

PEGASUS MAGAZINE

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Address all correspondence to The Editor, Pegasus Magazine,
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EDITOR

Tom Stluka

EDITORIAL STAFF

*Jennifer Mathis, Tara Petolicchio,
Donna Branca, Steve McGuire*

FACULTY ADVISOR

Alfred deProspero

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The Ladder

Phillip F. Yates

THE THOUGHT of sleeping in the old place again nauseated him. Just the idea of lying in that ancient bed with the headboard covered with hangman scratches and the springs piercing him with their snake-tongued grayness was enough to make him want to vomit Aunt Sally's after-funeral casserole.

Still, the sky was ominous enough to convince him it would be a long, dreary trek to the nearest motel - ninety miles to be exact.

A flicker of lightning sliced through the gray clouds and he slammed the Buick door shut with a thud. The house hummed, groaned with the wind; the rooster weather vane squeaked and twirled in drunken fashion. The black-eyed windows stared silently, oblivious to the decaying layers of chocolate and vanilla stone which surrounded them.

God, how he hated that house.

With a passion.

He grappled with the key, the cold metal growing colder in his fingers. Same damn deadbolt the old man had put in an eternity ago; somehow it had gained a power of its own through the years, biting and spitting wood splinters, resisting his turns as if entry was forbidden.

He hated that bolt, pocked with the old man's grease prints, almost as much as the rest of the house, the farm, the barn, and the two hundred acres of rotted corn stalks lying like a holocaust of skeletal remains, the corn itself unraveled at its feet like rows of rotted teeth. The rats, who had long ago feasted on the neglected crop, were now concentrating their efforts on Mother's vegetable patch. Right up until the stroke had hit her, she nourished the vegetables with unstoppable abandon. He remembered, on one of his infrequent trips to the farm, the familiar sight of her perched in the soil, the road map legs disappearing into the ground, the mop of Christmas garland hair, and the sweat drowning in the peach wrinkles as she folded the earth with knobby-freckled fingers . . .

Don't see you much anymore, Harry, her voice whispered through the wind, and he turned the key again, cursing at it.

Don't you like to visit your brother n' me no more?

She had stared at him with those fading hazel eyes and he felt the pangs of guilt rippling through him.

"It's a long haul from the city, Mom. You know that."

"Whyn'cha bring them kids up with you? Your brother and I haven't seen you and Maureen since Christmas."

"You know they're in school, Mom," he said, waiting for her to blink her eyes and reply: *School in the middle of August?*

But she never questioned his excuses. She simply nodded, smiled and stroked the spiderous web of hair growing on her chin.

"Just come on up, soon. Your brother and I miss you!"

Damnit, I don't want to hear about him, he cursed the bold again and, almost as if on cue, the barn door was easing open, flapping gently against the mosquito-bitten frame. The hinges squealed like an old woman in arthritic agony. He felt a wind of icicles creeping up his spine.

Have you forgotten me? it said.

Of course he hadn't gone near the barn. Why should he? There was nothing in there but cob-webbed grain, mildewed straw, flies feasting on petrified dung, a few of the old man's tools and . . .

He could almost see its legs protruding from the shadows and he squinted for a moment, wiping his eyes.

Of course it was still there, Harry. It had always been there. Where did you expect old ladders to go? Ladder heaven?

Hold it tight, Harry, want me to fall? . . .

. . . And found himself walking across the yard and standing before it. Nothing but wood, Harry; ugly tarnished brown, the rungs caked with dry mud and grass; speckled with drops of red paint (or was it paint?); the ropes hung limply from the pulley, their heads buried in the straw; black greaseprints spotted the sides, too large to be the old man's, so who? . . .

You know whose they are, Harry.

He almost touched it, but withdrew when he saw the last rung dangling from its socket, like it had dangled for the last ---- what, twenty seven years?

"Jesus," he heard himself murmur. No one's touched the goddamn thing since . . .

He shivered in unison with the wind. He promised himself he wouldn't think about this. Still, when he reached out and felt the coarseness of wood, the smell of ancient summers and corn husks rose in the air and ---- what else was there imbedded beneath the layers of grime besides just pine, metal bolts and rope?

He remembered how the old man's hands had chopped and shaped the wood only three months before his ticker gave out.

Harry was eight. His brother Nathan, twelve. The flat, rich land was older than all of them. Golden and green with abundance. When Harry's father died, the land seemed to enter a state of eternal mourning; the soil grew cold and ignorant and the survivors no different. By Harry's ninth birthday, Mother had sold the last of Father's tractors and took a job as a secretary in town. By spring that year there was nothing left, but more barren land, some of Father's old tools and . . . the ladder.

hold it for me, you want me to break my neck?

I don't like the sound of that when it creaks, his mother's voice rushed to him again.

Overhead, the ashen clouds conspired in secret as birds floated drunkenly through their midsts. Lightning sizzled in the grayness . . .

. . . it was lightning that had felled Nathan's cedar tree the summer the old man's heart retired. Yes, Nathan's cherished tree. His home away from home. God, how he climbed and slithered through its branches like a regular chimpanzee.

Where's Nathan? his mother's voice cried from long ago.

And Harry always knew where he was, his long legs dangling over the sturdy limb, his freckled face dancing with puppet shadows of twisted leaves. At night in their bedroom floating in the darkness . . .

But why am I remembering this, he asked himself. I don't want to remember this. I don't need to ---

He whipped his hand away, felt the splinters racking his finger with pain.

So go on, Harry, there's more, isn't there?

No, I don't remember anything.

One summer night a brutal storm had crushed Nathan's tree into kindling. Nathan never forgave Mother Nature nor did he ever forgive the old man who had shaped the remains into a gright, polished ladder.

That was when Nathan turned crazy. Over a goddamned tree. Like it was some human being that deserved a proper burial. Jesus, he even remembered stupid Nathan spending his days on that stump like he was trying to hatch a gossling.

But it wasn't the only craziness Harry remembered. He remembered the nightmarish days when Nathan ran away from home, the constant fights with the old man over stupid trivial matters. Then there was the night he and Mother came home from shopping and found the old man slumped in his chair, white as a sheet, and Nathan in the other room watching television and . . .

. . . no, not the rest of it. I don't remember the rest of it, and suddenly he was slamming the barn door tight against the ladder's nudging legs and snapping the padlock shut.

He moved across the dirt yard, up the yellowed wood steps, and this time the deadbolt slid easily, the cylinder rattling with relief.

Come in, Harry, please do come in. We have something for you, the house whispered.

The place still reeked of death and Mother's cinnamon tea. None of the guests noticed it earlier, their sinuses still clogged with the day's eulogies. By noontime he had hustled all of them out with a gracious, but greiving appreciation. In actuality he had grown sick of all the sob stories about Nathan and his Mother . . .

Such a tragedy, you brother and mother going within weeks of each other. Of course it must of been a relief for Nathan.

Yes, relief, he thought to himself, pouring a shot of Mother's cherry brandy.

The stillness of the house suddenly seemed a comfort (or maybe it was the brandy). His arm arched from packing Mother's debris; burning old papers and photos (Nathan swinging from his tree), and generally setting the place in order for the movers the following morning. He had avoided Nathan's rooms for as long as possible and regretted it the moment he stepped in and inhaled the odor of ancient urine and stale baby food. A fine mist of dust covered the floor, cob-webs threaded their trapezes across the windows.

Two weeks Nathan had been dead, he thought, pouring a second shot over the rust-speckled sink Or was it twenty seven years?

Did it really make a difference? No, he told himself and his belly ached for another.

His hands shook (or was it the house) and he swallowed it quickly, feeling its rush.

I said I'm not going to think about you, Nathan.

No, there were other things. His beautiful wife, Maureen; his two beautiful daughters; his beautiful job selling IBM typewriters (well, almost beautiful); their beautiful house on Apple Street where the grass grew high and the trees . . .

Yes, Harry, the old man never gave that tree a decent burial. That's why I hated him, Harry. That's why I listened to his screams of agony.

He shook himself and downed another.

Jesus, got to get to bed. Anything so I don't think about this . . .

but the images persisted and he was nine years old and it was a spring morning. Mother was fixing lunch and Harry was digging in the yard and watching the buzz of hornets gathering among the wildflowers. Nathan was pacing in the field, looking bored and outcast, tossing stones in the cornfield. They never talked much to each other. Harry had his own friends and Nathan? --- well, Nathan had his hate. A living, breathing hate for the land and even for the dead.

and Harry heard the hornets congregating and suddenly everything at that moment became clear.

He knew then what he had to do.

"Mother, there's a hornet's nest! A hornet's nest in the rain gutter!"

Nathan had come running, excited at the opportunity to be involved in something.

"Right above your bedroom, Mom," said Harry. "I can see it!"

"Well, don't you be going near it!"

