

Marist Literary Arts Society
Presents



...Mental Graffiti



The Wedding

I love you more than ever
More than time and more than love
I love you more than money
And more than the stars above.
Love you more than madness
More than waves upon the sea
Love you more than life itself
You mean that much to me.
Ever since you walked right in
The circle's been complete
I've said good bye to haunted rooms
And faces in the street
To the courtyard of the jester
Which is hidden from the sun
I love you more than ever
And I haven't yet begun
You breathed on me and made my life
A richer one to live
When I was deep in poverty
You taught me how to give
Dried the tears up from my dreams
And pulled me from the hole
Quenched my thirst and satisfied
The burning in my soul
You turn the tide on me each day
And teach my eyes to see
Just bein' next to you
Is a natural thing for me
And I could never let you go
No matter what goes on
Cause I love you more than ever
Now that the past is gone.

R. Z.

ONE LESS

by M. C. Francisco

The man pulled his car into the parking lot of the Fairway Motor Inn and parked in one of the numerous empty spaces. The night's rain had been reduced to a soft drizzle that added an ominous feeling of terror to the air.

But the man wasn't interested in terror. He was interested in only one thing. With soft gliding steps, he walked the short distance to the office and rang for the manager. Seconds later a short, dark-haired man appeared and moved to the counter.

"Can I help you, gramps?" the manager asked with indifference.

"I would like a room for the night," replied the man in a quiet voice. He didn't like the man's tone of voice but knew he would get nowhere by making a big deal about it.

The details were quickly taken care of and the man signed the book as Thomas Goldie. It wasn't his real name, but it was the one that appeared on his Indiana driver's license and the alias would do for now. Goldie took his key, grabbed his bags from his car, and entered room 7.

Goldie locked and bolted the door and closed the drapes to the small window. He carefully set his bags on the spare double bed and then laid down on the other one.

His old bones groaned with relief when he laid down and he closed his eyes. The man was 72 and showed every one of his years in his well-worn face and white hair. His thin bony frame was no longer tall and commanding, but he could still handle his job. He could do it better than anyone and they feared him for it. The fear never really mattered, for not one of his quarry knew his face. He smiled at that thought as he drifted off to sleep.

The man called Goldie dozed for an hour and then took a cool shower, after which he prepared his equipment. He wore his dark gray slacks, black turtleneck, gray trenchcoat, and black fedora, which were his usual working clothes. At his belt he tied a bottle of Jack Daniels with its clear contents. The opening was corked and sealed with wax so his quarry wouldn't smell the liquid.

The inside pocket of his trenchcoat carried a folding tree saw and a wooden stake. His briefcase contained six spare wooden stakes, an assortment of plastic garbage and a pair of latex gloves. A crucifix hung around his neck. After another quick look, he threw the folder that detailed his quarry into the briefcase and headed out the door.

It was a short 10 minute ride to the bar downtown. The bar was named Charlie's after its proprietor and was filled with all sorts of refuse from around town. The time was 11:30 as the man called Goldie sat at a table in a corner some distance from the

bar.

Charlie, an obese man with dark glasses and a black beard that showed some gray, stood behind the bar joking with his friends. Goldie ordered a double bourbon which he sipped occasionally as he scanned the crowd, looking for trouble.

His quarry arrived precisely at 12:00. He swaggered into the bar with an arrogant look on his face and a defiant sneer. Everyone in the bar stopped and looked at the newcomer. The newcomer appeared to be about 30 and was as thin as Goldie. His hair was brown and close-cropped, his eyes were dark and strangely vacant.

The newcomer was greeted with cheers and offers of drinks. A man at the bar even vacated his stool so that the newcomer could have a prime place to sit. The newcomer smiled and talked and joked with his sudden acquaintances. He held them all enthralled.

Goldie took in the whole scene impassively and ordered another double bourbon. The newcomer, whose name was Eddie, locked eyes with him for a second and Goldie gave his best "just another drunk" look. Eddie whispered something to Charlie and the bartender shrugged a response. Eddie seemed satisfied and continued with his carousing.

This continued for another hour and a half with Goldie ordering more bourbon and seeming to get more drunk. In reality, the bourbon did not have any affect on him at all. One of the few tricks he had learned in his 72 years. Then, a little after 1:30, a man rose, bid his farewells and staggered out of the bar. Eddie did the same after a few minutes. Goldie waited a few minutes and then gathered his hat and briefcase from the table and followed his quarry.

Goldie staggered into the alley that Eddie and the other man had gone down, continuing his drunk act. He found what he expected halfway down the dark alley. Eddie was bent over the other man's limp body, with his face buried in the drunk's face.

"Hey, there," he yelled with a slur, "whattaya doin' to that poor man?" At this Eddie's head jerked back and he turned to face the intruder.

Eddie dropped the limp body and smiled. Fangs glistened when he did so. "Come here, old man," he said in a high-pitched voice. His eyes were burning red and filled with excitement.

The man called Goldie straightened and became rigid. He stepped forward obediently. "I shall feast on your blood, old man," Eddie cackled, near frenzy. The beast ordered his second victim of the night to kneel and bare his neck. Goldie complied with a dazed look in his eyes.

