

1975

et cetera

Marshall University

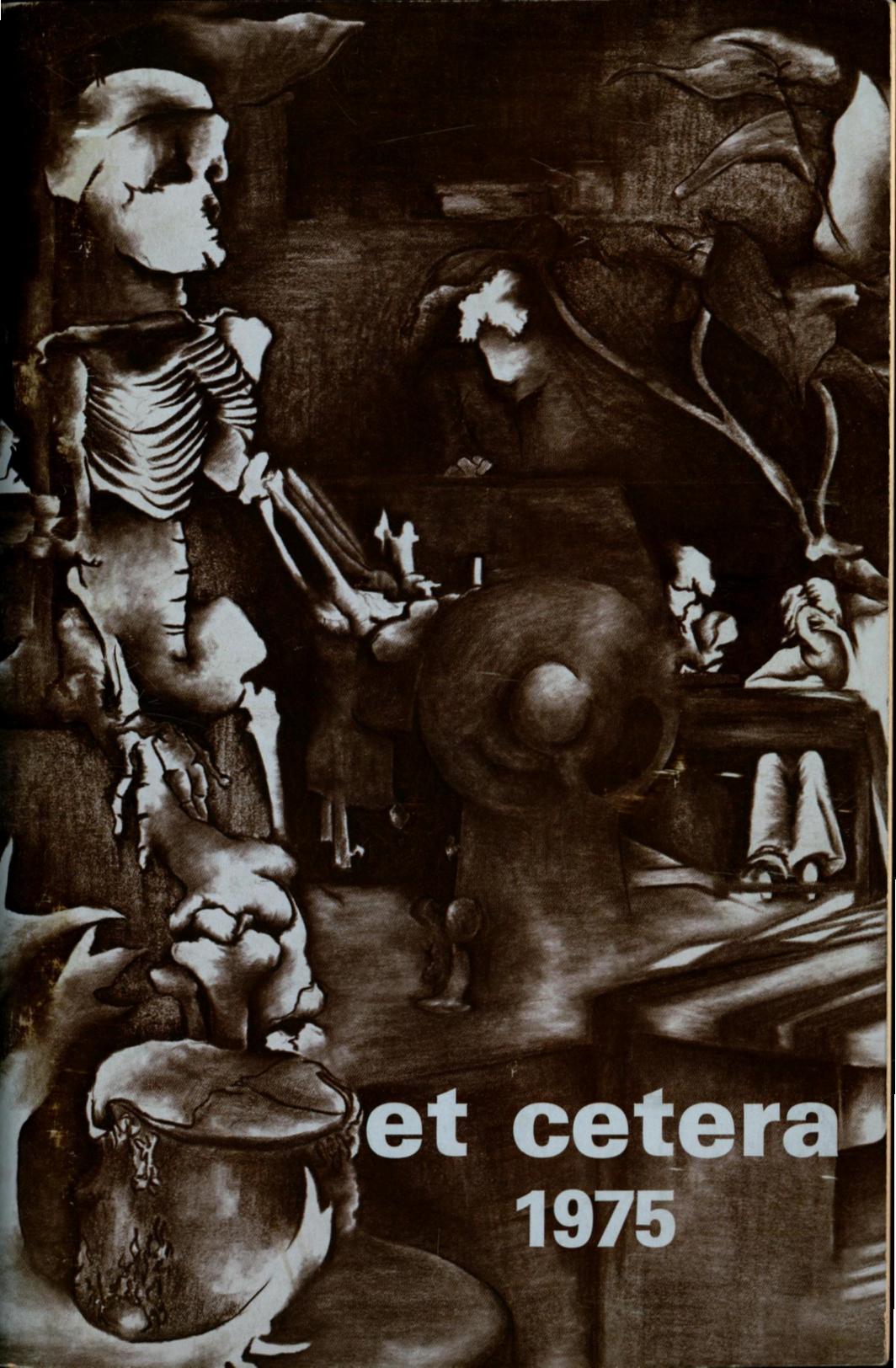
Follow this and additional works at: https://mds.marshall.edu/english_etc

 Part of the [Appalachian Studies Commons](#), [Children's and Young Adult Literature Commons](#), [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), [Fiction Commons](#), [Nonfiction Commons](#), and the [Poetry Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Marshall University, "et cetera" (1975). *Et Cetera*. 39.
https://mds.marshall.edu/english_etc/39

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the English Student Research at Marshall Digital Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Et Cetera by an authorized administrator of Marshall Digital Scholar. For more information, please contact zhangj@marshall.edu, beachgr@marshall.edu.



et cetera
1975

This magazine was designed and compiled with the sole purposes of: first, representing the various styles, thoughts, and attitudes of the artists of Marshall University and, secondly, providing the reader with enjoyable and understandable entertainment.

We do not believe in the necessary suffering of writers but have taken into account those sufferings of the reader. Anyone looking for more or less than this need not read further.

This magazine is sincerely dedicated to those people who seek freedom of mind and heart with the hope that they will always find peace for themselves and the world in that freedom.

Pat Riley, editor

Staff:

Lee Babilon
 Frank Dilatush
 Laura Maynard
 Barry McOwen
 Paula Midkiff
 Kim Thompson

Faculty Advisor:

Elinore Taylor

Index

poems — amos perrine	3
The Cross — Rich Greg Lewis	4
A Revelation from Vietnam (An episode from a longer work) — DCD	5
Picture — Jeffrey Kincaid	8
A Short Story — Frank A. Dilatush	9
Cross Eyed Stare — g. o. knicely	14
The Syndrome — Rich Greg Lewis	14
Untitled — Myron A. Pecora	15
poem for a little dog — Nancy Pemberton	15
VIII. — Susan Weaver	16
Picture — Adah Karen Johnson	17
Fix Your Own Tire — g. o. knicely	18
A Mental Cage — Francie Bullock	18
Topping — Anthony Nagle	19
Candy — Deborah Stillwell	20
The Things A Little Girl Grown To Womanhood Remembered — g. o. knicely	23
Picture — Brent Bragg	24
drifting past — john caserta	25
spring rain — amos perrine	26
Untitled — Beverly Caserta	26
A Pond — Robert M. Williams	27
Destiny — Margaret Fadeley	27
Picture — Jeffrey Kincaid	28
dawn to day — Barry McOwen	29
Ambition — Lee Babilon	30
Untitled — Kathy Jo Burley	30
Green 2012 — L. S. Maynard	31
Picture — Jeffrey Kincaid	32
Grandpa — Dave Mills	33
Death — Anthony Nagle	34
As I Prepare To Depart W. Va. — Anonymous	34
Dust — Robert M. Williams	34
Picture — Brent Bragg	35
The Kid Across The Street Who Sometimes Ate Snow And Crayons — J. Caserta	36
“ETC” — Anonymous	38
To whom it may concern — Rich Greg Lewis	38
Untitled — L. S. Maynard	38
Picture — Jeffrey Kincaid	39
The Pigeon-man — L. S. Maynard	40

Picture - Jeffrey Kincaid	43
Missed Carlsbad - g. o. knicely	44
Death of An Eighty Year Old Mulatto - g. o. knicely	45
The Train - Charles S_pissu	46
Picture - Brent Bragg	47
Ohm - Charles Spissu	48
Picture - Adah Karen Johnson	54
Fortran IVG Level 21 - Wooda Duba	63

poems

poems

are little secrets

you keep

to yourself

until they lose

their meaning

and then

you gi e them away

-amos perrine

The Cross

The Man
tell us
"Blacks are
i n f e r i o r
they are
a minority"

but he's just runnin' a sting on
blacks, got you believing you're a
minority — so you act like one
there are more people of darker skin
in the world than whites and the

Arabs got
the oil and
JC was black
why else was
he cruxified
like niggers
are lynched
in Mississippi.

Rich Greg Lewis

A Revelation in Viet Nam (An episode from a longer work) DCD

. . . Bedivere had a lot to learn about modern warfare. He pictured himself flying to Viet Nam in a cargo plane, armed to the teeth, and having to fight his way off the plane while bullets whizzed over his head. Instead he flew on a TWA plane with an attractive hostess and ate TV dinners on the way. When the plane landed in Cam Rahn Bay a sergeant led everyone off the plane to a room filled with chairs and smoke where the newcomers filled out forms declaring what they brought into the country. To Bedivere's surprise a lot of guys brought their own arsenals, which were promptly taken away so no one would get hurt.

Bedivere landed in Viet Nam on July 4th. It was so quiet that he found it difficult to believe there was really a war going on. His trip, so organized until now, soon began to deteriorate. First, he flew to Quien Nyon, a coastal army base, on an antiquated World War II cargo plane. The trip was analogous to riding in a car of the same vintage — the trip was so bumpy that Bedivere almost pissed himself. Then he rode to Phu Cat on a supply truck bringing meat to the base. He and two other guys rode on the back with the meat. The meat wasn't covered and flies swarmed over it. It turned his stomach to think he may be eating that meat soon. After Bed had been in Viet Nam a while he learned to stare at his food for a couple of minutes, being very quiet. He knew he looked like a damned fool doing it but sometimes the food moved. Then he knew it wasn't safe to eat. He learned this by accident one day when his corn flakes crawled out of the bowl as he reached for the powdered milk. The bugs were so small they were hardly detectable. Upon exiting they were bound and determined to take their loot with them, even though it might mean drowning in a torrent of milk.

As they drove along a boy from the mid-west exclaimed: "I wish I had a movie camera. No one back home would believe this." He was referring to the contrast in scenery. The country was beautiful. On either side of the road stretched rice paddies, perfect geometric squares built with mud walls, which ended at a vast jungle reaching out into the distance.

This beauty, however, served only to mock the pathetic inhabitants whose lives wasted away in eternal ignorance, disease, poverty and hunger. Along the road were igloos made of mud and straw which Bedivere considered unfit for a dog house. He couldn't understand why the people had to live like that when there were obviously so many trees which could be used for lumber. Standing

in the middle of the fields were shrivelled up skeletons working with their silk pajamas rolled up to their crotches, thigh deep in mud, Baggy silk shirts hung loosely on their sunken chests, and straw cones, similar to "dunce hats," on their heads. Bed soon learned that all these people really wanted was to be left alone. Sometimes they were bullied into playing along with either side, but as soon as these outsiders were gone they would continue their unrelenting lives. They had no stake in the war and usually tried to ignore it. Needless to say, this attitude did not work very well. The Viet Cong would chain them to machine guns so they had to fight.

This apathy did not go over too well with the Americans either. They were not only suspicious of it, but it also hurt their egos. After all they were here to liberate these "gooks." Once Bedivere was riding in the back of a truck with two infantrymen. They were bragging about their exploits. One was telling about a conflict with the Viet Cong. The Americans were on a road when they were ambushed by the Viet Cong who were hiding in the jungle on the far side of a rice paddy. As the Americans and Viet Cong exchanged bullets a Vietnamese farmer continued to work in his fields as though nothing was happening. He could hardly do anything else. He was caught in the open. If he ran towards the Americans he would have been shot by the VC, if he ran toward the VC he would have been shot by the Americans. The fact that the farmer did nothing disturbed this braggart so much that he shot the farmer where he stood. It worked out well, however. After the fight was over and the bodies were counted, there was one dead American and one dead Viet Cong - so the score was tied.