Harry could see Nathan licking his lips, his eyes widening.

"But Mom, what if they make a hole in the roof and get in?"

"They won't be getting in nohow," said Nathan finally with a look of adventurous determination. Harry knew the look well, and sometimes it scared the shit out of him.

"Both of you stay away from it, you hear? First thing tomorrow I'll call an exterminator."

They slinked into the yard. Harry hacked at the dirt quietly while Nathan sat on his tree stump.

"They'll break into the house," Harry persisted.

"Shutup! You heard what Mom said!"

"Bet you're a coward," Harry breathed softly. For a moment he was almost prepared to duck when Nathan swooped his hand across his face. To his surprise, Nathan had taken the bait and suddenly was springing off the stump and running in the direction of the barn.

He watched Nathan for a long time, staring at the rungs of vanilla smoothness and the sturdy, brawny legs. He watched Nathan reach out then, his hands gripping it firmly in a hug, the muscles tightening in his wrist as he swung it wide in front of the house and eased it gently against

the rain gutter.

Then he began to climb.

The rungs creaked, groaned with pleasure, Halfway up Nathan stopped, his body pressed full against the rungs.

Jesus, A BOY AND HIS LADDER.

"The hornets," Harry shouted, his hands gripping the sides firmly. "You're getting closer!"

Up, up, Nathan climbed, never looking down until he reached the top and ----

"Don't see any hor ----".

Their eyes met.

He knows, thought Harry. Jesus, the bastard knows!

He remembered the look on Nathan's face. Was it the same look the old man had when he clutched his heart and cried in agony?

Or was Nathan really smiling as he grasped the wood in his bloodless fingers?

Now do you know what it feels like, Nathan?

The ladder began to wiggle, scraping eerily across the gutter.

And for a moment, when it slid into the lifeless air, Nathan neither screamed nor flailed his arms helplessly.

And all the way down he had that grin on his face.

Even the moment when he split his head open.

He was smiling.

He climbed the stairs to his old bedroom, his eyes avoiding the electronic wheelchair contraption that had carried his brother up and down, up and down, for twenty seven years. The day the workers had put it in, Nathan had been home from the hospital for three weeks. Harry watched the stranger who was his brother, staring at the workers with a passionless expression. It was all he could do the rest of his life ---- stare. The hatred had been washed out of him, along with half his blood and portions of his skull. There was nothing left but motionless flesh, black eyes and murmurs of gibberish.

At thirty nine, he had died; natural causes, they said. Harry knew better. Nathan had finally finished the job himself. That's all there was to it.

Two weeks later his Mother followed, felled by a stroke which left her body slumped over the turnip patch. Her death was something he hadn't bargained for. At her funeral he cried for the first time in years.

So it was a goddamned house of death, he thought sullenly, and pissed out the day's substances and crawled into bed. It wouldn't be long. A few hours of sleep and he would be rid of this place forever. The movers would take care of the rest. With a little luck, vandals would burn the place down in a week. By tomorrow he would be back in Maureen's arms and the smell of decay gone forever.

He slept, the thought of Maureen and the children mingling in his brain.

At half past three he stirred, jerked awake by the sound of something

thudding against the window frame. The shade was closed, but the moonlight revealed the skelton-knuckled branches writhing in the breeze.

He waited, listened.

Nothing. Why should there be anything?

He pulled the quilt to his chin and swallowed, the cherry brandy still clinging. He knew if he got up, he'd keel over in a stupor, probably knock his head on the post, be discovered by the movers, drowned in his own blood. Funny sight that would be, eh, Harry?

So it he was drunk, why wouldn't he sleep, What the hell was he listening for?

Then as if in reply, the answer came.

At first it sounded like a far off squeak of a child's swing, or the eaves on the rooftop straining against the wind.

Eeeeeee went the sound and he sat upright, his head pounding dizzily, his knees perched against his chest.

Jesus God, he knew what it was! Some goddamn dream he couldn't wake up from.

eeeeeee

The brandy bile was climbing his throat and he fought to keep it down. Christ, this wasn't happening!

eeeeee went the third creak of wood.

No, of course not, Harry, you're imagining this. So why the hell are you counting them, Harry? Why are you counting the goddamn rungs? No, Harry, you're going out of your mind ----

eeeeee, eeeee went the fourth and fifth rungs.

Something crawled up his back and he shivered against it. His body was stiff, every hair standing at attention. Down, boys. This is your commander ---

eeeeee, eeeee went the sixth and seventh rungs.

No. this wasn't happening. Something inside him was laughing, or was it something out the window? For a moment he almost crawled out of bed and flung the shade up ----

But Harry wasn't moving.

eeeeee

eeeeeee

Something was rubbing the glass then, tugging gently, quietly at the window latch

Yes, he had locked it earlier. As a child he always kept the window locked.

You aired out the room, didn't you, Harry? Forget to lock it, didn't you. It was awfully nice of you, Harry.

The window slid open, the chains rattling furiously.

He closed his eyes when he heard the shade rising, flapping in its roll.

Oh, my God, he screamed and squeezed his eyes tighter, seeing the darkness and the veins pumping rivers of blood.

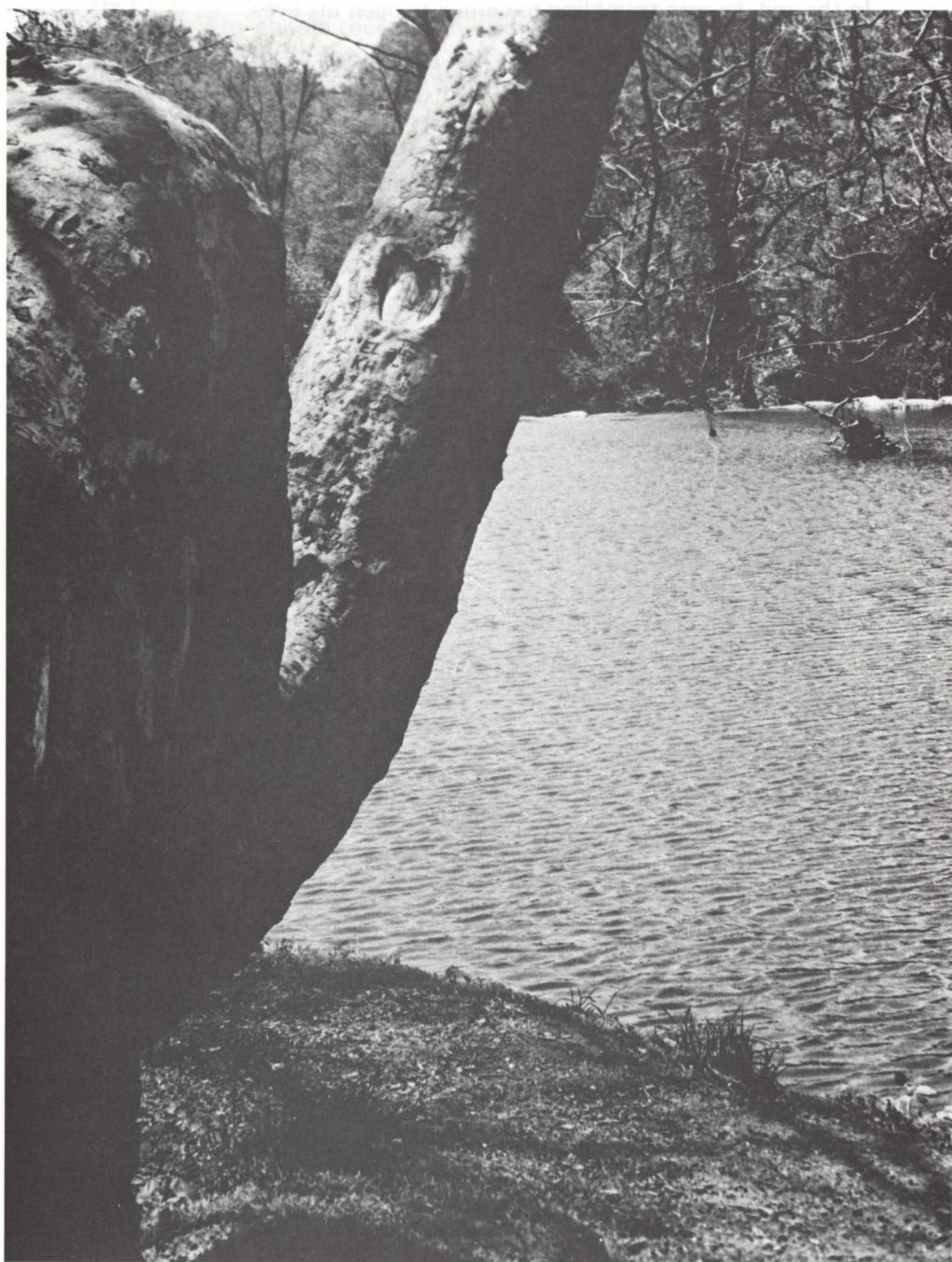
"Who's there?" he whispered to the night and the windy mist of ice that licked his body.

