



The Windy Hill review. 1987

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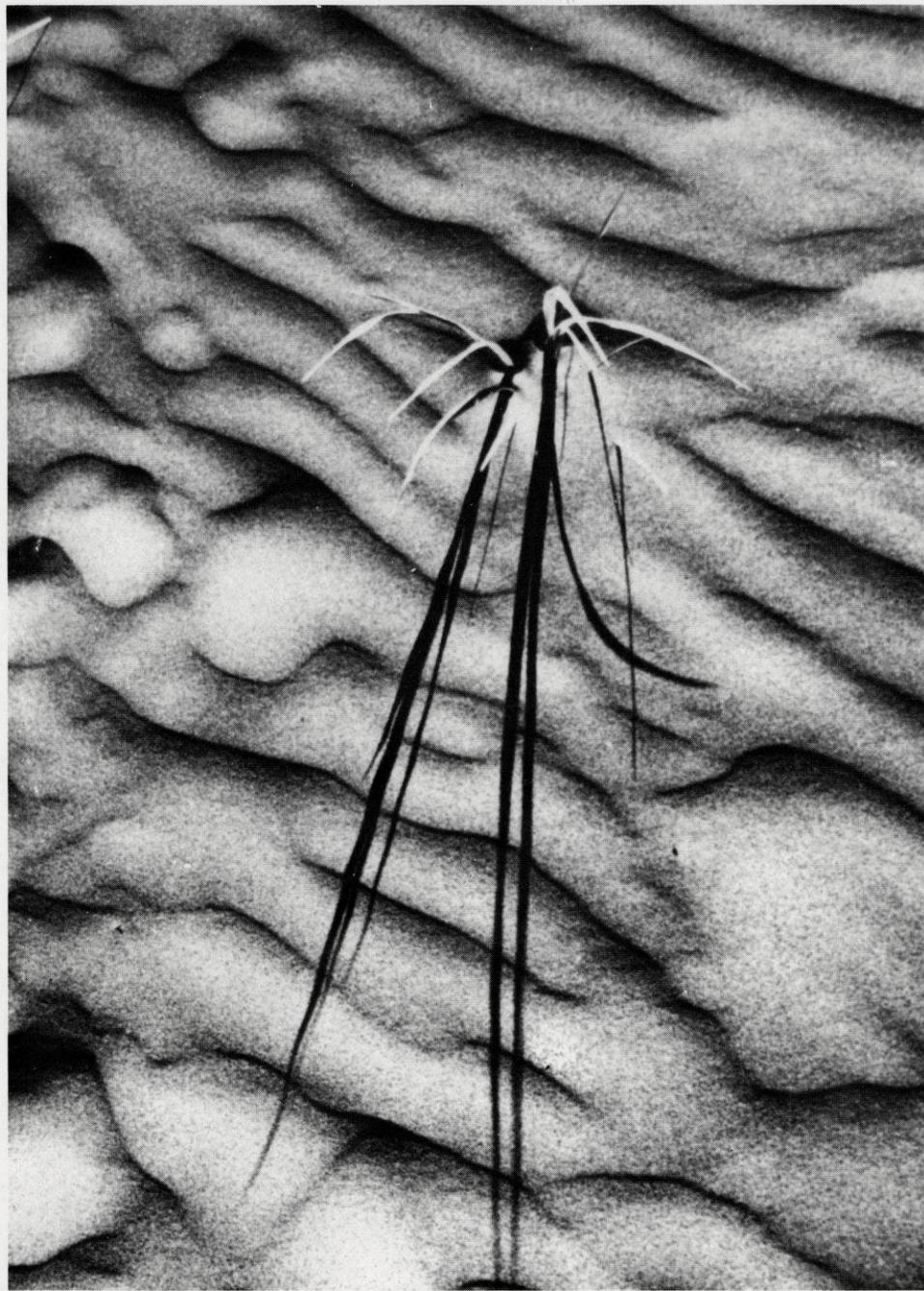
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Windy Hill Review

1880-1881

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Our thanks to all the contributors for making the 1987
Windy Hill such a fine issue.

Second Floor Shenanigans

Volume 1, Number 1

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Claire Davis

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A special thanks to Lynn Paque for her help in coordinating printing.

See you

Bus Rides

on the school bus
home in between Kuchenbeckers
and Delongs lay an old car
down in a deep ravine
only visible
in late fall
and early spring
when it wasn't hidden by
undergrowth and under
snow someone's older brother
said it was a chevy to us kids
it was bonnie & clyde's
getaway car the broken
windows shot out by the posse's
bullets by the time we hit
45 the bus had turned into
a supercharged tank filled
with twenty of the worlds
most dangerous criminals
we had'em all dillinger
capone bonnie and clyde
baby face badenov
and whiplash
with ten screaming sisters
as hostages pencils became gats
rulers tommy guns crayons into
sticks of dynamite thrown
out the window at the posse
disguised as two old ladies
in a lincoln continental
at every stop each villain would
make a break for his hideout
followed by a snickering sister

Geo

2nd Floor Shenanigans

The baby sitter sleeps on the war-torn couch
While late night monsters flicker in the dark.
Upstairs, flannel jammy imps scurry to the bathroom
Flannel jammy imps, crew cut, missing baby teeth
Vandal brothers, partners in crime.

They stop the sink with a green washcloth
Open the faucets, so the water runs full bore.
"We'll go skating," says imp one
Pouring a glassful on the tiled floor.
"This'll be a lot of fun," says imp two
Flashing a mischevious grin.

Standing water on the bathroom floor
Hallway carpet flooded soggy beyond the corner
All the way to the stairs.
Flannel jammy imps skate, dive and slide like otters
Whoosh on a homemade water ride.
Crew cut goblins frolic at an upstairs carnival
Until a calliope cry wakes the sleeping sitter.
She catches a freckle faced vandal sliding on his
Stomach down the stairs.
She wonders why the stairs are damp.
Snickering imps each take a high school hand
And pull the sitter upstairs with anxious pride.
"Ain't it neat, Judy?
It's our own ho-made water slide."

The sitter takes off her glasses and cries.
Frustrated tears fall into the standing water.

Kevin Harrington

"and now it's my turn
to get him back"

Chemistry

Chemistry set sounded cool
to me at nine-years old
but enthusiasm faded
when nothing blew up
To protect her investment
Mom combed the instructions
for something to catalyze
my interest

"Here Scott, let me show you
how to make a stink bomb"
she said, impish delight
in her eyes
Two measures of sulphur
and a piece of paraffin
the size of a pea
in a test tube
heated over an alcohol flame

My father was furious
when rotten-egg fart gas
filled the basement
and covered the smell
of the yellow paint
he was laying
on concrete block walls

Through uncontrollable tears
of laughter
Mom told me
to never try that experiment
in the house again

It worked as well
out in the garage
and I wowed my friends
for a few weeks
until I forgot
about science
to be a kid again

One warm August Friday night
Mom was inspired
She planned all day
to have fish fry
and close the bar
at the Coachlight Inn
Dad was tired
from a long week
at the Post Office

Dad told Mom
to make spaghetti
and he was in bed
by eight o'clock

By nine Mom knew
that the television
wouldn't satisfy her
She asked me to get her
some sulphur and wax
a test tube and some clamps
and my alcohol lamp
"Your dad always farts
in the bed"
she said
"and now its my turn
to get him back"

We went outside
to the corner of the house
and with the smoke of her cigarette
she tested her bedroom windows
to find which one
the air was blowing in
We lit the lamp
and soon the fumes
spewed forth from the test tube

Dad burst through the front door
and leaped around the front yard
in his underwear
shaking his finger
swearing in Dutch

R. Scott deSnoo

Elevator Bugs

eggbin

I watch them bob,
never seeming to tire;
from the glass's bottom,
to water's top.

