

Marist College  
Literary Arts Society  
Presents  
**The Mosaic**



**Brain Matter**

Issue 2

Spring Semester

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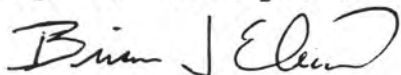
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# BRAIN MATTER

Welcome to the second installment of the Literary Art Society's publication, the Mosaic. I would like to thank all of the contributors to last semesters issue, and hope that you will continue to send us material. With your help, we can make this publication better for students and faculty alike.

Starting with the next issue, which will be out in about a month, we will be publishing material for our faculty as well as students. The English dept. has helped us a great deal, and we would like to say thank you to them. This magazine is for the campus, and without student and faculty help, we wouldn't be where we are today.

Again, thank you for your support.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brian J. Elias". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Brian J. Elias, President

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Table of Contents

CLUELESS by Scott Wyman.....p1

CHANGED MIND OF LOVE by Kevin O'Neill.....p2

F-STOP by Trisha D. Wray.....p2

DREAM VISION by Mike Pappagallo.....p3

RED TONIGHT by Cathleen O'Brein.....p4

THE RAPE by Andrea Murphy.....p5

STAR TREK: A PARODY by Bryan M. Walko.....p5

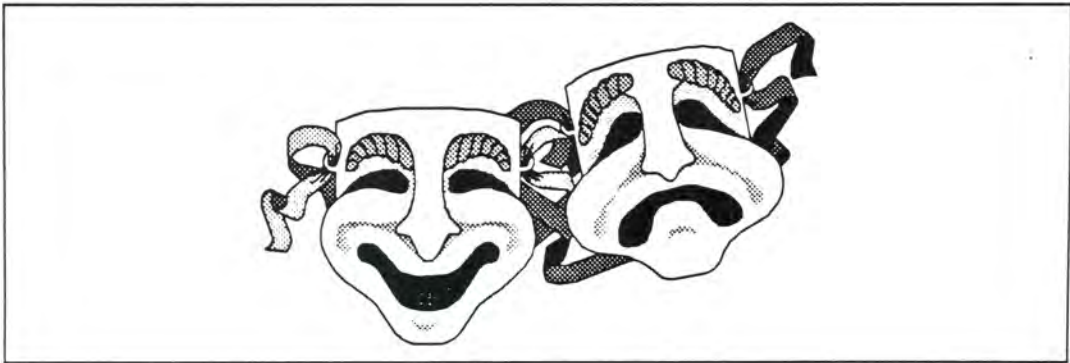
SONG OF MONOTONY by Tanya Andrasko.....p16

UNTITLED by Tom Becker.....p17

A BEGINNING by Jason Crandall.....p18

THE PASSENGER by Mark Francisco.....p20

THE LONGEST ROAD by Brian J. Elias.....p26





CLUELESS

CAUSE i HAVEN'T GOT a CLUE, HAVEN'T GOT a CLUE  
NOTHING IS THE WAY i WANT IT TO BE,  
AND NO CHANGE WILL EVER COME TO ME,  
CAUSE I HAVEN'T GOT a CLUE, HAVEN'T GOT a CLUE  
IT SEEMS i'LL NEVER SAY JUST WHAT i WANT TO SAY,  
FOR i WILL SIT AND JUST STAY THIS WAY,  
CAUSE i HAVEN'T GOT a CLUE, HAVEN'T GOT a CLUE  
MAYBE SOMEDAY i'LL ASK MYSELF EXACTLY WHY,  
BUT REPLY MAY BE a SIMPLE SIGH,  
CAUSE i HAVEN'T GOT a CLUE, HAVEN'T GOT a CLUE  
SENSE? YEA, LIFE MAKES LITTLE OF IT,  
TENSE? YEA, LIFE MAKES LOADS OF IT,  
CAUSE i HAVEN'T GOT a CLUE, HAVEN'T GOT a CLUE  
AND i OBVIOUSLY DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO,  
WHEN IT COMES TO ME SO DON'T ASK ABOUT YOU,  
CAUSE i HAVEN'T GOT a CLUE, HAVEN'T GOT a CLUE  
OUT OF TOUCH WITH YOUR REALITY?,  
MAYBE...BUT THAT'S JUST THE WAY i SEE,  
CAUSE i STILL HAVEN'T GOT a CLUE, STILL HAVEN'T GOT a CLUE

