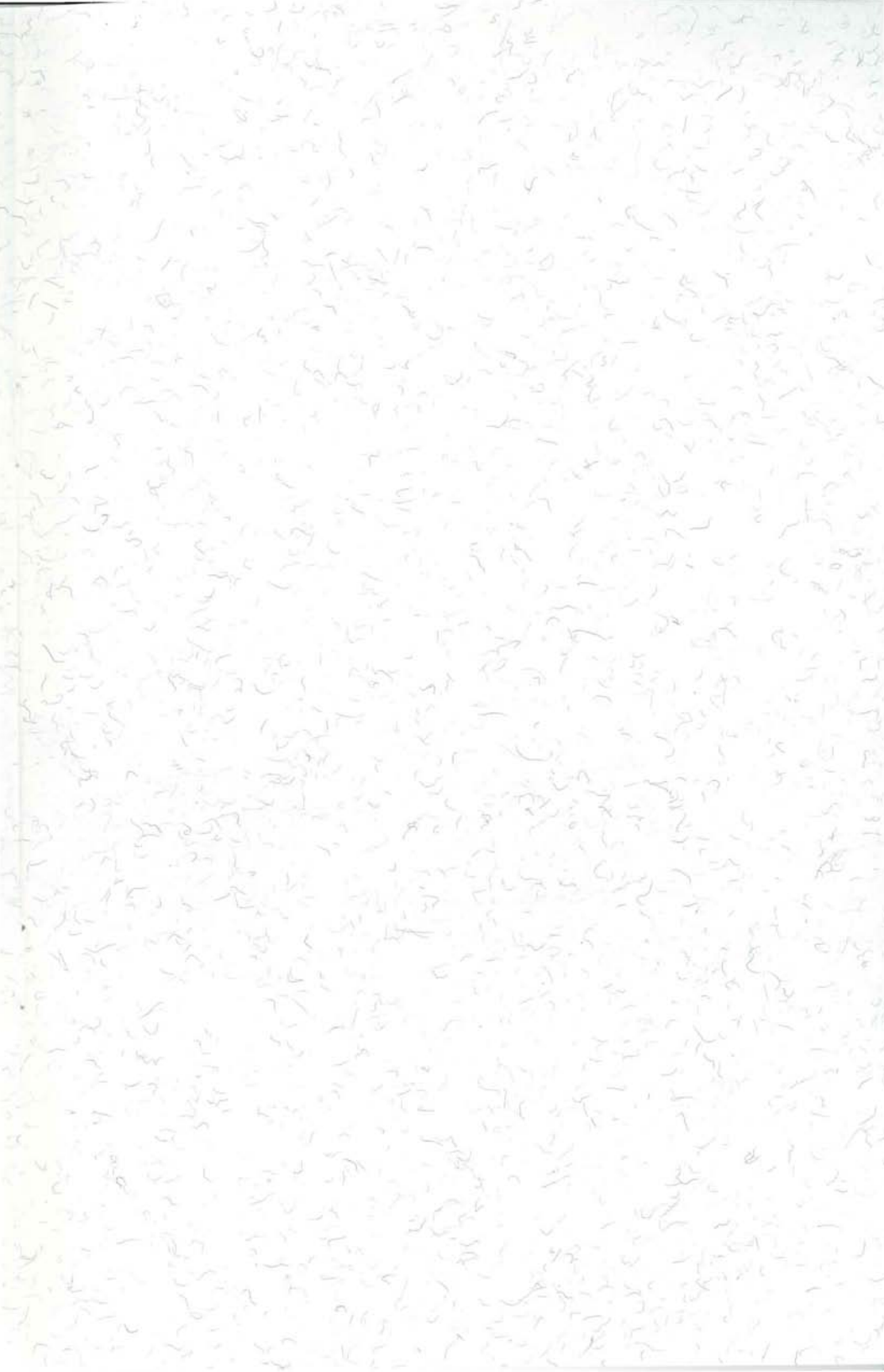


THE KIOSK



THE KIOSK

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THE ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
PRIZES FOR CREATIVE WRITING

FIRST PLACE

Trish Regnerus
"How Lovers Can Enjoy Citrus Fruits
While Dining on Seafood"

SECOND PLACE

Jeff Donner
"To a Fallen Institution"

THIRD PLACE

John Shuck
"The Unexpected Mentor"

ABOUT THIS YEAR'S JUDGE

Brian Bedard was born and raised in Missoula, Montana. He holds two degrees from the University of Montana: a B.A. in English and an M.F.A. in Creative Writing. He also holds a Ph.D. in English from the University of Utah.

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All entries are judged blindly by editors and no entry receives special consideration. Editors are eligible for the contest, however they are not eligible for the prize money.

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Dear Abby

OUR THANKS

This year, the Kiosk is pleased to have a patron. Abigail Van Buren, known to her readers as Dear Abby, has generously agreed to support the printing of our magazine and to provide prizes for the winners of *The Kiosk's* literary contest. Abigail was a student at Morningside College from 1937 to 1940, and in appreciation for her continuing interest in quality writing here, we are naming our literary prizes in her honor— The Abigail Van Buren Prizes for Creative Writing.

SARAH WEST

Three Haiku

A poem isn't
a cool lake, the winter sun,
or a long dirt road.

It's tempting to say,
"Look at me, I'm a poet,"
or just, "Look at me."

Over her shoulder
he rested his heavy arm.
She thought about this.

RANDY CLYDE UHL

Small Circles

This dirt that you call hills,
I call walls
and the trees
are really just people
who stayed too long.
Even the sidewalks crack
under the small town pressure—
then race to get anywhere
but here.
The wind
is the only thing
that is allowed to breeze in
and out.

I want more than what they have planned for me.
I want more than small circles.

Sometimes,
at night,
I dream of balloons
in the hands of clumsy children.

JEAN MCGINNIS

Tigers

The tiger roars within my chest.
My lips are closed—
my body still.
You pump your hate and
anger into me in the
disguise of sex.
A thought of scissors
ripping through your chest . . .
Your face so close to me—
the one I told my sister looked
so kind—
the one I used to ache to touch.
There is a tile on the
ceiling in the corner
of the room.
There are water spots
along its edge.
Tomorrow I will leave.
Tomorrow I will leave.

