



genesis

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Invitation to Artists and Authors

Artwork is invited from all persons who have been students at IUPUI at any time during the last eighteen months prior to submission. Any type of artwork may be submitted. All artwork will be reproduced in black-and-white. Artists are asked to submit no more than ten pieces for a given issue; artwork should not exceed 26 inches by 32 inches. Please identify each piece on the back with its title and your name. Enclose a cover sheet with your name, address, phone number, title(s) of your artwork *and* a 25-50 word bio. Submissions not accompanied by a bio will not be considered. Artists will be notified as to acceptance prior to publication; they will also be instructed as to how artwork will be returned. Submit work to GENESIS, Student Activities Office, University Library, 815 West Michigan Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46202.

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Authors whose material has been accepted will be notified prior to publication. Authors who wish to be notified of rejection prior to publication date—and all authors who wish their manuscripts to be returned—must include a self-addressed stamped envelope with their submissions. Any manuscript submitted too late for the current deadline will be considered for the next issue. Honorary prizes are awarded at the discretion of the editors for the outstanding entry in each of the categories of art, essay, fiction and poetry. Members of the Editorial Board are ineligible to receive prizes.

In the Dead of Winter

Jackie Schmidt

The formal draperies on the library window create the illusion of a mortuary and form a melancholy frame for the flower bed outside. The painted white rocks that line the garden have assumed the roles of headstones in this little frozen cemetery. Death knows no prejudice; the dried, brown remains of marigolds are laid to rest alongside weeds, stiff with rigor mortis. All protrude lifelessly from their graves. Some are headless. A deceitful winter sun pretends to penetrate the thick skin of earth with her cold rays, but a layer of white snow, like mold on rye bread, remains unchanged. Meanwhile, a nearby fir casts a slightly moving shadow across a corner of the ruins, lordling its immortality.

Sitting silently in her wheelchair and gazing out at the morbid scene is the diminutive form of a lady, wrinkled and bent with age. Her bony arms, covered with a fragile transparency of blotched skin, move the wheels back and forth in a slow, rhythmic, rocking motion. She comes to this place often. There seems to be a kind of peace here away from the constant disturbance of P.A. announcements, routine nursing questions, and mop buckets. Time is her friend on this retreat. She closes her eyes, and memories of a prettier garden fill the void of her mind—an ivy-covered gazebo with white satin ribbons streaming down each post.

She remembers vivid details of that June afternoon when she stood there with him, such as the tint of the flowers she held and the uncommon spotlessness of his strong farm hands as he lifted her veil. Later that day she tied the bows together in a glorious bunch, and she kept them as a reminder over the years, until she moved here, where space is too limited.

Fingers, crooked with arthritis, reach up to touch the white knot of hair on the back of her head; she feels the thinness now, but it used to be thick and auburn. He liked to pull the pins away, one by one, and let the locks cascade slowly down past her bare shoulders. Her breasts, sagging now with the weight of years, were firm and youthful then and nourished two healthy baby boys. She recalls the summers when they played hide-and-go-seek between the rows of young corn while she picked ripe red tomatoes for canning. Sometimes she yearns to smell just once more the tangy, acrid aroma of stewed vegetables which permeated the small farmhouse for weeks during the hot canning season.

The institutional smell of food from the kitchen calls her back to reality. Convincing herself that the empty ache she feels is in her stomach, she tries to guess what is being prepared for lunch, but as usual the competing odors of urine, cleaning products, and medication make this game unfair, too. As her eyes readjust to the light, she turns her head and squints at the room filled with other residents. Like apparitions, they move only occasionally and speak

reluctantly from time to time to walls papered deceptively in warm shades of rose. She wonders how she could be so lonely yet long so desperately for privacy.

Her pale blue eyes have seen the passing of life's seasons, but now as she turns back again toward the window, seeking another precious rendezvous with the past, she sees only a garden in the dead of winter—prophetic and final.

A Poet Denied

J. B. Straw

 musing time
may find new forms of life
alien in the grass. When buying

 sod for
her bed may turn the earth
to Angelican chimeres and sodomize

 the undergrowth.
A poet denied musing time may metamorphosize
the grocery list into winged bones of

 alliterated sonnets
describing the decadence of aisles
lined with Ponce de Leon's bottled

 cocaine water.
When guarding her heirs may capture
their crayons and melt them to palettes

 to cover
the panes of the neighborhood like
quilted aurora borealis cobwebs. A poet

 denied musing
time may change clothes
hung across the lawn to icons

 honoring Aeolis.
When so afflicted with a poet denied
shutter the windows, disconnect all cables,

 using time
to paint and hang out a sign
saying "Beware! Poet Inside!"

Greasy Sleeping—(The Poem)

Bill Ross

It's a greasy sleeping morning,
Drafty snowy cold
Blowing in from under the sink
But, it's somehow comforting after a greasy sleep,
In a greasy house
I guess it's life
Like water it's warm

In this yellow kitchen
Sharp and still appliances are waiting
As if to clock on for another hard working day
Of opening cans and cooking meat

Like a dog I beg,
Setting at the picnic table
The one that makes itself comfortable in the middle
Of the kitchen, between Thanksgiving and Christmas,
Collecting school books and coats and old dirty plates
And me on this greasy yellow morning

There are three other persons in this house
Still in bed, under layer cakes of covers
Still sweating and sleeping

And what is today?
Sunday?
Monday?
It doesn't matter
It's just another November morning
Still greasy and sleeping.

Nina Dean, the Neon Queen

Leslie Lynnton Fuller

The little brown-haired child rounded the corner of the junkyard and threw herself violently to the ground, crawled over the hood of a defunct Cadillac abandoned there like an old turtleshell, and disappeared.

Inside, the ground was covered with a bit of dirty canvas and a board. She lifted up the board and exposed the glint of shining metal canisters. They were cans of spray-paint. There were a hundred and ninety-nine of them.

The girl squatted and pulled out another can which she had managed to hide under her oversized sweatshirt. She wiped the canister off on the corner of this garment and then placed it in a stack with the others.

Then she reached into the back pocket of her jeans and pulled out a Sugar Daddy bar, which she unwrapped and examined critically before popping into her mouth and stretching out like a cat on the dirty canvas.

The girl's name was Nina Dean, and she came to the junkyard a lot.

There the earth gave birth to metal springs and pocket watches; five hundred ruined automobiles stared at the sky with broken headlights like smashed eye-glasses. A hundred hubcaps hung on the fence, the abandoned shields of feasting warriors. The junkyard was a strange place.

It was a robot garden that yielded screws and springs and fenders and seat belts, with a ground that seemed to bear oil, like a well.

The center of the yard was like the nest of a giant bird, an orc. There the metal was curiously mounded and flattened together, as if the monstrous legend flew there at night to sleep, awaking at dawn to rise like an animate 747 from the yard, shedding feathers of stainless steel.

At night, all the cast-off appliances and automobile hulks reflected the least bit of light like voodoo whirligigs, and an occasional violent crashing would be heard in various parts of the yard, like a genie sighing and settling to his rest.

These things never frightened Nina, for she was never alone. Here, in this place where secrets flourished, she felt herself at home. Nina's secret was that she was always, night and day, accompanied, everywhere she went, by a giant winged bulldog—indeed, it was his flanks that she was pillowed against now.

He was closer to her than any human she knew, and her memories of him seemed to go back to infancy. Forever, it seemed, she had seen that face, the battered abused face of a canine prize-fighter, shadowed comically beneath the grace of two sweeping wings. His name was Rufus Clyde.

She was in one of her favorite places with her closest friend. Nina slept. The moon came out abrupt and ugly, an egg thown on wallpaper by an ungrateful tenant. The crickets sang a country hymn.

Abruptly the town's lone stoplight, a vigilant cyclops eye guarding the corners of Maple and Main, began flashing yellow instead of the brief season of yellow red green.

Nina woke up with her candy stuck in her hair. While she tried out some cuss words, she cleaned the sticky from her hair as much as possible, sucked her fingers clean and stretched. In a minute, she selected an exquisite powder blue from the 200 canisters of spray paint, tucked it beneath her shirt and crawled from beneath the Cadillac shell.

Two minutes, and Rufus Clyde was trotting at her heels as she walked to the junkyard gate, found it locked, shrugged her shoulders and began climbing the splintery fence. The bulldog sailed over with one majestic leap, a spare wrench clamped in his slobbering jaws like a bone.

Main Street was silent as she rounded the corner, quiet except for a child who was crying some three blocks away. She stared through the darkened window at the Vanderhook Grill, and the counter just 12 feet away looked like dollhouse furnishings, with a tiny pie beneath a tiny dish. She couldn't see them from the window, but she knew there were dozens of Hershey bars, brown wealth in silver paper, carelessly stacked behind the counter.

Nina pressed her nose against the glass, a 10 year old pirate dreaming of Fort Knox. She allowed herself greedy dreams for a minute, then struck out for the post office, her project for the night.

And now she was at the designated building, the dog guarding her as she set about her task. Humming satisfaction, Nina stepped back from the brick wall before her to remember the design.