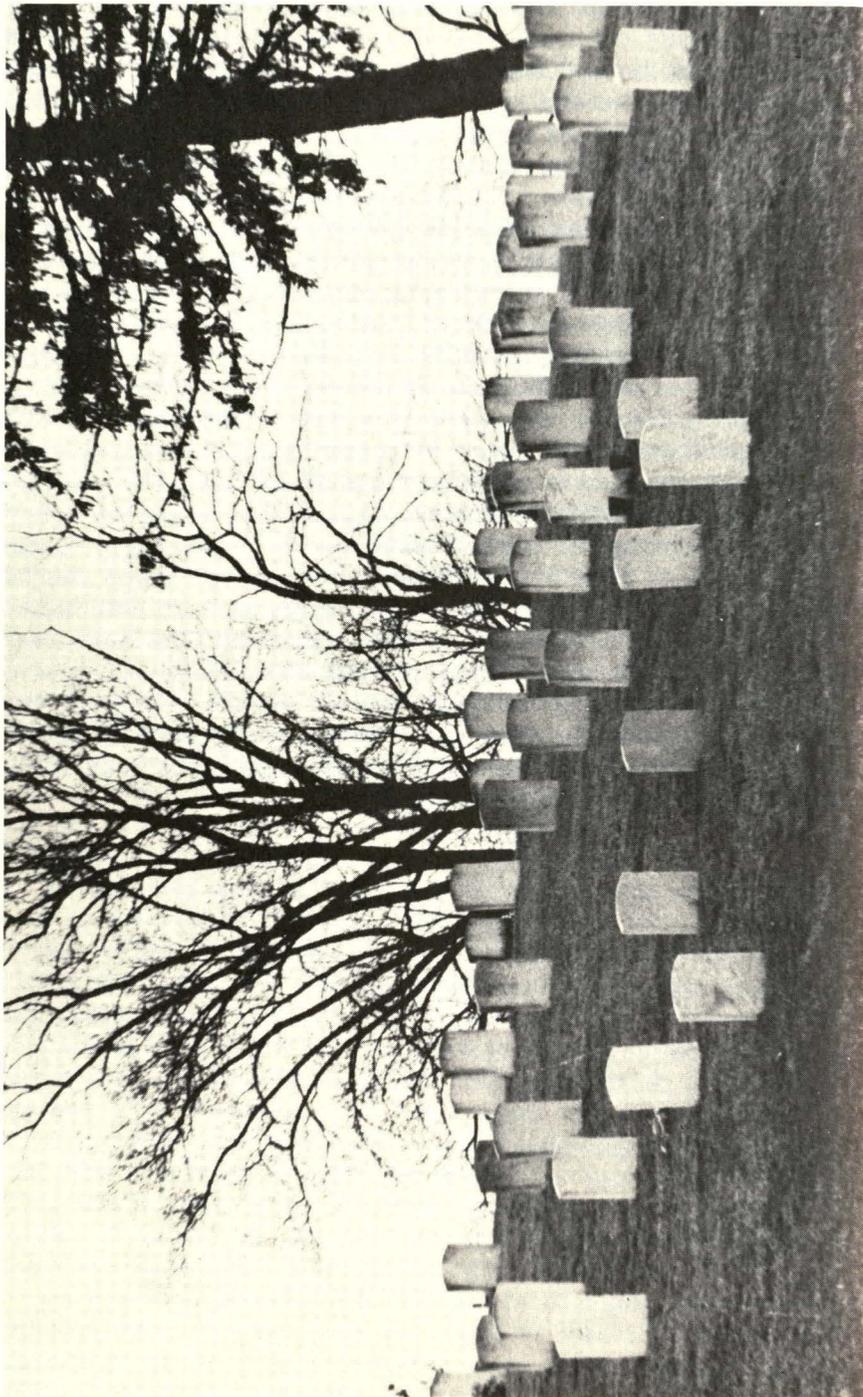
But these thoughts did not yet disturb Bedivere.

Finally, Bed reached Phu Cat Air Base. The base was situated in a valley surrounded by green, rolling mountains. There was a small village outside of the base, but beside that there was nothing, only Jungle and mountains. The base had opened the month previous to Bedivere's arrival; therefore, the base was not yet completely built. Wandering around looking for a place to let it be known that he had arrived, he was impressed by the odd construction going on. He decided that someone must know what they were doing. The buildings were so flimsy that no one would purposely build them like that. The barracks were two story structures with corrugated roofs and screening as the only sheathing. He thought in the tropics it would be nice to have the breeze blow through the barracks. He changed his mind during the monsoons.

As Bedivere searched for someplace to report each footstep raised a cloud of dust. And that night he learned another disadvantage of these romantic barracks - he woke up with an half an inch of dust on his forehead.

Ultimately Bed did find headquarters, after searching half the afternoon, being misguided by his numerous queries. It was an inconspicuous tent in the middle of a field. Bed and his two companions reported shyly to a clerk sitting behind a desk, sipping coffee. Behind the clerk was a sign saying: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of death I shall fear no evil, for I'm the meanest mother fucker in the valley." When they handed their orders to the clerk he absent mindedly acknowledged their presence and opening a drawer began extracting canned coffee, can opener, various coffee cups, danish and various other paraphernalia of an American warrior. Finally, he found what he was looking for. He pulled out three pads of orders and handed them to Bed and his companions, replaced his war implements and continued silently sipping on his coffee. All the time his eyes glued to a centerfold before him. Bed and his two friends stood there for a few seconds awaiting some clue from the mute dummy behind the desk as to what to do next. Finally, they looked at their orders for a clue. They would not spend the war in this paradise - they were to report to Da Nang Air Base.

The next day the three continued their journey. They caught another antiquated cargo plane. This time it was filled with South Vietnamese soldiers and their families. The three GI's had a very uneasy trip. They expected at any moment a Viet Cong would jump out of the group and shoot them. The old women smiling at the three with their black teeth made them especially uncomfortable. They found it difficult not to stare at the old bags' black teeth. They wondered what they did to get them so black



A Short Story

Frank A. Dilatush

Allen gazed gently into Beth's eyes and pecked her lightly on a tear stained cheek. He remembered a similar scene nine months earlier as he was leaving for boot camp. Nine months or nine years? He had supposed leaving wouldn't hurt so much the second time but it was worse. The hurt doubled but he had to smile.

He was a Marine now. Anyone could see that, by the cut of his hair and the shine of his shoes. A paratrooper leaving to join a combat unit in the 'Nam. Stand tall and stand proud. You're a man now.

Allen let go of Beth smiling assurances of safety and return. A group of friends from his old high school joked enviously about saving America, and his mother [aughed nervously as she patted \$20 into his hand for traveling money. Grinning and waving, he passed through the metal detector and out the double terminal doors towards the silver Boeing 727. The whining of jets drowned the last frantic good byes as he entered the rear door, blindly waited as the stewardess marked his boarding pass, then quickly took the first available window seat. As the sooty white snow began to blur in the motion of takeoff he told himself that Marines don't cry, but unchecked tears rolled silently on to his scratchy wool uniform and the knuckles of his clenched hands turned white against the plastic window.

Wake was hot and muggy as Allen walked off the plane with Gary. He had met his old boot camp buddy during the stopover at Norton AFB in California. They had spent their last two days state-side in a hazy reminiscent drunk | broken only by two individual phone calls home. When Allen had finally gotten Beth he forgot what he wanted to say so after two minutes of stifled silence he said "I love you, goodbye." His time was up anyway.

In the droning solitude of the Pacific crossing, Allen had spent considerable time contemplating the twelve months to come while Gary slept off the remnants of their fling.

It was mid-January but the airport thermometer read 82°. Allen idly wondered if the coveted jungle utilities he would soon wear were as comfortable in the tropic heat as he had heard. He remembered clearly the envy he and Gary had expressed during their few months of stateside duty whenever they had seen a returning "vet". Now Allen merely felt the discomfort of sweat soaked wool and a mild nausea brought on by a turbulent descent. There was also a vague tension that he refused to accept as fear.

Gary and Allen paced the worn holding area floor working out the kinks of extended inactivity while the dark-skinned civilian airmen scurried about the "bird" feeding it the several thousand gallons of fuel and oil necessary for the final leg of their journey. Allen stared emptily at the vast blue-green plain of ocean surrounding them while a stubby Air Force staff sergeant called names from a flight roster. Allen, deep in recollection of home and Beth, heard his name and heard himself respond with a soft "here, Sergeant." He was handed a boarding pass and his stamped orders but as he looked at the mass of paper he tensed and felt an intense need to run screaming from the sweaty herd of humanity, anything, just release some of the overload built up in his soul. Instead he stepped mutely behind Gary and joined the mindless horde shuffling resignedly towards war.

Allen didn't like Hoa Loe but then of course he wasn't supposed to like it. Helluva place to put a town, right in the middle of a free fire zone. Even the natives seemed to walk around with a mixed air of doom and self-pity.

The village itself consisted of 23 thatched one room "Hooches" raised from the jungle floor on rickety bamboo stilts. An aura of squalor emanated from the dank moist lume beneath the huts where filth-encrusted pigs squealed and rooted for food among the piles of human feces.

Allen's unit was part of a battalion size mop-up force following an ARVN divisions offensive against stepped up guerilla activity along the jungle supply trails. Allen and his squad had arrived at Hoa Loe earlier that morning and were now bivouaced on the outskirts awaiting orders. The squad was scattered around a small clearing burning off leeches and cleaning weapons while the squad leader talked with company CP on the radio.

Allen sat propped against a sea pine wondering where Gary was now. The last time he had seen him was in the huge orders processing center at Da Nang. That was 11 months ago. Allen had only 30 days left until he rotated back to the real world. Back to Beth, an honorable discharge and happiness. Allen silently swore to himself and began wildly throwing rocks at the monkeys playing overhead. The squad leader glanced up from his vigil at the radio and yelled, "Hey Corporal Baker, you going nuts?" Allen began to laugh and said "Hell yes. Months working files in a secure Saigon office and then some asshole decides I need a vacation with a combat unit, now some 14 year old V.C. John Wayne is going to blow his wad right between my eyes, beautiful, just fucking beautiful." The squad leader smiled and returned to his decoding while Allen resumed his sprawl under the pine. He wondered if Gary was dead yet.

The incensed monkeys began chucking a hail of green bananas onto Allen's camouflaged helmet while he tried to write Beth a letter. After 5 minutes or so he tore it up and picked a safer spot to sit.

Late that afternoon a coded message from company CP came over the radio. The men gathered tensely and watched the slow ritual of decoding while the villagers continued warily with their daily chores.

Hoa Loe was an unimportant backwater community of semi-civilized hillsmen. It had been bypassed by the ARVN formation because enemy activity was low in that area. The local economy was sustained mainly by hunting and fishing so that unlike its plusher, Cong infested neighbors, Hoa Loe had neither rice stores nor conscriptable men to attract Hanoi's interest. In fact, the 20 years of conflict that had ravaged so much of Vietnam was hardly noticable here.

After the message was decoded a suitable reply was encoded and sent to CP. The squad leader stood, brushing the loose red jungle clay from his fatigues and addressed the weary circle of teenagers, "Okay everybody grab your gear, we're going in." Assorted groans and retorts followed the command as the 12 men put out their stale C-ration cigarettes and struggled into overstuffed back packs. "Load and lock your weapons. Corporal Sanchez, work around the village perimeter and post your men on that access trail leading out. CP says there is a platoon sized VC straggler band in this vicinity. They were routed by the ARVN's and may be holed up here. We'll take it one hooch at a time. If you see anything, sound off. Corporal Baker give me a wedge on the point, let's try not to get any "friendlies."

Allen formed his fire team into the wedge shaped lead formation and nervously flicked his M-16's safety into full automatic. He had avoided killing up to now and hoped his luck would remain. The grey teflon finish of his rifle began to glisten with sweat and the drizzle of a fresh afternoon shower. As the drops began to soak gently through his utilities he closed his eyes and for a moment he was back home walking through the rain with Beth. They held hands lightly and slowly turned towards each other encased in a multicolored veil of mist. As their lips touched Allen heard a barked "Move out!"

The villagers appeared uncertain about the intruders, yet made no action, friendly or otherwise, towards them. Allen approached the first hut apprehensively. The squad's translator had been killed before Allen joined the unit and his replacement was lost somewhere in the redtape of intergovernmental redtape. With a variety of rough handsigns Allen told the scraggly old man stooping by the

house that he was going to search it. His only reply was a steadfast glare at Allen's boots. Looking up he felt the icy stares of the 30 some odd villagers tearing at him. He felt something was amiss but couldn't finger it until a PFC in his fire team made a nervous joke about Vietnamese birth control. Allen had seen no children during their 8 hour occupation. Looking behind him he yelled to the squad leader, "I can't make him understand." "Get him out of the way and search the arned place!" He felt an overwhelming sense of anguish flood his heart yet he knew he had no choice. He had been ordered to search the house regardless of the fact that he neither knew nor held grudge against these people. "The hell with orders, the hell with America, and the hell with this old man," ran through his head as he started to climb the hut's bamboo ladder, and as he reached the door he began to slowly recite a childhood prayer. The inside was too dark for him to see clearly, so for a moment he stood in the gloom trying to distinguish shapes. He heard a husky stifled breathing from one side and as he turned towards the sound a young Vietnamese woman lunged at him. There were tears streaming down her soot-streaked face and she was screaming something that sounded all the way to Allen like "No Bobby! No Bobby!" He could not comprehend her wrath yet he understood or perhaps sensed the terrible wrongness of the situation.

It was as if he had been violently thrown into a whirling maelstrom of sound and erytion. He felt the woman trying to push him out the door and he heard the cries of his squad leader below but he seemed to be a rock covered with choking moss, without arms to free himself or voice to call out for help. So he stood as stone while his mind screamed for Beth, or his mother, or anyone to release him and return him to a rational world.

The woman grappled with Allen for perhaps 10 seconds and then for some unexplainable reason began to violently wrench the muzzle of his weapon back and forth almost as one would pull the rope in a tug of war. Perhaps she thought she would take it from him or use its leverage to force away his intrusion. Whatever her reasoning, it made very little difference. Allen felt her pull the weapon towards herself, and felt the tension release from the trigger. There was a look of absolute, unthinking, and totally uncontrolled fury in her eyes. He remembered a similar look in the eyes of a mother hawk when he and Beth and unintentionally stumbled onto her nest of chicks two summers before.