The beast lunged forward, the thought of more blood the only one in his mind. Eddie screamed in pain as the bottle of Jack Daniels shattered on his left temple. Holy water splashed across his face and immediately started to burn the skin. The beast clawed at his face in an effort to scrape the holy water off but only succeeded in burning his hands.

Goldie didn't waste time after hitting his quarry with the holy water. Quickly, he removed the stake from its place and rammed it home into the torso of the beast. His quarry fell to

the ground, a scream of agony still etched on its paralyzed face. He knelt by the body and put on the latex gloves. The small folding saw cut through the beast's neck without a problem and Goldie placed it into a plastic bag along with the decapitated head. He said a small prayer and removed the wooden stake, which also went into the bag.

As soon as the stake was removed, Eddie's body burst into flames and was soon reduced to ashes. Goldie tied the bag's opening into a knot and his face showed no expression as he walked back to his car. Later, he would burn the head and the stake and bury them in some deep woods somewhere. For now, he tossed the bag into the trunk after wrapping it in several more bags to keep the stench down.

The drive back to the motel was uneventful as the old man named Goldie thought about his last kill. That was one less of them, he thought. On less to worry about. For the first time that night, the man who called himself Thomas Goldie smiled.



Witch of Pakistan

Veiled in white as custom forces,
She stokes the fire out her door.
Of the lives of us she alters courses;
She is far from naive, far from pure.

A blackened hat adorns her head
(It she washes twice per week)
Her mouth, though small, is fine; instead
Through her nostrils she can speak.

In the lives of others in our town
She measures far from dominant.
She blends right in with steady frown,
Although her nose is prominent.

Rest assured that she is thinking--
Daily plot consume her week--
Her spells affect us, not her stinking
(The food she drinks--it makes her wreak).

But be forewarned--do not approach her,
lest she hit you with her spoon,
Into the cauldron you will tumble
(And lunch is served at noon).

Sean McPharoah, jr.

SLEEP IT AWAY

Kimberly Hackett

I want to go back to sleep.
In my dream
my children are still alive.
In my dream
i don't have to wake in a disillusioned haze
and clutch my empty womb
and scream.
I want to dream.

What???...Huh???

Hands of stone, face of paper
Heart of crimson, eyes of yellow

Tell me, I'll tell you

You, at one time, were the only one that mattered
Your angelic face permanently scarred into my weak mind
And your inquisitive tone is still ringing in my ears

Skin of leather, hair of grain
Fingers of experience, legs of endurance

Talk with me, I'll talk with you

You, the one who made me wrinkle my brow in wonder
Your more-than-relaxed attitude contradicted my ulcers
And the light of you possessed cleared all darkness

Nose of wood, cheeks of water

Mouth of knowing, tongue of telling

Touch me, I'll touch you

You taught me how to open my fist
Your smile upon contact left me with confidence to spare
And the time we never had was made up by the time we did

Look at me, I'll look at you

When I find you, I will find you, when I find you
I will find you, when I find you, I will find you

- scottwyman

Rufus, Bluta, and the Root Gathering Story

Once there lived a man named Rufus and his wife Bluta. They lived in a country called Zola. The man and his wife made their living by gathering, planting, and harvesting the various herbs and vegetables that grew on the craggy hillock behind their hovel. It was a hard life, but a good one.

One morning, the man set out, as usual, to scout the nearby shrubbery for new and unique tubers. It was an unusual day, bright and crisp, with a unique glare that seemed to reflect the sunlight back and forth between the sparse, puffy clouds. "What a beautiful day," thought the man, and he plunged a shovel into the dirt to test the ground. Much to his surprise, he discovered a fine root in the dirt below a bush. "Behold," said he, "What a marvelous root there lies beneath this bush! I shall pick it up and transfer it to my wife. Perhaps she can prepare a fine jam or stew with it." And so the man picked up the root and placed it in his valise. Then he resumed his digging. That night the man and his wife feasted on the fine roots that he had gathered in the day.

It so happened that the next day the man was required to attend jury duty. Upon hearing this, his wife inquired as to the location of the roots so that she might go herself and reap enough of the tender tubers to provide for dinner. The man explained that to get to the location, he was required to travel a moderately short but complicated trail beyond the briars on the great mound. To be sure she would reach the location, he left her the directions on a piece of parchment.

Shortly after breakfast, the man set out on foot for court. It was an unusual day, dim and damp, with an unusual greyness that somehow made the sky unusually gloomy. It threatened to rain. "What a lousy day," thought the wife. "Why should I trudge out on foot on such a day when it threatens to rain, when I can much more easily set out in my husband's car?" And so the woman took her husband's Honda Civic and set out toward the briars on the great mound.

Unfortunately, the woman was not too familiar with a stick shift, and so on the long climb up to the top of the briar hillock she left the car in high gear, which lugged the engine so severely that the car began to overheat. "Oh NO!" cried the woman, "I must get to the top of the hill lest I be stranded here! If I get to the top I can coast down the other side." And so she forcefully applied the throttle.