But there was silence. An impenetrable silence.

"Nathan?" he said.
But there was no answer.
In the end, he was trembling too much to open his eyes.
For that matter he couldn't.
Not even when he felt the coldness of fingerbones clampling them shut.

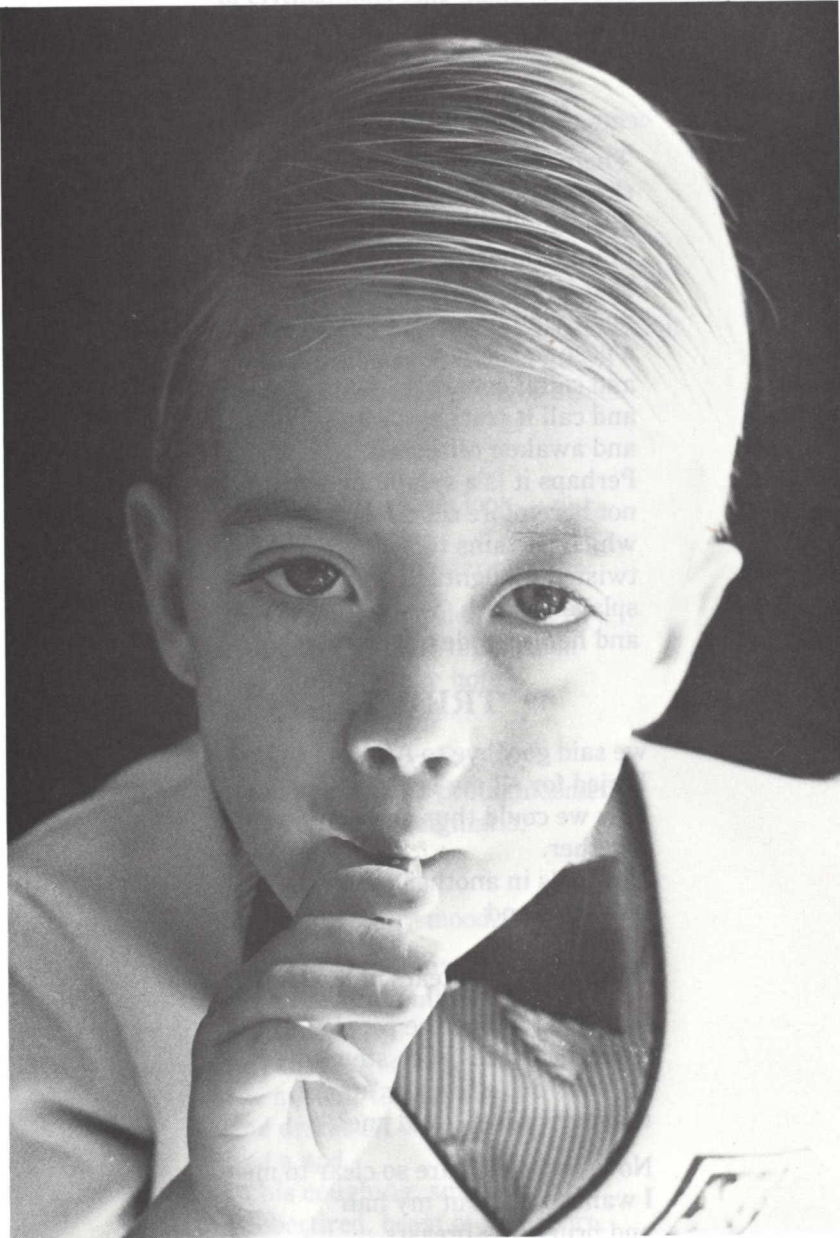


Charles Skoglund



Mary Kelly

A Portfolio of Poems



Dora Hollister

A Portfolio of Poems

Gloria Beam

THE BROKEN DOLL

Theresa sleeps like a broken doll
thrown down by a careless child
arms and legs askew, twisted
in ungainly pose
as if jointless
no human bones, it seems, could hold
a pose so splayed
and call it comfort
and call it rest
and awaken refreshed.
Perhaps it is a symptom
not heretofore set down
which pertains to her
twisted thoughts
splayed speech
and her attitude all askew

TRIBUTE

we said goodbye to Autumn today-
I cried for all my lost plans
how we could thus and so
together.
Now he's in another place
he's gone and
I just realized
I've been crying tears of mourning.

Is it India where the people
dash their faces with stones
or pluck out a tooth or an eye
to mourn a lost loved one?

Now, those acts are so clear to me-
I want to tear out my hair
and bruise my breasts,
for these tears of mine are too mundane
to pay tribute to so deep
a love that's lost.

RITUALS REVISITED

My lover is like a Shaman,
of civilizations long past,
who demands a new lamb ritual
to seek answers
in its entrails
answers to those eternal questions:-
will the rains come
will the crops be fruitful
and what is the condition
of our relationship.

There he is-high atop the ziggurat
where Father Sun meets Mother Earth
up to his elbows in corded guts,
flowing blood and strips of fascia
searching carefully.

On his face,
a deep, portentous look
open for all to see
yet ominously mysterious

He speaks with quiet strength
so all peons below must hush
and carefully take note
not to miss a work.

I am one of the crowd
also awaiting his pronouncements
His words are enigmatic,
a constant
to be unraveled
according to my mood.

And as I stand puzzling
with the ambiguities
of his speech
he calmly descends
the ancient temple steps
and drives off with a wink
and a nod
in his coughing, snarling,
rubbertyred, beast of transport.
And leaves me enshrouded
inside and out, in a cloud
of combustion,
earthly dust,
and inscrutable syllables

LEGACY TO MY DAUGHTERS

Your faces smile at me
from photographs-
I sigh with the burden of unfulfilled dreams,
for you, unfinished hopes,
dashed upon the jetty of mistakes, lies,
misfortune, hurts and fears.
My dreams and hopes
to help you "get somewhere"
And now here I am empty-handed
my only legacy-words-
compiled as I survived those years
as I learned to see inside myself.
you know the words-smile, be happy, love,
share, think, decide, stand tall, try.
Before I say them, you know.
And I see you doing them all,
in your own way, in your own time,
and getting somewhere on your own steam
and you give back dreams and hopes
for you.

TWO WOMEN

two past worlds
joyously, excitedly share
ideas, of then and now
eyes meet minds
differences melt
similarities arise
pride and empathy
each for each
form bonds
which weather pain
distance and time
what magic-
friendship;
sisterhood.

OUT OF ORDER

My name is Mary Goodwife
I am a vending machine,
My husband feeds me grocery money
he pulls the lever and wants "Roast Dinners,
just like Mother used to make",
and all his favorite snacks.
He pays the bills to house me,
he pulls the lever and wants:-
a clean house for his wake of peanut shells,
cigar butts and dirty clothes,
his favorite chair unused by anyone else,
his own TV shows and no interruptions.

I am a vending machine-
I show an interest in his bowling,
golf and country club buddies.
I never ask questions
or need consideration, communication,
warmth or honesty.

I am a vending machine-
I produce strong healthy children-
boys who wear their hair "the right length"
and love sports
girls who are docile, self-effacing,
mindless pretties-
all to reflect his manly prowess.
I never expect fatherly love, interest,
teaching, or patience.

I am a vending machine-
(machines don't think, don't feel,
don't care, don't need)
he puts in the money
and wants more
the lever jams-
my eyes flash-
Out of Order!

MY MAN HE BE A SAINT!

he go in dat crib
every day-
dat crib-he open de door
an out com
de kids
an de bills
an de cats
an de talkin'-all-de-time-woman
an pop's near brush wit death!
But he got to be a SAINT!
Cause
he don fuss
he don scream
he don argue
he don drink
he jus keep goin in dat awful door!

DESE MEN

Dese men roun heah
be devourin' me wid
dem eyes
Dese men roun heah
be noticin' my walk
an my eye seein' dem
Dey tink my looks
be invitations to taste me
wid out ever needin' to know me
Dese men roun heah
don gibe no ear to my words
don gibe no head to my thoughts
don gibe no space to my soul
Dese men roun heah
dey ain so wise!

BACCHANALIA

Attitude and conscious motley
set free with the glamorous lowlife
lost in the hammering sounds
of two-bit, rip-off, music-assault psychobabble
would save us all and change the world
but they have no talent,
or maybe it is lost in their burst of scorn.
A mass as one
pounding, throbbing, screaming
to the naked women on the wall
who watch the drama endlessly unfold
with lifeless eyes.
We are all engaged
a dance a fury a rage
got to get it out
another lost lover in heels and leather
spikes and dangerous eyes.

