



Quercus

And now
abideth
Faith, Hope,
LOVE,
these three;
but the greatest
of these
is Love.

10 Quercus years

Quercus publishes poetry, fiction, plays, and artwork by St. Ambrose University students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Address contributions and submissions to: *Quercus*, c/o Carl Herzig, St. Ambrose University, 518 W. Locust St., Davenport, Iowa 52803 or email cherzig@saunix.sau.edu.

Bill Lafever
Corinthians

2000, graphic art, 5.5 inches x 8 inches

Quercus

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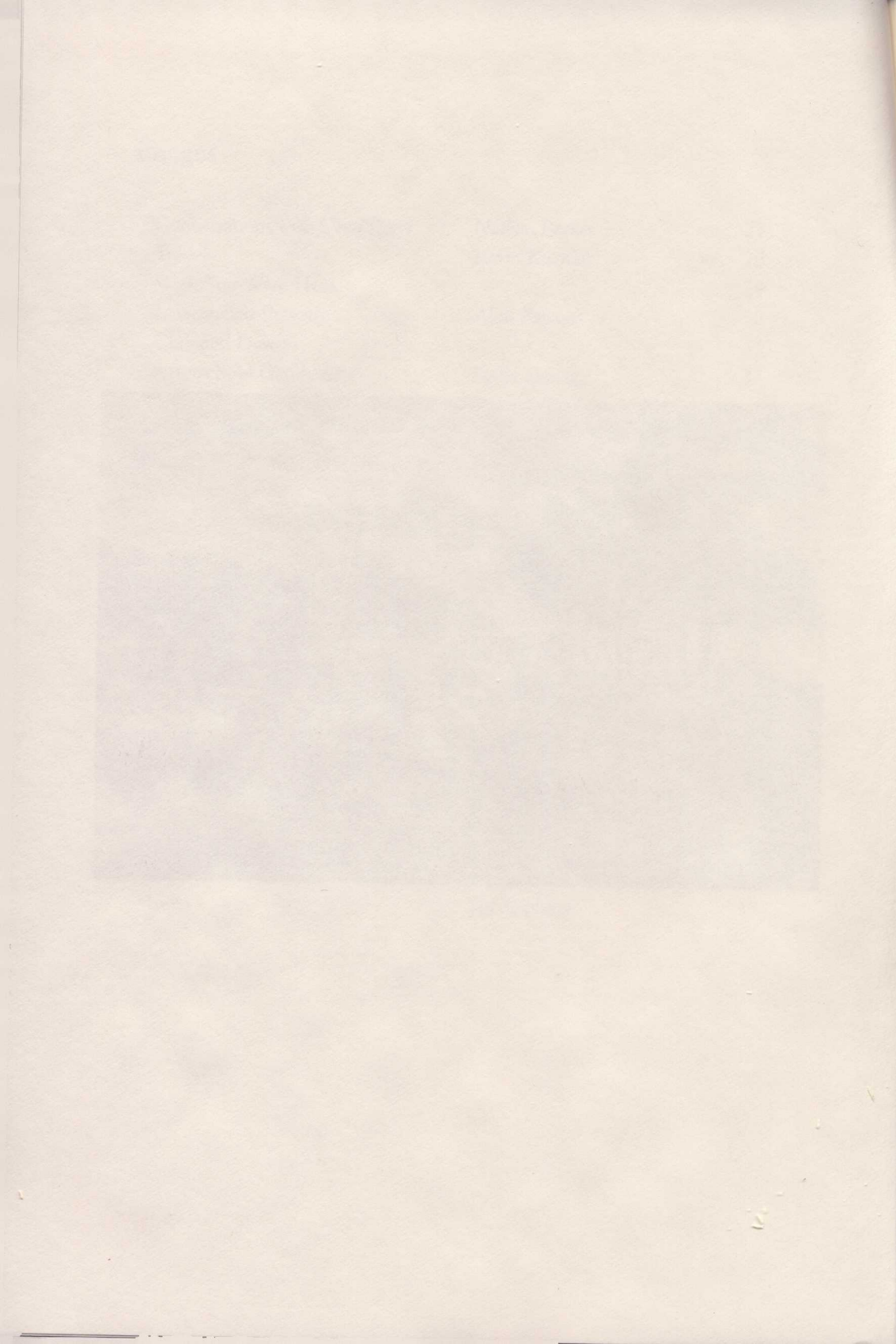
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cover image
Carl Herzig
Vrindavan Parikrama
2000, photograph
4 inches x 6 inches

intro image
Pat Collins
Tow Boats at Lock 14
2000, pen and ink
9.75 inches x 6.625 inches

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Wisconsin Hills

These old Wisconsin hills lead me away
Down ageless trails on a legless journey.
Hundreds of crows fly overhead at dusk
Not in a flock but strung out
Like someone on dope.
Hidden in shadows are coyotes, deer
And a menagerie of creatures
Too subtle for the clumsy human eye.
The hills lead me away on and on
Toward a distant red dawn
Breaking on an eastern ridge.

—Gerald McConoughey '62

Apart

I begin I must retrain my brain. There is nothing new only to grasp cold fragments that must continue to be used in another way as they have not vanished from the frontier on which thought meets action, although their home and true potential is unbeknownst to me as it has flittered into obscurity and would have taken these morsels away were it not for their hunger of these trifles, strong as it is yielded this mere part-time work, incomplete existence. Is life fragmentary in disconnection; they lost coupling which enforces the outcast, the compeence inscribed in existence.

When a piece becomes a piece is a piece a whole in itself or is it forever reprobated to be just part? Its existence is conditional, would seem to depend on its lack of a whole. The entirety of the rest appears to be incomplete as a chunk or a sliver is missing gone, omitted or disregarded, is that what makes the difference in the absolute nature of the whole as it is incapable of continuation, as a gear has flown out of place and action is cancelled because everything else would perform insanely their molded metal tasks?

Soft marshmallowy commissioning, can it squeeze out space still warm for return? Is it even still a piece if its place is gone? The bed is kept warm by division longing for an integrity of the whole. Kindling desperately spread on the ashes of worth.

Retreat impossible, for the new its own requital. If learned now, pulses of knowing throb from cold piece scars, what perception of being whole landed save the sole perceived?

—*Dawn Feddersen*

Uncertainty is that which causes
restless, tossed nights
much more so than
fragmentary work
coarse words
inflamed thoughts.

I've been told to trust him
and I have
sightlessly
until questions scorched my lips
clarity clouded
arms outreached propelled my body spinning
all navigable sights were lost.

He is. That I cannot deny.
Unsure where he ceases and we begin,
what is marked by man's hand
and what flows directly from him
compels me to ask the unanswerable.

Were he to stand before us
would he recognize that which
bears his name?

—*Laura Ernzen* '99

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—*Laura Ernzen '99*

Confronting with confidence
oftentimes makes a perceived block
give way

Certain times
innocence in regard to the meeting itself
can work

Still
other times can be complicated by an overture
of shit

(

Chance the determining factor
as to who what where &
how impacts

Why the question
that begets inaction & should be skipped
in queries

)

So to truly make headway
one must tread very lightly
in spirit

With full recognizance
of the fact that blocks of most kinds
are weightless

—*Matt Gannon*

Small Town Excitement

People used to tell me that nothing exciting ever happened in small towns like Viola, and I believed that until Wednesday July 18, 1943, a day I will always remember.

I had just turned twelve, too old for toys and too young to get a job, so I spent most of my summer days at my dad and uncle's garage, located near the main intersection. It was about 9:30 a.m. and dad had just returned from the post office with his copy of the *Chicago Tribune*. I think he was the only one in town who subscribed to it. After he read it from cover to cover and satisfied himself that Colonel McCormick and his righteous journalists had made Illinois safe for Republicanism, he went back to work on a car in the back room. I grabbed the paper and sat down to read my favorite comic strip: Dick Tracy. Then I turned to the Editorial page and attempted to read it. It took some years for me to realize that this was why I had become a life-long Democrat.

Suddenly my reading was interrupted by an alien sound—POP, POP POP, POP. It didn't sound like a car backfiring so I ran out the door and looked around the intersection. Then I heard Miss Mary Frances, the bank teller, running down the street screaming hysterically, "They robbed the bank, they robbed the bank!" This managed to arouse the town marshal, Scrooge Magrew (who came by his name legitimately), from his easy chair in front of the garage. He loped across the street toward the bank, drawing his snub-nosed .38 revolver as he went. He took aim at some unseen target and shot off two rounds. Then I saw what he was shooting at . . . A blue 1937 Dodge came roaring down the street, skidded around the corner, and headed south on Route 67. Whatever his shortcomings, Scrooge could shoot accurately because the Dodge had clouds of steam pouring from the front. He had hit the radiator!!!!

All this commotion had brought Dad and my uncle out of the back room. My Uncle John (we called him Sam) ran to his Huppmobile and jumped in with Dad close behind.

"Dad, Dad," I yelled, "You don't have a gun." He wheeled around and ran past me into the garage office as he yelled to Sam, "Wait 'til I get the over and under." He quickly grabbed the double-barreled 16-gauge shotgun with the .38-caliber rifle beneath and hopped in the front seat of the Huppmobile. Dad yelled at me, "Watch the garage but don't pump any gas."

My uncle hit the gas pedal and away they went after the bank robbers. Later on, Dad told me what had happened next. . . . Sam yelled, "How many shells did you bring?" Dad yelled

back, "Shells, shells; I didn't bring any. We don't have any because we've never been held up." Sam responded with a sigh, "I guess we'll just have to fake it."

