


Spring 1990

et cetera

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Et Cetera

Spring 1990

*This Et Cetera is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Hymen Hart
1918-1989*

et cetera

spring 1990

PRIZES

FICTION

FIRST PLACE

Counting the 1>fferent cShadas of ♦ed
Chris Delea

SECOND PLACE

DmpavLd
Deb Luci

THIRD PLACE

Dt Comes from 13eLng a Bod
Phillip T. Carson

POETRY

FIRST PLACE

What ♦H aathar 1>oas and 1>oasn't 'Do
Chris Delea

SECOND PLACE

.C.oclier ♦oom
Joe Ball

THIRD PLACE (TIE)

tjor CaLtlIn, unfolding
Rory Perry

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Deidre Conn

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Sharon Curry, Et Cetera 1990

fran the editor

<.DreamSwimmer

<there are sharks Ln the black mater mhere the chUd smLms
.Cate at nLght
careful not to make her parents
mho sleep fLtfullu beuond the deep end
Dn the momLng theu mLlI malk around each othe.r
not notLcLng the dampness Ln her haLr

8he spreads the cool mater mLth her hands, floatLng
leaues from cLtrus trees moue across her bodu
Dn the duLng breeze of the .Jlugust nLght
she makes no sound goLng under
Ln the black sLlk
Ln the secret shadoms
of the deep pool

8he dreams her father Ln a blue glom
scannLng the bottom to fLnd her
1:heu dLue together and surface alone
to the crLckets, dromnLng out the nLght
e smLles undermater
Ln the blue-black of the deep
and screamLng, she can almost hear herself

SHARON CURRY

FIRST PLACE FICTION

Counttng the tfferent Shades of eel

Christine Delea

My name is Emma Starlight I am six and a half I am a big girl. I am in the first grade at Melnick Elementary School on the reservation where I live. My school is new it is a big building and everything is so clean. I like it that way. Daddy says rm such a clean freak maybe I could teach Mommy and sometimes she laughs at that and sometimes she gets mad. She's like that. I also like school because my best friend Samantha is in my class. Our teacher is Miss Harris she is white.

Mommy doesn't like me having a white teacher because we are Sioux and we should teach our own after what they've done to us but Daddy says what can you do? she's got to learn sometime there's more than just the Sioux in this world. That's pretty funny because I know that we have a television and I see lots of people on it. Except for Sioux. Mommy does not like television either. Daddy and I only watch it when she's out.

Miss Harris has blue eyes and short curly brown hair. She lives in the city on the weekends and breaks with her husband he works for the government. During the week she rents a room from one of the Blood families I never can keep them. straight all those people. This is Miss Harris' first year teaching and she was nervo'us and first but now it is March she has gotten use to us kids.

At home Mommy teaches me lessons too Samantha says what a drag it's like always being in school but I like it. Mommy teaches me about the Sioux and how things were way long ago the stories are exciting and Mommy says rm a smart girl. She even draws pictures for me to color I am very good I stay in the lines. Daddy is a carpenter which Miss Harris says is like Jesus all I know is he works a lot all over the reservation. He knows everyone. He has big hands. Mommy has little tiny hands but she says the important things she does she does with her mind.

Sometimes they fight a lot they think I don't know. I know why they fight too at least some of the stuff I understand like last summer when I had to go live with Mamaw and then I came back and Mommy went away for a while to stay with her people. That was because of the fire that Mommy can make with her mind I know after all rm a big girl and a smart girl.

Last summer was so bad Mommy was angry at everyone it seemed and she made too many fires the police from the Indian Bureau even cam around but they couldn't prove anything. That was when I went to Mamaw's and she told me things. She told me how scared Mommy gets sometimes. One day Daddy came to

get me and Mommy was home she cried when she saw me. She said, My baby, my baby over and over to me. The next morning Daddy drove her to the busport I got to go too. Before Mommy got on the bus Daddy told her Don't get mad at the bus driver he laughed but not a real Daddy laugh. After Mommy was on the bus Daddy picked me up Because even though I'm a big girl I still like to be picked up he asked me what am I suppose to do? She's gotten worse and she'll end up crazy and bad like her grandmother. I didn't answer I don't think he really me to.

I was all ready in school for a week when Mommy came back she looked at the new school clothes Daddy got me and said she couldn't trust him to go shopping for nothing and they both laughed it was like it was before. Mommy took me shopping again so I ended up with more school clothes than anybody except JoJo whose Mommy is a lawyer and her Daddy is hardly ever home because he's so important is what she says anyway it's hard to tell with people.

Last night Mommy and Daddy fought it was about Mommy not having a job even though Daddy doesn't care we don't need the money but Mommy is bitter she brought it on herself said Daddy loud. You won't work in the white world and most folks out here are too scared to hire you in case they piss you off Daddy screamed. Mommy just cursed back at him. He yelled it's too bad voodoo doctors aren't needed up here then the door slammed. It was quiet except the clock in my bedroom. I must have fallen asleep because now it is today and I'm cold and I don't want to get out of bed.

Mommy comes in Today is your class trip, she says. I had forgotten! Mommy and Samantha's mommy are coming with us to the museum in the city with the whole class. Jimmy Lightfeather's Mommy is coming too she doesn't wash her hair. Mommy is dressed she looks pretty like she always does her hair in long braids and in a woven dress she made it has feathers. I'm not big enough for feathers yet. I put on my blue tights and my blue sweater and the woven skirt Mommy made for me so we kind of match I know that makes her happy and we run to school laughing. I know Mommy hates Miss Harris my teacher but maybe today will be good.

I never went to a museum before Samantha either. We sit together on the bus. Now we hold hands and go real fast through the museum. I want to see everything the rocks from the moon and the dinosaur bones and the fossil rocks and the log cabin and the lady making candles. Me and Samantha want to see an adobe there isn't one says the lady she looks real runny when we ask. But have you girls seen the log cabin? she asks in a voice like wear little girls. We run to another room there are stuffed birds eagles crows hawks. I don't like it here I say. Mommy is suddenly behind me picking me up you shouldn't like it in here she tells me and looks at Samantha's Mommy it figures she'd bring them here. Have you talked to her about it? that's Samantha's Mommy.

Mommy puts em down Yes, but it does no good. White woman doesn't understand about our heritage. As a matter of fact she once told me, it was when she had them reading about Thanksgiving. that it's important to know about different cultures.

Well. says Samantha's Mommy, that's true.

To a point! Mommy almost yells. It sounds like the fights Mommy and

Daddy have at home is starting although Mommy and Ms. Aquinillo are best friends. I grab Samantha's hand we run away to the statues of naked women with papooses big men with red hair and guns. I am sad I do not like this. Samantha pulls me to a room with just rocks I like it there.

Mommy. I say. what's wrong as we are on the bus you look sad.

Black clouds she whispers.

Mommy and I walk home real slow listen to the winds she tells me I try but I am only little they don't talk to me yet. It is almost dark Daddy is all ready home the house smells like cornbread and pepper rice.

How was the museum, Emma? he asks me. I tell him the things I saw and the sad rooms but he watches Mommy.

Didn't like the museum much he says to Mommy but his voice is not a question. Mommy walks out of the room. I heard about the damn fire on the radio a whole damn section! Are you crazy!

I go to my room where I always go when they fight I listen to them scream then there is crying. The house smells of smoke I run out it is just the dinner Mommy and Daddy are holding each other I wonder how long Daddy is going to be understanding this time.

It is spring break from school it is April the air is warm it is almost like the winds are talking to me but not quite. I am at Mamaw's she is wanting to teach me things she says before she gets too old. I am a smart girl she tells me, I may die soon it is time.

Your Mommy is angry a lot she says I don't answer back. She has good reason but she is not always smart.

She is so smart I yell I want to go home why does she say these things to me about Mommy?

Smart is a wrong word I'm sorry says Mamaw she sits next to me on the big sofa it is the color of wheat. Do you want to know why your Mommy is angry? Mamaw laughs she has a lot of reasons, but I will tell you the big ones it will be our secret that you can't tell you know.

I say yes but I want to cry I do not want to hear bad things about Mommy anymore.

Your Mommy has hurt in her from a long time. Her Mommy and Daddy died when she was little. Mugged in the city. Understand?

I do kind of. Mamaw is scaring me. Mommy my head screams.

She lived with her people and went to white schools. They thought she was stupid. She didn't have many friends, and when she was sixteen she quit school and came here to be with her sister, who was being raised here. Her sister killed herself after the man she loved, the white man she loved, left her. Your Mommy found her.

It is a lot in my head. I keep nodding very slow.

Her crazy grandmother came to live her. Mamaw laughs low. She made fires too, just like your Mommy. She taught your Mommy things. Some things that should have been left in the old ways.

Will Mommy ever hurt me and Daddy? I ask Mamaw.

She will never hurt you, Emma. Mamaw looks sad. Quiet.

Monday I am in school we are doing math tables me and Samantha sit at a table with Jimmy Lightfeather and Hollis Two Deer because Samantha like Hollis and wants him to be her boyfriend I think he is gross but he's better than most of the boys in our class.