THE PARK

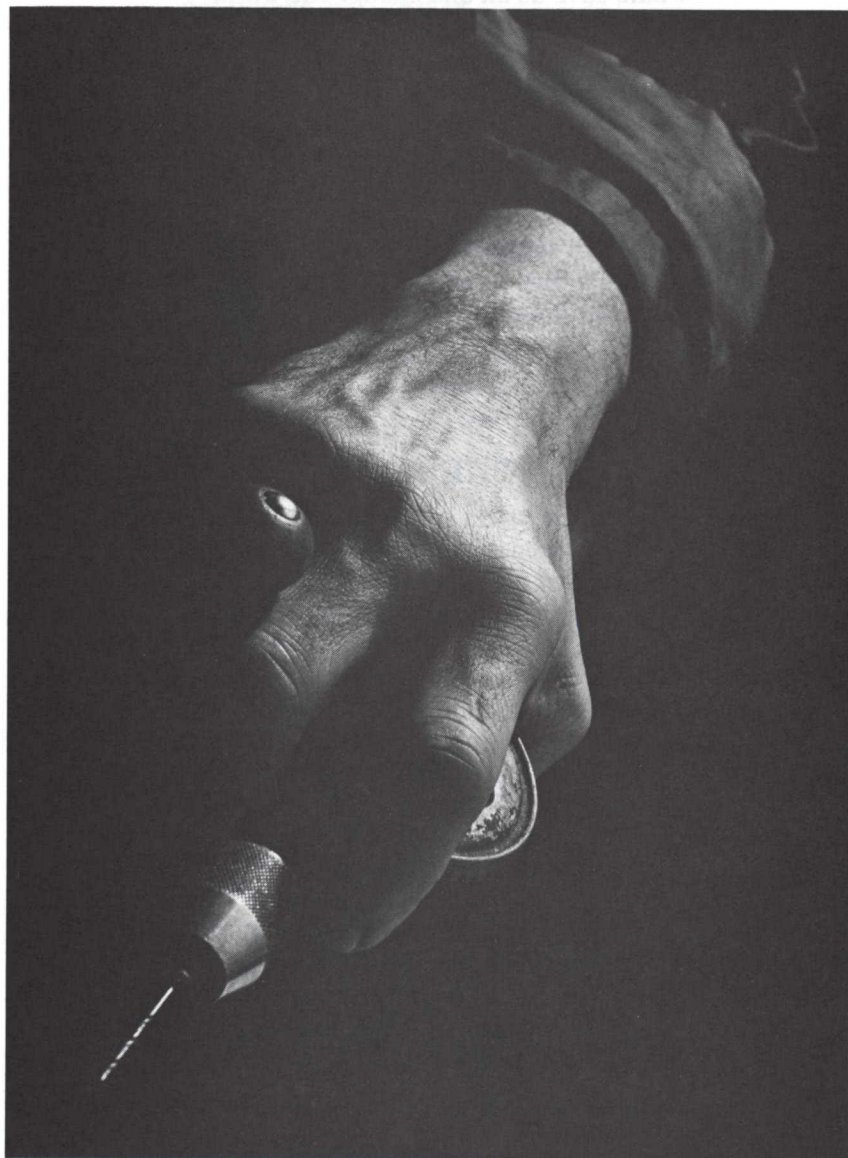
A gentle warm sun is caressing
my fantasies of splendid office girls
when from the side a hushed plea
filters through, "Buddy . . .
spare change . . . cuppa coffee?"
"Sure pal," I dig, "here you go,"
and with a smile of satisfaction
watch him gratefully amble along.
But now three more have the mark
"Buddy . . ." "Buddy . . ." "Buddy . . ."
I get up and leave
and the sun hides behind a cloud,
sorry
go away
leave me alone

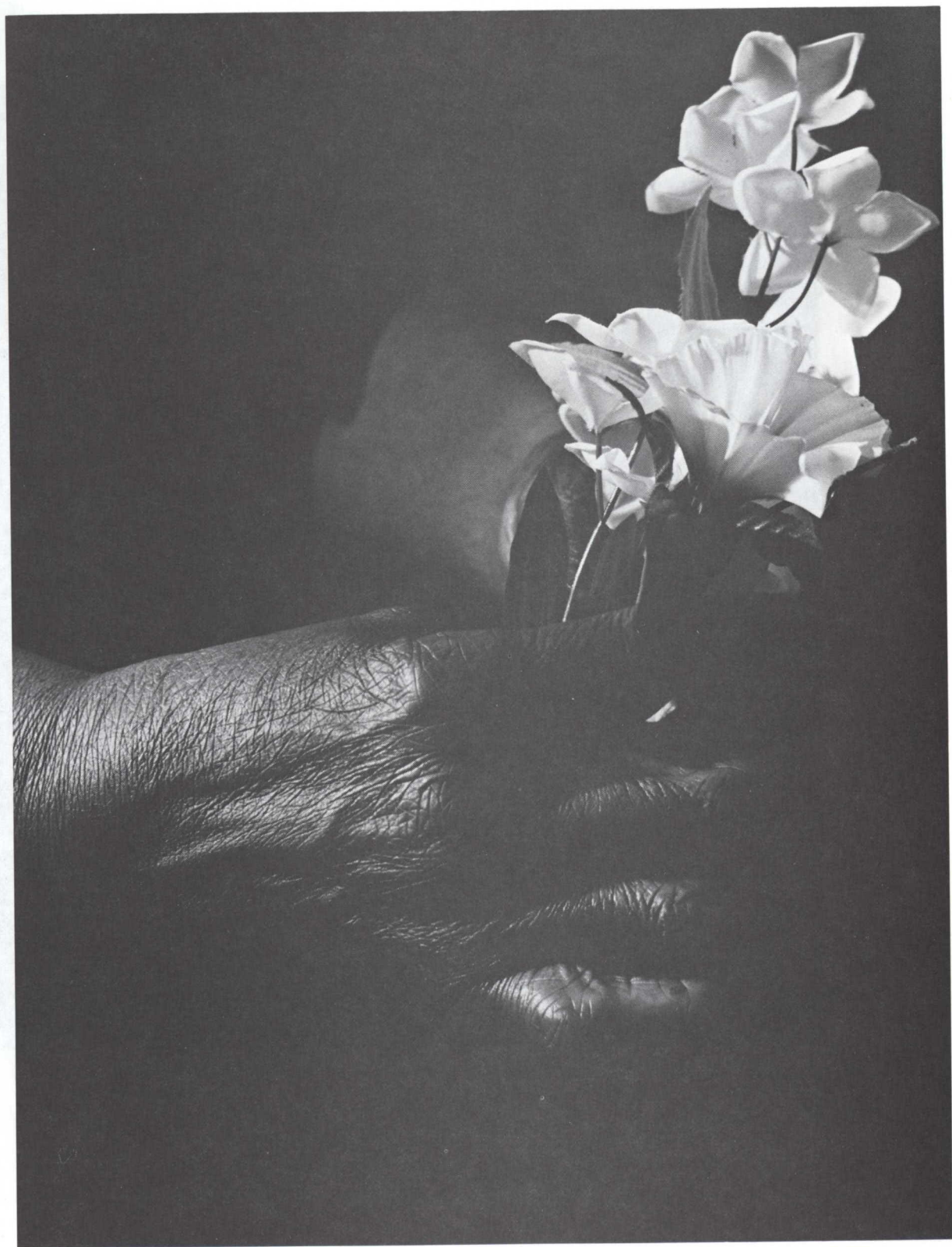
UNINSPIRED

shielding scratched eyes from sharp morning sun
absently groping to find vacated space
in tousled sheets no longer warm
puddle damp remnants of uninspired lust
the only reminder