She shook the can, partially to properly mix the paint, but partly to hear the lovely swish-swish rattle clunk. For a while, Nina simply switched off everything but the garden growing on the wall before her, a complex pattern of geometric flowers. She was undistracted until she heard the sobbing of an ambulance nearby. It was this noise that kept her from hearing the footsteps advancing behind her. When the hand roughly grabbed the back of her sweatshirt, she twisted and fought like a jack rabbit in a sack but was unable to evade the other's strength.

It was a policeman. "Young lady, you are going to come with me and we are going to call your parents."

"I live with my aunt and uncle."

"Then we are going to call your aunt and uncle."

She rode in the front of the police car and was fascinated with the glowing display of red lights and radio.

He talked all the way to the station. He talked about criminal mischief, which was what she had done by vandalizing a U.S. Post office.

He told her she was a nice little girl and it had better not happen again. In the parking lot, Rufus Clyde wet all over the policeman's tires and soiled his shoe. The man appeared not to notice.

They seated her on a cold metal chair and took her name.

They notified her relatives and took notes of her hair and eye color. She sighed. She knew her aunt and uncle had been called, that her uncle would be coming to get her, and that she would be spanked with the belt from his pants tonight.

She thought regretfully of the almost complete design on the back of the post office. Next time, she knew, she'd do better. She ached thinking about the cached paints in the junkyard, lined up with the crack precision of young toy soldiers.

Nina had blues the color of a dolphin's back. She had Tallulah Bankhead lipstick reds. She had yellows, from the bright warmth of a Jamaican banana, to the sere patina of a New York Checker cab.

There were mistletoe and hemlock greens, scaled down to the shade of a U.S. dollar.

She had mourning blacks and lustful oranges, but her favorite of all were the Mirage Metallics.

The Mirage Metallics. When they had begun appearing on the shelves of the paint and hardware stores she frequented, she knew she couldn't steal them like she had the others. They were too great a magic to come by dishonestly.

It took her two weeks to save the money. When she bought the first of the set, she allowed herself the withheld luxury of shaking the can.

Some people live lives in search of a sound. And Nina's sound was this: swish swish rattle clunk.

When she walked down the street, a paint can in her shirt, that noise inaudible to all else was like a friend's whispered secret.

Like a smoker choked on a habit, Nina grew restless and a little frantic when she couldn't shake her spray cans and paint something ugly into attractiveness.

One of the policemen noticed her restlessness, and thinking to please her, thrust a doll into her hands—an oddity which had shown up in a prostitute's purse.

"Would you like something to play with? She's a pretty girl, just like you."

Nina smiled for a generous second. She hated dolls.

This one was a Glamourdoll—a latex, sexy but sexless tease with a vacuous smile. Her blue eyes were enormous, horribly out of scale, while her synthetic curls hung askew a bit sadly, like someone who doesn't know their foolishness. Nina contemplated the stigmata of Glamourdoll. Glamourdoll had holes in her feet so her shoes wouldn't fall off. She had a hole in her hand for her ring, and two holes in her temples to hold on her beauty-crown.

She smelled like cigarettes.

Nina eyed her with contempt. She knew she'd been right about dolls. Glamourdoll was a loser if she'd ever seen one. She held the figure by the hair and then a leg, then pinioned it absentmindedly beneath the stapler, where Glamourdoll's arms were forced out to east and west, while her saucer eyes ceaselessly petitioned the ceiling.

Nina yawned; she put her cheek against the chill metal of the desk and slept. Somehow through the noise of the men talking, the typewriter and an intermittent telephone, she fell asleep for the second time that night, feeling on her ankle the warm breath of the faithful dog, Rufus Clyde.

She slept through her uncle's arrival, his carrying her out to the truck, the ride home, and her aunt's undressing her for bed. Nina slept with a rare gift. She possessed a certain talent for it.

It was not until she felt herself alone in the room that she opened her eyes, stared around the quiet darkness and thought of the store she would raid after school the next day to replace the seized can of blue paint.

Nina Dean spent Vermeer Octobers spray-painting the small Indiana town of Fairlaine. She was a restless girl, and all her colors were neon.

Question of Time

George Dunn

Time, my good friend
and tormentor,
waits

as a question embracing two lovers,
the question we became

on first embrace.

The Jig

(dedicated to D. S.)

J. B. Straw

She used to dance
the Jig at Saturday Barn Floor Doin's;
after picnic chicken, she'd pick her partner
and dust them boards.

But such celebrations were only weekend fare.

Each morning she'd walk
the Field behind some Tired & Spiteful Hosses;
she worked 'em so hard, they almost died
one weeklong morning.

Afternoons she'd hang
the clothes out on Monday Washday Lines;
after hand-scrubbed cycles, she'd pin 'em
in the wind.

Before the Jig, there were faces
to wash, shoes to tie, and yarns to tell;
first she'd fix the meals, teach me Life,
then take time to dance.

But then her feet
got tired, her eyes got weak, I got learned,
&
Cancer gripped the Jig.

Bayou folks say, "The Jig is up."

The dust honors the harness,
ribboning her braids, turning dark to silver;
the barn floor creaks like fibula rubbed
too often against fibula.

Where fly the lines? Where hang
the raiments, washed to the perfect quotient?
Once choreographed bluely, where is the brown
dirt tiered to harvest?

Oil rigs are pumping still
on Mr. Myer's land. Black River is yet
queued with yellow buses turned to homes;
Taters grow outside the Old Red Bridge.

Those folks don't know the word
cicada; its just the night to them. Somehow
the graveyard doesn't get any larger. And I
have memories of riding furniture in the flood.

Some roads are lost in weeds,
Johnson Grass higher than her plow. When
the work is done, she'll dance the Jig,
she says. But first there's wash to do.

I feel generations growing inside of me.

The Visitor

Linda D. Lewis

It was early in the evening
A deeper dark of twilight
October caught me by the shirt tail
And bade me sit with her awhile
To sip the cider of the season
And take my ease beneath the moon.

A whispering voice of rustling cornstalks
Secrets in the whipping wind
She spoke of pumpkins growing round
And full upon their twisted vines . . .
Of apple orchards, ripening sun
And glorious trees in fancy finery
For their grand finale.

“How could you not have noticed
The beauty all about you?”
She shook her finger
Patiently admonishing for
Hurriedly chasing my written lists
Oblivious to her cornucopia . . .
Failing to accept her generous gifts.

We sat together, she and I, for the longest time
Savoring rich sweet scents, freshly fallen leaves
Sifting through memories, autumns of my youth.

At One with her by what ensued
Our unspoken primeval bond renewed.



Untitled

Bill Ross

Invisible

Linda D. Lewis

I speak too loudly
when you ignore me.
I hear myself and
my voice confirms
my existence.

I stand in front
of the television
to gain your attention.
You stare blankly
at a point
beyond my belly.

I am

The Worship of William Stringfellow

Shirley Vogler Meister

Across the aisle in church tonight he knelt,
resembling you so much that thirty years
rolled back like incense in the sanctuary.
Nature rules that handsome, dark virility
cannot endure unchanged like God: it turns
to grayer tones and slacker flesh; yet
there you were: the first professor to bless
my virginal mind with a literary grace.
From the corner of an eye, I watched you
(in that other form) and remembered sacred
lines enshrined those youthful years before:
Donne and Milton, Blake and Byron and Yeats
and all male paragons of lettered prayer.
Blushing with my private thoughts, I saw you
move into the aisle, genuflect, turn toward me,
and nod: your double caught my awe and smiled.

Waistline

Pat Logan-Browne

Oh waistline,
I was warned on the eve of eleven
that you were to be my unwieldy
heritage from good peasant stock;
that you never would mellow
into slender inward curve
between hip and breast.

By the eve of thirteen
your breadth had
condemned me to
vertically striped
overblouses
and radical brown and black dresses
recommended by
grandmother, mother and aunts.

In my youth
I cursed you
exercised, dieted and girdled you
into slight indentation;
into conforming to measures
of waistbands on skirts.
I exhibited you in
a bathing suit
once, in my youth.

As you grew,
I grew to revel in winter
when sweaters and sweatshirts
and layers of clothing
could hide you, my shame
from public distain.

But you showed no pity.
After childbirth you bellowed into new fulness.
You challenged Woman's Day
to create camouflage fashions
for grotesque problem figures
unlike those of women depicted by Vogue.

Oh waistline,
encircling tyrant,
relentless master,
you've dictated my habits,
my hobbies, my wardrobe,
my style and the food that I eat.
You have shaped me,
and honed me, prepared me
for less than perfection,
and molded me into
the me that I am.

When I Was A Kid

Jackie Schmidt

There were rules
that protected me once.
They couldn't get me
if both feet were
under the covers.
Sometimes I awoke
startled
one naked leg in danger.
I'd yank it back.
If the quilt touched the floor,
they'd crawl up.
Then I'd have to reach
over the headboard and
flip the light switch three times.
I taped the broken blind
to keep them out
after sunset and
my monkey with the banana
always stood guard
on the vanity.

But
nothing
seems to work
anymore
when
i'm
alone
just last week
i awoke
and my electric blanket
was on the floor
full of them
and
off
the storm windows thrown wide open
the dimmer switch out of my reach
and I don't
even know
what happened
to my monkey

Seaswept

Jackie Schmidt

Years have passed
since the white beach
where we packed our hopes
gently
into sand turrets
 with shell-lined moats
 and driftwood drawbridges
until
a sundrenched dreamcastle
stood
splendid
changing before us
to twilight hues
to moon shadows
to a seaswept memory.