JEAN MCGINNIS

Laura Ellen's Moon

The moon shines bright
So I can see the rocky
Cliffs from miles away.
I can see her too.
Arms outstretched—
Eyes closed to feel the
Wind—
Standing on a road
Filled by day,
Empty now.
The bushes of sage
Surround us
And sing to her,
"Yes . . .
Dance . . .
Dance for us . . ."
And she does.
Her spirit is fluid
As her long hair
Brushes my arm.
And my hands begin
To rise . . .
And I dance
With the moon
And the sage
And we are free . . .

SARAH WEST

Tina

She sings from her toes
her face turned toward heaven
her feet gripping earth.
The people around her—
they're writhing and dancing
and moving the way
that they do when
they feel it's o.k.
under stars, under night.

Those people that dance—
they fling cotton wrappings
they send flapping codes
that surely mean something.
When one meets another
arms thrown to the sky
it's foolish to say
that skin touching skin
could compare with a lie.

And Tina's still singing
in those who may breathe
for the very first time.
No drums of the jungle
no indigenous fashion
just Tina, her toes
and the wild-hearted
passions of people who
dance in the night.

DAYNA MANSFIELD

Lettuce & Cabbage

Used to be a time when I couldn't tell the difference
between a head of lettuce and a head of cabbage.
But I was just learning and everything
confused me.

How far away did the car have to be before
I could safely cross the street?
Why say please and thank you?
The New England states, the Southern states,
South America.
Puberty, periods, and punctuation.
High School?
Cliques, friends and "friends"
ACT's, SAT's, GPA's,
C-O-L-L-E-G-E.
Saying goodbye to friends,
making new ones.
Majors, minors, Budweisers.
"Why do I have to take this class?"
Perfecting the fine art of procrastination,
Finals (learning one semester in one night).
GRE's, GPA's, IOU's for the next ten years.
Holidays back at home.
Mothers and families,
boys,
guys,
men . . .

Confusion is still in my life,
as it always will be,
but I do know one thing —
the difference between lettuce and cabbage.

THE ABIGAIL VAN BUREN PRIZE
FOR CREATIVE WRITING
SECOND PLACE

JEFF DONNER

To a Fallen Institution

Ebbets Field,
icon of baseball yesteryear,
how I long for one more
sunsoaked afternoon when you
unlock your rusty, rickety
turnstiles for two bits a head,
and come alive with the hearty
aromas from the echoing vendors:
hot dogs, stale beer, and
peanuts in their shells.
Roll out a mile of plush,
green grass, graced
by the tobacco-cheeked
Boys of Summer, clad in wool caps
and baggy uniforms,
bleeding Dodger blue,
bigger than life.
"Bums" they were called, even by
their Brooklyn faithful, but
they were your bums, and Brooklyn's
too, and many a sweltering day you packed
them in by the thousands. That melting-pot crowd
formed one resounding voice that exalted their
team to the peak of adoration,
even if not the standings.
Your Dodgers were underdogs,
just like them, New York's lower-class,
below the elitist Giants with their Polo Grounds
and those Damn Yankees.

Time again those bums lifted the spirits of
that crowd through dog days of August,
only to dash them like a fleeting summer romance
come fall, leaving bitter echoes within your
empty seats for another lonely winter.
But every spring that love affair renewed
with hope that, at last,
"This would be the year."
Until, that is, they abandoned you
and headed west, leaving Brooklyn's
humble confines for the glamour of L.A.
They tore you down and stripped the last
remaining identity from that crowd.
Now, only a few relics remain from
your storied past: some steel seats,
the home plate, and the outfield billboards.
Dim reminders of a glorious day when baseball
was just a game.

TRESSA O'NEILL

A Golden Color Castle

In the air
settling away to escape
the cold lost light.

Flaming farewell
colors orange and
pink, blue and gray
fading past dark into
the losing day.

Shadows chased
by moonlight all white
and gray to die past
colors and dance, in
black. . .

STEPHEN COYNE

Owed to Winter

In spring an invisible bird
with a song only two notes long
loans promises to me:

I am,
 you are,
 we will,
 be one . . .

Under the tree,
I gaze at the still
bare branches but never
catch a glimpse of this
one-footed bird of poetry,
this rusty swing swung by a child.

Its song is spring,
but in this northern place
spring lasts late,
and by the time leaves
are deep green and nests
are empty, I doubt I want
to see the bird at all.

What if it's a common thing—
scavenger or nuisance?
What if it doesn't drink the air
and live forever? Such questions
obsess the northern mind.
What if spring comes
and winter is close behind?

JAN D. HODGE

Warning

This siren is no fire engine, no rescue squad
rushing to jump start someone's failing
heart. Wailing in place,
it cuts through rain
and silence--a
shark fin in the
warm and shallow
afternoon. All
halts in this
democracy of
fear: kids
skipping
rope, the
cutter of
Kentucky
blue, the
runner
left on
third, the
Tornado at
the light
at 6th &
Hickory--
or moves
untended
save by
ghosts: a
backyard
swing, a
sheet half
clothes-
pinned to
the line,
the pages
of last
Tuesday's
Daily
News

THE ABIGAIL VAN BUREN PRIZE
FOR CREATIVE WRITING
THIRD PLACE

JOHN SHUCK

The Unexpected Mentor

Click, clack...click, clack. The safety chain tapped insistently against the plastic swing seat, its message unmistakable to anyone with ears to hear. Be free...with me...be free...with me. It sounded its call with a tireless resolve that clement, balmy afternoon. However, as any native Iowan knows, an early November day in the Midwest can change without warning. For now, it was the sort of afternoon that lifts the spirit of anyone who perseveres through days of first biting, then numbing arctic winds. Indian summer Iowa style, the sort of afternoon no Californian, bred on the certainty of recurrent sunshine, can fully appreciate. Billy Dablich could hear the call, and he was doubtlessly no Californian. His spirit soared like a hawk as he chuckled gleefully to no one in particular. Outside, free, and glad of it, his diminutive brunet features were punctuated by a puckish, canny grin, and a luxuriant moustache grew nearly out of control under a squashed flat nose. He had short spindly legs, nearly kneeless, but they were offset by broad, powerful shoulders. His left arm was somewhat withered, but his right was strong from persistent use. As he was trundled across the recreation yard, his eyes were fixed on that particular swing, the one singing its siren song in today's warm caressing breeze.