The boys would trek
to the stream
to capture them,
bring them back alive,
release them in a glass.
They'd ride up and down,
spinning and reeling;
like a yo-yo
on untwistable string.

It was not until
I was twenty-one
I learned these bugs
that had held me
for so many years,
were simply raisins
in my mother's 7-UP.

Kathy Held

Bridges

"Whazzat?"

Helen looked up from stirring. The large wooden spoon stood upright in the thick gray mass. "What do you think it is? It's a cake." Helen's glasses slipped into the grooves on her nose, and she looked at the ragged old bag lady crouching down in front of her. She went back to stirring. Maybe if she ignored the woman.

"Well, you ain't going to take no prize with that one. Could pave walks with it." The woman reached over and grabbed the empty bag. "Medusa. Medusa, Portland Cement. Either you're putting me on, or you've been shopping in the wrong stores, lady."

Helen's flower-print cotton shift pulled taut over her breasts as she laughed despite her intentions to ignore the woman. Fingers automatically reached up to be sure the buttons stayed closed. The woman fussed about, arranging wads of newspaper for a seat. Helen leaned against the rusted-iron bridge railing. The canvas x-frame stool creaked beneath her shifting weight. She kept her face carefully averted. Still hoping.

"You're in my spot."

"Pardon?"

"You're in my spot," the woman repeated. Everybody who belongs here knows this is my spot."

"Sorry," Helen replied. "But I won't be long."

"Yeah, well that's all right. You seem a nice enough sort, even if you are a lousy cook. Everybody hereabouts calls me Meg. Ain't my name but it serves." Meg proceeded to peel off layers of clothing. Starting with a rain and shine coat, whose shine was mostly over the seat, she worked her way down to a filmy nylon jacket that was more wind-sieve than breaker. Next, a sweater that closely resembled a sweater Helen had given her daughter one long ago Christmas. The ingrate. Judging by the bulges, Helen guessed there were multiple layers yet to unfold and by the odor coming from the clothing, several layers of grime just as thick.

Helen went back to stirring the gray substance until it was free of lumps like a good cake batter. Two plastic bags were removed and placed over each of her support-hosed feet. Meg's beak-thin nose was poking into Helen's still opened, black leather handbag. Helen snapped the metal clasp shut in the woman's face.

"Hum." Meg smiled and turned to rummage in her own paper shopping bag. She came out with a pair of gloves. The once-bright red gloves had dappled and faded with age to the color of an autumn wine-sap. The gloves had been cut so that the tip of each finger was exposed. Helen had seen that done before, but Meg had left the glove tips hanging by a few threads so they jutted at odd angles from the fingers, each hand acquiring an additional five phantom digits. She

wagged a double digit pointer in Helen's face. "My invention. Get cold . . ." She popped the glove tip over her finger, "and there ya are, warm again. But ya need to pick something up, like a dime--dimes are nice. Small and thin. People lose them all the time. Might not seem like much, but they mount up quick--anyway, ya need to pick up a dime," she flipped the glove tip off, "and there ya got it."

"You know that's really quite clever," Helen admitted.

"What'll they do?" Meg asked.

"Pardon?"

"The plastic bags. What'll they do?"

"Keep the cement from burning my feet. Or at least that's what the salesman said. Told me to be careful of skin burns when working with cement because of the lime." And she plunged both plastic wrapped feet into the center of the shallow pan of cement. "Aaah." The sigh oozed from her like the cold cement over her feet. Both women watched in silence.

Meg nodded thoughtfully as the cement settled over the tops of Helen's feet. Then sifting about once more in her bag, she pulled out a plastic fork with a broken handle. She drew the tines through straying gray wisps of shoulder length hair then secured it with the fork like a hair comb. It brought to Helen's mind the set of tortoise shell combs at home. They'd been a gift from her husband, Hank.

"Ain't you going to clean it off?" Meg asked.

"Clean what?"

"The spoon. Seems like a nice solid wood cooking spoon."

"Yes," Helen mused, "it is. Served me well during some forty-odd years in my kitchen."

"Well, then don't you think it's kind of a shame to let it get all concreted up?"

Helen shrugged. "I won't be needing it anymore."

"No?" Meg snatched the spoon up. "Then ya won't mind if I clean it up to keep." She plunged it into the bucket of water Helen had hauled out onto the bridge to mix the cement. The spoon was cleaned and stashed in the shopping bag before Helen had a chance to say no.

They sat in silence for close to an hour by Helen's reckoning. At first she was mildly peeved that the woman insisted on remaining there with her, as if this weren't a hard enough thing to do. And then it began to wear on her that the woman didn't even have the wits about her to be curious. By the end of the hour Helen was outraged that the woman could be so uncaring about another human being. She simply could not believe this woman.

"I don't believe you," Helen said, doing her best to look down

on the miserable creature from her sitting position on the stool. "Don't you even wonder what I'm doing? Don't you think a person putting her feet in concrete is just a bit strange?"

Meg's face split open in a smile, showing strong, even teeth and her laughter was like the sound of litter blowing over the bridge road between the bursts of engine noise. "I seen stranger. Like the time Len paraded across the bridge in his sister's clothes. Her a short ninety pounds and him going well over two hundred. Now that was strange." Meg crossed her legs straight out in front of her. "I may not look real sharp, but I sure ain't no dummy. I figure you go through all the work of hauling a forty-pound bag of cement and bucket of water out on a bridge, you ain't planning to make footprints in concrete for your grandchildren. And face it, when a person sets to paving her feet in a tupperware bowl on a bridge--near the only opening in a quarter mile of railing--it starts a person to thinking she's not just passing through."

Helen flushed, dappled and red as Meg's gloves that flew into Helen's face to emphasize each point made. Of course, it was obvious. It was one of the reasons why she'd chosen this bridge. She'd thought with all the bums and crazies here, one more crazy woman wouldn't draw attention from the police. She hadn't taken the locals into account.

". . . shoes."

"I'm sorry. I guess I'm just a bit distracted today. What about shoes?"

"I said," Meg repeated, "nice shoes. Seems a real shame to just leave them here. Guess you ain't going to need them, huh? Real waste if they got accidentally knocked into the river and sank to the bottom where no one could use them . . . "

"You want my shoes," Helen stated as she watched Meg stroking the genuine leather Red Cross shoes painfully pre-broken in by Helen for bunions. "Take them."

Meg's hi-top tennis shoes were already half off her feet. For the first time, Helen noticed Meg's left shoe grinning largely with its flopping sole, the right shoe duct-taped into a grimace. The old shoes were fed to the ever-hungry shopping bag. Meg then removed several layers of socks, turning each inside out as she did so, and laid them in a straight row. "Do this and ya'll never have foot trouble again." Remembering suddenly, Meg slapped Helen heartily on a leg. "Not that that'll concern you anymore, hey?" She laughed short, sharp blasts like exhaust backfire, while carefully picking the lint from between each toe, then wiping them clean with the innermost sock. Reversing the procedure, she re-layered her feet with socks--grays once white, blacks once brown, browns soon to be black, and one canary yellow. "I rotate them once a week," she added, as her feet were socked

and then sausaged into the new shoes.

Helen's hands flew to her breast buttons again. "No!" She said as Meg eyed the flower-print shift. "I'm going clothed."

"Yeah. I suppose ya should." Though she didn't sound convinced.

