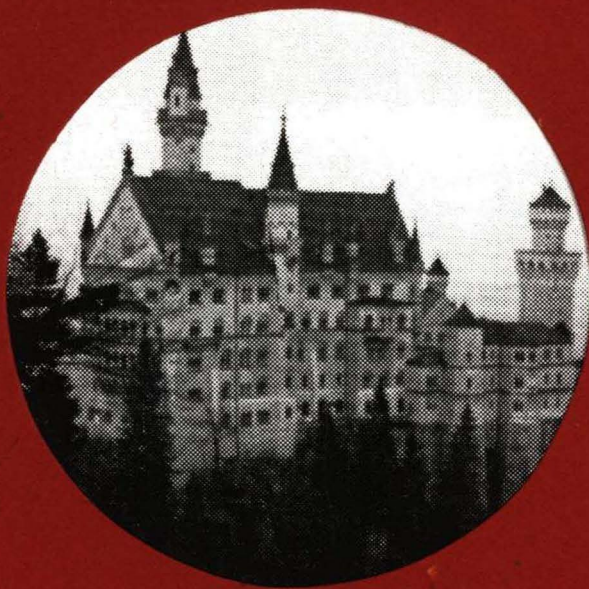


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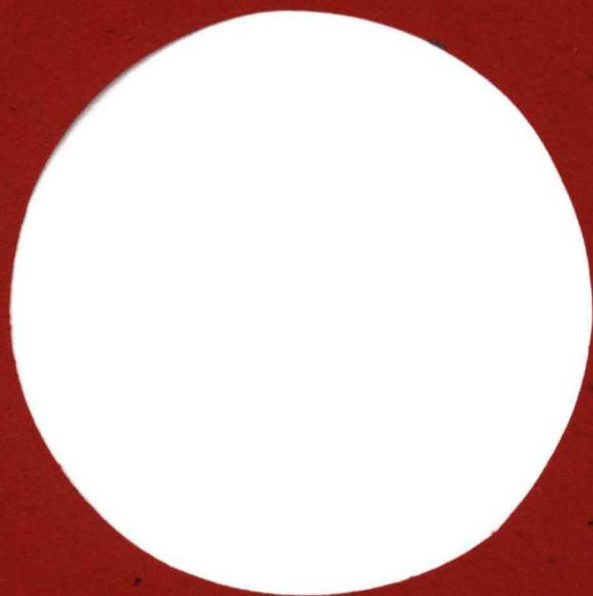
THE ROARING MUSE

Literary Arts Magazine



SPRING TWO THOUSAND

DULUTH
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THE ROARING MUSE

Literary Arts Magazine



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Contents

Literary Work

Andrew Cumings

PRODIGAL.....	41
MARY.....	42

Joanna Green

PAGEANT GIRL.....	5
A LIBRARIAN'S WISH.....	6
THE FISHING LAKE.....	7

Linda LeGarde Grover

THE GIRLS OF CASUALTY DAYS, 1969.....	28
---------------------------------------	----

David Heckman

TONY DELILLO.....	10
-------------------	----

Rebecca (Becca) Horner

ANGEL.....	26
WONDER.....	27

Eldon "Donny" Krosch Jr.

WAITING FOR YOU.....	20
----------------------	----

Chris Lavelle

ON A PASSED CONVERSATION AND RUMINATIONS ON IT.....	8
DAYS GO BY.....	9

Terry W. Lussier

EAGLE CLAN.....	45
-----------------	----

Josh Magsam

THE LAKESHORE.....	33
--------------------	----

Nathan Ness

POETRY READING AUDIENCE.....	46
------------------------------	----

Karin Riggs

PERFECTING SEX.....	3
TRYING TO NOT PRETEND.....	4

Tara Rogan

DUSK IN THE OLD QUARTER.....	1
.E.X.P.O.S.U.R.E.S.....	2

Jennifer Rose.	
WHERE'S KARA.....	43
BEGINING TO END.....	44
Karen Schmidt	
SATURDAY NIGHT.....	30
THE COSMETIC COUNTER.....	31
HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD.....	32
Ester Smith	
TEMPORARY SANITY.....	23
UNTITLED.....	24
UNTITLED.....	25
Dan Udem	
MOMENT IN TIME.....	48
Matt Wright	
LIFE'S COLLAR.....	21
KILLERS AND THRILLERS.....	22

Dusk in the old quarter

by Tara Rogan

I'VE FOUND MYSELF
LOST AGAIN
 IN OLD LOUISIANA
SOME ROMANTIC HOMESTEAD
 DRAPED IN MOSS AND IVY
AND OLD
 MOLDING MEMORIES:
— ONCE INSIDE
 AN IMMEDIATE PRESENCE
WHISPERS AND LAUGHTER
 OF DEAD LOVERS
AND CHILDREN
 A POTENT SMELL
OF ANCIENT WHISKEY
HISTORICAL
 CREAKY WOOD
STAINED WITH HUMIDITY
 AND SHOE SCUFFS
AND OLD
 SOUTHERN MUD
AND I CAN'T HELP
 BUT WONDER
ENDLESSLY
 OF HOW MUCH MORE
STIMULATING
 AND DRAMATIC
THOSE TIMES WERE THAN THESE.

.e.x.p.o.s.u.r.e.s.

by Tara Rogan

THE FILM I HAD TAKEN
OF US
THE DAY
YOU WORE
THE CRIMSON ARGYLE SWEATER
MY MOTHER GAVE YOU FOR CHRISTMAS
-CAME UP IN BLANK EXPOSURES.

WHEN YOU WORE THAN SILVER CELTIC KNOT
AROUND YOUR NECK
THAT MY FINGERS
USED TO TRACE
IN THE SLEEPY HOURS OF NIGHTTIME
WHEN EVERYTHING
WAS
SILENT

THAT FOGGY DAY
WHEN I THOUGHT
I FINALLY KNEW YOU:

WHEN I THOUGHT
FOR JUST THOSE MOMENTS
NOTHING YOU WOULD DO
COULD DAMAGE ME—

THE FILM CAME UP
IN BLANK EXPOSURES
ERASING YOUR SPHINX-SMILE
GIVING ME A HAZE
TO DECIPHER—
TRANSLUCENT,
MILKY WHITE
LIKE LONELY GHOSTS.

NOW THEY SIT IN THE CORNER
OF THE DUSTY ROOM
WHICH WAS ONCE
OUR ABODE.

Perfecting Sex

by Karin Riggs

BEGIN WITH YOUR EARLOBE
BITE YOUR CURVY
NECK SHOULDER WASTE
HEAR YOU WHISPER
YEAH...YEAH...YEAH...
SHOUT
BABY BABY
SCREAM
MY NAME
TOUCH YOU
ONE
TWO
MORE
FIVE
YOU LAUGH
SEE PALE GREEN
RED
PALE GREEN
LISTEN TO YOU
PANT SIGH GRIN
SLEEP HOLDING YOU
BODIES MOTIONLESS
SOULS UNCONTAINED
WAKE
TO YOUR SPIRIT SMELL

Trying To Not Pretend

by Karin Riggs

WE CHIT-CHAT ABOUT THINGS
YOU THINK ARE IMPORTANT TO ME

EVEN THOUGH I KNOW YOU KNOW
THAT'S NOT REAL WHAT'S REAL

IS THAT I AM SOMEONE YOU
ABHOR SO INSTEAD YOU SIT

SMILING ACROSS FROM ME HOLDING YOUR
CIGARAETTE DRINKING BLACK COFFEE

IN THIS ORANGE CAFE BOOTH WITH
CRACKED SEATS OOZING OUT STUFFING

MY EMOTIONS LIKE THAT

AND SAY TALK TO ME WHY WON'T YOU
INSTEAD OF DRUMMING YOUR FINGERS

ON FORMICA AND MAKING EXCUSES
TO BE PROUD OF SOMEONE

YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW

Pageant Girl

by Joanna Green

FACES PAINTED, THICK AS A CLOWN'S MASK
BOLD, BLACKENED, SMOLDERING EYES,
BRICK RED, MOISTENED LIPS AND
ROSY PINK, APPLIED CHEEKS

A NEVER ENDING BOUQUET OF CURLS
GATHERED AT THE CROWN,
FUMES AND FLOWERS, STALKING
THEN LINGERING AROUND THE BODIES

SEQUINS TWINKLING WHILE BOWS
AND RIBBONS ENCOMPASS THE WAIST,
FAKES NAILS, FAKE JEWELS, FAKE SILKS
AND FURS...FAKE SMILES

SHOWTIME, DON'T LET US DOWN, DON'T
FORGET ALL WE TAUGHT YOU,
NO!
ARM HIGHER, SHOULDERS STRAIGHT,
TURN LEFT, NOT RIGHT

IT'S NOT YOUR BEST TRY, BUT I GUESS IT'LL
HAVE TO DO, DON'T CRY
TOMORROW'S A NEW DAY
ANOTHER BEGINNING FOR MY PAGEANT GIRL.

A Librarian's Wish

by Joanna Green

ROWS OF BOOKS,
LEATHER-BOUND, PAPERBACK, HARD COVER
RED BOOKS, BROWN BOOKS, YELLOW BOOKS
LIKE A FIELD OF CORN,
SO ARE THE ROWS OF BOOKS

I STROLL DOWN THE AISLES
ONE BY ONE
MY OUTSTRETCHED HAND
TOUCHES THEM AS I WALK
A BOOK CATCHES MY EYE

"A LIBRARIAN'S WISH"
THE TITLE READS
THE BOOK IS OLD AND WORN
YET NEW TO ME

I BEGIN TO READ,
AND THEN I LEARN
AS I LEARN
THE LIBRARIAN'S WISH BECOMES TRUE

A LIBRARIAN DOES NOT WANT SILENCE
NOR ROOMS FILLED WITH UNSPOKEN WORDS
A LIBRARIAN WANTS BOOKS READ
AND MINDS TO LEARN

AS I LEAVE THE LIBRARY
WITH MY ARMS FULL
I THINK OF WHAT I WILL BEGIN TO KNOW
AND I FEEL HAPPY TO FULFILL THE LIBRARIAN'S WISH.

The Fishing Lake

by Joanna Green

MY GRANDPA AND I
OUT ALONE,
ONLY SOUNDS OF FISH
I HEAR

HE BAITS MY HOOK
AND I LET IT SOAR,
OUT INTO OUR FISHING LAKE,
PLOP

I WAIT AND WAIT
LETTING IT SINK
GENTLY REELING IN,
DISAPPOINTMENT

AS I CAST AGAIN,
I HEAR GRANDPA SAY,
"GET THE NET"
A BASS IS ON ITS WAY

I GROAN AS I LOOK DOWN
AND SEE,
IT'S HIS FIFTH FISH,
THAT'S NONE FOR ME

THE SUN IS SETTING
ALMOST TIME TO GO,
ONE MORE CAST GRANDPA,
"PLEASE"

ONE MORE CAST FOR ME,
I LEAN BACK
TO WAIT AND SEE,
IT TUGS AND PULLS

NOW I'M HAPPY
FIVE FOR GRANDPA,
AND ONE FOR ME.