"Wheelchairs are optional on a day like this, Billy," said Fran.

"Tha' rye' Fra'," answered Billy.

As they neared Billy's most favored swing, Fran expertly positioned the wheelchair beside it, locking the safety brakes on both sides.

"Are you ready, Billy? Here we go, out of the chair and into the swing. Help me lift...that's right, good job! My back thanks you. Now sit still while I fasten the safety chain."

"A'rye! Up high, les' go," demanded Billy.

As Fran unhurriedly completed preparations to send him

aloft, Billy reached around and impatiently tapped her on the arm.

“‘mon Fra’, push.”

“Billy, just hold your horses, you’ll go up when I’m ready and not one second before. I hope George wasn’t spying on us or we’ll both be in trouble.” Fran softened her tone and implored: “Have you already forgotten yesterday? He had you put in restraints, twice.”

“Na’ lahk Jahj.”

“I know, but if you want to stay out of trouble you need to stay on his good side, if he has one. Otherwise...” Not knowing what else to say, her voice trailed off.

“Ya, ya,” answered Billy impatiently. He turned again, eyed Fran with an impish smirk, and deftly tapped her on the same arm, in the same place, before she could move.

Fran was caught completely off guard and flinched, but couldn’t hide a smile.

“Billy, you are an outlaw,” laughed Fran as she sent him arcing into the warmth of that Indian summer afternoon.

Unfortunately, Billy’s actions did not go unobserved. The ever-vigilant George Chespering stared intently out of his office window across the leaf-covered recreation yard. Keeping an eye on Billy Dablich was proving to be a full time job. Somehow he seemed to be able to induce certain staffers into ignoring disciplinary measures when they were obviously called for. Not good, not good at all. Most of the patients at Hearthside Homes had shown steady if slow improvement since he had accepted the director’s post here, but Billy... well, Billy continued to be a problem. George’s thin, spidery fingers massaged his throbbing temples as he tried to shield his eyes from the bright afternoon gläre. Flicking his swollen tongue across parched lips served as a further reminder of last night’s lonely indiscretions.

“Phyllis, come in here.”

Phyllis Delhaney sighed and headed for George’s office. She had been a nurse at Hearthside for as long as anyone there could remember, and just this past April George had promoted her to Director of Nursing. Although her hair was generously streaked with silver, her step still displayed a young girl’s energetic spring. Intelligent, level-headed, and alert to

everyone's needs, she was the one aides and nurses alike came to when they had a problem. Always on an even keel, she acted with imaginative impulse rather than constraining decisions to rational reason and rules. It was with this talent that she was able to ameliorate some of George's more repressive tactics, mostly without his ever realizing it. Worked best that way, she knew.

"Phyllis!" More volume, less patience this time.

"Something wrong, George?"

Seeing him stand woodenly at his office window, Phyllis could guess who was causing the problem, if a problem it was.

"Did you see?"

"See what, George?" Phyllis asked innocently.

"That!" he answered triumphantly.

"Yes, I saw," she admitted. "But George, you must admit that he never hurts anyone. If you want my opinion, it looks like he's just being playful."

"Playful?" He snorted in disgust. "I think not. I'm going outside to straighten this out before he ends up hurting someone."

"Do you want me to come with?"

Too late. George was already gone and Phyllis was talking to his backside as he hurried outside. He strode purposefully across the yard, sending a shower of dry leaves in his wake. The crackling fall sound warned Fran and Billy of his impending arrival. Sighing audibly, Fran first steadied, then stopped Billy's swing and turned to acknowledge the unwelcome intruder.

"Ah, Mr. Chespering," Fran ventured warily.

"Ann, did I just—" His query was cut short.

"Fra! Fra!" shouted Billy.

"What in the blazes is that all about?" asked George, looking somewhat perplexed.

"Billy is merely correcting you. My name is Fran."

"I know that," George shot back, his suddenly mottled face betraying his embarrassment. Changing the subject, George sought to regain control.

"You know Billy's program, I hope."

"Yes, of course I do."

"Then maybe you can explain why, after he hit you twice, he wasn't taken inside."

Fran reddened, her eyes downcast.

"Surely you realize that when Billy displays aggressive behavior he must be taken inside at once? And?" His voice dripping sarcasm, George paused, waiting for Fran to fill in the rest.

"And immediately escorted to the quiet area and put in restraints for no less than five minutes, providing he shows no resistance or attempts any further aggression," countered Fran, quoting the directive verbatim.

"Correct," answered George flatly. He seemed almost disappointed. "Yet Phyllis and I saw Billy hit you twice. Furthermore, you ignored it both times."

"Yes, but—"

"You can explain?" George smiled and raised his eyebrows, feeling that he had regained the upper hand.

"I'll be honest sir, I don't think any program you devise will prevent Billy from hitting people."

"You don't. Why is that?"

"I can't give you a specific reason. But I do know Billy, and the more you try to prevent these incidents, the more determined he will be to continue them. Restraints won't help. Besides, he has never physically hurt anyone in the three years I've been working with him."

"Hasn't hurt anyone? How fortunate for Hearthside. What would you propose we do if he does hurt another patient? Why should we take the chance if we can prevent it?" Of course, George didn't wait for Fran to answer any of these questions.

"Before you leave today, stop by my office. Obviously we need to clarify some things."

"Yes sir," Fran gulped.

A freshening breeze skittered lightly across the yard, shifting directions and heralding the return of fall-like weather. Leaves whirled in a cyclonic pattern as George knelt down to stare directly into Billy's eyes. Billy, as was his custom, stared blankly past George's left ear, resigning himself to another boring lecture.

"Billy, listen carefully to me," said George, speaking in the

stilted monotone he used when addressing any patient. "You cannot continue hitting people, do you understand?"

Billy continued to stare vacantly and gave no indication to George that he had heard. He talks different when he talks to me, thought Billy.