A Portfolio of Prints

Richard A. Johnson



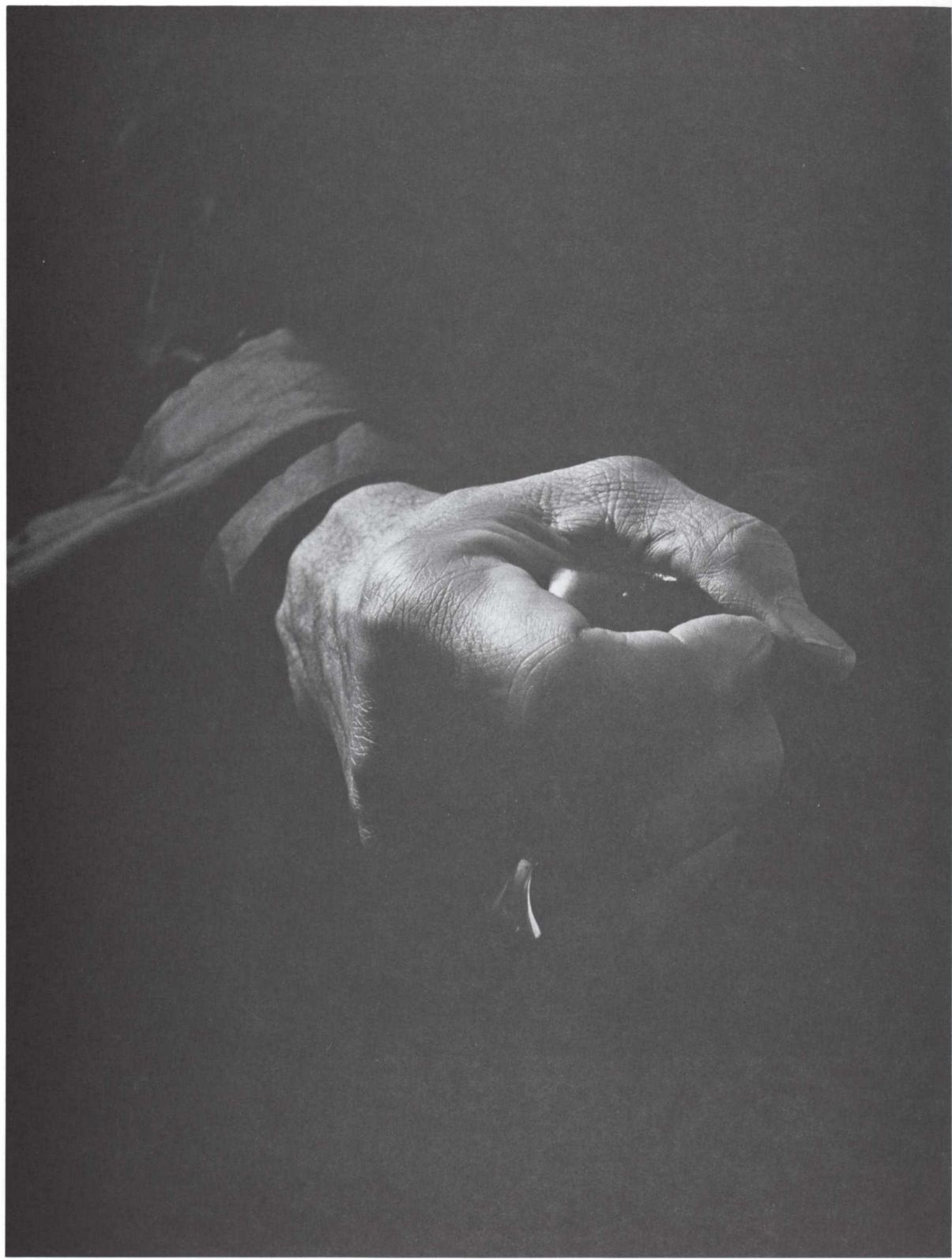


Photographs by Richard A. Johnson

Richard A. Johnson has recently joined the College's photography staff as instructor. He makes his home in Broomall, Delaware County, and is a well-known landscape photographer. Some of his work will be exhibited at Delaware County Community College's Art Gallery this Fall. In these prints, Johnson turns his lens on timeless subject matter for the artist - the human form. The prints abound in subtle contrasts - between masculine and feminine, between the world of work and the world of nature.







Richard A. Johnson

THE CITY

The factories and tenements
Cast shadows over this steel and concrete maze
A graveyard for the living
Where rocking-chairs are kept indoors
And children peer through barred windows

A dark alley is home
To twisted teens
Who, armed with rusty knives and chains
Defend their turf with midnight raids
On hapless passers-by

A wizened man in wet worn clothes
With whiskey on his breath
Breathes slow, sick, sad the sleepers song
And dreams
Love, war, and death

Ahead another sorry sight
Flashing blue and crimson light
Whips the darkness. Sirens blast
An ambulance is racing past
Screams coming from inside

Five blocks north, the working girls
In leather boots and leotards
Patrol the sidewalks and the bars
And call to all the passing cars
And every stranger walking by
They sell themselves to any guy
Fifty bucks a night

Behind hard walls of blackened bricks
In corners where a shadow sticks
Pimps who live on hookers tricks
Drug ruled men who need their fix
And those who kill to get their kicks
Are holding knives
Still dripping blood
Painting Death on city streets

Thomas E. Stluka

JUST AS FRIENDS DO

We are different, you and I.
I accept you as you are and
Would never want you to be
Someone you are not
I always thought you shared
The same view and accepted
Me as I am . . .

Just as friends do.
We shared lost loves and
Heartaches that so often
Accompany such a loss.
We conversed of past
Experiences and discussed
Future plans. We laughed
At each other's jokes and
Shared each other's sorrow . . .

Just as friends do.
When you needed me I came
To you, and you to me
When I was in need. We
Worked out disagreements
In our way, a calm
Manner and I felt secure
In our friendship. I
Assumed you did as well.

I believed in you and
You in me. I trusted you
And you trusted me. We
Never practiced deception
In this friendship and we
Relied on one another . . .

Just as friends do
Yet there came the time
Our friendship did not
Endure one of us going through
A troubled time in life. I
Stumbled and reached for
My friend . . . as friends
Often do . . .

You turned a cold shoulder
. . . Just as friends do?

Karen Farina

COLD AS STONE

Too long
Too long without you.
The castle walls are bare
 and cold as stone.
The darkness of the rooms
 created shadows,
 hard and scary shadows
 in the night
 without the moon.
Remberances
 of the warmth
 within the blankets
 where you lay
 have drifted far away.
No coziness,
 no comfort,
 just alone.
The dripping rain
 just decorates the pain

Veronica Sarron

'NAM

They say Uncle Sam/ that he wanted me
Well, I was in 'Nam/ where was he?

My wife's complaining/ cause she thinks I'm lazy
But, it's this pain in my head/ it's driving me crazy

My joints are hurtin'/ and my body's weak
We went in as men/ came back like freaks

The war in 'Nam/ it did it to us
And "Agent Orange"/ you know, "To kill the brush"

Well, the war is over/ and we're still men
We're tryin' to make it/ the best we can

We fought this war/ for people like you
We don't want much/ a simple thanks would do

Kevin L. Moore

Prey On the Mind

I,
Have stumbled far,
My sinful glance,
The second chance.

You,
The memory moves,
The mood forgets.

They,
They martyr soul,
Of barren eyes,
A slip of the wrist.

We,
The holy child,
The enterprise,
A paradox, the missing step.

I,
In regret, have seen too much,
To deplore this playful jest.

We,
The assembled free
An allegiance may it be.

Chris Lackey

March

Tender green tubers
Pushing through half-frozen ground
Swaddled in nodules

Pussywillows burst . . .
Catkins swell, dipping branches
Stoop in submission

Harsh winds blow steady . . .
Gold jonquils trumpet the chill
Bowing toward the earth

Murielle L. Parker

SONNET

I stand at Neptune's shore and dig my toes
In sand that's wet and cold and watch the swells
Surge in. Bedecked with thrashing foam and throws
Of satin froth, they rush to tag the shells
As if to play, then scurry back to ride
Again this roller-coaster of the sea.
But it's not just these simple games of hide
and seek which cheer these waves with sport and glee.
They also mock; that crest's a jeering grin
That seems to say, "Although I'm not a wave
I have eternity, but you, akin
To all who feel, will end up in a grave."
It's not the sea, of course, that scoffs, but I
Who scorn a world where minds and hearts must die.

Douglas Yadevia

THE BLUES

Cry, the blues, *sing* the blues, *feel* deep the blues.
Blues has the look of coursing tears and sad eyes filled
with longing. It has the *smell* of decline, of whickey
mingled with loneliness. Neither time nor space limits
the infiltration of the Blue Devil; he is everywhere.
The *sound* of blues filters in the air, commands a plaintive
birdsong, moans in the night, wails in haunting horn cries,
groans on a pillow.
The blues *permeates* the human heart, drags down the human
spirit, dulls the human mind. Its victim is left maimed
in melancholy, gorged in gloom.
The blues *hurts*.

Murielle L. Parker

TWO POEMS

Dad is home
Staggering, slipping slightly on the plastic rug
Dad is home
Salty tears and draft beers mix and mingle
on breath and cheek
Car dented from the tonight's adventure parked
sideways on the lawn
Voices low, then loud, then exploding
Upstairs
"Where? Why? With who?" she shrieks
"What do you give a shit for?" he slurs
Furniture falls
Cold dinner coats the walls
The dog cowers under my bed
They dance, the dance of the doomed
On my ceiling
A knock, a push on my door
"Hi" he murmurs "I love you"
"Hi Dad" I answer
But he is gone
He never really was there

GRAY

Gray little light
Flee or fight
Blackness in a soul
Madness in a heart
Love, once real, tears

Author: 205.52.4752

Computer Life

Dana Lynn Bernosky

THIS IS KINDA WEIRD. Oh, yeah, my name's Ray Eller. I am going to tell you a story about something that happened to me after I died, but, having been alive a short while ago, I know you have heard other people's "after life" tales. Believe me, most of what you have read is a figment of imaginations or maybe brain cells starved for oxygen. I don't know exactly what those stories are all about; please believe me when I tell you I have not found any bright lights, long tunnels or Gods. I've not even heard any of the 'Elders' speak of them. But, I don't know very any of them so I don't know how much that counts. Don't get me wrong, maybe those things are around somewhere. I've only been dead for about a week, earth time, so I'm no expert by any means. Let me start someplace that will not bore you.