Then Dad said he saw the bank robbers' car about a mile ahead—it was on its side in the ditch across the road from Bill Russell's house. Uncle John came up behind it and slammed on the brakes as he and Dad jumped out and he yelled, "Throw out your guns and don't try any funny stuff" (He had seen a lot of Edward G. Robinson movies). Dad had the over and under on his shoulder and made some threatening noises, too. (He didn't tell what he said but I think it was some choice cuss words.)

The two robbers climbed slowly out of the Dodge through the left front window and leaned against the bottom of the car. They had some bruises and scratches but they were able to walk. Dad said he herded them into the back seat of the Huppmobile and they drove back to Viola. He didn't cover them with the over and under . . . he was afraid they could see it was too rusty to shoot so he kept both of their revolvers on them. The robbers didn't say a word. I guess Dad and Uncle John really had them scared.

As they came back to the downtown area, people started blowing their car horns and yelling. Uncle John had the biggest grin I had ever seen. Dad was waving one of the revolvers out the window. By now the State Troopers had their car parked in the middle of the intersection and were talking to possible witnesses. Miss Mary Frances had calmed down and was talking a blue streak. And of course, Scrooge Magrew was telling anyone in hearing how he had managed to stop the robbers. But when Dad and Uncle John pulled up with the bank robbers everybody ran over to see them instead. And of course Minnie Lewis was right there with note pad and pencil preparing her account for the *Times Record*.

Nobody was paying any attention to me so I hopped on my bike and rode toward home. I got there just as my mother was coming home from Augustana College where she was taking teacher courses at summer school. As she got out of her car she asked me if anything exciting had happened that morning.

I casually replied, "Two guys robbed the bank but Dad and Uncle John caught them and turned them over to the State Police."

"Bobby, Bobby, don't you dare repeat that. After all, I am a school teacher. What would people think?" she scolded.

As I got back on my bike, I thought to myself . . . well, it could have been true.

—Bob Schaechter '53

There was a man with a crooked arm that wasn't so cute but gave off charm. People noticed him everywhere he would go but if it was for his charm or his arm he did not know. He always wanted to straighten out that crooked arm of his. He would lay awake and pray that change would come to him. If he could start out fresh with a normal man's arm he could one day be accepted and run the family farm. But alas he realized that a crooked arm it would always be and a crooked arm others would always see. He later realized one sleepless night that he was much more than a bend at his side. He was charm, arm, bend, and what he could and could not hide. So forget the farm, forget the arm, and forget the crooked ties that bind. Remember the charm, embrace the arm, and straighten out your mind.

—*John Stender*

Burning, Sighing

Dark and wide with open arms
the silent mother calls her son.
Dust to mud, the ashes cold,
the golden blossoms floating down
her bosom till time's delta.

Her currents chilled run deep and I
forget the names that I have worn—
the aging faces, prison floor
that housed our fears—and float, borne on
our mother who will make us well,

embrace us in her shadowed groves,
caress us in white swaddling clothes
that, licked with flames and washed
in blood, had bound the skin and flesh—the home
until the hammer cracked the skull—

and spilled the brain
and crushed the bone
and under sky released
the soul,

and Mother Ganga

takes it all.

—*Carl Herzig*

Television-blinded children cry in the dark,
In search of answers they'll never find.
Playing with voodoo dolls and bewitched by
Bloody corpses, they watch, they see.
Prayers of the dead clawing their minds with
Steal nails and flames.
Wishes for wealth and fame
Flow from their throats.
They sit and play doctor
Under the front porch stairs.

—*Dave Morehead*

death valley days

---- Original Message ----

- > Date: Tue, 15 Aug 2000 16:28:39
- > From: Carol Farwell <ziplockd@excite.com>
- > To: <thetick@aol.com>
- > Subject: death valley days
- >
- >
- > holy kukumunga bob,
- > today's temperature is 90 degrees and the humidity is 90%.
- > according to channel six's "heat index," that makes the temp
- > feel like 122 degrees! so i guess you win best weather for today? i
- > was in 122 degree weather for real once. wanna hear about it?
- oh, well i'm
- > tellin anyway.
- > when i was 16, mom, dad, mary lou and i took a trip to los angeles
- > to visit uncle bud and aunt phylis. on the way home, we drove
- > thru needles, calif and it was so hot we had to stop on the
- > ariz/calif border because all of us were getting sick. but stopping
- > by the colorado river was a bad idea because of humidity. we
- > were literally getting cooked. dad got us back to needles where
- > we checked into a motel for the afternoon and night. mom and
- > dad went to sleep in the air conditioned room. lou and i hit the
- > swimming pool. that night after the sun went down, dad found a
- > place in town that sold car window air conditioners (the '59 ford
- didn't
- > have air . . . remember it? it was grey) and had it installed. the
- > next morning we started up out of the desert valley. (isn't that
- > death valley?) glorious cool air streaming in mom's shotgun
- > window. ahhh. hadn't driven for very long until the mountainous
- > skies got black, golf ball size hail pounded dents in almost every
- > car but ours and the temperatures dropped from 122 to 40
- > degrees . . . frigid air now screaming in mom's window. poor little
- > shit was getting frostbite. we were ALL freezing! turn the air off
- > you say? great idea. but no can do. you know ernie. sometimes
- > stuff didn't work out for him. COULDN'T turn that damn thing
- > off. couldn't even change the fan speed. mom started stuffing
- clothes
- > into the vents.
- > nothing could deter that unit from cooling. the hail stopped
- > most people. there were cars, campers, and semi trucks all along

> the shoulders. but dad kept driving at a slow, steady pace and
> that may be why we didn't get car damage. while he was busy
> with the storm, us girls were busy emptying suitcases dreaming of
> parkas and mittens . . . anything to warm us the hell UP! teeth
> chattering.
> it seemed like an eternity, but probably not, 'til the storm passed.
> we, and everyone who was headed east, pulled over at a roadside
> cafe. we congregated at the counter stools and in the booths to
> share war stories. everyone that is except dad. he was outside
> yanking that hundred dollar air conditioner outta the damn
> window. think i'll call mary lou. see if she remembers.
later
> buddy, carol ann.

—Carol Farwell

This Year's Model

Rows of red-enameled lawnmowers
unscuffed by backyard fences
and rock-bordered shrubbery
stake out their concrete turf
like sentries firmly rooted
but ready to roll, self-propelled,
at the twist of a key.
Pushed by enterprising kids,
the forerunners of these models
once blazed through the lawns
of couples swinging on porches,
coughing out clumps of grass
like cowpies in their wake,
making sauce of fallen apples.
With their frayed-rope starters
and engines out in the open,
those dynamos wore their coats
of lawn dust like a second skin.
Here in the garden department,
engines wrapped in black cowls,
white-fabric clipping catchers
cradled between shiny handles,
this new line is all decked out,
priming, with no place to go.

—Jeff T. Dick '77

Sitting on the Porch

sitting on the porch
watching the cars pass by
days turn into weeks
in a matter of minutes

mesmerized by the ebb and flow

I am sucked in

flashes of blue, red—to purple

now the cars speed past

i am in the driver's seat

my hands on the wheel

adrenaline pumping

the vibration rushing

through my body

i need this feeling

this is freedom

hearing another horn
i'm twenty feet away
sitting on my porch
i've been here too long

letting my mind wander
to pointless places
wasting time

—Dan Griffin

He who is the devil advocates
everything
locating inner highways of thought
in the sky
bringing the traffic onto his highway
below the ground

He remains between the flow
of cars
eyeing the separate directions yet
staying neutral
never compromising
the yellow line

He stands his ground and
collects stares
from the passing cars
basking in the attention

What a devil

—*Dan Griffin*

Blackout

Flashbacks of all the endless hours of watching Looney Tunes and Tom and Jerry with white-flashing starbursts spewing out images of memories past—long since I can remember—but how should I know, I'm sleeping, right? and the noises all around me are the beeps of road-runners and the roars are the coyote's stomach growling as rabbit (fat from carrots) walks across the road and we all laugh together, especially when Tom and Jerry both stop in mid-violent smash to ask, "Do you know your name?" and I think the whole time that this is a crazy question, of course I know my name, so I just nod and say, "Yes," without noticing that they want me to tell them, and my whole world shakes as they keep saying, "Andy . . . Andy . . . Can you hear me Andy?" and I come to notice that they knew my name all along and they were just tricking me (which I really don't like) so I swat at my friendly foes for making me think that I didn't know my own name, but it's gentle and they know this and tell me, "You're alright. Everything's alright," and I believe them because I have, after all, grown up with them.

—Andy Stamer

Life as Freedom Demanded

Leaving life's struggle of set ways and planned-out futures,
We decided to venture into the realm of nothingness at its best,
We knew no rules, no right, and no wrong,
We were completely free to make our own reality and we did.
We experienced no yesterday and heard of no tomorrow, life was
one continuous day,
We understood no limits and welcomed everything that came our
way,
We realized that our lives were now guided by the rhythm of the
moment and not the constant search of success
We found our freedom from the mind through the mind.

It was a time of chaos, peace, and vengence on life as we knew it,
We set out to see worlds collide and the glass of normality broken,
We felt no problems and we accepted no recognition,
We honored nothing and everything in the same.
We were not anyone to everyone else but were everything to each
other,
We escaped our past knowledge and traded it for a clean slate,
We believed there were no meanings, only feelings of the new,
We understood the power of our surroundings, but respected its
tranquility also,
We were not present to make waves, but only to sit and watch the
possibility of our lives reflect off the water,
Living stories untold . . . it was only the beginning.

—Ryan McNeill

Existence and Attributes

Attributes are like containers,
Meant for separating things.
Qualities of things are secondary.
Look to the thing itself.

