

SUSQUEHANNA UNIVERSITY



the  
apprentice WRITER



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Mr. James Nagle

# Introduction

This is the fifth issue of **THE APPRENTICE WRITER**, which annually features the best writing, photography, and artwork we receive from secondary school students.

Each year I've managed to shorten my comments because the publication has spoken more and more for itself as both a showcase for outstanding talent and an effective teaching tool in classrooms throughout the nine states (3,600 schools) to which we distribute copies.

Susquehanna University and Ottaway Newspapers continue to be committed to this project and we believe this issue will be as practical and enjoyable as the first four 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, 1988. We will announce acceptances by April 30, 1988.

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## THE APPRENTICE WRITER

### Number 5, 1987

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**LOGO DESIGN**  
Carolyn Gienieczko

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## Sonnet for My Mother

*My mother danced in a Brazilian circus,  
swung from a spangled rope and they'd applaud her.  
Her long white legs would gleam like ice above us.  
I still love to watch her dive into the water  
or call me in to supper; her hand holds  
the dishtowel like the scarf she used to dance with.  
It's all a dream, she says, this growing old--  
a disguise for what really happens--it's a myth.*

*I cry to think of death, of her warm shadow  
secreted in the earth--yet she believes  
her soul will peep out, like a cheery sparrow.  
So we dust the cobwebs from the eaves:*

*her preparation. Her mind's so sinfully clean!  
She's seen something I've missed. I'm not yet weaned.*

Cathy Wagner  
Catonsville, MD  
Catonsville High School  
Dr. Gary Blankenburg

## Nightlight

*Pray, tell me about midnight--  
tell me of things I do not know  
and cannot see  
Tell me of how  
the sofa sings strange songs of solitude,  
how the meditating refrigerator chants.  
Tell me of the fern dance  
in the livingroom  
when no one is around.  
Teach me to play  
those shutter games  
and fireplace tricks.  
Let me learn the joke the coffeemaker  
told you. (let me laugh)  
Tell me of the love affair  
between the carpet and the floor.  
Tell me for  
it is early morning,  
and no one has slept in this house  
but me.*

Stephanie Seeley  
Morristown, NJ  
Mrs. Penny Harter

## White Berries

*We were still sleeping  
when the sky fell. It drifted downward  
like a vast silk parachute,  
needled everything it touched  
with splintery crusts of sky-stuff.  
It must have moved as gently as bird wings,  
to leave undamaged  
such fragile traces of its pelt.  
It coated the windows with crystal,  
the ice on the lake  
with static foam.*

*The berries are infatuated  
with the color of the sky--  
they yearn for blue-tinged caps of frost.  
(Or have they seen the pallid moon, coin of night,  
do they want to replicate  
her sharp-edged disc of white?)*

*See, there's jagged glass in the grass!  
And the brambles mark with grizzled arches  
their epiphany of white and grey.  
The brown  
of the first weeks of winter  
is hidden by the sky's shed hair: sky white, sky bright,  
you've paled all colors to your own.  
How they love you, these drab branches  
and shriveled leaves! Their new voices  
are clearer than the belling wind  
across the ice.*

Liz Shura  
Vienna, VA  
James Madison High School  
Mrs. Bernis Von zur Muehlen

## On The Road

*My dog hitchhiked away from me  
after that argument we had  
in the middle of the freeway  
something about  
not enough something*

*She half-ran down the shoulder  
of A-1-A South  
ripping off the bandana  
I put around her neck  
grinding it between her teeth*

*refusing to look back  
her ears closed tight  
and tucked against her head  
her brown hair raised like quills*

*I held nothing but my bags  
and the distance between us  
scraped hard like gravel*

*she limped along  
three-legged, holding  
the fourth paw to the cars,  
flat, with no thumb*

Greg Delisle  
Baltimore, MD  
Catonsville High School  
Dr. Blankenburg

As I drive up River Road in the autumn to visit my father, I think about what it would be like to live in one of these expensive houses with picture windows, three chimneys, and an old brick exterior. The trees along the sidewalk are tall and intertwine over the road, letting through scattered rays of sun which blind me like a strobe light. I park my car in front of an old style street lamp, sleek and black, with part of the yellow glass cracked at the top. My boots click on the stone steps as I pass between two identical bowls of fruit made of marble. I sign in and ask the receptionist for directions to the hospice brunch. Instantly, I see that "poor little dear" look, as though I were an invalid myself. Her eyes droop, and the corners of her mouth turn up and down at the same time.

As I wander around, peeking into hallways, a hand grabs my elbow and turns me around. "You must be Jennifer." I admit that I am, and the stranger kisses me on the cheek. "Ray's in here," she says, leading me into a room with a high ceiling and small windows at the top of the walls. I am surprised to see my father in a wheelchair; he didn't need one up to now. He tries to sit up to greet me, but, his smile turning to a grimace, he falls back into his pillows. The stranger finally introduces herself; she is Patti, the social worker. I have talked to her over the phone.

Dad offers me some of his brunch, but I hate quiche. He is emaciated; his eyes seem huge, and his hair is falling out. The small room becomes crowded, and we leave. As I push him down the green tiled hall, he asks me proudly how I like it, as though it's a new house he has built. I don't answer him. I am concentrating on the other people who look even worse than Dad. Sensing my discomfort, he remarks, "I like it fine, but there are no real toilets." I laugh. An old black woman in a violet frock approaches and says, "Ray, God is with you." She mumbles scriptures under her breath and fidgets with something in her pocket. As we pass her, I hear a man yell "Oh-h-h!" Exactly five minutes later I hear the voice yell "Oh-h-h!" again. Dad says, "Mr. Tarkley, right on time."

Dad and I roll into the lounge where I help him onto a red and yellow couch. The room is freezing; I turn on the heater by the window. Dad seems tired. I come to his side and hold his bony hand tracing the veins with my fingers. I put my arm around him and cup his shoulder blade in my palm. He looks annoyed and inches away from me. "You know, it's not too late to catch Jack Lemmon at Circuit City feeding babies." I wonder if he has a brain tumor.

A nurse bustles in with an assortment of pills and liquid morphine. Dad lifts his head to sip the morphine and choke down the pills. In a few minutes he relaxes.

"Do you want to hear an Uncle Reese story?"

"Yes, of course." Uncle Reese stories have been my favorites since I was a little girl. Dad describes Uncle Reese's excursions along the river bank where he taught Dad how to grab a water moccasin by the tail and crack its body like a whip to paralyze it. Dad stops in the middle of a sentence and asks, "Did I ever tell you about Sergeant White?"

"He was one of the best guys I ever knew. He served under me in Korea. He was a black guy about 6'4" and really handsome. He was like an African prince. I was a green second lieutenant, and he was a far better soldier than I. I had the good sense to ask his advice when we were out on patrol. He saved my ass more than once. He always kept his cool. While everyone else was filthy in the field, unshaven, Sergeant White always looked neat and clean. Amazing guy. I went to see his mother in Seattle after the war. She was every bit as beautiful and regal as her son."

"What happened to him?" I ask.

"He was killed," Dad replies. Tears hang on his eyelashes and

fall to his cheeks. He begins to sob violently, and I realize he is hyperventilating. His face looks stricken. I run to the nurses' station and hear Mr. Tarkley yell "Oh-h-h!"

Jennifer Eagan  
Vienna, VA  
James Madison High School  
Mrs. Bernis Von zur Muehlen

## Untitled

*It wasn't meant to be easy.*

*You kept on going, going at the speed of light,*

*Like superman did.*

*You forced it down and kept forcing it,*

*Like Hitler once did--*

*Forced were many deaths--*

*You walked with a dropped head,*

*ashamed for you look like a hot air balloon--*

*Ready to explode--*

*An original Goodyear blimp.*

*Now you're more beautiful than*

*the sun on the clear blue water.*

*Now you feel good about yourself--*

*Your smile--*

*The ripple of life.*

Veronica Burdick  
Norwich, NY  
Norwich High School  
Bob Peffley

## Osteoporosis

*Posture, posture*

*Reminds me mama.*

*Posture, posture*

*I agree*

*And so I sit up straight.*

*Calcium, calcium*

*Cries she*

*Shoving to me*

*Fist-sized pills.*

*Calcium, calcium*

*I reply*

*And swallow*

*And gag.*

*Posture, monster,*

*Postulate, vertebrate.*

*Calcium, halcyon*

*Brittle bone, nursing home.*

Leora Tanenbaum  
White Plains, NY  
Ramaz Upper School  
Ms. Litwack

# Of A Trial By Fruitcake

Some time ago, while leafing through an old magazine, it happened that I came upon an advertisement for a product called Hoenshel Brandied Fruitcake. The ad detailed a test wherein the consumer is instructed to hold the fruitcake up to the light and peer through the "colorful, delicate, glaced fruits." I am puzzled as to just what sort of satisfaction can be derived from such an activity. Personally, I manage to find more productive uses for my time, but if staring at a bare light bulb through a slice of fruitcake can provide amusement for lonely Maytag repairmen, I'm all for it.

The advertisement recalled to my mind a scene from a Christmas long past; of a visit by an old maiden aunt of mine. She came bearing good cheer, of the verbal kind and no other, for she was quite the teetotaler--the only exception to this rule being the ritualistic consumption of her nocturnal brandy constitutional ("Good for the blood"). On this rare occasion of a visit, our guest saw fit to bestow upon us one astoundingly large fruitcake.

Now, this gift may have been just slightly more welcome than the uncle who stashes his burning cigars under the sofa cushions when a stogie-detesting female wrathfully enters the room with suspicions of an offense, but we--trouper all--accepted the new 4-lb. addition to our family with much enthusiastic lip-smacking.

As I recall, this well-meaning but misguided relation had on the same red overcoat which she would continue to wear for years afterward, probably even after the fruitcake was gone. It is highly doubtful that the aunt baked the fruitcake herself, because her lack of domesticity was rather notorious in the family circle, and it served as the fuel for numerous family chinfests in the aunt's absence.

In reflection, I've concluded that this type of family chatter may very well have been responsible for our annual bombardment by fruitcakes, each scarier than the last with its myriad mystery fruits and creepy unknown ingredients like currants and citron. As we expressed to one relation after another our mock ecstasy at the prospect of devouring the dark brown form they had laid before us, our reputation grew as the family's foremost fruitcake enthusiasts--a designation which was most decidedly unwelcome.

Our polite mendacity sometimes backfired loudly, an example being the time when we were all forced to sit and graciously eat our words, along with assorted fruits and nuts. On this particular evening, we had allowed an elderly relation of whom we were not very fond (she had the habit of opening our closets and drawers when she thought herself unobserved) to finagle from us a dinner invitation.

The meal seemed to be going unusually well--until dessert rolled around. At this unfortunate juncture, our dear relation, with evil in her heart, uttered those fatal words: "Why don't we try some of that nice fruitcake I gave you for Christmas?" It seems she had just happened to spot it on the top pantry shelf behind the gravy boat and the Mouli food-chopper.

Finally, a few years ago, we came up with a solution to our torture. That Christmas, after we'd received a few of the predicted fruitcakes, we carefully returned them to their gift-wrapped condition, and mailed them out as gifts to those perennial cake-givers who hadn't already made us their annual benefaction. Since Uncle Otto would never dream of sending an ugly green necktie to the thoughtful nephew who'd already sent HIM an ugly green necktie, our scheme proved ultimately successful.

Mind you, we were careful, sending the fruitcake given us by Aunt Viola in Michigan to Aunt Rowena in Nova Scotia, knowing as we did that Rowena and Viola hadn't spoken to one another since 1957 and the argument over the proper amount of raisins

to add to their late mother's steamed pudding recipe. Anyway, this maneuver has succeeded to such a degree that just one solitary fruitcake arrived at our door this past Christmas.

Out of a sense of curiosity more than a hunger for "colorful, delicate, glaced fruits," I attempted to locate the Hoenshel company, which the magazine ad informed me was located in Sandusky, Ohio, but my efforts proved fruitless--no Hoenshel in Sandusky. Now I must walk through life plagued by a biting fear that my family singlehandedly put Hoenshel Brandied Fruitcake out of business, a stain for future generations to bear. At times, all those homeless glaced fruits can be a terrible burden on one's conscience.

Dennis J. Forfa  
Lee, MA  
Lee High School  
Kerry C. Kelly

## I Remember

*I remember being by the seashore,  
living in toy houses of tar-paper, sand and glue,  
furnished with Depression furniture hidden  
under ten layers of glossy paint  
that grew sticky on burning afternoons.*

*I remember getting up in early morning light,  
reaching for good weather so I could walk on the sand bar  
where razor clams cut mouths to swallow salt,  
where enamel skeletons of sand sharks stretched  
and yawned in their yellow powder.*

*I remember being Neptune,  
viciously pulling legs off hermit crabs,  
letting them suffer for my perverse wickedness.  
I so wanted to be one with the ocean  
but distanced myself with my cruelty.*

*I remember rainy days,  
melting behind curtains of fog  
and playing dolls on a damp, sandy bed.  
I was a Thumbelina, who grew out of nature  
but discovered limitations in her own mother.*

*I remember the colors of small shells  
dulled out of water, like they  
had cried themselves dry.  
Back at my dehydrated suburban home,  
I threw them away.*

*I remember being washed out to sleep  
by the quiet sodium breeze and bell buoys,  
under open windows with fluttering curtains  
that sighed "goodbye, goodbye"  
to my wakefulness.*

*And yes, I remember knowing inside  
that my paradise would fall out someday  
like the bottom of an ancient fishing boat.*

Heather Pisani  
Franklin, MA  
Ms. Sylvia Baca



Julie Thompson

## November Rain

*Through rain-pimpled glass,  
two of last spring's bird nests  
now only water-bowls*

Brendon C. MacBryde  
Fairfax, VA  
Fairfax High School  
Mrs. Carol Lange

## Winter Twilight

*Snow-caterpillared twigs  
draped in silver-gray mist--  
the softness of wind chimes*

Brendon D. MacBryde  
Fairfax, VA  
Fairfax High School  
Mrs. Carol Lange

## Sunsets

Mom said the pretty sunsets  
were because of an awful volcano  
way down in Mexico  
somewhere.

Way down in Mexico  
a monster groaned  
and vomited 50,000 tons of smelly black ash,  
drooled scalding red sulferous rock,  
and belched away the existence  
of a few small towns  
some hundred chickens  
and a couple of families who refused to move.  
The 7 o'clock news showed  
all the pictures.

For six weeks in Washington, DC  
the sun set in fiery pinks  
windows on the west side of The Point highrise  
gleamed gold  
fenders on The Beltway glittered  
and the evening flashed in the last few sips  
of my wine rose.

The autumn rays  
as they struck my cheek through the kitchen panes  
were warm.

Heather Clague  
Silver Spring, MD  
Ms. Marylee Ruddle  
Dr. Nancy Traubitz

## The Collection

the flock roosts on her  
dresser  
isolationists all  
flightless  
speaking from their beaks  
of paper wood and glass  
craning fluttering bodies  
mime escape

in the bathroom  
she perches at the sink  
neck in nose down  
thin knee locked  
one foot hooked behind the other

feathering her hair back  
she looks into the glass  
and notices  
for the first time  
how her image does not  
take wing

Robin Suleiman  
Potomac, MD  
Peggy Pfeiffer

## Raindrops

Headlights ricochet  
off the rain-slicked highway.  
I sit in the cold darkness of the car beside my  
mother,  
separated  
by a wall of air, an  
electric fence of  
tension.  
My eardrums throb under the heavy pressure of  
silence.  
The pounding march of the  
raindrop army grows  
louder  
and louder,  
beating  
on the roof,  
exploding  
on the windshield,  
a thousand clamoring voices,  
but my mother does not hear,  
her jaw clenched as we race  
angrily  
through the night.  
I stare out the window  
watching the raindrop soldiers  
commit suicide  
against the glass.

Shelley Sylvester  
Timonium, MD  
Dulaney High School  
William Jones

## Nightmare

Mumbling and murmuring to themselves  
A dandelion fuzz scream  
Fragile, tiny, cricket like  
The aborted babies wait outside my door  
and they're mad.

Julie Blackwell  
Gaithersburg, MD  
Mrs. Mary Alice Delia

## The Lie

I stand alone on a ghost town road  
wishing I could kill  
There's a crystal moth inside me  
and I will not have it made to fly  
Slowly the lie forms in my mind  
"Somebody is waiting for me."

Julie Blackwell  
Gaithersburg, MD  
Mrs. Mary Alice Delia

## What Are Friends for

Why do I always wait at the end of the cafeteria line when everybody else cuts ahead? I won't let the next person who tries to cut in front of me get away with it.

"Heather, I'm late for biology class. Could I take your place in line?"

"Sure, Jill. I understand. Being late for class and Ms. Carls is so strict about--"

"Right, Heather. Hey Kelly, did you hear the big news about the concert tonight?" Jill grabs a tray and strolls up to Kelly.

When a friend asks to cut in front of you as a favor, that's fine. That's what friends are for: to do favors for each other. I would do anything for Jill. We solemnly pledged to remain friends forever in first grade. We are on the phone for hours every night, sharing secrets.

"Salad and a cup of chicken noodle soup is all I'll have." I have to carefully count calories. My goal is to fit into my black Guess jeans and red sweater, the way Jill fits into hers. First I have to drop at least five pounds though. The main meal is Mexican tacos anyway. I cannot eat tacos without them falling apart in my hands and getting at least a spot of grease on my glasses. Then I would have to sit through the entire lunch period, like a specimen under a microscope, knowing that everybody was staring at that spot of grease. Or, I would have to slip out of my glasses and unobtrusively try to wipe them with a Kleenex, and everybody would stare anyway. It seems as if I am always cleaning my glasses. The doctor prescribed the lenses as thick as my middle finger in fifth grade, and I had to select among heavy brown frames to hold them. I was never teased about my glasses and called four eyes, but I know that is what people think when they first see me. Every year, I dread going to the optometrist for my eye check. Every year, my lenses become thicker and thicker and my glasses heavier and heavier. They keep sliding down my nose making me feel like a pedantic school teacher. It is so embarrassing having to continually push the heavy frames up the bridge of my nose while trying to make conversation.

I skim the crowded cafeteria to see where Jill is sitting. My eyes are getting worse, and even with my glasses I have to squint to see Jill's face clearly. Jill probably saved me a seat next to her as a thanks for letting her cut in front of me. I hesitantly approach the table, juggling my tray, my glasses sliding down my nose.

"Hi, Jill. Can I pull up a chair and squeeze in?" I question softly, unsure of my welcome. Jill did not save me a seat after all. She probably thought I would eat in the library or the Senior Lounge. I push Jill's tray towards her, so that my food fits onto the table. The girls continue to gossip as if I were not there, relegating me to the status of observer.

"Can you believe that Asian history exam? She must think we spent our summer in China to expect us to answer that essay."

"Jill, tell me about Saturday night."

"You know the scoop on crater-face Norman, don't you?"

The girls giggle hysterically. I sit in silence, picking at my salad. Jill is probably waiting until tonight when I call her to chat about all the juicy details. I have been calling her every night at eight o'clock since fourth grade. Jill is usually too busy to come to the phone now, but in fourth grade we gossiped for hours. We used to be best friends and the most popular girls in our class. To sit at our lunch table was a privilege granted to few. I had perfect vision when I was younger. I could run in the rain without worrying about getting my glasses wet. I never had to squint upon entering a crowded room, desperately trying to identify unfocused faces. I never dreaded chemistry labs when I had to put on scientific goggles over my glasses. The eyes are the mirror of the soul. When I was young, people looked into my brown eyes and saw the laughter and joy in my heart. Today people look at my glasses and the grease spot on them and turn away, without ever seeing my eyes. Jill never needed glasses,

but my wearing them did not matter to her. Only her spiteful high school friends make me conscious that for the rest of my life I will be pushing the heavy brown frames up the bridge of my nose.

Shelley's high-pitched squeal brings me back to reality. The lunch conversation had shifted to maligning Peter Clatton, our Latin teacher. Latin IV is the only class I have with Jill, and I always save her a seat next to me in the front row.

"Latin is tough, isn't it? Jill and I were on the phone for hours last night, discussing that essay," I brag.

"Come on, Heather. Don't exaggerate. I just called you to get the homework I missed and the answer to the extra-credit," Jill quickly adds.

"That was a whopper of a problem, wasn't it? I spent three hours in the library poring over books. A Roman author wrote one of them and -"

"Sorry Heather. We have to go. We're late for Biology lab."

"Hey sure. I understand. I'll call you tonight Jill. Right?"

"Whatever," comes the response.

They leave me sitting alone at the lunch table, with all of their garbage piled onto my tray. Jill will probably call me tonight to fill me in on crater-face Norman. She called me last night to find out about Latin IV. If she doesn't call, though, I know she will be waiting by the phone at eight o'clock. I never wear my glasses when I talk to Jill on the phone. I feel closer to her without the heavy frames sliding down my nose. My Latin essay will have to be written by the time I call Jill, so I can help her write her paragraph. That's what friends are for: to do favors for each other.

Simone Pulver  
Short Hills, NJ  
Oak Knoll School  
Mrs. Marcus

## Feeding the Fire

*I don't read newspapers anymore.*

*They make your fingers dirty  
and work their filth into the crevices  
between your toes.*

*My parents lived in a newspaper house  
and ate at places reviewed favorably  
by the tabloids.*

*They took me to the movies awarded four stars  
and read me books  
they'd read about.*

*Everything I saw,  
read or bought  
was filtered through  
a smudgy grey cheesecloth.*

*I want to burn down our house.  
Then we'd stand watching  
the orange and red flames  
triumph over all the news  
unfitly printed.  
We'd see the colors  
Without clouded lenses.*

Rosemarie Klein  
Long Beach, NY  
Mrs. Pickus





Machiko Itoh  
Eastchester High School  
Sue Mariane

## Official Holocaust Rulebook-International

1. You may not hit any vehicle signified by a red cross sign with a war head carrying more than 50 megatons of explosives, unless, of course, they are exceeding the designated speed limit.

2. There will be no bombing of any hospital or other building bearing a red cross unless, and only, if you suspect it to be occupied.

3. There will be no bombing, of any sort, on any ranches in California, for there are endangered condors living there and it is our responsibility to protect and preserve our wildlife.

4. There will be no bombing of animal shelters, wildlife refuges, or zoos. After all, we must maintain a certain level of civilized humanitarian composure.

5. There will be no bombing of any area known to be used for production or distribution of illegal drugs, as it is necessary to preserve these for voluntary experimentation by rich upper class and high ranking government officials.

### National

1. In the event of a nuclear war, there will be no smoking allowed in any public shelters of any sort. Smoking of any sort is a known health hazard and the government does not want to be

responsible for any hazards to anyone's health.

2. In the event of a nuclear winter and famine, no civilians or any army officials under the rank of Brigadier General will be allowed to eat. Instead, they will volunteer all foods to the country's leaders. Where would we be if there was no leadership? After all, who got us into all of this?

3. In the event of a nuclear war, all schools will remain open for as long as they stand. Our children are our most important resource and must be treated as such.

4. In the event of nuclear war, there are to be no unauthorized vehicles on the road, unless, of course, you are on the way to the post office to mail in your income tax returns. (Note: In the event of nuclear war, the return date for income taxes will be moved back one week.)

8. After the war you may feel slightly ill and develop such minor symptoms as total loss of all body hair, growing of a third arm or leg, vomiting up the intestinal tract or a strange glowing throughout the body. Such symptoms are not uncommon. Do not fear. They will not persist for long.

9. In the event of nuclear war, expectant mothers will be prohibited from going into labor as all medical facilities will be pre-occupied with the treatment of the rich upper class and high ranking government officials, who are required to keep expectant mothers out of the hospitals.

10. In the event of nuclear war, there will be no engaging in sexual activities, with or without a partner, as our country does not want to be caught with its pants down.

11. In the event of nuclear war, there will be no brushing of teeth, as the nation's scientists wish to examine the effect of varying amounts of radiation on the germs that cause bad breath.

12. In the event of nuclear war, extra-strength Tylenol capsules will be recontinued for the treatment of radiation poisoning in the lower class civilian population.

13. In the event of nuclear war, the use of water will be restricted as follows:

- 1) Toilets may be flushed once per month.
- 2) Drinking water will be limited to 1 gallon per month.
- 3) 1 tub of water per family every 6 months.
- 4) If necessary, water may be recycled for drinking and bathing.

\*\*Rich upper class and high ranking government officials will be excluded from this ruling as it is not possible for them to exist without their necessary items, such as pools, hot tubs and bidets.

14. Slavery will be reinstated to insure the work force of the lower and middle class and preservation of the strengths of the position of the rich upper class and high ranking government officials.

15. Because of possible ecological damage, there will be no burning of wood or coal stoves.

16. There will be no dying without proper advanced permission, granted only by high ranking government officials. Violators will be punished to the fullest extent of the law.

17. KKK activities will be postponed, as the participants could attract enemy fire, the hoods being mistaken as missiles.

18. All film stars will be recruited to act in the role of President, in an effort to confuse the enemy.

19. There will be one minute of silence in the middle of the war to commemorate Woodstock and the 1960's peace movement.

EDITORS NOTE: Items 5, 6, and 7 originally supported equal rights for lower and middle class civilians. These items have been deleted because it has been established that these civilians are not deserving of such rights.

Michael Moore  
Mays Landing, NJ  
Greater Egg Harbor Regional High School  
Susan D. Feder

## Death Goes A-Walkin'

Soaking my sorrow in the remains of a shot glass, I saw the thousands of snowflakes fall beyond the window in the barroom mirror. I could almost feel the snow on top of me, weighing me down, pushing my sleepy head toward the bartop. The world became a gigantic whirlpool, and tables and chairs and bottles and mirrors and drunks and men and the sidewalk and the snow were being flung to the vortex by torrents of circling water.

When I woke up, I was alone. In one corner of the bar, the poker-faced bartender silently wiped a shot glass dry. The night in the mirror was profoundly dark--streetlights made pitiful attempts to cut the void, but they were stopped within feet, showing only whirling snow.

My glass was empty, and that was a shame. I was about to croak for more liquor, but the barkeep inexplicably left through a swinging door. I awaited his return, but this did not occur. I would have reached the hundred million miles to the bottles that I could see under the bar in the mirror, but there was no way I could pour anything into that tiny little glass.

Time passed, and I looked at my sullen face.

Then, the door was flung open, sending tendrils of snow blowing to the farthest corners of the bar. With a chill gust of wind, a man in black strode in, his shoes clacking on the floor.

To my misfortune, the stranger was Death. What I had mistaken for shoes were the cold bones of his feet. "Drinks for everyone!" he yelled gleefully. Leaning his enormous scythe on the bar, he pulled that elusive bottle from under the bartop, snatching a glass as well. "Just you an' me, huh old timer?" he chuckled, swiveling his great round eyeballs at me, ligaments creaking.

"Good Golly," I thought, as he refilled me.

He slugged the first drink down quickly, tilting his head back and pouring it into his mouth. He made another, and stared into the mirror, in what might have been a disconsolate expression. After a moment, our eyes met, and he leaned forward to my reflection, about to speak.

"Ya know," he said, "being Death is no picnic."

I had sort of expected something like this, so I settled in to my listening pose.

"Nobody is ever happy to see me. Ever. They always give me the same expression, like 'my time? already?' Don't they know they gotta go sometime?"

"I would think that sort of thing came with the territory," I said.

