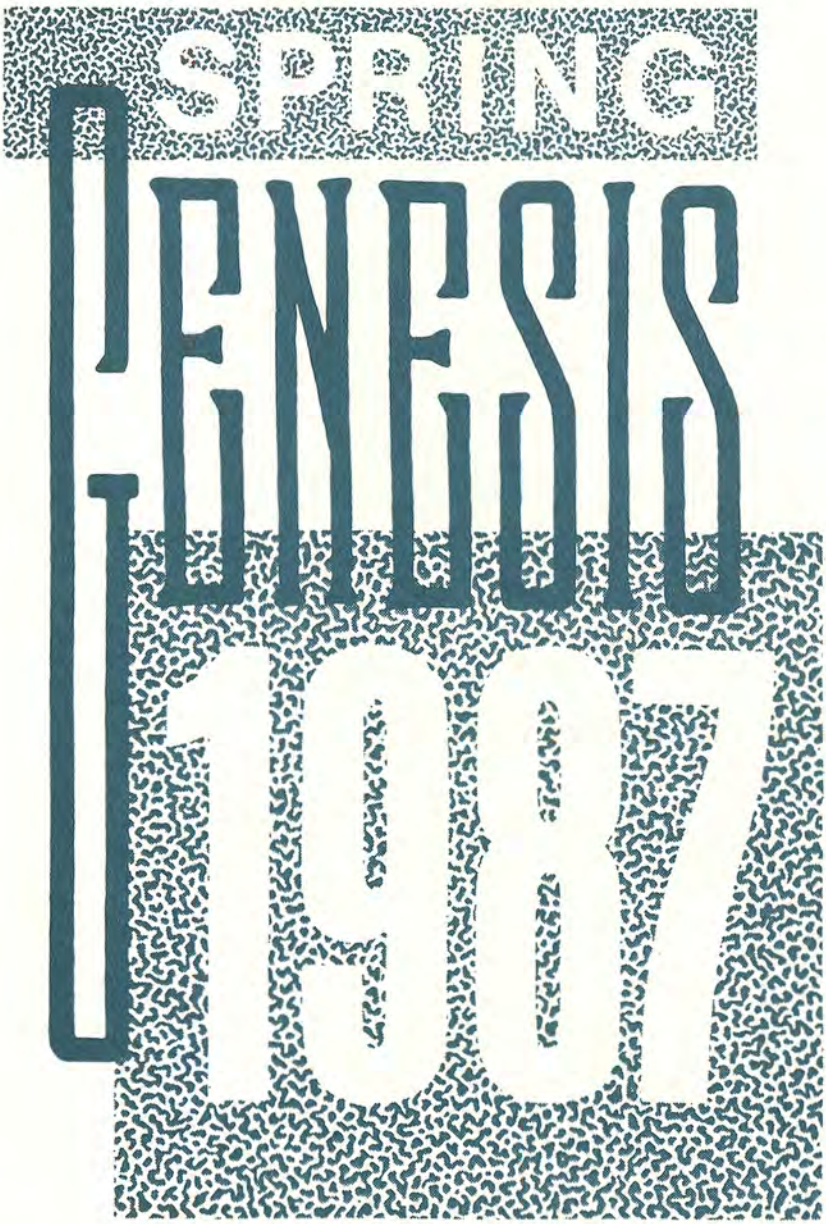
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CONTENTS

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The editorial staff appreciates the support and assistance of our faculty advisor:
Anne Williams

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 ntoified 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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Manuscripts must be typed and submitted in duplicate; prose pieces should be double-spaced on a sixty-space line. Please classify prose pieces as either fiction or non-fiction. Poets are asked to submit no more than ten pieces for a given issue. All submissions must be accompanied by a separate title sheet containing the author's name, address, telephone number and a 25-50 word bio.

Authors whose material has been accepted will be notified 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 Editoral Board are ineligible to receive prizes.

Army Men

Robert Aull

"Hide them behind the hill."

"Where?"

"*Here.* Where Grandpa Carl said."

"On B-Day."

"*D*-Day," the older boy corrected, wiping a line of dirt from his lip onto his sleeve, moving awkwardly in the heavy, confining suit. His tie lay coiled in a corner; he has removed his shoes before climbing in.

Ted picked four plastic tanks out of the battered hatbox and set them behind the dirt mound they had raised between them. Andrew watched his brother with an artist's intensity, carefully guiding each piece with his eyes.

"Put some with mortars over there."

In the dark of the crawlspace, the younger boy was forced to tilt the hatbox toward a faint lightbulb at the foot of the basement stairs. He rummaged inside, sorting figures, pushing unwanted pieces to one side before delivering up two small handfuls.

"Machine guns. I need more machine guns."

They had dug trenches in the dirt with their grandfather's wood chisels, creating the mound in the center to lay siege to. A cluster of soldiers already waited in a crater at the top of the hill, and surrounding it the boys worked to lay out attacking forces. Their agile hands moved quickly, straightening, shifting—forcing the plastic base of each figure into the dirt so that it stood upright in whatever molded attitude of war it presented: standing and firing, kneeling and firing, firing from the hip, manning the machinegun, loading the mortar, sighting with binoculars . . .

"No, put the ones with binoculars in the back. With the radiomen."

Ted replaced them, first reaching out to steady himself on the cobwebbed rafters supporting their grandfather's den. Through the floor they could hear their father's footsteps and the lighter movements of Grandpa Carl. Occassionally, when one of the men spoke after a long silence, or shouted, Ted and Andrew would freeze in position like their soliders, waiting.

They had not asked to be in the crawlspace, or to use the chisels they found wrapped in newspaper in a footlocker beneath the workbench. Grandpa Carl would not care, but even he, when he first brought down the plastic army men from the attic, had warned them not to be caught by their father. It didn't seem fair but they didn't ask—their father got angry at strange things, certain TV shows, or toys . . .

And they were playing in the good clothes they wore for the service, under the striped tent in the rain. Everyone cried, even

their father, and Grandpa Carl had almost fainted when they started lowering . . . Once in the crawlspace, Ted managed to stain his suit pants with clay to the knees, and as Andrew watched his little brother he was suddenly impressed with the amount of trouble they had fallen into.

"Sh!" He raised his hand. The voices had stopped without warning. Before, by the hard edge in his father's voice, Andrew had placed him near the door to the study, while the click of Grandpa Carl's boots had come from behind him, where the back window would be. Now, as he stared at the unpainted cinder blocks making up the basement wall, concentrating, he could hear nothing. Ted started to whimper and Andrew quieted him again; their father's voice had returned, swelling even louder.

"You can't say that! I had no idea she was sick!"

"Of course you didn't! You never even called, dammit! She knew more about Margaret than she knew about you—"

"Leave Margaret out of it!"

"Why not?" You already have! Son, in my day we got married and we stayed—"

"YOUR day? Who gives a goddamn . . ."

Ted selected three more men from the box, pressing them into the dirt wall of a small trench. Andrew went on staring at the cinder blocks until satisfied that the men overhead were not listening, then returned to a wall of his own he had thrown up at the bottom of the hill. He leaned over to his younger brother, whispering as the voices rose above them.

"Gimme some more army men. I'm gonna set up a *crossfire*."

Ted dug into the hatbox and came up with a small clump of plastic pieces, hesitantly lifting his eyes to the rafters and floorboards, through which they could hear the mounting anger. An old telephone wire covered in brown cloth ran alongside a heating duct, and on the points of the floorboard nails hung thick, dust-covered cobwebs. They heard their father cross the room, walking behind Ted's shoulder with heavy steps. The argument was resumed there, and although Andrew occasionally stopped long enough to listen, he went on placing the soliders behind his wall, pushing their heads down until only the very tip of each helmet showed over the top. Ted watched him nervously, beginning to jump at the shouting and sudden movements filtering down from above.

"You have no idea, no idea at all! It was different. . .coming back . . . Sure, you and your VFW buddies . . . the big heroes! Do you know what I came back to?"

The old man was furious. "Did you think we weren't going to take you in? Your own mother . . ."

Andrew put the end of a soldier's rifle in his mouth and tried to straighten it with his teeth. "Are there any of them with grenades left?"

Ted glanced up from the tanks and shook his head, his chin trembling now.

"Spill them out over here."

They turned the hatbox over and began shuffling on their knees in the dirt surrounding the hill, placing the last messengers, mine-sweepers and odd-set cowboys in inconspicuous places. Andrew directed Ted constantly; it had to be *real.*

"Now go over and run the tanks. Don't bring them out until I tell you to," he dictated.

"I *know*." Tear streaks had appeared in the dirt on the younger boy's face.

"Sh!" Andrew hissed. They froze, crouching over the battle. Their grandfather had stamped his foot, loosing a curtain of a dust over them from between the floorboards.

"I don't know what kinda man punishes his family for what they had nothing to do with—"

"Nothing to do with?"

"—or never calls his own mother . . . lets his wife talk to her, tellin' her about grandchildren she'll never get to see—"

"Dad, don't!"

Ted moved a tank turret with his little finger, pushing it left and right in the silence that followed. He glanced over to his brother, who had rubbed his hands free of dirt before crawling back to his "crossfire." Suddenly, the voice of their grandfather went on, slowly, tremendously loud:

"Are you saying you blame me, you ungrateful son-of-a-bitch?"

His voice was terrible, deeper than their father's when he was angry and yet almost from the same mouth. It affected Andrew just as his father's anger always did; he stared at the cinder blocks and concentrated on not hearing, not reacting to the voices, the same yelling again, his mother screaming back . . . but Ted couldn't remember that much, and to hear the voice even deeper and more awful, and not his father's . . .

He began to wail.

Andrew tried to keep concentrating but the howl increased. His brother pounded the dirt with his fists, eyes squeezed shut, mouth hanging open, coughing when he stopped long enough for air . . .

They heard the voice of their father and the heavy thud of his boots on the floor. He shouted, ordering them upstairs. Andrew looked over the crawlspace sadly, anticipating their punishment. They had not even had time to play out the battle. Ted, too, recognized that his outburst had given them away and knew what would follow, for as Andrew reached in to pull him from the crawlspace he increased his screams. They tried frantically to brush the dirt from their clothes, but there wasn't time—their father shouted again.

Grandpa Carl was speaking as they came into the hallway. They stood outside the door, afraid to enter, Ted breaking out into hiccups.

"John, you can't blame the boys. Blame me, I showed 'em where you used to play. I gave 'em your army men—"

"You gave them what?"

The old man blinked at his son, puzzled. "Your toy army men. The ones that you played with in the crawlspace."

"And did you tell them about D-Day?"

Ted held his breath; Andrew marveled to hear his father speak steadily in the rage he could sense at the edge of his words. He expected an outburst, and after a short silence, it came:

"Dad, can't you understand? I don't want them to play war! I don't want them to know anything about it! It's sick, insane . . . I

don't want them to grow up like I did. I want them to know it's wrong."

The old man blinked faster, working his hands into fists.

"Of course it's *wrong*, but you have to get over it. Dammit, I had to get over what happened . . . I saw men die, terrible things . . ." He paused, and in the hall the boys could suddenly see their grandfather in uniform, running, firing, kneeling to aim, shouting . . . They became excited, momentarily diverted from trouble.

". . . but I had to come back. I had to forget about it and get on with my life. That's why I came *home*, son . . ."

The door swung open and the boys faced their father, a large man who filled the entrance to the small room, seeming to push their grandfather into the background of his own den.

"Get in here."

"Now, don't blame them, John," the old man repeated as they came in, Ted crying again, dirt smeared into their good clothes. The younger boy pulled free of his brother and ran to Grandpa Carl, jumping into his arms.

"What were you two doing in the crawlspace?"

Andrew backed away from his father, not sure whether he would be struck or not. The anger was at a fine point now but somehow under control, just behind the calm voice . . .

"We were playin' Germans." He held up a figure of soldier in his hand. "Like you and Grandpa Carl used to."

"Grandpa Carl was in the *war*," Ted interuppted, lifting his head from the old man's shoulder, the white shirt smeared with handprints. "On B-day."

"D-Day," his grandfather corrected.

"You told them?" John demanded. Ted climbed out of the old man's arms and left him standing there, arms loose at his side.

"I didn't know how you felt; how could I? It was raining out . . . you used to love to play there. Always."

The younger man knelt down and pulled the two boys close to him. "I don't want you to play with these at anytime, do you understand?" He pried the plastic soldier from Andrew's hand and set it on the windowsill. Outside, the rain had increased, flooding the backyard and making an island of his old clubhouse, the rusted swingset . . . his voice wavered.

"When I was in the war, in Vietnam, my friends and I . . . we had to kill people. It was terrible . . . it was *awful*. I want you boys to understand that war is bad . . . it's nothing for you to play. People don't get back up again and keep shooting. My friends died there—would you like that, Ted, if your friend Henry died? If he were hit by a bullet and you could never see him again?"

