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## idol - spring 77

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## *Memorial to an Elm*

Behind the house  
at the edge of the field  
the elm tree stood  
limbs  
    sprayed across the sky  
trunk  
    straight, tall  
like my father's whistle called me home.

The day after the night  
jagged lightening mouths screamed  
the tree was gutted  
    skin at its feet  
the City came with eager hives of saws  
"to control the Dutch Elm Disease"  
    (in charcoal form)  
and cut her hands and arms  
but left toes  
    clinging raw up to skins.

Lightening strikes the tallest and closest  
    she said  
it might have been the house

Some nights when the moon stirs  
    clouds into winds  
I see that tree, darkest blacks of the night's black  
groping to catch the lean howls  
surprised  
blazing crown to belly.

*Jody Green*



## Grandfather's Violin

grandfather's hands carved wood into sound,  
his pull took cats by surprise in sudden bows.  
the strings, like his fingers  
spanned the ash  
of his will made carved and polished  
and it shined his grizzle beard in the grain.  
the sod house knew music

the dancer looked for him in the rain,  
where grandmother had sent him  
to capture the dancing daughter . . .  
she could spin a tune

moving  
like a bell on a string—  
a whirl-flash ringing  
in a clear night praire sky

until  
back in the one-room schoolhouse  
grandmother assigned homework and  
who would chop wood for the potbellied stove  
which drove the schoolhouse by sheer heat and ember  
glowing and dark like the horse that slid the sled  
jangling, a bell flung across ice  
from England to the Saskatchewan praire  
in snowstormed night when she was still young  
and in command

now she sent grandfather to bring  
the dancer back from the evening—the wild stars,  
which like a violin tautly carried the tune

grandfather's hands kept on making things,  
they could not stop the tinkering talk,  
the late nights over the broken of whatever  
needed his building touch, living in a wooden  
house full of grandmother's cats.

He asked the now married daughter  
if she wanted the violin

the daughter cradled the slowing notes,  
refusing to let the melody die—  
to take the melody as a memento,  
a dead thing to stir like grave-white  
points in the night sky  
and kept on dancing

grandfather's hands moved  
no more. wooden, as the violin, they burned into ash,  
and ash took the wind by surprise—  
drifting over the grass  
as a sungoddess  
bent over her song of earth praises.

*ESR*







## *Bequest*

She sifts recollections  
of the city forty years ago  
herself as a girl, Depression  
fed and foraging for a thin moon  
in an empty sky.

She sifts like hands  
moving slowly across  
the face of a lover,  
retracing their steps  
to prove everything  
has its place.

She holds them in the palms  
of her hands, presenting  
the sliver of a found moon  
and the promise of hunger  
to me, the sole survivor.

*Kathy Hayes*

## *Magic Stone*

To be a stone is stone  
rippled brown and tan ring  
protozoa and hard shell diatoms  
smeared, crushed in blind ooze  
planes out of phase  
have slipped in time while  
stone space discovered itself.

Brushed with powdery copper  
from the pennies in my pocket  
dinged and chipped when stumbling  
fingers gobble loosely—it drops  
to bounce brittle off sidewalks.

Rediscovered last month  
under my bed, hours after she left.  
Stone back in pocket, I went  
to buy my own detergent.

*Piedmont*



## *A Lost Creature*

I do not understand the cat;  
he is a throwback.  
His kind prowled the ancient jungle winds  
for the smell of the herds,  
padded footfalls that set the red monkeys fleeing  
from the deep grasses; home  
was a trampled mat that would rise again  
leaving no trace. They have left  
by some mistake, and come here.

I do not want this cat, he has found me;  
he digs deep into my body  
catching at all the loose strands,  
hunting down my unknowns;  
he lives in the hidden feelings of thought  
that spin over on their backs  
and lance up at me,  
clawing my arms and hands.

I bleed:  
my cells tumble and fall  
spilling, as this animal would have it,  
away from well connected lines;  
arteries of reason, scattering  
useless and dumb  
to die in the dry air.

Now I awake  
to the cat clinging at my breast  
driving home its blades,  
spading my earth to plant his awful seed.

In the back alleyways  
of my mind I sense  
beginnings of a low moan  
twisting into darkness.

*Iain Drummond*

## ***Mannequin***

ladies rushed to the sale  
to screech  
hangers on the rack  
and finger  
crimson tags dangled  
like blood  
by pale thread.  
motionless she stood  
a frozen gasp  
untouched by hands—  
they striked fabric flesh instead.  
  
they tore dresses from the wires  
nude, she felt,  
though they did not notice—  
too busy flirting with mirrors.  
ladies shoved shopping bags  
through revolving doors  
when they left  
the walls stared.

*Debbie Pelham*

# *Growth—A Sequence (Incomplete)*

1

The coxcomb procession runs down our street  
Prisioned in walls of alabaster tiles.  
Pretentious ligature for wounded meat,  
Brilliantine beauties with vaseline smiles.  
Grand venery when the season is right,  
Harbingers of a crude and neon hell.  
The hunter shot down by the dove in flight;  
The frontispiece of a book they lived well.  
Invidious warning of present coming—  
Ennuied masses complain with their blames.  
Three minstrels crying an off-key strumming  
A synchopatic etude lost in flames.  
Where are those halcyon simplistic days?—  
Havoc reigns mighty in the growing blaze.

2

Transparent children now falsify truth  
Lustrating motives while lusting a quest.  
The moiety of society's youth  
Severed; a world where division is best.  
Fondness is fondled by defeated knights  
Long since retired from being brought down.  
Stuck in their armor of made-up delights  
Rusting so slowly, the hero's a clown.  
Invest, young men, take money for a wife!  
(An addiction without a cure off it).  
Jest is a business and so becomes life—  
They are reading for Isaiah's profit.  
Where are those halcyon simplistic days?—  
The toddlers today pass over that phase.

3

Beautiful women spit in the street  
Long past emotion and farther from tears.  
Petrified females who lead a retreat  
Out from the world of their earlier years.  
Loathing their present while hating their past  
They push vanity to a new degree.  
Towards no destination they all run fast,  
Scared of the mirror's unseen enmity.  
Rocks in the image of a great god stone.  
A deaf ear to look away from trouble...  
Nature's a mother who left us alone!  
Few find salvation under the rubble.  
Where are those halcyon simplistic days?—  
Our matriarch chooses to coldly gaze.

*Gary Ira  
Glauber*



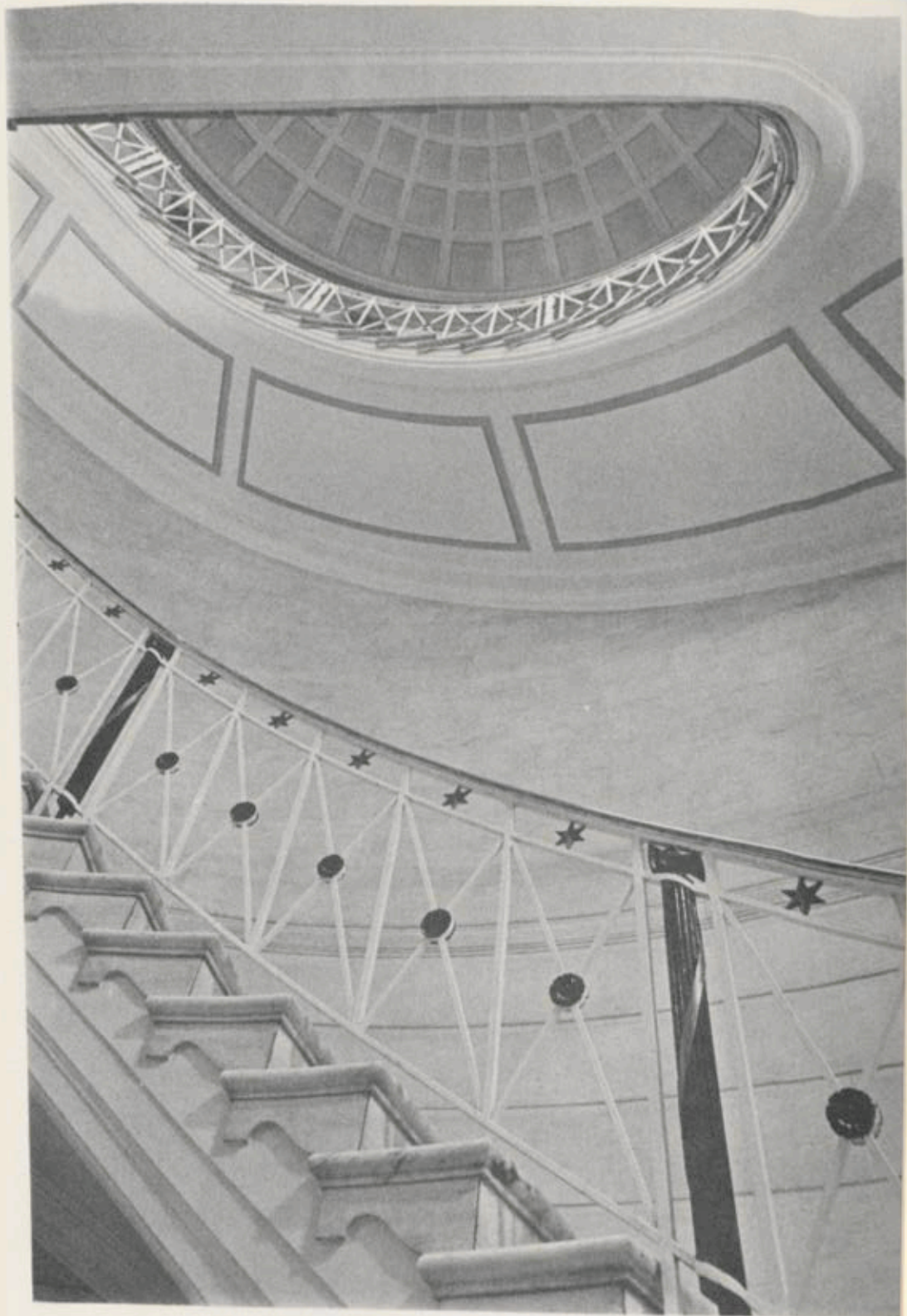
## eve's

dragon flies:  
dart  
rocky temple rose  
red & climbing,  
trellised  
downing  
sun

mountain flowers:  
templed  
in  
dragons  
wings  
rising  
cape  
evening  
sky

*ESR*







# The Extraordinary Suicide of John B. Alerick

David Mendelson

## I

It was almost lunchtime when Herbert Glasser stormed into the musty warehouse and shouted his hefty, "Hi, there, ya schmucks." John shot a wary glance toward him and returned to his labors, assembling and stuffing a half dozen odd pieces into their respective little boxes. Of all the truckers who come here, John thought, of all the bigots and bullies and crazed bastards, Herbert Glasser's big mouth was easily the least bearable. "Got laid last night," Glasser would say. "Got drunk last night." "Beat me up some nigger faggots," Glasser would beam.

Al was used to it. Al had run the warehouse for fourteen years and he once swore to John that some truckers made Glasser look charming. And it was Al who greeted Glasser now. "Hey, dink. Got my thermostats?"

"I got a ton and a half of yer fuckin' thermostats. Wanna sign for it?" Glasser handed Al the clipboard and searched the area for a skid to sit on. It was then that Glasser saw John. John had loathed Glasser for months but Glasser had never noticed John a single time. He looked at the boy. Kid must be twenty, maybe nineteen. Sandy haired, spindly, probably a faggot, he mused. Glasser walked over to John's workbench. John didn't look up. "Nice day, huh?" Glasser started.

"Okay." John kept eyes on his tedious job.

"What's yer name, son?"

"John."

Glasser chalked him up-an egghead or a hostile faggot, maybe both.

"Ever get laid there, John?"

John kept assembling the kits. Two of those. Two of those. Don't forget the instruction sheet.

"Don't talk much, do ya John?"

Hell, there's an extra bracket. Must have left it out in one kit. Better check the last few.

"Dontcha say nothing, kid?" Glasser's voice was abusive.

"Gonna say 'lunch' in a minute."

