

PEGASUS

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The Value of Wisdom

Neal Spector

A WIDE AND PROMINENT forehead dominated his lean, taut skinned face as it stretched endlessly upward to a hairless scalp. The large frame of his body, straight broad shoulders and solid jaw, conveyed the image of an aging athlete or a steel worker accustomed to moving immense objects. Yet, the sensitive eyes of an elderly scholar, delicately colored misty blue, peered out from within the cavernous recesses of his bony eye sockets with an uncanny, omniscient gleam. One might imagine that no object or creature could escape detection by these eyes that now darted furtively back and forth scanning the empty landscape before him.

He stood perfectly still and surveyed the space like an escaped prisoner cautiously straining to remain invisible. An electric tension radiated from his eyes and immobile stance, yet a strange looseness punctuated every movement of this body. He was a study of dynamic stillness and the stationary maple and oak trees that gently swayed as they towered above him. An eerie sense of remote indifference emanated from this solitary fugitive; any passerby would have looked twice but quickened his pace hoping to pass unnoticed.

Minutes passed but he maintained his vigil at the edge of the woods. Not unlike an animal stepping out beyond his territory, he seemed to be sniffing the wind for some special scent, waiting for the proper moment with a timeless patience. If some veiled threat or urgent need drove him to this primitive instinctual behaviour, it remained hidden in the solemn stillness of the forest. A raw humid chill competed with the hazy sunlight that penetrated leafless trees and cast long, uneven shadows on the leaf strewn earth. Squirrels raced across his line of vision and birds chirped noisily from tree limbs that reached out directly overhead but his eyes remained focused on the space before him.

Suddenly, without warning, he edged forward, stepping from the woods into the bright clearing, his forehead glistening in the sunlight. Momentarily, almost magically, he saw the form of an elderly gentleman taking his morning tonic in the scenic forest. He angled his body forward, looking sharply left, then right, and dashed across the clearing with long powerful strides. Twigs and clods of dirt flew up behind him as he fled the sheltered darkness of the woods and raced full speed across the open meadow.

The sudden burst of forward motion carried him a hundred yards into a grassy ravine. He sprinted through the dried out winter grasses leaving a wake of undulating leaves waving to and fro behind him. As he approached a gentle slope leading to an unseen knoll above the horizon he effortlessly assumed a stationary position. Without missing a step, precise goosestepping movements replaced the long gaited sprint. Arms tightly crossed before his chest, he inhaled deeply with an exaggerated sound that culminated in a sharp, earsplitting 'HA!' as he exhaled. The yell echoed hauntingly in the stillness of the surrounding silence.

The activity at the edge of the woods had startled and then attracted the attention of a young boy who crouched behind a tangled cluster of vines and bushes to spy upon the unsuspecting stranger without being seen himself. As he knelt awkwardly behind the protective barricade, eyes riveted on the intruder, exhilaration rippled through his consciousness. Fear and curiosity piqued his senses as he observed the unusual proceedings in his own backyard. As the elderly man finally ceased his peculiar movements, the boy suppressed an urge to rush to the middle of the clearing and ask the intruder what he might be doing in his backyard.

Perhaps he's playing soldier or doing some special exercises for mountain climbing or . . . he didn't know what to think, but it certainly was strange, he knew that. The intruder abruptly reached down to his thighs and began to briskly rub and knead them in a systematic manner not unlike a sculptor deftly shaping clay to resemble an internalized vision. The boy strained to avoid moving against the bushes and signalling his presence to the stranger, both awe-inspiring and ridiculous to him.

The boy, for all his suspicions, felt drawn to this strange man, although he continued to regard him as an intruder. Filled with anticipation, he waited in silence, imagining dark secrets to explain the mystery of the man's sudden appearance and his peculiar behavior. When the man stood up and turned towards the woods, the boy felt stunned. Thinking the intruder was about to leave, he cautiously stood, took one illconceived step to extricate his foot from the tangled undergrowth, and, catching his foot, pitched headlong into the prickly branches.

Involuntarily, he cried out in pain and so the unsuspecting man was finally made aware of his audience. As he walked to the dense thicket where the boy lay, curiosity appeared to triumph over a wariness that gradually receded from the wrinkled lines of his face. When he approached the bushes and peered inside, his eyes sparkled as though he was laughing heartily to himself. He was clearly amused as he surmised the intentions of the young onlooker.

The man reached down for the boy's hand and gently pulled him up from the birdblind-like barrier turned trap. The boy stood slowly and held his silence, but the intruder's serious mein instantly softened to radiate mirth and compassion. "These brambles can be tricky if you're not real observant. I've been caught by them hundreds of times til I learned to watch out for them," the man said, emphasizing the word 'caught.'

"Yeah, I just kinda came out the backdoor and saw you there and forgot to look where I was going. I mean . . ." and he stumbled trying to avoid the details of his spying activities. "I wondered what you were doing here. I've never seen anybody that looks like you, except, maybe in the movies, so I couldn't help but watch," he finally blurted out.

The intruder simply stared back at the boy in silence. Waiting, watching, with an air of contemplative quiet, he allowed the boy to finish his thoughts before continuing with his own, more confident, speech. The boy just stared up at the man with a quizzical look in his eyes and an uncertain twist in his grin. "So what are you doing here mister?" Again, the two intruders peered

deeply into each other's eyes, neither knowing what to expect, uncertain about what to say or what would become of their chance meeting but still searching for some clue.

"This is a beautiful backyard. When I was a boy like you I had to walk three or four miles to spend an afternoon near a forest watching for animals and playing in the leaves. Do you spend much time here?" he asked, gently coaxing the boy to talk about himself and forget his inquiries of the stranger.

"Hey mister!" cried the boy, despite the intruder's effort, "What are you doing in my backyard? Do you live around here? I've never seen you before."

"Ah! I like your air of confidence," replied the intruder with a bemused smile and a gleam in his eyes. "After I help you out of the thorns, after, I've caught you spying on me, you turn the tables so I'll feel defensive. I understand though. Territory's real important to most people who live in the suburbs where all their other instinctive behaviour has to be so repressed. I guess you've watched your mom and dad guard their land in the proper suburban way so you at least come by it honestly."

After a moment's reflection, he continued, "Anyway, you're right. I don't live in your neighborhood although I live very near to your house. I guess I'm sort of passing through this area. I was doing a certain part of a routine I practice to keep my mind and body scynchronized," and with these words, he turned once more as if he was preparing to leave.

The man didn't answer. Instead he searched the tall grasses until he discovered a dry, sturdy looking stump and sat down quietly with a sigh. Very slowly, methodically, as though performing a sacred ritual, he untied and then loosened the laces of his very heavy, worn boots. Despite the cold, moist air, the man proceeded to remove each boot and his socks as well. As he rubbed his feet with graceful, circular motions, he glanced up at the boy who stood watching him in a peaceful trance.

"Many years ago," the man began, "Americans used to treat unexpected guests as special people, not at all unlike the original Americans, the Indians. In fact, in India and throughout most of Asia, the guest is still treated as though he were a god. They offer their best food and relish the opportunity to talk with a traveller."

The boy half listened to the man, who continued rubbing his feet, wondering why the man was talking with him about such strange things.

"Americans must live so close to one another to appreciate an unexpected pilgrim or sojourner. It's all they can do to avoid spending too much time with those around them at work, in traffic, at school and then on the telephone. Of course the TV provides an abundance of incredible although impossible people to marvel at. You probably watch a lot of television, don't you?"

The boy's apprehension, stilled by the man's amiable superiority, gave way to a pleasurable sense of curiosity. Who is this man? The boy wondered. Something about the way he moved and the unnaturally calm and distinct fashion in which he spoke led the boy to believe this was an incredible person. He didn't know anyone who even vaguely resembled this man. Maybe, the boy thought, on some strange TV show where someone possessed supernatural abilities or came from another planet, he had seen someone like this

man. "Do you live in the woods then?" he inquired, surprised at the sound of his own voice.

But the strange man wasn't visibly offended. "Not exactly," the man replied with a hint of mystery. The boy cocked his head to the side and squinted as though he were trying to see through an intense glare. "Living means a great deal more than sleeping, bathing and where you keep your belongings," he finally offered. "I spend a lot of time in the woods. I walk wherever I go and stay off the main roads-avoiding heavily populated areas whenever I can."

"You sure sound like Johnny Appleseed or an escaped convict."

"Herman!" The word clanged like the tolling of a huge, invisible bell. Both man and boy jumped in surprise. The new intruder's voice invaded their tenuous rapport like a searchlight aimed from a prison turret. Atop the knoll, the outline of connected red brick two story houses spanned the horizon in an endless row. They marked the perimeter of the town; a barrier between civilization and the unclaimed woods.

A maternal, though not unattractive woman stood by the door that jutted from one segment of the huge brick box. She held the door open, but kept both feet within her home. "Herman?" she shouted again, "Are you out there?"

"Yes Mom," the boy said with resignation.

"Come back inside or put on a heavier jacket. You're gonna catch a cold like that."

When the boy returned, he was visibly pleased to find the man still there. His mother had warned him about talking to strange men and asked him to stay inside awhile and watch the TV. "You shouldn't be here, should you mister? My mom wanted to know why your head is shaved. Are you a Harry Krishna or something?"

"The term for believers in the sanctity of Lord Krishna, a more recent sect of Hinduism, is 'Hare' Krishna," he explained, pronouncing the word with exaggerated diction. "As to your first question . . . well, then where should I be? Because I don't own a house bordering on these woods, I'm not allowed to walk through them or sit and reflect on a tree stump for awhile? Is that what you believe?" he said, challenging the boy in a flat, unemotional tone.