"Oh, I know," he said, "but it's so depressing! You never get used to it!"

I muttered my sympathies.

"Take the other day, in Tucson. Some guy does eighty into a guard rail in Tucson. He's got spark plugs up his nose. Do you know what he says? 'Who, me?' Like what more do you need? Then he tells me he's got a family to take care of! I tells him, 'Hey, they'll be dead, too, one of these days.' This makes him even more mad, and . . . I don't know." Death let his drink trickle between his chalky teeth. With a graceful flair, he refilled both our glasses.

"You know," he said annoyedly, pointing a bony finger at me in the mirror, "you people are makin' it harder and harder all the time! I always come lookin' for some guy, like his time has definitely come, and do you know what I find?"

I shrugged.

"He's hooked up to some machine or other. Or someone got his heart going again or something. You wouldn't believe how many false alarms I get." He snickered, and leaned in close. "Sometimes I take 'em anyway. They keep the body breathin', but I take 'em."

He took a deep drink.

"You people really bug me, though. Always complaining, always tryin' to live longer. Always trying to get me to play chess. Never coming quietly. Why can't you just be decent about it?"

I shrugged.

"You know, of course," he said matter-of-factly, "you got too many people on this here Earth."

"Yeah," I said, "I know."

"Everyone makin' babies, an' no one wanting to die. Pretty soon you're going to be up to yer necks in people. Yer gonna be walkin' ten foot deep in people. I kin see it. Yer gonna say 'Where's the food?' and someone else'll say, 'Hey, it's planted underneath all these people.'"

"Golly," I said, my head really buzzing now. Death was starting to look a little glassy-eyed too. It was beginning to get hard to hear him over the thud thud thud of my blood blood blood.

"An' now," he slurred, "People's tryin' to cure all those diseases. I mean, some of those guys are my best friends. Smallpox, f'r instance. That was a swell guy. He was a riot. And then, some joker had to go an' cure it." He leaned his glaring white skull towards me, and whispered, "I got the guy that did it, though. Blew up his appendix. Heh heh heh!"

"Golly."

"Yeh. Sometimes, though, I gotta go to the big guy fer help. I sez, 'Hey, God, send 'em an earthquake or a war,' and he jest smiles an' cooks somethin' up. One time he even sent me a plague."

"I think I read about that somewhere," I said.

He rested his chin in his hands and mumbled to himself, "I'm gonna hafta see him again soon."

"Yeh, I guess so," I said. "But . . . kin ya wait for me to get outta this place before ya do it?"

"Ah," he said, turning the blank ivory of his face towards me for the first time, "Anything fer a drinkin' chum." With a throaty chuckle, he slapped me on the back hard, and one of the smaller bones in his hand popped out and rolled into a corner.

Then the incredible Charybdis began to swirl again, and the waves of water began to engulf everything, sending me drowning into the murky depths of my mind.

A rapping split the night in my head, and I awoke to see the bartender banging the empty shot glass on the bar.

Past his arm, I could see a haggard face alone in the mirror, and behind that, the falling snow.

Joe Golaszewski  
Brookfield, CT

## Phonograph

*I am getting hotter  
inside*

*as the old diamond needle  
of your voice*

*plays your words;*

*I don't feel, anymore,*

*but I smell smoke,*

*and I know*

*(as you wear through the record)*

*that it won't be long*

*before my circuits go.*

Wendy Marie Cukauskas

Vienna, VA

James Madison High School

Mrs. Bernis Von zur Muehlen

## Conducting

When I'm walked to my car to drive the few blocks  
Home, it's as if--no, it's real--the shadows of trees  
Move in the wind, over the grey grass  
And pavement, as if trying to find something to pin  
Their darkness on. It's almost time. When  
I am nearly gone--

I will tell you what it will be like.  
I could draw a picture of this much more easily.  
My chin tilted away, your hand moves anxiously  
In my cool hair.

Carry your head like a bantam, or don't--  
I walk like a boat, was meant to be a quadruped. You've seen it. Yet  
Humming like the diligent space between  
The snap in a neuron and a word, and widening  
As much as the space does.

The talk always ends aimed away from me.  
But we're shaped like language, even: ragged, a field  
Of itchgrass and soybean, a space to be lived on.  
At night, it seems raw as dark water, and dirty water's a conductor  
Almost as pungent as copper wire.

Listen:  
I'll tell you a story, and another, and you must guess the true one.  
The above was the first tale--a guess. The other is this: What I've  
Told you is true, but not real, or it's real, but not  
True. I've folded myself into a one-way mirror--choose  
The glass, or the reflection.

Conducting light, I'm wired  
To my own spine and I'll turn away easy as a hinge. You see,  
Even you can't tell me what fire is made of. What is it?  
Burning air. Air burns, always, to one hot point--we could  
Darken it between our two palms.

Cathy Wagner  
Catonsville, MD  
Catonsville High School  
Dr. Gary Blankenburg

## Still Life

only the wind  
animates  
this diorama--  
of waxy, deep green trees,  
sulking  
and anchored in archaic clay,  
ominous clouds  
suspended in the damp, lifeless air  
here where hearts are heavy  
and no-one dares  
to take a leadened breath

Daphne Kalotay  
Madison, NJ  
Ms. Harter

## Boysenberry Jam

There is that light-fingered madness  
between crossing within the lines  
and rolling them up, with your nose to the asphalt,  
just mad enough to sit down when your legs are tired,  
and wet your head when you are hot.  
There is walking barefoot down the hall,  
and burning your books when it gets cold.

Run your fingers through somebody's hair.  
Put a slice of orange in each ear.  
Rub tomato juice into the scalp,  
and put strawberries between the lips.  
Dribble milk on his chin,  
and watch it trickle down the jaw.  
Spread butter between the fingers,  
Stuff lettuce between the toes.  
Eat ice-cream off the nape of his neck.

If you have a television,  
break a hole in the top and grow plants in it.  
If you have a big lawn,  
buy sheep.  
If your flowers get choked with weeds,  
plant apple trees.  
Boysenberries make good jam.

Erik Morsink  
Madison, NJ  
Ms. Harter

## Aid

Bawlaby, squawlaby  
The mighty Menelik  
Starving with open mouth  
Pointed skyward.  
Then comes the mission bus,  
Reverentistically,  
Boxes and boxes of  
Hope for the earth.

Twangity, bangity,  
Bob Geldof, Joan Baez  
Singing their loving hearts  
Out for the poor.  
Millions and millions of  
Anglocurrency  
Hastily dropped off at  
Africa's door.

Bawlaby, squawlaby  
The weary Menelik  
Recalling thoughtfully  
The mission bus.  
"All of a sudden, though,  
Abruptaturily,  
The food and bishops stopped  
Coming for us."

Loren Goloski  
Lancaster, PA  
Mrs. Mary Pautler

## Mary Janes

I met Pete in between third and fourth grade. He moved in next door to my house, and we immediately became friends. He taught me how to catch fish, play football, and spit up and catch the saliva in my mouth. That was the neatest thing I ever learned, even though my Mom yelled at me for doing it. Sometimes it got a little messy, like when I missed and got my eye or the living room rug. Then my Mom would really hit the roof.

Pete came during summer vacation. I introduced him to my other friends: John, Patti, Eric, Marc, and Ilene. He taught them the spitting trick and they liked him a lot. I was relieved. I would have hated dragging him around with me for two months just to be nice. The seven of us did almost everything together; we swam at Eric's, swam at John's, swam at Patti's, at Marc's, Ilene's, and Pete's. In fact, the only home we didn't swim at was mine. I had a pool but it collapsed during a thunderstorm when I was about five. Everything was flooded and my Mom had to go around the neighborhood telling people not to sue. She said if she didn't do that we'd be broke. I didn't really understand what my bones had to do with a pool, but I didn't say anything.

On Sundays I visited my Dad. He lived in New York City, and I got to take the train in alone where he met me at the gate. Usually he was late, but I never told my Mom that because then she'd get mad and not let me take the train in. I loved the train, especially in the summer; it was air conditioned and I didn't sweat half as much as I did at home. I always sat at a window seat and stared at the metal rods that ran along the brick walls. It was neat watching them move up and down. They would suddenly dip and then jump back up again.

Dad and I would usually go to the park, a baseball game, or just talk in his room. Whenever I went home, he would always say, "Now Karen, even though your mother and I are separated, it doesn't mean I love you any less. I love you very much and don't you ever forget." I knew that by heart and expected it every time we said goodbye. It was kind of like talking to my grandparents, who would say, "Nice talking to you" and I would say, "Nice talking to you too. I love you" and hand the phone to my Mom. She didn't like them very much; they were my Dad's parents. She thought they were lazy and selfish, and said that was why Dad acted the way he did. I didn't understand what she meant but I could tell by the look on her face I wasn't supposed to.

In the middle of July, Pete told me he was going on a fishing trip with Marc, Eric, and John, but I couldn't come because I was a girl. I got so mad at him. What's the difference if I'm a boy or a girl anyway? I asked him this and he just stood there, stuttering. Finally, he admitted there was no reason, but they'd voted on who would tell me I couldn't come and he'd won. He said notto worry, because Patti and Ilene didn't want to go either. Didn't want to go? Were they crazy, giving up a chance to leave home for a night? Patti said she hated worms, and Ilene said she didn't like the smell of fish. Besides, her mother was taking her shopping for a new pair of Mary Janes.

Mary Janes were ugly, black patent leather shoes with a rounded foot part and a buckle across the top. They gave me blisters all over, and whenever the shoes rubbed anything they got lines on them. Mom called them scuff marks and she said I should try walking with my legs apart so my feet wouldn't touch. She said she couldn't afford a new pair of shoes every two months just because I kept dirtying them. I didn't care. I hated dressing up. Anyway, I told her about the trip and how Pete said I couldn't go because I was a girl. She sat me down and said, "Honey, if you think this is bad wait until you try to find a job." My Mom never made any sense.

The next day, I confronted my Dad with the problem. His advice was to explain to them that I really wanted to go. He said I should tell them I was capable of doing just as good, if not better, a job as them and that was sufficient evidence, proving that I could handle it, or something like that. I told him I might need him as a backup, and he said I meant a source, and that was

fine.

It's a good thing he thought it was fine, because when I told Pete what my Dad said I should do, Pete said I could go only if he could go into the city with me one day. No problem, I told him, since I was almost positive my Dad wouldn't mind anyone coming with me. First, I asked Mom, though, just to be sure, but all she said was not to get her involved. Lately, she had been acting kind of strange, but when I asked if everything was ok, she muttered something about it being a bad time of the month and I would understand soon. So I called my Dad and he said he'd love to have Pete over and that we could go to the Phillies-Mets game. That was perfect, because Pete was from New York and I loved the Phillies. I called up Patti to tell her the news about me being permitted to go on the trip, but she said fishing was gross and she had better things to do. Her loss, because I was convinced I was going to have a great time.

When Pete and I took the train in, all I could think about was what Patti said. Maybe I shouldn't go if they weren't either. Pete asked what was wrong, but I didn't tell him because I was afraid he'd think I was lying just so I wouldn't have to go, and I'd be a sissy. I pointed out the jumping bars and he said they were really neat. Finally, I told him everything. He explained that that was why they didn't want girls going, since we'd probably get scared. After I said I was looking forward to our expedition, Pete told me I'd make a great boy. I didn't know if that was good or bad, so I just muttered a thanks.

My Dad was waiting when we arrived at Penn Station, which was good because if he was late, I was afraid Pete might tell his parents. Pete's parents lived in the same house, so he had to ask two people about taking the train alone but I only had to ask one. My Dad took us straight to the stadium and filled us up with hotdogs, pretzels, and soda. He didn't usually do that but I guess he was trying to get Pete to let me go fishing. I whispered to my Dad that they already said I could go and he stopped feeding us. Which was good, because Pete was turning a little green. On the way home Pete threw up, and that afternoon my mother was yelling at someone over the phone. All I heard was "No reason, no reason at all. They're only nine--" and guessed she was talking to Dad. After she hung up, I tried to tell her why he did it, but she wouldn't listen; she kept muttering "irresponsible" and "I wish the lawyers would finish the paper work" or something like that.

While all this was happening, Ilene and Patti were kind of ignoring me. I went over to Ilene's on Tuesday afternoon, and all she wanted to do was play house. I didn't really want to, but I said okay as long as I could be the father. She said that was fine; she'd be the wife. I guess I was looking at her strange, because she asked why I was looking at her like that. I said if I was the father, she had to be the daughter if we were playing house. Ilene said in normal houses there was a husband and wife and then there were children. She accentuated the normal. Suddenly, I didn't feel very well and told her I had to go home.

My Mom was in the kitchen making iced tea when I walked in. She kissed me hello and asked how Ilene's was. I said fine and told her what she said about the normal homes and everything else. Mom sat me down at the table and took my hands. She said that she and Dad were once very much in love but just couldn't live together anymore, so he moved out. I asked why we weren't normal and she hugged me to her chest and said there's no such thing as normal, everything is relative. I didn't understand, since I had no idea what my cousins had to do with it. Then she told me she loved me very much, and Daddy loved me very much, and I shouldn't worry so much about what other people said. I shrugged and tried to ignore what Ilene told me. Dad called that night to say he couldn't make it this Sunday. I asked him if he thought we were normal. At first he was quiet, but then he said yes; we all loved each other and that was normal. Then he asked to talk to Mom, and she told me to go outside and play for a few minutes. She did that whenever she was going to cry or yell.

(Continued on Page 13)

I went over to Pete's house to see what he was doing. Marc and Eric were over, and I asked them if they thought I was normal. They said sort of, but I was the only girl they knew who would want to go on a trip with them. I was talking about something completely different but decided not to say anything. Secretly, I was afraid they'd say yes and think I was weird because my Dad didn't live with me.

Well, the summer crept along, and I saw Patti again. We had a lot of fun, since I hadn't seen her for such a long time. She made me promise I wouldn't tell Ilene that she really wanted to go on the trip, but her mother said it wasn't proper for girls to do things like that. When she told her mother I was going, her mother said it was because my mother and father weren't living together and it was a bad influence. I looked down at my feet and didn't say anything. I felt so hurt, betrayed, and confused. My Mom and Dad said I was normal, but I guess I wasn't. Ilene was right; when parents don't live together, there's something strange going on. Patti said she was sorry, but she had to tell me since we were best friends.

I went on the overnight with Pete, Marc, and John. Eric was in Pittsburgh visiting his grandparents. I tried to have a good time but couldn't. It seemed like I was doing something wrong and I didn't really belong there. I caught six fish but let them go free because I felt bad for them. I didn't want to ruin their families; that is, if fish had parents and children. When I got home, I told Mom I had a good time. I'm not sure if she believed me, but I didn't feel like talking.

I went to visit my Dad on a Wednesday. He looked uncomfortable and I didn't have too much to say to him. He asked about the fishing trip, and I told him about the ones I let go but not why. I guess he thought I didn't want to kill them, which is sort of true but not completely. Before I left, he told me Mom had something to discuss with me. Instead of saying the usual quote, he just kissed me goodbye and said, "Have a good trip, sweetie." I didn't have a good time that day, especially since on the way home the train was packed and I was squeezed between two businessmen.

My Mom picked me up at the station and we went out for dinner. She said that if Dad was acting a little strange, it was because they had made a decision. I couldn't believe it—we were actually going to be a normal family. My eyes lit up and I told Mom that I knew their decision was all for the best and whatever they did I would be happy for both of them. She said she knew her little girl would understand, and Dad would be moving in with his fiance next month. Their wedding was planned for October. Then she started talking about visiting rights and money and custody. I lost my appetite. I couldn't even finish the mint chocolate chip ice cream, my favorite. Ilene was right, Patti's mother was right, everyone was right except my parents; I was not part of a normal family.

School started early that year, right after Labor Day. The week before, I went shopping for some new clothes with my mother. I picked out some shorts and a skirt and sweater outfit. She looked at me in surprise and asked, "No jeans?" and I just shook my head. Then my father came the next day and asked if I wanted to go look for some school clothes. I lied and said that would be great, since I needed new shoes. Once inside the store, he headed straight for the sneaker rack and asked which ones I wanted. I went over to the Mary Janes and picked up a pair, not saying anything because I was afraid if I opened my mouth, I'd start to cry.

Gabrielle Fisher  
Eastchester, NY  
Eastchester High School  
Mr. Richard Leonard

## Steel and Baby Blue in Fat

*I've been told before  
That it wouldn't be right  
For us to put down our gun  
And watch the Big Fat Guy  
Because that means he still has a gun  
And when he sees us  
As the loser  
Who didn't want to fight for ash and cold faces  
He will squirt us  
And laugh a deep and stupid laugh  
And stare at his mess.  
Then he will remember  
His masses of stone figures  
Who have big shoulders  
And know where to point a cannon--  
They are not told to be forgotten,  
It's just part of the game.  
Only those figures who stand to the left  
At a timely second  
May tell about what was to the right.  
Because they do not know,  
They are just soldiers in blue booties  
Sitting in the lap  
Of the Big Fat Man  
Who holds them there  
Next to his steel squirt gun.*

Karie Button  
Bernardsville, NJ  
Dr. Jane Cole

## Class Trip to St. Patrick's Cathedral

"Oh my God . . ."  
My mouth was agape and my eyes were riveted on the woman in front of me.  
The priest attempted to sing "Blessed Be the Children." It sounded like a drunken whale.  
Any minute I was expecting to see the head in front of me move, or show some emotion, a tear falling from its eye.  
But its eyes were glass. Cold black glass.  
I tried to keep my eyes on the woman's beehive hairdo, but it was no use. They kept falling on the pathetic animal draped around her neck, comically biting its tail to stay upon her shoulders.  
And its legs dangled down her back. Skinny, pitiful legs with tiny, brittle claws poking out from the feet.  
The woman began to sing "Blessed Be the Children." Mary pushed me to move.  
"Come on, Mr. Fletcher's waiting. If we stay in St. Patrick's forever, he'll think we're like religious or something."  
So I left.  
Its cold, black eyes followed me.  
Blessed Be the Children.

Monica Tauriello  
Dumont, NJ  
Mrs. Cullen



"A Giant's Thumbprint"  
Berkeley Heights, NJ  
Elizabeth Dupuis

## The Card Game

I wiped the sweat from my forehead as I stared intently at the seven, up-facing cards presented before me. A sly grin came to my face, for I knew this time my well-worn playing cards looked promising. I itched my unshaven face and winked at the card placed first on my right . . . the ace of hearts. I breathed deeply on my cigarette and let the smoke slowly creep past my right eye as I picked the ace up and noisily placed it above the rest. Confidently, I revealed the unturned card. It was the jack of diamonds. Jack Forrester, I thought to myself, where are you now? My mind fled from Jack and went back to the game.

"Black eight on red nine . . . red seven on the eight . . ." I spoke aloud to myself. I was surprised at the faint echo of the room. "Hello?!" I shouted, and listened for the response. The echo was there, but the reply was not. I turned on the radio next to me, but only to get the same voiceless static.

Red ten on black jack . . . red jack on black queen.

I picked up the cassette next to the ashtray and put it into the deck. "Hi, daddy!" my seven-year-old son's voice said, as I pushed down on the dusty 'play' button, "Do you want to play He-man with me?" I thought of his curly blond locks and innocent eyes as his voice filled the room. "In a minute, Josh," my own voice carried over, "Do you want to say something to Mr. Microphone?" As I listened, I continued my game.

"Yes!"

Black queen on red king.

"Go ahead, Josh, say whatever you want."

Black nine on ten.

"Whatever I want, daddy?"

Black two on three.

"Yes, Josh . . . you can say anything . . . anything at all . . ."

Red nine on ten.

"Well . . . I love you, daddy . . ."

"I know you do, champ."

One, two, three . . . ace of diamonds.

"Why do you hafta go away, daddy? 'Cuz of the war?" Josh's voice asked.

I held the ace tight in my fist.

"Uh-huh. You know I want you to go with me, Josh."

"To go underground?"

"Yes, Josh. To protect us from this world we live in. It isn't fair for the government to jeopardize our lives the way they do. Please, Josh, ask your mother to postpone your vacation . . ."

"But, Dad . . . it's Disneyland!"

I slammed the ace down hard on the table, hurting my hand.

"I know son, I underst--"

I switched the tape off as quickly as I could.

I put out my cigarette and sipped at my powdered milk. I was hungry and tired. My watch read quarter of seven; however, I knew the time was way off. I stared at the cement walls of my room and remembered building them not so long ago.

Black six on red seven.

Red three on black four.

It had been twenty-two days since the radio had gone dead; twenty-two days since I had heard anything about the nuclear war.

Two of diamonds on the ace.

I thought of Josh at Disneyland.

Red five on the six.

I thought of my ex-wife.

Four on the five.

I thought of the world I used to live in.

Black nine on the Jack of diamonds.

And yet, I still played my game of solitaire, knowing full well that the game was already over.

Jonathan Hoefler  
Henrietta, NY  
Mr. R. Guido

# Summer at Cornell

Trish, Jenn, Whitney and I lie on the hill in our bikinis and shades, waiting for the sun to bronze our bodies. I am done with classes for the day, and the other three have two hours until their next class. The sun is out for the first time this week. When I first came here, it was sunny for three days straight; it's as if they planned it that way so we wouldn't turn around and go home.

Kenny comes over to us and starts talking about what a nice day it is. He is looking at Trish especially, examining her in her skimpy suit. Then he turns to me and asks me what I am doing tonight. I tell him that I have a research paper due Monday and that I will probably spend the night in the library, making love to a microfiche document. He looks disappointed, then says he has to run because he has a class in five minutes. When he is gone, I tell Trish that he was looking her over, and she insists that his eyes never left me. We both laugh.

The sky is bigger in Ithaca than it is in any other part of the world, especially on sunny days. It's so smooth and round and open and unending. You look up at it and you know you can't lie.

If I had to draw a picture of forever, I would draw the sky at Cornell.

Trish and I are lying on the wall, her radio between us. Jenn is sitting on my other side, straddling the wall and kicking the stones like the sides of an old horse. There are hundreds of other students in the area: on the wall, throwing a frisbee in the dust bowl, smoking under a tree, playing basketball.

I like to watch the sun drip over the buildings in the distance up on the hill. It is fluorescent and it makes the intricate architecture of each structure look like origami that could be stripped off the sky with a fingernail. I like the way the pinkness peeks between the pillars. This place really lets you think, and not just about the insanity plea and biomedical ethics. I don't really have time to think at home. The one thing I really hate about high school is that everyone's so busy shoving you through the assembly line toward college that you lose the power to think for yourself. Up here, it's different. I think a lot about my sister and me, and how I'm going to try to be nicer when I get home and how I'm going to set a good example for her. They're good thoughts, if not practical, at least not totally impossible.

"What's up tonight?"

"I'm going to the movies with Kenny."

Trish smiles at me. "You're gonna stand up the library computer?"

"The thought of spending my Friday night in a learning facility makes me retch."

"What're you seeing?"

"'Pretty in Pink.' Again." There are only two theaters in Ithaca, showing a total of four movies, and in four weeks I have seen all of them at least once.

"I thought you said you were tired and you wanted to rest tonight."

"I'm always tired here. It must be something about the atmosphere. If I slept every time I was tired, I wouldn't have gotten out of bed since day one."

"Me neither."

"I don't know what it is that we do when we're not studying," Jenn comments. "All we do is eat and sleep."

"Yeah, we're like cats!" We laugh. But we all know that it's true.

"Still, I don't think I've complained once in my letters home," Whitney says. "I love this place, don't ask me why."

"Hmm . . . it's better than watching 'Three's Company' reruns all summer."

"No, seriously," Whitney persists, "I feel like I can think up here. Like we're so far away from reality that for once I can

think about myself and straighten out my life!" I stare at her. I had thought that Whitney was telepathic before, but now I'm sure.

"Well, I don't think it's just that," Trish says. "I don't know what the hell I like about being eight million miles from civilization, but there's something. I just know that six weeks isn't long enough."

"Yeah. I'm gonna miss you guys so much when I leave. I don't think I can relate to my friends at home like I relate to you guys. You're so weird, I feel closer to you."

I put my arm around Jenn. "Ditto, sweetie."

It is a beautiful morning. The rays of light that come through the window pierce my eyelids and wake me. Gigi, my roommate, takes half a pizza from our refrigerator and begins to eat it. I climb off my bunk and join her.

"How was the movie?" she asks.

"The same as the last time I saw it."

"We had pizza in Liz's room last night, about eight of us. Whitney was acting out a scene from 'Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret.' It was hysterical." Gigi stuffs a piece of crust in her mouth. She is looking at me eagerly, and I know that she is curious about Kenny, but I don't feel like talking about him. I know he likes me, and I have a good time with him, and that is all. I think of Stuart, my boyfriend at home. He is far away, as distant as world hunger and missile crises. It is hard to think about him. I can read his letters, but I cannot read the feelings behind his words. And Stuart is young, I remind myself; a year younger than I. I'm sure he has been dating other people since I left. I think I'll go out with Kenny again tonight, maybe out to dinner, but I don't feel like talking about it with Gigi right now.

Gigi and I decide to go to the gorge today. We love the gorge and go there nearly every weekend. You don't have to love nature to appreciate the Cornell gorge. I sit by the edge of the water, and the undertow carries away all my frustration. Down here, you can't hear anything except the water crashing over the rocks. From the bottom of the gorge, you look up and you feel like you're sitting in a crevice in an old sofa and nobody knows you're there and you can see everything. You could come with a hundred people, but you would still be alone with the water and the rocks. I can't think of any place at home where I can see or think or feel as much as I do when I'm at the gorge.

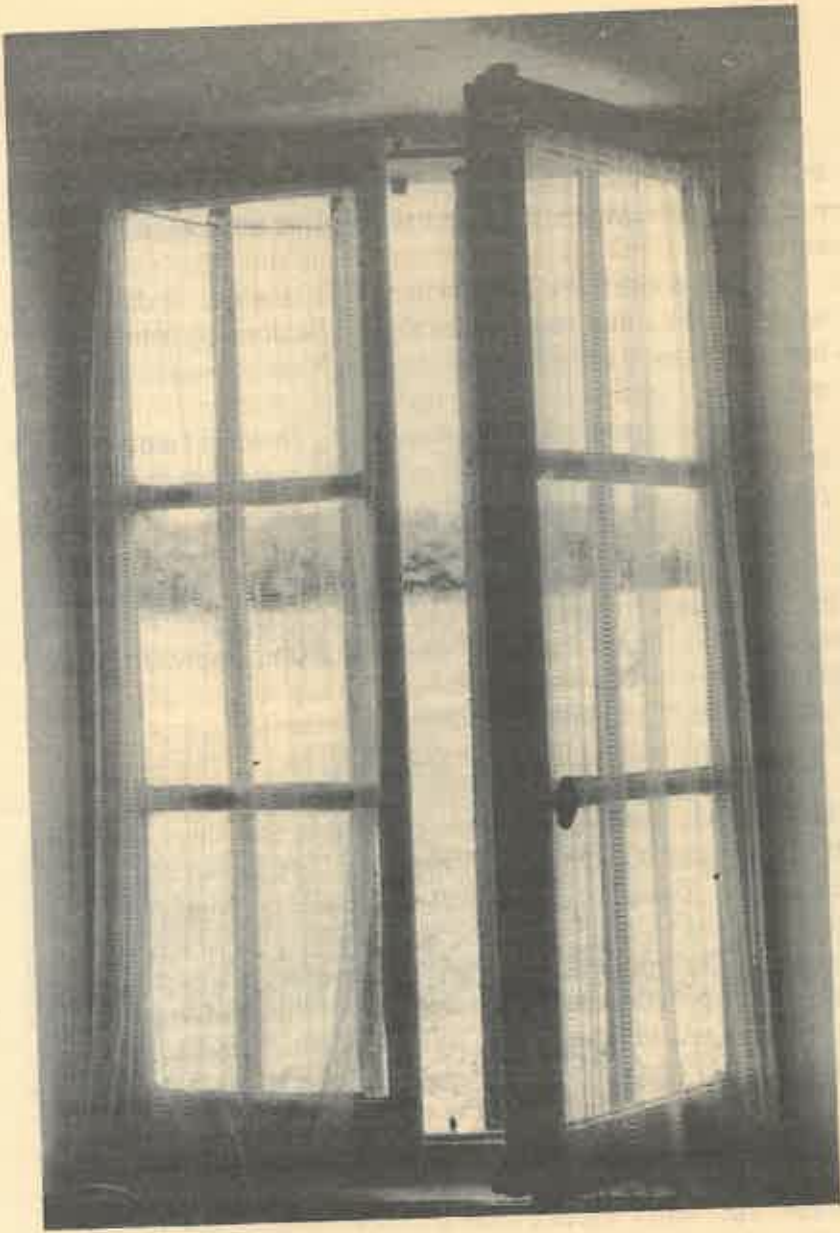
We have two weeks left before we leave. I don't think there is anything left to do here that I haven't done yet. Then again, I don't think there is anything I would mind doing over a few times, save seeing another movie. I don't think I could get enough pizza at midnight. Or ride my bike through the campus with Jenn too many times. Or dance on the furniture in the lounge too often. Or straighten out my life too much. I've been here four weeks, and I've just begun to scour out my brain. I'd need a few years to finish all the housekeeping I've let slide for so long.

