--blazing pink--but the Dean hadn't understood. No one ever did. In the four months since she'd left B.U., she'd gone through three jobs. "Looks like this might be my fourth," she thought, and rubbed her sore elbow.

Rich reached over and gave the swivel chair a tentative push. "Still works," he said. "You know, you could have broken this, and these things cost thirty bucks apiece."

Kate nodded.

"You've been real cute lately," he continued. "First that argument with a customer and now this."

Kate opened her mouth to protest. "I don't want to hear it," he said. "I'm going to give you--an ultimatum." He savored the word. "One more problem from you and you're out of this store." He pulled himself up from the table. "O.k. Closing time. Bye."

The Creamery door clicked shut behind Kate. It was a grey-black rainy night. Kate looked up at the illuminated clock on top of the courthouse. It was only 9:08. "The world spins too slow," she thought.

She started down the wet sidewalk, then paused to wrap her long red scarf about her throat. She looked back toward The Creamery's front window. Rich had shut off all the lights except the thin fluorescent one above the counter. He stood in the pale glow, then clambered onto one of the swivel chairs. He kicked at the floor, and slowly, began to spin round and round.

Catherine Sweeney  
Carlisle, PA

## Night Songs

Everything is very still now.  
The world is about to be  
swallowed up  
by the giant o-gape of the moon.  
She is a woman like me.  
She is whispering secrets into the night.  
They are all evil and lined with silver.

I asked if you could spare  
just one small seed.  
I needed to fill up this hollowness  
before she could get in and rot me out.  
I needed to fill it with  
flowers that would grow.  
But the seed you gave me was black and brittle  
It went away in a month of blood  
And I am still quite empty.

If I could sum myself up in parts,  
I would sell them each to you for a dollar.  
Reassemble them into a sticky mess.  
I am a violet rose now.  
My petals are folding to hide the secret  
that won't stop whispering.  
Whispering night songs  
into your mouth.

Our lips touch like two delicate flowers  
afraid of crushing the other.  
I said I never wanted to love you, not without me  
The moon is gaping  
Large white o's are filling our sky.

Erin G. Barrett  
Clarkstown High School North  
New City, NY  
Mr. William David Swift

## Learning

I'm learning  
To be an amoeba.  
Nature's compromise between  
a solid and a liquid.  
Pseudopods pour out into  
Emptiness to take no shape.  
Binary fission toys  
with the mind.  
I split, and two sides see  
What the other one  
Should. Confusion sets in.  
Division again,  
And all four  
Think as the first. I choose  
Not to think, and I  
Flow about in search  
Of food.  
It's hard,  
But I'm trying to be an amoeba.

Lori Brudner  
Long Beach, NY  
Frances Goldwater

## Dusk in the Country

An everlasting sea of flattened cola cans  
swallows the floor around the chair.  
The place where he has sat  
twenty years.  
The station is his house  
all grease and old candy  
bars rotting in a window.  
He waits for his sign  
"Last Chance for Gas for 88 Miles"  
to grab a lonely driver.  
The road bears nothing  
but chopped cornstalks  
--dirty upturned daggers  
slicing at the stagnant air.  
"I was a lumberjack in Anchorage"  
he coughs another lie  
and drools from his splintered lips.  
No one knows talent  
like a gas station man  
one who has watched it all his life.  
He raises his arm again  
towards the heavens for a second  
then brings it whipping down  
eager to squash a passing moth.

The wind is finally rushing in  
shifting to the east  
shaking a loose memo across the desk.  
He stands and walks  
trembling lightly in the new cold  
slowly chased  
by troubled ghosts.

Leigh Cheng  
Potomac, MD  
Ms. Pfeiffer

## Farmer

How many years  
have you weathered,  
Mister?

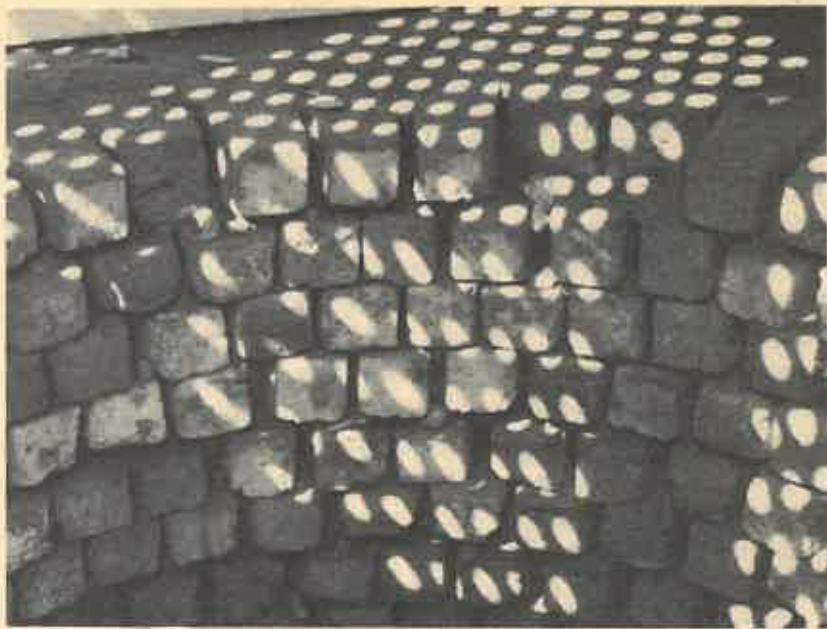
How many times  
have your bleak eyes  
glared back at the land?

Your plow has carved  
the ashen soil.  
The wind has etched  
your grizzled jaw.

Your hands  
hold the toughened scars  
of the dead harvest.

How far down  
does the gray reach?

Heather Clague  
Silver Spring, MD  
Springbrook High school  
Ms. Mary Lee Ruddle



Danielle Michaelis  
Burke, VA

## Masking Happy

My cousin Rob and I grew up together on family weekends and holidays. We were the older kids, with three years between us and Christian, his little brother. (Other cousins were too young to be anything but bothersome so Rob and I ignored them.) When holiday dinners came around, the parents would set us up at a folding card table in the den. Rob would drape a napkin over his arm and play waiter to my "very rich woman." I would giggle that the milk was not quite the correct year and send back, at least twice, the fancy dinners of caviar (and any other rich food that we could think of) as being too cold, before we finally settled down to pick at our own cold plates of turkey or ham, depending on which holiday it was.

On our eleventh Christmas, Mom gave us a candle to dress our table and we conjured ghosts by dripping their initials in wax on our plates and chanting the vowels. Later, we fed our dinners to the dog and made bowls of ice cream soup until our fingers were brown and sticky. As the night drew on, I taught Rob poker, although I didn't know how to play. We bet with a box of after-dinner mints that we had stolen earlier in the evening. I won, but lost, getting sick all over the front of my party dress just seconds before a worried Rob could rush downstairs for a grown-up.

When we were twelve, the parents considered us big kids, old enough to sit at the grown-up table. I sat between Aunt Mary, who always give me socks for Christmas, and Grandma, who insisted that I put "a little bit of everything" on my plate and then nagged at me until I had eaten it all. Rob was a million miles away across the table. He sat between my dad, who told funny stories, and Uncle Harry, who smelled great and always carried silver dollars in his coat pockets for us to find. Rob got three during dinner. I felt sick.

Parents are dull and dinner lasted forever. I asked to leave the table, but Rob wanted dessert so we waited another half hour. Grandma didn't want to have to tell me again not to put my elbows on the table. She made a mean face when I said I didn't want her to have to tell me either.

Finally, we left and went to the T.V. room to play video games. I asked Rob to sneak into the dining room and steal the after-dinner mints. He said that he didn't like after-dinner mints any more. I asked him to build a pillow fort upstairs but he said that was silly. I asked him to thumb wrestle and he said that he had a girl friend now and he didn't think he should touch my hand.

I pretended to play video games by myself for two hours that night. Rob called his girlfriend on the phone and listened to the parents talk as they drank coffee and sweet liqueurs.

I dread holidays now. My relatives press on me for answers to polite college-type questions. Uncle Harry doesn't carry silver dollars any more, and no matter how drastically the place-set-

tings change, I am always next to Grandma. Rob doesn't come much any more. Relatives say he has lost his family sense. I'm glad. It gets too awkward seeing him and masking happy, playing polite, pretending that I have forgiven him for growing up first.

Jenifer Toomey  
Chevy Chase, MD  
Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School  
Mrs. Marilyn Alberts

## How Life Imitates the Late Late Show

saw a great movie on TV the other month.

They hardly ever show my kind of movie any more; I have to stay up late to catch one. I like the old stuff, from the black and white era. Crackly and muffled, late at night--what an atmosphere. This one movie was an old 40's gangster flick, a wonderful period piece. All the men wore fedoras. All the women had that indescribable 40's sound, that nasal voice that lives only on celluloid. Every last creature on that set smoked; probably the dog smoked too. The movie started at 12 or so, and I hooked on a few minutes into the story. Guy in a bar, maybe in Mexico, voicing off about something-or-other. Lady walks in. Nowadays of course they'd get together right away, but this director I guess knew something of dramatic tension--she spurns the guy for a good twenty minutes, through four or five scenes. Then they get together. Someone gets shot.

I was thinking, while watching this movie, that I didn't really understand it a whole lot. Someone in a dark suit would say something quietly, and all the guys would turn slowly--clearly this is something significant, but what exactly he means I can't quite tell. But then a word, a look, and I think I understand, think I've figured out the story--and the ending. But I'm wrong.

I've felt that way before. Every once in a while I'm struck by one hell of a revelation, and life makes a little more sense for a while. During a band concert in the 7th grade, it occurred to me that every one of those four billion souls out there is the center of its own huge universe, just as I'm the center of my life's whole experience. To the Pakistani barber, his life is far more real than mine. He is just as important to himself as I am to me. At the time this seemed very, very significant, somehow. Soon, I came to take it for granted, and now it seems childishly obvious. My life is a series of these insights, which gradually fade into patent and given truths, or naive idealisms. I think I've finally realized human nature, or the right priorities--but I never have. Until the next zinger comes along.

But boy, a lot happens in between, just like in that movie. My own crackly and muffled dramas, some great atmospheres. A lot I don't understand. I never did figure out why they killed the guy in the end. But it was a great movie.

PERTINENT QUOTATION: "I have done the best I could through many years to search for truth. Sometimes I have thought I had a gleam of truth; sometimes I felt that I had in my hands the truth, a truth that could not be disputed, but that would be true forever. Sometimes I thought I had found it; and then again I thought I had lost it; and the truth I so fondly held in my hands was only an empty dream, and not the truth at all; and I have searched again and again, and here I find it and there I lose it; and I expect it will be this way until the end. It is not given to man to be sure of the truth."

- Clarence Darrow

Robert Isaacs  
Lutherville, MD  
Mrs. C. Helfrich

## I'm Terry not Kate

The clock had stopped. That would be a good excuse for being an hour late. No! My parents wouldn't believe that. It wasn't true, of course. I'm not sure why I was late. The party was boring. I didn't know anyone. I didn't meet anyone, but I stayed until 1:00 A.M. anyway. I went into the family room to explain about the clock having stopped but I never got a chance.

My dad asked me if I had had a good time and then went up to bed before I could answer him. My mother, meanwhile, launched into a tirade, but it wasn't over my lateness.

"Your sister is so dumb! She has no self-respect. She has to see him every night, not just on weekends. Nothing in moderation! Always overdo!"

She was talking about my eighteen year-old sister Kate and her boyfriend Tim. Kate was a secretary and Tim was a bartender. My mother couldn't stand him. "Mom, it is the weekend. Everyone's allowed to go out on Friday night."

"Teresa, why do you always defend her? If I want to be angry with her, it's my business. She's a good-for-nothing!"

Why did I defend my older sister? She was an idiot. Tim was scum. I don't even like them. I can't stand even hearing about them. I mean, I love Kate and all that. She is my sister, but she's a boring topic of conversation.

My mother was still going on and on about my wayward sister. I wanted to leave but I didn't know how. I couldn't walk out on my mom while she was talking. I really didn't want to hear any more about Kate. I don't think I would have minded except that Mom was yelling at me for what Kate did. I could have handled it if it had been for something I had done.

"Mom, I'm sorry I came home so late, but the clock in the car stopped. It won't happen again. I swear."

"You're so late? Kate still isn't home! Can you believe it? Where could she be? What will people think of a girl who stays out so late? . . ."

"Good night, Mom."

She nodded at me in dismissal and continued to ramble on about Kate.

I was lying awake in bed when Kate finally came into our room.

"Terry, you awake?"

"Yeah! What happened when you got home?"

"Nothing. I just talked to Mom about my date with Tim for a while."

"You didn't get in trouble?"

"Well, yeah, I did. Mom was upset as usual. She said to come home earlier next time. That's all. I told her I had a terrible headache, so she felt sorry for me. She actually went to get me some aspirin . . . Oh, how was your party?"

"Fine."

About ten minutes later, Mom came in to give Kate her aspirin. She wasn't the least bit angry at her. She was worried about Kate because of a headache that she didn't have. I said good-night as she was leaving the room.

"Goodnight, Kate."

"It was me, Mom, Terry."

"Oh, Terry, go to sleep. It's very late."

Kate was already at work when I woke up the next morning. My father was working in his garden. Gardening was his big hobby. I decided to go outside to talk to him.

"Hi Dad! How's it goin'?"

"Fine."

"I'm sorry I was late last night . . ."

"It's okay, but your sister had your mother worried sick. You should have a talk with her and tell her how much she upsets us. Out with that boy 'til such an hour. I wish she could think of her mother's feelings every once in a while."

"Yeah. Well, uh, I won't be late again, Dad."

"Good. What d'ya think of my roses, Kate?"

"I'm Terry not Kate, Dad. The roses look great."

I found my mom in the kitchen. She was reading the newspaper and drinking a cup of coffee. When she saw me enter the room, she put down the newspaper and started talking about her favorite topic. Actually, it's her only topic of conversation. Dad, Kate, and I are all Mom has in life. I guess that's why she worries about Kate so much, and me too.

"Can you believe that Kate almost called in sick to work this morning? Her boss never asks her to go in on Saturdays. You would think she could sacrifice just once! She has no sense of responsibility. She's lucky she even has a job. After all, she didn't want to go to college like we all had hoped."

Dad was right. I had to think of Mom's feelings. I decided to give her some good news instead of problems. Kate causes her enough trouble and grief.

"Mom, guess what?"

"What?"

"Remember how I tried out for the school play? Well, yesterday, they announced the cast in school, and I got a lead!"

"Good. What play is it?"

"I told you when I tried out, Merchant of Venice. You know, Shakespeare."

"Terry, I'm sorry if I can't remember every detail of your life."

A few minutes later, Kate came home and went running into the kitchen to talk to Mom. She was home earlier than we had expected.

"Mom, guess why I had to go to work today? I was promoted!!!"

"Kate! That's wonderful!"

"It's nothing big but I get a raise."

"Great! See, you got this because you're such a hard worker! Tell me exactly what your boss said. Every detail."

"Well, first we went into his office . . ."

I left the kitchen and walked upstairs to my bedroom. I could hear their excited voices through the shut door. I turned my stereo up as loud as it could go and climbed back in bed.

Monica Polino

Union, NJ

Mrs. Harriet Marcus

## A Winter Talk Remembered

*We do not gesture  
with our hands when we talk. We do not dare.  
I sit on the cot's hard edge,  
exposed.  
You are spun in blankets, a cocoon in a cradle.  
Your hands are in the blankets'  
hot silken breath.  
Mine are brittle, ice skeletons  
between my knees.  
We do not dare to gesture  
when we talk.  
Your words have shape,  
the blur of rain  
frozen on window glass.  
My words are  
forever little empty sounds  
like the elderly make  
when they are infants in their minds.  
I am on the hard edge, wishing I could lean back  
and slide down the slope to the soft center.  
But when we talk,  
I do not dare.*

Michael King Dorr

Newton, MA

Mr. Connolly



# Swim!

I dive into the pool, and I am suddenly enclosed by the density of the water. It has encased my body and I cannot move. I cannot breathe. The others in the pool seem swollen as they drift slowly through the water. A small boy floats by, while behind me, another is upside down. His body bobs with the waves of the pool. My chest begins to ache. I open my mouth, and it quickly fills with water. My left foot finds the bottom. I stand up, the surface shattering as my head emerges. After a gulp of air, I scan the pool to orient myself. Everyone is split in half, their chests separate from their legs. I jump from the pool and run toward the locker room. A voice says, "Get back into that water!" A massive body rumbles towards me casting a shadow over me. I turn and run back to the side of the pool. The people are still separated. I turn and am again engulfed in his shadow. I climb slowly back into the water. When I look at the surface, my legs stand next to me. I grope beneath the surface and find my body still intact. Even though I feel whole, my legs are not below my waist. I want to get out. The shadow guards the ladder. My legs aren't here. "Swim some laps," the voice bellows. I retreat underwater to escape the sound. Bloated faces with bugged-out eyes pass by. They all stare at me. I can't breathe. I can't leave the protection of the water. There is too much pain. I come up, surrounded by sound. "Swim some laps or you can't go home!" the voice screams above the slish slosh of the other swimmers. I push off the bottom and swim toward the deep end. My muscles ache. My arms won't stroke. My legs won't kick. I have no help and no hope. I float into darkness. Alone. I sit up straight. Sweat runs down my cheek onto my neck and is instantly absorbed by my pajama top. My heart is bursting. Even though it's dark, I am safe. I glance over to the far wall: 4:59.

The Ramones broke the silence with "Blitzkrieg Bop." I knew it was the beginning of the song because they were repeating the phrase, "Hey, Ho, Let's Go!" Since I really didn't want to go anywhere but back to sleep, I reached over and slapped the top of my clock radio. I was successful on the third try. The music faded as I floated into sleep.

The room filled with light. I pulled up my covers and rolled over to escape it. Two swift tugs released the blanket from my grasp and exposed me to the full effects of the 60 watt bulb.

"Get up!" my mother yelled. "We're already fifteen minutes late. You know it's your fault you aren't improving. You're lazy and your attitude stinks. Get up!"

I sat up slowly and said, "All right, all right, just give me a couple of minutes."

She left my room grumbling. "That kid's never going to be a good swimmer. I used to look forward to morning practice."

"Why do I get up at five to go swimming every day? It's so stupid. I lose sleep just so I can experience new heights in pain, and then be told I can't do anything right." I already knew the answer. My parents both loved swimming and had decided that I would like it too. I pulled on my sweat pants, grabbed my swim gear, and headed for the kitchen.

My mother was making something that looked like scrambled eggs. "Do you want some?"

"No, thanks," I replied as I reached for the box of Crunch Berries that was sitting alone on the counter. I was only half way done when she grabbed my arm and pulled me off my chair.

"We have to leave now or you'll be late," she said with a smile. I didn't care—I didn't want to go at all. Her opera music filled the car. I tried to cover my head with my towel, but it was no protection. Luckily, it was only ten minutes to the pool.

"Work out hard and listen to your coach!" she yelled as I walked into the locker room. The air in the pool area was freezing. My mom used to tell me all about her winter swim practices in the outdoor pool. She said her hair would freeze on the way to the locker room. I didn't know Florida got that cold in the winter. I glanced at the surface of the water stained with the yellow, orange, and purple of the sunrise. Occasionally, the image

would become wavy, the colors seeming to melt together. Then the surface would solidify restoring the image. I did not want to get in. I knew my dive would replace the sunrise with a cloud of bubbles. The stench of chlorine permeated the room.

"Get in the pool!" the coach barked. We dove in, the water exploding with the barrage of bodies.

Geez, the water's colder than usual. What am I doing here? Flip. I'm already tired. This is going to be a great practice. Flip. Streamline on those turns so Coach doesn't yell at you. Flip. He's sadistic. He loves it when I'm exhausted. Flip. "I just wanna be a good boy. I don't wanna be bad." Flip. This sport is pointless. Who cares if I'm fast. Flip. Your obsessed parents and your heartless coach. Flip. Damn! Way to miss the wall. Hope nobody saw that. Flip. Gosh, my muscles feel good. I just love pain. Flip. "No pain no gain." Who thought up that one? Flip. I wish I was playing my trumpet. Flip. Six more laps after this one. Flip. Six more laps! I'm never gonna make it. Flip. Five. Swimmers are stupid. Flip. Let's see how bad we can hurt ourselves. Flip. Hundred to go. People would be clapping if I was playing my trumpet. Flip. No they wouldn't, it's only six o'clock. Flip. Two more laps! Will he make it? Flip. I hate swimming, hate swimming, hate swimming hate swimming Hate swimming HATESWIMMING...Done!

The coach slid out of his deck chair and walked toward me. He was holding a cup of coffee in one hand and an apple danish in the other. His shoes were well ventilated by several strategically placed holes. I asked him why he wore those shoes to a pool.

"With my salary, K-mart blue-light specials are all I can afford."

"Aren't we funny this morning," I replied.

He had that sadistic look in his eyes when he said, "Ok, I want you to do a set of ten, 200 freestyles pull, on the 2:15."

I illustrated my disapproval by purposely splashing him with my pull-buoy as I put it between my legs. "Stupid, jerk!" I mumbled under my breath. I swam to the other end and did a slow turn to mock him. At the end of the set, I jumped from the water and ran toward the locker room.

I marched into the house, slamming the door behind me. The jingle of my dog's collar replaced the silence. She stumbled into the room and glared at me for interrupting her nap. I walked to where she was standing and tried to feed her my chemistry test. She must have seen the grade because she turned and pranced back to her bed. I went into the kitchen, poured myself a Coke, and sat at the table. Morning workout was the pits. My shoulders were still sore from the stupid swim set. Since my parents both work on Wednesdays, I decided to skip swim practice. I knew Mr. Kmart at the pool wouldn't miss me, and my parents wouldn't be home until after six. It was almost impossible to get caught. I jogged upstairs, set up my music stand, and pulled out my trumpet. It had never been shiny like the ones in the parades. I ran my fingers over the three dents and thought about my parents. When it came to swim suits or sweats, they always bought me the best. They bought my trumpet at a garage sale. I always dreamed about owning a new one. I envisioned myself pulling it out of the case, the sunshine radiating from every piece. My parents would buy me sixteen swim suits before they would buy me a new trumpet. I began to practice. The sound was as clear as the glassy surface of the water.

"What are you doing here? You're supposed to be at swim practice!"

"Mom! What are you doing home so early?"

"That doesn't matter," she hissed, "you better have a good reason for being here. Why are you practicing that stupid trumpet?"

"It's not a stupid trumpet!" I yelled, "I didn't go to practice because I needed to practice for the band competition this weekend."