"Well, you are a pretty strange guy. Most people your age wouldn't sit and talk with me, or if they did, it would be about sports scores or dumb questions about how well I'm doing in school." The boy paused, again, the intruder silently watching him. Puzzled, he lashed out more in frustration than anger, "You won't even tell me who or what you are. I bet you're a Russian spy or some escaped prisoner, aren't you? There's something real strange about you. You don't even act or talk like an American, you're so different from anyone else I know."

"Well," said the intruder and drew a long breath, "it's a curious thing." The boy was straining to stand still, as curiosity and frustration fought for control within his mind. "Many years ago, in Eastern Europe," the intruder continued, "an advanced university student of literature and philosophy left his city and the university to pursue a knowledge which wasn't then and still isn't taught in any schools as we know them. He set out to meet some of the

enlightened men he had read about; to receive firsthand the knowledge and understanding they had developed concerning weird aspects of human existence."

Almost inevitably, the power of new and unusual speech, of truth, cast its magical spell upon the boy. Unconsciously, he walked up to the man and sat beside him while the rest of the world began to fade. "Some of these 'masters' travelled thousands of miles, wandering back and forth between the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa. Once, they walked or rode on horseback; later they travelled in trains or automobiles to their often unknown destinations because they were getting old for the rigors of such demanding journeys. People today don't realize there are special qualities and benefits in walking."

The intruder paused, perhaps to see if his young listener had any questions. But the boy continued to peer into the man's face, spellbound, waiting for the words to continue.

"You see, such a man was willing to suffer many hardships to get this knowledge, and spent his time in the company of others who valued and questioned the forces of the universe. They didn't seek supernatural powers to dominate others, or to gain great material wealth; no, they quested for knowledge, exploring the edges of human knowledge and testing it for themselves: in mathematics, astronomy, physiology and psychology, pursued the truth believing nothing to be 'impossible'. But more importantly, these men believed the way they sought this information was as important as the information itself!"

"So you see, the travelling time was itself a method to gain insight into the less obvious conditions of life. It is said that the way one moves determines how he sees and consequently what he thinks." Again, the intruder looked deeply into the boy's eyes, but he only nodded his head, signalling his willingness to listen.

"Anyway, it is said that such a man, known as Master Hanish, studied and spoke to a degree that his IQ would have greatly exceeded the two hundred level. He could exist for months on bread and water and could remain awake for several weeks without any signs of fatigue or impaired mental faculties. But, you see, he didn't go into an office each day or work in a factory. Sometimes he sold old Persian rugs or religious artifacts; more often, he travelled for months at a time through hazardous mountain passes and backward villages, talking with townsfolk about unusual practices to develop the mind and body. Few people know much about this, even if they've heard of the man. Gurdjieff, Blavatsky, Ouspensky, Yougananda and countless other learned people of our century lived similar lives but their history and their findings never appear in our classrooms."

The intruder shifted his position on the tree stump. After a moment, he turned his head to stretch out his back. The boy broke the silence: "He sounds like this guy I saw in a movie who left his kingdom where he was prince to go out and find a way to live, ah . . . well, I guess without pain and all the bad feelings that some people have. Are you trying to be like him?"

"Yes you're right about that. The bad feelings people have are often a result

of their ignorance, and the effort to understand can seem more like the proper method to change their thinking. That's how religions and religious cults attract millions of followers. The ability to understand has nothing to do with changing. The great philosophers knew that every student must have the opportunity to know himself to see himself without any external standards.

"Many modern writers believe that man is constantly hypnotized by society's routines and standards, and the incentives of material rewards, so that he's hardly able to think beyond what's right in front of him. When a man is afraid of living in the woods in wintertime, and can't afford food from the supermarket or a suit from the haberdashery, he may feel his life and hope to invest any money saved in a house. The point is, he's compelled to assume he's lucky that he chose this life; in fact, only a few are suited to this stagnant lifestyle. The others must pretend they enjoy it.

"Ultimately," he continued after wetting his lips, "it's no different than the conditioning in a prisoner of war camp. Society in the Western World treats non-destructive lifestyles that may be most productive for an individual, and, ultimately, society at large, as criminal behaviour if it doesn't fuel the national economy."

"So what!" exclaimed the boy. "What's wrong with that?"

"Each man is entitled to seek satisfaction in life in the way that he chooses. But to tell children that one way to be satisfied is the only way is destructively misleading."

"So you think that a cozy house and a good job isn't what life is really about? You really are some sort of aging, hippie-freak, aren't you?"

The intruder didn't answer. He sat with his elbow tucked into his chest and rested his chin upon his hand that was clenched into a loose fist. The boy for his part wrestled with emotions that were raging out of control. He knew his anger was misplaced but he felt that some tone in the intruder's voice meant more than the words. It was this message he responded to, in a language he felt he couldn't understand.

"So what are you saying?" said the boy.

"Why don't you tell me what you think? You've listened to me for a while and you obviously disagree—that is, according to what I hear you saying. Somehow, I think maybe you're more afraid than anything else. What do you think?"

"You're not angry with me?"

"No, but are you angry with me—for what I said?" the intruder asked, trying to subtly guide him.

"I don't know. I think I want to grow up, make some money, you know, have a good time. Find a pretty girl and marry her, vacation in the Caribbean and here you go telling me about these fairy tale weirdoes who give up everything I want—just to learn."

He shifted uncomfortably and stretched his neck backward and looked up at the sky, wondering, waiting for the clouds inside to pass. "I mean, who are you to condemn the lives of people who succeed, who live the way they're supposed to? Just because you don't live that way doesn't mean it's wrong."

"True."

"So why should I listen to you?"

Again, the intruder silently stared at him, waiting. For what, wondered the boy, what's he waiting for?

"Hey mister!" the boy nearly shouted, surprising himself more than the man, "You're hiding something. I can tell."

The intruder closed his partially opened mouth and pushed out his cheeks, refraining from any verbal response. A trace of dejection showed in his downcast eyes, for the boy could tell he wasn't really looking at anything on the ground. He noted with sadness the intruder's avoidance of every direct question asked of him. It seemed a blatant negation of all the other qualities the boy had come to respect in the strange man, and he felt let down.

"Well," said the man, deliberating over what path to take, "I'm offering you information you'll probably never find anywhere else, for a long time—if ever again. Exactly where I live and what I do is no concern of yours."

"You know, you're really just like my parents and my teachers that talk one way and act another when it suits them. I thought you were different." As he raised his voice, he began to back away from his new found companion of the last twenty minutes. The boy was fifteen years old and the first etchings of real whiskers lay sprinkled about his chin but around his eyes the swollen redness of withheld tears divulged his inner pain.

"You know," said the intruder, extending the last word as though he was singing 'knooooow', "you know, I think you're pretty intelligent. You've understood everything I said, didn't you? Even though all those ideas are unnerving, and part of you didn't want to hear, you were able to sit still and listen. This is quite an accomplishment. You can't expect to fully grasp radically new concepts the first time you hear them. I've studied in many universities, read thousands of books and talked with scholars from around the world. I've felt perplexed and foolish about the anger and resentment that drove me like a mad-man when I was assaulted by startling, uncomfortable ideas. Sometimes we're just afraid to use all of our minds to leave the safety of ignorance and the familiar."

The boy didn't look up, he just grumbled a potentially affirmative "Mmmmm." almost imperceptibly nodding his head.

"Well, think about it this way," the intruder continued, "if you use your intelligence this way, including some of your untapped intuitive capacities, you might be able to surmise a lot of things about me. Of course it's important to try to verify everything you can, but you must be patient and develop the ability to probe with limited information. Patience!" he exclaimed softly.

"Don't be in such a hurry. People treat every gap in their ability to comprehend as though it were a street they were trying to cross. NO. The truth is, knowledge more aptly resembles intimacy with a woman; wooed from some deeper, unseen subterranean crypt, its gifts remain withheld from all but to the special suitor who grasps the scope and intensity of love's rewards and hazards; his entrance is always welcome. But it must be coaxed, with timing and in harmony; not wrestled from some unseen greedy monster. When you think of knowledge, think of love." He peered upward while gazing into his own unspoken thoughts. A ripple of creases swept across the intruder's forehead. "Besides," he continued, "if you think there's something about me

I'm keeping a secret, why do you think I'm obliged to tell you?"

A tiny sparrow hopping through the leaves caught the attention of the boy. He watched as it plied the soggy humus in a seemingly futile effort to unearth one of unseen creatures. In this thoughts, he compared the bird's pecking with his own repetitious inquires into the intruder's circumstances. Perhaps the man wanted only to deceive him. His lofty thoughts and mysterious manner conjured up the ghosts of learned religious men and medieval alchemists. The man was strange. But why be afraid of him? Why the urgent desire to penetrate the mystery of this unexpected intruder in the first place?

He read no signs in the countenance or behaviour of the man to warrant his suspicion; no hint of violence or malice threatened him from this man's intense but gentle eyes or his evasive, labyrinth-like speech.

So, the boy fought furiously with the desire to turn around and run home-back to the safety of familiar words and thoughts, back to the mundane talk of his family and friends. Yes! That's it, he marvelled, realizing the depth of his insight. I don't know the outcome of this conversation or even the purpose of our speaking.

The intruder's vast knowledge and intuitive grasp of human behaviour prevented the boy's leaving. With a rush of vain superiority he envisioned his mother fleeing in terror from the man's strange speech and mysterious appearance in their backyard, but, he wondered, why should he succumb to the same narrow outlook? This pensive man was *his* personal 'intruder'. Perhaps his greatness, unheralded in books or magazines, presented itself exclusively for him to discover to discern for himself the validity of profound musings.

"What would you do if you met someone like, aaah, let's say Siddhartha or Jesus today?" he suddenly asked the man as if he had never been angry.