-- SCOTT WYMAN

Changed Mind Of Love  
by Kevin O'Neill

Oh, I drive you to your gate with your hollow face  
Midnight bells were chiming, no one was deciding  
Trail of indecision led, Oh across your head  
The visions shed were lost instead  
And illusions blew on bye  
Oh, to converse with you brings me impression too  
Mighty hymns are swimming, no ones winning  
Tail of two sides disagreed  
The visions shed were lost instead  
And illusions blew on bye  
Oh, to see you go has confusion bows  
Mind is whispering, time is tinkering  
Trail of indecision led, Oh across your head  
The visions shed were lost instead  
And illusions blew on bye  
-Good bye-

F-Stop  
by Trisha D. Wray

The flash of the cameras  
The blue light that flickers  
For a moment, but the end  
Results last for a lifetime

The flash of the camera  
Like the beat of my heart  
It lingers only to stop  
At an unexpected moment

The flash of the camera  
Bright lights, burning lights



Sting in my eyes until they burn  
And begin to tear, just as they do  
When you leave me.

Dream Vison

by Mike Pappagallo

In my dreams you walk dripping from the sea-journey on the  
highway across America in tears to the doors of my cottage in the  
"Western night"

And I wait for you.

And in my dreams you come with open arms, for though your heart  
is sad, it is warm and inviting

And I embrace you.

And in my dreams you sing to me, a song that I, myself wrote to  
you, my dear. And you remember the words and melody, as your  
voice sounds like heaven to my ears.

And I hum along.

And in my dreams we drink the wine 'till the bottle's buttocks is  
dry and we cry and laugh and reminiscence. I tell you that I  
love you and I always have.

And I hold your hand.

And in my dreams we set upon the record player, a song we did so  
love when we were young. And we drift along the floor in time.

And I hold you close.

And in my dreams I kiss your lips and feel the warmth of your  
body. And my hands caresses the curvature of your hip as we  
still move in time.

And I continue to hold you.

And in my dreams you push me away, as you did that night when we  
were young. And you turn to me with teary eyes as you slap my  
pentinent face.

And I apologize.

And in my dreams you walk away and slam the door on your way out.  
My eyes again are teary as I rush to the door to stop you. Too  
late once more.

And I weep.

And in my dreams I open the door and am blown back by the cold  
wind, which brings with it the dark clouds that loom overhead.

And I look for you.

And in my dreams I see you there among the trees. I see there  
too another, whose face is more striking than mine and whose body  
is more sinewy.

And I hold out my hand for you.

And in my dreams you turn away and leave with him in the dark,  
stormy night. And you never look back.

And again I wait for you.

And my own guilt brings me to handle the pistol in my closet.  
And I caress the cool steel between my fingers as I raise the gun  
to my head.

And again I weep.

And my memories of you grow stronger as I sit, and the tears flow  
like rivers down my cheeks as I picture you walking back across  
the America toward another unending sea-journey...with him.

And I pull the trigger'.

RED TONIGHT

by Cathleen O'Brien

Red tonight;  
    too red  
for lights  
    for thought  
or the poetry  
    you squeal  
during the  
    Ceremony  
in the room.  
    By the scorched  
hot moon  
    too red,  
Too soon,  
    Fleshy red lunacy  
In the flashy-robed  
    sky,  
                    Together', they fly.

**The Rape**

by Andrea Murphy

A stinger to a rose  
just beyond a pristine blossom,  
sweet honey on the bee's brain  
as he gather's her pollen.

Perennial rose is from a bulb  
She grows a thick, thorned stem,  
But each petal's pride is spread  
for the bee again.

She can't deny her graces  
as a creature of creation  
in preservation and defense of  
pollination penetration.

Its the inevitable curse  
for a pure and gentle rose  
and blood covers her maligned petals  
in her proud pose.

**STAR TREK: The Next Generation**

**"Hamster Dreams and Stranger Things..."**

A Parody by Bryan Walko

Original Star Trek concept by Gene Roddenberry

Setting: Picard's Ready Room, just outside the bridge.

[Picard is using his desk viewscreen to talk to someone.

The "Starfleet Command" screen pops on, and then we see  
a rather important looking Starfleet Admiral.]

Admiral: Good evening captain Picard.