But she will give. Was it a dream? No, her head was gone, that was it. There was nothing on her shoulders, yet his M-16 continued to flash like a crazy strobe light. Her hands still clasped the muzzle and the skin of her field worn fingers began to smoke with the heat of 30 high velocity rounds. "She'll burn her hands," he worried, and

then remembered that her head was gone. Suddenly the sound, light, and smell came back in an intensity and brilliance so painful he had to let go of the weapon and cover his ears. The M-16 had long since stopped, yet as the woman and rifle fell together still clutching each other Allen heard the explosions run together in a single unending echo.

He stared for a moment at the arching pulse of her broken arteries and began to convulsively laugh, and retch at the same time. The pool of blood, puke, and flesh fragments began to soak his knees as he gently knelt over her spattered body trying to piece the bone and brain together again so she would live. They could be friends and laugh and talk together as he and Beth had done so long ago. But there was not enough left and what there was continued to slip from his blood soaked hands. He began to cry softly and rock her back and forth in his arms. She began to cry too yet the voice was too small and she had no mouth anyway. He looked up as a small boy climbed from beneath a bamboo mat in the corner and ran to the breast of what once was his mother. Allen realized then that she had been hiding the child and in her broken English she was trying to say "No baby, no baby."

The squad sergeant looked carefully inside as Allen cocked his .45 pistol. He stepped in as Allen raised it to his mouth and he began to form the word "No!" as Allen pulled the trigger. Then there were two headless bodies crumpled together on the stained floor.

The sergeant quietly took the boy outside to the crowd of Marines and tribesmen gathered around the foot of the ladder.

For a moment he stared at the empty door and then with the engraved lighter his daughter had given him for Christmas he began to set fire to the loose thatching of the hooch. Turning to his men he gave a gruff "Get your shit, there's nothing here." Corporal Sanchez pointed out a torn propaganda sheet tacked to one of the burning stilts. "I'm not sure what most of it says but get this. According to Charlies, American soldiers eat babies. I wonder if they believe that trash?"

"Yeah, I wonder."

OVERCOME BY THE BEAUTY OF RED NORTH GEORGIA CLAY and
writing down lines, riot being able to afford a tape-recorder, or
CROSS EYED STARE

Cross eyed stare down a
County Mountie's trigger finger.
"Up ginst the truck boay,
You'a soak or one'em hippies boay?
Shaup boay when I'm talkin at you, heahn?
Hullo .. Retha ... I got me one this time,
Flitin on'n off the road out herah on the innerstate,
Lika fly'round summer hog-turds.
Get this Retha,
Seyzehe's writin portry".

knicely-go

The Syndrome

The hands that took time so softly float
across my body

Now rub and redden the skin,

the gentleness is gone, the care no longer matters
just the act.

The wetness that made it fantasy
is now dry reality.

Rich Greg Lewis

Untitled

Your sweetheart sleeps with me
And I shall wake her gracefully.
I see your longing so clearly
And into my heart it slips quietly.

Myron A. Pecora

poem for a little dog

the white pigeons
are eating next year's lawn.

Cardi attacks
growling, snapping,
leaping after the naked red legs
that trail behind as

the pigeons rise
in a cloud of dirt and feathers.

Cardi loves the soft,
graceful pigeons.
they are so small.
so afraid of her.

Nancy Pemberton

VIII.

Being female is
not being allowed to take shop
or mechanics
then growing up and having the functions of bandsaws
or clutches
explained to you
by a man

Being female is
wearing sexy clothes and being immaculate about grooming
because the men on madison avenue will it
and having to be offended when the men in huntington whistle

Being female is
automatically not being considered for managerial positions
automatically laughing at "dumb broad" jokes
automatically being coy &/or subservient

Being female is
doing your own typing because you don't know how to ask favors
substitution for the secretary
being asked to tend the office coffee pot

Susan Weaver



FIX YOUR OWN TIRE, OPEN YOU OWN DOOR,
LIGHT YOUR OWN FAG, CHAIN YOU OWN LOAD,
PACK YOUR OWN GUN, CHALLENGE YOUR OWN INSULT,
PUT OUT YOUR OWN FIRE.

i was a consumate chivalist

Until some pin-head slapped my wrist

Insisted i call her Ms

knicely-go

A Mental Cage

We went to the zoo yesterday.
The Keeper bared his teeth and said welcome with his sad eyes.
He took us inside and began unlocking doors.
He walked in smiling.
He warned us not to give the animals money.
We smiled and nodded.
But we didn't understand.
Inside, we huddled close together tor protection.
The Keeper huddled close inside himself.
He showed us the baby cage first.
We smiled and huddled and waited to be ushered on.
He took us to the female enclosure
But my God!
They weren't animals,
They were people.
One smiled sadly and spoke of her grandchildren
Her eyes cried a little
And our smiles cracked and fell one by one.
We followed the Keeper's sad eyes with our own.
And we waved goodbye to the ladies.
The metal door slammed shut.
Next he led us to the men's quarters
But there weren't any inside.
There were just broken shells lying in the halls
And empty bodies shuffling around.
We huddled ever closer and searched my pockets tor an
extra smile
But they were empty.
The Keeper led us out and we left them the same
Still shuffling and being nothing
In particular.

Francie Bullock

Topping

Poor Bill. He couldn't eat his eggs,
Even with all that cats up;
He was sorry. Everytime
The waitress came around
He ducked. He was too sober.
Maybe I'll go into realestate:
The fraternity boys
At Oklahoma U.
Laughed because he was in baking.
And he didn't make football.
Or date that girl in highscool.
But he could draw anything,
Or work any crossword puzzle.
Really trying to ki 11yourself.

The guy who asked him to step
Outside was so skinny;
But he couldn't hit him.
And then one of the other guys
Pushed him down from behind,
And then all three of them
Started kicking him. He couldn't
Get up. They kicked him down.
They kicked him in the face,
In the kidneys, everywhere.
He was dead.
He couldn't remember his rank
Until the doctor came in,
Then he was sharp as a tack.
And that weekend Barb consented
To go to bed with him.
They made it tor two and a half
Hours, without a break,
A new record tor him,
And she said it was great.
Maybe I'll go into realestate.

Hallways with doors to hallways.
Corners around which clowns
Laugh at you, and you die.
Really trying to ki ll yourself.

Anthony Nagle

Candy

Deborah Stillwell

She stood in the middle of the crowded barroom, an almost tall girl with copper-colored hair flung carelessly back over her right shoulder, and hanging carefully brushed down the left side of her chest. One three-ringed hand held a glass of beer that contained only one more gulp; the other hung fretfully at her side, its motion alternating between nervous finger-snapping and an almost childishly vulnerable clenching of the fist.

She then began the carefully planned Glance Around The Room. It was a gl \diamond nce that required much willpower to keep it in its steady, casual motion: the willpower to avoid an envious glare at The Blonde By The Pool Table and to avoid a lingering and lustful stare at the Golden Haired God who stood near the juke box, the boy with the creamy-colored, open-necked shirt and blue suede jacket he hadn't decided to remove yet. They were the only real objects of interest tonight.

Her friend returned with two glasses of beer; she had already taken sips out of both of them to avoid spilling.

"Candy," her friend said, "when does the band start?"

"In fifteen minutes," she answered. "It's pretty crowded tonight, huh?"

"Yeah, but it looks like it's gonna be pretty dull. All these freshmen. No good-looking guys. Even the girls are dogs."

"Yeah, that's right. I don't see any guys here tonight." Candy placed her beer down on a vacant table. "I'm going to play the juke box," she said. There were ten feet between she and the machine: at the halfway point, she had to pass the owner of the blue sued \diamond jacket. At this exact point she stumbled, brushing against him lightly and balancing herself with a hand around his waist which she slid down his back dangerously close-but not quite-to his behind.

"I'm sorry," she mumbled, her eyes looking into his face but carefully avoiding contact with his eyes. She continued to the juke box, a new motion added to her hips and, once there, she danced briefly to the music already playing, and lingered over her own selections for almost ten minutes.

By this time, a walk to the ladies room was in order so without consulting her friend, she walked the twenty feet, 'showing oblivious disdain to any eyes that watched her. It a head had turned, she would have been even more scornful.

"What took you so long?" her friend asked when she returned. She had already begun to drink Candy's beer.

"The band is starting," she said.

They stood for twenty minutes, holding their beers, taking occasional sips, sips that were necessarily tiny because they could not afford to buy another one, and this drink would have to last until a young man started buying.

After thirty minutes of standing and occassional sips, Candy felt a growing annoyance-at the band, which was not very good, at the young men who stood talking to each other, at the Pool Table Blonde who had twice walked in front of the Blue Suede Jacket and caused his head to turn. She handed the other girl her beer. "I'm going to the ladies room," she said.

"Again? What's the matter-can't hold your beer?"

But she was already ambling toward her target, allowing no eyes to meet hers, yet when she came to the torch-blue eyes of the Blue Suede Jacket, she stared into them tor an intinitismal moment, then lowered her eyes slowly over his body. When her gaze came up, she turned her head and walked more quickly to the ladies room.

She stood inside the rest room for seven minutes, watching girls comb their hair and add more make-up, listening idly to the gossip of a few identifiably freshman girls. Her mind wandered to thoughts of her roommate, who had, three months ago, broken up with the young man she had dated for almost two years. Candy could not understand Elizabeth's motives: John had been handsome, intelligent, ambitious; no one could have done better. But in her explanation, Elizabeth had launched into a tirade that Candy could only listen to half-heartedly ... There are some things that only a woman can understand-what it's like to be a wallflower at a dance ... to go to the prom while your best friend sits home and cries ... to go to a club for a drink and some solitude and be assumed a pick up ... to see your fetus-baby flushed down a toilet because society and some man made you take the moral responsibility for something that was the mistake of two people.

Candy hadn't understood then, and now, anticipating the attention of the Blue Suede Jacket, she would have understood even less. She opened the door and began the slow, saucy walk back to her friend.

A hand on her arm detained her, at the exact moment and place she planned. "Would you like to dance?" a voice asked. There was that momentary feeling of triumph, and then an intoxicating pride surged through her as she walked down the aisle to the dance floor, holding the hand of the Blue Suede Jacket. She didn't look at her friend as she passed her.

"Where are you from?" he asked, after they had danced.

"Seneca Falls, New York," she said.

"I thought so. You don't look like a Kentucky girl."

"Oh? What do I look like?"

"Like something that should be made illegal." He took her hand. "Why don't we leave here and go to my apartment? It's getting pretty crowded."

As they walked out, she tried to put herself in the place of the girl standing by the bar, or the boy holding the pool stick, and imagine how she and the Blue Suede Jacket looked together. Her mind took this mental picture and, as the camera clicked, she smiled brilliantly, unseeingly, into the crowd.

After they made love, she felt the familiar hunger pangs that followed drinking, smoking, and lovemaking. She walked naked into the dingy kitchen. A loaf of bread and a jar of Little Boy peanut butter lay on the table. She began making a sandwich.

"Hey, what are you doing?" he asked, and she turned quickly, catlike. He didn't look quite the same without his blue suede jacket.

"I'm awfully hungry," she said.

"Listen, I really have to get you back. I've got an 8:00 class tomorrow. Really. Get dressed, o.k.? You can bring that sandwich with you."

They walked the four blocks to her dormitory in silence, save for a few embarrassing smacks that came when the peanut butter stuck to the roof of her mouth. At the door, she said,

"When are you going to call me?"

"Tomorrow. We'll go out tomorrow night."

As she walked down the hall to her room, her platform shoes pounded heavily on the floor, announcing her return. Elizabeth was still up, talking to one of her friends. They had stayed in all night, even though they had no tests, no work, the next day. And Elizabeth was so pretty to be boring herself this way, to have stopped living at twenty. For the first time since she had been a little girl, Candy felt a twinge of pity for another female, a sentiment free of suspicion, distrust, and envy. She felt so sorry for Elizabeth.

"Did you have a nice time?" Elizabeth asked politely.

"Oh, yeah. I met a great guy. We're going out tomorrow night. I think I'd like him to take me out to dinner. I haven't had a good steak in so long."

The next night, she went to the Cave, a new club on Raven's Road, where she saw a boy with black hair, who wore a long, furred coat, which was a very daring style for Kentucky.