The younger boy shook his head, chin moving again.

"I don't ever want to catch you playing with those toys again, and I don't want you bothering Grandpa for them. Is that clear?"

The boys stared at the floor.

"Is that clear?"

"Yessir," they answered, but he continued to stand there, glaring. He studied them for a long time, while they wondered whether or not they would be paddled. Finally, he turned away in agitation and snatched the plastic figure from the sill, staring out over the backyard. Grandpa Carl pushed them out of the den and

moved quietly to his room to change shirts, telling them to clean up the basement and shutting the door behind him.

On the way down the stairs they were excited and relieved, pushing one another to be first to the bottom. At the hole in the wall opening on the crawlspace, Andrew sat down and pulled off his shoes. He looked over the waiting figures, the tanks in a row, their guns trained on the hill. His eyes flashed momentarily and he gripped the wall.

"Daddy was in the *war*," he whispered, picturing his father in uniform, firing his rifle, shouting . . . Ted came up next to him and they smiled at one another, faces flushed and thrilled, looking over the scene with the same dreamy eyes.

"In Bietnam."

Patterns

Jackie Schmidt

Stitch after stitch
the pieces link
on the quilting frame,
scraps of her past
in textures and prints and shades,
faded as her memory
recalling them
when her fingers were agile
and her eyes sharp
and her life full.

The brown and yellow plaids
were flannel work shirts
rolled to his elbows
and smelling of hay
when he'd surprise her
in the garden
and press her to his chest.

The boys wore them, too,
just like dad's
except their plaids were red and blue
with a smaller print.
It was the only choice
from the catalogue
to size 16.

And, of course, bits of denim
thin and nearly white
from wear,
passed down from cousins
and patched
passed down and cut to shorts
and passed down.

The scarce few squares of broadcloth
were Sunday best,
just one apiece
and too blousy to outgrow.
They were preserved in starch
according to the boys
and wore forever.

But the youngest
never complained of crispness.
Blue and white dotted-swiss
pinafores trimmed in lace
ginghams and calicoes
with tatted cuffs
and embroidered collars.

And her own contribution:
an occasional muted paisley,
but plentiful squares
of simple solids,
poplin and muslim,
from housedresses and aprons
that endured the gardens
and cannings and sinks and meals
and floors and wash days
for years and years.

And now,
these fragments
pieced together
by bent fingers and memories
into a pattern
nearly complete.

Your hand, this page

Alex Anderson

Your hand, this page
Physicists say
Is but an empty space:
A galaxy
Of interlocking charges
And when towering ivory loves
Crumble under glacial eyes,
It is easy—comforting—
To think of all
As tiny fields of force
And miniscule sparks
Drifting chill
In the great motherdark.

Nice Start

Jackie Schmidt

Daddy built this house.
The small back bedroom
with the view of the swing and garden
was mine—
from provincial and gingham
to Hollywood and psychedelic
from Mickey Mouse posters
to Bob Dylan and Joan Baez
from chicken pox
to heartaches.

And mom shared her kitchen with me.
Waiting for winter breakfasts,
I straddled the register
near the pantry,
my flannel gown puffed
by warm gusts.
At dinner: homebaked bread
rich Italian sauces
half-baked jokes
and poor Italian relatives.

We called the living room a "music room."
Country songs and
mountain jigs.
Daddy on the guitar
mom on the accordian
me on the spoons
until bedtime.
They'd tuck me into bed
then go to their room.

It was the large one in front
with rose carpet
and hard-maple bed and rocker
and view of the flowering crab
that Daddy planted as a seedling
on their sixth anniversary
and that is casting a shadow today
on a sign:

FOR SALE
NICE STARTER HOME

Little Jack Horner **Darryl Brown**

Dusk

Mark Small

Cattle crop lower branches
of the tree line
    luminescent with the sun
14 shades of glowing green—
but for the cottonwoods,
leaves upturned in whiteness,
pages to be read by breezes.
Hot July fragrances
on heavy corn-pollinated air—
    and mown hay
    and cut peppermint.
And blades of timothy, sweet
to the tastes of the horses.
And a falling sense of dusk
writes its name on every evening
as the first star appears
for wishes to be made.

Faces

Steve W. Mathis

A stone faced poor man
walks the city streets
blown along by gritty winds

A leather faced farmer
works a plow somewhere
digging his own grave and
that of his children

A wax faced businessman
has a toot before lunch
He looks at himself in
his well-used mirror
and thinks how hard life is

New Heaven

Mary Nicolini

it rarely lightnings in winter,
and the birds they don't chirp
quite so incessantly
outside my window

there are days when i've fallen asleep in the night
to their warbling their impatient trilling
to welcome the dawn

which comes so much earler now than it did
just a few weeks ago
and
do you know what i mean when i say
the mimosa blooms at the end of the block

it means sweet proserpine bids her farewell
to the monarch of pluto
she rises from Hades
shedding the darkness
shakes off the deadness
spits out the seeds of
the pomegranate and
they root where they land
and things grow
and it's spring and it's spring

Images of Home.

Christine Dowdeswell

Africa,
magic, buried in my heart.
There,
among granite rocks,
on the kopje,
nestles my old farmhouse.
Aloe, cactus,
wild fig and frangipani,
Pointsettias,
climbing free,
stretching to the sun.

Soft cushions of vibrant red blossoms,
archways of Flame Trees
shade the avenues.
Clouds of purple overhead,
fallen petals below,
walking among Jacarandas
beneath an African sky.

In the bush,
grass, golden brown,
shading lion lazing in the heat.
Msasa trees,
canopy shaped,
on scrubland,
stretching to the horizon,
vast, dry,
water to my eyes.

Mosi-oa Tunya,
Smoke that Thunders,
Zambesi, mighty, powerful,
plunges to the gorge below.
Watching, wet with spray,
I stand there,
hypnotised,
in Africa.

Tithe the Drummer

Jeff Roby

Satellite preacher screams the word,
  so begin the drums and drumming.
Eternal souls auctioned for gold,
  and louder comes the drums
  and drumming.
Fear the Lord; drum, drum ...
Burn the thinkers; drum, drum ...
Drumming on to numb the mind,
Hear no pain
Feel no evil ...

Righteous ruler targets a weapon
  while drum, drum, drumming.
Power obsessive—political pushing
  and drum, drum, drumming.
Warships pressing; drum, drum ...
Terrorists threatening; drum, drum ...
Drumming death on skulls of American Jews.

Vigilante tactics rule;
  drum, drum, drumming
Child murdered—retaliation;
  drum, drum, drumming ...
Subway killer; drum, drum ...
Now a hero; drum, drum ...
Begging minister—hostage of God?
  while the drum drums,
  drumming, pounding,
  numbing, howling,
Herding sheep to a coma of faith
Shearing their will—taking their young ...

Thoughts' Journey — **Kathleen Eain McGinnity**

The Painter

David Beck

Nick sat by the window of his upstairs room, smoking a cigarette and watching a young woman as she raked leaves in her backyard. His window faced the back of her house, and, in the summer, he would watch her as she lay basking in the sun.

She wore a red sweatshirt and blue jeans, her blond hair pulled back in a pony tail. Leaning back in his chair, Nick nervously tapped his foot against the window sill. Suddenly, he sat forward and pushed the window open. Fresh air, he needed fresh air, he thought. A gentle breeze blew in the window, permeating his room with the smell of autumn.

He got up and paced around the room, rubbing the back of his neck with one hand, holding his cigarette in the other. As he walked by the window, he stopped and leaned out, overlooking his neighborhood. Flicking his cigarette out the window, he then fell back in his chair, his eyes focused on the tree tops sprinkled across the lawns and between the old two-story houses. The orange of the sugar maple and the red of the dogwood were highlighted by a tall oak tree, which stood like Goliath, in the young woman's backyard.

A breeze blew and Nick watched the leaves fall from the oak tree, swirling in the October air, landing softly on the ground, then dancing across the lawn. The young woman laid her rake down and went inside. Nick got up restlessly, and threw himself down on the bed.

His room was silent except for the sound of water running through the pipes. Mrs. Murray was doing dishes, he thought. Probably going to some church function or to visit her sick sister. For a moment, he felt pity for the heavy set woman from whom he rented his room. What a boring existence.

She was a deeply religious woman whose husband had died ten years ago. Her kindness, as seen by Nick, was a good reason to be late with the rent. The less she said, the more he owed, and she said little. Currently, he was three months behind. Only when becoming weary of evading her did he pay the rent. But he knew she wouldn't evict him. She didn't like living alone. Ever since the neighborhood had begun to deteriorate, she seldom left the house.

From his bed, he gazed through the open window as the young woman stepped out her back door. Closing his eyes, he envisioned her, barefooted, lying in a grassy meadow on a summer afternoon. A gentle breeze blew as she lay on her stomach reading a book. Suddenly, he sat up in his bed. The smell of burning leaves perfumed his room. He walked to the window and saw the girl standing by a pile of burning leaves. Nick wanted to touch her, hold her, run his fingers through her blond hair. But the smoke rose

from the pile of dead, burning leaves, like a temple curtain, separating him from her and the whole world.

Nick walked from the window, feeling bored, tired and dirty. He hadn't showered or shaved in three days, seldom even had he left the room. After entering the small half-bathroom in the corner of his room, he turned on the tap above the bathtub and waited for the water to get warm. His face expressionless, he stared, as if dazed, at the rising steam from the hot water as it formed at the basin of the tub, ascending, then dissipating before reaching his face.

After showering, Nick, quietly and quickly, went downstairs and out the back kitchen door, avoiding Mrs. Murray. Stuffing his hands deep in his pocket, he stopped on the back porch. The young woman was no longer in her yard. He saw the pile of ashes, dead leaves, and broken twigs heaped in the yard, somehow, reminding him of pictures he had seen of the bodies of Jews in Nazi concentration camps, piled lifelessly upon one another.

As he walked towards the Village, where he spent much of his time, his thoughts were of Mrs. Murray. Why was it he avoided her as he did? The rent, perhaps. But she seldom mentioned it. In fact, it was usually he who brought up the subject during their somewhat strained and formal conversations. Something like, "Oh, by the way, I'll be getting your money to you at the end of the week." She would smile pleasantly, yet somewhat sadly, and nod her head. Later, he would curse himself for even mentioning the rent, perplexed at why he said anything at all. Only once had she confronted him about his debt. She had complemented his ability to paint and said, if he liked, he could paint her a picture of Jesus instead of paying her the money he owed. He shook his head at the thought of the idea. What is Jesus supposed to look like, anyway? he thought, as he approached the Village.

Passing the small night clubs and sidewalk cafes, Nick watched the empty, pretty faces of the people who journeyed out every night as the sun began to set. The air was getting cooler and Nick pulled his jacket collar up around his neck. Many of the cafe owners were pulling the chair and tables inside for the evening. Everything soon would be dead, Nick thought, while passing the empty, outside tables. The mass of people would no longer slowly saunter down the sidewalks; nor would there be the music coming from the open doors of the small clubs which lined the streets; no musicians performing on the sidewalks or painters who set up their easels on street corners, capturing on canvas the somewhat make-believe world of the Village.

Nick approached a small shop that had hanging from the window, a wooden, hand carved sign which read, "Aesthetic Experience."

"Hey, Nicky. What's happening?" asked a short, balding young man, who held a palette smeared with oil paint in one hand and a brush in the other. He rose from behind the canvas he had been working on, laid down his brush, and shook Nick's hand.

"How's it going?" Nick asked apathetically, his eyes glancing around the room, as if hardly noticing the figure with whom he was shaking hands.

"Not bad, not bad. 'How 'bout yourself, Nick?"

"Hangin' in there," he answered, his eyes still scanning the

room. "Has anything of mine sold?"

"Naw, Nick, not a thing," Marty answered in a disappointed tone. "Not much of anything has been selling lately. It's been pretty dead." Quickly regaining his enthusiasm, he said, "Look — why don't I close up and we'll go get us something to drink." Nick nodded, putting on his sunglasses.

Bending over the sink, with a can of turpentine in his hand, Marty began cleaning his brush and pallet. Shouting over his shoulder, he asked, "Did you see what I'm working on?"

Nick walked over, removing his sunglasses, and looked closely at the painting. He shook his head, as if disgusted, and said, "Birds?"

"Yellow-belly finch — What do you think?" Nick shook his head, putting on his sunglasses again, and said, "Let's go."

Marty followed Nick, locking the door behind him. "So you don't like it, huh, Nick? I supposed you wouldn't, not that I really care."

They shouldered their way through the slow moving mass of people. Marty continued, "Maybe I could put a bullet moving straight towards its head. Or a bloodthirsty hawk swooping in for the kill. More your style, huh Nick?" he asked mockingly.

