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# **KIOSK**

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## Visiting Wyoming

Uncle Donald flicks ashes  
Into his shirt pocket. He knows  
What is wrong with America.  
Aunt Jaree sips coffee and squeezes  
Into herself.

Nebraska after Gordon  
is like a giant unmade bed,  
Soft and lumpy, mourning  
Sleep. Then, you meet  
The Big Sky,  
The antelope, the deer, and miles  
And miles of nothing.

Donald talks with clenched teeth,  
Cigarette wagging.  
Range cattle, he says,  
Are real—wild, afraid, like God  
Intended. They hide  
Their young from men.  
Cows in Iowa are tame.

Wyoming  
Is a place for cowboys,  
For men who love and fear  
The wind, the cold, the snow.  
For men who fight. The sky  
Is not bigger  
In Wyoming  
Just closer.  
It hides behind  
No cornfields, only mountains.

Donald climbs the mountains  
To touch the sky.  
He shoots antelope and deer.  
Jaree drinks coffee and longs  
For home and cornfields.

*Deb Freese*

### **Greyhound Breakdown**

Got laid over  
for three hours in Texarkana  
till I caught this northbound  
toward late afternoon.  
Lulled by the drone of tires  
and telephone poles  
keeping time on my eyes,  
I squinted into the low sun  
and saw my life stretched out  
like lines of broken cornstalks  
slow toward the horizon—  
till a slender woman  
got on at Hot Springs.  
Miles later I see me out there  
tied up on a pole.  
Crows wait for my eyeballs.

*Scott Simmer*

## The Knives

*Rebekah Yates*

He loved the knives. He had discovered them hanging in their rack and had gazed on as his mother used them. They glinted in the afternoon sun. More swift and deadly than anything he had ever seen, they had the power to pass through anything they were put against. He longed to touch them, to press them to his palm and feel their smooth, firm coolness. But, each time he would reach for them, he was met with a slap and a sharp rebuke. Compromising, he would hide in the hallway to watch them, to feel them with his eyes. As the knives were sharpened, he would close his eyes and listen to the slice of metal pulled against metal. The sound burned against his ear. His longing grew. He became obsessed with it; he plotted their capture.

He soon learned he was closely watched. "You're much too young to be playing with something like a knife. They aren't made for little boys." Now he knew he must have them. Each time he crouched in the hall and listened to his mother's footsteps fade down the basement stairs, he was ready. Walking softly onto the linoleum, he approached the sink. He did not run, he did not speak. The only sound was that of the refrigerator, humming into the silence. He reached for the knives. Despite his caution, his silent swiftness, he was caught. Each time, he was reprimanded, sometimes spanked, but always caught.

Soon, the knives were moved above the refrigerator, totally out of reach. He was not discouraged; instead, the desire began to eat at him. He could not sleep at night. Tossing, he would see the knives above him, sneering, shining in the moonlight.

His mother sensed a change in him; he had begun to watch her, too. At times, she would feel his eyes upon her and turn to catch a glimpse of him, a shadow from around the corner. He was anxious for the day his mother would forget to follow him, forget to take him with her. Certainly, some day, she would drop her guard and he was ready. Forcing his patience, he was finally rewarded. A beautiful day dawned, grew warm, and beckoned. She lifted the heaping laundry basket to her hip and bumped open the door. He waited. His mother must have forgotten, for she did not order him into the yard or to his room. Facing the southern breeze, she simply stepped outside. The door closed on his watchful silence.

The kitchen glowed warm and white. Today, he did not stand and gaze at the knives. Today, he must work quickly. From the

floor, he stepped on the bread drawer and finally to the counter. Through the window, he could see his mother, mouth full of clothes pins, sheets billowing around her in the breeze. She payed no attention to the house; she did not miss him in the yard.

Turning his attention to the knives, he lifted the rack from the wall and settled on his haunches. He pulled the largest from its slot and slid to the floor, leaving the others behind. The room seemed to grow brighter; he felt warm and dizzy. He knew he had won. The knife in his hand was heavy and long, longer than his forearm and nearly as wide. The handle was warm from the reflected morning sun, the carved words worn smooth. The blade felt just as he had always known it would feel, cool and clean. He cradled the knife, clenched the handle in his small hand, feeling its power. He threatened the air. Touching the tip to his arm, he marveled at the depression it made. He leaned against it, pressing it to his face, then to his throat. Closing his eyes, he recalled the sound that had been burned into his memory so many weeks ago. The silver, scraping rhythm. He pictured the blade sliding upon itself, gaining its power. Suddenly, he knew. He knew he, too, must gain that power. He had known it all along. He drew the blade across his throat.

The blood made no sound as it spread across the tiles and settled into geometric shapes between the squares. Beside the boy, the knife grew warmer. It shone with strength and glistened wet.

I staggered from the crumpled Honda on the street  
Bleeding on the brick, my trembling feet;  
My roaring ears had heard above the din  
Her call to me — I laughed without, within.  
The sallow, jealous face of Death  
Had missed me by a silent breath.

*Opal Noble*

### To My Sister

Your memory comes to me tonight,  
Fluid, light,  
I see the contour of your face,  
The silky hair over the pillow case.  
The silence is broken by distant music.