When you look at yourself,
Look first to existence, and last to attributes.
When you are unsure which phase of life,
Which aspect of self, is really you,
then look beyond phases and aspects
Into what is enduring.

Enduring is a two-edged sword.
It means that which always exists.
The other edge of that (s)word
Means putting up with the unbearable.
When you look to the enduring,
Look to that which always exists.

When you look to that which exists,
With what do you look?
Are the five senses enough?

Your time here is limited, my child.
Do not go down every dead end,
But choose a sure road,
And along it learn to sing and dance,
To wield the sword, to love.

Amid many things, perceive unity,
And in unity, many aspects.
There is a dimension of experience
For which we hunger,
But we do not have the right tools to
Perceive and satisfy that hunger.

We may exhaust ourselves in sex,
Sports, and revelry, but even in that,
There is something left unaddressed,
As if the meaning of life lies beyond life,
Acting upon us, but itself unacted upon.

Luisa was saying, "and if you finish that off there will be some fluffy *baba* for this happy day."

Taking small, measured steps, she moved, as was her morning routine, to give her mother a kiss on the cheek. The countess leaned over to accommodate her daughter. Anna thought her mother the most beautiful woman she had ever seen. Her father's chair was empty, so she went directly to her own place. Carefully, she positioned the package next to her plate. Freed of her treasure, she clambered up onto her chair.

Luisa was just placing Anna's breakfast before her, humming very prettily. Anna was determined to eat every bite, for she could smell the delicious iced *baba*. Where is it? she wondered. The light, sugary cake with its hidden raisins was her favorite.

Lifting the first spoonful of egg to her mouth, the girl noticed that her mother's violet-gray eyes were locked upon the red package. . . . And that her smile had died away.

A little bell of alarm sounded in Anna's head. She put down her spoon. Her immediate thought was for support. "Where's Papa?"

"He's gone off on business," the countess replied. "Always some farm business."

Her mother's tone frightened the child. The countess' eyes moved from the package to her.

"Now what have we here, Anna Maria Berezowska? Is this your new doll?"

"No, Mama."

"I see. I thought not. The package seems neither the correct shape nor size. Where is it, then?"

Anna's lips were dry. "I . . . I didn't choose a doll."

The countess' mouth tightened. "But your father took you all the way to the capital yesterday for the expressed purpose of buying you a doll, one with a painted face, glass eyes, and real hair. Were there none to be found in all of Warsaw?"

"Oh, yes, there were many dolls, Mama, only—"

"Only what?"

"Only I chose this."

"You did, did you? You were quite deliberate, then, in going against my wishes. You were to have chosen a doll."

Anna didn't know what to say. Her mother did not raise her voice to her, never had. But Anna recognized the seriousness in her tone and steady gaze. Her little limbs trembled; she would not cry.

"Would you leave us now, Luisa?" the countess asked, smiling.

Anna's heart dropped. She had seen that smile before. She had learned that it wasn't a real smile. She longed to have old Luisa stay but knew to say nothing.

The maid curtsied, then crossed the room toward the kitchen door. She smiled at Anna, a smile that was a smile. The girl knew Luisa meant to give her courage, but it didn't help much.

"Open it up," the countess said, once the maid had vanished behind the swinging door. "Let's see what can be more amusing to a little girl than a new doll."

"Shouldn't we wait for Papa?"

"Open it, Anna Maria." The countess was not to be put off by the cleverness of a five-year-old.

Anna had been so caught up in the wonder of the gift that she had not thought about her mother's reaction. She started to tear clumsily at the well-wrapped package. Her hands were sweating.

It had been her first trip to the capital. Wide-eyed, she had sat on her father's lap as the carriage rattled along for what seemed hours and hours. They entered the suburb of Praga, then across the River Vistula, the wheels vibrating on the wooden bridge, then clacking along the cobbled streets of Warsaw. It was the most amazing thing, this city, like something from one of her books. "Oh, Father!" she cried. There passing before her was the Royal Castle. "Does the King live there? Truly?" Her father was smiling. "He does, indeed." They passed the Cathedral of Saint Jan, and the city mansions of the nobles—the *very* rich ones.

Magnates, her father called them. "Why aren't you a magnate?" she asked. "I have all the wealth I need," he laughed, hugging her to him. In the castle's outer courtyard the two of them craned their necks up at Zygmunt's Column. The bronze figure of the long-dead King held a cross in one hand, a sword in the other—like some warrior saint. He had been the one, her father told her, that had moved the capital from Krakow to Warsaw. Years later she would remember the Royal Castle as merely massive and daunting, but the memory of her father's embrace—his strength, his warmth, and the faint scent of a shaving soap—these she would carry with her always.

They continued then to the Market Square, a glittering honeycomb of shops and stalls. And Anna did see dolls that she liked, too, dolls of every description and recent style. Beautiful dolls. But once her eyes settled on that sparkling object she was now unwrapping, nothing else would do. "Is this what you truly wish, little Ania?" her father asked, using her diminutive. She looked up at him, realizing at once that her wish was his wish. "Oh, yes!" she cried. It was then—in the enchanting city of Kings—that the notions of birthdays and wishes and magic were sealed together in her mind, it seemed, forever.

The red paper was tearing away at one corner, then another. Something under it flashed and gleamed.

When the paper would not pull wholly free, the countess became impatient, moving swiftly to the girl's aid.

In moments it stood stripped of its wrappings. The translucent object seemed now to draw in the sun from every direction. It stood before the countess as if pulsing and glowing with warm life. The molding and cutting of the crystal was exquisite. Secured in a crystal base, the delicately carved legs seemed to thrust the body forward. The wings were extended as if for flight, the beak lifted in anticipation.

"What is *this*?" the countess cried.

Anna could not tell whether her mother was happily surprised, puzzled, or angry. Still, her own fears momentarily disappeared at the sight of the marvel. "Oh, it's a bird, Mother. A crystal dove! Isn't it beautiful?"

"I can see for myself it's a bird, Anna Maria. But why should you or any little girl want such a thing? . . . And in place of the doll of your choice!"

"Because it's so pretty, Mama. You know I love birds. I've always wished for one, but Papa says they are meant to be free. This is a bird I can keep. See how it sparkles. And . . . it has magic!"

"Magic?"

"Oh, yes."

"What magic?"

"See how the light goes through it? It makes colors just like a rainbow."

"Much like a prism," the countess conceded.

"A what?"

"Never mind. Go on."

"Well, the merchant said that's a sign of magic. He said this bird will carry me anywhere I want to go. Even to the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow!"

"What a lot of bombast! The magic was not in the bird but on that wily merchant's tongue. I'll wager he wheedled a pretty price out of your father for this bit of nonsense!"

Anna felt her heart fluttering against her chest. She looked up into her mother's face, which seemed to have reddened slightly. "Oh, but Father . . ." Anna's words died away when the countess lifted a forefinger in a shushing motion.

"Anna Maria, darling, it was your *mother* who suggested the doll for your birthday, was it not? Don't you think your mother knows a bit more than you?"

Anna held back the tears. If only she could explain her love for the bird. She *had* tried, but her mother did not understand.

"You do get the strangest notions, dearest," her mother was saying, "and you just don't let go. Yes, you can look at the bird, but

you can *play* with the doll."

Was there a softening to her tone? Anna dared to hope so.

Seizing the crystal bird, the countess carried it across the room and placed it on the uppermost shelf of the china cabinet, well out of Anna's reach. "It'll stay here until I decide what's to be done with it. If you don't want a doll—"

"But I have Buttons!"

The countess turned around. "An old rag doll!"

"I don't need another—"

"And so you won't have another, either. Perhaps you will just do without a present this year. Do you have any idea how you've upset your mother?"

Anna stared. Her mother's lips seemed to thin, then disappear.

"Do you?"

Anna couldn't speak.

"I see you do not. I'm going upstairs to lie down. Finish your breakfast." The countess left the dining room.

The girl did slowly finish her porridge and egg, cold as they were. As she ate, her wide, dry eyes never strayed from the cabinet that held the bird captive.

"Ah, Anna," Luisa chimed as she came in from the kitchen and bustled toward the sideboard, "I can see you're ready for your fluffy *baba*, my little birthday girl!"

Anna, however, slipped quietly from the room before the maid turned around with the cake. She was halfway up the stairs when she heard Luisa calling her.

She did not turn back.

* * *

"What is it, little green eyes?" her father asked. He dismounted and stood tall before her. "Have you been crying? Why?"

Anna had been in the stable for over an hour awaiting his return. Risking everything, she had crept out of her room, down the servants' stairway, and through the kitchen to the back door. Stealthily, she crossed the yard and entered the stable. She waited nervously. When she was in such a state as this, she would thrust the extended fingers of both hands back through her long brown hair in a brushing movement, rudely simulating the soothing strokes the maid employed in brushing her hair. But today this oddly nervous motion of the hands agitated more than soothed. Even the presence there of the wonderfully majestic horses failed to divert her attention.

"Anna," her father pressed, lifting her up onto his empty saddle. "You've been pulling at your hair again. . . . Tell me what the matter is."

She found herself looking down into her father's face. It was the first time she had sat on a horse and she felt her heart racing. The great animal stirred slightly beneath her, like some mountain come alive. It was a thrilling moment, but she was not about to lose thought of the bird. She let the story spill from her, holding back tears. She had done all of her crying earlier in her room; she would not cry in front of anyone, not even in front of her father.

"This is serious," Count Berezowski announced at the end of the account.

"Must I give it up, Father? The crystal bird, must I?"

"Did your mother say you must?"

"No, she didn't say so."

"But you think she means as much?"