Nick didn't answer, so Marty continued. "Seriously, Nick, what are you working on? Anything?"

"How about a pretty girl, barefooted, lying on her stomach in a grassy meadow?" Nick said, smiling as he stared straight ahead.

"It's been done."

"Everything's been done," Nick answered sharply. "That's why I haven't been painting. Besides, why paint if it won't sell?"

"Quit being such a utilitarian. Paint for the sake of painting."

"Right," Nick said sardonically while removing his sunglasses.

They walked into a small wine bar, half empty, and sat at a table by the window.

"You know," Nick continued, "when I see the crap that is sold for art, it makes me want to flush my supplies down the toilet."

"Poor Nicky," Marty said with a grin as he took off his jacket. "Hey, speaking of crap," Nick said irritably, "look at what you've been doing lately. Birds, for heaven's sake."

"Wait a minute, Nick, I —"

"What do animals have to do with anything?"

Just then a waitress came to the table. Both ordered a glass of Rosé. Then, leaning forward, Marty said, "What do animals, or scenery for that matter, have to do with death? Nothing! Absolutely nothing. That's what you're getting at." Realizing he was beginning to raise his voice, he stopped, sighed, then said, "You see, Nick, all those grotesque subjects we used to paint in art school didn't mean anything to me. I just did it 'cause it was the thing to do. I mean, half of those paintings only looked as if they were saying something."

The waitress brought their glasses of wine, setting them on the table, while Nick stared out the window, watching the many faces moving up and down the street, as the final moments of the day succumbed to the darkness of the night. Knowing that Nick was only pretending to be disinterested, Marty continued, "Just because an artist doesn't brood over death in every work, doesn't mean he isn't serious about art. Nor does it mean his work is

shallow."

Nick looked down at the table, shaking his head. Marty reached over and hit Nick on the shoulder. "You gotta lighten up, man." He paused, and then said, "Nick, you want to know something crazy? The more I paint nature scenes, the more I get this sense of . . . of the transcendent . . . or a divine presence —"

"Oh give me a break, Marty," Nick said, pushing himself away from the table. "You've been reading too much Emerson or Whitman or something."

"I don't know, Nick, maybe there's something to religion and all that," Marty said uncomfortably, feeling somewhat foolish.

"You ought to get together with Mrs. Murray, my landlady. She's been asking me to paint her a Jesus picture. Said she'd let me off a few months' rent," he paused, taking a drink of wine. "I mean, what is Jesus supposed to look like? For that matter, who really cares?"

"Well, then, you'll really think this is crazy."

"What? Did you join a monastery?" Nick asked sarcatically.

Ignoring the remark, Marty continued, "This preacher came into the shop and asked how much I'd charge him to paint a crucifix picture. Nothing elaborate, no people, just three crosses, illuminating the one in the middle. He said he couldn't afford much but wanted it for his church. I thought about it for a minute, then said 'Why not.'

But here's the strange part: I got to painting it, and I really felt something. Something deep inside." Marty paused, took a drink, then said, "It was good, too."

"What, the painting or the feeling?" Nick asked, seeming somewhat uninterested.

"Both, I guess. Anyway, what's really strange is, after finishing it, I didn't know what to charge the guy. Then I found myself thinking, 'Who cares?' So, I just wrapped it in brown paper and laid it inside the door of the church. No charge. A few days later, I got this real nice letter from the preacher, thanking me and blessing me, and all that stuff." He smiled, looking down at his glass, and said, "Made me feel real good."

"Well, Marty," Nick said, rising from the table, "I hope your landlord doesn't mind getting paid with nice 'bless you' letters, cause if he does, you wasted a lot of time."

Marty shrugged, also rising from the table, "You'll never change, Nick, you'll never change."

In the cool of the night, Nick, with his hands pushed deep in his pockets, walked along the empty sidewalks toward home. The neighborhood streets were silent, except for the sound of the fallen dead leaves being crushed underneath his feet as he walked alone. For a moment, he remembered reading in school of the elephant graveyards, where the huge beasts would go to die. It was ironic, he thought, that the dying leaves did much the same thing when they fell together every autumn, awaiting their burial in the ground that once gave them life, or to be cremated in the fiery piles like the one the young woman tended this afternoon. Every autumn the earth becomes one large cemetery or a temporary crematory, he thought to himself.

Nick thought of his conversation with Marty. As absurd as it

was, it kept returning to this thoughts. He also thought of his need to do something to occupy his time. His money was beginning to dwindle to nothing. And wandering around the Village was getting tiresome. Same old people talking about the same old things.

When approaching the home where he stayed, Nick walked to the back of the house so as to avoid Mrs. Murray who probably would be in the front room. He unlocked the back door and quietly walked through the kitchen to the staircase.

Suddenly, he stopped, hearing what sounded like sobbing coming from upstairs. Slowly, he walked up the stairs. Reaching the top, he could clearly hear Mrs. Murray crying in her bedroom.

The door was ajar, and Nick stood half behind it, hidden in the shadows. A picture of Mrs. Murray's sister lay on the bed beside an open Bible. Sitting on the edge of the bed, facing away from the door, her body heaved as she wept. Nick felt uneasy, viewing this pathetic creature with folded hands in her lap, sobbing. He started to turn away but could not; the whole scene somehow intrigued him. Then, he felt as if he wanted to comfort her, to say or do something. He hesitated as he stood at the door; his body seemed torn in two different directions.

Knowing her sister had been sick, he knew that she probably had died. He thought to himself that perhaps he could touch her shoulder, or sit beside her to try somehow to comfort this lonely woman. Taking a deep breath, he placed his hand lightly on the door handle and eased forward. Then, quickly retreating, he quietly walked away.

Lying on the bed, in the darkness of his room, Nick's mind would not let him rest. Thoughts of the sorrowful Mrs. Murray, the new, mystical Marty with his nature paintings and the picture he donated to a church, for some reason, served to depress him — even to the point of sickness.

"Maybe Marty's right," he said to himself. "And maybe I should have said something to her." He began to breathe heavily, biting his lip, he said aloud, "No! I don't owe them anything! They can all go to hell. Marty's an idiot to give away a painting to a church — a preacher whom he didn't even know. And what do I care about Mrs. Murray and her dead sister."

He sat up in his bed and wiped the perspiration from his brow. Quickly he stood and opened the window and looked out over the neighborhood. His eyes focused on the house where the young woman lived. A light was on in an upstairs window, which he assumed was her room.

The cool air was still scented with the smell of burning leaves. Slowly he sat down, eyes still fixed on the lighted window. All was quiet. No longer could he hear the sobs of Mrs. Murray, or the conversation with Marty, just silence. A crisp breeze blew in the window as the bedroom light went out. Silence. Darkness.

A sudden chill went over Nick — a sense of being isolated and alone in the darkness of his bedroom. It was as if the light was his final friend who had just said goodbye. He could see other houses, lights in other bedrooms, even the skyline of the city, but they were meaningless: nameless faces in a world of silence. A sudden sense of dread came over him as he thought of his daily existence, moving in and out of each day, never able to differentiate one from another. Nick was alone and felt small in view of the vastness of

all that lay outside his window. He shivered, wrapping his arms around himself, tucking his chin to his chest. He looked toward the young woman's bedroom once again, but found only darkness.

The next morning Nick woke to find himself still huddled in his chair. He sat forward, feeling stiff and unrested. As he stood to close the window, he could see beams of sunlight shining dimly through the gray canopy of clouds. He walked to the bathroom sink and filled a coffe pot with water. Once it began brewing, he sat on the edge of the bed, staring at the floor, as if in a stupor.

Suddenly, he stood and began gathering his art supplies. Unfolding the easel, which sat in the corner of the room, he then placed it by the window and pulled a chair in front of it.

Two days later, Nick fell on his bed exhausted from his work and lack of sleep; yet, he felt good. Once again he had created something, and the feeling of accomplishment ran through him like a shot of adrenaline.

He hadn't left his room for two days, drinking pot after pot of coffee, eating only a small box of crackers. Sitting up, he looked at the painting, which still rested on the easel. He felt somewhat embarrassed, but only for a moment. He realized what he had done was good. He thought it should be ready before Mrs. Murray returned from the funeral, later that afternoon.

The painting showed a woman sitting on the edge of a bed, crying, with hands folded in her lap and a Bible by her side. Reaching down, almost transparent and slightly illuminated, was a nail scarred hand, facing upward, almost touching the woman's shoulder.

After taking a shower, Nick lay on his bed and slept. When he woke, he looked at the clock beside his bed, then quickly got up. After putting on his shoes, he took the painting from the easel. In some ways he wanted to show it to Marty, but it was too late and somehow it didn't matter if anyone saw it or not.

Walking down the hall, with painting in hand, he arrived at Mrs. Murray's room. Slowly he opened the door, and placed the painting beside her bed, where she would see it when she came in. Suddenly, he heard the sound of a car arriving in front of the house. He ran to the window and saw Mrs. Murray being helped out of a car he hadn't seen before. Quickly, he sat on the edge of the bed, grabbing the Bible, which sat on the night stand. He flipped towards the end, scanning the red letters.

"Com one, come on, I know it's around here somewhere," he said, impatiently, as he heard the sound of voices approaching the front door. "Here it is," he said, aloud to himself. He took a pen and a small piece of paper from his shirt pocket.

He hesitated for a moment, then printed on the paper: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." He quickly closed the Bible as he heard the front door open and close. Placing the paper beside the painting, he then bounded down the stairs.

As usual, he went through the back of the house and out the kitchen door. He heard Mrs. Murray say his name just as he closed the door. Probably just seeing if he was all right, he thought. Or perhaps she would tell of her sister's death, which he didn't want to hear about. He then paused for a moment, standing on the back

porch. He knew he had nothing to say. Besides, someone was with her. She didn't need to tell him.

He began walking across the lawn toward the street. His pace was quick as he took a deep breath of the crisp, autumn air. Nick felt as if he should do something or talk to someone. But he didn't know what he wanted to do or to whom he wanted to talk. He felt he needed to burn off energy, a feeling that had long escaped him until now.

Heading toward the Village, Nick wondered why it was he felt so good, so alive, while the idea of going to the Village began to disturb him. He stopped and hesitated, then turned and walked the opposite direction. He wasn't sure — but somewhere — there was someplace different he needed to go.

The Door-to-Door Salesman of Love

Kristi Hart

I.

He knocks his way into your life
from out of nowhere
and expects you to open wide
the door and let him in with his wares.
It's always something you don't need
like a ten-ounce can of oysters
and always something you don't want
like feet on your coffee table
or cumquats in your crisper.

But he's a hard sell with harder shoes
and pushes in and presses on
backs you down
on the couch
bends over you
and sells sells sells.

II.

I'm selling beds,
love beds—
what every woman dreams of.
For you, pretty lady,
there's a special offer:
the bonus is me in it like a stallion
and you, the only mare.
What beauty, what bliss, what animal sweat.

I know what you want.
I know what you need.
I'm gonig to make you make you make you
say yes
to the hay
say yes
to the stall
say yes
to the oats I eat and sow
eat and sow
say yes
to the oats I eat and sow.

Petroglyphs

Jackie Schmidt

If you've been to Arizona
you may have seen them—
great desert rocks tooled sacred
by ancient nomads.
Jagged lines form hunters
and the hunted
whose secrets rest in burial grounds
below the cliff.

The guide will stop the Jeep
for pictures if you like.
I placed a quarter by the etching
of a lizard (for perspective).
In the camera's eye,
I saw it—
a small chameleon darted in a crevice.
I gripped its tail
to hold it near its primeval likeness,
to catch the paradox on film.
With a snap
it left its fleshy tip between my fingers,
and dashed away
below the cliff.

as the fields outside of oz*

Mary Nicolini

the poppies on picacho bloom brilliant in the spring
time; i know because i've seen them: their calyx
ablaze with the gold, with the orange the red and
they blanket the peak-side, they and saguaros,
standing erect, silent sentries, so noble and tall.
their delicacy contrasts so sharply with spines of
the cholla which grow right behind on the slopes, on
the sides of the peak that they cover, faintly waving in wind.
pressing poppies from picacho makes them thin, so
thin you can read print on the page of the book you're
pressing them in; after just a few hours they crumble
and fade and all that is left just a pile of dust,
fairy dust, desert moon dust and it all blows away
till the next time they bloom on the peak in the spring.

*landscaped with sand

Virgin Forest

Kristi Hart

Daughter
when it comes to saving lives
you are not mentioned.
You are shoved to the front
to bear the baggage
of your mother's past.

Your failure is female.
Carefully, your mother
folds the red bandana
her mother's mother made,
pins the four thin corners
to her old broomstick
and waves you,
little white daughter,
into the woods.

She makes your bed
by moonish light
as if everything
were all right, as if
at last she could rest
her eyes, shake the dreams
out of the sheets, or drive
the he-wolves howling
from the place.

