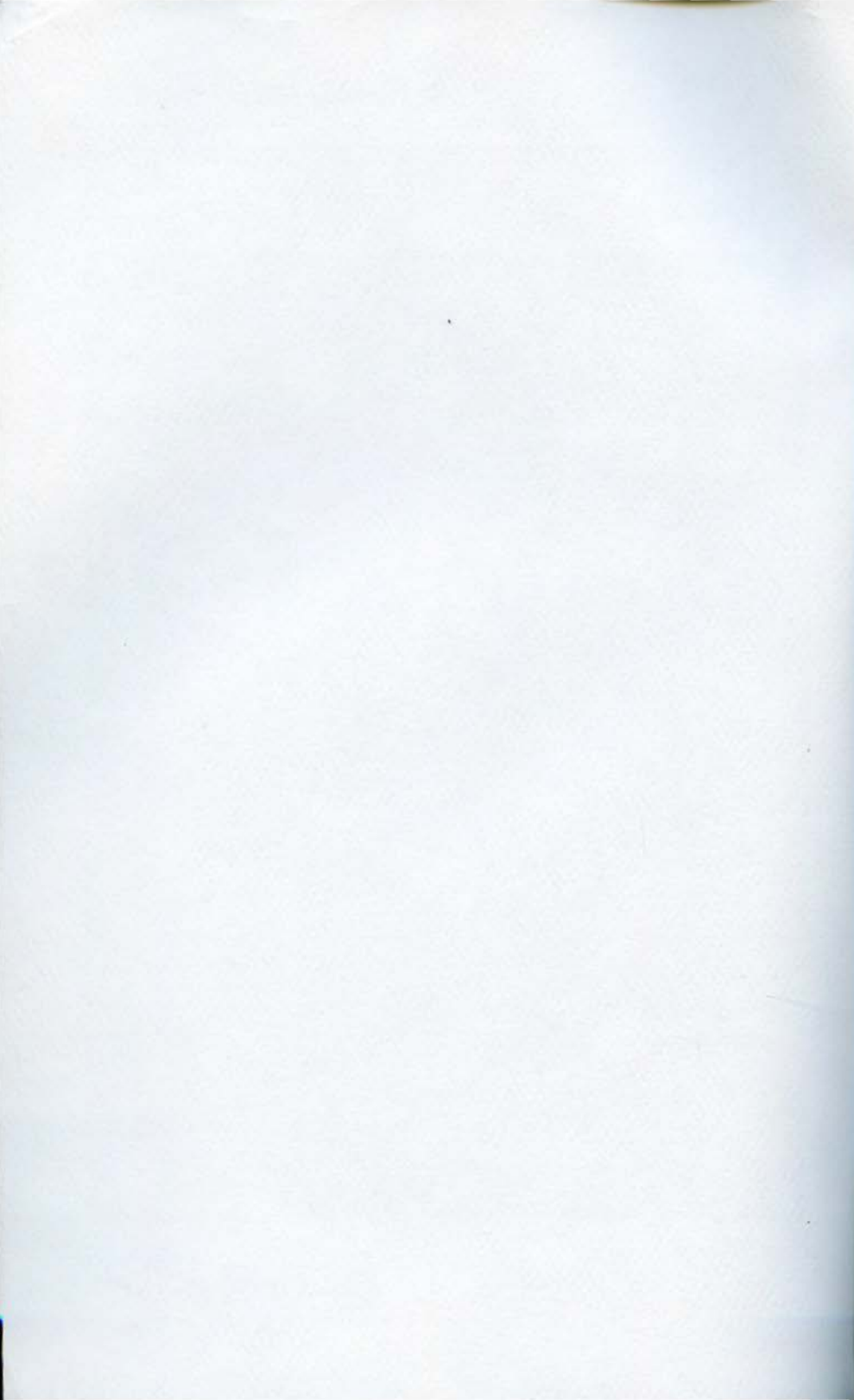


Maristiana

THE MARIST COLLEGE LITERARY AND ART MAGAZINE
THE MOSAIC



Spring 1984



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"The Mosaic" is a publication of the Marist College Literary Society.

Before I say anything else, I would like to thank all who sent submissions to "The Mosaic" this year. I was surprised not only by the quantity of contributions, but by the quality as well. Literature and art are not dead.

Looking through all the submissions this year, I found myself asking the same question over and over. Why do we write? There are quite a few answers to that. Some people say they write for recreation. Others write because of some inexplicable compulsion telling them to write. And there are those few who say that they write for money.

But I think that one of this year's contributors to "The Mosaic" has the answer. With his collection of poetry, James Kurkela sent the following.

"Probably the most difficult times of our lives are spent trying to come to terms with our deepest feelings. This is why I wrote the following poems."

Maybe that's why we all write what we do.

And now, turn the page, and begin an incredible adventure. It's your magazine. Enjoy.

Steve Eastwood
Editor-in-Chief

There is no need to cry.
There is no need to fear the future.
Be yourself.
Go your own way.
Be careful,
but be happy.
Know what you want,
get it, and
enjoy it,
for it is yours.
Know people.
Know who they are,
what they are.
Recognize their hidden feelings,
their inner beings.
Live life to its fullest.
Dream dreams,
and help fulfill them.
Share, live and love
because
there is hope.

by Jane Stanka

That Freshman Year

I graduated the other day. They gave me a genuine, certified diploma — not the phony kind that they give you in kindergarten.

And my parents were so thrilled that I had mastered my A, B, C, D, and F's that they spared no expense to celebrate. They even rented out my uncle's house for the occasion.