On a Passed Conversation and Ruminations On It

Chris Lavelle

SO NOW-

PASSING UNHAPPINESS.

MAN AND WOMAN,
(OR IS IT WOMAN AND MAN?)

HE SPEAKS!

HE'S BEEN DUMB, SHE JUST LOOKS IT.

HE'S NOT LISTENING
NOT LISTENING
NOT LISTENING

SPEAKINGSPEAKINGSPEAKING
HE'S ALWAYS SPEAKING
I KNOW THAT LOOK.
THAT FACE SHE WEARS.
NOT HERS
NOT MINE.
NOT ANYTHING

BLANK

OR IS IT BLANC?
HARD FOR HER, WITH HER
BRONZED SKIN
BOLD EYES

THUS SHE SPEAKS WITH THESE
I LISTEN
I HEAR
BUT I AM MERELY

PASSINGPASSINGPASSINGPASSINGPASSING

NOT THE TARGET
I AM A SPY UPON THE PAIN OF LOVE
I BEAR NOT THE POWER OF ALTERATION OR AFFECTA-
TION OR AFFECTION.

HE'S NOT LISTENING
NOT LISTENING
NOT LISTENING

ALWAYS

SPEAKINGSPEAKINGSPEAKING

Days go by

Chris Lavelle

DAYS GO BY AS THE PASSING OF MORNING MISTS
A FOG WE CANNOT SEE BEYOND, COLD AND SOFT
A BLANKET OF VEILS FROM FUNERALS WE WILL NOT ATTEND
FOR FRIENDS WE NEVER KNEW, FOR LOVES WE NEVER FOUND
AND TIMES CONTINUE ON,
AND I, WHO HAVE BORN ALL MY BONES TO THE WORLD
AM FOR MY TRAVELS NOT WISER, BUT TIRED AND TRODDEN,
COLD, RAPTURED, HUNGRY, AND LOST
IN THE MIDST OF DARK WOODS,
PEOPLED WITH THE DEAD UPON ROADS.
THESE WERE ONCE BOLD, AND NOW WHAT?

MY BONES WILL ONE DAY TURN WHITE AS THEIRS.

Tony DeLillo

by David Heckman

TONY DELILLO LOVED FIREWORKS. HE LIKED CANDY. HE LIKED BIKES. HE LIKED HIS G.I. JOES AND HOT WHEELS AND HE-MAN GUYS AND MOST OTHER THINGS THAT A TEN-YEAR-OLD BOY LIVING IN THE EIGHTIES LIKED. BUT MORE THAN ANYTHING, HE LOVED FIREWORKS. HE LOVED THEM MORE THAN ANYONE I KNEW, OR KNOW TODAY, FOR THAT MATTER. THAT'S WHY TONY WAS ALWAYS ANXIOUS TO GET HIS DISTURBED LITTLE HANDS ON ANYTHING THAT REMOTELY RESEMBLED THEM. I WATCHED HIM MELT HIS DUKE ACTION FIGURE INTO A LITTLE BLACK NUGGET WITH A LIGHTER AND A CAN OF WD-40. I SAW HIM BEAT HIS LITTLE BLACK HOT WHEELS PORSCHE WITH A HAMMER AND THEN PLUNGE IT INTO A POOL OF BURNING LIGHTER FLUID. HE EVEN AMPUTATED ONE OF MAN-AT-ARMS' ARMS WITH A RED HOT KNIFE BLADE. BUT NOTHING, AND I MEAN NOTHING, COULD COMPARE TO THE TIME THAT TONY GOT THE REAL THING...

"HEY, TONY," I SAID AS I DISMOUNTED MY STILL ROLLING BIKE. IT WAS A COOL TRICK THAT I FIGURED OUT ABOUT THE SAME TIME THAT I LEARNED KICKSTANDS WERE LAME. THE BIKE CAME TO A CLAMOROUS HALT, HITTING THE SIDE OF TONY'S HOUSE.

"I GOT SOME FIRECRACKERS."

"NO SHIT."

"YEAH...I GOT 'EM FROM MY BROTHER. I THINK HE GOT THEM IN MEXICO OR SOMETHING." TONY TURNED TO ME, SCRATCHING HIS HEAD WITH ONE HAND AND PICKING HIS ASS WITH THE OTHER. WHEN HE MOVED AWAY FROM THE SIDE OF THE HOUSE, I COULD SEE THE LITTLE DRAMA THAT WAS ABOUT TO UNFOLD ON A LITTLE HILL OF DIRT TONY HAD CREATED ON THE LAWN. EVIDENTLY, DESTRO AND MAJOR BLUDD HAD SOME SORT OF FALLING OUT THAT COULD ONLY BE RESOLVED BY ARMED CONFLICT. DESTRO, FORTUNATELY, WAS POISED BEHIND THE CONTROLS OF AN H.I.S.S. TANK AND THE MAJOR WAS ARMED WITH A SHOVEL. IT PROMISED TO BE A CLOSE ONE. TONY REACHED INTO AN EXCESSIVELY WRINKLED LITTLE PAPER

BAG AND PULLED OUT TWO FIRECRACKERS. HE SET THEM BETWEEN MAJOR BLUDD'S LEGS AND, IN HIS BEST DESTRO BARITONE, HE SAID, "YOU MUST DIE FOR YOUR COWARDICE, MAJOR BLUDD!"

"NOOOO!" TONY REPLIED, IN WHAT COULD ONLY BE THE MAJOR'S VOICE.

"I'LL SEE YOU IN HELL!!!" HE SAID AS HE LIT THE FIRECRACKERS WITH A STRIKE ANYWHERE MATCH. HE LUNGED BACK A FEW STEPS, NEVER LETTING HIS EYES OFF OF THE CONFRONTATION AT HAND.

"POP! POP!"

MAJOR BLUDD FLEW ABOUT SIX INCHES IN THE AIR AND LANDED ON THE DIRT, THE SHOVEL STILL HELD FIRMLY IN HIS PLASTIC GRIP. TONY RUSHED TO GET A CLOSER LOOK AT THE CARNAGE.

"DAMMIT!" HE SHOOK HIS HEAD, LOOKING AT MAJOR BLUDD. I MOVED CLOSER TO SEE WHAT HORRIBLE THING HAD HAPPENED. THE MAJOR'S GROIN HAD SUFFERED SOME TRAUMA, AS I COULD DEDUCE FROM THE POWDER BURNS IN THAT AREA. BUT HIS LEGS WERE STILL INTACT AND NOTHING HAD BEEN OBLITERATED THAT WASN'T ALREADY MISSING.

"NOBODY COULD REALLY WITHSTAND THE POWER OF A REAL H.I.S.S.! THESE FIRECRACKERS ARE WEAK!" TONY LOOKED INTO THE BAG AND SHOOK HIS HEAD. THIS TIME HE PULLED OUT A BOTTLEROCKET AND A LITTLE ROLL OF ELECTRICAL TAPE. HE FASTENED THE BOTTLEROCKET TO THE MAJOR'S BODY, SNAPPED THE STICK OFF, AND PERCHED THE MAJOR ON THE MOUND OF DIRT.

"YOU MAY HAVE DODGED THE FIRST ROUND OF ARTILLERY, BUT YOU WILL NOT BE SO FORTUNATE THIS TIME!" HE SAID IN HIS DESTRO VOICE, STRIKING ANOTHER MATCH AND IGNITING THE FUSE. HE TOOK A QUICK STEP BACK. THIS TIME THE MAJOR WAS LIFTED ABOUT A FOOT OFF OF THE GROUND BEFORE HE WAS SENT TUMBLING BACK TO EARTH IN A SHOWER OF SPARKS PUNCTUATED WITH A LOUD "POP!"

TONY WAS CLEARLY EXCITED ABOUT WHAT HAD JUST HAPPENED. HE GRABBED THE MAJOR AND TOOK A LOOK AT THE BACK OF HIS LEGS WHICH WERE BADLY SINGED AND MELTED. THE BAND OF BLACK TAPE STILL HELD THE SHREDDED NOVELTY TO THE LITTLE PLASTIC MAN. AND HE STILL HAD ALL

OF HIS LIMBS. YET, TONY FOUND SATISFACTION IN THE FACT THAT THE MAJOR HAD BEEN DISFIGURED BY THE ORDEAL.

"I THOUGHT THESE THINGS WERE SUPPOSED TO BE DANGEROUS AND STUFF. MY MOM TOLD ME THAT THEY COULD BLOW YOUR HAND OFF OR SHOOT THROUGH YOUR EYES." TONY SHOOK HIS HEAD.

"YEAH, THEY CAN'T EVEN BLOW UP A LITTLE GUY," I SAID, EQUALLY PUZZLED.

JUST THEN, TONY'S MOM PULLED UP INTO THE DRIVEWAY. NONCHALANTLY, TONY DROPPED THE BAG BEHIND THE MOUND OF DIRT AND TURNED TO WAVE AT HIS MOM AS SHE STEPPED OUT OF THE CAR. TONY'S BROTHER SAT SULKING IN THE FRONT SEAT OF THE BLUE VOLVO.

"HI, OWEN! HOW ARE YOU?"

"GOOD, MRS. DELILLO. HOW ARE YOU?" I ANSWERED.

"OH, FINE. JUST FINE. DO YOU WANT TO HAVE DINNER HERE? I HAVE A MEETING TONIGHT, SO I CAN ORDER SOME PIZZAS FOR YOU BOYS TO EAT WHILE I'M GONE."

"I BETTER ASK MY MOM."

"OKAY. HOW ARE YOU, TONY?"

"AW, I'M FINE. WE WERE JUST PLAYING G.I. JOES," TONY ANSWERED AS HIS MOM WALKED INTO THE HOUSE. JUST THEN, BRETT SLAMMED THE CAR DOOR SHUT AND BEGAN TO STRIDE TOWARDS US, COMBING HIS LONG BLONDE HAIR WITH A LIGHT BLUE COMB WHICH HE KEPT IN HIS BACK POCKET.

"WHAT ARE YOU BUTTMUNCHES DOING? PLAYING WITH DOLLS? AREN'T YOU TOO OLD FOR THAT CRAP?" HE SAID, STUFFING HIS COMB BACK INTO HIS POCKET. HE STEPPED RIGHT ON THE MOUND OF DIRT, CRUSHING IT AND FLATTENING IT CONSIDERABLY. HE ALMOST KEPT ON WALKING, BUT JUST THEN HIS EYE CAUGHT THE BROWN PAPER BAG. HE SAW THE SHREDS OF RED AND WHITE PAPER AND THE EXTINGUISHED MATCHES. AND SUDDENLY IT DAWNED ON HIM WHAT WE WERE REALLY DOING. WE WEREN'T PLAYING WITH DOLLS IN ANY CONVENTIONAL SENSE. WE WERE DESTROYING THEM. IN A FLASH, TONY WAS PINNED TO THE GROUND AND HIS BROTHER WAS PUNCHING HIM REPEATEDLY IN THE ARM.