"The others understand, why can't you? If you are just being stubborn, I warn you that there are places you can be sent besides Hearthside which offer much lower levels of care. I need to make you understand how many clients with abnormalities like yours are on our waiting list. You must show improvement; if this aggressiveness of yours cannot be controlled ..." Again George paused, this time to emphasize his point. "If this problem persists I'm afraid you will leave me but one choice. Do you understand?"

Seconds passed. Finally, Billy nodded and muttered under his breath. Was it agreement? Even Fran couldn't be sure.

I hope he's finished, Billy thought. His breath is offensive and it matches the rest of his personality. I hate the way he stares at me. He violates something when he gets so close. Someday ... someday he's going to go too far, get too close, or both.

"Any idea if he understood, Fran?"

"I have the distinct impression he understood every word."

"You do? How can you be sure?"

"He understands all right, Mr. Chespering. Every word. Billy is very smart, watch him sometime. He often eavesdrops."

"He does, does he?" George was not amused.

Fran gave Billy an apologetic glance; he was already in enough trouble.

"If he were that intelligent, he would realize that it is wrong to hit anyone for any reason. His program is carefully designed to prevent such occurrences. He will eventually hurt someone if he isn't properly trained. Now take him inside and put him in restraints for ten minutes, five for each time Phyllis and I saw him hit you."

"Yes, sir," answered Fran, realizing that George considered the matter closed.

"Don't forget, I want to see you in my office after work."

Not waiting for or needing a reply, George turned brusquely

on his heels and made off toward the building. Meanwhile, the breeze had permanently shifted direction and was starting to lose its warming effect. The sun transitorily hid behind the scudding clouds as Billy shivered and scowled at George's receding figure. He knew it was time for Fran to take him back inside. He also knew there would be no swing and no more trips outside for a long, long time.

"Billy, I know it's not your fault," lamented Fran, "but it looks like we're both in hot water this time."

"Na' ya' falt eeda, Fra'," consoled Billy. "Jahj nee' hap, na' us."

"I know that but he doesn't, and at this moment, that's what matters."

Fran shivered. "Let's go inside."

She trudged slowly across the yard, dejectedly pushing Billy before her. The unpleasant thought of putting him in restraints depressed her even more than the thought of her impending meeting, but she also realized that if she wanted to continue to work at Hearthside, written programs must be carried out to the letter under George's vigilant eye.

Once inside, she wheeled Billy to the quiet area and reluctantly began to apply the restraints. Billy considered resisting, but he knew it would be futile and only get Fran in more serious trouble. He abhorred submitting to the bondage of the hand straps, but after all it wasn't Fran's fault. If possible, she disliked putting them on more than he hated submitting to them.

In time, perhaps a minute or two before time, Billy was liberated. As Fran occupied herself with any number of mundane tasks, she worried about the impending meeting with George. Actually he was quite intelligent, but ... Thoughts and half-thoughts chafed her consciousness as she automatically attended to her duties. Freedom is risky to be sure. Unrestrained freedom can be downright dangerous, but Billy isn't mean, just high-spirited, and George sees his behavior as intrinsically evil. Why couldn't the man realize that by restraining Billy, he was inviting the very behavior he was trying to control? As for Billy, there was nothing to lose by rebelling. It was obvious that he simply would not respond to the type of punishment George

administered. Sometimes things happen that can't be controlled. Sometimes things happen that need to be left alone. The meeting! What explanation could she offer for this afternoon? None. None that George would find acceptable anyway. Time passed slowly, agonizingly. But time did pass, and all too soon it seemed, it was time to put her friend into the care of the evening shift.

As for the meeting, it didn't last very long. George talked and Fran listened. She didn't care much for what he had to say, and as she left his office she was talking to herself. Learn the programs of every resident! As if she didn't already know them. If he would have bothered to ask, she could have told him that much. Clutching a folio, she muttered and grumbled her way to the lounge to fetch her coat. On her way, she almost bumped into Jackie, who happened to be wheeling Billy to his room.

"Sorry, didn't see you two."

"We know, you almost ran us down," answered Jackie. "Did you know you don't swing your arms when you're angry? You looked like a Prussian foot soldier in a parade."

"Do you want to tell us what happened in there?" asked Jackie, inclining his head in the direction of George's office.

"George saw Billy hit me while we were outside this afternoon, and you know how he is about compliance with his precious programs."

"I do. So?"

"So I didn't do anything about it. The upshot is, he's giving me the rest of the week off to think about it."

"No! Doesn't he know by ...?"

"Da wee' off!" interrupted Billy. "Wye?"

"You know why, Billy, for what happened this afternoon."

"Tha' ih na fair!" spluttered Billy.

"Too late to change things now, not that I would," Fran sighed. "Well, I'd better go. If I stay here any longer I may get another lecture from George. That's something I want to avoid at all costs. G'bye, Jackie. Take care of this desperado while I'm off and don't let him get in any more trouble."

"Keep Billy out of trouble? Sorry, you know I can't guarantee that. He's always in trouble."

"Sad but true, Jackie." Fran started to go, then paused and

looked at Billy. "How about you, will you promise to stay out of hot water?"

"Na' prama, Fra'."

"That's what I figured," Fran sighed. "Well, you just be yourself, that's what you're best at."

Billy was not smiling as he watched Fran leave. As she walked to the parking lot, the steadily increasing wind buffeted her toward her car, and a cold penetrating mist began to fall. Can't go outside tomorrow anyway, Billy thought. But no Fran till next week? Not fair! Suddenly, Jackie's voice brought his attention back inside.

"C'mon Billy, let's get ready for supper. Do you need to go to the bathroom first?"

"Ya, li'l."

"Well, let's make tracks," said Jackie with forced enthusiasm.

As he started to push Billy down the hallway, George stepped out of his office. He walked over to the nurse's station and began casually leafing through the daily reports. Phyllis looked up expectantly.

"I've just finished with Fran."

"What happened?"

"Well, I gave her the rest of this week off to think about the incident this afternoon."

"Really," Phyllis's tone was flat. "Why?"

"Had to be done, Phyllis. You saw what happened out there. That Billy is nothing but trouble."

"But George, suspending Fran won't change Billy."

"I don't know, it might. Besides, it was necessary," answered George confidently. "Billy likes Fran. When I tell him about the trouble he's caused, he's bound to see the light."

"Do you think that's wise?"