Renewal

“... keep one eye open for the violets ...”

—Theodor Fontane's *Effi Briest*

Shirley Vogler Meister

Midst the wildness of my weathered place,
spring breaths sweet youth in amethyst:
violets dot the common grasses and weeds
like precious jewels mixed with trinkets—
regal miniatures sustaining hope in ruins.
There was a time when violets bordered certain
paths of brick winding 'round the bright-hued
beds of hyacinths, daffodils, and tulips:
this charmed the neighborhood each year.
Children wove the violet stems with vines
for crowns in May and held sweet nosegays
on their Sunday walks, while elders saved
the blossoms for their potpourris and placed
small parlour vases of bright blooms
in other rooms for vivid floral art.
And when the violets lost their lovely heads,
the leaves stayed green as seemly setting
for diverse annuals interspersely planted
around the waning bulbs; then greenery dimmed,
and mums in tiny pots gave fresher view.
Keen care we plied in garden plans and work—
till stopped by stringent age. Now I stand
inured to unkempt grounds and lonely house,
where winter reigns all year—except in spring
when violets mass themselves in random spots:
myriad purple gems in breezes mild,
recalling homegrown nature not so wild.

I have wanted you so badly

George Dunn

I have wanted you so badly,
felt my breath empty
like a river
of surrender,
limbs stirred to readiness
when you take the room.

The Cereus

Deann List

When my husband, Michael, and I set up housekeeping, one of his contributions to our decor was an extremely large, ungainly, weird and jungly-looking house plant in a huge white pot. He proudly introduced it as his Night-blooming Cereus and I could see it was a beloved object. What I couldn't see was why. In the interest of harmony I tried to conceal my distaste and began to rearrange the furniture in the apartment to accommodate this new addition to the living room. Michael, sensing my dismay, began to explain why he loved this ugly plant so much.

He had first seen and loved a cereus when he was twelve, on a visit to his Tante Thea's house in northern Indiana. She had one that had completely taken over her sun porch, a rather large room. What had inflamed his youthful passion for cereus was not the plant's dark green, long, long, flat, undulating leaves, nor the trailing feelers it shot forth in every direction, nor the dead, brown foliage that clung tenaciously to its stalks; no, it was none of these. Michael had seen it bloom. The glory of its flower blinded him to all other consideration and he coveted Tante Thea's cereus. Tante Thea, while unwilling to part with her own adored plant, took pity on him and gave him a start. For sixteen years this plant had been his faithful companion, through high school, through five years at Purdue and through all of his young bachelorhood. It had thrived, outgrowing one pot after another. Now he felt it only fit that it should grace our home, all four feet by four feet of it.

The cereus was not blooming when I first saw it. Michael assured me that when I saw it flower I would also fall under its spell. (Privately, I doubted.) Unfortunately, Michael added, he could not predict when this would be. Like all great beauties, the cereus was capricious. He explained the plant was capable of going dormant for several years at a stretch. There was no predictable cycle. Not only capricious, the cereus was also sparing with its favors. When it did bloom, it would flower just one night and if it produced more than one blossom, you could indeed consider yourself blessed. Michael's cereus had bloomed four times in the past sixteen years.

By this time I had moved the chairs and the coffee table and was beginning to dismantle the bricks and boards we used for a bookcase. No small effort, I thought, for a monstrous plant that apparently seldom bloomed. Michael began to help me and, while we worked, he waxed lyrically on, describing the bloom and its fragrance. He told me cereus is sometimes called the cathedral plant because of the structure of its flower. Michael said the flowers are extremely large, almost one foot in length and six to seven inches in diameter. They are snow white with pistils and

stamens of gold arranged within the bloom in such a way that it does resemble the inside of a white and gold cathedral with pews and aisles leading to a spectacular nave. Michael promised that the scent was incredibly delightful, better than Easter lilies.

My husband is a landscape architect with a deep feeling for growing things. I loved him; I respected his knowledge and judgment, and I was intrigued. The cereus was ensconced and I became accustomed to its unsightly and slightly overwhelming appearance. I began to look forward to its blossoming.

For five years we lived in that apartment. Five springs saw two strong men carrying the cereus out to the patio and five autumns saw two strong men carrying in back inside. I don't think it ever considered blooming, but it never stopped growing. Occasionally it would run amok and I would persuade Michael to chop a path through its foliage. I did not become attached to it, but usually I gave it very little thought. Michael remained quite fond of it and sometimes I would surprise him gazing at it longingly. I never understood his feeling for the cereus, but I accepted it as just one of his quirks.

Three years ago we bought a house. We moved in January and Michael was quite concerned about moving the cereus in winter. A native of the tropics, it had never experienced a wintry blast. I was only too sure it would be fine, but nevertheless we borrowed a van to move it (the cereus would never have fit in the car with the rest of the house plants). Michael covered it tenderly with a large blanket and two strong men carried it to the waiting van. The plant seemed to survive the experience rather well, but even after all his precautions, Michael worried. Spring came and, even though I was openly skeptical about ever seeing a bloom on the cereus, the ritual conveyance to the patio was held. Once again Michael was disappointed and this time he was also disturbed. The cereus had never gone this long without blooming. While I had grown used to the cereus, I had always entertained a small hope that Michael would grow weary of the plant, perhaps eventually find it a new home. That fall I suggested this, quite gently I thought and was astounded at the resounding no I received in return.

Another winter passed and once again, with the coming of spring, we enacted the ritual cereus move to the patio. That was last summer, the summer I saw the cereus bloom. It was simply the most exquisitely beautiful flower I had ever seen and instantly I understood Michael's love. We called family and friends to come and share the beauty. There was a hush as people sat and stared at this awkward plant and its single, magnificent, luminous bloom. It seemed to me as if we were pilgrims at some strange shrine. The scent drifted to us on the night air and, just as Michael had promised, it was strong and sweet.

I thought about the paradox of such beauty arising from so unlikely a source. I thought about how sad it seemed to have this glory for just one night. I thought about how wise my husband was to prize beauty and take pains to secure it. I watched the cereus until late, late in the evening. Before I went in I silently acknowledged to *Hylocereus Undata* how fortunate I felt to have seen its splendor.

I took it as an omen that the cereus bloomed in our new home, a blessing on us. I told myself it would bloom again some night as a sign that all was well.

Last night the cereus bloomed again. This time there were three flowers and, yes, things are very, very well with us.



Untitled

Patricia F. Keane

"Lovely as a Lapland night . . ."

(William Wordsworth)

Shirley Vogler Meister

. . . my elder-feline

mirrors serenity:

she belies her kitten days when she played and preyed
with the grace and bounce of leaves dancing in the wind.
In peace she sleeps, her brow unruffled by surface sounds
that earlier twitched her ears even in slumber. Awake
in a silent house, she moves to the rhythms of calmer
breezes, paw-steps stiff yet alert to the rousings
of all senses but one. She preens with the keen pride
of lost youth, responding to caresses with purrs unheard.

Ah, Lapcat! A poet's words to a lady pertain
also to thee: ". . . old age, serene and bright,
and lovely as a Lapland night,
shall lead thee to thy grave."

Curtains

Bill Ross

The palace laced with harlequin afternoons
She finds refuge in the retarding heat
A baptismal perfume
A mother on her mother's bed
Watching the deep blue murder above her head

A sweaty dance
 in a church stained dress
She feels her heart
 a shattered tomato
 under her hands

The lion roars through the window curtains
As she dreams of heaven,
 a holiday on ice

She's holding on with both her lips
Leaving lipstick kisses on receipts
 on her nose
 on her mind
 on her daughter's lunch box

She's starting over with broken hands,
 thinking
 and feeling
 and seeing
 with
 such
 surgery
 and

The curtains,
 they whisper,
 asking her secretly:

“What do you have lined up if this fails?
What curse hides in your purse?
What do you want to be buried with?”

She replies, simply, by closing the window
For she is starting over.

The Search

Jackie Schmidt

Bent fingers
search trouser-creases
smoothing each fold.
Nothing.
He flips off slippers
probes them with his toes
lets them lay
slips from his shirt
shakes it
drops it to the floor
and peers below his chair
between the wheels.
Just dust.

Then the labor of inching
along the dim corridor
in evening light
wheeling past the nursing station
unnoticed
examining each picture frame
ransacking laundry tubs
pulling plants apart
sifting soil
emptying ashtrays
running fingers along sills.

The hall ends.

Sweat drips
to cheeks encrusted
with dried gravy.
He pushes with short
insistent
jerks
into the corner
straining against restraints
stretching out thin arms
hot palms against cool wallpaper
peeling loose ends
feeling for clues
stopping to smear away tears
and cobwebs.
Just dust.



Untitled

Patricia F. Keane

Over the Edge

David Beck

Jack Higgins pushed himself away from his desk and stood to stretch. He gazed out the window that displayed another cold, dark evening. The snow and gray clouds felt like an oppressive weight upon his back. He sighed, looking at the empty parking lot below him. Only his car remained. Looking past the parking lot, across the snow covered lawn he saw the choppy, cold Atlantic Ocean.