I love the way the cool air feels at night, when we walk among the statues in the art quad. The night is a blanket around us, and we feel closer to one another than to anyone we have ever known.

Standing here at the top of the hill, centrally isolated in the middle of Ithaca, New York, I know it will not be the same when I come home, put my brain in neutral, and listen to my friends' update on the latest gossip that has seeped out over the summer. "Can you believe they broke up? . . . It's true, she's really pregnant . . . I can't believe my mother grounded me til judgment day . . ."

I have less than three hours to finish my research paper.

Karen White  
Potomac, MD  
Ms. Peggy Pfeiffer



Barbara Mahnen  
Scarsdale, NY

## The Queen's Obituary

There used to be a queen who lived on my road, but she died. I don't know when she died because when they found her she had already been dead for a few days. The days made her smell and she made the house smell. When we went in her house to see her, we forgot she was a queen.

Someone called a priest. He came and said prayers so she could go to heaven. He said the same prayers to my grandmother. My grandmother wasn't a queen but he said the same prayers anyway. I wondered how having the priest say prayers would get the queen into heaven. If she had been dead for a few days, wouldn't she already be there--if that was where she was going?

He talked in Latin. We didn't understand Latin, the queen probably did because she was a queen. We stayed with the queen while the priest was there. Then the relatives came. They were mostly royal like she had been. The princes and royal people didn't resemble the queen but they did cry when they saw her. Her sister came too, but she was just a regular person--she wasn't royal.

The day after the dead queen was found, there was a funeral for her. She was buried and we all went. It was sad because all the royal people were crying. We started to cry then, too. After most of the people were done crying, the regular sister sang a very happy tune. Then we went to the

queen's house that didn't smell like her anymore but instead smelled like Lysol, and ate all kinds of foods. The regular sister made all of the food. It was good.

Three men in tuxedos came to the house and played music. No one danced because that would've been rude. Everyone just sat, ate, chatted and smiled. The men played happy music for a long time and then left. We all kept chatting.

When it was almost dark, we all left. The dead queen's relatives stayed at her house. We said good-bye and gave them our sympathy for her death. They all said good-night and thanked us for making their stay as enjoyable as we could.

One of the relatives stayed in the house after all the others had gone. He took care of all the queen's belongings and sold the house and all of her land. Now a young man and his daughter live there. They take good care of the house and keep the lawn neat. They tell all of their friends that it was a queen's castle once, before she died.

Felice Primeau  
Averill Park, NY  
Mr. D. Bogardus

## The Dance That Has No Name

The sky so misty after snow  
thick and silent  
as a headache

Trees run their black rivers  
into the sky  
the topmost branches reach  
daggerlike and slick

A fly, groggy with winter  
stumbles across the window sill  
bending and stretching  
its heavy joints in slow motion  
its wings just another burden

A young boy's heart stops,  
escapes through the cloudy  
oceans of air  
flies for a moment  
then plunges headlong  
into the stratosphere,  
into the dance that has no name

A young boy learns the truth  
a brother is left behind,  
heart cuffed to the boy's cold, empty ribs

Gaea rubs her temples;  
endurance, the last bed of snow,  
slowly  
slowly melting away.

Liz Ahl  
Cherry Hill, NJ  
Peggy Beck



The only times I saw Gretchen when I was little were when we went to visit her at the big old wood house where she lived with the orange cat and some kind of dog that I don't remember very well. We used to go crab fishing on the short, rotting pier that seemed so long and dangerous, my dad and Gretchen putting the bait into the wire cages with spaces too wide to catch any but the big ones. Then we'd wait and wait, and finally pull one up, and there would be some huge, blue, horny thing with long popped-out eyes and feelers as hard as fingernails. I was always scared, so Gretchen and my dad would take the crabs out and drop them into the pots to cook, I standing to the side to watch them hiss as they hit the boiling water, and then peering over the stove to see their shells hardening and slowly turning red. I don't remember eating them, but I'm sure we did.

Gretchen was big on eating--she loved m & m's, and when she came to visit us, she'd bring those hefty 20-pound bags and hide the little candies around the house for me to find. I remember the sound of their hard round shells, clicking as they fell onto the glass surface of our coffee table. One Christmas she scattered them behind the miniature gold angels that my mother always let me arrange in front of the creche. Pretty soon, Mom decided that all those m & m's probably weren't good for me anyway and made us switch to Triskets, those salty health-food crackers. They were square-shaped, rough like emery-boards, and a lot harder to hide.

Some of my earliest memories are of Gretchen and me at the ocean, her in a black bikini, me in an ugly cotton sunhat, a blue T-shirt that hung to my ankles, and the sticky, white zinc that Mom spread under my eyes, all to prevent sunburn. Gretchen would take me way out to the really big waves and show me how to hold my breath and duck under, to float where it was black and cold, until the wave passed over. I was petrified that some time we'd come up too early, in the middle of one, since we couldn't hear it crashing over us way down there. Then we'd play crab--that was my favorite. Gretchen would swim around underwater and pinch me on my leg, and I'd scream, remembering how loud a small white crab once made my dad yell. She'd pop up and say in an innocent, high, totally fake voice, "What, did a craaab get you?" We'd both laugh, and I'd do the same thing to her. She always acted surprised, and splashed and made just as much noise as I did.

Later she moved away, but until Long Beach was demolished by the hurricane, we would still all go down there and rent houses every summer. When I was around ten--I think it was my great-grandmother's ninety-seventh birthday--the whole family came, eight second cousins, a few once-removed's, and a couple of aunts, uncles, and babies. One night we all ate dinner together on someone's porch, the wooden floor gritty with sand blown in from the dunes. For some reason the long dining table was really high off the ground, so that we had to stretch to see our food. I still remember Great Grandmother peering over her end, her face white, calm, and still with deep-etched lines. After we ate, Gretchen and I took my littlest, bratty cousin Jessica for a walk on the beach. I told her ghost stories I'd learned at Girl-Scout Camp until the long shadows that stretched across the flat wet sand, and the orange lights that flickered fire-like across the curving dunes scared me too, and Jessie and I walked together, Gretchen in front to protect us.

I haven't been back to the beach for a while now--it seems like someone always has to work or can't afford it or is too tired to drive all the way there. I get cards from Gretchen on my birthday, the kind with the obnoxious messages (they get more obscene as I get older). She always writes a real letter inside, in her long, loopy handwriting, not just some cute little note like those from my aunts--"Hope you have a wonderful birthday, with all our love, blah blah blah." Sometimes she sends five or

ten dollars, and a couple of years ago she began giving me books. "A Farewell to Arms" still sits in my bookshelf, white and new and straight, where I put it the day I unwrapped it. She's really smart (I don't know how many times my mom's said to me, "And when Gretch was in high school, she got an 800 on her verbal SAT's), and so every birthday she does something to try and improve my mind.

I guess she's used to having to try--she's a teacher, of ESL for adults. For a while she worked in New York. Then, my mom was constantly telling me horror stories about what an awful place the city was to live, how Gretchen got mugged twice, right outside the door of her apartment. I never mentioned it to her--usually we don't talk about things like that, or, if we do, she makes them seem funny. One day I got on the phone in Dad's room, asked how she was, and she said, "Oh, you know, my stomach feels kind of gross from the radiation. It was so weird--they put me in this big room totally covered with lead and then some nurse closed a huge, thick metal door, and I thought I was going to get stuck in there forever...." That's how I found out she had cancer. The first time we saw her in a wheelchair my mom's face jumped around a lot like it couldn't quite decide on an expression. We'd just gotten out of the Chevy, which looked an awful lot nicer than usual next to Gretchen's rusted, dented yellow Pinto, and there she was, even bonier than usual. Sometimes I wanted to ask her about it, how it felt, but I was glad when she just made jokes or let Jessie and me give each other rides in her chair, up and down the old bridge that she used to tease us had a troll under it.

Now, going home after we see her, we talk about how she looks. Sometimes my mom's happier--"She looks so strong; I've never seen her better"--but awhile ago it was, when we got out of hearing distance, "It's so awful to see her like this; she used to be so full of life...." It was then that I wanted to turn up the radio and smack my mother and scream, "Why bother saying it? We can all see," which is silly, because a lot of the time I feel the same way she does. When Mom called me this summer and told me that the doctor had said Gretchen's not improving, the drug's not working, it doesn't look good, she told me not to get depressed, as if I didn't have the right to cry for someone who's only my second cousin.

Now they talk on the phone once a week, Mom in Dad's room, the door closed, Dad sitting on the beige vinyl chair in the living room, pressing buttons quickly on the remote control (we must have 132 channels, but there's still nothing to watch) and pretending to be mad about the phone bill. Mom's read about some new technique called imaging, in which supposedly you imagine your problems going away, and then they do. She's convinced Gretchen to try it, and every week she coaches her. I don't believe it works, but Mom seems to trust just about everything right now--she prays for Gretchen to get better the same way she prays to St. Christopher that we'll get a parking space when we're in DC.

I went up to visit Gretchen, in the house where she lives in Cranford. It reminded me of the houses on the beach, built of white and blue wooden planks, a tiny porch on the back with white cotton curtains and a screen door. She took me into New York later, and I did all the things you're supposed to do there--shopped and ate and took a couple of bad photos of Liberty Island. It was dark when we drove back, all the windows on the Pinto open and the wind rushing so loud as we crossed the bridge that we could barely talk.

Anne Gowen  
Vienna, VA  
James Madison High School  
Mrs. Bernis Von zur Muehlen

## Untitled

"Some woman just called. She thinks Nee is having a heart attack." I reached my grandmother's house within two minutes. The familiar mess greeted my eyes. The television was on, unwashed dinner plates were still piled high on the living-room fold-up table, and newspapers of every conceivable date scattered everywhere. The smells of her old, small, and deteriorating house were present; also, the smell of the cat's spoiled milk, garbage, and stale cigarette smoke; not overpowering smells but easily discernable when combined with the eighty-plus degrees the house is kept at even in the summer.

She was in her bedroom, sprawled out on her antique cherry-wood bed. She was suddenly old, lying there in one of her "grandmother" floral dresses. I asked how she was feeling; "I can't move, I...I hurt so...pain in my chest..." Out of breath, she stopped. I couldn't help but notice how shallow her breathing was. I decided to wait for my mother; maybe she would know what to do. It seemed like an eternity before she arrived.

"How are you feeling, Mom, what's wrong?"

"Just call an ambulance, at least they'll know what to do." But Nee wouldn't stand for it, "Don't call an ambulance!...no...please...don't...Don't!"

My mother was used to following her mother's instructions and wouldn't call. I could see panic and indecision in my mother's face and I could feel it in my own mind and body through the presence of my pounding heart. Again I told my mother to call an ambulance, this time mouthing the words to her and pointing towards the kitchen. Hopefully, Nee wouldn't hear the call from the kitchen and I could keep Nee calm. All this time I had been clinging to my grandmother's hand and trying to keep her talking just to keep her conscious and assure myself that she was still breathing. A tape recorder was playing over and over in my head; "Don't die on me...Please don't die...I can't believe this is happening...It's twelve thirty and my grandmother is dying in front of me!"

No, my grandmother didn't die. Within two weeks she was home again and continued to do anything she could to go against the doctor's orders. That means I'll maybe even live through another heart attack, before her death comes. I don't want to repeat this experience, but I don't want her to die either. Death is too final. Humans are helpless when death threatens, even more helpless in the finality of the moment. Even doctors have their limits. But I've learned something about my own limitations and how selfish I am for not wanting to let go.

Jeffrey A. Fitz Gerald  
Scotia, NY  
Mrs. Nancy Chant

## Maroon and Maroon

*Me and Jordan had just finished a big fight  
and the nurse was taking him down the hall to her room  
so I snuck up behind running fast and loose  
to throw myself down in the maneuver he taught me  
slid fifteen feet across maroon tiled floor my  
dress shoe heel caught his  
dress shoe heel he went flying over backwards  
surprised and bruised face cracked his head ouch  
he said that was neat  
do it again--  
In gym class me and Troy were playing wrestling  
so when I saw him leap I was on my back  
put my foot in his belly  
sent him over my head  
and he looked so silly I said that was fun*

*let's do it again--*

*Greasy Jackie Leopard ran to his older sister  
showing her the scratches on his arm from my fingers  
the stains on his shirt*

*I sat under the slide with a fat lip  
sucking the ends of my nails  
wanted his blood I could taste it  
wanted more--*

*The poor kindergardener with a chip  
kept kicking me in the knee  
kept saying sorry Charlie till I pushed him down  
he cried because he fell and mud went down his pants  
so he got up and kicked harder--  
In the dream I can't see his face  
but he wears school colors--maroon  
and more maroon, like dried blood  
we swing and swing  
our knuckles only graze and we can't cause any pain.  
Not like the girl I kicked in the gut  
the day my tooth fell out.  
Not like Jordan in the winter when I  
stabbed him hard with my pencil  
till it broke.*

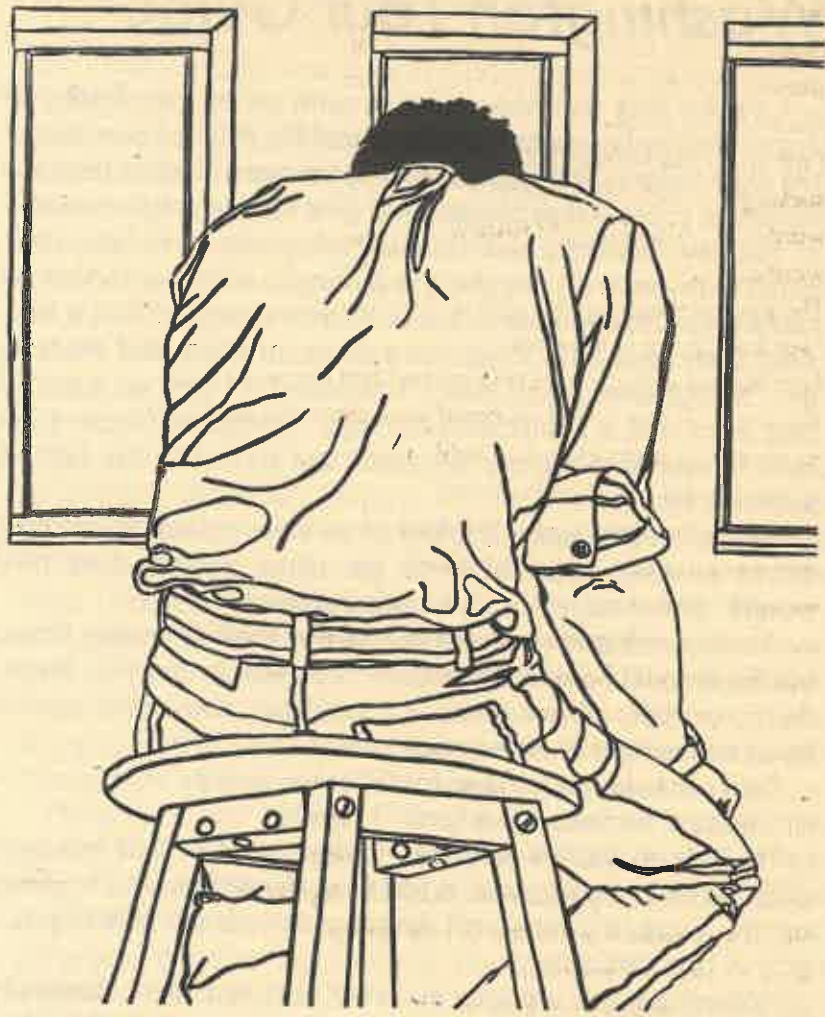
*Or Dana, the fast one, who fell off a swing  
and across the playground we heard his leg crack.  
No, it was more like Jordan in late spring  
when I tried to trip him up  
dove at his ankles from behind  
and he didn't move, just stood  
looking at me face down in the brown grass, waiting  
until I let go.*

Greg Delisle  
Baltimore, MD  
Catonsville High School  
Dr. Blankenburg

## Freeze

*Moon in Jupiter. The signs are right.  
A dead cat ticks in the grass.  
It is the new year, tentative upon the skies,  
As if written there the prophecy  
Of our next twelvemonth penance.  
Wind wheels the bare spines of trees  
Toward day, when the force behind light  
Strikes the calendar from the nail.  
The old year is framed on paper  
(Paper patient with lies and days far away).  
Blowsy brand-veined celebrants  
Linger looking till sunrise:  
Yesterday's newspaper now firefeed  
Where shaky sleepless hands light the new logs,  
Wrap the ashes of the old year that now scatter  
When the back door opens, and lets in the wind  
So pure that it stings the freshly-washed face.*

Angie E. Mlinko  
Malvern, PA  
Mrs. Nancy Rosenberger



"Seated Figure"  
Bryson Van Nostrand  
Kiskiminetas Springs School  
Mr. James Nagle

## Two Points

He hates my story. I don't know why. I called Mari, and she said it was great. She was probably just trying to make me feel good. All right, so my rough-draft was boring. I must have spent twenty-four hours on the stupid thing, and all he did was cross out the good parts. He's such a jerk. How does he expect me to do this? Should I keep writing 'til I write what he wants to hear?

I know. I'll write about dead people. He'll like that. Something grotesque, putrid, and morbid....

...The damp air filtered in from the swamp. A smell of blood filled the dark room. Gorey bodies lay mangled among each other with their internal juices oozing into the cracks of the worn floor boards....

Maybe I'll just write about him. No. He says we can't write about something unless we know about it or have experienced it. I don't think I want to get into a story about him. I can't believe I'm spending a whole vacation day trying to discover the best way to please him.

"Watch spelling and punctuation, or your mark will reflect it," he says. "Don't use adverbs. Don't switch tenses. Don't capitalize the title. Keep it simple." (Or should I say boring?) How does he expect me to write if he's always throwing all sorts of rules at me? He's so picky too. Why can't he just let us write what we feel?

"Change the ending, Mari. Keep it simple, Fern. Watch your spelling, Janet."

Speaking of Janet, some day when he's walking by, I wish she'd just stick out her foot and trip him.

There I go again. I'll never get this story written at this pace. I guess I shouldn't have put it off 'til today. Mr. Vanston said life is chaos. It sure as heck is this weekend. Now I'm stuck with one day to create a masterpiece.

He said I should pick something I could deal with. Maybe I could write about my grandmother, or senior year, or our new

car. Boring. I could concentrate on an exciting incident that happened to me. Yeah, that's it. He likes incidents. Hm... Something exciting, attention-grabbing, funny, and a little bit of death, just to get on his good side. How can I write all that and keep it simple? Him and his stupid rules. I'm never gonna get this done.

Think.... What can I write about? I've got it. It's perfect, it's funny, and it's simple. Now all I have to do is figure a way to work in a death here and there....

I stepped out of the car and on to the curb. I was so nervous. Who's actually going to be there, I wondered? I hate going places when I don't know what to expect. I could imagine I'd walk in, and eight hundred people would be there, or it would be just me and Mr. Vanston. Who cared, as long as I got my two points?

Anyway, I walked down this empty street, and I was shaking like a leaf. I don't know why I get so nervous all the time. When I turned the corner by the Ritz theater, I was overwhelmed by a mob of about forty Prep students. After a brief show of enthusiasm, our over-dressed, under-aged crowd walked into the smoke-filled room. Within a matter of seconds, half of us were back on the street asking ourselves why we were there. With a little reconsideration and self-encouragement, we re-entered and took our seats near the rear of the room, so we could leave at our leisure in case of severe boredom.

I glanced around the room to see who I recognized. Besides my peers, I knew no one. I could have sworn the original Bee-Gee's were there. All the men had their hair groomed at shoulder length, except Mr. Vanston, probably because he teaches at Prep.

Clothed in Wranglers, cowboy boots, and leather vests, the men paraded around the room sharing various bits of gossip and poetry with their Mulberry buddies. The few women who came were less attractive than the men, and were also clothed in styles from years past. The sophisticated video taping equipment further enhanced their distance from the real world. Stories buzzed around the room about the excellent guest writer who was to entertain us.

It was five minutes to eight, and most everyone was seated. We were ready to begin. Mr. Vanston sat across the room, marking down the names of those who attended. He was pleased.

The master of ceremonies made his way to the podium on the stage. This was a strange man. He might have been a country singer, or right off the cover of Frontier magazine. Strange indeed. He began to read his introduction with an erect posture, steady voice, and strong emotion. Quickly, however, he began to stutter, and his nerves were standing on end. Several times he lost his train of thought. By quick flinches of his head, his stringy brown hair was thrown from side to side. By the end of his introduction, he was at a loss for words, unintentionally. To say the least, he had no audience appeal.

Without further complications, the guest speaker walked to the podium with his ashtray, books, water, and his pride. He looked as if he hadn't a care in the world. After a few minutes of mental preparation, he placed his horn-rimmed glasses on his nose, took a sip of water, and proceeded to tell us his life story. It was no fun.

A long period passed. I noticed the majority of the students were sharing faces of boredom and disgust. The minority were asleep. He finished babbling and read us a few selections from his famous masterpieces. To say the least, they were pitiful. Delivered in a monotone voice was a mixture of his previous love-lives and problems, his teenage quirks, and his lunatic relatives. His poems were based on strange diseases which grew on his hands, the city of El Monte, relatives who committed suicide, and little girls riding their bikes down dirt roads. The latter, called "Perry's Farm," was my favorite. It helped me realize that

(Continued on Page 20)

simple is better. I guess Mr. Vanston isn't as crazy as I thought. The time passed, and before I knew it, it was nine o'clock. My ride was outside. I had to leave. Before I left, I pushed my way over to Mr. Vanston to let him know I was there. God forbid I should go through all that without him seeing me. When I got to where he was sitting, I joined in some intelligent conversation with him and a couple of juniors so he would notice me. He did. I saw him mark my name down. We discussed our mutual hatred for this man's poetry and then I left. I was happy. I got my two points.

Alan Aschenbrenner  
LaPlume, PA  
Scranton Preparatory School  
Mr. Vanston

## Sister

*You draw a dotted line across your throat  
and hand me the scissors, but  
my fist closes, small as a fruit*

or

*I tell you I'm an angel (we are children)  
and you're a changeling. Proof:  
look, the bad girl's curl*

*in the center of the forehead.  
And you always swam  
so strongly, small legs*

*kicking like greased pistons;  
your awful ease in water,  
sign of the witch*

or

*what is the truth: I do hate  
you, I want to choke  
your life out, see your shadow falter*

*my strong hands sing with death,  
with triumph; I ascend  
through the flap in the tent of sky*

or

*what is the truth? I remember  
squatting in the wind together  
building houses of sand,*

*our foreheads close and humming  
with nearness, with knowledge  
of completion of ourselves*

*in one another,  
spat from the same  
jealous womb*

Cathy Wagner  
Catonsville, MD  
Catonsville High School  
Dr. Gary Blankenburg

## Washington Tour Guide

I awoke that Saturday morning with an intense feeling of dread. No, my homework was done and the dog had been let out the night before. This was something far more hideous than any forgotten chore: I was obligated to give visiting relatives a tour of the city. Normally this tedious task would have been delegated to my mother, but she was putting in overtime so that we could afford to continue to live in Northern Virginia. Uncle Ned, Aunt Betty, and little Junior were all up, dressed, and ready to go. "Just give me a half-hour," I mumbled. I threw on a pair of blue jeans and a t-shirt with the logo "I'm not a tourist. I live here." I wolfed down my Wheaties and turned to the Post to wake me up.

Fifteen minutes later, the four of us were racing down Route 66 at a speed appropriate to the name. "What does HOV mean?" Junior asked the all-knowing guide.

"It means that if you want to use this road at certain times, you have to find a way to squeeze three people into your Hyundai." Just then, a black sedan with diplomat plates went roaring by us on the right at no less than ninety.

"Why does he get to go so fast?" asked Junior.

"Because he doesn't live here," I replied.

"Neither do we," he persisted. "Speed up." I let that comment drop. More likely than not, it had been the diplomat's chauffeur out for a spin in a car worth the same as a square mile of property in Tyson's Corner.

"Where do you want to go first?" I asked them. Naturally they were indecisive. As we crossed the Roosevelt Bridge, they reached some sort of consensus--monuments first, then museums. Ah, yes, the dreaded M&M's. We started with the Jefferson Memorial, as it was the farthest removed from our other stopping points. We couldn't find a place to park, so I drove up and down 14th Street until they were ready to go. "So, what did you think?" I asked. No answer. I had seen it before--tourist syndrome with a touch of Jefferson on the brain. I drove over to the Smithsonian Resident Associate parking lot, a lot which has saved me more than once. Not many people know about it, but unfortunately there is no hiding from the pigeons. As we headed up to the Mall, the birds began to make manifest their presence. At that time of day, the line for the Washington Monument was only about forty-five minutes long. While Ned and Betty saved our places, Junior and I checked out the souvenir stands located at strategic points up and down the Mall. The only t-shirts they had said "Hail to the Redskins." I tried to explain to Junior why Washingtonians feel more strongly about their football team than they do about their monuments, but it was no use. I don't understand it either. I bought him a plain vanilla ice cream cone. He started crying, "I want one that looks like something."

"Well," I said, "if you turn it upside down, it kind of looks like the Washington Monument." Meanwhile, Ned and Betty were holding up the line, reading every one of the plaques around the base. "C'mon," I prodded, "only tourists read those things." We stayed on the top of the monument for about fifteen minutes while Junior tried to figure out how all of those snapshots and business cards got behind the plate glass surrounding the windows. For that matter, we both tried to figure out why the glass was there in the first place.