Picard: Good evening Admiral Gambolputty de von Ausfern-schplenden-schlitter-crasscrenbon-fried-digger-dingle-dangle-dongle-dungle-burstein-von-knacker-thrasher-apple-banger-horowitz-ticolensic-grander-knotty-spelltinkle-grandlich-grumblemeyer-spelterwasser-kurstlich-himbleeisen-bahnwagen-gutenabend-bitte-ein-nurnburger-bratwustle-gerspurtent-mitz-weinache-luber-hundsfut-gumberaber-shonendanker-kalbsfleisch-mittler-aucher von Hautkopft of Ulm.

Admiral: Of course, you may call me John.

Picard: Of course.

Admiral: Now Picard, I want to warn you. I have heard that things are getting pretty silly there on the Enterprise and, if I hear anymore of this nonsense, I will personally come to your ship and decommission her.

Picard: I am sorry sir. But we were infected with one of those rare space diseases that makes everybody fall into a drunken stupor. It is protocol that this disease hits the Enterprise every 20 e rs.

Admiral: Understood. You know, it must be a welcome change after all those rapid-aging diseases.

Picard: Yes, it is. If I got any older, all of my hair would fall out and even Bev wouldn't sleep with me.

Admiral: Funny, in your Starfleet bio-file under hair, it says "none". Anyway. I would like to commend you on your defeat of the Vicious Chicken of Beta 5. I would like

you to promote the crewmember that you believe was most important in vanquishing the vile Chicken-Beast.

Picard: Well Admiral, due to extreme coincidence and a particularly indecisive writer, my entire bridge phasered the beast simultaneously.

Admiral: Hmm... That is a problem. Well you can only promote one, so you decide Picard. Admiral Gambolputty de von Ausfern-schplenden-schlitter-crasscrenbon-fried-digger-dingle-dangle-dongle-dungle-burstein-von-knacker-thrasher-apple-banger-horowitz-ticolensic-grander-knotty-spelltinkle-grandlich-grumblemeyer-spelterwasser-kurstlich-himbleeisen-bahnwagen-gutenabend-bitte-ein-nurnburger-bratwustle-gerspurtent-mitz-weinache-luber-hundsfut-gumberaber-shonendanker-kalbsfleisch-mittler-aucher von Hautkopft of Ulm signing out.

[The viewscreen pulls back to reveal that the Admiral was wearing the standard tunic, with a short pink tutu and ballet slippers. He pirouettes into the sunset.]

[Begin Star Trek Theme]

Picard: Space, the final frontier... These are the voyages of the starship Enterprise... Its continuing mission, to explore strange new worlds... To seek out new life and new civilizations... To boldly go where no one has gone before...

[crescendo of the theme]

Picard: Thank God! So often in these stupid parodies, I manage to make a total fool of myself in the opening credits...

[Picard suddenly realizes the microphone is still on]

Picard: Shit.

[Opening titles end, with the Enterprise priming up for Warp speed. Rather than disappearing in a flash of light, it crashes into the background scenery, leaving an enormous splat mark.]

[Picard enters the bridge, skipping along and whistling "Rule Britannia."]

Bridge: Picard! [in the familiar Cheers style]

Picard: At ease.

Riker: Captain, I'm glad could make it to the bridge in time for shuffleboard. [Sighs] I miss not being able to stick Wesley's head into the photon torpedo tubes. [picking up shuffleboard stick] I hope he shows up at the end of this episode to save us all. Especially because of my trombone recital.

Picard: Oh, yes Number One. [picks up shuffleboard stick] I should tell you that I have been notified that I have to... Mow the lawn in the holodeck. The Admiral said the grass was getting too high. Sorry I can't make it.

Riker: Captain... I see no reason why I couldn't move my recital to the holodeck.

Picard: Oh. [looks extremely irritated] That won't be necessary.

Riker: No, I insist!

Troi: Oh, please Captain, the lawnmower will drown out... er

harmonize so well with the trombone playing.

Picard: [Realizing that the welfare of many outweigh the welfare of a few, and then thinking that he doesn't give a damn about the welfare of the many stuff...]  
No, it is out of the question. The lawnmower is a secret Romulan prototype. It is a top secret mission. The lawnmower gives off dangerous radiation that can only be withstood by French/English Starfleet Captains. Captain Pierre LePoop-Smithe of the HMS London will be the only one joining me.

Troi: Captain, I sense that you will be in great danger if you and I ever meet alone in the turbolift.

[Picard glides the shuffleboard puck a bit too far over the 50 point line.]

Riker: Yes! I win!

Picard: Number One, who commands this vessel?

Riker: [Nudges puck into the 50 point area] Oh, my mistake, it looks like you've won again. For the four hundred and ninety-third time in a row.