"WHAT WERE YOU DOING IN MY ROOM, DOUCHEBAG? I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU NEVER TO GO THROUGH MY STUFF,"

BRETT GROWLED WITH THE MUTILATED VOICE OF A FOURTEEN YEAR-OLD. BY NOW TONY WAS CLEARLY SOBBING, BUT THE PUNISHMENT WAS FAR FROM OVER. BRETT PULLED DOWN HIS PANTS AND PRESSED HIS BARE ASS AGAINST TONY'S THRASHING HEAD. ALL I COULD HEAR WERE TONY'S MUFFLED SCREAMS AS BRETT LET LOOSE A VICIOUS FART THAT LEFT TONY CURLED UP AND GASPING BETWEEN SOBS, HIS HEAD BURIED IN HIS HANDS. IT WAS A GOOD TEN MINUTES BEFORE TONY LOOKED UP, AND WHEN HE DID, I WAS SURPRISED THAT THERE WERE NO SKID-MARKS ON HIS FACE. INSTEAD, THERE WERE PUFFY RED EYES AND TEAR-STREAKED CHEEKS. AT THAT POINT IT DAWNED ON ME THAT I HAD SEEN SOMETHING THAT I REALLY SHOULDN'T HAVE. IT WAS PROBABLY THE ONLY REAL SECRET THAT TONY AND I SHARED. TO A TEN-YEAR-OLD BOY IT CAN ONLY COMPARE TO THE UNSPEAKABLE INDIGNITIES GRAPHICALLY DEPICTED IN MOVIES ABOUT LIFE IN PRISON. AND TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, OUR STASH OF FIREWORKS WAS GONE.

"TONY, I'M GONNA GO ASK MY MOM IF I CAN EAT OVER. YOU WANNA COME WITH ME?" I INVITED HIM, KNOWING FULL WELL WHAT THE ANSWER WOULD BE.

"Naw," HE REPLIED, WIPING HIS NOSE, DRAGGING A SNAIL TRAIL OF SNOT ACROSS HIS CHEEK. HE WIPED AGAIN.

"I'LL BE RIGHT BACK," I SAID, MOUNTING MY BIKE AND SLOWLY PEDALING TOWARDS MY HOUSE, WHICH WAS JUST AROUND THE CORNER. I WAS GLAD TO LEAVE TONY BEHIND FOR A MINUTE—IT WAS TOO PAINFUL TO SIT THERE AND WATCH HIM CRY. AND IT WAS PROBABLY EVEN MORE PAINFUL FOR HIM.

I PULLED THE BIKE UP TO THE BACK PORCH AND CLIMBED THE STEPS. I OPENED THE BACK DOOR, CAREFUL TO NOT LET IT SLAM. MY MOM HATED SLAMMING DOORS. SHE WAS AT THE KITCHEN COUNTER, PUTTING THE GROCERIES AWAY.

"MOM?"

"YEAH?"

"MRS. DELILLO INVITED ME FOR DINNER TONIGHT."

"IS SHE GONNA BE HOME?" A CAN FELL ON THE FLOOR AND ROLLED TOWARDS THE OVEN.

"I THINK SHE HAS A MEETING OR SOMETHING."

"IS MR. DELILLO GONNA BE THERE?" SHE FOLDED UP AN EMPTY PAPER BAG AND OPENED THE REFRIGERATOR.

"I DUNNO." I BEGAN TO GET WORRIED THAT SHE

WOULD SAY "NO." "BRETT WILL BE AROUND."

"THAT TONY'S BROTHER?" SHE WAS BENT OVER AND TALKING INTO THE REFRIGERATOR.

"YEAH, HE'S FOURTEEN." I BEGAN TO WORRY THAT BRETT WOULD BE WATCHING US.

"FOURTEEN..." SHE HESITATED, AND REACHED FOR A BUNCH OF BROCCOLI WHICH WAS PERCHED ON THE COUNTER.

"AW, MOM, SUMMER'S ALMOST OVER," I BEGAN TO BEG.

"ALL RIGHT, GO PLAY." SHE PUT THE BROCCOLI IN A DRAWER LABELED "MEAT."

A HUG AND A KISS LATER, I WAS OUT THE DOOR, SPEEDING TOWARDS TONY'S HOUSE ON MY BIKE. WHEN I GOT THERE TONY WAS STILL OUTSIDE—THIS TIME HE WAS CHUCKING MAJOR BLUDD ACROSS THE DRIVEWAY LIKE HE WAS SKIPPING STONES. THE MAJOR WOULD SKID ALONG THE PAVEMENT AND COME TO A REST ON THE GRASS ON THE OTHER SIDE. THEN TONY WOULD RUN, PICK HIM UP, AND DO IT AGAIN.

"HEY, TONY!" I SHOUTED, "MY MOM SAID 'YES.'"

"COOL."

I DISMOUNTED MY BIKE, BUT THIS TIME, INSTEAD OF LETTING IT CRASH, I WALKED IT OVER TO THE SIDE OF HIS GARAGE. I DIDN'T WANT ANYONE TO STEAL IT. TONY WAS EYEING MAJOR BLUDD AND STROKING HIM WITH HIS THUMB.

"LOOK AT HIS NOSE," HE SAID, HOLDING THE MAJOR UP TO MY FACE.

"AWWW! YOU SKINNED IT OFF."

"YEAH."

JUST THEN, MR. DELILLO PULLED UP. HE DROVE A BIG YELLOW CHEVY VAN. HE STEPPED OUT OF THE VAN. HE WAS TALL. HE HAD CURLY BLACK HAIR AND A SHINY BALD HEAD; BIG BUSHY EYEBROWS AND A BIG MOUSTACHE. HE WAS A SKINNY FELLOW, EXCEPT FOR A POT BELLY. AND WHEN HE SPOKE, HE SEEMED LIKE A CARICATURE, A STEREOTYPE OF EVERYTHING I HAD LEARNED ABOUT THE PEOPLE FROM NEW YORK.

"EH, TONY! WHATTA YOU DOIN'? PLAYIN' WITH DOLLS?"

"AWW. JUST PLAYING G.I. JOES."

"AND HOW YOU DOIN' OWEN?"

"FINE, MR. DELILLO."

"GOOD!" HE PATTED ME ON THE HEAD WITH HIS BIG GRIMY PAW AND HEADED INTO THE HOUSE.

MR. DELILLO WAS ACTUALLY TONY'S STEP-DAD, AND THEREFORE BORE LITTLE RESEMBLANCE TO HIM. TONY WAS A SHORT FRECKLE-FACED REDHEAD. HE KIND OF LOOKED LIKE RICHIE CUNNINGHAM. TONY GREW UP IN L.A., BUT HIS MOM GREW UP IN BOSTON. MR. DELILLO WAS FROM NEW YORK AND THEN CHICAGO. AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT TONY TOLD ME.

"IS TOM GONNA BE HOME TONIGHT?" I ASKED. THAT'S WHAT TONY CALLED MR. DELILLO.

"NO, HE'S GOING TO THE MEETING WITH MY MOM."

"OH," I WAS RELIEVED. ALTHOUGH MR. DELILLO WAS A NICE MAN, I KIND OF USED TO BE SCARED OF HIM. FOR ONE THING, HE SEEMED TO SHOUT A LOT AND HE USED TO GET ON TONY'S CASE ABOUT PLAYING FOOTBALL. I LIKED FOOTBALL JUST FINE, BUT TONY WASN'T VERY GOOD AT IT AND HE NEVER WANTED TO PLAY.

"I THINK BERETTE IS GONNA BE HERE." BERETTE WAS WHAT TONY CALLED BRET BEHIND HIS BACK.

"BOYS!" TONY'S MOM SHOUTED OUT THE FRONT DOOR. WE RAN TO THE DOOR. "I ORDERED TWO PIZZAS, ONE PEPPERONI AND ONE SAUSAGE FROM DOMINO'S. HERE'S TWENTY DOLLARS. PAY FOR THE PIZZA AND MAKE SURE YOU TIP THE GUY A DOLLAR. OKAY?"

"SURE," TONY ANSWERED, PUTTING THE MONEY IN HIS POCKET.

"WE WILL BE AT A MEETING FOR DAD'S WORK," SHE LEANED DOWN AND GAVE TONY A KISS ON THE CHEEK. SHE SMELLED GOOD, LIKE PERFUME. AND SHE WAS WEARING LIP-STICK, SOME OF WHICH REMAINED ON TONY'S CHEEK.

"BRETT IS IN HIS ROOM, SO MAKE SURE YOU TELL HIM WHEN THE PIZZA IS HERE. AND DON'T FIGHT WITH HIM, OKAY?"

"I WON'T." TONY NODDED.

"I SPOKE WITH YOUR MOM, OWEN, AND SHE SAID TO CALL IF THERE IS AN EMERGENCY."

"OKAY," I REPLIED.

MR. AND MRS. DELILLO WALKED OUT THE DOOR, LETTING THE SCREENDOOR SLAM BEHIND THEM. WE WATCHED OUT

THE WINDOW AS THE TWO GOT INTO THE VOLVO AND BACKED OUT OF THE DRIVEWAY. TONY AND I WENT INTO THE DEN TO WATCH SOME T.V. HE TURNED THE T.V. ON AND WE WERE GREETED BY THE THRUSTING AND GYRATING PELVIS OF A FLUORESCENT SPANDEX-CLAD DAVID LEE ROTH.

"COOL. VAN HALEN," WAS TONY'S ONLY REACTION. I WATCHED IN SILENCE, WE DIDN'T HAVE MTV AT MY HOUSE.

DING. DONG. THE DOORBELL RANG. TONY SPRINTED TO THE DOOR, I FOLLOWED A FEW STEPS BEHIND. HE OPENED THE DOOR. THERE WAS THE PIZZA MAN, WITH TWO PIZZAS, EYEING A RECEIPT.

"YOU GUYS ORDER SOME PIZZAS?"

"YEAH." TONY HANDED THE GUY THE TWENTY.

"LESSEE, THAT'LL BE ELEVEN DOLLARS OUT OF TWENTY." HE HANDED TONY NINE DOLLARS IN ONES.

"THANK YOU." TONY HANDED HIM A DOLLAR.

"THANK YOU, SIR." THE PIZZA GUY SMILED AND RETURNED TO HIS CAR.

TONY RAN, CARRYING THE TWO PIZZAS INTO THE KITCHEN. HE SET THEM ON THE COUNTER, LIFTED THE LID AND BEGAN TO DEVOUR A SLICE INSTANTLY. I FOLLOWED SUIT. IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE BRETT HAD JOINED US. TONY SNATCHED TWO PLATES FROM THE CUPBOARD AND PUT TWO SLICES ON EACH, HANDED ONE TO ME, AND WALKED INTO THE DEN. I FOLLOWED HIM, AND WE RESUMED WATCHING MTV. BEFORE MAKING TONY GET OUT OF "HIS" SEAT ON THE RECLINER, BRETT FLIPPED THE CHANNEL TO THREE'S COMPANY.