Unfortunately, the woman had somehow forgotten that automobiles are generally not used in the woods and shrubbery to climb rocky hillocks, so the bump-induced vibration caused the throttle to jam, causing the woman to wrap the front end of the vehicle around a sedentary birch tree. "Damn," said the woman, and she got out of the car to assess the damage. "Hark!" she said, "See how the briars have marred the paint of the car!" Then, after a few seconds, she said "Behold, the buckling dent seems to have spoiled the frontage! Were my husband to see it, he might become angry. I will leave the car here while I think of an excuse to tell him." And so the woman took her shovel and other equipment and proceeded to the place where the roots were to be found.

It so happened that her husband was dyslexic and the

directions on the woman's parchment came to be somewhat reversed. An hour later, she found herself to be relatively lost. My husband's directions do not take me to the destination. He must be dyslexic." The woman decided to backtrack and continue onward.

A short time later she came across a large situated rock. Now beyond the windward side of that stone lived a rather colossal elf by the name of Choll-Choll. Choll-Choll was a truly wicked creature who delighted in the looting of passers-by. He was employed by an ogre who lived farther into the woods, and his job was to keep passers-by from disturbing the ogre in his incessantly "temporary" rest.

As the woman approached the rock, Choll-Choll leaped out of the shadows. He roared, "Give me your belongings!" Upon viewing this strange creature flailing his three arms about himself, the woman felt inclined to shout for fear. Instead, she chose to give Choll-Choll exactly what he wanted. Since she carried only gardening tools, she gave him the shovel--literally. Two swings were sufficient to send Choll-Choll charging away into the northern bogs wailing loudly for his maternal figure. Then the woman continued onward.

A short time later, she approached a slightly filled hollow. Unknown to the woman was that near this hollow lived a relatively squat giant named Baxter, who preferred to be known as Troll. Once shunned by the other giants because of his short stature, Troll came to live in this area when he responded to the "Help Wanted" ad of an ogre. (This ogre, the same one who had employed Choll-Choll, had been looking for guards to keep trespassers to an absolute minimum.) When Troll heard the snapping of twigs (the sounds created by the woman's approach), he vaulted out of the hollow to stand in front of her. Upon seeing this strange creature blankly staring at her, the woman felt inclined to yell in fright. Instead, she chose to converse with him. "Hello, who are you?" she asked. Troll responded, "I am Troll. You may not pass." The woman, quickly adapting to the situation, decided to use flirtation to achieve her goals. She exclaimed, "My, my. How could such a fine gentleman be so rude to a woman like me? And for shame--you are much taller than my husband." (In actuality, her husband 6'3", Troll 6'2".) "I can not let you pass!" Troll repeated, this time becoming violent. By now the woman, growing impatient, simply decided to prove her prowess at the ancient art of Tae Kwon Do. A few minutes later, Troll lay battered in a ditch in a state of mortification at having been defeated by a woman of 5'2" stature. The woman once again continued onward.

A short time later, the woman approached a relatively unclosed fissure in the open forest. Now in this fissure lived a great ugly ogre named Pox-Pox. Pox-Pox was a truly evil creature who delighted in the various flavors of passers-by (when he wasn't resting). As the woman approached, the sound of her walking through the leaves

awoke Pox-Pox in his den, where he had fallen into a deep slumber while watching taped re-runs of Saturday Night Live. Pox-Pox bounded out of the fissure and roared, "Why have you disturbed me?" Then he reassessed the situation and inquired, "What have you done with Choll-Choll and Troll?" Upon seeing this huge monster violently shaking his three heads, the woman felt inclined to scream--so she did. But then she reassessed the situation. Herself growing tired of the increasing monotony of the day, the woman simply said, "Away ye foul beast, I must pass on! I possess a black belt in Tae Kwon Do, so do not stand in my way." Unfortunately, the woman's haughty self-confidence clouded her judgement. Considering Pox-Pox's 8'7" height, three torsos, and 1486 pound weight, the woman was hardly in a position to threaten him. As a result, he proceeded to eat her.

Upon arriving home that night to find his wife and car missing, the husband descended to a state of great mental anguish. "Oh my," he said, "My wife and car are missing. My wife must have left me." Then it occurred to him that he alone would not have enough time to gather and prepare himself enough food to survive in the future. He said, "I can not continue to live as I do alone, lest I starve." A change of profession was in order.

After a brief, unsuccessful attempt at commercial advertising, the man eventually found himself condemned to the selling of middle-aged cats to eccentric old women. It was a boring life, but a profitable enough one. And so the man lived on in mediocrity.

Moral of the Story: One should not use a Honda Civic in the woods and shrubbery to climb rocky hillocks when relatively unfamiliar with a stick shift.

Little Soul, Lost

She was not big, she was not small, she was not ugly, but she wasn't pretty. She wasn't utterly wretched; she was not too special either. She wasn't smart or stupid. She claimed neither impudence nor sweetness. She was just there, a nondescript young woman. And yet, she wasn't really a woman, either. If anyone had ever been interested enough in her description, he'd have had a hard time getting it out of anybody.

At night, sometimes, she took comfort from the moon. The moon was a little like she was--there, and taken for granted. Yet, even the moon was more important. People studied the moon, proclaimed it beautiful. Astronauts walked on it. No one had ever confessed any great beauty in her.