A lady from the office is in the room and talks to Miss Harris who tells me to come with her to the principal's office. I don't think I did anything bad today as am leaving stupid Jimmy Ughtfeather says Uh-oh you're in trouble I hate him and his smelly gross mother I want to cry.

Mommy is in the principal's office with Mrs. Pinta. I run to her It's okay she tells me you're not in trouble.

Mrs. Pinta looks at Miss Harris it seems we have a complaint about the museum where you took your class I was trying to discuss it with Mrs.

Ms. Mommy says.

All right, Ms. Starlight here, but she wishes to speak with you. It was not my decision to have Emma present, but Ms. Starlight asked that her daughter be here.

No one says anything I can feel black clouds.

Well, says Miss Harris with her big smile, what seems to be troubling you so much that you needed to interrupt my class?

You and I have discussed this before, Miss Harris, but that Museum was out of line. Mommy is talking very soft I sit on her lap and can feel something in her mind almost. The glorification of the whites taking over the land, killing our animals, the whole bit is not a suitable place to take young Sioux children. And the Indian Museum out by the airport is small, I know, but it is free to school-groups. Of course, it's probably run by whites.

Do you have a problem with my color, Ms. Starlight? Miss Harris is standing over us.

Not really says Mommy. Just the fact that you are trying to cram your white ways down my daughter's throat which is just too typical of you people.

Miss Harris sits down She needs to know about the rest of the world that is out there. She will leave the reservation one day.

Oh, really? now Mommy's voice is loud. She jumps up pulling me with her. How dare you!

Mrs. Pinta coughs. Ladies, I think that will be enough for now.

Fin with me Mommy walks out of the room

I can't believe her says Miss Harris This is the third time she's

Hush, Nancy, the child says Mrs. Pinta but I am far away in my head. I can almost hear what the winds say. Almost I think it's the winds.

I am sent back to my classroom. Jimmy Ughtfeather laughs when I walk in he makes me so mad I can almost see black clouds like the ones Mommy must see. Why do they have to make Mommy so mad?

Miss Harris comes in the room. She whispers but I hear what she says Thank you to the woman from the office and Mrs. Pinta says the crazy lady is scared of losing Emma. She laughs. Emma should be scared of her.

J2I, (j)oem for the (j)rlsoner

.C.ilw D told your friends, you arm't really
U:ulng, just suaking up each moming
to fliten.d light, shaving IR a clipped slnk.
everything about you needs repair,
from your zipper-less book bag
to your high-plitche.d Southern O<Xffit.
'Don't knock at the door. everyone suas right, you lied
about not smoking, some damn glrl named 'tommy,
your plt bull terrier, everything you
kneau D suouldn't Uke. ♦ut D suon't
lie to you. D suon't go ssulmmlng or
play racquetball or have a
rum and Coke at !Romeo's or
say D love you ever again.

CHRISTY RUTHERS

Mamaw is at my house. Where's Mommy? but Mamaw doesn't answer. I go to my room to read and do my homework.

I hear Daddy come home. He and Mamaw talk so I open my door to listen they.speak so quiet I can hardly hear. Sometimes the powers make a person crazy Mamaw says. Sometimes! says Daddy look at her whole family. Well, it's especially bad in today's world says Mamaw then she is calling me for dinner it is a meal that no one talks.

Mamaw is gone home Daddy and I sit in the overstuffed chair and watch ESPN his favorite show. It is baseball Daddy yells a lot at the television he shakes the whole house.

Is Mommy crazy? I ask him. Why do you say that he says slowly without looking at me. I don't know I say.

Mommy walks into the house right then. She looks tired Daddy jumps and holds her they walk to the couch Daddy puts Mommy down. No one talks Daddy comes back to me on the chair all ready Mommy's eyes are closed I think she may be asleep.

Daddy turns off the television and tells me maybe I'd be best off at Mamaw's I cry but he wants me to go. He puts a blanket on Mommy it's the one past down by her grandmother and we get in the truck to Mamaw's house I wonder what Daddy is going to do.

Mamaw is not surprised to see us she tells Daddy I put my things nice and

neat in Daddy's old room where I always sleep when rm here. I lay on the bed I wonder where all the black clouds are from.

I thought you might still be awake Mamaw tells me Your Daddy just left. Mamaw sits on the bed. Emma do you want to talk?

Okay I whisper it might make all the clouds go away

You know your Mommy is from the fire people. They have special powers. Some of them do-the women who are chosen. It was a gift to her people.

Does Daddy have it? And you? I ask.

Mamaw laughs No, we are from the trees. We have other powers. But most of the Sioux don't have powers anymore. Or they don't use them. Mostly ifs just the old folk. Medicine men. Special people.

Like Mommy?

Yes. Like your Monimy.

Samantha is from the wolf I tell Mamaw as she helps me pull off my shirt She says her Daddy howls like one when he drinks a lot.

Mamaw laughs and laughs You kids sure grow up fast.

The phone rings it is dark it is still night Mamaw answers it I fall back asleep and now it is morning.

Mamaw has comcakes with syrup and milk waiting for me. Good morning she says but I don't think she means it. I eat and she watches me. I wash my plates and dry them and put them away I always try to be neat and clean and polite with my manners.

Your Mommy and Daddy had a bad fight last night says Mamaw.

I can't live out here I think I have to go to school Miss Harris will be very mad at me and at Mommy if I am not in school on Monday.

You Mommy hurt your Daddy.

Did you make him bum? I can hardly ask I am crying. Oh, Daddy!

No. No, Emma. But he had to go to the hospital for stitches. He will be okay. He'll be home today.

Where's Mommy? Is she okay?

I'm sure she's fine Mamaw says but her voice is not Mamaw's voice We just don't know where she is. But rm sure she's fine.

We don't say anything then.

Daddy comes and it is almost night. I jump on him to be picked up and he grunts. Careful yells Mamaw. He opens his shirt and shows us the big wrapping the doctors gave him at the hospital.

I don't know, Ma, he says to Mamaw.

You've done what you could. Take the girl home and wait for her. See what she says. She is your wife. You need to at least listen.

And then? Daddy yells.

Mamaw whispers Listen first.

She's scared, Ma, scared of Emma growing up, scared of me leaving, scared of whites, Miss Harris. But Emma will grow. And Miss Harris...

And you? whispers Mamaw looking at me Will you leave?

Daddy doesn't answer. We get in the car and go home.

Mommy is home asleep when we get there. Mommy and Daddy fight on Sunday morning I stay in my room but I can hear Mommy scream and curse and

say she wants to bum down everything. Daddy gets her quiet he even gets Old Hawk to come and that makes Mommy quiet, too. I don't see her at all. I hear her, though in the night. She fights with Miss Harris in her sleep and growls.

Daddy sends me to school he is going to stay home with Mommy. In school I am quiet Miss Harris won't look at me I look at her and concentrate real hard. We do math tables Samantha sits next to Hollis I am stuck sitting next to Jimmy Lightfeather but I do not care I look at Miss Harris and picture dark clouds. I look at Miss Harris and make my mind real quiet so I can listen to the wind. I look at Miss Harris and remember what Mommy and Mamaw have taught me. I look at Miss Harris I smile because I am the only one who knows that I have been practicing with paper sticks leaves lots of things. I have been practicing I am a big girl now I know how to make things bum like Mommy does and I look at Miss Harris.



third place poetry

3or Caltln, unfolding

Jou opened mhLte ll.ke an orchLd
petals thLR as the mLRgs of butterflies
fluttm.ng mlor IR the breeu.
8trokLRg your stamen, your pLstLl,
pollen-brushed and heavy mLth your nectar,
morker ba s gather, and dart away.

Dn lts tum the orchLd falls
as you suck your mother's breast,
sLng clpher cries
mLth the strength of sprLRg,
your arms and legs dancing
quiet untanglLRg rhythms.

'the bees rub thelr bodles IR the comb
gathered nectar pulses LRto honey
pollen stored for RERJ bLrth,
and IR sleep your small hands
grasp the clear mtton shat
mhLle you dream of mhLte-petaled raLR.

RORY PERRY

Si:1 Ways of Looking at a Diet Seven-Up Can

I
Out of my hand
above my head
and into the corner
the Diet Seven-Up can
dances, clangs.

II
Two more drops of that
sweet aspartame,
newest, sweetest, celery-
like Diet Seven-Up
in a hard can.

III
And the crunched
metal skids on
the ground, hitting
you friend's foot,
"Diet Seven-Up can,"
he says.

IV
Rain hits the ground
where the Diet Seven-Up can
sleeps, alongside the Coke
can, giving aid and
rust-comfort to the enemy.

V
My computer mouse is tied
to the back, next to
the shadow of a
Diet Seven-Up can, where
it roams free on its
aspartame ball.

VI
Three years to the
mainland, and I have
only
one
Diet Seven-Up can.

PHILLIP CARSON

third place poetry
Ten Ways of Looking at a Renoir Print

I
There among a garden of pastels
A watering can in the grasp
Of a Renoir child.

II
I am of
The Impressionist's mind;
I think the world with my own thoughts.

III
Little brushstrokes thick with paint
Imposed upon the canvas;
Renoir created, never painted.

IV
The little girl with her watering can
Is watching me,
And I her.