Next we visited the Lincoln Memorial. On the way down, Junior almost fell into the reflecting pool because he thought that he had seen a fish. At the memorial, they walked around the entire exterior, reading the names of the states along the top and looking for their own.

We slowed down to take a look at the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial. It may be the area's newest landmark, but it is also my favorite. I don't know anyone who died in the war, but that does not diminish the sense of respect and admiration that I feel for those who did. I saw a girl my age touch one of the names and

say "Daddy." I saw members of a motorcycle gang staring at all of the names and muttering to themselves. I watched a Korean girl staring without emotion at the statue, repeating the quote below it silently to herself. We all moved quietly away, even Junior, who could not have comprehended what was happening.

We bought hot dogs and fries outside the Natural History museum while Junior played on the triceratops. Then we all ate on the mall and watched the frisbee players. I tried to explain to my guests how great the folklife festival had been, but being from Tennessee they had a hard time getting worked up over an entire month being dedicated to their state.

We spent the next four hours at selected Smithsonians: Natural History, American History, Air and Space, and the Tower itself. I tried to show them some of the things that few tourists notice in addition to the old standards. Of course we saw the Hope Diamond, the original American flag, and the Mercury space capsules, but we also saw the bird collection on the lower level of Natural History, a campaign button featuring Robert Redford which I challenge anyone to find, and the original Starship Enterprise from the TV show Star Trek. We also bought freeze-dried ice cream on the way out.

Piling back into the car at five, we began the last leg of the tour, driving to all the great places we hadn't had the time to visit. I showed them at least the outsides of all these significant landmarks, like the White House, the Capitol, and the Library of Congress. We saw the Supreme Court and although it is the highest court in the land, it can't help you if you get a parking ticket in Georgetown. I, of course, only told them about Georgetown. I'm not stupid enough to drive down M street during rush hour if I can help it. Passing the Kennedy Center on Route 66 signaled the end of our illustrious tour.

I think that one of the saddest things about Washingtonians is that so many of them fail to recognize just how great this city is. It usually takes company from out of town to motivate suburbanites to go downtown. Washington is much more than just the Redskins, and it is much more than just another city. Many people who live here think that they will always have time to see the things downtown, "some other time." Well, as George Allen of the 'Skins used to say, "The time is now."

Tom Volz  
Vienna, VA  
James Madison High School  
Mrs. Bernis Von zur Muehlen

## God's Light

Walking down the stairs at 5:30, Rachel began her morning routine. She flicked on the lights in all the rooms downstairs: the living room, the dining room, the den, and the kitchen. She left the bathroom light off because it had one of those automatic fans attached to it, and she hated that whirring noise. The overhead lights threw a bright, cold glare onto everything in the house. She used the other lamps, the ones that create the cozy atmosphere, later in the day. She proceeded to turn on the television and radio in the kitchen; the noise helped her think. She poured a cup of coffee--the percolator had been set on the automatic timer--and lit a cigarette. She forced herself through these motions every morning. They didn't seem to make a damn bit of difference.

The bright light enabled her to see the whole scope of her home. The Sony TV and radio, the numerous appliances and enormous refrigerator simultaneously disgusted and delighted her. As her eyes adjusted to the glare and her ears to the noise, she reassured herself that other people did this, too. Other people were obsessed with what grows and lives in the dark, and

they did all they could to try and see it.

She rubbed her eyes to rid them of the stinging sensation she felt. This light didn't seem to be doing any good. She felt a burning pain between her first two fingers, and she realized her cigarette had reached the filter line. She abruptly stubbed it out. She watched the ashes turn from the vibrant orange to the cold, grey color of impotency. It was the destruction of a once viable part of her life. She only smoked in the morning; it was the one pleasure she allowed herself, no matter what the effects were. It was how she had met John to begin with. He had lived in her dorm in college, or she had lived in his dorm, whatever. They both began their day with coffee and a cigarette. It was inevitable that they should meet. It was the beginning of a beautiful relationship until he became a health freak and quit smoking. Their early morning get-togethers had been abruptly terminated after six months of marriage, and they'd lost touch. That early smoke was the most important part of her day. It was something to warm her under the glare of the overhead lights.

Maybe she was doing something wrong. She shrugged her shoulders and lit a second cigarette. The quiet hours were slipping away now, and the lights were rapidly losing their purpose. The golden light of dawn was shining in on the white woodwork of the kitchen. She didn't bother to look at it; she could feel its intrusion. They were forever in competition, Rachel's garish light and God's golden light. She knew he was lying. She got up and flicked the lights off.

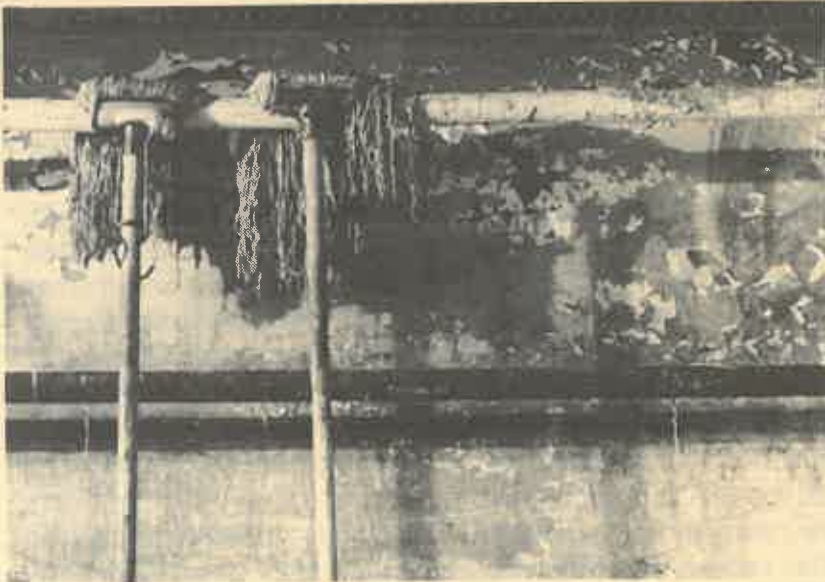
Damn, she had Brownies at her house this week. That meant she had to stock up on Kool-Aid and chocolate chip cookies and completely childproof the house. Her daughter was one thing, but fifteen of the same was another story. She couldn't forget to take Carol's carpool on Thursday. She had written herself a poster-size note to remind herself; it was on the fridge. Then there was the Junior League meeting from 11:00 to 2:00 on Wednesday morning. She had to bring Jello--was it strawberry or banana they had asked for? There was something else, too.

Suddenly she realized something. She had just read somewhere, at the hairdresser's last week, how daughters regarded mothers as role models. They looked up to them and all that. If Rachel didn't trust God, Marley wasn't going to either. Who would take care of her when she was gone? She didn't consider herself a religious person. In fact, the thought had never really crossed her mind. But John was not good enough and with both her parents dead, the next place would be John's parents. That was worse than John.

He wasn't good enough; he'd let Marley forget her. Oh, God. Wait. That meant Marley would probably smoke, buy appliances, be Brownie leader with the responsibility of fifteen kids with cookies and Kool-Aid. She'd host Junior League and drive Carol's carpool. This was going wrong. Kids were a parent's second chance; a second chance at the happiness their parents had screwed up. She lit another cigarette. Slow down she said to herself. I'll think of something. She inhaled deeply. She waited. Exhaled. She thought. Slowly it came into focus. It was really quite simple. The hard part would be getting John in the mood. I could have another baby and start all over again. Yes, that's it, another baby. Everything would be perfect; a fresh beginning, everything would be fine.

She stretched, satisfied. She turned off the TV and radio as she heard the bathroom door click shut. The microwave was ready to heat up John's 100% Bran--high in fiber to prevent cancer--and the blender was ready for the freshly squeezed orange juice. Mr. Coffee was still busy, and would be all day. The light from outside was a bright sunshine. Rachel's world was secure again and her purpose was clear. She smiled a secret smile; perhaps her morning routine had been worthwhile after all. She had already decided on a name: William if it was a boy and Jessica if it was a girl.

Catherine Humphries  
Summit, NJ  
Dr. Jane Cole



Philip Krayna

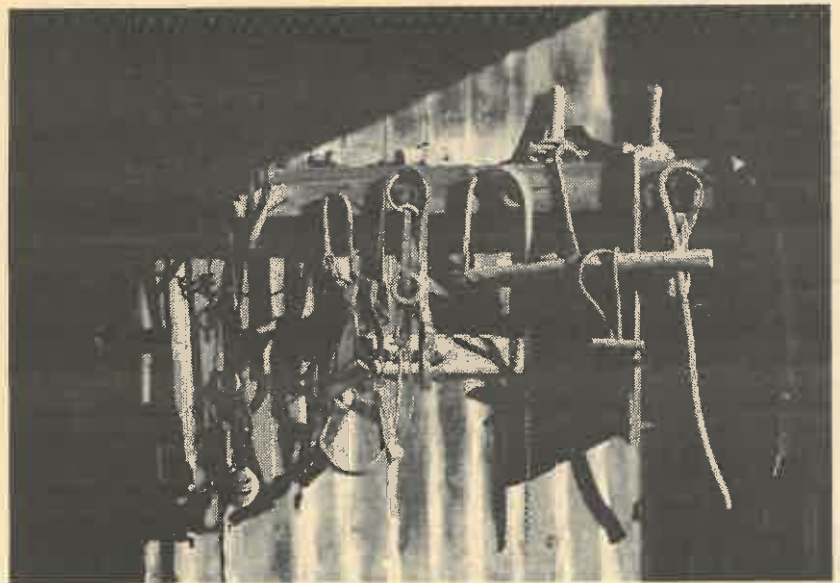
## Over the River and Through the Woods . . .

We are running a little late. We move sporadically towards the car, back inside for car keys, down the steps, back in for a coat, until we can't remember anything else that we've forgotten. Finally we tumble awkwardly into the small car, putting the sweet potatoes on top of an old "New York Times," the salad fixings on top of some books, and the pumpkin pie on a sullen little brother who is hooked up to a walkman. The cats look at us stupidly as we inch out of the driveway in the holiday silence of the neighborhood. The car makes several quirky noises before going into third as we putt down towards our Thanksgiving feast.

We huddle in the narrow, crooked hallway as the tiny, poised dancer tiptoes down the stairs. Tanya leads us up to their funky flat where her equally diminutive mother, Julie, bounds up and bestows genuine bearhugs as we precariously balance our food. Julie bounces around the kitchen while her large, white-haired parents smile and gaze lovingly at everyone and everything. Tanya curls up gracefully in a chair and nibbles charmingly on the vegetables that I wash with Becky, an even tinier daughter. Ben, at sixteen, the youngest and most cynical cynic I know, bangs out Jimi Hendrix on the acoustic guitar in the living room. Jeff, my sullen little brother, listens excitedly and tries to act cool, hoping that one day he, too, will be able to develop his sullenness into a piercing cynicism, and imitate Ben imitating Jimi Hendrix on classical guitar. Here we wait hungrily, as the rest of the country polishes off their pies, for Ben's mother to return with Ben's unfavorable person, his stepfather, our Israeli guest who is just flying in.

Finally Moshe bursts in with Ben's giggly mother and yells "Happy Holiday!" sending us into stifled chuckles. As we attack the traditional wretched excess, the conversation meanders aimlessly around with gushing praise eulogizing the tenderness of our poor turkey, the avocados in the salad, the apples in the cranberry sauce, and the general auspiciousness of the evening, resulting in some brilliant shows of modesty and pride. Julie's white-haired parents continue to smile lovingly between bites, alternately at Julie, Tanya, Becky, each other, and their food. Soon the conversation turns somewhat heatedly to the current diplomatic scandal, which proves especially interesting since Moshe is one of the leading Israeli specialists in Arab studies. We are all a little left-of-center so we make each other feel righteous and good for a while, until the boys get bored and sullenly and cynically alternate between conservative and radical to liven things up.

We explain Thanksgiving to Moshe, but have difficulty getting past the textbook description. With all of our education we still cannot show him how we proudly came home from grade school with construction paper turkeys, how we try to stifle all



Philip Krayna

thoughts of Christmas out of respect for Thanksgiving, how nice it is to always know what day this holiday will fall on. Thanksgiving is intrinsically American; it is uniquely intertwined with our history, our culture, and even our economy. It is a vital link between the general population and the early American history that it signifies. In this land of abundance and widespread materialism, it is a day to feel thankful; in this diverse, rapidly changing society, it is a day to uphold common traditions. Families that are spread over the country, people with overfilled schedules, have a day set aside to gather together. Millions enjoy the satisfaction of settling down with a six-pack and chips in front of a football game, knowing that millions of others are doing the same, and not worrying about what they should be taking care of, including their cholesterol levels. And, of course, Thanksgiving prevents the Christmas season from raging totally out of control.

We stagnate at the table for a while as our bodies protest the too sumptuous repast and tell lots of stupid jokes. Tanya temporarily relinquishes her poise to pick neurotically at the red candle below the flame. Finally we heave ourselves into the living room to begin the second stage of the Thanksgiving digestion.

As in all things intrinsically American, Thanksgiving allows plenty of room for innovation and diversity. We put on tapes of Julie singing and the adults circle dance a bit. Miriam and Moshe trudge up with some very old wood that makes a roaring fire. Tanya tells me about Tufts University where she is majoring in psychobiology and minoring in dance. The adults play African rhythm instruments but the music sounds far away as I stare into the dancing fire until my eyes burn. The women gradually retreat into the kitchen for no real reason, and Julie's old father and Moshe forego the traditional mantalk for a serious discussion of old Dr. Kabat's neurological studies. My brother takes over all the bongos and drives everybody crazy with a twisted rendition of heavy metal.

Finally I, too, retreat to the kitchen just in time to sponge off the table. I am still not accepted in their conversations about sex and men, so they breakoff and rejoin the men in the living room where they begin to end the evening.

The fire now sulks broodingly inside the charred wood and we experience a warm, lazy inertia that keeps us from leaving. We play the leaving game; we announce our plans to spend six hours at the Mall on "Black Friday," stand up, shuffle around, sum things up with compliments and best wishes for Christmas. After a final burst of loud, energetic good-byes, we file down the creaky stairs trying to get our arms into our coats. We drive home looking at the stars through the sunroof, stuff our share of the leftovers into the fridge, and fall into bed, drifting off to sleep as Bruce Springsteen sings "Santa Claus is Comin' to Town" on Jeff's stereo.

Jocelyn Sharlet  
Scotia, NY  
Mrs. Nancy Chant

# The Business of Life

A play in six scenes

## CAST:

One female, any age, to play:

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL

NURSE

MOTHER

NUN

BOOKKEEPER

PATIENT

One male, any age, to play:

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER

DOCTOR

FATHER

ACCOUNTANT

PRIEST

PATIENT

## PROPS:

Female: ID card; nurse's hat; doll; ledger book; habit; winter hat

Male: Sheaf of papers; stethoscope; football; calculator; priest's collar; shabby fedora

## SCENE ONE

A desk in an office; American flag in room. PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER, carrying sheaf of papers, and GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL, wearing ID tag, are sitting across from each other at desk.

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER: The letters are really pouring in.

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL: Do you think I don't know that?

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER: Don't get angry with me. How was I supposed to know that the public would make such a big deal about this particular transplant case?

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL: It's your job to know what the public is going to think.

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER: But--

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL: No buts. We have to do something fast. I'm getting heat from high places.

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER: How high?

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL: Very.

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER: Whew. We had better use our influence to make sure our man gets the next available kidney.

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL: What about the other one who needs the same operation? There are waiting lists for this sort of thing.

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER: Just worry about the man who the big boy is worried about.

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL: Yes, I guess so. It's not as if

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER: Nobody will be saved by it.

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL: One man will be saved

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER: Even though the other might

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL: Die.

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER: Do you want to know what your best bet would be?

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL: Yes, what is it?

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER: Get your picture taken with both of them.

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL: Cute. Let's go on to something a little

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER: Lighter.

LIGHTS DOWN

LIGHTS UP

## SCENE TWO

A doctor's office. DOCTOR, with stethoscope, and NURSE, with a nurse's cap, are on break.

DOCTOR: What are we supposed to do?

NURSE: There's nothing you can say to cheer up someone who's at the bottom of the heart transplant list.

DOCTOR: Each patient will die if they don't get the organ they need. But you can't mail order parts for a transplant.

NURSE: Unless they have a relative in the public relations business, then they can hope.

DOCTOR: I can't ignore the list, but at the same time the hospital is getting flack from everywhere over this stupid case. I wish I could just bump him up to the top of the list. The lady who's there might not die, who knows? Sometimes we get several hearts at the same time. Maybe that will happen this time.

NURSE: If they are really lucky, they don't find out how sick they are; I've seen too many of these people die with their hope destroyed. If it were me in one of those hospital beds I would just want to get it over with. Sure that sounds weird. Some of our recovered transplant patients DO live to lead a healthy life. But I wouldn't want to take the chance and have to live through my life with the constant fear of rejection and infection.

DOCTOR: Sometimes, I'll see a kid who's dying, and I can't do anything for him until another child dies. I ask myself, what would you do if one of your children died? Would I let the heart go to another kid? Let them live out the life my child never got the chance to? I still haven't figured out the answer to that one.

LIGHTS DOWN

LIGHTS UP

## SCENE THREE

A hospital waiting room. MOTHER holding a doll and FATHER holding a football.

MOTHER: How lucky I am! I'm going to be able to see my daughter play again.

FATHER: And just because she went on TV. She got the liver that my child has been waiting for. It's not like that kid was any sicker than my own.

MOTHER: Now she's fine. Well, as fine as she'll ever be. The doctors say that one day she might live a normal life but I don't want to hope. I check in her bed at night to see if she's still alive.

(Continued on Page 24)

(Continued from Page 23)

FATHER: My son is in the hospital now, they have him ready for when the next liver comes in. I try not to be too angry that his first transplant was stolen just because we wouldn't flaunt ourselves on television.

MOTHER: I would have sold

FATHER: My soul to have him

MOTHER: Here at home with us again.

FATHER: I forgot how quiet the house is on Sunday mornings without him to play catch with.

MOTHER: I live for her.

FATHER: There is nothing holding my life together without him.

MOTHER: Maybe it's selfish. I just wanted her home and I didn't care what I had to do. Going on television was easy.

FATHER: Watching her on television, begging for the liver that should have been my son's, I asked myself, Why can't you do that? Isn't your son's life worth it? But no, I had to be the good guy, wait my turn.

MOTHER: The doctors say

FATHER: It should be over soon. One way

MOTHER: Or another.

LIGHTS DOWN  
LIGHTS UP

## SCENE FOUR

ACCOUNTANT with calculator, BOOKKEEPER with a ledger at desk in an office.

ACCOUNTANT: Have you finished the billing yet?

BOOKKEEPER: Yes, it's the same story. We're behind in transplants.

ACCOUNTANT: Damn! How many and how late?

BOOKKEEPER: Less this month, ten and only three are over one hundred days.

ACCOUNTANT: Some of the aid came in, I see.

BOOKKEEPER: It's a start.

ACCOUNTANT: You could say that.

BOOKKEEPER: At least it's only ten cases.

ACCOUNTANT: Ten cases that are costing us over a hundred thousand dollars.

BOOKKEEPER: As if I didn't know.

ACCOUNTANT: It's not like there aren't any people out there who have money and need a transplant.

BOOKKEEPER: That's not fair to the patients.

ACCOUNTANT: And is it going to be fair to anyone when we have to close our doors because we have no money?

BOOKKEEPER: It's not my fault.

ACCOUNTANT: Whose fault

BOOKKEEPER: Is it?

ACCOUNTANT: What am I

BOOKKEEPER: Supposed to do?

ACCOUNTANT: It looks like I have to go to the boss.

BOOKKEEPER: Do you think it will do any good?

ACCOUNTANT: I hope so.

LIGHTS DOWN  
LIGHTS UP

## SCENE FIVE

PRIEST in white collar, NUN, in habit, at long table in a shopping mall.

PRIEST: Support this fine lady, buy a ticket to the raffle. Win big, help a friend.

NUN: Father, we are almost out of tickets.

PRIEST: Great. This should help with her bills quite a bit.

NUN: But what if she's on that machine forever? Wouldn't you think that perhaps it was a sign from the Lord?

PRIEST: Sister, if we were in the Dark Age then maybe. But you know her as well as I do, she didn't deserve this and my parish will help her any way we can.

NUN: Yes, Father. But what if they get an organ and she still doesn't recover?

PRIEST: Then we'll hold raffles every weekend for the rest of her natural life.

NUN: But Father, do you honestly think that this is a natural life? She's on a machine.

PRIEST: Sister, please! As long as she breathes, she's alive. As long as she's alive the members of this parish will help her in any way they can.

NUN: Yes, Father. God

PRIEST: Help us all

NUN: Saints

PRIEST: Preserve us.

NUN: Win a new Cadillac! Raffle here.

PRIEST: One dollar a chance!

NUN: Help your neighbor.

PRIEST: Help your desperately ill friend.

LIGHTS DOWN  
LIGHTS UP

(Continued on Page 25)



SCENE SIX

WOMAN, well dressed, but obviously poor and ill.  
MAN, shabbily dressed, heavy foreign accent, also looking ill.  
On opposite sides of the stage, lit up by spotlights.

MAN: I came to America because it was the best place in the world to treat me. There was no place else for me to go. The doctors in my homeland don't have the skill or facilities to give me a new heart. My new doctors say that if I do not get my transplant operation soon, I will die.

WOMAN: I have no desire to die. I'm going to school now and I'm going to get a better job. If I can, that is. At this point I'm not sure. The doctors want to take me into the hospital so that I'll be ready for my new heart.

MAN: My doctors say that I am at the top of the list because of my great need.

WOMAN: I'm at the top of the list for a new heart, I've been waiting for about five months now. If I don't get one

MAN: Soon, I'll die.

WOMAN: I don't want to

MAN: Die.

WOMAN: It would be such a waste after all of this time and suffering to have to die and not even get the damn thing . . .

MAN: It took me so long just to get permission to leave my own country. Soon I won't even have enough money left to pay my hospital bills.

WOMAN: Thank goodness I have insurance or else I would probably be dead by now. My family gives as much as they can afford, but still, it's a lot.

MAN: Still, there is no guarantee even if I get the heart that I will live.

WOMAN: I just want one more chance, that's it. Even if the stupid thing fails after a year or even a week. To be able to breathe with ease just once more . . .

MAN: I will probably never get to see my family again, even if I do get this heart.

WOMAN: What man would want to stay married to a woman who is less than whole?

MAN: What if I don't

WOMAN: Get the next heart?

MAN: I will die.

WOMAN: I don't want to die.

LIGHTS DOWN  
LIGHTS UP

Amy Spiezio  
Englishtown, NJ  
Carol Sturm Smith

# One Minute Wish

Wish in vain,  
Wishing vane,  
The clock is known as wishing vane  
Oh that I know so well.

Timepiece in a wooden case,  
Ticking on the mantelpiece,  
Lend me a minute

Amber hours, honey drums, are  
Miser smallhands gold.  
Sixty second petals  
Are thinhand's gift to all.

But oh, to hold a gleaming minute  
In my hand, and watch it glow

When the third hand touches twelve  
I'll catch a minute bubble  
Solidify at six,  
Still sticky on my palm.

Now twelve again,  
Jewel fine,  
Sixty-faceted minute mine.

I'll make a box to keep it in,  
Of flirting second hands,  
Pendulums,  
And church bell chimes.

Then point me to the sands of time  
And I'll plant it there,  
Where it can sprout into a lovely daytree

Timepiece on the mantelpiece,  
Spend a minute

Meredith Shea  
Rockville, MD  
Mrs. Deborah Wilchek

# Sleepwalk

The skeletal gray has been wrung  
from the sky and collects in dismal offices  
and hospitals which breed ghosts.  
New York drives a mechanized pulse  
like the ticking of a robot's heart,  
the dripping of water on garbage pail lids,  
and quarters being hurled endlessly into the void  
of a blind man's tin cup.  
A wino jettisons pink elephants from his eyes.  
They form a celestial circus  
above the neon droves of Broadway  
or hover in clusters  
over the East River.  
Perhaps they really do exist  
somewhere else.

Ian Brand  
11 Curley Street  
Long Beach, NY  
Mrs. Pickus

## To Drown a Cheerio

I'm sitting in a dog house  
 Trying to hide from the world,  
 Yet the planet is right under me.  
 I'm going to have to leave soon,  
 Because the moon has left its orbital plane  
 And I need an excuse card for being gone so long.  
 Guess what?  
 Cheerios cannot drown. I tried to kill a Cheerio.  
 What kind of person would try to suffocate cereal?  
 I listen to country music,  
 But I'm not from Oklahoma.  
 This dog house is starting to get boring.  
 No pretty pictures and people think  
 My name is Rover.  
 I don't mind. It's better than  
 What some people call me.  
 "Batteries not included," the kit read,  
 The day the sun hatched.  
 Please, sir, stop. I'm ringing the bell.  
 Please, sir, stop, for my grape juice will defrost.  
 Mr. Speedy Delivery is at the door, but he has to go.  
 Everybody must leave; the dog house is too crowded.  
 Just like my mind and the sun, ever-bright.

Amy Norm  
 Methacton High School  
 Kurt Ulrich

## Carpe Diem 1986

"Without love, you have nothing," he cried  
 As I, chin on palm, stared past the sunset.  
 Enough poetry! To marry is to die!  
 But by my resistance his desire was whet.

"Love fuels the world," he insisted,  
 And reached out to clasp my hand,  
 Which was captured. My fingers, fisted,  
 Wriggled, but couldn't escape his grasp.

"I'd be good for you," he said, leaning close.  
 His warm breath tickled my ear, and I smiled.  
 Maybe I should give him a chance. "To potential," I toasted.  
 He grinned, already seeing me defiled.

Then I saw his intent, but could not run,  
 So I stared at my enemy, the setting sun.

Alison Buckholtz  
 Potomac, MD  
 Ms. Peggy Pfeiffer

## Poison Bombers

When I was five, I discovered that nothing held the world up in space. Awed and horrified, I gasped, "That's important! Why don't they put it in the newspapers?" Small wonder, then, that constantly discovering new facts on the basis of somebody else's word, I never dreamt of doubting Abby.

Abby was my friend and protector. She had taken me up on the first day of kindergarten when I was huddled silently at the far edge of the group around the teacher.

"Are you really called 'Patricia'?" she asked, exuding confidence.

"No, 'Pasha,' I mumbled, looking askance at her wild hair and grubby yellow jumper. In her hand, she clutched a partly decapitated dandelion.

"I'm called 'Abby.' Want to play blocks?"

"All right."

"We'll build up a big stack, and then we'll knock them all down with a bulldozer and jump on them and make lots of noise. Okay?"

"Okay." Secretly, I considered this a desecration.

She flung aside the tortured dandelion, and, marching across the orange carpet to a row of cabinets packed with toys, boldly pulled out a box of colored blocks. She spilled them onto the floor and began to pile them up while I watched, fascinated by such daring initiative. With relief, the teacher, who had doubtless been dreading having me on his hands for the rest of the year, sent us to lunch together.

One day when we were digging in the sandbox during morning recess, Abby seized my arm. "Come on, come on!" she shouted. She dragged me out of the box, across the playground, and under a large concrete turtle.

"What is it?" In a sudden seizure of fear, I thought my heart had stopped.

"Poison airplanes! If you stick your head out, you'll be killed! There are men in them looking for children through little windows, and if they see us, they'll shoot."