The intruder slowly looked up from the ground and studied the boy's face. "That would be an incredible opportunity" he said with a trace of hesitation, "but it would require a lot of thought to know if I should say anything at all. I guess I would sit and listen until I intuitively knew what to say or ask. Reason and logic is certainly worthless in such cases."

"It's strange," said the boy. "I don't know what to say to you, like you're one of those great people, but I'm sure you're really just a man like my father."

"You think you can tell what I am, or any man is, for that matter?"

"Look, forget it" said the boy testily, "I was just thinking outloud. I was stupid for bringing it up."

"Listen," said the intruder and he paused while he visibly struggled to find the proper words, we revere men like Buddha and Jesus who lived thousands of years ago. Yet very few people, if any, would truly know how to approach a messiah or enlightened master if they chanced to come upon him without some prior acceptance by a worldwide religious order to validate his competence.

Most people are afraid of thoughts that extend beyond their immediate comprehension," he continued, all the while scrutinizing the boy's expression and body movements. "Yet there's a certain reverence people must maintain for the expression of spiritual ideologies and supernatural insights if they're to glean any insight into human life beyond a mechanical viewpoint. Contemporary man relegates religious discussions to jabbering over politized,

church-centered dogmas using spiritual platitudes far removed from their own personal experiences and inquiries. When I was your age I practically lusted to meet anyone, who like myself, had explored metaphysical methods and endeavored to penetrate the mysteries of the universe AND . . ." he emphasized, and was willing to discuss it—this is very rare, my friend, very rare!"

"Hey mister, you're pretty wild! I mean you're a really neat guy, but this stuff is too weird. Not that I think you're crazy, no, aam . . . it's just way out for me. There's something unusual about the way you talk and listen, kinda like you know what I think before I say it and the reasons that I feel that way."

"Maybe I do."

The boy recoiled in shock. The man's crazy, he thought. Then he realized it was his momentary belief in these powers, not the man's audacity, that had stunned him. Half in fear of the bizarre prospects of this hesitant admission, half of him struggling to deny an intense urge to accept such a magical ability in the intruder, the boy withdrew in silence to ponder the matter alone.

As he thought, he paced back and forth, hands thrust deep in his jacket pockets. What if this man actually can see into my thinking? he asked himself. His efforts were laudable, but here his thinking stopped. As he retreated into confusion, the very mystery of the man assumed a malicious form in his mind.

"So you're telling me," he began with a hint of sarcasm, "you expect me to believe that you have ESP but you won't tell me where you live and what you're running from. Right! If you know what everyone thinks then you wouldn't be afraid of anything—you could practically know what people will do before they do it."

"I didn't say I was clairvoyant," said the intruder, suppressing a laugh. "Body movements, eye contact, certain states of mind that project, aah . . . well, you see they might be able to be communicated without any physical sign—it's possible—if you can read all the less subtle, physical communications first, beyond the misleading words. He shifted uneasily on the tree stump while more explanations than he could reasonably explain to this fledgling explorer lay useless on the tip of his tongue.

The boy responded with a drawn out smirk. Despite his disappointment with the man's answer and his anxiety fueled by the prolonged state of confusion, the boy was fully focused on the now speechless man. In this hour that seemed to span a lifetime of companionship and awkward tension, a powerful bond had been established between the young boy and the aging man: from the impact of their last exchange, it shattered into jagged fragments of doubt and distrust. Such unacknowledged shards of consciousness indiscriminately dog the efforts of every man to think beyond the strictures of a socially imposed, moralistic conformity. Most men and women lay their curiosity and amazement aside at an early age in life to wield the lifeless clichés of power, security and morality. They unconsciously quit the subtly forbidden quest for knowledge that every human embarks on from the moment of birth, choosing instead to pursue life in the more obvious ways.

Unseen, squirrels and birds scurried across the forest floor, leaves and twigs disturbed by their darting movements sounding the passage of time. But for these sounds the two pondered their solitary thoughts in a pregnant silence;

embraced and protected from the moment by the surrounding trees and the twilight darkness gently settling about them.

The intruder's thoughts shifted to stream of consciousness ramblings. Fragments of esoteric insight swirled in his consciousness. Instead of the peaceful serenity he longed for, they seemed to block his insight, leaving him edgy and frustrated. The boy's interest and emotional intensity had suggested the presence of a worthy disciple. Yet some barrier prevented the hoped for exchange; the mystical vistas of liberating thought and profound ideals lay useless as a dirty rag; how could he express his need to share this delicately woven cloth? The boy, for his part, longed for the attention of an adult who might listen to his incomplete feelings and ideas without a defensive and authoritarian air.

"Your determination is commendable." The unexpected words of the intruder floated through their pensive silence. "You have tremendous potential in this world, but you'll have to strive to develop some mastery over your emotional side. Look beyond the normal reasons for wanting an object or a result to understand which things you want are truly valuable, and let go of those that will only serve to distract and prevent you from gaining what you need." The boy sat motionless, seemingly unmoved by these last words but his eyes shifted to peer questioningly at the man and remained transfixed on the source of these sage words.

"I have traveled through the jungles of Asia and the congestion of Los Angeles. I've wandered through the Himalayan Mountains and the rural villages where the 'backward' people tell of mysteries that will never be printed on any pages. I've searched the world for the people who have seen beyond our normal consciousness trekking into the most subtle realms of awareness.

"Even as our paths converge like the collision of charging water buffalo, I have seen those who are hungry for the truth," creasing his eyebrows. "As I wander through these lonely woods, visiting the little known outposts of other spiritual sojourners-be it Quakers, Sufi's or the nameless ashrams of other mystical paths, I see and hear things you have never dreamed of. Listen. Your desire is strong but your frustration from not knowing how to seek is stronger still! You're no different than anyone else in that respect-but!-you are different because some urge to know is still alive in you. I can see it. I can hear it. That's why what I've said is upsetting to you."

Again, the boy felt lured by some exciting mystery in the man's words that were being said solely for him. "If you have the strength," the intruder challenged, "if you can tolerate the condition of ignorance, then you can overcome this weakness. Effort, it requires intense effort to search inside yourself. Somehow, I feel drawn to help you on your way. Despite your weaknesses, I can see the strength of your desire. This quality is very useful, but of course only you can develop it-alone. My help is at best insignificant, no more than a reminder to the part of you that forgot. And now I'll answer your question, if you want."

The boy sat speechless, lost in a miasma of fantasies, wishing to set out on some mysterious quest without wasting another minute. "Yes," he murmured, as though awakened from sleep.

The intruder said nothing. In the strained silence he licked his lower lip and his countenance seemed to drain of all emotion becoming the very essence of serenity. He drew up his feet and tucked them under his buttocks, balancing himself precariously atop the solid tree stump. Straightening his back, he appeared to grow larger and more powerful to the boy, who watched expectantly and now without a quiver of trepidation. As the man ever so slowly closed his eyes, a hypnotic stillness radiated from his face and the presence of an exotic, Eastern fakir instantly replaced the image of a suspicious looking fugitive. The boy's pulse quickened as fear was transformed into rapture and amazement at the vision mysteriously created before his very eyes.

"I have lived in these woods now for four years," began the man. "I commune with the wild animals whose civilization far surpasses the crude, destructive armies of suburban idiots that cluster like roaches and microscopic parasites along the rivers and streams. This bacteria, these people, poison their food with excrement they deposit in their drinking water and in the ground beside their homes. They fashion newer, more potent poisons to overcome the conditions of their world that they stubbornly fight, just as idiots struggle against their mothers who try to feed them."

"I'm a fugitive," he continued, though a trace of anger threatened his serene countenance. "yes, from your society, and I'm running to sanity and freedom from man's madness and self destructive ways. I observe the squirrels and the snakes, the rats and the roaches, the birds and the raccoons to learn from them how to live in cooperation with the earth and its appendages-to be a healthy part of this organism and not a rogue cell or antibody that unknowingly, thoughtlessly, races on to destroy every other part of this body of which it is itself a part, all the while thinking it's creating wonderful buildings and machines. Mankind is a disease and it's scouring the earth."

"By living here in these woods without a property deed I'm breaking the 'law'. By living off the land and the food offered to a wandering seeker, I go hungry for weeks, sometimes. I've stolen candy bars and fruit from stores after several weeks of meditation when the animals raided my food reserves. Yes, I'm a fugitive, just as Jesus was a criminal in the eyes of the Romans, as Buddha was a despised heretic in the eyes of traditional Hindu's or Emanuel Swedenborg was considered to be a lunatic-genius for speaking of his first-hand revelations; you see no matter where you live, throughout all recorded history, to follow a spiritual quest is against the law."

Both man and boy sat upon the log without speaking for several minutes. The man's words transformed their surroundings into a secluded, unexpected paradise, an oasis from the world of rowhouses, noisy traffic and garbage disposals. Lengthening shadows cast upon the ground by the setting sun stretched across trees and bushes distorting the contour of the land. The cold air of a winter's night was already settling in, but the two companions basked in the warmth of the man's prophetic words that hung as a pleasant mist in the air.

After a time, the boy awoke from his reverie. "That makes sense," he said tentatively like an actor attempting a difficult line from a new play. "You're so strange, but what you say is only as crazy as Jesus Christ's condemnation of

the people of his time. Wow. Only hippies talked about these things, but they used drugs and didn't have any morals-in our time. I guess what you're talking about seemed as crazy to the Italians during the Protestant reformation when those people were threatened with death for heresy-weren't they?"

The man nodded silently in assent.

As the rising, crescent moon warily peeked over the horizon of silhouetted trees, a noisy rustling of leaves and twigs jarred their senses and jerked them back into the normal world from their peaceful oasis.

"You're under arrest! Put your hands over your head!" shouted two men in business suits who were running toward them through the woods.