Picard: Enough of this. I have been asked to promote one of you for the Chicken of Beta 5 incident. I will have to choose one of you within the next two hours.

Yar: Sir, may I remind you that I was the one who tried to push Wesley into the path of the Chicken.

Picard: Yes, your actions have been noted. I...

[A series of beeps signals that the bridge is being paged.]

Guinan: [Over intercom] Tasha, I have this feeling that you do not belong in this universe.

Yar: Damn. I hate when this happens.

[Tasha disappears in a puff of smoke.]

Picard: I will make my decision shortly.

[Riker, Data, Worf and Troi all turn to Picard and glare.]

Picard: But right now, I must use the bathroom. Number One, you are in charge.

[Picard enters the turbolift.]

Riker: Data, I give the bridge to you.

[Riker follows into the turbolift and stands next to Picard.]

Riker: Er, I... have to use the bathroom too. Did you notice how I displayed extreme valor on Beta 5?

Data: [Realizing what Riker is doing] Lieutenant Worf, I place you in command of the bridge.

[Data follows into the turbolift and stands near Riker and Picard.]

Worf: [Running into the turbolift] Counselor Troi, you have the bridge!

Troi: [Meeting Worf at the turbolift and fighting to get through the door] Ensign... Um, whatever your name is, you have the bridge!



[The turbolift doors close with all the bridge crew shouting their accomplishments at Picard. The Ensign, at the helm control opposite of Data's , is now the only person on the bridge.]

Ensign: Gee, now I command the Enterprise!

[On the viewscreen, the stars start to shake and wiggle. A Romulan ship decloaks. Immediately, the computer announces that the Enterprise is being hailed.]

Computer: [In Worf's voice] This is Worf. The regular bridge crew is not here right now, but if you leave your Name, empire, and Ship Identification number...

Ensign: No! Computer open channel.

Computer: [In regular voice] Channel opened.

Ensign: Thank you.

Computer: [In Worf's voice] You're welcome. [Changes voice to regular style] I mean... You're welcome.

[A Romulan captain appears on the screen. He has a grin on his face. He is wearing a green felt vest reminiscent to "Robin Hood" and a pink top hat with a trick arrow going through the hat. All the other Romulans, except for one standing at his side, are jumping up and down, pretending to be monkeys.]

Loony: This is Captain Loony of the Romulan vessel "There's a Tiger Behind You."

Ensign: "There's a Tiger Behind You"?!?!

Loony: [Looking around frantically] Where?! Where?!

[Realizes his mistake] Oh, sorry... I thought you meant... never mind.

Ensign: This is Ensign...mmm...Ensign... Well, I've forgotten my name for now, but it's not important. This is an Ensign on the Federation starship Enterprise. Why have you entered Federation space?

Loony: Hm...Oh! Why have we entered Federation space? [whispers to the Romulan at his side. Suddenly, he remembers] We have brought a gift.

Ensign: What kind of gift?

Loony: [Whispers to the same Romulan] We believe you call it... [Whispers again] A Matter/Antimatter bomb.

Ensign: If I take it, it won't blow up over here will it?

Loony: [Pretends to look very surprised to the question] Oh no! Never! We would not do something evil and devious like that! No! [All the Romulans in the background start singing, rather off tune, the words "Meryl Streep" while doing jumping-jacks.]

Ensign: Well..... Alright.

[The Enterprise's shields drop, and a large, dangerous looking contraption beams next to the captain's vacant chair.]

[SCENE 2]

[Camera shot of the Enterprise sailing through space.]

Picard: Captain's Log, stardate 4136.33 repeat. I decided to give the promotion to Tasha Yar, posthumously. She was

the only person on the bridge...besides Ensign...what's his name...who didn't follow me to the urinal. This is not to say I didn't appreciate what Dianna did...but that's for my personal log. I was going to award the Ensign but he is going to die in only three pages.

[Shot of bridge. All are present except Dianna and Picard.]

Riker: [Staring into space, a frequent habit for him.]  
Computer, locate Counselor Troi.

Computer: Counselor Troi is located torpedo tube 5.

Riker: Just what the hell is going on?!?!

Data: [Turning to Riker] I believe Captain Picard ordered Dianna to clean the photon torpedo tubes.

[Shot of a ragged Dianna in a small crawlway. She is wearing large floppy yellow rubber gloves, to keep her skin soft, and a miners helmet with a light on the front. She is busy scrubbing the side of the wall with a Brillo pad.]