Helen removed her glasses. "But you can have these. Never know when a good pair of glasses will come in handy."

"Genuine rhinestones?" Meg fingered the sparkling polished bits in the pointed corners of the pink plastic frames. Helen nodded and watched the glasses disappear into the depths of the shopping bag. She leaned back, feeling good.

Meg seemed to be feeling good too and lifted her face to the sunlight that eased the street-map of cracks on her face until Helen began to believe Meg was not so much aged as weathered. As if the heat and cold had raised and sunk whole portions of her face like the city streets. Helen wondered what moved a person to such a life.

"It ain't easy."

Startled, Helen tilted dangerously on her stool. She grabbed Meg with flailing arms, her feet helplessly anchored.

"Ya can't have 'em back!" Meg fought her off, and Helen latched onto a rail to haul herself back to safer seating.

"I don't want anything back. I just lost my balance."

Meg arched a shaggy eyebrow, and with measured dignity, re-fastened the fork-haircomb which had shaken loose in the tussle. She nodded somberly, but kept a winesap hand locked about the bag--ready to bolt if necessary.

"It was just what you said before . . . "

"Huh? It ain't easy? Well, I don't think it is. Drowning always seemed a tough way to go, to my way of thinking."

Helen relaxed. "Oh, that. Yes, well I suppose it must. It just seemed the best way. Seems as though all my life I've done things the wrong way. So I've thought this out pretty carefully. I've heard of too many suicides getting rescued. I figured there's no way, once I jump, that I can be rescued."

"Always heard people who jump from buildings lose consciousness on the way down, so they never know what hit 'em. But then I read this story about a guy who jumped from an airplane and lived. Said he was conscious right up til the time he hit the ground. His body went like this . . ." Meg's hands telescoped in on each other, her gloves suddenly looking blood red. She looked away, her eyes avoiding Helen's.

"yes." Helen nodded slowly. "I had a friend who tried to do it in a car in her garage. She got rescued too late--or too soon. Brain damaged."

"Hey, that's like Jose down on Fifth, right next to the main and fifth vent. Put a gun to his head. The bullet went clear through, took his smarts but left him. Some people say he used to be real normal."

"Well, I certainly don't want that happening to me." Helen shook her head.

Meg shifted uncomfortably. "How's that cement coming?"

"Can't move my feet so well anymore. Doesn't take very long, does it?"

"Guess that's why they call it quick-drying. Nice shallow bowl."

"Yes. I planned that too," Helen said with a note of pride in her voice.

Meg looked away again. "Hungry? Got some food here somewhere?" Out of the bag came a heel of French bread, one half-eaten apple, and a prune Danish old enough to be squashed yet not lose the prunes.

"Thanks. But I'm fine. Had a nice big breakfast." Meg wasn't in the least offended by the refusal. The French bread snapped under her strong, straight teeth, and having taken two more bites out of the apple she placed the remainder in the bag. The prune Danish she devoured.

"Did ya leave a note? Always liked that part best. You know, the kind that says . . . 'Why'd ya leave me, ya bum?'"

"No. Been thinking about that too. Seems to me, its been my choices all along.

Meg leaned lightly against Helen. Helen thought she saw a flicker in Meg's eye. A look of, "Yes, I know you." Strange, Helen thought, Meg didn't seem to stink anymore, or maybe it just didn't matter so much. Helen felt a certain familiarity with Meg, a genuine fondness. It had been a long time since she'd felt that for another person. But the bag-lady could be disconcerting. Even without her glasses, Helen could see Meg was searching her face, as though looking for some small crack to enter. Meg's next words took Helen by surprise.

"How about slitting your wrists? That's a pretty good way I hear."

"Oh, no. I couldn't do that." Helen's face wrinkled, annoyed with Meg for asking and annoyed with herself for being unable to admit that it was the many years of housekeeping that made the thought of leaving such a mess behind abhorrent to her. "No. This is the best way. I'm sure of it. For once, I've done something absolutely right." Helen's jaw was set. It was her bulldog look, or so Hank had been fond of saying.

"Still think ya ought to leave a note. To your children, maybe?"

"She probably couldn't find the time to read it, even if I left one."

"A daughter, hum?" Meg drew her legs up and wrapped her arms around them in an almost forgotten gesture of youth. "Pretty?"

Helen nodded, then tilting her head to the side, considered the question again. "No. Not pretty. Handsome. A handsome woman. She has some pretty children though."

In a voice dark as the river rushing beneath the bridge, Meg spoke. "My boy was a pretty child. Pretty."

"You've a son?"

Meg shook her head mutely. After a moment her eyes swung back out over the river. "Dead." She cleared her throat. "He . . . died," her wrinkles becoming crevasses, "when he was real little. Got sick and died."

Helen touched Meg's shoulder, feeling the terrible thinness beneath the bulges of clothing. "It must have been awful for you and your husband."

"Yeah. Well, I didn't hang around much after that. I just sorta went my own way. Knew it wouldn't work anymore. Just knew it. Didn't seem to be any point. So I just left. Ya make your choices, right?"

"Right," Helen answered quietly.

"So ya got a daughter. Come on," Meg's voice took on its familiar rasp, "let's write her a good note. Hey, we'll do it in concrete. Got a stick?"

"I don't think--"

"I must have something here we could use." She dove into her bag, and out flew the old hi-top tennies, the apple rolled out after them. She stuck the apple in her mouth to keep it safe while freeing her hands to scavenge. "Humphf . . . Yah, knew I hash shomething," her words slushed over the apple. She took a good bite and dropped it back into the bag with the tennies. "Here we go." She waved one half of a pair of chopsticks grandly in Helen's face. "Just what we need."

"I really don't think--"

"Damn!" Meg swore. "It's hard already."

Helen looked down in surprise, knocked on the concrete tentatively and felt a sudden shiver run down her body.

"Looks like you're ready."

"Maybe just awhile--"

Meg glanced up at the sun. "Good time of day, too. Another half hour or so and the cops'll be doing their rounds. Ya make your choices, right?" Meg's voice was gruff as she stood up slowly and stretched her stiff legs. "Here, I'll help ya." She hauled at Helen's arms.

Helen was amazed at the small woman's strength. But she was soon on her feet and swaying in the breeze like the Bobo doll her daughter had loved to bash in the face as a child. "Whoah! Oh, my!" Helen grasped the railing. "I don't think I can do this after all," she said her voice wavering.

"Change your mind?" Meg asked, peering up at Helen, who stood a good six inches higher and rocking on a rounded tupperware and concrete base. Meg started laughing. "Sorry, you look like one of those toys--"

"Yes, I'm sure I do. And no, I have not changed my mind . . . I just don't think I'll be able to get over to the opening. Maybe I should sit down."

"Nah. Ya got half the battle licked. Here, I'll help ya." She gave Helen a gentle push. Helen tilted forward, her feet staying anchored. "Maybe ya better sit down. We could drag ya over there."

"Drag me?" Helen's voice rose shrilly. "I will not be dragged to my end. I'll just have to call it off."

Meg helped her down onto the stool. "Ya got a buck?"

"I suppose so," Helen answered, feeling an overwhelming relief at being seated again. The water sounded loud and heavy beneath her. Her chest ached a bit.

"Good. We'll get old Vern to help us out. He'll roll ya off for a buck." And she was scrambling across the bridge, gesturing widely to a man stretched out on the walk across from them. Before Helen could get her wits about her, they were back.

"This here's Vern."

"Where's the buck?" Vern asked, his breath fruity with wine.

"Wait--wait, I--"

Meg turned on the surly man, small but formidable. "Ya get it when ya finish helping. We got to carry her over to the opening."