It was last Wednesday. Jennie and I were coming home from an all-day picnic and time had slipped away. Boy, did it! It was near nine P.M. and the sun was beginning to set when we realized the Everly Brother's "Wake up Little Suzie" was written for us. Jennie was beside herself, visualizing the fit her dad would have as soon as she showed up. As for me, I could think of other places to be than facing her old man. Oh well, my over active glands had gotten me into similiar messes before. Guess I'd muddle through this one, too.

It had started to drizzle and I was going too fast. Coming down Turner's curve was something one should do with at least some caution. On the driver's side the mountain face was a sheer granite slab that went up forever. Absolutely no room to maneuver that way. The passenger's side had a generous view of the river and the valley, both of which stretched for as far as you could see. The tugs and barges looked so small. Good reason for that. The cliff dropped straight down for almost half a mile.

The motorcycle came out of nowhere. It was on my side of the road and the driver spotted me the same time I saw him. His eyes were bulging like a frog and he knew it was going to be a bad scene. I swerved to the right and clipped his back wheel. The last I saw him was a glance in my side view mirror of his bike trying to climb the sheer cliff. My next visual picture was of being airborne. I knew I had bought the show.

Some time back I had watched a documentary on prey and predators. It showed how after a rabbit or a deer was caught by a predator, they simply became docile and died without a struggle. The narrator explained this as nature's way of not wasting her time on a lost cause. That was my plight and I knew it. Time ceased to exist for me as soon as I realized I was suspended a few thousand feet over the valley floor. For all means and purposes I was dead - your kind of dead. Sure, a whole bunch of things went around in my head as the car started its dive toward the ground. But, it was not like a bad dream. Not at all. There would be no waking up from this one. I had the

distinct impression I had experienced a similar happening many times before. Explanations for that feeling evade me.

Somewhere from point A to point B I left my body. Whoever runs the universe knew full well there would be scant use for whatever remained of me, my material me, as soon as B arrived. Truthfully, I lost interest on the outcome about that time. Sure, I watched the Camaro slide over on its side and then tumble muffler over grill and get smaller and smaller. There was a puff of smoke way down there and that was that. Jennie? I don't really know. Can't tell you where she is. Hey, things are different with me now. I don't feel some of the emotions I used to. When I was on 'your side' I had the distinct impression I was somewhat novel. That is, I thought me was me and you were you and things like that. It ain't so. All that is an illusion. That fact is, if it matters at all, you, and say a leaf, are very much one and the same. Both are more space than substance. You can see that clearly from where I am. That's not my story though.

After I had been here for a year (my time) it became evident, for the moment at least, there was no clear plan for my future. Not that I needed one mind you, but I knew that everything has a purpose and I had been put on hold for some reason. In all modesty, I do know, from this vantage point, more than any human alive. As soon as I made the transition from your side to mine I realized that fact. Having time to contemplate, I began to wonder why no one ever communicated with those on the "material" plane. After doing a bit of research, some of which was nothing more than a runaround by some of the folks here, it became obvious that the reason was simply a lack of a vehicle to do it. Seems even things over here are not completely perfect. It was mind boggling! Billions of souls had migrated out of the physical plane into this one and not one had ever communicated back! That is, until me. Here's what happened. Ah, - I forgot. I'm not allowed to; an 'Elder' will do it for me.

Jason Stetson, Ray's best friend, had his 'Apple' turned on. (An Apple is a computer). He was working with the word processor; getting a term paper completed for stat class. His fingers had stopped clicking the keys and he had put his mind on hold, thinking of Ray. Hard to believe. Ray had been dead for over a week. The funeral had been real tough. Jason could see the lines of kids and adults circling around the block, a low hum swirling from their midst as they tried to make small talk. He had stayed close to Ray's family through it all and felt their pain as they greeted all those solemn people. Never in all of his 19 years had he experienced such anguish. As he sat there his thoughts turned to Ray and what they were doing the last time they had met before the accident. His last mental image of Ray was of him using his computer and laughing at something or other. Jason adjusted his glasses and geared his mind for his term paper, even though his heart was nowhere near being in it.

"The industrial revolution was brought about because of a unique

combination of inventiveness **"Hey, Jason"** and an abundance of labor. Jason looked up from the keys and wondered "What the hell? Where did that come from?" He erased out the **Hey, Jason** and continued. Cheap fuel was **"Yo, Bubba, what's the jazz with the eraser?"**

Jason's stomach felt like it had just eaten a host of ants. His skin crawled with a sensation he had never before experienced.

"Hey, man, stay cool. You look real bad man. Be cool"

Jason knew this computer as well as anybody. He had learned it from the inside out and that plethora of knowledge never included a computer talking to him. As he stared at the screen, fingers off the keyboard, he watched. Only one person in the world ever called him Bubba. Where it came from was lost in the recess of history. But, only one person ever called him that, and that person was Ray.

"Sit back and relax. You look like you've seen a ghost. You're not seeing one, your 'typing' to one, hardy, har, har. Laughs sure do look flat on the screen. O.K., here's what I want you to do - and with that Jason hit the off switch. The screen went blank but his eyes couldn't leave its gray face. He was expecting it to do something. He wondered if he was going mad. Ray's death was a shock. Maybe he'd better walk over to Dr. Neely's and have a talk.

Dr. Bill Neely was a clinical psychologist, thirtyish, newly-married and had known Jason for many years, since Jason was a little boy. They had fished together when Jason was very young and played a bit of tennis as a partners team some years later, when the difference in age was not such a factor. They were friends. Jason rarely gave what Bill did for a living any thought at all.

"Mmm, you say that your Mac is...I mean you say Ray is talking to you over your Mac?" Bill said to the piece of weed that was clenched between his teeth. He didn't want to look at Jason and have him detect what was obviously in his expression. There was no way his 'professionalism' could mask this one.

"Ya, that's exactly what I said, and let's cut the doctor - patient bullshit. You heard me the first time." Jason retorted, his neck becoming hot like it always did when he lost his temper.

Dr. Neely jerked back like he had been slapped. Jason and he had never even come close to having any harsh words. "Ok, ok, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to come off that way. Let me phrase it a little differently. Could there be any other explanation for what you said, I mean, what happened?"

"Absolutely and irrevocably no way." Jason answered. "I know the Mac inside out and what happened couldn't happen. The telephone hookup wasn't even attached; for that matter. Even if I knew someone sick enough to do such a thing, I don't know anyone with the talent to do it, if it could be done, - which it can't."

Bill knew disturbed people. He made his living knowing them. His friend, Jason, was very disturbed." Look, Jason, you and I know full well there can be only two explanations for what has happened. Either it did happen or it didn't. Now don't get me wrong. What you saw was very real. Some of these

types of behavior problems seem so real the subconscious can't tell the difference between reality and fantasy. Before you jump down my throat, let me prove it to you. Why do you think sex is done in the dark? At least most of the time? Maybe, tens of thousands of years ago, people were so ugly they couldn't stand to do it during the day. Anyhow, even with us, sometimes it's better with our eyes closed.. So, don't think it's so abnormal to have some sort of fantasy." Dr. Neely paused a moment. "Don't get me wrong, it's serious, but fixable. Go on home; get something to eat, and we'll be in touch tomorrow." And with that, he put his arm around the shoulders of his disturbed young friend.

Jason went back across the field to his house not feeling any better at all. Bill was kind enough, but it wasn't what he had expected. Maybe he wanted a quick, sure answer for what happened. Maybe there wasn't any. No one was home and he was kind of glad. He would have had to lie to his mother if she asked what he was doing and he didn't feel up to it. Couldn't very well tell her the truth. She'd go bonkers. Lucky he had Bill to talk to.

His room was as he had left it. His notes were scattered across his bed, the radio was on and so were most of the lights. His friendly computer was still there too, but it didn't seem friendly to him now. He wasn't as panic stricken now as before and that made him feel a little better. Probable a good sign; but did he dare turn the machine on? Thinking about it made him feel like the time he had to dive off Miller's cliff. The thinking was worse than the doing.

Jason turned on the Apple and the friendly "Welcome to Macintosh" greeted him. The machine and the external disk drive hummed, getting ready for his next command. He chose the paper he had been working on and the Apple hummed some more, bringing the document to the screen. The page he had been working on appeared and it looked O.K. to him. He started to type.