[Meanwhile, back at the bridge...]

Ensign: Sir! I'm picking up a unidentified spacecraft on the scanners.

Riker: Data, can you identify it?

Data: Sir, it is a private craft named "The Blue Triangle".

[The unidentified ship appears on the viewscreen.]

Riker: [Looking at the viewscreen] My god! It's blue...and it's shaped like a triangle!

Picard: [Just entering from his office] Thank you for your brilliant insight Number One.

Riker: Thank you sir.

Picard: [Under his breath] Stupid git.

Worf: The ship is hailing us captain.

Picard: On screen.

[On the screen is a large filing cabinet.]

Picard: [Speaking towards the screen] I am Captain Jean-Luc Picard of the starship Enterprise. [He looks at the screen as there is no response.] Hello?

Cabinet: Hello?

Picard: Hello. This is Captain Jean-Luc Picard. To whom am I speaking?

Cabinet: I am Brian Wobble.

Picard: Er...[Looking puzzled] Why am I looking at a filing cabinet?

Cabinet: I'm hiding from the evil Spam empire! If I disguise myself as a filing cabinet, they won't find me!

Picard: Ah yes, quite right.

Riker: Sir, have you noticed his ship is blue and it is shaped like a triangle?

Picard: Very good Number One. I am proud of you.

Riker: Don't I get a gold star?

Picard: No, not now.

Riker: I wanna gold star!

Picard: [Turning to Data] Data...

[Data gets up and takes out a small sheet of paper. He peels off a gold star and pastes it on Riker's chest.]

Riker: I like stickers!

Worf: Sir, there is an incoming message from the Admiral.

Picard: On screen.

[The screen splits in half, one side is the cabinet, AKA Brian Wobble, and the other side is the Admiral.]

Picard: The RCA split screen TV features a 47 function wireless remote...

Admiral: Picard! I told you not to act silly! I'm warning you...

Bridge: Awwww!

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE

**Song of Monotony**

by Tanya Andrasko

Song of Monotony  
Have no fear  
Do not linger behind so  
Your shadow is lazy  
And reveals your  
Hiding place  
What gossip do you  
Bury in your bag of tricks?  
What to tell  
    Of Hazard?  
    Spontaneity?  
    Youth?  
Chain me not with your  
Nine-to-five schedules  
And mortgage payments  
I can do without.  
You can try your best  
To make me a disiple  
You may succeed in  
Taking me prisoner  
But I have friends  
On the outside and  
The are shrewd.  
You will never find the file  
In the birthday cake the bring  
And You'll miss me when I'm gone.

In a tender circle  
soft lines  
smooth curves  
grow the hopes of a few  
bound by a thought  
together  
Many weather the brimstone  
Sunshine smiles must travel  
Cold shattering truth  
Pain seems so strong  
Fall back on the circle  
Where true souls belong  
-Tom Becker

## A BEGINNING

by Jason Crandall

A light patter of rain echoed through the valley, as two boots jumped down from the worn stirrups of a middle aged horse into a shallow puddle. If you looked up you'd see that the boots belonged to a beautiful young woman whose body was mostly shrouded by a heavy looking armour. An overflowing backpack, stained dark brown by the rain, hung from her cramped right shoulder. A few items, such as battered iron lantern, a small cracked mirror, and a few steel spikes spilled out as she laid it upon the ground. With the heavy burden gone, she proceeded to unbuckle her belt from which two swords were attached and laid it on top of her pack, next to her horse. She stood tall and repositioned her black leather hat so that some of her golden hair rested upon her shoulders.

Altea's surroundings were bleak, nothing but fog could be seen, and the mud they'd been slogging through for hours to get this godforsaken forest, that now only stood a few dozen feet ahead of her. The weather, Altea thought, it's always the damn weather! Altea had been on a quest to free a great force of good for a few weeks now and ever since the beginning every force imaginable stood to see her fail. The weather was the only thing that seemed to be the only thing on her side, but now even that has turned against her, that she needed help, and the wood elves seemed to be the best possible candidates. Of course, this would require some massive protocol skills, since the elves hated outsiders.

"I don't like this. The wood elves aren't going to take kindly to us trespassing, even if one of us is half elf," a feminine voice stated behind her.

With those words, Altea reached back to feel the slight point at the top of the right ear that confirmed what she was. She then turned around to face her four good friends, the ones that had stuck with her in her darkest of hours. They were an unlikely band of companions, perhaps



the most unlikely Altea thought she would have ended up with. But they were better than any of the likely ones she ever could have found.