"Carry her?" Then for the first time he seemed to notice Helen's feet.

"By God!" He squatted down in front of her, rapped on the concrete bowl around her feet. "Will ya look what she's done. Har, har, har--" his laughter broke into a chain of choking coughs.

Helen pulled herself as straight on the stool as she could.

"Pay no mind to him," Meg soothed, patting Helen's shoulder. Vern was doubled over, sputtering with coughs and laughs and rapping on the large concrete bowl again, as though the bruise of concrete on knuckles made it real.

"All right. That's enough now." Meg pushed Vern clear of Helen's paved feet. "Ya want that buck, ya help us. You grab the feet." Vern looked to protest, but Meg's scowl shut him up.

Helen was having a hard time hearing the talk with the hammering pulse in her ears, or was it the thrashing of water below? She felt her skin go slick with cold. We make our own choices, right?

Vern dropped her concreted feet with a grunt. The thud bounded through Helen's body. "Careful, Vern, ya'll hurt her."

"And droppin' her off a bridge won't? Har, har, har . . ." Vern fell to coughing and laughing again, but he moved up behind Helen and, laying her flat, started rolling her down the walk.

Helen flung out both hands. "Stop!" She reached down to pull the flower-print cotton shift back down about her knees from around her hips. "Lord! Oh, Lord!" Vern started rolling her again. He had her at the

opening and then stopped. Meg helped her to sit up.

"See. Nothing to it."

Meg's face floated before Helen, as though she were already submerged. Helen's arm flung out and locked firmly about the guard rail. We make our own choices, she thought. It suddenly occurred to her that Meg had made a similar choice and had jumped into her own dark river long ago. And, as though Meg read her thoughts, she just smiled that "I-know-you" smile and nodded slowly, then paid Vern the dollar out of Helen's bag.

"Well, what ya hanging around for?" Meg asked him.

"I want ta watch." He grinned largely at Helen. "Make a hell of a splash. Har, har, har . . ."

"Go on. Git, before I take that dollar back, and ya know I can do it too!" Meg shook a gloved fist in his face.

Vern backed off. "Yeah, well why don't you plant your feet next to hers, you old bag?" Helen could hear bits and snatches of his griping as he left, "Dumb broad . . . cemented . . . dry this year . . . dumb . . ."

Helen sighed, her shoulders slumping hard against the railing's end.

"Made your choice, huh?" Meg asked and sat down, swinging her feet out over the edge.

Helen nodded, afraid to try speaking yet. The water sounded thunderous in her head. But after some odd minutes in silence together, watching the rough water rolling beneath them, Helen spoke, "Thanks, Meg."

Meg spat out over the edge and watched it disappear in the dusky water below. "Didn't do nothing. You're the one made the choice. Made the right one too. Been a dry year, though. Didn't know how to tell ya, but the river's only about three-feet deep down there."

Helen started laughing, then wept softly. "Oh Lord. I still can't do anything right."

Meg patted Helen's scraped knee and pulled the shift modestly back over her thigh. "Ya got a quarter, Lady?"

"Yes. Sure. In my purse."

"Well, I'll go call the fire department for ya . . ." Meg walked back to her shopping bag. "Suppose ya'll be wanting your shoes and glasses back, huh?"

Helen smiled and felt a fullness moving in her. "No. I think it's time for new shoes and glasses."

"Yup." Meg agreed happily. "Good time for new shoes and glasses." She picked up the paper bag and turned once more to Helen, her face washed young by the late afternoon light. "You're wrong, ya know. Ya picked the right bridge." And she walked away, bag swinging in her hand.

In the Dying Grass Moon

In the dying grass moon
our ancestors we grind.

Inside this circle of yellowed
blades and pine, the shadow of a tepee
stands here this morning. Above the conicle tree
looms wind pines and
the songs of Sitting Bull--soon.

In the dying grass moon,
we hear what sounds like
the crying loon. It is only a man
who sucks on legends that are dry
as corn husks, and they fall from his mouth like
kernals of teeth.
He tells me:

I-ki-ci-ze wa-on
kon he wa-na
he-na-la
ye-lo
he i-yo-ti-ye ki-ya wa-on

In the dying grass moon,
the final crescent,
suns become insolent. The past and dearth
of hyacinth, human, rotted loon
are one calloused earth.
Spirits with gaping mouths, green veins
sing from the gruel of grains.

In the dying grass moon
from the concrete my grandfathers poured
for this house,
from the white chalk of bonemeal,
a crescent cracks--
unraveling from a cocoon--
a tree reels.

In the dying grass moon
I cull up an arrowhead
from the upturned earth.

It is as sharp as a dead blade
of grass or pine needle. This will be a souvenir
to prove that circles and moons
were here.

Glen M. Blenkush

from: **From August 13 to October 12**

So while I wait I place this moment here
It turns I find out once again second hand of him
And the second hand of my mother made a scent
Lighting a cigarette and looking quite young
Still in love with his cheezy remains
While I was far inside reading fuel and fire
And guiding a scent as a cell smirk within her grinning

The libido: my mother's arches rug burned from being on top
My mother moaning
Like the even better buzz of shivers
Pent up and temporal
Sax in the wings off slippery fingers
Long and drawn for the molding into command bundles
Built till the bottle tips
Another lung fellow traveller of tipping lore
Slippery nimble
Built in fine fettle
Enough for total focal rising

My father the layman muted bloom
Out of Harvard fresh
That the rest were all of another very young and aged side
And sighted after Walter and Willie and Peter, Nate and Roger

We must find father now
We must find a pedigree
We must go even further now

Sighted after Walter and Willie and Peter, Nate and Roger--
One to take care of the nubs and edges
One centered for another shuffle
Another one is a driller and a fairy
One right proud in civvies and beer proud as well at it
Left one sorts spaces for the city
This forsaken place is full of gods

Wish I was Catholic or Jewish like
 Damn'd Walter and Willie or (Bishop, Casey, Horace) Peter,
 Nate and Roger
 Damn you all won't you tell the truth because there are so
 many liars?
 Damn I'm suspended in check with no tube to stuff
 No teet to suck
 Not a liberation literally
 Must reach to get rich
 Not a dime through education
 Only sight in stacked imagination
 And is not life the eye of me
 What wanders forward helping free?

Scott Zieher

Tight Shoes

August 13 to October 12

Olaf Bjorn jounced down the gangplank grinning widely. America at last. The crossing from Sweden had been long, but he had finally arrived. The broad shouldered, blue-eyed blond took a deep cleansing breath of New York. Pungent scents of dead fish and debris assailed his nostrils, before wracking his lungs, setting off convulsive coughs.

He fell into step with Cal Summers, an American who had befriended him on board. "Do America all smell such bad?"

"Nope, just around the docks. Can't judge a book by its cover, you know?"

"What book, Cal?"

"Never mind. Where are you headed?"

Olaf reached upwards to feel his head when Cal corrected himself, "I mean where are you going? You know, a place to crash . . . ah, stay?"

Understanding replaced the look of confusion on Olaf's face.

"Ya! I have place to stay. It is Brooklyn. You tell me how to go, Cal?"

"Come on, I'll give you a hand." Olaf reached for Cal's hand, which was not uncommon in his native land. Cal jerked his hand from Olaf's light grip. "For Chrissakes, I ain't no fairy. Just keep your Goddamn hands off men in this city or you'll find yourself getting decked."

Olaf had a hurt look on his face from Cal's harsh speech. Cal felt his anger ebb like the tide. "Listen, just follow me. Put your best foot forward and give it a shot. Just think about things before you do them and you'll get along just fine."