She tried hard to be happy. She tried to laugh at everything. She tried very hard never to cry. But sometimes the tears slipped out, and then she was ashamed. When she started to feel sad, she'd pull on the one memory of someone who'd made her feel special, if only for one day. All she had to do was pull out a book whose inside cover was adorned with a little drawing, the picture of a thousand words. She'd read the words silently to herself, laughing, smiling, sometimes flushing a little. It always cheered her, till she got to the end, for the end was meaningless now. The feeling had gone. The little pain she almost never felt would sting her heart for a second, and her little lost soul would cry for the sweet intoxication of happiness.

Then she would sit up, pull a brush through her hair, and laugh sardonically, always worrying that she might feel a pang of sentiment, a pull of longing. Up then she would fly to busy herself, so she could not think of any such nonsense again.

Cylinda Rickert

Blue-Green Love

by Ellen Kalaus

It was a hot spring day. The smell of melting crayons clung to the humid air. We were working on an original art project, trees standing in a meadow. This unique scene, two green trees standing on two green mountains with four pink flowers circled by a halo of one yellow circle that was supposed to resemble the blazing sun, was duplicated by Picasso-like first graders on thirty white sheets of paper.

Then it happened. Our eyes met. I noticed him, and I think he noticed my intent stare, though I'm not sure because the gleaming sun struck the glass of his glasses.

.....those wonderful handsome glasses that were pushed up by those powerful pudgy fingers....those ten gripping fingers holding his crayons with such tyrannical force.....clutching his Batman bookbag with an incredible fierceness.....

He, Harvey Bellwall, was walking toward me.

.....oh my gosh are my knee socks straight....are my pigtails even....is there some peanut butter and jelly on my chin....

Harvey was about to say something to me.

....what am I going to do....he is definitely too good to be true....he has it all....the looks, the charm....the fact that he is always the last one to remain in the dodge-ball games....I love him for his rebellious side too....he is the only boy who has enough courage to clap the erasers against the back wall, even though Sister Bernard warned us not to....

"Sarah, are you finished with the blue-green crayon? If not, I'll use the green-blue one."

Those words will live in my mind forever, 'blue-green, green-blue.' Like the blue and green of the crayon, our love would surely interlock for all time.

Our love affair flourished for weeks. Harvey and I shared our lunches and sat next to each other during story time. Summer was approaching. We talked of romantic nights when we

would trap fireflies and play dodge-ball until the sun came up.

Then that evil day came, the day when Harvey learned there were other women out there, women more sophisticated than I, one in particular, a third grader.

She, Jessica, wore her hair in one pigtail. She had pierced ears. She could even cross the street by herself. Jessica's trademark color of green-blue was smeared all over her artwork that hung proudly in the hall. Her renowned reputation for having lost all of her baby teeth had gained her a place of respect among all her classmates. Not only did Jessica have the respect of her peers, but she was worshipped by the younger students for her fantastic ability in hopscotch.

Harvey left me in his blue-green past for this third-grade beauty masked by a green-blue facade.

I learned to love again, but to this day, I still can't use a blue-green crayon without having my vision blurred by a tear.

THE END

Christopher J. Laline
The Woman

She is always standing there in the corner of my mind. Always that slender body draped in a dark shadow, never really knowing if she was out there.

Could I ever attain such beauty in one woman.

Walking lonely through deserted streets in the early morning hours I would look for her. Through empty store windows, in the occasional passing of a car and even in the quick look over my shoulder I would look for her.

I feel I am destined to wander through the streets of life alone, always looking and searching my soul for the woman.

If she does exist deep down I know she will never be mine. It will be my shyness and timidity that will always keep her at a distance.

The words may never be spoken between us but my eyes in that stare will be all that I would have to say.

She will never know that it was ultimately I who held the key to her heart. It was ultimately I who was that missing piece to her puzzle.

Romance will never find me. I will only be found walking the dark streets of morning, wandering aimlessly looking for the woman.

A night at West Cape

We lie here in each other's arms, covered in the sweet sweat of our labors. You rest your head on my chest, and I smell your hair. I rub your shoulder and feel you smile against me. We talk of nothing, enjoying each other. I run my hand through your midnight hair. Your green eyes shine mischievously as you smile and rub your leg up against mine intently. I laugh and pull you tightly against me, wanting to hold you forever. We kiss and it is intoxicating. We roll around and laugh. I tell you that I love you and you say that you already know. You are all that I want, all that I need. I wish this night will never end. But it doesn't.

A SUPER HERO'S REALIZATION

by Tom Becker

As I reflect on my past week, I can't help but think it was all my fault. Yet there is a part of me that knows the truth, knowing that I had nothing to do with it. But that part won't speak.

Guilt is in command as usual, and why should I choose to fight it now? HAH? My brain racked for answers to my question but withdrew any answers. I would just have to feel it and perhaps deal with it. My life's become a struggle between guilt and logic. It wasn't my fault. But those eyes, those goddamned eyes, crying out for help, accusing as I stood by. That's exactly what they did. They accused. Maybe they were right. O screw it!

Get on with your life, man. It's over. Everyone has their problems, but that doesn't stop them from living. Right? What was it that Donna used to say? "Don't worry, be happy",? A saying from a popular song by some black guy. Bob Marley was it? Whatever. Diana, only a couple of weeks ago, meant so much to me. I remember how I loved her. She was the only one I ever loved. God, we had some great times together. We had big plans. Yup, she was my first and last, I suppose. She's gone now. I could no longer love her like she needed. Don't worry, be happy. You only live once, right? That's a question to be dealt with. I mean, can I still consider myself living? A living person's supposed to be able to feel many different things, positive and negative.