THE THINGS A LITTLE GIRL GROWN TO WOMANHOOD
REMEMBERED ABOUT THE ONLY TIME SHE VISITED
HER DADDY AND EXCUSING HIM FOR NOT APPRECIATING
HER EAGERNESS TO BE OF HELP AND STAY WITH HIM

I milked the cow with long fingernails

When I come to the doctor was there

Everything I done I got hurt

No wonder daddy sent me back to grandma's

I straddled an electric fence on my way

To water the horses by the time

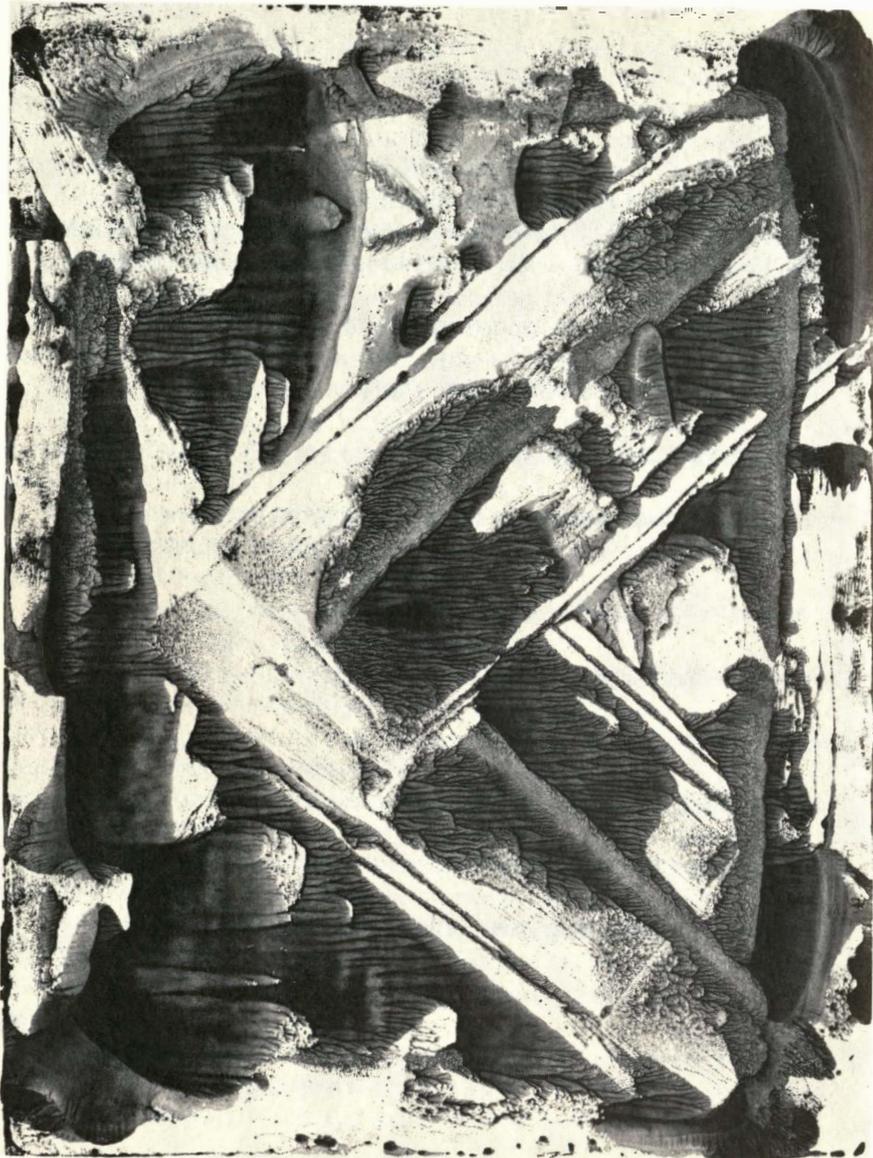
Daddy turned off the power

I'd emptied my pails and filled my step-in's

Everything I done I got hurt

No wonder daddy sent me back to grandma's

knicley-go



drifting past

this is the slate-blue sky of my eyes.
here white clouds
are anchored like ships
to the mountains.
a bird is drifting past
in the blue spaces,
and the sun, a yellow mouth,
yawns,
and becomes an island
on the horizon.
here on the mountainside,
i watch the screaming pirates
bury the island sun
in the face of the dead bird,
i close my eyes,
and night begins
in a cold brown hole - forever.

john caserta

spring rain

come summer
the hopes i've stored up
will be a picnic lunch
on a beach in maine
and i'll bring back
a piece of driftwood
to memorize a place in time
you haven't been
the lighthouse
and rocky coast
is reminiscent of
you and me
but i can't remember
who is which

amos perrine

Untitled

old polka dot tennies
lie in a heap
like two corpses
with laces crawling
like worms
through a forgotten grave.

Beverly Caserta

A Pond

There is a pond I know of at forest's edge
perimetered by rocky caves and fallen logs
disturbed only by an occasional fish's splash,
or the sounds of animals on earthen sod.

Candidly adorned by nature's plush,
ultimate serenity is placidly unveiled
amid tree shadowed still life pond
surrounded by honeysuckle and daffodil.

Beauty yet not surpassed by the pink splashed sky
as dusk stealthily approaches from heavens east
is captured from the mirrored surface by my eyes,
and later to my memory's cage released.

Not does the earthly scent my nostrils appall
from the mixture of flowers and aquatic life
as they to my nostrils lathargically stroll
which harbors me from unbearable daily strife.

Amid executions of an arduous task
or civilization's fast paced ways
this scene is a bottomless flask
which affords my mind an instant escape.

Robert M. Williams

DESTINY

The stream trickles down its bed.
The river roars over its rocks.
They are of the same element.
But the stream will reach the sea intact
The river will lose itself along its rocky path.

Margaret Fadeley



dawn to day

dark in early morning sleep
train lights appear and dis-
rols into the station of the two alone
parting beneath the gray softness of a single light
without sound the dark enfolds them
shy and intense stand touching - their breaths
beating the rhythm of pigeon wings in heated flight

a sip of whiskey in the day
beyond shadowed walks and drives
playing forever in the sun's display
coming and going-eights and fives
in routine- an image of circles
rolling towards - in perpetuity

but that will not last
in shattering night
- the steel wheels grinding down with sparks-
sooner thoughts than flesh volunteer
a tear and a clasp to bond the flesh
by a pull - and silent screams add
to the grating steel

until the night is broken by control
into a hundred squares
of empty
growing between the station and the train
and the night unfolds to dawn
and dawn to day
Barry Mcowen

Ambition

Conceived in nature's womb and nourished there,
The crocus is impatient to be born.
But springtime's night is faced by winter's morn;
Somehow the crocus doesn't seem to care.
She boldly paints the flesh of earth, once bare
And hidden by a blanket old and worn.
Without a fear she smiles upon the morn.
Ignoring then the snowflake in her hair.
But can it be thus for woman when she
Imagines all her goals can be attained?
She sees life's season unprepared - yet old -
And doesn't know that fate sometimes can be
The winter of a spring that has been feigned.
-The warmth of zeal is frozen by the cold.

Lee Babilon

Untitled

The snow
falls softly
And melts
immediately
Reminding me of broken promises
and faded dreams
That seem to melt away -
As soon as they touch
Reality.

Kathy Jo Burley

Green-2012

She sang a song of bright green days,
The old woman wrinkled against the pseudo-chrome
Viscose-leather therapeutic chair.
She told stories of green-grass and trees
Bushes, shrubs, and authentic flowers
Walls painted green, and green lawn chairs -
Childish memories of a too-old woman.
The last of her age, for no longer would
People be allowed to wither to such
Unhealthy, unnecessary elderliness.
The last of our kind to remember green
a color I think I might have liked.
Her wavering voice made it sound so lovely: cool, alive
Soft, fresh-smelling
Green.
Our colors now are transparent and silver
And blue for its high visibility
And red for danger warnings.
The old woman has experienced the pain of so
Many things I will be saved from -
Sickness, childbirth, old age itself -
But she has seen the color green
And I have never seen it.

-L. S. Maynard



Grandpa

His boyhood was busy,
and he was tough and always
helped his dad cut brush.

He cut brush with an axe,
when he was 17.
sweat was his living and hard,
calloused his hands were grasping
and tough,

and
through his fingers it slipped,
and he kept piling brush up to burn,
and
hard were his 6 children and tough,
sometimes he cut them with his hard hands
and calloused dreams like words,
and
sweat was their living and tough.

and
He cuts weeds with a scythe,
when he was old and 67.
weak was his mowing and tough,
and the weeds were
hard

to pile
burn
and then his dreams got sweaty
and he sat down
and
died.

(it slipped through his fingers)

Dave Mills

Death

Whether you think you die or not
depends,
On what you think you are.

Anthony Nagle

As I Prepare to Depart West Virginia

I came, as all immigrants, seeking prosperity and fulfillin' dreams and like them darkies my 3 years has been their 300. You'all lied to me - several times. Jack lied, Denise lied, Eddins lied, Mister Cartoon lied, and I lied . . . I had to. Nobody told me the truth. My advisor never did, I bet your advisor never did either. The only thing I ever did here was get beat up. Last year some prissy styled smartass got up and spoke on knowledge. I learned to drink, fuck, and sometimes listen.

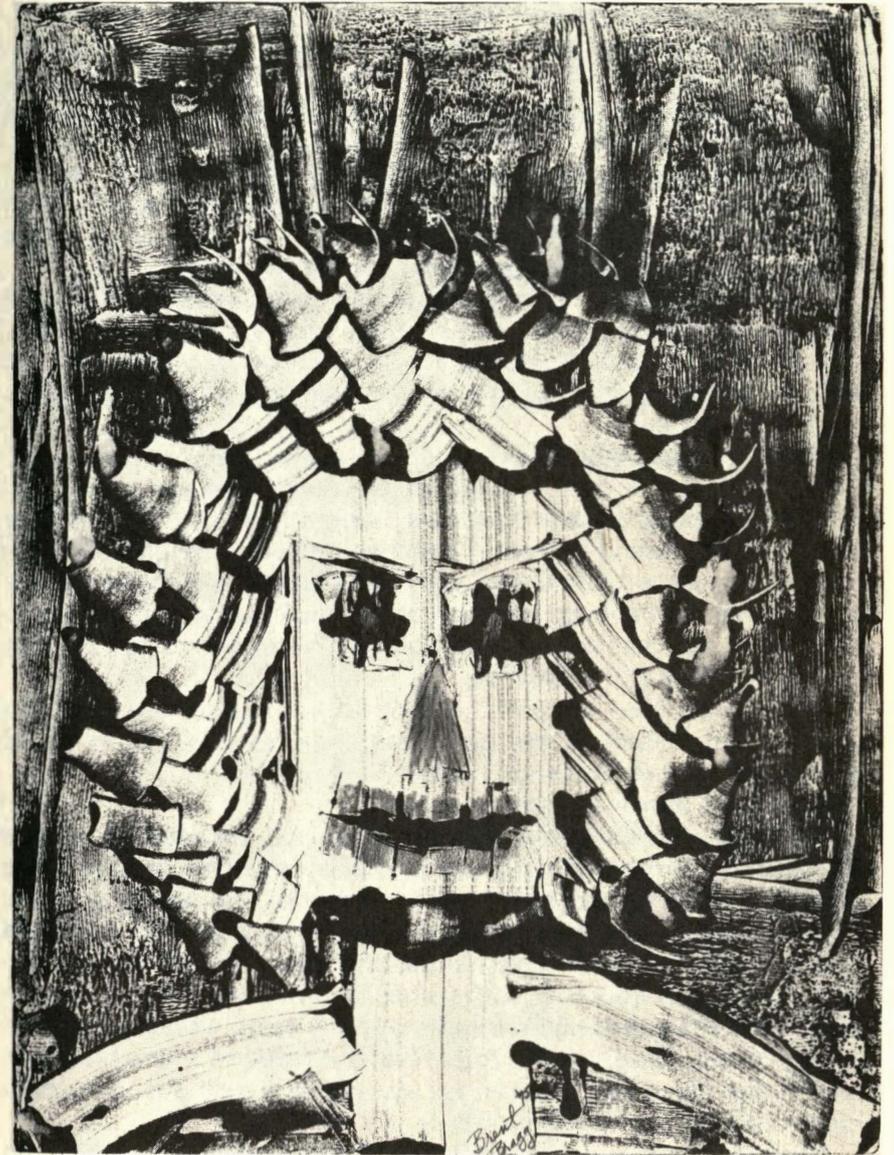
Anonymous

Dust

Jutting prominently from the side of the hill
the mammoth boulder appears majestic, but yet ominous;

which offers an analogy to my mind
of time reducing life as does the wind the stone.

Robt. Williams



The Kid Across The Street Who Sometimes Ate Snow And Crayons

J. Caserta

Ralph was my friend who lived across the street from my house. He was a phenomenal person because he used to eat snow by the buckets full each snowfall of every winter. While the other kids on the block would construct snowmen and snowforts and make great snowballs, Ralph would eat all kinds of snow - frontyard snow, backyard snow, and at times, alley snow. There usually wasn't much snow left in Ralph's yard. As a result, nobody wanted Ralph in their yard during the winter months because of his strange eating habits, so in winter Ralph became a snow eating hermit.

One thing Ralph did better than eating snow was the way he ate crayons. He couldn't draw, but brother, he ate crayons like other kids ate licorice and popsicles. It was exciting to watch him eat crayons. He did it for about two and one-half years, then his parents and him moved away.