I STARED IN SILENT SATISFACTION AT THE RESEMBLANCE BRETT'S FACE BORE TO THE PIZZA WE WERE NOW EATING. AND I THINK TONY WAS RELISHING THE SAME THOUGHT AS WELL—HE WAS THE ONE WHO HAD POINTED IT OUT TO ME IN THE FIRST PLACE. THE THOUGHT WAS ALMOST BETTER THAN THE PIZZA ITSELF. WE BOTH STARED WHILE BRETT DEVOURED THE GREASY, LUMPY, SAUCY SLICE AND WONDERED IF HE WAS AWARE OF THE CRUDE ACT OF CANNIBALISM HE WAS COMMITTING. TONY HAD POINTED OUT THE SIMILARITY WEEKS AGO, YET IT WASN'T UNTIL I OBSERVED THE TWO SURFACES SIDE BY SIDE THAT I WAS CONVINCED—BRETT DID INDEED HAVE A PIZZA FACE.

WE ATE SEVERAL SLICES. THEN BRETT SPOKE: "I'M GOING OUT." HE POINTED TO TONY, "IF YOU TELL, I'LL KICK YOUR ASS AND I'LL DO MORE THAN FART ON YOUR FACE." AND HE STORMED OUT OF THE ROOM AND OUT OF THE HOUSE. WE WATCHED OUT THE WINDOW AS HE RODE AWAY ON MY BIKE. LITTLE DID BRETT KNOW, HE WAS DOING US A GREAT FAVOR.

TONY SMILED AND SAID, "LET'S GO FIND THOSE FIRE-CRACKERS."

"OKAY."

WE WENT INTO BRETT'S ROOM. I BEGAN TO SEARCH THROUGH HIS DRAWERS. TONY LOOKED IN HIS BACKPACK. THE DRAWERS YIELDED NOTHING EXCEPT SOME HALF-USED BRIEFS. TONY DID MANAGE TO TURN UP A WRINKLED OLD COPY OF PENTHOUSE MAGAZINE, WHICH WE PERUSED CAREFULLY BEFORE RETURNING TO HIS BROTHER'S BACKPACK. WE CHECKED UNDER THE MATTRESS. WE CHECKED UNDER THE DRESSER. WE CHECKED IN HIS CLOSET. AND THERE, IN A MUDDY OLD HIKING BOOT, WAS THE PAPER BAG. TONY TORE IT OPEN RECKLESSLY, HIS EYES WIDE AND GLOSSY.

"MAYBE WE SHOULDN'T..."

"NO....I'M GONNA USE THEM ALL. AND IF HE TRIES TO HURT ME, I'LL TELL. HE'S NOT ALLOWED TO HAVE FIRE-CRACKERS. THEY'RE DANGEROUS!" HE LAUGHED.

"ALL OF THEM?"

"YEAH! I'M GONNA MAKE A BOMB! YOU EVER SEEN MACGUYVA?"

"MACGUYVER?"

"YEAH, MACGUYVA." HE WAS PRONOUNCING THE NAME WITH SOME KIND OF EAST COAST ACCENT, WHICH PUZZLED ME. HE CLUTCHED THE BAG TIGHTLY AND SAID, "LET'S GO INTO THE GARAGE."

I FOLLOWED HIM INTO THE GARAGE. HE DUMPED THE CONTENTS OF THE BAG ONTO THE FLOOR. ONE BY ONE, HE BEGAN TO SPLIT THE FIRECRACKERS WITH A UTILITY KNIFE. I WENT TO WORK BESIDE HIM, CUTTING OPEN SOME FLOWERS AND SOME SMOKE BOMBS AND SOME BOTTLE ROCKETS. HE INSTRUCTED ME TO EMPTY THE CONTENTS ONTO THE PAPER BAG. THE MINUTES TICKED AWAY, AND BY THE TIME WE WERE DONE, WE HAD A SMALL PILE OF SILVERY BLACK POWDER.

"THAT'S GUNPOWDER. NOW, WE NEED TO FIND SOME-

THING TO PUT IT IN." HE GRABBED A GRAY PIECE OF PVC PIPE, ABOUT A HALF-INCH IN DIAMETER AND ABOUT THREE INCHES LONG. HE CEMENTED A LITTLE CAP ON ONE END AND DRILLED A HOLE IN THE CENTER WITH AN AWL. WITH THE HANDS OF A SURGEON, HE TWISTED SIX FUSES TOGETHER AND THEN THREADED THE COMPOSITE FUSE THROUGH THE HOLE HE HAD CREATED. THEN, HE TOOK THE PAPER BAG AND FUNNELED THE POWDER INTO THE PIPE. HE FILLED IT ALMOST TO THE TOP AND THEN CAPPED OFF THE REMAINING END. THERE THE LITTLE EXPLOSIVE DEVICE SAT. TONY WAS QUITE PLEASED WITH THE PRODUCT HE HAD CREATED SO PROFICIENTLY AND IN SUCH HASTE. MY STOMACHE WAS A LITTLE UNEASY AT THE PROSPECT OF BRETT'S RETURN, BUT I, TOO, WAS AMAZED.

"I BET THIS WILL DO THE TRICK," HE SAID, PULLING MAJOR BLUDD OUT OF HIS POCKET. HE BEGAN TO LAUGH SADISTICALLY AT THE HELLFIRE HE WAS ABOUT TO UNLEASH ON THE IMPUDENT MAJOR. TONY PLACED HIM ON THE MOUND OF DIRT WHERE DESTRO WAS WAITING TO ANNIHILATE HIM. THE MAJOR SEEMED TO TREMBLE AT THE PROSPECT OF HIS EXECUTION. TO PREVENT HIS ESCAPE, TONY FETCHED A GAS CAN FROM THE GARAGE AND TRACED A LARGE RING AROUND THE MAJOR, SATURATING THE GROUND WITH GASOLINE. TONY PICKED UP THE MAJOR ONE LAST TIME AND TAPED THE LITTLE BOMB SECURELY TO HIS BODY. HE LIT THE GASOLINE, AND A BLAZING RING OF FIRE ROSE UP FROM THE EARTH. THICK COILS OF BLACK SMOKE ROSE FROM THE SACRIFICIAL FLAMES. STILL HOLDING THE MAJOR IN HIS HAND, HE LIT THE FUSE. IT BEGAN TO SPARK AND FIZZ, AND TONY STOOD THERE, TRANSFIXED BY THE GLOWING FIRE AND THE PROSPECT OF WHAT WAS ABOUT TO TAKE PLACE. HE TOSSED THE MAJOR INTO THE CIRCLE OF FIRE, AND BEFORE HE HIT THE GROUND A LARGE EXPLOSION SENT PIECES OF HIS BODY FLYING THROUGH THE AIR. I WATCHED TONY AS HE STOOD STARING INTO THE FIRE, A FIRE WHICH SEEMED TO BE GROWING BRIGHTER, HIGHER, HOTTER, AND LOUDER. IT CLUNG TO THE SIDE OF THE HOUSE LIKE IVY, DARKENING THE STUCCO AND CURLING THE ROOF SHINGLES.

ONE BY ONE, THE NEIGHBORS TRICKLED OUT OF THEIR HOUSES. AND BEFORE TOO LONG, AN ELDERLY MAN CAME WITH A PAIL AND DOUSED THE FIRE WITH WATER. IT HISSED AND A CLOUD OF WHITE STEAM PUFFED UP FROM THE HOLO-

CAUST LIKE A SMOKE SIGNAL. THE OLD MAN, WITH SURPRISING AGILITY, MANAGED TO STAMP OUT THE DYING FLAMES.

“YOU BOYS ALL RIGHT?” HE ASKED UPON NOTICING THE GAS CAN AND THE BURNT UP MATCH TONY HELD BETWEEN HIS LEFT THUMB AND INDEX FINGER. TONY JUST STOOD THERE, SMILING AT WHAT HE HAD DONE. THERE WAS A HUGE BLACK SMUDGE UP THE SIDE OF THE HOUSE, AND THE LAWN WAS SINGED. MAJOR BLUDD WAS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND. DESTRO SAT VICTORIOUS BEHIND THE CONTROLS OF HIS H.I.S.S. TANK.

SOON MY MOM CAME RUNNING OVER, NEARLY HYSTERICAL. SHE GRABBED ME BY THE ARM, AND TOOK TONY BY THE HAND. THE WALK WAS LONG AND SILENT, AND IT WAS GETTING DARK OUT. I COULD ONLY THINK OF THE GLOWING FIRE AND THE LOUD EXPLOSION.

TONY’S PARENTS CAME AND PICKED HIM UP LATER THAT NIGHT. I DIDN’T PLAY WITH TONY FOR A LONG TIME AFTER THAT. MY MOM DIDN’T WANT ME PLAYING OVER THERE. AND TONY COULDN’T COME TO MY HOUSE BECAUSE HE GOT GROUNDED.

SCHOOL STARTED. TONY WENT TO PUBLIC AND I WENT TO PRIVATE. SO I NEVER GOT TO SEE HIM. I’D WALK BY THE DELILLOS’ HOUSE HOPING I’D SEE TONY PLAYING OUTSIDE WITH HIS GUYS ON THE LITTLE MOUND OF DIRT. BUT THE MOUND WAS GONE, THE BIG BLACK SMUDGE GOT RE-PAINTED, AND THE CURLED SHINGLES WERE REPLACED. IT WASN’T TILL I FOUND MAJOR BLUDD’S BLACK HELMETED HEAD WITH THE SCRAPED OFF NOSE THAT I WALKED UP TO THE HOUSE, RANG THE DOORBELL, AND ASKED TO SEE TONY. I HANDED HIM THE HEAD AND HE SMILED.

Waiting for you

by Eldon "Donny" Krosch Jr.

WAITING FOR YOU TO COME

YOU WILL BE HERE SOON

I AM A BIT EARLY SO I WILL WAIT

THE TIME MOVES SO SLOWLY

IT CRAWLS PAST AT ALMOST A STANDSTILL

IF IT WOULD JUST FLOW IN A NORMAL MANNER

THIS WOULD NOT BE AN ETERNITY

WILL YOU COME? THE TIME FLOWS BY

DID SOMETHING HAPPEN? WAITING

DON'T WORRY I TRUST YOU

YOU WILL BE HERE LIKE

YOU PROMISED ME YOU WOULD

BUT WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

WELL MY FRIEND YOU ARE HERE

NO I HAVE NOT BEEN HERE LONG

Life's Collar

by Matt Wright

AND NOW I SEE A HAPPY DAY
WHEN THAT PRETTY GIRL WALKS MY WAY.
FORGET THE TROUBLES; FORGET, IF I MAY,
THAT LIFE WAS HELL JUST YESTERDAY.

THE RISING SUN, IT FINDS ME HERE
ON TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN, STILL IN FEAR.
WITH A FUTURE UNKNOWN, AND OH SO NEAR,
THE FIRST GLIMPSE OF LIGHT WILL BRING THE TEARS.

I'VE WORN LIFE'S COLLAR, LIKE A STRANGLEHOLD.
AND "IT SURE WON'T BE EASY," WE'RE OFTEN TOLD.
BUT HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A LIFE GO COLD?
AND WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF IT WERE YOUR OWN?

FIGHT BACK THE DESPAIR, I'D HAVE TO SAY,
LEARN TO LIVE AGAIN, TO LOVE AGAIN, TO SAY:
"MY LIFE IS MY GIFT, DON'T TAKE IT AWAY.
I'LL GIVE IT TO YOU, AS LONG AS YOU STAY."