For me there's only the negative: pain and guilt. It's not so much the pain as it is the guilt. Oh man, I'm back to square one. Maybe it wouldn't be so hard for me if he didn't expect so much from me. But as so many kid brothers do, he idolized me. I hate him for it. Those eyes, how I hate those eyes. But I did love him. I guess that's part of the problem. I remember what I now look on as probably the last happy day of my life. I had spent it with him. We had gone skiing together. God, it was only ten days ago. I remember how excited he was. He got up at 6 a.m. and was ready to split by 6:30.

"C'mon John," he said, "let's go. I can't wait. You think there'll be a lot of snow? I hope so. I heard the mountains were supposed to get six inches last night. Anyway, we could always pick up snow bunnies, right?"

His little face was all bright with excitement and so was mine. I guess he rubbed off on me. He could do that to people; get them to share his feelings. He was a great kid. Kid! He was only ten years old! Don't worry, be happy. We had a great day at the slopes. That day I felt closer to him than ever before. I really, truly loved him. It was more than just the usual brother to brother love. I would've loved him even if he wasn't my brother. But why did he have to love me so much? Why?

The ironic thing is that I used to love the fact that he idolized me. Wouldn't anyone? I remember how my mother used to warn me to be careful of what I said or did around him, because he'd do it too. I remember one time I was in my room listening to my stereo. I had my CD's laid out on the floor. I was trying to organize them. I remember he came in my room and came running towards me, stepping on two of my CD's. I screamed at him and told him to get the hell out. His face changed from his patented smile to one of being shocked. He began to cry. I was being stupid that day and it wasn't his fault. I knew that, yet I made him cry. Sometimes he was a burden. No, scratch that. If anything, he was a welcomed burden.

I wonder how he envisioned me. Whenever I try to picture it, I see myself in mylons, standing on the highest point of a mountain. A red cape I'm wearing blows in the wind. Superbro! Stupid, isn't it? But to him I guess I was sort of like a superhero. Hell, it must have seemed to him like I could do anything. Yup, don't worry, John is here. He'll take care of it.

But John didn't take care of it. He, ME. I couldn't. I had no chance. I didn't know he'd gone out. Why didn't he tell me? He told me everything else. Why didn't he tell me THIS TIME? Worse yet, maybe he did tell me. Maybe I wasn't listening. I wonder if he ever did that to me.

How many times did I tell him to be careful? This time he'd done something so dumb! We'd had nothing but warm weather all week and yet he thought the pond was frozen...skate frozen that is. C'mon kid, are you an idiot? Why'd you do it, bro? It doesn't matter. I still should've been there to do something. Yes, here comes the old guilt trip again and this time I'm welcoming it.

That day I had been at Diana's. We were working on our term papers. Ironically, I was doing mine on Shakespearean tragedies. I should have left at four, when I was supposed to, rather than four fifteen. Of course I missed very friggin' light on the way home. You see, the bond was a block away from my house and I would pass it during my drive to and from Diana's house. I was stopped at the light on the corner of Penn and James' streets. Penn ran parallel to the pond. That's when I saw a couple of kids by the ice. I remember thinking, "How stupid could those kids be?"

I pulled over and got out of my car to go shout a warning at the doofs. That's when I saw Andy ON THE ICE! He was hitting a puck around while one of his friends was

lacing up on the shore. I called out to him and that's when it happened. The ice broke from under him just as he turned towards me. He fell into the dark pond water.

I ran. I would've had a shot at beating Carl Lewis, I was running so fast. But not fast enough. I got out onto the ice and kept slipping. It was like one of those freaky dreams where you're trying to run but your not going anywhere. I saw Andy moving steadily under the ice. The current had caught him. He was beating the ice with his fists and he looked terrified. I placed myself directly on top of where he was and tried beating on the ice too. He looked at me, those green eyes had filled up with hope. I even think he smiled a little. I'm not sure but I think he did. But I was crying because I wasn't a superhero, I couldn't save him and he didn't know that.

His body continued to float and I saw him give me one last look. I now realize his eyes weren't accusing me of anything. They were saying goodbye, maybe even thanks for trying. One thing I know they were saying was - I love you. I'm sure of it.

His body disappeared from sight. I fell down right there and kept on crying. I cried for what seemed like an eternity, all the while hoping the ice would collapse from under me. But it didn't. I guess that's good. I know it is. Andy wouldn't want his super hero to die. I know that too.

I'm still depressed and the pain of his death remains. But I think the guilt has gone. I know now that I tried and that's all Andy wanted. I think he didn't see me as a super hero who fought off evil, but instead just someone to look up to. I was his big brother. To him, that made me a super hero.

THE END

Illumination

Azure skies with lavender borders
Spliced with yellow-golden rays of
Light breaking through the clouds of my soul,
Awakening my spirit, causing it to
swell and bloom with dewy vibrance,
Outshining my silt, which soon is sent
To endless sleep below the earth.
My reach for Perfect Love
Is now within my grasp and seems
More real to me than dreams ever were.

