

Pegasus



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THE EXPERIMENT

*First we created the environment
to conduct the experiment in —
that took five days,
and on the sixth we put in
our two main subjects.
We watched them grow,
change, reproduce, spread.
Now (many days later)
there are billions of them
from the original two.
There are many variations
on the original copy.
They fight for little areas
of the environment we created,
to have spaces for themselves
and their families,
little realizing that
they are all of the same family.
They have leaders
who make important decisions for them.
They kill each other
over disagreements — they have wars;
killing others for one's idea of right.
One day while looking through
our viewing device,
we observed a bright flash
and a cloud rising from a tiny area
surrounded by water on all sides.
We saw the subjects learn to fly,
and living in every possible spot,
even destroying the environment that
we created for them in order to make
new places to live.
After a few days
the experiment ended
when the subjects destroyed themselves,
their environment and everything in it,
and all that they worked hard to create.*

Carol Flechsig

Convoy

by Brigham Bentley

TSCHHK TSCHHK "CODY"
tschhk, "hey cody" tschhk, "Hey
Cody!

"Hey Cody, it's time to get up, man. The convoy's getting ready to roll out."

"All right! I'm up! Aw, would someone turn down the sun?"

The Lucky Lady isn't exactly the most comfortable place in the world to sleep, but on the road she's about the safest place I know; you see, the Lady's my car. She isn't much to look at, compared to some of the other cars on the road today. She doesn't have all the fancy weaponry and electronics as the others, but she carries a dual mount machine gun on a lift platform hidden under her roof and a few other surprises, one of which is a set of four anti-tank missiles; L.A.W. tubes actually, strapped to her belly. It's not a lot, but if you know what you're doing you don't need much. Besides, I run bandit for truckers who give me plenty of backup; no one attacks a truck except maybe another truck, so I really don't need that much.

"Lucky Lady to the All-American Transfort, you ready yet?"

"Crazy Joe here, the Transfort's all warmed up, Cody, and the Mary Jane said she's A-1. Just call on up to the gatehouse when you're ready and we'll get this show on the road."

"Ten-four Transfort, Lucky Lady to Clark gatehouse, convoy ready to leave, requesting open gate."

"You got it Lady, good luck and good numbers, gatehouse out."

I pulled the Lady onto the strip and through the heavy steel gates, watching as the two trucks pulled in line behind me. The run itself is pretty standard, a six hundred mile run between Clark and Tuscon with a stop halfway there at Salt Flat truck stop. We'd probably stop there for lunch and be finished the run by dinner time. That is of course assuming there are no dust-ups on the way. I hope we don't have any trouble today. Much as I enjoy a good duel, I'm not really in the mood. . . .

"Break 19, this here's the Silver Fox. I got myself a bit o' a problem, is there anybody out there?"

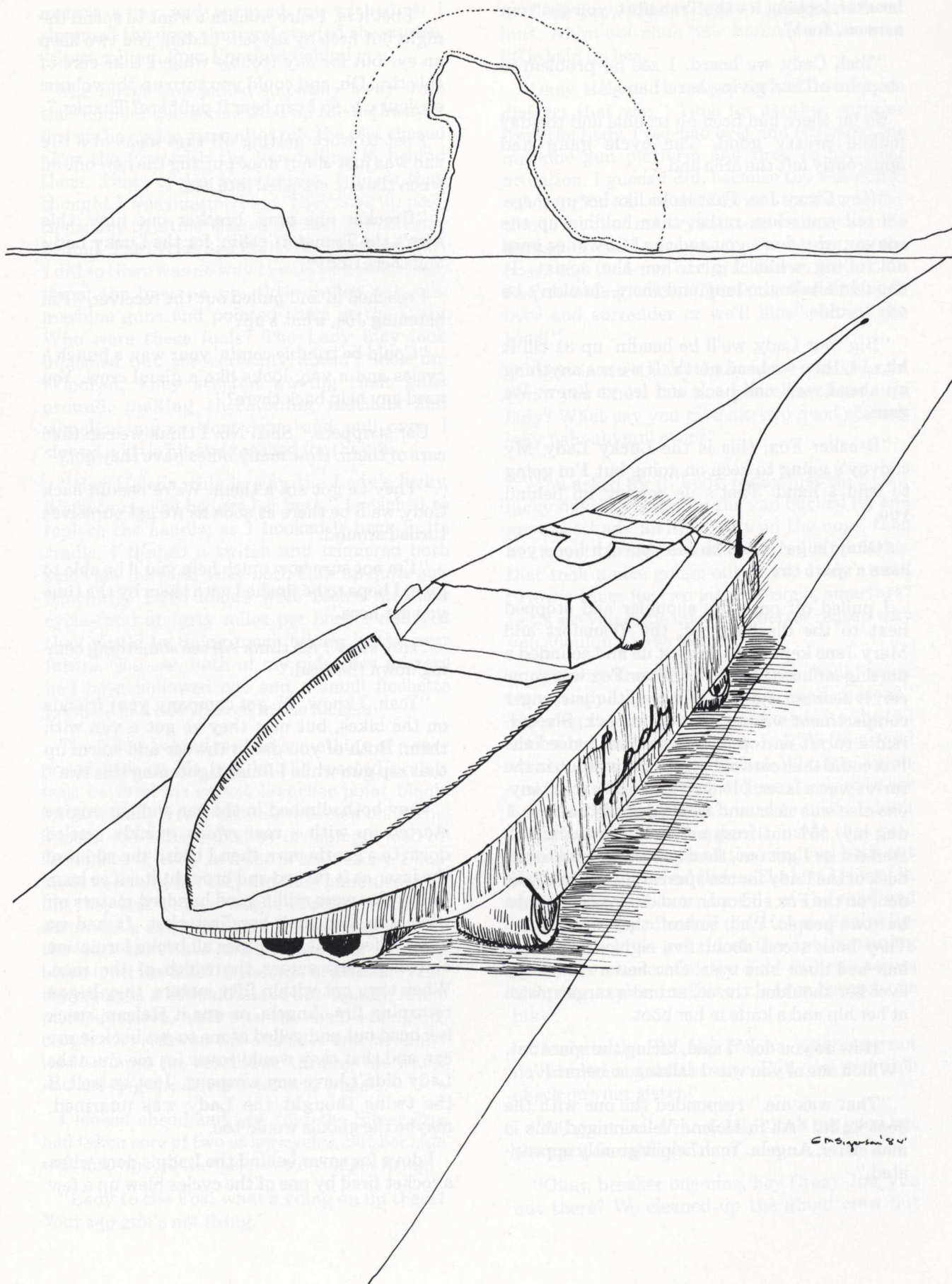
"Breaker one nine, calling for the Silver Fox, you're speaking to the Lucky Lady; what seems to be the problem?"

"Well hello suga', it's good to here from somebody. Ah got myself into a little wing ding with a pack o' cycles last night and they left me in a bad way. Mah car is off the road and mah right front tire is just a mass o' shredded rubber."

"Any trouble right now? What happened to the cycles?"

"Oh, they're gone now. The Fox does a dandy job o' takin' care o' me; they just got in a few lucky shots befoah Ah chased them off."

"Okay, well we shouldn't be too far from you now, we'll be there in a few minutes. Breaker,



G. M. Sigurdson '84'

breaker, looking for the Transfort, you got your ears on, Joe?"

"Yeah Cody, we heard. I see no problem in stoppin' off and giving her a hand."

So far there had been no trouble and the day looked pretty good. The cycle gang had apparently left the area and. . .

"Hey, Crazy Joe. That looks like her up there. I'll tell you what, rather than holding up the convoy, why don't you and the Mary Jane keep on rolling while I give her the assist. It shouldn't take too long and there shouldn't be any trouble."

"Big four Lady, we'll be headin' up 31 till it hits 14, then we head north. If we see anything up ahead we'll call back and let ya know. We gone."

"Breaker Fox, this is the Lucky Lady, My convoy's going to keep on going but I'm going to lend a hand. That's us coming up behind you."

"Okay, suga', good to see you. Ah hope you have a spare tire."

I pulled off onto the shoulder and stopped next to the disabled car; the Transfort and Mary Jane kept right on past us and sounded a parting air horn blast. The Silver Fox was some car; it seemed she was all hood, the passenger compartment was all the way in back. She carried a turret on top and I saw that indeed the Fox could take care of herself; the weapon in the turret was a laser. I looked around to see if anyone else was near and then popped the door. I dug my .357 out from under the seat and holstered it as I got out, then headed around to the back of the Lady for the spare. As I did that, the door on the Fox slid open and disgorged not one but two people. Well, sort of, they were twins. They both stood about five eight, long blond hair and dusk blue eyes. One had a rifle slung over her shoulder, the other had a target pistol at her hip and a knife in her boot.

"How do you do," I said, lifting the spare out, "Which one of you was I talking to before?"

"That was me," responded the one with the boot knife, "Ah'm Helena Voltaine and this is mah sister, Angela. Yoah help is greatly appreciated."

"I bet it is. I sure wouldn't want to spend the night out here by myself. Listen, you two keep an eye out for any trouble while I take care of this tire. Oh, and could you turn up the volume on your c.b. so I can hear it out here? Thanks."

I set to work getting off that mess of a tire and was just about done putting the new one on when the c.b. crackled into life.

"Breaker one nine, breaker one nine, this here's the Transfort callin' for the Lucky Lady. You there Cody?"

I reached in and pulled out the receiver, "I'm listening Joe, what's up?"

"Could be trouble comin' your way, a bunch a cycles and a van; looks like a ghoulish crew. You need any help back there?"

Car strippers, "Shit! No, I think we can take care of them. How many bikes have they got?"

"They've got six a them. We're headin back Cody, we'll be there as soon as we get ourselves turned around."

"I'm not sure how much help you'll be able to give, I hope to be finished with them by the time you get here."

"Hey suga'? Ah think Ah see something coming down the road."

"Yeah, I know. We got company, your friends on the bikes, but now they've got a van with them. Both of you get in the car and warm up that zap gun while I finish tightening this tire."

They both climbed in the car and the engine started up with a roar which quickly settled down to a gentle purr, then I heard the whine of the laser as it turned and brought itself to bear. The cycles were still a good hundred meters off when the Fox took her first shot. It had no direct effect, but the cycles all broke formation and dispersed across the width of the road. When they got within fifty meters, they began returning fire. Angela, or was it Helena, stuck her head out and yelled at me to get back in my car, and that they would cover for me since the Lady didn't have any weapons. Just as well, if the twins thought the Lady was unarmed, maybe the ghouls would too.

I dove for cover behind the Lady's door when a rocket fired by one of the cycles blew up a few

meters away and sprayed me with dirt. I slammed the door shut and started the engine, "Start rolling, Fox, I'm right behind you!"

The Silver Fox pulled smoothly away from the shoulder and accelerated up the highway; a few of the cycles came after me, the rest chased after the Fox with the van falling in behind them. Three cycles were on me, I guess they thought I was unarmed too. They took up positions, one to either side of me and one directly behind. The cycles had better acceleration than I did so there was no way I could pull away from them; the ones on my sides pulled out sub-machine guns and pointed them at the Lady. Who were these fools? The Lady may look unarmed but she certainly doesn't look unarmored. They started waving their guns around, making threatening motions and signaling me to slow down and pull over. I slowed a little bit and reached for the c.b.

"Hey Helena, this is why the Lady's lucky, it's because she hedges her bets." I reached to replace the handle; as I hooked it back in its cradle, I flipped a switch and triggered both side view mirrors. They both blew up quite satisfactorily. Both bikers were blown off their cycles and at forty miles per hour I doubted they would be doing much biking in the near future. You see, both of my side-view mirrors had been hollowed out and a small flechette grenade had been placed in the niches.