V
My father bought the Renoir;
He said because
Her eyes were like mine.

VI
She and I are the same
In my mind;
Lifetimes collected with our eyes.

VII
Tell me, Renoir,
Was she yours
Or anyone's child
With beautiful eyes.

VIII
In another time
This girl could water the garden
In the privacy of her own world.

IX
She endures the captivity;
Scrutiny on a canvas
In the name of art.

X
Morning sun falls across the painting,
Motes play in the light,
Forming small pictures;
Eyes shine through a thin layer of dust.

DEIDRE CONN

secarl place fictim

Impavld

Deb Luci

August

Sorry it's been so long since I've written. I'm loaded on morphine right now. The drug of the romantics. It's doing its job well enough. Sneezing is fatal. Your letters are stacking up. I haven't opened them, because I can only see through a small slit in the bandages and I wouldn't want to lose anything they might contain. I'm sure you understand. Anyway, it happened about five months ago after work.

I merged onto the interstate as I always do and right before exit ten, where the right lane ends, a white sedan slid in front of me. It was an old model, with strange fins on the back and the back left tire was really wobbling. Then the tire left the car and started heading toward me. I thought it was some weird flashback until I realized I was hearing a painful scraping noise caused, no doubt, by the sedan's bare axle cutting a groove into the highway. The tire came toward me like an old friend. It took a big bounce and smashed into the hood of my Honda and rolled into the windshield sending my face into the backseat. My feet acted remotely and hit the accelerator. I skidded and smashed into the sedan seconds before the car behind me smashed into me and sent my chest into the steering wheel and my face onto the dashboard. I heard a rapid series of frantic horns, skidding tires, and crashing cars. I figured the explosion and fire would reduce us all to ash.

Then I was in a black fog at the Center living on morphine with my head wrapped better than any mummy's. I could sense people watching and I didn't feel like talking to anyone. I wasn't sure I could talk. So I didn't move. But, those damn doctors have machines that can tell them whether I'm asleep or awake. They can observe from miles away everything you're doing. You know how I hate to be watched, so I was countless hours of aggravation for them.

The sedan driver has to pay all my bills. I'm still racking them up. Morphine four times a day and a therapist who comes to my house twice a day. She feeds me, brings me my mail and expresses amazement when I say I'll open it later. Mercifully she has covered all of my mirrors. So, as I wander through my apartment bumping into things I don't have to see a fuzzy warped view of my bandaged tire smashed face. I never cared much about how I looked, now I just don't want to see. The bandages have to be on for another two or three months. Bone reconstruction is a long procedure. I keep my radio always on so that I can hear the world. I can't see well enough to listen to tapes. The constant flipping and choosing of music would make me batty. So, it's up to the local DJ's to keep

me informed and entertained. 1V would be futile as I can't see. I was mad at the networks anyway. So, at all hours the radio is on. During the early morning I sometimes wake up to static, but I don't remember where the radio is or what I might break if I try to get near enough to turn it off or change stations, so I just wander around in the dark and bump into things till I'm tired.

Bumping into things is my sole source of exercise. It isn't safe for me to go outside. With this much morphine in me I'd be arrested for WWI and I'd forget where I lived. I suppose you think I could always ask the therapist to change the radio station for me or take me for a walk, but I won't give her that satisfaction. The music is usually bearable when she's here and I won't parade around town on the arm of a person I've never seen like some elephant man. Besides, the first thing she does is load me up with morphine. Who wants to go running around town blindly loaded on morphine? Not me. I usually just put on my bathing suit and lie in the bathtub. I pretend I'm Crusoe, basking in the solitude of my own private island. It doesn't last for very long though. She always finds me. She comes tramping down the linoleum hallway with her clicking shoes and turns on the lights and the exhaust fan so that the music is drowned out. She yells and complains. Oh horror, I might get my bandages wet. I don't see how. I haven't been able to get my head under water in a bathtub since I was twelve. Time to eat she says and why do you bathe in your bathing suit? I try not to be rude but she'd bathe in a suit too if some stranger had the run of her house. But I can't get rid of her. The sedan employs her and until the state says I'm well enough for her to leave she stays. At least I'm out of the Center and she doesn't stay here all day.

I did let her do one thing. Together we marked my computer discs so that my unseeing hands could tell my unseeing eyes what data was where. And thanks to my voice activated program (which the sedan bought me) I can write to you and continue with my private work. I have what I want now. I don't have to get up in the morning and drive to work. I can focus on my writing full time. Editing will be tricky. I'll have to trust the computer. I could let Frankie read it to me, but I don't think I'd enjoy hearing her read. I never asked her her real name, and she loads me up on morphine so if she told me I've forgotten. Since I feel like the monster I call her Frankie and someday I'll have to look at the creation I've become. Not recognizing yourself was once a symptom of insanity, but for me it'll be the norm. If I ever need counseling because of this the sedan will pay. That car must have a lot of bills, I remember being hit by at least one other car. Maybe the other drivers weren't hurt, I've never asked.

Anyway, the sedan pays my bills, my computer does my typing, and Frankie sees to it that I stay well fed with food and drugs. The slit in my bandages is very small and not even you would recognize me, though I apologize for not having opened any of your mail yet.

Your Friend,
Edgar

September

I have a terrible cold. The temperature's dropping outside and I can't figure out how to adjust the heat. Frankie is useless, she just loads me up and leaves.

She found out that no one checks up on her, and she knows I won't tell anyone so she makes sure I have food and leaves me alone. She did gloatingly read your letter to me. I must say that I resent your writing "read no matter what he says" on the envelope. It was a dirty trick. Hardly worthy of your character and I must tell you that Frankie is one of the worst readers I've ever heard. If you want to visit you can, but with Frankie and the sedan I guess I really don't need you. The morphine's good to me and I try to bump into things three times a day. I wrote a terrible poem the other day. I titled it "1/2 of 1 is 2." Pseudo-symbolic, morphine induced verse about the perfect relationship severed. Together they are one and apart they are each half of one, but two people. The verse doesn't live up to the title. The poem doesn't bear repeating, but stay tuned and some prose will find its way to you.

The sedan may be paying my bills till I die. There's a good chance that the bandages will never come off, or that if they do I will be too disfigured to be allowed back in the public eye. It would be illegal for me to violate the new aesthetic laws and pollute the streets with my tire marked face. But my life will not be terminated. I can write all I want and the sedan will buy my food and Frankie will feed me. Actually, I feed myself now, Frankie just delivers the food and medicine. In bulk. I shall try not to O.D. but accidents happen. I have never met the driver of the sedan. It must have been embarrassing for him to suddenly lose his tire that way on a government road. I know I would have been embarrassed.

The sedan bought me pay-TV so I play some of the video channels and listen to the movie plots. I have to keep up with what the public is exposed to. Did I mention that I have a cold? There's nothing worse than to blow half your head off when you sneeze. And the bandages are a mess with my nose running and all. For some reason, my radio is now off. I must go see what's up, hope you enjoyed my tale.

happy trails,
the mummy

October

Things are kinda odd. This hyperactive kid has moved in. The first thing he did was turn off the radio and the tv. He's quiet, not like Frankie. I always knew where she was, but he sneaks up on me. He complains about the mess, which I, of course, couldn't see and didn't notice. He's been frantically cleaning for a couple weeks. He took me by surprise. With Frankie gone, I had run out of clean clothes and just stopped getting dressed. That's probably why I got such a bad cold, but anyway I wasn't dressed when he appeared. He was amused at this and suggested that I might want to return to wearing clothes since I might have visitors any day now. Then came the morphine and I don't remember why I'm expecting visitors. He cleaned everything. I hear him scrubbing the bathroom now, but at any moment he may silently sneak up on me and read over my shoulder. His name is Henry, and he seems extremely amiable, though with a name like Henry how could one be anything but amiable.

Henry only leaves for supplies, he says he has been employed to supervise me and that that is a never-ending job. He's teaching me some ancient exercises, but I can't see what I'm doing. I asked him if he'd take me trick-or-treating and he laughed. That's better than a no, but I don't think he knew I was serious. He says hello, as he is now reading over my shoulder. He has something for me to do, so I must go.

Till next month,
Adieu.

November

It is I. Once more, in your mailbox. Do not be surprised or amazed. I now understand why Henry was cleaning so frantically. He was preparing for the interns. That's such a nasty word-interns. They all crowded in for the unveiling. That's right, I've been demummified, unwrapped and otherwise exposed. I can see better, but I refused their offer of a mirror and Henry agreed not to uncover any of my reflective glass. He took me out for a while Halloween. We walked around, but I got tired real fast. Even with his exercises, I wasn't up for a long walk. I got a look at Henry for the first time. He's a good looking kid. Long light brown hair and the clearest blue eyes I've ever seen. He bought some imports and we drank the rest of the night. I asked him to read me the stack of your old letters that I hadn't opened and he complied. He has an amazing reading voice, I could listen to him for hours. Thanks for what you sent, Henry laughed when I opened the letters and we properly disposed of the contents.