My Creator speaks and I no longer
Strain to hear his soaring Call
Sent to me on
Wide-stretched wings that glimmer of gold.
For all one needs to know
Of the Great Creator is reflected
In the brilliant skies, where
Fire dances on ice, scattering sunbeams
To the embers of my heart,
Rekindling my spirit with
The Love from which I came.

Erika Leone

Jack in the Box

by Jeanine Bertone

I'm over here
watching you
anxious
fearful
paralyzed

I'm over here
feeling for you
heartache
pain
grief

I'm over here
reaching out to you
withdrawal
denial
refusal

I'm over here
why don't you come out and play?

They walk
A line of tattered beings
torn, shreds of humanity adrift.
giant greyness exits.
breathed in and out
in and out.
The stones and dust
paint the only emotion
They walk
Spurred on by a dream
daisies to eat, tulips for thirst.
pieces fall, people fall.
is love worth it all?
Armor sagging
truth to the blind.
They walk

- Tom Becker

Tomorrow's Lullaby

I believe in lullaby's
I believe in things that fly
I believe in rainbows high
To explain it all would just not be good
Don't leave me here
Calm my fears
You play with my world
Then you set fire to my soul
You know my life inside out
Untold stories that should never get out
I don't know why I opened my mouth
But I did and now I'm lost within
You read me inside out
I don't know how
Like an open book
You know what other's don't
And if you believe in lullaby's
And if you believe in things that fly
And if you believe in rainbows high
Then tomorrow will not be lost

- Kevin O'Neill

CHRONICLES OF SATILE: PART I

It was then that she appeared. In her magnificently embroidered gown, Vena, goddess of all she surveyed, glided down to the great plateau at which she was to meet her nemesis. Thorn, lord of demons and god of evil, who had gotten there only moments before, watched as she flittered down before him. 'How easy it would be to destroy her' he thought. With the orb of darkness and the power he had stolen from his brothers she would be like a leaf in the wind compared to him. Finally Vena reached the plateau and spoke.

"Dost thou wish to stop thy killings of my people or would thou rather face me?"

At this Thorn laughed, "Art thou threatening me?" he asked with an evil grin.

"I will not let thy slaughter continue. Face me or be banished forever!" Vena's voice seemed to echo into the distance.

Thorn was not impressed, "I will face thee, but only to show that thy power is obsolete to my own!" and with that Thorn took up the orb of darkness and created a giant bolt of black energy that struck at Vena. Vena recuperated immediately. She then swung her arms around herself and weaved a spherical shield that emanated a blue radiance. Thorn concentrated on the shield and suddenly it burst into flame. Thorn let out a hideous cackle as Vena, blackened and scarred, flew out of the inferno and looked to the sky as if waiting for something. Without wasting any time, Thorn held the orb high and summoned a swarm of acid flies which flew immediately after Vena. The goddess, unaware of the flies, watched as a giant storm cloud drew near from the north. Without warning the flies were upon her and she screamed as they melted her flesh away. Thorn grinned in ecstasy as he watched her fall back to the plateau in excruciating pain and approached for the final blow when he caught sight of something, a necklace, Vena's necklace. It was said to be the source of her power. If he could get it...? Thorn banished the flies and stood over Vena in defiance as she writhed in pain.

"I have won," he said. "And as a victory prize I shalt take thy most powerful possession!" But as he reached down to take his prize, a rain of lightning came down from the storm cloud. Thorn doubled over as bolt after bolt hit him. Enraged, he focused all of his power on the cloud and disintegrated it. He then turned back to Vena, who was getting up and struck her down once again with a taloned claw. With glee he ripped the necklace from its owner and held it up to the sky as he howled in victory!

With Vena's source of power in his hands, she would surely give herself up to him. However, it surprised him when she unsteadily stood up and faced him with untold bravery.

"Evil...cannot...prevail...forever. Soon...the power of good...will overcome thee," she whispered. Thorn scowled, truly sick of this talk of good overcoming evil and was just about to rip her to shreds when he felt a strange tingling in his hand. He looked over and saw a white light emanating from the necklace. As he wondered what it was he felt his hand stiffen and with horror realized what was happening. He tried with all his might to stop the slow but effective magic of the necklace, but to no avail. Despite all of his efforts, it was slowly turning him to stone. Vena stepped back as Thorn's fury unleashed incredible power. Within the next few minutes, whole mountains were torn asunder, great earthquakes ravaged the land as far as the horizon, tidal waves sunk unknown islands in distant oceans, and the heavens rumbled and roared with hurricanes, tornadoes and the like. Only the great and ancient Plateau was unaffected. Thorn, as the stone crept up his neck, flashed an intimidating look at Vena.

"Do not think that your toy can stop me here and forever," Thorn struggled with the words as if he still might yet stop the stone that threatened to encase.

"I will return!" Thorn screamed and Vena turned away as a blinding flash of light shot out from his face.

"After that, Vena stood alone on the Great Plateau that we now call the Tower of Victory," stated the old man in red robes, as he leaned back onto a barrel full of ale. The liquid sloshed around as the old wagon travelled down the road. Some escaped and seeped into the warping wood of the wagon's floor as the storyteller tried to refill his tankard. Silently, a group of wide-eyed children sat quite uncomfortably on the splintering wood wrapped in wool blankets. Their attention was solely on the old man who had captured it for several hours.