The fellow behind me had something of a surprised look on his face but he reacted pretty fast; he fired his rocket launcher point blank into the Lady's rear end. She shook a bit at the impact and I responded by dropping a load of tire spikes directly in front of him. These I had made specially, not only did they puncture tires but they had a meter length of chain welded to them. On a car, this chain would wrap around the axle and either lock the wheel or actually break it off the axle. In the case of a motorcycle, the result is a little different but equally, if not more, effective. As it was, the chain swung up, caught the rider on the shoulder and wrapped itself around the handlebar, turning the wheel and sending the driver head over wheels.

I looked ahead and saw that the Silver Fox had taken care of two of her cycles, but her side was torn up and the laser was no longer firing.

"Lady to the Fox, what's going on up there? Your zap gun's not firing."

"Cody . . . this is Helena. Angela's been hurt, Ah'm not shua how bad. Ah could use a little help up hea."

"Okay, Helena, I'm on my way, I'll see if I can distract that van." Time for another surprise from the Lady. I reached over and triggered the machine gun platform and fired to get their attention. I guess I did, because the van pulled out from in front of the Fox and took up a position in front of me, trying to slow me down. He backed up and gave the Lady a bang on the nose, and then my c.b. crackled to life with a deep rumbling voice, "This is the Cerberus, pull over and surrender or we'll blow you off the road!"

"This is the Lucky Lady you're talking to, don't you know it's not polite to threaten a lady? What say you give me two good reasons why I should pull over?"

"You asked for it, Lady, today just isn't your lucky day." In response the van backed up and gave the Lady another butt on the nose, then her turret turned around and fired off a rocket that took a nice gouge out of the Lady's side. "How's them for two good reasons, smartass? Let's see you come up with a better reason why you shouldn't have to stop."

"Didn't you ever learn that you should never hit a Lady? How's this for a good reason?" Flooring the accelerator, I rammed into the tail end of the van, fired all four L.A.W. tubes and veered off to the left. The L.A.W. tubes aren't very accurate, since they're just strapped to her belly, but point blank it's hard to miss. I don't know exactly what happened inside that van, but as I pulled past it all the windows blew out in a cloud of glass and flame. The last I saw of it, the van pitched over the side of the road and rolled over. Up ahead of me, Helena finally figured out how to get rid of the one remaining cycle; she accelerated the Fox and cut across him, running him and his cycle over. Scratch one biker.

"Lady to the Fox, hey Helena, you better not have blown out another tire. Pull over and we'll check on your sister."

"All right Cody, she doesn't look too good but she's still breathing."

"Okay, breaker one nine, hey Crazy Joe, you out there? We cleaned up the ghoul crew but

we're still going to need some help. One of the girls got hit."

"I hear ya Cody, we'll be there in a few. In the meantime, just keep holdin' the fort. Transfort out."

I pulled next to the Fox, covering her holed side with the Lady, and got out. Helena was just opening the door as I got out. "Let me have a look at her and we'll see what we can do."

"Ah . . . Ah guess so suga'. Thea's a first aid kit in the front compartment, under the dash."

I climbed into the car and clambered around under the dash to get the kit, then had to squirm into the back area to get a look at Angela. Indeed, she was something of a mess, there was blood streaked in her hair and on her face and jumpsuit. I checked her over but all I found was a gash on her head; apparently she was brained by a piece of the door when it got blown in. I put a bandage on her head and tried to lay her back in a slightly more comfortable position. About the time that I climbed out of the Fox, the two trucks came up and pulled off the road.

"Hey, Cody," Joe called as he swung down out of the cab, "What's the news? She gonna be all right?"

"She'll be okay, she just caught a chunk of the door with her head. There's not much we can do to patch up the hole in the door, and the Lady needs some repairing and refitting. It looks like we are going to have to lay over at mid-point, we'll have to call ahead and let them know why we're late."

"S'pose we'll hafta, Cody. We'll take care a the business arrangements, you take care a the ladies."

"Okay Joe, I'll tell you what, you turn the trucks around and I'll strap Angela into her seat so she doesn't get thrown around at all."

I got Angela secured in her seat and by the time I got out of the Fox the two trucks had turned around. I waved them on and turned to Helena, "Make sure you stay close and try to keep one of us on your open side, preferably one of the trucks. They'll do a better job of covering that hole. We'll be in the truck stop at Salt Flat in about two hours; you can get some help for your sister and your car once we get there."

"Okay, suga', Ah really must thank you for all the help you've given us." She reached up and gave me a brushing kiss, then climbed in the Fox and started her engine. I paused for a second before going back around and getting into my own car; the roads are a rough life and you're always living on the edge. You just never know if you're going to make it to the next stop. Maybe it was time to gather my funds and settle down to a life where I know where I was and where I'd be tomorrow, but for now I still have to get the convoy and our tagalong to Salt Flat stopover.

"Breaker one nine, Lucky Lady to convoy, we're rolling. We'll be with you in a few minutes."

"Ten four, Cody, we hear you, convoy out."

The trucks were just ahead of us and the Silver Fox was cruising right beside me. I gave them a blast on my horn and the trucks split up giving us room to squeeze in between them. We rode along like that for another hour and a half or so when I looked out my rear view mirror and saw something coming up behind the convoy. I picked up the c.b. and called, "Lucky Lady to the Mary Jane; hey Stone, take a look out your rear and tell me what you see."

What was coming up behind us was another truck. This one was painted gloss black with gold pin striping, and she was coming in full tilt.

"Hey Cody? This is the Mary Jane, I see it, that's the Black Dragon. You better get yourself and the Silver Fox out of here and leave that truck to us. Her driver is a rebel trucker; he cruises the highways looking for private vehicles and under-armed trucks to raid. Once we get rid of him we'll catch up to you at Salt Flat. As it is, the two of you are just going to get under wheel or in the way."

"And what am I supposed to do, just run off from this fight? Or had you forgotten that I'm supposed to be running bandit for you?"

"That fact we haven't forgotten, Cody, but face it, you used up most of your gimmicks on that ghoul crew. We're only twenty miles out from Salt Flat, so you better get moving before I give you a bump on the rear. Now move!"

"Okay! You're right . . . Hey Fox, you got your ears on?"

"Shua thing, Ah heard what he sayd. Ah guess we better get going. Last one there is a bald tire!"

The Fox pulled out of line and started accelerating away, and I followed suit. After a couple of minutes she slowed down to eighty miles per hour, and in ten minutes I could see the walls of the truck stop rising out of the ground, ten meters high. I reached for the c.b. and announced our arrival, "Breaker one nine, this is the Lucky Lady calling for the Salt Flat gatehouse, do you read?"

"Salt Flat gatehouse, we see you Lady. You're scheduled in with two trucks, where are the Transfort and the Mary Jane?"

"We picked up a tag-a-long on the way here and the trucks just picked a scrap with the Black Dragon twenty miles out. Would you mind rolling up the gate and then letting the doc know we have a patient for him? She got hurt in a dust-up halfway between here and Clark."

We pulled in through the gate to the main lot. I got out and went over to the Fox. Helena was just getting out and I looked in to see that Angela was awake; so I reached in and gave her a hand out. I steadied her as we walked over to the little medical building and let ourselves in. I left them there while I went over to the garage to arrange repairs for both cars and to reserve berths for the trucks while we waited for the work to be completed. When I finished that I went back to the medical building and found Helena in the waiting room.

"The doc sayd that Angela would have to stay in bed for a day or two but she'll be all right. In the meantime why don't we get somethin' to eat? Ah've got some things Ah'd like to talk to you about."

"Sounds good to me. The cafe here isn't the fanciest place in the area but the food's pretty good. Let's go." I took her out and led her to the cafe. We sat ourselves down in a corner booth and placed our orders. We passed the time with small talk, but when we were both finished eating she put her hand over mine and said, "Cody, Ah thank you ever so much foah helpin' mah sister an' me. Ah've been thinkin' that maybe the roads aren't such a good place foah a lady, at

least not one like me. Ah'm sellin' the Fox and settlin' down here in Salt Flat; wah don't you join me, Cody? The road's no place to live, here you could have peace and security and . . . and a life. How 'bout it, Cody?"

"Well, I've been thinking something along the same lines, and I think I could really get to like you, but . . ."

"Hey, Cody! There you are, I been lookin' all over for you, man."

It was Crazy Joe, standing in the door and shouting to be heard in the crowded little diner. "You take care a all a your business, Cody? You got the girl and the cars in getting repaired?"

"Yeah Joe, I took care of it all. Angela's going to be fine and both cars are in the shop. Helena's selling the Fox and staying here in Salt Flat, what do you think of that?"

"I guess it's okay. If that's what she really wants to do. Me, the roads are my home. Right Cody?"

"Uh, yeah. Listen folks, I'm going to get a room and crash. I'll see you all tomorrow. Okay?"

"Sure thing Cody, talk to you later man."

"Shua suga'. Ah'll be talking to you tomorrow too, keep what Ah sayd in mind and let me know tomorrow. Good night."

I got up, paid our bill and went to get a room for the night. I didn't really sleep much that night. Mostly I tossed and turned and thought about my life, though I did finally fall off to sleep. The next morning I got up early and went out to the garage to see how the work was going. The Lady was finished and the trucks were already out of their berths and waiting on the tarmac. I got into the Lady and pulled her out of the garage; Helena was waiting outside and I turned off the engine while I talked to her.

"Well suga', what do you think? What have you got out there on the road? Soona oah later yoah gonna be too old to drive and then where'll you be? And that's only if yoah lucky, if yoah not, you'll be so much junk out there. What kinda life is that?"

I sat back and thought, she was absolutely right, what kind of a life was it? Eventually I will be too old to drive; and as she said, that's

only if I'm lucky. If I'm lucky I'll grow old and die a slow, quiet death due to old age . . . a slow death.