Along with all the family friends whom I don't know, all my relatives were there. Even my sister managed to make it. Kate goes to college in the Midwest, but didn't come home right away last month; she went to her friend's house in Florida. We hadn't seen her in six months.

"Chucky!" she exclaimed in a pitch so high the wine glasses were stirring. "How are you doing? How does it feel to be out of high school?"

I wasn't quite sure how to answer that, which was just as well since my sister has the habit of answering her own questions.

"I bet you're all set to go to college."

"Well, school doesn't start for another two months," I said.

"Don't worry about it. College isn't as tough as they say it is."

Somehow that didn't seem credible coming from a person who giggles when she talks.

"You'll meet lotsa new friends," she asserted. "Lotsa great parties, too."

She apologized for her appearance and went off to say hello to someone else.

I didn't really want a graduation party, but my parents insisted on it. Anyway, it gave me a chance to see my cousin, Tom. Tom has been out of school for a year now. I couldn't remember where he had gone.

"Greenhaven State," he answered.

"Oh, yeah. Where are you working now?"

Tom proceeded to tell me all about his many interview sessions. The happy ending was that he got a job at an insurance consulting firm in the city.

"It's not a great job, but it's a living."

"Would you rather be working or still in school?"

"Hey," he expounded, "college isn't all fun and games at Greenhaven State. You work at Greenhaven."

Tom always was a little different.

I like his parents, my aunt and uncle. I made my way over to the kitchen where they were telling my parents about the flowers they saw on their trip to Maine. After a while, Aunt Anne decided I was getting bored, so she changed the subject.

"So, Joe High School is going to college. Oh, that first year is tough! Our Joe had to work so hard so he could run track in the Spring . . ."

She went on for about two hours before my uncle could get a word in edgewise. Uncle Rich is the type of guy who nods his head with everything you say and says "Yes, that's very true." In this case, he elaborated on that premise for me.

He said, "You should do very well in school, Charles."

The aforementioned Joe is the pride of the family. He's really going places. My parents want me to be like him. They don't actually say so, but I'm sure that's what they're thinking.

Joe's a nice guy. Besides being super-intelligent, he knows a few things, too.

"The thing about college that struck me, even in med school, was that everybody was constantly running around all over the place, trying to do their own thing. And they were all doing it together."

Now *that* was interesting! But before I could give it much thought, he was saying something else.

"Living in a college dorm is a great experience, because with all those guys playing guitars with varying degrees of inadequacy, and making up words to go with the music, you get an idea of where seventy-five percent of the music you hear on the radio comes from."

And with those words, the party adjourned. I feel I gained something from the experience — 120 dollars and change.

by Carl MacGowan

A Daughter Leaving For College

Jeanine has gone
a way
from home

a silence
not like
any past

emanates
in waves
of hate

from the room
that she did
vacate

in other times
when she had
left

it was as if
she had not
gone

for we knew
she would
return

even trips
across
an ocean

left a presence
in her
room

to which
she would
return

not so this time
for
I

her father
must allow
the girl

to remain
the silent
scream of mem'ry

prepare myself
for the
visit

of a woman

by Bob Vivona

September 30th

All I have of you is a
Faded photo, torn and frayed
Around the edges.
And Daddy, that's all
I'll ever have of you;
A dim memory that is constantly
Becoming ever more distant.
How I wish that I could just
Hold your hand or hear your voice.
But that is forever lost to me
And all that I'll ever have of you
Is a photo that has faded
Until no image remains
But an ache and a void . . .
A void that will never be filled.

by Jo Ann Sopko

Do you
See me? Or am
I a reflection in
your eyes, one more facet
of you?

by Sue Jones



by Don Eustace

Saving the World

Twenty feet into the hotel ventilation duct, she knew she was making a tremendous mistake. Kate paused for a moment in the darkness, trying to gather her scattered wits and lost nerve, leaning against the wall with her legs stretched out in front of her. The large rifle – in her inexperienced mind she called it THE GUN, heedless of the jumble of letters and numbers that made up its identity – jammed uncomfortably in her back. When she had bought it, with the loan from Citibank ostensibly to buy a car, she had to ask how to put it on safety, how to load and unload, how to aim and fire. The nameless seller, faceless in the shadows of the dingy room, had seemed amused by that. He hadn't asked any questions, though, and she had practiced over and over again in her little studio, until even when she wasn't touching it, her forefinger remained perpetually, nervously crooked around an imaginary trigger. Her legs were trembling in the cramped space and her eyes stared into the darkness as if trying to see by sheer will power.

What am I doing here? she asked herself miserably. And another part of her mind, the part she had always thought her rational, sane, methodical self in all this madness, answered seriously.

You're going to save the world.

After that it was easy. She had never had delusions of grandeur, never been of a megalomaniac character, had in fact been rather lazy, wasting her potential on a safe and unimportant job, that required no great effort of thought or action on her part. She was manager of one of a chain of local bookstores. It was no outstanding potential, either, that the world had been cheated of, just one more person atrophying of their own choice and preference. But now – she resumed her crawl, the spindle of string with meters meticulously knotted off, trailing behind her. Mad though it was, she had no intentions toward godhood, which made the deed even more insane. No, she was doing what she thought was right, as she had been taught, as every nice Jewish girl of her acquaintance had been taught, until the comfortable feeling of rightness settled like a warm electric blanket over every action. This felt RIGHT, like watching her little brother had felt RIGHT, or doing the dishes without being asked or studying in the library long before the exam instead of on the night before.