Glasser stepped back, screwed up his face. No egghead, he corrected himself. Tart. He

walked over to Al, who was now starting to unload the thermostats. Glasser leaned in his ear until Al was enveloped in the trucker's breath of cigarettes, rum, and gasoline. "That kid there," he started. "A retard?"

Al looked at John. "Him? Nope. Good man. Shy and scrawny, but a damn good worker. Smart, too. He's been really drawn back the last week or so, though. Like someone died or something. Doesn't talk about it."

"Well if he ain't no tart, how come he talks like one?"

"What'd he say?"

"I says, 'Ya don't talk much,' and he says, 'I'm gonna say 'lunch'.'"

Al chuckled. "He was being serious. He always calls lunchtime for the warehouse."

"So he's gotta be fuckin' proud?"

"You don't understand. Just wait a minute. We break for lunch here at twelve-thirty. I set my pocketwatch every morning by calling up time."

"So?"

"So wait a minute."

Glasser stepped back and seated himself on a skid. After about half a minute, John suddenly stood up, walked over to the center aisle and paused. Al motioned Glasser over. John lifted his head and bawled down the aisle, "LUNCH!!!"

One-one-thousand.

Two-two-thousand.

John walked back to his bench.

Five-one-thousand.

Six-one-thousand.

"So?"

Eight-one-thousand.

Al reached for his pocketwatch.

Eleven-one-thousand.

Al opened the face, smiled as he saw the second hand sweep twelve seconds after twelve-thirty.

"So?"

"He said 'lunch' at the right time, Herb. To the second."

"Big fucking deal."

"See any clocks in here? Any clocks on the kid's bench? I can tell you that John doesn't

carry a watch or anything."

"Big shit."

"Glasser, you dumb asshole. That kid KNOWS what time it is. All the time. To the second."

Glasser remained unimpressed. "Yeah? What else does the little faggot know?"

## II

Robert Lacey could see nothing and feel little. He had just mustered enough coherence to realize that he was coming out of sedation. Something seemed wrong.

A good deal was wrong. Lacey's spacecraft had been bound for Saturn. It was now orbiting Ganymede, the largest of Jupiter's moons. Lacey was to be in suspended animation until Saturn's electromagnetic field could be felt. Yet, he was coming to, one entire planet off course. Something was wrong.

He felt rather great pain as the sedation wore off. He could not yet surmise where he was, but it seemed to him that he was coming out of animation too early. The body betrays me, the brain said to itself while receiving various complaints from the aching limbs and digestive system, the brain thought.

His eyes were slowly focusing. The panel flashed. The speaker spoke. It said "Lacey! Come alive there and reply! Captain Lacey! This is moonbase. Please reply."

The speaker did a good deal to awaken him. He reached for the radio controls. "Moonbase," he slurred a bit. "This is Lacey. This is Lacey. What's the story?" His new voice seemed unfamiliar.

A long silence ensued. He peered through the window. "God, no!" he exclaimed to no one in particular. He undid his straps and leaned groggily toward the scene. "No," he muttered again. He recognized where he was. He recalled his earliest briefings; "Ganymede orbit: In the event of a malfunction precluding a fly-by or orbit of Saturn, the spacecraft will be directed by computer command from moonbase to fall into orbit of Ganymede. The crew of one will then be thawed and awakened." Thawed and awakened, Robert thought. Ganymede. Massive. Good for hyperbolic trajectories. Gain velocity. F equals m times a he mused whimsically. Classically, that is, he corrected himself. Ganymede. Maybe to find something about the strange electromagnetic goings-on at Io, nearby puzzle-moon.

Ganymede. Maybe to die in orbit.

The speaker crackled. "Lacey! Come in Captain Lacey. This is moonbase. Please reply at once." Lacey became panic-stricken. "They

haven't heard my reply!" he cursed in his brain. The radio is dead! Only receives! He glanced at the clock, and then became pensive. He punched into the computer.

TIM, TRANS: 7, LATEST

The screen spat back.

14:36.792 START

14:37.841 END

He checked the clock again. His reply, the last transmission the computer recalled, had been only five minutes ago. He scolded himself severely—there had been no cause for alarm. His groggy state had led him to believe that time was progressing more rapidly. The moonbase could not have received his reply yet. It would be a long time for the broadcast to travel to the earth's moon and bounce back with instructions. They were trying to wake him up every five minutes until they received his reply. They had probably sent messages every five minutes for an hour or more before he replied. He would hear wake up calls for almost another sixty minutes before hearing news from his distant companions. A long wait, indeed.

Lacey sat for a few moments, scolding himself for his panic and trying to compose his thoughts. The body will still be causing a good deal of pain. He turned to the computer. "You should know more than they do," he said to it. "SO WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE PROBLEM?" he typed in.

The screen flashed:

???

He chuckled. "You dumb bastard," he said aloud.

## III

"John!" Al shuffled over to the workbench. "How're things?"

John looked up. "Okay."

"How long have you been putting those damn kits together?"

"A week and a half. Straight."

"Shitty job."

"Yeah."

"John, you know you only have a couple of cases to go. You should be able to finish by tomorrow morning."

"Should be."

"Yeah. John, you know I think you're a good worker and I'm anxious to have you back helping me with shipping."

"Doing my best, Al."

"Uh-huh. Well, you were doing your best for the last month, but you've been slowing down a whole lot for awhile now. Anything wrong?"

"I'm okay." John reconsidered his statement. "Can I have tomorrow off, Al? I know I'm asking a bit much, but..."



"Yeah, take it. You're no good at the pace you're working at now. Take the afternoon off, too, if you want to. Just make sure I know what hours you've worked."

"Thanks."

"You don't feel like sharing anything you got on your mind?"

John shook his head. "Thanks anyway. I couldn't explain even if I wanted to."

"Couldn't explain. First you act like you're in mourning and then you're confused as all hell. Whatever it is, I hope it's worth it."

John gathered a thin smile. "Me too."

#### IV

An hour had passed and Lacey could expect word from the moonbase in a few minutes. He reviewed the computer readout he had just been through. "Replay from when I woke up," he told the computer in its language.

It dashed words out blindingly on the glowing blue screen:

TIM, TRANS: 7, LATEST

14:36.792 START

14:37.841 END

CALL MLFRPT

RUN

\*\*\* MALFUNCTION REPORT \*\*\*

MALFUNCTION: CIRCUITRY, COMPUTER CONNECTED

SYMPTOMS: CLOCK MALFUNCTION

DETECTION: MOONBASE COMPUTER

MBB700C, TIM: 01:12.837

CIRCUIT REFERENCE: HS849K7

SCHEMATIC:

The schematic of the circuit appeared, with appropriate indications of what circuits could be called by the computer in connection with the clock system.

PRESENT CONDITION: OPERABLE

ACTION: BEGIN GANYMEDE ORBIT:  
PILOT OVERRIDE BY MOONBASE COMPUTER MBB7000C AT TIM: 03:37.225  
GANYMEDE ORBIT BY MOONBASE COMPUTER CONTROL. ALL OTHER FUNCTIONS ON SHIPBOARD COMPUTER.

ESTIMATED TIME TO ACK

STOP

DSPLY, SCHEM, HS849K7

The schematic appeared again. Lacey had studied it for a long time, looking for possible problems. He had the computer stop its review, erase the schematic from the screen. If the clock could be trusted, which was much in doubt, his reply from his friends should come over in good old audible english at any moment. He leaned back and shut his eyes. The clock circuit appeared in his eyelids, floated around in oranges and blues. The body still ached.

Lacey was just managing to dismiss the diagram from his bleary eyes when the speaker crackled. "Another wake-up-message?" he asked himself. No. It was time for a reply.

"Bob. Just got your reply. I hope you're feeling okay. I'm afraid the problem could be serious." Lacey recognized the soothing voice. "I assume that you have now questioned your computer about the problem," the voice continued, some thirty-five minutes and four-hundred million miles ago, "and have traced it to the clock circuit. As you know, the computer depends on the clock for its timing instructions for piloting. The malfunction in the clock lasted only a couple of seconds and did no damage. We could not let the mission continue with an unreliable clock, though, so we were forced to send a chain of instructions from our computer to initiate the proper piloting for a temporary Ganymede orbit. I guess the shipboard computer told you most of that background."

Robert gazed at the speaker as if it were his friend. "At the time of this transmission," the speaker explained, "your computer is receiving instructions for you to read. Apparently, a faulty diode allowed a large power surge through the crystal oscillator of the clock. We think the crystal might have been damaged, although the power surge created no apparent damage to the life-support or piloting features of the ship. The diode has a replacement which the computer will direct you to. The crystal can't be replaced, but a similar one can be sacrificed from another circuit. The computer will tell you where to find this crystal and what it will sacrifice in the safety control to use it. If all goes well, you should be able to complete your mission to Saturn without problems and perhaps get some data on Io while you're in the area."

There was a pause. Robert waited for the expected, "But..."

"There is one possible hitch, though. Between the time it takes to send and receive messages and the amount of time you'll be behind Ganymede, it will be difficult to get time corrections from the moonbase computer. You will lose some clock time when you change crystal. You'll have to wait until communication comes from us for time correction. Since we don't know your exact distance, we can only be correct to within a few seconds. That's okay. That's not serious. But..." The word resounded throughout Lacey's craft, "... if your clock suddenly decides to stop when you're on the other side of Ganymede..." They didn't have to finish the sentence, Robert thought. If the clock stopped, Lacey would have to leave Ganymede orbit by manual pilot to buy time to fix the clock. That meant calculating trajectory



for escape, finding the time to fire thrusters, and then estimating what time it was...to the minute or better. The parameters were narrow. The proper window in space was small. If he guessed the time wrong by too much, he would be way off course. By the time the clock was fixed, he might not be able to get back on course when he received corrections from moonbase. He could probably avoid the clutches of Jupiter's gravity, but there was an awful lot of space to get lost in if he missed his target.

"Too many ifs," he thought. "If the clock stops; IF I guess the time wrong; IF I end up on a very bad trajectory. All of these things are unlikely. The mission will continue. The mission will succeed. I am not the first astronaut to go to Saturn. I must test my abilities to gauge time." He looked at the clock, decided that he would look again when he thought exactly one hour had passed.

The computer sat, waiting patiently to give him instructions. The speaker was quiet. An hour passed. The body ached.

## V

"I thought you were dead," John said bluntly. He got no reply. John was sitting alone in his room. "My friend Edward, what has happened?" The room was silent. The question was not audible, for it was just a mind wave to travel some hundred and fifty-two years. Yet, it had always been answered. Always until a couple of weeks ago. "Edward Garvey," John thought to himself. "I've known Edward Garvey all my life. He was born on the same day I was, to the hour and second, thirty eight leap years after my birth. Living in the early 2100's. We have known each other since before we could speak. You were my childhood buddy, my 'make-believe' friend. You told me that you even look like me. You were (are?) a master thief, a wealthy young man. I wish you were not a thief. The temptation was great enough, though. You could communicate with me whenever you wished. I could tell you the exact time when you wanted it. I could give you advice if you panicked. Together, we were a master thief."

"We were also happy companions." John rolled over on his bed, buried his eyes in his pillow. He remembered a conversation he had had with Garvey.

"We're luckier than we think," Garvey had said.

"We're lucky all right," John had agreed.

"I don't think we even realize it. John, have you ever felt lonely?"

John had considered the question for a moment. "No," he had answered with conviction.

"We never feel lonely. We've always had each other. Night and day. Waking and dreaming. We could always summon each other's company."

"Mmmm."

"You remember about a year ago when I was sick?"

John winced. "You were real sick, Ed."

"I was. I might not have made it except for one thing. I could always get encouragement and conversation from you. Any time. You pulled me through. But there was one point, just one split second of time when I was too sick even to hear you. I screamed in my mind for you and writhed in my bed, but you didn't hear. Then, you returned. That one second of time was horrible, though. I didn't want to tell you. I felt lonely for the first time. There's nothing like it, John. If someone stepped up to me and said he was a wizard—if he said he would give me a wish so that I could wish away all diseases on the earth or I could wish away all loneliness, but not both—Johnny, I'd wish away loneliness without a second thought.

John had been stunned. He forced back tears. "It's that horrible? Most people face it every day and yet it's that bad?"