HEAVEN'S LIGHT SHINES IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE.
HOW DID SHE FIND THE ORDINARY GUY?
FOR A CHANCE OF LOVE, I'D LET IT ALL OUT,
BUT A SHADOW OF HOPE IS A SHADOW OF DOUBT.

SO LET THE SUN RISE UPON THE SKY,
FOR YOU, MY FRIEND, WILL NEVER DIE.
I FOLLOW YOUR LEAD AND BECOME THE LIGHT.
I WALK FROM THE DARKNESS AND OUT OF THE NIGHT.

NEVER AGAIN WILL I BE THE SAME,
TOO MANY THINGS CHANGED WHEN SHE CALLED MY NAME.
SO I'LL LOOSEN MY SHIRT AND HAVE SOME FUN.
WITH JOY ON MY SIDE, THE NIGHT COMES UNDONE.

Killer and Thrillers

by Matt Wright

KILLER AND THRILLERS, OUR KIDS OUR DRUG DEALERS
AND EVERYONE THINKS IT'S A GAME.
YOUNG BOYS ARE DYING, THEIR SISTERS ARE CRYING
AND NO ONE IS TAKING THE BLAME.

KILLERS AND THRILLERS, OUR UNCLAS ARE RAPISTS
AND WOMEN ARE SCREAMING IN PAIN.
A DIRTY LITTLE SECRET, HIDING IN THE BASEMENT
BROODING IN SICKNESS UNTAMED

KILLERS AND THRILLERS, OUR FATHERS ARE CONVICTS
WE DON'T KNOW OUR DADDIES' NAMES.
LOCKED UP BEHIND BARS, A ONE-TIME FOOTBALL STAR
BUT HE WON'T BE HOME TO PLAY GAMES.

KILLERS AND THRILLERS, OUR SISTERS ARE WHORES
AND THERE ARE ALWAYS PUNKS WHO ARE LOOKING TO SCORE.
ABUSED BEYOND REASON, IT'S A NEVER-ENDING SEASON
JUST CALL AND SHE'LL COME TO THE DOOR.

KILLERS AND THRILLERS, YOU ARE A SADIST
I KNOW BECAUSE I AM THE SAME.
WE HURT OTHERS FOR PLEASURE, THEIR PAIN IS OUR TREASURE
WE'VE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH INSANE.

WHAT IS IT ABOUT THE WORLD TODAY?
IT HASN'T ALWAYS BEEN THIS WAY.
OR IN TIMES PAST DID WE CLOSE OUR EYES
OPENING THE DOOR TO THE DEVIL'S DISGUISE
IN HEARTS OF DARKNESS, DOES THE SUN EVER RISE?

Temporary Sanity

by Ester Smith

GAZING UP AT THE SKY FROM DOWN BELOW
I LIE QUIETLY UPON THE SUN-FADED WOOD
LETTING TRANQUILITY TUMBLE INTO ME UNTIL I AM SATURATED
WITH IT.

MY EYES WANDER FROM CLOUD TO CLOUD AS SIMPLE SHAPES
ARE FORMED,
ONLY TO FLOW INTO ONE ANOTHER AND BECOME UNRECOGNIZ-
ABLE.

THEY NEVER STAY,
I NEVER STAY.

I WOULD LOVE TO LAY UPON THE GREEN GRASS
WHICH MONARCHS FLUTTERING AROUND ME AND THE SUN
LIGHTLY TOUCHING

MY SKIN AND WARMING ME EVER SO SOFTLY
FOR LIFE.

Untitled

by Ester Smith

DEEPLY FALLS MY HEAD
INTO FEATHERS
SPONTANEITY IS KILLED
BY ANTICIPATION
BLEEDING WITH
TEARS
FEARS
INEXTINGUISHABLE THOUGHTS
OF AWKWARD GREETINGS
REHEARSED REACTIONS
SHORT GOOD-BYES
LEAPING INTO ANXIETY
BETWEEN TIME
WAITING FOR THE CALM
THAT FOLLOWS THE STORM
WITHIN MYSELF.

Untitled

by Ester Smith

SILENCE PERVADES
LIKE A RAMBLING
FOOL
HOLDING THE KEY
TO MY HEART
BROKEN
AND STALE
HUMMING SOFTLY IN TUNE
WITH THE TEARS
FLOWING
WATER
ABUNDANT
LILIES
COVER PICTURES
OF AN AGE
WHEN NO WORRIES
INVADE
MY
MIND.

Angel

by Rebecca (Becca) Horner

YOUR STRUGGLES RUN SO DEEP,
BUT I KNOW NOT
HOW TO HELP.

I WORRY FOR YOUR SANITY,
YOUR HAPPINESS,
YOUR SOUL.

I SEE THIS BEAUTIFUL SOUL
NEGLECTED AND ALONE.
LISTEN TO IT CRY, FOR ONLY YOU
CAN ANSWER ITS CALL.

I REMEMBER HOW YOU USED TO BE,
SO HAPPY,
SO CAREFREE.

NOW A SHADOW LIES OVER YOU
AND YOU NEED TO BE
SET FREE.

BE YOURSELF MY ANGEL,
SO BEAUTIFUL,
SO FREE,
REMEMBER WHAT IT'S LIKE
TO FLY,
TO SOAR,
TO BE.

PLEASE BE YOURSELF MY DEAR,
BE YOURSELF I PLEAD,
BE YOURSELF MY ANGEL,
FOR THAT
IS WHAT YOU NEED.

Wonder

by Rebecca (Becca) Horner

I LOOK OUT THE WINDOW,
I LOOK BEYOND THE TREES,
I LOOK AMONGST THE HEAVENLY
STARS
AND WONDER WHAT WILL BE...

I LET MY MIND WANDER, THROUGH
MY OCEANS OF THOUGHTS,
AND I FEEL AS IF I PUSH AND
PULL AND STRUGGLE,
MAYBE I WILL SEE...

SEE WHAT LIES BEYOND TOMORROW,
SEE WHAT HE WILL BE,
LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW,
LOOKING BEYOND THE TREES,
PONDERING HIS OWN OCEANS OF THOUGHTS.
THINKING ABOUT ME?

NEVER HAS THERE BEEN
A DAY, A NIGHT, A DREAM,
WHEN I DID NOT WISH TO SEE...
HIS BEAUTIFUL SMILE, HIS BEAUTIFUL EYES,

THAT LOOK DEEP DOWN,
DOWN INTO MY INQUISITIVE SOUL.
BUT THROUGH HIS EYES I CANNOT SEE
THE ANSWER TO MY QUESTION...

THE EVER PRESENT QUESTION,
ALWAYS ON MY MIND,
LURKING IN MY WORDS TO HIM,
HANGING IN MY KISSES...

IS THERE A DAY,
IS THERE A NIGHT,
IS THERE A DREAM THAT PASSES,
THAT HE MAY WISH,
WE WOULD NOT BE?

The Girls of Casualty Days, 1969

by Linda LeGarde Grover

BACK HERE IN THE WORLD AS SUMMERS PASSED
CHILDREN FAR TOO OLD FOR ERSATZ INNOCENCE
SHAMELESSLY PIPED A HEDONISTIC DIRGE
THROUGH BRIGHT AND GRITTY DOG DAYS, WHILE UPSTAIRS

ACHORED DAUGHTERS BRAIDED COLOR SNAKES
RED WHITE GREY WHITE ACROSS THE CONTINENT,
THEIR SAD AND TENDER FINGERS GLITTERING
IN THE ABSENCE OF THEIR MEN, WHO SLUMBERED ACROSS THE SEA.

AND SLEEPLESS GIRLS WE SANG THROUGH THE NIGHT,
SONGS I REMEMBER AS I REMEMBER OUR FRIGHT

Operator?

Your number please?

Please deposit

ten cents more.

Operator.

Your number please?

I'm sorry, ma'am,

your time is up.

AND BEV, YOU REMEMBER THOSE CASUAL WEAR DAYS
WHEN WE SAT WITH PALE KIND LADIES, THEIR SPREADING FLESH
FADING AND SCENTED IN SOFT PICNIC DRESSES
AS POLITE AND FRIGHTENED WE SWALLOWED
UNEASY NOODLE SALADS, THEIR INTENDED COMFORTS OUR REWARD
FOR BEING SUCH DREADFULLY GOOD GIRLS.

THEN AFTER SUMMER PASSED, HERE IN THE WORLD
THOSE CHILDREN, PRECIOUS PRICELESS PREDATORS
RETURNED TO COLLEGE IN PROLETARIAN CHIC AND PEASANT KITSCH
WHILE HE HURRIED IN THIN-SOLED FLATS LIGHT ON A FROSTY SIDEWALK
TO PUNCH IN AND ANCHOR OURSELVES BOUND AND FACELESS
TO THE BOARD, GIRLS PLAINTING AMERICA
RED WHITE GREY WHITE ACROSS THE CONTINENT
DULUTH TO DETROIT, TO THE FIRE DEPARTMENT,
TO THE BUSY BEE MARKET. BUSINESS. BRITHS. DEATHS.

IN WINTER, WHITE MARBLE BALANCED ON AN EGG
AS FLATLY JAZZED BRIDAL LASAGNA SWEAT
QUEASY BEADS THROUGH WEDDING GIRFT PYREX,
AND GOLD ROOSTERS CROWED AND FLAUNTED AVOCADO PLUMES
WHITE SHIVERING GIRLS TIPTOED PAST THEIR BLOOM.
PAMMY'S CAVE RAT TRAPPED DEEP IN THE JUNGLE,
AND SHARON'S SNIPER IN HIS TINY BOAT,
POOR UNDYING WRAITHS, WHAT DID THEY DREAM
WHILE THEIR FEET YELLOWED AND ROTTED
WITHIN HEAVY LACED BOOTS, IN THEIR SLUMBER ACROSS THE SEA?

REMEMBER BEV, HOW VERY YOUNG WE WERE?
I REMEMBER, AND REMEMBER HOW HE KISSED YOUR PRETTY FACE.

Saturday Night

by Karen Schmidt

PERFECT STALE GREEN LAWNS

OF INTENTIONS.

INTELLIGENT LOVELY DAUGHTERS.

HANDSOME POPULAR SONS.

200 BUCKS AND THE CAR FOR

PROM NIGHT.

BACKYARD PARTIES OF HIGH STATUS

AND FALSE SINCERITY.

MEETINGS, SCHOOL EVENTS, ENDLESS FUNDRAISERS;

FLAT SODA AND STALE POPCORN

OF OPPORTUNITY.

A RIGID SMILE.

DETERMINED SUPPORT.

A BARRIER FOR DISILLUSIONMENT.

The Cosmetic Counter

by Karen Schmidt

THE OPEN CASKET OF TRUTH
REVEALING TOO MUCH
TO ABSORB UNDER FLUORESCENT
LIGHTS.
PRESSURE FROM INVISIBLE HANDS
MOLD MY BODY.
ONLY MY MIND IS FREE
TO FLOAT ABOVE
ON ANCIENT WINGS OF LIBERATION,
SHOUTING TO SILENCED EARS
DESPERATE TO BE HEARD.
YET I KNOW
BEAUTY IS ENOUGH TO GET THROUGH THE DAY.
A CONSTANT BATTLE OF DESIRE
IN DEAD FIELDS OF PLASTIC SOULS.