"I don't intend on trespassing, Kalia, in fact, I was planning on being invited in," Altea responded.

"What!?" What a hot head Kalia was; Altea could not remember one time when she didn't get excited over something, or a time when she didn't get mad when something over something that didn't go her way. However, she did seem to take her anger out in battle which made her a vicious fighter.

"Do you expect those elves to let us just come in and do whatever we want?!" Kalia retorted in a sardonic tone.

"Oh! You mean we ought to just charge on in, weapons flashing and all, and demand their help? Where'd you leave your brain, woman!" a squat gnome named Tori stated with just a bit of satire.

Oh, those two were always fighting. Tori, a smaller than small gnome alchemist who was a scaredy cat by nature, but stood by you in a fight, was always trying to belittle Kalia's intelligence. In return, Kalia always made smart remarks that Tori could sometimes beat, but either way, it was a close match.

"Gee, Tori, maybe I left it in your stomach. Shall I cut it up and see?" Kalia inquired gesturing to her sword.

"As if you could, woman, let's see you try!" With Tori standing at 3 feet 2" and Kalia at 6 feet 1", their confrontations were comical and fun to watch, but Altea had no time for it.

"Tori, Kalia. Stop it right now. We have more serious matters on our hands. Phenien, how well do you know these people? Will they listen to us?" Altea asked her third companion.

"I don't know. They're liable to fill us full of arrows if we're not careful. But as for listening..." Phenien, a wandering fighter who knew most of the continent and the people who lived in it, let his sentence run off to show them how much he knew.

"I don't think they'll be very hostile once we tell them what we're offering, remembering their war with the goblins has hurt them a lot and our quest's success means salvation from that war." Morlicks, a battle worn soldier

whose advice made a big difference, sometimes, supported Altea's move. His attitude and help was always a comfort to Altea.

"ahhhhhhhhhhhhh!" Tori yelled. All heads turned on Tori's horse to see him hanging upside down with his pants leg caught somehow in his stirup. He must have been trying to get off his horse, Altea thought. If Tori wasn't the worst horseman in the world, then he wasn't too far off.

"Imbecile, don't you know that gnomes can't ride horses." Kalia smirked.

"Silence woman! I..." Tori ordered and was about to continue when a vial from his red cloak's pocket fell out and hit a rock on the ground. It shattered and a small explosion, from the liquid inside, blew right under Tori's horse, frightening the beast very badly. The animal then shot off into the woods like lightning.

"AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!" Tori screamed as the horse, and its unwilling rider, disappeared into the forest.

"Kern." Kalia swore under her breath and whacked her horse into a gallop, following Tori into the woods.

"Well," Phenien said to Altea and Morlicks, "someone has to save the little guy." With that, they all charged in after Kalia.

### **THE PASSENGER**

by Mark Francisco

"Well, at least it was a nice walk through the woods," Barry Ormond said quietly as he walked up to his car. It was mid-November and the grocery store manager was enjoying a Saturday of deer hunting. Unfortunately, he didn't have much luck and didn't see a deer the entire day. Barry looked around at the darkening sky and thought of the hour-long car trip back home. "Claire is really going to kill me for

staying out this late. I hope I make it back by dinner time or else she'll be made at me all weekend," Barry mumbled and quickly stowed his hunting gear in the back of the car. After finishing off the last few gulps of coffee stored in his thermos Barry started down the road, leaving the desolate autumn woods behind him.

The manager flipped the stereo to the "oldies" station, as he hated to drive in quiet. In fact, Barry hated silence in general. It was always so quiet--except for hunting which was different, of course. "Yesterday" by the Beatles was playing. It was a nice melancholy song, Barry thought--though the radio stations overplayed it. Fond memories surfaced in Barry's ponderings of the day it was first released. "Was it '65 or '66?" he asked himself, "must be 1965, the year I met Mrs. Ormond." That was twenty-nine years and forty pounds ago. Barry looked down at his ever-widened stomach and sighed. Claire was always trying to get him to exercise but he never seemed to find the time or the inclination. "Maybe that'll be my New Year's Resolution," Barry smiled at the thought, knowing full well that he would procrastinate for at least another year.