"For me at least, loneliness is a death. For you, too, I would guess."

"Ed," the words stuck in John's mouth. "Ed, you won't die? You won't be caught as a thief? What would they do? What would happen to us?"

"Take it easy, John. I'll be around. We're a team. We don't get caught."

"If you were caught. What **would** happen to you? To us?"

"We won't get caught. You're a hundred and fifty-two years in the past and I'm nimble."

"And I'm nimble," John repeated to the headboard by his bed now. "That was the only time in our lives that you ever avoided answering a question of mine, Ed. What was the horrible answer? Are you finding out now? Caught and killed? Perhaps. I thought maybe you were caught and destroyed. At least, I did until a couple of days ago. I don't know exactly where my friend Edward is or what he's up to, but **someone** keeps asking me what time it is."

## IV

"Is it time yet? Is the hour up?" Lacey asked himself. The answer came to him. "No, not yet," it said with deep conviction. Lacey wondered how anything in the human body could be so sure. He had labored for almost an hour in preparation to fix the clock. He was just about to disappear behind Ganymede. A report left the transmitter on its way to the earth's moon.



Lacey leaned back for a moment and let the contours of his seat support his throbbing muscles. He pondered his predicament, tried to get a perspective on where he was in the universe. The mind drifted. "Edward Garvey never knew how painful his body was," thought Lacey. "A kid of some twenty years. A thief, and a good one at that. Maybe his painful body was the cause of his maladjustment. Anyways, one would expect some pain when having his mind transplanted to another's body. One's own body adjusts to its idiosyncracies from birth. Then the little pains aren't noticeable. Like good old Pythagoras's music of the spheres. You don't notice it. You'd just notice it's absence if it stopped." Lacey leaned toward the window port, gazed at Ganymede, looked farther to Jupiter.

"But to put another mind in another body, well that really asks the brain to do a lot of adjusting. Still, Garvey's body seems to be harder for me to adapt to than it should be. I guess the situation isn't ideal, since we can only use the bodies of captured and convicted criminals. But Garvey had a young, supple body, and my own was worn out at the ripe age of fifty. It wasn't painful for him. Just sedate, destroy the brain and replace it. Good-bye criminal. Leave the medulla to perform all the involuntary functions it's used to." The stomach twitched. The mind was wrenched back to more practical considerations. "Is it time yet?" he asked himself. "Almost," came the answer. "Listen now," his cells whispered. "Almost... almost... NOW." Lacey looked at the clock and dropped his jaw. The seconds digit was just flipping, exactly one hour after he had set the strating time in his mind. "God!" he said aloud. "Goddamn. I know what time it is!"

Lacey reclined with great relief. "The mission will be completed. I know I can do it. I'll be able to do all the experiments this damn craft is set for and maybe a few of my own as well. No problems. In ten minutes, I'll see Io over the horizon of Jupiter. I'll even get data on Io's magnetosphere. My clock won't stop. The craft is working for me. Fate is too. And anyway, I know what time it is."

The mind composed itself. It made the body sigh. The eyes peered out the port. They calmly watched the distant dot that was the earth as it faded out behind the slight atmosphere of Ganymede and winked behind radio signal range.

The mind turned thoughts to Io it started to "rise". The brain was busily thinking computer symbols to tell the spacecraft how to measure the magnetic field of the little moon. The computer hummed inaudibly with the music of the

spheres.

Lacey's mind became thoroughly involved in the long process of programming while Garvey's eyes shot to the clock every minute or two to assure the brain that the little red digits were flipping on schedule.

Lacey worked for twenty minutes, summoning bits of program and rewriting instructions. Finally, the spacecraft knew how to look at Io and measure its field. Lacey typed in the password:

RUN

The spacecraft came alive. He could hear the slight whirl as the sensors on the ship's hull as they swung into position and started throwing numbers at the machine. The blue of the screen flashed with data.

Lacey leaned back with satisfaction. He closed his eyes for a moment. When he opened them again...

"Holy shit!" The clock stopped. When? Couldn't have been more than a minute and a half ago. No. About a half minute ago according to the number it stopped on. The sucker up and died. No life at all. Here I am, thrity minutes behind Ganymede and the bastard quits. Okay Lacey, keep yourself together," the brain warned.

The time to leave orbit in emergency had been calculated by the computer beforehand for this orbit. Lacey asked the computer what time he should fire thrusters.

THRUSTER FIRE 7.64 ON 4, STABLE PITCH

2.45 ON 3, Stable Yaw

AT TIM 13:51.982

The computer displayed the information and continued with its experiments. 13:51.982. Lacey looked at the dead clock. The numbers still glowed 11:32.867. "Two hours and nineteen minutes," Lacey murmured. The throat gulped. "I'll have to keep my mind occupied," he reasoned. Lacey summoned back the first data from Io to the computer screen. "I'll solve the damn puzzle of Io while I wait," he encouraged himself. He began to study the numbers intently, putting each one into the formulas he knew and thinking about the possible significance. "I knew the hour to the split second," the subconscious kept repeating. "I'll know two hours and nineteen minutes to within a minute without problem."

The time passed at a normal rate and the astronaut became intensively involved in the scientific inquiry. "I can't quite make the connection," he told himself, "but I swear this data will answer any questions. I know the explanation is here." The data had been flooding in for an hour. "An hour?" he asked himself. "Almost



exactly an hour," his medulla told him. He smiled with confidence, looked at the thruster controls. The spacecraft was busy and yet ready. And he knew the time.

Lacey leaned back and shut his eyes. The body still throbbed slightly. "Must be the suspended animation sedative that makes it act up so much," he decided. The body had taken its toll in fatigue on the brain, though. Indeed, it had taken a larger toll than the astronaut realized, a much greater drain than the earth scientists would have guessed or allowed. It betrayed him now. He fell into sleep.

Lacey left consciousness for only five minutes. It might have been a fatal five minutes in another body. In any other body, the space traveller would have been left to his own resources to guess how long he had slept. Five minutes? A half hour? But the body was once belonging to the late Edward Garvey, unknown companion of one long-dead John Alerick.

Yet, perhaps the sleep was more fatal for that fact. After four minutes and fifty-three seconds of slumber, Lacey awoke from a nightmare. He had been travelling in space for three years, far beyond Jupiter or Saturn. He was in deep space, heading nowhere, hopelessly off course. The radio was out of range. The dream was so

clear, so strong, that it rattled the body by its very cells. The most complete sense of loneliness drew pictures as he awoke. He came out of his five minute doze with a vivid portrait of a man completely alone and absolutely lonely. The picture ravaged and danced from his hair follicles to his medulla. To Edward Garvey's medulla.

## VII

John writhed in anguish. His head split with pain. The first image in three weeks entered and tortured his sensibilities and he suddenly knew what loneliness was. "Loneliness is a death," Garvey's voice reverberated from every corner of the room. He suddenly understood all. In the low light of his silent room John Alerick screamed, "NOW! NOW! IT'S 13:51.982. IT IS TIME!"

He could feel the panic in the awakened mind. He knew the uncertainly the brain felt. Garvey's body reacted to the signal without hesitation and Alerick knew the confused brain had trusted the body. The hands of Edward Garvey reached out and pulled the thruster switches... at 12:39.461.

The body carried the brain's nightmare into a slow torture of reality. "For me at least, loneliness is a death," the walls resounded. "For you, too, I would guess."





## *Luna*

Aged yellow  
night companion,  
endlessly circles,  
partially hidden.  
Your time worn,  
pitted face  
Watches stoically  
as men ravage,  
rape their mother,  
spit on your face,  
kill each other  
in the name of  
Gods and causes.  
Known by many  
different names;  
to some a goddess,  
to others a curse.  
Crazed men  
named for you;  
raging tides  
caused by your  
subtle influence.  
Seeing so much, yet  
a sister in peril.  
Your image screams  
a message  
to deaf ears.  
Relentless, time  
collects its toll  
owed from eons ago.

*Clifford Lyons*

## ***Consummation***

Smoke rings meet condensation;  
the window panes make pictures  
we have missed meeting  
in your tiny room, sniffing  
like dogs at our own  
scents, as if nobody else  
were watching.

We look out, at branches  
scratching at the moon's back,  
at memories of far away  
places, at anything but  
the two of us, braver in the dark  
staring at cigarette embers,  
falling asleep hungry, dreaming  
of unleavened bread  
and dried oranges

*Kathy Hayes*

## Thoughts

I shall sit and stare at space a while  
Or watch raindrops hit the empty air  
Or watch a sun like butter shining  
On an uncut loaf of bread.

And in a little while perhaps  
Like ripples in a pool  
Ideas will come and dribble in—  
Like jam, when too much of it is spread.

Then visions will float as free  
As salamanders wag their tails.  
They'll come running, dancing, pelting in  
Like rain on falling leaves,

Until they split and shiver  
Like so many rainbows on a sea  
And like the sand through fingers  
Go sailing out to sea.

*Jan De Dekka*



## *Puppet*

Those summers  
my grandmother's porch cooled me  
Half-opened Dutch door catching each breeze,  
luring me with a bowl of shelled peanuts  
and a glass of coffee soda  
When I was six or seven and had nothing better to do

Some days we walked to Nunley's  
The merry-go-round cost a dime with the newspaper coupon  
The polkadot puppet danced  
for an hour  
or maybe a minute  
while I struggled to make  
that clown stop grinning

*Terri Cohen*



## *A Wasted Wish*

I blew out the sun  
and watched wax slip down my fingers  
like tears on a child's face

After ice cream and cake  
we ran to the grill,  
thin branches and marshmallows  
crisscrossing over warmth  
The orange coals glowed so quietly  
their temptation was a reminder  
to leave them or they'd break

We all joined hands  
and pulled too hard  
Ashes, ashes

*Terri Cohen*







## *Above the Crematory*

Ashen horses leap  
quicksilver  
through night berry blue.  
Hocks taut  
with layered muscle,  
hoof-hooks trace  
luminous arcs.  
Wind snare  
rends them to stratus  
pouring through sky:  
dissolution  
in dull moonlight  
to ashes,  
ashes in a hushed rain.