It was night now, the only light emanating from the crescent moon high above and two torches mounted at the front of the wagon. The wagon was small, with a two-man bench at the front for the drivers and an open back space just big enough for an old man, his audience and a keg of ale. Though it was well into the night, the moon and the torches illuminated enough to see the narrow edges of the dirt path they followed, lined with a variety of trees, yet vibrant with the life of spring. In the distance, sounds of animals echoed through the valley Kalo, reminding the children again of what they were leaving behind.

"I want to go home!" a freckled, red-headed little girl stated as she cradled her doll of cloth and wool with both arms.

"So do I!" said a young boy covered in dirt, who seemed to catching sniffles all of a sudden.

Before anyone could blink an eye, the whole group of children was bawling. The driver, a rat-faced man in farmer's clothes, with dull brown eyes, shaggy black hair, and unkempt stubble, just grinned as he looked back to see the old fool with his hands full of miserable children. 'I'd like to see him start a story now, the drunken old fool!' the driver almost said out loud, then turned to bring his attention back to the road. They had perfectly good reason to be upset, he supposed. Tarne was the only home they knew, or he knew, for that matter. This whole war, that was the problem. Who needed death and killing when there was a tavern close by? A few drinks and a wench or two and these damned kings would forget all about who had said what. 'But that won't ever happen, poor bastards are higher than society like that, I suppose.' As he pondered what he would do with such things, he heard the old beggar call him from behind.

"Billi, can't you help me just a little bit with these children? They're too much for my old bones."

"Not to mention your fuddled brain, Malcomm. I'd bet me ale money that you can't count to ten right now."

"Nonsense!" Malcomm retorted, as he pulled down another swig of ale.

"Oh really! I - " Billi cut himself off as he saw a group of perhaps eight horsemen wearing leather and armed with make-shift spears galloping down the road towards them. 'I must be fuddled meself not to notice the sounds of eight horsemen galloping towards us,' he yelled in his mind.

The eight of them rode up to the wagon, which Billi had stopped by now, at a trot, then stopped a few feet away. They waited there, their horses towering over the mules that pulled the small cart. They were not soldiers, far from it. And they were not brigands. They were farmers just like Billi. Anyone could spot it - the patched leather pieces for armor, the roughly made spears. But more than that, they had no killing in them, there was no blood behind their eyes. They were no more used to fighting than he was at staying with one woman.

Their leader, a tall man of middle years, with brown hair, blue eyes and a strong build from working out on the field, leveled him with a steady glare. The others just watched in expectation.

"Billi, I could hear those kids all the way down there." He gestured vaguely in the direction they had come. "You're supposed to keep them quiet!"

"Not my job, Hawkens! The old fool back there got them started." Hawkens shifted his gaze to Malcomm.

"Oh dear. I gather I'm in a small bit of trouble," Malcomm said while filling his tankard once again.

The children had stopped crying now that the men had arrived. A few of them jumped out of the cart yelling "Daddy, Daddy!" and were accepted into open arms as their fathers got down from their horses.

"I don't want to go away, Daddy!" said one yellow-haired boy of ten to his father, Jacob.

"Where's Mommy, Daddy?! You said she'd be here tonight!" another dark-haired girl of the same age wailed to her father, Lyle.

Hawkins only sat there on his horse looking at Malcomm and Billi with a grimace.

"You two are useless! What's the point of scouting ahead if all that noise brings brigands or who knows what else right to you?!"

"Really Hawkins, you act as if there are people trying to kill us behind every bush. We're leaving the war behind us, not travelling to it. You're taking this whole 'in charge' thing to your head is what I say," Billi replied.

"Elder Hamman charged me with bringing the last people from Tarne to the safe hold at Carnor and by Char's hell I'll do it! Even if it means leaving Pell or Taurus to look after you."

The two mentioned looked up from their children and smiled at the prospect.

Malcomm looked away from Hawkins angry stare to take in the spot they had stopped at, a small piece of the road and rocky, but sheltered from the wind by trees and as good as any spot for maybe ten leagues.

"Are we stopping then?" he asked. Hawkins looked around and saw the starting of settling down for the night spread throughout the men he was travelling with.

He sighed, then answered "I had hoped to make it to Stoney Vale before we turned in, but we're all tired. We'll make camp here and start early next morning." The fathers comforting their children looked up in approval and started to unpack their gear from their saddle bags as the rest of the children came down from the wagon and sat by where Jacob was making a fire.

"Good, that. I don't envy a man who's got to sleep on a bed of stone. Not that rocky dirt road is any different, but..." Billi started to ramble on as he, too started to get ready to turn in. While unstrapping his own pack, Hawkins saw Malcomm trying to lift a barrel of ale twice his weight out of the wagon by himself. Hawkins hid a laugh and walked over.

"I don't think you'll need your ale this night, old fool," he said and tried to push the barrel back into place, but Malcomm swatted his hand away.

"Get away from that now! An old man needs his liquor to warm his old frail bones or else freeze during the night! You wouldn't let a poor old man freeze to death would you?"