I heard a faint, chilling hum above and pressed my face to the ground, desperately wishing the dirt would yield and swallow us up. Finally, after what seemed like hours of shivering, I heard another sound, the whistle of an aide telling us to go inside.

Abby scrambled into the open. "It's all right. You can come out now. They've gone away until lunchtime."

I waited mutely for the lunch hour, sick to my stomach. Nothing Abby did could elicit more than a monosyllable from me. How she could take our approaching danger calmly was beyond me; I knew very well that I would never be able to go outside again, and as lunch drew nearer, nausea rose and choked my throat.

"What's wrong?" demanded Abby.

"I just don't feel well," I said, refusing to disgrace myself by admitting fear.

She accosted the teacher. "Pasha's feeling sick."

"She is? She'd better go to the nurse, then. Why don't you walk her down?"

I repeated my vague complaint to the nurse, and just as I had hoped, she let me go home without delay. The moment I left Abby and departed with my mother, my sickness lifted. I had known it would, and, since I was addicted to speaking the rigid truth, suffered a few pangs of guilt on this account. But what else could I have done? The grown-ups, safe from poison bombers, would obviously have never understood if they had known the real reason. Forced to stay in school, I might have been killed, by fear if not by poison.

Throughout that autumn, Abby and I were threatened by sporadic poison airplane attacks, and I mystified my mother more and more with increasing bouts of "sickness." Occasionally, I tried to hint at the cause, but she brushed my stories off with, "You don't believe that, do you? You go outside with me, and

(Continued on Page 27)

you're not afraid of poison airplanes then."

Finally, I arrived home with a new danger. "You know those big trees across from school? They have poison wings falling off them, and if they hit you, you die."

"Who told you that?"

"Abby."

"Now look here, Pasha. All those 'wings' have on them are seeds. You know about seeds, don't you? An acorn is a seed. When you plant it in the ground, it grows into a tree. Those trees across from the school grew out of seeds on wings like those. Now, tomorrow, I want you to tell Abby that and see what she has to say."

I returned home the next day as frightened as ever. "It is poison!"

"Didn't you tell Abby what I told you about seeds?"

"Yes, I did, but she said that it is poison. She read it in the encyclopedia."

My mother pulled down an encyclopedia and opened it in front of me on the kitchen table. "There. What does this say?"

"I don't know," I said, puzzling over the barely familiar letters.

"Right. You don't know because you can't read it. Neither can Abby. So she couldn't possibly have read about poison trees in here."

"But she said she did."

Soon after, mysteriously, I was placed in another class and put under the wing of another girl, older and quieter than Abby. She drew pictures of kittens and played with plastic horses, and we became best friends.

A few years later, however, she moved away, and I again entered a new classroom without friends, hanging on to my mother's hand. Abby was sitting next to the door, and out of politeness, my mother said hello.

"Oh, good!" exclaimed the teacher. "You know Abby! Why don't you sit next to her?"

Patricia Lynch  
Princeton, NJ  
Joan Goodman

## Sestina

You were my best friend  
You know that, don't you?  
You were rather like my twin,  
in our navy-blue skirts  
We were rather like two  
paper cut-outs or a pair of shoes.

Remember your grandmother's green shoes?  
I've never had a friend  
--I certainly haven't had two--  
Who had such peculiar relations as you  
had, or who wore such dirty skirts  
to school, where you were called my twin

and I was called your twin.  
We both wore orthopedic shoes  
Remember? And we never wore the gala skirts,  
those clean, white Sunday skirts. My grimy friend,  
you used to smell like your dog, and sometimes you  
smelled of tobacco, too.

And I suppose I did, too.

For I was supposed to be your twin.  
Although, of course, unlike me, you  
always had such awful taste in shoes.  
But, as you were my best friend,  
I didn't mind at all your ugly shoes or scruffy skirts.

In fact, we scoffed at girls in well-pressed skirts.  
Because we thought alike, we two.  
And isn't that what a best friend  
is all about? Some psychological twin  
--not just green and orthopedic shoes.  
You know that, don't you?

You, you, you  
and I wore navy-blue skirts  
and orthopedic shoes,  
and, most important, our thoughts kept pace together, too.  
And with you I was never alone, my twin  
Never alone, my very best friend.

So don't be shy if now I find you  
In seamless skirts and Italian shoes.  
My dear, I'm supposed to be wearing them, too!

Maria Cristina Mejia  
Rockville, MD  
Richard Montgomery High School  
Mrs. Deborah Wilchek

## St. Thomas

The soft, white sand  
rushed through my toes as my feet carried me  
back to the shore.  
Stopping, I spoke to the coconut man.  
"Excuse me, sir, may I please have one?"  
Climbing down from his rusty old ladder,  
he placed it in my hands,  
making sure that it did not touch the sand.  
My back sagging with my hands hung low,  
I looked like an elephant--  
the way we pretended in nursery school.  
Then I arrived and saw mom and dad  
sitting on a tan colored towel.  
"Daddy, look what I got!" I crowed.  
He took it from my tiny hands,  
setting it upon the towel.  
We all ate the brown, hairy thing  
called a coconut.  
When I finished,  
off to the water I ran,  
rinsing my hands.  
A wave burst at my feet;  
invited,  
I swam out,  
until mommy said it was time to go.  
Picking up my towel, I whined,  
"But I want to swim more!"  
And off I ran,  
my little feet pattering  
on the cold stone path.

Michele Amira  
Yorktown Heights, NY  
Yorktown High School  
Mrs. Leone



Chip Belden  
Kiskiminetas Springs School  
Mr. James Nagle

## The Few, The Proud

They say you need cold eyes,  
stone cold eyes.

And a tough heart,  
with strong limbs.

I'll have to hide  
my "boy-next-door" face,

and my dimples,  
if I want to be

one of the few, the proud,  
one of them.

Like the guy in the poster,  
fatigues and camouflage.

The line is long and crowded  
with clones of the poster guy.

The guy looks tough,  
the caption says "A Few Good Men."

I try not to show my flawless teeth  
or my perfect smile.

I hide my Gucci watch  
in my jacket pocket.

And make sure the keys to my Corvette  
don't fall when I take it off.

I roll up my sleeve,  
and turn pale at the sight of my blood.

I look again at the poster,  
The rugged Marine.

I hear a female sergeant whisper,  
something about seeing me in "GQ."

I look at the poster,  
it says "We want you."

I mutter that olive drab  
isn't my color.

Fiona Kelly  
Westmont, NJ  
Bishop Eustace Prep  
Mr. Croce

## Untitled

Two weeks.

Two weeks is a very long time.

Two weeks is a very long time when you are waiting for something. Two weeks is a long time to wait for Christmas, or your birthday. Two weeks is a long time to wait when your boyfriend goes on vacation. It's a long time to wait for a pay-check when there are bills to be paid. Two weeks is a long time to wait for a package to come in the mail. Two weeks is a long time to wait for your mother to come out of a coma.

My mother has been in a coma for two weeks. I come to visit her every day after school. I bring my American Literature book with me and I read to her. I explain algebra theorems and chemistry equations to her. At night, my father comes to take me home. He explains what the doctors tell him each day. They say that my mother is brain dead. They tell him that she does not know us and cannot hear us. They say that she will never wake up.

They are wrong, I want to yell. My mother knows that I am there and that I am reading her favorite poem by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. That is what I want to yell, but I don't. I ask for more time, just two more weeks, please?

Two weeks.

Please give my mother two more weeks. I know that the equipment keeping her alive costs hundreds of dollars for each day, but what is money when someone you love is involved?

All right.

They've agreed!

Two weeks is a very short time when summer is ending and school is beginning. Two weeks is a very short time when you have to write a term paper and a lab report. It's a short time to travel through Europe. Two weeks is a very short time when wedding preparations are being made. Two weeks is a very short time when you have to thank your mother for everything she has done to help you during your life, especially when you can't do anything to help hers. It's a very short time to convince her that you never meant to hurt or upset her. Two weeks is a very short time to show your mother how much you love and have always loved her.

Two weeks is a very short time.

Two weeks.

Elly Fogarty  
Sunbury, PA  
Lourdes Regional High School  
Sister Marie Manuel

# The Man Behind the Muffin

Who or what is the Cosmic Muffin? Simply, he is a blond, tanned man of about forty years with an absurd, generous sense of humor and a dramatic voice. Actually, there is much more to WBCN astrologer Darrell Martinie than a mere physical description allows. Relaxing in the Holiday Inn Lounge, next door to WBCN offices in Boston, a few weeks ago, I was surprised to discover just how much more there was to Darrell Martinie.

A syndicated astrologer for the past eight years, the Cosmic Muffin broadcasts twice daily on Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Dallas radio stations. Even though he has traveled extensively, Martinie prefers Boston over most cities. "Astrologically, it's right for me. It's a Virgo city, so it's compatible with my chart."

It was a cocktail party at the University of Illinois that decided Martinie's lifetime career. At the university, he had already earned a B.A. in Political Science and Economics and was working on a masters degree in Neo-Freudian Psychology. At the party, Martinie met T. Patrick Davis, a biochemist and astrologer, "I told her how my father and I were born on the same day, but were nothing alike. She said, 'Yeah?' like she really meant, 'So what, you dummy?!'"

"The first time I had my own chart done (by T. Patrick Davis), I was stunned. That did it. There was more to it than any multi-personality inventory or Rorschach," said Martinie excitedly. Consequently, Martinie gave up psychology and studied under the following astrologers: the said T. Patrick Davis, Dr. Harry Darling, psychiatrist and author of "Astro-psychiatry," and Barbara Waters of Washington, D.C.

"In psychology, there was no one answer for anything, but astrology gave a final definition. It cut through all the bull," said the Cosmic Muffin. Believe me, Martinie knows his psychology. His mother is a Gestalt psychologist, his father is a Jungian therapist, and two of his sisters are (1) a behaviorist and (2) a transactional analyst.

"There's a general misconception about astrology--it is not the study of signs. Knowing someone's sign tells as much about that person as if they had told you their ethnic background." In fact, the Cosmic Muffin has adamantly refused to write general astrology for newspapers or for publishers, because he feels that these types of astrology lie to people. With a straight face he described dime-store scrolls as being "really good if you're out of toilet paper."

"The real job of the astrologer is to be able to waltz through what's unique about your chart. That's the tricky part," explained Martinie. Besides a birthdate, there are a myriad of other factors which determine one's chart.

"We like to have the exact time when the umbilical cord is cut and the first breath is taken," he continued. In order to deduce the location of the planets at the time of birth, the astrologer will photograph the heavens at the place of birth.

"The planets change position every four minutes, so at the exact time (across the country) different locations will produce different people. If you stood still, away from the stars, it would take over 26,000 years for them to go back to their original position. So, you don't have a duplicate. In the same hospital, someone born seven minutes later than you is nothing like you."

To calculate the angles and the paths of the planets for his daily forecasts, the Cosmic Muffin uses a home computer. Generally, a full moon makes for a bad day. However, different stars affect people in various ways, depending on their chart. "Aries' moon affects me the most," Martinie continued. "My agent (Bob Wolff) knows to leave me alone when I say 'Moon in Aries.' Don't catch me at a low tide, catch me at a high tide!"

"I don't want to come across as a heavy, know-it-all, I-have-all-the-answers-you-poor-sucker. Astrology is just one piece of information. You want to know what the external weather is to know how to dress. Is it going to be hot or cold? Rainy or dry? You also want to know about the traffic and the news. The as-

trological factor is what most people are not informed about."

Martinie, realizing the troubling responsibility which comes from giving advice, has worked to project an interested, not fanatical, attitude towards astrology. His closing remark for every program (It's a wise person who rules the stars, it's a fool who's ruled by them) once served as a government regulated disclaimer. It now functions to ensure that people take his forecasts in the right manner.

From the responses which flood in, the Cosmic Muffin believes that the majority of his listeners are intelligent. Here, in Boston, he receives about eight letters a week. Showing me one of his stranger, violent letters, he told me that 90% of the writers are "terrific," but he saves the following reply for the remaining bizarre 10%:

Dear Mr. X,

It's only fair to tell you that some fool is writing stupid, ignorant letters and signing your name to them.

Sincerely,

Darrell Martinie, the Cosmic Muffin

Besides writing letters or listening to his radio show, the Cosmic Muffin can be reached in other ways. Cosmic Muffin Hotlines have been established in most of his broadcast cities. A recorded message gives a detailed summary of the daily astrological forecast. In Boston the hotline garnishes approximately 1,300 calls a day.

"Oddly enough," said Martinie, "Houston is my biggest audience. Mayor Cathy Whidmire designated one day as Cosmic Muffin Day. Everyone calls her (Whidmire) Tootsie. She looks like Dustin Hoffman in drag." Doesn't she take offense? "Oh no, she loves it!" On that day, Martinie slid down into a large vat of Jello in the Houston Hyatt Regency to raise money for Leukemia.

Just a few years ago, Martinie toured the country with his show "Evening With the Cosmic Muffin." Over the last two years, the Cosmic Muffin sold out the Paradise Theater in Boston, the Park West in Chicago, and the Boston House in San Francisco. Essentially, these shows were a "conversationalist Cosmic Muffin" where slides explained such astrological terms as retrograde motion, void of course moon, etc. Martinie also won national exposure on The David Letterman Show and on ABC's 20/20.

Martinie has had to drop his tour and his private consulting practice because of his pressing schedule this year. Until giving up his practice as an astrological consultant, the Cosmic Muffin had a diverse clientele which, ironically, included both a priest and a rabbi.

"It's not my job to tell them what to do. Not in the sense that I should know that a blue Buick will run over their left foot on a Tuesday. That's not astrology. That's garbage," said Martinie. Instead, once a year, he informed his clients about the cycles in their lives; in their work, in their health, and in their total life. "They make the choices," Martinie said.

Because the South Shore is "rampant with (unlicensed) fakes," the Cosmic Muffin advises to check credentials carefully when looking for a competent astrologer. He, himself, passed eight hour exams from the American Federation of Astrologers. Presently, as a national faculty member for the organization, Martinie lectures at the biannual international conventions.

But how about the Cosmic Muffin's own superstitions and philosophies? As a practicing Roman Catholic, he finds the occult, Satan worship, and the study of pyramids to be ridiculous. "Most of my superstitions come from my Italian grandmother. Everytime I left the house she'd ask, 'Darrell Blair, are you wearing God (a crucifix)?' As proof to this statement, Martinie held up his gold chains with emblems of the cross and his lucky number thirteen.

The Cosmic Muffin also holds a deep belief in fate, a subject explored in his upcoming book. "The amount of free will that you have is fated at the moment of birth. Jung theorized that it was the air, containing the world's electromagnetic field, breathed in at birth that sets up cycles in you. This affects all of your personality. Which is why parents will often say, 'I don't understand where we got this one ...'" Martinie goes on to study families, exposing fate's influence on personality. In defense of his concept, he protested that "Science doesn't say why, only how (things happen)."

Working from his year-old home in Saugus, the Cosmic Muffin should be finished with his book, tentatively titled "Life Is Not That Complicated," by early next fall. "If I had my way, I'd go to Barbados on a nice advance and come out with the book in 1988." Upcoming projects include a rap song, and possibly a movie role playing himself.

Although at times outrageous, Martinie never wavers from the strict standards of his profession. After spending an hour speaking with him, it is clear that he is more interested in sharing his knowledge than in feeding his ego. This is the real man behind the Muffin.

Tracy Barnes  
Marshfield MA  
Nancy Prisco

## Randall's Drugs

"Laura, check him out." I moved closer to Katie.

"Who?"

"Aisle seven. And you can't miss him!"

I figured what the hell and pushed past Katie and the three fur-lined ladies with Chestnut River Art Gallery plastic shopping bags. Then, in front of aisle seven, I positioned myself behind the No-Nonsense pantyhose display and took a look.

He was down about halfway, standing by the Band-aids and cold relief. A blinding orange mohawk pierced his head, about half-an-inch thick and half-a-foot tall. He was wearing a beat-up and patched army trenchcoat with an Agnostic Front sticker on the back, and on his feet were black, shiny combat boots. Suddenly I was embarrassed to be seen in my Santa Claus hat.

I looked back and saw Katie cracking up at the register.

"He . . . ha ha . . . oh god . . . he looks . . . oh god like a . . . ha ha . . . like a rooster!"

Thank you, Katie, for that well-planned editorial comment. Lord, that girl has no sense of decorum at all. She is ridiculing Mr. Red Hair just because he was slightly (all right, a lot) different from us. After all, this boy was making a statement! Of course Katie doesn't understand anything about individuality; she wears those omnipresent Coca-Cola sweatshirts.

"Katie, how do you know that your Good Lord had meant for us to wear sweaters and stretch pants? Maybe that kid is the epitome of human beings."

"Epitome? What the hell do you mean? Anyway, he looks like he came out of a looney bin. He looks like he went for a haircut and the barber messed up and forgot about the middle."

I wanted to shove her stretch pants in her mouth.

But I quickly forgot all that when I realized that there were no customers around, so I could get another look at him. I pretended to be dusting the red and green Hershey's kisses and made my way down candy/tobacco/men's toiletries, whereupon I found Red by the "Gift Idea" ice scrapers, the ones surrounded by garland and blinking lights. But--oh no--Dennis-the-assistant-manager was coming, gliding out of the stockroom, a butterfly in tight slacks. He threatened me with his orange feather duster.

"Get back to the register!"

I made up an excuse about putting away a returned dish detergent and slipped away, defeated. Red hadn't even looked up. Maybe he was lost in thought about something really important--like death or socialism or nuclear war or whatever mohawked people thought about.

Or maybe he was deaf.

Katie yelled at me to get my rear-end up front, and of course I obeyed, since the line of customers was heading into stationery and we didn't want to give the impression of being an inefficient store, now did we?

To be honest, I couldn't have cared less, but I did my duty. (Besides, I didn't feel like losing my \$3.85 an hour.) However, as I was hurrying back like a good little Randall's employee, I tripped over an old lady's thick-heeled boot. "Why must they always wear those boots?" I thought as I careened into the counter, knocking over the display of 99-cent pin-on Santa heads with light-up noses.

"Bout time you got here?"

I ignored the mess and angry stares, figuring Mark would come out and clean everything up in a minute or two. Mark came out, saw the mess, and bent over to pick it up. When he bent over to pick it up, his pants chose to ride off his rear, exposing a tattered pair of Jockey-brand white briefs, which I pretended not to see. Where was Red when I needed him?

After the yuppies and snobby-old-bags had gone, I went back out to find Red again. My love, my safety-pinned love, where art thou? Thou art staring at feminine hygiene? All right, something funny was going on here. Well, maybe he was contemplating the significance of the Dead Kennedys' breakup and what Jello's arrest would mean for future censorship debate and he didn't realize where he was. Oh, what kind of innovative, new thoughts journeyed inside the realm of that flaming orange head? What kind of courage did it take for him to be so different in a town where the school custodian drives a BMW? What the hell was Mrs. Shultz doing now?

Isabel Shultz was leaning over the counter, rummaging through my drawer.

"Excuse me, but you can't go back there."

"Oh dear, but I do need a comb. My hair is a frightful mess and I have to go walk the dog. My granddaughter says I should cut it, but I don't know . . ."

Mrs. Shultz is the wonderful woman who started talking to me about razors and shaving one day and then pulled up her pants leg to display for everyone a beautiful, eighty-year old leg. "See, I don't really need to shave; after menopause your hair doesn't grow anymore. But I guess you wouldn't know anything about that yet." I hoped Red didn't see me talking to this woman.

Isabel went on to tell me about her husband's prostate trouble and her dog's polio. Suddenly, Red began walking, then jogging, towards the door. Dennis's screech cut through the drone of "mellow music" Randall's Radio.

"Catch that kid!"

Red sped through the door and was gone in a flash, while I had to watch helplessly as Mrs. Shultz counted out her pennies. Dennis stomped to the front, hissing something about aisle six under his breath. After I had gotten rid of Isabel ("Good bye, dear, I'll tell you about my mother's death tomorrow."), I high-tailed it over to aisle six. Red had certainly been casing the store; I wondered what he had stolen.

However, it was more like what he'd left.

A puddle of urine stained the floor under the "2 for 88 cents" boxes of tinsel. By its side, written in black marker was:

SANTA CLAUS IS DEAD

Well, he had made a statement, I guess. Katie started the hyena routine again, and Mark bent down to clean up the mess.

Monica Tauriello  
Dumont, NJ  
Mrs. Cullen

# Rainy Afternoon Thoughts on a 2 O'clock Call

I am a jealous hand  
trying to touch the wind,  
clutching bits of cloud  
and thumbing them into  
little shapes which I bite  
when I try to kiss you.  
Fog is almost glass  
as it passes between us,  
separating our truths,  
and what I can't say w/my tongue  
I trace on to the pain  
w/air and water.

The heart is an inverted mountain,  
and I can't breathe  
above its timberline  
unless I move more slowly.  
I'm too close to a summit  
that might not hold me  
or feel like home.  
To make the soul climb,  
submerge the body in lust.  
Trees--green clouds  
around brown godfingers--  
never taught us that.

By your side, the clock lies  
to us (glossolalia in the tongue  
of time) but I'm not listening.  
I'm pushing words through my lips,  
from my mouth to yours  
w/only a small pause.  
It's not been long enough;  
we're stretched as thin as rope  
and not even the third day  
can save us now

Yes, I love you.  
In all the alphabets

Sarah Marshall  
Baltimore, MD  
Catonsville High School  
Dr. Gary Blankenburg

## Seagull

When you play;  
when your fingers  
flit flit, up and down  
the neck of the violin;  
they flutter upon the strings;  
there are birds in your hands.

The bow swoops,  
sliding up and down, back and forth  
over the sand;  
and seagulls  
flew over them.  
They soared on the wind,  
wings fluttering at times.  
Then flit flit, upon the waves

they landed,  
singing their harsh cry to the ocean.  
I remember.  
And I hear an echo  
when you practice your violin.  
You make a mistake,  
and the note isn't sweet  
and controlled,  
but harsh,  
and wild,  
like the seagull's cry.

Then you go back  
and do it right; the bird's cry  
is gone.  
Except for in my mind.  
But there are birds in your hands.

Jennifer Dale Weiss  
Gaithersburg, MD  
Mr. Menzer

## Standing Alone

I look at you  
standing away from me,  
wearing black  
and black  
and black-and-white,  
with your tainted hair  
and charcoal eyes.

Standing like this,  
with the iron between us,  
I say nothing,  
and you watch me  
until I feel you  
from the other side  
of the hair in your face,  
then you say  
what?

Wendy Marie Cukauskas  
Vienna, VA  
James Madison High School  
Mrs. Bernis Von zur Muehlen

## Sister Tree

I serenade that swaying elm  
because we look alike  
although I don't have leaves.  
She says what I would say  
if I could read through wind.  
She's my sapling sibling  
with fingers pointing,  
promising something greener.  
I look up hoping.  
I'm patient.  
I love this tree because it doesn't laugh.  
She knows how to shade  
while I take caterpillars off her leaves.

Rosemarie Klein  
Long Beach, NY  
Mrs. Pickus

## The Red Light

I sat there thinking. Red was an odd color for that light. Red meant blood, but there was no blood. There was only sitting and thinking in the glare of its red eye. Red meant danger, but there was no danger here. In all the time I've been down here and I've gazed into its mesmerizing glance, I was never afraid. It was a soft, comforting light. I often would just stare into it and think. I couldn't bear to hear another story. None of us could. We usually just thought.

Just as we were running out of talk, we were running out of thoughts. I never thought about the way it was. Not because of the pain, I was healed. It was useless thinking back, although I frequently caught myself lapsing or saw it in the faces of one of the others when they thought I wasn't looking. I thought about my new family which wasn't so new anymore but not the same as my old family.

"You better turn away from that light before you poison your soul," Billy, my new brother said. "Don't believe it."

I looked at him with an evil smirk. "Are you for real, poison my soul?" And the laughter rolled out from me and bounced back off his serious eyes. "It helps me think," I apologized.

"Think back?"

"Not back."

"Think ahead?"

"Ahead to what?"

"Maybe you think too much. This place is even getting to you. Can't you just . . .?"

I turned away, back to my thoughts. How lucky I was to be working at the restaurant that night. It was so long ago, and it happened so fast. I remember how scared and lonely I was, running down the stairs with everyone else. I thought then that this room was quite small. Just my luck to be working that night because here I am locked inside this can with people I hate most and love more than anyone else. Here I am in the view of the soothing red eye. I thought about the quaking of the ground and the worry and the loss, and then I thought no more because it was time for the talk and that was so long ago.

Paul called us together. Lately I had been impressed with his improvement. I remembered when he ran the restaurant. He had grown stronger and more mature since he was thrust into his role of father. He drafted a whole rulebook for us down here to keep up the morale.

He always liked to be so organized with all his little quirky notes. I guess I saw it coming. It wasn't so popular with all of us, too many details. In the early days, we were frightened and often got upset talking about what was. Paul made it a rule that nobody could ever talk or even think back. Once talk ran out, he forced these daily storytelling sessions on us. He made rules governing everything, and everyone obeyed. He gave out our chores, and they became tedious, but still everyone obeyed. Only once in the whole time I have been down there did anyone ever have a problem with the rules. The argument was about whether or not someone should go out through the shelter door and upstairs to see what he could from the window on the front door. Paul deemed it too risky but said someday we would. Billy backed down, bitter at best. Since then, he's been quite strange, only looking at the door, never at the red eye above it. He was somewhere apart from me and far from the family.

I remember back when we had still been counting the days. Agnes, our mother and hostess, owned the only book we had down there. It was a copy of "Hamlet" and some other of Shakespeare's plays. We all read it. I read it more times than I could remember. Billy read it more. We really got into it. "To be or not to be," he always said to me in a semi-somber way with a half-smile. After the argument his joking stopped. "To be," became as bitter as "not to be." Then he would look up at the door and see beyond, while I turned to the soothing red light and thought.

"It's time for talking now. Kris, it's your turn today," and

everyone slumbered over and set a fixed gaze on her. She had been a waitress long ago.

"Well," she began. "You're going to find this hard to believe, but there's something I've never told you guys. Promise not to laugh, although it really doesn't matter . . . here. This is hard to say but here goes. Way back, a few years ago, some friends and I decided to go camping in Yosemite, out in California. It was really beautiful. Looking out over the valley from the cliffs, I felt so free. There was a photographer there who hiked a few miles with us and said he was working for a magazine. He always smiled and seemed so at large, but he was quiet and always seemed to be thinking. He said that he wished he could just jump off the cliff into the valley so, for those few seconds, he would be as free as the birds.

"Well, anyway, things started out really great but got much worse. One night we drank too much around the campfire and got thrown out by the rangers. We couldn't drive, so as soon as we got out of the park, we pulled over to sleep it off. When I woke up, there was a gun at my head. I hardly remember it; we had parked on this guy's property, and he called the cops. We got arrested for trespassing and drunk driving. When the cell door slammed closed, I thought I'd be trapped there forever. It was the longest night of my life. I knew I could never escape the memory even if we did get off. Sometimes I still feel like I'm there. I wish I could just be looking out over the valley. I'd jump off the edge like the birds and fly free. The photographer always found a niche in my soul."

What was it with souls, I thought.

And with that, Kris was finished with another great speech that made me tired and lonely but at least made me think. Everyone else seemed just as impressed. Danny, who was our dishwasher, started to snore while MaryAnn and Kevin paced back and forth like when they were waiting tables; Billy was the only one interested.