Olaf stood there debating. He certainly had no intention of further angering Cal. He needed his help to reach his destination.

Cal had walked several feet towards the customs building when he noticed that Olaf was not behind him. Turning, he saw the Swede staring intently at first one foot and then the other. "Now what the hell are you doing? I haven't got the rest of my life to see you through customs. Move it!"

"Move what, Cal?" His eyes moved quickly over the ground.

"Step on it! Let's go!"

"Step on what, Cal?"

Cal strode back and grabbed onto Olaf's hand, dragging him towards the building.

"I do not understand, Cal. Do not give hand, give hand, put good foot first, move it, step on it. I am, how do you say, mixed up."

"Oh, did that just dawn on you?"

"No, no. I been up long time. Before sun come up."

Cal rolled his eyes and shook his head, "Look, I know you want to get to Brooklyn. When we get through immigration I'll see about a hack for you."

"Hack? Like China?"

"Yeah, Pal, New York is filled with all kinds. Chinamen, Nips, Wops . . . and dumb Swedes," Cal muttered.

Cal guided Olaf through the turnstiles and literally pointed him towards immigration. "I go that way because I am an American. You have to go through those doors." Jesus, I sound like I'm talking to a kid, he thought. "I'll wait out front in the lobby for you, OK?"

Olaf pumped Cal's hand effusively. That jovial look that turned up his mouth, raised his cheekbones, and crinkled his eyes made Cal feel guilty. What the hell, maybe they could share a cab, Cal thought.

"Ya, Cal. Tank you. I be there."

Cal made a phone call while waiting for Olaf. He kept muttering things to himself like, "the stupid idiot will be taken for a ride," and, "New York will eat him alive," and, "They eat guys like him for breakfast and spit em out by noon," and, "Why did he latch on to me aboard ship?"

"Jammer--Cal--Yeah, I'm back and through customs--No problems--thought I had a tail, but I lost him in Copenhagen--Right, see you later--I'll call again."

Cal was working on his fifth cigarette when Olaf, all roseay cheeked and smiles walked towards him.

"America! Goot country, ya?"

"Yeah, let's go. Listen, we may as well share a cab uptown. We're both going to the same area. I didn't claim my luggage--thought I'd wait for you."

Cal had grabbed a large suitcase and a knapsack. "Say, Olaf, could you carry that tan gym-bag for me?"

"Ya, sure. That all?"

"That's all, let's hit it."

"Hit what, Cal?"

"It means go. Geez, Pal, you're gonna have to pick up the lingo if you plan to get by."

"Be glad--which is lingo? You have more cases?"

Cal rolled his eyes heavenward. "Man, you're hopeless. This way." He jerked his head towards the door.

"How about a drink, Olaf. You still haven't given me the exact address you're trying to get to. Maybe you should give your friend a ring."

"Ya, a ring. I tell you on boat. We marry soon."

"I meant, that you should telephone her. Let her know you're in town."

"That is goot idea. I like drink too."

The cabbie dropped them uptown and Cal led the way to a tavern called Freddie's on Fifth. The place was jammed with people. Olaf stopped just inside the door. He tried to take everything in at once, but his gaping mouth caused heads to turn in his direction. Cal was moving through the people searching for a table in the rear, nodding acknowledgements to familiar faces. He found a corner booth along the back wall. He glanced over his shoulder as he pushed his luggage under the table, shoving the small tan bag snugly against the wall. The hell with the nerd. Let him find his own way. I've had enough babysitting for the asshole. Sucker looked like an owl the way his head kept swiveling in the cab, Cal thought, as he sauntered toward the bar.

Olaf still stood rooted to the spot. Rich mahogany gleamed, framing the huge bar. Brass rails and ornaments sparked in reflection of the soft globe lights. Frost etched mirrors complemented the walls and bounced pictures of crystal glasses suspended from the ceiling. The entire scene looked like an interior designer had deposited colorful patrons all around to enhance the beauty of the room.

"That's quite a fly-trap, my Man."

Olaf swiveled about and felt the front of his jeans. Everything seemed to be in order. He turned to question the man who had spoken to him, but he had vanished into the crowd. He had watched Cal make his way to a back table and did the same. After checking on the luggage, he turned towards the bar.

"Where is telephone, Cal?"

"Down the hallway, next to the cans." Cal signalled with his head, never taking his eyes off the breasts of the woman he had been talking to.

"How much you want to bet he looks for a stack of cans back there?" said Cal. The woman laughed as if it were the funniest thing she had ever heard.

Cal walked down the hall a few minutes later to use the phone. "Ya--I am at Brooklyn. You come for me--here? I ask my friend Cal--where is this place, Cal?" Before Olaf could stop him, Cal snatched the phone from his hand.

"Yeah, this is Cal. Olaf has told me all about you, Honey. I've been helping him out since we met on the ship--are you there, hello--Oh, okay--We're at a place called Freddie's on Fifth--You know the place--Good, sure--See you in a little while--here's Olaf."

Olaf spoke rapidly in Swedish and Cal turned to the other phone. "Jammer--Cal . . ." He turned to the Swede with a look that conveyed his thoughts. Olaf moved away. The men's room was next to the telephone that Cal was using and Olaf moved through the door, leaving it open a crack. He leaned against the wall listening to Cal's conversation.

"I'm at Freddie's--Meet me here with the cash and don't forget to put it in the identical tan bag--Yeah, an hour."

Olaf was washing his hands when Cal came in. "Yessir, Olaf, I'm going to be rolling in the dough real soon."

"You get job and make bread. Goot job, Cal. We bake bread on farm."

Cal laughed. How could anyone be so dense? Well, he thought, I'll be rid of his company soon. "Come on, we came for a drink. Let me buy you a toddie."

"No, tank you. I drink beer."

"Okay, Pal, I'll buy you a Heineken. How does that sound?"

"Ya, Heineken is goot beer."

Cal amused himself for the next hour introducing Olaf to people. Olaf struggled with the American slang to everyone's amusement. In particular one woman said, "Boy, if you don't sound like you just stepped off the boat, I don't know who does."

Olaf responded with enthusiasm. "Ya, zat is what I do today. Get off boat in America. You are smart lady. Pretty too." The group howled while Olaf smiled and nodded.

Cal excused himself, "Got some business to attend to," and made his way to a table.

Olaf spotted the man with the tan leather gym-bag making his way to Cal. He made eye contact with several people scattered about the room, nodding imperceptively, and slid off the bar stool. Four other people converged in the same direction without drawing attention. Olaf slid into the booth, pushing Cal over at the same time that an attractive black woman did the same to the man across the table.

"Beat it, Olaf," said Cal. He gave the woman a derisive look.
"Ya, I like beating it."

"I'm not talking about your dick. Now, get the hell away from here. I have something going down here and I need privacy."

"I've got something 'going down' too, Cal. It's called beating it. Drugs, that is. You know that American saying, up the creek without a paddle? This gun pointed at your 'dick' says that you're going up the creek, no, make that river."

"What the f---! Where's your accent? What are you talking about?"

The woman sitting across the table jabbed her gun into the stranger's ribs. She pulled out her wallet and flipped it open to expose her badge. "You're both under arrest for possession of narcotics with intent to deliver. You have the right . . ."

"You Godamned bastard! You let me think you were such a dope. How do you fit into all this?"