Reaching behind him, he picked up his cup of cold coffee, grimacing as he took a drink. Wearily, he ran his hand across his face, noticing the stubble on his cheeks. Five o'clock shadow, he thought. Glancing down at his watch, he said to himself, "No. Six forty-five shadow—where has the day gone?"

He looked at the pile of papers on his desk. Mortgages, percentages and interest rates were all screaming for attention. Turning toward the window, the thought of those cool, blue eyes and that dark, black hair falling across her soft, olive-colored skin kept haunting him. Laura. The thought of this woman—girl—half his age had consumed him all day.

He thought of walking with her along the lawn that overlooked the ocean. Talking with her. Gazing in those sapphire eyes. Holding her.

Looking down at his desk he saw a picture of his wife and two children. Once again, as if wakened by a splash of cold water, he was faced with the reality of a family, a desk piled high with demands and half of a corporation resting on his shoulders.

Shaking his head, as if to clear his senses, he picked up his overcoat and stood by the door, glancing at his desk and the winter scenery outside his window. He turned out the light in his office and walked toward the main entrance. The hall was dark, and the offices were empty. The only sound was the squishing of his shoes as he walked across the plush carpet.

On the front window, in black letters, were the words: HIGGINS AND EPSY REALTY. He always felt a certain amount of pleasure when seeing this. Opening the door, he was greeted by the cold, January wind. Quickly, he locked the door, pulled his scarf around his face, and walked hurriedly, but carefully, across the slick, snow covered parking lot.

Driving home he was able to relax. The rush hour traffic had cleared. And once again his mind dreamily drifted back to Laura. Her laugh. Girlish. Playful. He wondered how she viewed him. Probably as some horny, middle-aged fart who is no longer satisfied at home. Which could be right but—Suddenly he struck the steering wheel with the palm of his hand. The basketball game. He was supposed to pick up his son, Mark, at the basketball game.

He turned around and headed toward St. Thomas Jr. High, where his son attended. "Perhaps if I can get there soon enough," he thought to himself, "I can watch him play." Jack had been meaning to go to one of the games but was usually busy at the office. "Oh well," he thought, "I get the impression he doesn't get to play too much. Who knows? Such an odd kid."

Jack didn't like to think of Mark. God knows he had tried to figure out what he felt about his son. But Mark was so different. So quiet. He got good grades but probably went out for the basketball team just because Jack had encouraged him to.

Jack was never good in sports, but he knew the importance of competition, of making friends and, maybe most of all, being like the other boys. Yet, Mark hadn't changed.

Entering the gymnasium the old familiar sounds welcomed him. The squeak of tennis shoes on the court; the chants of the cute little cheerleaders; the referee's whistle; classmates and parents shouting from the bleachers. Jack took a seat at the top of the stands. Glancing at the scoreboard, he noticed the second half had just begun, and St. Thomas, as usual, was behind.

Jack's eyes scanned the court before finding his son sitting on the bench. He seemed so much smaller than the other boys. Trying to get his attention, Jack kept his eyes fixed on the pale, thin figure. Mark glanced his way, then his eyes quickly looked away, pretending not to see his dad.

Jack saw this and felt embarrassed to be shunned by his own son. He watched the faces in the crowd. Were there other fathers whose sons pretended not to see them? He looked at a group of girls sitting below him. They were adamantly cheering for Troy—whoever he was. Does anyone yell for Mark in those few minutes he plays?

Jack looked at Mark. He sat at least five feet from the other hopefuls who were huddled together, yelling encouragement and advice to their teammates. Then there was Mark, seemingly unaware that a game was being played. Jack felt angry. Why does he just sit there? Why does he pretend not to notice his father?

A loud buzzer sounded, startling Jack. The third quarter had ended. He leaned back on the hard bleachers, stretching out his feet. And once again his mind was filled with thoughts of Laura. The smell of her perfume as she walked by him this morning. The way she cocked her head and listened when he gave her instructions. As confident as she was, she seemed surprised in receiving so much attention from the head of the company. Make believe conversations ensued. Ardent liaisons, intensified by his own confident, nonchalant attitude.

He snapped back to reality when noticing his son had come onto the floor. With interest he watched his boy run up and down the court looking as distant from the team as he did on the bench. "Why don't they give him the ball, for heaven's sake," Jack said to himself. Yet, a disturbing thought came to him: "What if he gets the ball and loses it—then how will I feel?"

Just then Jack noticed that his son would slightly, hardly noticeable from the bleachers, shake his head everytime one of the boys looked as if he were going to throw the ball to him. "What's wrong with him," Jack asked himself with a bewildered look on his face. Finally, the buzzer sounded, and the game was over. And, for

just a moment, a flood of pity swept over him, as he watched his son walk, behind the other boys, into the locker room.

"Don't feel bad, son," Jack said, under his breath, "I guess I, too, was shaking my head, 'no'—forgive me, Mark, forgive me."

Driving home there was an awkward silence. Jack wanted to encourage his son; put his arm around him. Something. Anything that a father may do. Instead, he pretended to be concentrating on driving even though the traffic was sparse. Steadily increasing his speed, he said "Pretty cold out tonight, huh?"

Mark continued to gaze out the side window, "Yeah, I guess so."

Silence.

"Hey, look, Mark," Jack said as he stiffly slapped Mark's knee, "you're not down about losing that game, are you?"

"Naw."

Monosyllabic, Jack thought. Why can't he just talk like a normal kid? He tried once more, "Yea . . . a . . . I played a little ball in school."

"Did ya? I thought you once said you were never any good?"

Jack forced a laugh, "Well, maybe not as good as you, but I still played . . . some." Keeping the grin on his face he looked at Mark, who was still staring out the window, expressionless.

Jack thought he should maybe stop and get a soda. Perhaps Mark would like that. He doubted it though and continued to pick up speed.

Arriving home, Jack pulled in the driveway. Mark, without saying a word, got out to open the garage door. Jack caught himself breathing a sigh of relief. As he watched Mark lift the garage open, he thought of saying something to him like, "Son, I noticed tonight that you wouldn't let the other boys throw the ball to you. You know, we all have our fears. But we must work on overcoming them. I have my fears, they may be different than yours, but . . ." Jack laughed sardonically to himself. "Yea, they're different, son. I have fears of talking to you; I have fears that you're psychotic and need help; I have fears that if I can get one of my employees into bed, I may get caught. No, Mark. No fatherly advice from dear, old dad tonight."

When they came into the house, Mark went straight to his room. Jack walked into the kitchen where his wife, Carol, was putting away dishes. He leaned over and kissed her on the cheek and sat down, wearily, at the kitchen table.

"Would you like for me to heat up your supper? It's lasagna."

"No . . . no, just fix me something to drink."

"Have you eaten? You know you shouldn't drink on an empty stomach."

"Yea, I ate before picking up Mark," he lied. Changing the subject, he asked, "Where is Cheryl?"

"She's on the phone again with that Steve. You're gonna have to talk to her about him. I'm not sure I like him."

"You don't have to. After all, he's not calling for you, is he," he said sarcastically, wishing now he could pull back the words.

"Very funny," she said, with a biting tone in her voice. "But he just happens to be twenty-three years old. Your daughter, in case you've forgotten, is only seventeen." She walked over and

roughly set his drink down on the table, spilling some Scotch and soda out of the glass.

Closing his eyes, he sipped his drink, preparing for what was to follow. He deserved it, he thought, as he watched her busily wiping off the counter and banging pans into submission, as she always did when angry. She was a pretty woman, slightly overweight, and solidly built like a farm girl. Taking another drink, Jack noticed she seemed to be getting bigger through the hips.

She continued, "If you were home more, perhaps you would know what's going on with your family. You're got a daughter who's dating a twenty-three year old man whom you've never met . . ."

"I met him," Jack interrupted, "I just didn't know he was twenty-three. God knows he doesn't act like it," he mumbled.

She continued, "And you've got a son that you hardly know."

"I've got a son nobody knows. Now why don't we just drop the whole thing?" He quickly downed his drink, got up and started toward the bedroom. Something inside told him to look back—was she angry? Was she sad? He hoped, between the two, she was angry. He didn't want her to be sad. That would mean conciliatory actions on his part. Either way, he didn't look back.

He went upstairs to get ready for bed. As he began undressing, he looked closely at himself. Standing in front of the bathroom mirror, he scrutinized his face. His hair was beginning to recede with a tinge of gray along the sides. Stepping back, he could see he was still thick around the middle; he had, however, began to lose weight ever since he started playing raquetball regularly. Overall he was pretty pleased. Glancing at his side view, thoughts of those sapphire eyes and olive skin appeared in his mind.

As he walked into the bedroom, he was thinking that it didn't really matter how he looked. Laura was young, somewhat naive, and very ambitious. Bright-eyes, just out of college, she knew he could be the key to her future—at least, financially speaking, her immediate future. Besides she seemed to like him. The other day she caught him staring at her. She smiled, flirtatiously, and winked. Embarrassed, but flattered, he turned and walked in his office.

Lying on the bed, he smiled to himself. Then a chill—a sense of fear—came over him. Why was he thinking like this? Like some infatuated school-boy? Nineteen years of marriage, he thought, and never had his imagination carried him so far. Why?