"To be or not to be," and he flashed a bitter smile around the room before turning to the door and seeing beyond. "To be," he said again and laughed cynically, "not to be."

After everyone went to bed, Kris came over to me. I suppose that I was closest to her these days. She talked for a while and said many things. She said she was watching me lately because she was worried and that she knew what I was thinking (although she didn't). She wished she could get me a camera or at least a pen and paper. I guess I reminded her of the photographer. She said I would have liked it out in Yosemite despite what happened. She really didn't say much.

"Thanks," I said, and she kissed me like a sister. "Thanks for being there always," I added, hoping to convey gratitude but only implying eternity. We looked over towards Billy who was sleeping closest to the door. He had fallen asleep with "Hamlet" on his chest. Kris frowned and said, "I wish we could get rid of that book; it's made him so crazy." With a look of disgust and love, she walked away. I fell asleep gazing into the red light thinking about when I was the oldest brother instead of the youngest.

The next morning I awoke to an uproar. Billy was packing some food, and everyone was trying to convince him to do something as I rubbed the red light out of my eyes. He was telling everyone about the dream he had the night before.

"I was at this zoo," he began, "and all the animals were in their cages. They seemed angry and anxious, and there was a lot of noise. Then I realized that the cages were getting bigger. The open space was getting smaller as the cages closed in. I couldn't get away. It was like being in the old movies where the walls come crashing in. Just when they were about to crush me, they stopped, and I opened a door that led down this dark hallway. At the other end was another door. When I opened it, this bright light came through the crack. It was so bright I couldn't see what was behind it. I have to see," he said, "I have to know."



No one could stop him now. He finished packing quickly and made long good-byes to the family. Just as he was about to leave, a voice of protest cried out, "You can't go. Who will close and lock the door upstairs? The radiation, who'll take the risk?"

Everyone agreed, what about the risk?

The voice won and with a long sigh and a crushed expression, Billy dropped his bags again. "You're right, I'm being silly."

Silly, maybe, but for the next few days I thought and looked into the light even more. Whenever I saw Billy look my way, I turned my gaze from it but still I thought. I lost myself deep in the red light, and I saw fire. I looked even deeper. I saw blood. I tried to turn away, but there was red everywhere. Panic swept over me like a wave, and there was no escape from the sinister red eye that glowed on the room and covered it in crimson. When I thought I was trapped, I saw a glimmer of blue. Billy's blue eyes stared me cold. The red was gone. When I saw the deep defeat in his eyes, I knew that I had to escape, too.

I told Billy I would lock the upstairs door, regardless of the risk. I didn't tell him I was going with him though. He wrote a quick but sad good-bye note to our sleeping kin and took one last glance around before I opened the downstairs door and walked out. He wanted to make sure he had done everything before he left, I suppose. He was like that.

We hadn't been out of that room in ages. We almost forgot how to walk. The climb up the stairs was much harder and longer than I remembered, but we made it. The restaurant looked as it always had but it seemed oddly empty.

As we moved to the door, I saw light coming through the windows. Out the window on the door all I could see (because of the angle) was the blue sky. When I reached for the door, my body froze. All I could do was look out the window and think. I realized I couldn't leave, not now, maybe never.

Billy squeezed my shoulders and said thanks. "I'll be all right. Don't worry. I have to go, you know that."

"I know you do."

"Tell the others I love them. Find some room in your thoughts for me sometime. Don't look into the red light anymore. You can't get away from it."

"I won't," the youngest brother in me said.

"I'll miss you," the oldest brother said. "Someday you'll follow me out here, or what's left out here."

At that moment, he was the bravest person I had ever met. "You're the only one who can leave this place."

He hugged me tight for a second, then let go and reached for the door.

"To be or not to be," I said, wiping away the tears.

"To be or not to be," he said, trying to hold them back.

Then he was out the door, and I saw his back walk away. I didn't get to see what it looked like outside before the door slammed shut. After I locked it, I went back downstairs wondering how many illegal trips to the window it would take before I could leave, too. With the slam of the downstairs door, Billy was long gone.

Back in the shelter, I grabbed a can of something and threw it at the light above the door. Everyone woke up at the sound of the shattering glass. They knew what had happened and for a while they talked sadly and angrily, but I knew they were happy for him and they missed him. Maybe they were even jealous.

Carrie Reithmayr  
Dumont, NJ  
Mrs. R. Cullen

## Cut Grass and Soccer Balls

As he struggled with his bright red Toro commercial lawn mower, I noticed him fiddling with something in his hands.

"What took you so long?" I inquired, considering the job ahead and the time. "Nothing, I'm here aren't I?" Then I watched him push a torn piece of a Snickers bar into his mouth as he dropped the brown wrapper into the box of trash bags.

For a little less than nine years, I've been facing scenes like this in sports and in our lawn business. Yet I've managed to stay good friends with this skinny, freckled kid everyone calls D.C. (I call him Dees or D for short.) After I stand back and examine the two of us, I wonder how, with so many differences, we've remained so close. But as I refocus my view, those differences are blurred by our strong similarities.

Together we've played on the same soccer teams for five years and have even started our own lawn business. We were on the light blue team in a town soccer league in fourth grade, and I remember admiring, even envying, the way my friend could maneuver through a pack of stampeding, kicking children and score three goals a game. When practices and games came around, D.C. revealed his obliviousness to the meaning of the word time. In the fall, a four-thirty schedule for a pick up soccer game could mean a pack of nine guys waiting around till 5:00 or later for D.C. to arrive in order to form teams. When he arrived on his rusty silver ten-speed, he'd stroll out onto the field as if he were right on time. We wouldn't say anything, but through the course of the game he'd unconsciously reveal that he was having a hard time choosing between Bubble Yum and Bazooka at the Lake View Deli; or, Rite Aid didn't have Snickers so he had to go to the Acme. Unfortunately, I have to put up with this long after soccer season ends.

During the summer, our twenty customer lawn service also waits for D.C. to arrive. Finally, when he gets there--after choosing Bubble Yum--D.C.'s mind and body shifts into first gear and money is his fuel. He--and I--will work steadily for an average wage of \$10 to \$15 per hour sometimes more depending on the customer. Not even D.C., whose argumentative, contradictory nature is blanked out by the mere glimpse at a wad of green bills, can complain about these earnings. "I love money," he'd say as we walked back to our mowers after collecting a \$20 check, sweating, dirty, red in the face. Then he'd hand me a ten and we'd move down Chews Landing Road to our next customer. Or sometimes he wouldn't hand me a ten and I might not see it for weeks, because I, in my weary state, forgot to request my end of the bargain. This misconception would slip until the next weekend of lawns, and that was plenty of time for D.C. to forget, also. "I know I paid you because I remember wanting to get rid of all the ones I had." An argument usually breaks out over this but it ends shortly; there are no hard feelings and I'll end up with my \$10. Again we begin the trek down Chews. Most of our lawns are on Chews Landing Road; nine to be exact. The others are in that vicinity. D.C. has repeatedly come up with the idea of monopolizing all the Chews Landing lawns for ourselves and bringing the infamous Haddon Lawn Service to their knees. A great sense of competition and challenges. When this love for money combines with such a competitive spirit, my friend, D.C., the lawn boy, turns into D.C., the gambler. Such things as kicking a soccer ball through a 'V' in the tree branches from twenty yards out after practice is a common bet of his. "A dollar I make it," he says. If he misses, it's "Double or nothing" and so on until a win emerges or he breaks even.

At dusk we finished our long day of cut grass, trash bags and gasoline. D.C. looked at me satisfied and reached into his sweat-shirt pocket. Then he tilted his head back, squinted and bit his lower lip. "One hundred twenty-seven dollars in nine hours. We're incredible." He looked at me, smiling, and combed his light brown hair over with one hand. I began pushing my mower forward up Chews and he soon followed. "I love money," he said as he pushed half of a day old Snickers into his mouth.

Chris Ryan  
Haddonfield, NJ  
Haddonfield Memorial High School  
Chris Bloom



"Sisters"  
Kim Pierce  
Hanover High School

## November 15, 1986

As I got on the bus, I was struck by the range of ages--senior citizens, the middle-aged, two young children, several young adults, college students, and another high-school student such as myself . . . predominantly middle-aged and up--not what I had expected on a bus headed for a peace rally.

Not just a peace rally, though.

This was for the culmination of  
**THE GREAT PEACE MARCH!!!!!!!**

The bus hummed with talk--reminiscences on '60's demonstrations which I listened to avidly and discussions of current issues and actions that I joined in eagerly. "Peace Now" and "Impeach Reagan" became the watchwords of our group.

We arrived in D.C. I got off the bus, and was greeted by the signs and people of the peace vigil at Lafayette Park--Peace Park, they called it. Due to the media's deliberate silence on this action, I had never heard anything about this five-years-and-counting vigil, didn't even know it was a vigil 'till I stopped and talked to one of the people involved. Phillip had been in the twenty-four hour vigil for two months, helping to care for the homeless as well as manning his sign. I sat cross-legged on his blanket and we talked of the vigil, the march and the peace movement in general. Folk music from a nearby stage provided perfect background. Phillip quoted a line from Rush; I named the song. His smile and voice were warm, as warm as the day's wind was chill. His concern and dedication impressed me greatly, as did the camaraderie between the people of the vigil whom he called his brothers and sisters and greeted with warm hugs. I left him at his sign to watch the peace marchers as they entered the park and to hear the subsequent speeches.

A personable marcher dressed entirely in black and another in harlequin clothing and bright clown make-up occupied the stage, together with others who were not so noticeable, partially obscured by the crowd and video camera set-ups. Mahatma Ghandi's great grand-nephew spoke, ending by having us repeat a beautiful pledge--I wish I could remember the exact words. Several of the marchers talked to us. An astro-physicist who had quit NASA and was currently on the peace vigil and the fifty-fourth day of an open-ended fast for disarmament addressed the crowd. Carl Sagan, Dr. Spock, and several legislators also spoke for disarmament. I remember most clearly the lowan senator. He seemed deeply involved and justifiably proud of the many lowans present that day. A Japanese physicist who had lost relatives in Hiroshima made a moving, impassioned speech. The daughter of a man present at an early nuke test--a man deemed expendable by the federal government--told her family's story. She told of watching her father die inch by inch, of her mother's grief, of her own battle with the effects of radiation passed on to her at conception. Tears welled in my eyes,

threatening to spill. Across the street, the windows of the White House stared blankly, coldly down on our assembly. The backs of the speakers faced it.

A group from an Ardmore, PA high school carried the sign of their student peace coalition. I walked over. A girl with a peace sign painted on her face told me how the group started and promised help in starting a similar group in Wyomissing. We exchanged addresses. A man with long hair and turquoise-blue cloak stood beside me. We began to talk of the issue at hand, and of Arlo Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Dylan and the Grateful Dead. Belatedly we introduced ourselves. His name was John. He had been with the march since Philadelphia, PA. We spent a lot of time together that day and got each other's addresses before we parted. I am glad to have met him. A musical group played a Negro spiritual updated to deal with the arms race. We danced, grooving to the music. It was great to see little kids and old folks and everyone in between getting into the same song. A siren was sounded, and many, including myself, dropped to the ground in symbolic death. The siren ended, and we got to our feet, chanting "It doesn't have to happen."

We walked the last mile to the Lincoln Memorial. I was suddenly overwhelmed by what had been around me all day--the people in laid-back, '60's style dress, the diversity of other styles present, the fellowship we shared in a common cause. A kaleidoscope of images whirled through my mind--the back of a denim jacket bore a painted Earth and the legend "Love Our Mother" . . . A man in jester's clothing stared intently at a balloon-globe he held in his hand. "Peace Fool" was written somewhere on his clothing; I can't remember where . . . Doves flew on clothing, on buttons, on banners and signs. (Dickens's Mr. Gradgrind would not have approved--but then it's the Gradgrinds of the world that have put us in such peril, the Gradgrinds and the Rambos and those who just don't care.) The headiness of the psychic gestalt became a non-chemical high.

I saw Phillip again and stopped to say "hi." He was handing out leaflets. John introduced me to some of those he had walked with, and we exchanged names and hugs. Everything had a sense of rightness about it, a feeling of "good vibes." And love--a love for humankind, for Mother Earth, for the sheer beauty of existence. A banner announced "Deadheads for World Peace." John and I gave them a special cheer. A girl watching by the side called out "Jerry wants peace!" Sweet! We passed a group of police officers who smiled and flashed the familiar hand sign for peace; we responded in kind. Beautiful--they're with us!! Can you dig it?!! A huge hand (styrofoam? paper mache?) marched somewhere ahead, forming (of course!) a peace sign. Someone went by on roller skates, calling out "I love you." We called back "We love you!" I later heard that the skater had been with the march from the beginning.

We arrived at the Lincoln Memorial. John and I sat on a hill for a while, watching the people come in. The bright blue of my friend's cloak contrasted pleasantly with the autumn's soft red-brown, gold-brown trees, leaves, grass. I was trying to grasp the reality of it all. After being surrounded by apathy and animosity for so long, this massing of aware, concerned, peaceful people seemed too wonderful to be real. I thought over and over again "I can't believe I'm here; I can't believe it's real."

Incredible, beautiful, blow my mind, if I'm dreaming don't wake me.

More speeches and music, and in a too-short time I had to board the bus, homeward bound. We compared our experiences and reactions to the event . . . talked of what influences society . . . engaged in a disorganized sing-along. We arrived home with heads full of dream-like memories, spirits full of renewed enthusiasm and hearts full of peace.

Shawna Reppert  
W. Reading, PA  
Dr. Smith

# The Future of English

"Anybody fortunate enough, however, to have learned the joys of reading in his formative years—usually through the inspired guidance of one wise, gratefully remembered, and disgracefully underpaid schoolteacher—knows that there never has been, and never will be a substitute for a really good book."

--Bennet Cerf, "Reading for Pleasure"

I have never watched "On Golden Pond" in its entirety, but one heartwarming scene I chanced upon several years ago still manages to pluck a chord deep within me whenever I come across a particular novel. In the scene, Henry Fonda, playing a retired 80-year-old professor, is seated in a comfortable armchair reading "Treasure Island" for the umpteenth time. Asking his wife (played by Katherine Hepburn) whether or not a certain boy had ever read Stevenson's classic adventure story, he frowns with displeasure, discovering that the child has failed to do so. "It's a shame," Fonda mumbles softly in a mildly exacerbated tone, "everyone should read it."

Over the past summer, as I skimmed through stacks of college brochures, a disturbing message-pattern began to emerge. Colleges repeatedly stressed the need for undergraduates to secure a solid English composition background, simultaneously suggesting that a large percentage of college freshmen were ill-equipped in communicating effectively with pen and paper. To wit, Dr. Peter Marsh, the author of "The Future Shape of Education": "Everyone from parents to prospective employers bemoans the inability of undergraduates to write clearly and think incisively about broad issues with which they must deal."

Furthermore, in 1983 the Education Equality Project published a concise booklet enumerating the capabilities that a high school student should have prior to enrollment in college. Citing inadequately prepared college students as the genesis for the urgency of the report, the Project provided a list of recommended prerequisites in the fundamental areas of learning, from mathematics to English.

Although somewhat controversial, the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) may reveal part of the story behind the lamentations. In Fairfax County, for example, the average math score for the class of 1986 was 515, overshadowing its verbal counterpart by 55 points. The same imbalance existed in Montgomery County where the math score exceeded the verbal score by 51 points.

In leafing through any college guidebook currently on the market, the pattern continues to disclose itself with showcase lights. At the University of Virginia, a highly selective college, the median verbal score was 590, compared to a math score of 630. At another highly competitive college, Virginia Tech, the median math score registered a full 75 points higher than the verbal score.

In light of the importance many people place on the education of their children and the sheer volume of colleges (nearly 2,000 four-year colleges) in the United States, something appears to have gone awry in how English is being taught. In a random inquiry of 90 students at FHS, one out of every six students said that their English course was their least favorite class.

## A Lack of Interest?

In today's visually oriented society, it comes to no one's surprise that reading for pleasure has taken a second seat to television, movies, and other eye-appealing mediums. But by how much? Outside of assigned readings, more than a third of the students sampled read only one to three novels or novel-length books a year. One-sixth read more than nine novels. Compare these figures with a-trip-down-memory-lane conversations with parents who sketch a faraway world existing prior to the advent of television; a time when books were one of the chief sources of entertainment.

On the other hand, when one must read to acquire information, a third of the students read newspapers or magazines some of the time. Two-fifths either read periodicals often or

always. Hence, teenagers are still reading but are, nonetheless, reading a different variety of literature than what is being used in the classroom.

## Out of Touch?

With one out of every six students expressing disinterest with their English course, ejaculations such as Henry David Thoreau's "How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book!" seem out of place, almost anachronistic in today's fast-paced high-tech world. Perhaps then, students and teachers represent two differing viewpoints in debates concerning the twin basics of "reading and 'riting":

Question: For what should a high school English course ultimately prepare you?

Answer: Although a large fraction of the students displayed difficulty in choosing only one answer, the majority replied that an understanding of basic literary principles and devices was the most significant lesson. The rest of the students divided their votes almost equally between a knowledge of basic grammar and an appreciation for literature. A few individuals mentioned that proficiency in verbal communication merited consideration.

Similarly, in the English teacher inquiry (seven out of 16 teachers returned the feeler), all except two pinpointed one area of concern. Still, six out of seven teachers agreed that an appreciation for literature was vital, and one elaborated that "the understanding (of literary principles and devices) hopefully will foster the appreciation." Several teachers called attention to writing and speaking skills, prompting one teacher to write: "reading and understanding all forms of written expression and (the ability) to write most of them correctly" should be the ultimate ambition of a high school English course.

Meanwhile, the Education Equality Project categorized English into four sections: reading and literature, writing, speaking and listening, and language. Under reading and literature, the Project emphasized the entire gamut, ranging from "the ability to read critically" to "the ability to respond actively and imaginatively to literature." For writing, "the ability to write appropriately for different occasions, audiences, and purposes (persuading, explaining, describing, telling a story)" was one of several objectives in preparing high school graduates especially for college-level study and also the world of work.

## Appreciating Literature

An excerpt from "Writing," a monthly magazine about written communication geared to adolescents, May, 1983: "Many educators and writers criticize 'theme hunting' not only because it encourages study guides but also because it can kill the enjoyment of literature. Says well-known teacher of English, Dr. Michael C. Flanigan of the University of Oklahoma, "Too many students leave high school believing that serious reading is nothing less than 'finding the message.'"

The above paragraph reminds me of a conversation that my cousin, Neil, and I recently had about assigned reading for English. He said something to the extent that it is ridiculous to scour a book for symbolism; you never read the story, you never enjoy it. In brief, it is eating without digesting.

A teacher's most demanding task is to teach students who are unwilling or disinterested in learning. But if the excitement of reading, rather than fear of overbearing "technicalities," can be implanted within students, teachers would be soon harvesting two bountiful crops, self-confidence and an appreciation for literature. Moreover, teachers should demonstrate that through writing people express themselves. Or let the students learn the lesson themselves. Have them write journal entries. Then have them read their original assignments, be it "To Kill a Mockingbird" or "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn." Inspection of the students' work will expose most novels for what they really are: lengthy journal entries in disguise.

The point, then, is the following: Literature is not solely re-

(Continued on Page 36)

served for bookworms or florid writers who know "Webster's" from cover to cover; it is, on the other hand, an open market for everyone to delight their innate desire to tell and listen to stories.

#### Reading for Pleasure

Perhaps a final, summarizing question needs to be examined: What, then, is the value of reading? The Education Equality Project sees "competence in language (serving) a variety of purposes: accomplishing the business of daily life, communicating attitudes and ideas, expanding thought, and informing the imagination." However, considering that higher education facilities such as Harvard College were first established to instruct people in reading the Bible, reading not only entails an education of the mind, but of the spirit as well. From generation to generation, the thoughts and feelings of countless authors are timelessly frozen in a mosaic of black and white, narrating humanity's introspection in its quest for reason.

Although it is unclear which factor poses the greatest threat to a good English background--apathy, home environment, modern society's pro-work attitude--one thing is for certain: Illiteracy is an unfortunate state, but unemployed literacy is a shameful condition. "Treasure Island" was meant to be read and enjoyed, not neglected under a shroud of dust.

Brendon D. MacBryde  
Fairfax, VA  
Fairfax High School  
Mrs. Carol Lange

## Jimmy Reverie

I'm not sure exactly when I fell in love with Jimmy Reverie. It was one of those things that just happens when you're not really paying attention, and then you sort of assume you'd always been that way. I mean, it felt like I had always been in love with him. Like I had always lain in bed thinking about his beautiful blue eyes and blond hair before I fell asleep. Like I had always wanted to spend every minute with him. Like I had always dreamed of his noticing me and falling in love with me.

I suppose it happened when I saw his first movie. I thought it was going to be an ordinary Sunday afternoon. Mother wasn't home, so I took a couple of dollars and headed for the movie theater in town. I didn't know what was playing, and I didn't really care. I just had nothing better to do. I paid for my ticket, bought my popcorn and found a seat. It's much easier to go to the movies alone--then you don't have to search for several seats together. I hate it when people do that, and they ask you to move over to make more room. I especially hate it when it's some guy and his girlfriend, and then they never even pay attention to the movie.

Luckily, no one asked me to move over that day. I slumped down in my seat and put my feet up in front of me. The lights dimmed, and the movie started. I was a little disappointed that there were no previews, but I was curious to see what the movie would be about.

It started out in a dark room. The title--"Meant for You"--flashed on the screen. There was a girl around my age sitting in the corner of the room, crying. All of a sudden, her mother opened the door to the room. I don't remember what she said, but she yelled something at the girl. The girl ran out past her mother. Outside, she jumped on her bicycle and started riding down the street.

That's when Jimmy Reverie came in. He was standing near the edge of the street, reading a newspaper, and she kind of crashed into him. I was sure he was going to get really angry. But he didn't--that's what made me lean forward in my chair and really start to pay attention. Jimmy Reverie just talked to

her gently and asked her why she was crying. Then he took her to a park, bought her some ice cream, and just sat and talked with her for the rest of the afternoon. He didn't make any moves on her. He didn't even get mad when she said she had been scared of him at first. He made sure she was safe at the end of the day, and he helped her with whatever it was she was crying about.

The rest of the movie was about how the girl fell in love with Jimmy Reverie, and how he fell in love with her. Their families didn't want them to get married, but they argued and finally convinced everybody that their being in love was all that mattered. So they had a beautiful wedding, and they had a really happy life together.

I didn't like the girl especially, but Jimmy Reverie was so good. He was so caring, and thoughtful, and gentle. He never yelled at the girl, and he was always there when she needed him. And he was always really excited for her when something good happened to her. And he always helped her when she had a problem.

I sat through the movie a second time. (I ducked into the bathroom between shows so the usher wouldn't notice me. It's really easy to do if you practice a few times.) I kept picturing me instead of the girl: I would marry Jimmy Reverie, and we'd have a happy life together.

After the second showing, I had to go home. All the way to my house, I thought about something I once overheard a girl in gym class tell a friend: she said that you could write to movie stars by writing to the studios that make their movies and just putting the star's name before the studio's address. I planned to write to Jimmy Reverie. I was sure he would answer my letter, and maybe he'd even suggest that I call him or visit him at the studio or something. He'd probably give me his home address so that we could write more letters.

I ran into my house, trying to remember where my stationery was. Mother was in the kitchen. I began to speak quickly: "Mother! I just saw the best . . ."

"Don't slam the door, Laura. And hurry up and get washed for supper. I don't want the food to burn just because I have to wait for you."

I stared at her for a minute, then went upstairs to wash my hands. I peered into the bathroom mirror, trying to remember if the girl in the movie wore makeup or not. Mother screeched, "Laura! What's keeping you? You'll have to eat burned food! I'm just going to start without you!" I rinsed my hands and then went downstairs. I ate as quickly as possible, because I wanted to get started on the letter to Jimmy Reverie.

After dinner, I scrounged around my room and found a few pieces of notebook paper. That wouldn't be good enough for the real letter to Jimmy Reverie, but I decided I'd practice on it before I bought good stationery for the final copy. I began a few times before I could decide exactly what to write. After about an hour, I finished:

Dear Jimmy Reverie,  
I just saw your movie "Meant for You."  
It was the best movie. I cried at the end because it was so good. I wanted to write and tell you how much I liked it. I hope you will write back, because I think you and I could be really good friends. You can write to me as often as you like, and I will do the same. Please write soon.  
Don't worry if you don't have much to say.  
Your friend,  
Laura

I figured he'd like the letter well enough. I wasn't even nervous about my grammar or wording, because I was sure Jimmy Reverie was not the type of person who would criticize me. He was special.

I ran downstairs and went into the kitchen to show Mother

the letter. "Mother! I want you to see . . ."

"Laura, please. Can't you see that I'm busy? I'll talk to you later. Now please leave me in peace."

"Fine. I'm going outside," I told her.

"Hush! I'm trying to work!"

I went into the back yard. I decided to just use the notebook paper rather than taking the time to buy new paper. I had to address the envelope I found to Jimmy Reverie, and I didn't really know where to send it. The movie was made by Kingdom Studios, so I just wrote, "JIMMY REVERIE, KINGDOM STUDIOS, HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA" on the envelope. I was sure he'd get the letter, because everyone in Hollywood was sure to know him. I ran down to the mailbox on the corner of the street, dug the stamp I had taken from Mother's desk out of my pocket, stuck it on the envelope, and dropped the letter into the mailbox. I opened the mailbox flap twice to make sure the letter had gone down. I always do that, just to be sure.

I waited and waited and waited. No letter came from Jimmy Reverie. After about three or four months, I wrote a letter to the Post Office saying how mad I was that they'd lost the letter I had written. It makes me really upset when someone doesn't do what they say they will. Especially someone like the Post Office, since they work for the government and everything.

In April, Jimmy Reverie's next movie came to the movie theater. I skipped my piano lesson the day it came, because I wanted to be the first to see the movie. I wanted to see it before I overheard the kids in school talking about it.

I found a seat in the front row (that close, I could feel like Jimmy Reverie was talking directly to me). The movie was called "Second Illusion." Jimmy Reverie was a magician who did tricks to help poor and sick people. One time, he even did a trick which helped the police catch a criminal. He also fell in love with some girl—she wasn't great or really pretty or anything, but I guess Jimmy Reverie was able to see some inner special quality in her or something. I knew that he was the kind of person who could do things like that. I sat through the movie three times. Mother wasn't going to be home for dinner, so it didn't really matter what time I got home.

When I left the movie, I was thinking about how much I loved Jimmy Reverie. And I was sure that if he got to know me, he'd be in love with me too. His blue eyes would look into my eyes and he'd tell me how special I was. All I had to do was meet him and let him get to know me. All I had to do was figure out how.

A month later, my problem was solved. I just happened to look at the newspaper Mother was reading at breakfast one morning, and I saw an advertisement: "JIMMY REVERIE COMES TO THE CLEARVIEW CINEMA, JUNE FIRST. COME SEE THE HOLLYWOOD STAR IN PERSON." I could barely breathe. I was finally going to meet Jimmy Reverie. The Clearview Cinema was a short bus trip away. A short bus trip, and I'd meet the most special person I knew. And he'd fall in love with me, and we'd be happy.

"Mother, I need bus fare, because . . ."