Olaf revealed his badge and said, "NYPD Detective, Narcotics Division. My partner and I trailed you from New York to Stockholm, but you made him on the return through Copenhagen. I took over from there. We already busted your contact in Stockholm. The Swedish authorities express their appreciation to you. That little delay in immigration convinced you that I was the real McCoy, and it gave us enough time for the dogs to ID your luggage. We weren't positive until you asked me to pick up that piece in claims. Pretty clever of you to ship it through under another name."

"Shit, you really had me snowed."

"Ya, you look like the yokel now. How does the shoe feel on the other foot?" Olaf pulled his tennies off his feet saying, "Ahh, it'll sure be great to have mine on the right ones."

Sue Spiering

The Literary Bartender's Guide

White wine goes with fish and myths
of Venus and Adonis;

Red wine goes with beef or pork
while reading Gothic horror.

Sherry goes with salted nuts
and stuffy English novels;

While brandy in a snifter goes
with mystery and suspense.

Scotch straight-up is needed for
historic family sagas;

Bathtub gin goes well with sin
in modern autobios.

Margaritas rimmed with salt
taste best with west adventures;

But fantasy and sci-fi
need a kick from pale champagne.

Romance requires saccharine sweets,
pink ladies and mint juleps;

But racy stuff needs something
hot like spicy Bloody Marys.

While Aesop's fables, fairy tales,
require ice cream fizzes;

Beer goes well with anything--
poems just need water.

Mona Dalsin

Night Vision

At night my eyes leave me,
roll out to explore a whole new world.
They're always back when I wake
and they always leave their trails.
"Sleep seeds" we call them
the sand man was here.
I know what it's really all about.

Sometimes I'll have memories
and not know where they're from
Deja vu we call it
needing to give it a name.
Memories of crevices much too small
rooms I've never entered.
Points of view I've never seen, never will.
(Don't fit behind a flower pot.)
The time I lost an earring
only to know for sure the next morning
it was in the corner behind my desk.

Used to wonder how I'd know these things come the A.M.
no need to ask that now.
Days when things are "Not quite right"
it takes but a moment to figure why.
At these times I am aware that
in their haste to return they've erred
gone back to the wrong sockets.
I know I need to catch a nap
not out of drowsiness,
but to give them a chance to right themselves.

I try to catch them
but the little REM's know when I'll awaken
they're back before I get a chance to peek.
Kept a mirror beside my bed, wanted to catch them.
Realized the futility of it all,
they had me either way.
How could I check to catch them out
unless they were in?
And if they were in to see that they were,
how could I catch them out?

Kathy Held

In the Kitchen

Dad anchored barber shop quartets
In his three-packs-of-camels-a-day, whiskey bass.
"Down by the old mill stream
Where I first met you."
"Skinamarinky dinky skinamarinky do
Skinamarinky dinky dinky do oo oo."
"By the light
Of the silvery moon."

It was a place with a lot of standing
At the sink, the stove, the counters
At parties. I sat at the round table
That wasn't truly round,
One side cut off
To fit against the wall,
A dark marbled linoleum top
With metal edges,
Under which crumbs festered.
Sat next to the toaster,
And amidst the smoke and song,
I'd stare into its shiny sides,
Disheartened once again
By the red hair and freckles I saw.
I could sometimes turn the room
Into a long corridor and all the people
Were far away, even their voices.

Mornings, I savored spicey Taylor Pork Roll,
Toast, butter melted in,
And the box scores of the last place A's:
Jimmy Finigan, Lou Limner, Spook Jacobs,
Arnold Portocarrero, Marion Fricano,
Joe DeMaestri, Gus Zernial, Elmer Valo,
A lackluster, but beloved team,
Soon to be gone from the city.

Afternoons, it was Tastykakes,
And Mom watched through the jalousie windows
As my friends and I played basketball
In the driveway, occasionally losing the ball
Out of bounds, into the tomatoes or flowers.

Evenings, after dinner,
Simple things like meat loaf and fish sticks,
Dad led the family in reciting the rosary,
A much despised event.
I mumbled most of the "Hail, Holy Queen"
And panicked because I could never remember
Which mysteries were on which days.

I was the last of the children to leave home
And when I returned during semester breaks
Or for vacations, the kitchen wasn't the same place.
There was no singing. It was my father's refuge,
Where he poured himself
Gin after gin
To blot out the beating he took at work.
No apologies. His lack of fight,
Misconstrued for gentleness,
And the drinking were weaknesses,
No disease, but they ate away at him like cancer,
Till he could hardly walk or breathe,
This man of words who scored
Minus three in a Scrabble game
And was reduced to a few fast ones before bed
So he could sleep
And, perhaps, not dream.

Steve Tighe

Gary

In the morning in a picture near a headline
Hazy dots stiff unsmiling
a likeness unlike you
I didn't want to see you there
I knew I might
I hoped I wouldn't

You thought you'd never be there
so carefree and confident
potential with privilege
God, why did he spirit you out of college?
Your great friend
the rebel just because

"Let's kick around the country
like Woody and Dylan"
'cept times were a'changin'
They took you and left him to wander
His dream became your nightmare
uniform and all

He wandered back to college
You learned to fly
He studied history you made
I know he worried he felt guilty
when he studied stats
and you became one

I didn't keep that picture
it didn't fit the memory
of you in my mind alive
I used to picture him with you
laughing in that old car of yours
now I just picture you.

Linda Hurd

Burning Leaves

Blue Moon

At ten, I spend all Sunday afternoon
raking the big lawn around Grandma and Grandpa's
white frame farm house, oak leaves lined
in long piles like Grandpa showed me,
then dragged on a musty canvas
back behind the barn.

In the house, Grandpa hands me
a few wooden matches. I go out and light
the pile and watch the flames.
My clothes smell of leaf smoke
and Grandpa comes out,
says the lawn looks good.
He lights his pipe,
Prince Albert smoke curls up
from the burnt bowl.
I see his face soften as he watches the flames.

He smiles, and says come in
after the pile burns down some,
your Grandma has an apple pie ready,
and the sound of the howl
of the late November wind
blows a chill through me
as I stand alone in the dark
and rake the embers in.

ERRATUM

The name of Dennis Held,
author of the poem
"Burning Leaves," on page 33,
was omitted due to editorial
oversight. Our apologies.

Blues Moon

several animals

Sometimes the blues
just need to be played
sitting on a stump
the moon shuffles
across the lake
to my feet

Behind me the radio
of a parked station wagon
plays rock and roll
too quietly
to stop my song

Two long bent draws
on the second reed
six quick draws on the fourth
up to the sixth
back down the scale
sustain a low wail
radio falls silent
and I know
I'm not alone anymore

R. Scott deSnoo

Bleaching Shirts

I fill the laundry tub with water and liquid bleach.

The air is filled with the powerful smell of forgiveness.

Humbly, in go the white shirts, grey with living. The sins of the shirts will fade in the waters of Jordan.

My cat watches from the bank of the waters. His white is also grey with living, but bleach would not work on him. He is not a believer.

The white shirts are. In faith they will be cleansed of dirty cuffs and collars. Blessed are the pure, for they shall live another year.

I lift the shirts from their baptism and hang them to dry. They are the saved. Forgiveness drips from the shirt tails, forming puddles on the floor.

My cat keeps his distance. He runs from my reach. He smells bleach on my hands but sees they are no whiter than before. Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Mona Dalsin

My brother, Damon, lures with success,
wealth and power his draw. Sensual
subtlety, my asset, attracts not less
but more, as my men, thinking me casual
fall believing they've drawn me in.

No matter. Let them think what they may.
With ecstasy greater than Damon's trappings
the men I destroy do not lay the blame
on me, but themselves, as they lie gasping
never knowing it was I who broke them.