My soul opens up,  
Pure, white,  
Your memory sets in.

As light  
As the blue that falls from the sky  
Into the waters of the lake;

As the moonbeam that rests  
On the gaunt face of a sick woman;

As the shadow of a child  
In the garden of an orphanage.

### Desilusao

The moonlight passes through the blinds,  
Paints shadows on the carpet,  
Comes to rest on my lover's face.

I hear the clock on the mantelpiece  
Tick away the darkness of the night.

When the light changes in the window  
I'll see him go.

But I'm powerless to make him stay.  
It was the past that brought him back  
And I have nothing to offer but today.

Zine Cortez

### **For Kim**

I write this  
And in between the words  
I watch the smoke as it winds  
And twists upward from my cigarette.  
As I inhale I watch the red glow,  
It comes closer to my fingers as they hold it  
And I think of you eight goddamn hours away.

The last time you were here  
We got drunk on T.J. Swann.  
You don't smoke but you asked for one anyway.  
I laughed when you puffed but didn't inhale,  
When you did I laughed because you started coughing  
And the smoke came out of your mouth all at once.

We tried to play backgammon,  
But you could barely see the dice  
And I missed the board when I rolled.  
We both looked up at the same time,  
Tears still in your eyes from coughing,  
And you smiled.

My cigarette lies stuffed out in the ashtray.  
I look at it with tears in my eyes,  
And hate you.

*Beth Taylor*

APC

Reminds me of LSD

So what I suppose - could be worse  
Saw Nixon on TV last nite  
- could be worse

Thoughts of the GILA monster  
appeared

Gila is only WORDS after  
solo in my dictionary

~~that's an after thought~~

It should be pronounced

hé'la

I think they shit too

Did God really invent ~~erasers~~ ?

create

\*note

This system was mistaken for literature. This is not a piece of literariness, nor does it respect language. This is the adoption of pre-fixed symbols from our civilisation. In drawing it, I remembered two old men and their thoughts. One old man said, "Civilisation, too, is a hallucinogen, a consciousness-destroying, habit-forming drug, and we are all opium-eaters from birth." The other old gentleman simply said, "The 'fault' lies with language, and as language is the tool of thought, the fault lies with our way of thinking." I apologize for Mr. Bunuel, Mr. Richter, and myself for any and all confusion caused. Mr. Bunuel and Mr. Richter would never apologize for themselves. Ergo, do not confuse the above drawing for anything normally published in literary magazines.

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## Ali Baba

*Rod Wingfield*

Once upon a time there was a city in Persia called Yacch-Ah-Yaccha-Hacch-Im-Dakkum-Ah-Bah-Booboo-Booboo, which in Persian meant "I didn't say you were a blockhead, I just said, 'Put on your turbin, Charlie, here comes a flock of woodpeckers.'" Persia was a land of Persian melons, Persian cats, and snake charmers (which is very charming if you're a snake). It was a land where the snake charmers played Russian Roulette. How do snake charmers play Russian Roulette? One of the Cobras is deaf.

In this land of Persia lived two brothers named Ali Baba and Kaseem. They used to call each other all the time. These were the first Persian-to-Persian calls. Their father was a bag salesman. They used to call him Old Bag-Dad. Ali Baba married a very poor girl and settled down. Kaseem married a very rich girl and settled up. Yes, Ali Baba was very, very poor. He eked out a meager living by painting pickles yellow and selling them for bananas. He had such bad luck, if it was raining cats and dogs, he'd get a skunk. He was even once in the marble business but he lost all his marbles.

Whenever Ali Baba wanted to think, he went to the mountains because the mountains were all he thought about when he wanted to think. When he thought about the mountains, he was at his peak. So while he was peeking at the mountains, he heard horses in the distance. Yes, he saw a bunch of thieves loaded down with silver and gold and all kinds of goodies, so he hid behind a tree that looked like a mink coat. It was a fur tree. As the thieves approached the mountain, Ali could see that they were all riding backwards. Well, I guess that was because it made the horses nervous to have somebody looking over their shoulders. He recognized the leader of the bandits because he used to be a taylor before he became a robber, so they all called him Robber Taylor.

The chief of the thieves called out to the mountain, "Open Sesame! Open Sesame!" What else can you say to a mountain? And sure enough, the mountain was opened by Irving Sesame, the famous mountain opener. The thieves rode in, left their ill-gotten gains in the big cave, and after the mountain was closed by Myron Sesame (a brother of Irving, and a famous mountain closer in his own right), they rode off into the desert.

When the thieves were out of sight, Ali Baba walked up to the mountain and yelled, "Open Sesame!" And sure enough, Irving Sesame again hearing the magic word opened the moun-

tain. Ali Baba walked in and lo and behold! Everywhere he looked he saw jewels, furs, and gorgeous fabrics. He said to himself, "Gee, I didn't know Saks Fifth Avenue had a place here." Then he loaded up his mule with as many treasures as he could carry and he took them home.

His wife asked, "Where'd you get the stuff?"

And Ali replied, "I just used my Visa card." But she was very upset because he didn't get any green stamps.