Aftermath **Neil M. Lindgren**

Death

Jackie Schmidt

Even late-blooming daylilies
contemplate the autumn night, now.
Earth wrapped in layers
of gray
cut by flocks
of winged swallows seeking sun.
The crust of earthern leaves thicken
and life bears down
waiting.

Untitled **NLM**

Choices

Pat Logan-Browne

Did I ever wish I'd done it differently? Danny'd asked me early that morning, before the others came down to breakfast. "Who didn't, 'least sometimes," I'd answered. But it got me thinkin', I guess.

Danny. He was my first-born grandchild. He was thirteen now, and taller than me. Redheaded young man, like his Grandpa'd been before the gray took over. He'd come down that mornin' before the rest of 'em, and sat in the kitchen while I made biscuits. He started askin' questions about the farm and all. "How long have you and Grandpa lived here?" he asked me.

"Grandpa's lived here all his life."

"Where'd you come from, Grandma?"

I went into the pantry for the flour. I hadn't thought about where I'd come from in a long time. Not a very long time. I went back into the kitchen and stood across the table from him while I measured the lard.

"I come from the city," I told him. It was the same answer I'd give to my own kids whenever they'd asked. They knew I meant Memphis, the nearest place you could really call a city. Wasn't really lyin'. Had enough truth to it, all right. But it wasn't the whole truth, 'cause it didn't go back far enough. Didn't go back to the beginnin'.

"Do you like livin' on the farm?" Danny asked.

"Sure I do. I raised your mama here didn't I? And your aunts and Uncle Hank? Sure, Danny, I like it just fine."

"But don't you ever wish you'd stayed in the city, like where we live, Grandma?" he asked. "Don't you ever wish you'd done it different?"

I looked out the window behind him for a minute, rememberin'. "Who don't, 'least sometimes," I said finally, turnin' my back to him, to get the bakin' sheets. "Now go get your mom and sister out of bed so you can get started home before the heat gets too much to drive."

He ran on upstairs, soundin' like a herd of cows. Nobody'd sleep through that, I figured, and I turned to gettin' breakfast on the table.

It was pretty busy after that, what with feedin' 'em and cleanin' up the dishes. I talked with Ellen while I helped her get their things together. Said she'd seen Hank a couple of weeks before, and he seemed just fine. Got a letter from Elizabeth about the same time I did, so we both had the same news from her. Katy'd been so busy with her new job neither of us had seen nor heard from her since the divorce. Too soon they was packed and ready, kissin' me and Jake goodbye, and us tellin' them to be

careful. They drove down the lane wavin' and hollerin' 'til they was out of sight.

Me and Jake watched 'em 'til they rounded the curve in the road. Then Jake took his hat from the hook by the door and went out to look after the animals. I wandered around the house a bit, pickin' up and dustin' and finally took my chair out to the porch.

Jake probably thought I was sick after they left that mornin', the way I just sat there, starin' off in space. 'Course it was too hot to do much else anyway.

The corn had been duly planted and cultivated. Nothin' much to do but sit and watch it growin' out there, 'til the harvest. The house nearly takes care of itself since the kids been grown, and the farm chores are fewer too. So I sat back in my chair, just rockin', and lookin', and thinkin'.

It was a hot day. August's always like that. Wasn't gettin' enough rain this year either, and the corn was already turnin' brown. I could see the fields, stretchin' out for miles from our place on the hill. Over to the west, where the land started dippin' into the glen, was Jim Wilcox's farm. The wood line that separated his place from the Henderson's further on down in the valley had been the sight of many a 'coon chase in the past. Beyond that, the corn met the trees, and the trees met the cloud painted sky. To the east, the land seemed to peak and valley over and over with red barns and green rowed fields, each farm divided by noticable boundaries—a fence row, a tree line, sometimes just the different way the corn or soybeans was planted. I sat there starin' out at those miles and miles of land that marked our home and the homes of our neighbors and thought about Danny's questions, and the answers I'd never been able to give. I thought about Memphis. I'd lived there alright, for a short while. It wasn't but a few months, but every minute of it was branded on me, all the way through to my soul.

Before that I'd lived in Arkansas. The kids used to ask me about my folks, and I told 'em they was dead. Might be true for all I know. But when I was in Arkansas, I was sure my mother was alive.

I can still remember when she left me at the Wallaceville Orphanage. I must have been about four years old or so. She kissed me and told me how pretty I was, and cried and hugged me. "My Annie," she said. "I'll be back for you, baby. I'll be back as soon as I can." I held onto that promise for a good many years. And I held on even tighter to what I remembered 'bout her. There were only two things—her name was Hattie, and she was always talkin' 'bout Memphis. The way she talked, I thought Memphis and paradise was the same place.

Wallaceville wasn't the worst place in the world, I reckon, but when I was there I sure thought it as. It seemed so big to me then. The main buildin' was faded red brick, three stories high, and old even then. The east side was the boys' dormitories, and the west side was for the girls. They was separated by classrooms in the middle part. Both side had its own playrooms, but the main floor had a big dinin' room where everybody ate together. There was another buildin' for the littler kids that wasn't ready for school yet and one for the infirmary. Some smaller buildings for storage and laundry was scattered over the grounds. The whole place probably

only covered a half a mile square or so, but it seemed like a lot of space to me at the time.

I suppose it had everythin' a child needed, but it was awful lonely. Oh, I had some friends there all right, but it wasn't smart to get too close to nobody. You just didn't know what was goin' to happen to 'em. Sometimes kids was farmed out to foster homes. Sometimes they was adopted. They couldn't do much about me 'cause my Mother didn't sign no release papers, but soon as I'd get a friend, they was sure to get moved. After awhile I learned to guard myself, so it didn't hurt so much when one of 'em would go.

The loneliness was what drove me to meetin' the boys, I guess. They tried to keep us girls separated from 'em except durin' school and eatin' times, but we found ways of seein' 'em. Sometimes one of us'd say we had to go down the hall to the lavatory and then meet one of the boys in an empty classroom. If a boy promised a girl that he was goin' to marry her and take her away from the orphanage, she might let him do what he wanted. I let 'em touch me sometimes, Oh, I knew it wasn't no good. They told us all about it bein' wrong to look at yourself or let anybody else look at you without your clothes. And even worse to let 'em touch you. But the boys made you feel like you was worth somethin'. They'd tell you how pretty you was and how much they liked you. Then they'd beg you to let 'em do things. Sometimes it was just too hard to tell 'em no.

I let Billy have his way. He promised he'd take me away. We talked about gettin' out of Wallaceville all the time. He was goin' to be seventeen in April, and then he'd leave and go in the Army. We'd get married, he said, and he'd take me with him. Maybe he really meant to take me. Maybe he was just talkin'. Doesn't matter 'cause one mornin' in April Billy wasn't at breakfast and I never seen him again.

I cried a lot that next couple of months, but I did some thinkin' too. And some plannin'. I made up my mind 'bout goin' to Memphis and findin' my mother. I spent hours dreamin' 'bout findin' her, and how happy we'd be when we was finally together again. I tried to remember what she looked like, but all I could think was Hattie and Memphis, Memphis and Hattie. Them two names went spinnin' 'round and 'round in my head 'til I was dizzy.

I didn't tell nobody what I was goin' to do. I picked a Saturday 'cause we usually had chores then that took us out from under their eyes. I figured they wouldn't miss me 'til bedtime. They generally didn't look too hard for a missin' child back then anyway. Times was hard what with the war and money bein' so hard to come by. That was fine with me. Me and my mother had a new life waitin' for us in Memphis, and I didn't want nothin' to get in the way of that.

One bright June mornin' I took my last look at Wallaceville. I'd been snitchin' money from the matrons for two months, and I figured I had enough saved up to buy me a bus ticket and a couple of meals, at least. I put on two of everything that mornin' so I'd have me a change of clothes, and I took off walkin'. By the time I reached the Little Rock station, I must've looked a sight. It was nearin' five o'clock, and there wasn't no bus out to Memphis before Sunday night late. I was so tired and sick, I like to cried when he told me that, but I bought my ticket, and, after cleanin' up a bit

and findin' a sack for my extra set of clothes, I went back in the lobby to sit and wait. Didn't feel like eatin' even though I knew I ought to be hungry, so I just sat there watchin' the people and prayin' I wouldn't see nobody from Wallaceville. Later on, I tried to sleep, but mostly I was just thinkin'. I thought a lot 'bout seein' my mother, and I thought some 'bout the kids I'd left behind.

It must have been long 'bout midnight when it dawned on me what Billy'd left me with. Bein' sick to my stomach and not havin' my spell in May, or April either, I didn't think. I couldn't remember. I'd been so busy makin' plans and gettin' ready to leave, I plain didn't notice what was goin' on. I put my hands on my stomach, but I couldn't tell nothin' 'bout it. It was funny the way I felt when I first figured it out. Prickly on the back of my neck and weak in the joints. I was scared, but, still, I felt kind of peaceful. It was mine. It was growin' in me, and nobody else could touch it or even know it was there. My child. My own child. And I vowed right then I'd never leave it like my mother did me. There couldn't be no reason big enough to cause me to leave my child. Finally, I fell asleep, and for the first time in weeks I didn't dream at all.

Sunday mornin' came up sunny and hot, and I woke up feelin' cramped and a little sick to my stomach. I combed my hair, splashed water on my face in the restroom to get myself woke up good and went out on the street. I figured I needed to get somethin' to eat 'cause of the baby and all, so I walked 'round 'til I found a little cafe. I spent most the day in there, gettin' up and walkin' 'round outside for awhile then goin' back in and orderin' milk or coffee so they wouldn't throw me out. And I made me some plans. I figured on buyin' me a little gold ring at the five-and-dime when I got to Memphis. It wouldn't be lyin' to tell people that my husband was away in the army, except that Billy wasn't exactly my husband. But him being' my baby's Daddy, I figured it was close enough. Soon as I found my Mother, she'd fix everythin' up for me, and I wouldn't have to worry about nothin' after that.

I don't remember much about the ride to Memphis. I slept most of the way. There was some servicemen on the bus, and I looked 'em over thinkin' maybe one of 'em might be Billy, but none of 'em was, so I just went to sleep. I guess I was awful tired 'cause I didn't dream again that night.

My first look at Memphis was through the windows of that bus. I woke up and seen the sun comin' up over the tops of the buildings and spillin' gold down on the streets, and I took that first sight to be an omen. We pulled into the station, and I walked away from the past, sure that Memphis really was paradise just like I remembered my mother sayin' it was.

I cleaned up in the restroom and put my other set of clothes on. I looked in the mirror and tried to see myself like I was somebody else. I was hopin' I looked older than twelve. I wouldn't even be twelve 'til August, but I sure felt older. I thought it'd help if I got my hair cut short, but I remembered Billy, how he'd always liked it long and shiny brown and curly on the ends. My eyes was lookin' too big for my face 'cause I hadn't been eatin' much, and my dress hung too loose on me, but I wasn't ugly, I didn't think. At least I wasn't ugly. I stuffed some toilet paper in my bra to fill me out a little and straightened my dress around. I was ready for

Memphis. Ready to find a ring, a job, and my mother. I figured I could sleep in the bus station 'til I got some money for a room, but things turned out even better than I hoped that first day.

I found a Ben Franklin a few blocks from the bus station and bought me a little ring. It felt good when I put it on. Kind of easeful, like everything was all right, and for the first time in days I felt hungry. Real hungry.

A couple of blocks on down, I found a little restaurant and had me some breakfast. After I paid for it I had less than a dollar left. I counted it three times. Eighty-seven cents wasn't goin' to take me far. I was about to leave when I seen the sign. "Help Wanted," it said. Well, I'd sure worked enough in the kitchen and dining room at Wallaceville. I ought to be good at it. I waited by the counter 'til the waitress had a minute free, and I asked her about the job. In fifteen minutes I was wipin' the counter.

Jo, the girl that hired me, was kind of in charge of the place, I guess. In all the time I worked there I never even seen the owner. Jo just took care of everything. She knew about everybody that came in and could carry on a conversation with just 'bout any of 'em. She was real friendly and talkative and, me bein' kind of quiet myself, we got along just fine. She asked me a lot of questions that first day, like where I was from and where my husband was stationed. I tried not to say too much and get caught in a lie, but it didn't take too long for her to figure out I didn't have no place to stay. When we got done workin' she gave me my first day's pay and sent me around to Mrs. Forrest's roomin' house.