Kate wondered why she felt no more than that particular satisfaction, and fear. Maybe she *was* crazy because she had no more conviction, or faith in her conviction, than a middle class morality gave her. She tried not to let the thought confuse her, entrap her in a circular argument in which there was no resolution. Which was madder, to be sane or insane when performing an insane act? She crawled doggedly on within the hotel walls with the stubbornness of one never before particularly stubborn.

She had calculated beforehand, to the best of her ability, the distance to travel before she reached the Suite L'Etoile; four hundred meters straight in and one hundred to the right. The day before, she had stood

with the crowd, gaping at the huge modern block that was the new Geneva Hotel. She had gone to no pains to disguise herself among the November tourists — no one knew of her. Her plans did not shout themselves out from her blue jeans and hiking boots, or glaring yellow raincoat. There was no need even to ask questions and risk revealing dangerous interest — the guide admitted freely that the START talks were to be held in that very hotel starting Wednesday. Another tourist in the group asked which suite, and that, coupled with the architectural data the guide reeled off impressively in French, German, Italian and English gave Kate all the information she needed. Really, it was too easy; she couldn't even back out anymore on the grounds that her plans wouldn't work. The wheels had been set in motion without her; all she had to do was follow the path laid before her.

Now she wondered what the other tourists' interest was in the hotel. A giggle welled up behind her clamped lips as she pictured herself dropping out of the ceiling on another gunman and a third behind her. It was like something out of "Get Smart". Missed him by that much, she thought, and had to stop again, holding her sides in the agony of silent laughter. In her present state of mind, she almost felt relief at this sign that she was, indeed, cracking up.

The triple knots that slid through her fingers in the darkness signaled that she had made it, if all went as planned, to the Suite L'Etoile. She began to feel around for the opening grate to the room below. She was no longer in hiking boots; instead, she was wearing soft moccasins and gloves. She lightly padded her hands and feet all about her in the cramped space, feeling for the opening. She found it, a ridged unevenness in the right wall. She placed a thin piece of cloth over the first screw, to prevent any sound of metal on metal when she loosened it with her screwdriver. It turned easily.

Half an hour later, the 2 foot square grid was free. Again stuffing cloth under the edges to prevent any sound, she paused before pulling it away. It would all have to be done fast, so fast if she were to take them by surprise. She listened a moment to the low murmur of voices that rose up through the grate past the blood beating in her head. They had been a constant background as she worked, now louder, now softer, but always unintelligible, until she had lost all awareness of them. I hope this is the right room, she thought as she pulled the grid away and dropped through; THE GUN caught a moment on the lip of the opening and she hung for a split second, then fell painfully on her side. In an instant, she was up, rifle in hand and backed into a corner as if she were the one menaced by the astonished group of dark-suited men instead of the other way around. There were more people than she had expected and they all looked alike. She almost didn't recognize Schultz. Gromyko, too, looked nothing like his pictures. A movement to her left caught her eye and she swung THE GUN toward it. The man stopped in his tracks and all of a sudden Kate realized she had not yet spoken, made herself clear. Idiot, she thought, embarrassed.

"All right," she said, "all right." She gestured with THE GUN. She swallowed — something was wrong — if she didn't concentrate, she

knew all that would come out of her mouth was the silly phrase "All right."

"All right, listen," she said. "Listen to me," she pleaded. "Listen, please listen." She shook her head to free it of its echoing. "Please listen. I don't want to hurt anyone. So you, all of you aides, please lie down on the floor over there and everyone else keep your hands on the table. If anyone moves, these two men die." Gromyko and Schultz sat close enough together to make the threat a possibility. It was done.

"Now," her throat hurt and she felt like crying. "Please. I don't want to hurt anybody. But you — you have the power to kill whoever you want. I don't want that. I want it to stop. Please." She felt dimly that she should explain to these silent, astounded men, so they wouldn't think she was crazy and would listen to her.

"Listen," she said. "There's too much dying. Too many boys getting killed. It has to stop." Her voice began to rise uncontrollably. "I want to live, not die because — because of something going wrong. Don't you see how wrong it all is? I don't want to die because of your stupidity — and your pride!" she shrieked suddenly, making everyone jump. "How dare you make me suffer because of your stupidity and ambition! Or anyone else for that matter! How dare you . . . tell me, how you have the gall . . ." she choked herself off. Careful, Kate, she thought. You're scaring them with these mood swings.

"Please, miss . . ." someone said gently.

"Listen to me!" she cried. "How can you stand yourselves? How dare you contemplate the destruction of my world! How dare you! It's not yours! You have NO RIGHT!"

"So, listen," she began calmly. "You're going to decide right now. No one walks out again, do you hear me?" and she looked straight at Gromyko. "No more temper tantrums." She looked at Schultz. "Here are the terms."

"No Pershing missiles in Europe. They are to be recalled at once. No more American nuclear warheads in Western Europe. No more Russian nuclear devices in any of the Warsaw Pact nations except in the USSR. No nuclear submarines. No more nuclear war devices built. No neutron bombs. No armed satellites or shuttles or rockets or space stations. And no more germ warfare research." She took a deep breath. "There, simple, isn't it? Everyone wins because everyone loses. Write it up and sign it."

There were protests and babbling. "Shut up!" she yelled. "Are you people crazy? Don't you even understand what it is you're fighting for? How can you want that? How can that be something desirable?" She felt like sobbing. "It isn't RIGHT," she said. "It doesn't even come close to RIGHT."