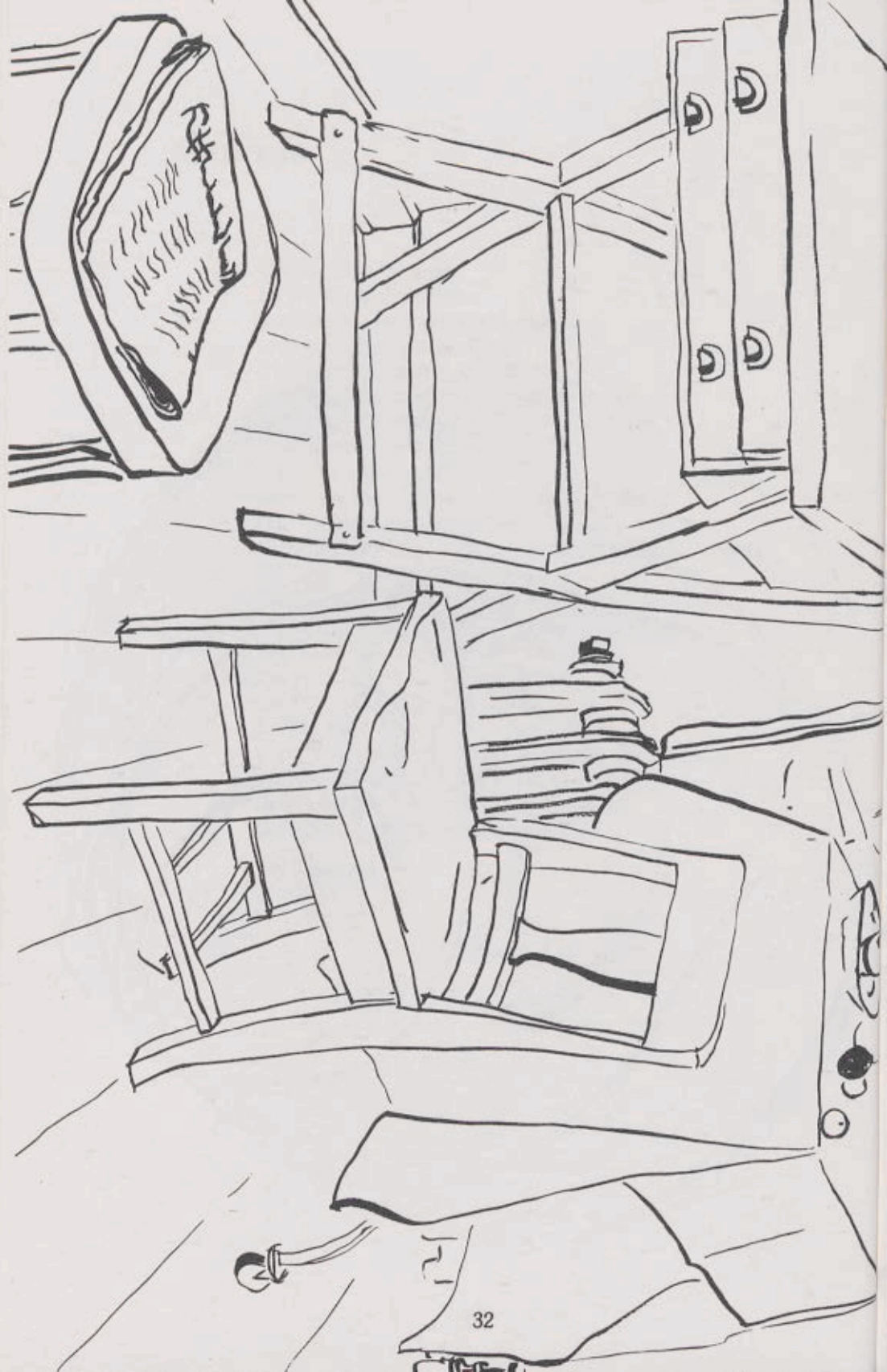
*Jim Anderson*

## Onions

We lie side by side  
all through the winter  
our skins dry from early nights  
and snow bound heating  
flake and fall aside, our feet  
tangle in our commonwealth warmth  
here, by the stove and hot water pipes.  
Our honeyless snoring  
was hung to dry in the fall  
and now hangs around us in this bin  
our musks now quieted  
through months of fast days and inevitable nights  
let us lie here  
forgetting  
as we roll side to side with the openings  
and closings of the bin,  
more skin lost in the collisions  
we pass the winter avoiding  
knives and stews  
which rip us open to our aromatic memories;  
in the dark rollings and skin shedding  
the potatoes rot or wrinkle  
we sprout tender green shoots.

*Jody Green*







## *Aborted Affair*

My heart is the egg  
you've held in your hand since I've met you  
It rolled to your palm to be warm  
from a snowdrift of faces

Confused in an airport  
it lost sight of you  
You didn't even blink  
as yolk spilled  
down the terminal after you

*Terri Cohen*

# The Further Adventures Of The Guardian Of the Corpulent Fig

Todd Miller

Old Morgh, the elderly tinker who kept a tiny trade at the source of the Lion River, was awakened from a pleasant sleep by a mail-card hand. Opening his eyes quickly (there was a great fear among small tradesmen of Shiddlebar Town that a pack of highwaymen were moving down from Villian's Cove to pillage and lay to waste their pastured settlement), Old Morgh half-expected to behold the grizzled countenance of some robber's chief. Instead, he saw through sleep-fogged eyes the dashing figure of Sire Ronald Tuthesom... the Guardian of the Corpulent Fig himself!

"Old Morgh, I have news from the King of England; may I talk without fear?" inquired the gallant swordsman. Old Morgh nodded his head mutely. Bending on one knee, Tuthesom of Rottenmire addressed the elderly craftsman.

"Tonight," he whispered, "my nemesis of old, the cruel Duke of Elling-town, or as he is better known, the Earl of the Pearl, is to lay in wait for me near Boddleswaithe Creek. I know that you are most familiar with that territory as you were brought up within its green borders; therefore, friend Morgh, I ask that you draw me a sketch of the area that I might plan for the Earl an eventful night. The King, in His most gracious assent, has permitted myself, his humble servant, to offer you the piddling sum of five pounds sterling for your efforts. Old Morgh blinked his rheumy eyes in blank astonishment.

"Five pounds; s'blood, 'tis more money than I have ever set my failing gaze upon, eh what!" faltered the tinker. Sir Ronald smiled kindly, and withdrew from his vest a pouch of no small weight. Handing to the tinker the sum of five pounds, the Guardian continued in muffled tones.

"My men have the hearts of full-blooded she-wolves; with your help, my men and I will soundly thrash the wicked Earl and his yellow band of thieves and rogues. After that, we shall continue up Katzpuke Road to Villian's Cove, where we shall rid the countryside of a nest of fiddling vipers." At that his men laughed heartily; routing robbers was their most favorite of hobbies. Old Morgh scratched his greying beard in thought, and in a twinkling, pulled up a roughly-hewn table and began to draw a map upon a piece of yellowing parchment. Sir Ronald nodded his head approvingly, and as the tinker was putting the finishing touches on the

sketch, the Guardian handed to him a small patch. It showed a magnificent quince emblazoned upon a field of tiger's blood.

"This is my sign," said Sir Ronald. "Should any evil befall you, sew the patch onto your back and run screaming through the streets. My men will assist you within a camel's blink." Old Morgh was at a loss for words.

"I shall never forget you, good Tuthesom of Rottenmire; may God and the King grant you speedy victory!" Sir Ronald clasped the old man thrice, and then signalled his men to depart. As he and his men were cloaked by the moonless evening, Old Morgh lay down drowsily upon his simple bed.

He was again, after a time, awakened roughly. Instead of an iron fist, he beheld a knife at his throat. Gazing quickly upwards, his eyes met the stony stare of that of the Earl of the Pearl. The Earl smiled cruelly, and the dagger bit further into Old Morgh's neck.

"Had a visitor tonight, eh waht?" queried the nasty Baron of Alesmithe. Old Morgh shook his head no.

"Then explain the horse-dropping upon your porch, old fool!" snapped the Duke, pointing towards a mound of fecal material at the foot of his hut. Old Morgh closed his eyes, and swallowed his bile. How he hated the evil Earl of the Pearl.

"You may kill me if you wish, foul cob's-pawner; you will never know the name of the visitor I entertained." The Duke's eyes narrowed into menacing slits.

"You are very foolish, old scoundrel. There are ways at our disposal of making you reveal the night visitor's identity." At that one of his cutthroat colleagues began twirling a mace slowly.

"It was the Guardian of the Cropulent Fig; I swear it. Marry, put down that mace, nasty one," said Old Morgh quickly. The Earl of the Pearl smiled. Soon the old man would be food for the minnows at Gallsblather Lake.

"Tell me, old one; did the beneficent Guardian leave to you some small remembrance? Something likening to a fruit in a field of sow's blood."

"Tiger's blood, 'twas," said the old tinker.

"Aha," cried the sinsiter Earl, "than you do possess the famed Shield of the Quince! Fetch it up hence, knave!" Cowering under such ver-



bal abuse, what could the miserable tinker do but hand over to the Duke the patch entrusted to him by Sir Ronald?

"Good lad," said the Earl in a disparaging tone of voice. "Now then, I shall take my leave of you. But first . . . oh, an idea has hit me! You shall be the bait for the Guardian of the Corpulent Fig, tinker! A fitting lure; what think you, gentlemen?" The Earl's men guffawed vulgarly, and then quaffed a hogshead of the tinker's precious ale. The odious Duke beckoned to two of his henchmen.

"Place this young of a greensnake in a large sack and heft him oer' the saddle of that skinny nag yon," he said. "No doubt the fool has given the Guardian a map of the area; we must be on our guard. Do it hence, and report back to me." The two thugs dragged the whimpering old tinker outside, and after a rather one-sided scuffle, they strode back into the hovel to await further orders. After the wick had burnt low to the pewter, the villainous party made their way on horseback down the Road of Scollinway. The Duke's eyes were fiery embers piercing the night as he rode along the dusty path towards their encampment in a forgotten pass within the Goldeng-Pitzz Mountains overlooking the Lion River. Soon sweet vengeance will be mine, thought the Earl to himself. He envisioned the head of the Guardian stuck unceremoniously on the head of his walking-staff, and laughed wickedly. Before the dawn broke over England, the Guardian of the Corpulent Fig would die.

\* \* \*

The river toads' deep-throated calls formed a symphony of natural sounds that pleased the young Guardian, whose love of the native countryside of England was second only to his passionate dislike of the persecutors of the poor, oppressed, and needy.

"Hrrumph yoursevels, fairest woodland creatures," said Sir Ronald aloud in quiet gest. A few hundred yards beyond the clearing in the Sylvan Wood where Tuthesom and his men had made camp stood a jerkin-clad lookout with the eyes of a hawk. His name was Fealdbar of Puddlebyshire-by-the-Marsh, although his companions knew him simply as the Eagle Boy. A good, trustworthy scout who knew the brush of even the most tangled of forests, the Eagle Boy was a dear asset and a good friend of Sir Ronald's, who oftentimes fell asleep to the pleasant voice and mellow lute of his scout. Suddenly, the night stillness was broken by an urgent cry.

"Sir Ronald! Fifteen, maybe twenty men clad in black heading up the Forest Path towards us! Sir Ronald; one of them is the Earl of-ung!" Ronald recognized the youthful voice as that of

the Eagle Boy. Racing towards the clearing, Sir Ronald discovered the Eagle Boy laying upon a carpet of pine needles with the shaft of a crimson-red arrow piercing his heart. Smacking the ground in silent grief, Tuthesom realized that the Earl of the Pearl was close by. Even as he contemplated his foe's barren cruelty, a second arrow whizzed past Sir Ronald and imbedded itself deeply into the trunk of a gnarled pine tree.

"Men, the enemy is upon us! Quickly yeomen; take your positions and stick the scum sweetly, for they have killed the Eagle Boy!" Hurriedly, the men took their positions behind rocks and trees and began firing determinedly into the thick of the cruel Earl's company. Soon one blackly-clothed figure fell; then, another, and another. The Duke, knowing that he was hopelessly out-fought, decided to play his final card.

"Ho, Sir Ronald Tuthesom of Rottenmire! I have your friend, the tinker with me! Come out to the clearing unarmed, or I shall kill him forthrightly!" The Earl smiled with smug satisfaction. He knew that the Guardian would voluntarily perish with the knowledge that an innocent man would die if he didn't. Surely as the dawn rises, out into the clearing stepped the tall, dashing figure of the Guardian of the Corpulent Fig. His eyes burned with such an intensity that for a brief moment the Earl considered giving up his evil ways and becoming a farmer in the northern provinces. No time for daydreaming; shape up he thought to himself. Rising to his full stature, the Duke addressed Sir Ronald with arrow poised.

"Since you know that you will die soon, o great Guardian," smirked the Earl, "I have but one request of you: I will spare you if you would but kneel before me and swear your allegiance to me." The old tinker shuddered at the thought of Sir Ronald dying so needlessly. Yet, wonder of wonders, Sir Ronald did actually bend his knee and begin to swear his loyalty to the Earl. Old Morgh turned his head away in disgust, and then wept. What he did not see was Tuthesom of Rottermire's hidden dagger come sweeping upwards and ripping the surprised Earl from gut to chaps! Dead, the cruel Earl fell wordlessly to his knees, and then keeled over before the kelly-green boots of Sir Ronald.

"Even a Guardian of the oppressed must leave some options open to himself, eh what, good fellow?" With that, Sir Ronald, Old Morgh, and Sir Ronald's small but intrepid band of fellows rode off to the palace of the King of England, where they all received tidy pensions and bought homes in the quiet lands beyond the Digglesworth Hills.



The morning glory  
crawls the slow mounting heat  
across the Rhode Island field.  
Fingers clenching around clumped dirt  
and rock, and frilly harvests.  
Blossoms washed out of blue—  
the sky catching back all the blue, the blue lost  
blue sucked down the shrivled roots  
to granite and sandstone.  
Now the sixth generation strikes hoes into that vine  
again, the vine  
tangled deep within the remenants and decay of other summers.  
The hoes chop and clip a finger and stone  
and the blossoms keep sucking the sky  
down through their faces  
their hands holding on  
down on the rock, planting veins of blue sky  
in ripples on the granite  
the veins blue and ripple  
as arms swing the hoes.