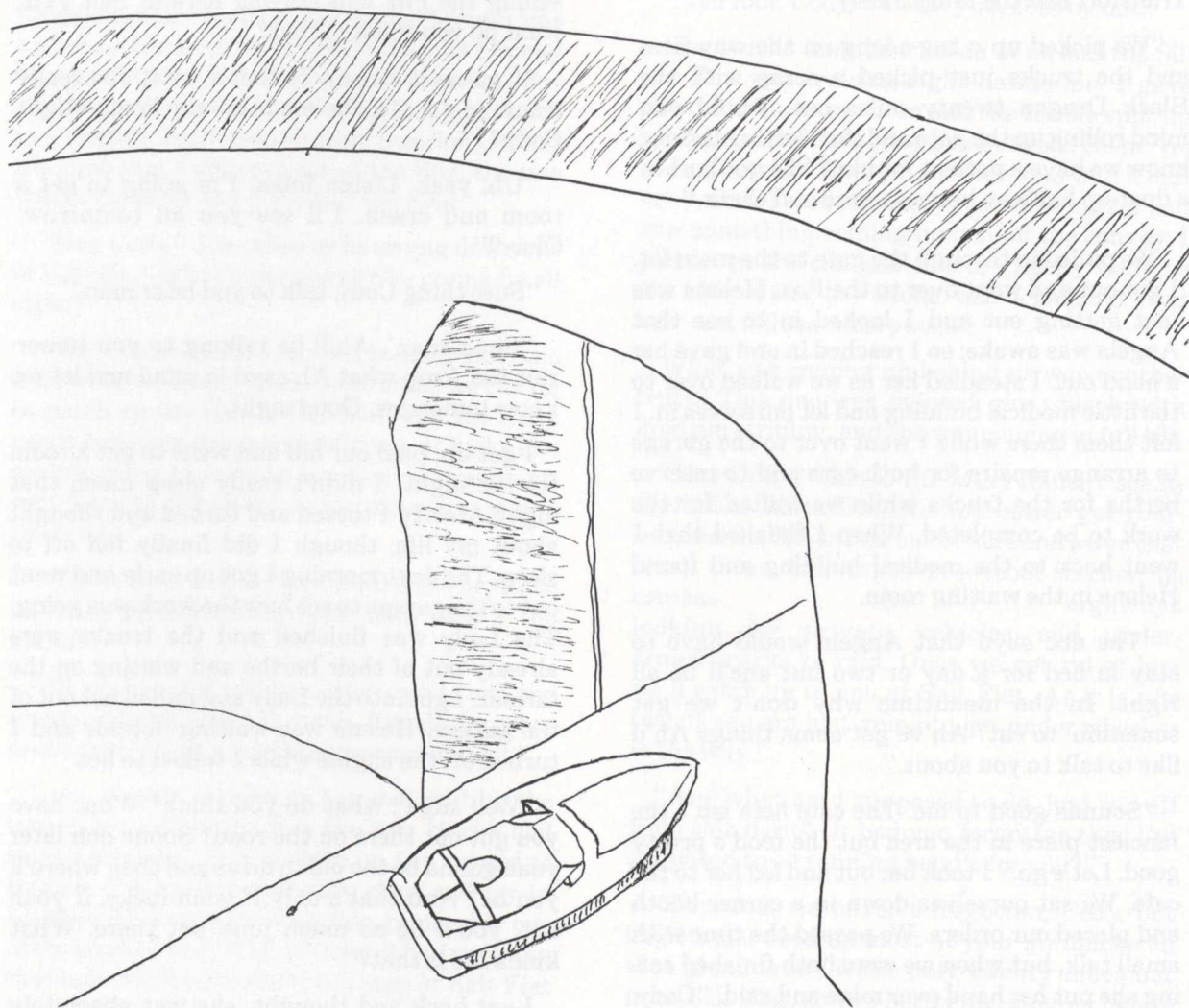
I reached for the ignition and started the Lady's engine, "Lucky Lady to the Transfort, you got your ears on Joe? Let's get this show on the road."

"Transfort here, convoy's ready to roll. I'll call the gatehouse. Let's roll out."

"Hey Joe, just what happened out there yesterday between you and the Black Dragon? You never told me."

"Well Cody, it's a long story. Remind me to tell you about it sometime when we have a slow night or somethin'."

A slow night, huh? That means I'll probably never hear about it. After all, there's no such thing as a slow night on the road. Perhaps if I'm lucky I'll hear all the stories I missed, just like if I'm lucky I'll die of old age and become just another corpse in the graveyard. You tell me, just what kind of life is *that*?



SPACE OUT

*as he travels through his mind
he'll open every door he finds
and break out on the other side
a very cosmic ride*

*he hopped onto a train of thought
wondered where it would leave him off
in some foreign state of mind
a trip through space and time*

space out

*mr. spaceman
where's your rocket ship?
where's your shiny, silver suit?
is it a perfect fit?*

*mr. spaceman
is there room for me?
I could pour the TANG
and keep you company*

space out

*journey out to inner space
explore the worlds behind your face
reach out for a shining star
discover who you are . . .*

space out

C.D. Flagiello

WISHES

*For a fleeting moment,
I saw a singular star,
darting to the north,
wanting to be wished upon
Catching my attention.*

*I saw it, and
wished.*

*Nothing happened as I watched
it descending and soon
it disappeared over the horizon.
I saw a bright flash
to the north.*

*I saw it, and
wished.*

*I heard thunder
and for a fleeting moment*

*I saw
hope
slipping
slowly
away.*

*I saw a star ascend
from the north,
catching my attention,
along with a huge cloud.*

*I saw it, and
wished
That nothing had happened.*

Carol Flechsig



UNTITLED

*Black velvet sky
Cool crescent moon
Melted hearts underneath
Loneliness had mounted inside
Breaths of nothings blew out good-bye.
By candlelight
On a perfect night
Spent without a flicker.*

Betty Jane Mahoney

WIND DREAMS

*I sit like the tree
letting the wind flow
through my leaves and branches.*

*I soar like the bird
becoming one with the wind
and the sun.*

*I touch like the grass
forever becoming entwined
in life's cycles.*

*To dream is everything
but to be aware
is the thrill of sensing all.*

Kim Boles

CHILDREN ??? OR ??? ADULTS

Are we children acting as adults, or

Are we adults acting as children?

Children have fights, then they're friends.

Adults have fights, then they're enemies.

Children have something to share; they give.

Adults have something to share; they keep.

Children respect the old and life.

Adults avoid the old and life.

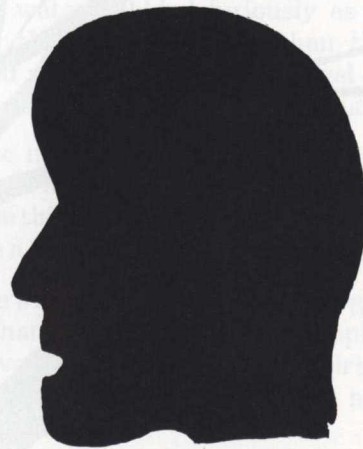
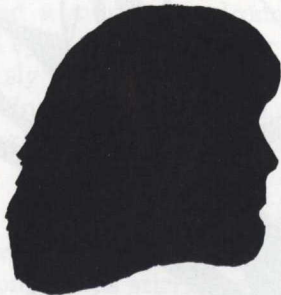
Are we children acting as adults, or

Are we adults acting as children?

As adults, maybe we should copy the children,

Before the children copy us.

Nancy E. Wellington





T. CLAYTON

Riches In The Dust

Have you had a kindness shown?

Pass it on;

'Twas not given for thee alone,

Pass it on;

Let it travel down the years,

Let it wipe another's tears,

Till in Heaven the deed appears —

Pass it on.

Henry Burton, "Pass It On"

THE AUGUST HEAT ASSAILED MORRISTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL'S playground early that morning many summers ago.

A breeze, which had gamely swirled about at dawn, had been driven out, and only thick, humid oxygen remained.

A calico with his pink tongue protruding like a sliver of lunchmeat flopped wearily in the damp gravel beneath the playground's water fountain.

Overhead a mud wasp droned like a prop plane and eyed the cat's comfortable position. Immediately it dive-bombed both the cat and the fountain before settling on the rim of the latter where it hopped about, content for the moment.

On the Little League field, some hundred yards from where the cat and wasp hid from the heat, a woman was stirring up the infield dirt with a well-worn broom.

The woman, clad in a cotton dress and supporting a shawl across her stooped shoulders, struck the grounds with quick, pendulum-like motions. An object, caught by the sun, caused her to stop. As she bent down to retrieve the warm, dusty Indian Head nickle, the reflection sent shadowy images, like photo images, dancing across her retinas.

Jake Willouby, head janitor and bus driver for the Morriston School District, emerged from

the basement of the elementary school carrying two buckets brimming with gray, sudsy waste water.

He saw the solitary figure moving across the ball field as he flung the dirty water across the blacktop lane that separated the school from the playground.

The water bubbled furiously as it streaked along the torrid asphalt, then the rivulets formed pools on the baked gravel where they were grudgingly accepted by the hard asphalt.

Jake mopped his face and neck with a red bandana and, as he watched the woman sweeping the third base area, a robust sigh, like steam inside a boiler, escaped slowly between his lips.

Jake's huge frame was clothed in green utility garb that strained to retain his ample girth and massive shoulders. A line of perspiration traced his spinal column and pockets had formed under each armpit.

Despite his imposing size and brusque manner, Jake enjoyed popularity among both adults and school children, especially the latter who usually demanded that he ferry them on their field trips or to Dr. Manley's office for their annual inoculations.

An ice cream truck with its bell jingling merrily wheeled sharply into the playground and screeched to a halt near Jake's two empty buckets.

"Hi, Jake. Hot enough for ya," the young driver asked cheerily. He was dressed in a white uniform with a black bow tie and his hat sat atop slicked-back hair at a rakish angle.

"Hi, Bennie, what's the word," Jake countered as he absently watched the woman with the broom poking around in the left field grass.

The ice cream vendor lit a cigarette and nodded toward the object of Jake's attention. "Don't know how Carla can wear them heavy clothes on a day like this. Hey, Jake, how old is she? I bet a guy that she's under forty."

"She's thirty-six," Jake replied flatly.

"Damn, I knew it," Bennie squealed triumphantly. "Do you think she finds much dough rootin' around like that?"

"Enough to buy and sell a squirt like you," Jake chortled, but the smile drained slowly from his face as he pulled a memory from a dusty corner of his mind. He shuffled his thoughts carefully, rearranging the words associated with the recollection, then he wet his lips in final preparation.

"Fourth of July, three or four years back. The VFW and the power company were playing out there," Jake explained, pointing to the Little League field. "Actually, it was more drinking than ball playing. Anyway, Carla shows up just as both teams are leaving. She sweeps around both player benches, between cars, everywhere. The point is she collected almost twenty bucks that day."

"You mean those guys dropped that bread on purpose?" Bennie was skeptical.

"Yeah," Jake said woodenly, as his eyes skirted the ball field gathering the sights and sounds of that day for a brief reunion within his mind.

The mud wasp, long since bored with the water fountain, buzzed Bennie's head and brushed up against the sides of his truck. It careened madly along one bumper, then flew away in quest of better intrigues.

"I hate them damn things," Bennie snarled as he crouched down to collect his fallen hat. "That's just a few drunk guys, Jake. Actually what she does is the same as panhandling or begging."

"No, Bennie," Jake replied, shaking his head.

"The same thing happens on Main Street. People see Carla coming and right away the hands dig into pockets and purses. The way I see it is Morriston takes care of its own. Bennie, don't you think of her as special?"

"Carla? No, she's nuts. My granny claims that even looking her way will put the curse on you. Besides, I got plenty of ways to spend my pay without tossing it away to some strange bird."

"Carla is slightly retarded; she's not crazy. By the way, junior, here she comes. Stick around and learn something about people," Jake said, poking the vendor in the ribs.

Carla approached the two men with deliberate slowness, as if she were crossing a minefield and her eyes swept the ground before her in wide arcs. Her left hand held the woolen shawl so tightly that both men noticed her knuckles had gone snow-white. The other hand gripped a faded carpetbag and the ancient broom, the latter dragging along in the grass like a rudder.

"Hi, Carla," Jake said evenly. "Nice seeing you again. Oh, this fella is Bennie Baker. I'm sure that you've seen him around."

Carla eyed the vendor suspiciously and shifted her weight from one foot to the other. She fingered her purse nervously and the coins inside clinked like chains across concrete.

"Would you like some ice cream," Bennie ventured half-heartedly.

"No," Carla replied curtly and she quickly thrust her face within inches of the vendor's. Bennie unconsciously took a step backwards; momentarily frightened by the countenance before him that seemed to mirror confusion, and register child-like curiosity while, at the same time, Bennie saw that it cruelly betrayed her youth.

Suddenly Carla withdrew from her inspection of Bennie and turned shyly to Jake. "Would you count my money, Mr. Willouby? Mother wouldn't do it for me."

"Sure, Carla, be glad to," the janitor replied and for several moments the playground was silent. The cat, his flanks laboring to ventilate his system, slept in the cool sphere of the water fountain and his ears flicked in quick reflex to slow moving flies that tickled them.

Finally Jake smiled at the expectant face whose eyes darted from his hands back to her own which held the purse. "Sixteen dollars and nineteen cents. Not bad for an hour's work, Carla. Pretty good, huh Bennie?"