"You are not going to any band competition this weekend. You have a swim meet this weekend."

(Continued on Page 18)

(Continued from Page 17)

Glaring at her, I replied calmly, "I don't want to swim in the meet. I want to play my trumpet."

"I don't care what you want. Your father and I have invited all of our friends to watch you. You are swimming in the meet and that's final!"

"So my feelings don't count?"

"Don't talk back to me! You may just find yourself without a trumpet."

I looked down at the ground trying to control my anger. I wanted to throw my trumpet at her and tell her where to put it. It is almost impossible to win an argument with your parents. Regardless of how rational you are, they always pull rank and force you to surrender. I heard my mom talking to my dad on the phone. Now I knew I was really going to get it. My dad was my mother's henchman. He supported my family and enforced my mother's rules. He was a big man, about 6'1" and 215 lbs. He still swam every day after work. I never felt comfortable around him, probably because he was in charge of the punishment. Since there was nothing I could do about my future, I closed my door and finished practicing. "Taps" was the last song I played. I dedicated it to all children who have fallen to the tyranny of their parents. I remained in the protection of my room for the rest of the night.

I awoke to my dad's voice Saturday morning. I opened my eyes and saw him standing in the doorway. He smiled and said, "Get up, Son. We've got your breakfast made."

I didn't answer him. He was much nicer now than he had been during the week.

"Are you psyched yet?" he asked.

I shrugged and didn't look at him. My lack of response angered him. He turned around, threw his hands in the air, and went downstairs.

We arrived at the pool early as usual. In fact, I was the first person there aside from the officials. The coach showed up about ten minutes later with his coffee and apple danish.

When he saw me, he yelled, "David, good to see you! Get in and warm-up!"

"I'm going to wait for some more people to come."

Unfortunately, my father had just walked into the pool area. The coach barked, "Get in now!"

I pulled off my sweat suit and threw it down. The concrete was cold. The water shimmered under the lights. The diving boards at the deep end loomed above the surface. I thought about the band and the fun I would be having on the bus. These thoughts just made me angrier. I hit the wall harder on every flip-turn. My feet began to hurt, but I didn't care. If my parents didn't care about my feelings, why should I?

My first event was about forty-five minutes after warm-up. I thought about my parents the entire race, feeling their eyes on me. When I touched the wall, I found that I had finished last. My time was three seconds slower than my best. The 100 fly was worse. I was disqualified for doing an illegal turn. My parents were so angry they didn't say a word. As soon as we got home, they stormed into the house. I went to the back of the car, opened the trunk, and pulled out my swim bag. As soon as I walked into the house, they descended upon me. Their eyes were indifferent and as cold as the pool water.

My father spoke, "What you did today was inexcusable! You embarrassed both your mother and me. We don't tolerate losers in this family. I never swam as bad as you did today. Disqualified for a one handed touch. You're a disgrace."

"What about me? What about my feelings? Do you think I messed up on purpose?"

"Certainly looked that way," my mom mumbled. She raised her voice, "All you care about is that stupid trumpet. I think you messed up on purpose, just to get back at us for not letting you go to that band competition. I'll never forgive you for this."

I turned and ran from the room. "I quit!" I slammed my door and threw myself onto my bed. I hated them. They never understood what I was going through. All they cared about was their reputation. I wanted to tell them to live their own lives, not mine. I lay on my bed, my muscles aching. The room became darker.

The Ramones were on the radio again. This time it was "I Don't Care." I looked at the clock. 5:00 jumped at me from the far wall. My mom walked in, and I rolled over. We hadn't talked since the fight on Saturday.

"Wake up, David," she whispered.

"I didn't move."

"We're sorry, Son. We had no right to yell at you like that. We'll never do it again. We just want you to be happy."

I couldn't believe it. "You really mean it, Mom?"

"Of course I do."

I was so excited. Maybe there was hope for them yet. They had never apologized to me before. I reached up and hugged her.

She said, "I love you, honey."

"I love you, too, Mom, and thanks!" I released my grip and rolled over.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"Going back to sleep," I answered.

"No you're not. You have to get up and go to swim practice. We know you can make us proud. We explained to everyone that you didn't feel well. You'll get 'em next meet, right?"

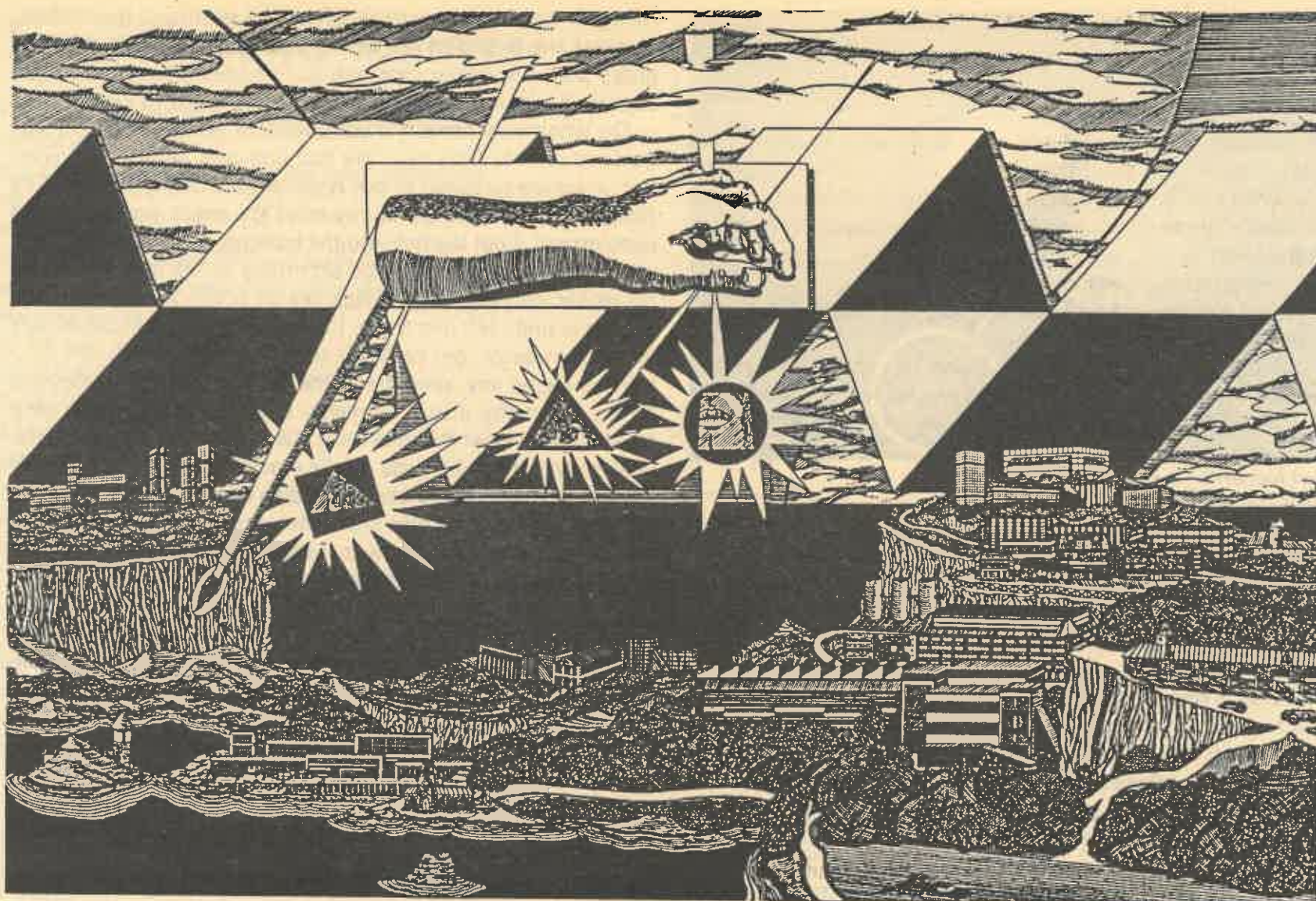
I couldn't believe it. "Yeah, Mom, I'll get them next meet." After she left, I pounded my pillow until the feathers came out. "You will never change!" There was no reply. The radio played "Cryin' Over You" by Platinum Blonde as I stared at the far wall.

Brian Funk  
Vienna, VA  
Mrs. Bernis Von Zur Muehlen

## The Storm

The ocean rolled  
Ever forward  
Like a nightmare returning  
To haunt  
Again and again.  
The sky was thick  
And thunder rolled  
In deep-throated warning.  
A dead fish lay belly-up  
And seagulls plunged  
Towards it  
Like children playing  
"Kick the Can."  
The wind's puffed-out cheeks  
Blew huge gusts  
And the water  
Rippled in fright.  
A lightning bolt  
Cracked the horizon  
In two pieces  
As if someone  
From above  
Was reaching out an  
Electrical, arthritic finger  
And pointing at something  
Below.

Margie Robinson  
Berwyn, PA  
Mrs. Nancy Rosenberger



Ray Sahakian  
Kiskiminetas Springs School  
James Nagle

## Untitled

The church was already overflowing with people, who talked in muffled whispers. Twenty stained-glass windows, ten at opposite walls, hung wide open. Through their gaping mouths poured humid, sticky sunlight and gusts of scorching hot air. Beads of sweat formed at Gina's forehead, dampening her stringy, straw-colored bangs.

She had noticed a girl in a wheelchair near the pews when she had first walked in with her mother. Gina hadn't meant to stare, but she couldn't resist.

The girl was about Gina's age (fifteen), perhaps even a little older. She was large and flabby. Her stomach was dented inward because of the constricting strap which bound her to the chair. Two stubby black ponytails were held tightly with elastic bands and fixed on either side of her head. Her full face was ghost-white. Small blue eyes peered curiously from shadowy, slanted eye sockets.

The gray-haired priest strode in briskly. He rang a gold set of bells which brought the church to order.

Everyone rose to their feet. The girl attempted to get up also. When she could not, she kicked her feet, banging her legs furiously.

"Da...da," she spoke, grasping her father's hand. She bounced in her chair, making wailing sounds in her throat which sounded shockingly similar to that of an infant.

"As you all know, tomorrow is Mother's Day. Motherhood is a very special and sacred thing . . ." The priest's faraway voice droned in Gina's ears.

"Ma...ma," the girl in the wheelchair whined to the small, stiff woman who stood next to the girl's father. The woman turned to her daughter, who smiled broadly. The woman quickly averted her eyes and turned sharply away. Gina winced.

"And we all know of the hardship and suffering that mothers

endure for their children . . ." Gina felt her mother reach over and grasp her hand. Gina squirmed uncomfortably. Squeeze her hand, she thought to herself, but she couldn't do it.

Her mother's arm withdrew. Oh mommy, she thought, I love you! I love you so much . . . you know that, mommy, don't you? I wish so badly that I could tell you that . . . The words gathered in her throat, forming a lump which she could not swallow.

The girl in the wheelchair seemed unaffected by the mother's rejection of her. Her ruddy face had sombered for an instant, then giggled happily, clasping her hands together.

Mommy, mommy, Gina thought. Do you love me? Why does intense hate often glow from your eyes? Sometimes, mommy, I wish that you would hug me tightly against you, so I can feel your skin against mine, and maybe I'd feel a little less confused, a little less frightened of everything around me. Why must I embrace pillows, wishing love would leak out of them . . . Oh, mommy, can't you hear me crying, don't you hear my voice . . . I love you mommy, Gina's thoughts screaming in her head. I don't love anyone but you.

Gina watched as the girl thrust her head back, flailing her arms. The father smiled, and put his arms around the girl's shoulders. He whispered in her ear and kissed her cheek. She squealed with delight.

I remember when I was like you, Gina thought to the girl. I didn't know about Hitler then, or nuclear bombs. I didn't know I was going to die.

Oh, it's all right, mommy. 'Cause someday I'll tell you I love you . . . and someday all those bombs will disappear . . . someday those dead Jewish children will find the lives they lost . . .

This is futile, Gina thought. This is futile. The dark-haired girl sat squirming in her wheelchair. Gina looked at her, feeling a sudden surge of envy rise from deep within.

Susan Nicastro  
Lanoka Harbor, NJ  
Robert Ranta



Ben Manevitz  
Fairfield, NJ

## The Fish From Woolworth's

It was a rainy afternoon last year, very much like this one, and I was feeling very whimsical. That's the only explanation I can give for my behavior that day. We had parked the car in Woolworth's parking lot on the way home from the store and gone in. My mom gets into those discount places. I'm not sure if it's the aroma of decaying merchandise or the bargain prices on such daily necessities as magnets and shoe polish that attracts her, but she keeps going back. Normally, I don't subject myself to those places and refuse to go into them. On this particular day, I would have waited in the car, but, as I said, it was raining pretty hard and I had to choose between bag ladies or lightning. The lesser of two evils, so to speak.

My mother has often accused me of being a snob. This incident was no different. She noticed my lack of enthusiasm right off, and, of course, couldn't pass up the opportunity to make a motherly comment on my "attitude." There was no sense in trying to placate her. Once she gets in that frame of mind, she'll fuss about it endlessly. I wandered around Woolworth's aimlessly, feeling guilty, and trying very sincerely to look blasé about the whole situation. I must admit, I felt very out of place, but I had grown accustomed to that. For the past few months, I'd been feeling restless. Me, the Snob! It was the feeling of restlessness that comes between vacations, when you are feeling buried and there is no end in sight. It didn't help much that my "snobbery" had also been called everything from "shyness" to "anti-social." My counselor said convincingly that I was just, "having some trouble interacting with other people, especially peers," but the truth was, I was feeling lonely, uncomfortable, and very sorry for myself.

Glancing to my right, I caught sight of an aquarium full of all sorts of excited goldfish. I had no idea Woolworth's sold goldfish! These were certainly the most energetic I had ever seen. I stood transfixed and watched as they swam back and forth together. Their lives seemed so idyllic and fulfilled. No responsibility, no cares. Just freedom and a whole lot of friends. Part of me envied them and the other part saw the "SALE" tag on the tank.

I was possessed. Breaking a life long vow of snobbery and disillusionment, I actually sought out a salesperson and, horror of horrors, I actually purchased Woolworth's merchandise! Definitely a radical act on my part!

When my mother emerged from the aisles of the store and put her items on the check-out counter, she seemed very surprised to see me standing on the other side, clutching a Woolworth's bag I was trying desperately to disguise. Why do they have to make those bags so colorful?? What happened to sensible brown paper?

My mom asked me what I had bought and I told her, as

though it were nothing extraordinary, "A goldfish." Nonchalant, as ever! She looked at me with a questioning expression, but I guess she knew better than to ask. I've been known to be quite bizarre. Besides, I really don't think she wanted to know.

The whole way home, I tried to think of where on earth I was going to put the little guy. We had had pets before, but never fish. I had the foresight to buy food for him, but not a bowl. The thought weighed heavily on my mind the entire way home and upon arrival, I put the fish into the bathtub, taking care to moderate the temperature change according to the instructions on his plastic carrying bag. It was like an ocean for him to swim around in and I left him there. I'm not sure yellow linoleum was his taste in decor, but he didn't seem to mind it much.

Thus began my search for the perfect fish bowl. Several boxes and many disappointments later, I finally settled on a crystal punch bowl that had been a wedding gift to my parents. It was very pretty but was a little cracked around the rim, so I knew it would be OK to use. Mom didn't like to throw things of sentiment away, but I also knew she would never entertain with a cracked punch bowl. She was a snob about certain things too.

By this time, I had become quite sick of calling my little aquatic buddy "Fish," so I decided on "Max," just because it was an unconventional name. The whole time I was changing Max's water, I let him listen to the radio and I talked to him in excess. I'm not sure he was listening, but he sure liked the music. Very delicately, I picked him up and put him into his new aquatic home. He swam around a little, seeming to get acquainted with the place.

And then, what I had been watching happen gradually seemed to intensify. Max just seemed to stop swimming and began to freefloat, as if he had stopped caring. He turned his body, very slowly and deliberately, to face mine and just watched me with his sad, lidless eyes. Unblinkingly, he stared me down and I realized the cruelty of what I had done. I had removed a contented creature from his environment. His small mouth opened and closed pathetically, and I imagined silent screams of help echoing forever through the water. I felt a sickening feeling in my stomach, as if I were responsible for the death of a spirit, an essence.

In remorse, I watched as the tiny golden body lost its zest. The loneliness and boredom he must feel . . . and then it hit me like a ton of bricks! How ironic that after months of isolation, I should find myself able to appreciate the life of a fish. Like Max, I had no control, doomed to a lonely existence of indeterminable length in a stifling environment, with no one to talk to and nothing to do.

It seems so silly now, the miserable feeling I had created for myself. The feeling that I was unable to change my life. But as I sat looking at that desolate goldfish, I began to realize that I could change Max's predicament. I could. It was so clear all of a sudden. Why couldn't I see it earlier? Why had I looked at the bleakest side possible? Was I not an essentially intelligent person, who occasionally got a bad break, but then, who didn't? The more I thought about it, the more laughable the whole situation became.

I grabbed my car keys and got into the car, putting Max's bowl between my legs and holding onto him tightly. It was still pouring rain, and the tops of my legs were getting pretty wet from Max's "habitat." Poor old Max, he must have thought the world was ending. I don't know why I brought him with me; in my exuberance it seemed the thing to do. The entire way to Woolworth's, I began to think to myself, "Hey, if I can make Max happier, why not me?" It's true, if I had the ability, in myself, to take one basically miserable fish and turn him into a well-adjusted, normal one, what's to stop me, a girl, from adjusting on my own? With a little initiative and some well-placed conversations of my own, a lot of perseverance and faith . . . well, who knows what could happen? If I tried a little harder, and got over my own fears of rejection, I could be on my way.

(Continued on Page 21)

## Tiny (The Two Spiders)

There is a bee and its tiny legs are struggling, but it cannot swim.  
It is trapped on the surface of the cool, chlorinated water  
In the White House.  
A tiny piece of plaster falls and lands next to it making tiny circles in the water which seem like tidal waves.  
To the bee.  
The White House is crumbling, slowly, but Surely  
And every clock is exploding simultaneously like fireworks.  
It takes two seconds for the White House to deteriorate to ruins, but how can two seconds be measured without a single clock?  
Then a tiny spider crawls out of the rubble, finds another, and is inviting her back to his place  
But there is no place anymore.  
It doesn't matter, though  
Because all motion is disappearing  
And the two spiders are frozen in their elation.

Cindy Lee  
Baltimore, MD  
Roland Park Country School  
J. Brown

## Mosaic

Every autumn leaf  
I see  
brings me back  
to my last glimpse of Seoul--  
Streets lined with poplars--  
a gleaming wave of amber  
against dull grey pavements--  
smoke arising from  
tiny stone houses--  
the smell of roasted chestnuts  
sweetening the damp air--  
Under a warm cinnamon sky  
people brushing by  
in hurried steps.  
Amidst the autumn scene  
walks the solemn  
procession of my family  
toward the airport--  
arms locked,  
hands clasped--  
brittle leaves crumbling  
under our heavy steps.  
As the plane cuts  
across the evening sky,  
I see below me  
a motley of glowing dots--  
emerald, orange, and amber--  
a still mosaic  
I remember  
with every autumn leaf.

Lisa Kim  
Timonium, MD  
Dulaney Sr. High  
Mr. William Jones

## Untitled

Across a screen, darts a woman  
with hair a  
hurricane of frizz  
and mouth a  
tragic red,  
and a Doll--and it has snappy little eyeballs--  
is what this lady--with hairy head in hands and  
redred lips in blur--  
is running from.  
And me--and myself is near the screen--  
a jumpberry jelly, jiggling: heartthrob most hoppy of jumps  
between  
lumps of couch,  
and this self  
belonging to me  
wobbles with  
a shiver of goosebumps,  
and my hand is squeezed by  
the ice statue-person--and she has heartofhops too,  
and that is what  
she tells me  
who sits  
next to me--and the couch with lumps is not warm--  
and--nonono!--the Doll  
has a Blade--and it is sharp, and it makes Blood--  
but whywhywhy?  
Goosebumps  
are on my ribs,  
and the person--the cold one on the couch with lumps--  
has goosebumps on her fingers.  
Hilary Steinitz  
Washington, D.C.  
Sue Willens

## The Fish From Woolworth's

(Continued from Page 20)

And why not? Anyone who can feel sensitive emotion for a fish must have some admirable qualities!

I left Max in the car and went into Woolworth's and bought four friends for him. I bet Woolworth's never had a more excited customer. The cashier seemed quite frightened. I just smiled my fool face off at her. She must have suspected I was on drugs and seemed very cautious when I reached into my pocket to pay her. I wondered if she liked herself. I almost suggested fish to her, as therapy, but stopped. If someone had said that to me, I would have thought that they were crazy! Besides, this type of thing has to be discovered for oneself. No one can find acceptance for you.

Out in the car, I dumped the contents of the bag in with Max. He got very lively right away. The feeling of satisfaction that I felt surged all the way through me and I felt like smiling at the world. I did, too.

Since that time, my crystal bowl has become a full-fledged aquarium, with heaters and lights and an air-pump, the works! My family of fish has extended to include several exotic varieties. More than that, I have made a more concentrated effort to meet and cultivate friends, and, would you believe it, I have a date this weekend! I feel great, I don't even object that much to going into Woolworth's, especially if it's raining or dark, and no one can see me!

I'm very happy to say that Max is still alive. He's the fattest, most conceited goldfish to ever live! He's still my favorite, because it was he, who, on a rainy day last January, made me appreciate ME!

Erin Kenny  
West Chester, PA  
Mrs. K. Head



Tammie Ledden  
General McLane High School

## Untitled

"I hate you, Father." How many times I screamed these words toward my dad. Since when? I don't remember. My dad is a manager of a bank and he's never been free. He never came home before midnight. He never cared about me. The only thing he did was to criticize my life, not knowing how I thought, I felt. In addition, he argued with my dear mom. At the time I really disliked dad and wanted to ignore him, my pain in the ---.

Well, I think I should write about his background here. He was born as a second son of my grandparents, who lost everything during the war. So life had been poor for him and four other brothers and sisters. He studied very hard to please his parents, to get pride for himself. (I think in those days, Japan was not a rich country like now because of its defeat in World War II. My father's grades were always straight A's. Not only did he achieve good grades, but he was also very popular among his friends.

Unfortunately, he had to give up going to college because of the lack of money, and instead, he began working at the bank to support his family. He was eighteen years old then. At the job he tried to do his best, so his bosses considered his ability and he succeeded day by day, though he was only a high school graduate. Then he met my mother when he was twenty-three and they got married two years later.