*Jody Green*













# The Assassin

Todd Miller

It was becoming a trifle warm in the chambers of the United General Assembly; this was due to a slight malfunctioning in the air-recirculation system, and compounded by the blistering accusations of Palestinian Aru Rhokam. The senior delegate from the Palestinian Republic was in the midst of tilting his sarcastic lance at United States representative Richard Draeger, an emissary of the State Department who was becoming fast embroiled in his inaugural debate.

"...the United States, in keeping with its policies of fascism and foreign intervention, has involved itself once again with that eternal underdog of the democracies, Israel. Israel; a land of milk and honey...and border outposts and strategic command stations overlooking our territories."

"Mr. Delegate," began Draeger unemotionally, "it is in keeping with this nation's foreign policy to protect the God-given sovereignty of any nation, democratic or otherwise. In this respect." Rhokam raised his hand, and shook his head in amusement.

"And good sir, when our people were attempting to secure its borders from the misunderstood Hebrews and Zionists, what was the reaction of the United States and its allies?" Rhokam paused for effect. Most of the other delegates were either conferring with their junior staffs or napping, which irked the Palestinian. "What was their reaction? They set up a string of offensive missile stations along the Negev; our Negev. Offensive stations! Is that how the United States 'protects' its allies?"

"And I reply... 'good sir'... that it is necessary for a nation to maintain a respectable first-strike capacity as a deterrent to surrounding hostile nations which may get the notion that a lack of offensive hardware implies vulnerability. They would be right. You may love thy neighbor, but I consider your love purely semantic, Mr. Delegate... purely semantic!" Draeger leaned back, an angry man. He had

been with the Assembly only three weeks, and was now dealing with a filibustering heavyweight of the diplomatic corp.

"Goodness; do I sense the spirit of Daniel P. Moynihan lurking about?" A few chuckles, then silence. "Your policy of tough-talking amuses me Mr. Delegate, because it is truley semantic. You and your people do not live with the elements, and survive them; you live in your plastic reality of comfortable homes and spacious cars and plush offices. My great-grandfather, a Bedouin chieftain; a man of great respect; lived in a canvas tent in the heart of a burning wasteland. He, as well as my people today, knew the meaning of toughness, sir. You have no concept..." The voice droned on and on, accusing, defaming, blustering and frothing with pretty rhetoric. His voice, and the violent rejoinders of delegate Draeger, drifted up to the visitor's gallery to be for the most part ignored. A group of fourth-graders from PS423 squirmed uncomfortably in their seats. Their teacher wished that she had taken them to the Bronx Zoo instead. Kids; what a headache. But she did need the money, and City teaching jobs were fairly well-paying. The rest of the visitors were either off the streets looking for a place to cool off or talk. And in the very back of the section, sucking determinedly on a Camel, sat the Assassin.

The Assassin was completely amoral. He was a political mercenary typical of his peers. A paid combattant in the Angola fiasco; a seasoned veteran of the Oil Wars; he was loyal only to the stablest of world currency. Then, after the last of the Wars, he was approached by a representative of the Third World Alliance. The man had a rather extensive resume on him, and said quite good-naturedly that he was most impressed with his record. Would he care to work for the Alliance? He was quickly assured that no price was too great. The Assassin quoted the other a figure. The representative blanched somewhat, and asked permission to wire his



superiors. He did so, and was sweating visibly when he read the reply. My superiors, he stated uncomfortably, are somewhat astonished at your temerity. The Assassin shrugged. He knew he was a valuable market commodity. Nonetheless, added the representative with a broad smile, your commission has been accepted. The Assassin shook his hand, signed a contract, and disappeared from view for three years.

Then the phone call.

The voice on the other end of the line was detached; the tone was quiet, yet assertive. You will receive your instructions through my personal courier. He will pay you half your fee upon receipt of the instructions; the other half will follow expediently when the contract is satisfied. Good day. The Assassin acknowledged the message, and placed the phone back gently on its cradle. He walked over to his bureau, and removed a false panel on its surface. Gleaming in the sunlight lay a Horester-Fobbes laser pistol...top of the line. Deadly at six hundred yards. The Assassin enjoyed working with such armaments, and was skilled enough with one to sizzle a pea at forty yards...to decapitate an enemy at sixty.

To drill a tight beam of coherent light through a beating heart at one-thirty six. He had done that to an American corporal during the Oil Wars. Punched a hole in his chest a dime-size in diameter. He thrilled at the corporal's reaction: surprise, realization, and a geyser of hot blood. Then stillness.

The courier appeared the following evening, and handed the Assassin a diplomatic pouch.

His target was to be Aru Rhokam.

This is why the Assassin sat puffing complacently on a cigarette in the visitor's gallery of the United Nations while his intended victim stood at his place and ranted. Too bad, murmured the Assassin to himself. The delegate was more than one-hundred thirty six yards away. Nevertheless, he still could do a nice bit of sculpting. Maybe a quick scatterbeam fry, and while the place was in an uproar, stride downwards until he got within pencilling range; pencilling, a trade term referring to the tightest laser setting.

The Assassin, out of sheer boredom, leaned forward and attempted to involve himself mentally in the discussion. He noted that the Palestinian had ceased his emotional flourishes, and was in the midst of outlining an arms-limitation proposal. His glance fell upon Draeger, who sat back heavily in his seat with his arms folded gently across his chest. The Assassin listened to the gentle lilt Rhokam's voice had taken on; the underplayed crispness of his delivery, and the cool accented detachment of his tone. The

Assassin's brow furrowed in enlightenment.

Detachment. That same air of cool logical intonation that had so neatly given him his instructions over the telephone.

Aru Rhokam and the voice were one and the same.

This momentarily puzzled the Assassin, who prided himself most of all upon his ability to sort out complex issues and act on his decision. What reason could Rhokam have for outlining his own demise?

Then the Assassin recalled one of the provisions of his deal: that he be assured swift and guarded exit once the deed had been accomplished.

Then it hit him. The Third World Alliance was not displeased with Rhokam's zealous persecution of the United States; far from it. If Rhokam was indeed the superior which the Alliance's representative had referred to, then there could be only one answer.

The Assassin withdrew his pistol and shielded it with a copy of the Times. Back at the podium, Rhokam waited anxiously for a bolt of reddish thunder to cut him down with photic swiftness. As he enumerated, the elder delegate from Palestine made a simple prayer: that Allah grant him speedy passage to the plains of Heaven.

The Assassin stood up. Rhokam, whose eyes drifted about the visitors gallery as he spoke, caught the movement. For a brief instant their eyes met, and Rhokam almost grinned. His death would provide his fledgling country the grievance with the United States it needed to balance the brutish superiority it demanded; superiority which would cripple the paltry democracy of Israel and at the same time embarrass its great protector, the United States.

The Assassin raised his gun, and casually clicked the safety off with his thumb. For the tiniest portion of a nanosecond there was the crack of unbridled energy leaping through the air, and the stomach-churning crackling of human flesh.

Rhokam stared in disbelief at the blackened remains of Richard Draeger. He turned his eyes upwards in terror, and was riveted by the sight of two Security men leading a smiling Assassin out of the gallery. The entire Assembly was in an uproar, including the school children, who had never seen such action before.

"No; no, no, no!" screamed Rhokam, now a hollow man. Police were sectioning off the United States' delegates section, and security men streamed through every aisle. Instead of embarrassing the United States, Rhokam would now be implicated in a conspiracy to assassinate the delegate from the United

States. Instead of enjoying the popular support of one hundred countries, Palestine was transported back to the day's of a grubby, imbalanced Yassir Arafat-induced world opinion. Rhokam, even as he stood dazed at the podium, could see the five Security Council delegates filing quickly into their alcove to deliberate.

The delegate from Palestine looked down at his hands, hands blasted by the cruel Saudi sands and toughened by the freezing night winds of his land. It then came to him; it came with such fury that he was momentarily startled.

All the dirty political ruses he had perpetrated with frantic lust; all the slanderous speeches he himself had promoted in the Assembly. All the degradation he had incurred upon himself through cunning and treachery.

All his previous actions were hollow now.

The end had been destroyed, and all that was left on the record was his blighted, misshapen past.

He remembered a line from a book he was required to read in one of his English classes at the University of Saudi. It was a frightfully boring epistle full of light/dark symbolism and meandering narrative which held no interest to a young man devoted to military tactics and political maneuvering. He whispered it slowly to himself, and closed his eyes.

"The horror . . . the horror."

He waited patiently at the podium until the Security squad hustled him away. As he passed by the Assassin, who was being roughly shoved through a milling crowd which had assembled outside the building, he posed that same line mentally upon him. The Assassin smiled again; that cruelly ironic smile, before he was thrown into a waiting police car.

After all, he was just a pawn.

Just so, thought Rhokam, for the heads of the mightily ambitious must fall from the greatest height.





## *On Sleepers*

### *I*

we chuse the bed we must lie in  
coverlets scud the sky, over moon,  
patches and bunch blow  
cloud-like across sprawling  
sleepers twisted in stupor,  
while numb beasts  
of macadam and pastures  
mix night vapors with groans...  
twists lie senseless, and open-eyed  
in streams and bogged ponds  
of train tunnel thoughts,  
waking is only a circle  
of light luming...  
only another dream, like these,  
contorted as toes  
gripping for a ledge  
before the fall  
from imagined height.

### *II*

stars spread out the valley,  
arching up bridges across  
ink-waters to the sky...  
street light constellations  
deep in the milky way  
stroll through submerged city.

in Orion  
and skirts of rust,  
a train pants—  
sounding lantern  
spinster bat  
talking to itself  
in dark valley stillness,  
prowling  
an iron pearl bemired.



### III

on star street  
a gothic locomotive  
lies bechurched—  
lewd angels leer  
from the funnel's edge—  
towering over the boiling nave,  
shimmering organ peel  
gargoyle spittle, a wedding  
rice over the procession.

I people the church,  
choir sings bacchanalia—  
my wafer underfoot  
an acolyte in burning

an altar of flesh  
breathes soft and even  
as a votive candle,  
golden as beeswax,  
the flame sips and wastes  
the monk's body for me,  
while black locomotive  
sprawls a dischorded  
groan at the light luming...

### IV

the petaled stalk of light  
stands naked and corpse-cold-stiff  
in shivering morning

### V

the tongues of saints have glowed and embered  
above the candle the monks had fashioned.  
stories once vivid—  
fine ash and black pillar  
over frozen pond,  
when morning snuffs about,  
poking its nose  
into the unswept corners.

*E. Rayher*

## *Bare Trees*

Emotions are broken  
twigs made into nests  
by beaks well versed in  
the silent intention of  
design; eggs may be laid  
in safety.

Nestled in branches, (arms  
pulling like vines  
on cold greystone sky)  
poems wait to be born.

Some sealed, frozen  
in death solid; others  
the half-skeletons;  
bones and feathers stuck  
in small heaps like despair:

A wake interrupted  
the door flies open  
and a blast of wintry air!  
Window crumples to the ground,  
black veil loose in the wind.

The grave is dug  
twice as wide.

Footprints of mourners  
trail empty away from  
wound of fresh dirt;  
Splintered dreams, fallen  
twigs and dead branches  
spell open sores, rotting  
into the white ground of this yard

Termites huddle inside  
laying their eggs  
wet and shiny.

*Iain Drummond*













## Porno People

Matt Brief

She stood in the aisle, wearing a gray skirt, [off white] blouse, and a blue sweater with a hole under the right arm. The theater was empty and she faced the projection booth.