By six o'clock, I'd closed myself up in the first room I'd ever had all to myself, and I cried 'til I was dry from the feelin' it gave me. I just kept walkin' 'round touchin' everything, like it might disappear or somethin' and thankin' God for gettin' me there. I still see that room in my mind like it was yesterday—the gray wallpaper with little yellow rosebuds runnin' up and down it; the brown sofa and chair over by the door; the bed with its bright yellow spread; the big dresser down at the other end; and the knick-knack shelf with its little statues hangin' on the wall. I thought it was beautiful. Most the time I wasn't workin' I was in that room for right at six months, but I never got tired of lookin' at it. It was mine. Like my baby, it was mine alone.

At first I'd spent a lot of time lookin' for my mother. I'd thought about her so much I guess it kind of got to me 'cause I started havin' nightmares about her most every night. Durin' the day, if I heard that name, Hattie, it went all through me like a kind of cancer that ate away at my nerves. I was livin' to find her, and every day that passed without her answerin' the ads I put in the newspapers, and every call to the wrong Hattie I found in the telephone book, made the cancer grow. But somethin' else was growin' in me too, and it grew faster than my longin' to find my mother.

My mother. Who was she? Just a woman named Hattie, that had a child she didn't love enough to keep with her. A woman that thought Memphis was paradise, but left her child in a place called Wallaceville. I didn't know her, and as my baby grew inside me, it pushed out all the need I'd ever had of her. It pushed out all the carin', and later on it even pushed out the hate I sometimes felt for her. I was livin' for just one thing. My baby. Just my baby. I quit

searchin' for the ghost named Hattie. I didn't need her anymore.

The time went by fast enough after that. I wasn't sure just when the baby would come, but I figured it'd have to be around Christmas. I took most my money, after I paid the rent and bought baby things with it. I saved some up too, so I could afford to stay home and take care of it when it was first born.

Workin' took up most my time. Jo was the only real friend I had, and I tried awful hard to try and please her. She was kind of the flirty type with the men, so if she got to talkin' too long, or wanted to take off for awhile in the afternoon, I'd cover her end as much as I could. I never forgot how she helped me when I first got to Memphis, so if she took a little advantage of me sometimes, I didn't mind.

Mrs. Forrest wanted to keep me company some, but mostly I just kept to myself durin' them months. She was kind of a busybody, askin' questions and pryin' into my past circumstances all the time, so I just stayed away from her. She was always askin' me to go to church with her, and I did a couple of times at first, but her preacher made me feel awful the way he looked right through me. It made me feel like a hypocrite to be in the house of God anyway, considerin' all the lies I told and me bein' pregnant without a real husband and all, so I quit goin'.

Pretty soon we was decoratin' the restaurant for Christmas. I got a little wreath to hang on my door, and I bought a tiny pair of socks so I could hang one up for my baby's stockin'. I was startin' to feel some pressure down low, and I was pretty sure it'd be here in time for Christmas.

I woke up late at night on the Saturday before Christmas with the pains. I'd done figured it all out, what to do and all, but now that it was time I was scared. And I didn't know it'd be so hard. I didn't know the pain would be so bad. I filled the little pan I'd got for the baby's bathtub with water and took that and some towels back to my room. I laid down some clean sheets on the bed and put the scissors on the dresser with the water and towels I'd spread out. I felt like hollerin' some during the birth, but I put a pillow over my mouth and bit it real hard. I was sweatin' and pushin' and bitin' that pillow for a long time, it seemed like. I don't know what time she was born. By then I was sort of crazy from the pain, I reckon, and awful tired. I was scared to cut the cord. Scared I'd kill her. But I tied it and cut it, just like I'd read and heard 'bout, and then I kind of smacked her to get her breathin'. She took in air and started right out cryin'. And me? I guess I started cryin' too. My baby was here, and, God in heaven, the joy just kept runnin' through me. I got her washed up and got me and the bed cleaned up as much as I could, and finally we both fell asleep. I named her Billy Jo.

I put her to my breast when she woke up, and she took the first milk real eager, like the newborn calves I'd seen. I counted her fingers and toes and ran my hand over her fuzzy black head. She was beautiful, and I couldn't keep from lookin' at her, and touchin' her while she slept. I thought a little 'bout Hattie, but it didn't bother me none. Billy Jo was the only thing that mattered, and she was mine 'cause I'd give her life.

It was just startin' to get dark when they came—Mrs. Forrest, and that preacher, Reverend Eaton. I was so tired, I could hardly

keep track of what they was sayin', and the questions they was askin'. Their faces kept fadin' in and out, but I must have talked to 'em more thatn I thought, 'cause pretty soon they had most of the truth about Wallaceville and Billy. They knew for sure that I wasn't no fifteen years old, and that I didn't have no husband. The Reverend kept tellin' me about a nice couple that didn't have no kids.

I didn't understand his meaning 'til he took Billy Jo from my arms and started toward the door. I tried to stop him, but I was very weak and Mrs. Forrest was holding me down. I kept yellin' and tryin' to get away from her, but he took Billy Jo and walked out of that room with her, and there wasn't nothing' I could do about it. I guess I got pretty crazy. I felt like they was tearin' my heart out of me, and the empty place it left in my chest kept screamin' and screamin'. Why'd they take her? Why did they take my baby girl away? I cried and begged Mrs. Forrest to go get her and bring her back, but she just sat there holdin' me and tellin' me it was for the best. I was too young, she said. But I wasn't too young. Not too young to have that baby, and not too young to mourn for her.

The next few days was like a blur. I don't remember much but little bits and pieces of the talkin' that went on between the Reverend and Mrs. Forrest. I stopped cryin'. I stopped doin' everything but breathin', and I prayed God would stop me doin' that, too.

The nights and days was all the same, and I don't know how many of 'em passed before the Reverend brought a woman into my room, and told me her name was Mrs. Richards. He told me how her husband was dead, and that she needed help runnin' the farm she lived on with her son, Jake. Said she'd put me up with them in exchange for my workin'. If I'd go with her, he said, he wouldn't have to send me back to Wallaceville. But I didn't care what they did with me. I just sat there and didn't say nothin'. I guess they'd done made up their minds though 'cause next thing I knew I was on my way north, to a place I'd never heard of, with a woman I'd never seen before in my life.

I lived there on the farm with old Mrs. Richards and her son, and I did the chores she gave me to do, but I didn't talk to either one of 'em. They helped the Reverend separate me and my baby, and I hated 'em for it. I was lookin' for a way to go back to Memphis. Memphis and Billy Jo. I was gettin' stronger and thinkin' more clear. I was sure of one thing. I had to get her back.

In April, Mrs. Richards died in her sleep. One day she was workin' hard as usual, doin' her farm chores. Next day she just didn't get up. Jake found her dead in her bed. Doctor said her heart failed. Jake said she just wanted to go and be with his father. I didn't care what it was that caued it. I seen it as an answer to my prayers. Now we'd go to Memphis. We'd go to bury Mrs. Richards, and I'd get my baby no matter what I had to do.

I remember takin' my first real look at Jake on the ride down that day. Oh, I'd seen him all right, but I hadn't paid no real attention before. He was big. Maybe six foot two or so. Skinny, but strong from doin' farm work all his life. He wasn't real good lookin', but not ugly either if you didn't mind the red hair and freckles. He was awful quiet that day. I knew he was sufferin' from

losin' his mother and daddy so close together, but he'd had 'em for seventeen years. He'd had parents and lived in a real home with 'em, and that's more than I'd ever had. My heart turned over in my chest when I thought about him helpin' to keep Billy Jo from havin' her mother. I didn't feel sorry fr him for what he was goin' through. I hated him. Hated him so bad I didn't know why he couldn't feel it. Why it didn't burn his soul.

The graveyard was a little fenced-in group of stones and flowers next to the church, and as soon as the people was gathered to hear the Reverend's talk I seen my chance to slip out. I went around to the empty parsonage and tried the door. It was unlocked, and I went in without 'em even noticing I was gone. I figured there must be some kind of paper 'bout Billy Jo in his office, but the more I looked, the more upset I got. I turned over drawer after drawer and dumped out books and ledgers and papers, but there wasn't nothin'. Then somethin' from deep inside me took hold, and I guess I went crazy for awhile. I went into the kitchen and found what I needed to make him tell me where my baby was.

I sat down in the big chair behind his desk, and I waited. I felt like I was standin' over in the corner watchin' a stranger do things in my body. It was startin' to turn dusky outside, and long shadows fell across my hands on the desk top. I held the knife and turned it over and over, watchin' the glint of dyin' sun on the blade. Finally, I heard him comin' through the back door. I stood up holdin' the knife behind my back. I'd ask him once. Just once. If he wouldn't tell me where she was, his heart would suffer and die, same as mine suffered from what he'd done.

The door opened and he stood there, squintin' in the darkness. A buzzin' noise was loud in my ears, so I could hardly hear, but his voice cut through it. "Who's there?" he asked. "Is that you Annie? We've been looking for you."

"I been lookin' too," I said. "I been lookin' for my baby." He didn't say nothin' 'til he was standin' across the desk from me. "Annie, your baby's gone," he said finally. "You couldn't raise her properly, and the peole who have her can. Try to understand that I did what was best for the child."

"Tell me where my baby is," I said, drawin' the knife from behind me.

He blinked hard and took a step back away from me.

"Tell me where my baby is," I screamed. I raised the knife over my head, ready to srike.

His voice was low and kind of scratchy soundin'. "She's gone, Annie. I can't tell you where. She's with good people." He was talkin' real fast now, tryin' to calme me down with his words, but I brought the knife down and caught his sleeve. I heard the material rip and seen the blood it drew on his hand.

He took in breath and tried to grab the knife, but I jerked it away and brought it down again against his chest, grazin' his jacket.

He took another step back, and suddenly there was Jake standin' between us, grabbin' my arm and forcin' the knife out of my hand. He slapped me hard in the face and yelled at me. "Annie, for God's sake stop. What are you doin'?"

I was shocked for a minute, like I was lost in time, and nothin'

seemed real. I just stared at 'em—Jake, his eyes big and strange lookin', and the preacher, with his torn jacket and bleedin' hand, his skin all kind of gray lookin'.

The room started spinnin' real slow at first, then faster and faster 'til I slipped in the center of it, fallin' and fallin' and fallin....

When I woke up, Jake had my head on his lap, smoothin' my hair back off my face. Reverend Eaton was sittin' in his chair behind the desk talkin' in a low voice. "You get her out of here, and make sure I never see her again." He was holdin' the phone in his hand, shakin' the receiver at us. He stood up and leaned over the desk. "Get her out of here," he yelled, "or I'll call the police." "Wallaceville would probably like to have her back if the prison doesn't want her."

Jake picked me up without sayin' a word and carried me out to the car. I couldn't say nothin'. I was full of tears, and they kept slippin' out and runnin' down my face, chokin' me 'til I could hardly breathe.

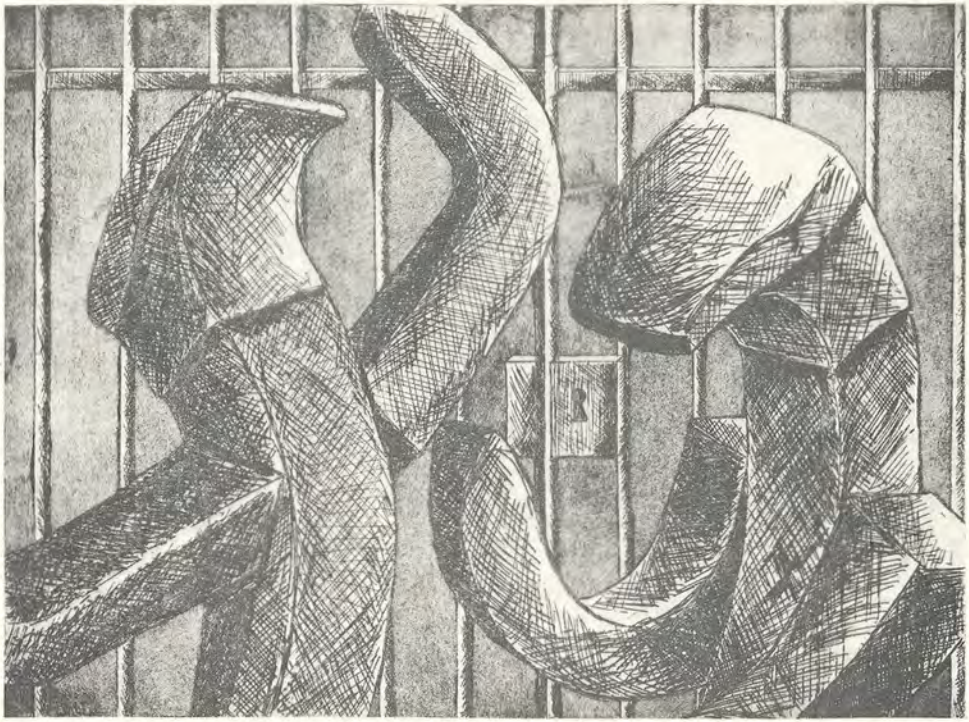
We was probably ten miles out of town when Jake pulled the car over. He used the sleeve of his shirt to try and wipe the tears off my face. "I didn't know Annie," he said. His voice was quiet and gentle soundin'. "I didn't know about your baby."