I don't mind having Henry around and he says he is not repulsed by the way I look, but that the sedan is paying all of our bills until I die so he's going to stay. He promised not to read over my shoulder when I'm working and to tell me if I get any important mail. He's a nice kid, but I prefer the solitude I had become accustomed to so I avoid him until meal or morphine time. My basement needs to be cleaned and I think I'll begin to clean it as soon as Henry goes to bed. He has some neat toys that we screw around with a lot, other than that, he studies and I work and we try to lead separate lives in spite of the sedan.

e

December

My basement is as cluttered as an old garage sale. Among the dust and spider houses I found some interesting gadgets. Deep in the depths of my library I found the books written to explain them. Inventions of my forefathers, actually half of them were invented by my foremothers. Henry is fascinated and is diligently polishing them for me. As he shines up the metal I begin to see warped reflections of my tire-altered features. Ignorance cannot last forever in the idle brain of a cosmic explorer. Invention one, created by one of my foremothers is a gateway. Invention two, also by a foremother, is an infinity separator. Invention three, by a forefather, is a preservation module. And invention four, by a forefather, is an illusion.

The four inventions were positioned at the four poles and faced one another

WLsh for a artend

D aulsh for you, my friend, that you may knoau
the tlny, aual1ng songs of falrie.s lR the hills
that you call home; that you may see yourself one day
and knoau auhat D have knoau as lo_{ng} as D've knoau you.
Jou possess a magLeal hue, amber vapors lR the aLr.
Jou can see ln me and others that gloau fire
you keep tryng to quench lnsl.de yourself
aultH Lncessant rains of sorroau.
aust once, D aulsh that you mlght call yourself poet,
and from someauhere lR the mystlc auood of your soul
pull out that flame. D aulsh Lt auould bum
so hot lnslde you that your trees b_eg ln to catch,
the bLrds fly up from a-ackLng
underbrush, the rabblts scurry lR the smoke, the turtles craaul
toauard tlny streams and cook, overturned;
that someday that flame might utterly consume you.

C DS'D 'll't f S

leaving a ten foot circle within them. They were created and arranged when my two sets of great grandparents exiled themselves early in the 21st century. According to the library, they worked together to create the answer to their dilemma. Each one built the most necessary machine he or she could conceive of out of the materials available. The four then separately wrote descriptions of their machines to preserve the instructions for building them. Then, together, they joined the power of their machines and collaborated on a book about how to use the machines as one and what results were desired and expected.

The gateway is a passage to other planes of existence within the probable universe. The illusion can be adjusted so that the gateway can be a passage to the improbable universe. The module insures that the lives of those operating the machines will be preserved by whatever means necessary. And the separator insures that those operating the machines will not find themselves Juxtaposed with past or future lives of themselves. It seems rather fantastical and farfetched, but Henry and I verge on an explosion of our imaginations if we fail to get these machines working soon. Perhaps I will meet my ancestors and find an unusual gift for you for the holidays.

the Wandering Ranger

Henry says Hi

January

Ahhh, to bask in the light of the ancient pyramids before they are built. To step into the dung of dinosaurs before they are kilt. Henry is suffering from the water of lethe and once claimed he would like very much to have my child. I promptly threw a novel and several short stories at him claiming that I am only qualified to reproduce on paper. I have divined from the books of my ancient kin the trick to establishing a pocket sized miracle. The four machines in tandem were dubbed the miracle by the four and Henry and I are keeping up that tradition. We do not know how important the balance is. Must we find two women to join us? Are the machines set for four? Or can we simple blooded males go it alone? This we are trying to discover as Henry collects the supplies and I get used to the object of my introversion.

Henry is correct that if I am going to travel anywhere I must first become accustomed to my own features. I was wondering why I haven't been feeling the itchiness of a beard. It has been several months since I last shaved, and though my blonde hair allowed me to survive a week or two without resorting to the blade, several months has never before been possible. As I lifted the cover off the sparkling clear mirror the truth was revealed. My jaw is metal and my nose looks like rubber. I am not much like my former self, but as I plan to depart I am not disturbed by my discovery.

Edgar revealed

PAR'f1WO

Edgar and Henry sat across from each other at the dining room table.

Heaps of pretzels, m&m's, shelled peanuts, and imported beer bottles were scattered in various piles around them. For days they had been competing to see who was the better gin player. Henry had won a third of Edgar's m&m's, but Edgar had won all the salted peanuts and eaten most of his pretzels. They had consumed a six pack of green bottled liquid and to insure that the game remained fair, both were deep in a morphine haze. Silently they threw and drew cards until one or the other yelled gin. The winner took the pot of delicacies and the loser had to finish his beer. The loser then shuffled and redealt while the winner had to walk to the kitchen and crack open a fresh cold beer for the loser.

Henry set his hand down quietly and raked in the collection of peanuts and m&m's. Edgar sighed and polished off his fifth bottle. Henry slowly threaded his way through the thick air to the kitchen. Several walls impeded his progress and once he had the phallus-like bottle in his grip the whereabouts of the bottle opener eluded him. He bumped around the kitchen searching until he heard Edgar calling.

.It's in here." Edgar yelled and his voice was echoed by a loud rapping.

.Was that you?" Henry asked, popping open the beer and returning to his chair.

.What?"

.I thought I heard a strange rapping, I thought it might be you," Henry explained.

.No," Edgar said. .No doubt it was Lenore trying to get in."

The rapping persisted as Henry drew the first card and bet seven chocolate candies.

"There it is again," Henry pointed out.

.Yes, she was always persistent. She wants my last cask of Amontillado."

.Do you deny her that?"

.No, never would I deny sweet Lenore anything. However, to retrieve the cask I would first have to cross the pendulum pit, which is protected by the black cat, and then I would have to remove a brick wall within which the cask is encased."

Ahhh, there is much labor in that. I bet six peanuts, and twelve chocolate candies."

A good hand you must have my boy, to be so loose with your sustenance."

.Hardly, dinner is cooking even now and I have chocolate candies in abundance. It is the pretzels which have become scarce, and that's only because you're eating them."

.I am not. The raven steals them from the pile while you blink."

.My mistake. So sorry to have unjustly accused you, but methinks I hear trespassers."

.What, here? Preposterous!"

Dimly a voice could be heard. Feet began to shuffle through the rooms till a body entered and stood behind Henry. The body had a mouth filled with straight white teeth and a tongue. The mouth spoke and the two drunken, drugged men sat stunned wondering if they had gone deaf.

.Hello, Edgar, I didn't mean to intrude but you wouldn't answer the door. I knew you were in here. Excuse me, I must use your bathroom. God, we've been

on the road all day." The woman went to the bathroom which was being vacated by another woman who waited in the hallway out of the sight of Henry and Edgar. She marveled and their strange conversation.

.Edgar, I believe I felt the presence of something behind me: and I imagined the most melodic voice."

Yes, I too heard that voice, and I saw a specter behind you. She has returned."

.Lenore?"

.No, silly." The woman said returning to their table and sitting at one of the empty chairs. The woman with her sat opposite her staring in amazement at the men... It is I, Joan, your old friend, Edgar. In spite of your refusal to answer the door, I have entered. I made sure to lock the door behind me so that no others could follow my example. I have brought with me a friend. Driving is hard to do alone. Terri is her name, but if you wish to dub her some fantastical name out of Poe's writings I'm sure she won't complain. At least not in public, she is, you see, rather shy. Please Edgar, deal us in."

Henry pushed his cards across the table to Edgar and threaded his way back to the kitchen. He smashed into the hallway before returning to the table and opening the beer for the women.

"Thank you, Henry." Joan said and took a long gulp.

Henry explained the rules. .Betting is unstructured. Each piece of food is worth the same value, nothing. You can bet after you pick up a card and calling is up to the other player's discretion. This way, one can stay in the game without any food. Joining in the middle, you two must win a pot before you will have any chips. The loser of each hand must finish his or her beer, and the winner must find the kitchen and bring the loser a fresh beer. The opener is on the table, and beware of the linoleum, it could put an eye out. Every player must consume the same amount of morphine per body weight to keep the game fair. In twenty minutes I must find dinner or it will burn and set off the smoke alarm which is very loud."

Terri picked up her cards trying not to laugh.

"That was an excellent summary, Henry. I had no idea we were playing with so many rules. I think, perhaps, that we should assume our guests are real as, either way, they appear to be staying for awhile."

Judge not by the suitcases in the hall, dear Edgar. However you are correct. We have come for a prolonged visit and now that we have joined the game I question your shuffling. Gin"

Joan laid her hand face up on the table and Henry and Edgar stared in disbelief. They both reached for their beers.

"I have a question."

The men stared at Terri. "Are their three losers and one winner, or one winner and one loser."

"Quite a ponderable question, my dear." Edgar said.

"It is beyond me. The rules are really set up for two, not four," Henry meekly replied.

"Ahh, then it is up to me. House rules. To be fair, I think there should be two of each. That way, no one has to travel alone to the kitchen."