"You almost ready, you goddamned drunk? Hell, we got a three o'clock film to show. Only two twenty five so I guess you really don't have to hurry. The afternoon matinee usually gets us seven or eight perverts anyhow. What we showing today? 'The Life and Times of Marie Antoinette.' Yeah, very historical. Crap like that. I remember when Mario owned the Rialto back in the thirties there were movies then. 'It Happened One Night,' 'Mutiny on the Bounty,' 'Camille,' 'A free Soul,' '42nd Street,' 'Ninotchka'—the forties, Mario still brought us the best of Hollywood. Casablanca, Mrs. Miniver, oh I did love that Walter Pidgeon! I remember the day it had its premiere in New York, right here at this theater, Greer Garson and Richard Ney came to see it. He was ten years [her] younger but they were lovers. We had lots of usherettes at the Rialto then. Young and pretty like yours truly. I was quite a sight in those days. You know who was here for the opening of 'Mrs. Miniver'? FDR and Eleanor! That's right. I showed 'em to their reserved seats. Reserved seats we had then. You know what FDR said to me? I'll tell you. He said, you shouldn't be showing people to their seats, Elvira, you should be what people are paying to see. Lots of people thought Elvira Lipton should have been in pictures. Fine people came here in those days. Bankers, society folk, doctors, lawyers, you name it. Now we just get dirty old men and young kids with pimples. The carpeting hasn't been redone since Mario died.

Mario sure was a fine gentlemen, particularly for a wop. Dressed in suits and shiny shoes, he always brought us usherettes flowers and candies. Course I didn't eat any of the candies cause of my delicate figure. We were still going strong till Mario died in '62. That fine Italian gentlemen. Best wop I've ever known. Business

was slipping but he coulda picked things up, he was a great businessman. This was a palace among movie theaters. Then his two scum, Johnny and Franco inherited this place. Scum. Mario used to come here almost every day to check things, those two asses he sired always hide out in their damn houses in Long Beach. All of Times Square, taken over by the Johnny and Francos. Coons mugging innocent folk in the street, hippie freaks shooting up right near the box office. Dirt, vile pornography is all we got now. For five bucks a clip. You weren't here then, in those days when movies was movies, the right folk came here, and Elvira Lipton was a pretty little thing. Now it ain't safe for me to go walk the street I work on. It's got so many goddamned streetwalkers as is anyway. Yep, the end of the society is near. I've read about it. No hope. The Apocalypse they call it. A big word for the end.

Where's that goddamned hostess? Franco told me she'd be here at two fifteen. We got to advertise this place as having sexy new hostesses. So Johnny and Franco hire this hussy who's probably slept with them and every two bit wop hustler in Little Italy. I'll bet she's sexy, you could probably touch her and get syphilis. Well, it's a customer."

Richard Bascomb crept into the theater. Looking at the dilapidated interior, he felt out of place in his three piece gray business suit. Embarrassed at first because he was alone, a wave of relief swept over him subsequently. He sat down on a chair that didn't have too much foam coming out of the plastic covering. His raincoat conveniently fell over his lap as he sat down. He placed his attache case underneath his seat, but pulled his Wall Street Journal out beforehand.

They wouldn't miss him at the office. Freida was out shopping, Dickie would be at baseball practice and Dotty, darling Dotty, would be at a meeting, she was the chairman of this year's high school senior carnival.

Freida would probably divorce him if she



knew he was here. Sweet, Tab-toddling Freida. Degenerate, she'd call him. Stooping to the level of filth. And he felt so damn bad about her not, well, being satisfied in bed. Like it was his fault. They'd seen marriage counselors, shrinks, the works. They hadn't slept together in seven months. Divorce was a topic often thrown around but always scuttled (by him) for the sake of Dotty and Dickie.

"Well, hello," she snarled. With false teeth he noticed.

"Hi," he said nervously. The old shrew probably worked here. She had to be pushing seventy.

"I'm supposed to seat you," Elvira said.

"Oh, sorry."

She shook her head, her face made up of a thousand lines frowned, "Probably wanted to avoid the quarter tip. Most of you perverts are cheap as well as disgusting."

"This, this is my first film of this type," he protested weakly.

"Cow dung!" she roared. "You know how many of you businessman pervs have told me that. Enough to finance another Sodom and Gomorrah. What's your name?"

"Why do you want to know?" he asked defensively, his voice trembling.

"Blackmail," and her voice laughed in such a high whine that Bascomb thought it made the laugh of a witch sound like music.

"Only kidding, my name's Elvira Lipton, I'm the usherette here. I promise not to phone your missus if you tell."

"Well, it's Richard Bascomb."

"You anybody?"

"Huh?"

"Once in awhile, notables come to see our film art. Doctors and such."

"I'm a stockbroker."

"You know anyone that's got shares of Foreplay Industires. They made this film."

"Well, no."

Suddenly, she dove over his lap and grabbed his attache case, snapping it open. She quickly looked inside, laughed, and dropped it to the floor as her head rested in his lap.

"You were telling the truth, no one ever tells me their real name," she was still laughing into his thighs as he tried to push the attache case under his seat.

Whitney Howell briskly entered the theater. His baggy gray pants fell over his black-rubber soled shoes that squeaked against the floor. He could only see Elvira's gray skirt sticking out in the aisle, her back bent over.

"My, this is an exciting new hostess!" exclaimed Whitney in his guttural voice which he often used to cheer on the actresses at some of

the burlesque shows down the street.

Elvira quickly stood up and straightened her blouse and skirt. "Whitney Howell, you seventy year old degenerate, that was not what you think."

"Don't worry none Elvira, no man likes a gum job."

"You disgusting creature. Why don't you die?"

"Can't, not while the Rialto is showing classics like 'The Life and Times of Marie Antoinette.'"

"There was a day when Mario owned this place, when trash like you wouldn't step in here."

Whitney sat down next to Richard and introduced himself.

"That's Richard Bascomb, stockbroker, this is Whitney Howell. Old perv never misses one of our flicks."

Richard looked in amazement at the unkempt smiling gray-haired man.

"I'm a big film buff," he said, with a smile.

"Likes to see people in the buff," Elvira added.

"Most, except for you, Elvira dear."

Richard gazed at these two relics. Howell, the Rialto regular, and Elvira, this mad woman who seemed intent on humiliating all the customers. He thought of his own parents in Miami and shook his head at the comparison. Dad at the golf course, Witney at the movies.

"Can I borrow your newspaper?" asked Whitney. Elvira chuckled, "you've already got a raincoat."

"For what?" asked Richard, and then realizing its intended usage drew back in horror. "Not on my Wall Street Journal!"

Elvira laughed as Bruce Pinckney walked down the aisle. He wore black boots with taps that alerted all to his entrance. Dark blue bell bottoms clung tightly to legs, crotch, and backside. His orange satin shirt was unbuttoned almost to his navel. Silver plated bracelets adorned his wrist. His wrist dangled, as he sat in a seat across the aisle from Bascomb and Howell and a few rows further back.

"You sure you don't want the Oscar Wilde Cinema cross the street?" asked Elvira.

He smacked his lips and ran his hand through his bleached blonde hair. He noticed a man in a gray business suit fidgeting. Strange someone who would come to a movie like this would react so nervously. The old man hadn't paid him any attention. Well, he wasn't ashamed.

"This is 'The Life and Times of Marie Antoinette?'" he asked, "starring Lance Peck. That luscious hunk of ten inches."



Bascom groaned, Whitney chuckled and picked his nose.

Elvira smirked, "In the old days, pretty young girls like me went for Walter Pidgeon, now you've got young men getting mushy for male porno stars. What a world! It's the coming of the end."

Whitney said to himself, but loud enough for Bascomb to hear, "Cassandra, the harbinger of doom."

Bascomb wondered—the old man wore shoddy clothes, picked his nose, and unbelievably wanted to use the Wall Street Journal for unsavory, illegal purposes in a public theater. Odd for someone to use a phrase like that, he reminded himself to ask Dotty what harbinger meant, it sounded like an SAT word.

"Is this movie going to start soon? I must eat din-din and then prance off to my dance lesson."

Sneering, Elvira asked. "What's your name, Brucie?"

"Well only a few call me Brucie, really I prefer Bruce."

Elvira nodded, "they're all named Bruce, or Darryl or Duane."

"My name is Bruce Pinckney, and, and, I'm not ashamed. I am what I am. And I can't wait to see Lance Peck as King Louis."

"Johnny and Franco brought this upon us. Made this place a haven for the perverted."

Whitney leaned over to Bascomb. "Johnny and Franco took this place over when their Father died. His theater chain was going bankrupt; they turned them to porno and saved them. Saved old Elvira's job. If it wasn't for them I dare say she'd be on a welfare line somewhere."

Bascomb eyed the old man, "How do you know?"

"I've met them, they stop in once in awhile and after all I'm a regular patron."

"There are some theories that Louis was a latent homosexual. I do hope the Director brings this out," said Bruce.

They all settled down. Whitney cleared his throat. Bascomb buried himself in the Wall Street Journal, but really absorbed nothing. Bruce fidgeted in his seat, tapping his boots against the chair in front of him.

"It's so quiet in here," said Henry as they entered. He scratched at a pimple on the side of his nose.

"What were you expecting? A coffee klatch? Christ, this is a porno movie!" exclaimed Doug to his pudgy, pimpled friend.

This was a big day for Doug Kahn and Henry Seltzer. It had been planned for weeks. They had told their parents that they'd signed up to

work on their high school carnival, and their job was to solicit donations of toys from some Manhattan manufacturers. So today, they had to travel to the city to pick up "gifts." The scheme was devised by Doug, as all their schemes were, and seemed foolproof.

"I'm nervous what if our folks find out?"

"They won't, Relax."

Elvira started up the aisle towards the two boys. "We always get a couple from the Romper Room set."

"We're twenty-one," said Henry.

"And so am I," Elvira derisively said as she literally pushed them into two seats. To her shock Henry gave her a quarter.

"No one's done that since I seated a banker during the opening of 'The African Queen'." She walked down towards Whitney and Bascomb, holding the quarter in front of their faces.

"Where do you think you are, the fucking theater district?" barked Doug. "You don't tip the ushers here."

"She's old and probably poor," replied Henry.

"My heart bleeds. Hey, where's those new exciting hostesses? I saw them advertised." proclaimed Doug.

"I'm exciting," said Bruce in an exaggerated lisp, "you two can call me Brucie."

Henry sunk in his seat, "Christ Doug, it's a fag!"

Doug nodded, "It's sure not Joe Namath. I wouldn't expect a fag at 'The Life and Times of Marie Antionette'."

"What if he attacks us?"

Doug laughed, "Don't be a dumb ass. Anyway fags don't want fat guys with pimples," Henry blanched, "and if he comes near me, I'll kick the shit out of him."

"Don't call me fat," said Henry.

"I'm sorry," said Doug, "you know how I am."

"Where are the hostesses?" persisted Whitney.

"There's only one," said Elvira, "and she's late. Wait till I get hold of Johnny and Franco."

The lights in the theater darkened. Bruce sat upright. Bascomb took short breaths, not really knowing what to expect, the thought of Dotty knowing of this incident fading somewhat back into his mind. Whitney sat back, twiddled his thumbs and hoped this one would have some different twists from the usual porn. Doug leaned forward, eager. Henry was still sunken in his seat, wondering if he would get a hard on, then noticing he had one already.

He looked at Doug. Tall, skinny Doug who had a steady girlfriend who slept with him regularly. Henry was ashamed of his virginity.



Most of his friends and lost theirs, and though they didn't tease Henry, he did feel separated when they recounted their experiences.

His parents would be pissed. They'd let him still go away to college, measures of punishment wouldn't be that drastic, however Dad could bar use of the car, which then again wouldn't make any significant difference because he hadn't the nerve to ask any girls for dates.

They could hear the film rippling in the projection booth, "That damned hussy hostess," exclaimed Elvira, "probably out somewhere in a cheap motel room." The screen was black, a narrative in white letters suddenly appeared. Elvira in a mocking tone read it aloud, "Many women have figured prominently in the role of history. Eve, the Virgin Mary, Joan of Arc, Betsy Ross, are just a few fabulous females who molded the world we lived in. Betsy Ross," screeched Elvira, "all she did was sew," and then she continued to read, "one of our illustrious females was Marie Antoinette not usually presented in books or other medium. We believe this film is unique in its approach to this controversial figure," Elvira snorted, "unique! I'll bet. I saw the original Marie Antoinette with Norma Shearer when it played here in 1934. Now that was a movie."