"Yeah, great," the ice cream vendor replied nervously. "Excuse me, I could use some of that spring water." Bennie walked briskly toward the water fountain and the semi-conscious cat, sensing his advance, leaped up in fright and sped off across the playground in a crazed, zig-zag pattern.

As Jake was returning the coins to Carla's purse, he heard her gasp and he looked up in time to see her clutching her shawl at her throat.

"Trouble coming from the west," Bennie said in mock jest and the three of them watched as Ida Terry, Carla's mother, hurried toward them. She wiped her forehead with the back of one hand while the other hand stayed buried within the pocket of her flowered apron.

"This is where I bail out," Bennie said sheepishly. "I don't get involved in family fights, especially when they're between two women." He gunned the engine of his truck and quickly backed down the asphalt lane. Jake waved and Bennie responded with three blasts from his horn.

"Jake, why didn't you bring her home," Ida moaned, "if I can't count on you, who can I trust?"

"We just lost track of the time, Ida," Jake answered in a patronizing voice.

Carla, her back to them, swept the gravel several feet away. She knelt to examine an object that stuck up through the ground like a shiny mountain peak.

"Put that down," Ida commanded. "We're going home right now, my fine young lady."

The buried item turned out to be a piece of broken glass and Carla, tossing it aside, expanded her search to an area several feet to the left.

"That girl ages me," Ida said wearily. "but she listens to you, Jake. Why is that?"

"I guess we speak the same language. Ida, you know that we've had this little talk before. Isn't it time to send her to the school at the capital. Morriston just is not big enough for her.

She needs special attention. I've told Seth the same thing for years."

"I know you're right. God knows the way she guilts people into giving money is shameful. Seth doesn't understand. Not being her real. . ."

"Ida, you confuse pity with goodness; people feel good giving her a quarter. The people in this town really like and care about her," Jake explained waving his arms widely as if to indicate the entirety of Morriston.

"It would be best," the stout woman replied, her hands wringing out her apron as if to dispel the years of wear and worry. "I can't keep her in. She sneaks off no matter what I do. But you are right, Jake, she can't take care of herself and Seth and me are getting too old to chase her around. God knows a thirty-five year old woman shouldn't look like her. My mother used to say that a woman should always appear as fresh as a daisy, regardless of age. But I can't keep her clean, and if I turn my back, she's gone."

Jake and Ida watched Carla, who was crouched down beside the water fountain and they could hear the slow cadence of her voice as she called out numbers at random.

"Now what," Ida asked resignedly and she lightly touched Jake's elbow.

"Mr. Willouby," Carla shouted over her shoulder, "would you help me count please?"

Jake left Ida and moved to where he could observe Carla's activity. To his surprise, the janitor saw rows of coins neatly lined up according to their size; quarters, nickles, pennies and dimes stood in precise rows like soldiers awaiting a command.

Jake tallied the stacks of coins as he crouched down in a catcher's position and he could feel the eager, expectant eyes upon him. Finally he turned his head toward Carla and announced flatly, "Five dollars and twenty-five cents."

Carla placed the new-found treasure inside the carpetbag/purse and got up. "Thank you, Mr. Willouby." Then without looking at her mother, she muttered, "I'm ready."

"Good-bye, Jake," Ida said to the janitor. "I'll try your sermon on Seth again." She left

Jake with a tired smile and fell in step behind Carla, who was retracing her steps back to the Little League field.

As Jake watched the two women walk across the outfield, Carla bent down several times to examine objects that caught her eye and Ida quickly expediated these delays with stern warnings.

The woolen shawl had slipped from Carla's left shoulder and she allowed it to drag behind her. Jake saw it creeping along, like the train of a bride's gown, and he heard the coin-laden purse chime each time Carla's right foot touched down.

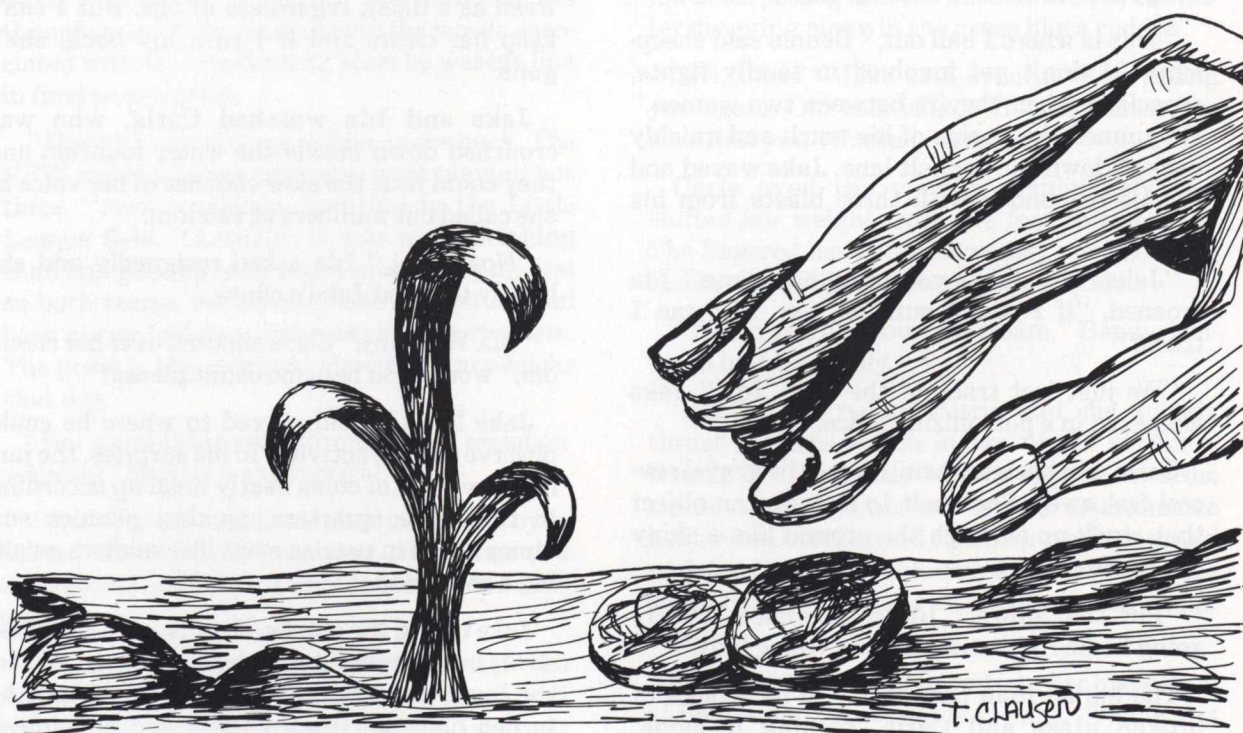
Bennie's ice cream truck, several blocks away

on a side street, seemed to answer the pealing as its bell rung out in enticement.

Suddenly a lump formed in Jake's throat as he recalled Bennie's trip to the water fountain and the subsequent find by Carla.

Collecting the empty buckets, Jake entered the welcome relief of the cool basement beneath Morriston Elementary School. The janitor let the chilly cellar air engulf his entire body for several moments, then he closed the double doors and threw the dead bolt, leaving the oppressive heat outside to again reign supreme over the playground.

Steven Meglio



IN PRAISE OF PUNCTUATION

*If there was no such thing as punctuation
then there would be no pauses for breath
or changes of meaning or inflection
or ways to abbreviate words
and the sentence would be a non-existent entity
which means that people would not be able to write
but they can since there is so I can stop.*

Diane Houlihan

The Conflict

by Diane Houlihan

Paul Gerlach

Greg Sigerson

THE CAVERN WAS SHROUDED IN SHADOWS. Slowly, stealthily, one of them began to slink along the dank stone wall toward the ice-white moonlight streaming through the rough-hewn windows above. The only thing discernable was the strange, intense glow piercing the darkness through the masking folds of the cloak, twin pin-pricks of cold white light. The slipper-shod feet padded panther soft across the cold stone floor. A black-gloved hand issued forth from the voluminous cloak and the sword clutched in it blazed silver, as though sucking in all the light surrounding it and flinging it back with blinding intensity.

"Ah, my old friend," came the deceptively soft whisper. "Long has it been since I have needed your services, but not long enough." An edge of despair crept in. "Not near long enough."

With one sweeping step, he stood in the pool of moonlight, like a vortex, a total absence of light. He was swathed in black cloth: black cloak and cowl, black gloves, supple black leather slippers. Even his eyes, as painfully blinding, seemed to glow with an anti-light that magnetized anything bright and alive. His long, solid body was a silent challenge thrown in the face of his adversary.

The man that materialized opposite him was his exact negative image. He was enveloped in pristine white and his eyes glinted with dark, quiet sorrow. The only difference was that in his hand was a thin silver rapier. It looked pitifully insubstantial against the massive white flame of the broadsword.

"So you've come, Michael. Let us hope that this time the outcome will not repeat that of our last encounter." The dark man's eyes flashed, then dimmed to a steady glimmer.

The white-clothed man approached slowly, with a graceful, floating motion. His robes fluttered warmth as he moved closer to his black-robed opponent. His rapier flicked out, whipping the cowl away from the black man's face. It was a colorless face, oddly dull against the power of his eyes and the rich darkness of his garments. He remained still, his eyes wavering slightly, as Michael struck again . . . and yet again. Repeatedly it struck, never wounding physically, but sending his pride into agony.

Slowly, against his will, he began to parry the lightning quick blows, flicking them harmlessly away. But his hurt pride cried out for vindication. How could he *let* this . . . this enemy strike him? He was no better; in fact, he was worse. He, not Michael, was the best!

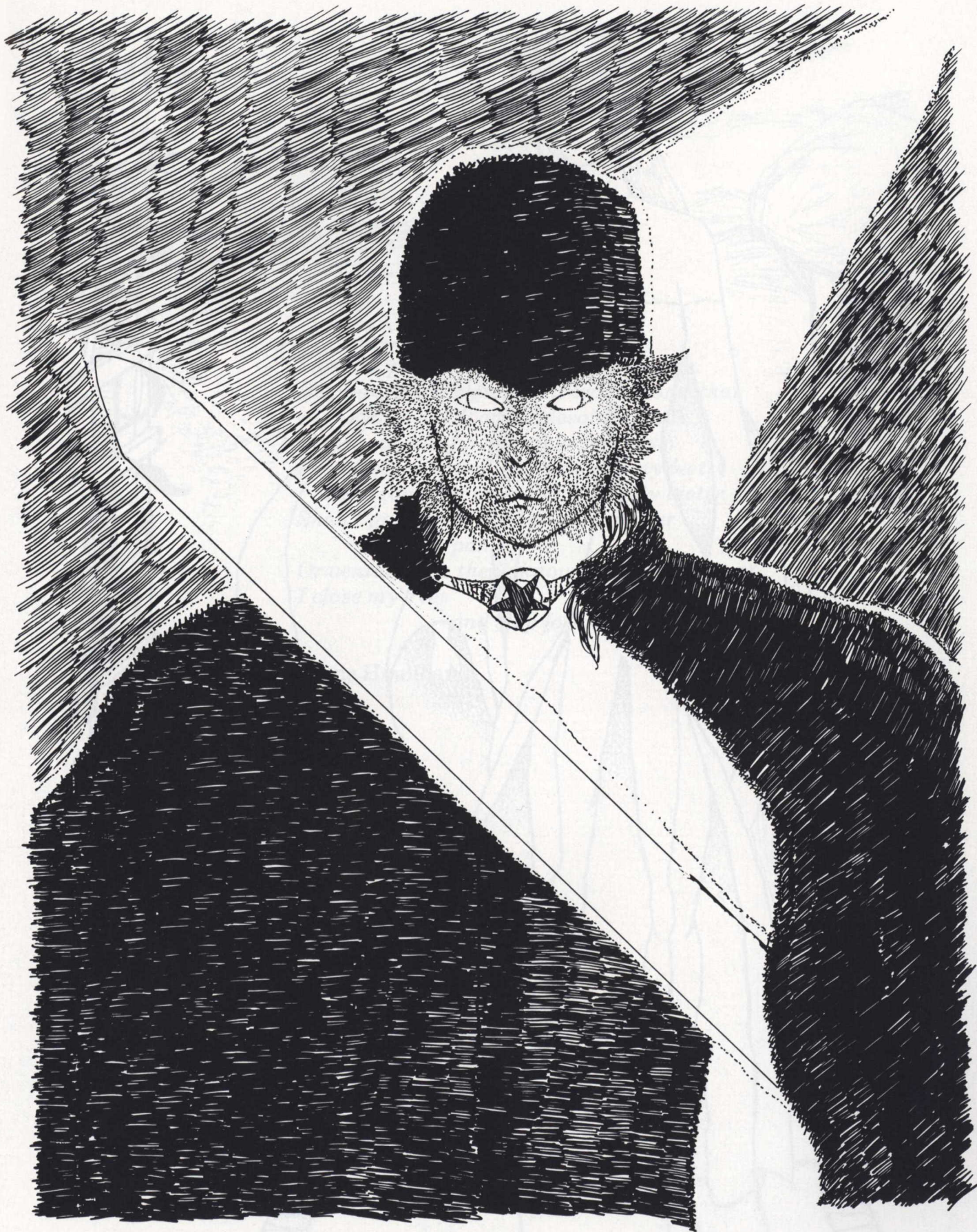
He slashed down with a massive cleave of the glowing broadsword, connecting with tender flesh drawing blood. Still it was not enough; the enemy was not broken. He struck again, screaming, "God, help me!" as his blade bit deep into Michael's flesh.