Head of the Household

By Karen Schmidt

THE SHORT WALK FROM YOU TO ME.

ENOUGH TIME TO UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE

OF BIG BODIES AND SHORT FUSES.

A SALTY CRACK OF INSUFFICIENT NOISE

EMERGING FROM ONE TO ANOTHER.

HOT TEARS ON COLD CHEEKS,

BLURRY EYES UNFOCUSED ON

THE DECISION MAKER.

CHOOSING SIDES, PARTNERS, HAPPINESS;

BULLSHIT WITH A NAME.

THE TIMER SOUNDS.

THE COOKIES ARE READY.

OPEN WIDE,

YOU'RE GETTING WHAT YOU WANTED.

The Lakeshore

by Josh Magsam

IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL EVENING. THE SETTING SUN SHONE ON THE LAKE, PAINTING THE SURFACE IN ORANGE AND RED. ACROSS THE LAKE, TWO DEER CAME OUT OF THE WOODS AND CREPT TO THE SHORE TO DRINK.

THE TWO PEOPLE SITTING ON THE BANK WERE VERY STILL. NEITHER ONE WANTED TO DISTURB THE OTHER. THEY SAT A FEW FEET APART, EACH CONSUMED WITH THEIR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS. THE CABIN ON THE HILLSIDE LAY SILENT AND STILL, ITS WINDOWS DARK. A LIVER AND WHITE HUNTING DOG SLOWLY MOVED ACROSS THE YARD, NOSE TO THE GROUND, ON THE TRAIL OF ONE ANIMAL OR ANOTHER.

SHE BROKE THE SILENCE FIRST.

"I'M SORRY," SHE SAID, BRUSHING HER HAIR FROM HER FOREHEAD. HE LOOKED AWAY QUICKLY.

"DON'T SAY THAT. IT'S TOO LATE TO SAY THAT." HE STARED OUT AT THE LAKE. A FISH JUMPED, ONE HE WOULD HAVE BEEN HAPPY TO LAND ANY OTHER DAY, BUT HE DIDN'T SEE IT.

"BUT I AM SORRY," SHE REPLIED, LOOKING DIRECTLY AT HIM. "I NEVER WANTED THIS TO HAPPEN. YOU'RE A WONDERFUL PERSON, I DIDN'T WANT TO HURT YOU..." HER VOICE TRAILED OFF. HE WASN'T LOOKING AT HER.

"MOST PEOPLE DON'T WANT THINGS LIKE THIS TO HAPPEN," HE SAID. "BUT THEY DO. THEY ALWAYS HAVE." HE PAUSED.

"DOESN'T MEAN I HAVE TO LIKE IT."

"NO, OF COURSE NOT," SHE SAID QUICKLY - TOO QUICKLY, REALLY.

HE KNEW WHAT SHE MEANT. SHE WANTED IT TO BE QUICK AND CLEAN - PAINLESS, ESPECIALLY FOR HER. SHE WANTED TO CUT THE TIES AND RUN AWAY, LEAVING HIM HOLDING THE CARDS. YET SHE DIDN'T WANT TO FEEL THE GUILT. SHE WANTED HIM TO FORGIVE HER NOW, SO SHE COULD HAVE A CLEAR CONSCIENCE. HE SAID NOTHING.

"LISTEN. I WANT YOU TO DO SOMETHING FOR ME."

HE RAISED ONE EYEBROW.

"THIS WHOLE AFFAIR WAS NONE OF YOUR FAULT; I DON'T WANT YOU DWELLING ON IT AND LETTING IT WEIGH YOU DOWN. GET

ON WITH YOUR LIFE, DON'T GET HUNG UP IN ALL OF THIS MESS." SHE LOOKED INTO HIS EYES, PLEADINGLY.

HE SMILED THINLY.

"DO YOU REALLY THINK IT'S THAT SIMPLE? THAT I CAN DISMISS THIS "AFFAIR" AS YOU CALL IT AND NOT THINK ABOUT IT EVER AGAIN?"

SHE STARED AT HIM SADLY THROUGH THE GLOOMY LIGHT, THEN RELEASED HIS HAND. AFTER A FEW MINUTES SHE STOOD UP AND SAID,

"I STILL HAVE A FEW THINGS TO PACK. I'D BETTER GO BACK TO THE CABIN." SHE TURNED AND SLOWLY WALKED BACK TOWARDS THE CABIN, ARMS FOLDED AROUND HER CHEST, AS IF TO KEEP HER ESSENCE FROM ESCAPING.

HE DIDN'T MOVE. THE SUN SLOWLY SANK BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THE LAKE, BUT STILL HE DID NOT RISE. DARKNESS FELL, AND WITH IT CAME THE AWAKENING OF THE CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT. FROGS ALONG THE BANK BEGAN TO CROAK, CRICKETS CHIRPED. OVERHEAD AN OWL CALLED OUT TO HIS BRETHREN. IN THE DISTANCE, AS THE MOON ROSE TO CLAIM HIS POSITION AS KING OF THE SKY, A PACK OF WOLVES RAISED THEIR VOICES IN HOMAGE.

FINALLY HE STOOD TO HIS FEET. WITH ONE LAST LOOK AT THE MOONLIGHT PLAYING ON THE LAKE, HE HEADED UP THE HILL FOR THE CABIN.

INSIDE, THE DOG GREETED HIM AT THE DOOR WITH A WILDLY WAGGING STUB OF A TAIL AND A LOPSIDED GRIN. HE PAUSED TO SCRATCH HER EARS AND THUMP HER RIBS, THINKING TO HIMSELF THAT THE CLAIM OF DOGS BEING MANS BEST FRIEND HAD NEVER SEEMED SO TRUE.

THE DOG TRAILED HIM OUT TO THE KITCHEN, WHERE HE Poured AN EXTRA HELPING OF FOOD INTO HER BOWL. THAT DONE, HE TOOK A MUG FROM THE CUPBOARD AND Poured HIMSELF A CUP OF COFFEE, FRESHLY BREWED. AS HE TOOK A SIP, A SMILE - A GENUINE, HONEST SMILE, ALBEIT A SAD ONE - PLAYED AT THE CORNERS OF HIS LIPS. SHE ALWAYS HAD MADE EXCELLENT COFFEE, THAT AT LEAST HAD NOT CHANGED.

HE LEFT THE DOG IN THE KITCHEN AND WENT INTO THE LIVING ROOM. THE BEDROOM DOOR WAS SET INTO THE FAR WALL AND HE CROSSED THE ROOM, TRIED THE KNOB AND FOUND IT LOCKED. HE COULD HEAR HER MOVING AROUND INSIDE THE

ROOM, BUT AS HE RAISED HIS HAND TO KNOCK, HE THOUGHT BETTER OF IT AND TURNED AWAY.

SETTLING INTO HIS FAVORITE ARMCHAIR, HE SIPPED AT HIS COFFEE, HIS THOUGHTS DRIFTING INTO THE PAST. THE DAY THEY MET, THEIR FIRST KISS, THEIR WEDDING DAY. THE MAGIC OF THEIR HONEYMOON IN JAMAICA, THE NIGHTS SPENT BY THE FIREPLACE IN THIS VERY CABIN.

WHERE HAD IT ALL GONE WRONG, HE WONDERED, AS SO MANY MEN BEFORE HIM HAD SILENTLY ASKED THEMSELVES. LIKE HIS PREDECESSORS, HE FAILED TO FIND A SINGLE EVENT, OR ONE MISSPOKEN WORD THAT HAD SENT THEM DOWN THIS JAGGED ROAD. IT HAD BEEN A GRADUAL FALLING OUT. A MIXTURE OF BEING TOO CLOSE AND NOT COMMUNICATING, CREATING AN ULTIMATE EMOTIONAL HABITUATION - A CLOSENESS THAT HAD EVOLVED INTO A BORING SAMENESS. SO CLOSE THAT ANY NEW FACES MUST HAVE SEEMED LIKE AN INVALUABLE OPPORTUNITY TO START AGAIN.

IT HAD GONE ON FOR A WHILE. HE NEVER NOTICED THE GLANCES, THE WHISPERS OF TOWNSPEOPLE AND COWORKERS BEHIND HIS BACK. HE REFLECTED THAT MAYBE IF HE HAD NOTICED, MAYBE IF HE HAD GONE TO HIS FRIEND'S HOUSE AND CONFRONTED HIM, GOTTEN INTO A KNOCK-DOWN, DRAG-OUT FIGHT FOR HIS LADIES HONOR, MAYBE THEY WOULD BE SOMEWHERE ELSE NOW. BUT IT WAS TOO LATE FOR THAT: THE OPPORTUNITY HAD LONG SINCE PASSED.

"ARE YOU THERE?" SHE CALLED SOFTLY FROM THE DOORWAY. HE STARTED, NOT HAVING HEARD THE DOOR OPEN.

"YES," HE REPLIED, SIPPING HIS NOW-COLD COFFEE TO RECOVER HIS COMPOSURE. IN THE DIM LIGHT COMING FROM THE KITCHEN, HE SAW HER START ACROSS THE ROOM TOWARDS HIM. SHE CAME AND STOOD BEHIND HIS CHAIR, GENTLY MASSAGING HIS SHOULDERS. "I'M SORRY," SHE WHISPERED.

"STOP SAYING THAT," HE SNAPPED. "IT'S NO GOOD NOW."

"I WISH I COULD UNDO THE WHOLE MESS, BUT I CAN'T. I'M TRYING TO MAKE THIS AS EASY AS POSSIBLE, AND YOU'RE NOT HELPING."

"THAT'S BECAUSE THERE'S NO WAY TO MAKE IT EASY AT ALL. IT'S GOING TO BE A MESSY, BLOODY THING, AND THERE'S NO WAY AROUND IT."

"WE'RE TRYING OUR BEST TO MAKE IT EASY ON YOU!" SHE WAS

CRYING NOW. "AT LEAST WE'RE GOING AWAY FOR AWHILE TO SAVE YOU THE EMBARRASSMENT-"

HE INTERRUPTED HER.

"TO SAVE ME THE EMBARRASSMENT, YOU'RE GOING TO LEAVE? OH, THAT'S GOING TO WORK REAL WELL, ISN'T IT?"

"WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO? AT LEAST YOU WON'T HAVE TO SEE US TOGETHER, WON'T HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE PAIN OF THAT EVERY DAY!" SHE HALF SAT, HALF FELL INTO A CHAIR.