Whenever I had a chance, I would yell at Ralph across the street; "Hey Ralph, come over and sit on my porch and eat a crayon." Ralph would never answer right away. Sometimes he'd say, "Today is not a day for eating crayons." But I would yell to Ralph in a coaxing way, "Be a sport and come over; eat a crayon and make a laugh for us." And sure enough as soon as he could assemble his materials, he would come across the street as if he were a misfired rocket headed for some distant planet.

We would sit on my porch, Ralph in the chaise lounge, and I would adjust myself on the porch step next to him. Ralph would say, "What color do you want me to do today?"

"It doesn't matter in the world, Ralph."

So most of the time he would choose red because he always seemed to have more red crayons just like some people have more money, or more dirt, or cats, or peanut butter. He would peel the crayola wrapper from the sides of the crayon as if he were peeling a banana. He would eat it in four bites, and then chewing the red gob as if it were Mail Pouch or some other kind of chewing tobacco, he would look at me and make a smile and his teeth would be several shades of red. Usually at the top of his teeth around where his gums start, it was the reddest. His tongue was red as were his moon curved lips and the corners of his mouth.

We both then had a good laugh. Then Ralph started kissing things and making them red. He kissed the sidewalk and it became red as a red carpet used for movie stars in Hollywood. Then he kissed my porch and the tree in the middle of my front yard. These things became bright red. He kissed the mud puddles around us

and they turned into red seas, then my bicycle which turned to a fire engine red. He kissed everything in sight and laughed like a nut.

"Please Ralph, don't kiss the sun," I said, "Because a lot of people would be angry if you changed the world they live in."

"I won't," he said and continued to kiss things with his red mouth. He kissed an ant, a flower, and the next door lady's dog, and they turned red.

"Are you a better painter than Michelangelo was, Ralph?"

"Who was Michelangelo?" he asked.

After a while, after we had taken some more laughs and looked at all the red things around us, Ralph's mother called him to come home.

Ralph gathered his crayons and after saying goodbye, leaped across the street as if he were on some kind of space walk.

"Goodbye Ralph, and please don't kiss the sun or the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel."

"I won't, but where is the Sistine Chapel," he yelled behind him, and then disappeared into his house.

And now the years have passed. Once in a while I think about Ralph and wonder if his mother was red.

"ETC":

I don't know whether these 'lines' are suitable, but here they are anyway.

As a matter of fact, there are others, collected through the years; but I never thought of submitting them to you. They are all pretty much different from each other, hence the pen name(s) Nate Pool for the 'serious' ones, and Paggalnath Plunk for the not-so-serious ones.

Anonymous

To whom it may concern:

I am: an English major; a junior from Thomasville, North Carolina; a black; my student number is 245-90-0900; been writing since sixteen; twenty years old; a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity; ex-student senator; Commissioner of Human Rights Committee; Central Committee of Black United Students. Anything else you need to know is none of your business.

Rich Greg Lewis

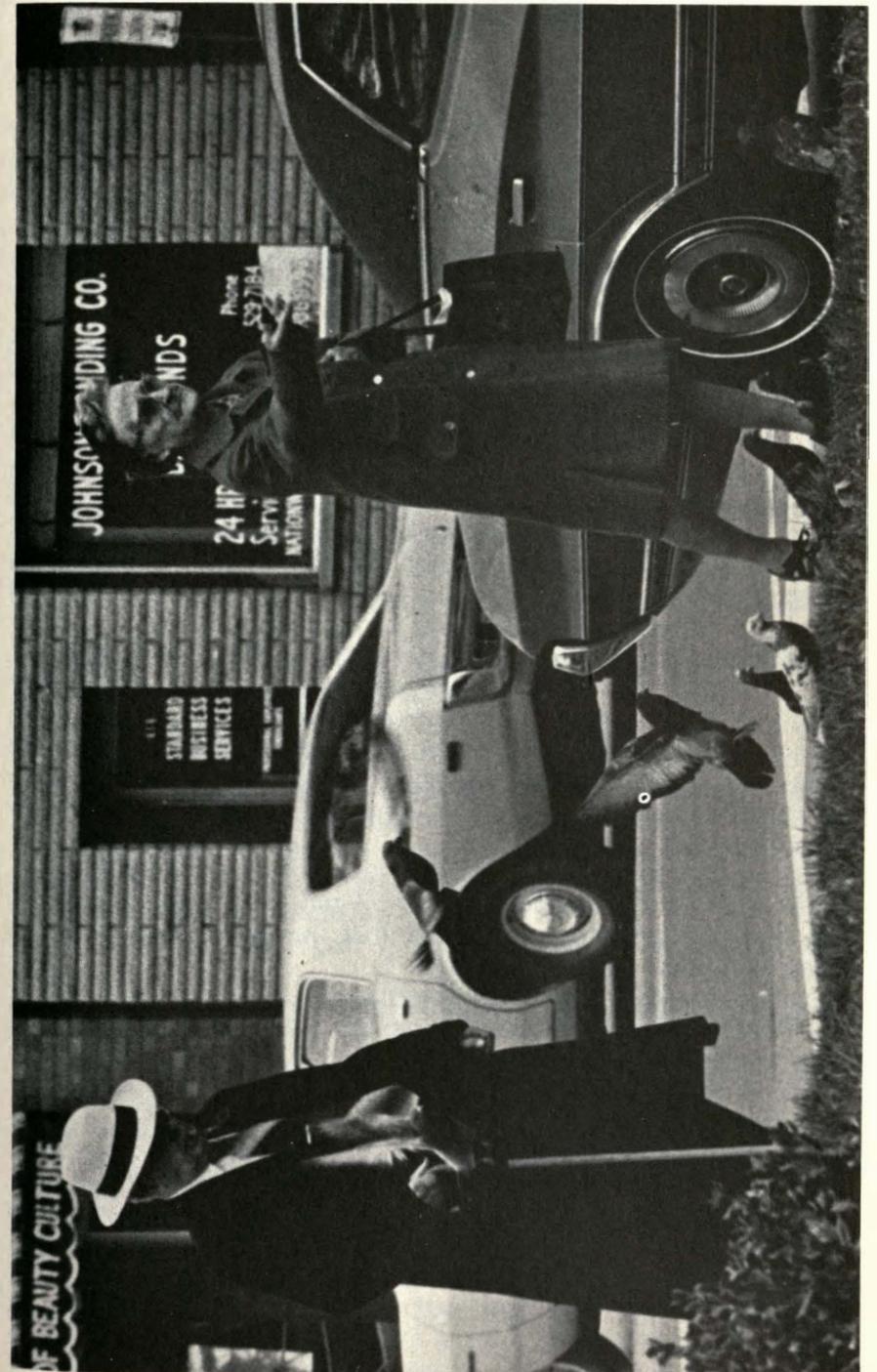
Untitled

In our efforts to be Christ-like
All suffer some small persecutions;
You come so close I must offer advice -
Watch out for the nails.
***** *

a-
lone

Going under slow
Terminal independence.

L. S. Maynard



The Pigeon-Man

L. S. Maynard

In June the old man started feeding the pigeons outside my store. I work in a candy and nut shop downtown, and I noticed this old man right away. Every day he shuffled into the store, bought sunflower seeds, and fed them to the pigeons on the sidewalk. Sometimes he sat on the pavement with his back against the wall, and those birds would come right up and take the seeds from his hands.

Since he came in every day, I got acquainted with him - a strange old fellow, grey and thin, with old battered clothes and a shapeless felt hat. His speech and motions were typically those of a very old man, and sometimes he leaned heavily on his rough wooden cane. However, his eyes glowed alertly beneath their bushy grey brows, and it was those clear eyes that first made me watch him closely. When I began observing him I noticed that he sometimes appeared to be much younger than he had first seemed. And it was amazing to see those birds come up and sit on his hands and shoulders, almost from the first day he fed them.

Children also seemed to feel some familiarity with him, to the distress of their mothers. The old man looked like any other wino sitting on Fourth Avenue, and the women were always upset when their children spoke to him or touched his hat or reached for his birds. They pulled the youngsters away, scolding, and the old man watched them carefully avoid him whenever possible. I felt sorry for him sometimes.

I often tried to converse with him on his daily visits to my shop, but he was not very talkative at first. When we did speak, he was difficult to understand, and I sometimes thought he was joking or trying to confuse me intentionally.

"Where are you from?" I asked politely.

"Everywhere and nowhere," he replied. I thought that was a little silly, but I continued my questioning.

"What do you do?"

"I feed the pigeons."

"Is that all?"

"It's enough to tell," he said, smiling at me devilishly.

Other conversations revealed more about this puzzling man and I soon became friendly with him. I found that his family was far away, he lived here in town alone, he loved animals, knew a lot about nature and wildlife, and lived on some sort of pension that he wouldn't say much about. The old man slowly opened up to me. He never seemed to speak with anyone else. When he finished talking

to me he went out, sat with the birds in front of the shop for a few hours, and then went home.

One day he came shuffling into the store, grumbling to himself and putting weight on his black cane. His eyes were all funny - dark and shaded with mist - and I was afraid he was sick.

"Are you o.k., sir?" I asked, handing him his usual order of sunflower seeds.

"What?" he said, "Yes. Yes, I am fine. Fine. Just thinking."

He looked so different that I was worried about him - his whole body trembled a little, and he continued to mumble under his breath. After paying me for the seeds he slowly turned and walked toward the door, without even stopping to talk. Just then a blue-suited businessman rushed into the shop, flinging open the door and crashing into the old man. He didn't even apologize, he just hurried to me and ordered some peanut brittle. As I went to the case to fill the order, he leaned over the counter and whispered to me, "I see that old bum outside here every day. You shouldn't let a guy like that hang around here, it's bad for business."

I glanced up in time to see the old man raise his black cane into the air, pointed at the ceiling. In that quick glance I am sure that I saw his eyes change color, from blue to deep golden. Then there was a flash of hot white light that filled the room as if lightening had struck. A resounding boom accompanied the light, and the businessman slumped forward on the counter.

In half a second it was over - the old man's eyes were blue again and the glaring light was gone. I was too frightened to speak, but the old man smiled slowly and said, "Don't worry, friend. He will be all right. He will not remember." He turned and went out, closing the door behind him, then rapped his cane twice on the door. The young man woke up.

"Hey, what happened?" he said, "I'm sorry, I must have slipped."

The old man looked at me through the front glass of the shop and smiled again.

The next day when he came to my store I was scared. I didn't want to talk to him, but I had to ask what he had done, and how. When he wouldn't answer me I knew I should throw him out and not allow him to come back, but my curiosity was too strong. I said nothing.

"I'm sorry I lost my temper," he said, "It won't happen again." He wouldn't say anything else about it.

After the incident he wouldn't say much about himself, but he began telling me stories, a different one each day. The tales were about talking birds and thinking flowers and ancient men. I didn't

really understand them, but the trees that swallowed people and enchanted castles and flaming rivers seemed to have some effect on me. I started feeling drawn to the old man, as if some magnetic force was making me stand closer to him and listen more intently. Each day when he left I told myself he was a bad influence on me and that tomorrow I would refuse to talk with him. But each time he entered my shop I felt more fond of the man. When he came near me I could not send him away or do anything except watch and listen.

In September he came to me with a gift. It was a cane similar to his, roughly carved from some fine and heavy wood, but it was pale grey. He gave it to me and he said, "I knew from the first that you would receive this. Do not use it yet or you might hurt yourself."

He wouldn't say more about the staff, so I put it in a corner of the shop and never touched it unless he was there. It frightened me and I didn't like it. But as the weeks passed and the old man daily told me pleasant, pretty stories I was no longer afraid. The rod began to feel good in my hands, soft and yet hard, heavy and light, sometimes seeming longer or shorter than other times. I grew fond of this staff, and started carrying it home with me. But I still didn't know what the old man meant by "using" it, and I remembered the incident with the young business man. Once I bravely pointed my staff at the ceiling but nothing happened. After I did it the old man laughed at me.

It was late October when the pigeon-man told me he had to leave. He wouldn't say where he was going and I was sad to hear of his leaving because he had enlivened my days with his tales. I felt strangely close to him and wondered what I would do when he was gone. He promised to return in the spring and I promised to look after his pigeons for him. The following day he did not come. It was the first day since summer that the old man hadn't been in my shop, and I almost cried. I was mercifully busy that day, with twice as many customers as usual, so I did not have time to ponder my strong feelings.

Now it is winter and snow covers the sidewalk where the pigeon-man used to sit. I miss him, and I feed his birds out front and talk to them sometimes. I still don't understand the things the old man said and I wonder if he'll really return in the spring. I worry, sometimes, about the control he had over me, and how strongly I loved him. But usually I'm not very concerned about it—the intense feelings are gone now, and I control my own thoughts. But I cannot understand why, when I walk down the street carrying my fine grey staff, the pigeons gather all around my feet, and settle on my shoulders and head ...