FIRST PLACE POETRY

◆ hat c:11.ya=ather (I)oes and (I)oesn't (I)lo

&MMfather doesn't go to the CUJ=W,
but he does sLt Ln a blg chaLr suhere he
uses the arm rests, hls Left arms
exposed Ln an undershLrt, Un.eel
sulth tatoos. 'W'WDD shlps he
suas on. 'tsuo of them sunk
LRthe ad.fie, but he suon't talk about Lt

uer sLts around talkl.ng about the good,
fun tunes klillng aaps. drinkng beers
sulth other men hls age.

e refuses to go campLn g. haulng
had enough of outdoor llfe. 'Won't
buM a aapanese car. 'turns off
the teleuLslon suhen the nesus
gets to the hllLpplnes. euer
kept a gun Ln the house; doesn't
osun one to keep there.

jlnd suhen he throsus hls grandson
Lnto the alr llke he's a flne,
'ragLle bauble, he hears bombs
all and chLldren scream. e
catches mMson and holds
on for dear LLf.

c DcS'tD e ne.c.ejll

"-Izhelmerners

'the graM hlghllghts of mMgrandmother's halr
shosu throu_gh the kLtchen suindosu llght.
"Oh mM, D forgot to close the bag," she laughs
as the paper bag of flour
to season the fried chlckm
dusts her face and surrounds her feet.

She perches on her knees
dutchi.ng onto the graM dLuan,
staring at the suorld outside.
'D knosu D should remember,
suhat are those things flMng Li the aLr?
jllre theM cars? o. brds.
l>on't their poor llittle feet get cold?"

She touches mMbrosun halr.
"there ls Lt, D'ue found Lt,
D used to use Lt on my floor
and there Lt sLts upon Mour head,"
she smLles suLth translucent eyes.

&MMgrandfather ls outside raking
fresh fallen leaues from the maple tree.
"Qui.ck, come here, suho ls that man,
suM ls he hurtng that thing?"
She stands and turns around,
sualks ouer to her chair to slt,
and b_e_g lns to clap her hands.

s e D jllcS

"Quite equable of you, Edgar. How is the second winner chosen?"

"Simply, Joan. We continue play till the second gin, then the two winners split the pot and the two losers split a beer."

"Split a beer, Edgar?" Henry asked.

"How long have we been playing?"

"Days."

"With two extra players we'll need to ration the beer or we will run out twice as fast."

"The ever logical Edgar. The game continues," Henry announced and drew a card.

Hours later they lay in the living room finishing the last scraps of Henry's dinner obediently, for Henry demanded that there be as little organic waste as possible. Joan's friend Terri was trying to explain how she had built a contraption which was capable of receiving and sorting radio signals by matching rhythms and meters in both the music and the words.

"Of course," she explained, "I never know how accurate my reception was. I had my machine collate songs together to fill up this tape, however, what my machine determined were complete songs could turn out to be jumbled mixes of many songs. It's hard to know because so much music was doggerel that the lyrics don't adequately piece the music together and solos cause confusion with the computer. Really, all machines are so unreliable that I hate to trust them. I much prefer learning through experience."

"We all do, dear," Joan said setting her empty plate with Terri's and warmly hugging her, extremely glad that she would be coming along. "Now Edgar, I didn't want to distract you from the game earlier, but we have come for a specific purpose."

"I knew it!" Henry declared juggling the dishes into the waiting sink of dishwasher. "It's a premeditated invasion, we're doomed Edgar!"

"Now calm down, Henry," Edgar yelled, "I'm sure it's not an armed invasion. Joan, please, Henry is very sensitive. I would prefer it if you did not upset him, it might affect my morphine treatments."

"You guys are crazy," Terri stated wondering whether she was amused or not.

"Edgar," Joan began, "you mentioned needing two females to complete your polarities so that you two can go traipsing off in those machines. I have a deep need to be aware of your whereabouts, my friend, and since Terri knows a lot about radio waves, and because she is not someone I could leave behind, and because you need both of us, we are here to accompany you on your voyage."

Henry returned wiping the soap off his hands and danced a bit around the room. It was official now, they would be Leaving Epos, he could hardly wait.

After a substantial period of rest, study, and interaction they each chose a machine. Edgar chose machine number four, the illusion. Joan chose the machine dipolar to number four, number two the infinity separator. Terri chose machine one, the gateway: and Henry chose three the preservation module. They performed the ritual parting as described in the texts and entered their machines.

The machines, not needing to be turned on since they had been left on since the original foursome left, began to function as soon as the proper polarities were detected. The humans felt the change immediately. Terri felt her body waver as she was squeezed out of it to the center. Henry was also in the center: the two were thrown together by the quickly moving molecules around them. Edgar and Joan were pushed together just as quickly, then Edgar/Joan was pushed into Henry/Terri and the four spent an incalculable amount of time adjusting to the collective memory they shared. The miracle reacted and as they flowed and retreated among each other's thoughts they were aware that they were being sent somewhere.

PARFTIREE

TJHE stood on the brink breathing. Centering. TJHE remained fixed until they were all calm. There was turmoil in the background of the mind, yet the neurons were empty. The time to begin filling them with information was at hand, but which way to go first? TJHE was divided and could not decide, so they remained fixed until the piece that had been Edgar remembered that the original bodies remained within the machines. Edgar activated the model of the machines in his pocket and Terri, Joan, Henry and Edgar stood outside their machines.

They moved slowly to the bunks against the walls and all delved deep into their thoughts of what had occurred.

Terri dreamt of the edge. She remembered the view beyond the doors. Billions and billions of beyond doors. All she had to do was to step over a threshold, but she was divided over which threshold to choose. She stood, trying to pick.

Jo leans over the precipice and wonders what force is keeping her from falling. She realizes that half the doors lead to disaster. Still she leans, she knows where to go.

Henry pulls back trying to get away from the edge. Henry hates the edge. He retreats with all of himself wishing the others to retreat with him back into the forest.

Edgar feels the ache in his teeth and the straining of his clenched hands. He loosens and feels the object in his pocket. He is aware of the dreams of the others and knows they are not dreams. He pushes the button knowing that after they return and lie to sleep they too will know they were not dreams.

Waking one by one and moving to the upstairs they do not know who is in the bathroom mirror. They move to the table to play cards and see the hands through the minds. They sit on the couch and hunt for the symbols needed to communicate.

Edgar pulled his right hand out of his pocket and dropped the model that it clutched on the table. He felt relieved.

"Thanks," Joan whispered as Henry collapsed into Terri shaking with terror. Terri let him fall into her and did her best to comfort him. She did not feel adequate to help him for she had been the one most willing to step over the edge. If she had taken that step she would have compelled him to follow. She would not turn away from him, still she wanted to take that step. Henry cringed as he realized they would go over the edge as one. Edgar repocketed the model and they prepared a last meal.

Illumination 1120 A.D.

In the stone walled scriptoria,
parched air and high windows-
corridors for dust and smoke and light-
torches stain the air with sweating soot
rising like black quills painted on the stone,
narrow tips straining to touch the stony light
and thin gold laminae laid on holy vellum.
Disciplined scrapes of delivered ink
chorus in spandrels, rise in rounded uncials,
place Christ placed in almond mandorla.
The certainty of colors:
blue for heaven, green frame for hope, soothes,
and the hissing crackling torchlight
settles through the limpid noiselessness
like patterns of dust.
At time, the monks leave their Psalters in silence.
The liminary texts rest. lucent,
and the last remaining illumination
dies as the torches quiet,
and the evening sun closes the high stone windows.

RORY PERRY

part one

TJHE concentrated and discerned the minute differences between the places beyond the threshold. One was chosen and TJHE crossed the line and stood beyond the door staring at a wide unformed countryside. It was hard to accept for they were familiar with a world covered in ash with air one almost waded through. TJHE searched the collective memory for a description of what appeared to be west. Water! Joan had once seen pictures of a body so vast. TJHE headed west-drawn to the water.

wet air touching extremities
respond.

Awareness crept throughout the new body. They saw reflections through the clear liquid. Edgar had only experienced opaque fluids in his tub, nothing like this. The colorless blue shimmered in the growing light as the orange fire rose around t

them. TJHE was aware of possessing immense strength. Four huge limbs anchored TJHE to the ocean floor as the huge, slender neck reached the small head toward the vegetation. Eating without thought. Standing deep in the col liquid. Wondering why the sky changed shades. TJHE experienced life in its largest form then Edgar pushed the button and another line was crossed...

1:rapped

Splitting down the middle with the pain of emptiness
where the child had been, the hollows where he
slept
darkness and light and the hall of souls is
his new home
while I go on searching, dreaming he's still alive
he cries out to me, the distant piercing cry
he needs me
I am unable to rise from my bed, held down
by plastic pipes
that race through my arms, pumping nourishment
to an empty womb
I struggle to free myself, ripping the tubes from my arms
gentle nurses replace them
they tell me to lie still, in quiet submission
I refuse
I will struggle every day trapped on that bed
my child's cry
echoing in car horns, in the siren of an ambulance
Splitting down from the inside
until I am filled with darkness

LYNNE THOMPSON

POSITIVITY

There's a little game
to play
Each night when
You go to bed:
You look at yourself
And you try to decide:

A)+

B)-

Is it a+

Or a -?

Does it matter?

To you?

Maybe to him

It does,

When you kiss him

Good night.

Do you think:

+

Or

-?

Certainty lies just beyond

Your reach,

Because it's not just a test.

It's more like a trial.

And you will be judged,

Guilty or Innocent,

+

Or

-.