After the narrative, a disclaimer appeared on the screen, not for classroom use.

Then it stopped. The screen went black and the white light from the projection booth vanished.

"What the hell," barked Howell, "damn projectionist must be drunk, always is."

"God, I've got to make a five thirty eight to Millbrook," said Bascomb loudly, too loud he thought.

"Hey that's where we live!" proclaimed Henry as Doug elbowed him in the ribs, encouraging him to maintain silence.

"Well, I've got to see Lance Peck before I go to that dance class. He's so dreamy."

Bascomb turned around to Henry and Doug, "A fine place for you two to be, my own son is almost your age and he's at baseball practice."

"The All-American boy," whispered Henry.

"I hear he gives it to the centerfielder up the ass," Doug whispered back.

"And my daughter Dotty, she's a high school senior. She's a million light years above you two. None of the dope or this kind of dirt. She's into working for charities, in fact she's running her high school charity carnival. We expect her to go to Vassar next year, you two hooligans will probably end up at some party school wasting your Father's money."

Doug muffled his laughter, "Henry, do you

realize who his daughter is? Millbrook, Carnival, Dotty! Dotty Bascomb!"

"No," blurted Henry, "his kid sounds like Joan of Arc."

"And she goes down on half of the football team," said Doug. "Wait till I lay that on him."

Henry grabbed Doug's arm, "Doug, don't, I mean the poor guy must be sick to have to come to one of these things at his age. I'm sure he's got a wife. Why tell the guy, hell there's no need to give the guy any more grief than he's probably got, you know what I mean? Let him think Dotty's a saint."

Doug looked at Henry and laughed, "You're the saint. I'll keep my mouth shut. Let him keep his illusions," he paused, "Jim Dixon, the full-back told me his daughter is really good, though."

"Let's keep it to ourselves," said Henry.

"And the rest of the Millbrook student body," added Doug.

"Your daughter's a high school senior?" asked Howell.

"Well yes," replied Bascomb, "she's an angle, sometimes I think that she's the only thing that holds me together. And real pretty," he laughed, "no she doesn't look a thing like me."

Howell coughed, "I know about high school seniors. Used to teach them."

Bascomb was surprised, "What? You taught?"

"How do you think I made money, just standing in the streets panhandling? I taught literature."

Bruce draped his feet over the seat in front of him, "These facilities are just terrible. This doesn't happen at the Eros Cinema."

"How would you know, you're probably too busy going down on the ushers to know if the film's on or not," snarled Elvira.

"Bitch," spat Bruce.

Bascomb's mind was twirling. He wished to slip into a porno theater, anonymous, only to sermonize to two youngsters, meet a dirty old man who at one time taught kids like Dotty, and to face an usherette determined to shatter his nerves. He looked at Howell, who was engaged in a staring contest at Elvira, and then at Bruce, rubbing his temples with delicate motions of his wrist.

"This wouldn't be so bad if there was an exciting hostess," said Doug.

At that moment, she came.

Her golden blonde hair flowed over her shoulders down almost to her waist. Henry gasped, as the long legged girl clad in a black leather mini skirt and white highly transparent blouse walked up to Elvira and introduced herself.



"You're late," said Elvira.

"Sorry, the traffic was just so awful. Welcome to the Rialto everyone, I'm Cindy, your hostess," she waved.

"Spitting image of Elvira, isn't she," said Howell and they all laughed, except Elvira.

"I hope everyone is enjoying our show," cheerily announced Cindy.

"Where did Franco and Johnny get you from, the gutter?" hissed Elvira.

Cindy sat on the arm of Howell's seat, "maybe we'll get to talk later," she said, ignoring Elvira. She crossed those long nylon-stockinged legs and tapped her black leather boots against the side of the seat.

"I got a hard on," murmured Henry.

"You're not the only one," responded Doug.

Then again the lights dimmed, and the screen was filled with 'The Life and Times of Marie Antoinette.' It consisted mostly of a buxom young woman, whose beauty wasn't all that apparent, spouting obscene phrases and moaning in a Brooklyn accent that couldn't be mistaken for a French one. When Lance Peck came onto the screen as Louis and started to expose his royal wares, Bruce began to scream and make suggestive comments so loudly that Cindy had to walk over to him and request him to quiet down.

Then the screen went blank again.

"Shit," said Doug.

"Don't take Lance away from me," cried Bruce.

"He's always drunk," explained Elvira to Cindy about the projectionist, "why don't you go entertain the troops?" Cindy promptly ambled over to Henry and Doug who were finding it hard to control themselves as they saw the two objects in her transparent blouse bounce forward.

Bascomb fretted about missing his train. Late work wouldn't pass for an excuse, and Freda always required an excuse.

"I used to teach at Winthrop High, in the Bronx," blurted Howell not even sure if Bascomb was listening, "and I was one of the best, all the kids wanted me. Of course I read kind of racy stuff in my classes, not just Lawrence and Joyce, actually one year I threw in a bit of De Sade. Didn't go over. I was called before the Board of Ed. and reprimanded. It wouldn't have cost me my job if it hadn't been compounded by one other incident."

Bascomb was mildly interested, however his true interest was in watching out of the corner of his eye, Cindy bending over, showing much breast to a flabbergasted Henry and Doug.

"There was this one girl. Real sexy, I mean she looked like a model. She used to sit on my

desk after class, wear short skirts, you know, try to act sophisticated. She wanted to go to Radcliffe and of course needed a good grade in my course, well she didn't get one. You know what she told her guidance counselor, that she got a bad grade because she rejected advances by me. She got two bitchy friends to back up that line. I quietly resigned rather than let the thing go public. But she was lying, I'll tell that, she was lying. Damn senior cost me my job. At least I was able to keep my pension by resigning."

Bascomb turned to Howell and asked quizzically, "How come you never married?"

"Never found Miss Right. You know how romantic we teachers of literature are. You must have yourself a fine wife."

"Got one. But fine wouldn't describe her."

Howell saw a pained expression on Bascomb's face, "You don't get along?"

"We don't even have sex anymore. I guess we just stay together for the kids. They're what I live for."

"Faggot, cocksucker," hissed Elvira into Bruce's ear, "decadent filth, you're not fit to live. What about your Mother? What does she think of you?"

Finally Bruce jumped out of his seat and into the aisle, "Will you stop it," he screamed, "can't you just let us be? My Mother, you couldn't have been a Mother, they have to be kind and gentle," a tear rolled down his eye, "She caresses her child when he needs her. My mother did that for me, while my Father used to sit around, whore around, protecting me from Father. I saw a couple of the sluts he brought home. I hated them. I hated him. My Mother knows what I am, she even accepts it, and she'll still care for me when times are rough."

"Like when your boyfriend breaks up with you?" snarled Elvira.

"You have an endless capacity for cruelty," mumbled Bruce, as he dropped to the floor, took out his wallet and looked at a picture of his Mother.

"And no capacity for being a Mother," whispered Howell to Bascomb, "Franco once told me her husband and two sons left her. Never even wrote to her. She's been supporting herself for years now. Franco and Johnny can't bring themselves to fire her."

Cindy walked over to Bascomb, leaving Henry and Doug dumbfounded, and already formulating a million stories in their minds to tell the boys back home.

"Well sir," she said to Bascomb as she sat on his lap, "I am sorry you had to go through this breakdown. Maybe there's something I can do to help pass the time," she suggested as she



stroked his cheek, "I'm available for a drink after the film."

"Slut," spat Elvira. The word shot out of her mouth like a missile from a launching pad.

Bascomb eyed the girl, she was sexy, he had been aroused for the first time in months. She was young, and well obviously had no morals. The invitation to drink was an invitation to sleep together he assumed. Were all "hostesses" like this? He had to get home after the film. Unconsciously, his hand reached to Cindy's breast, Henry gasped, Elvira shrieked, Doug rooted for him, Howell watched hoping to get a turn, Bruce sat on the floor crying over the picture of his mother, and Kerry O'Rourke burst into the theater, a rookie cop who shaved twice a week and said, "This is a raid."

Henry and Doug dove underneath the seats. Cindy jumped off Bascomb's lap and onto her feet.

"The public is going to shut this place down for showing explicit sexual fare. Pornography," said the young cop, "where's the manager? I must serve him the injunction."

Elvira laughed. "Those wops live in Long Beach. They're never here. Almost never."

A puzzled look came on O'Rourke's face, "Well then who do I serve it to? I can't go to Long Beach."

"You're the cop, you should know," said Elvira. "Shut this place down."

Bascomb placed the Wall Street Journal over his head. He would need it for when the TV cameras and the Daily News Photographers would come to snap shots of them being ushered by cops, out of the theater into the paddy wagon.

"This is my first raid," said O'Rourke, "I'm not sure of procedure yet."

"You'll learn with time son," said Howell.

Cindy put her hands on her hips, "Officer, my name is Glenda Wollins, I'm a graduate student

in Sociology at Columbia doing research on sexual deviancy and I can prove it with one phone call."

Then, another cop walked in, he whispered something into O'Rourke's ear and left. The young cop turned red, "A mistake has been made. This theater belongs to Johnny and Franco Gagliano! They've been good to us, Kiley just told me we don't raid their theaters. We're going to hit the Oscar Wilde Cinema across the street. Sorry again," he turned around and rushed out.

Bruce screamed at O'Rourke as he left, "Don't you dare arrest my Freddy. He's watching a film there right now. We're meeting to go to dance class."

Bascomb stood up and started to leave, Henry and Doug had already slipped to the back underneath seats and left, convinced they would be fugitives by morning.

"Hell, he'll never fix the film," Howell grumbled as he picked up his coat.

Bruce jumped up. "I've got to go across the street and save Freddy," he said as he charged out of the exit.

Bascomb looked at Cindy, who looked straight back at him, "You're really a grad student?"

"Yes."

He buttoned his overcoat, incorrectly but wasn't able to do it right, "Why do all women prey on men?" he asked, with out waiting for an answer, he left.

"Well, if there's no customers, then I can leave," said Cindy as she started for the exit.

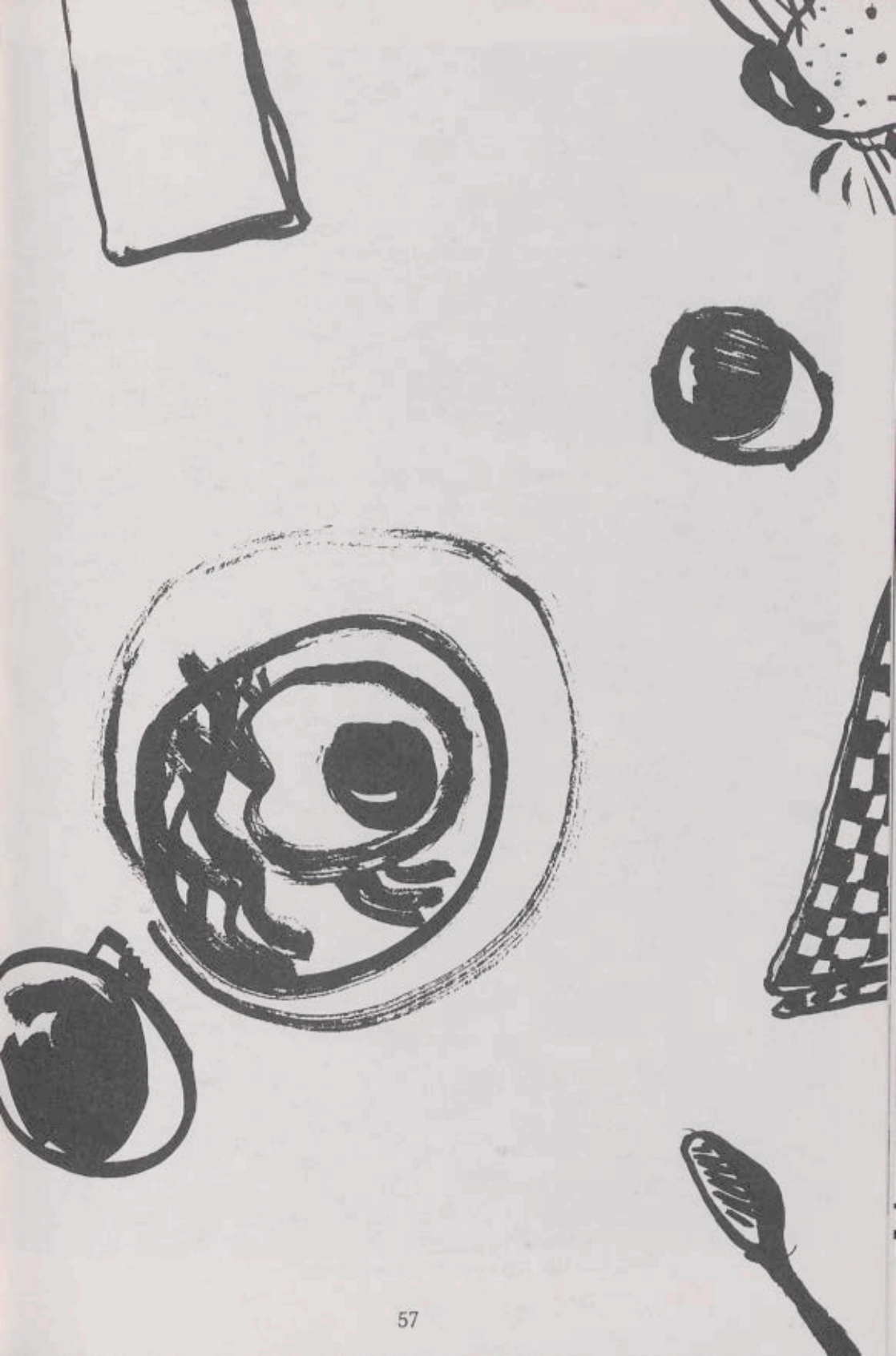
"Johnny and Franco will fire you when I tell them what you are," screamed Elvira.