"Come on man, quit the crap! At least have the courtesy to let me know when you're leaving. You ready to talk? Before you wet yourself, here's how we're going to do it. You type to me and I will type back. Got it?"

Jason's hand could not move toward the keys. He didn't even know if he wanted to.

"Oh, shit! You going to turn me off again? You really are a dopey dude. I'm getting kind of tired screwing around with you. Get on the stick and type something."

O.K., Jason thought. This is an illusion. It's not really happening so I have nothing to lose.

"Who are you?"

"You dumb jerk. You know exactly who I am. Ask me something that only you and I know, then we can get that shit out of the way."

"What is your address?"

"Pardon me for saying this, but how is that such a novel question? There must be ten thousand people besides the postman who knows 582 Orchard Beach Rd. is my past address."

If Bill is right, and this is some mental aberration, this is really a dilly, Jason thought. Might as well keep on going. Probably find myself in a padded cell before the day is over anyway.

Who was Patsie Z?"

"Is that all you can think about is sex? Here we are on the verge of making history and you can't think about anything but some hot pants little slut! Just, kidding. Great choice! Last May, right after the Batville ball game. Me, you, Patsie and Jennie went to the falls and had a picnic. Patsie got blitzed and tried to take advantage of you. Need I say more?"

"Yeh, you can say a hell of a lot more. If what is happening is happening, I want to know how and why. I want to know whether I am supposed to feel good, bad, indifferent or what."

"I can't answer that one for you, old buddy. I'm kind of in a sort of new situation too, you know. This gig, I mean the going over the cliff thing, wasn't exactly a planned event."

"Fair enough; where do we go from here?" Jason replied, feeling almost at ease.

"As far as I know nothing like this has ever been done before. There is no heavenly plan. It's just an idea whose time, well, maybe has come. Let's fool around with it a bit and see what happens."

"Go on. What fooling around are you thinking of?"

"How about me giving you the winning number in tomorrow's numbers drawing?"

"You mean you can really do that?"

Well, I've never done it before, for obvious reasons, but I am at a place where there is no such thing as past or future. I don't really think too much about either; they're simply there. Something like shifting the gears on your car. You do it but you don't give it much thought. The number is 420. See you tomorrow."

Jason sat back, hands folded across his stomach, and thought. What if what is happening is really happening? What if?

Jason was jarred from his thoughts by his mother's call. "Jason, its Dr. Neely on the phone. Do you want to pick it up?"

"Yeh, Mum, I got it, thanks," and he reached to the floor and plugged his phone into the jack.

"Hello, Bill, what's up?"

Mmmmm, Bill thought, sounds pretty cool. "Just checking, how do you feel?"

"O.K., I guess. You were probably right. I'm doing alright now. Thanks for calling," Jason replied, not really wanting to draw Bill any farther into this thing; at least not yet.

"You sure now? I'm here whenever you need me," Bill replied with genuine interest in his voice.

"Appreicate it, but I'm really fine now. I'll drop over and see you some time later today. Tomorrow for sure." And with that the conversation ended. Hours of staring at the ceiling followed and somehow sleep crept over him.

Jason's morning started as usual. Well, almost as usual. His mother was still carefully choosing her words for fear of mentioning Ray. Jason felt sorry for her because he knew that his pain was hers. He ate breakfast not even knowing what it was, thanked his mother, made an excuse and left the house.

The morning was brisk and some of the leaves, remnants of warmer moments, drifted down towards their final resting place. Jason watched them, wondering about what Ray had said about them. Something about how he and the leaves were mostly space and very much related. What Ray had said!!!..... I guess I really believe, he thought. Jason cut across the main street when he reached town, using the broken field running style of O.J. and Jim Brown. He skipped around moving vehicles and hit the front step of the paper store going full tilt. The man behind the counter, looking bored, in keeping with the job, gave him a daily ticket, number 420.

Jason had watched the daily drawing on T.V. many times, but he had never really paid much attention. This time it was different. He cared what numbers were going to be pulled from the bowl holding the round balls. One part of him wanted the number to be 420, another desired anything but. Unfortunately, he couldn't figure which feeling was dominant. He watched as the air was forced underneath the balls, they started to gyrate in all directions and one, two, three, up they popped to the top of their respective cylinders. When the young lady read the number on the first ball as 4, Jason knew full well what the others would be; and he was not disappointed.

Jason didn't tell his folks he had a winning ticket in his pocket. Instead he left the living room without anybody noticing and went to his room, clicked on the 'Mac' and let it greet him with the Familiar 'Welcome to Macintosh'.

"Hey, Dude, you did real good. How's it feel being on the 'winning side? For one buck you got \$500. Not bad!"

"I appreciate it Ray, but I don't feel too good about doing it. I doesn't seem right. Its like I cheated or something."

Come on, that's a dork way of looking at it. I picked the number, you didn't. And anyhow, who did you cheat? The odds are a thousand to one for picking a three digit number and the state pays you five hundred-to-one if you win. Now that's cheating! You don't ever hear of them telling the public how much of a rip off they are running. Don't be so thinned skinned. Enjoy!"

"Yeh, you got a point there. I guess one time won't hurt. I'll buy my mom and hey, your mom, something with it!"

"That's fine. Just fine. But we have bigger and better things to do than worry about a measly 500 bucks. I am really going to help my old buddy. I got plans."

"Uh, I don't really know if I want to know what your plans are. Know what I mean?"

"Come on, you gotta be kidding. Remember how we used to talk and dream about being rich some day, owning two Vets and a Rolls with a blond on each fender? Well, old chum, it can really happen. I can make it happen; happen for both of us."

O.K. I won't promise anything but I'll listen."

"This week's lotto is worth 3 mil. That's just in this state. All the other lottos combined are 26.234 mil. I'm talking about one week's take. From this moment on money is going to be the least of your problems."

"You obviously know the exact amount, but, what is going to happen to me if I go around and win all that money? I can't very well hide under a rock someplace and pretend it won't draw some attention. You must be able to see what a turmoil it would cause."

"Yeh, there's going to be a little change in your life style. Garnersville won't be able to hold you and some other things will happen, but don't worry about it. I got plans."

What 'other things' will happen?" I want to know right not."

"You're going to control huge chunks of real estate, have all kinds of politicians in your pocket, and be surrounded by throngs of people all eager to do your slightest bidding. You are going to make King Louis XIV look like an amateur. Oh, yes, women you -

"Hold it, what happens to my family? You didn't mention them."

"That's a slight problem. Ah, they sort of go their separate way. Say -you've changed. Hey, they don't ever have any money problems though!"

"Sounds real peachy. Lots of money, fame, and power but no family or friends. I guess you can fix it so that I can become a scratch golfer?"

"Now your talking'. You want to be a scratch golfer? I guarantee I can find a way to fix it. From now on old buddy whatever you want old Ray can get."

When I started to tell you my 'life after death' story I told you it was kinda weird. After I let Jason know he could have whatever he wanted, he up and turned me off. I can't figure it out and until I do the 'Elders' here say I can't go on with my 'contact.' What I'm wondering is, if I can find someone else to work with, maybe the 'Elders will give me another chance. Would you be interested?

THE DAY THE CHOIR STOPPED SINGING!

(A short story for children)

Gloria Scharff

MISS LAKE SAID we all looked like angels in our white robes, and she expected us to sing like angels.

"Angels do not live on Earth," chimed David, "or go to the third grade. How do you know if they even sing?" My friend, David, has a very curious way about him.

"I just know, David," replied Miss Lake. "Angels look so sweet with cute, little smiles on their faces. Anyone who looks like that certainly can sing a note or two."

David pondered Miss Lake's answer and decided not to discuss it any further. He just stood in place dressed in his white choir robe wearing a cute, little smile.

"Are we ready, children?" Miss Lake questioned as she raised her arms to lead us in song. The organist, Mrs. Trevor, struck the first note and we began. Sue Ann, my best friend in the whole world, opened her mouth so wide I could see all her missing baby teeth. Sue Ann held onto one note so long, I thought to myself, "I may have to close that mouth for her!" Chuckling out loud at the very thought, I felt a huge shadow over me. Looking up, I saw Miss Lake.

"Meredith Monday!" She raised her eyebrows. "Why aren't you singing?" My mouth must have suddenly opened as wide as Sue Ann's because Miss Lake said, "Close your mouth, Meredith! Answer my question, please."

In my amazement over Sue Ann's missing baby teeth, I had forgotten to sing. But who cared? All the other children were doing a great job, and no one noticed that I stopped singing --- except for Miss Lake, of course.

"Miss Lake," I explained, "I have a sore throat and singing is difficult for me." I did not exactly have a real sore throat, but sounded like a good excuse. Miss Lake would surely show some sympathy.