And like some spotted, coughing

Cassandra

You would know your end,

But you can't tell.

Really a shame

(Or is that

Ashamed?)

Just 2 signs.

Just 3 lines,

Only 2 ways to be:

Doomed or Blessed.

Dead or Alive.

+

Or

-.

Fate kisses

Your darkened eyes,

And, weary. you wonder

Which it is.

You care,

But do you care to know?

+

Or

-.

Could you handle

Your every desire

Distilled to

An Acronym-

Or Anachronism-

Bound by an ancient lot.

Stirred by a skillful

Black hand.

And when your eyes

Finally close,

You still

Think:

+

Or

MICHAEL WHARTON

Rain Fantasies

Outside the dying continues.
In the earth carefully placed particles
split with ordered severity, hundreds of hexagons
plussing in the rows.

Splitting the summer wood
I imagine her plucian gesture unfolding me:
the wedged froe forgotten, sledge abandoned
to the frothy rain-bubbled soil.
But the froe rings regular and only the dust boils.

In the evening
the baked warmth rises into my feet
a worn and slow
staring into the sun
burning the backs of my eyes
standing on the scorched cracked kilned clay
scanning for the shape of her in the sky.

I remembered once
watching her curl around my question,
coy, she delighted in my asking-
suppliant farmer studying by smell and feel and hope-
longing to touch that place within her,
some shameless and swirling origin
that moved her with such beauty.

On the twilight porch
a lap supper held between my knees
I search the pattern of the earth
for the curve of her
and later, napping in the rocker, wander through my dreams
of her

It is a dark room with no ceiling
a woman wearing white stands in the corner
where her fingertip brushes aside the curtain
she pulls her hand through her hair
and stands, leans, poses against the stone mantle
she smiles and runs her hand along her thigh
hums closely under her breath
she inspects the patterned carpet for bums
sees many the ice in the glass in her hand
clinks and melts and drops
form on the glass
fall to the shapes in the floor
and disappear

I wake in sweat
the buzzing patterns and bits surrender
to the comfort of an easing breeze.
Cradled in the chair, cool night and cicadas guard me
with song and darkness
distract me from the thirsty earth.

Soon enough I will sleep
hidden and huddled under roof
hoping for even the faintest drumming
of rain upon the eaves to wake me.

RORY PERRY

ello

I wanted to write you a letter
and tell you I was sorry that you hated me
since it was partly my fault
 you felt that way
you let me down
denying your own words, lying to yourself
 lying to me
after all that we created
 all that we shared
 the life
 the death
more than sharpened the pain
to a frenzied pitch
 like when I saw you last night
It brought back all of it
 not just the misery when I realized you were gone
 but the good times
our first date that lasted thirty hours
when you told me about your father
in Burger King
surrounded by plastic plants and
 little kings in their paper crowns
when we painted our living room floor
 and both of us stepped in the paint
 you were the first one to walk upstairs
 and leave your feet on the steps
 white feet on grey wood
All that was tarnished and forgotten
by your black feelings toward me
but last night
 You stopped me on the street
 and touched my arm with your long fingers
 You smiled and said hello, just hello

You could've gone on
Your feet are still on the stairs
I guess
I won't paint over them now.

LYNNE THOMPSON

-'lsleap on the Ill

The minister took a grave
view of our hurry to honeymoon.
At the first place to sleep,
a resort called Pleasant Dream
nestled on the crest of a hill,
we rented a cottage of stone.

Things last that are made of stone.
The Great Pyramid is only a grave
like the one at the top of the hill
we found while walking in the moon-
light. We were living our dream
too young and alive to need sleep.

I watched as you went to sleep
your face as gray as stone.
I felt it was only a dream
but the truth was hard and grave.
You had left me, as the moon
leaves the sky, beyond the hill.

We used to climb that hill,
carrying bedrolls, as sleep
under the stars and the moon.
Our campfire, encircled by stone
was covered over like a grave,
as we lay and planned our dream.

We had so much time to dream
in those days, up on the hill.
There were no problems so grave
that they could trouble our sleep;
for love was a foundation of stone
as certain as the cycling moon.

This morning I saw the moon
as I rose early from the dream
that turns my heart to stone.
I see you up on the hill
and think you only sleep
in the cold earth of the grave.

The moon rises over the hill
and the dream returns, as I seep
by the stone marking your grave.

CAROLYN HURD

-YOU
like that damn traffic light that
goes schizoid every time it rains
YOU
StopGoStopGoStopGoStopGoStop
YOU
mixed signals at every crossing and
me caught in mid
red
light
green
light
mother
may
I
step
YOU
tease me with your sideways glances
lethal utterances "smell my cologne"
YOU
are why i still stand here
waiting with sucked in breath
quivering like a one-legged flamingo
YOU

Marie Manilla

NOT THE FIRST TIME

Went out with Kerry again tonight
to the street where prostitutes chew gum and
wave and say "Yo, baby" to passing cars.
We wondered what it felt like to stand on the corner,
forced to use your body to pay rent,
to have sex with a fat-walleted stranger.
So we parked the car and found a vacant spot to stand
and played at being hustlers, two innocent looking kids.
We proved quite popular and adept
at mixing double entendre with milk-faced hellos
but the night air grew colder and we tired of our game
so we said so long to our spot and our late night friends
and went home to our warm beds alone.

Jen:y Kinser

I look back to where I came from and fall asleep.

Drinking

What do I need with people anyway? I get depressed because they're not here and I get depressed because they are, showing me in vivid detail how intellectually underdeveloped, emotionally stunted, morally juvenile and generally inadequate I am.

And insecure.

In this hangout with friends I talked about my newest drunk story, how some of us went to six places. drank about two drinks at each, and ended up at a gay bar getting hit on. I talked about how I felt ill the next day. missed classes, and finally slept the rest of the day. When I did, I say the reactions of those who were there, perhaps turning green perhaps wanting me to shut up, perhaps not reacting as clearly as I thought. They looked at anything but my stories while I was in the side spotlight, making a fool of myself, and I thought, "Isn't this part of the fun?"

I wanted to talk about how my father drinks, not until after work and always before dinner. I wanted to talk about the loud discussion about God and not-God we had and how I don't believe and wish I could.

I saw them taking mental notes on my behavior, compiling a personality profile of people they do and don't like.

New People

I saw this lady with her new baby, about a month old I guess, in a sit down fast food place. He was really cute and quiet, sleeping most of the time, or sucking on his pacifiers. I know they have them but you can't see them. That's that cliched honesty of a child, before he starts to think much and figure out how the world works and how the people will accept him only on their terms. His pacifiers are visible; he doesn't hide anything.

i I looked at him lying in her arms and I wanted to tell him, "For the rest of you life remember one thing: it's not your fault."

musions

I thought adults were in control. They seemed to know the world and their future, and mine. Now some people are saying I'm an adult. I'm starting to believe them.

"Now what?"

"It's time to create a new reality, Raymond. Join the adult world and succumb to the spell of an uh...imaginary reality. This is what we call the real world."

I looked at Tyler's intellectual grin while he stirred five teaspoons of sugar into his ice tea at the chrome diner downtown.

"Get outta here. What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about how things work. You said you don't feel like an adult and you don't know what you would do if you were." He looked at his tea swirling in the glass. "Are you done with your coke?" he asked.

"Yeah."

"Can I use the glass?"

"I guess."

He took the glass and, one at a time, took the ice cubes out of his glass and put them in mine. I looked closer, into his eyes, and squinted. He put the last cube in, looked back, squinted. Nothing.

"Raymond, I think you'd do well to go into therapy."

I took my glass back and looked at the ice up to the top, and at him. "I don't think so."

"A little harmless therapy. Nothing heavy duty, just a little talking. Maybe you could find yourself a nice cognitive therapist, settle down to weekly sessions. What do you say?"

"No."

"I did."

"Well, you need one."

"They could help you too. I did it for awhile. Helped me deal with things much better. I see things as they are now."

"So what happened? Did you have dreams about killing a lot of people? I get those sometimes."

"Uh, no." He looked at my glass of ice.

"Oh. Well, I only had them twice."

"Uh huh."

"After horror movies."

"No, I just felt like you now. I thought I should do something about it since the answers weren't in the back of the book."

Tyler always talked like that. If the conversation went long enough he usually got down to the meaning of life.

Identity Crisis

My name is Raymond.

More Dreams

I woke one morning remembering a dream that told me what I was missing and how I should feel about it.

I was in a mall with this girl, she was my girlfriend in the dream, I don't know how. She was very pretty and intelligent and she was a real person, someone I knew awake and liked very much. We were walking around and I went to do something, look at a paisley wallet I think, and when I came back she was gone. It was like she had lied to me and I had to find her fast or she would leave. I was running in this mall and when I came around a corner I noticed her sitting with some people. She caught my attention as I flew over them. I realized who she was and fell down softly on the smooth floor to stop. I was going so fast and the floor was so slick that I slid, first in on position feet first, then another head first, then sideways, looking back at her smiling at me, me knowing it was all right. She wasn't going to leave me.

Later on we were about to make love, in town, on the sidewalk in front of this little grocery and the grocer came out, looking at us like there was something wrong, and started closing two hours early. We know each other and he didn't approve somehow. I needed some condoms and I knew he had them but I

couldn't get them there because I was too embarrassed. I went somewhere else to get them and woke up.