When Ali's brother Kaseem heard about the fortune his brother found, he figured he would do the same bit. So he went to the mountain. He yelled "Open Sesame!" and walked into the glittering cave. However, the mountain slammed shut behind him. Kaseem loaded down forty-seven donkeys with all the loot they could carry, and wanting to open the cave, he called out, "Open Pumpernickel! Open Whole-wheat! Open Rye!" But he just couldn't think of Sesame, so he was stuck. While he was knocking his head against the wall trying to get it into the shape he wanted, the forty thieves came back and found him there! Needless to say, they were not too choked up about this discovery, so they drew their swords and cut Kaseem up into little pieces. The forty thieves now knew that besides themselves, only Ali Baba knew where the magic cave was, so they decided to murder him, which was pretty drastic as we all know that murder can be fatal.

The chief thief, whose real name was Ivan (Ivan Offulitch), disguised himself by putting on a clean shirt and rang Ali Baba's doorbell. "Ivan calling." When the door was opened by Ali Baba's wife, the chief said, "Allah be with you, Allah be with you, Allah be with you in apple blossom time." Thinking he was one of the Andrews Sisters, she invited him in to have dinner with Ali Baba.

This time Ali Baba didn't recognize the thief so they sat down together for a sumptuous feast. What a tongue-tempting menu! Crabapple soup with real crabs and real apples floating around in it. Broiled brisket of baboon gizzard with gorilla gravy. Yum, yum! Python pie with monkey marmalade and whipped caterpillar juice, and other nauseating tidbits. Luckily, Ali Baba had hired a dancer named Morgana to dance for his guest. She was a chewing gum dancer (Wrigley all over). When she danced she would shiver and shake like the license plate on an old used car. Morgana recognized the thief chief and excused herself by saying she ate something that didn't agree with her and she couldn't do her belly dance on a sour stomach. She rushed out into the garden where there were forty huge jars. Each one contained one of the forty thieves. She poured scalding safflower oil into each of the jars, and although they were boiled in oil, their doctor was happy to report that they were polyunsaturated.

Then Morgana ran back into the house, grabbed a sword, cut off the thief's head and threw it in his face.

When Ali Baba found out that Morgana had saved his life, he said to her, "Nothing I do would be good enough for you, so I will be good enough to do nothing for you." She was tired of being a belly dancer so she turned in her belly button and quit dancing. However, she wanted to keep a hand in the business so she opened a small stand and sold naval oranges. Then she met Ali Baba's nephew, Ali Katz, and they moved to Arizona where they run a dude ranch for old belly dancers called Stomach Acres.

### **On The Death of a Friend**

Dogs bark back and forth  
Across the neighborhood.

Water drips from a diluted glass of iced tea.  
My fingers stick  
To the onion skin pages of a book.

It's been two weeks.  
I can't believe  
Those kids outside  
Have nothing better to do  
Than throw that damn frisbee around all day.

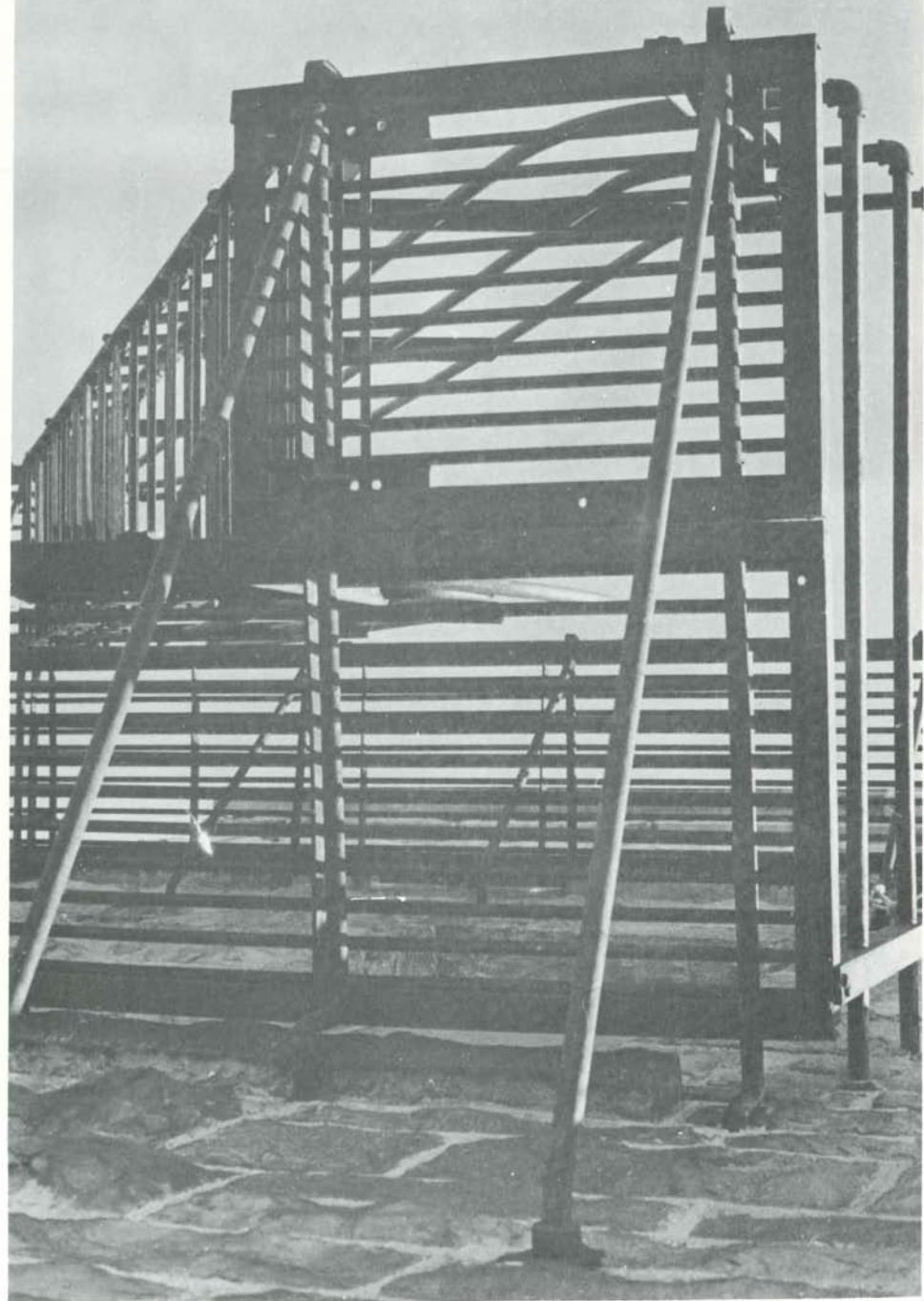
My back hurts from slouching in this old chair.  
I know I've read this part before  
And I still don't know what it means.