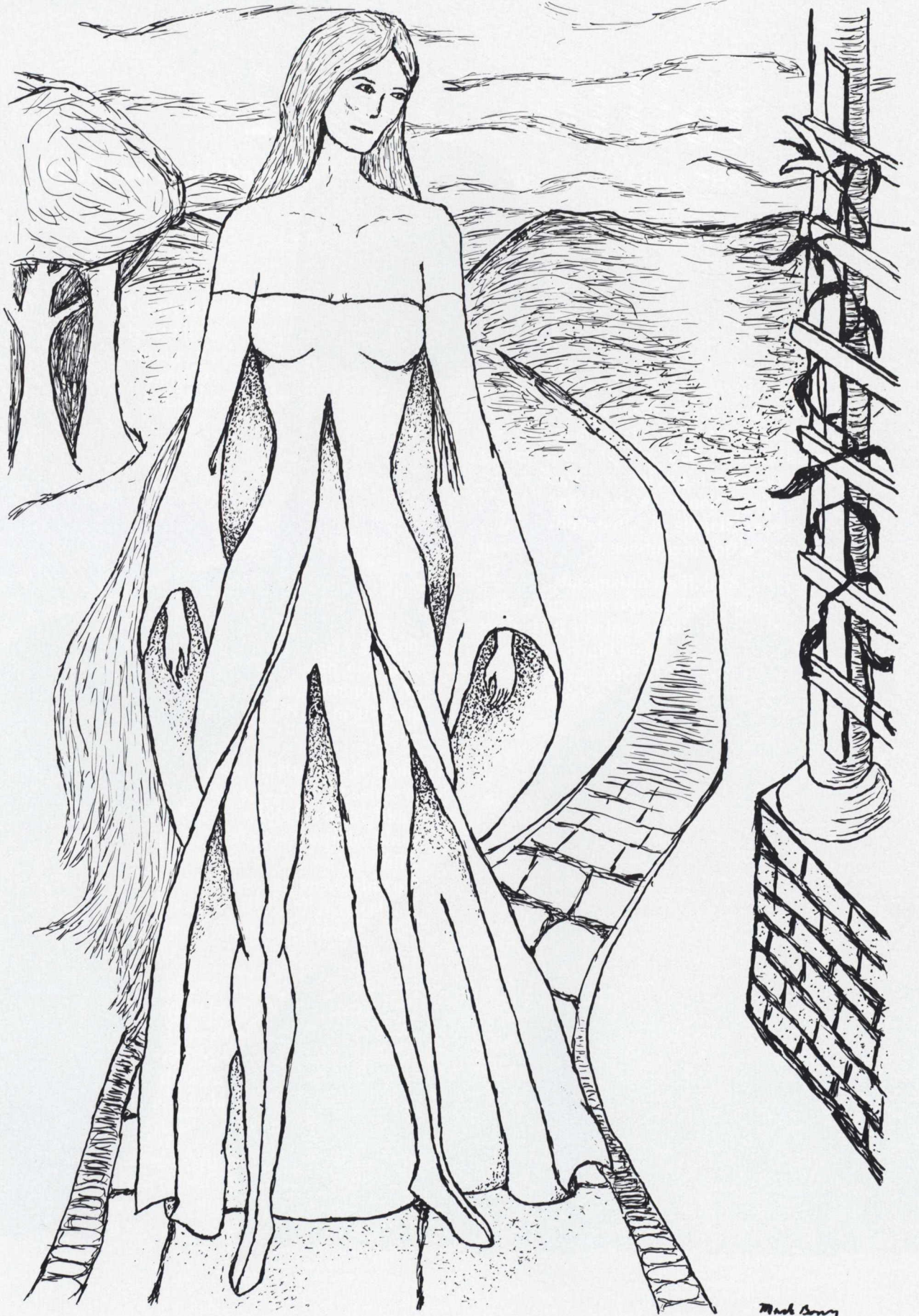
Michael's eyes were drowned in tears of pain, though not from the terrible wounds that gaped like the mewling mouths of babes.

"I had so hoped. . . . I am sorry. . . ." The soft voice was just an echo of a sob as Michael faded away, drawing the light with him and leaving only the bleak, dark shadows.

"No," whispered the dark man as he began to sink back down into the black crevices. "Dear God, call me no more by my cursed name Satan. Grant me one more chance to overcome my pride!" Silence was his only answer.

"Dear God, I want to go home . . ."





Mark Brown

Precipice

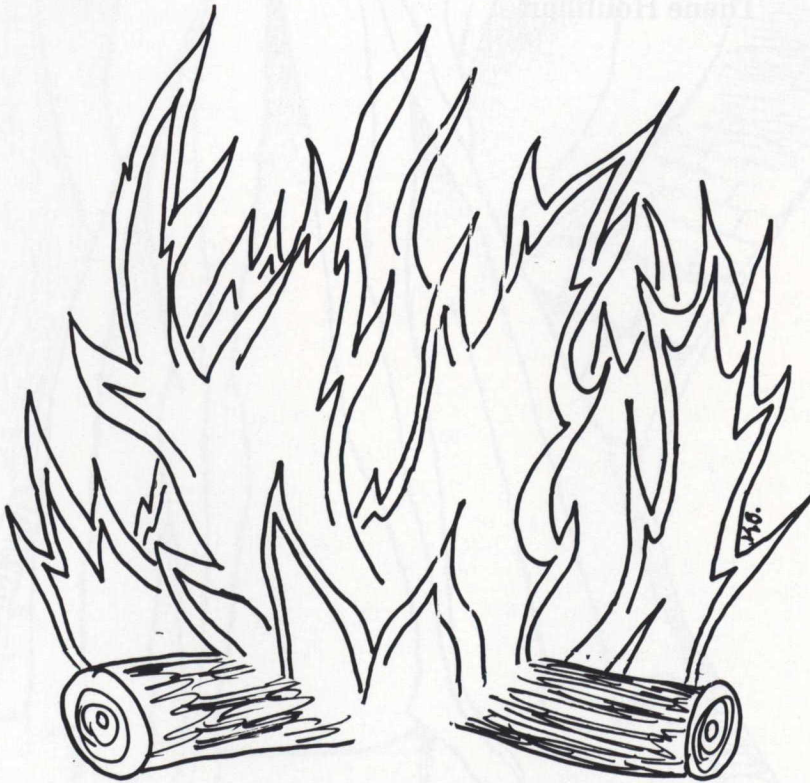
*I am balanced on the edge of a precipice.
Behind me is the gray, tear-laden storm that
washes over barren, desolate lands,
Before me, an unpenetrable darkness.
I can feel the sharp edge beneath my feet
and together my mind and body teeter.
Shall I go back to the known, familiar
pain?
Or venture into the unknown and risk falling?
I close my eyes
and step forward...*

Diane Houlihan

THE BONFIRE

*Orange and yellow flames
Leaping for the sky,
Dancing with the whispering trees.
Crackling wood 'POP',
Crunching leaves;
The bonfire keeps us warm.
Slowly, as the moon rolls away,
Against the dark sky,
The fire dies down,
Leaving a warm glow.
What is left?
The odor of burnt leaves,
Black ashes that disintegrate with touch,
And forever lasting memories.*

Mary Lisa Cappelli



CANDLE IN THE WINDOW

*I miss you not because I cannot live without you,
but because your being here replaces existing
with growing.*

*I love you not because I sometimes feel lonely
or because the rooms are still, but rather because
something ethereal surges through me and says
it's so.*

*I need you not because you make my life easier
or the world less harsh, but because I need re-
minding that I must sometimes leave my island
and touch others.*

*I welcome your return home, not because I expect
us to be as we were, but because I know that we
will be better.*

Steve Meglio

MEMORIES

*Sitting on my bed,
Reading your letters
That have been stashed away in an old box,
Memories of you come rushing back to my mind.
The fun times that were so sweet,
And the sad, bitter times too.
Reading over your letters,
I can hear your voice
And see your face
In the words.
Slowly my eyes flood with tears,
Over the memory of you.*

Mary Lisa Cappelli

CANDLE IN THE WINDOW

I miss you not because I cannot live without you
but because your being here replaces existing
with your absence.