It was gray outside and drizzly. I remembered the dream and the girl and the real girl. I was used to ordinary melancholy or outright depression but that morning I felt sad. Something had been shown me that I wanted, not the sex on the sidewalk, the girl. I know I can't have her. You can't have people.

Mislaid Being

"I don't feel like myself today," I said to Tyler sitting in that same chrome diner, different day.

He spooned the sugar, one two three. I hurried with my coke so he could use the glass. "Have you mislaid your being again?"

"My being? Yes, I have mislaid my being."

"Capital B or lower case?" He leaned closer, looking into my story. Had he a notebook at the time he would have started taking notes, looking back on notes from previous talks.

"What?"

"Ontic or ontological being," he said.

"Ontic or ontological," I repeated. I watched him stir the tea I drained my coke and pushed the glass toward him.

"Thank you," he said and started with the ice cubes. He took the last cube out, tasted the tea, looked contemplatively at my chin and asked, "Exactly how do you feel right now? Physically or psychologically 'off?'"

"Uhm, uh, psychologically, I guess."

He took on that grin again, and I knew from experience and the fact that we had just begun the conversation that this was in order to launch. I mean a real launch but with a quiet takeoff and a steady ascent into the heavens. Tyler didn't get enough good air.

"You see, Raymond, ontologically means psychologically. Not strictly, though, it also means spiritually or, simply, in your consciousness. 'Not feeling yourself means you've left yourself somewhere, like in bed.'"

"Yeah, that's it. I know it."

"Now, something that would be good for you to do is to center yourself. Take a few minutes and relax, concentrating on one thing, something simple and relaxing. Close your eyes."

"What if I go to sleep?"

"You can't go to sleep. You've mislaid you Being."

"But what if..."

"Don't go to sleep."

I closed my eyes. I thought about that girl from my dream.

"Oh man," I said.

"What are you thinking about?"

"A girl."

"Something relaxing, Raymond. How can you center yourself with an erection." I looked at him with my smile.

"Tyler, is this not when we are most centered?"

He stopped his next sentence for revision, closed his eyes and said, "Right,

right, all right, ok. But you can't relax. Close your eyes and concentrate, relax."

"How can I do both? When I relax, I sleep. When I concentrate, I get a headache."

He went into his therapist mode, Juuusst Relaxsssss. Look at that beach over there."

"What beach?"

"Imagine a beach, and relaxssss."

I imagined a beach, and of course it had scantily clad women on it. No help there, but I couldn't do what he wanted. I never have been able to. When I started going to church I didn't understand what they were talking about, what they wanted. I just knew I had to go to church. I never have believed it, any of it. God was a word.

Eternal Recurrence

I go to work, now. I come home. I eat, sleep, and go to work. I see Tyler once in a while. We set up meetings at the diner and talk about everything. He avoided crystals and most of the new age stuff infiltrating the popular culture. He still reads a lot: self help books, philosophy, science fiction. He's still looking.

I read, some. Comics, mostly, important stuff. I drink occasionally. I watch too much T.V. I see the way things are supposed to be according to someone. Always with an ending.

hapachangar

Strange how you never look
The same as I remember:
Even from one second to the next
You change. Eyes brown and warm
Tum green, malicious,
Or golden, disdainful.
That movement of your hand
Which twisted my insides,
Heart lurching from its place,
Now seems insignificant.
Only part of a moment's passing.
A word that meant nothing
An hour ago, now holds
Profound depths. You are Plato,
Aristotle, Einstein. In my dreams
The combination Eastwood-Redford,
Or whatever great lover
You are at the moment,
Smiles at me. But when I wake,
You are only you.

HELEN MOLWHAN

&&stnto 'West fJlrglnlo

West Virginia is a proud state
proud of her people and mountains
Here it is sin not to be union
and common for a man to spend his life
being poor.

We forget by listening to blue grass.

Others smoke grass.

Marijuana is the largest cash crop of the state.

Can you blame us? It is no fun to be poor
even if you live on a mountain.

We live a simple life

but we all join the union.

Family is important, even more than the union.

Generations live in a grass

roots society that is the center of life.

People make jokes about our state.

Is it because of the mountains
or just because we're poor?

But being poor

makes God more important and also the union.

Please don't laugh at the coal mines and blue grass
of the Mountain

State.

It's our life.

We may not be happy with this life;

we think about being poor,

and whether our state

belongs with the Confederacy or Union.

Some just smoke grass

on top of the mountain.

Blessed are the poor who join the Union

and love the "Mountain State,"

Grass roots, almost heaven, our life.

cSknt untng

*"In unplowed Maine he sought the
lumberer's gang"
-Ralph Waldo Emerson*

It's the first time you've
ever experienced snow
that wasn't just flurries.
You've cut more wood than we need,
and each time you go outside
you walk slowly, hoping
to see a cardinal or a rabbit.
I watch you from the den.

You pile log cabin quilts
on the bed and tell
me how much
you love Maine.
Last summer you cursed
the cool nights and imported watermelons.
And one night in August, as we
stood on rocks at the beach,
shivering in our sweaters,
you said, "Remember
how on nights like this
in Mississippi we
would go out and hunt skint?"

c:Myreprteve

I have been granted
a reprieve from you
and hope to gain
a full pardon soon.

Running barefoot in the grass.
basking in the heat of day,
feeling raindrops on my face,
being alive once more, being free.

I hold my arms out
to embrace the world
and it embraces me.
I am not alone.

Vina Hutchinson

addy's Other .Ceg

Marie Manilla

Daddy shot the rest of his leg off today. He said, "Boy, go on over to Grady's," and I knew. Grady lives the next farm over and is Daddy's oldest friend. They went to school together in Lincoln County in 1947. I had to walk over Emmitt's Mountain and through Grady's chickens to get to his side door. Grady was laying on the couch on account of he fell out of that Birch and punctured a lung. He said, "Hello, boy," and rattled a cough. I stoked up the fire and didn't even jump when I heard the shot. Daddy's finally got his timing down.

Grady rolled his head toward me, "She gone again?"

I said yes.

"Better call Rube. I'll get my clothes."

Rube is who everybody calls whenever there's trouble. He's a volunteer fireman and knows about bleedin and bandagtn and CPR. Mostly he's got a hot-wheeling Ford truck with a stock engine that'll go over 85 over these mud-pit roads. Only takes four and a half minutes for him to get to our place.

Grady throws me his truck keys. "You drive."

I said, "Yeah?"

"You're old enough aren't ya."

"Almost."

Grady's old Chevy won't go over 40 so Rube's already got Daddy packed in by the time we get there. I peeked in the camper top and Daddy and his arms strapped tight across his plaid shirt. His eyes were pinched shut. I rapped a knuckle on the window and he opened his eyes to look at my flattened hand. Then he reached up to the glass and pressed his hand against mine. Rube slammed the back door and pulled me over under the Sugar Maple. He always wore green fatigues with lots of pockets that bulged with all kinds of medical-type things. He's a hairy man. Thick black pelts on his arms, and his chest hair curled out over the top of his shirt. He tried to look me in the face, but I ouldn't.

"He's gotta stop this, you know that don't you."

I didn't say anything.

"Is he gonna start on the other leg next?"

I could only shrug.

"Well, this is the stupidest thing I ever saw. It's just not right. Not right at all." Then he got in his truck and drove Daddy off.

I can understand Rube's disgust. This is his fourth trip over Daddy's leg and he can't make much money off it. Grady and I used to follow Rube to the hospital, but not anymore. Grady settled into Daddy's chair on the front porch and I took the hard-backed visitor's. Grady offered me a dip of Skoal. I've been dippin snuff since I was nine, the first time Mama left and Daddy shot his leg. Well, I guess that first time he shot his foot. He's been workin his way up since then.

It was winter. First of January. We'd just dropped Aunt Vi off at the Greyhound after her annual Christmas visit. Mama and Daddy fought the whole way

to Meyer's Diner. Well, Mama fought, Daddy listened. We always went to Meyer's for cocoa and pie after we took Vi to the bus station. Mama was mad cause Daddy wouldn't wait to see the bus pull out. We'd always wave and wave until it turned down Yoakum. But not this time and Mama was ticked. Her mouth was a thin purple line in her white face and she kept shoving her brown hair behind her ears. She had the same haircut as me. Kinda long in the front and pushed over one eye to the side. Mama had a young face. She was eighteen years younger than Daddy and always called him old man. Daddy married Mama on account of she was pregnant. It never bothered him that I wasn't his. Never bothered me much either.

Daddy was real quiet in Meyer's. He never fought in public; said it wasn't right to spread our garbage. Mama never cared. She liked the attention. The more people, the faster her arms would wave. She was rude to Carla, made her bring clean glasses-twice! Daddy slid lower down the vinyl bench and let his cocoa get cold. I watched Mama like a 1V. She was better then some actresses I'd seen. I figured Daddy would bust loose back in the car, but he didn't. Just kept real quiet and still. Mama kept lookin over at him, then back at me.