Unfortunately, George wasn't really listening. He had already made up his mind.

"As a matter of fact, I think I'll talk to Billy again before I leave for the day."

Phyllis frowned and started to say something, but knew it would be a waste of words. Obviously, George was determined to pursue this. Not a good idea, she thought. Definitely not a good idea.

George carelessly flung the daily reports down on her desk and strode self-assuredly down the hall to Billy's room. Let's see, which one is it? Ah yes, this must be it. Without knocking, he opened the door and saw Jackie standing, apparently alone in the room.

"Is Billy here?"

"Yes he is, Mr. Chespering, but he's indisposed at the moment," answered Jackie, nodding toward the closed bathroom door.

"I need to talk to him," said George, reaching for the doorknob.

"Could you please wait until he's finished? Billy needs his privacy."

"Normally I would, but I'm in a hurry tonight."

Not waiting for a reply, George pulled open the door and contemplated Billy's compromised position. A thin humorless smile played about his lips.

"G'ow," snarled Billy.

"Calm down, this will only take a minute, and then you can get on with your business." Another humorless smile.

Billy was not amused.

"Billy," still smiling, George squatted in front of him and assumed the now too-familiar confrontational position. "Since you appear to be busy, I'll try to be brief."

Billy scowled and struggled to maintain his composure. I need a lock on my bathroom door, he thought. His face reddened as his eyes hurled daggers at George's left ear. A fricative hiss escaped his tightly pursed lips.

"When Fran ignored your aggressive behavior this afternoon, she disobeyed a directive in your program. Because of this incident, I was forced to suspend her for the rest of the week. I didn't want to, but I needed to send a message to everyone who works with you. Aggressive behavior will not be tolerated under any circumstances."

"G'way!" shouted Billy.

"What?"

"I seh, gaaaa' way," repeated Billy, struggling to enunciate.

"Sorry, I can't understand you. Jackie?"

"I believe he wants to finish what he's started," replied

Jackie, modifying Billy's directive.

"Oh. Well, I must be going."

George stood up, strode out, and neglected to close the bathroom door. Shaking his head sadly, Jackie performed the simple courtesy for him.

* * * * *

The breakfast dishes clattered behind Billy, but he was barely aware of the noise. His attention was focused elsewhere as he diligently surveyed the parking lot from his favorite vantage point in the living room. Last night's storm had worsened, changing first to sleet, then to snow during the early morning hours. As the temperature plummeted, a crust of glare ice had formed on everything, and the trees and power lines creaked and groaned under the added burden. Finally, Billy's vigilance was rewarded, and he saw what he had been looking for. George's station wagon came into view and turned cautiously into the driveway. Billy's gaze never wavered, intent on George and only George as he gingerly exited his vehicle. The blustery wind combined with the glare ice to make the going even more treacherous, and George nearly slipped and fell more than once as he tentatively made his way to the front entrance. Finally inside, he stomped the snowcaps from his boots and wiped them on the mat. Good, thought Billy, he didn't fall.

* * * * *

Fran waited nervously. Unconsciously pacing outside George's closed office door, she could hear the sound of muffled conversation inside. Soon Phyllis opened the door and came out. Fran nodded a timorous greeting, looked past Phyllis, and saw George sitting at his desk. Unprepared for what she saw, her eyes widened in surprise. His nose was visibly swollen and a pair of sunglasses failed miserably in their attempt to hide a black eye. As she steeled herself to enter, a firm yet gentle hand stopped her.

"Fran, I didn't expect you back for a couple of more days."

"I'm here to talk to George," replied Fran, her eyes attempting to avoid Phyllis' questioning gaze.

"Have you a few minutes to spare before you see him?"

"Sure, anything for you," answered Fran. "So what hap—"

"Sh!" Phyllis quickly interrupted before she could ask the obvious question. "Let's go to my office and I'll tell you what happened."

Seconds later, as Phyllis closed her office door, she said: "Do you know that Billy is gone?"

"What?"

Fran couldn't believe her ears. She was speechless. Billy gone? Where? And why?

"It's true. I personally loaded him into the van earlier this morning. George transferred him to the Plainview facility in Oakridge. Do you know it?"

"Yes I do. Nice place, not too far from here. George didn't waste much time, did he?"

"I think he'll like it there, Fran. The residents are higher functioning at Plainview and he'll have someone he can play checkers with. You know how he loves to play board games. Anyway, I think he was bored here.

"That could explain some of the aggressive behavior, don't you agree?"

"It would, Phyllis. He always did like to stir things up."

"That he did, Fran, that he did."

"But you were going to tell me about George." As the words came out, Fran knew the answer. "Billy?"

"Yes, Billy." Her voice betrayed a hint of pride as she made the admission.

"Lured George over to him with a minor but typically vexing behavior.

"When George bent over to lecture him, Billy drew back that mighty right hand of his and George was on the floor before he knew what happened. I swear, I laughed so hard I almost wet myself. Had to stay in my office pretending to catch up on paperwork for the rest of the morning."

"So George had him sent away. That bastard!"

"Hold on, Fran, I'm not sure you fully understand."

"What's to understand? George was just looking for any excuse to get rid of Billy."

"Fran, listen to me. Billy knew what would happen, and if I'm not mistaken, he planned it this way. In fact, I'm sure of it."

"Yes, knowing Billy, I suppose it's possible, but—"

"Before you say any more, let me tell you something about George that may surprise you. I've been a nurse here at Hearthside for twenty years and I've been passed over for the Nursing Director's job so many times I've lost count. So I can understand some of the bitterness you feel toward George.

"I have felt the same way, many times, about his predecessors. Do you know why they passed me over so many times for the position?"

"I can't imagine, Phyllis, you're certainly well qualified. Everyone knows that." Fran puzzled a moment, then ventured: "Is it your color?"

"That, and one more thing, luv. How many black nurses do you know with the surname Delhaney? In the past, the combination has proved deadly to my chances for promotion. I can't tell you how many times I've thought of leaving, but I truly like this job and I am not going to let anyone force me to leave. Anyway, when Lori took that position at City Hospital this spring, George never hesitated. He knew I was the most qualified person for the job and offered it to me, no questions asked. I could have kissed the man. Well, maybe not. But in this world, a color-blind person is very hard to find. Lord knows he has his faults, one in particular which, if you're as observant as I think you are, is obvious."