The intruder and the boy turned their heads in unison toward the direction of this sound. They sat completely still, watching destiny racing toward them from out of the darkness like rabbits under the spell of auto headlights.

"NOW!" one of the men shouted angrily.

A third man in dungarees ran to them from the house. He reached them first and grabbed the intruder with both hands around the chest, pushing him sharply against a nearby tree. He was breathing heavily when the boy's mother, having made her way carefully down the side of the knoll, rushed to the side of her son. She pulled him close to her chest with one arm encircling his shoulders.

"Thank God you're ok!" she sobbed. "I called the police when you went back outside and I saw that evil looking man sitting here in our backyard. We don't even know him!" she cried on the verge of hysterics. "Why did he come here! When I described him to the police they said he was wanted for so many crimes and I thought he might try to kidnap you."

The three detectives quietly performed their duties while the boy's mother anxiously fussed over her son. As they frisked and handcuffed the now captive intruder, the three law enforcement officials stared into his nearly invisible face with venomous glares.

"Oh my," Herman's mother said, "the man who spoke with me on the phone told me not to go near him, to wait until the detectives arrived! Waiting until they got here was almost impossible. You don't know! I had to wait so long and I prayed to God that nothing would happen to you. Did this awful man threaten you? Tell me, what did he say?" she pleaded.

The boy's mind raced in response to the maelstrom of conflicting thoughts and feelings. Was this man dangerous? Had he been fooled by this intruder, who was really a criminal hiding out in the woods? For a moment he clung to the possibility that the man was some strange monk or some sort of weird holy person-like in a movie where everyone takes the hero for a villain. Who knows, he thought, already floundering in the depth of his doubts from which only anger and resentment surfaced and welled out of him like a burst watermain: "The man's sick!" he shouted stepping backward away from the handcuffed prisoner. "He claimed he was Jesus or someone like him. He tried to hypnotize me so I couldn't move and I was afraid to say anything, just like they say people are brainwashed by those cult fanatics! It was horrible. God, I was so scared."

"Well son, thanks to your mom, you're safe and we've got our man. We're

glad you called, ma'am." said one of the detectives. "We've been tracking him for over a year now."

"What did he do?" asked the boy.

"Well, nothing really serious, just a bunch of shoplifting charges, but the witnesses said he looked dangerous and had a strange, demonic look about him. They all reported catching him in the act and yet, none of them would go up and say 'we caught you'. So he's been difficult to apprehend."

"Bill, you better read him his rights."

"Your type doesn't deserve this," he said in disgust. "You have the right to remain silent and anything you say may be used against you in a court of law," the taller, stoop-shouldered detective dutifully muttered.

The ominous words hung suspended in the cool night air, eerily dampened by the softness of rotting leaves that absorbed every nuance and implication of the warning threat.

"Listen son," the intruder said in a deep, barely audible voice, "it's never easy to understand what's going on in life. Things are rarely what they seem to be. You've been reminded of some deeper truth that's in all of us. . ."

"Come on!" the boy broke in. "You admitted you stole stuff from the stores-the fruit and candy. You said you've been living in the woods for a long time. How do you expect me . . ." and he broke off with a stifled sob.

"But you know inside," countered the intruder. "The truth is only there for each man to receive alone. You can . . ."

"That's enough!" said the shorter, husky looking detective. "You'll have your say before the judge. Look at you! You don't even have a job-living in the woods-and your gonna tell some kid what life is all about?"

"I thought for awhile he was some special person, Mom. That's why I didn't try to run away and come back inside. I guess I was being stupid." His mother pulled her son closer to her chest as they began to walk toward the house.

The hastily gathered assemblage imparted a surrealistic atmosphere to the meadow in the fading light of dusk. The three men, the boy and his mother simultaneously turned to look into the captured intruder's face. His tranquil, undisturbed countenance radiated a quiet confidence, surprising the on-lookers. They felt uneasy even in their certainty. His strangeness was as real as his guilt, yet his countenance spoke a deeper truth that made them wonder. His honest serenity frightened them for reasons they did not understand-nor cared to. Instead, they idly remarked about his woeful condition and the state of modern times.

"There's thousands like this one," said the detective in faded dungarees and tennis sneakers. "We have to deal with this type even here in the suburbs, all the time."

"What's wrong with our society?" asked the boy's mother. "These sort of people shouldn't be allowed to run loose."

As the last rays of light gave way to the encroaching darkness, several stars became visible in the sky overhead. Only the intruder tilted his head backward to see their faint glow as two of the detectives clutched his arms from either side and led him up the hillside back to civilization.



Winners

Pegasus Writing Competition - 1988

The Pegasus staff would like to congratulate the winners of this year's short story and poetry writing competition:

First Prize — Best Short Story

Neal Spector, for "*The Value of Wisdom*"

Second Prize — Short Story

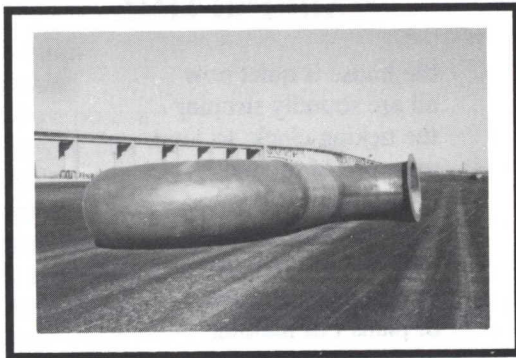
Adam Pflug, for "*The Day Tom and I Didn't Play Poker*"

Poetry Prize —

Gloria Beam, for "*Marking Time*"

Robert Fortunato / Photographic Essay:

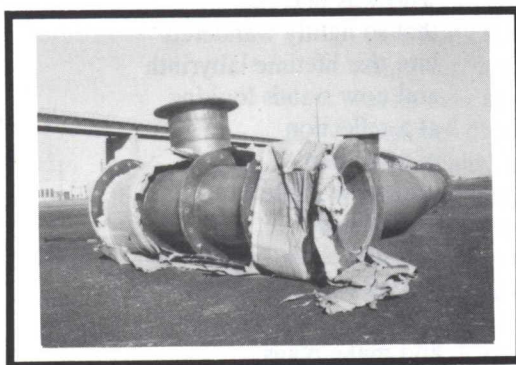
"Proliferation of Pipes"



MIGRATION



GROUP MATING



BIRTH
(placenta attached)

A Portfolio of Poems

Gloria Beam

MARKING TIME

the house is quiet now
all are soundly sleeping
the ticking clock, so loud,
unaware of my life
continuing
without their presence
unaware of the books I'm reading
of socks I'm mending
of plans I'm making
of chores I'm finishing
of dreams I'm dreaming
wide-awake.
the kitchen clock ticks
ticks away
my mother-life
my other life
how many tocks
to clock the completion
of the tasks
to mark an end
and a return
to the complete other me
set aside so many ticks ago
that I've lost count
and have to stop and wonder. . .
who was that girl
that so lightly wandered
into this lifetime labyrinth
and now stands looking
at a reflection
of a woman
somehow related
but changed
now the clock begins
ticking this new life
and again I read books
and make plans
and dream dreams
wide-awake

PREPARATION

my daughter says,
"I don't want to cause you pain,"
as she sits marooned
on her island of dwindling reserves
surrounded by a sea
of deadly temptations
perilously close
ready to consume
her spirit, her strength, her self.

I hold a lifeline, of sorts,
that may reach her in time
but
I must cry
realizing the abysmal gulf
between her destructive past
and her unknown future

I must cry

with the fragility of my untested line
with the weakness of my grasp
with my primordial need-to save
my daughter, a piece of me.

I must cry
while I begin
to hank up the braided line
to estimate the distance
between drifting and security
to invoke the higher powers
to enhance my earthly strengths

I must cry
before I throw
the lifeline
that may guide her back
to herself and me.

QUEEN'S HOTEL

Under ancient mango trees
ripening fruit hangs heavy
tempting but not ready
banana trees with their strange
upside down fingers
portend rich harvests
achene trees attracting
with seductive red fruit
tall breadfruit towers
just beyond reach
its massive globes
beckoning the hungry
dark young girls
slim, shy
budding virgin fruit
luring hungry men
to take them down
to slake their thirst
to ripen them to women

TOURIST GAME

smiling face, smooth voice
promising love, saying
"I can tell you're so nice."
it's so practiced
he never falters
his eyes flow over her
with professional ease
"you're strong, make good love"
so open, so fast
in mere minutes
lusion could be made
"I must hurry,
she may leave tomorrow. . .
oh, these American women-
so rich and aching for de love."

MEETING OF MINDS

it's tough to be,
a woman in Jamaica
got to like children
and living in the hills
you've got to
like being on bottom
Women's Liberation
is having your own pushcart
to sell what everyone else
sells for the same price
and not much profit
"How come there are no women
Reggae singers, taxi drivers
or bus drivers here?, I ask.
"There are some,
in Kingston," she replies
"But they are hard
women and they hustle the men,"
she adds with disapproval.
So the high school girls
are being trained
to have their own cart
to love children
and living in the hills
is like being on bottom
It's tough to be,
a woman
in Jamaica

Jamaican Taxi

Jet planes come and go
cars honk whizzing by
hurrying young drivers
taxis new and shiny
watches droning minutes
with digital accuracy
knowing there's no rush
everything waits
life saunters along
from school child
to burdened old man
why rush, nothing has changed,
poverty is hard to escape
even if you hurry



The Day Tom and I Didn't Play Poker

Adam Pflug

THE RAIN SPLASHED RELENTLESSLY against my bedroom window pane. I looked through it at a wide puddle on the sidewalk, the water droplets bounced about like grease on a skillet. With a sigh, I turned away and glanced around the room. It was a mess. On such a gloomy Saturday I decided to give it a touch of organization.