I looked at him and seen the wetness in his eyes and the way he was lookin' at me, and I knew he wasn't lyin'. I reached out and touched his face, and we just sat there for a long time cryin' together.

Finally he started the car up and took me home. Yes, it was home. Has been ever since that day. We lived in fear of the Reverend turnin' me in for what I did for the next months. I was scared I'd have to go back to Wallaceville, or even worse. I couldn't figure out a way to get Billy Jo back. But I mourned her, oh God, I mourned her for the rest of my life.

Jake and I've had a good life together. About three years after we came home together that day from Memphis, we seen that we was goin' to have us a baby, so we went down to a little church in Glenview, and got married. We've had a good life together, and I don't know if I'd change any of it. But sometimes I still think about Memphis and what I left down there. I wonder if she ever knew about me, and if she looked for me like I looked for Hattie.

And sometimes I wish I'd done it different. If I'd stayed down there, maybe I'd've found her. Maybe I could've got her back. But we all make choices. And we all got to live with 'em. I forgave Hattie a long time ago for the choices she made. I won't ever know what her reasons was, but I pray she found peace about it. And I hope that Billy Jo forgives me for the choice I made. Maybe someday I'll find peace for myself.



Gotta Light J.M. List

Sumi on Silk

Jackie Schmidt

A child squats in hay
staring at the stillness in
the squirming litter

Sheets surrender on
heavy lines above lower
Manhattan alleys

A white-robed toddler
smiles at the crowd of people
through a klansman's hood

A lover guesses
a finger word traced lightly
across the stomach

Old men cast their nets
from the sides of rotted junks
into ancient seas

A wet finger draws
an early morning sizzle
from a hot iron

Night falls like the dew
squelching the persistent choir
of frogs and crickets

How I Met My Wife and Became a Methodist

James W. Kirk

Mom was sipping coffee when I swaggered into the kitchen, and her eyes lit up when she saw me, her favorite child. Never mind that I'm an only child.

"Lyle, do you know what I would like for my birthday?" Mom said.

"Just name it, Mom, and it's yours," I said magnanimously.

"Would you go to church with me tonight?" Mom said so sweetly that fish would jump from the water for her.

Me and my big mouth. I should have known right then and there that somewhere behind her sly blue eyes and crafty Mona Lisa smile lay a well conceived trap. After sixteen years she could still trick me everytime. The one time I attended Mom's church the highlight of the evening had been a rock album bonfire. I almost wept when the Ozzy and ZZ Top masterpieces were hurled shamelessly by the howling mob into the lusty flames of the pyre. The visiting evangelist mistakenly interpreted my anguish for zealousness; he slapped me on the back, handed me a precious Deep Purple record, and shouted "Have to it, little brother! Hallelujah!!"

"Well, Son?" Mom said innocently. She knew she had me.

"Sure, Mom."

"You don't know how happy this makes me, son."

I could tell she was truly happy by the shine in her eyes. She walked across the room, arms open, and gave me a hug.

Mom is still a looker—probably always will be—tall, with shoulder length hair reminiscent of late afternoon sunshine, a patrician nose and a chin that is soft, yet strong. Some women her age are in the throes of "grandma-osis"—that is, the strange transformation that can afflict a woman in her mid-to-late fifties. The hair turns blue and forms a bun on top of the head. There is weight that would look terrible on a young woman but seems perfectly suited for the stricken. A nice smile, but not too toothy and, of course, the billowy dress of nice lime-green or psychedellic blue. My mom will never suffer from "grandma-osis."

Dad died two years ago and shortly after, Mom found religion. Mom wants very much for me to become a Christian and there's nothing wrong with being one, but the Pentecostal faith is a bit extreme for one of my tender and sensitive psyche.

"There's a nice girl who attends my church and I want you to meet her," Mom said, dragging me from my reverie in a big way.

"Oh, Mom," I said. I can see her now—brown hair down to her butt, buck teeth and no knockers. Of course, when a guy has a nose like Cyrano's and ears like Clark Gable's, he can't afford to be too choosy. At least I have blonde hair and blue eyes, and I'm small

and cuddly (or at least I like to tell myself I'm cuddly, having never been cuddled by anyone except Mom when I was little, and that just isn't the same). "I have to go now, Mom," I said.

"Be back by four." And don't be late, Buster, her eyes telegraphed.

Time passed, as it is inclined to do, and before I was really ready, Mom and me were strolling along the sidewalk that leads to the small white and unassuming Pentecostal church. The air was clear and crisp, and the stars shone brightly overhead. A perfect night for a bonfire.

Reverend Kipper and his wife were standing at the entrance, ready to greet the faithful. I stood across from Mrs. Kipper while Mom and the Reverend exchanged pleasantries. Mrs. Kipper has brown hair that would have fallen to her behind if she didn't wear it in a beehive hair style. And of course, she has buck teeth and no boobies. Mrs. Kipper has a holier-than-thou attitude and I certainly wish people wouldn't look down their nose at other people. But then she said that I was certainly a fine looking young man and I forgave her. The Reverend just looked at me, nodded his head, and looked hungry, like I had "sinner" written across my forehead. There were souls to save tonight!

With that out of the way, Mom and me entered the church. Immediately, an elderly couple pounced on us (the woman was suffering from terminal "grandma-osis"). "Praise the Lord," they said in unison.

"Praise the Lord," Mom said.

"The Holy Spirit is with us tonight, Sister Conrad," the man said gleefully to my mom.

"Hallelujah!!!" thundered the Reverend from somewhere behind us. Things were really starting to heat up now.

"Excuse us, please," Mom said, bless her heart. "There's someone I want Lyle to meet." Uh, oh, I thought. Time for Mrs. Kipper, Jr. Suck it in, Lyle. Mom only has one birthday a year.

"Follow me, Lyle," Mom said and I obediently did like the good son that I am. We entered the main part of the church, where the pews and pulpit are. My heart was beating irregular and I know my ears were bright red, because they always are when I'm flustered.

"Lyle, this is Sara Ambers. Sara, this is my son, Lyle," said Mom.

Sara Ambers is beautiful. Her hair was the color of the sun when it is rising; red with promise of good things to come. Eyes the color of the sky when the sun has fulfilled its promise. She even had breasts.

Sara makes me tingle, like I do when I have to pee real bad and finally get to let it out.

"Hello, Lyle. It's nice to meet you," Sara said huskily.

"Charmed, I'm sure," I said. I'm so stupid.

"Sara, would you like to sit with us tonight during the sermon?" Mom said. God bless my mom; again, and again, and again.

"I would enjoy that very much, Mrs. Conrad. That is, if Lyle doesn't mind," Sara said.

"I would consider it an honor," I said. Better, but still stupid.

So there we sat, Mom on my left and Sara on my right, with

the evening's entertainment about to begin. Pass the popcorn, please.

Paintings of Christ on the Cross clung to the walls' offering redemption. The overhead lights were bright search-lights for lost souls.

The organ sounded.

All eyes pivoted toward the pulpit as silence filled the room, an entity demanding obedience; which was fine by me until someone's belly rumbled ferociously. I had to bite my tongue to stop the peals of laughter that would surely have branded me an imp of Satan and resulted in my being banished from the church, forever. Mom would have been furious and Sara would probably deny my existence for all eternity.

Suddenly, an unknown force descended into the room, filling the air with crackling electricity that seemed to feed on the available oxygen in the abruptly hot room. I wasn't breathing; I was gasping.

Well, it wasn't quite that dramatic, but there was a certain amount of hushed anticipation, of expectation; even I could feel it. I wonder if Sara felt it to, so I glanced at her from the corner of my eye. She did—she was breathing heavily and acting fidgety, same as me.

The reverend approached the pulpit and switched on the amplifier for his micophone, which I knew he wasn't going to need. He looked directly at me and the threat of hellfire flared in his red, beady eyes.

"Brothers and sisters, my sermon this evening will come from The Great Book Of Revelations, chapter eleven," Reverend Kipper announced, his voice calm, like the sea before a strom.

The reverend's sermon started out slowly and articulately enough, but each "Praise The Lord!" and "Hallelujah!!" from the congregation was kindling for his fire. Soon enough it was a raging conflagration. His sentences began running together. He was shouting into his amplified microphone and the pews were vibrating from the tumultuous river of words flowing from the mountainous speakers standing sentinel on each side of the pulpit, allowing me the perfect opportunity to jitter over next to Sara so that our arms were touching.

The reverend's sermon was becoming a chant, becoming hypnotic, and the effect was working grandly.

My first clue that events were reaching a climax came from a young couple brave enouth to sit in the first row of pews. They began to jerk. That's right, jerk. And then they wer standing and jerking. This frightened me, so I jittered back over next to Mom.

"What's goin' down, Mom," I whispered.

"They're dancing in the spirit of God, son," said Mom.

Well, that explained that, so I vibrated back over to Sara. Yes, the reverend was still going strong and showing no sign of wearing down.

A man sitting in the pew directly in front of mine let out a moan that would have been at home in a haunted house and I bet I turned white as a ghost. Except for my ears, of course; they were burning out of control, because I was quite disturbed by this time.

And then the reverend stopped chanting.

The organist began playing "The Old Rugged Cross."

Sara tugged my shirt sleeve and Mom slid over and put her arm around me. Everyone else was speaking in tongues, dancing in the spirit of the Lord, crying or praying. A few were doing it all at the same time.

"It's time to accept Jesus into your heart and life, Son." Mom said.

"Jesus loves you, Lyle. Will you accept him into your life?" Sara said.

You know, I almost did it. The sincerity of Mom's eyes and Sara's voice was real and it moved me. I wanted to make Mom happy—I love her so much—and, to be totally honest, seeing Sara on a regular basis would be an added bonus. But then the reverend started towards me. A man with a mission.

A sixteen-year-old has to do what a sixteen-year-old has to do. I bolted. I ran out of the church, down the sidewalk, and home.

I had time to ponder the situation while I waited in the kitchen for Mom to arrive. If I know my mom, she won't say a word about my cowardness; but, that's not the issue. I *want* to go to church, but I simply can't attend Mom's; it isn't *me*.

I was sitting at the kitchen table eating a bologna sandwich when Mom walked in. She didn't say a word; just looked at me.

"Mom," I said, "tonight I decided I want to be like you and Sara. I want to become a Christian." I truly meant what I said and Mom knew it.

"I know," Mom said.

"There's this nice Methodist church down the street," I said, hoping she would understand.

"I understand, I think ... Anyway, that's where Sara's parents attend church, so I'm sure it is a fine one," Mom said.

"Why doesn't she go to the same church as her parents?"

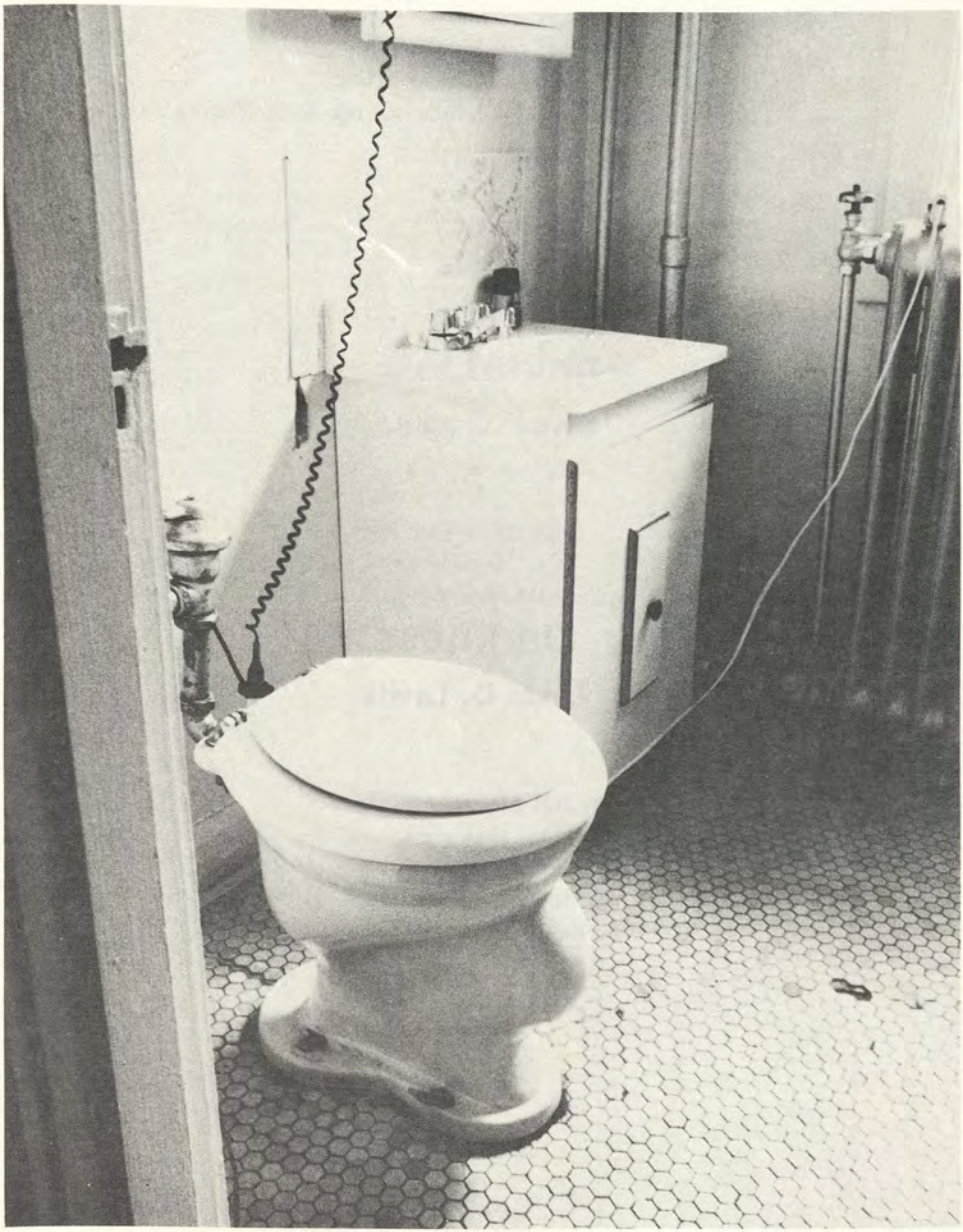
"I guest she's a lot like you, Son." "By the way, Sara's coming to dinner tomorrow night." I sure love my mom.