Anna nodded. She bit her lower lip. One hand moved unconsciously toward her hair.

"Well, then, Anna," her father said, gently catching and restraining her hand, "we must not lose hope. I'll see what I can do."

"You'll talk to her?"

"Oh, I suspect she'll talk to me first," he laughed. "But, yes, I'll talk to her."

"Oh, thank you, Papa!"

"Come along, now." He lifted her down from the horse, so that his mouth was close to her ear when he said, "Sometimes you must put yourself in the way of destiny."

Anna's arms tightened around her father's neck. He smelled of the fields, another scent to lock away in her memory.

"There, there, no promises. And if we are successful, Ania, it might mean you may have to do something to please your mother. Or give up something."

"Oh, anything, I'll do anything."

"I'll see what I can do."

Somehow her father met with success, for when Anna awoke the next morning, it was to the sight of the crystal dove gleaming on the table beside her bed. She picked it up gently, as if it were alive, mesmerized at the rainbow she thought she saw within. It would be years before she would find out what had been yielded for the sake of the glass bird; years also before her father's brief and enigmatic philosophy would find resonance in Anna's mind: *Sometimes you must put yourself in the way of destiny.*

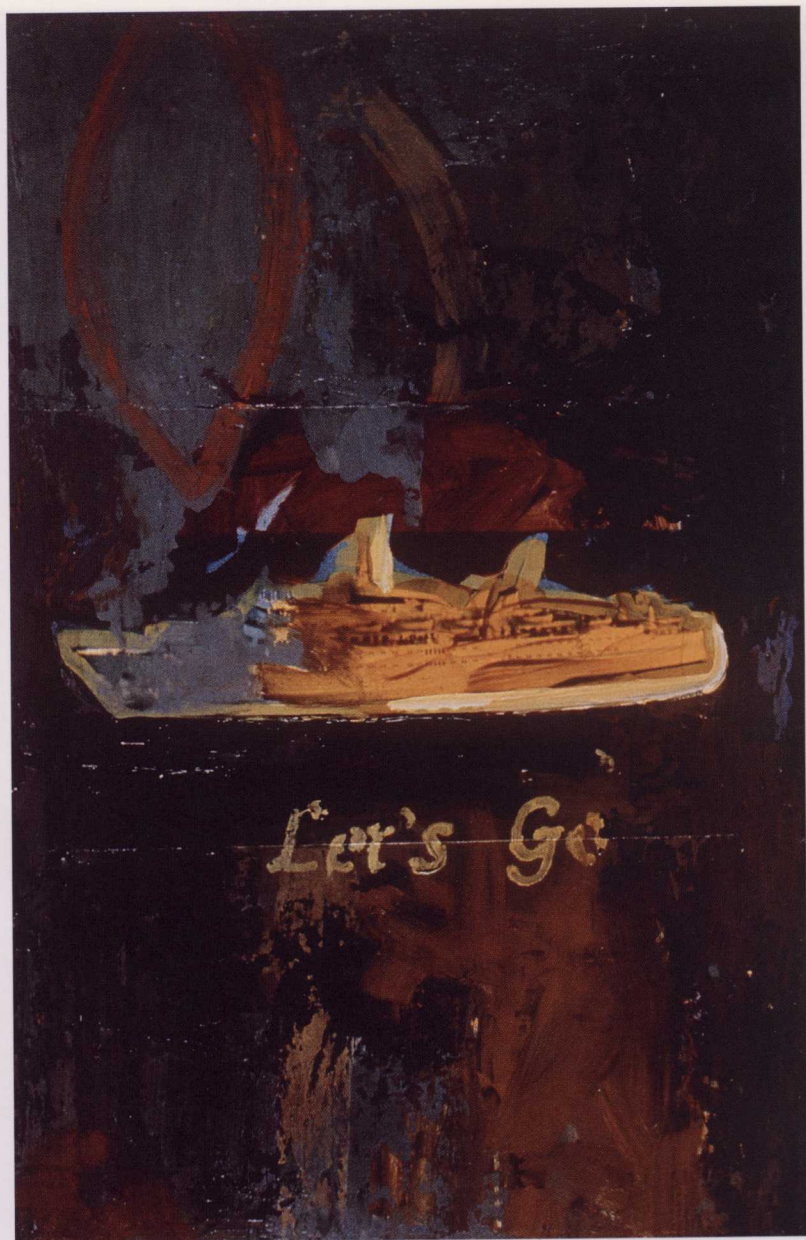
—James Conroyd Martin '69

"Sochaczew 1779" is the prologue from James Martin's novel, *Push Not the River*, Xlibris, 2000.



Nathan Becker '00
Conversations with Dead Poets

2000, graphic art, 8.5 inches x 11 inches



Karin Kuzniar '98
Travel

2000, oil and mixed media on masonite, 10 inches x 6.5 inches



Karin Kuzniar '98
Wish You Were Here

2001, oil on mixed media, 11 inches x 11.25 inches



Alan Parsons
Unattached Pressure

2000, oil on board, 24 inches x26 inches



Alan Parsons
Clamped Down

2000, oil on board, 24 inches x 26 inches



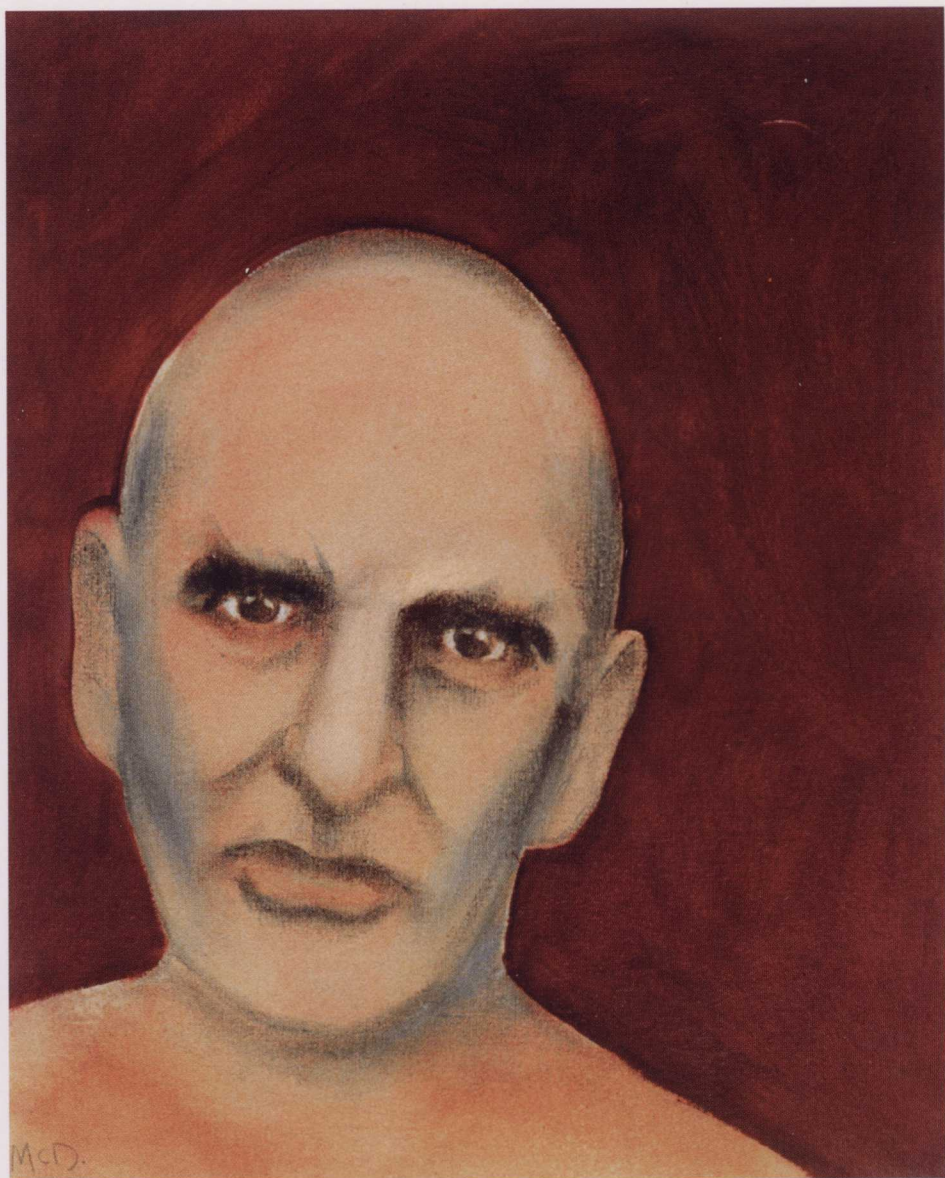
Stella Herzig
Afterschool Candystore: Kathmandu

2000, photograph, 6 inches x 4 inches



Jo Meister
Victims (AIDS)

2000, oil on canvas, 24 inches x 30 inches



David McDaniel '70
Anger (Larry Kramer)

