et cetera

spring 1990
FICTION

FIRST PLACE

Counting the Different Shades of Ed
Chris Delea

SECOND PLACE

DmpaVLd
Deb Luci

THIRD PLACE

Dr Comes from 13ELng a Bod
Phillip T. Carson

POETRY

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Editor  Sharon Curry
Fiction  Van Flesher
Poetry  Sharon Curry
Layout  Phillip T. Carson
Advisor  Dr. Spilman

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Sharon Curry, Et Cetera 1990
fran the editor

<DreamSwimmer>

there are sharks in the black matter where the child swims

careful not to make her parents

who sleep lightly beyond the deep end

don't make them walk around each other

not notice the dampness in her hair

she spreads the cool matter with her hands, floating leaves from citrus trees move across her body

during the long breeze of the August night

she makes no sound going under

in the black silk

in the secret shadows of the deep pool

she dreams her father in a blue gleam

scanning the bottom to find her

three of us together and surface alone

to the clocks, dreaming out the night

e she smiles under matter

in the blue-black of the deep

and screaming, she can almost hear herself

Sharon Curry

FIRST PLACE FICTION

Counting the Different Shades of Fear

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 I'm 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 doesn't 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 nervous 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 I'm 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 I'm 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 came 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 way 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 Don't get mad at the bus driver he laughed but not a real Daddy laugh. After Mommy was on the but 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 J ojo 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 you 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. Mommy comes in Today is you class trip, she says. I had forgotten!

Mommy and Samantha's mommy are coming with us to the museum in the city today. 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 school laughing. I know Mommy hates Miss Harris my teacher but maybe today will be good.

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. You 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's 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 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 Lightfeather 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 Lightfeather 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.
neat in Daddy's old room where I always sleep when I'm 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 it's just the old folk. Medicine men. Special people.
Like Mommy?
Yes. Like your Mommy.
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 I'm 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 says 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.

joun opened white like an orchid
petals white as the wings of butterflies
fluttering in the breeze.
Gtroke, your stamen, your pistil,
pollen-brushed and heavy with your nectar,
milkers busy gather, and dart away.

When you suck your mother's breast,
singing child cries
with the strength of spring,
your arms and legs dancing
quiet untangled rhythms.

The bees rub their bodies in the comb
gathered nectar pulses into honey
pollen stored for JPEG birth,
and in sleep your small hands
grasp the clear mutton shot
milk you dream of milk-white-petaled radish.

RORY PERRY

third place poetry
Ways of Looking at a Diet Seven-Up Can

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

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

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

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

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.

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

PHILLIP CARSON

Ten Ways of Looking at a Renoir Print

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DEIDRE CONN
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 work. I'm sure you understand. Anyway, it happened about five months ago after a small slit in the bandages and I wouldn't want to lose anything they might contain. I thought it was some weird flashback 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, moaning and hit the accelerator. I skidded and smashed into the sedan seconds later.

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 of the sedan's bare axle cutting a groove into the highway. The tire came toward me like an old friend.

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 of the sedan's bare axle cutting a groove into the highway. The tire came toward me like an old friend.

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. 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 tripping down the limeade 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 bathtube since I was twelve. Time to eat she says and why do you bathe in you 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

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. The poem doesn't bear repeating, but stay tuned and some prose will find its way to you.

For some reason, my radio is now off. I must go see what's up, hope you enjoyed the mummy's happy trails,

the name is Henry, and he seems extremely amiable, though with a name like Henry how could one be anything but amiable.

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 only leaves for supplies, he says he has been employed to supervise me and 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 a lot 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,

Henry

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 intern. That's such a nasty word-interns. They all crowded in for the unveiling. That's right, I've been demummied, 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.

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 aush for you, my friend, that you may knou the tiny, awailing songs of fairies LR the hills that you call home; that you may see yourself one day and knou awhat D have knouan as loo as D've knouan you. Jou possess a magLeal hue, amber vapors LR the air. Jou can see ln me and others that gloau fire you keep trying to quench insde yourself auth Lncessant rains of sorroau. aust once, D aush that you mlght call yourself poet, and from somewhere LR the mystic auood of your soul pull out that flame. D aush it would bum so hot Inside you that your trees beg ln to catch, the bLrds fly up from underbrush, the rabblts scurry LR the smoke, the turtles craaul toward tiny streams and cook, overturned; that someday that flame mlght utterly consume you.

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'1YWO

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?" Edgar said.

"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." Edgar explained.

"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 ensnared."

"Ahh, 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." Edgar replied.

"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!"

Dully 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." Edgar explained.

"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 hands 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

That clothesmother does and doesn’t

& the other doesn’t go to the CU

but he does sit in a big chair somewhere he uses the armrests, his left arms exposed in an undershirt, unlike tattoos. ‘W’ ships he says on. ‘Two of them sunk

L_the alcohol, but he won’t talk about it

ever sits around talking about the good, fun tunes killing aaps, drinking beers with other men his age.

e refuses to go camping, having had enough of outdoor life. ‘Won’t buy a japanese car. ‘turns off the television when the news gets to the hilltops. euer kept a gun in the house; doesn’t own one to keep there.

ilind suhen he throws his grandson into the air like he’s a fine, 'rapile bauble, he hears bombs fall and children scream. e catches mson and holds on for dear life.

c DeS’tDe ne.c.ejll

"Izheimer’s"

‘the gram highlights of mgrandmother’s hair shines through the kitchen windows light. ‘Oh mV, D forgot to close the bag,” she laughs as the paper bag of flour to season the fried chickm dusts her face and surrounds her feet.

She perches on her knees dutching onto the gram dLuan, staring at the suord outside. ‘D knows D should remember, what are those things flying in the air? jire theM cars? o. birds. I-on’t their poor little feet get cold?’

She touches mMbrosum hair. "there is Li. D’ue found Li. D were to use it on my floor and there LiLts upon Muor head,” she smLies with translucent eyes.

& &grandfather is outside raking fresh fallen leaves from the maple tree. "Quick, come here, sub is that man, suM is he hurting that thing?”

She stands and turns around, sulks over to her chair to sit, and Beginning to clap her hands.

s e D jleS
"Quite equitable 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.

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.

PARTHREE

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.

**ltumlation 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 scrages 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.

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**
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 skilful
Black hand.
And when your eyes
Finally close,
You still
Think:
+
Or

MICHAEL WHARTON
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.
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

-'Isleap 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 moonlight. 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 sleep
by the stone marking your grave.

CAROLYN HURD
YOU like that damn traffic light that goes schizoid every time it rains YOU StopGoStopGoStopGoStopGoStopGo 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

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

Musings

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 comer 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 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, Juuussst Relaxssssss. 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 some-
one. 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

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.
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?"

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
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 stomped 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 couldn'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.

Rube slapped me on the back 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 couldn'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?"

"Almost."

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."

Daddy walked straight to the bedroom when we got back. Mama 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 out and burned it.

It was winter. First of January. We'd just dropped Aunt Vi of 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 throw dirt in the air.

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 out and burned it. When I got back, Daddy was still balling up on the floor.
.Boy, go on over to Grady's," he said, and I did. But I didn't get half way up Emmit'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 tolled me to tell whoever answered what happened. The phone rang five times 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-bye, 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 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 corner 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 she 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 4Wuck 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.
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 where she is."
    Grady said, "It'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."