The church bells interrupt,  
" . . . suffered to redeem our loss . . . "

My loss.

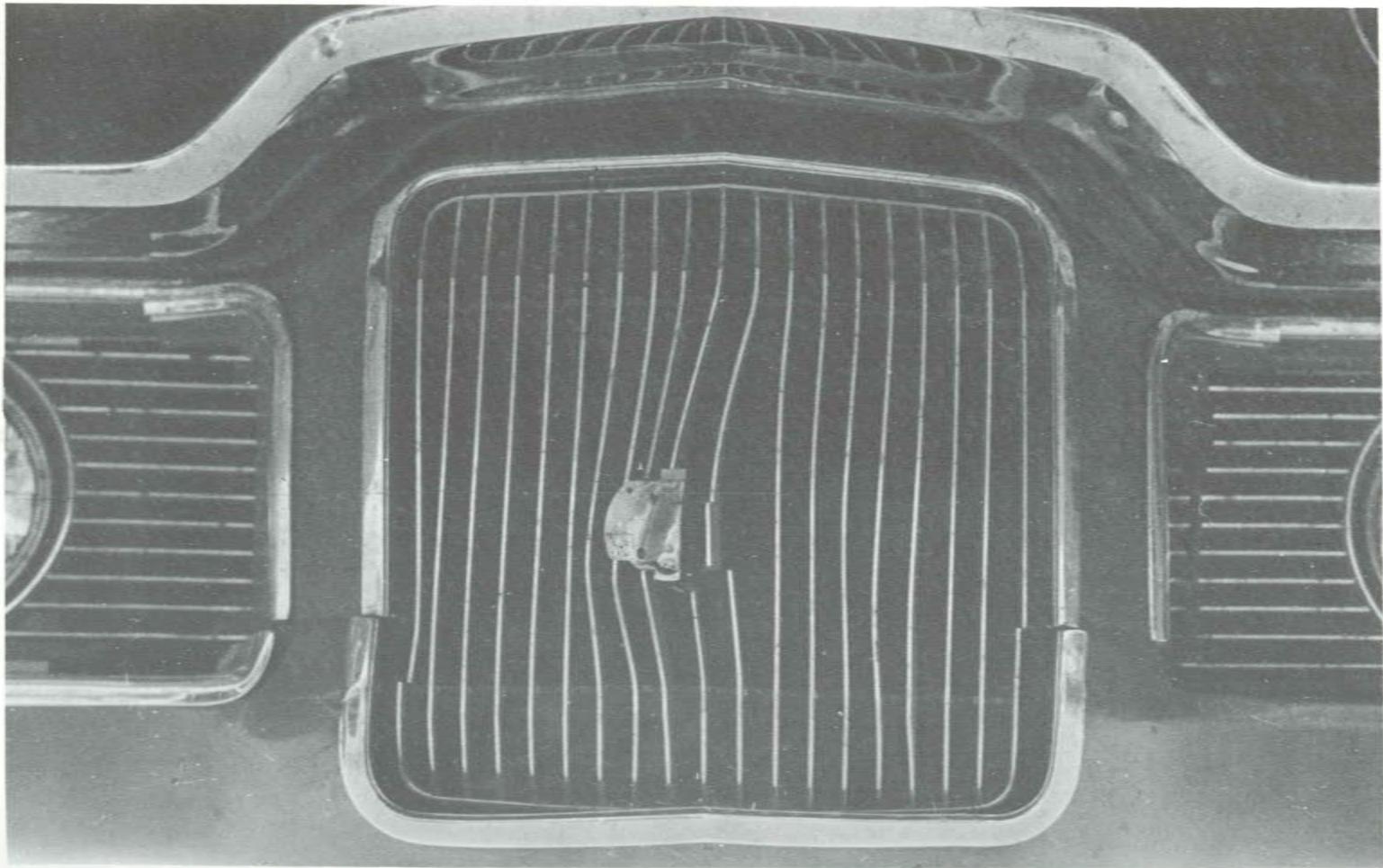
*Gina Grimsley*







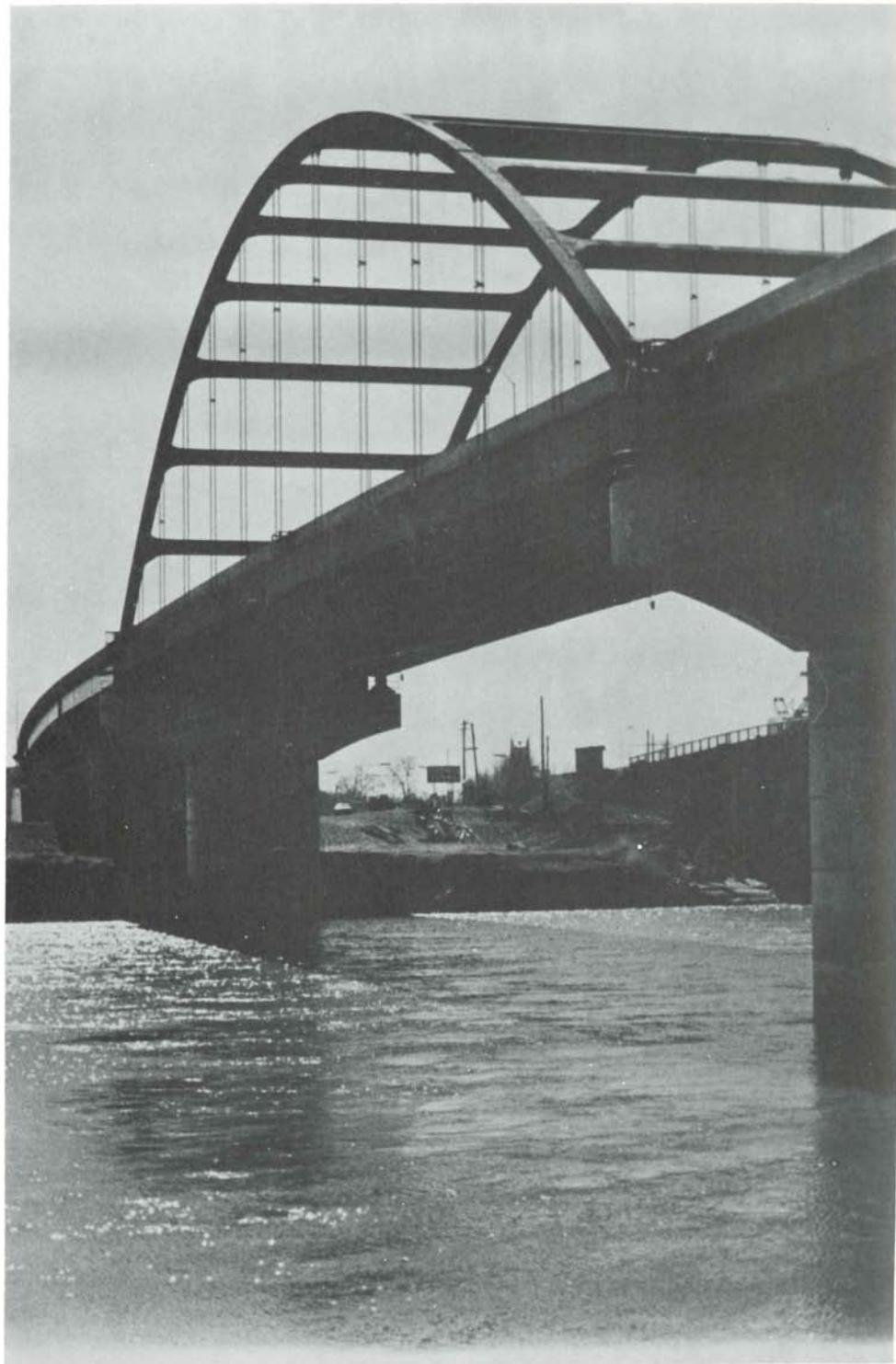














### **Champagne, Orchids and Cavier**

You are

Bachelor button mornings  
of twinkling blue skies.  
Sun glittering gold  
through windows of white.  
Breakfast for two  
in drifts of eider-down,  
croissants with jam  
and cinnamon tea.

Daisy afternoons  
of plump feather pillows  
tossed in the sky  
over luscious green meadows  
waiting for two.  
Light wicker basket  
with crackers and brie,  
frosted green grapes and red cabernet.

White gardenia evenings  
of soft velvet black.  
Palms, Casablanca and slow ceiling-fans  
nestled among them  
our table for two—  
white linen island adrift from the room.  
Nibbling green lettuce, filet of sole,  
freshly baked bread and a glass of white wine.

Red roses at sunrise  
as the night fades to gray  
flickering fire to embers—  
a setting for two.  
The day circles around us  
Like your arms round me.  
Life's touch of champagne,  
orchids and caviar.

*Joan Sandwick*

## The Final Battlefield

Fire fell from the sky  
and was consumed  
by the blazing turf  
with the indifference  
of the sea  
swallowing  
rain.