Anyway, the picture of "my dad" reflecting in my eyes was really different from the way others saw him. He didn't take me anywhere on holidays, while my friends were talking about many great places where Daddy took them. He criticized my grades very strictly. It seemed to be impossible to satisfy him with my grades. He demanded that I do perfectly!

"I gave up pleasing you, Dad. I know you did perfectly, but I'm not you. So don't expect me!" I told him. So, I felt I hated him and he did not love me at all. I felt pity toward mom when they argued, because of his ignorance! Poor mom! It must have been her big mistake to have married such an ---.

One day, mom and I were cleaning dad's desk. And it was then I found this book in his desk drawer, "The Book of a Daughter." It was an ordinary kind of "how to" book. How to communicate with your daughter.... Since I did not read it, I don't know what it said. But I felt as if I'd found a different dad suddenly.

Mom said calmly, "Dad wants to understand you. He does not hate you. If so, he would not read such a book. Your attitude has been too cold." I could not take my eyes off the book.

I think most people expect their parents to be perfect. That's what I did. I was blind and immature because of it. I did not understand his background, that circumstances prevented him from attending college, and so, he wanted me to study as much as possible. I didn't understand a tired dad, working hard for a week and sleeping or relaxing on a holiday or Sunday. I hated his coming home really late, getting drunk. I didn't understand that much business took place over cocktails, and that he drank while discussing work plans with his partners or to relax with his friends. It was I that had been ignorant. Since I saw that book I could accept dad as a person who has a few faults and many good traits, not a perfect father.

And now, separated from him, I miss him.

Hiromi Amagai  
Burlington, NJ  
Burlington Township High School  
Mrs. Vivian Kurilla

## Mom Loses Twins in Poker Game!

*That a.m. the doc called w/the news  
that it would be twins  
& I rang Ralph at the auto shop  
& he said hell let's celebrate  
we haven't had the boys over for a poker  
game in three weeks  
& I said huh well okay  
but I ain't doing all the serving & dishes as  
this is my celebration  
& he said hell no honey  
you're lucky now mom ain't you  
you're playing them tonight  
& so in the p.m. the boys slouched home w/Ralph  
& dropped their dingy jackets in our vestibule  
& I had put coasters over the  
cigarette burns & we plopped on the stools  
& Ralph he wore my apron & served  
the beer & pretzels like a waitress  
o the boys were rolling  
& I sat like one of them & mouthed off  
at Ralph like I was master in the house  
& I got real lucky w/the cards, Ralph grinning  
like the front end of a Buick & joshing  
the boys when I won. Then Dwayne  
got a run of luck & then the  
money was gone, I don't know  
how the money got gone it  
wasn't my fault Ralph I just Dwayne  
won & won I had to get the  
money back & Ralph he stopped smiling  
& he was cussing & then he smacked me  
hard across the ear, & then  
the guys started getting up fakey  
smiles & thanks for a fun evening  
& getting the hell out of here but  
not forgetting to scoop up the cash  
& then I closed my eyes while Ralph hollered  
& holding me to the bare sheetrock punched me  
till I blacked,  
& I bled like a ripped wineskin for three days  
& then doc said I'd lost the twins  
& to be more careful on the stairs*

Cathy Wagner  
Catonsville, MD  
Dr. Blankenburg  
Ms. Thomas

## Piecing on the Road

"Oh hell! I hear someone coming," Gene said. I just stood there, hardly noticing that Gene was cursing to be cool. Gene and I were in Grandpa's house, in his room digging through all sorts of old and useless stuff. As Gene would say, we were "permanently borrowing" what appealed to us. We would steal cough drops that tasted horrible, money that we spent at Houdak's corner store, and shiny and invaluable things we could play with.

I always admired Grandpa's old house on the east or rich side of town. I liked its white and grey trim, the green grass, the nice bushes and the steep driveway which we used for sleighing. The house scared me when it moaned under every step due to the age of the boards. It reeked of Ben-Gay and cookies all at the same time because our grandmother, always sore in one spot or another, was constantly baking. The house was always clean and being cleaned, and in only a few spots did it show signs of six kids and countless pets.

Gene and I, having hid from our aunt, decided to go to Houdak's corner store to indulge ourselves with the rewards of our risks. We crept downstairs like cats escaping the failing vision of an old dog and proceeded out the back door which led us straight to Houdak's. We went through the neighbor's well-kept yard and walked slowly down the hill.

"Did ya' ever kiss a girl?" Gene asked me.

"Uh, uh, yeah! I did," I said knowing very well I was lying.

"Who?"

I was trapped I thought. "You, uh, don't know her." I was stalling for time, trying to think of a good name.

"Her name is Lori, Lori Drescal," I said, gaining my confidence back. "How 'bout you?" I asked.

"Yeah, you might know her. She's from Spring Lake. Her name is Janie Dunbar." Gene's face gleamed with pride because he knew I knew her and knew she was beautiful.

"Oh, yeah," I said trying not to show my envy. "I know her. She's the one with the red bathing suit that always falls down. She's good looking, but she's not too smart." That was true, but I thought he was lucky to have any girl interested in him.

"Are you going steady with Lori?" Gene asked.

"No, because I might go out with someone else," I said.

As we came over the hill right before Houdak's, Gene saw his present "girlfriend" and quickly dodged behind some tall hedges.

"Mike, Mike, how does my hair look? Am I clean? Oh hell! I don't know . . ."

"Listen, Gene, you look good, man, and who is the girl Janie's with?" I asked, peeking around the bush.

"Shhhh, get down or they'll see you!" Gene yelled. Then he peeked around the bush and said, "Yeah, that's Genine Banes. She's really nice. Okay, let's go down there, and be cool for God's sake!"

Gene slunk down the last hill toward the ageless store acting really cool, and I thought he changed into a different person.

"Hi, Janie. Hi, Genine," Gene called to his friends.

"Hi," Janie said.

"Hi," Genine said.

"Why do you guys always match?" Gene asked. "You always wear a scarf, those dark jeans and an oxford."

"I don't know," they responded in unison and giggled.

I thought they were a little overdressed for spring time.

"Who's the friend?" Genine asked.

"This is Mike Gillespie. He's my cousin," Gene said, acting as if I wasn't even his friend.

"How old are you, Mike?" Janie asked.

"Twelve," I said, plainly not having much enthusiasm.

"Oh, just your age, Genine," she said.

"Shut up!"

"No!"

"Yes!"

"Okay, both of you shut up!" Gene finally exclaimed.

"Mike, how about buying something for Genine in Houdak's and I'll buy something for Janie," Gene suggested.

"Okay," I said.

Gene pulled me behind the potato chip rack and whispered. "Mike, don't ruin this. I'm going to go out with her today, so you can take Genine and do what you want with her. Buy her some good food and keep her busy for about an hour. By the way, Genine does kiss boys, and if you want, I'll talk to her and ask her to."

"No!" I squealed. "Don't do that! I'll take care of everything. You must go and meet me here in one hour exactly."

"Okay," Gene replied with a sheepish grin on his face.

Gene shouted, "Okay, what are you having, girls?"

"Well, I'm just having a couple of things," the girls said at the same time and giggled again. The girls took a pile of food.

"Gene," I whispered, "we can't afford all this stuff."

"Sure we can," he said loudly as he watched old Joe add up the tab.

"Eleven fifty-four," old Joe snickered.

"Eleven fift..."

"Shut up," Gene yelled. "We have eight dollars, Joe. You know I'll give it to you later."

"No sir! I don't give credit to no one, no how," Joe replied.

I thought that was pretty reasonable. Those girls were taking advantage of Gene and me.

Gene once again pulled me behind the Lay's potato chip rack and took a deep breath to clear his mind.

"I, I, oh hell, Mike, what am I going to do?" Gene cringed, thinking that he could never win over Janie.

"Maybe you could ask them to put stuff back, or you could run to Grandpa's house to get more money out of his Georgetown mug, or maybe you could send the girls out and pretend to pay for the food and steal it, or maybe . . ."

"Maybe you could shut up," Gene stated coldly.

"All right," I yelled, "then you solve it. I don't know what to tell you."

"Okay, shut up will ya'," Gene said. "Let me think. Oh, mmmmm, aah, okay. This is what we're gonna do. We're gonna, no, you're gonna go out and tell Janie and Genine that they have to put some stuff back so I don't have to look like the bad guy, all right?"

"Sure," I said, not really caring what the girls thought of me. I guess I really did care what everybody thought of me because on the way around the potato chip rack I pretended that I was looking for something specific. I was stalling for time, looking down at the deeply soiled and slowly rotting boards which had already seen a couple of generations of McGees. The shelves behind the check-out line which were filled beyond capacity with Bic lighters, pens, combs, and other assorted oddities, the candy racks which had seen many a Good and Plenty come and go, the old Stroehmann, Marlboro, Tastykake, and Coke and Pepsi signs which had been hanging there for years and years stood out as I walked toward the girls. As I approached the girls, I tried to put on my nicest face so that I could tell them that they had to put some food and candy back.

"Uh, Janie and Genine, could I talk to you for a moment," I said, motioning them closer to the Twinkies with my pointer finger.

"Uh, Gene and I were wondering if, uh, if you could put some of the, uh, food and junk you put on the counter back, because, uh, we don't have enough money to, uh, pay for the goods." I tried to spit it out as quickly as I could without stammering due to nervousness. By the time I got done, my mouth was totally dry and my pits were perspiring.

I guess they got a little embarrassed or upset because they stormed out of the store mumbling nasty remarks about Gene and me. The few that I heard were "cheap, stingy, mother's, asses" and I could imagine what they called us after leaving.

## My Mother and I

I just finished cleaning up the dishes and straightening up the apartment before I had left for school. I went into the bedroom and kissed my mother goodbye as she lay there so peacefully and ran outside to catch the school bus. On the way to school I kept on thinking of all the things I had to do for my mother when I got home from school. I had forgotten to do any of the shopping and for that matter get the rent money ready for the apartment this month. My father always used to do all those sorts of things before he had left us. One day he left for work and never came home. From that day on my mother and I have been managing on our own, and we seem to be doing just fine. My mother is very sick and finds it very hard to do things around the house, so everything is pretty much left up to me which I really do not mind at all.

I hate it when all the neighbors ask all the time if they can come into the apartment and say hello to my mother and see how she is feeling, or when a teacher calls home because she feels it is her duty to talk to her about my school work. I have never had a friend over to the house. I usually come home from school every day by myself and sit with my mother while she just sits in her rocking chair staring at me while I do my homework. A couple of months ago I met this really great guy Kevin. He was in a lot of my classes at school and we became good friends. Kevin started asking a lot of questions and he became very annoying. He kept on calling me up and asking me out on dates. When I finally said yes, he insisted upon coming to my house to pick me up. I refused to let him, so I made him meet me at the local pizza place. After meeting there for a while, Kevin kept on asking me if we could come back to my apartment and hang out there, or if he could meet my mother. I told him over and over again that my mother was not interested in meeting anyone and that she was very sick and it would not be good to disturb her. Kevin and I got into a huge fight about the whole situation, because he kept on insisting. We have not spoken since; that was the one and only boy friend that I have ever had. But I really did not care as long as I spent the time with my mother. Can't people just leave us alone and let me live my own life with her? Whenever I come home from school I always make sure no one has tried to get into the apartment. I want to make sure my mother is as safe as possible. At five o'clock my mother and I sit around the table with Peter the bunny, George the tall green alligator, and the pink fluffy panda that I named Pricella. We all gather around every day at this time for tea. My mother does not like to talk. She just sits in her same chair every day with the same smile on her face. I love to dress my mother up in all sorts of pretty dresses. She never argues about which dress I put on her, but I can tell that she loves the pink lace one that goes perfectly with the ribbon in her hair. One day when we were having tea, I suddenly heard a knock on the door. I picked my mother up and put her away in the toy chest and went to answer the door.

The manager of the apartment was standing at the door and handed me the yellow envelope with a letter inside. I opened it quickly and inside of it was a check for the rent, along with a note.

Dear Ann,

Right now I am in Capri. I'm sorry I haven't written or called in a couple of weeks. It's just I have been very busy meeting people and going sightseeing. The weather is great and I am having a fantastic time. I will probably not be home for a couple of weeks, even a month or so. Ron has decided to take me to Hong Kong. "Isn't that great?" I will definitely keep in touch and call you soon.

Here is the rent money for this month. I will send more as the months go on.

Love,

Jacklyn (your loving mother)

P.S. I will send you a "T" shirt from Capri.

The manager was still standing there after I had finished reading the letter. I guess he was waiting for this month's rent money. I handed it to him slowly and quickly closed the door behind me. I put the letter away in the drawer along with the others and decided to go to bed. I went into the bedroom and got my mother ready for bed. I put her favorite nightgown on her and lay her across the white lace bedspread. I leaned over and kissed my mother goodnight, then I went into the bedroom and fell right to sleep.

Tina Swerdloff  
Old Westbury, NY

## Piecing on the Road

(Continued from Page 23)

Gene followed the girls for about a half a block pleading, or from what I could see, begging Janie to let him have another chance. He didn't tell me what they said and I didn't really care.

By the time Gene got back, I had spent my three dollars and forty-seven cents on licorice, Coke, pizza, pretzels, and chips (all of which I planned to eat after dinner) and a little wooden airplane that slides together and is propelled by a rubber band.

Gene came storming in Houdak's with sweat dripping down into his deep brown eyebrows, which kept it from going into his green eyes. His curly brown hair was all askew and his cheeks were flushed. He bought all of his junk in a hurry without saying a word to me and proceeded to leave the store.

"Gene," I called, but he kept going.

Racing out the door and up the first hill, I found Gene behind the bush he used to hide from Janie. He was crying. I hadn't really noticed how dirty Gene was until I saw the two clean paths that wound their way down his face. The dirty tears were just about to drip off his face, and I reached out with a napkin I got from Houdak's with my pizza and wiped his face. I gave him the napkin and he continued to cry.

"I guess you really liked that girl, Gene," I said, trying not to show the pity in my voice.

"Yeah," Gene practically whispered as I pictured little creatures inside his throat making him not able to talk while crying. At least that's what I thought happened to me.

"Well," I said, "why don't we walk home and forget about girls for a little while?"

"I can't," he blabbered. "I mean you don't understand. I mean she was the first girl I really liked, ya' know."

"No, I don't," I said, because I didn't really feel that girls were that special to me. "But," I said, "I'm sure that you know how you feel."

"What do you think I should do?" Gene asked. I noticed he talked in a nicer tone than he ever talked to me before, probably because he wanted something.

"I don't know, maybe you could call her tonight . . ."

"Call her?" Gene said as if he never heard of that before.

"Or maybe you should buy her some candy or maybe you should ignore her or . . ."

"Shut up!" Gene yelled. "I'm sick of you and your puny little maybe's. How could you know? You've never been in love."

I laughed at this because I had finally realized that Gene was all the time trying to prove that he was better than me.

"No, you shut up, you ass," I shocked Gene as well as myself with this language. "I'm sick of your trying to be better than me. I have just been trying to be friends with you. Or don't you know what that is? All I do for you is because I want to be your friend, but I guess all you're interested in is yourself, you, you jerk!"

After my little flurry was over, I went up the hill with my stash and ate it in Grandpa's old garage and I couldn't eat my dinner when I got home.

Mike Gillespie  
Scranton, PA  
Mr. Vanston





Kyle Webb

## Marta's Alley

*There is a place,  
behind the old brick building,  
blocks chipping,  
mortar dug away,  
where the cats go to  
sing their love songs  
unopposed.*

*Where broken beer bottles  
are ten years old  
and the honking horns  
barely penetrate.*

*Weeds that shoot  
from cracks in blue--  
black macadam here  
are healthier than  
potted plants  
in a Manhattan  
penthouse.*

*Pigeons flock  
for a free meal,  
and any stray  
knows he's welcome.*

*My aunt Marta,  
the original stray,  
found a spot  
and simply built her shack.  
We offered to pay for  
an apartment,  
but she turned us down.*

*I don't know when the first  
cat showed up or when  
the weeds became her garden,  
but Marta accepted each new  
turn with grace and  
welcomed any fellow  
stray to her fold.*

*I don't know if that  
place still exists  
except in the memories  
of cats who have  
nowhere to cry  
and pigeons with empty  
stomachs.*

*My aunt Marta died  
a year ago,  
but I bet the weeds  
are still healthy.*

*Jeanne Hartman  
West Chester, PA  
Mr. Robert McCann*

## The Old Pysanky

"My grandfather taught me how to do this when I was little," the old man said. "That was a long time ago. Almost 90 years. It's a very old Ukrainian tradition. Did you know that? Come here, Nicholas. I want to show you something." The man stood up from his chair and walked into the narrow foyer with his grandson following him. He stood next to the tall etagere. The glass windows were clear and almost unnoticeable, and the black ebony shelves were freshly polished. The case held hundreds and hundreds of beautifully colored Easter eggs. Each egg was placed on a black ebony stand.

"This is your heritage, Nicholas," the man told the boy. "Some of the eggs in this case are older than I am. They were made by my parents and grandparents when they were young." The boy stared at the awesome glass case filled with the eggs.

"Where are your parents now, Papa?" asked the boy.

"They died many years ago. Before your mother and father were born," the old man replied.

"Well, why do you still have these eggs? How come they don't smell bad? Mommy told me that eggs get smelly if they are out of the refrigerator too long," the boy persisted.

"That is the secret to making them. If you do it carefully and don't rush, they will never break and they won't smell. Do you want to make one of your own?" he asked. The boy nodded and followed his grandfather into the tiny, cramped kitchen.

"Sit down here while I get everything we need," said the man. He gathered several chipped porcelain bowls from the cupboard and set them on the table. Next, he took out a large shoebox containing two wooden sticks with metal tips, tiny white packets of colored powders, a lump of beeswax, a candle, different sized rubberbands and a soft cloth. The last thing he placed on the table was a half a carton of large, white eggs.

"When I was little, we went out to the chicken coop to get the eggs," said the old man. The boy giggled at his grandfather's remark and waited anxiously for the ritual to start.

The man filled each bowl with water and emptied the packets into them. The water turned from clear to yellow, orange, red, green, blue, violet, dark red, and black. He placed the candle in a holder and moved it to the middle of the table. When he lit the wick, the aura from the flame illuminated the table.

"Watch me carefully, Nicholas. This is how you make pysanky. That is the Ukrainian word for Easter egg," he said. The old man picked up one of the eggs and inspected it. He warmed it in his hands for a moment. The stylus was held over the flame of the candle until it was hot, and then beeswax was scooped into the opening at the end of the tool.

"Papa, I want to hear about what it was like when you were little like me," the boy said.

"Well, when I was young, everything was a lot different," the man started. "I lived in a place far away from here. My mother and father brought my brother and sister and me to this country when I was 9 years old. I don't remember much about the boat ride, but I do remember that my parents were very sad that they had to leave the Ukraine. It meant that they would have to leave their friends and jobs to start over in America. By leaving the Ukraine, my parents were afraid that their heritage might be lost forever." As he spoke, the old man covered the delicate eggshell with intricate designs of flowers, leaves, stars, and crosses. He immersed the egg into the bowl of yellow dye and let it sit for a while. The man continued the story for his grandson.

"Before we left the Old Country, my grandfather taught me how to make the pysanky. He told me that it was very important that I never forget how to make them. We would sit in his sod house making the pysanky like you are here with me. 'Capusta malenki,' he'd say, 'someday I want you to show your grandson how to make the pysanky. Teach him as I am teaching you.'"

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"What does capuka menky mean, Papa?" the boy asked.

"It means 'little cabbage,' Nicholas. Little children were called that by their elders. I think it's time to draw on the egg again," he answered. The man removed the egg from the dye and dried it in the cloth. Again, he took the stylus and drew on the now yellow surface of the egg. He dipped it in the orange dye. After studying his grandfather's actions, the boy took an egg and began to draw on it with his instrument. He tried to emulate the man's complex designs, but his were bigger and messier. His egg, too, was immersed in the yellow dye.

"Tell me more," the little boy begged.

"When we first came to America, it was exciting, yet scary. My brother, Petrov, and my sister, Olga, and I had to learn English. That was very difficult since we were so young. Olga and my mother baked bread and sewed to make extra money. My father worked as a tailor and a schoolteacher. Petrov and I helped him. At first we were very poor. We lived in a tiny apartment on the lower east side of the city. We had no money to buy the materials for the pysanky, so my father and brother would go into the woods to collect the special roots and berries which could be used for the dyes. My mother would boil them until the water turned color. Then we would each make one pysanka. It was important to my parents that we keep the Ukrainian traditions alive. After a few years in America, my grandfather, Nikolai, sent us a package. In it were eggs that he had kept in his house for many years. He wanted us to keep the pysanky in a safe place so we could look at them and always remember our heritage and be proud of it."

The old man removed and dried his egg. He drew more wax designs on it and placed it in increasingly darker dyes until he reached the final color: black. He let the egg soak for a few minutes then dried it. The man held it gingerly between his thumb and index finger over the candle flame. The ugly wax coating melted, exposing an exquisite work of art. Painstakingly, slowly, so as not to heat the eggshell so much that it might crack, the man rubbed off the wax coating. The boy drew his last designs on the shell and then was ready to melt off his wax.

"We kept the pysanky in an old wooden crate. After a while, the crate was too small to hold any more eggs. I decided I would save my money to buy a big, beautiful case to hold them. It took me a long time, though. I finally had enough after I was married. By then, my brother and sister were grown up and married and lived with their own families. I have had that case for 49 years, Nicholas. And every year when I make my pysanky, I save them all and display them. It has taken me a long time to fill up the case. When your father was little, I taught him and his brothers and sister how to make them. Some of their first pysanky are in my case."

When his entire egg was uncovered, the old man put it in the carton on the table, and proceeded to help his grandson with his egg. In the same way, the wax melted off and a colorful design was exposed. He picked up both eggs and carried them to the tall ebony case that stood in the hallway. The man opened the door and stood them on the black bases near the front of the case. The boy stared at the contents of the case. He was amazed at how individual each one was, and that he knew the story behind them all. The boy understood why the pysanky were so important to his grandfather; they were a record of his life. The tradition of making the pysanky was a way of honoring his grandfather in the Ukraine. By continuing it each year at Easter, and then saving his money to buy a display case for his collection, he proved how much he respected his grandfather and how proud he was of his heritage.

When he turned around, the boy did not see his grandfather. The old man was sitting at the kitchen table, starting on a new egg. The little boy followed and sat down. He picked up another egg. Carefully, he began to draw geometric shapes with the stylus.