Challenger

Alex Anderson

You didn't like it anyway,
You say:
While Africa starved
And San Salvador flared
It gleamed in the dawn
A towering metal Babel
A flagrant playboy's latest toy
Like a Lamborghini left
At some bescummed Calcutta curb
A Freudian symbol
Of technocratic man
Raping the ionosphere
in hubris-born lust.

You never could understand:
Never felt the stomach-glow
Alone, at night, gazing starward
From this grass-green sea-sapphire tomb
Wondering what strange brethren
Were led from other Edens
By Prometheus' countless cousins;
Never knew within your heart
As white dragons shrieked
Into southern skies
On Newtonian wings
That magic had returned to Earth.



Untitled **Darryl Brown**

Funny We Meeting In Manhattan

Sharon A. Miller

I imagine flying out my Manhattan,
high-rise apartment and hailing a taxi.
And who should be the driver but my Aunt Evelyn—

An exile from a retirement
home in Indiana
rejected by her mother.

Darkness

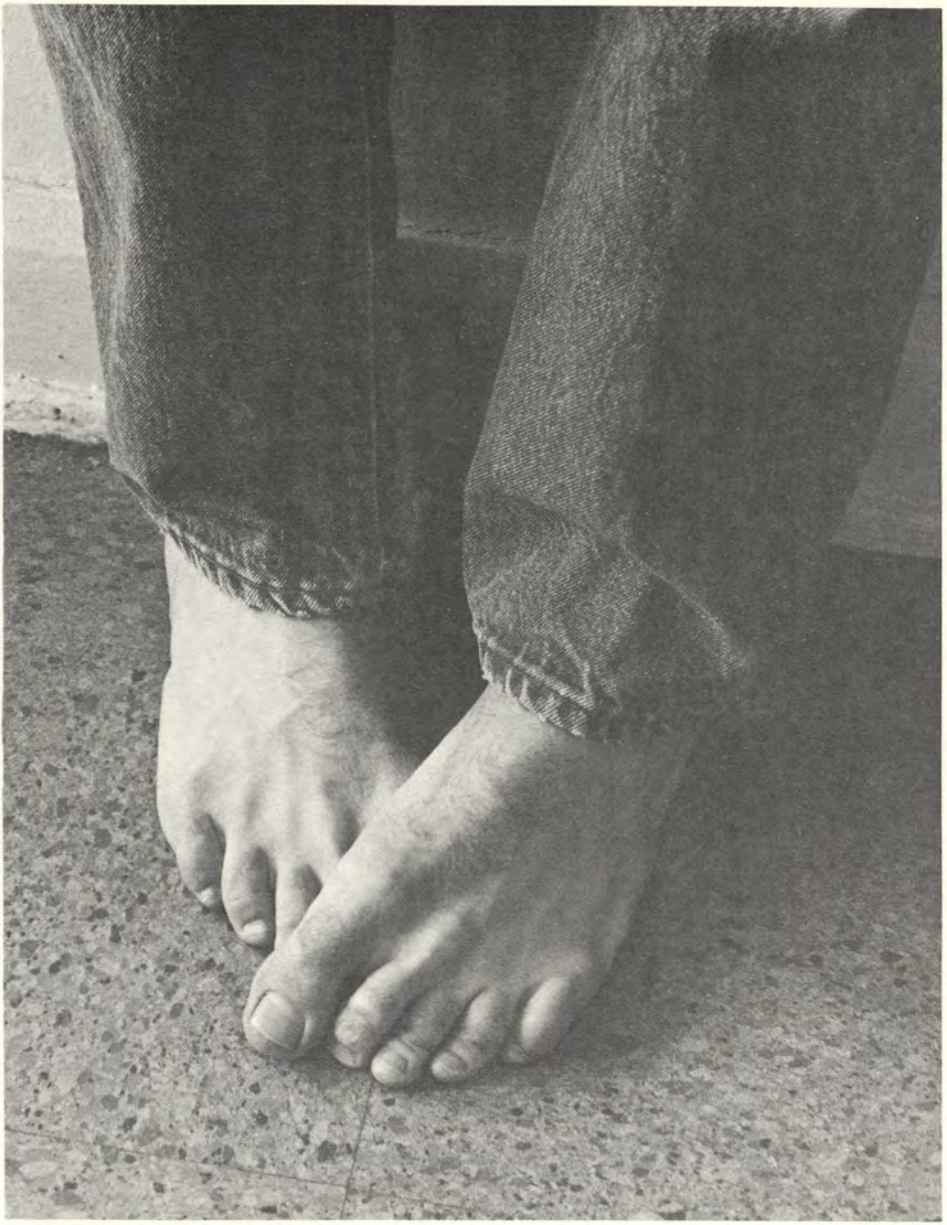
Linda D. Lewis

She left him with nothing
but stars that stick
in his throat
and the moonest mean
he has ever seen.

Deafening

Linda D. Lewis

the loudest sound
I ever heard
was the slap, slap, slap
of your silence



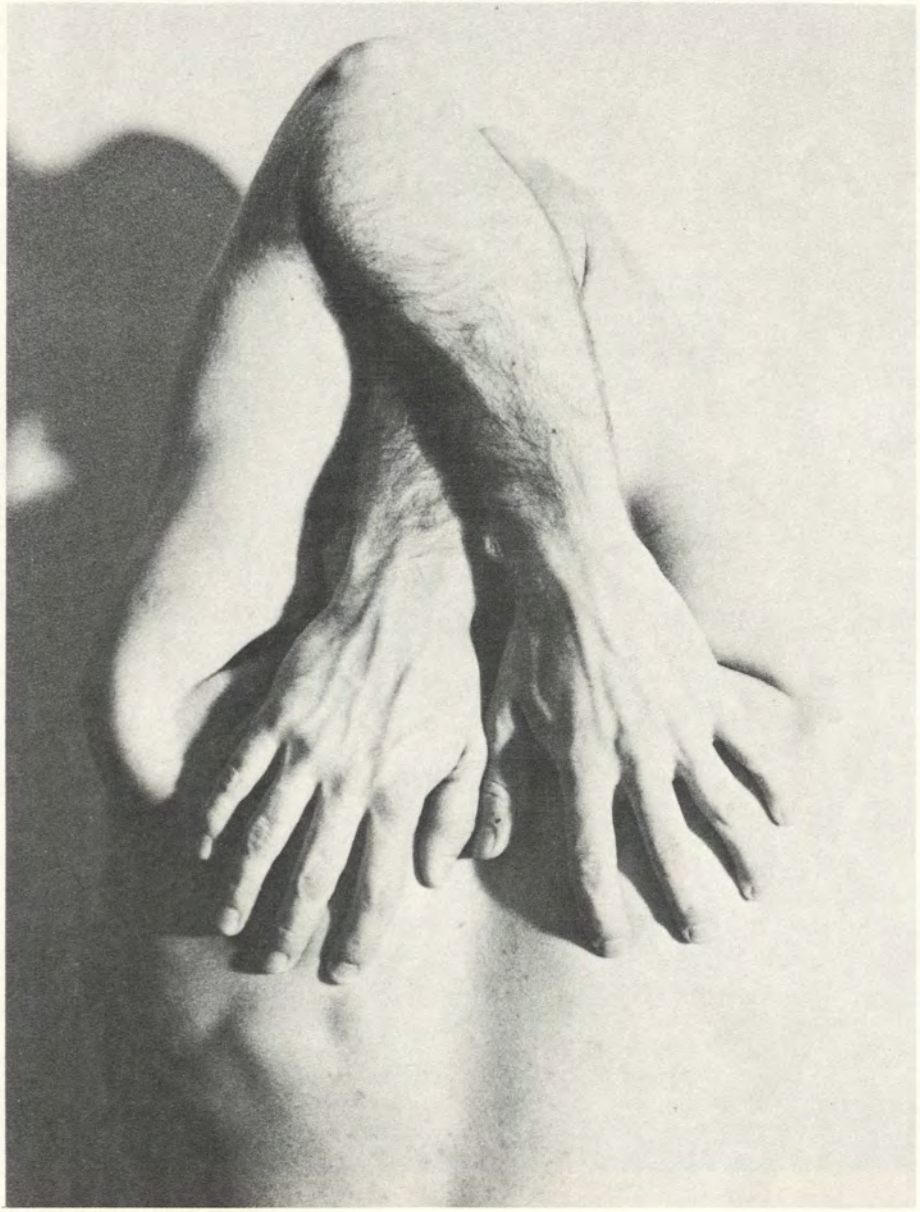
Two of My Favorite Things

Darryl Brown

Spider

Jackie Schmidt

You must think you've been invited
the way you've set up weaving
outside my kitchen window,
spinning silken strands
to delicate webs,
as intricate as mine
and as complex.
How is it
you never get
caught in yours?



Self Portrait **Darryl Brown**

Hindsight

Joyce K. Jensen

At the National Museums of Kenya, it is officially designated KNM-WT 17000. We will never know if it had another name, a particular name, if those creatures thought of each other in symbolic ways; if, across the undulating grasses of the plains, they looked up from a moment of solitary digging, lifted the torso high on strange, forward rotated legs and scanned the savannah for the dear face of a loved one while mobile lips formed a familiar sound approximating "John" or "Mary." It is a remote possibility. A very remote one. A possibility at least 2.5 million years removed from the present.

WT 17000 is the partial skull of a large-jawed, small-brained early hominid of the genus *Australopithecus*. It is the latest of many finds of early human remains from near Lake Turkana in northern Kenya, the latest to throw the world of paleonathropology into a tizzy, if far from the first to do so. Once again all the painstaking tree diagrams, all the carefully built houses of cards, have collapsed. But anthropologists are not the only ones to whom this sort of discovery is disturbing, exciting, frustrating. For many people such discoveries—new finds that inescapably change the way we perceive our beginnings—are a catalyst for personal reflection. With others I find myself asking: What are we? From whence did we arise?

A very early specimen of *Australopithecus boisei*, WT 17000 is not a direct human ancestor. But this new *A. boisei* threw off the scheme of things by being born several hundred thousand years too early, confounding previous theories about what Australopithecine, and our, progenitors might have been. WT 17000 had some grandparents who were also our grandparents, and the questions being asked are about the shape of their skulls and pelvises and teeth. Skulls signify brains; pelvises, stance; and teeth are the final arbiter of what is human. So one of the questions is what these creatures look like; another, if they were self-aware.

Humans pose these questions, but perhaps this is not really what we want to know. Perhaps we are not certain about what we hope to find in this hunt, this obsession with origins. The fascination goes beyond a general search for knowledge; it bypasses vague concerns such as where humanity fits in nature. It is more personal than that. What was considered repugnant and unthinkable only 100 years ago—that we might have descended from something apelike—is now a different matter. Apelike, of course. But *which* apelike creature?