Liquid earth,  
red and righteous,  
meandered in streams  
to an unknown shore.

Explosions of light  
disturbed the rhythm of night  
displaying a raging scene  
that wished to remain hidden.  
The flaring chaos was accompanied  
by quaking vibrations  
that unloosed stones tumbling  
in confusion  
among smouldering forests,  
falling heavily into  
crimson flows,  
and the liquid splashed over the Earth,  
and the whole world was  
stained.

Sandra Long

## **Requiem For Lulu**

*Marcine Smith*

Lulu was sprawled like a fat X under the corner street light, on her stomach with her head turned to the side. Her face looked yellow in the light. And her mouth sagged open. It looked to me like she'd been eating dirt. She was drunk and stinking. And someone should pull her crumpled black dress from where it was rolled around her waist, down past her butt so her pink bloomers wouldn't show. And to cover the layer of fat that poked out below where the legs of the bloomers were too tight.

"Drunk as a skunk," Murphy said. "Wonder that she made it this far."

Hertha said nothing. Just looked at Lulu. I shook my head. The pool hall was only half a block down the street. East. Yet Lulu had gone the wrong way. Her house was south, at the edge of town. But this wasn't the first time Lulu'd gone the wrong way. There'd been times when Lulu wandered all over Westfield, trying to get home. The town was three blocks square. That included Main Street where we were standing looking down on Lulu. Drunk. One time she'd ended up in bed with Reverend Crandall and his Mrs. I'll bet they scrambled to get up, I thought. That is, if Lulu stunk then as bad as she was stinking now.

"Looks dead," Hertha said. She had gone to stand over Lulu. Hertha bent at the waist and stared down into the old woman's face. "Do you think Lulu dyes her hair red?"

"Gawd," Murphy groaned. "Who cares."

"One of us should pull her dress down," I said. Really. Someone should. Or haul Lulu home. That's what someone should do. It would be only decent. Proper.

Murphy snorted. "You want to pull her dress down? Do it. Not me. I ain't touchin' that ole drunk."

Hertha was staring hard at Lulu. "Think she's breathing?"

"You want to know, stick your nose down closer," Murphy said.

"Won't do it. She's got vomit all over herself. I can smell it from here. It's vomit." Hertha backed away.

"Do you remember the time Lulu swallowed them live crawdads?" Murphy asked, then snickered himself into a tizzy. He'd been the one who'd got Lulu to do it. Supplied the crawdads. Seined them from the creek north of town and was on his way fishing when he came on Lulu.

"I heard rumors that Lulu's folks had money," I offered. Lulu wasn't one of us. She had just showed up in town one day. No one even saw her get off the train. She said that's how she'd come. She did housecleaning for women around town when the women could catch Lulu sober. Her own house never saw dusting or a mop, people said. And people said she ate out of cans.

"I heard she said she was a teacher," Hertha said. "Ma says teaching is enough to drive a sane woman to drink. But Ma don't touch nothing at all, of course."

"Shit. My ma says Lulu told her she had herself a boyfriend a long time ago. Then he got her in trouble. But the guy didn't marry her. Lulu said the bastard was already married." Murphy was shoving dirt around with his feet.

"I don't believe that," Hertha said. Logical. "Lulu doesn't have a kid. Lulu ain't got nobody."

"Gawd, Hertha. How'd you ever get into the sixth grade being so stupid. Ma says Lulu gave the kid away." Murphy smirked at Hertha.

"Who to?" I wanted to know.

"Gawd, Marcella, you're as stupid as hertha. How'd I know? Girls. You're all stupid."

I doubled my fist and poked it into Murphy's stomach. He grunted and hit me back. I didn't let on I'd even felt it. I said, "Someone should pull Lulu's skirt down."

Neither Murphy or Hertha answered. Not one of us moved.

"It's a shame." I said. "The poor old woman." I couldn't help but think it was sad. Her laying there, like a fat X. Not moving. I'd seen Lulu drunk lots of times before, bobbing and weaving. Flat on her face in the dirt, spread-eagled. But before she was wiggling, trying to stand. Trying to get up and out of the dirt, trying to go somewhere. Wiggle on her stomach, Lulu looked like a fish swimming on dry land. Now, she looked like nothing.

"What's a shame?" Murphy demanded.

"Well . . . the way she is," I tried to explain.

"Shit. Like ma says, Lulu's enjoying herself," Murphy asserted.

"I don't see how that can be true."

"You callin' me a liar, Marcella?" Murphy'd rolled his hand into a fist, again.

"Boy, I don't know," Hertha said. "Lulu sure is quiet. She ain't moved at all. Think maybe she really is dead?"

"Hell. Who cares?" Murphy said. "Let's go play."

Well, Lulu was dead and the county buried her. In the cemetery on the hill east of town. Reverend Crandall had the sermon. The Ladies Aid served coffee after. My ma said it was a nice funeral . . . considering.

I wanted to ask ma, When people die and get buried, does someone dress them proper? Did someone pull Lulu's dress

down? And wash her up good? Put clean bloomers on the body? Lulu needed clean bloomers bad. She'd shit the ones she was wearing. And somehow it seemed to me, she'd shit on the town. And, I guess, me too.