Laura C. Kuczma  
Scarsdale, NY

## Crazy Glue

*The sound of tension our  
conversation has created  
outweighs the sound of the kitchen fan.  
I scrape the remains of your peas and potatoes  
into the garbage  
and imagine a television ad  
where the silence shatters the crystal glass.  
I picture myself at the end  
of the commercial  
trying to pick up the microscopic pieces  
and rushing off to the next set  
to find some Crazy Glue.  
Yes, maybe the crazy glue could help,  
for the peas and potatoes certainly did not.  
Another effort ruined by your coldness.*

Tracey Yeramian  
Kent Place School  
Mrs. Cole

## Rock

*Hail, Sisyphus.  
What's up?  
Are you happy, Sisyphus--are you content?  
". . . again, try, try . . ." you spit through your  
sweat, pushing, pushing, and . . . and . . . damn--  
another slip.  
another scraped knee (for today, that's eighty)  
But you, you are the Rock Pusher.  
You sweetly curse the eternal, granite gods--  
I hear you.  
Such quartz contentment . . .  
pushing, pushing, and . . . and . . . there.  
It's up back down (for today, that's eighty)  
and down you go trudging,  
you rock pusher pawn,  
you cog.  
You, you grease the cold mechanics  
of the stairs.  
I see you sweat,  
I hear you curse--  
I see you smile.*

Keith Kessler  
Vienna VA  
Mrs. Von zur Muehlen

## Commuter

*I always watch  
the traffic light  
change at eleven o'clock  
to flashing yellow.  
It gleams  
in little beads  
outside the arc  
of my wipers  
and gently speckles  
my face with shadows.  
Its warning  
is my comfort  
these nights.*

Heather Clague  
Silver Spring, MD  
Springbrook High School  
Ms. Mary Lee Ruddle

# Prisoners of Elena

The light was dim in the church hall and it became more difficult to see as the endless afternoon merged with the interminable evening yawning ahead. My grandfather dealt the cards. We began yet another game of gin rummy. The circles under his eyes had become darker and heavier and he slumped over the wobbly table. I picked up my cards and put on what I hoped was a cheerful expression. "Watch out, Pop Pop!" I exclaimed, "I'll get you this game!"

I scanned the cards sleepily. Neither of us had slept well since we arrived here at the emergency hurricane shelter. Mattresses, sleeping bags, blankets and pillows were strewn everywhere, leaving very little space for the tile floor to peek through. With all the tables set up as beds, the church hall now appeared smaller than I had remembered it.

We had been here two nights and the only bathing facility was a small bathroom sink. I longed to take a shower, wash my hair, and feel clean again.

"You let cat out yet? Time to put him out for the night," my grandfather said to me, adding another scratch mark under his name on the napkin we used as a scoresheet.

"No, Pop Pop," I sighed, drawing a card. "You remember, we're still in the hurricane shelter. The cat's in the car."

Pets were not allowed in the shelter so I had no choice. I had to leave my cat behind in the car. I had left him perched on the rear window ledge watching the hurricane swirl about him. With his food and water bowls, a cat box, and a favorite blanket, he seemed content and unafraid. At brief intervals, when the howling winds and rains subsided, I would dash to the car to check on him. Somehow he seemed to know that there was nothing to do but wait out the storm.

I stared at the deep ridges in the old Greek man's face. In his haste in packing he had neglected to bring a change of clothes; I was tired of seeing him wear the burgundy and white warm-up jacket and wished he had brought another shirt.

The hurricane had thrust itself upon us suddenly. The police cars with their raucous bullhorns had patrolled the streets, "Evacuate your homes at once! Leave the area! Evacuate at once!" In thirty minutes we had gathered linens, toilet articles, and extra clothes and secured the house for the storm's impact. As we pulled out of the driveway, I had looked back and wondered if I would ever see my grandfather's house again. Joining the endless convoy of cars slowly winding out of the bay area, we had left, following the instructions and directions of the police with their sirens and bullhorns.

With a silent smile my grandfather placed the remainder of his cards down on the table, triumphantly ending another game.

"You hungry?" he asked.

"No, Pop Pop, I'm okay. But why don't you have this cake," I said, offering him the last Twinkie in the box. He quizzically pondered the cartoon cowboy on the wrapper.

"This is cake?" He slowly began to eat the spongy junkfood. I smiled at the idea that my grandfather had never before eaten a common Twinkie. I gathered and shuffled the cards for yet another game.

Outside waterfalls cascaded from the roof. Rain pelted against the windows like bullets. Angry winds bent palm trees to the ground and blew the rain into undulating, billowing waves.

He pushed the pencil across to me, "You keep score . . . I want to go home . . . when can we go home?"

I added another scratch mark to the column under his name. "When the hurricane moves on and they tell us it's safe to go back, Pop Pop."

"I want to go home," he repeated quietly and took out his pipe. I responded with a shrug and reminded him he had used the rest of his tobacco three games ago.

In the corner of the hall an old television emitted a dull violet glow. Weather bulletins flashed every few minutes bearing the

same message, ". . . HURRICANE ELENA IS STILL STALLED OVER THE BAY AREA . . ." Not knowing was the hardest part--how long would we be here? Another day? Two days?

Two days ago--an eternity--the sun had been shining as my grandfather and I had walked along "our beach." He knew just where to find the prettiest shells and could name each variety. He showed me how to dig with my toes to find sand dollars and told the legend of its markings. He knew the spots on the beach where a fishing line cast into the waves would most likely hook a fish. Our beach was a wide stretch with shimmering, silky sand. We loved the water in all its moods; on the calm days when the glossy surface barely rippled, and in its playful moments when we jumped its waves.

But never had we seen this dark side of our beach's personality. Try as I might, I could not imagine our beautiful beach in the midst of this storm: ten foot waves, hovering threatening clouds, eighty-seven miles per hour ferocious winds.

I looked at my grandfather and tried to read the expressions behind his cloudy eyes, the same dark eyes I used to look to for support, strength, and comfort. "Pop Pop, what are you thinking about?"

"We go to beach tomorrow, early. You pack lunch and we stay all day. You like?"

"Sure, Pop Pop," I said, blinking rapidly and trying to keep my voice steady, "I'd love to."

I dealt the cards and we began yet another game of gin rummy.

Karen Carbone  
Silver Spring, MD  
Springbrook High School  
Mary Lee Ruddle

## Body Meaning

*I awoke to find your eyes  
glistening on my pillow  
Bright as Blue could be  
Did you put them there for me?*

*I drank coffee from your cup  
that you left in my house  
Stained from your last drink  
The marks of coffee ink.*

*I found your arm inside my coat  
when I left for work today  
It grabbed my hand from inside  
One last grip before it died.*

*I found your legs upon the lawn  
severed at both limbs  
They ran after me as I went by  
The toes were screaming hateful lies.*

*And then I found your heart,  
by accident of course  
I never suspected where it would be  
I found your heart inside of me.*

Dana Wiggs  
Beltsville, MD  
High Point High School  
Mrs. Smith

# The Umbrella

(The middle of a city park. At center, a park bench. The ground is covered with litter. A metal wastecan, the type that leaves its contents visible, can be seen to be empty.)

(Enter JOHNSON, who shuffles over and seats himself on one end of the bench. He is dressed in a conservative three-piece.)

(Enter the CITIZEN, dressed in a full-body leotard, half-yellow, half-red split longitudinally down his body, and covered with glittery silver stars. Although the day is perfectly sunny, he carries an enormous golf umbrella in lurid colors open above his head. He walks on and moves to front center, where he stops and sniffs the air as though scenting prey, then partially turns his head as if sensing the bench behind him. Abruptly he turns, runs to the bench, and sits on the other end, facing partially away from JOHNSON. Immediately he relaxes, crossing his legs and swinging the top one back and forth. He stares into space, holding up his umbrella, elbow on knee, chin on hand.)

(JOHNSON examines him out of the corner of his eye, looking uneasy. After several false starts which go unnoticed by the other, he speaks.)

JOHNSON: It's stopped raining.

CITIZEN (not moving and still gazing into space): It hasn't rained all day.

(JOHNSON stops, confused. After a pause, he tries again, hesitantly.)

JOHNSON: Then--why--are you carrying an umbrella?

CITIZEN (quickly dropping the umbrella on the ground): I'm not.

JOHNSON (even more confused): Yes, you were. You just dropped it. (Points to it.)

CITIZEN (finally looking at him, with a cool, level gaze): I don't know what you mean.

(They sit in silence. With a sudden start, the CITIZEN leans over and puts his arm familiarly around JOHNSON's shoulders. JOHNSON looks mildly frightened.)

CITIZEN: Tell me--do you know how many coffins have been sold by unlicensed coffin manufacturers in this country in the last twenty years?

JOHNSON (utterly bewildered): Uh--well, no . . .

CITIZEN (after waiting expectantly and then moving back to his original position): Well? Aren't you going to ask me how many?

JOHNSON: How many?

CITIZEN (authoritatively): Twenty-one million, two hundred and seven thousand, six hundred and seventy-three.

(A pause. JOHNSON does not react.)

CITIZEN: Do you believe me?

JOHNSON: I--I don't know. Where did you get your figures?

CITIZEN: I just made them up. Why did you say it had stopped raining when you knew perfectly well that it never had been raining?

JOHNSON: Well, I--I didn't want to embarrass you if you were carrying that umbrella because you thought it was raining.

CITIZEN: What umbrella?

JOHNSON: That one! Yours! (Points to the umbrella, which still lies, open, on the ground.)

CITIZEN: That's not my umbrella. It must be yours.

JOHNSON: It's not my umbrella. You carried it over.

CITIZEN: No, it's yours. I think I would know such a thing better than you. What's your name?

JOHNSON: Johnson. Paine Johnson. I don't see what that has to do with--

(JOHNSON stops in mid-sentence as the CITIZEN picks up the umbrella and, taking an indelible ink marker from his leotard, writes "PAINE JOHNSON" in huge letters on the umbrella, which he then throws back on the ground.)

JOHNSON: No, really, I already have an umbrella--

CITIZEN: Yes, I know. It's right there on the ground. (Pointing.)

JOHNSON (slightly indignant): Look, may I ask just who you are and why--

CITIZEN: I'm your friend. I'm an upstanding citizen of this great, productive nation, a man of merit and renown. My great sense of civic responsibility is an inspiration to all who know me. Which reminds me, I must warn you there are severe penalties for littering in this park. (Points significantly at the umbrella.)

JOHNSON (quite indignant now): Now, really, this is getting ridiculous. You know damn well it's your umbrella and--

CITIZEN (diplomatically): No need to get upset. It's no big deal--all you have to do, if you don't want your umbrella, is put it in the waste can, where it belongs. After all, a clean city is a happy city, and a happy city is an efficient city.

(The CITIZEN takes out a candy bar, unwraps it, stuffs it whole into his mouth, and tosses the wrapper on the ground, looking smug. JOHNSON, his anger deflated, stares at the ground, slumped forward.)

(The CITIZEN stares coldly at JOHNSON and, after a few moments, speaks condescendingly.)

CITIZEN: You don't like talking to me, do you?

JOHNSON (in a small voice): You're very strange.

CITIZEN: If you don't like me, why don't you leave?

(JOHNSON makes no reply, staring at the ground.)

CITIZEN (with an evil, leering smile): No one's forcing you to sit here. No one can force you to do anything you don't want to do. Can they. (Not a question.) At any time, you can get up from this bench and walk away. Am I right?

JOHNSON (weakly): I suppose.

CITIZEN (pouncing): Then why don't you? (He continues without pausing for an answer.) It's nearly eight o'clock.

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# The Umbrella

(Continued from Page 28)

JOHNSON: It can't be. It was only five when I left the office. (Pulls up his sleeve and stares in surprise at his bare wrist.) Christ, now my watch is gone!

(The lighting dims suddenly to a late-evening level.)

CITIZEN (staring into space once again): I assure you it is eight o'clock.

JOHNSON: But I can't have been here for nearly three hours! Perhaps there's going to be a storm. (Examines the sky.)

CITIZEN: Then you'll need your umbrella. If you weren't here for three hours, then where were you? For all I know, you could have been out murdering people. (Laughs hysterically, then stops abruptly.) You weren't, were you?

JOHNSON (angrily once again): No, damn it, and it isn't eight o'clock yet!

CITIZEN (taking a watch from his pocket and holding it up): Yes, it is. See?

JOHNSON: That's my watch--give me that!

CITIZEN: No, this is my watch, and I'll do what I like with it.

(The CITIZEN drops the watch on the ground and crushes it underfoot. JOHNSON, having had enough, rises with a snarl of frustration and a stream of curses, and grabs the CITIZEN by the throat. As the two go at each other, the POLICEMAN enters. He is dressed in a leotard identical to that of the CITIZEN, and, in fact, the only differences in his appearance are his blue police cap and the white truncheon in his right hand. His first action is to stare with horror at the garish umbrella littering the park. Shaking his head in disgust, he approaches the combatants.)

POLICEMAN: All right, let's break this up right now.

JOHNSON (ceasing to fight): Thank God, a policeman--Officer, this man is completely insane. He--he . . .

(He trails off as he notices the POLICEMAN's style of dress. As he looks the officer up and down, his eyes bug out, and he falls silent.)

CITIZEN: As you can see, Officer, this man was obviously in the act of murdering me when you arrived. I'm lucky to be alive. In fact--(thinks briefly)--would his punishment be more cruel and unusual if he had killed me?

POLICEMAN: Oh, yes. Especially if I claim he attacked me as well. I think I will. It's been a dull day.

CITIZEN: Well, let's just say I'm dead, then, shall we?

POLICEMAN: Sounds good to me.

CITIZEN: In addition, I accuse this maniac of being a mass murderer. He left his office early this morning and went on a wild killing spree until just recently. He told me so.

(JOHNSON stares first at one man, then at the other, in growing horror. He begins to shake his head "no" with wide-open eyes. The POLICEMAN taps his truncheon against his palm, looking disgustingly at JOHNSON.)

CITIZEN: Then he completely destroyed my expensive new watch. (Points to the crushed watch.) You can see the remains. And what's worse, that's his umbrella littering our fine park.

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(JOHNSON's mouth opens and closes; he looks like a helplessly suffocating fish.)

CITIZEN: It's even got his name on it. Paine Johnson. That's his name. I recommend the electric chair.

POLICEMAN: I see. (Turning to JOHNSON and suddenly handcuffing him, at which JOHNSON looks even more shocked.) Well, Mr. Johnson, it seems the evidence is all against you. And even if it wasn't, you look like just the snivelling, weak-minded, liberal type I feel like pushing around.

(The POLICEMAN cracks JOHNSON across the face with the butt of his truncheon, leering. JOHNSON's mouth begins to bleed. He appears to have withdrawn from reality, and stares straight ahead, showing little reaction. The CITIZEN chuckles appreciatively.)

POLICEMAN (to CITIZEN): Sir, I congratulate you on your merit and on your great sense of civic responsibility.

CITIZEN: Thank you. Most people do.

(POLICEMAN shoves JOHNSON, who stumbles offstage to the left. The POLICEMAN follows him, raising his truncheon above his head for another blow just before moving offstage. CITIZEN comes to front center, fondling his chin with his hand. He thinks a bit, then takes out another watch.)

CITIZEN: Six o'clock and nothing to do. Life is such a bore. (He puts the watch away.)

(A sound of thunder. The CITIZEN looks up. Soon it begins to rain. The CITIZEN looks around, sees the umbrella, and picks it up. He takes a last look around the park, then exits off stage right, loudly humming "Deutschland Uber Alles." JOHNSON's crushed watch lies unmoving on the rain-soaked ground.)

Jeff Duffy  
Wyomissing, PA  
Wyomissing Area High School

## Brown Sweater

*You, the brown turtleneck sweater,  
Wriggle over my head and off my arms  
To the floor where you are happy,  
Where, when I am gone, you are free.*

*But I, the heartless executioner,  
Under the strictest instructions,  
Hang you on a hanger  
While you are still alive,  
Warm and breathing;  
But not strong enough to struggle,  
In the dark closet,  
Sandwiched between the flannel shirt and red v-neck.*

*I even shudder a little as I close the door,  
Thinking I hear you complain that it's cold.*

Leslie Holt  
Bethesda, MD  
Dr. Galvin

## Aquarium Shadows

I turned my key in the lock and opened my front door. Suddenly, the phone rang, jangling shrilly in the darkness. I flipped the light switch on and answered the phone. It was my boss, Jean Broadbent. Her voice sounded strained and almost unrecognizable but I put that down to the worry of having a VIP group rent the Aquarium at such short notice. She explained they needed a guide and that I was the only one able to come at such short notice. I agreed slowly and said goodbye. I had been looking forward to finishing the book I was reading, then going to sleep. Oh well, I climbed wearily back into my car and drove downtown.

I parked my car on the pier and walked across the long stretch of concrete to the Aquarium. The flags hung limply on their poles in the stiflingly humid night air. I walked past the empty reservation tent and stopped under the awning. The Aquarium was in almost total darkness. Well, what could I expect at ten o'clock on a Sunday night?

I glanced up the stairway and saw the green and blue neon tubing glow on the ceiling. A warm wind blew across me, bringing the smell of the harbor and the sounds of Harborplace that echoed in the empty covered entrance area. The doors were upstairs. I stepped onto the escalator and let it carry me upwards. I had no extra energy for climbing stairs at this time of night. The escalator stopped with a jerk and I nearly lost my balance. I grabbed the smooth handrail and slowly climbed the last steps to the overlook. I went to the door and pulled on the handle. The glass door didn't move. I pushed and got the same results. Testing the three remaining doors led to the same outcomes: all were locked. I muttered something about failures of communication and leaned my forehead against the glass.

The lobby was eerily lit by the neon tubes and by the blue bubble pillars. The glow reflected off the mirrors, casting a pseudo-moonlight into the giftshop and information desk. Nobody answered when I rapped on the door. Suddenly wondering why I had come to this door instead of going to the employee entrance, I crossed the overlook, looked down over the railing, across the seal pool. The seals made huge unearthly shadows as they circled around their tank. I raised my eyes to look at the employee entrance. That too was dark and deserted. I turned back to the general admission doors and tried all of them again. Still locked. Suddenly, I thought of the exits. I knew there were no handles on the outside; but if one had been jammed open . . . sure enough, the second door I checked wasn't closed flush with the rest. I slid my fingers into the gap and pulled the door open. Curious, I looked to see what had been keeping the door from closing. A blast of chilled air hit me, condensing the warm summer air into droplets. The air conditioning, of course. I went inside.

The blue bubble tubes made their usual percolating noises. I bypassed them, heading for the green glow of the exit sign over the stairway door. I pushed on the bar and nothing happened. Whoops. I transferred my grip to the other side of the door and pushed again. It opened. The air inside the stairway was as warm as the blood red the walls were painted. The air was stale and smelled faintly of dead sea urchins. I took a gulp of air and hurried up the stairs two at a time. I swung around the railing and started on the next flight.

Finally, fourth floor. Home of Children's Cove, Puffin Cliffs, and various small exhibits. The Harbor View room. That was where the VIPs would be, because that was the room that could be rented separately. I opened the black door under the writing "Knott Harbor View Room." It was empty and dark. I turned on the lights and blinked in the sudden brightness. The windows suddenly became black as the lights of the harbor disappeared. The wall with the grainy expanded photos of the colonial harbor became the only part of the room that wasn't featureless and black. A scrap of paper lifted and fell, fluttering in the draft

from a vent. I went over and picked up the note. "Giving them a tour of the backup. We'll be on the second floor. -Jean." The second floor backup: food preparation, some fish tanks, and the shark catwalk. All right for some, I thought, if they were interested in giant refrigerators and sharks. Otherwise there wasn't much to offer on that floor. I decided to catch up with this mysterious group of visitors as soon as possible. I folded the note up and stuck it in my pocket, turning the lights off as I left.

I hesitated as I neared the stairway door. Using the stairs shortened the time it took to get from floor to floor, but the odor in the stairs was particularly unpleasant tonight. I decided to walk down through the exhibit areas. Changing direction, I headed for the "people-mover" escalator that crossed the central open space.

I walked down the slight slope and noticed that the lights on all the exhibits were off. The walls were lit by the shimmering reflection from the neon designs on the coral reef tank. The fish hung quiescent in the water, moving their tails only occasionally. I hurried past the long rows of exhibits and crossed the second escalator. The door to the backup area was nearby. The white writing "For staff use only" showed dimly in the glow from the exit sign. I opened the door.

A wave of cold, fish-smelling air hit me. The refrigerator wall had frost on it. I opened the door to the shark area and looked around. "Hello?" I called. The lights were on, at least, but no one was there. I walked further into the room. The sharks circled around their tank, making huge unearthly shadows in the dim blue light. I stepped onto the catwalk over the tank and walked partway around, seeing if the group had gone to the other side of the oval tank. Nobody. A scrap of paper bobbed on the surface of the water. I held securely onto the railing, leaned down and snatched it out before the next cruising shark came by. The ink had run a bit from the water, but not too much. I could read the writing after I blotted it on my sleeve. "Gone back to Harbor View room to pick up their coats. -Jean."

I snatched the other piece of paper out of my pocket and compared the writing. The same. They had gone back to the Harbor View room to get . . .

I jumped off the catwalk as a huge sand tiger shark cruised by, its snout breaking the surface of the water. They had gone back to the Harbor View room to . . . That room had been empty, completely empty. NO coats, hats, purses, or anything. Just the note, telling me to go to the shark area. The note from Jean. I feverishly unfolded the notes and looked at the handwriting. There! The letter j didn't have a flourish, the kind Jean always put on j's and y's. Jean hadn't written the notes. And now that I thought about it, that hadn't been Jean's voice on the phone.

I ran to the door of the shark area and flung it open. And listened. I could hear the faint rush of water through the circulation system, the now sinister chuckle of water in the lobby bubble pillars, and a low rasping sound like something . . . breathing. I gulped another breath and waited with the blood pounding in my head. The sound continued, sounding very close.

I dashed to the door of the stairway. The stench of dead fish was even fouler. I shoved open the door to flee down the steps. At the bottom of the next flight, a mass of shadows lurked against the red wall. Were they moving? I wasn't sure and didn't wait to find out. I slammed the door shut and ran past the walls of refrigerators. I threw my weight against the door and burst out into the empty darkness of the second floor exhibits. I ran to the elevator and pounded my hand on the down button until the small light ignited. I stared around, looking for some movement. I began to hear the elevator coming up the shaft.

It stopped. The doors stayed closed. I pounded on them, then realized. If escalators could be stopped, and lights turned off, then why would elevators be immune? I could hear the humming of the motor close but still impossibly sealed behind the door. I listened and heard to my horror the harsh breathing start again.

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# Chocolate Chip Cookies

You used to come over  
on Saturday nights  
back when there were  
no boys to date.

We made chocolate chip cookies  
splattering sticky batter  
powdery flour  
on faded Toughskins  
bloated with sugary laughter.