There was a stunned silence. Then Schultz nodded calmly. "That's a tall order, miss," he said, and nodded again, his eyes glancing past her momentarily. A flicker of alarm raced through her mind and was gone. Nervously, she gripped the rifle, her eyes riveted on his pale face as he continued. "And I'm sure you realize that that is just the solution our countries' leaders have been working toward over thirty years now. And

I assure you that, like our predecessors, my colleague and I have everyone's best interests at heart. Your proposals are thought provoking, but it's simply not feasible to initiate such a drastic program into the world at this point in time."

Disgust flooded the back of her throat and spoke through her, now no longer tentative or hesitant. "You make me sick," she said hoarsely. "Well, the party's over, Mr. Schultz." She raised her chin proudly just as he nodded for the third time. Full realization surged through her and she whirled around to confront one of the forgotten aides rushing up behind her. She swung THE GUN belatedly, as if she had forgotten what it was for, when a team of security guards burst through the ornate door sending it flying from its hinges.

No, don't kill me, please — but the words never made it past her lips and a short burst of gunfire rendered them irrevocably mute.

The papers all said that the struggle was brief and that none of the diplomats were harmed. The terrorist's body was identified, but her motives and affiliations remained unknown. Schultz was praised by both the United States and the Soviet Union for his quick thinking and action, and political observers said that relations between the two superpowers would probably be strengthened by the incident.

by Andrea Stohl

China Doll
I must not touch.
Though silken robes
 and porcelain skin
Lure me
 and hold me in awe.
I long
 to feel the beauty
 and sheer joy of touching
Just once.

China Doll
I have touched.
The silken robes, soiled
 and porcelain, shattered.
In my mind,
 its place is held.
The fragile, delicate beauty
 of a hollow shell.
Forever destroyed
 by the ecstasy of having touched
Just once.

by JDH

Mary

The Virgin Mary,
She stands on my table.
Wooden, but dignified.
She holds her child in her arms.
Contently gazing into each others eyes.
Softly, gently, carved as one.
The sun shines brightly through my window.
Melting for a moment,
She releases her child.
Christ climbs down His mother's robe,
Which flows in the breeze from the window.
The brown color of the wood now faded.
With bright eyes she watches Him,
He looks about
Then turns around
And reaches up.
Mary takes her child back into her arms.
Holding Him,
She glances over her shoulder
We exchange smiles
Mother and child
Contently gazing into each other's eyes.
A tear rolls down her now frozen face.
Wooden, but dignified.
She holds her child in her arms.

by Allison Reck

A Little Tale

"Mrs. Hardcastle asked me to come and give a talk to her girls at her house next week," Jennifer Leigh told me at lunch the other day.

"I didn't know Mrs. Hardcastle had any children. In fact, I was under the distinct impression that the title 'Mrs.' in her case was a strictly honorary one, with none of the usual connotations."

"Of a husband, you mean? I don't think Mr. Hardcastle could be considered usual in any sense of the word. But no, the girls in question are the ones in her Ladies' Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Something or Other, I forget what, and they have all sorts of cultural talks to drink their coffee with."

"Are you cultural?" I asked, somewhat dubiously I admit.

"Are you kidding? I'm the local celebrity now. After all, as you very well know, I just got back from two miserable months in India doing a seminar with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. I haven't exactly been broadcasting the fact, but when mom was out buying the fatted calf for the return of the prodigal daughter, she met Mrs. Hardcastle, who naturally enough asked her what the occasion was."

"Very natural, considering it's not an every day occurrence to witness a purchase of beef on the hoof in the village," I agreed. "But are your mother and Mrs. Hardcastle still friends? I thought they had a major falling out some months ago, over Mahjong, wasn't it?"

"Scrabble. I came home to find them barely on speaking terms. Oh, they had plenty to say *about* each other, or at least mother did, but I never felt it warranted much attention. So I was a bit surprised when, for some reason, mom was only too happy to reveal all to the old — and Mrs. H. probably felt it her duty to take some winds out of the maternal sails and ask me to do something I would hate to do yet couldn't in all decency refuse."

"First culture — now decency?"

Jennifer ignored that with the narrowed concentration of one picking the last elusive garbanzo bean out of the depths of her salad bowl. As she speared it with a flash of sharp tines, she remarked, "I only wish I knew what mommie dearest was up to. I know there's something going on, but I can't put my finger on it. I don't begrudge my mother her outside interests, in fact I encourage them, but not when she drags me into her schemes. She's unscrupulous, she really is."

"Do you have any idea what you'll talk about?"

"No, that's another thing. I need to come up with a topic. I was so phenomenally bored and depressed in India, and I've eaten better authentic Indian food at the *Brahmin Bull*, and then I got dysentery, I really wasn't up to appreciating the local flavor."

"You could always make something up," I suggested. "After all, the range of intelligence in the LSPCS does not encompass anything farther east than Free Port, Rhode Island. And then, when the usual little blurb appears in the "Courier" to a more knowledgeable audience, such as the general public, about Ms. Leigh's adventures on a tiger shoot under the south wall of the Taj Mahal — well, I'm sure you'll understand

the common reaction. I mention this because I get the distinct idea that revenge for getting you into this situation might be a major factor in the subject of your talk."

But Jennifer wasn't listening. Instead, she gazed unfocused in the general direction of the table centerpiece for a moment. I could tell she was caught by the idea. Gradually a smile crept about her lips and a light danced in her eye.