Missed Carlsbad

Went to California
In a '47 Plymouth
Rode home on
My thumb

Against an adobe wall
Lost half my money
Entered Nevada with a nickel
Picked up potatoes near and
Sold blood in Las Vegas

Slept across the dog house of a White
In an unlocked car in the city of
Wright's Talisan West
In a motel in Albuquerque
He wasn't too repulsive

Starved across Texas in a '50 Impala
With a tight fist drunk
Did Dallas Ft Worth up with
Quart of milk and loaf of bread

Walked across the Mississippi at Memphis
Watched black babushkas in faded gingham
Fish for cat
Catch turtle

Helped a shell shocked truck driver
Load moon-light freight in Chattanooga
Became an accessory after-the-fact to a
Possible beating death in
Grand-ole-opry-vi lle

Fled in certain panic for the
Ky line and watched the
Five dollar dropping of a
Hinged-lipped schmuck in Cincinnati

Down Route 33 from Lancaster Ohio
To West Virginia sleeping in an ambulance
A shrewd relative paid Greyhound to
Haul me off to New York

knicely-go

Death Of An Eighty Year Old Mulato

Looking down the trail i
Followed, the girl i married, her
Waiting as i built hard time in Joliet,
The good months away from that Speck, on
A farm in Mississippi, drinking and forgetting
After nights of butchering lambs.
My mistake's:
Going back to Walkkiln,
Meeting Lana who floated us all, whose
Husband is on the cellblock above,
Thinking she loved me,
Doing her bidding,
Killing the mulato, the mulato
We robbed on the wrong night, while her
Boot-leg money was still account paper,
Hitting her until she was still,
Lifting her into the bath,
Smoothing her hair about her skull and
Face as the water swirled around her body,
Washing blood from wounds i had given her,
Staring into her quiet space beneath the still water,
Spitting, watching her face grimace and become still again,
i lie here with my life stealing into the mattress,
Oozing lovely red into my existance, i wonder if
It's true, blood is blue until air hits it?

knicely-go

The Train

The train dull gray under a dull gray Sky

Creeps across the blandscape

Moving toward the plannedscape

Why? It carries men.

It carries men

Through the drab suburban towns

Up the ups and down the downs

Past the school that fails to teach

Past the church that fails to reach

Men

Past the sprawling shopping centers

All the summers, all the winters

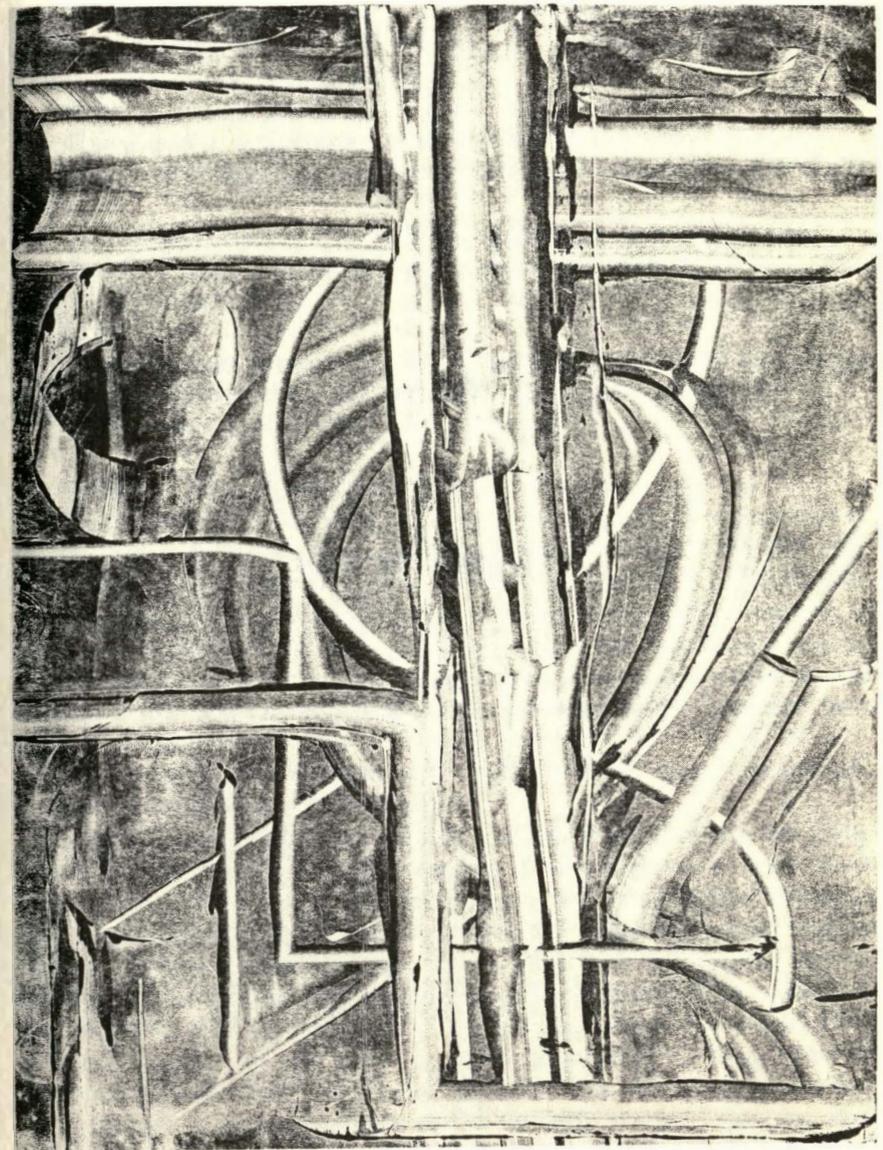
Chug, chug, chug.

Into the tunnel down into the hole
Like an animal like a burrowing mole
Its screech to a stop
Hat and newspapers drop
To the filthy gray floor
Then a mad rush for the door
OUTFLOW THE FEBRILE HUMAN SCUM
Up the fallopian escalators
See rrythespermambulators
WILL ONE REACH THE ROTTEN OVUM?
No
The city is a sterile womb
The city is a concrete tomb

It is time to pull out again

The train . . .

Charles Spissu



Ohm
by
Charles Spissu

One

The death of a robot

"Hey, Vic!"

Victor Ohm, startled out of his daydreams by the voice above, jumped a bit and almost lost his grip on the telephone pole rung. Returned to reality, he looked up.

"Yeah, Charlie?" he asked.

"Throw me up a screwdriver, will ya Vic?"

"Sure." Ohm reached down and pulled the screwdriver out of his tool belt.

"Comin' up," he warned, then flung the tool up to his partner.

"Got it!", said Charlie as he snatched the twirling thing out of the air. "Thanks."

"Sure."

Charlie turned around to finish repairing the burnt out transformer, then turned back and asked, "Hey Vic, you all right?"

"Yeah, fine." Jesus, what a lie, he thought.

"You sure?"

"Positive. Never felt better."

"That's good," said Charlie, unconvinced, after which he turned around again to finish the job. Ohm leaned his head on the telephone pole, closed his eyes and sniffed. He liked the smell of telephone poles, but that was all he liked about them. They were full of splinters, a pain in the back and the legs, and bad places to be during electrical storms. He opened his eyes and looked at his watch. 4:45, almost quitting time. He was tired but not very anxious to go home.

"Finished!..", said Charlie with a flourish of the screwdriver. "Let's call it a day and go on home."

"Right," replied Ohm as he and Charlie started down the pole. Down on the ground, they gathered up their equipment, put it back in the truck, then climbed in themselves. The drive to Ohm's house was accomplished at a moderate, almost leisurely speed and in silence. Charlie, sensing that something was on Ohm's mind, decided not to bother him by pressing the subject. If he wants to talk about it, he'll talk about it, he reasoned. Ohm contented himself with gazing out the window at the seemingly infinite rows of suburban houses they were passing, watching with an envious eye the activities of people like and unlike himself. He was a young man walking arm in arm with his hugely pregnant wife, a father playing catch with his son, and a rapid succession of fathers, mothers, sons and daughters busily at work or play in their yards. He despised them bitterly and envied them deeply at the same time,

realizing that he was not and never would be one of them. His reverie was ended abruptly when the truck lurched to a halt and Charlie slapped him on the leg.

"Last stop," said Charlie. "Home sweet home." Shit, thought Ohm.

"Another day, another dollar," said Ohm with a forced smile.

"Yeah. See ya tomorrow, buddy."

"Take it easy, Charlie." And with that the truck roared back to life and rumbled off down the street. Ohm watched it until it was out of sight, then turned toward his house and braced himself in anticipation of a possible fight tonight with Arabella, his wife of two long, miserable years. He crossed his lawn diagonally in about ten steps, hesitated for a moment at the door, then went inside.

"Bella, I'm home!" He listened for her usual sarcastic answer but received none. Silence. It was a welcome relief from her customary complaints and insults, but it was also somehow ominous and threatening. THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM was the phrase that flashed in his mind, illuminated by the discharge of billions of bolts of miniature lightning that leaped across each synapse from dendrite to dendrite in his brain cells, completing each cerebral circuit. He went into the kitchen and found the note she had left him before leaving the house. It read: GONE OUT. WON'T BE BACK TIL LATE. YOUR SUPPER IS ON THE TABLE. He looked down at the table and saw a can of beans with a canopener on top of it. She must be out with one of her boyfriends, he thought. He could feel her spectral presence suspended in the air around him, watching him, laughing at him. He shuddered violently and proceeded to fix himself a supper of hot dogs and beans and barbecue potato chips to be eaten while watching television.

Click, click, Click, click, Click, click. Ohm changed the channel on television with his remote control device. A robot with a plastic bubble full of blinking lights for a head and two metallic tentacles for arms appeared on the screen, swaying back and forth and waving its arms like a drunken spastic. Looking closer, he noticed that the robot's head seemed to be on fire. What the hell is this, he thought. Click, click. A Tarzan movie showing Tarzan, Jane and Boy cavorting merrily in a jungle pond. Click, click. An idiotic game show pitting a team of men against a team of women. Click, click. A moronic situation comedy about the merry mishaps of the Typical American Family. Click, click. The deranged robot again, now immobile and with a molten torch for a head. Ohm, fascinated and horrified at the same time, shuddered empathetically as the burning hulk suffered its death throes and slowly began to fall apart piece by piece. Suddenly its head exploded in a shower of sparks, shrapnel and shards of plastic, causing Ohm to start violently. THE

END appeared on the screen in large block letters. Click, click. Ohm switched off the television and sat back to think about what he had just seen. Having always liked to think of his brain as a computer and his body as a machine, he interpreted the death of the robot as a kind of apocalyptic vision foreshadowing his own inevitable destruction. He cursed the frailty of his flesh and blood and wished instead for skin of stainless steel and nerves of copper wire. He cursed his wife, too, and wished for an obedient female robot to take her place. He visualized a machine made to resemble a woman with soft, realistic plastic for skin, deep blue photoelectric cells for eyes, and long brown synthetic fibers for hair. He continued his fantasy and gave her a toggle switch for a clitoris with which he could turn her on both literally and figuratively, the thought of which made him chuckle lewdly. He even named his amorous automaton and composed an incomplete limerick in her honor,

DORIS THE ROBOT

There once was a robot named Doris
With a toggle switch for a clitoris.
Just a flick of the switch an'
She's twistin' and twitch in'
And

which he could not finish no matter how hard he tried. Exhausted, he finally gave up the effort and decided to let the poem remain incomplete, reasoning whimsically that it would someday be ranked equal with such past masterpieces as the Tower of Babel, the Canterbury Tales and Schubert's Eighth Symphony. He stumbled into his bedroom and was asleep and dreaming of Doris only minutes after hitting his mattress.

Two

Ohm's Sweet Home

Ohm's married life was at best bizarre and at times seemingly non-existent. He was married to a woman with whom he only occasionally met and spoke (i.e. yelled) and never slept, a vindictive vixen who despised him and spent his hard earned money entertaining herself and her numerous boyfriends in his bed. Ohm's great source of strength and sustenance, however, was his resistance. He tolerated her ceaseless insults and torments and resisted a powerful urge to destroy both himself and her because, oddly enough, he loved her every bit as much as she hated him. He lived a life of quiet desperation, wondering what he should do while

he awaited that Final Hour when the Hand of God or Fate or Whatever is Out There would pull his plug out of the Great Cosmic Socket and finish him once and for all.