"Of course not," Hawkins replied, as he forcefully pushed the barrel back into place, despite the old man's flailing arms. "I'll give you my wool blanket for the night." And with that Hawkins walked away from Malcomm's complaints and threats to sit at the now lighted fire and to share in the food that the stocky, grey-haired Jacob now was cooking.

Much later when all the children were asleep, Hawkens sat by the fire alone. Having taken first watch, everyone else was asleep. It was perhaps midnight or later and the perfect stillness was the kind of environment Hawkens liked best. Back at the village he had been a hunter, and a pretty good one. Not as good as Olmar or Pell - they could track an eagle across the whole of valley Kalo! It wasn't his skill that mattered as much as the feel of it all, the solitude it gave you. The feeling of being on your own. It was something that Hawkens had gotten used to ever since Olmar had taught him how to string a bow. All that didn't matter now though, all that mattered was to get his people to Carnor where they would be safe. Only thirty more leagues to the west and they would be there; but what then? That was the question that needed to be answered. Perhaps he would return to Tarne and get the things he couldn't bring before, or maybe he would go north to Peallandor and give that lunatic, King Borus Manframe, a knock on the head for getting them into this foolishness. Then again maybe he would just go home.

Thinking of home, however, brought to mind again the actual reason they had left in the first place. They had been ordered to do so by an officer of the Satilian Army. He had told them that the invading armies of Kylendria had come too close to the area and that they had to leave their homes at once for the safety of Carnor. Hawkens wanted no part of their war. It was his country, but wars were for fools that wanted to show their strength to all. This war was no different than two bullies trying to see who was the tougher. Hawkens shook his head 'Perhaps they will come to their senses before any blood is spilt' he thought, then got up, truly baffled at it all, to change watch. As he looked up from the fire, he froze. A pair of red lights looked out of the foliage at the side of the road directly at him. Fear struck Hawkens as he caught the huge silhouette of some kind of beast only ten feet from the camp. A low growl held him with terror as it began to move forward out of the trees. Something had to happen, whether good or bad, and Hawkens had to be the one to do it.

Malcomm, Billi, Olmar and the rest were all still asleep. He had to wake them up. The second he moved to yell a warning, the creature lunged with lightning speed. Hawkens was unable to dodge the attack and fell backwards as the creature's full weight collided with him. He struggled with the beast, fending off tearing claws and rending teeth, but to no avail. Hawkens knew he was going to die.

Suddenly the creature jarred upwards with a shriek of pain as Jacob and Lyle stabbed it in the back with their spears. It leapt off Hawkens and turned on its new prey. As Hawkens looked on he saw it clearly for the first time. It was some huge wolf, but too big to be natural. It was twice the size of any man! And the thing had two spears in its back and was still walking!

Olmar, Taurus, and Pell joined the fight with the beast just as Jacob was knocked aside by a massive paw and lay still. Billi and Malcomm suddenly appeared at Hawkens' side, helping him up. While the children waited crying in the wagon, and the wagon's mules were being replaced with two of the horses by Gerald and Coro.

"Quickly! Tell them we must get away! That thing will kill us all if we don't!" Malcomm practically screamed in Hawkens' ear. While looking at the fight, Hawkens could see it was true. Three spears now protruded from the beast, but it neither slowed nor showed signs of retreating. Taurus and Pell now joined Jacob on the ground, lying in pools of crimson. And Olmar who had fought bears on his own before this, was covered with sweat and blood and wouldn't hold up much longer.

"To the wagon!" Hawkens screamed in desperation. Olmar and Lyle heard and started their way over while fending the creature off. Malcomm jumped into the back, with a nimbleness he had never shown before, and kept the children under control, while Billi ran and leapt into the front seat, grabbing the reins. Gerald and Coro helped Hawkens into the wagon, then turned to help Olmar and Lyle.

"No, you fools! All of you get down!" Malcomm yelled as he reached into his robe and brought out a small glass vial in seconds. The next instant it was hurtling through the air and hit the ground right before the beast just as Olmar and Lyle ducked out of the way. A blinding explosion followed and the next thing Hawkens saw was Olmar, bloody and broken, along with Lyle in the same condition being carried on the wagon by Gerald and Coro as the wagon started to speed down the road, leaving the beast floundering around back by the campsite along with several good friends.

"Olmar, what was that thing?" Lyle asked while nursing a large gash on his hip.

"I don't know, but I've never seen anything like it in my life." The statement itself was as frightening as the beast, for Olmar knew about all creatures if not just having heard of them. The fact that he didn't know what had attacked them was unnerving.

"But you have to know what it is, you know everything about this valley!" Gerald yelled.

"I to-" Olmar winced as he wrapped yet another of the dozens of cuts and gashes that now riddled the forty-year old man. "I told you I've never seen anything like it. I don't think it came from the valley."

"Yes, did you see the scales it had? There were scales underneath that fur! It gives me the shakes just thinking about it." Lyle added.

"Well it's over now. That thing is blinded and it won't find us before we get to Carnor," Hawkens reassured the group.

In the background, leaning up against the back railing, Malcomm stared intently back at the way they had come.

"Something has started here," Malcomm whispered with a

frown. Then turned to comfort the children who had fallen
to crying again.....