"Well, of course, everyone knows they don't shoot tigers anymore," she said.

I saw nothing of Jennifer for the next few days. Whether she was rehearsing her speech, or simply hiding herself from sight like a bride from the bridegroom, I never learned. But the day after her scheduled appearance in front of the Ladies' Society, I got a call from her.

"Oh hi!" I exclaimed.

"Rather say 'bye'. I'm leaving."

"Leaving! But where to? Why?" I began to feel an awful premonition. "Your speech . . ."

"Went off like a charm. But mother never told me she had always wanted to join the club in spite, or perhaps to spite, Mrs. H. and saw my speech as a ticket in. I'm going to California while the storm blows over." She chuckled unrepentantly. "Send me a copy of the 'Courier'. I believe it was really my finest hour."

The 'Courier' never did print Jennifer's speech, which I felt was a wise decision on Mrs. Hardcastle's part. But from what I knew of the case, and the rumors noised about in strictest secrecy, it seemed she never did recover from the shock of bloodshed under the walls of the Taj.

by Patrice Sarath

Couples

Hands
Interlocked
Making two one
Loving unity flowing
From one to the other
Shared joys
Become
Shared lives

by Pat Nichols

Cages

I am a monkey. People walk by my cage and laugh at me. They call me silly. Some feel sorry for me. They are sad because I am caged. How stupid they are!

I am not silly. I do not bog myself down in work. I put no stress on myself. My days are carefree. My troubles are of the least importance. When I have a problem, I handle it. I do not sit and ponder its complications. I do not worry about its outcome. These are things I cannot control. Why should I burden myself?

Silly humans! Can they not see that they are encaged? They are trapped by the worries and frustrations they bring upon themselves.

My cage has bars. They allow the sunlight to pass through. It fills my cage with warmth.

The bars on my cage are iron. They can be broken down, although not easily. My cage also has a door. Friends can come in and visit. If it is locked, at least they can reach through the bars and touch me. I know that I am not alone.

Human cages are not made of any material. They can't even be seen! Their cages have walls, not bars. People box themselves in and don't even know it!

It's funny how even though the walls are invisible, they don't allow the sunlight to come through. The cages are cold and dark.

The invisible barrier is also strong. It is much stronger than the iron in my bars. It cannot be broken through. There are no doors. No one can get into the cages. No one can reach into them to touch the person inside. The person is totally alone.

How sad I am for people. If only they could be happy like me. I could teach them how. They could learn so much, so easily . . . if only I could get out of my cage.

by JDH

overlooked

have you ever felt like a parsley?
i know i have.

the one that's always overlooked
no matter
how nice he is
or
how good he looks.
just left behind
to be
tossed out
with the dirty napkins
and empty potato skins.

at least a parsley
doesn't know it.

by Sue Jones

Desert

Empty, vast, and searching stands the horizon.
Flaws caused by wind break the plain,
Only to be swept away without a thought,
Since permanency is unknown here.

No path ahead, no remains behind,
Simply suspended in Time.
A silent echo is heard from within;
"The wasteland grows . . ."

No secret behind, no promise ahead;
Deceit and revenge feel soft underfoot.
Labor forth, since no other path exists,
Or does there exist another way?

Empty, vast, and searching; hollowness within,
Except for the echo resounding
"The wasteland grows . . ."
Woe to him who hides wastelands within!"

by Meg Adamski



by Debbi Zegel

A Song for Old Comrades

Riders approached the fortress at dusk. They were just three dots in the gray-purple twilight, almost indistinguishable from the dirt road that wound over the uneven terrain. Hidden by the slopes and outcrops of the desert, they often passed out of the lookout's line of sight, only to return, closer, but no clearer. It was becoming too dark for that. Night would fall before they achieved the gate. The lookout alerted the watch and the fortress prepared to meet the riders.

The massive iron-banded gates were opened barely wide enough for the horses to squeeze single file into the empty, barren square. Weeds grew up in the cracked and broken flagstones. Pitted ancient walls rose in jagged opposition to the purpling sky. The fortress seemed lifeless, a deserted wasteland ruin. Only a skeletal watch remained in Tung Fortress, that guarded the eastern borders of Res-SilhNar. An insignificant fortress in a semi-arid waste, she had yet received her share of the bloodshed in the grim civil war that had wracked her country barely a month since. Now, in an uneasy peacetime atmosphere, Commander Shan did not expect visitors (save those unfortunate soldiers newly assigned to his post), and especially not those wearing the Losfyr's crest, a silver gryphon. Shan stood with his soldiers when the riders entered the walls of the keep — wondering, speculating, guessing.

The leader slipped from her horse and walked stiffly forward the few paces to meet him. Shan had time to think only that she has been riding long and hard, and she looks familiar, then she slipped the battered helmet off and he recognized the tired face, eyes and form of Hanad. He just shook his head and grinned as they clasped hands.

"You!" he exclaimed. "I can't believe they sent you!" She shrugged inside the disfiguring armor. "It's a long and arduous story. Almost as bad as that ride," she said. "Let's go in, I've got a lot to tell you."