1999, oil on canvas, 18 inches x 20 inches



David McDaniel '70
Another Spring

1999, oil on canvas, 23 inches x 26 inches



Carl Herzig
Sri Nityananda Abisheka

2000, photograph, 4 inches x 6 inches



Carl Herzig
Sri Nityananda

2000, photograph, 4 inches x 6 inches



Carl Herzig
Govardhana Fields

1999, photograph, 6 inches x 4 inches



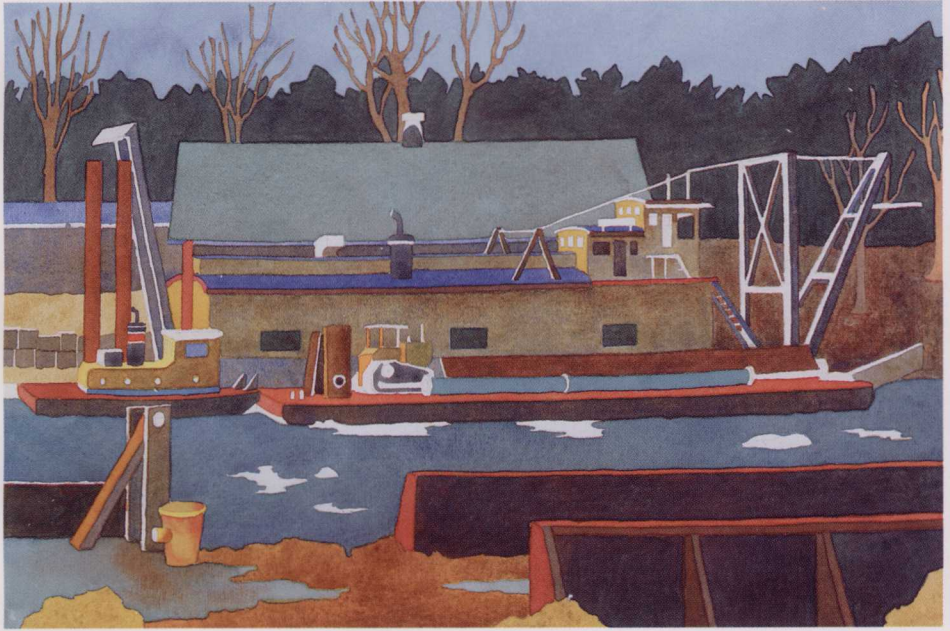
Carl Herzig
Yamuna Twilight

2000, photograph, 6 inches x 4 inches



Carl Herzig
Mayapur Paddies: Dawn

2000, photograph, 6 inches x 4 inches



Pat Collins
Lagoon at Lock and Damn 14

2000, watercolor, 19.75 inches x 12.625 inches



Leslie Bell '72
Along the Way

2000, oil on canvas, 30 inches x 36 inches



Leslie Bell '72
The Go-between

2000, oil on canvas, 30 inches x 36 inches



Kristin Quinn
Punchinello

2000, oil on canvas, 44 inches x 36 inches



Kristin Quinn
The Fata Morgana

2000, oil on canvas, 44 inches x 36 inches



Joan Johnson
Before the Storm

2000, oil on canvas, 30 inches x 24 inches



Emily Majeski
untitled

2000, oil on paper, 27.5 inches x 20 inches



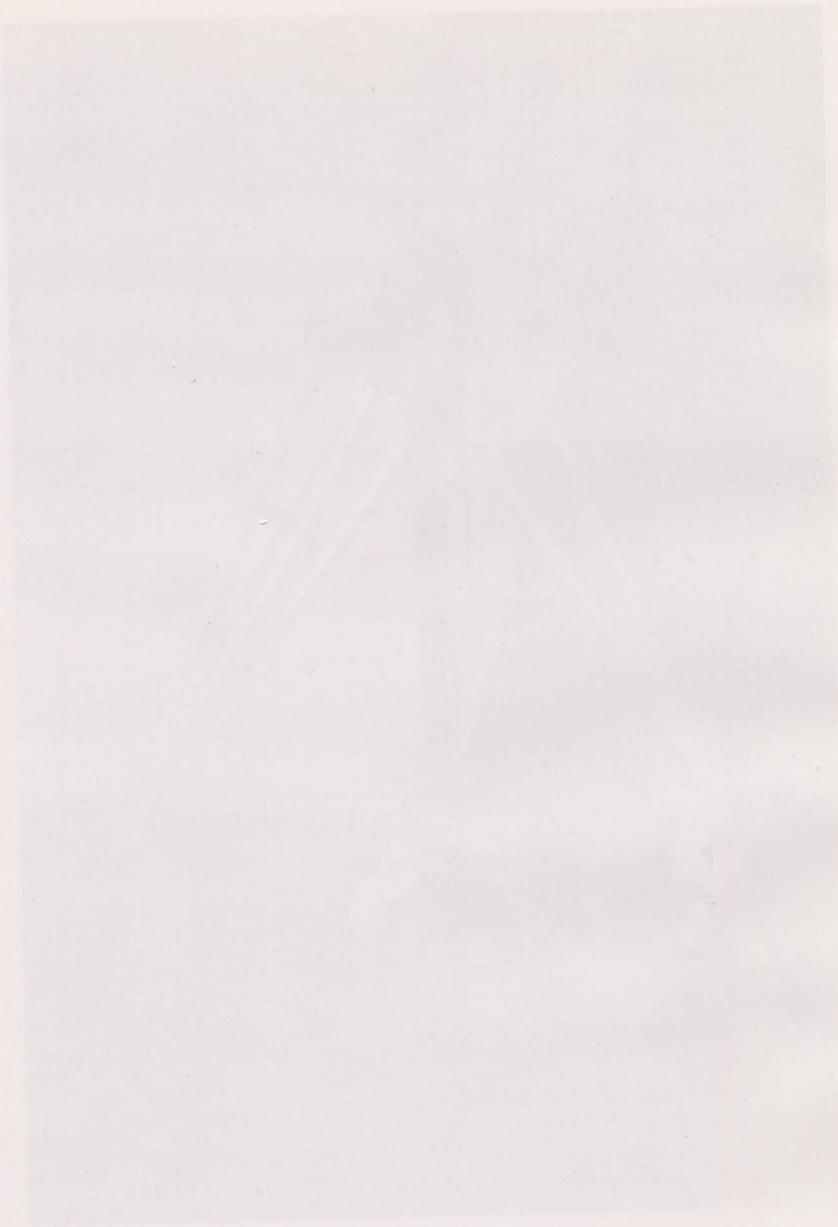
Jen Eckerman
Dancers #4

2000, oil on canvas, 16 inches x 20 inches



Ted Stephens
India

2000, silver gelatin print, 4 inches x 6 inches



Tal Stephens
India

1990, after return from 4 months in India

Today is Wednesday. Usually I dread Wednesdays, because Wednesday is the day of carnage, or that's what I call it anyway. It usually takes me all the days to the next Wednesday to recover from the previous Wednesday. Today will be different; today and every Wednesday is going to be a new kind of Wednesday. If all goes as planned Wednesday will be a day to celebrate rather than to mourn. Wednesday and every other day will be a day of completeness and harmony instead of shame and suicidal thoughts. Today, if all goes as planned, will end in a joyous announcement, followed by a joyous occasion; if all goes as planned, today will end in love united.

At 5:00 this morning I decided Wednesdays would never feel like the ones I've come to know in the past five years. From today on there will be a purpose to what I do on Wednesdays. My purpose from now on is to provide for a family that I will soon have, to put vegetarian meals on the table of my new suburban home, to make life better by providing more for the children I plan to have and the household I intend to run. From this moment on, God will see me as a workingman rather than a demon. He and I will both see there is a final justification to all of this madness. From now on there's something to smile about on Wednesday, rather than to cry about, but more than anything, I'm convinced the nightmares will end.

I've decided this won't be as intolerable as it once was. You'd figure after five years the pain this job brings would have dulled, and I would have turned into a careless murderer slashing the throats one by one down the line as worryless as an apple picker in an orchard, that I would figure it as a part of life, that I would view the lives I take as a need for human consumption, but I don't. I have never been able to justify what I do; I find it sinful and immoral but now, or soon for that matter, my job will serve a purpose. I will be responsible for someone's well being, and I plan to make her life well off and provide her with the things she deserves.

When I started working here I told Mr. Stangeti that this type of work wouldn't bother me, but I guess you never know what kind of effect it has on you until you actually take part in it. At the time, I was in desperate need of a job, and this one pays a lot more than you'd think. I did not anticipate the emotional stress that would come along with the work, but it's just the Wednesdays that really take a toll on me; the other days are just swine, which isn't as big of a deal to me for some reason. But Wednesday is lamb and veal day and something inside of me screams **WRONG WRONG WRONG**. I guess it must be some kind of intuition, or my conscious. I'm not sure because I've never really understood that kind of thing, but I

feel I'd better do something about it. That's why I plan on making Cassandra my wife, so I can share my earnings from this dreadful job with someone and something meaningful.

Well no more of this rambling and letting my thoughts get the best of me. The buzzer has rung, which means the shipment has arrived and I must locate the Crucifier.

The room is freezing like it always is. The temperature must be below 10 or so, much colder than usual today, or at least that's what it feels like. It's always the lambs first, then baby calves second. I'm not sure why; that's just the way Mr. Stangeti orders it done. Does he have something for the lambs I wonder? Why does he want them gone right away? Why can't the calves go first? Why doesn't he give the lambs the extra time?

Many people say that lambs and sheep are the dumbest animals alive, that they wouldn't escape even if you gave them the chance. I disagree: I believe the lambs as well as the calves are perfectly aware of what's going on and what their destiny holds. But they're not there to fight you or try to escape. No, they're there to teach you a lesson, they're there to try to bring out human compassion, or at least that's what I believe. They look at you straight in the eye the whole entire time, those adoring black eyes glossed over with sorrow and piercing your heart to let them go. They're there to prove you can be sensitive, that you can show you care . . . here I go again. Let's get this over with.