Damon, had he heart, would envy me.
Though we're equals in destruction
he knows our father has made men need
my woman's ways, my lusty attention.
He knows if he fails, they will fall to my passion.

Once fallen, my father will gather the souls
of men we have conquered, my brother and I,
with riches or fame, or, for me, their egos,
and they'll find themselves in my father's domain,
some cursing my brother, some calling my name.

Linda Hurd

Untitled

set off to basl schema

When talking to her,
he used his ideas like building blocks
to construct a large and heavy foundation,
and he walled it all together with
the mortar of a rational mind.

His words formed the rooms that kept them apart,
but he placed a roof upon his beliefs,
and he closed his oration.

Her thoughts, though, sped past him
in an elliptical orbit,
pausing to wonder at the motion of an atom,
before encircling the orb of earth again.
She found life's joy expressing itself in
the rotation of this
universal dance,
but dared not speak of it
to a surface-minded man.

Carol Perszyk

america, land of the free

america
land of the free
 man
land of the fathers
land of equality
 for all
 men
land of opportunity
 for every
 man

america
home of the brave
 men
home of the wise
 men
home of the fathers
home of the fighting
 men
home of the brotherhood
 of all
 men

america
home of the learned
 men
home of the fathers
home of the great
 men
home of the man
 on the street
home
 of the man

Linda Bard

america

land of the fathers

land of the rising

son

land of justice

for all

men

land where any

man

can aspire to be

Of random play

One instant

Rose Czerwonka

Pushing back the window on a house we knew I "knew" when her instant

One child is not enough for a child to be

beneath the skin of a child

As her life is flat

Papers books through which I know I have

about, piled and

Lined and level white

Thin and flat

She peeks beneath

Buckles and ribbons

Eyes the mass but a wide, cloudy 3302 . A

Sliden below

To be a child,

Her child

Julie Jackson

Pizzeria, land of the free

Purse-lipped stone head on rigid neck
protruding from expensive three-piece suit
tired silent from arguing with three hundred
pounds of well-dressed wife
casts reproving glances across
barely touched pizza
as two well-behaved little girls
silently squirm anxious to get away
Waitress assaulted
by tin voice

"Well, I guess we weren't as hungry
as we thought. Can we have
a doggy bag? We're just so busy,
we never get out. He's working
two jobs, and I'm working two jobs.
These are our accidents.
This was our first accident,
and this was our second accident.
And I was on birth control both times.
I just don't know."

Eyes-front striding dad leads
out to late Friday night
followed by mom
holding her breakfast
and two little girls holding
each other.

R. Scott deSnoo

Her Child

showcases

Her child calls
Entreats her to join him
As a child
In an under-table world
To build the roads
And bridges from blocks
That meet where his blocks

Gap

To recover the pleasure
Of random play,
One instant
Tumbling into the next
When her instants

Gap

One child is not enough
Beneath the flat of tabletop

As her life is flat
Papers books thoughts

pushed
about, piled and
placed

Lined and level white
Thin and flat

"Mom!"

She peaks beneath
Smiles and sighs
Eyes the mess he's made,
Slides below
To be a child,
Her child

The sound of a car Julie Dickson off highway

Dennis Held

Paperwork

We can't do our job
if you don't give us a problem.
We can't give support
unless you send in your request.

Typed, double spaced
Proper margins
I just need a hug

Wait to be processed
hopefully they will get to you
before the need goes too far.

Sitting on the cool blue tile
of the bathroom floor
she shatters her drinking glass.
Then, bending her wrist properly forward
makes the successful cut.

They shake their heads
can't understand what has happened here.

Three days later her request
is found buried
in the paperwork.

Kathy Held

Hike

visit to shwo's on T

Orchard spills over fence
full apples pull branches down
Deer path crosses creek
grass pressed flat
buck track pushed deep in mud
shallow fawn prints

Soy bean field dull green
heavy with seed
Blue heron glides above fenceline
turns and wheels one tight circle
to marsh pothole nest
Breeze rattles cattails

Low grey sky drops scattered drizzle
Thick brush covers fieldstone piles
Leopard frog leaps quick
into wild grape vines

Tail of doe flicks white
in neck-tall weeds
One waist-high oak
Queen Anne's lace puckered brown

Sumac presses out from fenceline
Tan hawk glides over low
Deer path winds through far fenceline

Rusty handsaw hammer nylon straps
with wide steel buckles
sap drips below iron pegs pounded into tree
rope hangs down from a high branch
foldup camouflage deer stand

The sound of a truck from a far-off highway

Dennis Held

The Fourth of July

It was 1955
she lay waiting
for a sign

some message
of her coming doom.

If she had known
then what she
would know in 1959,

maybe another road
would she have taken,
or maybe some
other life would she

have chosen. Or maybe
she never would have
come this far

and would have
taken the easy
way out. But

this was 1955,
and she did not
know what

the wait
would bring.

Nancy Schram

herself signed

Ambitions

I hold them in abeyance lest they roar
And build my hopes of winging towards success.
If I could feel but one side of the war
Within my spirit, I'd sense failure less
And loose my passions without fear of hurt.
But deep depression taunts me from within
Awaiting the right moment to exert
Its power in a battle it can win.
So I keep my feelings tightly guarded
Against a close attachment to my dreams.
Thus, I control the side of me that's larded
Complete destruction of my grandest schemes.
I wonder, though, if I have been outdone.
If I feel nothing, has the dark side won?

Linda Hurd

To Youth

I've heard some say they really envy you
Who must inherit this neglected site.
I think we had it better than you do.

For all the gains, advantages are few.
Yet, they insist your futures are so bright.
I've heard some say they really envy you.

In making Things, we've left a residue,
Destroying nature with industrious might.
I think we had it better than you do.

Although we left Earth's balance all askew,
In blindly reconstructing nature's sites,
I've heard some say they really envy you.

You have it good in some ways, but a cruel
Impending devastation darkens life,
I think we had it better than you do.

The darkened skies and rivers we now view
Were caused by generations without sight.
I've heard some say they really envy you.
I think we had it better than you do.

Linda Hurd

Inverse Functions

found poem

Two functions
Inverses of one another
if each
undoes
what the other
one does.

Sheri Race

Milwaukee Domes

No Xanadu
No Kubla Khan
No sacred river
And no, no, never,
Though sometimes smokey enough,
No opium induced dream.

Long maled and breiered years
Marched at, yielding
Only meticulously measured movement.
Official city decrees make
No poetry.

Yet only the innermost circle
Suffers such aridity.
Dried up breweries notwithstanding,
This is not a dry city.
Off center, to the east,
Enter a different world.
In fertile humidity, life
Rises to its highest form
Or dances in many colored
Orchidian glory
Plays and sings and feasts
Who would have thought
To look here for such
Sturdy and solid growth
So contrary to the
Established climate

To this west side in this
City fond of symmetry
A circus of special events blossoms
Yes, parades, yes, two.
Yes, weddings & dancing &
And, yes, children
Yes, ordinary, extraordinary
Coleridgian, handicapped equipped
And free in the early morning
Source of art and poetry and fun.

Margaret Rozga

Images

Little child in sepia,
Nightgowned and barefooted.
Eyes shining with fear.
Was this the day your mother died?
I did not know you then,
But I know your eyes were blue.

Little boy torn in half,
In knickers and old cap.
Was this the winter you were farmed out?
I did not know you then,
But I know your hair was red.

Young man in khaki,
Saluting in soldier's garb.
Was this the war that brought such pain?
I did not know you then,
But I know your face was determined.

Grown man in black and white,
Wide lapels and trouser pants.
Was this the year you went in business?
I did not know you then,
But I know your mind was shrewd.