Shan's office was a shabby affair. A huge wooden desk dominated the chamber, hacked and gashed and standing crooked on four uneven legs, a relic left over from previous commanders. The stone walls, despite the desert temperature, sweated drops of cold moisture that formed rivulets in all the cracks and edges, finally seeping back into the stone floor. A small fire in the brazier flickered constantly in an attempt to combat the bone-deep chill. An ill-fitting wooden door led to the hallway; a tapestry blocked the entrance to his private quarters. Tall Hanad swept through it now, no longer in armor, but in the cloth and leather of an ordinary warrior. Shan turned hastily from where he huddled over the brazier, a twinge of shame knotting in his gut. That she should see him like that . . . But, she made no sign. As she took a deep breath and hesitated before speaking, Shan raised a brow. Hanad was usually the most straightforward of women. Quietly, he sat down at his desk. She shook her head. "Bad," she said. "The Losfyr's dead." He looked at her stunned, unable — unwilling to comprehend. "Yes. She died last night. They — doctors, courtiers — suspect poison. No one had been very careful about food, what with the Recining uprisings, but you know of all that." Shan's fortress had been struck in surprise attack and the saddest thing had been the nearby village folk, victims of their countrymen's rapacity and ignorance.

"Do they have any idea who's guilty? he asked, as a slow chill seeped from his bones to his heart.

"Everyone's blamed somebody by now, but there's nothing concrete, just court rivalries. It's all such a turmoil. There's no heir, no viceroy. Foring has been trying, but he's only Senior Councilor, nothing but a nursemaid all his life. And I . . . I was banished . . . exiled."

"What?" Shan exploded out of his chair. Hanad smiled tiredly.

"I'm just a soldier, Shan, and not a particularly good one. There's been a lot of intrigue since you were established here. I got involved. And I got discovered. I'm running now, trying to reach Frii Pass before my time is up. I didn't think they'd catch up to me. There was so much happening in Losfyrriki that I doubted they would send the usual hunters. But now that the Losfyr's dead and I'm a known traitor, I can't count on that. I need to move fast."

"Then why here, Hanad? This is a two week's ride out of your way. I can't hide you here. If there are hunters, they will find you in no time. You have a month's grace period. How much is left?"

Hanad got up from her chair and stood at the fire, looking into the flames. She was silent for so long, he had time to really look at her and see the long, straight back, hips wide with childbearing and the muscular limbs. Her face, softened by firelight, made her look like the young warrior she had been when they had met twenty-five years ago in Losfyrriki, serving together. Her very youthfulness reminded him all the more poignantly of the passing of time, and their age. Finally, she answered.

"One week."

"In the name of God," he cried, "It's only a day's ride from the city to here. What happened, Hanad?"

"There was something I had to do before I left, and it took longer than I thought it would." She crossed the room to him and took his hand. "Shan, I came to you knowing I would lose valuable time, because I need your help."

He shook his head. "I'll do what I can, but, the hunters, Hanad. Plenty of warriors out of work now, fresh horses, food. My God," he whispered. "It'll take a miracle to save you."

She laughed a little. "Not a miracle. A little luck to add to my own, and a fresh horse if you can spare one. But I'm not asking for myself. I'll make it. I'm sure of it. It's Carem. She's in prison."

Shan sat back down in his chair. "You certainly are the bearer of bad tidings today," he said slowly. "Why?"

"Everyone in the city connected with me – and don't worry, you're as safe as a person can be these days – is suspected of, well, you don't need to know my crimes; my daughter naturally most of all. People know how close we are. They know that no cell would hold me. This way, they could be sure I would either be dead or out of the way – far away. But she's innocent, Shan. She knows nothing of this. I swear it. Perhaps she had plans of her own. I don't know. God knows Losfyrriki is boiling over with schemes and ambitions. I searched for her the moment I was sentenced, practically. Three weeks ago, I thought I still had time for that, until the Losfyr died. I didn't know where she was. I thought she was still at large. We don't exactly keep a close watch on one another, and I assumed she had been untouched.

I didn't want to leave before she knew of my banishment, and after making inquiries I discovered she had been arrested. They don't last long in the Losfyr's dungeon. Shan, I'm asking you to get her out, or if you can't do that, I just don't want it to be unknown where she is. If you could get word to someone you know, who can be trusted. I don't want her to disappear — to become another mystery."

Shan pressed the palms of his hands over his eyes. "All right," he said at last. "Now I know. And I'll do my best. But I can't promise anything. I can't leave the fortress and just jaunt into the city."

"Just so you knew, Shan," she replied quietly, her gaze unreadable. "That's all I wanted." Yet he felt a twinge of shame at his reluctant response to her plea. Shan looked away. "And about those two warriors I rode with, they're with me, but this is as far as they go. Their sentence was only lifelong service at Tung."

Shan cursed. "All they give me are outlaws and conspirators. I can't run a post with soldiers like that!" Hanad looked at him, and now he could see the questioning wonder in her eyes. Again he looked away uncomfortably. "It's different now, Hanad. That's all. We aren't kids playing war games anymore. Now, I'm running the games, and you . . ." You should be running from me, he thought. Grief and shame washed over him. "We're both too old," He said it very softly. "Don't you wonder what it's all for? You've borne four children, and only Carem is left now. God knows I don't even have a child. Not the way a woman has. What do we live for anymore?"

"I live," Hanad said quietly, "as I always have . . . without thinking, I know, but with self-doubt. I may be too old to be a warrior, Shan, but I am not too old to be human. I only wish that now I could have my children, but life isn't like that. So, I'm going to run like the devil is at my heels for Frie Pass. Frie and freedom, cry the outlaws! If I die at the hands of the hunters, then ballads will be written of me and my warrior's soul will be satisfied. If I live . . . well, I start all over again, Shan. Want to come?"

"I'll get you a horse," Shan said as he pushed back his chair and stood up. Shan stared at her in the dim room. "No," he said finally and walked out.