There they are, herded around one another to find warmth, only to be yanked one by one from their fluffy companions and hooked onto the belts where they hang waiting on the assembly line of death. They hang there a while longer than we'd both like, but it takes me a minute to compose myself and come to terms with what I'm about to do. My chest is caving, and I just do it. I slash away; one by one I slice their throats. I try to stare at their bellies and ignore their cries, but I've just done what I swore I wouldn't do, I swore I wouldn't, not on this day. I've made eye contact with number nine. The blood of number eight is all over his face and he's shivering with fear. "I'm sorry," I mumble to him and I try to show that I feel but he doesn't know, he doesn't see it in my face. I want to but I can't; I want to let him go, just this one, but I can't. He has nowhere to go; he's just a product in our eyes. And then before I know it, he's gone, too, and at this point I am numb. One by one I move down the line; the first seven have stopped screaming by now, they're gone. You know they live for awhile after you slice them, a short while, but they're still alive. Their necks are spewing blood all over themselves and their neighbors, but they're still aware of what's going on. Their loud cries decline to a whimper, their heads drop, and then they're gone; it's over.

Hi, thanks for coming, and welcome to my summer home. Yeah I got lucky with this property. It used to be some Indian preservation ground or some shit, I don't know, who knows, there's a lot of land and a big lake to park my boat. Anyway, come on in, I'll fix you a drink.

My wife's out getting her nails done or something. Ya know I try to tell her pretty nails aren't going to fix your big ass honey. Know what I mean?

Anyway, this is the kitchen; it never gets used. Nah, my wife doesn't cook or clean, she doesn't do much of anything. Yeah, we have these Polish broads come once a week to do the cleaning. One of 'em's pretty hot so sometimes I make it a point to be here to watch her scrub. One thing though, you gotta remember to lock up the valuables.

Oh yeah, how about that staircase? Isn't it a beaut? I had these Cambodian refugees plane all the wood for me. Practically for free. There's a whole family of 'em down the street, probably made 'em feel like home.

Hey what do ya say we refresh our drinks and take a seat on the deck?

Looks like the neighbors are out again, a little on the trashier side. But the son comes through with the nose candy whenever I need it.

And there's Max our dog. Don't worry, he can't leave the yard. We have one of those electric fences that gives him a slight shock if he gets out of bounds, probably works on small children too. Nah, it doesn't hurt 'im, just makes him walk crooked for awhile.

Yeah, ya like that hot tub? Maybe after a couple of these we could all hop in. Let's see how many of us are there, one two three four, ah it doesn't matter, we'll fit, might be a tight squeeze but I don't mind.

Seriously, as a man with a strong Christian background, I realize infidelity is a sin. That's why I only cheat when I'm out of town. So don't any of you girls try anything, unless you want to meet in Reno next weekend.

Ya see the way I look at it is I'm the moneymaker, so I decide who and what I want to do. When you make over 200,000K a year, big nuisances like wives and children become small ones that can be taken care of. Of course this means giving 'em money all the

damn time, but it also means keeping them off your back too. So you see its all about priorities!

Well, thanks for visiting my summer home. Sorry we couldn't visit longer, but I have an important client coming over. I hope I've given you all a good insight on what being part of corporate America can do for you. Don't get me wrong, it does help when your dad's CEO of the company, but don't sweat it, there's other ways to make it up that ladder. Just don't fuck it up with marriage and children, 'cause they just get in the way.

—Sam Saleb

Political Awakening:

George Wallace and the 1968 Presidential Campaign

The year 1968 was a watershed in American politics. The Vietnam war raged, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in April, and Robert Kennedy was assassinated in June. Americans began to outwardly distrust their government's leaders. For many of my generation, new messages and political remedies were sought. In the presidential election, Richard Nixon defeated Hubert Humphrey and George Wallace. Wallace, former governor of Alabama, had gained national stature as a staunch defender of segregation. He ran on a backstairs platform of racism and resentment. Wallace garnered almost 10 million votes, winning five states and 45 electoral votes. In the fall, during my salad days at St. Ambrose College, I was seeking policy explanations from all the presidential candidates. This search led me to a Wallace campaign rally and a brush with history.

On Monday evening, October 21, 1968, Wallace brought his presidential bandwagon to Moline, Illinois' Wharton Field House. His third-party candidacy attracted a constituency of mostly disgruntled Americans who opposed integration, liberal judges, antiwar protestors and big government intrusion. The field house was packed with 6,000 supporters and opponents. Outside, another 2,500 spectators listened to the political fray from loud speakers. The candidate charismatically bellowed themes that pleased his backers and outraged his foes. As anti-Wallace forces intoned "Sieg Heil, Sieg Heil," Wallace pointed to the hecklers and admonished them. Departing from his farm policy speech, he traded barbs, calling them "anarchists" and "militants," and said that they were draft-exempt while others were fighting in Vietnam. His face contorted with anger. As the local news cameras recorded their verbal exchanges, Wallace appeared to revel in the fight. His campaign was fueled by rage, and wily Wallace knew how to use the news media to his political advantage.

From the back of the field house came a muffled burst. According to an account in the next day's Davenport, Iowa, *Times-Democrat*, a minor tear-producing smoke agent had been released sending roughly 100 spectators scurrying to exits. Despite the increasing pandemonium, I felt passably secure seated with college chums atop a second tier of bleachers. Both the candidate and the chaos were center-stage. In front of us, a young man and woman eagerly joined the anti-Wallace chorus. Their repeated taunts attracted the attention of two young men, dressed in dark

suits with black arm bands, who inconspicuously made their way to our section. As the couple, unaware of their new neighbors, stood to taunt Wallace further, one of the men slammed his elbow into the young man's face. Blood spilled and a shoving match ensued. As the young woman started to raise her purse to strike the attackers, I instinctively lunged forward to intervene. Seconds later, police officers armed with night sticks began to untangle us. They managed to restore order, and we regained our seats. I squeezed between the young couple and their attackers. One of the attackers turned to me and snarled, "Anyone who boos when the Governor is speaking about communism will get the same treatment." I believed him. The attackers, I suspected, likely were members of the candidate's entourage.

Wallace concluded his remarks by righteously condemning the turmoil. He was adept at sending a message. It was a message of fear. As the crowd dispersed, in the evening's only ironic moment, the young woman turned to me and said, "thanks for shielding me from those guys, but I could have taken care of myself. I know judo." I did not know judo, but in Moline on that October evening long ago I did learn what a demagogue was.

Wallace's future presidential bids were cut short in 1972 by an attempted assassination. In later years, Wallace, confined to a wheelchair, admirably recanted his racial extremism. As well, he asked for and received forgiveness from civil rights leaders for his past deeds. Nonetheless, according to historian Dan Carter, Wallace's down home populist disdain for big government became the gospel of modern conservatism. In 1998, Wallace, 79, died in Montgomery, Alabama, a repentant disciple of the politics of massive resistance.

—David Balducchi '70

La Lluvia

It was summer school in Mexico, and I met her there
on the street built on the causeway where Alvarado
made his famous leap, to escape the vengeance
of the Aztecs in hot pursuit.

We made our escape that summer day by another route,
in my old Ford, from the City to Toluca, then down the cobbled road
to Ixtapan de La Sal, the sulphur springs.

Nightfall caught us on the road—so did the rain.
Rain in droplets, then in trickles, then in torrents crashing down
on the windshield and the roof, and a din of devils wailed
in the slashing wind.

I was young and daring and she was dark and pretty,
and we laughed—we laughed at the rain that
turned the road to river and pounded, pounded, pounded
on the roof with angry fists.

We stopped then at Tenango, for some drink to keep us warm.
“Moscos, numero cuatro is what you need,” the shopkeeper said,
laughing at our plight, “One drink, you live 150 years!”
So we drank the Moscos and laughed and squeezed each other,
two wet sardines, and drove off in the rain.

Next day the sun came early, and the steaming of the springs
joined with the steaming of the verdant valley,
Green, green, lush and growing, just like us.

After that we parted and that was that.
That was that, but all these years the rain,
the cobbled road, the laughter, and the Moscos Number 4
were something I knew we shared, that only we two knew,
each of us eternally youthful in the memory of the other.

I wrote to her not long ago, upon a whim,
but the memory was betrayed.
“We regret to inform you,” the short reply began.
“She died ten years ago, in India, near the sacred river's bank.”
The shopkeeper lied.
The guarantee was bad.

The memory of the rain dangles in the wind,
from only one end of the thread.

—Ralph G. Smith '47

Meaningful Relationships

Does the road listen for
the sound of hoofbeats?
Does the wagon wheel read
the ruts and rises of the road?
Does the horse ponder its
intimate relationship with the wagon?
Do the trees along the fenceline
sympathize with the horse?
Does the pond smile at the trees
reflected in its water?
Does the creek worry the pond
that it runs into?

Do the road
and the wagon
and the horse
and the trees
and the pond
and the creek
listen,
read,
ponder,
sympathize,
smile,
and worry together?

—Ralph G. Smith '47

The Artist's Gift

Years ago an artist with a love of color,
But, I thought, a disregard for form,
Brought me a gift, a painting he had done,
With reds, and browns and yellows
Trowelled on, it seemed to me, in a
meaningless, though exuberant, display.

When I hung the picture up, the painter chuckled,
And said I had it upside down, or on its side,
But no matter, he said, in time I might
Get it right,
and see it as he had seen it,
At the moment of creation.

I took the gift horse down. I looked it
in the mouth, and tossed it in the closet,
where for years it rested, neglected, in the dark.
but it sadly sighed, I swear, whenever
I pushed it back to get my hiking boots,
Or to make room for other things likewise
discarded but not gone.

Old bones are easily chilled.
When September came I opened up the closet door
To find a jacket, to fend off Autumn's chill,
and glancing at that painting, in a flash,
I saw some of the form the painter tried to catch,
Not clearly, but enough to make me know
That it had meaning, after all.