Middle-aged father, colored
With you're bundle of joy.
Was this the morning you brought me home?
I do not remember you then,
But I know your arms were strong.

Lonely man in grey,
With your head against the wall.
Was this the Sunday mama died?
I did not know you then,
With your eyes far away.

Old man dying,
Nightgowned and barefooted.
Eyes shining with fear.
Was this to be the end of life?
You did not know me then,
But I know your eyes were blue.

Mona Dalsin

Perch are studious, very bluegills, croakers
Many drop out for the sake of the line
Eyes are broad shouldered bluegills
Crapping down Rabet in unshaded work boots
Tarp are deaf mutters half-as old barnacles
Scaring young daughters with thick-lidded plasters
Walleyes are finicky, artifice and craftsmanship
With an eye for detail and a taste for the grape

Dennis Reid

Bouffant Muleface

His long
low slung
jaw hung
down under
well oiled
hair pile
like a misplaced
grudge

Did you ever see such a strong, such pain?

Dennis Held

Green man in black and white,
Wide lapels and trouser pants.
Was this the year you went in business?
I did not know you then,
But I knew your mind was shrewd.

Middle-aged father, colored
With you're bundle of joy.
Was this the morning you brought me hope?
I do not remember you then,
But I know your arms were strong.

Fish Jobs

bohei A bohei O

Northerns are ruthless, cold-blooded killers
(I hear Mack the Knife was a big northern pike)

Alewives fill factories, go home and get loaded
And die in a car wreck one Saturday night

Sturgeons are Old World, dinosaur royalty
Deposed, they eat caviar and drink Earl Grey tea

Trout are the gamblers, high-rolling card counters
Smugglers of diamonds, con artists supreme

Salmon are fat cats, industrial magnates
With mistresses, penthouses, champagne and brie

Panfish are students: perch, bluegills, crappies
Many drop out for the lure of the line

Bass are broad shouldered blue-collar bullies
Chugging down Pabst in mud-caked work boots

Carp are dull brutes, half-wit old farm hands
Scaring young daughters with thick-lidded glances

Walleyes are finicky, artists and craftsmen
With an eye for detail and a taste for the grape

Dennis Held

O Period K Period

" I'm OK You're OK
I'm not OK you're OK
You're not OK I'm OK
I'm not OK You're not OK "

You could be OK
but you won't be OK
You once were OK
but you're not OK any longer
I think I'm OK
but I'm not sure I'm OK

I felt OK once
have you ever felt OK?
I won't be OK
so you can't be OK
I have been OK
you've never been OK
You pray I'm OK
I pray
that you're praying to be OK
I pretend I'm OK
but I've never been OK
I want to be OK
but I can't be OK

She said I wasn't OK
now she isn't OK
The court doctor said I wasn't OK
but with help I may become OK
I'm not in jail, which is OK
but I'm stuck with soft walls, which isn't OK
The treatments really aren't OK
but they're once a week, so that's OK
My mother comforts me, which is OK
but she's been dead for six years, so it isn't OK
The nurses tell us we're OK
but I know it's a joke, they don't think we're OK
My roommates a smoker and that's OK
but he sets me afire so that's not OK

If I could just figure out what's considered OK
then pretending I was OK
I could be saying things that they felt were OK
Then they could decide I was OK
and let me out to be OK
And I could do things that would make me OK
to get along with people that are *really* OK

Now . . .

Just what exactly is meant when we say OK?
And what do they mean when they say we're OK?
Does anyone care what makes us OK?
Just who decides what is OK?
Is the person who decides what's OK OK?

Does he consider himself OK?
Could we know if this person was really OK
when he decided what was OK?
And what if this person really wasn't OK
when he showed us the light as to what was OK?
Does this mean we all get to choose
what we think is OK?

If this the case, I know I'm OK
You can get my bags now, I'm off to be OK
In a world full of people who are also OK
As long as they don't try to figure out
what others mean by OK
and settle with whatever they think is OK

OK?

Kathy Held

Maybe I Should Get Fat

I feel like you don't love me
anymore
it's like you've accepted
and expected
my presence
like before . . .

When I searched deep inside
and uncovered my heart
I found it had
a crack,
much like the one
on the kitchen wall

I feel like the kitchen wall
standing here
cracked
and
alone

If I could search deep inside
and uncover your heart
Would I find a crack
or too much plaster
that you applied
to harden and hide

I feel like getting fat
then I would have
a reason
for your lack of
attention and
loving looks
gentle words
passionate kisses

Oh, how I've missed them
I've learned to survive
without them
except that . . .
I yell too much
cry too much

And you . . .
do you just sit there
and yell too much
and cry too much too?

Maybe I should get fat.

Nancy Schram

Self Portrait in a Hand Dryer Nozzle

Their dinner date was going splendidly.
He had worried about lulls in conversation,
But discovered they had much in common.
And he was on a roll,
His wit never sharper.
But he had to excuse himself.

The men's room gleamed
In the fluorescent light,
Silent, empty, dazzling
The porcelain and tile shone.
The stainless steel sparkled.
The mirrors magnified the brilliance.
All was spotless.

He stepped up to the bright white urinal,
Large fresh pink mints, no cigarette butts,
Aware that any mistake
Would speak volumes on his khaki pants.

He waited that extra time
After shaking, before tucking.
But fate had been plotting against him.
Above, a stainless steel apparatus
That released the cleansing waters
Into the urinal
Was building up condensation.
And while he paused
To be certain of no drips,
It was forming its own.

As he tugged at his zipper,
A drop descended like a bomb,
Exploded in a puddle atop the urinal,
And splattered in the groin area of his trousers.
He looked down, then up,
Then closed his eyes trying to ignore the pain.

Washing his hands mechanically,
He wondered how long he would have to stay
Till the spots disappeared.

While he rubbed his hands gently,
As instructed, under the hand drier,
And stared at his misshapen image in the nozzle,
He was struck by a curious and creative thought.
Could not this hand dryer
Be used to dry more than hands?

He hit the button again with his elbow,
Stood on tiptoes, pinched his pants
Away from his groin into a little tent
And drew it and himself and his groin
As close to the nozzle as possible.

This was no time to contemplate possibilities
Other than drying those damned spots.
And it did seem to be working.

He elbowed the button again and read,
"Medical tests prove that electric drying
Minimizes the possibilities of disease."

Under the hot whoosh of the hand dryer
He never heard the door open.

Steve Tighe

The Raveno Ballroom

or just the raveno
it was bought at an auction
by my grandpa george
i was named after him except
my dad forgot a birth
certificate is a legal document
and just put down geo
it was named after Lawrence
Ducal's Red Ravens the house big band
before that it was the Valley Gardens
a speak-easy in the early 30's
it was painted white then with
fake palm trees inside Ducal took
over in the 40's took out the palm trees
and put in beer but besides blowing
for the Ravens he played with the
chicago boys and ended up in the joint

my mom's dad was at the estate sale
and added a bar to his cemetary
and construction business he brought in
rock and roll bands and the Raveno became
the place to be for the next twenty years
there'd be a line of people outside
the door waiting to get in if someone left
my dad met my mom there and never left
taking over after my grandfather died
they began having weddings and other sorts
of parties along with the bands
and they painted it barn red
people began calling it the hotdog
because of its length and color

it's still red today and my friend's parents
are having their anniversary parties there
the place where they held their wedding
twenty-five years ago the place they met
thirty years ago
it's still there at the intersection of Highway
114 and breezewood lane in between 45 & 41
a big red flat barn god sat on

Geo