"Yes, I think I know what you're talking about."

"You do." It wasn't a question. "Good, keep it in mind. It will help you understand why he doesn't always act reasonably. Now that that's taken care of, how about you? If I'm not mistaken, you're not scheduled to work until Monday morning."

"That's right," Fran was nonplussed. "Actually I came in to give George my notice."

"You did." Phyllis paused. "Do you have another job?"

"Actually, no. But what he did was unfair to both of us."

"Yes it was. But sometimes, there's no stopping things, Fran. Sometimes things just happen."

"And sometimes they need to be left alone," finished Fran, smiling for the first time that day.

Phyllis nodded and returned the smile.

"I get it. You're saying that I should be the one to choose when to leave Hearthside. Well, to tell you the truth, I don't think

I'm ready just yet. Thanks, Phyllis."

"I suppose I could take the credit for this, but I really think Billy deserves a fair share of it. He planned this whole thing. George may think he sent Billy away, but I think we both know the truth. As I loaded him into the van he said, 'Say good-bye to Fran, I'll miss her. Tell her it wasn't her fault.' And it wasn't, you know, so don't penalize yourself. See you Monday morning."

"Seven o'clock, just like always, Phyllis," answered Fran, still smiling.

As she walked out into the warming morning sun, Fran thought to herself, You know, I've got to visit that rascal one of these days and thank him properly. Today seemed like the perfect day.

STEPHEN COYNE

Past Christmas

I've heard of you, Old Santa,
collecting clutter from
garages and forgotten corners.
You fill a garbage bag
with used goods and carry
Old Christmas over your shoulder
back to a dusty resurrection
at that old solstice second hand store.
You're supposed to protect us from plenty,
from death by possession,
and we look for you every time
we change our chimneys.
Wherever dumpsters gape
and stores are boarded up,
I imagine your shaved face
and your caved eyes.
And the amazing thing is
whether I believe in you
or not and no matter how old
I get, you, Old Santa,
are always there.

TRESSA O'NEILL

My Grandpa Still Wears Gray

Every day the same shade.
Is he not good or bad?
A gray hat between black
and white to signify
an ordinary man.

He has a wife and
nine children — some he doesn't
love 'cause they aren't worth it.

He built an empire with
his sweat and blisters so
they wouldn't have to live
the way he did, long ago,
when he was raised below
the poverty line without
anything but family.

He worked hard for money
so his family could have
everything — everything
except what every child
(and adult) needs most.
They never experienced love.
He never showed them love.

Grandma couldn't give love.
She was raised in black
and doesn't understand —
love is way beyond her
(Most things are beyond her).
The children who married
now know what was missing.
A few are very bitter,
A few really don't care —
"He did his best," they say.

Some of us grandchildren
have been raised to see his
mistake and to learn,
so we won't repeat it.

Flipping through a photo album
and seeing a picture of
a hard, gray man studying
the smiling face of the small
child held in his lap
reminds me of the terror of
my parents yelling when
they thought we were safe,
asleep.

Dad crying —
"I might as well be dead."
Mom repeating to him —
"Your father's a monster;
don't listen to him."
Yes, don't listen to him, Dad.
Then it fades.

The pain he caused us has
left us hiding
afraid of love, or
the lack of love.
Maybe he should wear black.

Now he lies in a
hospital bed, not dead.
Mom wishes he would go;
she wants it to leave us.

Dad doesn't want to let
him go — ever loyal,
the son who forgave him,
who is often like him
and must be reminded to
express his love.

The grandchildren are urged
to go stand by his side.
"Let him know you are there;
let him know you love him,"
says the one who forgave
but does not understand,
"let him know that you care."

What will the Lord say, if
I lie to a dying man?

TRISH REGNERUS

Potato Peels and Other Wasted Time

I guess the Tray Lady deals with that kind of
Junk every night.

She hides behind the food-streaked counter
Dressed in a stained plastic apron, aloof and
Methodical in her work.

With pictures (of her grandchildren, I presume)
Hanging between her breasts in a dime store locket,
She scrapes other people's leftovers into a whirring
Grinder and dips the plates into a bleachy solution.

The years have taken the life out of her hands.
They are wrinkled and spotted and worn,
Cracked from the work she has done.

Her steam-veiled glasses slide down her chubby face.
I frown a little as I see my own grandma in her dull eyes.
Grandma.

She was always doing that sort of work, the withered
Muscles of her arms flapping as she peeled potatoes with a
Paring knife over the old kitchen sink.

Sometimes she sang as she worked and would pause to cup m
Face in

Her warm potatoey hands when I begged for a piece of
Wrigley's gum from the cupboard.

She was always there and it seemed she was always peeling
Potatoes.

The skins would coil perfectly and cling to the edges of the
Sink when she dropped them.

I stared silently while she expertly scooped the peels away
And turned again to me.
Flowered polyester-covered arms reached out as she spoke.
"Silverware in the baskets, gotta get it in the baskets,"
As she grabbed my tray.
I realized, much too quickly, that the woman before me
Was someone else's
Grandma.

For Grandma Plonia.

DEBI SADLER

Farewell, Juliana

The morning dawned cloudy and dismal—reflective of my mood on this momentous day. It was August 31, 1992, the first day of school for my fifth and youngest child, and I wasn't quite sure of my feelings.

Juliana was a bright, lively child who had burst her way into our lives five years ago. She had twinkling dark brown eyes and an impudent grin, as well as an uncanny love for music. She had charmed her way into the heart of many an acquaintance and was now eager to try a whole new experience.

Leaving a bowl of soggy Rice Krispies scarcely touched, Juliana hurriedly dressed in her new "Dalmatian" shirt, donned some favorite blue jeans, and shrugged on her blue polka-dot book bag. As she laced her new school shoes, she asked endless questions, oblivious to the hubbub around her as siblings also prepared for school.

"Devon," she directed a question to her older brother, "what do you do if you forget where the bathroom is?"

"Oh, Teacher will show you," he mumbled, lost in his own thoughts.