The artist moved away, long gone,
his paints dried on the palette,
But now I study his painting, almost every day.
Perhaps I will understand his work before I, too, move on.

—Ralph G. Smith '47

Okinawa. These were the same two major campaigns in which Dad himself had fought. Indeed, the answer to my question was necessary to make sense of the book. Dad and the author had both served in the same Division (the First: the most prestigious of all Marine divisions, being the oldest and the only to have fought in every war of the twentieth century, including—later of course—Korea and Viet Nam). Because of my persistent and delicate questions, we were able to learn that Dad had been an artilleryman, supporting the three units of infantry. Because of an attack of malaria, Dad had been evacuated from Pellele, where the Marines suffered more than a 50% attrition in the weeks of merciless and, as it seems, useless battle: the 10,000 casualties were originally deemed necessary to secure the flank for General McArthur's attack on the Phillipines . . . but he didn't even wait for the island to be secured before launching this attack. Pellele was unnecessary. After the battle for Okinawa, a months-long rage of mud, bombs, and hand-to-hand bayonet combat, Dad had been organized for the invasion of the Japanese homeland. With the sudden surrender of Japan Dad was sent, instead, to participate with the occupation forces in China, adding 50 lbs. to his gaunt battle-famined frame. There he re-upped for a second tour of duty with the Marines, was reassigned from the famous First, and eventually arrived back home to his sweetheart, my mother, and to his decidedly unimpressed family (his father, upon spying him coming up the lane to the family farm after four years of an unimaginable war, simply nodded to his youngest son and said, "Well, get to work."). No wonder he had reenlisted, his inclinations toward "Janie" notwithstanding.

Mom said that it was very hard for Dad to adjust to civilian life. He'd shy at sudden sounds: once I guess an old friend snuck up behind him and tapped him on the shoulder to surprise him. In an instant he found himself flat on his back on the floor of the general store with a "shiner." Dad hasn't been in a plane since he got home, not even to visit his first grandson, born at a Naples navy base or his son's ordination in Rome. I can only imagine what his thoughts have been about Viet Nam, flag burning, consumerism, 50% voting averages, suburbanism. All I know for sure are his feelings about long hair, soft jobs, Communism, and the Republican Party (those all eliciting the same feelings).

My mother and Dad, by the way, had met the summer before he had thwarted his father's impressively stern will by enlisting. They were in school preparing to be teachers and my mom—one of 400 women—had made a grammatical mistake on a poster for a grade school lesson on kittens. My dad—one of four men—had

caught the error and had whispered it to Mom so she could escape embarrassment. Mom had obstinately refused to accept his answer, responding to the teacher's questions with a straight-forward "I don't know what mistake I made on the poster" (it was an apostrophe in the word "its"). "What's your name?" he had later asked, then, "I'll call you 'Janie.' I don't like the name Wanda." He still calls her that. Dad asked Mom for a date; she said no. She instead went to the premiere of *Gone With the Wind* with friends. He asked her the next night: she said no. No reason given. He asked her the third night; she said yes. No reason given. They went on to have what my mother called "a wonderful summer!" "The best summer imaginable" and then he left.

Somewhere in the South Pacific he remembered her and decided to write. She decided to reply. They courted via A.P.O. tissue-paper thin stationary for the next four years (on Okinawa he had to lean over letters, shielding them from torrents and reading quickly before the rain washed out the ink). When he had gotten back to the States she met him at the naval base in Philadelphia and they were married. She left the Church of the Brethren ("Pacifists, aren't they?" "Mom, did you guys dance or drink or cuss?" "Ohmygoodness! No, No, No! Dance!?!") and became a Catholic. He left nine months and one baby later for a tour of duty during the reconstruction of Southern Europe. His ship was the U.S.S. Providence. Then he came home and worked. That's it. He worked. For the next fifty years. His brother John got the farm (just as his father had gotten it from his father, against the claims of the other boys in that family) so he worked. They last week, four days after my interrogations about the war, he had his first heart attack, worriedly leaving his beloved horses to the temporary care of his sons.

Until last week, with that book, his answers, and Mom's remembrances, I have known virtually nothing of all of this. I am forty-two years old. The closest I'd ever gotten was when, on occasion, my brothers and I would sneak into the cellar, open an old chest and play with his Purple Heart, glance through old letters, look at meaningless photos of young men in uniform with their arms around one another (Dad never hugged any of us, near as I can remember) with the backdrop of the Pacific palm trees, Chinese walls, Roman ruins, moored ships, anonymous barracks, or unidentified pieces of machinery. One, I just found out, featured the image of the then King of Greece, who had toured my Dad's ship during a port call in Cyprus.

So, why had Dad tossed me that book? Why had he wanted me to know about something he had steadfastly refused to ever

mention for over half of a century? Why did he allow me this reflected insight into his ancient horror? The book detailed the sickeningly tragic deaths of soldiers by friendly fire. It spoke of atrocities wreaked on and by the Marines, prying gold from the teeth of corpses with service knives, shooting the innocent, the wounded, the medics, taking no prisoners. It spared no detail about the grotesque smells (of rotting body parts, exposed excrement, sweat terror, explosives, shattered and decaying vegetation) the searing sights (two Marines found mutilated: the penis of each having been severed and thrust into his own mouth), the endless sounds of shells, screams, and the awful silence, the taste of mud, contaminated water, and stale, cold rations ("Dad," I asked while doing dishes, "what's the difference between K rations and C rations?" "I don't remember, Bobby, it's been too long. I think one was dried and the other was canned food").

The thought struck me sometime in my sporadic interrogations that maybe Dad didn't remember; maybe he really had forgotten or had blocked it all out. Or, maybe he was embarrassed: his Division had experienced 150% casualties in three battles (if you count Guam, just before Dad joined the First); he fought with huge guns while others had it even worse on the front lines of infantry; he had been afraid; he had survived. But this thought, itself exceedingly speculative, sure doesn't answer the question: Why did he toss me that book? Finally I just asked him. His answer was simple enough: "Well, I thought it might change your perspective on things a little." Well, Dad, it has. It sure has.

—Bud Grant

One Week is Too Long

Flannel shirt, boots and jeans . . .
The smell of burning leaves
Remind me
One week is too long.
Dusty barn, broken fence,
Hungry horse occupy my mind.
Then realize
His house, his horse, his barn,
His cologne on my shirt . . .
Mice in the feed bins;
Call the cat.
Smell the sweet fed.
Bring her in,
Saddle her up, and
Try not to think
One week is too long.
Rid, don't wait
He might not come.
Silver on his saddle,
Stirrups too long . . .
Down the road, alone,
Through the ditch
To the empty field.
Practice . . . trot and canter.
Wind in my hair,
Stinging red cheeks
Remind me
One week is too long.
Practice more, then give up
Still no red truck.
Alone, ride back.
Pass one car, then two.
Shaggy dog chasing.
Hurry back, laugh . . .
Try not to think
One week is too long.
Her hooves on pavement
Voice next to me
Red truck, messy hair,
Blue jacket, eyes to match,

Oh, that smile . . .
One week will always be too long.

—*Renee Wakefield*

Extended Engagement

Leonard liked to say he came from a place of strong bodies and broken minds, that he was a casualty of that place. Hailing from New Orleans, he and Margaret arrived in St. Louis to liquidate her late aunt's estate, but since arriving, they'd spent more time in neighborhood bars than with prospective clients or attorneys. He was a theater veteran whose career had turned sour with drink, and for years, Margaret had been more his provider than his wife. This day was no different than those past. The play was in progress, and the actors took their marks.

Leonard spoke with that drawl familiar to people from the Deep South—more melody than speech. "My dear," he said to Margaret, "Why I notice our glass has suddenly become empty again." Irritated, she said nothing as Leonard reached into the breast pocket of his white suit jacket as if to search for a wallet. "Well I'll be, it seems that I have misplaced my wallet again."

Margaret came to life. "You haven't misplaced it; you've never had it. And if you did, it would've been empty, because you have nothing to put in it. You don't have a driver's license because that was taken from you. You don't have a social security card because you lost that. And you don't have any money because you can't keep a job. You have no identity. You have nothing because you're nobody."

"Why my dear, I am appalled that you see me that way. I'm your husband. That means something doesn't it?" It was obvious that it meant nothing to the only two other people in the bar, the bartender and on a stool by the window a thirtyish bleach-blond hooker with bored look covered with too much makeup. She seemed at home on her stool by the window. It was early yet, and they were having trouble getting started. They appeared to pay no mind to the unfolding drama.

"Don't you dare try to ignore me," Leonard said with mock offence. "Though void of life, you know your character my dear; act as though there is life in that morbid body of yours." Leonard's remark was obviously intended to inflict pain. And it must have; tears welled in Margaret's eyes.

"You say things just to hurt me, Leonard," she replied.

Leonard wasn't impressed. He continued, "Injure you? How can one injure the dead? Why, you stopped living ten years ago, my dear. You remember, don't you?"

Whatever Leonard meant by that sent Margaret in a rage. She

wept as she yelled, "You lousy son-of-a-bitch! You never cared. You never cared about anything or anybody but your own worthless, drunken self. You never cared ten years ago. You just let it happen and walked away from it—like it never happened at all. Then you walked away from life. You say I am dead. It's you, Mr. Leonard, it's you who is dead. Lifeless. I wish I never met you."

Margaret's tirade didn't seem to move Leonard, or either of the others. "Bravo, bravo my dear. You certainly have improved upon your performance. You deliver your lines with renewed force. It delights me to know that all the rehearsal has not gone to waste. She was excellent, don't you agree?" he asked, tilting his head toward the hooker by the window. She seemed more interested in what was going on outside than what was unfolding between the couple. Still, Leonard continued, determined to attract the attention of someone besides Margaret. "Cry louder my dear, that way you can entice your prey to come closer, you know what I mean. Yes like that."