### **Similes**

Like eating after having two teeth pulled—  
that's how it feels.

Whatever tastes or distastes  
(squash, pea soup, stroganoff gone cold)  
tempt the palate, all senses concentrate  
on a nervous tongue fretting nothingness.

That's how I miss you . . .

                          who can surprise,  
the way a dancer, teasing men with flesh  
and baiting Eros by drawing finger tips  
across her nipples or along her thighs,  
might for a moment use her hands to speak  
another language and of other things  
with someone deaf and mute beside the stage.

*Jan D. Hodge*

## Easy As 1-2-3

He thunderbolted me  
when we met—  
my Beatles (Red, White, and Blue)  
harmonized with  
his Tchaikovsky (1812, swans, and the Sugar Plum  
Fairy).

Then—  
hiding behind roses and the Blue Nun—  
he told me,  
“I’m married, and my wife wants  
to borrow the Beatles.  
She wants to become progressive.

I picked up the Red, White, and Blue  
(he picked up his wife)  
and we headed for his place.

His eyes commanded “Please”  
but I picked up 1812  
and hurled it at the western wall.

One—  
Defeat the British.

His eyes demanded “Now”  
but I picked up the swans  
and hurled them at the southern wall.

Two—  
Pluck for stuffing.

His eyes pleaded “Don’t”  
but I picked up the Sugar Plum Fairy  
and hurled her at the eastern wall.

Three—  
Pickle the fruit.

I told him,  
"Now, I want to be progressive."  
So I picked up his wife and together we walked—  
walked through the northern wall.

His eyes were left flat in sharp progress,  
and feel the chill.

*Deborah Craft*

### Pantry Psychology

I can't afford my coffee  
since the price went up,  
There's only one solution—  
hot water in a dark cup.

*Opal Noble*

Little girl dreams sit in a vase by the window:

Indian princesses faded to aspirations  
of Miss America.

By twelve, piano concerts in Carnegie Hall  
replaced all others.

Scottie's wife and field lunches fell short.  
The innocent dreams of girlhood  
are vanished.  
The vase overflows with stars.

*Quincealea Brunk*

## Morning

Eyes dark from no sleep  
And stubborn mascara  
Stare into a mirror.

No blush in the cheeks  
This morning.  
Hair still damp in back—  
Flattened on the right side,  
Frizzed and kinked on the other.

My holey sweat pants  
And ripped blue flannel shirt.  
My negligee of winter  
Kept me warm.

As I head toward the bathroom,  
I try to puff the right side  
And flatten the left.  
Grab my toothbrush.

From behind  
A hand touches and pulls me near  
For a hug.

*Gina Grimsley*

**Say Whatever Comes into Your Mind  
as I Count Slowly to Ten**  
(a cardinal ideogram after May Swenson)

- 0 Maybe  
a target of some kind?
- 1 Mumblety-peg—  
a knife quivering at my foot
- 2 A hanger for the neckties  
I gave father for Christmas  
that he never wore
- 3 How my lips felt  
when they were chapped and I ate popcorn
- 4 The chair  
the acrobat balanced on  
just before he fell
- 5 The ball I hit went through a window.  
I cut my finger pickup up the glass.
- 6 Walking the dog with my yo-yo  
(the only dog I ever had)
- 7 I was tied to a giant wheel.  
It was spinning slowly.  
The hatchets came straight at me.  
My scream woke me up.

- 8 After he hit me  
my glasses hid under the table.
- 9 I took a balloon on a stick  
home from the circus  
but Kenny broke it.
- 10 That was close.  
Next time will be a bull's-eye.

*Jan D. Hodge*

### **Into The 80's**

I will be Virginia Woolf,  
You will be T.S. Eliot;  
Together, we will conquer  
The rotting jungles  
Of Rod McKuen  
And Jacqueline Susann—  
We will explore the Antarctica  
Of literature in the deep-freeze—  
And we will triumph.

*Deborah Craft*

I read a book the other night  
the light was on 'til four.

The dish heap grows beside the sink,  
there's laundry on the floor.

Dust mice hide beneath the bed,  
your shoes rest by the door.

And I'm afraid to touch the scene  
afraid you'll come no more.

*Rebekah Yates*

## In The Valley of The Shadow

Deb Freese

Abby eyed the shadow of her pen fluttering on the wall while she wrote. She knew she was losing her concentration, and her fingers cramped. She laid the pen down. Eleven o'clock. Her eyes burned from the hours of reading. She hunched her sore shoulders and rolled her head. Time for a study break.

She wandered down the long hallway to the kitchen, improvising obscene dance movements to stretch her stiff muscles. Longfellow was sleeping on top of the refrigerator. She reached up to scratch his skin.

"Lazy cat," she mumbled. He didn't even open an eye to acknowledge her presence.

She looked inside the fridge. It was empty except for half a bottle of ketchup, a carton of sour milk, and a margarine bowl full of fuzzy tuna casserole. She fared no better in the freezer—it contained an empty ice cube tray and **The Social Integration of Lebanese-American Children in the Public Schools of Philadelphia**.

"Damn, it's overdue." She brushed the front of the cover and tossed it on the table.