Now  
when I see you  
you strut down the hall  
In Guess? jeans that hang loose  
on pointy hipbones.

Now  
you make cookies alone  
and all the chips  
make it into the cookies  
and the faucet gets  
to lick the spoon.

Now  
you won't eat one but  
instead wrap them up  
in a tight red bow  
to send to your boyfriend.

Now  
your Guess? jeans stay clean  
you cock your jaunty jaw  
stroll by skinny, oh-so-skinny  
down the hall.

Elizabeth Kremer  
Silver Spring MD  
Springbrook High School  
Mary Lee Ruddle

## Summer

August air drapes  
Over the brick-oven tenements  
Like a steaming towel.  
Dust-yellowed windows thrown open  
Or knocked out,  
Shattered on the skillet-sidewalk.  
Glass lies with brown paper bags  
And orange rinds.

The street is empty

Except  
On the corner in front of the liquor store,  
Children dance  
In cool spurts  
Of a dirt-caked fire hydrant.

Miriam Bernstein  
Silver Spring, MD 20904  
Springbrook High School  
Mary Lee Ruddle



Danielle Michaelis  
Burke, VA

## Aquarium Shadows

(Continued from Page 30)

I ran to the escalator down to the first floor. Again, that impenetrable shadow. As I stared, it seemed to stir and extend a pseudopod of darkness up the motionless stairs. I faltered back a few steps and turned to the railing. The floor below looked so close. So close.

I turned from the escalator, to the elevator, to the shark area, to the stairs. No escape. So close. I stepped up onto the railing. Not wanting to jump the whole way, I slid down until I was holding on only by my hands. I was committed now. My hands were already starting to slip. I took one quick look downward and closed my eyes. I let go.

My feet hit the floor in a split second. My legs stood the shock a moment then my knees gave out and I continued to the floor. I levered myself to my knees and pushed myself totteringly to my feet. My ankles stung from the impact and my head felt swollen. My eyes refused to focus. I gazed around blearily and saw shadows approaching from every side. I stumbled toward the doors to outside, faster and faster. I pushed through the heavy glass doors and threw myself at the steps, not daring to look behind me. I barely noticed the escalators were moving again. I ran down, my legs becoming steadier, across the concrete to where I had parked my car. I opened the door and jammed the key into the ignition. I turned it and the engine roared to life. The tires screeched as I drove away, hardly paying attention to traffic.

Behind me, the Aquarium brooded, a huge mass of angular concrete against the summer sky.

Sandy Owen  
Baltimore, MD  
Mrs. Levine

## The Fruit Bar Wars

If you sold fruit bars on the street for an entire summer, working eight hours a day and making a quarter for every bar you sold, you could make almost enough for a year of a small New England college. You could, if you were an impressive fruit bar vendor, if you seemed the type that people would want to buy from: young, friendly, clean, and preferably a girl. Two hundred and forty-seven bars sold earned sixty-one dollars and seventy-five cents; Lisa held that record. I never broke forty-seven dollars myself, but then with my short hair that summer, people did mistake me for a boy.

That August I was the one who found the job first, but Lisa was the one who ended up buying the carts for the next summer. There were two carts. One of them was smaller and was pushed by a bicycle, the other was named Elaine, they said. The owners were Pam and Donna and they made five thousand dollars in six weeks. Lisa and I fought over the bike cart, on the mornings we both worked. Elaine was heavier and had a lid that could scratch your neck as you opened it if you weren't careful, but her corner was busier; the bike cart was fun to ride and its corner had the bicycle men, handsome boys who worked for the courier service nearby and who smiled as they passed.

To have the bicycle cart on a sunny day on that corner of Walnut Street, with the couriers and the grinning old men and the still green Rittenhouse Square to watch, was to have heaven in the city. You felt that people understood this, regardless of which corner you worked: that people on wheels were happier than those on foot, or in cars. At any moment you might begin to ride away and to feel a breeze where there wasn't any.

Certainly a job outside was better than inside. Lisa said it well: she felt like she was earning her money. Here was a way of making a living and not selling out. Fruit bars and ice cream are too innocent to corrupt.

Everyone bought what we sold; the only difference to us between our customers was that the young professionals always wanted napkins while the millionaires in limousines and the bag people didn't care.

On the corner of Eighteenth and Walnut I leaned against one of the ugly grey planters that the owner of the apartment building there had placed to drive vendors away, and made forty-seven dollars on my first day there. It was a difficult corner to work; there were hard-core coconut people to please, and we hadn't been delivered any coconut; then there was the man who owned the building but not the sidewalk, who had been trying to get rid of the carts for weeks.

He'd never spoken to Pam and Donna; he only harassed their employees. I had been warned against him. This man was hated by scores of people—he had a city wide reputation as a jerk. The planters had been installed on the sidewalk at a rumoured cost of a thousand dollars a piece; the seven of them stretched to Chancellor Street. When we still squeezed in he said he would turn them at an angle, and after that we persisted and still fit in. I was told, "If he asks to see your license, don't show it to him, he's not the L and I—he has no right."

The nice old women who walked by the cart smiled and said, "Oh, good, you're still here. Don't let him bully you." The nasty old women passed with disapproving looks; one said once, "I think you should leave if he wants you to leave." For a week nothing happened, no nasty man even though I looked, and no L and I in a yellow van. We'd been forced to be five feet ten inches away from the curb instead of the legal six feet, but the L and I were so sick of this woman that we did not worry.

The doormen to the apartment building would come out to buy Chipwiches even though the owner got angry. They liked us, they wanted us to stay. The newspaperman with Mafia connections would wave as he saw us each morning. Men with law firms and restaurants had early on encouraged Pam and Donna in their all-American business venture; they bought bags of bars

for their wives because they weren't allowed sugar themselves.

One old woman said that the man would probably be more sympathetic to working people if he'd earned any of his money, but he had inherited everything. My older sister told me she'd seen him get a waiter fired at her restaurant even though everyone agreed with the waiter. He owned the building that housed the restaurant; that building had rats.

You could easily fall in love with a job like this, especially when you rode past the Square on the bike cart and passed the business people in their dark sticky suits and envious smiles. You made a quarter an item and you were allowed to read and eat. You got used to the dirt after a while. The dry ice, if you were not careful, would burn your lungs when you foolishly breathed it in while getting a bar. My right foot got much dirtier than my left because of the way I crossed my legs when I faced the street and the exhaust pipes; but at the same time my hair was turning blonde in the sun.

The man kept on moving the planters. He asked to see Lisa's license one day, and she ignorantly showed it to him. He called the L and I but they didn't come. "You were lucky," he said as he trotted past her at five, "they'll be here tomorrow." The hot dog vendor that held the corner in the beginning of the summer, a heavy young woman, had been hosed away with water.

We discussed her fate and other horror stories that day, and Lisa did her imitation of the man, jumping up and down and pointing up a finger and whining, "Oooh, I'm gonna get you, oooh!" We considered calling the television news station and having them do an expose. I told Donna that she could sue him because the planters themselves were probably illegal. She replied that she wouldn't go that far, but she did wonder if we could get him for employee harassment because he'd never approached them. We all agreed that the situation was absurd. We would not give up until we had to, just to annoy this man.

I arrived early the next morning with Elaine. The man was there with four other, older men, and he was ordering them in the moving of the planters. They grunted and shoved and wore the uniform of his apartment building. They were the maintenance men. He was dressed in a tan business suit and he screeched at them like a bird. I hauled my cart up on the sidewalk and then went to get a soda and a pretzel, and ate while I watched them work.

"All right, now, two inches over this way, here, come on . . . okay, that's fine!" He turned to me as the men behind him gasped for breath, and said, "I hate to have to tell you this, Miss, but you are in violation of the code stating that vendors have to be six feet away from the curb. I'm going to have to ask you to leave."

"Well, you're not the L and I; you can't make me leave."

With the air of a man who cannot take much more undeserved insolence, he flapped his arms up in the pollution and said, "You're in violation! You have to leave."

"The L and I has to tell me that, though." The workmen behind him were grinning sheepishly, dangerously, at me.

"I own this building! This property is mine!"

"But you don't own the sidewalk."

"I'm . . . I'm going to get a police officer, and have you removed. I'm going to have you arrested as a defiant trespasser." With that, he marched towards Walnut Street.

"How much does he pay you for this?" I asked the men, pointing to the planters. "Hey, it's our job," one said, touching the label on his uniform. "If we don't do what he says . . . Well, have a nice day, anyway." They walked away as the owner returned, talking to a policeman.

". . . It's just not in my jurisdiction," the cop was explaining. "I'm not the L and I. Call them."

"I'm going to call the L and I," the man announced on his way inside.

The policeman rolled his eyes. "It gets harder to make a living every day, don't it?" I agreed, and we launched into a brisk conversation about the notorious man.

(Continued on Page 33)



## Zippy and the Acid Rain

All around us, acid rain  
 everywhere; we are acid too.  
 My goldfish died when I was little,  
 just floated to the surface . . .  
 I liked my goldfish,  
 his name was Zippy, or maybe it was a her.  
 One day he got a bloody nose  
 because he swam into the glass . . .  
 Stupid, saw his reflection.  
 Anyhow he died.  
 Daddy flushed him down the toilet.  
 Poor Zippy, I wanted to give him a funeral.

Acid rain kills fish  
 but how did Zippy die?  
 It didn't rain in his tank.  
 A man on television said acid rain is all around us.  
 It kills the fish.  
 Some day all the fish will die,  
 We are fish and the earth is our ocean.  
 We will die; we won't get funerals,  
 we will be flushed down the toilets of the Universe.  
 Just like Zippy.

Erin Gillett  
 Stockbridge, MA  
 Ms. Trudy Rendall

## Ice Age

Across the cold gray field  
 Dead cattle graze  
 On the memory of a  
 Midday snack  
 And beyond this meadow  
 The wind rustles crumpled leaves  
 Over an open highway  
 A factory coughs wisps of spiraling poison  
 Like ghosts of departed poets,  
 Ivory nightgowns fluttering behind them,  
 Grimly cursing past prophecies  
 Now true

Ian Brand  
 Long Beach, NY  
 Frances Goldwater

## Untitled

Biology labs bother me--  
 Dissecting frogs, pigs, cats.  
 Today's dissection was just as nauseating.  
 I let my lab partner do the cutting.  
 As we were working  
 He kept telling me about his friend John,  
 How John had lied to him,  
 How John had used him,  
 How John would steal,  
 About the time John got him  
 In trouble with the cops.  
 He said John had no heart  
 But there I saw it--plain as day.

Richard Abramson  
 Toms River, NJ  
 Lois Hirshkowitz

## The Rest Peddler

the rest peddler  
 came round our  
 block  
 yesterday

smiled his toothless macabre  
 and asked  
 anything today  
 i've got

knives guns razors  
 nooses glass rat poison

and yards yards yards  
 of rope

slicey things to make  
 purple vessels  
 bloom red with the air

and pills  
 to slow  
 the beats  
 of hearts  
 till stopped

he asked  
 will there be  
 anything today

i stopped and stared  
 i wanted to say

o yes  
 one of  
 each

(soft bodied vermin to swirl and  
 consume)

but i pinched my lips  
 and managed  
 to mutter  
 a sullen  
 not today.

Daphne Gottlieb  
 Manlius, NY  
 Mr. George Schmit

## The Fruit Bar Wars

(Continued from Page 32)

The doorman came out and bought a Chipwich, and said that I should get a few strong men in the middle of the night to move the planters back, "Just to show them. I would, but . . ."

The L and I didn't come that day. When the man walked past me at five and said, "You were lucky," I let myself give in to temptation a little and reply sarcastically, "Oh, no." They came a few days later and declared the cart legal "in general." We were told just to make sure that we were eighteen inches away from the curb; the bicycle cart easily accomplished that.

Lisa bought the carts from the women we worked for; they are still outside on sunny days. Next summer we will work every day and get very dirty from the street, and very blonde from the sun.

Rachel Carpenter  
 Philadelphia, PA

## Deer

Once a year I think about life in general, my life in specific, and whether there are any deer in the woods. Not that this annual contemplation happens just anywhere. On the contrary, I seem to be sitting always on the edge of a swamp with a gale-force wind in my face. The temperature hovers around thirty-two degrees so my clothing soaks up more water before re-freezing. At least two turkey vultures circle over me, waiting for my death so that they can pick at my frozen carcass and sell my belongings. My meditation doesn't happen at any time: it happens during what's known as deer season.

I've often wondered why this time of the year is called "deer season." It certainly isn't a season for deer since it is the only time a deer has the "right" to be killed and eaten. Subsequently, all deer now visit their cousins in Idaho. Nor is it a time for deer hunters. They seem obliged to spend the better part of their weekends catching double pneumonia. I think, therefore, that the name "deer season" is actually referring to a season someone holds dear in his heart, probably someone in Idaho.

I typically get to my stand at five-thirty in the morning, an hour and a half before the legal shooting time. By six o'clock I am relaxed and in tune with all that goes on around me. By six-thirty I'm entirely at one with my surroundings. By seven I'm asleep. Invariably, I'm awakened at 7:02 by gunshots from some hunter who knows where the deer are. From then till 8:00, my senses are razor sharp, waiting for deer to walk by oblivious to the yards of fluorescent orange I wear. Around this time, I notice that the tracks by my feet are almost fresh. I come to the realization that a herd of fifty deer galloped by in the two minutes I was dozing. Now I start to think.

At first I think about how deer knew the precise time I fell asleep. Then my thoughts turn to more pressing matters—like where the deer are now. Idaho seems the obvious answer, but I dismiss it knowing that deer can't read airport timetables and have probably boarded the wrong plane and wound up in Tahiti. But how do they get back? By now, I conclude that deer don't exist.

At first, this theory seems far-fetched, but I examine the evidence. When are the only times I see deer? In the off-season, in gun manufacturers' advertisements, and on other hunters' fenders. Now the facts start to fit together. My thinking is only slightly disturbed by the circling vultures. My watch says 8:45.

I theorize that the gun companies had a product to sell, but nobody to sell it to. They then created tales of a fantastic creature with great tasting meat and (get this) horns that fall off every year. Thousands of people now flock to buy guns to shoot these creatures. I now notice a small inscription on my rifle that reads "sucker." Of course, the gun makers wouldn't stop there. No, they went on to breed a mutant strain of goat and to tie broom handles to its head. By nine o'clock it all starts to make sense.

A few questions remain. How do hunters manage to find these "deer" that they hang on their trucks? Not too difficult. The gun companies obviously pay store owners to give a few "deer" away to make the whole thing look legitimate. I suspect the proprietor at the coffee shop on Route 13. I never did like his sneer. Or the way he spilled coffee in my lap. I notice that the vultures are tired of circling and have settled in a tree.

And the tracks? I look suspiciously at the almost fresh ones at my feet. I ask the vultures their opinion. If they answer, I'll get worried. Careful examination shows that the "deer" tracks have been actually made by a tire with a special tread, obviously designed by the gun companies just to confuse me. I feel rather flattered that they have gone through all that trouble, but it hasn't worked.

At 10 A.M. precisely, I walk away from my stand. I leave the turkey vultures, knowing that I have solved the mystery of "deer." The gun companies thought they could fool me, but I

figured them out. Eleven A.M. I drink hot tea and gloat over my success. At noon a truck drives by with a "deer" on the hood. At one o'clock I think of the delicious meat, wrapped in butcher's paper, which my friends will give me. By two o'clock, I'm sitting on my stand by the swamp, talking with the vultures and anticipating the evening run.

Philip Johns  
Silver Spring, MD  
Springbrook High School  
Mary Lee Ruddle

## reflections on myself as seen through a third story window on spring street

this guy is from oklahoma.it is obvious.he is healthy, sort of.his face is reddish.he is making spaghetti on the stove that is next to the bathtub.what a mess.the bandana on his head makes him look kind of domestic,like he was hiding curlers or something.of course, he's not.that would be ridiculous.it was just a little idea that struck my mind.i am sitting on the windowsill next to the catfood watching this oklahoman handling pots and pans and washing dishes in the bathtub.the tunes are good though.the bass fills up the whole room with the little furniture—mainly, a telephone on the floor,and this empty bottle of heineken with these shrivled up flowers that look like old ladies that dye their hair blonde.it is comic,the whole apartment.the refrigerator is of a special kind that can't be opened without a knife and even with a knife it is a problem.i,myself,have never managed it without the help of the oklahoman who,owning the thing is,of course,a master at it.on one of the walls,there is a mural.it is the best thing i have ever seen.it is completely surreal and i can just stare at it for hours and hours.there are all these trees,not just trees,but trees with things growing on them.it's a circus,animals and everything and purple elephants.for the longest time i sit on this windowsill to watch this zoo growing on the trees.it is amazing.and all that is in an apartment where the stove is next to the bathtub.

wally says he wants to go out bowling.wally is my friend.he is from oklahoma too.i just say nothing at all but sit there on the windowsill and enjoy the sun and the sky that is orange and yellow today and am a little bit afraid of falling out.when i look down,i see spring street.it is strange.the people are so close it seems.i can almost touch their heads.at least that's what i feel like but i don't think i should try.when wally and i decided to visit this guy,we had to stand down there for ten minutes yelling—andrew!because he doesn't have a doorbell.he came to the window and threw the key out on the street.now he hands me the plate of spaghetti.it is a mediocre meal and i put the plate down on top of the catfood cans.i like sitting here far too much to let anything bother me.the windowsill is just the right size to sit on comfortably,and it is made out of wood.i guess it had been painted blue or something once,but now the paint is fading and peeling.someone had engraved all kinds of weird little sayings and poems on the wood.perhaps it was the oklahoman or somebody radical who lived here before.it is old, ancient, not in terms of time but in terms of usage,as if many people had sat here before and felt good.

wally and his friend go out bowling and leave me to sit here for a long time.

Lea Kobayashi  
Larchmont, NY  
Mrs. Enid Kaplan

## Flawed Image

"Damn," she cursed quietly. The jeans were too tight. Either her not-so-super-mom had put them in the drier and shrunk them or Terri had gained a few more pounds. It did not really matter. The result would be the same: Terri would look fat. Seven o'clock in the morning, and already things were going wrong.

Compensating for the tightness of her pants, Terri put on the loosest rugby shirt she could find. Once in her high-top Reeboks and freshly applied Clinique make-up, she had only to brush her just blown-dry hair. She swore again when she realized she had left her hairbrush in the bathroom. Cringing, she passed quickly by the sink and toilet and grabbed her brush off the white marble counter.

After plunging down the spiral staircase, Terri swung open the heavy kitchen doors. Her statuesque mother was pouring a cup of hot cocoa for Sara, twelve, and a cup of hot coffee for Terri, seventeen. All assembled around the kitchen table, the two girls showed a remarkable resemblance to their mother.

Sara had her mother's fair complexion, blue eyes, and (once naturally) blond hair. Terri's hair was slightly darker, but her skin was just as light as that of the other two. Older than her still-maturing sister, she already displayed her mother's striking bone structure. She was, by now, nearly as tall as her five-foot, nine-inch mother. The main point distinguishing Terri from her mother and sister was her eyes. They were all bright blue, but unlike Sara and her mother's gentle sparklers, Terri's eyes appeared harsh and cold.

Terri watched, repulsed, as her mother ate a second bagel: it was loaded down with cream cheese. Unfortunately, Terri had inherited a heavy lower body—a gift from dad—without her mother's high metabolism. Though Terri was hardly overweight, she deeply resented her mother's ability to eat whatever she liked without fear of fat.

After interrogating her mother about the jeans and purposely ignoring her little sister, Terri gulped down the now lukewarm coffee. She drove herself to school, first dropping Sara off at junior high. As usual, the old Mercedes continued to cough after she had disengaged the engine—what a piece of junk. She still could not understand why her mother had wanted it so badly. It was probably just spite or greed. She could understand her wanting to keep the house, but she had constant use of her interior decorating firm's company car, and at the time of their split, Terri had been nowhere near old enough to drive. Terri's father could have used the car more—but no. Mom got house, kids, and car; dad got to pay alimony to a woman who earned a more than decent living, and child support for children he rarely saw.

Terri hated school. She loathed dealing with superficial prep school types with whom she had nothing in common. No one in school really seemed to care about anyone else. She could see only temporary acquaintances for fun and convenience. As long as it looked like you had the right friends and got the right grades, it did not matter who actually cared about you or what in fact you had learned.

But hey, it was senior year, and Terri was not going to make an effort to change anything. All that mattered was for her to get into the right college and to get a good job afterwards. So she would play the game for a few more months. She would sink down to the level of her peers enough to be accepted, and study as much as she was required to.

"The game" also meant another day of being polite to teachers whom she hated and who she assumed felt the same way about her. Besides age, the only difference between the teachers and the students was that the teachers did not dress as well. Of course, the styles of preppy clothing hardly changed, but did teachers never buy new clothes? It disgusted Terri (who knew exactly what colors to wear in which season and rarely kept an article of clothing for more than one year), that she could think of at least seven teachers who continually wore the same outfits now as they had when she was a freshman.

The only bright spots she could foresee were: tomorrow would be Friday (no German class), a long weekend would be coming up, and she would already have graduated by the time her brainy sister entered high school. Terri was thankful her mother was picking the brat up today so she could shop.

Terri loved food shopping, but without realizing it, she had spent over an hour in J. Bildner and Son's alone. She looked at the groceries that sat next to her in the car. They looked perfect, nestled in the green and white bag, yet she was still unsure she had been correct in buying the poppy seed brie.

She was glad when she was on her way home. She had eaten only a small salad for lunch that day since she had three straight classes afterwards. (She would have needed some time to herself if she had eaten much else.) She was eager for the rest of the quiche she had made, and devoured half of, the night before. She had baked one for herself with ham, and one for her mother and sister with fish; Sara had recently become a vegetarian.

Terri did most of the cooking at home. Her mother's incompetence in both purchasing and preparing food had always annoyed her. No wonder her father had left. Terri could still remember his pretending to enjoy a chocolate mousse his wife had made; Terri knew he had found it too bitter.

Her mother had already started to heat up the quiches when she walked in. Terri greeted her by handing her the bundles and saying "I don't want to wait for mine to be heated. I'm eating it cold, now. You know I hate it when you mess with my dinner."

"I just thought it would be nice if we could all eat together tonight . . . as a family," her mother said quietly. She was stacking Sara's cans of Bumble Bee tuna up in the cupboard above the stove as she spoke.

Hearing the word "family" from her mother tempted Terri to laugh. Instead, she replied: "Well, you'll have to make it a family of two tonight, mom, because I'm eating now."

"Do you mind if I sit down with you while you eat at least?" the mother asked in her "excuse me for living" voice. Then she added apologetically: "I haven't seen you all day."