The night had gotten cloudy. The restive horse chomped his bit and pawed the courtyard floor. Clad in armor once again, broadshouldered now, Hanad sat on the horse easily, soothing him with voice and hand. Saddlebags bulged with food. She looked down at Shan. This time they were the only two in the courtyard. Their leavetaking was formal, strained. She knew then that their old friendship, seemingly so strong, had been breached by time and events, much like the old crumbling fortress around them. She grieved as he reached out his hand and clasped hers, briefly. Shan stepped back.

"Good luck."

"It's the only kind I have." She turned the horse and trotted through the gate. Shivering a little, he turned back and loped into the fortress. The nights were cold now in the desert. It wasn't until he was in his quarters that he remembered her response was the traditional warrior's reply. As he splashed cold water from the basin onto his face, he wondered if she really could still believe it.

by T. H. Anatos

Heroes' Gate

"... because any roll call of heroes must, of necessity, read like a rouges' gallery."

There is a place on the edge of Time,
Where heroes sit and drink their wine.
Men and women strong and bold,
All of them thousands and thousands years old.
This is the tavern called Heroes' Gate,
Where heroes set off to meet their fate.

There are stories here of songs and brawls,
Drinking bouts and drunken falls,
Dicing, gambling, extravagant lies,
Insults, punches, blackened eyes.
This is the tavern called Heroes' Gate,
Where heroes set off to meet their fate.

Cuchulainn straddles a stool at the bar,
Fionn watches him warily from afar
Where he stands, one eye on Dick's treasure chests,
The other on Boadica's breasts.
Kidd and Gawain are comparing notes,
Robin and Jesse roar over each other's jokes.
Nearby Anne and Mary sharpen their knives
And mutter over their choice in dives.
Beowulf and Deb come walking in after,
Both faces flushed, eyes dancing with laughter.
He pulls the rough homespun tucked in at her waist,
Her shirt at her throat gapes wide and unlaced.
Likewise Achilles and Patroclus feel no disgrace,
Their arms are entwined in a casual embrace.
Hypolita turns a jealous face;
Seeks out Athos for solace.

There is a place on the edge of Time,
Where heroes sit and drink their wine,
And fight and lust and so it goes,
For where heroes meet are no heroes.

by Judith Rose Felice

Ragnarok

Candle burns on oaken plank,
Sheepskin flaps in doorway.
Red coals darkly gleam on hearth,
And dim sleeper, ragg'd and sorry.

Who calls Odin from his rest?

Broken bulb hangs hagg'd, askew,
Toilet overflowing.
Window scummed in glassy glare,
Mold on old food growing.

Who calls Odin from his rest?

Throbbing 'neath the aching skull,
Mad fire leashed in power.
Thund'ring climbs to hurting pitch,
Crazed light leaps from the tower.

Who calls Odin from his rest?

And all the gods rise from their sleep,
A wolf gulps down the sun.
The golden horn cries bass despair,
And Ragnarok is done.

by A.C.E. King

Toys

A young lady with all her boys,
much like a child with all her toys.

After a while this one's no fun.
Now it's time for another one.

Bang! Bang! Smack it around.
There's always another to be found.

Smash! Crash! Another broken toy.
Time for a new one; jump for joy.

Thrown in the garbage left out in the rain.
Not to worry, toys feel no pain!

The toy is gone, another takes its place.
The child is a brat. It's seen in her face.

Boys and toys, often treated like dirt.
But unlike a toy, a boy feels the hurt.

The toy she had forgotten; she now wanted around.
But it was too late, it would never be found.

The girl cried a thousand tears.
Her heart was broken and drenched with fears.

Whatever she did, whatever she could say,
it was too late. The toy was lost away.

This is what happens to boys of today.
Caught in these times, lost in all ways.

by Bird

The ultimate weapon
Surpasses all others in its power.
It beckons, as well as repels.
It commands attention and
perfection.
All else is meaningless
as it utilizes its ability.
It weakens every thread
of resistance and rebellion.
Long,
Smooth,
Hard,
In command.
The _____, the downfall of all womankind.

by Santa Zaccheo



by Meg Adamski

i wish
just for once
i could write
something sad,
and caring,
and very beautiful
for you.

it would warble
like a songbird;
notes trembling
on the golden edge of dawn.

Or explode
in the molten glory
of the high-tide hey-day
in the noon-day sun.

Or sing down
the moon
through night's
silver-threaded skies.

yet here i sit,
another stilled tongue
in an ocean of silence;
but always here.

by Sue Jones

You are what gives me life;
What holds me together.
You are the essence of it all.
You are what cheers me up,
what holds me close,
when tears begin to fall.
You are my rescuer
when I'm drowning
in the sea of life.

At the edge of a mountain,
beyond its edge
a deep and fiery death,
you grab my hand
when I'm about to fall.
You are the essence of it all.
You are what gives me hope
when I'm lost and can't get out.
You are the light
at the end of a long dark road.
You are what gives me
confidence and reassures
me to stand tall.
You are the essence of it all.

You are what restores
my faith
when I've just about given up.
You are the one who freed me
from behind that dreaded wall.
My friend,
You are the essence of it all.

by Jane Stanka



by Debbi Zegel

Of apples there are many kinds
And I will tell you some.
They have skins instead of rinds.
In French their name is pomme.

Ladies, they are little
And delicate and sweet.
When served with ladyfingers
Lady apples make a treat.

Crabs are best when left alone
Hanging on a tree
Small and tart and sour
With taste they disagree.