As agreed upon beforehand, Juliana and I watched the big yellow school bus come and go, then we departed for school alone together in my car. Juliana tested out her pig-tail braids, bobbing her head this way and that, watching the little lacy bows on the ends dance to and fro. She pelted me with a multitude of questions as she speculated about freindships, teachers, naps, lunch, and many other "unknowns" that were plaguing her. I answered her mechanically, forcing cheer into my voice. My own mind was frantically trying to process dozens of thoughts and questions.

Juliana's school was fourteen miles away, but the trip seemed incredibly short to me that day. It seemed only a moment until we arrived and walked hand-in-hand toward that tall, formidable brick building. It was already teeming with noisy, colorfully-dressed children.

The heavy glass door swung open reluctantly, and we found ourselves in the brightly-lit hallway which was flanked on either side by classroom doors. The fall school smell greeted us: floor wax, disinfectants, and oily furniture polish. I felt a tightening in my stomach and wondered if Juliana felt it, too. Our sneakers silently padded down the smooth, tiled corridor, each of us absorbed in our own thoughts.

Suddenly Juliana's grip on my hand tightened, and I could sense her apprehension. Worried brown eyes gazed up at me as we entered the kindergarten hallway, which was a scene of utter bedlam. I chattered lightly to reassure her (and to steady my pounding heart).

The kindergarten classroom was bright and cheerful, with colorful bulletin boards and bins of toys and blocks. There was even a play kitchen! Together we admired the toys and made conversation with a couple of kindergarten round-up acquaintances.

It was time for me to leave—to break the tie, cut the strings, release my hold. How could I do this easily, painlessly? I had been a full-time mom for over seventeen years, and now my job of preschool nurturing, teaching, and loving was complete. This was it. Time to say good-bye . . . in more than one way. A new phase of life was about to begin for Juliana and me. It was indeed an historic moment, one worthy of a drum roll, or music, or applause, or something. Instead I was surrounded by twenty-eight yelling, rambunctious five-year-olds who were utterly oblivious to (and certainly unimpressed by) my presence there.

I stalled around a bit longer, reluctant to say farewell to this little piece of myself, this tiny angel in blue jeans. Finally, with determination, I squatted down beside Juliana and told her I must go.

Tears sprang to her eyes and she clutched me tightly. "Please don't leave me, Mommy," she whispered.

I brushed a wisp of silky brown hair behind her ear, then steeled my heart. "Juliana, this is it. This is kindergarten. You're a big girl now, and this is where you belong," I whispered firmly, hoping she couldn't detect the catch in my voice. "I'll go upstairs and pay for your lunch, then I'll come back down and peek in, okay?"

She nodded her head uncertainly and dabbed at two small runaway tears.

I shakily climbed the two flights of steps to the office and made small talk with the secretary to mask my turmoil of emotions. I feverently hoped that Juliana would be able to handle this.

Returning to the kindergarten classroom, I peeked in to find my baby sitting on her teacher's lap, absorbing a story, which was one of her very favorite pastimes. She looked so tiny and vulnerable sitting there. I was reminded of her birth—the thrill of once again holding a baby girl in my arms! We had shared so many wonderful times together these last five years.

"Did she cry?" I hesitantly asked another mom who was standing nearby.

"Oh, yes," she reported. "After you left, she just wandered around awhile. Then the tears began to roll."

I wanted to run into that room and scoop her up in my arms, but instead I turned and stumbled blindly down the hall. My throat was aching, and my heart actually hurt within me. I was leaving my last baby in the arms of someone else. Never again would she be one hundred percent our child, as school influences would begin to seep into her little being. Would she be okay? Would she make friends? Would she miss me . . . as much as I already missed her?

"This is it," I told myself. "This is kindergarten; it's where she belongs. Life goes on—get a grip!" I felt trembly all over as I turned the key in the ignition and directed my car toward home—the passenger seat empty for the first time.

ROBIN BROWER

Socks

It was laundry day again.
She dumped the last colored load in
the washer, carefully
setting the temperature—
Wouldn't want to ruin his shirts.
Up the stairs she muscled
the clothes basket full of
whites and not-so-whites.
"Once socks get dirty,
you never get 'em clean."

She paired his socks,
being sure to stack them
the way he wanted.
She used to fold them into
oblong shapes, but he changed that.
He said it stretched out the tops too much.
"Whatever you want," she replied.
He had always made the rules
and she had always played by them.
She glanced at the clock;
he was two hours late
and hadn't called.

She reached for the stack of socks,
but instead found a pile of
folded, oblong shapes.
Not having the energy
to unfold the socks,
she put them in his drawer
and found their wedding picture.
She traced around the happy couple
with her finger. An oblong
lump tightened in her throat.
Then she remembered the load in
the washer and turned
for the clothes basket,
and there lay one lone sock—
“That’s how it goes with socks.”

JEAN MCGINNIS

Forgotten

I look into his eyes and
Know I've lost.
I've loved him for a
Thousand years
And lived with him for forty.
I sit and introduce myself.
His eyes flicker.
I hold his hand and stay
Awhile.
As darkness comes I embrace
Him and leave him in the
Nurse's care.
I drive away
Angry at time
And lonely again.

VIRGINIA BITTERLY

Apple

Hold one in your hand
see the blush on the cheeks
as if ready for a lover
tones of green that
run from bottom to top.
Put it to your nose
inhale the fragrance.
Hold it in the hollow
of your cheek.
Now eat it.
Do not cut it, or slice it,
but eat it.
Feel the break and crack
of its cool, crisp flesh,
the flow of its sprightly juice
get the aroma that lies
at the very heart of it.

RANDY HAWORTH

A Man of the Cloth

I'm a disciple who's never dared,
I'm not excommunicated, inquisited, a heretic, or especially damned,
I just can't find the courage to cross the holy threshold,
and piously pass the divine doors of this church.

I'm a disciple who's never dared,
My faith is fervent and my prayers pure
but I can only worship before the door.
Chastity's charity beckons to many a penitent pilgrim,
but a crowded congregation would force my faith to fall.
Call me zealously jealous, but I'd hate to see even
a saint set foot on this sacred ground.