"I don't care, sure," Terri answered distantly.

"Do you want anything to drink, dear?" she asked in an irritatingly maternal tone.

"Mom, please, I can get it myself," Terri was losing her battle to remain civil as she poured herself two tall glasses of milk. An uncomfortable period of quiet followed in which Terri ate and drank with amazing speed.

"So, how was school today?" her mother asked, trying to break through the wall of silence.

Now Terri lost all control. "Jesus Christ, mom! How do you think it was? How is it always? What do you expect me to say to you—'Oh, mom, school was so fun today! I love it!?' Grow up. Every day, practically, you ask me this and every time I ask you not to ask me. Will you please catch on and stay out of my life?"

"I can't believe you're acting like this," she responded, hurt, as if this scene had not been played out at least three times a month for the past three years. "Do you assume that just because you're not a little girl anymore I don't care about what happens to you? Sara treats me with the love and respect I deserve. She doesn't talk to me like this and I just hope she never does. I don't think I could stand having both my daughters turn into strangers."

With building hostility, Terri removed a pint of Frusen Gladje from the freezer. Clutching her spoon, dessert, and second glass of milk, she left the kitchen without responding. Terri locked the door to her room so her sister could not come in and disturb her. With an expressionless face, she concentrated all her energy on the rich, chocolate Gladje and the milk.

Almost an hour later, she was sitting on her bathroom's cool tile floor feeling thin, relieved, and free from the day's pressures. Her limbs felt slightly depleted and she was a bit dizzy as she climbed to her feet. She felt the satisfaction of knowing she had gotten rid of a good portion of her dinner. Terri would much

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# Untitled

Alison had not intended to go to the movies with Lisa. In the three months since school had started, she had set up a routine based on solitude, spending lunch in the library with her books, going home to do her homework and to paint, drawing a curtain of printed words and self-sufficiency around her. But she missed the companionship of the friends who had gone to other high schools, and Lisa's invitation was a way out of the closed world that had begun to stifle her.

She had not been aware that Lisa had invited anyone else, but when she went out to meet the car it was already full, and she was not the last to be crowded in. Most of the faces were vaguely familiar from her classes at school; she didn't try to remember their names, sticking as close to Lisa as possible and answering their questions with an absentmindedness that in no way reflected her nervousness. At the movie she ate popcorn and kept her feet tucked under her to avoid the sticky soda on the cement floor; the film, a would-be drama about professional runners, could not take her mind off her sleeping feet. Going home, packed into the back of a Volkswagen beetle with a girl named Mary and her boyfriend whose name she could not remember, she let the conversation drift around her in a pleasant hum, watching the strange triple shadows cast by the streetlights move across the boys still face until she could not quite remember what he looked like.

When she was home, ready for bed with the lights out, the rain began: heavy drops, slanting in at an angle, leaving long, jagged slashes on the window that reflected and blurred the lights until she could no longer see them in the street below. She sat motionless on the foot of the bed, leaning her forehead against the glass with the darkness gathered round her, listening to the rain rhythmically assailing the shingles above, watching her reflection fade, melt away, reassemble. Her thoughts, too, melted away, shapeless, abstract, seeping through fragmented shards of memory until they formed a still pool.

She stopped spending the lunch hour alone in the library. She had hoped that the boy, whose name she had learned was Alex, would sit at Lisa's lunch table; but he and Mary sat elsewhere. After the first few days she stopped waiting for him to appear and began to talk to the others at the table. But in the middle of telling about the only Taoist in the United States Armed Forces, or the duck she and her brother chased through the bushes with all the neighbors looking on, her eyes would slip away from theirs, searching the crowd of talking, laughing faces for one that was not there.

When Lisa asked her to go caroling Christmas Eve, she went. As she walked behind Lisa and Tom on the frosty December streets, singing "We Three Kings" and "Silent Night" and "Carol of the Bells," knowing that somewhere out of sight behind her Alex was also singing, her alienation seemed overpowering in a way it had not earlier in the year.

"Hello," said Alex.

She looked at him a little unevenly, unnerved by his appearance, wondering why he had spoken to her. "Hello."

"You looked lonely, so I thought I'd say something." He was slightly ill at ease, perhaps because the friend he had brought, Tom, had gone off with Lisa so quickly.

"Oh."

"I can't seem to think of anything to say. You?" She shook her head, glad he shared her discomfort. They walked in silence for a while, listening to the singing; ahead, someone started "Saint Basil's Hymn," the strong, sweet voice dropping notes into the darkened street. She realized that Alex had begun talking again; describing the camp he and Sean had gone to where they learned to fly; wondering why the rest of the group didn't like him; telling her about his job in D.C.

"Who's Sean?" she asked irrelevantly, and he paused, watching her a moment with still grey-blue eyes.

"Sean is . . . well, he's been my best friend for years, ever

since second grade . . ." He plunged into a vivid account of the restless, dynamic brother who had always been closer than his real brother; who flirted constantly and without success; "I guess you wouldn't know him, not many freshmen do, except for Mary, and that's because she knows me--." He broke off and she looked away, noticing as she did so that the singing had stopped and they were back at the cars, preparing to leave.

Lisa called her. She said goodbye stiffly, not looking at him, and went to the car. Lisa asked immediately, "So, do you like Alex?"

"Yes," she said in a muffled voice, a part of her wondering why the grey headrest before her was tilted at such an uncomfortable angle. Lisa went straight on about how Mary didn't like him anymore anyway, and how Mary was becoming a boor, so it really didn't matter, and Alison wished she could sink into the leather car seat and disappear; she had no defense against Lisa's happy prattle.

The next morning, Christmas Day, she lay in bed, trying to ignore the unwrapped presents on her dresser. She glanced at the clock; it was still early, her mother would be sleeping. She got up, moving quietly in the semi-darkness, dressed, and made her way down to the foyer where she found hat and coat and gloves, and went out.

She eased the door shut behind her, turned, and stumbled down the steep, frosted hill, her breath marking the air with white. At the bottom, where the grey-skinned birch and elm shadowed the earth with their clean limbs, she was forced to slow and pick her way across rotted duckboards. A light rain, chill and invisible, laced her lashes and hair, gathered in droplets on her parka, and then dropped suddenly like small, desperate waterways. On the path ahead, a startled cat looked up from cleaning tiny feathers from its fur, looking sleek and oddly like Lisa, the way her green eyes looked up sometimes when she forgot to smile. She made her way to the side of the creek, the slick, dead reeds crackling across the morning, and stared at her icy reflection in the brown water, something tight and wordless at the back of her throat. The cat pushed against her leg, purring. She thought of the way Alex pushed his hand through his too-long hair, and the intensity in his face when he had talked about Sean, and the ice in her throat seemed to be dissolving, breaking off in the creek water and floating away with Lisa's smile and brittle laugh. She bent down to stroke the cat, but it stood unmoving, staring at its reflection in the water. She rose and turned to head home, then stood still, for as the dawning sun stretched its searching tendrils of light through the trees, turning the frost from grey to silver, the first flakes of snow drifted to earth, and the streetlights flickered out.

Liz Shura

Vienna, VA

Mrs. Bernis von zur Muehlen

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rather have stayed on the floor, reclining against the counter, but she realized that she had to brush her teeth and do her homework for Friday.

Terri savored the tooth brushing that night. She knew that, unlike they had been the night before, her teeth had not been scraped with acid. She could also spit out the toothpaste without seeing any of her blood go down the sink with it. The milk had really coated her throat; it did not burn at all.

For those few moments she felt things were perfect--but that feeling quickly passed. Tears came to Terri's no longer strong blue eyes as she looked in the mirror. There were little red dots around her eyes. "Damn," she half whispered, half whined. Could she do nothing right? No, she could not even do this successfully. No wonder her father had left. Terri was a failure.

Lara Denis

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Ms. Hamilton



Cissy Trotman  
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## Untitled

There was a thick, ripe tomato that grew slanted towards the sun. The sky was slate colored in the early mornings when I woke; at six there was light, and it was hot even then. The radio would be on, but softly so my mother wouldn't hear, and I would sit on the windowsill and fog the sweaty glass. At six thirty the sky would shift its grimy clouds towards the wide blue day that lay ahead. There was this growing anticipation as the sun rose. There was always a slight bewilderment and wonder at how the sky did this to itself, every day. The rush of the waves and the pull of the sand. At seven I would step onto the beach. The sun was hot, secretly and quietly. It didn't want to offend anyone. The water was icy and filled with salt and grit that stung.

The smell of salt and the tomato bursting towards the sun. As it grew lighter and I stood in the sand, the sky would blend its lemon colors. The sun started to act differently towards me. It noticed a change.

The sun is high overhead and I can't see my shadow. I can look back at my windowsill and remember the quiet the mornings had, the secrecy and pleasure of the birth. I lay on the beach, comforted by its touch, knowing I am not I; I am this one, this pebble on the sand, with the waves, the water.

Today was a day of scaffolding. Everywhere I put my feet there was a reconstruction.

Laura Migdal  
New York, NY  
LaGuardia High School of Music and the Arts  
Ms. Karyn Kay

## Becoming Ten (10)

the soldier stood  
guarding the fort  
proud of the  
power  
he commanded  
but he was lonely  
behind the steel

of his gun  
and his posture  
he wanted  
something alive  
to be there with him  
the cook  
dried off the last pot  
and walked out back  
his friends were there  
nine mutts  
howling and whining  
about him  
he loved them  
loved their company  
the strength of friends  
but he wanted  
to be alone  
just to think  
he fingered  
a small rubber ball  
in his pocket  
before hurling it  
with all his might  
toward the front gate  
all nine dogs  
chased it  
he was finally  
alone  
the soldier  
dropped his guard  
and stepped away from  
his post  
to pick up a red ball  
rolling towards him  
ignoring his duties  
he began bouncing it  
nine mongrels came  
to claim it  
jubilant  
he played with them  
forgetting his career  
just for a second  
till he found himself  
one pace to the left  
the ball to the right  
bound together  
decimally  
Lori Brudner  
Long Beach, NY  
Frances Goldwater



Ted Koester  
Clifton Park, NY

## An Immigrant's Story (2)

The railway station was grey and bleak. The platform, although clean, was made of a dirty-grey concrete. The dismal appearance of the station was also due to the lack of light, since half of the lamps, high overhead, were either smashed or turned off. The station was crowded, which was not unusual for that year, as this was the only station which connected Odessa and Europe. Among the crowd, the neat grey uniforms of the militia men, stood out like somber islands of calm superiority among a multi-colored, agitated sea of humanity. The year was 1975, and the overwhelming majority of people in this station were Jewish. One did not have to look at the actual people waiting for the train to tell their nationality, however. The look in the eyes of the militia men and their condescending tone were to be used in the presence of only one ethnic group.

This was the scene that greeted Vladimir Zymbovsky as he entered the inspection line. He was a man in his fifties who looked forty. His lanky frame gave him the appearance of being taller than he really was. His sharply chiseled features made him look dignified enough at close scrutiny, but he did not stand out from the crowd of people milling about. His plainness was a result of his environment—it is not wise for a Jew to stand out. His eyes, lively and intelligent in private, were now narrow and downcast.

He stood patiently, accustomed to the long lines that were so much a part of Russian every day life. As he waited, his thoughts drifted back to the events of the past few months.

It had all begun when he heard a Jewish co-worker's story of how her son, having graduated from college with the highest honors possible, could not even get into medical school. The boy had been forced to forget his dream of becoming a physician, and had gone to work as a laborer to support his wife and child. As he heard this story, Vladimir pictured his own 19 year-old son in the same position. The image horrified him. That evening he told his wife the story and, as they did many nights afterwards, the couple lay awake that night, desperately trying to devise a way out for their son.

The realization of what they had to do did not come easily or pleasantly. To leave the country was a step that was as dangerous as it was final. The couple knew that as soon as their applications for exit visas arrived in Moscow, their jobs would be forfeit, and they would be labeled as "enemies of the state" forever. They also knew that if they made a successful immigration, which depended solely on fickle fortune, they could never return. They would never again see their friends or their relatives.

A letter that was to decide the future of the family arrived two weeks later. It was a summons for their son into the army effective at the end of his school year—in two months. The situation had suddenly become desperate. Both Vladimir and Alyona knew that as soon as their son entered the army, none of them would ever exit the U.S.S.R. Their son would, supposedly, be in possession of "top-secret military information." Their applications were in the mail within the hour. It was now a matter of praying that the applications would go through and that the visa would arrive before time ran out for their son and them.

In the station, Vladimir smiled at his son, who was standing near his mother. The boy was tall and lanky, with his father's fine featured visage. The mother was rather short and slightly overweight, but she carried herself with a grace that made her plumpness barely noticeable. She did not stand out, however. She would never have her position at the hospital if she had stood out from the crowd too much. Nobody likes a Jew who believes herself to be special.

Vladimir remembered the final weeks of tension and anxiety as they waited for their visas. The wait finally came to an end two days before their son was due to arrive in Moscow for his first day in the military.

The good-byes were the most painful memories of all. He thought of his brother, the rest of his relatives and his good friends, to whom he could now only write.

A hand suddenly gripped his shoulder, jolting him into the real world.

"Good afternoon, tovarisch" said a bass voice behind him.

Three uniformed militia men had come up to him. Smiling, one had his hand on Vladimir's shoulder, beaming with false benevolence.

"Good afternoon," said Vladimir with a smile that hid the fear he felt within him.

"A fine family you have here, tovarisch," said the leader of the group with a note of sarcasm. "Now how could such a beautiful lady, such a fine man and such a nice boy abandon the homeland that made them such fine people, eh?"

"The way you put it, I'm almost regretting my decision to leave," said Vladimir with a nervous smile.

Two pairs of hands suddenly gripped him and began dragging him away from the crowd of people.

"We are most glad to oblige, tovarisch, and I am personally glad for you. You have shown intelligence, courage and patriotism by changing your mind," said the militia man, as his companions proceeded to drag Vladimir away. Before they could get far, however, a shrill scream cut through the noise of the station.

"Let go of him, you sons of ----es!!"

And Alyona, dropping the suitcases that she was carrying, threw herself upon her husband, pulling him away from his assailants. Seeing the desperation in the woman's eyes, the leader motioned his men away from Vladimir.

"Too bad, friend, we thought you were smart, but I guess you're just another dumb dgiid," he said with a chuckle and motioned his men to follow him.

"You fool!! You cretin!!" cried Alyona when the soldiers had gone. "I . . . I . . . oooh!! Just get back in line, you idiot!!" she cried, and barely missed his ear with her fist.

The remainder of their wait was uneventful, and Vladimir took one last look around him as he entered the inspection room. This was a room with a number of militia men leaning against the walls, looking bored. A portly figure who was obviously their superior in rank was sitting behind a large table, drumming his chubby fingers. As Vladimir and Alyona placed their luggage on the desk in front of the fat captain, they heard the roar of a train as it entered the station. Knowing that the train waited a maximum of ten minutes for passengers before leaving, Vladimir began to get nervous. The fat man's actions got slower and slower as the minutes crawled by. He calmly dug through the clothes in the suitcases with his small, round hands, sometimes lowering his thick, flat nose to the contents of the suitcases. The captain would occasionally take a piece of jewelry or some other trinket, examine it closely, and place it in his pants pocket with a benevolent smile. Nine minutes had gone by, and still the fat man was not done. Vladimir was sweating and was desperately looking at his watch. With thirty seconds to go until the train would leave, the fat man rose from his desk.

"Very good, tovarischii, I see you are carrying no contraband from the motherland or secret nuclear devices," said he with a malicious chuckle, "Good luck on catching the train, dgiid."

Never in their lives had they run so fast, thrown so many suitcases on a moving train or been so lucky as they were in that minute.

1. tovarisch - comrade
2. dgiid - derogatory term for a Jew

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Sharon Hamilton

# A Serious Essay on Humor

and how it can be used as a tactical weapon

Laughter, what is it? Scientists have determined that laughter is a series of uncontrollable convulsions due to an imbalance in the cerebral portion of the brain. This imbalance can be caused by any number of puns, pratfalls, mixed metaphors, and sarcastic remarks, to name a few. Laughter has become a safe practice by just about everyone, except for several incidents of laughter while drinking milk which causes the liquid to penetrate the nasal cavity and dribble from the nostril in a whitish goo. However, most people enjoy laughter and some have even made it an art such as the famous Dezi Arnaz, better known as Ho, Ho, Ho, Ricky Ricardo. Some men have made a profession of making people laugh. They are called comedians. A few years ago these men conducted an intensive investigation to find out what makes people laugh. Their findings are about to be released publicly for the first time.

Comedy is believed to have begun in a small prehistoric tribe named Hyena. Although the joke was only two syllables in length, it went over well and the tribe immediately erupted with laughter. However, this primitive tribe did not know how to control this new phenomenon and all died a week later of prolonged laughter. From this tragic incident the terms "laughing hyenas" and "knocked 'em dead" were derived. The first recorded joke was done in Egyptian Hieroglyphics and began, "☆☆□□=☆☆☆ □□⚡ + +□☆☆©©" and is roughly translated, "A funny thing happened to me on the way to the Pyramids. In fact, the Egyptians were a very funny people and used to bury live slaves with their dead, much to the amusement of the Pharaoh.

Since those crude beginnings, comedy has been shaped, revised and perfected. During the Dark Ages, jokes hit a low point due to the disappearance of the punch-line. This is attributed to the fact that during the Medieval ages when someone told a bad joke they were socked in the face, hence the term "punch-line." Comedians, fearful of broken noses, took their practice underground. Not until the early 1600's did comedy emerge again, only under an assumed name, humor. Humor is the Latin term for fluid which was many times released into the pants of the laughing person.

Sarcasm did much to the development of comedy. The first recognized figure to use sarcasm was Adolf Hitler. He was, however, way before his time and misunderstood by most. For instance, in his late teens his parents asked him, "Adolf, you lazy boy, what are you going to do with yourself?" His reply, "I think I'll take over the world or something," was taken seriously by both his parents and the rest of the people of Germany. Ever since, the sarcastic remarks have been looked down upon by most of the free world.

Another form of comic fun is to try to convince your most gullible friend that something totally ridiculous is true. Probably the most successful attempt was made by Christopher Columbus who tried one day to convince his next door neighbor that the world is round. Now, five hundred years later he has fooled just about the entire world.

The first pun was told by a witty court jester to Queen Inga the Unattractive, so titled because of the placement of an ear on her forehead due to years of inbreeding. Upon her request of a joke he asked, "Pun what subject?" She suggested the king. The jester replied, "But the king is not a subject, he is the king!" Unfortunately the royalty was not amused and the jester had his head displaced from the rest of his body. To this he received a standing ovation from the crowd. Since that time the pun has been regarded as the lowest form of wit.

Soon after completing his study on the laws of physical science, Sir Isaac Newton began his research into the laws of physical comedy. Since the beginning of recorded history when the first caveman slipped on a banana peel into a molten lava pit,

man has found humor in physical mishaps and blunders. Probably the most advanced form of physical humor is the tried and true pie in the face, followed closely by the dropping of the pants. It is considered by most that physical comedy is crude, tasteless and cheap. However, some people will do anything for a laugh. Why is it that the sight of an old woman punching a 576 lb. Sumo wrestler makes people laugh? Is it because it is completely bizarre? Or is it because we feel for the plight of the elderly against the greater oppressor? Obviously the former is true.

Humor has also been incorporated into a type of play called, appropriately, "Comedy." William Shakespeare, regarded as one of the greatest comedy writers of all time, was not known to have a great sense of humor. In fact he had to have his own jokes explained to him. Thanks to some brilliant and artistic friends, his play, "Whoops, I Made a Mistake" was changed to, "A Comedy of Errors." Shakespeare, confused by his ability to make people laugh, became insulted and offended. Not until the further development of the Renaissance and several threatening letters did he continue his writing.

Comedy is the culmination of quick thinking, good timing and a slightly warped mind. We can conclude that, because man is the only thinking animal and the only creature using laughter as a means of expression, humor is the product of the conscious man. Therefore, a comedian that drives his audience to a comatose state should seriously consider getting a new job. Finally, in the immortal words of Daniel Webster, "Have fun, laugh, and be merry . . . or die."

Sean McNamara  
Redding, CT

## Untitled

My grandmother sits in her little, rent controlled walk-up in the West Village, surrounded only by memories of dead times. For all intents and purposes her life is over; she is only waiting for the official announcement, and the funeral where the relatives who no longer see her will arrive with flowers.

At this exact moment my grandmother is hungry. She would like a bagel and cream cheese, but her legs can't carry her to the kitchen, and her arms can't carry the bagel. She has to ask the fat Jamaican woman with beady eyes to make her meal and serve it to her; the truth is my grandmother is too proud to admit that she is old and enfeebled. It's her tragic flaw, because she won't be able to have even one bite of bagel. Instead, a piece of rye toast is shoved in her face. Next to it stoops a glass of prune juice with just enough added potassium in it to taste bad.

As my grandmother eats, food falls from her face, and she looks around to make sure no one has seen her in her moment of degradation.

Once upon a time she was a beautiful woman. If you don't believe this, just peak into the large wooden chest. There lies pictures of a young girl with braids and happy smiles. Right before your eyes you can see this young girl turn into a handsome competent woman, and then slowly, as you progress through the years, you can see my grandmother as she looks at the cracks in the wall with nothing to look forward to but death.

She is under five feet tall and no more than ninety-five pounds. Her hair is dyed a grossly out of place dark brown. It stands out next to her intensely white, delicate skin that she used to so pride herself in. She still takes care of it by rubbing Porcellina into it every night; it is the only thing that she still does by herself and it gives her some measure of satisfaction, although her skin is no different than the sagging old lady's next door in apartment 2F. My grandmother's eyes are a light brown with stunning black specks. They are almond shaped and used

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to smiling, but they have been out of practice lately. Now they stare at the world behind shields of glassy fluids.

After her body has taken in just enough energy to keep alive another day, she is half carried into her bed. Here she no longer has to stare at the cracks in the wall, for there are a multitude of cracks in the ceiling. Because there is nothing better to do, my grandmother falls into a uneasy sleep, with occasional attempts at moving around in bed, like the rest of America. As she sleeps, Joyce can be seen running up the phone bill or jogging in place. She is a certified nurse's aide and a good person, but she treats my grandmother like a job. She will tell you that one old lady in a wheelchair is like the next; but we're talking about my grandmother. The apartment smells of a stink that is caused directly by Joyce's physical exertions, and by the fact that my grandmother can no longer control her body.