"I WON'T HAVE TO DEAL WITH PAIN? THE TWO OF YOU WILL MINCE ON OUT TO VEGAS AND EXCHANGE YOUR WORTHLESS VOWS IN FRONT OF A RUMMY IN A GAUDY CHAPEL IN SOME OVER-THE-TOP CASINO, WHILE ALL THAT I'LL HAVE TO DO IS TO SIT HERE AND WATCH THE SUN SET ON THE LAKE. MAYBE ON SATURDAY MORNINGS I'LL MOSEY INTO TOWN TO THE DINER AND HAVE SOME BREAKFAST. COULD BE THAT I'LL EVEN BE ABLE TO IGNORE ALL THE WHISPERING BEHIND MY BACK. 'POOR GUY, HIS WIFE TOOK UP WITH ONE OF HIS DRINKING BUDDIES AND LEFT HIM.' 'IT'S SO SAD WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HIM, AIN'T IT? POOR FELLA LOOKS SO ALONE.' ALL THE SYMPATHY AND PITY THAT I NEVER ASKED FOR, I'LL HAVE IT ALL MY LIFE NOW, THANKS TO YOU TWO."

HE WAS OUT OF HIS CHAIR NOW. SHE TRIED TO SPEAK BUT HE CUT HER OFF.

"THEN, AFTER A FEW WEEKS, YOU'LL GET TIRED OF THE TRAVELING AROUND AND SPENDING ALL OF YOUR MONEY. YOU'LL COME ON BACK TO TOWN AND SETTLE IN TOGETHER. YOU'LL HAVE A HOUSEWARMING; ALL OF OUR OLD FRIENDS WILL GO. YOU'LL HAVE A CAKE AND PRESENTS, A NEW HOUSE TO BUY CARPET AND FURNITURE FOR. EVERYONE WILL SAY 'OH, WHAT A WONDERFUL COUPLE.' 'SO NICE TO SEE YOU TWO ARE FINALLY HAPPY.' NOT A THOUGHT OR A WORD FOR THE TEN YEARS YOU AND I HAVE HAD TOGETHER, NO COMMENT ON THE FACT THAT YOU BROKE YOUR MARRIAGE VOWS AND DISGRACED US BOTH FOR NEARLY TWO YEARS BEFORE YOU DECIDED TO STICK THE KNIFE IN A LITTLE DEEPER, SKIN ME OUT OF TWENTY THOUSAND DOLLARS AND THEN START UP A HAPPY NEW LIFE WITH YOUR LITTLE FRIEND. THIS IS THE METHOD YOU'RE GOING TO USE TO SPARE ME EMBARRASSMENT? I'D HATE TO SEE WHAT YOU HAD PLANNED IN THE EVENT THAT YOU DECIDED YOU WANTED ME TO SUFFER."

SHE STARED AT HIM AND THEN TURNED AND WENT TO THE BEDROOM WITHOUT SPEAKING, HER SILENCE MORE THAN AN ADMISION OF HER GUILT.

HE SAT DOWN AGAIN, REACHING UP TO RUN HIS FINGERS THROUGH HIS HAIR, AN OLD NERVOUS HABIT OF HIS. HIS HANDS WERE SHAKING, ALMOST UNCONTROLLABLY, AND ALL HE COULD THINK OF WAS THE ANGUISH IN HER VOICE DOWN BY THE LAKESHORE EARLIER. THERE WAS A TIME WHEN HE COULD NOT BEAR TO SEE HER IN PAIN; WHEN HE WOULD HAVE SLAIN ANY DEMON TO BRING A SMILE TO HER FACE ONCE MORE. HOW MANY TIMES HAD HE WHISPERED IN HER EAR THAT HE WOULD DO ANYTHING TO KEEP HER FROM EVER SUFFERING? AND EVEN IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS, HOW MANY TIMES HAD HE PLEADED WITH HER TO WORK IT OUT? WE'LL TAKE A SECOND HONEYMOON, HE TOLD HER. JUST YOU AND I, ON THE BEACH IN JAMAICA FOR A WEEK...WE'LL REMODEL THE KITCHEN LIKE YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO...HOW ABOUT A LONG WEEKEND IN THE CITY, YOU CAN GO SHOPPING IN THAT EXPENSIVE STORE DOWNTOWN YOU LOVE SO MUCH, BUY SOME NICE THINGS...WE'LL GET IT BACK TO GOOD AGAIN.

IT WAS NO USE. THE FIRES THAT ONCE BLAZED INSIDE HER HAD DIED TO EMBERS, AND THOSE EMBERS SMOLDERED STILL FROM NOTHING MORE THAN SHEER GUILT. GUILT THAT THIS MAN, WHO MAYBE HAD HIS FAULTS, BUT NEVERTHELESS WAS A GOOD MAN, WAS IN PAIN BECAUSE OF HER. GUILT THAT SHE HADN'T BEEN TRUE TO AN HONEST MAN WHO HAD ALWAYS BEEN THERE FOR HER, WHO SHE HAD LOVED SO PASSIONATELY ONCE. AND SHE WANTED THAT GUILT ERASED, NOT FOR HIS SAKE BUT FOR HERS. SHE WANTED TO CUT THE TIES NEATLY, TO MOVE ON AND BEGIN HER NEW LIFE WITH NO VESTIGES OF THE OLD CLINGING TO HER SKIN. UNFORTUNATELY (AT LEAST IN HER WAY OF THINKING) HE WAS NOT MAKING THIS VERY EASY ON HER. HE SAT THERE IN THE LIVING ROOM, ANGUISH AND MISERY BLEEDING FROM HIS PORES, UNTIL HE SAW THE FIRST TENDRILS OF DAWN CREEPING ACROSS THE SKY. A FEELING OF PANIC OVERTOOK HIM WHEN HE REALIZED THAT IN A FEW SHORT HOURS, SHE WOULD BE GONE FOREVER, AND HE COULD DO NOTHING TO STOP HER. THOUGHTS AND SCHEMES RACED THROUGH HIS HEAD FASTER THAN HE COULD FOLLOW, FROM THE OBVIOUS TO THE BIZARRE, BUT HE HAD JUST ENOUGH

WILLPOWER LEFT TO REALIZE THEY WERE ALL POINTLESS TEMPORARY SOLUTIONS AT BEST.

POSSESSED SUDDENLY BY A VIOLENT NEED TO BE SOMEWHERE ELSE, SOMEWHERE BESIDES SITTING IN THAT CHAIR IN THAT ROOM, HE AROSE QUICKLY AND GRABBED HIS CAR KEYS. HE STOPPED HALFWAY TO THE GARAGE, STRUCK BY THE REALIZATION THAT HE COULDN'T SIMPLY RUN AWAY LIKE THIS. HE HAD TO BE THERE WHEN SHE LEFT, TO WRITE THE FINAL VERSE AND SEAL SHUT THE BOOK PERMANENTLY. REPLACING THE CAR KEYS ON THEIR RACK, HE GRABBED HIS JACKET AND WENT DOWN TO THE LAKESHORE AGAIN. SEATING HIMSELF ON A PINE BENCH (SHE'D SPENT TWO DAYS PAINTING IT AND STENCILING IT WITH PINE CONES AND LEAVES) HE CLOSED HIS EYES AND LISTENED TO THE SOUNDS OF THE LAKESHORE AS IT SLOWLY AWAKENED. THE LOONS CALLING SOFTLY, THE BREEZE STIRRING THE TREES, FROGS CROAKING THEIR GOODBYES AS THE FOG SLOWLY BEGAN TO LIFT. HE TRIED TO LET HIS MIND GO, TRIED TO FREE IT TO DRIFT ON THE WIND, AWAY FROM THE SORROWS THAT DWELT THERE. HE TRIED TO COMPREHEND THE PEACE AND TRANQUILITY THAT HAD LIVED IN THIS PLACE SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME, UNMOVED BY THE PETTY PROBLEMS OF THE SHORT-LIVED MORTALS THAT CAME AND WENT FOR BRIEF SECONDS NOW AND AGAIN. FINALLY, EXHAUSTED AND WEARY, HE DOZED OFF INTO A FITFUL SLEEP.

HOW LONG IT WAS UNTIL THE DOG WOKE HIM, PRESSING HER WET NOSE AGAINST HIS FACE IN A CONCERNED MANNER, HE DID NOT KNOW. AS HE SHRUGGED OFF THE SHROUD OF SLUMBER, HIS SENSES SHARPENED TO THAT PECULIAR KEENNESS THAT SOMETIMES COMES WHEN ONE HAS JUST AWAKENED, HE BECAME AWARE OF VOICES COMING FROM THE CABIN, AND THE PEACE HE HAD SOUGHT SO HARD SIMPLY SLIPPED AWAY.

HE KNEW THAT HE SHOULD GET UP AND GO HELP HER MOVE HER THINGS; SHOULD SHAKE HIS HAND, PAT HIM ON THE BACK, AND WISH HIM THE BEST. HE SHOULD HUG HER, GIVE HER A BROTHERLY KISS ON THE CHEEK AND PUT ON A SMILE AS HE WAVED AT THEIR DEPARTING CAR. BUT HE COULD NOT; HIS FEET WOULD NOT MOVE, HIS LEGS WERE NUMB, AND NO MATTER HOW MUCH HE WILLED THEM, THEY REFUSED TO BUDGE. SO HE JUST SAT THERE, UNMOVING, SILENT AND STILL, THE DOG RESTING HER CHIN ON HIS KNEE.

THE SOUNDS CONTINUED TO GO ON BEHIND HIM FOR SOME TIME. THEY VOICED WORDS HE COULD NOT HEAR, TOOK THINGS HE COULD NOT BEAR TO SEE LEAVE HIS HOME. HE HEARD HER LAUGH ONCE, HER OLD, HIGH-PITCHED LAUGH, AND WONDERED HOW LONG IT HAD BEEN SINCE SHE'D LAUGHED LIKE THAT AT ANYTHING HE'D SAID OR DONE.

FINALLY THE DOORS OF THE HOUSE CLICKED SHUT AND A CAR DOOR SLAMMED. HE STRAINED HIS EARS, EXPECTING TO HEAR THE CRUNCH OF GRAVEL UNDER THE TIRES AS SHE WAS CARRIED AWAY. INSTEAD HE PICKED UP THE SNAPPING OF A TWIG UNDER A HESITANT FOOT AND TURNED TO SEE WHAT IT WAS.

SHE STOOD A LITTLE WAYS OFF, HER JACKET ZIPPED AGAINST THE SHARPNESS OF THE MORNING AIR, HAIR PULLED BACK INTO THE STYLE HE KNEW AND LOVED SO WELL. THE DOG WENT TO HER AND SNUFFED AT HER PANT LEG, HUFFING UNDER HER BREATH AS SHE PICKED UP A DIFFERENT SCENT. HE STOOD TO HIS FEET, SOMEWHAT UNSTEADILY, AND FACED HER.

HE CLEARED HIS THROAT.

"WELL." TOOK A DEEP BREATH, RELEASED IT AGAIN. "I GUESS THIS IS IT."

SHE LOOKED AWAY.

"Yes, I suppose so."

"TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF."

"YOU TOO."

"I WILL."

SHE TRIED TO SMILE, FAILED, AND BIT HER LIP TO KEEP FROM CRYING.

"YOU BETTER GO. I GUESS HE'S WAITING UP THERE FOR YOU."

SHE NODDED.

"LISTEN, I..."

HE WENT TO HER THEN, PUT A FINGER AGAINST HER LIPS AND SHOOK HIS HEAD.