Daddy walked straight to the bedroom when we got back. Mama started coffee. I was fixin to take the Christmas tree out to bum when Daddy came back into the kitchen and threw a stack of letters on the table. Mama looked at them and her eyes got real round. Daddy stood in the doorway with his fist clenched. I hid behind the tree but peeked through the branches.

"How long's this been goin on?" he said.

Mama sat down and buttoned her sweater up to the neck. Then she folded her hands in her lap.

"I said, how long's this been goin on?"

"Since May."

Daddy paced around a bit. "When do you have time to see him? He lives two counties over!"

Mama didn't say anything. Neither did Daddy for awhile.

"I want it ti stop and don't say anything about it ever again." He picked up the letters and threw them into the wood stove.

"It's not that simple," Mama said. "You can't just bum it up like it never happened!"

"Why not! What else can I do?"

"Nothing. There's nothing you can do cause I'm leavin. Right now. Today."

She jumped up and ran past him to the bedroom. I heard lots of banging and thumping. Daddy just sat right down on the kitchen floor. We must have stayed like that for thirty minutes until Mama came out with the big suitcase.

"I'm taking the car and seventy five dollars from the drawer."

She headed for the front door then looked over at me in the tree.

"You stay with your Daddy. He'll need you." The she was gone.

Daddy's a skinny man with extra long arms and legs, so it looked funny to see him ball up on the floor like that. He just scrunched right up and didn't make a sound. Neither did I-for awhile. Then my legs got tired from standin for so long so I took the Christmas tree outside and burned it. When I got back, Daddy was still balled up on the floor.

“Boy, go on over to Grady’s,” he said, and I did. But I didn’t get half way up Emmitt’s Mountain when I heard the shot. I ran back down and was surprised when he wasn’t dead. At first I wasn’t even sure if he was shot-till I saw his foot. He’d taken off his sock and shoe first. Only the left ones, though.

We called Rub, the Grady. We told them it was an accident. Neither one believed it. At the hospital, Daddy wrote down a phone number and tole me to tell whoever answered what happened. The phone rang five time before a man answered and said, “.Hello?”

I said, “.Melvin Lee Rapphold shot his left foot off today.”

“.What?”

“.Melvin Lee Rapphold shot his foot off.”

The voice said wait a minute and I heard him tell Mama, ‘Jean, I think it’s your boy. That stupid husband of yours shot his foot off.’

Mama got on the phone and I told her what happened. She didn’t say anything, not even good-by, just hung up.

Grady took me home and we sat out on the front porch. It was cold and dark, but he taught me how to spot blue stars and red ones. He also taught me how to dip snuff.

Mama came home the next morning and fixed me buckwheat pancakes. She fIXed me pancakes every morning till Daddy came home from the VA hospital, and then she fixed him pancakes, too.

Daddy got along real well without his foot. He was always kinda slow movin so there wasn’t much difference. Mama let her hair grow long cause that’s the way he liked it. Things were better for awhile, then they slipped back to normal. That is, Mama yellin and Daddy listening. But I was getting bigger so Daddy let me drive the tractor when I turned eleven. Which is what I was doing the second time Mama left. I’d just finished the north field and put the tractor in the barn. I was getting some water when Daddy yelled from the living room, “.Boy, go on over to Grady’s.” Daddy’d borrowed a scythe from Grady and had been promising to sen me over with it. I thought that’s what he meant. I knew Mama wasn’t home, but I didn’t know she’d left. I was almost to Grady’s southeast comer when I heard the shot. I jumped and dropped the scythe. I was mad and cussed all the way home. I felt cheated. Daddy propped up in the middle of the living room floor. He’d rolled up his pant leg and put a quilt under him. The shotgun was laying at his side. I called Rube, then Grady. We didn’t bother to lie this time. Grady and I followed him to the VA. Daddy gave me a different number to call but the same message. A different man’s voice answered but with the same reaction.

Grady drove me home again. We got take-out burgers on the way and ate them on the front porch. It was early fall and we watched the sun go down. Grady told me about his late wife and he offered me a dip.

It took Mama two days to come back. She made pot roast and a rhubarb pie for Daddy when he came home.

Daddy’s fake leg strapped on right above his knee. He rarely used a cane and could even drive. The summer on my fourteenth birthday we went to the 1iuck and Tractor pull at the Golly Fork Civic Arena. I got a picture of me next to the Hog Crusher King Cab and Daddy bought me a two dollar coke and four com dogs.

It was a great day until we came home. A white Camero pulled out of our drive Just as we pulled in. It was a skinny blond man with a weak mustache. He looked away fast when we passed him and sprayed dirt as he sped away. Daddy and I stopped and watched until he was out of sight.

Mama already had the suitcase at the door. She walked up to Daddy and grabbed the car keys right out of his hand. The last thing she said was, “.It won’t work this time.”

Daddy’s not a drinker, so it surprised me when he pulled the scotch bottle out form under the sink. I was hoping he’d decided to drink this one off instead of shoot it. He poured two glasses and handed me one.

“.Happy Birthday, boy,” he said.

We tipped glasses and downed the scotch. Daddy choked, not me. Grady’d been teachin me that, too. He poured himself another, went into the living room and closed the drapes. I poured myself another and sat at the kitchen table. I was scared. It wasn’t fifteen minutes before Daddy yelled, “.Boy, go on over to Grady’s.” I almost said no, but when I saw Daddy’s shotgun leanin in the comer, I grabbed it and ran out the back door.

I made it all the way to Grady’s barn this time. Grady came out his side door at the shot. I forgot about Daddy’s .22.

“I need to use your phone,” I said.

Grady stood there for a minu then said, “.I’ll pull the truck around.”

Rube was real short tempered with Daddy. He was yellin at him when we got there till the time he left and probably all the way to town. I told Daddy I wasn’t gonna follow him this time. He tried to push the number into my hand. I wouldn’t take it...Make your own call,” I said, but.felt bad later on.

Grady and I shot tin cans off the fence until it was too dark. Then we finished off that scotch bottle and passed out.

I really didn’t think Mama was gonna come back this time. Daddy’d already been home two weeks before she pulled up. didn’t say a word. Just went straight into the kitchen with two bags of groceries and started a turkey dinner complete with cranberries and pumpkin pie with whipped cream.

They saved more of Daddy’s leg then we thought. There was a good twelve inches, though he did lose his knee. he was clumsy with the new leg. He knocked stuff over in the house and sometimes fell down.

Mama took a job at the Walmart in town. Daddy had to sell fifty acres on account of his medical bills. The VA was catchin on. Things were fairly predict-able now so it wasn’t long before Mama hooked up with the newly divorced Wal-mart Manager. She didn’t try to hid it this time, not even from me. Sometimes she wouldn’t come home at all. But the big suitcase was still under her bed so Daddy Just thumped his fingers on his armchair and stared out the front window.

That’s the way this morning started. Daddy thumping his armchair when Mr. Walmart Manager dropped Mama off in front of our house. She kissed him right on the mouth in our driveway. Mama came in real giddy and touched my cheek. I jerked back and wiped my face. She went to run a hot bath and Daddy hobbled after trying to catcher before she shut the door. But he fell down on the way and all he could do was lay there crying, “.Jean. Jeannie.” For thirty minutes he laid there moaning like that. Finally Mama burst through the door with her

robe mostly on and said, "Will you shut up!"

Daddy grabbed ahold of her wet foot. "Jean. Jeannie, don't leave me again."

She slipped right out of his hands. "You pathetic old cripple. I can't stand to be around you anymore. I'm too young to be harnessed to a decrepit old one-legged man like you!"

Daddy laid there and whimpered like a puppy the whole time she was packin. She didn't even comb her hair. Just threw on some clothes and tore out of the house yellin, "You're a stupid old man! So just go ahead and shoot that old stump off cause I ain't comin back!"

Daddy cried and cried, then he looked up at me and said, "Boy...."

.....

Grady and I watched Rube haul Daddy off. The we sat on the front porch and took turns spittin in a rusty Foldgers can. Finally Grady said, "Rube's right, this's gotta stop."

I said, "I know."

"She'll come back," he scratched his beard, "the she'll leave."

I nodded.

"And he'll start workin on that other leg."

"Yep."

We sat there for a while longer. Didn't talk. Didn't spit.

"Somebody needs to do something," Grady said.

I nodded again, then paced the porch. Back and forth. Back and forth.

Thump-thump. Grady eyed me the whole time. Till I went in the house and came out with Daddy's shot gun. I sat down and laid the gun across my knees. Grady offered me a fresh chaw. We spit at the can some more.

I stood up and said, "I need to use the truck."

Grady said, "All right," and handed me the keys.

I stood there, gun in one hand keys in the other. I said, "I know wh re she is."

Grady said, "at's good."

I took my time gettin in the truck, put the gun behind the seat and started her up.

Grady eased down the steps, spit over his shoulder and said, "Just what are you plannin to do with that gun?"

I revved the engine a little, put it in drive and strapped my arms across the steering wheel. "I'm gonna shove it in Mama's face and tell her if she ever comes back here I'm gonna shoot her leg off."

Grady chuckled, "And you would, too."

I looked him straight in the face, "Yes sir."

He patted my arm before I drove off and said, "You're a good son."