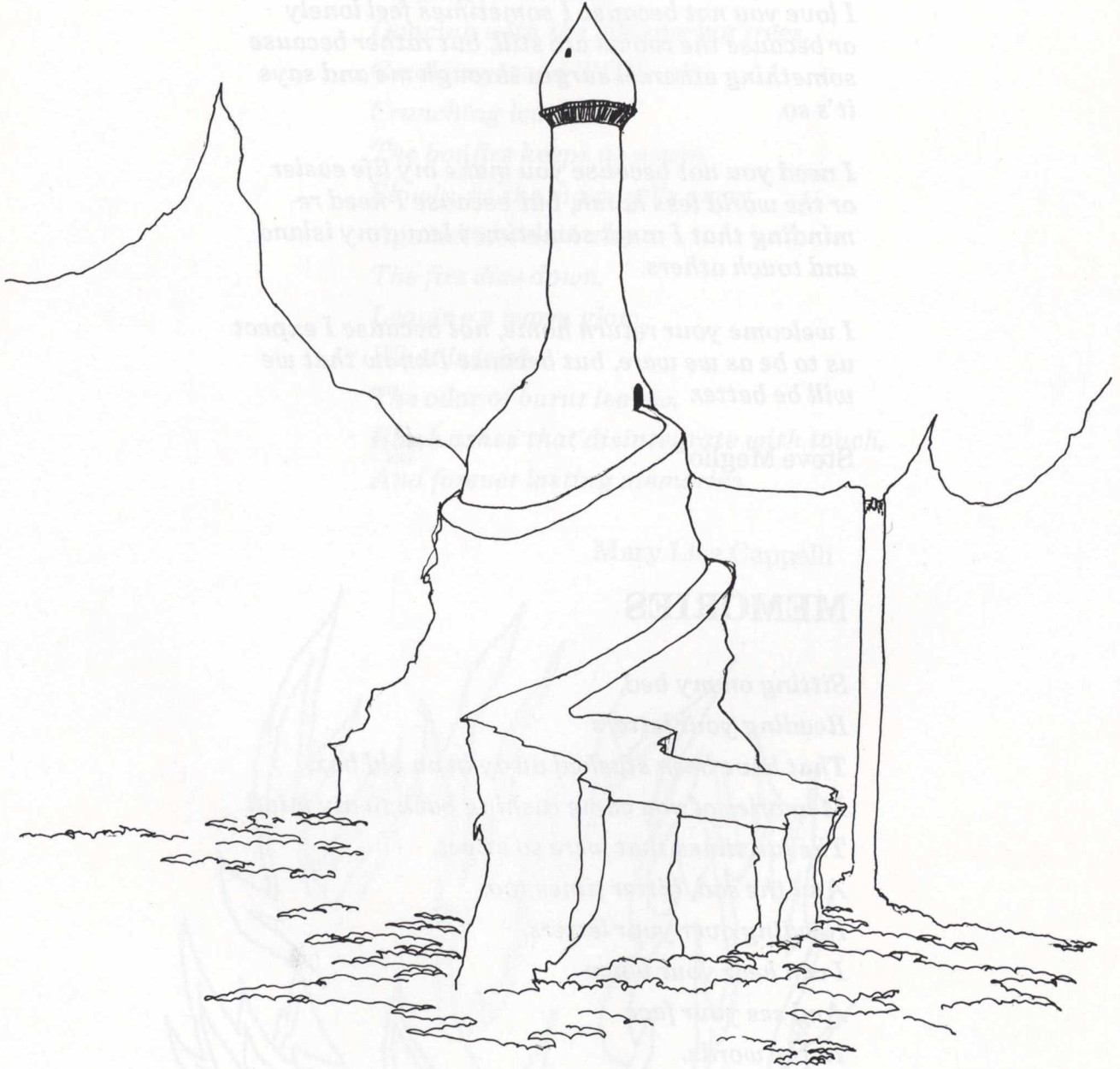
I love you not because you are perfect
or because the world is better with you
something about you is different
it's you.

I want you not because you are my life
or the world is better with you
something about you is different
and I want you.

I welcome you not because I need you
but because I want you
us to be as we are but I want you.

Steve Miller

MEMOIRS



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All In A Day's Work

by Clifton Siple

ALIFE, AT ITS BEGINNING, IS MUCH LIKE A CLEAR, unclouded lake. As time progresses, forces act upon it, shaping its character. Some lakes teem with all forms of life, animal and vegetable, sometimes maintaining a balance, sometimes overcrowding to the point of disorganization and death. Other lakes stock only a few species, but nurture them to a state of perfection and effortless grace. And sadly enough, a few lakes are polluted so early in life that only the lowest bottom-feeding scavengers can exist there. But the rarest type is one upon which no impression can be made; it is a lake crystal-clear from conception to conclusion, formed from acid rain, and immune to the intrusion of other life-forms.

Sean's parents had left him no legacy, financial or otherwise. Had they passed on some superior genes; of intelligence, talent, skill, or even good looks, he might have made an impression on the world; but one cannot give what one does not have. Their spindly, uninspired, homely son had an aptitude for staring at the wall, and little else. He left home at age eighteen, with fifty dollars, a cardboard suitcase full of clothes, and a mind devoid of ambition.

Sean had wandered around town for three days, looking for he knew not what. He spent one whole day in a movie theatre, the flickering images passing before his eyes but leaving no impression on the brain behind them. When the manager escorted him from the premises at midnight, Sean knew no more about the film than when he'd paid his admission to the noon matinee. His nights of sleeping in an alley suited Sean nicely; there was a wall to stare at while falling asleep, and the same to greet him upon waking.

On his third day away from home, the idea that he must obtain more money to live on somehow penetrated Sean's thickly-padded skull. Had he actually had to search for work, Sean might well have starved to death; but for once in his life, he was in the right place at the right time.

Wilbur Wheaton had had a bad morning at the sawmill, although it hadn't started that way. He had, after all, sawed three thousand board-feet of lumber, enough to snow the stacker completely under, before the ten o'clock coffee break. But then there had been that fateful carriage bolt, lying in wait for Wilbur within the very next log. Sawteeth had sprayed about the mill like confetti, blowing out the lights, embedding in the ceiling, and one in particular nestling an inch beneath the surface of the edger's thigh.

Wilbur hustled his edger off to the hospital, leaving Larry, the lumber stacker, with instructions to keep on stacking. The errant bit of shrapnel was removed from the edger's flesh, but it would be two weeks before he could work again. Oh well, thought Wheaton, Larry can double up on edging and stacking in the meantime; I'll give him a few more bucks and he won't bitch too much.

Wilbur bought two boxes of sawteeth while in town, and hurried back to his mill, expecting to see neat stacks of fours, sixes, and twelves to show for the morning's aggravation. He found instead a giant's game of pick-up sticks. Larry was gone, and scrawled on the topmost board was "Screw you and your goddamn sawmill. I'm going back to work at the diner. At least I won't get killed there." The blue lumber crayon used for the message lay on the ground, pulver-

ized by an enraged heel.

Wilbur sat down among the scattered boards, his face in his hands. He'd always been a strong man, in body and character, but now he felt close to breaking. His contract, the one that would have wiped out half of his debts, was due in two days, and he was still seven thousand board-feet short. Even if Larry had stayed on, it would have taken a monstrous effort to finish in time. Now he was alone, and after this morning's accident, not to mention Larry's bad-mouthing him all over town, only a complete fool would work for him now.

Sean came ambling up the dirt road to Wheaton's mill, oblivious to the scene of a shattered man amidst the shards of his dreams. Sean had somehow taken a wrong turn and wandered out of town; soon he'd realize his mistake, turn around, and aimlessly saunter back the way he'd come, reaching his alley shortly before nightfall.

Wilbur raised his head from his pit of sorrow to see a gangly creature with mouse-colored hair and empty eyes approaching. The sawyer had been praying to whatever gods there might be (he wasn't overly choosy at this point) to send him some kind of deliverance—some able-bodied help, a delay in the contract, perhaps a pistol with which to blow his brains out. Could this kid, presently tripping over the strewn lumber, be the salvation he had prayed for.

"Hey kid — are you looking for work?"

Sean stopped short, putting his hands in his pockets. "Uhh-yeah, I guess."

"Can you run an edger?" Hope shone in Wheaton's eyes like a lighthouse beacon.

"Dunno; what's a hedger?"

"Never mind that; can you stack lumber?"

"Well . . ."

"C'mere, I'll show you how." Wilbur drew the boy over to the short pile of sixes that Larry had begun before turning in his resignation. "Just stack all the six-inch lumber on this pile, until you get it twenty boards high, then call me and I'll band it. Here — wear my gloves so you won't get splinters in your hands. I'm gonna go replace some sawteeth; call me if you hit a snag. By the way, what's your name?"

"Sean— Sean Jones."

"Mine's Wilbur Wheaton; good to have you, Sean."

Wheaton strode into the darkened sawmill, jingling the boxes of sawteeth like sleighbells and trying hard to suppress a wide grin. True, the kid didn't look too swift, and he'd probably blow away in a strong wind, but it was a little ray of hope on an otherwise dark horizon. Thank you Lord, Allah, Buddha, or whatever your name is; a little luck is all I need.

The sawyer turned on the main power switch, bringing the mill humming to life. He reversed the saw carriage until the accursed log was free of the sawblade, then killed the power to the saw itself. After replacing the broken light bulbs, Wheaton began the long, tedious process of fixing his damaged saw.

Outside, Sean struggled with the rough-sawn lumber, dimly aware, perhaps, that he was doing useful labor for the first time in his life. He noticed the weight of the boards, and that the sweat was rolling down his sides. He did not take note of the lumber's beautiful grain, visible even in this rough form; nor could he visualize the fine furniture it would some day become. He just kept stacking, oblivious to everything else.

Wilbur had replaced all the sawteeth and was about to begin sharpening and swaging them, when he remembered Sean. Maybe he'd better check on the kid, see how he's doing. Maybe, once this backlog is taken care of, I can train the kid to edge boards, he thought; it doesn't take too much brains to run an edger. He stepped out of the mill to see Sean, a board under his arm, vainly attempting to climb atop a ten-foot stack of lumber.

"No, no, no, Sean! I said only twenty boards-high! Jesus Christ almighty!" Wheaton took a deep breath and looked to the sky. "God, or whatever," he intoned under his breath, "I said only a complete fool would work for me now; did you have to take me literally?"

He strode over to Sean, who had dropped the board and climbed down from his attempt at a tower of Babel. His eyes showed neither hurt nor anger, only vacuous indifference. He sensed from the man's tone that he must have done something wrong; he'd heard that tone of voice all his life, from parents, teachers, everybody. But what did it matter?

"Kid," said Wilbur, gritting his teeth to hold

back his annoyance, "can you count to twenty?"

"Yeah," mumbled Sean, wiping his forehead with his sleeve.

"Good. Start another pile, using the boards from this one. Take this," — he handed Sean a red lumber crayon — "and every time you finish a course — a layer, a row — of boards, make a mark on the edge here. When you have twenty marks — no more, no less — call me and I'll come band the stack." He pulled three boards down from Sean's ungainly pile. "And kids, *this* is a four-inch board, *this* is a six, and *this* is a twelve. You've got all three sizes in your stack; only put sixes in your new one, okay?"

"Okay."

Wilbur returned to the mill, his irritation obvious in his walk; Sean returned to stacking, a small bit of comprehension visible in his face.

The afternoon wore on. Wilbur finished setting up the saw, his concentration interrupted only by his new employee's calls to come band up another stack. After having the intricate mystery of different lumber sizes explained to him twice more, Sean succeeded in stacking the entire morning's run of boards. He was covered with a mixture of sweat and sawdust, and his arms ached, but he had a strange, pleasurable sensation he could not identify. He did know that it was different from the feeling he got from staring at walls.

"Quittin' time, Sean!" called Wheaton merrily as he turned off the lights and left the mill. "You did real good for your first day. Listen, I can only give you fifteen bucks now, but if you stay on, I'll pay you twenty-five per day; you'll get a check on Friday, after I get paid for this order. How's that sound?"

"Okay."

"Great; c'mon, I'll drive you home."

"I don't live at home anymore."

"Got an apartment of your own now, huh? Cut from under your folks' wing?"

"I sleep in an alley; that's where my suitcase is."

"An *alley*?" Wilbur was incredulous; had this kid just thumbed a ride into town or something? "Jesus Christ, kid; nobody who works for me sleeps in a goddamn alley!"

"You don't want me to stay on with you then?" For the first time, there was something akin to emotion in Sean's voice.

"Hell no, Sean, I don't mean that." Taking a deep breath and thinking, my wife'll kill me for this, Wheaton threw his burly arm, hairy and big as a bear's foreleg, around Sean's scrawny shoulders. "I mean you can stay at my place, in the spare room. You'll get plenty of good food — you could use a little meat on those bones of yours — and we'll work it out somehow. I've got some chores you can do; have you ever milked cows?"