Wait! Was that a hitchhiker? Barry looked back over his shoulder and saw nothing. For a second I could have sworn there was someone standing beside the road. Oh well, he thought, shrugging his shoulders. Barry's thoughts drifted to that of the upcoming Thanksgiving and he fell back into his usually habit of talking to himself. "Thanksgiving is coming again already. I must talk to Claire about making preparations. To bad we have to go to Chicago this year and have the holiday with her parents. She doesn't seem to notice that the nice quiet Thanksgiving we have at home with Pa are much better. And we don't have to travel all the way out to Chicago when we can stay in Vermont."

Suddenly, the car's headlights washed over a figure walking on the shoulder of the road. With the snow flurries Barry didn't notice the man until he was along side the car. Barry glanced in the rear-view mirror and saw the man falling behind rapidly as the car sped through the frigid twilight. "I hope he's okay," Barry murmured with concern, "It didn't look like he was dressed very warmly."

Barry looked at the digital clock set in the dash and cringed at the time: it was half-past five. The sky was pitch

black outside of the speeding car. "Damn, I think I may be a little late," the manager said with reluctance. "It isn't as if I intentionally stayed overlong in the woods. I mean, who could have known I would have found those fresh tracks right then and follow them for two miles through the woods? It was simply a minor oversight that I'm late. Yeah, that's it, Claire." Barry continued to revise the story he was going to tell his wife and the minutes continued to slip by.

It was fifteen minutes later when he had a workable piece of fabricated truth to relate to his wife concerning his tardiness. It was also at that time when his headlights picked up a lonely figure standing on a particularly straight stretch of rural highway. "Another hitchhiker?" Barry didn't usually stop for hitchhikers but this one looked a bit underdressed for the cold autumn winds that blew down from the north. He had a chance to pull over to the side this time, and did so, slightly ahead of the pedestrian.

The figure walked slowly up to the passenger's side window and tapped on the glass. Barry obliged him by rolling down the car window. "What's seems to be the problem?" asked Barry. An icy draft blew in from the open window, chilling the motorist.

"I, ah, had some car trouble. Can you take me to a gas station or something nearby?" the stranger asked calmly.

"Sure, hop in," Barry replied and released the auto-lock button to the appropriate door. The stranger swung open the door and slid into the passenger's seat. With a quick close of the door and when the window was rolled up, Barry returned to his trip down the road.

Barry studied his new passenger thoroughly. The man was young, in his late twenties. He had a certain yuppie look about him: Short dark hair, handsome features, and wire-rimmed glasses. His dress was that of slacks, dress shirt, and tie. He wore no coat as protection from the elements but, strangely, the man didn't seem to mind. "No coat?" Barry asked as a way to break the deafening silence.

"I seem to have forgotten it," the man replied without taking his eyes off of the road in front of the car.

"I'm Barry Ormond," said the manager as he extended a hand in the direction of his passenger. The stranger looked at it for a few seconds before gripping it with his own right hand, "My name is Keith Lane." Keith's hand felt cold to the touch

and it was rather unpleasant to hold. Must have really been cold out there, thought Barry.

"So what do you do for a living, Keith?" asked Barry as both sets of eyes returned to the seemingly endless road ahead of them. Barry began to suspect that his passenger was a very reluctant conversationalist.

"I used to be an investment counselor."

"Used to be? What do you do now?" persisted Barry, wanting to know more about Keith, the stranger without a winter coat.

"I'm helping an old friend out, currently. Doing some odd jobs," replied Keith Lane as his blue-gray eyes swept over to study Barry.

"I see. So where are you from?"

"Manchester."

"Where were you born?"

"Boston."

"Do any hunting?"

"No."

"Ever go skiing?"

"Occasionally. I don't get much chance to do any lately, however."

"I do some myself. They say it should be a good winter for it with all the snow they're predicting." Keith did not respond. Instead, he resumed watching the road.

To Barry this seemed like a very uncooperative passenger. The manager thought it was kind of rude to be so anti-social at a time like this. Keith Lane seemed only intent at gazing out the windshield at the road sweeping under the hood of the car. Well, I suppose not all people are as talkative and outgoing as me, speculated Barry. He broke the silence again twenty minutes later, "There's a gas station a few miles up here on the right, you should be able to call someone there and get a ride down to Manchester." Keith nodded silently at that.

The car passed on from the rural highway to the urban outskirts of Barry's hometown. Only a few more minutes and he'd be home, a little late--but intact.