Delicious apples bring delight
When served with wine and cheese
And even when they're by themselves
Delicious apples please.

Macs are the kind of apples
That make your mouth go crunch.
They are so good for eating
I once ate six for lunch.

Of Rome and Cortland there are so many
Yet in fact these are but few
Of the kind of cooking apples
That go into apple stew.

Not all apples need be red.
Some prefer them green instead.
Granny Smith and Golden Yellow
Taste quite good in apple jello.
Winesaps also come in handy
When preparing apple brandy.

Of apple types and apple kinds
And apple trees, I know no more.
And as I close this apple poem,
Remember not to eat the core.

by Amy Weitzner

The Master Wen

Ling Po counts the hours
on her fingers,
half asleep in the silent room
where the moonlight spins
the shadows into Time.

In her dream the white
rose beside the teacups
glistens with tea-smoke,
and the reeds from the river
are woven into prayer mats.
There is nothing to do
but wait for her husband
to bring fish home from the harbor.
She smiles in the darkness
at his coming.

Had there been more time
there is no telling
what the painter, Master Wen,
could have told.

by Alan Steinberg



by Debbi Zegel

But that was because we were young I could talk to you and tell you of my dreams. Sitting up in the loft, we shared so many laughs, and so many tears. But that was because I was eight and you were ten.

We used to play "truth or dare" up in that old hayloft. I would dare you to jump from the top step of the rickety ladder, and I always flinched as you stepped off that rung to land in the misty haypile below. I worried about you. But you did your share of worrying, too, for you knew I could never turn down a dare. You dared me to swing from the old rope outside the door of the barn. When the rope frayed and broke, and I crashed to the ground, you were by my side instantly, pleading for my forgiveness, and promising never to ask me to do something I didn't want to do again. I hated you until I saw the tears trailing down your face. You were more scared than I was, weren't you? But that's because I was ten and you were twelve.

When I was thirteen, I stopped putting my hair in pigtails, but we were still young. Our loft games became battles to prove who was more mature. You knew I still could not refuse a dare, so you dared the ultimate; you dared me to kiss you. I was scared, but you looked so proud of yourself for "beating" me. So I accepted your challenge. But that's because we were so young.

Soon our loft games turned to sharing games. You shared with me your knowledge and experience. But you never asked me to do anything I didn't want to do. Maybe that's because you were still afraid of yourself.

You left for college the day I turned sixteen. I didn't feel very young then. My insides hurt with the most adult pain I've ever felt. I knew that when you came home for Christmas, playing childish truth or dare games would not be enough for you, and I was right. We spent a week in our loft, just talking, because I was sixteen, and you were a man. But we were both so very young.

Two years later, I went off to school as well. I felt so old, because it is only old people who lose track of their friends. I met someone there who reminded me of you. He said he never wanted to dare me to do anything I didn't want to do. But that was because we were so young. No, not young as individuals, but young as a pair.

Is that what happened between you and I? Did we get too old together, or were we just not enough old to realize how young we really were?

If that is the case, then please accept my dare. Please call me please I dare you. We really are so young.

by Tara Scanlon

Uncertain Cloud

Standing on the shoreline,
The man with a million faces
Calls to me.
But the water feels
Cold and unfamiliar,
So I retreat.

He appears in a field,
Bursting forth from the daisies
With a glint in his eyes.
Pointing upward, he hints of
The Unknown.
But feeling unsure and insignificant,
I run
Leaving crushed flowers in my wake.

Like an uncertain cloud
I drift about
Sometimes evading his questioning glances
But never forgetting his presence.

by Jennifer Nash

Dateline: Rhinebeck

(RHINEBECK) — Police today report sightings of what they describe as a hideous flame/smog breathing creature schlepping around in the Hudson River near the town of Rhinebeck.

The sightings reportedly started about a week ago according to police and area residents. A conflicting report comes from Howard, the "Town Drunk", who claims that the monster has been around for years, although he admits that it used to have "four legs, a trunk and a pinkish pallor, and it always used to hang around the Main Street area."

Howard could not explain the creature's sudden affinity for water.

In an attempt to dispel the rumors of the so-called "Hudson River Monster" yesterday, the Mayor of Rhinebeck was quoted as saying "There is no such thing as this so-called 'Hudson River Monster', and to prove it, I'm gonna go for a swim in the river myself."

Town elections will be held in two days to replace the recently missing mayor following his as yet unexplained disappearance late yesterday.

He was reportedly last seen by two fishermen currently being treated in St. Francis Hospital in Poughkeepsie for injuries incurred after a boating accident on the Hudson River near Rhinebeck last evening.

The men wish to remain unidentified.

One of the fishermen, Elgin Stern, 53, of Rhinebeck, said that he saw the former mayor step into the river at approximately 5:37pm yesterday, swim around casually for a while, then scream "AAAAUUUUUGH!" before disappearing suddenly beneath the surface of the river.

"Damnedest thing I ever saw," Stern said as he turned a pleasing shade of blue and vanished.

"Damnedest thing I ever saw," said Stern's friend, Robert Donahue, 51, of Great Bottleneck, New Jersey. "Elgin usually turns a rather attractive red before he vanishes."

by Steve Eastwood

The Break Up

Oh the love spat
Heavenly couple now separate

She said it was he
He said it was she
Independence is so lonely
Their honor will not allow amends

Impossible to return
Too bad
Sad story

Omniscient is the observer
Vector is the pride
Eternal scar
Remember?

Anonymous

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