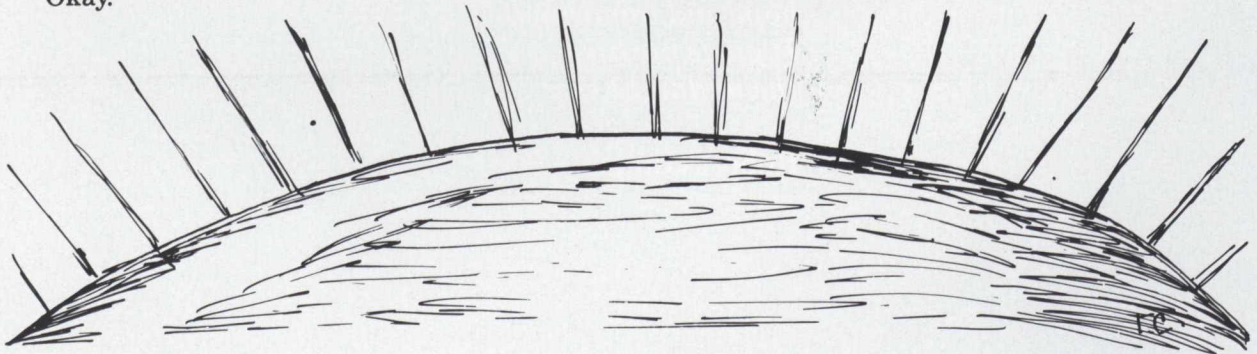
"Well . . ."

"Don't worry, I'll show you how. Let's go find that suitcase of yours, and then you can take a hot bath and have a good supper. What do you say?"

"Okay."

"Great."

They retrieved his possessions from the squalid alley and headed westward out of town, toward Wilbur's home. Sean's fatigue from the day's labors overtook him and he fell asleep, his head coming to rest against Wheaton's muscular shoulder. His last thought as he lost consciousness was that he'd been watching the sunset, not a blank wall, this time.



MIDNIGHT SKY

*Crisp, cool, clear,
unearthly beauty
quiet, still, forever,
the midnight sky.*

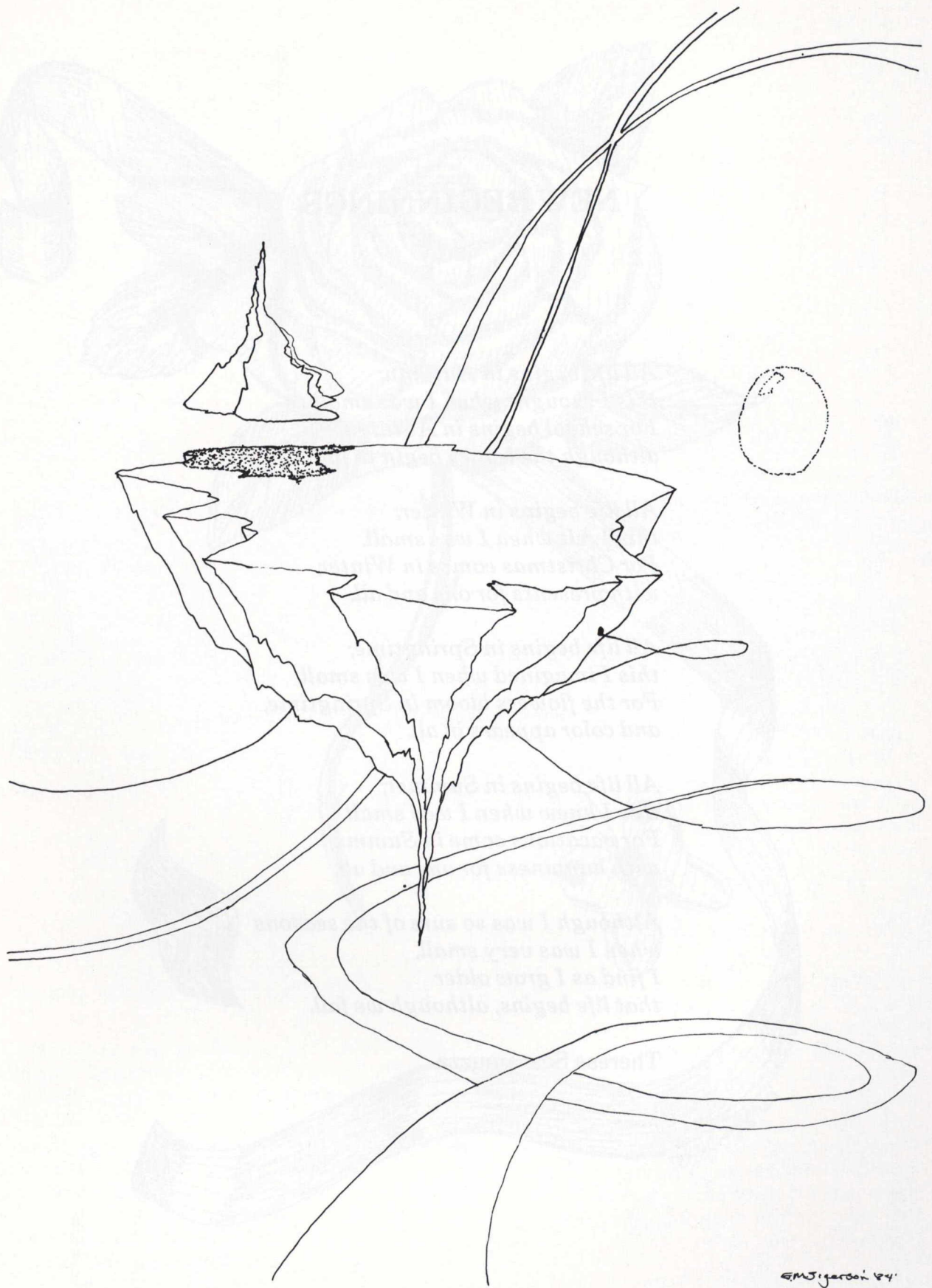
*The light of a thousand
yesterdays finds my
soul and traps it.
I am one with the
majestic vastness,
the midnight sky.*

*Diamonds on a black
velvet back drop,
the stars beckon me,
I close my eyes
and I am there,
the midnight sky.*

*This beauty it is
untouched by man
eternally pure, as it was
and will always be.
Peace and serenity
hold me amidst the stars,
the midnight sky.*

*It gives me strength,
hope and tomorrow.
It gives me life,
the midnight sky.*

Robert Guihan



SMJ. garson '84

NEW BEGINNINGS

*All life begins in Autumn;
this I thought when I was small.
For school begins in Autumn,
although the leaves begin to fall.*

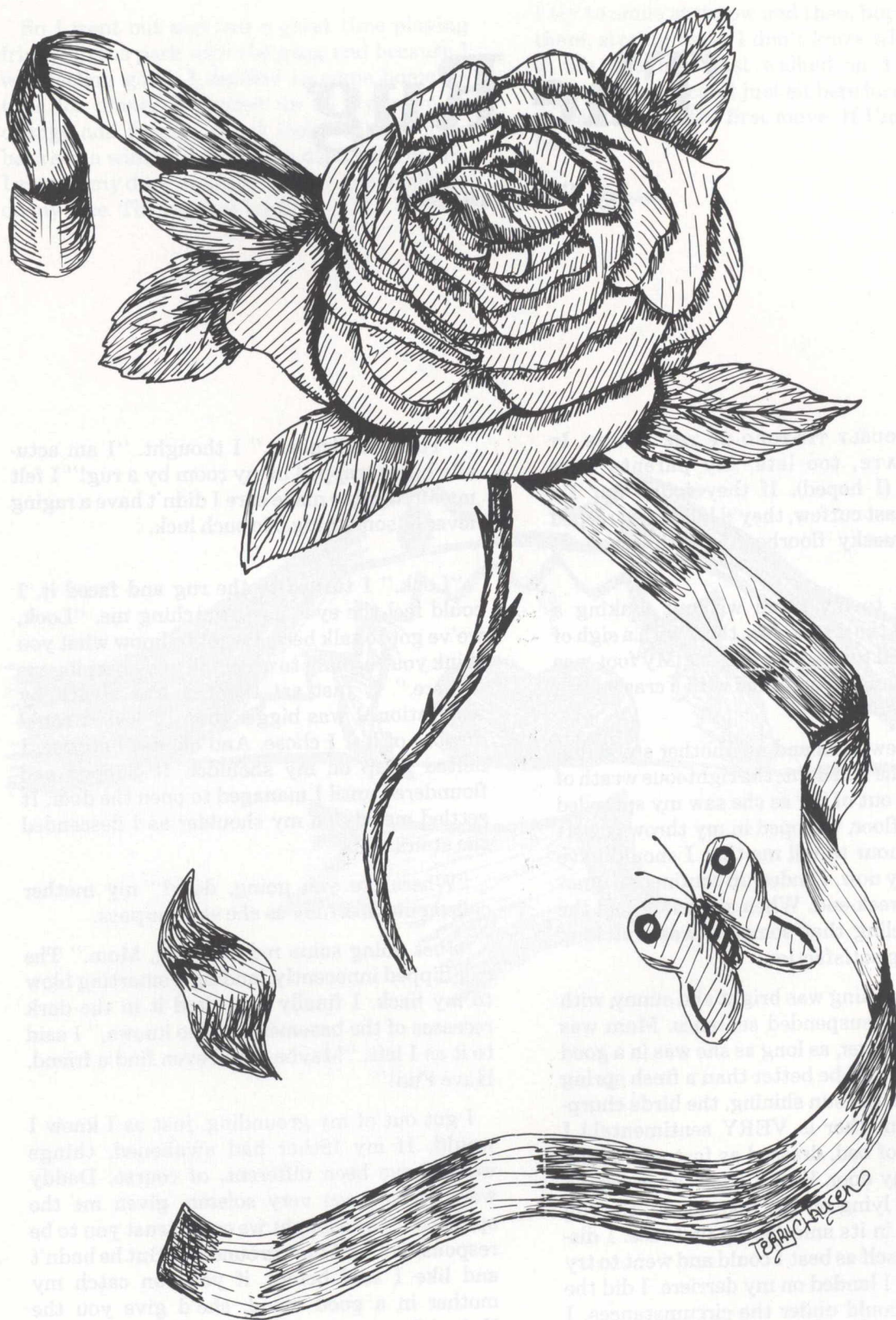
*All life begins in Winter;
this I felt when I was small.
For Christmas comes in Winter,
with presents for one and all.*

*All life begins in Springtime;
this I imagined when I was small.
For the flowers bloom in Springtime,
and color appears in all.*

*All life begins in Summer;
this I knew when I was small.
For vacations come in Summer,
with happiness for one and all.*

*Although I was so sure of the seasons
when I was very small,
I find as I grow older
that life begins, although we fall.*

Theresa Scaramuzza



The Rug

by Terri Clausen

I CAUTIOUSLY TIP-TOED UP THE STAIRS. IT WAS LATE, too late. My parents were asleep (I hoped). If they found out I'd stayed out past curfew, they'd kill me. I crept over the squeaky floorboards with practiced skill.

I made it to my room without making a sound. I shut the door softly, then, with a sigh of relief, I moved toward my dresser. My foot was suddenly entangled and I fell with a crash and a startled scream.

My door flew open and my mother stood illuminated by the hall light, the righteous wrath of God pouring out of her as she saw my sprawled body on the floor, wrapped in my throw-rug. It took her an hour to tell me that I should have been in bed by now. I ended up confined to quarters for the week-end. When she left, I had the strangest feeling that someone was watching me with smug satisfaction.

The next morning was bright and sunny, with a promise of a suspended sentence. Mom was always a push-over, as long as she was in a good mood. What could be better than a fresh spring morning, with the sun shining, the birds chirping . . . (My mother is VERY sentimental.) I bounded out of bed, dressed as fast as I could, and flew to my door. Well, I tried to, anyway. I found myself lying on the floor again, the rug wrapping me in its smothering embrace. I disentangled myself as best I could and went to try again. Again, I landed on my derriere. I did the only thing I could under the circumstances. I retreated.