His house was a nondescript little dwelling in one of those sprawling, overlapping "towns" on the south shore of Long Island, one of a long row of similar, almost indistinguishable, houses inhabited by similar, almost indistinguishable, people. It stood upon a small rectangular plot of sandy Long Island soil and consisted of a living room, three bedrooms, a kitchen, a bath and a half and an unfinished basement. His room, which adjoined Bella's, was small and contained a bed, a chest of drawers for his sparse wardrobe and not much else. Bella's room was considerably larger and not nearly as spartan in decor as Ohm's. Her room was in fact a kind of greenhouse or miniature jungle containing hundreds of flowers of every color, shape and size, all of which surrounded, and threatened to overgrow, an enormous multicolored waterbed in the middle of the room. Prickly miniature cacti, potted palms and voracious Venus flytraps grew, flourished and fought each other for precious carbon dioxide and sunlight, neither of which was plentiful in the room. Many of the more exotic plants emitted pleasant but pungent odors which combined to create a veritable symphony of scents. Beneath this pleasant atmosphere, however, sub rosa, so to speak, there existed a kind of undercurrent or putrescence, a stench of death and decomposition that clung close to the floor and undulated like a serpent under the cover of the sweet odors above. Perfumed by the other aromas in the room, the stench was noticeable only when one was near the floor, as while on the waterbed. This was Bella's lair, a room which Ohm never entered. Bella had taken it for herself not only because it was the largest and most comfortable room, but also because it adjoined Ohm's room. This enabled Ohm to overhear his wife's ecstatic lovemaking whenever she brought home one or more of her lovers, which was exactly her intention. Ohm could remember many nights when, unable to fall asleep, he would lay awake in bed and listen to the sloshing, gurgling noises, the shrill, high pitched giggles, the kisses, slurps, grunts and moans coming from the waterbed, all of which combined and built up to a climactic crescendo, a piercing, porcine squeal of sexual ecstasy. Makin' bacon, he would chuckle mentally. He could see them with his mind's eye, Loverboy on top with his fangs sunk in Bella's fleshy shoulder while she squirmed beneath him and flayed the skin off his back with her bloody catclaws. He could almost smell their musky animal odors of lovemaking mingled with the perfume from the plants. It was exquisite torture for which Ohm both admired her for her ingenuity and loathed her because of her cruelty, both of which seemed boundless in her.

The third bedroom, which was in reality closer to a den or sitting room than a bedroom, was located across the hall from Ohm's and Bella's rooms and was never used by either Ohm or Bella. It was in fact little more than a large closet containing a variety of toys and other kinds of baby impediments. In the early days of their marriage, a million years ago, Ohm and Bella, burning with love and bursting with plans for the future, had decided to have a large number of children. One of the first things they had done, therefore, after their honeymoon was to go out and buy armfuls of toys for both a boy and a girl. Soon after they had learned, however, that they could never have children, which marked the beginning of the disintegration of their marriage, they gathered up all the useless toys and put them in the room that was to have been for their first-born. There the toys, along with a crib, a bassinette, and a few other baby things, remained undisturbed for two years like dusty relics in a shrine to Infertility. Ohm, however, seeking sanctuary from the persecutions of Bella, invaded the shrine and disturbed the dusty sleep of its relics a few days after his first wedding anniversary. He came in search of an electric train set he remembered having bought. He found the set in good condition and had it set up and running in a few minutes. He now had a hobby, an activity that delighted him and diverted his thoughts from Bella and her machinations. Over the next few weeks, however, his interest in the train set grew into an obsession and became the source of a sadistic kind of pleasure for him. He discovered in the train set an imaginary microcosm over which he ruled with an iron hand. He began to vent his pent up feelings of anxiety and frustration on the imaginary inhabitants of his little train world, maiming and killing them by the hundreds in carefully arranged wrecks. Using only two trains, a tunnel and a trestle, he engineered cunningly elaborate avalanches, collisions, derailments and fires. He even blew his trains up occasionally, using some old firecrackers left over from the Fourth of July. As if that weren't enough, he kept painstakingly accurate records of how many passengers were killed or maimed on each trip. Just as the death toll was approaching 5,000, however, his little train world came to an abrupt end when Bella found out about it and ruined it for him, just as she ruined everything he liked to do. Coming home from work one day, he was surprised to find his train track laid out on the livingroom floor. The tunnel was in place over a section of the track, but the train was nowhere in sight. The wire connecting the transformer to the track snaked out of the livingroom into another part of the house. He called out his wife's name and, as if in reply, a diesel locomotive pulling two flatcars emerged from its hiding place in the tunnel and began to creep

along the track at a snail's pace. Looking closer, he noticed that the flatcars bore a message of some kind. Glued to the flatcars was a bunch of prophylactics and birth control pills arranged to spell out the words FUCK YOU. After that, he never used the trains again.

THREE

Three Dreams

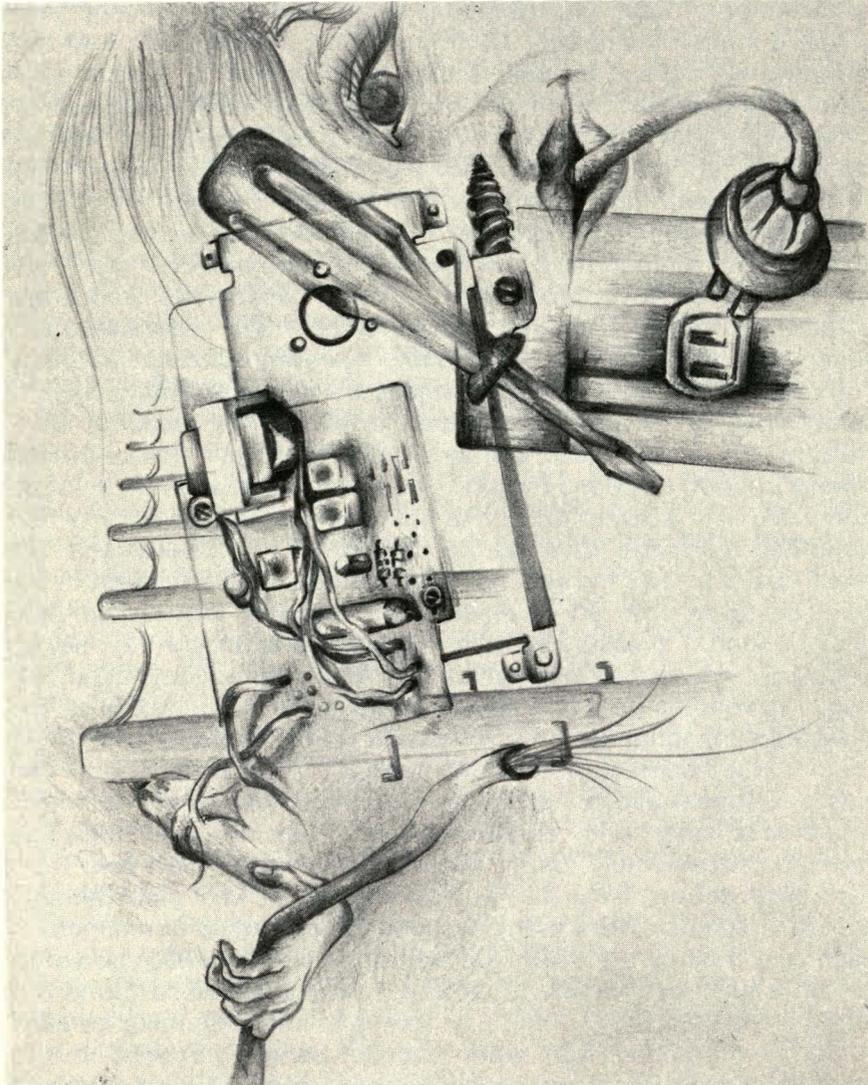
It often occurred to Ohm that he was quite literally insane, or at least highly neurotic. He could find no other suitable explanation for his reactions, or more accurately for his lethargic lack of reactions, to his wife's outrageous behavior toward him. This prompted him to consider psychoanalysis as a possible cure not only for his lethargic reactionlessness, but also for his sexual impotence. After about a week of soulsearching and hard thought on the matter, he finally decided to find a psychiatrist and make an appointment to see him. The analyst he chose to consult, a Dr. Verruckt, was highly recommended to him by one of the fellows he knew at work whose wife had had a nervous breakdown a few years ago. He called the doctor's office and made an appointment for 2:00 on a Thursday with the doctor's secretary.

Two months later the day of his appointment arrived. He took the day off from work and boarded an almost empty 12:35 Long Island Railroad train to the City. Arriving at Penn Station, he left the train and caught an uptown subway to the doctor's office. Finding himself again in a nearly empty car, he composed a little song which in his opinion seemed to sum up his mental condition very nicely.

OHM THE **INSANE**

Ohm, Ohm, you're insane!
While your wife and her loverboys play,
You speak not a word,
You just think it's absurd,
And the skies grow more clouded each day.

After the song he considered just what he should discuss with the doctor, deciding in the end not to bring up any of his most serious problems at their first meeting, but rather to talk about some very disturbing nightmares he had had recently. At a quarter of two he arrived at the doctor's office, a tastelessly plush, over-decorated affair with Muzak a la Mantovani, a deep blue pile carpet, fake stucco walls bearing bizarre abstract paintings, Danish modern furniture in a wide variety of geometrical shapes and a profusion of



potted rubber plants. He sat down in an orange naugahyde chair and picked up a nearby copy of Esquire to page through and kill the time.

"Mr. Ohm? The doctor will see you now," the secretary announced. Ohm started a bit and put the magazine down. He crossed the waiting room floor in a few paces and entered the doctor's consultation room at the behest of the beaming secretary, who closed the door of the room behind him. The room was miniscule and in scanning it Ohm saw a metal desk behind which sat the doctor in apparent ignorance of his (i.e. Ohm's) presence, a chair to one side of the desk, a low couch in front of the desk and a cluster of diplomas and certificates hanging on the wall behind the desk. Unsure of what to do, he sat down nervously on the edge of the couch and waited for the doctor to make the first move. That move came at long last when the doctor put down the paper he was reading and made an abrupt 180 degrees turn in his swivel chair to face and greet his patient. Their session, which lasted about twenty minutes, had begun. It ran something like this: Verruckt (lighting his meerschaum): What seems to be the problem, Mr. Ohm? Ohm (squirming uncomfortably on the couch): Nightmares, doctor, I have bad dreams.

Verruckt: What kind of nightmares? Tell me about them.

Ohm (glancing at his watch): All of them? I've had quite a few.

Verruckt: As many as you like.

Ohm: All right. I'll tell you about the car dream. (At this point Ohm lies back on the couch and stretches his legs, sighs and locks his hands behind his head. He begins to speak slowly and methodically, staring straight up at the ceiling.) The other night, Tuesday, I guess, I dreamed that I was a car; a Russian car, believe it or not.

Verruckt (scribbling on a pad): A Russian car? How do you know you were a Russian car? Why not a French car, or an Italian car?

Ohm: I was driving over a bridge and I recognized the Moscow skyline: the Kremlin and all those towers with the onion tops, you know. I saw the Soviet flag, too, on one of the towers.

Verruckt: I see. Continue, please.

Ohm: Right. Everything went fine for a while. I was driving along at a pretty good clip, my motor humming away. Then something weird happened. My chassis started to vibrate and shake, and after a few minutes I began to fall apart piece by piece. First I lost my right rear wheel, then my four doors, one by one, then my exhaust pipe. After the exhaust pipe I lost track. Somehow I could 'see' all the junk scattered on the road behind me in my rear view mirror, but when my headlights fell off I became blind. Suddenly I started to pick up more and more speed. I tried to slow down, but I couldn't. The last

thing I remember before waking up was the feeling that I was heading straight for another car, or a brick wall, or something like that. The whole thing was like some bizarre cartoon, except it wasn't funny. It scared the hell out of me.

Verruckt: It that all?

Ohm: That's it. Except for one thing. I thought of a name for the car.

Verruckt (after a brief pause): What is it?

Ohm (enthusiastically): A four door Dostoyevsky!

Verruckt (grinning and chuckling weakly): That's very clever. (Brief pause.) Are there any more dreams you'd like to discuss?

Ohm: Well, there's the brothel dream.

Verruckt: It sounds interesting. Tell me about it.

Ohm: I had the dream about a week ago. I was in a brothel somewhere, a place I'd never seen before. It was dark and musky and decorated in an old fashioned style. I walked up to the front desk to talk with the madam. I greeted her nervously, and when she smiled and asked me what I wanted, I said, 'Something unusual, I think.' She laughed, took a key off a peg on the wall behind her, and pointed to the stairs. I went upstairs and found the room I wanted with no trouble at all. I unlocked the door and opened it. It was very dark inside. A woman's voice called out to me, told me to come in. I hesitated, then took a small step forward. Suddenly a match flared up and flickered in the darkness. I followed it as it floated through the air and came to rest first on one candle, then another, then another. I took a few more timid steps forward. My eyes were by now accustomed to the dark, so I could make her out pretty well. She had long dark hair and was very beautiful. She was fully clothed, stretched out on the bed. It was only after I had taken a few more steps forward that I realized she had only one real eye. The other eye was artificial, but was not made to resemble a real human eye. Instead it was black with a red hourglass on it, like the back of a black widow spider. Suddenly she pulled the eye out of its socket and put it in a glass of water near the candles. I screamed and turned away, but she grabbed my arm and turned me around with surprising strength, then nestled her head on the pillow and said, 'Try this for size.' At first reluctantly, but gradually more and more enthusiastically, I made love to her through that orifice, holding her squirming head in my trembling hands. At the end of our love-making, she put the eye back in its socket and blew out the candles, then turned to me and asked, 'Wasn't that a mindfucker?' I turned around and started to walk away, but before I could reach the door the room was flooded with fluorescent light. I blinked around and discovered that I was in some kind of laboratory with glaring white walls and white linoleum floor, and not a room in a brothel after all.