Just then Carol came in. Her lips were drawn tight, as they always were when she was angry. He watched her as she went through her nightly rituals before going to bed. Does she ever think of other men, he wondered. Surely, she can't be happy. He then rolled over and closed his eyes. Perhaps tomorrow would be a better day.

Jack awoke early the next morning. Groggy and unrested, he staggered into the bathroom for his morning shower. The cool water beating down on his face seemed to awaken his senses. Recalling the events of the night before made his insides tighten. A silent son, an angry wife, and a seventeen year old daughter who probably is going to bed with a twenty-three year old man. But

what could he do, he thought, as he turned the water off and stepped out of the shower.

Standing in front of the mirror, he made an extra effort to look good. A close shave, careful not to cut himself; every hair in place, comb the front down, just a little, to cover his receding hairline; an extra splash of cologne. But, why? Even the thought of divorce or taking a chance of destroying his family, scared, even repulsed, him.

"Are you going to eat breakfast?" he heard Carol asking. Her voice startled him. He asked himself, "Does she know what I've been thinking? No, of course not, how could she?" He shook his head and wondered why he was so fearful. Nothing had transpired, he reassured himself. Only thoughts, Jack, only thoughts.

He skipped breakfast and just drank a cup of coffee. Everytime the thought of Laura came to his mind, he quickly dismissed it. Carol's anger had seemed to subside, and Jack, somehow, found himself disappointed. At least she was quiet, he thought. He also knew he would probably not have to listen to his son's silence. Mark didn't get up for school for at least another hour. Yet, there was still Cheryl to contend with.

Just then Cheryl came down the stairs and entered the kitchen. She was a pretty girl with light brown hair and a soft complexion. She had a carefree, effervescent personality which, at times, worried Jack.

She had a good figure, too, he thought. She seemed to flaunt it in her tight jeans and by the way she walked. Flirtatious. Another Laura in the making? She also was very quick witted, and she laced it with cutting sarcasm, which Jack felt was usually directed towards him.

"Good morning," she said as she hurriedly walked over to the refrigerator to get her morning yogurt. She didn't sit at the table; instead, leaning against the counter, she began eating her breakfast.

"Morning, Cheryl," Jack said, wearily. Carol looked at her daughter and said, "Don't you think those pants are a little snug?"

"Naw, men like it that way—don't they, Dad?" He quickly looked down at his coffee and pretended not to hear. There she goes again, he thought. He often felt transparent in front of his daughter.

"Cheryl," he said, changing the subject, "your mother has been telling me that this Joe you're seeing—"

"Steve," she interrupted, "it's Steve, Dad." There was a playful smirk on her face.

"Anyway," he continued, "this Steve is twenty-three years old, Cheryl, and—"

"Yes, but I hear he won't be next year—"

"Look, Cheryl," Jack said angrily.

Carol interrupted, "A guy that age only wants one thing from a seventeen year old." Jack hated when she interrupted.

Cheryl sarcastically shot back, "Oh what is that one thing, Mother? Sex—perhaps? You'll both be happy to know that we engage in copulatory activities every chance we get. I hear it clears up acne."

Jack pushed his coffee cup away. "I gotta get going." He picked up the morning paper and hurriedly kissed Carol good-bye, hardly touching her lips.

"Bye, Dad," Cheryl said happily. "And don't you worry, I have everything under control."

"At least one of us does," he mumbled under his breath.

Jack spent most of the morning trying to make up for the time he wasted the day before. For the moment, consumed in his work, all thoughts of Laura, Carol, his son and daughter were forgotten.

A slight knock on his door interrupted his concentration. Looking up, he saw Laura. Wearing a lavender dress, which fit closely around her slight frame, she asked, "Are you busy?"

Jack, caught off guard, answered, "No . . . no, of course not. Come on in." She did, closing the door behind her.

"I need you to look over these reports on the Clendenon account," she said, as he rose from his desk. She handed him the papers as he stepped next to her. "They should be ready to send out." She smiled, "But I thought I'd check first."

Standing next to her, he could smell the sweet scent of her perfume. He glanced at the papers, not paying much attention. The whole procedure was routine; so routine, in fact, he never bothered to check them before. He could, however, sense her watching him, making him somewhat uneasy.

"I didn't know if I were to sign here or not," she said, pressing up against him, pointing her long elegant finger to a dotted line on the bottom of the page.

"Yea," he said, feeling more uncomfortable. "Yea, you do need to sign there." He took a step back, "Look, Laura, do you have any plans for lunch?" The words were out before he knew it. His voice sounding unrecognizable to himself.

"No, Mr. Higgins," she smiled knowingly. "Why? Did you have something in mind?" He cringed. Her words, her tone of voice sounded remarkably like his daughter, Cheryl.

He was so used to lunch meetings with his partner, Bob Epsy, that he said, without thinking, "Meet me in the lobby around noon." Quickly, catching himself, he said, "No . . . better yet, why don't you just meet me at O'Connor's Pub. They have good sea food there.

"I see," she said, smiling. "Anything you say, Mr. Higgins."

He turned and walked toward his desk. Never before had he noticed the similarities between Laura and Cheryl, and the thought of desiring a woman that reminded him of his daughter scared him. What if, in his subconscious, he truly wanted to make love to his daughter? Impossible, he thought. All that Freudian stuff is a joke.

He leaned back in his chair, feeling young again. "What does a young, pretty girl like her see in an old man like me?" he asked himself, not wanting an answer, nor believing he was really old. He thought of sitting across from her, looking into those beautiful eyes and hearing her soft voice.

He wondered if she sensed he was nervous during their conversation. "No reason to be nervous," he told himself, "I'm older, more experienced and fairly good-looking for a man my age. Nothing to hold me back." Suddenly, he looked at the family

picture on his desk. The smile disappeared. He looked at it for a moment, then, laid it face down and tried to remember where he left off.

Driving back to the office after lunch, Jack's stomach was in knots. He tried to remember all that had happened, but it was difficult, as if trying to recall a dream. His head was in a whirlwind. "I just need to piece everything together," he told himself. "Laura. Where was Laura? Back in her apartment, lying in her bed." He had told her she could have the rest of the day off. Drops of perspiration formed on his forehead and above his lip.

"I need to get back to the office," he told himself. "No. Maybe I better get home. I can't go home." His heart began racing. "Do I smell like her? Just slow down, think it out. If I don't go back to the office, everyone may wonder where I am. Would anyone call Carol? No . . . no, she's gone. Yea, she's gone. I'll go to the office; say I'm not feeling well; go home and take another shower before Carol and the kids get home.

"Shouldn't have had those drinks over lunch. Then I would've been thinking clearer. In bed, why did she keep saying, 'Tell me you love me, tell me you love me'? What's wrong with her?" He shook his head, "She's from a totally different generation—different world even. When making love, does Cheryl ask what's his name to tell her that? How pathetic.

"What can I do about Laura? Will she start calling me? Try and break up our marriage? What if she tries to blackmail me—or tells someone at the office? Could she have some dis-ease? Oh, no. If she goes to bed with men that easily, she could—then what if I give Carol something?" He suddenly felt an itching around his groin. "Lord have mercy," he sighed, "that little slut. What if—" Gripping the steering wheel tightly, he began to gasp for breath. "Dear God have mercy," he said, glancing down at the speedometer which registered 80 miles per hour.

When he got home, he took a shower and lay down on the bed. The house was quiet, except for the ticking of the clock. He tried to sleep but couldn't. Over and over he could hear her voice whispering, "Tell me you love me, tell me you love me."

His stomach churned, and he found it difficult to swallow. Slowly breathing in and out, he tried to relax. Carol would be home in an hour. The myriad of questions that had haunted him on his way home screamed inside his head.

Feeling dirty, he got up and took another shower. "I gotta get clean," he told himself, "I gotta get clean. Laura. I got to get her and her smell off me." Even the thought of her repulsed him.

When Carol came home, Jack, once again lying on the bed, stiffened. "What are you doing home so early? It's not even five."

"I'm not feeling too good." He rolled over and faced the window, hoping she would leave him alone. Instead, she leaned over to kiss him. He flinched.

"What's wrong, Jack,?"

"Nothing, Carol, nothing," he said irritably. "I'm just not feeling well. I'll be all right." He could tell she was in a good mood and that bothered him. He turned and faced her, trying to look as relaxed as he could. At first, he wanted to cry—let it out—confess the whole incident, but he couldn't. Standing before him, his wife of

almost twenty years, looked so pitiful to him. If she only knew, he thought.

"Look, I'm sorry, Carol. I'm tired, and just want to be left alone."

"Let me know if you need anything," she said, pausing for a moment, then turned and left the room.

"Why did she hesitate like that?" he asked himself. "Did she suspect something?"

Later that night, Mark looked in on him. The room was dark, and Jack was staring at the ceiling. "How ya feeling?" Mark asked in his monotone voice.

"Oh, all right, son. Just tired, that's all. Just need to get some rest."

Silence.

"Well," Mark said, hesitating, "good night."

"Good night, Mark." Jack said, somewhat uneasily. He knew, Jack thought. Yea, he knew. Clutching the pillow, his heart raced. Somebody must've told him. Why else would he act so strangely?