"This is ridiculous," I thought. "I am actually being trapped in my room by a rug!" I felt my forehead to make sure I didn't have a raging fever or something. No such luck.

"Look," I turned to the rug and faced it. I could feel the eyes now, watching me. "Look, we've got to talk here. I want to know what you think you're going to accomplish by keeping me in here." It just sat there. I was struck by inspiration. I was bigger than IT was. I could dispose of it if I chose. And oh, did I choose. I hefted it up on my shoulder. It flopped and floundered until I managed to open the door. It settled meekly on my shoulder as I descended the stairs.

"Where are you going, dear?" my mother called out cheerfully as she saw me pass.

"Just doing some redecorating, Mom." The rug flipped innocently, landing a smarting blow to my back. I finally deposited it in the dark recesses of the basement. "Who knows," I said to it as I left, "Maybe you'll even find a friend. Have Fun!"

I got out of my grounding, just as I knew I would. If my father had awakened, things would have been different, of course. Daddy would have been very solemn, given me the speech on "We thought we could trust you to be responsible" and *then* ground me. But he hadn't and like I said before, if you can catch my mother in a good mood, she'd give you the United States, the good parts of Russia, and as many third world countries as you could think

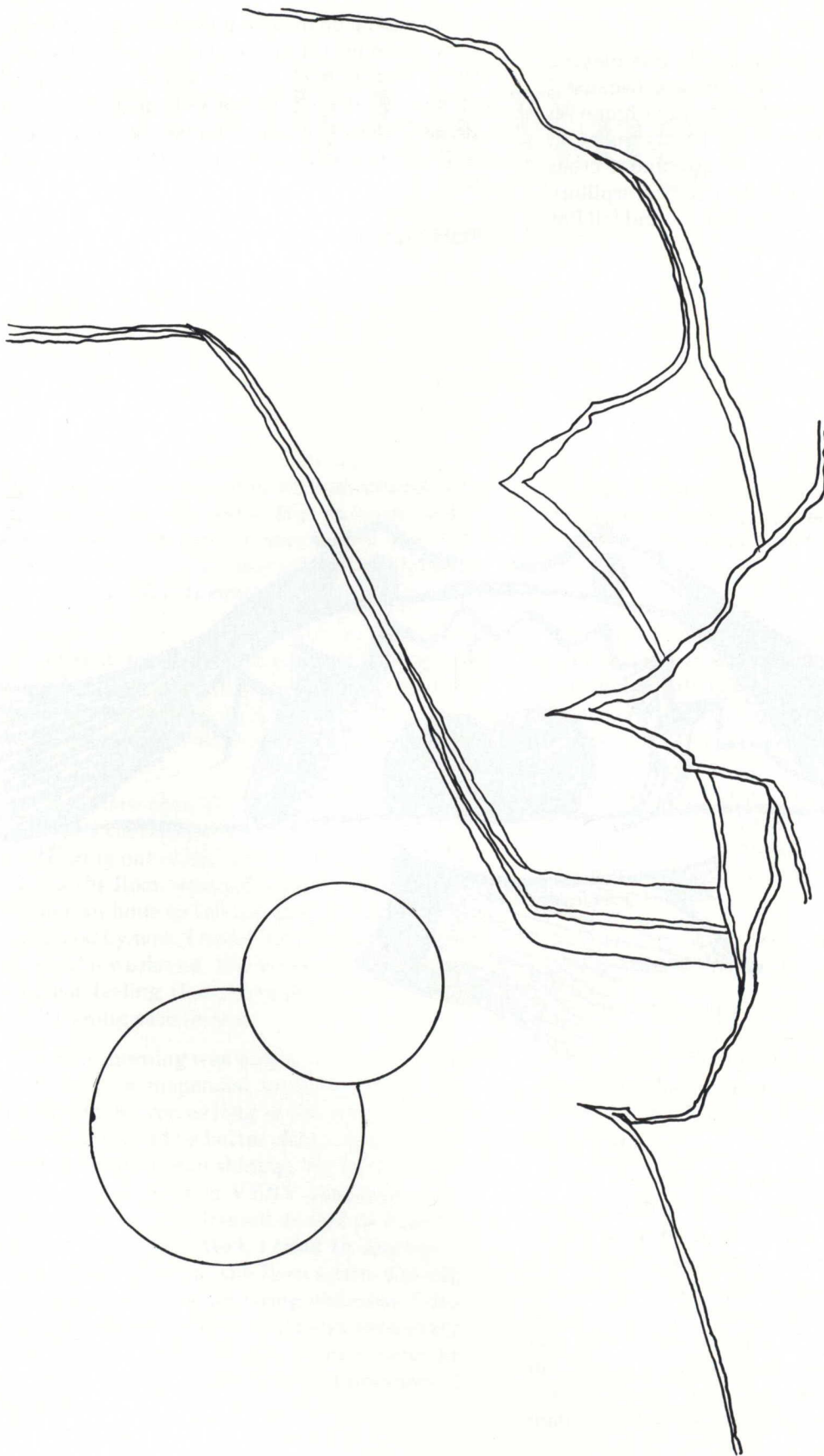
of.

So I went out and had a great time playing frisbee in the park with the gang and because I was feeling good, I decided to come home on time for dinner. I headed up to my room to change and freshen up. (I looked like a cross between a wilted flower and a dead caterpillar). I opened my door, stepped inside . . . and fell flat on my face. The rug was back.

I'm sitting on my bed now, staring at the rug. I try to smile at it now and then, but it just sits there, staring back. I don't know why it's mad at me. Maybe I just walked on it too many times. I know I can't just sit here forever; one of us has to make the first move. If I'm lucky, it'll be me . . .

Terri Clausen





A Broken Circle

by Diane Houlihan

THEY WERE FIGHTING AGAIN. THE SAME harsh words shot from their lips once more, stringing all the past arguments together into this one and the next one . . . a never ending chain.

She wondered, staring up at his anger flushed face, why they even bothered anymore. With the skill of long practice, she ignored his frustrated ramblings as her eyes strayed down to the diamond ring wrapped around her ring finger.

She saw, in her mind's eye, his long, elegant fingers gently slid the ring on her smooth hand, felt the warmth and tenderness of his touch.

"If we had known," she thought, detached, "would we have been so eager? Would we have married at all?" She pushed the thought from her mind as pointless. They *had* married and now they had to live with it as best they could.

Their first argument came unbidden into her mind. He had forgotten their first anniversary. When she told him, bitterly, he had been so sweetly contrite that her first instinct was to take him in her arms and tell him it didn't matter. But then resentment had taken hold and she turned into what she vowed never to be, a screaming shrew tongue-lashing her husband for his carelessness and thoughtlessness. Petty annoyances had blown in proportion until they were unbearable horrors no longer endurable.

They had made up, of course, and been tenderly cautious for weeks after. But that was when their love was a fresh, growing thing, not like now. Now it was being choked by neglect and indifference.

A small sigh escaped her and he stopped his soliloquy, startled. For an instant, they looked at each other in mutual surprise, as though wondering who it was they were staring at. They were strangers, with different thoughts and feelings from the people they'd been when they married. They even looked different; he, gray-ing and portly, a jovial looking fellow whose brittle eyes belied his image; she, pale and colorless, with fading hair, fading skin, fading eyes.

Where did her handsome Prince Charming go? And was she, the pink and white princess of her youth, with him? Were they living happily ever after in never-never land? And what had they left behind? Enough to build a life on?

"Ross?" His name hung in the air, like a balloon waiting to be popped.

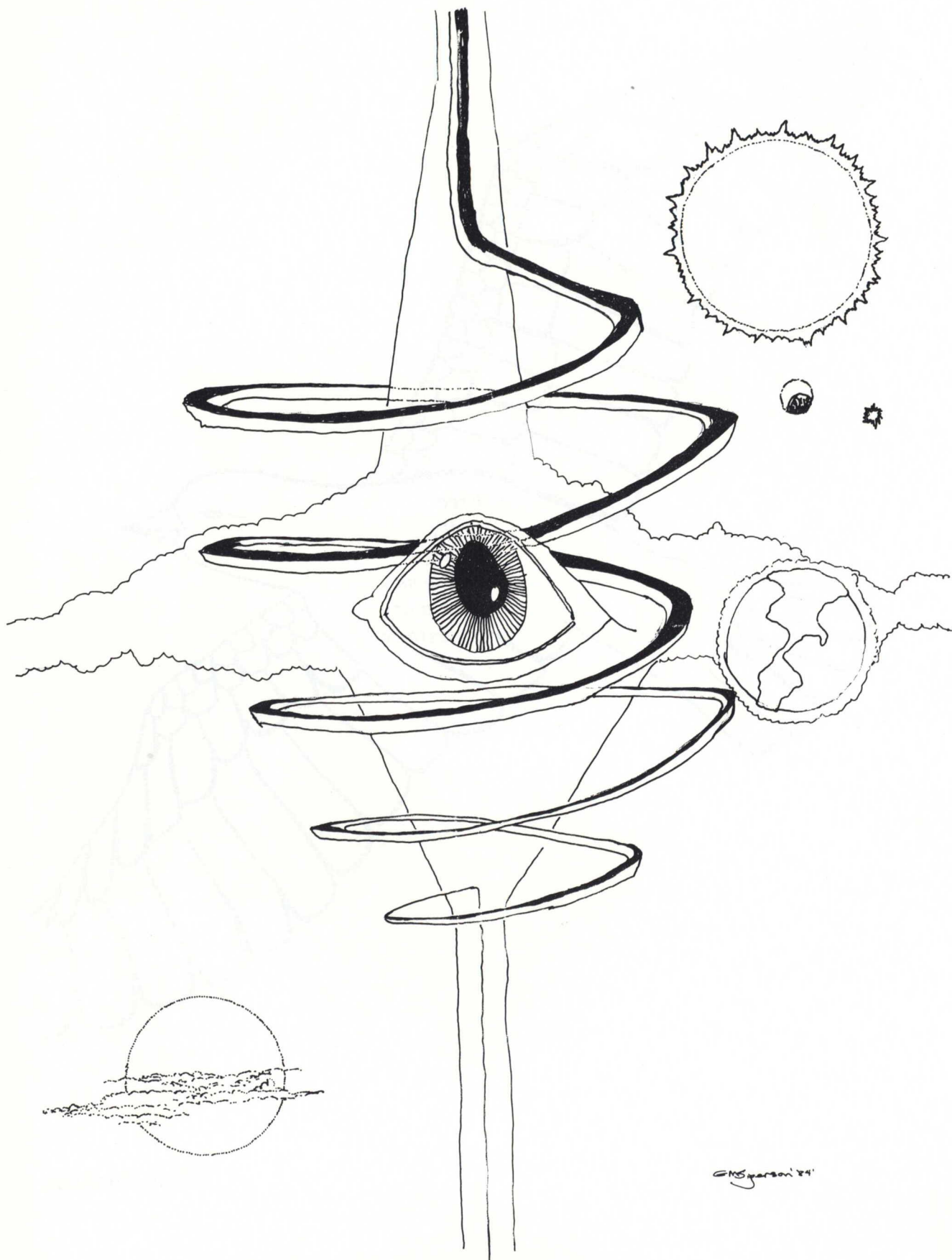
He looked at her helplessly and, his hands fluttering in a gesture of futility, turned away from her and walked deliberately out of her life.

Diane Houlihan

UNEMPLOYED SEAS

*The sea's salty breath
speaks to me
of endless turmoil
and raging,
ever carving the earth,
and it tells me
that man has
taken over its job.*

Carol Flechsig





Diane Houlihan