I walked to the other end of the room, grabbed the handles of an old, beat-up trunk and pulled it toward my bed. I was surprised that it was so heavy. I plopped down on the bed and slowly lifted the lid, afraid of what I might find. The hinges let out a long, thin cry as I pushed back the lid, exposing its contents that lay within its dusty jaws. A junior high school yearbook, scattered golf tees, and a compass lay on top in disarray. My curiosity aroused, I rummaged deeper. I felt something peculiar and pulled it out. It was a deck of cards held together by a black-streaked rubber band. As I stared at the cards in my hand, I felt a strange yet familiar tingling sensation on the back of my neck. Memories of a young boy entered my mind. His name was Tom.

Tom lived across the street, exactly four houses to the left of mine. He had a shock of red hair that was never combed, but it always made him easy to spot for a long forward pass. His face was covered with freckles, and his never-ending grin made you want to grin right back at him. He was one of the neighborhood gang. Tom, however, had a certain characteristic that made him popular; he was a daredevil.

No matter where we were or what we were doing, Tom made it exciting by taking any dare that was thrown at him. I remember one summer night the whole gang was lounging on Tom's big front porch. We were getting bored, so, Jimmy Turner dared Tom to stop slapping at mosquitoes for a half an hour. Tom joyfully accepted. After nine mosquitoes had feasted on Tom's bare legs, arms, and neck, he started to become uncomfortable. He jumped to his feet and scrambled into his house, returning before we said anything. Tom was carrying a nearly-full bottle of vinegar. After dramatically spilling the vinegar over his body, the mosquitoes refused to bother him. Tom smelled terrible. We couldn't stand it and left. Tom sat on the porch, alone, but triumphant, grinning as usual.

I went over to Tom's house the next day to continue our usual Sunday poker game. Tom had taught me how to play as soon as school had ended in June. We played for pennies, and even though Tom insisted I was getting better, his stacks of copper always seemed to put my few cents to shame.

The summer of '79 was my favorite one; I spent it with Tom. During the week we joined the gang in a wild, carefree frolic, but Sundays belong to just Tom and me. We started playing directly after church, which always bothered

my conscience a bit. But Tom always shrugged it off and said, "Aw, I'm sure good ol' Jesus would be playing a few hands himself if he weren't so busy."

Tom enjoyed our Sundays, too. It gave him a rest from the endless dares he tolerated. Sometimes we would get lost in a card game and the only uttered words would be, " 'Draw,' 'I'll take three,' and 'Tom, I fold!'" However, as the hours wore on, a new Tom would surface, one completely opposite the one I thought I knew. "Know what, Jack?" he asked me, shuffling the deck expertly, "I'm gonna miss you next year. I'll miss these times."

"What do ya mean? We'll still see each other . . . you'll see the whole gang."

"Naw, that's not the way it works. We're going to junior high, now. Friends always drift apart. That's what my brother says." He ran his fingers through that flaming red mop which needed combing badly. "To tell you the truth, I don't think I would miss the gang so much. I'm kind of getting tired of all those dares."

I looked at him in disbelief. "What, Tom? I thought you loved the dares. That's what you live for, isn't it?"

He sighed. "They were fun at first, . . . last year. But, I guess I just did it for the attention." Tom's parents were divorced. His brother, Louie, was the local high school basketball star. Their father's weekend visits were mainly concentrated on Louie's college visitations and scholarship lectures. I never fully realized just how lonely it must have been for Tom at home.

"Besides," he interrupted my thoughts, "you guys, well, the gang actually, has been going too far . . . it's not even fair!"

I thought back to last week. It has rained hard in the morning, but, by the afternoon the sun was shining. The gang met at my house, as usual, and we headed off in search of adventure. "How about baseball?" I offered. The idea was quickly rejected. "Street Tag? There aren't too many puddles." More yawns followed. We presently stopped at the street corner. Tom stared at the ground thoughtfully. Cheeks Wilson kicked at a drowned worm with the toe of his sneaker. Anyway, the boredom hung in the air like my family's wash. Finally, Cheeks said, "Hey Tom, what do you think of this worm?"

Tom examined the worm, then said flatly, "I think it's dead." We all laughed.

"Well," Cheeks said with a look of mischief spreading over his wide face, "I think you might like to eat it."

"Why would I want to do a thing like that?" Tom asked cautiously.

"Because I dare you to!" With that Cheeks stooped over and picked up the worm, dangling it in Tom's face. Everyone was silent. We had never seen Tom back out of a dare before, and we all wanted to see Tom eat the worm. "Chicken?" Cheeks jiggled the worm a little.

"I've never chickened out of anything in my life and I won't now, either!" Tom quickly grabbed the worm, ripping it so that Cheeks still held one half. Tom tossed his half into his mouth, shut his eyes, chewed, and swallowed. We all watched aghast. Tom bent over and gagged. I thought we would soon see his breakfast, and the worm, spill onto the sidewalk. He staggered, coughed, then paused. Slowly he straightened himself. His eyelids fluttered open, and

that 'same old Tom' grin stretched across his face. We all applauded, except Cheeks. Tom gave a quick bow, and then gave Cheeks the beating of a lifetime.

"Okay," I replied, hastily retrieving stray cards from my pathetic shuffle. "The guys might have pushed the dare too far last week, but that doesn't mean we won't be friends because of school."

Tom looked at me. "You'll see, Jack. You'll see."

I was too confused to say anything else. Because Tom also remained silent, I didn't know how he felt, either.

The rest of the summer flew by, as it always does. Tom was right. He wasn't in any of my classes at school, and I met many new friends. One day I passed Tom in the hallway.

"Are you going out for the hockey team?" he asked.

I told him I was. We agreed to meet at the pond as soon as it was frozen. It got very cold around the second week of November, but not cold enough to skate safely. Instead, I went over to Tom's house after school everyday for a week. As I ran my fingertips over the worn out deck of cards that was thrust deep into my pocket, I told my mother we would study. Every day we played and, of course, Tom won. We played, talked, laughed, and shared that sweet feeling of friendship. Then, one Sunday afternoon, Tom called. He said that the pond was frozen, everyone was skating. He asked me to meet him there.

Within a half hour I was there, armed with winter gear and my beat up old skates. I spotted a group of kids and walked over. Two of them were arguing. One I didn't know by name, the other was Tom.

"We can't play, it's too mushy," the boy insisted.

"You're crazy," Tom argued, a wisp of red peeking out from under his black cap. "The ice is just fine, I was on it."

"You're the one that's crazy. I've heard all about you, Tom. You say the ice is frozen, then I dare you to go out and walk on it."

Tom grinned, that 'same old Tom' grin. His eyes flashed. "No problem, buddy, where should I walk?"

The boy didn't smile. "Just straight across. We'll meet you on the other side. Then, we'll play."

"Fine," Tom replied. He looked over at me, "Glad to see you could make it, Jack."

I grinned right back at him, "Boy, these dares sure aren't like the old days, are they?"

Tom was thoughtful. "The old days," he murmured, more to himself than to me. "Only twelve years old and I'm talking about the old days." He quickly looked at me, returning to reality. "You wanna play poker after the game?"

I patted the lump in my pocket and smiled. No words were necessary.

With a quick turn of his heel, Tom dashed out onto the ice. He never slowed down. He just kept sprinting until he reached the center. He turned, waved, and jumped up and down several times. Although I couldn't see his face clearly. I knew he was grinning. Then he dashed on, sprinting again, safely reaching the other side.

The other boy breathed a sigh, whether of relief or disappointment, I couldn't tell. He started across the ice, and we followed. Tom saw us coming and ran to meet us. Probably tired from sprinting, he jogged in his heavy boots. I watched him jog toward us, bounding gracefully, up and down, up and down . . . and down! In a flash, Tom disappeared beneath the ice.

I stood there, frozen in my tracks, unable to believe what I had just witnessed. A nearby cry jolted my entire body. Dropping my skates, I ran as fast as I could towards Tom. Everything suddenly blurred into shades of white. I had difficulty running, my legs felt as heavy as lead, and I became dizzy. The next moment I watched the ice rising up to meet me. With a thud, I tasted snow. The boy who argued with Tom had tackled me and was holding me down. "Go get some help!" he screamed, "everyone get off the ice, quick!" I don't remember anything after that. I later found out that I had been forced off the ice to the snowy bank. An ambulance and police car arrived, much too late. I never saw Tom again. I was too upset to go to the funeral; my parents did not make me go.

It's been six years since Tom's accident. A brown object half-buried in the corner of the trunk caught my eye. It was an old baseball glove that had miraculously shrunk. I carefully unwrapped the rubber band from the deck of cards. They felt smooth and flexible in my hands. I shuffled them, once, twice, like an expert. The cards felt warm to the touch. Warm, like a summery Sunday afternoon. As I smiled to myself, I felt a cool tingle on the back of my neck. Cool, like ice, on a wintery day. I scratched the back of my neck - and closed the trunk.



ADIEU TO SUMMER

The maples don their scarlet shrouds,
Rasp curses, writhe their skeletal limbs,
And in their death throes, weeping leaves,
They sing to summer funereal hymns.

The moon, an alchemist's delight
Gives back the gold she stole from June.
The season weaves through day and night
A gilt bound quilt for Summer's ruin.

Mary T. Aber

Untitled

As the tears roll down the window of my eyes
I feel, these are the lonely times
And the questioning of whys
That will pursue me to my dreams.

Everything comes to an end
Whether it be bad or good
It will be terminated forever.
In time, all will mend simultaneously.

Drifting through the woods
As if time were no object
And money had no name,
He persisted through the forest
enduring the light and darkness
As if there was no end.

Catherine Clark Graham

**On Parting:
Homage to a Fellow Sojourner**

An unassuming presence, boldly
penetrates my thinking, lonely
I ponder the anomaly, of
your boundless curiosity.