He lay in the darkened room replaying the afternoon's event over and over. Carol came in the room and, after going through her nightly rituals, quietly slipped into bed so as not to wake Jack.

After finally drifting off to sleep, he began to dream: It was late at night and he was driving. The road was unfamiliar and he didn't know where he was going; yet, he didn't seem to care. Rain began to fall. Turning on the wipers, he could sense he was going too fast. Yet, he could not make himself slow down. Driving faster he noticed the road was narrowing and the curves were sharpening. Suddenly, the car went into a spin, throwing Jack to the passenger side of the car. Unable to reach the wheel, he struggled to pull himself to the driver's seat. But the car spun violently, tossing him against the door opposite the steering wheel. Managing to pull himself above the dash, he could see he was quickly approaching a cliff, which was lined with a white fence. Once again he tried to grab the wheel but was unable to reach it. The car kept spinning until it crashed through the white fence, bounding over the edge of the cliff.

Suddenly, he sat up, breathing hard, and covered with perspiration. He got out of bed and walked downstairs, his knees feeling weak beneath him.

After fixing himself a drink, he sat in the living room and stared out the patio window. Again and again, the scenes with Laura went through his head. Thoughts of Carol and his children made him sad. It was as if something was now gone, never to return.

As the early morning painted the sky with shades of pink and blue, Jack still sat in his chair with an empty glass in his hand.

Wearily, he rose and walked into the bathroom. Staring in the mirror, Jack saw lines he had never seen before. His hair looked thinner, and dark circles encompassed his eyes. Feeling tired and detached, he ran his fingers through his hair. Another day. He could see no options; either stay home with Carol, whom he could hardly look in the eye; or, go to the office and face Laura, and God only knows what problems could follow her. He sighed and slowly began getting ready for work.

Jack sat at his desk and tried to concentrate on his work, which continued to pile up on his desk. He knew he could delegate most of the work to his employees; he didn't, however, knowing it was a good excuse to stay in his office and work late.

For a few moments, he was lost in his work, forgetting the problems which beset him. Then, looking up, he saw the family picture lying face down on the desk, and, once again, the problems beset his thoughts.

He had only seen Laura once today, and that was by accident. Passing her in the hall, he pretended to be busily reading some papers which were in his hands. He glanced up and saw her. Halfway smiling, he said, "Good morning, Miss Taylor." She slowed down, as if to speak, but he quickly walked past her, looking down at the papers in his hand.

He pushed himself away from the desk, turning to face the window. For the most part, he had hibernated in his office. Too much was on his mind. What to do about Laura; what to do about Carol, Mark and Cheryl. The family was a mess before all of this, he thought, but now—what if Laura—No, he had to quit thinking about it. Yet, somehow, ironically, Jack felt betrayed.

Just then there was a knock on the door. Jack went to open it. His partner, Bob Epsy, faced him. "Oh, come on in, Bob," he said. Bob was a handsome man, looking much younger than his age. He was tall and lean with dark hair. He was Jack's best friend, though they didn't see much of each other anymore.

"So, how have you been?" Bob asked, with a deep, confident voice. "You look a little tired."

"Oh," Jack said wearily, "I'm not doing too bad."

"Well, I just got back in town and thought I'd check in," he said, taking a seat facing Jack's desk. Jack stood gazing out the window, his back facing Bob.

"Everything's about the same," Jack lied.

"Yea, well," he said hesitantly, "I just got done chewing out Dan Martin for not finishing the Carmell account. But he said he'd given it to you. Do you know anything about it?"

Jack shook his head, as if in a daze, "Oh, yea, the Carmell account. That's here somewhere," he said turning to his desk. "I don't know Bob, I'll get back with you on that."

Bob paused and studied Jack's face, "You sure everything is okay?" Jack turned, once again, and faced the window. Swallowing hard he tried to speak, then Bob said, "Carol and the kids, how are they doing?"

Jack took a deep breath, "The same. Yea, the same." He sighed, still facing the window, "You know it's funny, how life is."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, I dunno." He paused for a moment, then continued, "Have you ever felt that you were given a set of rules and, just when you think you're standing firm, someone makes up a whole new set and expects you to live by them? And if you can't live by those rules, you get pushed aside." Jack thought of the car in his dream, "Yea, or you die trying. Round and round, until finally, you go over the edge."

Just then Jack caught hold of himself, embarrassed, he said, "Look, Bob, I'm just rambling." He forced a smile but could tell Bob was uneasy.

"Jack, I'm not sure what . . . well, look, you could have Dan or Phil finish most of what you got there. Why don't you take some time off. Take Carol and the kids somewhere. You know, get away for awhile. Probably have a bad case of cabin fever with this lousy weather we've been having."

"I might do that," Jack lied. "In the mean time, I want to finish a few things around here. But, I appreciate your concern."

"Don't hesitate to take off," Bob said, rising from the chair. As Jack walked him to the door, Bob slapped him on the shoulder, "After all, we own this thing. What's the purpose of owning a company if it's going to kill us. We deserve our breaks, you know."

"Yea, you're right," Jack said. "Don't worry about me."

It was almost five thirty, and Jack remained in his office. Outside, snow had begun to fall. Jack rose from his desk and stretched. He picked up the family picture and stared at it for a moment. "Carol, Mark, Cheryl, all with their own set of problems," he said to himself. "And, somehow, I'm supposed to make everybody normal—work all of their problems out." He shook his head and laid the picture face down, "I guess I quit trying that a long time ago."

He walked away from his desk and put on his coat. Pausing for a moment at the doorway, he turned and looked sadly at his office, then turned out the light and walked away. The hall was dark and the offices were empty. The only sound was the squishing of his shoes as he walked across the plush carpet. A cold wind greeted him as he opened the door. He looked at the black words on the front window: HIGGINS AND EPSY REALTY. Then he turned the key in the lock and started off across the vacant, snow covered parking lot.

Not bothering to pull the scarf around his face, he walked past his car and across the lawn, which separated the parking lot from the overlook. When the weather was warmer they had planned for a fence to be erected around the cliff.

He stood almost eight feet from the edge. The cold wind blew harder, stinging Jack's face. Looking up, he saw the snow had stopped and the clouds were beginning to clear. Stuffing his hands in his pockets, he took a few steps forward.

"How could things get so out of control?" he asked himself. "All the dreams and strivings for over twenty years, and here I am, with everything slipping through my hands." He looked down at the cold waters, crashing against the rocks below. He felt empty and tired.

"What's the big deal?" he told himself. "People have faced worse problems. It's going to work out, somehow. Besides, what I did wasn't that bad. Nothing Bob probably hasn't done." But it was more than that. He knew he was living on the brink of a family collapse, and somehow that meant something to him. He took another step forward.

High above the restless waters, he nudged a small rock over the edge with his foot. His eyes followed the rock as it dashed towards the torrent waters. Bouncing once, twice, then, making a small splash, it was consumed in the ocean below. The rock's descension fascinated him. He saw another small stone and kicked it over the edge. He followed it with his eyes, until it hit the water, hardly making a splash. He took another step forward.

The toes of his black shoes were now just barely over the edge. Just then, for only a moment, the setting sun pierced the dark clouds. Though it was evening, the rays seemed to make Jack feel warmer. He turned towards the western sky and closed his eyes. The sun's warmth upon his face felt good, promising a soon coming spring. No more dark dreary days, Jack thought.

But he turned away, refusing its comfort. Facing the cold waters, Jack inched forward. Once again, the clouds blanketed the setting sun, and all was gray and darkening. His knees trembled.

High above the waters, Jack sighed and contemplated the future.

Love poem

George Dunn

Love ever mythologizes its origins
sniffing out fate
in every blind chemical random contingency,
any wink or touch of a hand.

Each moment breathless with the promise
of meaning,
vague and receding
salvaged by art;
ephemeral passions etched deep and elevated
in the brain.

Love plays the author
and then says of its embellishments:
heaven
is the genius here—not I.

And if discovered
disarmed
and stripped,
lathe still smoking,
love makes a poem even of its nakedness
and a legend of its crimes.

KW 199 Sweet Corn

Pat Logan-Browne

For lunch

I desired only a ripe ear of sweet corn
coated in butter and salt

I searched the rows
and examined each ear for signs of maturity,
rejecting the color of silk
or the feel of the ear,
or the way that it clung, still too closely to the stalk
until I found the one ear that satisfied my knowing
eye and hand.

Darker green near the tip
where the black dried up bag lady hair showed itself,
but smoother and lighter, more cashmere and yellowy green
near the broken off stem.
And curling back from from each shuck leaf
the stalk leaf from which it was formed
stood out like a handle
inviting me to pull it down.

The outer parchment like leaves came down easily,
but inside they were stubborn
intent on the protecting the corn
from the bugs, and the weather—
the sun and the storms of the summer
and from me

Nineteen leaves formed the shuck
and as I pulled the most tender and small
ones down, the silk was revealed.
Flaxen yellow, like doll hair,
a color and texture I'd thought of as fake
till I saw it there on my corn.
Designed and engineered by nature,
or by God, is what I believe.

I pulled it away from
the kernels.

Sixteen strands of antique yellow-white pearls
translucent and shiny in the bright kitchen light
juicy and tender and succulent sweet.