I'm a disciple who's never dared,
but often wished, to worship at the altar,
as an adoring apostle under these sacred arches.
A sanctuary unseen, and a sacrament unspoken
hide in that holy of holies, the virtuous vestibule.
What is it like, to pass the hallowed hall inside?
No bishop's marble is finer than this stone-wash,
nor cloth as saintly as this vestment sweet.

I'm a disciple who's never dared yet, to enter Here.
But I'll close my eyes in demure devotion,
and bend a knee before the door of
this temple of Denim.

RENEE NASSIF

Marcel Duchamp
Nude Descending a Staircase

I saw you

climb the stairs

Though you never

looked behind

From where

I stood

To say good-bye

I thought

My love

was coming

But you were

going

All the time

RENEE NASSIF

Saint Valentine the Martyr

I dreamt of you
on Valentine's Day
You whom I haven't
heard from in years
Think of something
pleasant I said to myself
summer in Paris
or skiing in the Alps
As you disappeared
beneath the wing of a white dove
listening to the even flow
of Egypt's Nile
One Easter morning
you arrived when I was green
taking my hand you
carved it in blood
It will hurt you promised
but you must remember
pain is the secret to healing
Well I am carrying the scar
without the bitter aftertaste
of love's betrayal
for I remember the soft caresses
of a stolen era
when your amorous love
arrived incased in a white envelope
while you were imprisoned
for the sake of freedom
I am his true rebel
and he loves me greatly
for he has created me
as I am

You confessed on thin paper
And then the exotic phone calls
when will I see you
wondering if you would
ask me to stay
which you did not
while I raced home
heartbroken
Oh Steven
You were such
an enigma
thinking it over
I wonder if you ever
loved for I thought
you were coming
but you were going
all the time

THE ABIGAIL VAN BUREN PRIZE
FOR CREATIVE WRITING
FIRST PLACE

TRISH REGNERUS

*How Lovers Can Enjoy Citrus
Fruits While Dining on Seafood*

The steaming trout on my plate
With his glossy, deadened eye, looks at it,

The dimpled, yellow wedge.
I smell Country Tyme and Lemon Pledge.

Parsley leaves shield the naked citrus,
As the fig leaves did for man and woman in
The Garden of Eden,

This time, it is my lover who wants first fruits.

I squeeze it tauntingly and lick its ripened edge,
The juice leaving my fingers squeaky.

Greedily, he takes the prized piece of fruit and puts it in
Whole, smiling a yellow rind,
Lips barely puckered,
His cheeks slightly sucked in, like the dead fish
On my plate.

He draws in the biting juice and drains the citrus
Dry.
With bits of pulp between his teeth and a pool of
Distasteful spit under his tongue, he pulls my face to his.

The other patrons
Gasp.

Our mouths caress, with bitterness. The Lemon Kiss.

TIM MCMURRIN

Requiem for the Mind of a Man Overwhelmed

Argument:

And this man,
having finally found his perfect
vision of the ultra-love
and again having lost it,
became unable to remain sane.
Her memory soon became his only
comfort and companion,
so he slowly gave up
and he was awake a long time before
he knew that his heart was broken.

I.

Do not reach your fingers toward
me in faceless passion,
for Desire is dead
and Cold is king.

I see you, shuddering cold coffee
fix, suffering the long good-bye of
crystal winter afternoon at the Quimby Inn,
where reality is what reality is
and all the painted worlds between
speak to me because I am the
floating existential voice of blue-collar
America's new doomsday generation.

When the strings are ultimately bent
and the cosmic toll is due,
Who teaches,
and preaches,
and heals you?
I do.

For I have known love,
and have known love lost
have lived in aftermath
and paid the terrible cost.
To let go and not fade away,
To lie down alone at the end of the day,
and to walk on, wandering and wondering.

II.

And on those days,
When I wake up from a dreamless sleep
and wonder who I am,
do I look for the answers
at the bottom of a scotch bottle?
Or will you be my savior,
a star in my sky,
selling salvation in exchange for trust?
Sometimes sanctuary comes cheap
and blood money is any color you like,
but finding your way alone
through the dark is another matter,
a beast whose heart beats doom
beyond the walls of your mental room.

So when we finally go,
empty and high and searching.
When we go,
emotionally naked and spiritually bare.
When you and I finally go there
To that place whispered of
in mist-veiled dreams.
Shall I turn my eyes to you
in a look of complete love, only
to find you've turned back,
leaving me alone at the threshold?
God help me. . .

III.

Dementia and chaos filling
my brain, numb with pain
running blind through streets, through
fields, across the emotional plains where
the cold winds of reality constantly blow,
Face to face with the recurring nightmare
of a love prematurely ended,
the knowledge that
what used to be can never be again.
There is a certain comfort in
giving up
Just a chance to rest
to find peace
After all, there are other worlds than these.

DENISE GARD

The Anticlimactic Fourth Down

The sound
Pulsates
Vibrating in the room,
Heavy moaning
Enthusiastic screaming
He penetrates deep
And grunts
Barking out his football commands—
Down, Set, Hike.
He charges downfield toward
Two upright poles
Legs of suntanned gold.
Swimming, diving, lunging
Into sweaty—
Hands.
His body trembles
Surging forward. Accelerates
Too soon.
And I am left to daydreams
And he
To memories of power and fame.

TRISH REGNERUS

Last Night

I
Dreamt
Of
You
And
Me
Lying
Breathless
On
The
Snow.
You Kissed Me,

And
The
Taste
Of
Your
Mouth,
Your
Very
Spit,
Filled
My
Senselessness.

Now,

For
The Life
Of Me,
I
Can't
Remember
That
Taste.

I
Guess
That's
Why
They
Call
Them
Bad
Dreams.

JAN D. HODGE

Because it is light . . .

"Because it is light and we are still here, come, give me a kiss. The light is brittle on the palm leaves, and how very little it would take to break it. How near, how definite the shadows seem. My dear, in our wonder's new and so brief season give me a kiss, if for no other reason than that it is light and we are here."

"In our wonder's new and so brief season, as you say, I watch as one leaf kisses another, and even so slight a treason threatens the light. Why is it that this is enough to make me shiver? No other reason, surely, in our new and so brief season."

1950

1951

1952

1953

1954

1955

1956

1957

1958

1959

1960

1961

1962

1963

1964

1965

1966

1967

1968