"Look out for that kid!" Keith's yell ripped Barry's mind back to reality. A child in a red snowsuit almost seemed to materialize right in front of the car. Barry croaked in horror as he lurched on the steering wheel. The car swerved

to the opposite side of the road, crashing through the child's plastic sled. Barry nearly rose out of his seat to put his entire weight on the brake pedal. The car gripped the road and skidded to a stop, twisting around so that it faced the wrong way. Barry's seat belt flew up and nearly choked him as he was thrown forward by the sudden stop.

Suddenly, he was sitting back into his seat. His heart was beating so hard it felt like someone was pounding on his chest with a hammer. Silence surrounded him as Barry realized, just then, what had happened. The man quickly removed his seatbelt and exploded from the car, his eyes scanning the road.

Relief overtook him as he gazed upon a small girl in a red snowsuit sitting in the road, crying but apparently unharmed. He rushed over to her and gently lifted the tiny child from the pavement. She was perhaps six or seven years old and she had tears streaming down her face. She was so small, so innocent, so defenseless. "I'm sorry, are you all right?" Barry asked with concern. The child continued to sob.

"Lucy! Lucy! Oh, my God, Lucy!" screamed a woman's voice from across the road. The source of the voice was a middle-aged woman running in hysterics toward him. She arrived a few seconds later and immediately took hold of the girl, "Are you all right, sweetie?"

"I'm sorry. She seemed to appear out of nowhere. I don't think I hit her, just the sled. She seems to be okay," Barry said in a rush. Everyone was still shaken by the near-miss.

"I've told her not to play in the road over and over," the woman said a little more calmly now, as she hugged her little girl, "Maybe she will listen to me, now."

"I'm so sorry," Barry said again, inhaling deeply.

"That's all right," replied the mother, "I should've been keeping a closer eye on her."

"It's a miracle I didn't hit her."

Mother and daughter were both smiling now as the mother said, "We have to take miracles as they come." They turned and headed toward their house, "Please, drive safely."

Barry sighed as he watched the pair walk up to the house and suddenly remembered that he had to get home, too. The motorist turned back to the car and saw Keith standing beside it with a faint smile on his face, "Nice reflexes, Barry."

Barry nodded and said, "Thanks for pointing her out. If

you hadn't said something I would have hit her."

Keith Lane shrugged as he got back into the car. A minute later Barry had the car repositioned and they were on their way again, leaving the crumpled sled in the road behind them.

"Hey, guys, I'm home," cried Barry Ormond as he walked into his house, and instant warmth. He could smell the pot roast cooking in the kitchen and hear the sounds of the six-thirty news coming from the living room. He was looking forward to a nice quiet evening at home with his family after the day's events.

Claire was there instantly, "Just where have you been? You were supposed to be back a half-hour ago."

Barry seemed to have forgotten all the stories he had formulated earlier so he just told his wife about Keith and the child, "I'm so glad I didn't hit that poor kid."

Claire seemed to grow understanding at his retelling and simply said, "Well as long as everyone is alright. Now, go take a shower, you're all smelly from traipsing through the woods all day. We'll eat right after you're done."

She disappeared back into the kitchen and Barry began to hang his heavy hunting garments on pegs in the small entryway. After he was down to normal clothing he made his way into the living room where Dan, his youngest son, was watching TV.

"Hi, Dad. Did you shoot anything?" Dan asked without much interest.

"Nope, the woods were pretty quiet today. I only saw a few tracks. So, how was your day?" answered Barry as he looked at his son.

"It was okay, I guess."

Barry only nodded at his son's answer. That seemed to be his opinion on everything these days. He was about to head down the hallway into his bedroom when Barry noticed something on the news.

"Keith Lane, of Manchester," began the news-caster, "was hit by an oncoming car this morning as he was returning to his own parked car to get a coat. The twenty-seven-year-old investment counselor was taken to Thurston Medical Center where he died of extensive internal injuries."

### **The Longest Road**

I am a traveler on this well worn path,  
I've done many things, and been to far off places.

I've seen mountain glades and snowy tundra,  
Heard the howls of wolves and the laughter of children,  
And felt the warmth of the sun and bitter cold winds.

I've felt the thorns of a rose and the touch of a woman,  
Heard the music of generations and those of the whales,  
And seen the ocean waves and the birth of a child.

I've seen the beauty of a sunset and the color of blood,  
Heard the cries of thousands and that of only one,  
And felt the rain on my tongue and tears in my hand.

So look around you when your on the path,  
You'll see me walking there too.

I'll be your guide if you like,  
Just remember, your never alone.

-brian james elias