"Fine. Go take it from my bureau—I'm going to be late if I stay a minute longer."

June first was two weeks away, but I wanted to make sure I had all my plans set by then. I set aside the bus fare. I checked the bus schedule three times and called twice to verify the time that was listed. I picked out my best dress and best shoes, and I even bought a little makeup at the drugstore (I had noticed that the girl in "Second Illusion" was wearing makeup). June first finally arrived. I got to the bus stop an hour early, just to make sure I didn't miss the bus. The bus came, and I got to Clearview in plenty of time.

I found the Cinema easily (Mother had taken me to Clearview once to go shopping, and when I got restless, she gave me money for a movie). There were lots of cars and photographers and people around the door. I pushed my way through the crowd and managed to squeeze up to the front.

There he was. Jimmy Reverie was signing autographs. He looked even handsomer and nicer and more special in person

than he had in the movies. There was a long line of people waiting to see him. I couldn't wait, though, and I was sure Jimmy Reverie would understand if I went ahead. He would forgive me.

I ran past the front of the line and up to the table he was sitting at. People started to yell at me. I ran over to Jimmy Reverie and grabbed his sleeve. "Jimmy Reverie! I have so much to . . ."

Two men grabbed me under the arms and guided me to the end of the line. "Wait your turn, kid," one of them said while the line looked at me and then away.

I stood there for a minute, staring at the backs of the people jamming in the door of the Cinema. Then I started to walk. I walked and walked and walked. It got dark, and I finally found my way back to the bus stop. I took the last bus home.

The next day, Mother was having friends over to the house for a luncheon. She gave me money to go see a movie, because she said it would be easier for her if I were out of the house. I took the money and went to the park. I bought myself an ice cream cone, and I bought bread crumbs to feed the pigeons. When it began to get dark, I headed home.

Meredith L. Gavrin  
Scarsdale, NY  
Scarsdale High School  
Mr. Neil Maloney

## Destinations

Dream--last night--I had to die and they made me choose my death like a computer program just like:

Choose printer 1

Choose printer 2...

This was:

Choose death 1

Choose death 2...

And I had to pick one so I chose death 2 and then this thin blonde lady who looked like my friend's mother came to take me there and comfort me and we walked by the soccer fields and she said once she had a boyfriend that tried to kill himself and she hasn't seen him for a long time but he'll be coming back she said it was all right, but as we started going into the cave and up the stairs I burst into tears and screamed "No, I'm afraid I don't want to die I can't believe I'm going to die," and her face distorted and she yelled "Then die by yourself," and she left and I went up the wooden stairs to a room with all wood floors and I put my socks in an empty drawer and lay down with a teddy bear and everything went dark

Then I was walking around my house by the clothes hamper and my brother saw me and my mother said "Are you dead yet" and I said "I think so." Then I was in school only it looked like a department store and I looked the same and felt the same but nobody would talk or look at me they turned up their noses and said I smelled because I was rotting I guess. Then I got to a classroom that was really the J.C. Penney Shoe Department and my ex-friend was cursing me under her breath and I said, "Say it to my face," and she did so I tried to bash her face in but my arm wouldn't make contact some force was in the way and my science teacher appeared and said, "A force is surrounding her and she can't break through it." And everybody looked at me so I walked over to her and folded her up and she left limping and I smiled

Then I was in a car going home in the green Ford Pinto like we had when I was little and I listened to the hum of the car and the chatter of my parents and the groans of the neighborhood and the whole world and I couldn't see the house yet but I knew--just knew I was almost home, I could feel it all around me, as if I was already there

Susan Nicastro  
Lanoka Harbor, NJ  
Lacey Township High School  
Mrs. Vircillo

## I Cried For Toast

Possibly it was the smell, like that of old fires aflame.  
Or, maybe it was all the black smoke wafting up the stairs and  
under my bedroom door. Whatever it was, it made me realize, be-  
fore  
I had even witnessed it for myself, that I'd done it once again. I  
knew it was much too late, but I tried anyway. Throwing my robe  
onto my body, ignoring my little bunny slippers altogether, I flew  
down  
to the kitchen.

Sure enough, the smoke and the smell were asphyxiating. As  
I neared, I saw the flames, little blue toast-flames of pain. I  
rescued the remains from the inferno. My beloved toast was, again,  
a crisp, pitiful, shrivled nothing. I had to turn away. As the tears  
welled up inside me, I saw the loaf of bread cringing on the counter  
with that not-me-I'm-too-young-to-die look on its wrapper. I  
pleaded with it. "I'm not a bad person, really ... honest. I never  
meant to tort--..." I couldn't go on. The pain was more than I could  
bear.

Up the stairs I flew to my room, where I broke down in a  
frenzy of tears. I was crying for the lost toast I'd known, for the  
smouldering tragedy in my kitchen now, and for the endangered  
toast of  
future days.

Patrick Baroch  
Timonium, MD  
Dulaney High School  
William Jones

## Cold War

I could fight you  
With guns and bombs  
And sharp knives dripping poison  
Or  
I could stare you down  
With 100,000 pounds of fire power  
And you would be just as dead.  
But  
If I could drop a bomb  
From three miles high  
Or sit in a steel room  
Far below the earth's surface  
Halfway around the world  
And push a little red button  
On metal command,  
I might not have to meet up with you  
Before your funeral  
And swap family pictures over a beer  
And talk about that girl in high school  
Who could stiff you with a smile...  
If I didn't have to know  
That you are just like me  
I could kill you in a breath  
But  
How can I open fire  
On my children in your eyes?

Christine Doyle  
Vienna, VA  
Cindy Piper

## The Tender Days

throwing back  
the covers  
i see  
your sock curled  
in the sheets  
a mouse  
at the foot of the bed  
  
your shirt  
is burrowing  
into the shadowed crevice  
between the back of the sofa  
and the wall  
of my fading living  
room  
  
reaching for the soap  
i come across  
your razor  
and at my unfamiliar  
touch  
it scurries off  
around the rim of the tub  
and down  
toward the drain

Sarah Marshall  
Baltimore, MD  
Catonsville High School  
Dr. Gary Blankenburg

## the professor stood preaching

the professor stood preaching  
floating profound ideas through my bewildered mind  
(full of wandering thoughts)  
and expounding on the nature of a  
vacuum  
(purely coincidental to my  
mental state)  
as i hid behind my unusually small desk  
(splattered  
with graffiti)  
trying to avoid his attention  
but then  
he called on me  
to give an answer  
to the ultimate question  
(for which i had none)  
and the color of my cheeks  
matched the color of  
my lipstick  
as  
i  
sank  
further  
down  
into my chair  
(the hard wood kind)

Julie Myers  
Timonium, MD  
Dulaney Senior High School  
Mr. William Jones

# Germ Warfare

"Nice goin', Germ." Jerome Drape always preferred to call himself "Germ" whenever he blamed himself for doing something stupid. This afternoon, Jerome was having a heyday attacking Germ for screwing up on everything that happened in school. Jerome started off logically with criticizing himself for the first big error of the day, getting up.

"Damn you, Germ. When the hell are you going to think enough to get up when the alarm goes off, instead of hitting the friggin snooze. If you weren't so damn lazy, I might've been able to make it to English on time. And about English, the next time you raise your hand, make sure you have something intelligent to say. Today you . . ."

Jerome was so engrossed in assessing all the errors he had made that day that he almost made another, much larger one, like walking out in front of a car. Fortunately, the driver was not as engrossed in himself as the pedestrian. Still, the car screeched to a stop a shadow's breadth from him.

"Hey, punk, what cha tryin' to do, get killed or somethin'? What cha blind or somethin'?" Looking at the driver, Jerome had the funny feeling that he was the type of guy who wouldn't stop if he knew he could get away with it. His beat up Bronco had the scars to prove it.

"Gee, sorry, mister. I . . ." He wanted to say what he was thinking, but nothing would come out. Except for Germ, Jerome always found himself unable to stand up against anyone, even this jerk with his "Nuke the Whales" bumper sticker.

Overly cautious, Jerome crossed the remainder of the black stretch. It was not until he was safely on the other side that he began to dish it out again, on himself.

"You're a coward, Germ." A small voice piped beside him. Jerome stopped abruptly, startled.

"You almost got me squashed, you cretin." The small voice piped again.

Jerome spun around, expecting to find someone following him home, mimicking him. Instead he found no one.

"If you had enough brains to look both ways before you crossed the street like your mother . . ."

Jerome stopped the voice in mid-sentence. "Who the hell are you?" Pausing, he rephrased his question. "Where the hell are you?"

"Down here, stupid." The voice replied.

"Where?" Jerome scrutinized the sidewalk. He would not believe that a chewing gum wrapper or an ant hill had miraculously learned how to speak since eight o'clock this morning. And shoes have tongues, but . . .

"Right here, you moron." The voice became agitated.

This time he had been paying attention to the sidewalk. It wasn't the ants or the wrapper. The little high-pitched whining was coming from his own shadow!

"No." Desperately, Jerome tried to convince himself that this was only a bad dream, that he could wake himself out of it by talking to himself.

"Yes, Germ, yes, yes" replied the shadow. Suddenly the shadow began to move. Jerome stood frozen in fear and disbelief as this negative of himself, shrunk to dwarf-like proportions by the afternoon sun, began to dance around him. "Seeing is believing. Isn't it Germ? Isn't it?" The pygmy's dance grew into a frenzy. The shadow whirled about Jerome as if it were an African witch doctor with Jerome the signal fire to his dark gods.

"Stop it!" Jerome screamed as his distorted double slowly terminated his mystic rituals. "Why," his tone became pleading, almost self-pitying, "why are you doing this to me?"

"Because I can't stand you, Germ," came the cold response. "Because I'm sick and tired of following a retard like you around every day. I've decided to go free lance." With this last remark, Jerome saw the shadow do what he didn't think any shadow could do. It smiled at him.

"Who the hell do you think you are," Jerome spoke out in a

rush of anger liberally mixed with blind terror, "to think you can just . . ."

"I'm you." interrupted the shadow.

"You bastard." Jerome lost any trace of terror as he addressed this arrogant punk. Reflexively, he spit on his shadow.

Simultaneously, the shadow spit back. Jerome winced as the shadow gob hit his cheek. Black as tar, it was cold as ice and even as he tried to wipe it off, it was gone. But he knew it had left some mark on him, he could feel it.

"A little slow, Germ. When are you . . ."

Jerome cut the black midget short with a kick to his shadowy head. He hadn't planned to kick the thing, it was just reflex. And he didn't expect his foot to make contact with anything, either. For an instant Jerome stood in a silent stupor as he watched his own shadow huddled in pain. Realizing the break he had made for himself, Jerome dropped his school bag and began to race home.

"Yo, Germ," his double screamed after him, still in a heap on the sidewalk, "run, run. But remember, you can't outrun your own shadow."

Jerome thought about what the shadow said as he sprinted through his front door and flipped the dead bolt shut. "Well, no one ever had his shadow give him a head start before."

"I guess you're right," replied a voice from the other side of the door. But this was not the voice of the dwarf; it was deeper, darker, more like his own. Jerome glanced at the wall. It was almost four. Then it dawned on him. The sun is going down, he's getting bigger! With a shudder Jerome realized that the little dwarf was almost as big as him!

"That's right, Germ," replied an eerie echo of his own voice from the other side. "I'm getting bigger and bigger and . . ." The voice stopped short with a sinister laugh. "I don't know if you've figured it out yet, probably not, you moron. But I'll tell you anyway. This door can't stop me. I'm anywhere and everywhere. Anywhere in that miserable house of yours where you've got a light, there's darkness . . . and shadow."

Jerome didn't wait to hear anymore. "So you need shadows, huh? Well then, I just won't give you . . ." Darting from room to room, Jerome turned on every lamp in the house and dodged every shadow they created. The lights may have created more shadows, but these were small and weak compared to what waited for him outside. As he completed his rush from room to room, Jerome began to feel as if he would be very, violently ill. Scrambling into the bathroom he hurried to make his offering to the porcelain goddess.

Jerome hunched over the mirror. It was pleasing to see his own reflection staring back at him, silently. "Nice to know at least you're on my side," he commented as his glass double lipped the words. Jerome took a moment to stare at the oddly shaped scar on his left cheek; he could not help from saying something about it. "Now that's one hell of a hickey you got there, Jerome. What'll the kids in school say when . . ."

The light bulb went out.

The darkness enveloped Jerome like a myriad of groping hands, all trying to force him down. Struggling against the shadows, Jerome struck out again and again. Each time his hand would make contact with something, but the onslaught only seemed to worsen. After what seemed to be at least a century, Jerome stopped fighting back.

"You win, you win," Jerome gasped as he collapsed on the cold, dark, linoleum.

Those hands that had only moments before attacked him stopped. Coalescing into one giant hand, the shadow picked up the husk that was Jerome and convulsed the barely living body from the bathroom. Waking up later, Jerome was startled to discover himself very much alive and on the living room rug.

"Maybe they're not so bad after all," he commented to himself as he assayed the damages he had received from the last melee. Lifting up his shirt, he was surprised to find several neat

little rows of darkened and bloodied pricks. "I take that back, those little bastards bite!"

"Germ!" The house reverberated with the sound of this cry, as if ten thousand men were summoning Jerome from the other side of the door.

"Germ!" The voice repeated the challenge. Or one voice ten thousand times as big, Jerome thought dryly.

"I could have killed you before, Germ, in the john. But I have a bigger surprise for you, runt. Watch!" Jerome sat frozen in his chair as his shadow burst open the front door and stood in the portal. It, he, still resembled the original exactly, but all the features were elongated. Jerome understood.

Indifferently, he looked past the behemoth to gaze outside. The sun was balanced delicately on the horizon.

"Now Germ Drape," the giant bellowed. "I'm gonna squash you like a grape." The shadow reached out its long, dark, powerful hand to encircle Jerome's chest.

Jerome felt the giant's steady pressure upon him as slowly he became aware of a shortness of breath; he knew the dark hand was squeezing the air out of his lungs. Above the giant's own perverted laughing, he could just make out the pop, pop, popping of his own ribs. Jerome knew it would only be moments before his eyes, already bugging, would pop out of his head. Hopefully he'd be dead before then.

As the sun began to set and Jerome's own world began to darken, he couldn't help thinking to himself.

"Nice goin', Germ."

Joseph F. Wajszcuk, Jr.  
Madison, NJ  
Madison High School  
Ms. Emily Style

## Noonmark Night

Yes, the moon was full. And the air was cool, the sky was clear. And I got to the top of the mountain after climbing by flashlight and I finally reached the summit and I looked at the moon and I huddled in my sleeping bag and I said goodnight and I fell asleep. That was how it was. That is exactly how it was.

It was mere coincidence that the moon was full on Saturday. Actually, it might have been almost full—I can't really tell the difference anyway. We met at the Ausable club, a lovely building dating from the nineteenth century that someone painted a hideous light green. The last of the Greyfield lineage was inside, still drinking after dinner coffee as we gathered on the front porch. Sleeping bag, yep; breakfast, yep; flashlight, yep; canteen, yep;.... We were off.

The trail up Noonmark is fairly smooth and quite short, but very steep, ascending over 2,500 feet in three miles. About a mile from the top begin a series of rocky ledges that look back down over the Ausable club and farther out over to Keene Valley. We wanted to get to the top at ten o'clock when the moon was at its peak, giving us only an hour and a half to reach the summit.

Even though I was in good shape from the full summer of hiking, my lungs were heaving. I concentrated on the slosh of my water bottle as I walked to keep my mind off how far we had to go. Agony is only agonizing when you think about it. "Slush-gerk, slush-gerk." My flashlight died periodically, and I would bang it a few times to bring it back to life. This was a temporary remedy, but each time I hit it the wires must have gotten looser, because it blinked out more frequently as I neared the first ledges. I began to whap it every other step, so I fit it into the rhythm of my water bottle. "Slush-gerk-whack, slush-gerk-whack."

The first ledges approached and lungs demanded a rest. We agreed to stop a few moments on the third ledge, which has the best view until the summit, but lungs won out and we collapsed at the first. The nighttime view surprised me; no green mountains rolling into forever, but two dimensional blackness speckled with tiny pricks of light. We identified the Ausable club and what everyone was sure was his house, even though most of us lived behind a ridge that would make our houses invisible from here. It was 9:20; dinner was over. The Greyfields were probably in their room preparing for bed. The moon was rising.

We had ascended most of the height of the mountain by this point; what remained was a ridgewalk that would take us over to the top. I put my ailing flashlight away, as the moon now provided almost enough light to walk safely. With the light out everything seemed quieter and more still. No one spoke. The trees thinned out to low spruces that just barely peaked above my head. Their needles stood motionless against the moon, lined up like little rows of soldiers at attention.

Our timing was perfect. The moon was at its highest as we reached the top. Now that I think back, it must have been full, because it had a satisfying look of completeness. I rolled out my sleeping bag and wedged myself into a crevice at the joint between two slabs of rock. The wind had begun to blow, but I could only feel it rock me back and forth, not its biting coldness. The sky was milky grey behind the moon, and looked very deep and thick, as though one could lie in it and sink slowly in forever. I felt heavy, like I was being raised with immense speed toward the infinite grey sky. Or maybe I was weightless; the earth was falling away from me and the sky was rushing down towards me. I let my eyes drift slowly shut and then open again. The sky was clear, but I saw no stars. The moon must have washed them away. A few rows of clouds streaked low in the horizon, just a few inches...miles? above the black line that divided earth and sky. I did not think of the Goodwins now. I thought of the greenish-silvery glow my alarm-clock gives off at 3:33 a.m., and the warm smell of blackberry tea, the wonderful wshshs of tree leaves waving, and one tumbling brook I couldn't identify. And then black.

That is exactly how it was.

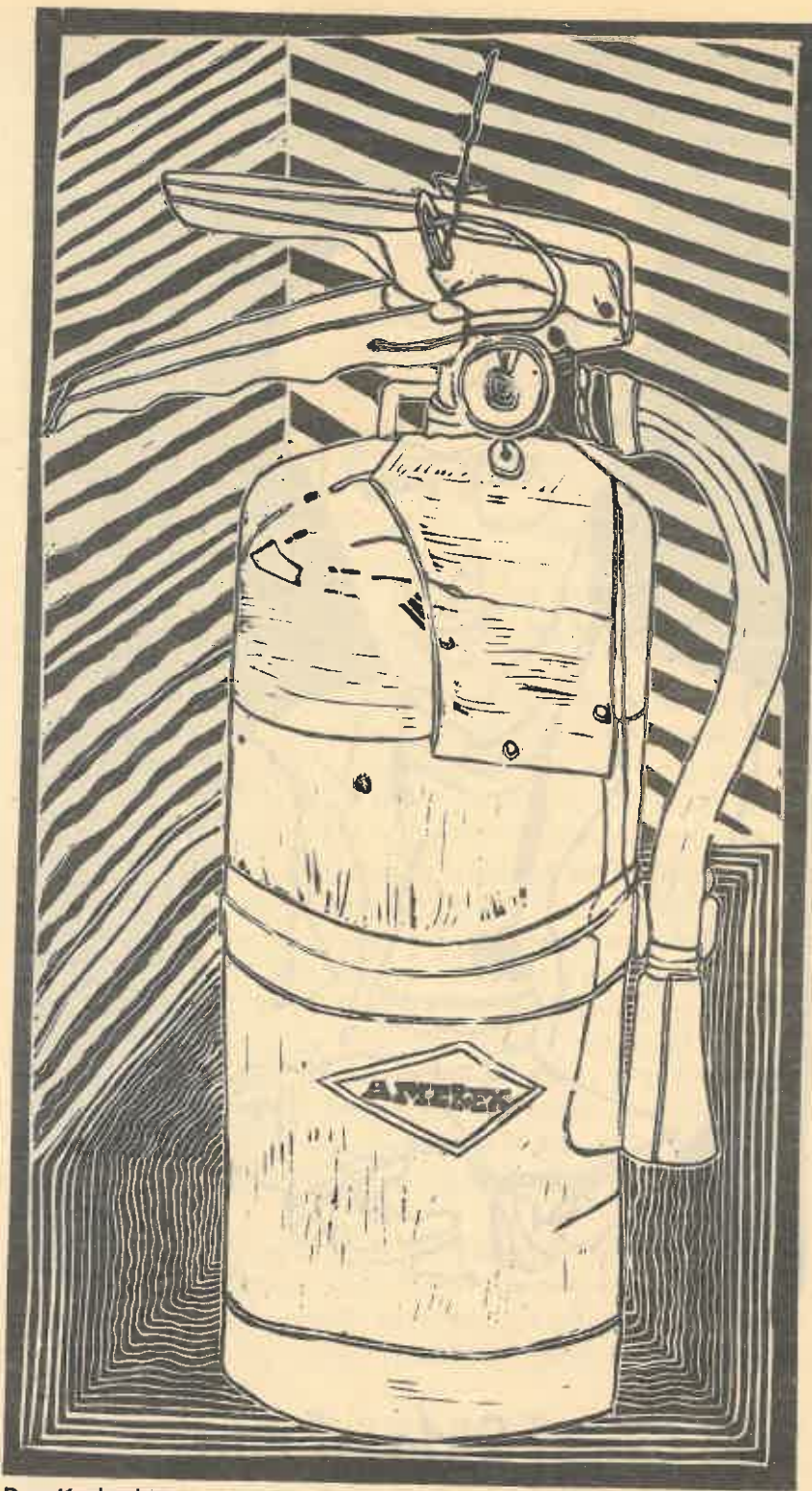
Heather Clague  
Silver Spring, MD  
Dr. Nancy Traubitz

## Oyster Soup

*My mother ate my oyster soup.  
The can I'd been saving for my lunch,  
With thick chewy oysters floating  
As if they were born without shells,  
Born to swim in their mother's milk,  
To be canned and restlessly wait  
On the shelves of the supermarket  
For me.  
I chose them carefully,  
Selecting only the finest can, my oysters.  
I would have gently warmed them, chewed them,  
Slowly savoring them (and they savoring me).  
But they were boiled violently,  
Swallowed crudely, without a thought or a pause  
By my mother,  
Who apologized later,  
Explaining, meekly, that my name was not  
Written on the can.*

Leslie Holt  
Bethesda MD  
Dr. Connoley





Dan Krokosky

## Caught in a Nursery Rhyme

*Ah, curds and whey, curds and whey,  
Which I shall undoubtedly be eating  
Until Judgement Day.*

*Sometimes my spoon's empty...  
Sometimes my spoon is full.*

*My tongue works rhythmically and my tuffet  
is fluffed under my plump behind.*

*Ah, curds and whey, curds and whey...*

*And my bowl sits contentedly between my knees*

*And my shoes are laced in double knots*

*So as not to make me trip and fall*

*Should I ever decide to get up and walk away.*

*My legs sit in my white lace socks.*

*White like egg shells--like my forgotten friend H.D.*

*Who "fell" because none took him seriously. Ah*

*curds and whey, curds and whey...*

*Not too bitter, but not too sweet*

*But hardly pleasing to the tongue.*

Kathy Egan  
Villanova, PA  
Baldwin School  
Mrs. Culver

## Not Just a Hair Cut

No this isn't Lake Wobegone but it is a small town. Everyone knows everyone, people leave their doors unlocked and you know your neighbor's family history. There's a main street with stop lights at both ends of town. There's a florist, churches, police station, two gas stations, supermarkets (but one's a chain store), a hardware store, paint and wallpaper shop, and the local barber shop.

People go there to get caught up on the latest jokes, gossip, and incidentally to get their hair cut. It's a place where trust is implicit: the barber won't hack away your hair. He's known you forever; he knows your style.

Before you get your turn in the chair you have to wait. You sit down in worn chairs patched with duck tape and smelling of familiar memories. You scan the magazines: "National Geographic," "Sports Illustrated," "MAD," all of these are a few years old. You pick up a "Sports Illustrated" and read about the 1976 Super Bowl, or the latest archeological dig in Egypt or a parody in MAD. You've read all of these magazines before but you read them again, and you listen to the chatter, sometimes joining in. And then it's your turn.

The chair awaits! Huge and heavily cushioned; it seems to conform to every patron's body. When you finally get your turn, you begin again the whole "chit chat" routine. You tell him "not too short" but you know it will be.

The barber is a jovial person who has an endless supply of bad and corny jokes. But, one never seems to mind because his warm, friendly personality compensates for his sense of humor. The barber knows everyone who steps through his doorway and all of their families. He always asks how you're doing on the job, how your "love life" is going or how the old golf game is shaping up.

The little kids know and love him; they call him "Uncle" and don't cry when they are getting their hair cut because if they are good they know they will get a lolly-pop. Sometimes if you watch carefully, you can catch a grey haired "kid" sneaking a lolly-pop. And if he gets caught the whole shop ribs him. But he protests saying "It's for my grandson." Of course, everybody knows his nearest grandchild lives in Nevada.

The barber always talks, but you never seem to mind; you are warmed and comforted by his voice and the constant "snip-snip" of his shears. You laugh at his jokes, ask how he's doing, how his family is or about his plans for the weekend. It's the same conversation you had last time but you enjoy it just the same.

Sitting in the chair you look in the mirror. Taped to the mirror are pictures of the barber with various people. Some of these people are in the shop now. You see the barber and the people at barbecues, on the golf course, and there is a picture of the barber and his son in graduation cap and gown. Some pictures are yellow with age and you wonder how old they are. The funny thing is that the barber looks the same in all of these pictures no matter how yellow the picture is. Amongst all these you see your picture. Probably snapped by another patron, it's you and the barber. Seeing your face up on the mirror reassures you that this is your place too.

Then you turn your attention to the counter beneath the mirror. There is an assortment of tools there. The "new fangled" ones, such as multi-speed hair dryers and hair waving brushes, lie towards the back with a thin layer of dust covering them, indicative of the untidiness of the dormant state of the modern devices. The barber relies on his "good old" shears, comb, and electric clippers. This is one of the constants that you love about this place.

The barber's tools are not the only thing that stays the same. The atmosphere of the shop has also endured. Some clients like to "rib" the barber about the unused portion of the shop that was supposed to be a "Unisex Salon."

(Continued on Page 42)

From what you can gather, a few years ago the barber tried to widen his clientele and add a "Unisex Salon." It wasn't the barber's lack of skill that caused the salon to fail but rather a lack of interest on the part of the people. At first women came in. They liked the results but just felt out of place. They were encroaching on men's territory. People don't visit this barber to get their hair styled but rather to get a hair cut and "shoot the breeze" with the guys.

Eventually your turn is up. The barber takes a hand mirror and shows you from various angles how your hair looks. You might ask him to "take off a little more here" but most likely you say it looks perfect, even if it is too short again. Then smiling with the knowledge that he has satisfied another customer, the barber brushes off the hair from your face and neck and then, simultaneously, with one graceful motion of his hand whips off your apron and lowers the chair to the ground.

Then he walks over with you to the cash register. You then hand him his fee, which, like everything else in the shop (the patrons, the barber's tools, the pictures in the mirror and the barber himself), is the same as when he started, allowing of course for inflation. You don't mind paying because you just got caught up on the latest gossip, remembered fond memories and, oh yes, got your hair cut. Saying goodbye, you then sneak a lolly-pop and stroll out of the shop, pausing just a moment to greet another patron on his way in to get his hair cut.