And I knew then that what I had read
about God counting the hairs on my head
might be true.

So much care for the birds, and the lilies,
the grass of the field,
and for one ear of corn!

And I bowed my head in my small kitchen chapel
to give a blessing
over a ripe ear of sweet corn
coated in butter and salt.

This That and the Other

Pat Logan-Browne

Between this

(books and Bic pens and number two pencils
and psychology lectures and midnight oil burnings
and tests of my knowledge and papers:
researched, ingested,
then spit out onto typewritten pages
like bingeing and purging on words)

that

(dishes and dusting and kids
and supermarket foraging and straightening out that mess
with the telephone company and taking the dog for
his annual rabies protection)

and the other

(Greg's wedding last Saturday evening
and the shower the Sunday before
and taking mom to her doctor appointment
and my birthday and my friend dropping by
just to chat and staying till midnight,
eating all the cheddar and Ritz I just bought)

I won't be able to meet you
for lunch on Friday as planned

Count on Constants

Linda D. Lewis

Often feeling quite alone
I invite the clouds to tea
Ask the birds to sing my song
Just to keep me company.

Share my secrets with the sun
Gentle winds around me croon
Afternoons look forward to
Nightly visits with the moon.

Raindrops do my weeping for me
Cooing softly as the dove
Magnolias mourn me as I sleep
Willows whisper how I'm loved.

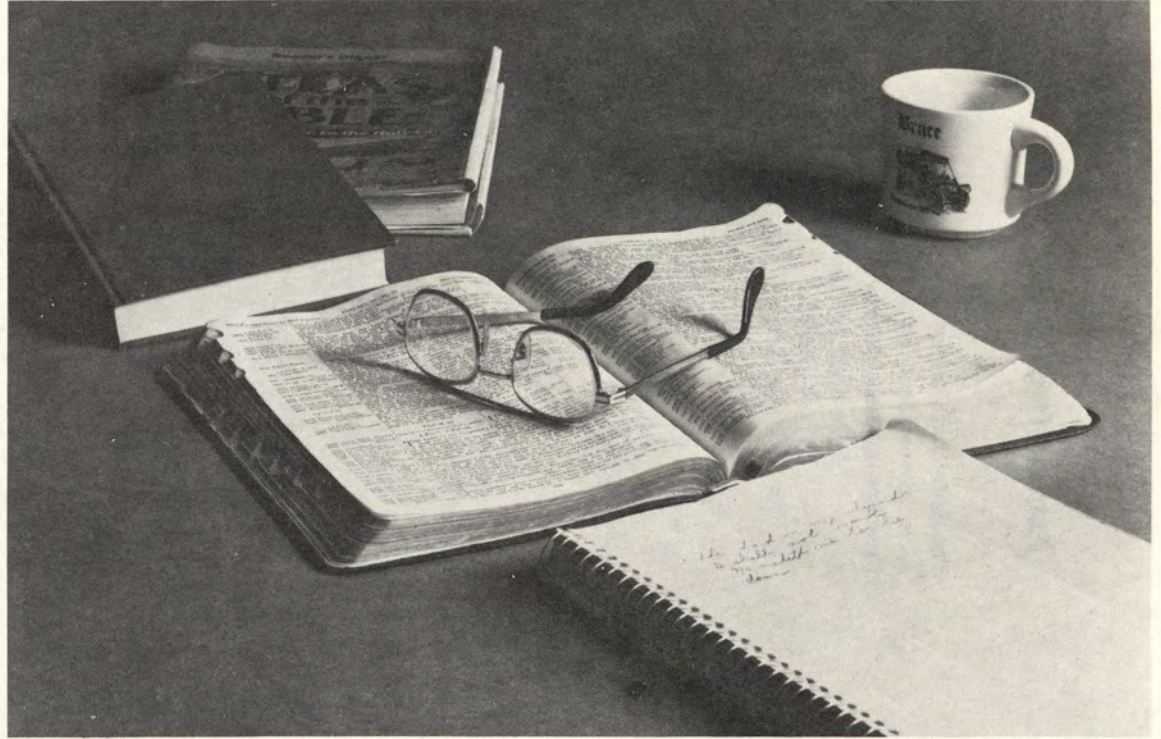
Late Night Pasta

Bill Ross

Late night pasta
Red shag carpeting
Au gratin iron railing
Around the world to the hospital
Around the world
To the house full of heartburn,
 buttermilk
 and muscle love

Late night T.V.
Black and white
And red all over

Dr. Pepper and cigarettes
Sleeping sometimes
Sleeping sometimes.



Untitled

Bruce Tapp

Freedom

Patricia Fogleman

The dog's chain rattles
As he moves about the yard.
Freedom is Man's word.

Chimera

J. B. Straw

i must write
 poems
like a man without sleeves
holding my hand until
 the last play
then spewing aces & treys
 across the room
amazing eyes
as my sharpest spade buries
 the elitest club
& my hearts turn to diamond;

i must unlock
 windows
like a thief without keys
holding my breath against
 the pane
then stepping thru shards & edges
 into the black
waiting eyes
inhabiting shadowed corners
 with sparkling spiders
as my pieces turn to mirror;

i must be
 disrobed
like a woman without inhibition
posing my Self across
 the canvas
then fusing the hues & oils
 into my skin
omitting eyes
as my fallen follicles reshape
 with the august breeze
& my faces turn to womb.

Anchors

Jackie Schmidt

I want the ocean, mirroring seagulls, crashing on rocks,
or bleaching the wood of New England's cottages,
white mountain tops under my feet,
a midsummer Blue Ridge gorge,
bluegrass ranches that smell of straining horses,
a desert sunset stretching rocky shadows,
Spanish moss drooping over swamps,
Creole bars and alley coffeehouses,
skyscrapers beheaded by clouds,
casino strips and floor shows,
rush hour subways.

I am anchored to
cornfields,
carpools,
high school basketball,
Waffle House,
\$1.25 movies,
unannounced friends,
and relatives
who want me
for Christmas.

Like dollops of cream

Shirley Vogler Meister

Like dollops of cream,
snow enriches winter's scenes:
cool delicacy

Night Watch

Linda D. Lewis

His day of work is done. The key turns slowly, and the door swings wide. Black Kitty looks up at him, and the silence within fills his head.

Wondering what others do to ward off the nothing, he picks up the nearly empty jar of peanuts, sits on the couch, and stares vacantly out the window.

The phone hangs quietly on the wall, interrupting no one, while he ponders ways in which to fill the hours ahead.

As the lavender twilight deepens, he absently munches the peanuts he does not taste. Recalling a different life than that now inside his window, his eyes fill, prompting him to quickly cut off feeling. He must continually nourish his numbness.

Methodically, he walks to his kitchen cubicle, opens the can, pours the contents into a pan and heats it on the burner. He turns on the radio, depending on the sound to assuage the emptiness before the house swallows him again.

After the meal, the pan is washed, dried, and put away. He moves down the hall to the bedroom, sprawls across the bed, and eventually sleeps.

She is there again, waving to him as she speeds down the river in her boat, leaving him behind on the bank, feeling alone and bereft. Her long black hair floats freely in the breeze, and she smiles as she glances back at him. Distance . . . too much of it to bridge now; she's forever out of reach. He cries because he cannot keep her with him, nor go where she is going.

He awakens, scared and sweating. His mouth is dry; his breathing erratic. Just another dream, he thinks, as he showers and splashes on too much cologne. Staring in the mirror, he tries to see himself as others must see him, and winces as red puffy eyes return his gaze. They do not lie.

Almost ready now, he finds his keys, puts on his hat carefully, and checks his image one last time. His neighbors are turning in for the night as his car turns into the parking lot across the street from the dilapidated corner bar.

His gait becomes John Wayne-like as he saunters in to say hello to his comrades. They shout their welcomes and call him by name as he shakes hands with the men and kisses the pasty cheeks of the ladies. He comes alive and becomes loved within this darksome circle. Here, he feels important, accepted . . . safe.

He claps ol' Kenny on the back as part of his nightly ritual, while Kenny sits unmoving, posted in his perpetual mushroom position.

He comforts Mrs. Thatcher as her soft shoulders shake off the sobs of her loss. Two days ago, she lost Paul, her live-in friend of many years. The bar stool beside her remains empty.

Marta waits impatiently for his attention. Finally, she touches his arm and motions him nearer. Tonight she seeks his counsel on the subject of aluminum siding for her rental property. He offers suggestions, and they debate aluminum versus steel for forty-five minutes.