"There are plenty of porno theaters in this city," replied Cindy as she walked out.

Elvira stood in the theater. Alone. She faced the projection booth. "We wouldn't get these perverts if we showed 'Mrs. Miniver'."







## A Park Scene

by Phyllis James

Eighty degree temperatures brings everything to life. The squirrels dodge and scatter about the feet of pedestrians and the wheels of ten speed Schwinn's. The benches which line the park's walks become filled with people; everyone hustling to get the shaded spots, while others hog the sun. If you listen closely you will hear the trees sing about the sunshine.

It's nice to lie in the grass and stare at the sky—the blue sky that refuses to cloud. But, when clouds appear they do not threaten you with rain; you imagine various caricatures that the clouds seem to be and one glorious hour has slipped away.

A stroll through the park enables you to enjoy others' enjoyment. Kids always make a beautiful day glorious. As you reminisce about your youth and the many games of tag and follow-the-leader which gave many hours away from mom and dad excitement and fulfillment; a child dogged out in front of you and smilingly apologises. Kids have a strange power of making people smile—just by being kids.

You sit now to rest and take notice of how the day effects others. Frisbees become UFOs, skateboards become escape vehicles, the park's walks turn into lover's lanes and a fashion show-place—it has turned into the yellow brick road of your imagination with strong possibilities of taking you to the land of Oz.

As you are engrossed with watching the results of a beautiful day you take pen in hand and begin writing of the splendour of a park scene:

Health nuts are out running on the green  
Bicyclists are peddling with ease along the path  
Sunbathers bathe—hoping not to burn  
While lovers hope not to be seen.

Dogs are freed from their homes  
While squirrels keep a watchful eye  
Birds and insects romp about  
While people duck and slap.

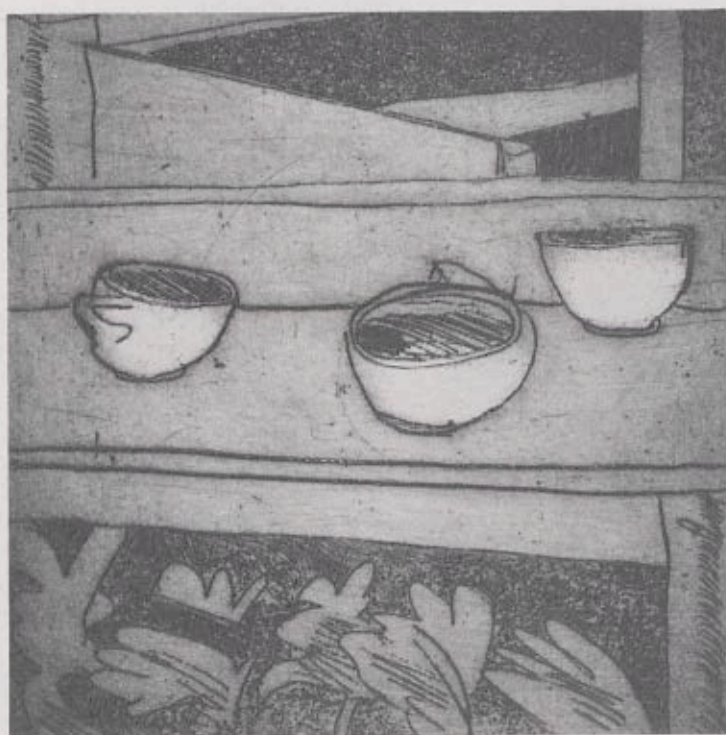
Children run about giggling without interruption  
Teen-agers do as they please  
Adults rest from the work-week  
While the senior citizens rest from life.

A Park brings people together  
It encourages enjoyment and relaxation  
It creates a cordial atmosphere  
And fills the mind with pleasantries.









## *Meeting at Dusk*

She stands by the small white stove  
looking down as the steam from the kettle  
rises past her shoulder,  
looking down the glow of late afternoon  
into two huge mugs of tea.

Daylight drawn down westward;  
I sit in my narrow chair  
looking east for the coming night.

Her hair picking up the last auburn  
she comes down beside me  
to sip in the dusk.

Stoneware sets  
heavy in her hands  
unpolished browns.

The mug is warm  
cruves into my palms  
and rests under wafts of darjeeling.

Tea fills the space under our tongues  
while shadows knit themselves  
between our fingers;

The sky darkens  
around low evening clouds  
following down the sun.

*Iain Drummond*

## ***Invitation To An Anarchist***

Amid the broken lives  
of the prison yard,  
lies a kiln-fired  
chunk of clay.  
Origin of life waits  
to be hefted,  
scrutinized, flung  
with bitter scream  
at silica sheets.  
Its time wearied surface,  
chipped, scratched,  
deeply pitted from  
a weathered wait.  
You walk past with  
fearful neglect,  
averting your eyes  
from your liberation.

*Clifford Lyons*









## *Hadrian's Wall*

We stand within our fence  
calmly eating the St. Patrick's day hue  
sprinkled

(like people in a rummage sale)  
leisurely picking and choosing

Our mouths methodically move  
words of grass

Our eyes stare with black unconcern  
ignoring the autumn wind that tangles  
the woolen cloud surrounding our body

Suddenly

(out-of-the-blue-sky-distance)  
a horn blasts and  
we run confused toward the track

a horn blast  
moves us all (like sheep)  
over the railway mound  
blindly following the lead

But some of us pause on the train path  
some of us pause for  
our eyes are not dark and colorless  
our eyes nest like ambers in the black soot of our face  
our eyes are alight with a destructive difference  
and it is our eyes which the locomotive slashes through

*pike*







On the point where Stony Creek  
pours frigid and rich into the great  
creeping river,  
brambles of driftwood and reeds,  
are left in a high water line,  
where she kneels and  
takes thumb size sticks dry  
on the beach, and thinner kindling.

She straightens,  
softened heavy denim and flannel;  
embrace with wood smoke woman.  
My mother grows old  
but holds herself in two hands;  
oak whittled face with annual rings  
only lightly etched  
and arms cord strong  
as she braids her grey hair.  
We drink bourbon and ice cubes  
in the shade of her last living elm.  
Float on the clockless river—  
voiced beige; but struck precise;  
on time, and always, to sluice—  
she fishes, radiant in the evening,  
for the hard freckled bass.

From half salvage, half christian Glimmerglass  
to the frayed and toiling Chesapeake;  
from ashen clubs and combed farms  
to piles of shell and copulate crabs:  
The Susquehanna rolls, drops,  
subservient to slope . . . through high pines,  
roiled by West Bank junction  
but blends, strenght  
through the mountains; great crosscut  
mountains, gouged by sand and gravel  
so the grove cuts deep but old,  
the river flattens, broadens to sluggish  
through rock ledges and island channels  
clogged with sand bars.  
Great hulking woman,  
if you could hear me now  
if you could feel my pulse.

Squat naked summer  
on rock ledges in the river—  
squat naked in a river rock garden  
where fountains and spurt  
only convolute but downways  
through cracks humped together  
feather and jet

she stands at noon  
smears naked mud,  
river-black, bottom mud on her stomach  
flat arched breasts  
neck and inner knees into  
thigh, smears gobs  
and knots of cool leaf silt  
streams in her snapping hair.  
she dives in brown river unwashed;  
and floats dark, a bole, an eddy  
in the river: shear glazed.

But the sun always softens  
with a scent of dusk.  
The wind comes fuming  
from the bay, chews  
current to surge and spray:  
fine bits in the flow,  
tossed back  
but even then, downways.



Her head tucked  
in oil warm feathers, bob  
and snap of sweat frozen chop  
Autumn mottled mallard unfurls  
coiled neck and drinks,  
stands once webbed to watch  
booming leaden skies.  
For weeks, she picks lost, wanton grain  
as flurries swirl dervish  
she is bold but in no hurry.  
she is old but preens in the early wind  
the sky cracks its skin for her,  
collapses by vacuum to her  
when she is finally done.

The temperature falls in torrents  
and slush laced river slows;  
viscous, swollen freeze  
until midnight winter lockup.  
Narrow blue desert with sawdust  
skating and tumble in the howl.  
The long quiet is shadowed  
of islands, broken elms and silt bark.

So she is crystal of a great block  
chipped, slashed and gouged.  
Shaved smooth  
she stitches the moon and ice sizzle  
refractions left and chase  
in translucent, waxen closeup.

Downstream flow starts with  
blast and crack snapped fiber.  
Pillars, garden walls, soaring entropic ice piles  
stream tight over the river.  
Dark of a moon night  
as the great frozen jam  
overlapped glows on its run.

She drips  
melted from the numb needles  
in cramped balsam forests,  
from the fringed drifts packed  
against bleached snow fence,  
in rivulets from cracked rock  
above worn out iron mines  
to run red and bitter fresh  
through tenuous moss and the last  
mush snow, the last greybeard frost,  
to run swelling, as always, to the river.

Salt splash in the city  
can give way to spring time mud  
along the river  
sleep slips as the sun shines  
through our window.  
I watch her wake, eyes  
brown she stretches and shakes  
away with stiff bound limbs  
mumbles rolling over but quiets  
with my hands on her side and loins,  
we rehearse our mindless role  
thaw chilled through to each other—  
we never speak in the morning on our sides,  
but burst, brightly and dumb.









BLIGHTER CITER FIGHTER PLIGHTER SIGHTER  
SLIGHTER TRITER ALIGHTER WRITER EXCITER IG-  
NITER INCITER INVITER MOONLIGHTER UNITER  
DYNAMITER

AMUSE CONFUSE ACCUSE CONTUSE DIFFUSE  
ENTHUSE MUSE ABUSE BEMUSE DISUSE EXCUSE IN-  
FUSE MISUSE PERUSE REFUSE NEWS SUFFUSE  
TRANSFUSE SYRACUSE BLUES

GORY HOARY SNORY STORY ALLEGORY A PRIORI  
AUDITORY CREMATORY DICTATORY HUNKYDORY  
MANDATORY MIGRATORY NARRATORY PISCATORY  
PREDATORY VIBRATORY DEROGATORY EX-  
CLAMATORY INFLAMMATORY OBLIGATORY  
PROHIBATORY SALUTATORY SPECULATORY VIN-  
DICATORY RETALIATORY SUPPOSITORY

CLEARLY YEARLY, QUEERLY AUSTERELY, NEARLY  
SEVERELY, DEARLY CAVALIERLY

SINCERELY,

|| IDOL ||  
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