Suddenly a door in the wall near the bed swung open and in walked two technicians with long white lab coats, glasses with thick lenses and clipboards. One of them greeted me and introduced me to the girl on the bed. "This," he explained, 'is FUCKER. Her name is an abbreviation of female unit, coitus kinematics, erotic research. We use her in experiments concerning the physical aspects, or mechanics, of sex. Please remove your clothes.' Somehow powerless to resist, I obeyed his order and undressed, while the other technician taped electrodes to my temples, chest and genitals. Then they led me over to the now nude girl. The girl turned over onto her stomach and spread her arms out like a cross. The two men ordered me to make love to her. Horrified, I tried to run away, but they caught me and threw me on the bed. I crawled on top of her and sodomized her while the technicians scribbled away on their clipboards. After a minute or two, I reached around to put my hand on her stomach and felt something that seemed to be growing out of her navel. I pulled away, turned her over on her back and discovered that the thing growing out of her naval was an electrical cord plugged into a wall socket. It finally dawned on me that I had just made love to a machine! Shocked, I ripped the cord out of the socket and she stopped moving. I jumped off the bed and ran for the door. I was just about to run out when she, or it, called to me. One of the technicians must have plugged her in again. I stopped and heard her say, 'Come back and see me sometime. I'll keep an eye out for you.' I turned and ran out into the corridor naked except for my streaming wires. I kept running, down the stairs and out into the night. After that I woke up, or at least that's all I remember. (Here Verruckt finishes his feverish writing and looks up.)

Verruckt: Very interesting.

Ohm (exasperated): Very interesting? Is that all you have to say? Tell me what these dreams mean! Help me!

Verruckt (patiently): I can't tell you exactly what these dreams mean right now. I don't know enough about you. These things take time, Mr. Ohm. Try to have a little patience. Now, are there any more dreams you want to tell me about?

Ohm: Just one more. I call this one the balloon tree dream. I was walking down a deserted city street late at night. The scene was illuminated by a tremendous full moon and, spaced at wide intervals along the street, mercury vapor lamps crowned with garish green haloes. I scratched my stomach, and when I did I felt something metallic there. I stopped, pulled up my shirt and got the shock of my life when I found a big screw stuck in my navel. I tugged at it but it wouldn't budge; it was part of me. Bewildered, I walked on, rounded a corner and came to a tree hung all over with white balloons. Every limb of the tree was covered with white balloons;

every limb, that is, except the second limb from the top. There, in the middle of the limb, surrounded by white balloons, was a solitary black balloon. Guided by instinct or intuition, I started to climb up the tree, which I discovered to be metal. I climbed slowly and carefully so as not to break any of the balloons. In a few minutes I reached my goal. I grabbed the black balloon and squeezed it until it burst and produced a small Phillips screwdriver. I carefully climbed back down, applied the tool to the screw and removed it easily. I threw it away and started off, but after only a few steps I realized that my ass had fallen off. I turned around to look for it, and as I did my arms fell off, then my legs, and finally my head. My head started rolling down the street, going faster and faster, until it hit the rim of an open manhole, cracked open like an eggshell and released my spongelike brain. Then the whole mess just oozed down into the sewer and disappeared. (Pause. Verruckt puffs on his pipe.)

Verruckt: Fascinating. Very nicely put, too.

Ohm: Thank you. Now tell me what it all means. What's wrong with me?

Verruckt: It's hard to say so early. Maybe nothing, maybe a lot of things.

Ohm: Then tell me what could be wrong.

Verruckt: Well, this is just a guess, but it seems to me that there's a common theme or 'thread' running through each of the dreams you just described that interconnects the all, and I believe that thread is a fear of the inanimate, or perhaps a fear of becoming inanimate. You seem to especially fear machines.

Ohm (indignant): That's ridiculous. I like machines. In fact, I like to think of myself as a machine.

Verruckt: That's the work of your wakeful conscience. Your fear manifests itself at night in your dreams, when you have no control over what goes on in your head. (Pause.)

Ohm: What else might be wrong with me?

Verruckt: Well, you may have a slight Oedipus complex. Your description of your encounter with the prostitute in the dark room seems to be a classic example of the desire to return to mother and the safety of the womb, and that 'electrical cord' you mentioned- is probably a symbolic umbilical cord. Lastly, your car dream and your balloon tree dream seem to indicate that you are potentially self destructive, perhaps even suicidal. Keep in mind that the things I'm telling you now are all just guesses and possibilities, and vague ones at that.

Ohm: So far the only thing you've said that I can agree with was the thing about suicide.

Verruckt (looking at his watch): Well, we'll discuss that at our next meeting. No more time today.

The session ended, Ohm sat up on the couch and stretched. He was about to stand up when he noticed Verruckt drop his notepad on the floor. It was full of pictures of little stick men and other kinds of infantile scribbles. Verruckt took a dart out of his coat pocket. His hand cocked and aimed at a Bavarian cuckoo clock on the wall which Ohm hadn't noticed before, he began a countdown in German from ten to zero, following the upward sweep of the second hand of his Mickey Mouse wristwatch. Just as he reached zero, the door of the cuckoo clock swung open and out popped the little bird. Verruckt waited. The bird appeared again, and he let the dart fly. It sailed past the bird and plowed into a picture of Sigmund Freud hanging to the left of the clock. The bird appeared three more times, as if to mock Verruckt, then remained inside the clock. Ohm, convinced that Verruckt was a lunatic, quickly slipped off the couch and into the waiting room. Fifty bucks down the drain, he thought on his way to the ground floor in the elevator. Fifty dollars for a madman.

Ohm stepped out of the building containing Verruckt's office in to a sunny afternoon. He merged with the flow of pedestrians on the wide avenue and walked uptown a few blocks, sucking in great gulps of air and letting his eyes roam everywhere, like the eyes of a child. He stopped on the corner of 64th Street and 5th Avenue to watch an old balloon vendor. The man was holding two bunches of multi-colored balloons and looked vaguely like a bizarre but beautiful tree. Suddenly a single balloon escaped from the bunch in his right hand and began its slow but steady ascent. Ohm watched it float up and away until it was out of sight. He knew it had to break sooner or later, and yet it continued to go further and further up, as if in defiance of its fate. Ohm liked that very much.

Four Ohmega

Ohm's last stand against Bella's merciless attacks was made in the form of a retreat beneath the waves, or, in Verrucktian terminology, a return to that eternal Womb of All Life, the sea. It was, in a word, an aquarium. Having bought it a few days after his experience with Verruckt, he originally intended it to be merely a new hobby to replace the one he had lost. The aquarium, however, soon began to acquire an importance and a meaningfulness to him that far exceeded that of any mere hobby. After only a few days of owner-

ship, he had become a victim of its subtle but powerful magic. He loved to sit and stare into its depths for hours on end, watching with unceasing delight as his little pets went through the paces in their everchanging water ballet. It gave him a sense of godlike power, also, as had his train world, but the power he held over the aquarium was real instead of imaginary. He had pretended to have the power of life and death over his train world. He truly had that power over the aquarium, but he never would have considered misusing it to harm his fish. He grew to love them as a father loves his children, and all his efforts with them were aimed at keeping them alive and healthy. He especially enjoyed visiting the tank late at night when Bella was asleep and he was in a pensive mood. His aquarium, unlike his inanimate train world, was a true microcosm, a miniature ocean in which the drama of life and death unfolded continuously. Having begun with an algae eater, three guppies and six neon tetras, the tank's population fluctuated on a roughly monthly basis, up one month and down the next. The only unnecessary accessory contained in the tank was a ceramic model of a sunken ship which Ohm liked to think of as a symbol of the shipwreck of his marriage. He felt at times that the aquarium was his sole link with reality and sanity, likening it to a piece of flotsam from the wreckage of his life to which he clung desperately in order not to drown, or to that single balloon he saw rise up and disappear after his meeting with Verruckt.

3: 30 in the morning. Ohm was sound asleep in front of the fish tank, having drifted off after only a few minutes of fishwatching. He dreamed a fantastic, Disneyesque cartoon set at sea that featured pearl toothed mermaids cavorting with laughing porpoises and graceful whales spouting diamonds and emeralds from their blow-holes.

He awoke the next morning around 10:00 and received the shock of his life, that final, fatal shock which was inevitable and for which he had waited so long. His fish were dead. He rubbed his eyes in disbelief and jumped up to have a better look. He found them all floating on the surface of the water, motionless, inanimate. The he noticed the empty gin bottle and the note from Bella next to the tank. He snatched up the note and read: FELT SORRY FOR THE FISH SO I GAVE THEM A LITTLE DRINK. HOPE YOU DON'T MIND. Stunned, he sank back into his chair, sobbing and cursing Bella for a full twenty minutes. Pulling himself together, he resolved to devise a course of action to follow. His first duty, he told himself, was to bury the fish. This he did quickly but lovingly, wrapping the little corpses in napkins and planting them in his backyard garden. Next came the matter of suicide, which proved to be more difficult than the disposal of the fish. His brain, crowded with images of

guns, gas ovens, razor blades, sleeping pills and exotic poisons, worked feverishly but mechanically on the problem of how to die, considering and then rejecting each possible method like a computer programmed to solve a difficult equation. Suddenly inspired, he hit upon an appropriate method and, chuckling mentally, ceased his frenetic thinking. He left the house and began to walk the four or five blocks to a telephone pole he remembered having worked on with Charlie a few months ago, moving slowly and solemnly like a condemned prisoner on his way to the gallows or the guillotine. In a brief fantasy, or perhaps an hallucination, he mentally proclaimed himself King Victor the Impotent, the monarch who had crowned himself with the horns of cuckoldry, on his way to ascend his electric chair throne,

11:15. He looked up the telephone pole and shuddered, then began the long, slow climb to the top. At the top, he looked down to the street to check for any observers, especially police. Seeing none, he paused a moment to gaze out over the surrounding suburban landscape that stretched for miles in every direction and was struck by the similarity between the labyrinthine maze of streets and houses and the intricate wiring and components he had seen on the printed circuit boards of various kinds of electrical devices. He searched for a moment and found his house, which he now began to think of as an electronic malfunction or short circuit in the larger circuit. Am I the only defective part, he wondered? Or are there others out there too? What about the wife beaters and child molesters? And the alcoholics and the junkies? And all the other criminals, lunatics and perverts? Are they malfunctions too? Are they my brothers and sisters? Maybe everybody's a malfunction: maybe the whole Big Circuit is nothing but a series of short circuits made up of burnt out people ...

Ohm, his hands trembling, took a pocketknife from his hip pocket, grabbed a wire connected to the transformer and began to cut. The current, instead of killing him, knocked him against the pole with such force that he was impaled through the chest on a rung. Stunned, unable to even scream, he stretched his arms out across the wires on either side of him, clawed the air for a moment, and died.

```

LINEAR LEAST SQUARES
DIMENSION X(100),Y(100)
5 WRITE(3,10)
10 FORMAT(1H1)
15 CONTINUE
DO 25 I=1,100
  READ(1,20) NCHEK,X(I),Y(I)
  FORMAT(1I,2F10.2)
  IF(NCHEK-1)25,30,90
  CONTINUE
  I=I-1
  SUMX=0.0
  SUMY=0.0
  SUMX2=0.0
  SUMY2=0.0
  SUMXY=0.0
  DO 35 J=1,I
    SUMX=SUMX+X(J)
    SUMY=SUMY+Y(J)
    SUMX2=SUMX2+X(J)**2
    SUMY2=SUMY2+Y(J)**2
    SUMXY=SUMXY+X(J)*Y(J)
  35 Q=1
  S=(Q*(SUMXY)-(SUMX*SUMY))/(Q*SUMX2-SUMX**2)
  B=((SUMY*SUMX2)-(SUMX*SUMY))/(Q*SUMX2-SUMX**2)
  WRITE(3,60)SUMX,SUMY,SUMX2,SUMY2,SUMXY,S,B
  60 FORMAT(20X,5HSUMX=,1PE10.4/,20X,5HSUMY=,1PE10.4/,20X,
  16HSUMX2=,1PE10.4/,20X,6HSUMY2=,1PE10.4/,20X,6HSUMXY=,1PE10.4)
  1/,/,20X,2HY=,1PE10.4,4HX+,1PE10.4)
  GO TO 5
90 STOP
END

```