You focus with a practiced ear
and consciousness expanded clear
beyond my hopes, you filled a need
for pensive friendship-I concede.

I loved your thoughts, sarcastic probing
the search for truth set many loathing;
truths that stretch beyond their logic
through doors whose only keys are dreams.

With a translucency few dare to risk
you revealed a lonely, hidden tryst
where separate dreams and awesome vows
convened to seduce a singular lust.

Bogus claims of wandering fools,
inner barriers of fearful ghouls
drive pensive minds to blindly swerve
when love and need and hurt converge.

Neal Spector

for Anna Lapidés (? - 1983)

Grandma, when I was young, almost
too shy to let you hold me close,
remember, you always tried to?
Do you know I stand beside you?

Upon the hospital wall, signs
read: "Patient is legally blind;"
no, you cannot see our sadness.
We stand mute, statues in distress,

as quiet tears leak from my eyes.
Nurses' blank stares. I cannot hide
my pain, your pain. Injustice shows:
Life is unfair; Death is more so.

We speak, despite the futility
of contending with senility.
The cancer has disfigured you
unkindly, without respect. (Two

young children race by, playing tag,
stop, look in, wonder why we're sad:
a smiling boy and his sister.)
These walls recall other visitors

who considered euthanasia.
Is there anyone to whom to say the
words, are there any words to say,
to send the suffering away?

Silent prayers for you to rest;
peace reaches for you. May God bless
Silent prayers for you to rest;
peace reaches for you. May God bless
you, Grandma, the pain will soon pass.
(Down the corridor, the little boy laughs.)

Maureen Lapidés

In Memoriam

Chubby fingers, pink and sweet,
curled in others, brown and weatherbeat,
Ready now, she starts to stand,
holding with trust her father's hand.

Schoolgirl fingers, not so pink,
stained with dirt, and pen and ink,
Soaring now, no time to land,
Yet holding fast her father's hand.

Now those fingers wear a ring;
a groom, a church, and voices sing,
life anew, a wedding band,
Started, holding her father's hand.

Mother's fingers, a child's too,
curled together, new worlds to view,
charting now a brand new land,
Steadied by her father's hand.

Fingers once light, now heavily weigh,
For goodbye it is time to say.
Those that held a life so grand
now lie at rest in daughter's hands.

Patricia Walker

LEAVE TAKING

The house is empty, cold and still -
No gossamer illusions veil the panes.

The crumbs of yesterday are swept
Behind the open door. She lifts her bags
Heavy with tomorrows, stepping forth
To seek some warmth within a frigid world.

Mary T. Aber

Formulas & Recipes

Joseph Fulgham

I LIVE IN NEW HAVEN. But that's really not important; the story I'm going to relate could have taken place almost anywhere.

The streets of New Haven look pretty much like the streets in most of Middle Class America. We have a Sears, a K-Mart, a Pizza Hut and a token Adult Book Store. Basically the epitome of the American suburb. That's partially what caused my wife, Marie, and I to settle here. A childless professional couple, we bought a house more than big enough for our needs.

It's not that we couldn't have children, it's just that they never figured into our plans. It was just as well, Marie never was the mothering type. Strong willed and ambitious, Marie rose quickly through the ranks of the market research firm that recruited her out of college. Occasionally Marie got pangs of maternal instinct which she smothered by spoiling her "lap dog" Chives.

With a pet named "Chives" you might suspect Marie was a kitchen wizard, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, Marie is one of the few people who could thoroughly botch the recipe for Jello. In our five years of marriage, I've witnessed her steady progression through a recurring cycle. It always begins the same way, with an almost obsessive compulsion to try new recipes. Stage one usually lasts several weeks and is quickly followed by the latter stages of the cycle - failure, disillusionment and at least a month of dining out. In defense of my wife I can honestly say that all this practice did make her a more consistent cook. Everything she made had the consistency of glue and the taste of paste.

As for myself, my best "cooking" took place downstairs in the cellar. I'd always enjoyed science, especially chemistry, and after I eventually made up my mind to major in Chemical Engineering I found the studies to be incredibly easy. Some of my professors even joked about my being some sort of idiot savant, usually when they thought I was out of earshot. Regardless, I completed my doctorate studies in half the usual time.

With the "Dr." in front of my name I received some tempting job offers but, decided that I wanted something different. Using Marie's steady income and money borrowed from my parents, I set up a small, well equipped lab in the basement and started work on some ideas I came up with in college. It wasn't long after that I invented "No Crack Black," an inexpensive asphalt additive that reduced pot holes on new roads by 50%. After that, money was never a problem. Marie was free to take chances in her professional career, I was able to work on whatever struck my fancy. It was this freedom that led to my later troubles.

Marie had left for a meeting in St. Louis, a week to ten days minimum she said. Because Chives was so unbelievably difficult to handle when Marie wasn't there, we took him to the boarding kennel.

Anyway, it gave me a chance to work on my latest brain child. A new compound that would either help feed the world's millions or produce the

best skuff-resistant no-wax-floor on the market, depending on how the experiments turned out.

Consecutive 18 hour days left me exhausted. New and radically different processes for bonding chemicals, methods I had tinkered with for years, were finally yielding results. Compounds unlike anything that had ever been artificially produced were flowing and recombining in a glass labyrinth of tubes, coils and beakers to form new and strangely unique substances. I was close to my goal.

At 9 p.m. on day four I was stretched out on the sofa. Even though I was hungry I was just too thoroughly drained to even contemplate cooking. It was just as well, there wasn't anything in the fridge anyway. Actually, that's not true. The fridge was stuffed. In the weeks preceding Marie's trip, she had gone on one of her classic cooking binges. The shelves were full of the homemade epoxy that imitated real food, but nothing fit for human consumption.

So on the couch I slept, until three the next morning. It was then that I awoke to sounds of breaking glass coming from downstairs. Stumbling over to the steps, I turned on the light downstairs. Like something startled, something not used to the light, the sounds of destruction moved rapidly out of the work area and across the cellar. Then all was quiet and silence again reigned.

Cautiously I took the steps one at a time, not really knowing what I'd find once I reached the last one. The cellar had no windows, no access to the outside world whatsoever except for the stairway I was descending. Of course, bugs and rodents always seemed to find ways into any house. It was a wayward rat or mouse that I had anticipated seeing when I reached the lab. True, whatever woke me made a lot of noise, but in the fragile environment of my lab, even the smallest creature could do considerable damage.

What I found shocked me. Destruction on an impressive scale. My current work area was a total shambles. Anything breakable within five feet of it was broken. Most of the vials, beakers and test tubes were reduced to shards scattered on the tile floor. The contents of the wreckage trailed across the floor into the cracks and crevices in between the tiles. Some of the liberated chemicals were tracked towards the darker end of the cellar though, the storage area. That was when I first caught sight of it.

Initially it was just a dark shape. Then, a slight movement caused the ceiling light to reflect off of a smooth metal-like surface. It moved again, closer - and then I knew. A cockroach. But this was no run-of-the-mill cockroach, this one was big - really BIG.

The insect was four feet long, about half as wide and easily weighted a hundred pounds. Six jointed legs, as thick as a man's wrist at the base, jutted out from beneath a shiny, black shell that I knew it would be as hard as granite. Long whip-like antennae twisted and probed in my direction.

Then, through the shock-induced haze that clouded rational thought, I realized I was in danger. As if reading my mind, the roach took a few hesitant steps forward and then charged me headlong. Turning quickly, almost tripping over my own feet, I grabbed the banister and climbed the steps three at a time. The roach was only two steps behind me when I slammed and locked the cellar door, catching one of its squirming antennae in the jamb.

Finding the biggest thing in the room, I pulled a Lazy Boy recliner over to barricade the door. My mind raced through a myriad of questions. Why? How come? Where from? The answers seemed to come almost as fast as the questions. The cockroach didn't break into the house, he'd been there all along. Just as daddy roach, grandpa roach and untold countless other generations of roaches had been. Only they were regular size instead of the size of a roll-away bed. This roach was special. - "Hometown roach makes good!" Somehow this bug must have ingested one of the new compounds. The results spoke for themselves. In some way I couldn't comprehend, the chemical must have caused an unbelievably rapid growth of the bug. Crazily my mind paraphrased an old joke; "Where does a hundred pound roach eat?" I knew the answer, but it didn't seem very funny. The cracking of the cellar door snapped me back to reality.

The door to the downstairs was one of those cheap, hollow interior doors and it wasn't going to hold King Cockroach for very long. How to stop it? I didn't own a gun and something told me it wouldn't have mattered even if I did. I'd seen enough old sci-fi movies to know that giant insects were always impervious to bullets. Then I had a thought and like they used to say in those same movies - "it's crazy, but it just might work."

The cellar door opened onto the living room which connected with the dining room/kitchen beyond. Working rapidly, I pushed the short end of the couch against the wall next to the cellar door. On the other side of the door I placed the rectangular coffee table on its side so that its wide, flat surface paralleled the couch. When the surprise from behind "Door Number 1" finally broke through, it would have to travel through my makeshift passageway. There was just one thing left to do - raid the refrigerator. The glue-like pastas, the tar-like stews, the failed sticky, gooey deserts. Placing the dishes end to end and side by side to fill the passageway, I used everything.

I finished, barely in time, as the Lazy Boy gave way with a groan. But no matter, the world's biggest roach motel was ready for its first guest.

For a moment the refugee stood transfixed at the shattered doorway. Then lured on by the sight of me and the smell of what it thought was food, the bug plunged in between the sofa and the table at top speed. Its momentum carried it halfway through the passage unimpeded, but, as it became mired in Marie's creations, its progress slowed to a crawl. By the time it reached the deep-dish tuna casserole, the roach was immobile. A repeated clubbing on the head with Marie's attempt at a scratch cake finished the job.