She said, instead, "My little angel, if we all had sore throats and stopped singing, what would this choir sound like?"

I thought about this question. then I answered, "The choir would sound like a bunch of sore throats!" With that, laughter could be heard not only from my singing partners, but from across the hall in one of the classrooms, as well.

Miss Lake rolled her eyes back, shook her head, and raised her arms again. "Now, now, children. Let's begin again." Mrs. Trevor patiently struck her organ and we sang, and sang, and sang.

Rehearsal

A choir rehearsal was scheduled for Friday afternoon, right after lunch. Lucky for all of us "angels", we were allowed to miss class until rehearsal was over. Of course, we all knew it would not end until at least three o'clock when school normally ends. This would be almost as terrific as a snow day off from school!

As it turned out, we sang at the very least, a thousand songs --- well, maybe not quite that many --- but we sang, and we sang, and we sang some more.

About every five minutes, though, someone raised his or her hand to use the bathroom, others wanted a drink of water, and some, like David, complained about knowing that real angels did not stand when they sang.

"Angels always stand tall so their voices ring out," shouted Miss Lake above our tones. "But after this song, we will all take a rest by sitting for awhile,"

You could hear a loud sigh of relief. If only they would all sing like they sigh, rehearsal would have been shorter.

Sue Ann, David's younger sister Allison, and I, sat in a far corner for our rest. I think I really did have a sore throat. All that singing made it feel scratchy, and as well as my tired legs, my throat needed a rest.

"I have a great way to help my scratchy throat," I joked.

"How, Meredith?" asked Allison, twisting her long hair between her fingers --- a habit she will never break says her brother David.

"What is your secret?" wondered Sue Ann, almost knocking me over, eager to hear what I had to say.

"I'll tell you both. Come closed." The three of us huddled together and I told them my secret. "I 'mouth' the words instead of singing out loud," I said.

"You 'mouth' the words?" Sue Ann and Allison spoke together.

"Yup. Sure do!" I proudly replied, implying that I knew more than they did.

Sue Ann spoke. "I think I will try that. Well, maybe just for one or two words. I get tired of all that singing, too."

We all agreed the whole thing was a great idea. After all, none of us wanted to get a real sore throat and miss singing in the Annual Spring Concert for which we were rehearsing.

The Concert (Almost)

No one seemed to be talking about 'mouthing' very much even though most of the singers all laughed about 'Our Secret' as the idea spread. And, anyway, we were all too busy being excited about the concert because our parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, and even some neighbors were out in the audience.

Miss Lake held an extra practice early in the morning on concert day. Some of us admitted to each other that on several occasions we 'mouthed'

the words, but the songs never sounded any different. David suggested that even real angels had to rest their throats.

"What is good for the angels must be good for us," he smiled his cute, little smile.

Miss Lake shuffled around behind the curtain, making sure none of our faces were hidden. She said it was no easy job arranging all of us on bleachers. I, for one, had to be moved in front of one of the taller boys, because his mother had brushed his blond hair so high, it appeared as if I were looking out over a mound of hay, as Miss Lake had put it. Well, maybe she didn't exactly refer to his mound --- I mean hair --- as hay!

Soon, we all heard Mrs. Trevor strike her first note and the Annual Spring Concert began. Miss Lake kept her arms flailing in the air, the organ kept grinding, and we kept singing.

In between songs the audience clapped. Mom and Aunt Sarah kept waving their forefingers at me, but I never figured out why they didn't use their whole hands. Sue Ann's father yawned, and David's three-year old brother squirmed in his seat.

With all these distractions, I suddenly found myself 'mouthing' the words. The rest of the choir sounded terrific, and since they really had no need for my voice, I decided to keep on 'mouthing'. At the very least, my throat would be saved from that horrible scratch.

To my left, Sue Ann squinted her left eye at me. I honestly believe she was trying to wink, but couldn't quite get the knack. Then I got the message. Her mouth was wider than ever --- even wider than the time I saw her missing baby teeth! Sue Ann --- oh! no! --- was 'mouthing'.

David knudged my right arm and I quickly stole a glance at him out of my right eye. He was doing 'it', too! Allison, also! then a few more children. I could not believe what was happening.

There we all were. Forty-four boys and girls from the second and third grades, singing in the Annual Spring Concert with all of our relatives and friends watching us.

Miss Lake's arms seemed a little lower for some reason --- or was it just my imagination? Louder sounds were coming from the organ, or so it seemed. The audience frowned and strained their ears as if they were listening for something. Did they really notice?

With her hands momentarily on her hips, Miss Lake stared a piercing stare at each and every one of us. She looked totally puzzled. David was 'mouthing' quite well, Allison stood behind him doing just about the same, and Sue Ann and I knew we had both perfected it. In fact, the entire choir was doing a most excellent job of 'mouthing'!

Not one of us, it was later agreed by all, had noticed the silence, because the organ lady seemed to be playing louder and the 'mouthing' went unnoticed.

The Annual Spring Concert came to a sudden halt. Miss Lake ran off the stage, her arms flailing again for no apparent reason. The organist followed, but seemed quite lost without her instrument, and the entire



choir shuffled down from the bleachers. Unlike real angels, we were unable to disappear into the clouds and fade away!

Meredith Monday
(*How could you?*)

The disastrous spring concert had been held on Friday, and what a great feeling to know my mom, dad, and relatives thought our choir sounded great. Correction. Not the last song. They all wondered what had happened. "Was Miss Lake feeling okay?" they wanted to know. "Why did the choir suddenly stop singing?"

Over the weekend, most of my friends were all telling similar stories. Their parents thought the concert's ending was a bit abrupt, but all-in-all, the Annual Spring Concert was a complete success and enjoyed by all.

Then, Monday arrived, and we were all back in school. No sooner had I arranged my books in front of me, sharpened my pencils, and had totally forgotten the concert of the Friday before, a messenger strolled into the room.

Why was Miss Phillips, my homeroom teacher, staring at me? Was it my hair? I told Mom I did not want two ponytails sticking out the sides of my head. Then the messenger looked my way. The two of them were definitely discussing me.

In my daydreaming pose, I dreamt that they were saying how perfect I would be as the lead in this year's school play, "The Beautiful One." "Meredith Monday!" someone screamed in the distance. As I looked in the direction from which my name was coming, I suddenly popped out of my dream.

Angrily, Miss Phillips was forming my name again. "Meredith Monday!" I thought to myself, 'All you have to do is ask me quietly and I would be more than pleased to take the lead.' "Please see Miss Lake," she was shouting. The eyes of the classroom were upon me. Well--- dreams were only dreams.

There I was; walking toward Miss Lake's room, with a vaguely small idea about why she requested seeing me. She spotted me first. "Miss Monday," she said in her calm, get-ready-to-sing voice. "You and I must have a talk. Let's take a seat."

The talking was done by Miss Lake. "How could you?! How could you?! How could you!" I heard her say those three little words a dozen times, sometimes sadly, sometimes madly, once with a little pleading in her voice, and once (or twice) hysterically.

I don't know why, but my mind shifted to a piece of paper stuck in my sweater pocket. The entire time Miss Lake was talking to me, I kept turning the paper with my fingers inside my pocket. Pulling it out, I spotted Miss Lake's name, and underneath that, it read: From Mrs. Monday. Why would my mom send my singing teacher a note?

"Here," I said shakily. "A note for you." My mom must have figured out somehow about our 'mouthing' during the last song of the concert. After all, stupid me had told the entire choir about 'Our Secret', and Miss Lake found out when she had heard two of the choir members discussing the matter in

the girls' bathroom.

Every few seconds, Miss Lake would look up at me from the note. Soon she handed it back to me, stood up, and put her hands behind her back. I couldn't possibly have noticed a faint smile on her face, could I? "Meredith Monday," she spoke, pacing back and forth. "I forgive you this time." Gulping, I twitched in my seat. "If you ever have a great idea again on how to save your sore throat or something like that (I gulped again), please discuss it with me first. You are just lucky. The concert could have been disastrous, but now I am over my anger, I believe the concert was a success after all." She paused and turned to look at me. The she smiled. "You may go back to your homeroom."

Hurrying down the corridor and, of course, stopping by the water fountain, something hit the floor. The note! Picking it up and turning it over to see the written side, I began to read:

Dear Miss Lake,

We all enjoyed the Annual Spring Concert, especially Aunt Sarah, who drove 15 miles to see it. The singing was beautiful and your orgainst sounded excellent.

Miss Lake, you certainly put much time and patience into the choir, and I speak for all the parents, I am sure, when I say we are grateful to have you at the school.

We hope to see you at next year's concert!

*Sincerely,
Mrs. Monday*

You know, I really should go home today and tell Mom what really took place during the last song of the Annual Spring Concert. But as I think about it, no one really noticed, not even Mom.