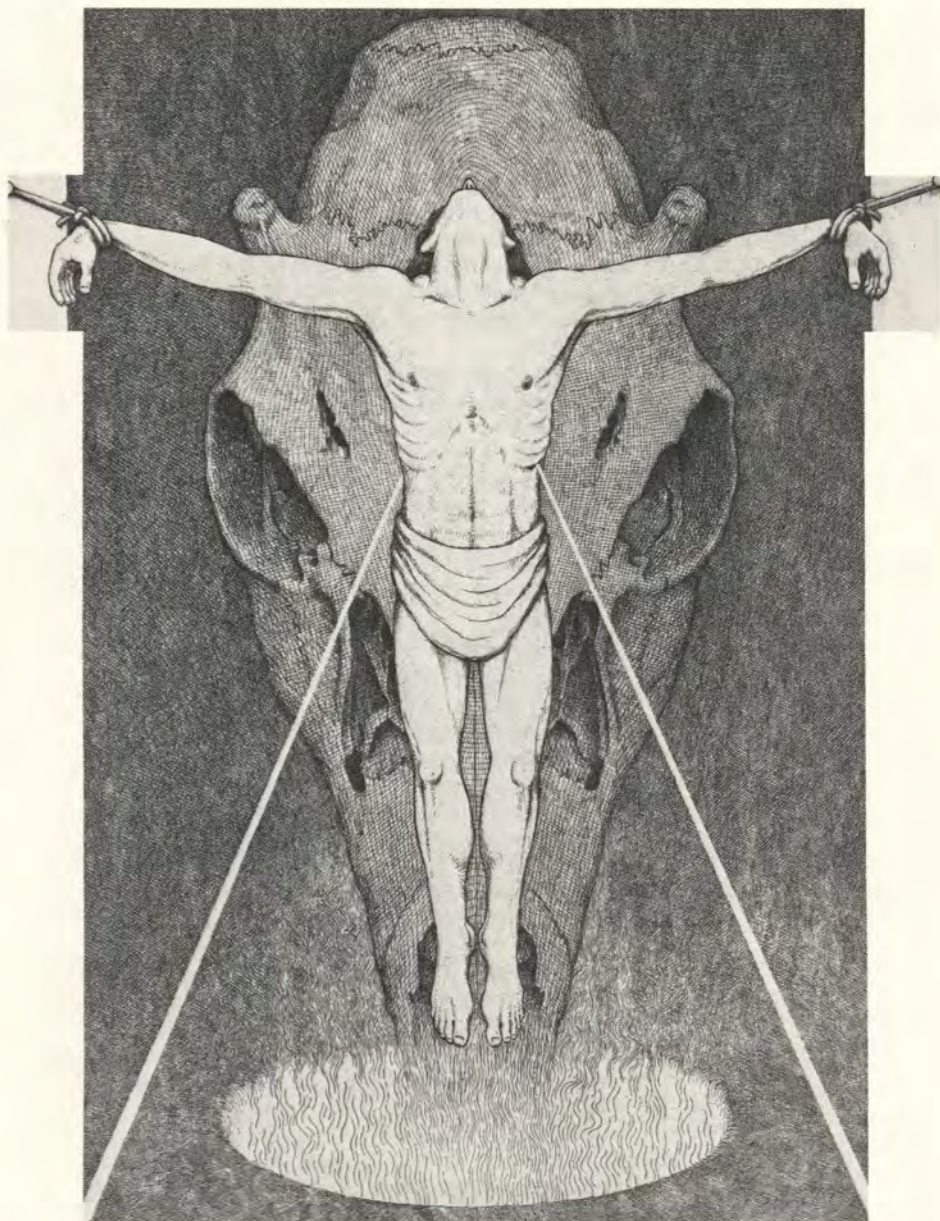
The lanky cowgirl that left her mark on his back last week asks him to dance. She's there with someone else tonight, and it bothers him that he cannot recall her name. He smiles at the familiar sound her boots make on the wooden floor.

Tony is busy, hurriedly pacing from one end of the bar to the other, intimidating customers with his raspy voice and quick temper. Seasoned regulars are aware that his sharp tongue is capable of reducing one to zero.

Presently, he joins Jim at the corner table. He speaks of the time Big Judy took them home with her after closing, and how her little boy walked in and found them there. They chuckle at the memory of the kid who yawned as he wandered back to his bed, undisturbed by the commonplace night noises and unfamiliar faces.

Around the dingy barroom, the unsung gallery of night people exchange exaggerated half-truths. All are important figures in the nocturnal vigil, evolving to oneness as they lament dormant dreams, exalt, taunt, and entertain one another through the nothing hours.

At 4:00 a.m. the key turns slowly, and the door swings wide. Black Kitty looks up at him. The silence within fills his head.



Sacrifice

Darryl Brown

A rocking-horse grandfather

Leslie Lynnton Fuller

There is man turned rocking-horse;
body bent like an attic candle

he swings Front as far as he is able
and Back as far as he is able
and he sits up.

He is the best jockey in this stable.

There is a scale, they weigh him.
A loss is a gain.
He is less, and so more fit
to ride the nightmare horse as black as ink
which stands in the stall and neighs to win.

He is the jockey
and knows his place in this cold womb of aching tile:
oh his weight is down again.

to win a race you light the load
this must be why
the once bright hair stays in the comb
and every tendon shows like wire . . .

The horse strikes sparks from the river bed
with a silver shoe. And you are first!

And the flag comes down, a scythe,
and we bear you your hard won flowers
we stitch your racing silks
into a 3-piece funeral suit
and melt the horse's shoe to a company watch—remember?

and you go, bold groom, to wed December.



Untitled

Jeanette Rowe



I do thee wed

Carol Lough

About the Authors and Artists:

David Beck—(prose, p. 31) I have lived in Indianapolis all of my 27 years. Currently, I am enrolled at IUPUI as an English major. I enjoy all types of writing and have had several non-fiction articles published.

Darryl Brown—(art, p. 54) I love God. I love life. I like to form images. I'm graduating soon. From Herron. Please Hire me.

George Dunn—(poetry, p. 10,22,44) "I'm a masochist for Jesus / I'm into pain for the lord / I love to turn the other cheek / I only wish I had one more . . ."

Patricia Fogleman—(poetry, p. 51) I am currently a sophomore at IUPUI majoring in history. I am interested in most things, if proficient at few; I have spent most of my life, inside and outside of classrooms, trying to learn. Poetry is a relatively new field of endeavor for me.

Leslie Lynnton Fuller—(poetry, p. 57, prose, p. 5) Like many of you, my favorite season is Fall, and I am in a sense a longer. Like you, I have ambitious dreams. Some are silly—for example, when I grow up, I'd like to marry the Theroux brothers. I keep stacks of Edith Wharton novels by my bed like bon-bons. I hope you all discover Stendhal's *Red and Black*. I'm an indentured servant for the IUPUI *Sagamore*, and I also write for *Farmweek*, *Steppin' Out*, *Indy's Child*, *Indianapolis Woman*, and stringer stuff for the *Indianapolis News*.

I'm surprised some of the writers I know think they're saving their souls by avoiding journalism. After all, it was good enough for Wharton, Woolf, Dickens, Balzac, and Poe . . .

Patricia F. Keane—(art, p. 26,30) I am fifty-five years old, married, with three children. My youngest, a son, now attends IUPUI. I, in the meantime, am working toward a degree in Fine Arts at Herron. This is a lifetime dream coming true, slow but sure.

Linda D. Lewis—(poetry, p. 13,15,48, prose, p. 55) My first love is poetry and poets. I've had crushes on such men as Whitman, Eliot, Sandburg and Emerson . . . not to mention a few Unknowns. I'm fascinated with the short story and hope to grow as a writer in several new directions. My goal in life is to eventually find a job with a classy company where I'm paid an exorbitant salary for expounding my own personal view on absolutely everything, manipulating corporate heads, eating chocolate and being wonderfully witty all day. (No overtime, please.)

Deann List—(prose, p. 23) Deann is a senior English major who is married and lives with her family on the east side of Indianapolis.

Pat Logan-Browne—(poetry, p. 17,45,47) I am a junior in the School of Social Work. On the side, I am a wife, mother, grandma, volunteer, and part-time employee. In my spare time I sleep, when not writing poetry.

- Carol Lough**—(art, p. 57) It used to be that the grown-ups would ask me what I was going to be when I grew up. Now it is my grown children who ask. It seems even more possible now, at forty that I do not need to *be* anymore other than I am.
- Shirley Vogler Meister**—(poetry, pp. 16,21,27,54) Shirley earned her B.A. in English, with highest distinction, in December of '85. A free-lance writer, she has published poetry, essays, articles, and reviews in diverse publications throughout the U.S., and she has won awards for poetry, literary criticism, and journal. This is her last contribution to genesis.
- Bill Ross**—(poetry, p. 4,28,49, art, p. 14) I am 21 years old and in my fourth year at John Herron. My major is painting, and I have an interest in performance art and music.
- Jeannette Rowe**—(art, p. 56) She received a Bachelor's degree in art history at Ohio University. As a housewife, she maintained an interest in reading and speaking French, and studied oil painting. In the last several years she has given up oil painting and focused a great deal of interest in photography, first with subjects from sylvan settings, and more recently with human subjects. She is currently studying languages at IUPUI, and hopes to take photography courses in the future.
- Jackie Schmidt**—(poetry, p. 19,20,29,53, prose, p. 1) Now that I have nearly raised my daughter, my son, and my husband, I am a full-time student at IUPUI trying to decide what I want to be when I grow up.
- J.B. Straw**—(poetry, p. 3,11,52)

Bio:

degradable:

1 fifth kerouac
 a sprinkle of rimbaud flakes,
 some corso salt,
 a touch of young,
 a daub of dylan,
 add morrison punch,
 stir well but crazy,
 & serve hot, a la carte.