The cupboard was her last chance for the supper she'd skipped. She shoved aside cans of 9 Lives and boxes of Meow Mix and Tender Vittles to find a jar of peanut butter. Somehow, she couldn't face an encore of breakfast and lunch. She sighed. At least the rent was paid.

Longfellow yawned and stretched. Abby tore open a packet of Tender Vittles. It was tempting her growling stomach, but it smelled worse than the cat's breath.

"Here, kitty-kitty."

The cat arched his back, then leapt from the refrigerator to the counter to the floor beside his food dish.

"Chow down, Fella."

She got a drink of water and headed back to her room. On the way, she made a pitstop. It was strange. The bathroom seemed smaller than usual. Abby guessed it was the pile of dirty laundry and the towels draped around the bathtub. No time to worry about that though. Her Soc term paper wasn't going to write itself. Back to work. She began reading what she had just written.

"The French sociologist Emile Durkheim classified suicide in three kinds of ways."

She nibbled on the cap of her pen.

"Emile Durkheim classified suicides as either—shit. Durkheim distinguished three distinct types of suicide." She closed her eyes. "Damn." She crumpled the paper into a little ball. Longfellow galloped down the hall.

"I knew you'd come." She tossed the paper to him. Sometimes she regretted having used him as a laboratory subject for Behavioral Psych. He batted the paper ball around with his paw, then he brought it to her. She threw it again.

"Fetch."

Longfellow fetched dutifully. Abby checked the clock. 11:39. She was wasting time.

"Okay. There are three reasons for killing yourself." She rubbed her forehead. "No food, headache, and term paper."

The cat jumped up on the bed. He pressed his slimy nose against Abby's cheek.

"Go away, Longfellow. There are three—scram, Fella. There are—dammit. There are three reasons for killing a cat." She crumpled up another paper and tossed it.

"Potty break." she got up and went into the bathroom. The whole room seemed bright, even though she hadn't turned on the light. She looked around. Something was different. She couldn't pinpoint it, but something was different. She sat down on the toilet to relieve her weak bladder. Longfellow appeared in the doorway.

"Voyeur."

She leaned forward to stretch her back. Her feet dangled before her, a good six inches off the linoleum. She rubbed her eyes.

"I'm farther gone than I thought."

She got up and opened the medicine cabinet. She found what she was looking for.

"What would I do without you?" she asked as she popped a No-Doz.

Longfellow rubbed against her calf.

"I'd like to try it without you."

She went back to work. Her concentration was still lacking. Soon, her ears started ringing as the No-Doz took effect. She was getting buzzed.

"Death—what a depressing subject. Death." She closed her eyes and dreamt of Sunday school and the special program she had starred in when she was seven years old. She had memorized the 23rd Psalm. That was the first time he had ever heard the word death.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...." She woke up. The term paper had to be finished. She chuckled.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of F, I will fear no evil, for I've got No-Doz."

She sorted through her index cards, looking for a quote. Her eyelids were heavy. She wasn't going to make it.

"Cold shower," she mumbled. She put her papers aside.

She stumbled into the bathroom with her eyes half closed and bumped into something hard, cold, and wet. She gasped and opened her eyes.

"My God, it's a giant toilet!"

She couldn't believe her eyes. The toilet stood six feet high. She stood on her tiptoes and peeked over the seat into the crystal white water.

"My God, the toilet grew."

She stumbled backwards into the hallway, staring at the shiny porcelain-coated monstrosity. It was still growing.

"Longfellow, you're not going to believe this." she said, even though she didn't know where he had disappeared to. She went to the kitchen and picked up the phone and dialed the emergency number.

"Yes, please help me. I've got a giant toilet in my bathroom and it's still growing and I don't know what to do...Well, it's about six feet tall. Eight feet if you count the tank...White. Yes, it's white...Distinguishing features? Look, mister, will you just get somebody out here before my toilet explodes and drowns me...Hello? Hello? Shit." She threw the receiver down. "What am I gonna do?"

She went back to have another look at her problem. It was still there, and it was bigger.

"Man, what am I gonna do?"

The toilet provided no answers. It just sat there, glistening and growing.

"I've gotta pee. How the hell am I gonna get up there?"

She looked around. The clothes hamper. She pulled it over next to the toilet and climbed up. The seat was five feet across. It was going to be some balancing act. She backed up to it and held herself suspended over the water. Her arms were weak. They started shaking. She knew she'd never hold herself long enough. Her muscles gave out and she fell splashing into the cold water. The crystal clear water was like ice. She was fully awake now. This was better than No-Doz anyday. She shivered in the water. How would she ever get out? The sides of the bowl were slicker than ice. She was stuck. There was no escape. She would have to stay there until morning when the pot shrunk back to its normal size. She knew her instructor would never believe that she didn't get her term paper done because she was stuck all night in the toilet. She sighed.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow..."

### Right Down the Middle

Please don't make me  
Make a choice,  
Form an opinion,  
Pick this over that;  
I'd rather not.  
After years in med school  
I might find  
That Vo-Tech U  
Made more sense.  
I really like green better  
Now that I've painted the room  
Blue.  
A skirt and sweater would have been  
More appropriate  
But, I guess,  
My jeans were . . . maybe . . . more comfortable.

Please don't make me  
Make a choice.  
I might be wrong.

*Allison Averill*