It took hours to clean the mess in the living room. The roach alone took three hours, two Hefty bags and the aid of a chain saw to dispose of. Exhausted, I fell on the sofa and slept. The wreckage downstairs would wait, I'd already set off a bug bomb and Marie wouldn't be home for several days yet.

Later I woke to the sound of Marie's voice.

"Wake up honey, I'm home" she said as she kissed me.

"Hi, I didn't expect you home for a couple of days."

"Well we wrapped things up a little early and I thought you might be getting lonely."

"You know me," I said, "always looking for good company."

We kissed again.

"Oh, before I forget, don't pick up Chives from the kennel. I've got some cleaning up to do and don't want him in the way."

"You're too late" Marie said, "I picked him up on the way home."

My blood went cold. "Where is he?", I asked, already fearing the answer.

"Oh you know him, couldn't wait to get inside the house, rushed through the door as soon as I opened it."

Then she caught sight of the shattered cellar door.

"Good God! What happened to the door?"

Before I could answer, a sound rose up from the basement. A sound of something big. A sound of something substantially larger than my wife's St. Bernard, Chives.



Intangible

I missed you slip by, in a flash,
lost in a vision, you couldn't see,
a moment of passionate reverie

your essence conjures sadness, euphoria
a brilliance blinding, urgency binding
patches of harness, unresolved

Look again, searching deeper, listless
echoes dripping as aimless words, glisten
spilling, wasted, a puddle at my feet

Having known tomorrow in a dream
gauging your words, speaking peace
knowing the truth unheard, consumed

missing the whole point of hers
and she mine
we viewed the setting sun without
a word.

Neal Spector



THE THERAPIST

She sits and listens while they speak,
Tired pilgrims, heaven-bent,
Carrying their soiled baggage
Gleaned from life's experience.
They carefully unwrap their inner hearts
Exposing the Pandora's box within;
The ageless children's depthless tears,
Undissipated rage that chokes the soul,
The dawnless night of fear, eclipsing hope,
And self-aborted dreams.
The spirit-sickened litany goes on.

Then, gentle-eyed, she reaches out to heal
The hurts,
And binds up shattered souls with heart
Strung ties.

Mary T. Aber

THE LONGER ROAD

Along my way, I thought I saw
A little boy, burned yet raw
Later notice did declare
He was dead, just lying there
It seems her car had hit a tree
Caused by ice and loose debris
The law demands he sit in back
Confined by belts and toys to stack
The infant son, locked inside
Was giggling 'till the time he died
Mommy is playing a game, I know
Her blood covered body stained the snow
How silent was his laughter then
That flames unseen by fellow men
Could not have screamed this gruesome tale
To save from box and darkened veil
Oh! What trickery! She'll come 'round
Now two of them lay in the ground.

Leah Haines

Message to My Love

You comfort me, my love,
In my sadness and fear,
And give me
The vision of hope
That will be our life together.

When you sing your songs
I feel you are telling me
All the beautiful things
You could not say otherwise
And I understand.

Together and forever
Are words you often say
And I seem to need
And understand them more
With each passing day.

Our lives will soon be one,
Eternal,
Like the circle of our wedding rings
And neither God nor man
Could destroy such a beautiful thing.

Gina LoBiondo

The Master Race

Man before man before woman,
the master race, mammoth marathon
of men, goes on. They clutch
batons — children, Bibles, guns —
charge, never want the race
to be done. On the sidelines, coaches
calculate on A-bomb abaci, add
distance run to distance left,
translate power into possibility.

At the finish line, the flagman sits,
black-and-white-checked cloth
in hand, waits for the sprinters,
who pump their batons harder
with each stride. The track blows up
and the flagman,
he just laughs.

May Ann Campbell

in grief i stand

having no soul
therefore you did not descend into hell last night
as you forever more turned your eyes from me
i now stand . . . alone
in the emptiness of your shadow
grasping a strand of your pearl white hair
your blood flows from my eyes
my cry brought no mercy
for i offended HIM
HIS wrath held no pity
before HIM you were less than nothing
in my grief i stand alone
alone . . . in your empty shadow
before HIM you were less than nothing
and i no more

Obi Chesm

The Study of Celery

At the grocery I buy celery
to break. Like a mother's arms
or the arms of the dead,
the tentacles that cling
to snapped stalks grow long
then release. I sever the stalks,
tear them into parts
that can't be put together again.
I buy only celery. I study celery,
meditate its breaks, jagged
or clean. I eat the stems
without snap, the stalks gone limp.

Mary Ann Campbell

without mercy

a leaf without limb
is but a bond broken
as blood with no vein
a promise unspoken
a branch without breeze
a dusk without dawn
no promise of heaven
no star to wish upon
a child without love
a people without peace
a god with no mercy
a pain without cease

Obi Chesm

Sweet Sister Susan

John Preston

WHEN ALAN WENT to a surprise going away party for a friend who was to be attending an architectural school in London, he had no idea that a surprise was in store for him as well. He arrived at six-thirty, a good half hour before the guest of honor, Don, was scheduled to arrive and walked to the top floor of the three story complex and into his best friend's apartment. The living room had already begun to fill with smoke, and he silently thanked God that it was a warm summer evening and Stu had all of the windows up as far as possible. No one noticed him enter when he let himself in. Stu's girl, Tammy, was busy with last minute decorations; at the moment, she was trying to get the letter 'd' to stay in place on her sign, which now read, "Goo Luck." Alan chuckled and turned to go into the kitchen to see if he could find Stu before anyone spotted him.

No Such Luck.

"Hey! Alan!"

He knew instantly that that voice belonged to Rick Capshaw, and he turned to greet him, but his eyes never made it. Instead, he found himself sharing a gaze with a pair of eyes just five feet from the voice that had called to him. And for a moment, a brief moment, all he could see were those eyes, and in that moment he felt the strangest sense of *deja vu*.

"Earth to Alan!" Rick shouted, breaking Alan's trance.

As he stood there paying no attention to what Rick was saying, he could not help stealing a few glances at the familiar blonde sitting in Stu's Lay-Z-Boy. She wasn't talking to anyone, but as soon as she turned her head anywhere near his direction, he would quickly look back at Rick in order to avoid being swept into her gaze once again.

"Hey, Alan. You haven't heard a word I've said, have you?"

"Huh? Oh, yeah, Rick, sorry. I'm just sort of out of it tonight."

"Yeah. I'll say." Rick said, looking at him curiously. "Why don't you sit down?"

"No, that's okay." Alan answered, noticing that there wasn't a place to sit even if he wanted to. "I'll wait 'till I can get a seat."

Rick looked in the direction of the Lay-Z-Boy and started to say something, but Alan beat him to it.

"Say, do you know where Stu is? I need to talk to him."

"Sure, Al, he's upstairs trying to get Jason to go to sleep."

"Thanks, Rick. I'll talk to you later on, okay?"

"Yeah. Is something wrong? You're talking kinda funny tonight."

"Naw, I'm okay. Later, Rick." As he walked up the carpeted stairs, he began to wonder just where he had seen that woman before, and why she intrigued him so. He also wondered if, and how, he could explain these feelings to Stuart when he could not even understand them himself. "At least . . .," Alan thought aloud as he reached the top of the stairs, "at least Stu will know who she is."

"I'll know who who is?"

"Oh! Hi Stu! I didn't see you."

"Shhh," Stu hushed as he pointed to Jason's room. "What's up, Al? See something you like downstairs?"

"Yeah, well . . . sort of. It's the blonde with the yellow blouse. Do you know her?"

"I don't know. I don't think I've seen her yet."

"She's on your recliner. When we go downstairs, I'll wait in the kitchen. After you take a look, come in and tell me if you recognize her, okay?"

"You sly devil you," Stuart joked.

They laughed down the stairs together and Alan, feeling uneasy now, went into the kitchen and began making himself a Screwdriver. As he poured the orange juice, he realized who the woman reminded him of, and he quickly reached for the vodka.

It was those eyes, those blue eyes. Only one person had those beautiful, ice blue eyes. When Stuart walked into the kitchen, Alan was staring out the window, and thinking of his sister, Susan.

When he was a child, Alan loved to play in the trainyard, even though he was strictly forbidden by his parents to do so. One day Susan had followed him into the yard and threatened to tell on him. Whenever she could, his younger sister would try to get Alan into trouble, and he hated her for it. If she would just leave him alone. Yes, if she would just get out of his life, then he would not have to worry about getting in trouble again. Then he thought of a way.

"I'll give you all of my allowance for two months if you don't tell," he said.

"For two months?" Susan asked warily. "That's twenty dollars!"

"I know. You just have to do one thing, unless you're too sissy."

"What?"

Alan had already looked at his Spider Man watch and knew that his favorite train would soon be booming by on the fifth track from where they stood. He liked this train because it was the fastest and sometimes had as many as one hundred cars in it.

"If you run from here to the last set of tracks and back in one minute, you will get twenty dollars. If you don't then you give me ten dollars and keep your mouth shut."

Susan looked across the railyard apprehensively. She would have to cross fifteen sets of tracks, some of which had boxcars on them. The cars were not blocking her path, but she would have to stop and look to be sure that there were no trains coming. Although she was only ten years old, Susan knew that the slow and quiet trains were still quite deadly.

"Give me two minutes," she said.

"You've got one and a half."

"What happens if a train comes by, and I can't get across?"

"Then you loose," Alan said definitely.

Susan thought of all the things she could get for her bike with twenty dollars; that new basket she saw, a bell that rings, and her name on a license plate - no, two plates! And it would be the prettiest bike around. So she said,

"Okay, but how do I know you won't cheat?"