"IT'S ALL DONE. THE CHOICES HAVE BEEN MADE. THERE'S NOTHING LEFT FOR YOU TO SAY THAT HASN'T ALREADY BEEN SAID."

HER TEARS WERE FLOWING NOW, AND HE HAD TO TURN AWAY; HE COULDN'T BEAR TO SEE THEM. AFTER A FEW MOMENTS SHE SNIFFED AND SAID,

"YOU'RE RIGHT." HE FELT HER HAND ON HIS SHOULDER.

"GOODBYE."

HE FACED HER AGAIN, TOOK HER HAND IN HIS AND FORCED A SMILE.

"YES. GOODBYE." LEANING FORWARD, HE GAVE HER A QUICK PECK ON THE CHEEK AND RELEASED HER HAND. HE SAT DOWN AGAIN, LISTENING TO HER FOOTSTEPS RECEDING BEHIND HIM. WHEN HE COULD NO LONGER HEAR THE ENGINE OF THE CAR RECEDING IN THE DISTANCE, HE GAVE IN AND CRIED.

THAT WAS EIGHT YEARS AGO.

THE PAINT ON THE BENCH WAS NOW FADED FROM THE SUN AND THE RAIN, BUT IT STILL OVERLOOKED THE SAME LAKE. THE LOONS STILL GAVE THEIR HAUNTING CALL ACROSS THE WATER; THE DEER DRANK AT THE SAME SPOT ON THE SHORE AS THEY ALWAYS HAD. THE DOG, OLD AND TIRED, DOZED BY HIS FEET. HE PUT HIS HAND ON THE HEAD OF THE LITTLE BOY THAT SAT NEXT TO HIM, INTENTLY WATCHING A FROG SWIMMING IN THE SHALLOWS. HE STILL THOUGHT ABOUT HER FROM TIME TO TIME; WONDERED IF SHE WAS AS HAPPY AS HE WAS, IF SHE HAD BEEN BLESSED WITH WONDERFUL CHILDREN, AS HE HAD. A VOICE CALLED FROM THE HOUSE AND HE GOT UP, RUFFLING THE BOYS HAIR AFFECTIONATELY.

"COME ON SPORT, DINNER'S READY."

HE WALKED SLOWLY TOWARDS THE HOUSE, HOLDING HIS SON'S HAND, THE DOG LIMPING FAITHFULLY ALONG BEHIND THEM. HE THOUGHT ABOUT THAT DAY EIGHT YEARS BEFORE, THE PAIN AND THE ANGUISH OF HER LEAVING, THE FEELING THAT NOTHING WOULD EVER BE RIGHT AGAIN... YET, AS HE LOOKED DOWN AT HIS SON, HE KNEW HE'D GO THROUGH IT ALL OVER AGAIN. AND OVER HIS SHOULDER THE SUN SLOWLY DRIFTED BELOW THE TREES, PREPARING TO RISE AGAIN AND SHED LIGHT ON ANOTHER DAY, AS IT ALWAYS HAD AND ALWAYS WOULD.

Prodigal

by Andrew Cumings

WAYWARD CHILD, TEARFUL BARD
TELL YOUR STORY SO FAMILIAR
IN THE DARKNESS OF THE TAVERN.
I DON'T KNOW YOU, FRIEND
NOT LIKE I USED TO
IN THE BROTHERHOOD OF WAR.
I REMEMBER YOU IN YOUTH,
WHEN THE ONLY SONG IN YOUR HEART
WAS THE CADENCE CALL OF WAR.
I WANT TO HATE YOU
FOR WHAT YOU DID TO YOURSELF,
BUT I CAME BACK AGAIN
TO HEAR YOU SING THAT
SAME PATHETIC SONG.
YOU RUINED YOURSELF
THE SHAME ALL THE GREATER
BECAUSE OF WHAT YOU COULD'VE BEEN.
I CRY A TEAR
AND DRINK A DRINK
FOR YOU.

Mary

by Andrew Cumings

RUNNING TO NOWHERE,
WILL YOU KNOW WHEN YOU GET THERE?
WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?
LONGING TO BE CAUGHT AND HELD,
BUT YOU RUN AND HIDE SO WELL.
IS LONELINESS YOUR SANCTUARY?

GAVE IT ALL AWAY,
LOST WHO YOU WERE.
HE SINGS A SONG OF STARRY NIGHT,
AND ONLY ASKS YOU DANCE.
A PIROUETTE OF LAUGHING LOVE.

THE SKY IS DARKENING,
DON'T BE AFRAID.
JUST LAY YOUR HEAD BACK DOWN.
LIGHTENING CRASH,
AND ANGELS CRY-
HE ORDERS REST,
THE WORLD TURNS OVER.
AND YOUR LONELINESS A PRELUDE
TO HIS SYMPHONY.

Where's Kara

by Jennifer Rose

WHERE'S KARA?

JUST A NAME ON A PAGE,

A PAGE OF OLD TIMES AND MEMORIES

LOST IN THE SHUFFLE

THROWN OUT WITH AGE.

A PERSON ONCE KNOWN.

A SPIRIT ONCE SHOWN.

GONE FOREVER, FORGOTTEN, FALLEN.

EVERYONE I ONCE KNEW

WAS A PART OF ME

LOSING THEM,

I LOST MYSELF.

LOVE NOT THE ONES YOU MISS THE MOST.

THEY ARE SIMPLY PHANTOMS, MERELY GHOSTS.

Beginning to End*by Jennifer Rose*

PASSION LICKS

AT HEATED WICKS.

LOVE OOZES DOWN

UNTIL FROZEN WAXY COLD.

FLAME DIES; WORLD DARKENS.

LOVE GROWS OLD.

Eagle Clan

by Terry W. Lussier

SPIRITS COME TO ME WHEN OUR EYES MEET.
LOOKING AT YOU ONCE CAN ONLY ADMIRE,
A SYMBOL OF GRACE, PRIDE AND POWER.
WE LOOK AT YOU AND STARE IN AWE,
ONE OR MANY YOU ARE ADMIRER BY ALL.
I WATCH IN AMAZEMENT WHEN YOU SOAR SO HIGH
GLIDING EFFORTLESSLY YOUR SPIRIT REMAINS,
YOU ARE MY FATHER.
YOU FLY LIKE THAT WIND AND FLY SO FREE,
IF I COULD BE ANYTHING
I WOULD BE LIKE YOU
GLIDING TO YOUR PERCH HIGH IN A TREE.
MY PRAYERS ARE WITH YOU
THEY ALWAYS WILL BE,
YOU SYMBOLIZE FREEDOM FOR OUR COUNTRY TO SEE
YOU ARE MY SON.
WHEN I SEE YOU I PUT OUT TOBACCO AND
GIVE THANKS TO ALL MY RELATIONS.
YOU ARE LIKE A BEAUTIFUL RAINBOW
COLORS SHINING BRIGHTLY
A GLORIOUS SIGHT TO SEE.
YOU ARE MY DAUGHTERS, YOU ARE MY WORLD,
YOU HAVE MY COMPLETE ATTENTION
WHENEVER I HEAR YOUR CALL.
WITHOUT YOU I DO NOT EXIST
YOU ARE MIGIZI
I LOVE YOU ALL

Poetry Reading Audience

by Nathan Ness

YOU, THE AUDIENCE ARE WHAT

INVENTS CONTEMPTUOUS
POETS...

YOU THE AUDIENCE, IN YOUR WOOL

SKIING SWEATERS
AND NON-PRESCRIPTION GLASSES
WITH GREY SPECS
OF AGE IN YOUR HAIR,
CROSS LEGGED YOU SIT...

YOU, THE AUDIENCE, SO KEEN ON UNDERSTANDING

OUR WORDS, OUR VAGUE,
INTERPRET US HOW YOU WILL
WORDS...

YOU, THE AUDIENCE, QUICK WITH THE CASUAL

"HMMS", AND NODDING YOUR HEADS
WHENEVER WE MENTION
THE MOON AND STARS...

YOU, THE AUDIENCE, KNOW WHEN TO QUAINLY

CHUCKLE, KNOW WHEN TO BURST
IN ALL OUT LAUGHTER
WHEN WE MENTION
CHIPMUNKS IN LOVE ON VALENTINES DAY
OR IF WE SAY THAT OUR WIVES
ARE THE *real* MEN OF OUR HOUSE-HOLDS...

YOU, THE AUDIENCE WILL PAY US 5 DOLLARS

PER HEAD-NOD
AFTER THE READING BY PURCHASING OUR
OVER-PRICED POETRY BOOKS...

YOU, THE AUDIENCE WILL APPROACH US

AFTER THE READING...ASKING US
WHAT SO & SO A LINE MEANS...
AND IF THEY INTERPRETED THE
METAPHORS CORRECTLY...

YOU, THE AUDIENCE WILL ACCEPT OUR BLUFF

AS WE RESPOND,

“YES, WELL...THE LINE ABOUT THE DOG
BARKING AT THE CLOCK TOWER, ISN'T *only*
OUR STRUGGLE FOR IMMORTALITY...IT *also*
INDICATES MAN'S INNATE AND BARBARIC
RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ETERNAL -NATURAL
WORLD AROUND US...

YOU, THE AUDIENCE...

WILL “REJECT THY FATHER AND REFUSE
THY NAME,” IF WE PUSH YOU THAT WAY...

YOU, THE AUDIENCE...

WILL BLOW OUR PHANTOM FLUTES
AND WATER OUR UN-GRATEFUL ROOTS,
AND NOD YOUR HEADS
AND NOD YOUR HEADS...

YOU, THE AUDIENCE...

YOU, THE AUDIENCE.

Moment in Time

by Dan Undem

THE MOON CASTS ITS COOL LIGHT DOWN TO EARTH
THE MAN IN THE MOON LAUGHS AND TAKES,
A SIP OF THE NECTAR OF THE GODS.
I SIT AND WRITE BELOW HIS WATCHFUL EYE.
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT SCRAWLED ON THE PAPER.
WORDS CAN NEVER ADEQUATELY DESCRIBE THIS MOMENT.
TIME WILL ERASE THIS MOMENT FROM MY MIND,
BUT IT CAN NEVER ERASE THE WORDS FROM THE PAGE.
THEY WILL LIVE ON LONG AFTER I A GONE.
IT IS THE PROBLEM OF LANGUAGE.
ITS INADEQUACIES WON'T LET ME PROPERLY RECORD THIS
MOMENT,
BUT,
ONCE WRITTEN I WON'T BE ABLE TO FORGET IT.
ONE WHO LIVES IN THE PAST HAS NO FUTURE
AND ONE WHO LIVES IN THE FUTURE HAS NO PAST.
LIVE IN THE MOMENT,
FOR THE NEXT TIME YOU BLINK,
IT WILL HAVE ALREADY PASSED YOU BY.

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by David Erickson

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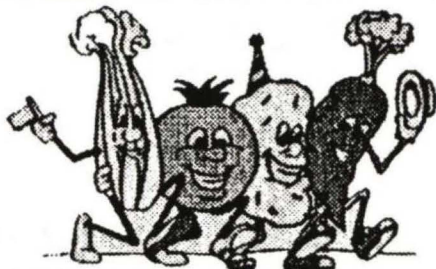
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