Ian Pinkerton  
Scotia, NY  
Scotia-Glenville High School

## Untitled

*if this is planet purple  
my head is a planet also,  
smooth white egg hatching nightmare*

*a toe tips soundless downstairs  
behind the closet door  
someone watches  
a squeak escapes the hinges' rusty throats  
a shadow crouches in the corner  
an ant crawls into Shadow Box  
a black moon rises in the cat's eye*

*was it so many mirrored moons ago  
that hands were harvested from the fields;  
pygmies hung upside down in milk bottles,  
and caves crowded with cretins and albino bats,  
their mouths 1000 silent o's?*

*don't smile--there are crucifixes on your teeth  
ascend the spiral stair  
before the mirror cracks into a silver web,  
walls crumble to cascades of laughter,  
and the shadow explodes...*

*do you, too, talk with the tongues of suds?  
I lean back  
minding my maelstroms...*

Evanthia Sikora  
Staten Island, NY  
Notre Dame Academy High School  
Mrs. Tina Orsini



"Hate"  
Marc Infeld

## The Cruel Side of Life

There comes a time in every person's life when he gets a rude shock that awakens him to the cruel side of life. Like most people, I have had many such shocks, but one in particular has changed my outlook on life.

I had been on a trip to Winchester, a homey city in the Shenandoah Valley. It's a city of country peace--quiet, green, and filled with the scent of country air. Apple orchards are scattered along the outskirts of the city, and the spicy smell of cider gives a home town touch to even the most industrialized areas of Winchester.

It was a beautiful summer day with a soft breeze blowing through the valley when I heard my mother arrive to take me home. I grabbed my suitcase, said good-bye to my hosts, and hurried to the car. I couldn't wait to tell my mother about the decision I had made during my vacation. I would finally get all the wondering behind me for good.

Muscular dystrophy runs in my family. My brother is currently in a wheelchair and is not getting any healthier. In addition to Billy, I have two sisters. Muscular dystrophy will affect fifty percent of the children in a family. When it is transmitted maternally, as in my case, male children will be afflicted by the disease and females will be carriers. I had decided to have a test done that would tell me if I was a carrier.

When we were about to crest the first incline, I told my mother that I wanted the test done. The smell of apples and fresh-cut grass drifted through the car's open windows. The mountains rolled across the land green and lush. It was a picturesque landscape stretched out in front of me, but I only saw my mother's

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unexpected look of dismay. Her heartfelt sigh told me that I had said something wrong.

She took a deep breath and said. "I guess you really were too young to remember." She glanced at me out of the corner of her eye. I must have looked as confused as I felt because a frown flashed across her face before she started her explanation.

"Honey, that test came out about eight years ago. It was experimental, but the laboratory I worked for at the time chose to do it. The test can only tell you if you are a carrier. If you come out negative, it doesn't necessarily mean that you don't carry M.D. Jeanette and Patty had it done, and so did you. Honey, it's not easy to say this. Are you sure you want to hear about it?"

At that point, I couldn't have said anything, just like I couldn't feel anything.

"They were both negative, but you came out positive."

Just when my heart stopped and when it started beating again I don't honestly know, but it didn't really matter. I was alive, but not living. I wasn't shocked by the test result, only by the knowledge that it was already decided.

I saw scenes of the past with characters from the future. It hurt to think of my future so painfully uncertain. I know what happens in a family with a handicapped child. Every day is harder than the last; every week there are more signs of the painful end. Then I remembered Billy's eighteenth birthday. In a restaurant filled with the smell of Oriental cooking, we laid our gifts on the table. My mother, sitting beside Billy, opened each box for him. To most of us, unwrapping a present is never considered an accomplishment--Billy stopped opening his own gifts when he was five years old. After each box had been opened, a pineapple cake was delivered to our table. The candles, only eight of them, flickered as we sang "Happy Birthday." Billy's first full breath extinguished only a few. After three tries, they were all out. My sister noticed a tear in my eye. I told her the smoke had gotten into it. You see, the doctors never believed that Billy would turn eighteen.

These memories came to me in an instant. I said to myself, of course, I'll have options when I start my own family, but does that change anything now? I wondered if I could be as strong a family support as my mother had always been. I was confused; nothing was definite.

This happened last year. It took days for me to dry my eyes and try to live again. I still don't know what decisions I'll make when the time comes. There could be a cure by then. When I used to hear people say that "life is cruel," I always related it to Billy. Now I know it for myself.

Roni Kohnken  
Fairfax, VA  
Fairfax High School  
Mrs. Carol Lange

## Untitled

"Lamby-kins" she exclaims, as I open the door and she gives me a warm hug and a loud kiss with ruby lips I later rub from my cheek. She repeats the affectionate greeting to everyone who enters.

"Put some Triscuits out for you, Jim Bum."

"They're my favorite."

"I know," she says with a big smile as she heads out to the kitchen from where delicious aromas emanate.

She attempts to keep up with the four to five conversations in the living room while she prepares dinner. Wearing an apron stretched across her stomach and carrying a spoon or ladle in her hand, she pauses in the door to the living room.

"Well, I've got all my Christmas shopping done, so don't any of you kids peek in the back closet," she adds to a conversation on the zoning of the village. We all look at each other wonder-

ingly, but she's quite content with herself.

I notice the picture of the Queen on the living room wall isn't there and ask if she's taken it down. "Heavens no, I'd never take my Queen down," she says while holding her hand over her heart. I soon notice the Queen on another wall, left of the floral plate and next to the antique, softly ticking clock. Other mementos of the royal family such as plates, books, and pictures are also about the house, where everything is always in its place.

Finally she calls everyone to dinner. Each time she calls her voice becomes firmer and her face, redder. The table is set with her best linen tablecloth and napkins, sterling silver, and her blue Wedgewood collection.

Before she sits down, she makes sure everybody has more than they could ever eat on their plates. Then she sits with a loud sigh and smiles girlishly at everyone.

"See this artsy centerpiece that Eileen made me? She's so clever. Oh, you should see what they've done to that house! The place is a wreck! They've ripped up the bricks by the fireplace and the dogs have chewed up all the woodwork . . . I know she gets the flowers for these centerpieces from my garden . . . And that no good son of theirs rips in here at three in the morning, the drunken bum. Now don't anyone tell Eileen I told you." Her mind turns to the past and her childhood in Canada.

She glares disgustedly at her husband of forty-five years as he quips, "I'll bet none of you've ever heard this one before." Despite the chuckles in the room, she continues the story we all could recite.

"Anyone for coffee or tea?" she asks as she starts clearing away the plates. Then she retires to the kitchen to start on the mound of dishes. She insists no one help her, but we know we'll get the "what-fors" if we don't.

As she serves up dessert, I watch closely and catch her snitching gooey, chocolate frosting from the cake. "This is my favorite part! I'm not too fat, am I Jimmy?" she winks at me, knowing I'll give her the answer she wants to hear as she tugs at her blouse and removes her Sophia Loren framed bi-focals from under her curly, gray locks.

As I leave, laden with Saran-wrapped cake and the last two issues of Yankee, I can hear her "Oh, I hate to see everyone go like this." But I know within a few minutes she'll be happily relaxing on the love seat, snuggled beneath her daisy afghan, hot fudge sundae in hand, watching Julia Child reruns on P.B.S.

Jim Flanders  
Scotia, NY  
Mrs. Chant

## Morally Speaking

I knew it was Derek because I saw him do it. All along I knew who did it. I just didn't say anything right away because I knew he'd get screwed. I didn't want people to think I made a habit of narking on friends either. But the real reason I didn't say anything was that I knew he would get screwed. Not only by his parents either, the cops were in on this one. It took me a while to decide to tell on him, but I finally decided I had to. It was the moral thing to do. I also had heard what cops do to people who withhold information. You can go to jail for that. But the real reason I finally told was because it was the moral thing to do. Honest.

Ever since I had known Derek there were times where the kid really messed up my head. It all started when we were ten. He moved in next door to me that summer. A few days after he arrived, Freddie, Joey, and I went to check him out. Freddie and Joey were my two best friends at the time, and I guess they still are. When we were ten I was bigger and smarter than both of them, and I only hung around with them because there was no one else. I still hang around with them, but it's different now.

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They sort of grew on me I guess.

Anyway, we had a gang that summer. Actually it was a club. Our mothers wouldn't let us call it a gang. Freddie's mother had read a book about youth gangs in New York, and she was worried that we were going to get into all kinds of crime and go out and "rumble" with other kids so she called both Joey's mom and my mom and somehow got them to agree with her. So we called it a club, not a gang. My dad said that he didn't see how calling it a club instead of a gang was going to stop us boys from "rumbling" if we wanted to. My mother told him to shut up. She told him that she was the one who had carried me nine months in her body, she was the one who had the cramps, and if she wanted her boy's little organization to be called a club instead of a gang, she was entitled to do so. I don't think we really called it anything after that. We were scared to.

So Freddie, Joey, and I went over to Derek's house to check him out. We were planning to sleep out in Freddie's wood lot that night, and we figured if the kid was cool enough, at least as cool as us, we'd invite him to come.

We rang the doorbell and his mother answered. We figured it was his mother anyway. She was all rolled up in curlers and she was still in her bathrobe even though it was near five o'clock in the afternoon. She had more hair on her top lip than my father did, and she smelled like a barn. But she seemed nice enough and let us in. That's one thing about mothers; it really doesn't matter if they are pretty or not, as long as they are reasonably nice. It's really a drag bringing your friends home and having your mother rag about you not making your bed or something.

She told us to wait in the kitchen and that she would go find Derek. I was beginning to wish we had never come in. I hated meeting new people, and if this kid smelled anything like his mother I didn't know how I was going to survive if he slept out with us.

When he came into the room, he told us right off the bat that his father was in jail and that he had two Reggie Jackson rookie cards in his room. He didn't smell that bad either. Because of these impressive credentials, we wasted no time in asking him to join us on our expedition at Freddie's wood lot. He said that he would, and left with us without even asking his mother.

We got to Freddie's lot at about six o'clock. It would be light for another two or three hours because of the daylight savings time. We used the remaining daylight to gather wood. We would have pitched the tent, too, but we decided not to bring it. It wasn't supposed to rain so we were planning to sleep under the stars. Joey had heard that Marines never slept in tents and he had always wanted to be a Marine, and since he had the only tent, the rest of us were going to be Marines for a night too.

When we were getting wood, Joey was going on and on about Marines. He was always going on and on about something.

"My father is a Marine." It was the first thing Derek had said since we had left his house.

"I thought you said your dad is in jail." Joey wasn't looking for trouble, he was just asking. Derek didn't see it this way and he punched Joey in the face three times. Joey sat crying on the ground for a while before he started to help us set up camp again. What a Marine.

Freddie and I really started to look up to Derek that summer. He didn't even have a right to hit Joey that night, but Joey could really get on your nerves, and a lot of people had wanted to punch the kid in the face, including myself. Derek was the only one I ever saw do it. He had guts to do stuff that he knew he could get in trouble for. I think that's why we admired him. He didn't answer to anyone.

Through the rest of elementary school and junior high, Derek, Joey, Freddie, and I were all tough together. All of our parents had grown to hate Derek, and they all agreed that he was a bad influence, especially Joey's mom who had never gotten over her little boy's black eye in the summer after fifth grade. The first two years of high school came and went, and we found our-

selves two years away from graduation. Well, all of us except Derek. He was still about four years away from graduation. School wasn't for him. He was going to drop out the next fall and get the guy at the gas station to put him on full time.

Our lives at this time consisted of going to school during the week and hanging out together on weekends. That was until Joey got his car, a cherry red '67 Mustang with leather interior. His uncle had died and left it to him. He didn't even know him. It was a pretty good deal. He drove us all over town on Saturday nights, and whenever one of us had a date, Joey would let us drive it. We seemed to get a lot more dates after word got out. When I said he let us drive it, I meant all of us except Derek. I think it was because of his mother. I had heard her tell Joey not to hang around Derek, and I'm sure that if she found out that Derek had driven the car she would have been ticked off.

One Friday night we stopped at the gas station to fill up Joey's car. We all pitched in for gas money except Derek. I don't know if he never had any or what, but he never used to pitch in. He always had to be in front too. Whenever he was in the car and someone else was in front, he got real mad. We were getting ready to pull out of the gas station when Derek turned to Joey and told him to get out of the car.

"I'm not getting out. Why do you want me to get out?" I could tell Joey was nervous.

"I'm driving."

"Come on Derek. I'm driving, all right? I don't want anything to happen to it tonight." Derek just looked at him. I knew Derek, and that look wasn't a good sign. The first time I saw it was that night when we were ten that we slept at the wood lot. Derek and Joey had had their moments, and I sensed that there might be some trouble, but the night went on uneventful as ever, and at about 12:30 Joey took Derek and me home. I thought things had blown over. I was wrong.

"Meet me at the end of the road in two hours." He had that look on his face again.

"That's 2:00 in the morning," I said. "I can't get out of the house at 2:00 in the morning."

"Just meet me, O.K."

I met him. I waited until my parents went to bed. It wasn't hard, but if I would have been caught I'd have been dead. He was there. He had a sledgehammer with him.

"What do you need that for?" I was scared.

"Are you coming or not?"

"What's with the sledgehammer?"

"Just follow me."

I followed him. I don't know why. It was one of those things you do and you never know why you do it. We walked silently for about a mile.

"Where are we going?"

"Joey's house."

"He's not going to be up."

"He doesn't have to be."

We got to Joey's and walked up the driveway. He went up to Joey's Mustang and smashed the windshield with the sledgehammer. I couldn't believe it. I took off running and didn't stop until I got to the corner of my street. I waited. Thirty seconds passed before he came running by. I grabbed him by the shirt and threw him down.

"Why did you do that? Are you crazy?" I held him down in disgust and disbelief. He stared at me for a while with a stupid smile on his face.

"He didn't let me drive."

I haven't talked to him for a while. I feel sort of guilty about squealing on him. He was an all right kid. Really. But come to think of it, who cares? He's been being a jerk lately anyway. I can't believe he did that to that beautiful car. I was supposed to use it this weekend. He really has been being a jerk lately.

Tom Noyes  
Averill Park, NY  
Mr. Bogardus



Penny Guisinger  
Midwood High School  
Ms. E. Kramer



Penny Guisinger  
Midwood High School  
Ms. E. Kramer

## Untitled

*press my face down on the page  
that's the only way*

*brow*

*nose*

*chin*

*every pore becomes a word*

*and it's so easy.*

*banging harder and harder*

*smashing against the lines*

*and my blood is in the work too*

*each feature*

*imprinted in fine tongued vocabulary*

*each flaw.*

*the pressure behind my eyes*

*beats*

*enraves.*

*and it's so direct.*

*press my face down on the page*

*my sweat mixes in with the wood pulp*

*that's the only way.*

Stephanie Seeley

Morristown, NJ

Mrs. Penny Harter

## I Grew Up

*Once I was Mama's baby,*

*Crying long and hard.*

*Then clapping giddily as the bunny went*

*Hop*

*Hop*

*Hopping along*

*And left a basket for me*

*On Easter morning.*

*Then someone killed the bunny*

*And used his blood to paint more clearly*

*Daddy's Santa Claus suit.*

*Someone pulled out Santa's whiskers*

*And used them to weave fairy flax.*

*And then I slapped the hand*

*That reached to take my tooth*

*From beneath my pillow;*

*And Mama cried out ....*

Bridgette Gubernatis

Lansdowne High School

Baltimore, MD

Elizabeth Kolodny

## Walking the Oxford English Dictionary

"Fine day for walking, isn't it? Such a shame it is that not a one of these stiff, grey little highbrows who scurry about and peer through keyholes with the aid of a glass will ever see the real beauty in this place. Why, deep inside each and every one of these looming, gargoyle-littered buildings lies an out-and-out mental heyday! Hmmm, it seems to me that we should soon come upon one of my very favorites. Ah yes, here we are, L. quassus VL. exquassare. Won't you take a peek with me? Come along, right through here...."

"Oh my, a thousand apologies! I assumed that you'd be prepared for that first, shocking fall that accompanies every entrance. But now I see those tears of frustration smarting in your eyes as I lie crumpled here on the cold, hard floor beside you. After so long I've come to think nothing of it. Well, up you go...but wait, very slowly now. Can you see it, as we rise ever so cautiously? The rippling of the floor, the colored tiles brightening, shifting about, creating a huge picture from the disturbing confusion of before? There, now surely you can see it, as we brush ourselves off, the individual tiles bubbling, the figures popping up one by one, the whole scene beginning to spring forth and come to life...."

Great inverted teacups hang from the ceiling, filling the room with a cold light that makes an eyeful appear shadowy around the edges. Loud babbling from the squash of spectators in the gallery bounces off of the ceiling and the walls. "Turn that wall into a squash-racket court." The room seems the interior of a huge ice cube.

A loud click sounds beneath the gallery and the court door swings open, gaining momentum till it crashes against the wall. Its knob fits perfectly into a small squash in the plaster. A sudden hush falls over the gallery, leaving only the five-and-dime store hum of the lights. In a few moments, chalk-white court shoes step onto the heavenly shine of the wood floor. A gasp of awe ripples through the crowd, and all in attendance crane their necks for a better look at the short-skirted, compact figure below. "Dor-bugs and squash-bugs and such undesirable objects of affection to all but naturalists." Planks creak as the figure strolls pensively toward the serving zone, carrying a racket and a pea-green plastic bucket with something large rolling and thudding about inside.

The door at the back of the gallery opens with a squeak and in hops a small, wiry squash. "But the smell of our weasels, and ermines, and polecats, is fragrance itself when compared to that of the squash and the skink." Bearing a complimentary

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squash in one hand, he scans the rows for a vacant seat. He spots one behind a fine lady squashing with her squash-hatted escort, who is naturally a naturalist. "Daily News 30 June: The million are going in for the broad-brimmed squash hat." Upon seating himself, the little man manages to squash a bit of his refreshment onto the fine lady's lovely squash-skin stole. "I pray you commend mee to mistresse Squash, your mother, and to master Peascod, your father." The gentleman at her side is immediately at attention, demanding some sort of reconciliation. "Hearing a squash, he cried, Damn it, what's that?" But the dirty, snickering gremlin only eggs him on. There is a small scuffle, but the sly little varmint puts a finish to it quickly, seeming to the gentleman to be an entire squash. "He came down, in less than no time, squash on his nose and broke it." The defeated returns, moaning, to his seat with the fine lady, who is fussing furiously, though more over the embarrassment of his inadequacy than over the state of his health.

At the red-lined serving zone the bucket is carefully put down. A glowing, giant pale-yellow vine egg is drawn out, and a collective sigh of admiration is heard from the gallery. "The improved Custard Marrow Squash." The huge, perfect fruit is lobbed into the air and, in slow motion, rises like an egg-yolk sun to eclipse with the light above. Then suddenly it is gone, thrust cruelly toward the front wall and violated with a waffle-like dent by a powerful stroke of a racket. It soars forward, seeming to grow ever larger, and smashes with a sickening splat and explosion of juice and crushed pulp.

A muffled roar bursts forth from the gallery as slushy debris rains down upon it. Our fine lady is sure to be shrieking in dismay and hysteria amid the din and confusion that follows. "I somewhat still doubt that there hath bene to greater abundance of the same squashed upon you." But the bright-eyed imp howls with insane delight. "It has all gone to squash."

"Careful now, stand out of the way while the scene jumps up, folds up, and returns to the floor just as suddenly as it came. Quite a diversion, isn't it? And hardly a soul even realizes it's here! Well, I suppose this type of amusement requires the willingness to take a chance with one's starched and spotless schoolboy shirt. Here, allow me to remove that sticky seed from your coatsleeve...."

Penny Elliott  
Pittsburgh, PA  
Shady Side Academy  
Mrs. Sarah Eldridge

## Terra

Since my birth, I had been inhabiting the home of my parents, yet of late, we had grown apart. There was really no accounting for this, except that I had become increasingly more introverted. Thus, my parents became quite concerned about my behavior and attempted to recapture their former status in my consideration and mend our relationship. Remembering my fascination with insects as a child, they made an effort to revive within me my child-like instinct of curiosity by purchasing, for my birthday, a rare and exotic tarantula.

This tarantula had skin and hairs the color of rich, dark, fertile soil, and so I named him Terra. He had been placed in a huge terrarium, containing many tiny shrubs, dirt, rocks, ample small insects for nutrition, and plentiful moisture. This terrarium was then set in the center of my room and was so large that if one stood by it, he could not peer over the top to the other side, and one was forced to take a significant number of steps around the object to reach another facet of it. My family obtained a dimmer light for the room, so as to let the tarantula thrive in an atmosphere that was natural for him. This, combined with the shrubbery and many webs, made it quite difficult for me to find the animal.

However, I spent all of the time that I could catching random glimpses of Terra carrying out his daily activities. I was amazed by the mere fact of a tarantula living within my room; however, it was an impulse of wishing myself to be, somehow, part of the animal's existence that jolted within me a sudden burst of foolish motivation and courage—I attempted to hold the animal.

As soon as my fingers touched the prickly hairs, I felt an immediate twinge of stinging pain. I had received the brunt of its sudden, powerful jaw action, and a small chunk had been removed from one of my fingers. Apparently, the spider was not of the sort that spewed poisonous venom, but I was suspicious and kept my distance.

However, my interest was not deterred, and I continued to watch, day and night. The flies and grubs that I had placed in the terrarium as food, if they were not eaten immediately, I smashed or ate. I could not bear to have them moving about the cage and diverting my concentration away from Terra. I became, from lack of sleep, nervous in the extreme, so that even my parents noticed my peculiar behavior.

They rushed me to a psychiatrist, who supplied me with an almost overpowering narcotic. This drug caused quite the opposite of my previous disposition: I became quite doleful, lugubrious, and totally apathetic and unfeeling towards my environment, devoid of quick responses. I rapidly became quite taken with this drug's use, and yet, despite its effects, I did not stop watching my fascinating pet, save for the times that I fell asleep.

During one of these instances when I had taken an excess of my medication and fallen into a deep sleep, I found myself within the terrarium. I was lost, running through the trees, searching for the tarantula within the forest of the cage, yet could hardly see in the night, stumbling over stones. I spied the tarantula floating down a river; it pounced on me, chewed me to bits, and covered me with soil; I was never to be found.

I awoke from a great tremor within me to find my vestments saturated with perspiration. I looked up to find the tarantula staring straight at me with its many eyes.

My need to watch the animal did not cease; in fact, it grew, even though I somehow knew that it was not particularly joyful about being the recipient of my constant attentions. When outsiders entered my room, no hostility would be present in the air. However, when I was alone and watching the insect, I would sense its intense hatred. When I felt such sensations, the spider's terrarium seemed to grow slightly, in size and impact.

On one particular occasion, I had misused my medicine and had consequently fallen asleep. Upon awakening, I was still very groggy. However, as soon as my eyes opened, I felt evil, hateful watching. I knew not exactly from where, but I was determined to find out. I arose, knocking over my chair. However, I found myself within the heart of the terrarium—it had filled up my room. The only part of my chamber which was visible was the ceiling, and even that was green with light vegetation. I made a trek through the wilderness of my room, with much difficulty, because the outermost leaves blocked out almost all of the dim light from above. I groped all about the shrubbery, tripping over many loose stones and getting caught in many abandoned cobwebs. After some time spent searching, I collapsed on the soft earth.

At this point, I was aware of the large form of a grotesque spider resting beneath a large leaf. However, my attention had not been drawn by this alone. I noticed what seemed to be thousands of bright eyes in the blackness, all pointed in my direction. I leaped up and, almost losing my footing, groped for the spider. I grabbed it, then felt my body wracked with pain, and I was Terra's slave, as he calmly chewed off my limbs, bit by bit, and they blended into the soil.

Amanda Weinberg  
Old Greenwich, CT  
Greenwich High School  
Mrs. Anne Gilhuly



Dawn Marie Buglion  
Page School  
Vic Fazio

## Dandelion Wish

*You are - floating, floating -  
the wish on the last dandelion:  
Guided from the sweet earth  
to my warm hands  
And whispered, daringly;  
the light touch of a soft body.  
Lips pursed, a breath,  
and you are carried into the wind.  
My fingers clutch the wilting stem.  
My eyes search the cloudless sky.*

Naomi Aliza Pine  
Stony Brook, NY  
Ward Melville High School

## Untitled

The doors to the mall yield a steady stream of hurried impatient people. I watch as a man in a business suit with a large shopping bag gets it stuck in the closing door. His face wrinkles and turns purple as he forms some words I cannot hear. Like all the others he is just doing an errand but has somewhere else to be, probably a split-level house where his young wife is keeping the tuna casserole warm for him. I close my eyes and sigh. My purpose for being here is not so clear. I have left my home and all reminders of reality for this place where no one knows me and I can be whatever I want.

The act begins when I step out of the car and march at a brisk pace up to the mall entrance; I keep my eyes level and my expression serious as if my errand is very important. The first stop is the discount drug store where a rack containing nail polish at the bargain rate of 99 cents per bottle catches my eye.

For 10 minutes my mind is engaged in the slow process of deciding which shade of nail polish best enhances my cuticles. Finally, I opt for a bottle of grasshopper green and plunk down my money in dimes and nickels. The salesgirl gives me the evil eye as she counts out my change and I imagine that she is mad that I have just purchased the last bottle of grasshopper green. Well, maybe not.

Directly outside of the drug store is a row of benches occupied by weary shoppers. As I pass these people my entire appearance changes miraculously from that of a healthy and strong girl into a sickly invalid. Slouching and sucking in my cheeks to achieve a look of gauntness, I shuffle by the row of spectators clutching my drug store bag filled with an imaginary prescription. I can almost feel the pity in their eyes!

Where shall I venture next? A clothing store with rows of 50% off signs beckons to me and I float over to it. Inside a tall woman is busy behind the desk sorting out old papers and sales slips. When I walk in she looks up and smiles at me. I dream that she also works as the head of a modeling agency and is dying to approach me to work for her. From behind a rack of turtleneck sweaters I peek through at her curiously, being sure to keep my shoulders straight. Her head stays bent over her work and she doesn't look up any more. Of course, she must have assumed that I was already signed for another firm.

The young men's department is filled with many guys my age and their mothers, desperately trying to find some new clothes and get out of there. I mill around them and look at the interesting design on the T-shirts hanging there. Soon a matronly looking saleslady comes up to me and inquires if I'm looking for my boyfriend. My smile is gracious as I reply yes and proceed to buy a shirt for my boyfriend, but as soon as she leaves I sigh and frown. Now I remember what I came here to run away from. I think of Mike who is probably calling my house at this minute to find out why I haven't been talking to him. We were getting along together so well but I became scared of the new level of commitment that he wanted. I look up and see a young couple walking hand in hand through the furniture department. Suddenly, I am tired of the game; it's time to go home and face up to my life as me.

Ellen Eiseman  
W. Chester, PA

## Untitled

*the old woman  
she teaches you with the knife  
skinning the beast  
cut carefully around the hooves.  
peel back the hide from each leg.  
split the belly  
in one quick motion.  
don't turn away your eyes.  
gut out the once elegant curving underside.  
feed the entrails to the dogs.  
cut separately the liver,  
the meat and muscle  
put them to be saved  
dried and eaten when the wind has turned cold.  
slice out the heart of the great buck.  
hold it up to the sun  
warm and slippery in your young hands.  
sing my child and pray,  
wipe the blood from your forearms,  
comfort the soul that has gone.*

Stephanie Seeley  
Morristown, NJ  
Mrs. Penny Harter



*"The Comcrib"*  
Elizabeth Dupuis  
Berkeley Heights, NJ

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