The apartment is cozy, with furniture unchanged for fifty years. All over one can see the original works of art by friends of my grandmother and some by herself. The pictures have watched over her life, but as she sleeps in her sick bed, they look just as she did when the artist scrawled their signatures decades ago. There are books stacked in neat piles in bookcases all throughout the house, for my grandmother was always a vivacious reader. She read Victorian novels, short stories, Yiddish folk tales and a wild assortment of political commentaries. Now, however, the stroke has left her without the ability to read and she's reduced to living without learning and being closed off entirely from the outside world. She only stares at them with the sad eyes of desire.

When she was well, she liked to take me on long walks around Washington Square Park, where she would point out all the strange people and talk to me about anything that ever was and some things that never will be.

She was very imaginative and wrote many short stories. Once, she told me that if it hadn't been for fate, she would have been a real writer, the kind that people would talk about at the dinner table. She used to write rivers of words, and then tear the pages to shreds in disgust. Her destiny never did collide with her dreams and my grandmother never even published a sentence. When she retired, however, she attended many courses to learn and to have fun. Since her stroke, she has been unable to write a letter clearly, let alone a Pulitzer Prize winning novel.

At noon my grandmother will get up to do her exercises. They consist of moving her arm, walking ten feet, rolling her tongue, and blinking her eye. For her it is a gruesome task, and takes about an hour. It exhausts her, so she is plunked in a chair and given carrots and roasted chicken as well as some more of the dreaded medications. The chicken is good but this downcast woman is immune to the pleasures of the world.

She was a little girl in the Ukrainian village of Helinka. Her father was a store owner and a leading Jewish citizen but he accidentally killed a drunkard in a brawl that started with an argument over Jesus. To shield his family from his deed and the threat of pogroms and Jewish persecution, he decided to move to the new land. He arrived with my grandmother and two of her sisters. The brand new Americans opened up a newspaper stand and the lady who now sits unable to speak went to school to learn to speak her third language.

Her cousins had a large hotel in the Catskills so after a few years the Slutskys moved up to Ellenville, New York, and opened up a boarding house. For the next fifty years, my grandmother remained attached to the hotel industry. She married a dentist and became a housewife but in her forties she bought another hotel from her sisters. It remained in operation for twenty years, until it was bought by her cousins in the neighboring Nevelle Country Club. Her hotel attracted a medley of leftist intellectuals and Russian Jews. People who are now household names with shiny white teeth once performed at Grandmother's

hotel as actors, singers and waiters.

My grandmother hates to remember the past, but the present holds only emptiness and the future hides what we don't know and what she doesn't want to find out. She bides her time and the days pass with a blur.

Sometimes she will watch T.V., but without fail her beautiful eyes will begin to droop and she will begin to snore. Once in a while she tries to read but her mind can't hold on to the pages. Her life is the visits from her close relatives. When they visit, many times she throws tantrums, making them feel like never coming again.

Between one and six in the afternoon, my grandmother sits in a chair as her eyes watch the Jamaican stomp through the house on various tasks.

My grandmother's arm rests on her stomach, unable to move. The shiny brace raps around her aged leg, and wrinkles brush through her face. Her teeth are steadily escaping her mouth.

"Nanny, live your life, have fun!"

We all silently scream as we usher into the apartment to visit her again. But my grandmother only looks at us with those eyes, and then stares at the ceiling. Trapped within her own head; a prisoner.

Daniel Moses  
Larchmont, NY  
Mrs. Enid Kaplan

## Grandma

*I'd see her mopping floors up every night.  
She'd pour the dirty water on the cats.  
Had pleated skin, and eyes that danced with life,  
Loved chocolate and drank her coffee black.  
In flowered gowns of blue that matched her eyes,  
And furry slippers tearing at the sole,  
Standing in her kitchen she would fry  
Kreplach when all the soup was gone; and signs  
She made to help translate her broken yiddish.  
She filled her house with smiles and luscious scents  
Of cakes and breads she would bake in her kitchen  
throughout the day. And now she's gone. Hence  
The alley cats come scrounging six o'clock.  
No scraps put out quite famished they depart.*

Sherry Gutnick  
Brooklyn, NY  
Ditmas Junior High School  
Ms. Sasnow

## Summer Evening Before the Rain Falls

*Those mournful, still-born summer eves  
when lost dreams form a stifling quilt of the air  
children push their mothers' bruised hands away  
Neither lemonade nor ice cream change  
the sullen way  
ice cubes have of melting, forming warm water  
nobody wants  
the people move slowly  
seldom smiling  
young girls push lank hair back  
from bruised brows  
even the dogs sense the mood  
and do not play  
bruised paws padding on burning asphalt*

Terren Ilana Wein  
Ossining, NY  
Dr. A. Clemente



## Time for Goodbye

Sheila began scooping the mint chocolate ice cream for the super sundae ordered by the overweight man with the napkin tucked into his shirt. Tonight was the night Elizabeth was flying in from Texas to stay at Jackie's house for two weeks. She mulled over the idea of calling her after work. But what would it matter. She worked on, concentrating on just the right proportions of ice cream and hot fudge, a perfect whipped cream style, and a cherry placed directly on top. Each chocolate sprinkle and walnut that fell off was rescued and carefully pressed back on. Not one detail could be overlooked, lest her mind drifted to things that really mattered.

Glancing over at the tables, Sheila was surprised to see Elizabeth sitting with Jackie at a booth. Elizabeth waved frantically, and a huge grin spread across her face. Sheila waved and smiled in return. Each time Elizabeth had visited their hometown for the past four years, Sheila had received a long, warm hug, a hug tighter and longer than anyone else got. Because it seemed so sincere, the embrace confused her all the more.

She worked on the next two orders, topping them with hot fudge instead of the requested butterscotch. Her mind was clouded with jumbled thoughts about Elizabeth. She remembered when they had been like sisters and lived at The Sundae Shop "pigging out," laughing, giving the waitresses a hard time. "And now look at us," Sheila mumbled into the buspan of dirty dishes as she carried it back to the kitchen.

"Sheila, you're off now, hon." It was Philip, the manager. Without hesitation, she approached Elizabeth and Jackie. The hug, then the kiss.

"Sheila, how are you?" she asked excitedly.

"Great. And how are you, Elizabeth? I love your hair; you always looked nice with a short style."

They chatted about their families and their summer vacation, but it didn't seem to be such small talk as they looked each other over.

"I'll call you tomorrow night, Elizabeth, before you two leave for the shore," Sheila said and wondered how sincere she sounded.

"Okay! We'll be home! You bet," Elizabeth and Jackie chimed together.

Butterflies invaded Sheila's stomach even more than before.

"Sheila, remember how we used to come here all the time and eat the biggest, gooiest sundaes?" Elizabeth paused. "And now you work here." Elizabeth smiled softly.

"Yeh, I know, I was just thinking the same thing."

Sheila studied Elizabeth for a moment. She was thinking deeper than The Sundae Shop. "Well, I'll see ya' guys!" she said.

"Bye," Jackie answered, getting up from the booth.

"Bye." And a quick hug and kiss for Elizabeth and Sheila.

Sheila walked to the back of the shop, knowing she and Elizabeth would not talk again until Elizabeth visited the next time, but not knowing why. She never would know why. But she did know it was her turn to let go. Four years ago--Elizabeth already had.

Claudine Guillemain  
Montvale, NJ  
Charmaine Gillow

## In the Out Door

She is walking down a corridor. The hallway is about as long as she is old. It is plain with no doors on either side, just a hallway. Finally, after walking for a long long time, she comes to a stop. She is presented with two doors in front of her. Each has a doorknob and opens only one way, forward. The left door is marked "out," while the right door has "in" written on it. From hearsay, it is more advantageous to choose the "in" door. She opens it and walks through. The hallway continues. Light shines bright wherever she goes. Then she comes across other people. They are all wearing docksiders. She feels a sudden urge to get a pair. So she continues on down the corridor, looking for a place to get some of these shoes. The moment after she finds her pair, she wants an Opus album, the new group to hit the charts. She notices she has heard this music ever since entering the "in" door. She goes into a mad frenzy to obtain an Opus record. The instant she has the Opus LP and the docksiders, she sees nothing but Benetton and madly searches for a sweater with a Benetton insignia emblazoned upon its chest. Slowly other people start to approach her. When she finally finds a Benetton article, further down the corridor, even more people approach her. They all look the same. All have docksiders, including her. All have an Opus album, including her. All have another, except her. She needs a guy! Where will she find one? Everyone is taken. She feels a great pressure to get one. She cannot. People start to fade away. They do not accept her anymore. She does not have a guy! Get one, get one, get one, GET one!

He is walking down the corridor. The hallway is about as long as he is old. It is plain with no doors on either side, just a hallway. Finally after walking for a long, long time, he comes to a stop. He is presented with two doors in front of him. Each has a doorknob and opens only one way, forward. The left door is marked "out," while the right door has "in" written on it. He has heard one can go into the "out" area. He pushes the "out" door. It is barely lit in the hallway. As he ventures down the hallway he encounters a few people. All say a greeting. He answers back a friendly acknowledgement and continues on his way. Every few yards he walks, a different tune is heard. Nobody seems to be in groups, maybe two or three here or there, but rarely more than that. He just continues down the corridor content to be what he is. He collects his favorite music that he hears along his journey. Nobody cares what he listens to. He buys his favorite clothing. Nobody cares about his preferences. People keep saying things to him, nothing negative, and sometimes a conversation is struck up. He continues like this; carefree.

You are walking down a corridor. The hallway is about as long as you are old. It is plain with no doors on either side, just a hallway. Finally after walking for a long, long time you come to a stop. You are presented with two doors in front of you. Each has a doorknob and opens only one way, forward. The left door is marked "out," while the right door has "in" written on it. You reach for a doorknob.

Christopher Weinrich  
Madison, NJ  
Ms. Emily Style

## Preserves

Days I watch people  
And set them on shelves,  
Life pumped pots of jam,  
Cooling softly in a darkened basement.  
And I, plopping labels on their lids,  
Let tasty sweet jelly  
Sing on my tongue.  
Evenings I creak my chair  
Across the porch  
And watch as the sun

Licks over my house,  
Soothing the burnt wound  
Between two chimneys  
While shadows creep forward  
And trees run quickly  
Through their colors--  
A dress rehearsal of seasons.

Sarah Marshall  
Baltimore, MD

## 1 (Prologue)

The peaceful night is broken only by his footsteps as he walks and tries to clear his thoughts. The tree-lined trail is lit only by the moon until he hears the low drone of the engine. Suddenly the headlights cut through the night, and the car overtakes him. Unwillingly, he is dragged back to reality by the discarded bottle which shatters on the ground in front of him. Then, while the woodlands become cities, the path becomes pavement, and the unspoiled darkness turns into dawn.

## 2

"...John was cleaning out the bathroom cabinet right after they moved in, and he found an old diary taped to the underside of one of the drawers. From the handwriting it looked like it belonged to a child. Most of the entries were run-of-the-mill kid's stuff, except for this one part that was really different. The kid seemed to believe that if she stared at this one particular spot on her bedroom rug then the carpet fibers would start to shift and open up. The longer she looked without blinking, the more the rug would change. The poor child was convinced that this was the gateway to some other universe, or plane of existence, or whatever. She thought that she could open it up and go through only if she could stare for long enough without blinking. Evidently the hole closed if her eyes wavered. John said that the kid seemed to become more obsessed with this as the diary went on, especially in the last few entries...."

## 3

Once again while he lies in the icy bed, the worn furnishings seem to block his escape with creaks of protest. Far away, he can hear the nightowl calling him with distant promises of peace, and then he sees the headlights sneak through a crack in the curtains. He watches in horror as he sees how the light-beams appear to peel the ancient paint away from the walls in unbroken slivers. He is still waiting for the owl to take him to the dreams which will help focus his blurry mind. Unfortunately, as soon as the dreamed images have restored order to his life, the nightbird flies away. Moments later, the room comes flooding back as he wakes to live, once again.

## 4

"...So anyway, did you hear about Sherry? She married and got converted to some weird religion. Then she went off of the deep end, if you know what I mean. She had a little boy, and the two of them started breaking into neighbors' houses when no one was there. You know how it's real easy to pop those cheap locks on the windows? Well, she'd open them and put her little boy into the house. He never took anything. Instead, he'd just sort of move things around. What's really funny is that Sherry told the kid he was a ghost, and no one could see him. I guess it kept him from being frightened while he was inside. The whole neighborhood was about scared to death. Can you imagine coming home and finding everything shifted all about? Anyway, one time someone came home early and found the boy in his house. The child must have really believed the stuff about being a ghost because he didn't think the man could see him. When the boy found out that wasn't the way things were, he panicked. He ran back to the window, but his mother had run off and abandoned him..."

## 5

Sometimes he sits silently in a tree at the edge of a field and notices the group of children who are playing together. Then he sees the one who has removed herself from them and is living in her own world. He knows well the secluded games she is imagining. Sometimes she will stare at the glowing sun and pretend it is charging her with magical powers. Or perhaps she'll concentrate on the tall weeds and anxiously wait for the buzzing sounds of the insects to manifest themselves as strange creatures from foreign worlds. He knows that one day they might be kind, but on other days they might be hostile. As the girl plays

(If you're not reading...)

one of hundreds of lonely mind games, she will often fail to notice the other children when they call to her. First they will ask her to join in their games, but later, he is certain, she will be taunted for her solitude. Then he feels his stomach start to turn and knot as he realizes he is powerless to stop her from making the same mistakes that he has made.

## 6

"...It was one of those family reunion-type things, and, just to make his kids feel a bit more grown-up, my brother gave each of them a little wine. Chris, that's his oldest, was the only one who was mature enough to be interested in the conversation. Since you just can't expect little ones to sit still for dinners like that, he let the younger two go out and play while Chris stayed with the adults. Then my brother gave the kid some more wine. He didn't seem to be affected by it, so he got even more. Next thing we knew, the child was drunk. At first it was funny, but then things got sort of weird. Chris started talking about his dreams. They were these surreal sorts of images that a lot of creative youngsters would come up with. But after talking about those for a while, the young inebriate seemed to get sober. He started telling us about some things that happened when he was little, and then all of a sudden my brother became furious and dragged Chris from the table. For a few moments, there was some soft yelling from the back of the house. Then my brother came back by himself and changed the subject...."

## 7 (Epilogue)

The raindrops collect onto the leaves and fall upon his shoulders like small crystal marbles. His movement is random while he wrestles with the difficult feelings which are in his mind. In the course of his ramblings, he accidentally stumbles across an old tennis ball that was buried in a pile of rotting leaves. As he tosses it thoughtfully in one hand, he notices the ruins of an ancient tree-house where children once played. He slings the ball up against the remaining boards and catches it as it falls back toward the ground. He throws it again and again, harder each time, until it finally breaks through the rotted wood and is lost forever. Meanwhile, the rain has plastered his hair to his forehead, and his clothing is soaked through to the skin. He sweeps his hair away from his eyes and slowly begins to walk home.

Robert Byram  
Dale City, VA  
Mrs. Koeppling

## The Drowning

The sun pressed itself against the cobbled streets and thin sidewalks, twisting its invisible fingers through the stifling heat of the sterile afternoon air. The square, white houses reflected the sun like mirrors, adding to the unforgiving brightness that worked itself into every corner, fighting a battle with time, unwilling to give up even the smallest space to shadow.

A widow dressed in black walked slowly down the roughly tiled sidewalk. The old woman's eyes were slits in her head, squinting against the blinding light, vainly attempting to see. Her face was a map of lines and loose flesh, clinging to the underlying bone structure, and one could just barely make out the features and possible beauty that might have existed there in youth. Painfully, her bulky figure waddled up the narrow street, bent over under its own weight, and turned around the corner.

This activity had barely disturbed the lethargic scene, and all was as before, unaffected, until a skeletal cat slipped out of one of the alleyways. It pattered swiftly and awkwardly down the scorching sidewalk, keeping its belly close to the ground, cringing from some unseen enemy. It slithered more than it walked, and resembled a snake, for its ears had been clipped off while still a kitten by one of the boys in the village. Without hesitating, it pushed through a hole in a wooden door leading to the back

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# The Drowning

(Continued from Page 42)

porch of a house. The crooked tail followed after the emaciated body and disappeared.

Rosio, who sat pensive in the center of the patio, glanced up from the four little creatures she held in her hands, and stared at the cat. It, in turn, looked nervously at the girl and walked cautiously towards the faucet jutting out of the wall where the water dripped continuously into the dry earth. Rosio's eyes followed its movements, watching its thin chest heave up and down and the bones click back and forth under the elastic skin. Her hand moved deftly over the soft fur of the animals whining pitifully and stumbling blindly over each other in her lap. Rosio, with her eyes still fixed on the cat, listened to the whirring sound of the washing machine, and waited for the short, plump figure of her aunt to appear in the doorway. Paquita stuck her head out of the laundry room, her black hair hanging down in long, thick braids, and almost shouted to be heard above the noise of the clothes washing.

"Put the puppies in a bag, Rosio. I can't have them around here any longer. With two cats and a dog I have enough mouths to feed."

"What are you going to do with them?" Rosio touched a puppy's soft pink nose. Paquita came out of the washroom with a load of wet laundry and a mouth full of clothespins.

"Give them to Juan Sanica's son. He'll take them out to the old factory and leave them there." Paquita spoke slowly and from her throat, trying not to move her lips so that the clothespins wouldn't fall from her mouth.

"Can't we find someone to take them in? There must be someone who would take them in..." Rosio's voice trailed off. Paquita glanced skeptically at her niece.

"You know as well as I that nobody wants pets. They have enough trouble trying to feed their families."

"But we can't just let them starve to death. They'd suffer for days."

"It's not my fault their mother is a bitch in constant heat. And I can't very well keep her tied up in this patio all her life." Paquita tossed her head back, refusing guilt.

"You'd be doing worse by letting them starve to death." Rosio looked defiantly at her aunt. "That's torture." She paused and swallowed, feeling her tongue push saliva down her dry throat. "We have to kill them quickly. Drown them."

Paquita looked at Rosio as if struck by a knife. "I could never kill anything with my bare hands. I'm not that coldhearted."

"Three minutes of suffering is better than a week of slow death. But why can't you do it? Do you think putting them in a bag and giving them to some little boy to toss in an old factory isn't killing them?"

Paquita didn't answer. She picked up the empty clothesbin and went to the laundry room.

Rosio put the squirming puppies down and ran on her toes to the well. She began to pull water up in a metal pail. The bucket clanged against the stone walls and water splashed out as her trembling fingers drew the bucket up. She set the pail in the center of the patio, and, gathering up the puppies, thrust them in the water.

All this was done mechanically and quickly so as to avoid letting pity and revulsion take over her mind and prevent her from doing what she felt was logically right. Her eyes were closed tightly as she knelt, prayerlike, in front of the bucket, the hot tile burning into the flesh of her knees. Yet she did not move. Finally Rosio forced her eyes open; not out of curiosity, but out of a need to see the crime she had committed. She had in her the perverse hope that perhaps witnessing such cruelty would numb her. She watched the mass of little legs, little ears and little mouths twisting and writhing in silent agony beneath the water. Still she looked on, clenching her teeth, shocked at what she had done and even more shocked that she sat there, hypnotized,

unmoving. Within two minutes three of the puppies had stopped squirming and they floated, twitching slightly, an occasional bubble pushing its way past their bloated tongues and drifting to the surface. The fourth puppy bobbed hopelessly up and down. Its tiny mouth gulped futilely for air, breathing only water.

Rosio screamed. She overturned the pail, spilling the criminal liquid all over the thirsty patio, and gathered up the puppies. Her lips blew air desperately and frantically into the swollen lungs of the limp creatures.

"My God, oh my God..." Rosio repeated over and over again, clutching the lifeless bodies to her breast. Paquita, who had been in the washroom, came out quietly.

"Did you do it?" she asked. Then, seeing the pail of water knocked over and Rosio rocking back and forth with the wet puppies in her arms, she murmured, "... you killed them."

Blinking her eyes, Rosio snapped out of her trance. She shuddered, repulsed by everything; by the reality of warm blood turned cold, by the evil she had seen in herself and by the simple act she had performed out of compassion, but that now opened her eyes to the injustice and weakness of life. Disgusted with herself and unable to endure the evidence of her heartlessness, she shoved the dead puppies into a plastic bag and dropped it into the trash can. She put the water pail by the edge of the well, and looked at her aunt as if expecting some show of sympathy or a consoling word.

"You killed them." whispered Paquita, incredulous.

Rosio turned around, opening the back door, and walked out from under the scrutinizing gaze of the unrelenting sun. Her figure vanished, widowed from the world, into the cool, dark depths of the house.

Alicia Munoz  
Washington D.C.  
Edmund Burke School  
Robbie Murphy

## Out of Our Way

Don't ask me why my parents always keep the house so dark. I could barely see the leash I was struggling so hard to put around my two hundred pound cat's fat rolled neck. Martin, our family's other oversized feline, already fashioned in a leash and his red winter sweater, a hand-me-down from our dog, was trying to pull free somewhere behind the couch. The cats together weighed maybe a hundred and fifty pounds. But I'm never bothered by the fact I inherited my mother's great ability to exaggerate everything. The black cat, Spooky, finally cooperated; I ended up sitting on top of him to fasten his collar. I was groping about, feeling around for my bag, the absolute biggest purse I could have found to buy. I still need a bigger one. But I'm seldom bothered that I inherited my mother's organization, coordination and lack thereof. The thought suddenly came to mind as I stubbed my toe for the third time. It's only two o'clock. Looking down I discovered the culprit, my mixture home away from home, and blackhole of possessions, which I strained to pick up, second only to the weight of my cats.

At last with my bag thrown over the favorite brown coat, ends of two leashes in hand and cats on the other end, I opened the back door. The bright shining sun made no heat. And the wind a lot like winter, whipped back the screendoor, out of our way. I pulled the companions further into the cool air. Looking so odd, the hair blown backwards on their faces, they scowled up at me, squinting intensely against the brightness and the wind. I gave them back their dirty look and tugged the tethers. On our way, me and the tough cats, the neighborhood bullies. The only cats in the dull development that fought with the Miller's big dog, and won.

The sun still bright in my eyes as I led them down our road

(Continued on Page 44)

provoked me to embark on a mission to find my sunglasses. They're in my purse somewhere, but that was just as helpful as knowing the last piece to a jigsaw puzzle is somewhere in my room. Anyhow, my search began. After throwing away loose tissues that floated on top of other junk in my bag, I came across my prized possession, my favorite picture. A snapshot of my best friends, Bill and Art. It was taken in the fifth grade, right about when I was becoming friends with them. The two appeared so themselves in the picture that I laughed. That's what they are, easy to laugh with. I don't need friends who like to laugh at.