What *A. boisei* WT 17000 did was to reiterate our need to know what forces led to the development of the creatures we have become—creatures with an oddly-enlarged brain that carries with

it remembrance of the past, speculation about the future, the capacity to dream, the ability to choose. I have a friend who was 37 years-old when she learned the identity of her natural mother. At the halfway point in her life she found out what most of us already know—why her face is shaped in such and such a way, the genesis of a gesture, the roots of her nature. Knowing did not change her life, nor her feelings for the mother who adopted her. But it made a difference. She *knew* something about herself that cannot be put into words. But it is there in the mirror, daily.

In the same way, we humans need to understand the forces that changed the savannah ape into a large-brained, upright hominid who builds and destroys, loves and hates, frets about the past and worries about the future. We need the past to test the scope and limits of human imagination. The scope of our imagination is such that we are constantly trying to imagine where we stood up, when we threw the first rock, spoke the first word. And why.

We are footloose out here in the big time, and we want to know who we look like. We are a little afraid that if chimpanzees can talk, or dolphins or puppies, the Hindus may be right—perhaps animals *are* as important as we are, or, worse, perhaps we are no more important than any other living thing. We have a tiny, tenuous toehold in space and we do not understand what we have done to make us capable of such achievement. For some reason taking along a picture of Grandmother in a gilt Victorian frame helps keep us rooted in space and time.

We are like dear old Aunt Martha peering into the face of the new baby, announcing, "She looks just like her father!" When we gaze into the abandoned sockets of WT 17000, Mary or John, it could be that we want to know how disconcertingly closely our natures are tied to those of "lower" animals. Who is that, looking back from the mirror?

On the one hand we want the assurance that we are higher than the angels, that we have been created in God's image. On the other, we want to belong, to be an integral, meaningful part of the creation as much as a part of the creator. Perhaps, too aware that our worst, most "beastly" natures are capable of unreasoning evil, we are afraid that our choices reside not in our minds but in our hormones and genes. Would it be comforting to discover that violence is a survival mechanism, an evolutionary plus for which we cannot be held accountable? Or would such knowledge drain all hope, cause us to doubt our free will, hopelessly entangle us in a maze labeled "biological imperative?"

Perhaps such knowledge would be a triumph. Perhaps it would allow us, eventually, to rejoice with each victory over a nature that resides not so much in the mind as in the chemistry. Perhaps we would discover that there is more to being human than an upright stance or the ability to conceive of tomorrow or to name each other names that rise like magic to the lips. To be certain that it was otherwise would be to lose all hope.

Why are we so driven to know where the brow ridges went? My friend suspected who her mother was long before she knew for sure. She suspected but preferred, for a reason that even she could not name, not to act on the knowledge. Yet there remains the gnawing regret that the questions can never be asked, the whys

and the how-dit-it-feels and the probings about pain that she might not have been able to put into words anyway.

If the flesh should reassemble on the bones of WT 17000, if the mobile lips reappeared on the massive jaws and the small, absent brain miraculously spoke to us, it could be that we, too, would not know what to ask it—or how. In the end we might choose to ask nothing. It is preferable to believe that the brain is more than chemistry and the mind more than a random genetic mesh that thinks itself capable of originality, however mistakenly. Perhaps WT 17000 would shrug and itself look towards the future, point a hairy arm and rugged finger and say, "You haven't gone far enough."

This fascination with our progenitors is, in the end, a search for individual purpose and meaning. The human mind is such that it tries to impose order on the chaos, to discover the smallest particle or the earliest ancestor or the final result. I used to think it would be frightening to learn that humans were nothing more than an accident attributable to a change in the climate and a twisted gene, but now it does not seem to be an unworkable idea. Uncertainty is essential to our nature; why should it feel anomalous that we arose from uncertainty? Perhaps, like my friend, we are right in wanting to know what we look like, because it allows us to see how far we have come. It may not be necessary to ask why.

The Statute

Linda D. Lewis

an unexpected breeze
flings a rainbow mist
as the sun drenches me
with its heat

she stands erect . . . immobile
her arms stretched above her head
within the playful
circle of spray

you would like her body, I think,
if she were flesh and blood
perfectly rounded, firm breasts
tiny waist and taut tummy

distraught, as a jealous feeling
bubbles up inside me
at the thought of any response
she might arouse in you

I deem it my duty
to call your attention
to her thick ankles, bulbous nose
hair of dotted bird droppings

Northside Peddler

Jackie Schmidt

"Yesterday Herbie Wirth was buried in Crown Hill Cemetery."
—*The Indianapolis Star*, February 4, 1971

Again and again
he made his rounds,
potholders and washcloths,
door-to-door,
until every housewife
and child
and evening-shift husband
knew his simple approach.
At times they bought.
At times they chatted.

He shuffled along,
naming stray dogs,
praising flower gardens,
and marking the children's new growth.
A little girl once said,
"Your clothes make you look poor."
He tugged her ponytail.
"My friends make me look rich."

One winter morning the grocer asked,
"Did you hear
the peddler died?"
A customer shook her head:
"Poor old thing,
no money, no family.
I never knew his name."
She turned:
"Did you hear
the peddler died?"

A pauper's casket paused above the grave.
The morning snow paid deep respects.

So did the grocer
and his customers
and young mothers
and their husbands

and old folks
and men and women in business suits
and soldiers
and clergy
a teacher with his class and school kids cutting class
and a few
dignitaries
and reporters
and photographers
cracked bells
tolled
tears.

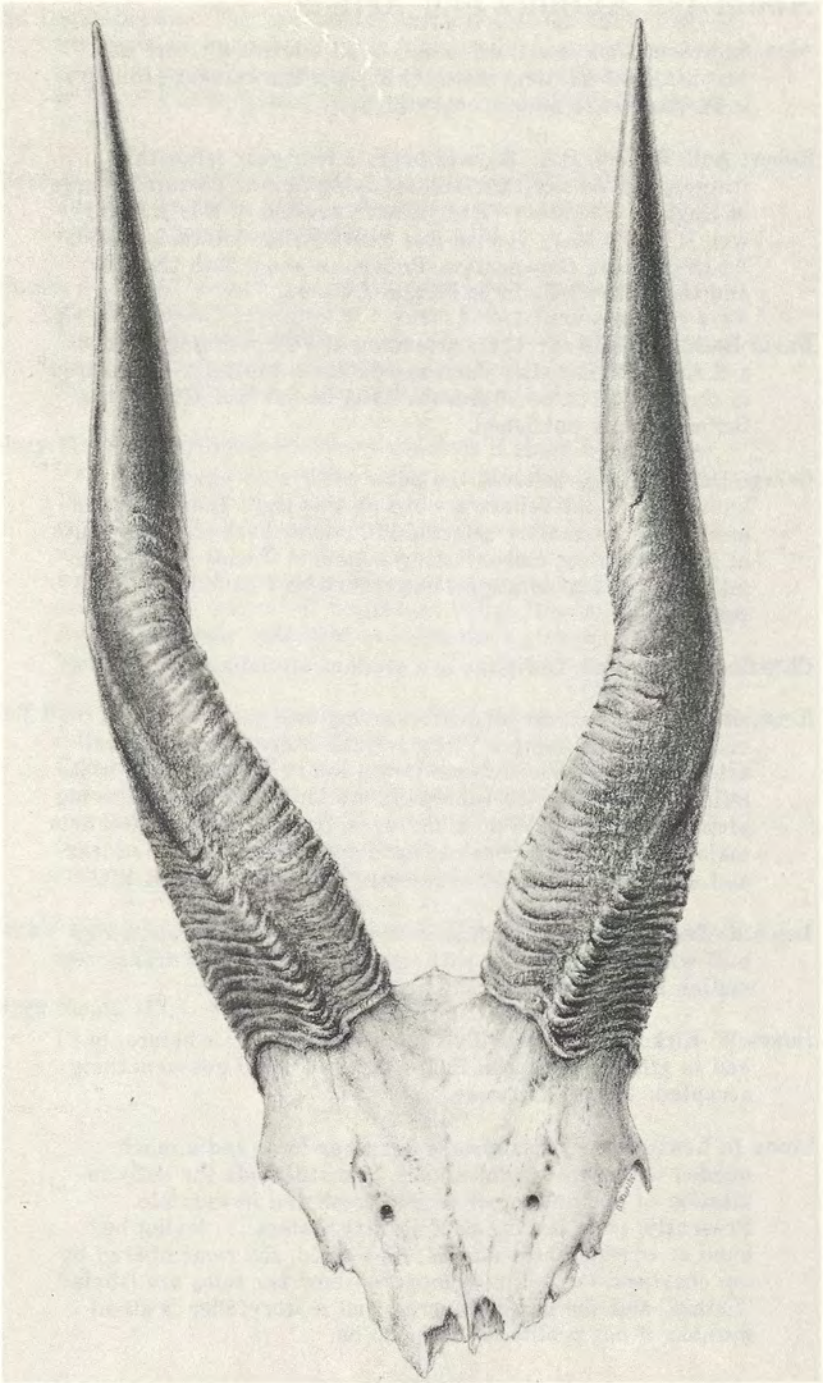
Thousands pressed together
hushed
strangers
in common
sharing
whispers
and hugs
and tissue.

A groundskeeper asked,
"Did somebody rich die?"
An old lady nodded.

In praise of terseness

George A. Dunn

Rah!



Untitled **Darryl Brown**

About the Authors and Artists

Alex Anderson: Alex is a traditionally-aged student (21) and has just attained full-time status this year. His current affliction is an interest in almost everything.

Robert Aull: Robert, B.A. '86, will begin a four-year fellowship at Rutgers University this Fall, studying for the doctoral degree in English. The story "Army Men", revised in this printing, won IUPUI's Mary Louise Rea Short Story Award for 1986. At the Honors Convocation, Robert received both the Rea and the Rebecca E. Pitts Fiction Awards.

David Beck: David is currently attending IUPUI, working towards a B.A. in English. His short story, "Over the Edge", appeared in the Fall '86 issue of *genesis*. Also, he has had several non-fiction articles published.

George Dunn: George believes the poets always lie—as Plato knew—so do not believe a word on this page. George's turn-ons: dental anomalies, selected effluvium. Turn-offs: the youth of America. Most embarrassing moment: "I once mistook my father for a total stranger, but otherwise I have lived a decent life."

Christine Dowdeswell: Christine is a student attending IUPUI.

Kristi Hart: "I'm about to graduate bearing two curses of great magnitude, one being a Virgo and the other being a liberal arts major. The Virgo in me forces me to see each idea in its infinite detail. The liberal arts in me forces me to see the big picture containing all possible ideas. So as a Virgo liberal arts major, I am now responsible for discerning all possible ideas and examining each one of them in infinite detail. Ah, life!"

Joyce K. Jensen: Joyce is a senior writing major and paleontology buff who is anticipating with unmitigated glee the transformation into an alumnus and ardent IUPUI booster.

James W. Kirk: James says, "I've submitted to *genesis* before, but I had to join the Editorial Board before I could get something accepted. Thanks, Yolanda."

Linda D. Lewis: Poetry has always been her forte and a much needed outlet since adolescence. She still finds the daily invitation of pen and paper wonderfresh and irresistible. Presently, she's testing new literary waters . . . trying her hand at writing short stories. As a child, she remembered being chastised for telling whoppers—now her tales are labeled "fiction" and she has discovered that a storyteller is an admirable, if not profitable, thing to be.

Pat Logan-Browne: The hyphenated last name is for the benefit of her uncle on her father's side who loves to see the family name in print. Who am she to disappoint her father's brother? Pat is "just a simple junior in the School of Social Work."

Steve W. Mathis: Steve is a senior majoring in SPEA/Criminal Justice. He'd like to be a wealthy writer so he can afford his hobby . . . juvenile probation.

Sharon A. Miller: Sharon is a fourth year Liberal Arts/English major. She should graduate in a year. Every time someone asks her when she will graduate, she responds, "in about a year." She has been saying this now for several semesters. This is Sharon's first attempt at submitting anyting to *genesis.*

Mary Nicolini: In retrospect, Mary wonders if there is any other way to earn a baccalaureate. Her relationship with IUPUI is two years short of a decade; with *genesis,* a sextet. Armed with a B.A., a B.S. and her canary Converse high tops, she will summer abroad then return to the city, ready to teach writing to high schoolers. Mary has accepted a high-paying position as a teacher of English at Broad Ripple High School. Aware that only hindsight is 20/20, she's stopped looking back.

Jeff Roby: A graduate, non-degree student ("because desire is more fulfilling than need") with a foundation of B.A. (Purdue '83) in Communications ("I'm still not sure what that means") and continuing classes for self fulfillment ("mainly to keep my mind alive and to be forced to write") with this being a first-time submission to *genesis* ("hoping I'll be published and somene will notice and have a cognitive transmission").

Jackie Schmidt: Mid-life, mid-education, "hovering between fool and sage." (Byron)

Mark Small: Mark is a law student at Indianapolis.