"I'll put my watch down right here," Alan said as he laid it on the ground among the rocks. "In two minutes it will be five o'clock, and that's when you go." He thought and said, "Do you see that big, red piece of paper on the other side of the last track?"

"Yes," Susan said shakily.

"You bring that back to me so I know that you went all the way."

"Okay."

They stood looking at the watch and waited for the last seconds to tick by; Susan began to sweat, and Alan began to smile.

"Go!"

For the first five pairs of tracks, she ran with her head down, watching where she was going. After that, she had to slow down in order to look left and right as she ran. No trains. She slipped twice, and fell once on the unsteady surface of rocks. Her heart was booming with fear and excitement.

Back at the finish line, Alan yelled triumphantly as he saw that his train was on time. "I hope it scares the piss out of her," he said delightedly. "I even hope it hits the stupid little rat."

As Susan neared the final track, she heard the low rumble of the train, and her heart leaped to her throat. When she grabbed the piece of paper and turned around, she noticed that it was much harder to see up and down the tracks from this end. She ran over the first three tracks and stopped to peer around a boxcar.

The rumble was getting louder, the train nearer.

"Time's running out!" Alan yelled.

Susan sped over three more tracks, and again she had to stop to look, as the train she heard came closer.

"You're gonna lose!" Alan teased.

Now Susan wished that she had never agreed to this. She didn't care about winning Alan's twenty dollars; she just didn't want to lose her ten. She had been saving to buy that new basket for her bike, and maybe even a pair of those plastic streamers that fit into the handlebars and flap in the wind. If she lost she would never be able to get them, so she ran.

Alan could see the train from where he stood; Susan could only hear it.

"Time's running out, Susan!"

Susan began to run faster, looking only at the ground to make sure that she would not lose her footing. She wanted to win badly.

"You're gonna lose, Suze!"

She could feel the train's vibration ripple through the air, yet she dared not look up for fear of falling. The train roared closer, and she thought to herself, "Maybe it's behind me. Maybe I already crossed the track that it's on, and I'll win! And I'll be able to buy the streamers! Only five more tracks to go and I'll win! I'll win! I'll . . ."

Susan never actually saw the train; only its dark shadow on the railroad tie upon which her foot never landed. It hit her in mid-stride and threw most of her body about seventy feet away from the point of impact. Other parts were found as far away as ninety-five feet, including her right hand which still clutched the red piece of paper.

Alan fainted almost as instantly as Susan died. But he could still remember watching her body bounce off the train as if she were a rubber manequin.

"Hey! Alan." Stu said louder. "Back to earth, Buddy. Did you hear what I said?"

"Huh? Oh, no, Stu, what?"

"I said, 'I didn't see her.'"

"Oh," Alan replied dully, still shaking away the memory, "I guess she's in the bathroom or something."

"Al, I'm gonna ask you something, and I don't want you to be offended, okay?"

"Shoot."

"Are you on something? LSD or . . .?"

"No, Stu! You know I don't do that stuff!"

"Easy, Pal, I'm just askin'."

"What the hell are you askin' me a question like that for?" He asked, as he poured himself another drink.

"Well, Al," Stu replied cautiously, "no one has seen this girl you're talking about."

"What?" Alan stormed out of the kitchen and into the living room. No one was in the recliner, and he walked straight to Rick. "Rick, what happened to the girl that was in that chair while I was talking to you?" Alan demanded, as he pointed to the empty seat.

"Alan, no one has been in that chair since Stu put Jason to bed. I tried to tell . . ."

"Sure there was!" Alan shouted, and turned to Rick's wife. "Kim, didn't you see that blonde sitting in Stu's chair when I came in?"

Kim only stared at Alan and shook her head.

"Oh, God! I'm going crazy." Alan said, as he put his hands up to his face.

Rick got up and walked with Alan into the kitchen where Stu waited.

"If this is a joke, Rick, it's not funny. You're sure you didn't see her?"

"No, Al, I didn't."

"Well, I did." Alan said softly.

"Here." Stu handed Alan's drink to him.

"You know who she looked like?" Alan said as he stared into the glass. "She looked like Susan."

Rick and Stu glanced at each other.

"Come on, Al," Stu said soothingly. "Don't do this to yourself; that was an accident."

Alan thought to himself, "An accident. Yeah, but I wanted it to happen. I just wanted her to leave me alone."

Then a voice came from the living room. "Hey, guys! Don's here!"

"Come on, Al," Rick said, trying to be cheery. "let's join the party and surprise Don."

"Nah, just let me sit here for a while."

"You sure?" Stu asked.

"Yeah. You go ahead."

"Okay, we'll be right in the living room."

Alan sat thinking; he never heard everyone else yell, "Surprise!" when Don walked into the apartment. Instead, he heard a familiar voice say "Time's running out, Alan."

Startled, Alan looked at the drapes which covered a pair of sliding glass doors and walked toward them.

"You're gonna lose, Al."

His heart pounded in his chest; his sister's voice was clearly coming from outside. He threw open the drapes and saw no one. Slowly he slid the doors aside and walked into the cool summer air.

"Cool," he thought, "it must have dropped ten degrees." Chills ran up his spine as he walked toward the iron railing at the end of the porch. When he reached the railing, he expected to see her on the ground below, but he did not.

From behind him, "Time has run out, Alan."

He whirled around and stared into the icy blue eyes of his sister as she spoke two words with the voice of a ten year old child. "You lose."

The coroner said that Alan died of a broken neck suffered from a fall of twenty-five feet. After dusting for fingerprints, none of which were found, and gathering statements from the party-goers, the police filed the death as a suicide. The only thing they could not explain was the red piece of paper they had found in Alan's mouth.



PAS de DEUX

Come, love, and let me lead you in life's dance,
Mile-measured by the music in our hearts
Unheard by others. Only we,
Who've stepped the minuet through silver nights
And gaily waltzed through golden afternoons,
Heart beaten tempos can recall.

Come, love, our patterned footsteps on time's bar,
Staccato in our youth, paced slower now,
Approach the ending pirouette.
Life's final flush of music . . . thrust apart.
By death, we solo briefly . . . then, paired once more,
Dance gleefully at Heaven's ball.

Mary T. Aber

DREAMS FROM INNOCENCE

Paralyzed by your very presence, it stirred a shiver
It is just you and I tunnelled into my gaze
Every angle of your profile is captured in memory
Who are you?
Subtle gestures are screaming for you to take notice
Too humble to deserve such a distinguished and prestigious man
Dare I walk within your aura!
May the doors welcome you before me
Meekly, I linger behind
Perhaps chancing the union of our footprints
On this day, how the breezes whirl fragrances of a sweet-smelling life.
'Till tomorrow, you are mine
For in my dreams, I created a kiss . . . and you are there.

Leah Haines

The Push Of The Button

Me and I contemplate the beginning
The beginning of the end
End of the beginning.

Now, death surrounds Me and I
Nothing of something living.

Grimley F. Fiendish I

**With Love To John
or
Ode To John Lennon**

Four young lads from Liverpool they came,
John, Paul, George and Ringo by name.
In 1964 on the "Ed Sullivan Show,"
They became the people the whole world would know.
But it is one I write of today with love,
The one whose mind and soul had the wings of a dove.
As the years passed he was called a genius,
Until Mark David Chapman took him from us.
First came "Double Fantasy,"
Brand new and beautiful for all the world to see.
Once there were four,
But, thanks to Mark David, now there are three.

Gina LoBiondo

Dream House

The house we imagine
at this the early stage of marriage,
though it does not exist,
becomes a prison to me.
Like the bars of an empty cell
that wait to be locked
around the criminal woman
incarcerated, caught
after few years of wild freedom,
the sterile white walls
rise up from the shaved ground
of an undetermined suburb.
Outside flowers grow
in plotted spaciousness,
line every border, every edge.
They line the drive
I want to back out of
and they line the street
I want to roar down
to the unplanned nothing.

Mary Ann Campbell

A BIT OF INSPIRATION

As I lie here with my eyes closed
My creative feelings take hold
My lover looks at me and says
“What’s going on inside your head?”
I grin a wide smile
Trying not to laugh all the while
For I’m in this situation
Which leaves me in desperation
To act on my creativity
To write a poem immediately.
I’m in the middle of a kiss
My lover’s in a state of bliss;
My eyes open real wide
As I let out a big sigh
For I’m now on a creative high
My lover gets the wrong idea
He asks me again what I feel
So I tell him what I’m thinking
He tells me what I ought to be making
Suddenly I want to get up and write
And leave him in his awkward plight
I cannot lie there and pretend
That I am really enjoying him
So now I am totally inspired
As I get out of bed perspiring
I must write my inspired thoughts
Before they’re forgotten or lost
Inspiration to write I guess
Comes even at an awkward time as this
Next time I engage in making love
I’ll have a pad and pencil there above
For creativity which to me is bound
Can be limitless and profound

Tanya Long

Untitled

Fingerprints,
dirty and black.
Slippery wood, covered
by worn carpet.
Banister,
sticky - ugh! - yet i welcome
its support.
Laughter from above,
i must go.

Temmi Szalai

Contemplation of the Potted Plant I Forget to Water

Last winter Gerty was a potted plant
and oh! she loved life so.
To be a potted plant in wintertime
made her shiver, tremor,
with photosensitivity
and push out leafpups
with great rapidity.

But to be a potted plant when summer came
filled her with such woe.
Forgotten on a windowsill,
she burned beyond repair.
Now she's but a skeleton
and Joe the Spiderbug
creeps along her spine,
weaves his web of solitude
on Gerty's dried-out bones.

GLASS

Mary Ann Campbell

fragile. . .
its uniqueness is astounding.
movement captured.
remaining so eternally.
mesmerizing, tantalizing
with its refraction of
waves and particles.

Temmi Szalai