A pull on my leg interrupted the reminiscence. Previously catching me, unconsciously, in their web of leather collar, presently my pets sat still and nervous. It was the normal time for them to get flustered, standing before the house where the Miller's big dog and creepy son Kenny live. Kenny was the guy everybody was scared of, about a million years ago. We all knew for certain of how he'd wait, hiding near an open window, for us to step foot on his lawn so he could pelt us with a bee-bee. Some of us still remember.

Just recently I remembered how we decided Kenny was really strange. I guess our average age was nine the vacation days we sat around the pool at Art's house. His brother Scott was always making fun of me saying, "What a weirdo," that summer. The fact I got confused by was, Scott only liked weirdos, and was a creep himself. He wasn't that bad. Just another big brother who annoyed you and your friends all the time. But thinking back, I remember he was always sneaking around, cackling at us from some secret spot with pencils or some stuff in his ears. Anyway, everybody figured that Scott was a bit off, and he was friends with Kenny Miller. We gave them a fair chance, but Kenny nearly drowned Bill in the pool one day. It was the deciding factor. Everytime we went near him afterwards he'd yell or give you some kind of evil eye. For forever, if I couldn't avoid Kenny Miller, I didn't do anything wrong near him.

Art, Bill and I had recently shuffled by his house. We wondered if we were the kids everyone now considered creepy. I said it was Art and Bill, they said it was me. Couldn't be me, I think I told Bill, the neighbors are used to me. I was always walking somewhere, except now.

Still a mess, and still intertwined, we quickly, lopsidedly scurried around the corner. I straightened everyone out in front of the Dickens house. The Dickens always got a bad deal. I often heard people say that something that was plainly awful was, "mean as the Dickens." I never knew why, they probably didn't even know the Dickens. Art said everybody'd just gotten confused with them and the Millers, who live next door. So, we said, "mean as the Millers," and of course we were right. I looked backwards at the house, as the cats slowly pulled me on, and wondered if Mr. and Mrs. Dickens thought I was a creepy kid.

When I was younger the neighbors thought I was swell. A lot of things have changed since I was younger. The cats used to sleep in my shoes, now they sleep in my bed.

"Come on you guys," I requested. They trotted for a bit, just a bit; obese cats take a long time to walk around the block.

Clouds rolled black and heavily hid the sun; an instant chill went through me. I could see the dark shadow fall across the landscape of suburban homes. The autumn winds changed and the cold gush swayed the trees in a new pattern. I began to feel around for my gloves. The cats scattered for cover, both running swiftly, with the silly, low to the ground prestorm stance.

I leaned down and peered under a car at four shiny eyes.

"Hey, the sun's out again," lying to the angus cat. I pulled his paw, he hopped back farther on his other three. Standing up, and forever holding the leash handles, I giggled at finding myself in front of Bill's green Volvo wagon and Art's house.

Judging by the signs, they were in the pantry that we'd converted into a dark room. We also made the remaining first floor of Art's house into a haven for the bored, middle aged teenager. Art's parents know the house isn't really theirs anymore, and they definitely think we're all creepy kids. I figure, after Scott



Adam Lindow  
Hagerstown, MD

and his friends, they don't ever think more than twice about us. Still, I don't think of myself as being as menacing as Kenny Miller. The neighbors don't say anything like they used to, when I walk home from the bus. Now they just stare and call back their barking dogs.

The dragging clouds drug on and pulled the dark sheet back. And the sun was radiant again, but still it was cold. I couldn't find my gloves, but here were the tortoise shell cat eyes, and I shoved them on. With the day, Martin and Spooky also reappeared. I got them sauntering on, down the street, shying away from a group of small kids. They were a bunch who were annoyed or something at me more than I noticed them. The queer little clique clad in a fadof clothing I passed through years ago, avoided my pass and glance. They exchanged words as we walked by, but were they referring to me, or my cats? I don't really care either way. So Bill and Art were right; maybe the kids think I'm creepy. I know they're ignorant. It still seemed that they whispered about someone else. At least they hadn't run away, I'm not as scary as Kenny, who was now becoming a large figure at the hill top. My pets began to fight. But the sore sight for unsore eyes was nearing, I knew his gangly long stride and the unsure sway of his stringy brown hair from anyone elses.

The goon of neighborhood past was in a direct collision course with me. Him, too stubborn to move, and me, trapped with hysterical cats. Kenny eyed me and I knew he liked me, just as I like the goons of neighborhood future, the ones up the street, Kenny Miller would never like somebody who wasn't weird.

Here he was, approaching, and I didn't want to be noticed. So what could be more attention getting than two huge cats brawling in the road as you walk by? I yanked the leashes, my purse crashed to the ground and I tried to blend in naturally. Spooky and Martin, unmoving, remained hissing back and forth, while my so red hair flopped in the wind. Kenny came up on our side of the street as I stood. With two fingers he held a quick peace sign. And I flashed one back as he strode out of our way.

Bryn Ashburn  
Doylestown, PA  
Marylou Streznewski

# The Most Dangerous Sheep

"You ready to go?"

"Yuh, just have to get my coat."

"Where's Craig?"

"Oh, he's really sick. I feel so sorry for him; he really wanted to go."

I had not seen Craig for weeks, but I knew that he was not sick. I also knew that he didn't "really want to go." I had an urge to shake Jamie and tell her what a jerk Craig really was. I wanted to tell her how he cheated with other girls and talked behind her back but it was useless, she would have never believed me. Something about the way she was dressed made me stop. Her overcoat from "Andy's Cheapies" in the Village dwarfed her and her baggy jeans and old man's shirt added to the pathetic Ho-bo look.

"Well, that's okay. Who needs men anyway? I say we become lesbians! God, Jame, I want your bod!"

Jamie laughed "Oh, Anne, I'm so glad you're with me for this today."

It was unreal. We joked and laughed the whole way to the doctor's office. I offered to put Joni Mitchell or Paul Simon in the car stereo but Jamie wanted to hear the Eurythmics. Unconsciously, I had even dressed for the occasion. I wore a bright red sweater dress with black legging and spiked red heels with matching earrings. The first thing Jamie said when she answered the door was, "I love you, Anne. You dress for every occasion."

Going up on the elevator Jamie laughed again. "Jesus Christ. I feel like I'm in an after-school special." She was right; we were living an after-school special. The pristine elevator with bright orange paneling was the same as the one in "My Mom's Having a Baby." The inside of the doctor's office was much of the same. The sound of the air-conditioning and the blow-lunch Delta decor made us both feel we were in an airplane. Not only were we in an airplane, though, but it was after the movie and so you had to be quiet because everyone was trying to sleep. We could see that the passengers in the waiting room were not quite living.

We approached the little glass windows, where a nurse who looked like Carol Burnett's Mrs. Havigins was telling a woman on the phone that her gonorrhea test had come back negative.

"Hi, I'm Jamie Andrews. I'm here for a 9:15 appointment."

"Is this a termination?" Mrs. Havigins sounded both nasal and bored.

"Yes, it is."

"Have a seat and fill out these forms."

Somewhere between the window and my finding an article in Outdoor Life called "MacGregor's Most Dangerous Sheep," we both decided that we were superior to those in the office and were not going to be intimidated. I was the first to break the silence.

"Most dangerous sheep? It's sort of like attack bunnies!" Everyone in the office stared. Jamie went over to the kiddie corner and brought back a stack of Highlights and "Tigger" books. We plowed through the books: she reading the part of Pooh and Eeyore and I reading Tigger and Piglet. Jamie and I concluded with singing, "The wonderful thing about Tiggers is that Tiggers are a wonderful thing." A face-lifted Jewish woman wearing exercise clothes just looked at us and shook her head. The books finished, we began to talk.

Jamie leaned toward me and whispered, "I feel like screaming, 'I am not a poor underprivileged ghetto child from a broken home! I'm a consenting adult and it was an honest mistake! Don't pity me. It's no big deal.'"

"Don't bother. It doesn't matter. You and I both know that you're incredible." Jamie gave me a kiss and put her head on my shoulder.

"Anne?"

"Yes."

"Do you think everybody would think we were really weird if

you hugged me; I mean just until they call my name. I'm not worried or anything; I just feel like being close. Is that okay?"

"Jamie, you should know that you don't even have to ask. Like I said before, Jame, I'm hot for your bod!" I put my arm around her shoulder and held her in my arms. She felt so small. She put her legs over mine, and I kissed her forehead and stroked her hair. The expectant mother to the right of us became nervous and moved over a seat.

"They say it's no big deal, Anne. It's really quick, and you don't feel anything. I don't want you to worry. Things are gonna be so great when it's over with. Things are really gonna be cool again, ya know?"

"I know." I closed my eyes and held her tight, "I love you, Jamie."

Sarah Taylor  
Summit, NJ  
Kent Place School  
Mrs. Cole

## Dominica

I want to call it my island, my home. I have trouble calling it anything but mine. I remember the generous people, miles of fertile mountain, my little village of Laudat, and that ridiculous trek to the Boiling Lake with a man I once loved.

The sun was hot when it sparkled off our white bodies and sun-striped hair. I loved the firm black skin stretching across powerful muscles and wished that somehow I could be so dark. In the little city were cheap baskets and bread, and mango seeds drying on the pavement in the sun. We jumped over open sewers as if we had done so all our lives. I walked across the stage in a school play as I walked these streets, with smooth, self-conscious strides, heels bouncing off the stone, and my head held high, every action carefully planned. I said, "Good afternoon," to a man I spoke with before, or to an aged woman sitting by the open window of her town house. Those old, wondering eyes would brighten at the courtesy of a white stranger, and all at once I would be filled with shame and interest. The woman knew what white people did, things which had happened long before I walked in those streets, things of which people do not speak. Only her age told me these things. Her smile seemed warm as the land yet the lines in her face were like the sun-beaten roads where slaves had hauled the cane to the harbor. Then I knew I did not belong. This was a place rich with history and generations I would never know.

I talked about money, clothes and beauty, but nobody understood. I told them I wanted a large house with a vast green lawn and a convertible in the driveway. I looked through my airplane copy of Vogue and talked about things I wanted, things these people could never have. They could not want like I could. They could only hope for a life of peace, and perhaps enough money to someday visit America, New York City. Our wishes were so different. I did not belong.

When the darkness came, it blended the colors into a night of desire. Everything was hidden, while sound and strobe danced quickly from one being to the next. Every individual dream lifted like steam from our bodies. The music and lights in a frenzied and gaudy display distorted reality as the large fans cooled the sweat on our backs. I could dance like a Caribbean woman, though I was not voluptuous. Two stars and a white crescent moon glimmered on the surface of night skin. These were my friends enjoying the same entertainment I did. Manufactured joy and the giddy kalypso beat intoxicated us all. I thought that only I wanted something more.

This is the same happy, happy music which haunts the rotten wood of a poor man's shack. The quick dance beat and simple, catchy melodies hint at the slave's song. Old ailing women with impetigo listen to a battery-powered radio. I could hear it from

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## Coup d'Etat

On the Guatemalan tabloid I was reading in the van en route to the Mayan ruins of Copan in Honduras, the headline screamed, "¡Golpe de Estado!" The rest of the page detailed General Rios Montt's overthrow on the previous day, Monday, August 8, 1983, by his trusted Minister of National Defense, Oscar Mejia Victores. Both men were pictured. Rios Montt's neat black hair, white moustache, and business suit made him look distinguished. Victores was pot-bellied. From beneath his rumpled short-sleeved shirt peeked a white undershirt. His face was a bulldog's, serious and determined.

With sketchy Spanish, I pieced together the articles. Apparently, at a government meeting Monday morning, Victores informed Montt that he was taking over. He ordered Montt out of the government palace. Montt said something along the lines of, "Oh, sure, whatever you say. No problem," and left the meeting. Of course, Montt went back to the palace, counting on the support of his 500 personal troops. But Victores had the palace surrounded, the telephone lines cut in the whole city to prevent Montt from calling in more loyal troops, and the air force fly its grand total of four fighter jets at low altitude over the palace. Montt gave up without firing a shot.

After the articles about the coup, the paper dedicated itself to soccer, American baseball, and a new Mexican movie. The coup was not mentioned again until the last page. There I learned that Montt had often preached his Protestant beliefs to the Guatemalans, who complained that he mixed politics with religion. Because Guatemala, however, had been relatively at peace during Montt's one-year, 123-day rule, some Guatemalans took exception to Montt's overthrow--shooting near the government palace killed five people and wounded others.

At the bottom of the last page was a photograph of one of the wounded: a man of about thirty-five wearing sunglasses, sitting on the curb, another man kneeling next to him, his comforting hand on his shoulder. The man with the sunglasses was pressing his hand to the top of his head. Blood trickled from under his hand down his forehead, behind his sunglasses, around his nose, and dripped from his chin, splattering on his white shirt. He held a clean handkerchief in his other hand, but made no effort to use it. He gazed up at the other man with a curious expression: pain, fatigue--yet no resentment, just annoyance.

After finishing the paper, I thought about the day before, when I was in Guatemala City with my family, staying at a hotel only a block away from the main square. That morning, we were in the square, dominated by a large white colonial interpretation of European royal palaces. In the open columned halls soldiers and civilians ran back and forth. More soldiers with machine guns surrounded the palace, and the jets roared overhead. A small crowd had gathered in front of the palace. Though some people looked genuinely curious about what was happening, most were nonchalant, oblivious, even bored by the troops and the guns.

Later that morning at the market, we asked a middle-aged Indian woman if she knew anything about what was happening at the palace. As she thrust a leather sandal into my father's hand, she matter-of-factly replied that a coup d'etat was going on, that they had one almost every year. For her, the day was business as usual, coup or no coup. She concentrated on persuading my father to buy the sandals for my little brother.

The only time the city seemed excited was at noon. Returning to our hotel from the market, we found that soldiers had blocked off the section of the city around the main square. As my father argued with a soldier, a lame young woman clothed in a long black skirt and striped wool coat with a hood who had been listening offered to help us. "Yo puedo conducir ustedes a vuestro hotel." We followed her as she hobbled through dozens of dirty side streets and littered alleys until we found ourselves on the street in front of our hotel. My father didn't "know how (he could) ever possibly thank" the woman. She said it was all right, and melted away into the crowd. Then we noticed that the

far end of the street leading to the square thronged with people yelling and throwing stones at soldiers on a tank. Suddenly the crowd turned, running towards us. My father yelled at us, "Get out of the center of the street!"

We scrambled for the hotel entrance, and no sooner had we tumbled inside when the shooting started, lasting less than a minute. Then soldiers occupied the vantage points of the city, including the rooftop of our hotel and our balcony, occasionally shooting from up there.

An hour later, the city was calm again. That evening we took a walk in the deserted square. In the orange lamplight at street corners stood only a few soldiers.

When we returned to Guatemala City from our visit to Copan on August 9, a cool breeze from the mountains swept through town; discos and arcades burst with people and music, and neon signs hung over the streets illuminating the young couples walking arm in arm, the beggars lying in doorways wrapped in wool blankets, and the grimy cars rushing by. No planes flew overhead; no soldiers guarded street corners, and no newspaper headline screamed "¡Golpe de Estado!"

Carlo Cavagna  
Silver Spring, MD  
Springbrook High School  
Miss Mary Lee Ruddle

## Dominica

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the dusty street. The Antiguan D.J. put on Debarge's "Rhythm of the Night." I last heard that song in Doug's GTI--red and very fast. He showed me how to cruise down Lancaster Avenue without getting fuzzed. He kept his Vuarnets in the glove compartment. "Change the station," he said, "or put on a tape."

Some nights we would wander through the lonely streets. I had never seen a city so still. Lit by the stars, the cobblestones were ripples in a river channeled by the dark, empty buildings. Cockroaches scurried across the road; we were the intruders. The storefronts were protected by plywood planks, jeweled with masterlocks and dead-bolts. Fruit peels, in the formation of a sunburst, marked the place where a woman had sought shade from the sun while selling her ginapes for 25 cents a bunch. She had seen so much from her little stool. There, in front of her, a transport ran over a chicken. Its blood attracted an old dog who carried the carcass away. A boy, his shorts pulled together with a safety pin, gathered the remaining feathers. And when the shadows stretched across the street and people faded into their houses leaving the roads quiet, and the mountains beyond glowed orange, she picked up her stool and walked home. Down the street two blocks, behind the supermarket, bank, and post office, was the sea. It spread across a desert, holding small islands such as this, holding them in place. The sea seemed forever to be going away, somewhere, someplace. So late at night, the roads of the city only made circles, going around and around, leading to nowhere.

This is the Dominica I will remember. It is an inebriated kalypso station which can't be turned off, a foreign D.J. controlling what is played, and a culture enveloping a past of struggle and pain. I know I was no more a part of this island than these natives were of mine. The music was not played for me. The Dominican sun beat around me. The mango juice slid down my arms and the fibers were caught between my teeth. But when I am very quiet and alone, and when I am very warm and still, I can hear the music coming from some radio far down the road. The sun is melting the air which forms pools in the dust; nothing changes but me.

Rachel Levitt  
Bala Cynwyd, PA  
The Baldwin School  
Ms. Debbie Bright



Michael Ruben

## Dusk

The pale tender skin  
of the mid afternoon  
stretched taut across the sky

And as the pain of dusk approached  
its soft membrane began at first  
to bleed  
red and rotting orange

then bruised with twilight,  
darker contusions of thick purple  
and murky indigo  
spread throughout its flesh

everyday the sky dies in silence  
lifeblood gushing away  
tissues swelling in agony

Albert Connelly  
New Hope, PA  
Solebury School

## Oh! e.

i amso  
happywithmy  
e.  
e.cummingspo  
et  
ry bookit isso  
cute(cuter than  
you can imagine)  
in yourwi ldest  
dr(dreary as they maybe)  
ams i wantto me  
etwith thebald  
manhim  
self sig  
ned mar iana(kind  
of like(helo veshar) mar ion)  
to meether too.

Mariana Almeida  
Bethesda, MD  
Dr. Martin Galvin

## Golden Moment

The wind was blowing harder than I'd ever seen.  
Buildings swayed.  
Probably too cold for a walk on the beach  
But the ocean current might have coughed up warm air.  
The sand was the sickly gray  
You get when you bandage a sore too tightly.  
Seagulls in groups had distant looks in their eyes.  
Why stand, I asked, when you could be sailing on wind?  
Just resting for a moment as I was?  
Maybe I'd sit on the rocks and play the harmonica  
Or let the wind play it for me.  
All going through kmy mind when suddenly

Ghosts.

Swirling my feet, white ghosts.  
They were lovely,  
A world I'd never expected,  
Pure white in contrast to the sand.  
I sat encircled by ghosts  
Dancing in delicate ribbons  
But never touching me,  
Disappearing as quickly as they'd come.  
I walked into another flock of seagulls  
Who didn't fly away.  
They circled me, too.  
I'd been blessed by the ghosts,  
Crowned queen of the beach.

Rosemarie Klein  
Long Beach, NY  
Frances Goldwater

## A Bend in the Road

Lying thoughtlessly on the  
Guest room couch,  
I watched T.V.  
While you stood against  
the family.

Scooping Thinny Thin coffee  
with a teaspoon  
Into my greedy little  
bowl,  
I added sprinkles  
While you cried softly  
to the Grateful Dead.

Creeping at bedtime to  
avoid mom's command,  
I closed the guest room door,  
While you searched for some  
of you in me.

Finally detected by dad  
(when he lived home)  
I was sent to sleep,  
While you dreamed of my  
awakening.

Joshua Preven  
Larchmont, NY  
Mrs. Enid Kaplan

# Sand Castles

We have movies of it. Jon and me. Me and Jon, my sister Karen, Davey still in diapers. We were all bouncing on the bed. Jumping really high. Especially Jon and me. We were the oldest, we got to stay up late that night and watch T.V. with the grown-ups. We used to have this green hassock downstairs. I don't know where it is now. Anyway, Jon and I rolled around on it that night. I remember. But jumping on the bed, our faces growing hotter and pinker and our hair making pinwheels around our head as we twirled. Higher and higher. This is what I keep thinking. We were laughing so hard. He kept poking me in the stomach and I kept trying to knock him down. His hair was thick and blonde. It was longer than mine and I was jealous. He had beautiful hair. He lives, I mean he used to live, in California. Jon is dead now.

Auntie Barbara just called today. She was crying on the phone and she wouldn't tell me what was wrong. I had to wait until I got home from school to find out. But the weird thing is, I'm not surprised. I feel like I've been out in the rain for too long, kind of soggy and cold and heavy. But what about Joh, how did he feel? See, my cousin Jon didn't get in a car accident with some drunken stranger or have a heart attack in his sleep like some old man. No, Jon decided to die yesterday. He will be 18 forever.

Most of my memories of Jon are from when we were little. As we grew older we saw each other on Thanksgivings and we never wrote in between. But I have this one letter from him and I never wrote back. I never will be able to, either. It's a terrible letter and I was afraid, I think, to respond. He wrote with a kind of hate and depression that I've never felt and that I didn't and will probably never understand. He had some kind of fifth sense, Jon did. One part of his mind was too developed and it felt too many things. Too many bad things. Not enough of the happy things. The pain was too acute, I guess. This is a childish explanation. I'm reverting to my memories to explain and my memories

are of us as children.

There's a picture in the album upstairs that is very orange. I don't know why it's orange, it just came out that way. Jon and I are in the bathtub. We're facing each other, and our arms are clasped around each other's necks. Bubbles surround us as if we are in the clouds. But the bubbles aren't white, they're tinted brownish, burnt a little around the edges. I hate the color orange.

And in a picture book that I made when I was seven, I see a magic marked version of Disneyland with him and me. We are riding the merry-go-round, around and around. I have black swoops along the rim to show the motion. I drew his hair longer than mine.

Then there are the four pictures of the four cousins Mom took at Snow Mountain. We are eating ice cream. Davey is grinning with ice cream gushing out from behind his gums. Karen peers up from her bowl. I'm staring at Jon-Jon (that's what we used to call him). He's looking off somewhere that no one can see. All of us except him have cheeks bursting with cold round pleasure and our eyes look into the camera. His face is smooth and he doesn't see us.

In California in the fall when I was 12 and he was 13, we made huge sand castles. We knelt in our jeans on the hard sand and created. But these were not white airy castles with dried yellow flowers peeking from chiseled windows. Our castles were made right by the water where the waves rise in the corners of your eyes. The sand was cold here and our mansions were built by steady marbles of sand dripping from our fingers. Our kind of castles melt back into their same surroundings within minutes or they are washed away by the white foam left after the waves. They are dark and twisted and their walls are too soft to hold any kind of yellow flowers.

Judy Wikler  
Silver Spring, MD  
Springbrook High School  
Mary Lee Ruddle

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