Margaret seemed to respond; her crying became louder and more furious, though her reaction seemed to be out of proportion to what Leonard was saying.

"That's it my dear," Leonard let out with a loud roar of laughter.

The bartender had become irritated enough to step in. He was a short man of about sixty, short and stocky, built more like a steel worker than someone who stood behind a bar all day. He'd been silent up till now, only once intervening, only to have been ignored by the couple, so he'd decided to leave them alone. But he'd had enough. Things were getting out of hand, he thought, and not even a drunk husband should be allowed to insult his wife like that. The woman seemed so helpless and anguished.

"Hey, that's enough," he demanded.

A smile came over Leonard's face. "You've recruited an ally, my dear." He shook his head while reaching for his drink. "Now let the show begin." Leonard raised his glass and saluted the bar.

The bartender then moved in Leonard's direction. "Halt there, sir," Leonard proclaimed dramatically, but the bartender paid him no mind. He had already moved from behind the bar and was on top of Leonard, grabbing him by the collar and throwing him to the floor. Leonard rocked a moment there on his buttocks, stunned. It had never entered his mind that the situation might turn violent, though that seemed to excite him even more. The bartender reached down to grabbed again and drew back to slug him. Leonard struggled to shield himself from the blow, but without warning, Margaret bolted towards the two men, screaming for the bartender to stop. The bartender thought that was all she was doing until he

turned his head to face her. He was staring down the barrel of a large caliber revolver.

"Get your filthy hands off of him," Margaret commanded. "Do it . . . right now." The bartender let loose of Leonard, who slumped to the floor. The prostitute, still half-turned to the window, glanced over from her window seat.

"Hold on a minute lady. I was just trying to help. I wasn't going to hurt him," the bartender stammered. He was obviously shaken by the woman's change of allegiance.

"You get away from Leonard . . . right now," she demanded.

"Sir, I must apologize for my wife's sudden change of attitude," Leonard spoke up from the floor. "She often does that, but not often with such zeal. You must understand that Margaret suffers from a condition, a paranoia, so to speak, which can sometimes make her most unpredictable. This is the first time for the gun, however." Leonard held out his hand towards her, but Margaret quickly pointed the gun at him. "Now, my dear, everything is alright." He smiled at her coyly as he lifted himself up to kneeling position.

"Are you okay, sweetheart?" Her tone had changed suddenly, but she still held the gun; even Leonard was not entirely sure of what might happen next.

"Yes my dear, everything is just peachy. Now give me the pistol, my dear." He stood slowly and moved closer. She stared in his direction but it wasn't Leonard she was staring at. She was looking through him, beyond him. Then, with a slight twitch and a slight slump of her shoulders, she handed Leonard the gun.

Placing it in his belt, he seemed to regain some of his earlier confidence. "Now I propose we have a drink. A drink to the bartender who exhibited extraordinary courage and bravery."

The bartender would have none of it. These actors were too bizarre for him. "The two of you just get out of here. You're crazy, that's what you are. Now get out of here." He pointed towards the door.

"Let's not be rash, my friend. It wasn't like you weren't forewarned. You chose to get involved in this comedy of fools, did you not?"

The bartender just wanted them out of there. "Just leave. No more talk, just go." He was almost pleading now.

Noting his change of tone, Leonard began to bargain. "After one more drink my friend. I will vouch for our civility and will attempt to temper my sarcastic tongue. Just one more, my friend," he requested solicitously, tipping the glass in the bartender's direction.

Despite himself, the bartender gave in. "Just one more. Then you leave. And if you start with that nonsense again, I call the cops. Got it?"

"Agreed," Leonard replied.

The bartender poured Leonard another drink, and Leonard began to speak, softly. His eyes included the prostitute, whose still-weary attention was now at least leaning to the scene as it had played out in front of her. "You see, my dear Margaret suffers from a decade of guilt. She is lost in it. Consumed. It was brought on by the death of our child. You see, she feels abandoned by God. No, actually she holds God responsible for our child's death. Alternatively, is it me you hold responsible, my dear? I sometimes forget.

"Anyway, I was working at the time, in the theater; I am an actor, you see. Our show was opening in Atlanta, and there I was. Margaret had stayed behind in New Orleans. She was pregnant and didn't feel quite up to traveling, so she stayed behind. Something was bothering her, I could tell from our conversation earlier that day. I had telephoned her as I did every day when on the road. We were very much in love in those days, not to say we are not in love now. It is just that our love has taken on a different hue. The complexion of emotions sometimes changes, you understand. Well, I had called, and she was saddened by the distance between us, so she expressed, and I tried to comfort her by saying I would catch the first available flight right after that evening's performance. But that didn't seem to put her at ease. I could tell she wanted me there, and I almost gave in. Now, in those days my income was the only support we had, and we certainly couldn't afford to lose a penny of that with a child on the way. Therefore, I decided to stay the evening and then go home. I assured Margaret that I would be there directly after the show and she seemed to understand. However, Margaret has never been one to show her true emotions, I have learned that over the years.

"It was towards the middle of the fourth act when I noticed the director receiving a note from someone from the theater. He looked at me strangely. Sympathetically. Sorrowfully. I could tell something was wrong, and I could tell it had something to do with me. For the first time in years, I struggled to remember my lines. His stare was frozen in my mind. I couldn't shake the feeling that tragedy loomed just over the horizon. What had happened? I asked myself. And the image of Margaret entered into my mind. Something had happened to my darling Margaret, I thought, and I began to race through my lines quite out of character, brought on by desperation and the need to get to a phone—I fought the urge

to panic. How I made it through that performance, I couldn't tell you. However, I did. And when I did, I ran frantically searching for the director. Upon finding him, for he was looking for me at the same time—it was quite comical in hindsight, if anything about that evening can so be characterized—he informed me that I needed to contact the hospital in New Orleans immediately. Something had happened to Margaret. I was afraid all right, but I never expected to hear what I did. Margaret had had a miscarriage; our baby was dead upon arrival.

"I felt as though I had been stabbed in the heart with a thousand daggers. I wasn't prepared for that—Who would have been? Not for the death of your unborn child, you understand. We had so prepared for her arrival, buying things together, and giving her a name and such. We knew she would be a girl, because we had one of those sound things. You know, where the doctor rubs the thing across you wife's belly and a picture appears on a screen? We were so happy together in those days. We were so in love. Better yet, the complexion of our love was so different.

"I didn't even wait to change out of my costume. Someone in the cast had arranged for me to catch the first flight out that night. God bless that person's soul, we were so much like family—the cast and I.

"The flight seemed to take days. When we landed I rushed to the hospital and was taken immediately to dear Margaret's bed. She looked so peaceful lying there asleep. I did not want to awaken her, but somehow she sensed my presence and her eyes opened. What was to follow set the stage for what you have witnessed today.

"Margaret was a worrier, although you could not readily recognize it. She is such a great actor—even better than I when it comes to hiding how she feels. You, my friend, was taken in by her performance, were you not?" he asked, nodding towards the bartender. "You would have taken off my head had my dear Margaret not intervened on my behalf. Her performance convinced you she was in distress. You were drawn to her, like a knight to a damsel, feeling her distress, wanting to rescue her. And the evil Leonard—he needed to be stopped, didn't he? Well, I could fully understand your concern, because you are not the first to get involved."

Margaret finally intervened in her own behalf. "You're the actor, Leonard. And a lousy one at that. Who will hire you? Who . . . no one that's who. You're a drunk and can't remember your lines. You can't show up to the theater on time, you can't be counted on. You are a nothing—a nobody." She struck like a serpent delivering its lethal venom.

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"That I am my dear, that I am. I am everything you have just accused me of being, and more. Nevertheless, I am still your husband." He lifted his glass in a toast.

Finally, the prostitute seemed to come fully alive. She turned in their direction to get a clear view. There was no money in staring at the empty street—no action out there—it was all taking place in the bar.

Leonard continued, as if on cue, "I still wonder why Margaret would think that I had anything to do with our child's death, unless of course she thought me to be God. Is that what you think, my dear, that I am God? Well no, you wouldn't think that, would you? Anyway, my dearest wife was in an awful state—delirious actually—that I understood, because she had been through so much. Our child had died, and according to the doctors, it was stress that caused Margaret to miscarry. But what do doctors know? By the way sir, may we have another?" Leonard said nodding towards his glass.

The bartender hesitated at first. He remembered telling them they needed to leave after the previous drink, but the story was becoming interesting, and he decided to let them stay, even if they were a little off their rockers. "Who's gonna pay for this? You don't have any money," he said, implying that Margaret would have to come up with the cash.

"The same person who always pays for it," she answered. The prostitute interrupted: "I've got it. You want one McCarthy?"

Kind of early to start drinking, the bartender thought. It wasn't quite noon yet. But this day was a different one, and he decided to make an exception to his usual after-noon guideline.

"Pour me one too," she said. "This is getting interesting." McCarthy poured the three of them drinks; Margaret had hardly touched her beer, so he left her alone. Leonard continued: "Margaret, do you remember that beautiful blue motherly looking gown I brought you from London? You were wearing it that night. You were so lovely in that gown. What in the world has become of it?"

"I buried it with all of Mary Beth's things," she replied. "I buried it when I buried you, you demon—you're a demon from hell." There was still venom in her words, but her eyes had lost their fire and her voice sounded drained, worn down.

since I have told this particular story. Oh yes," he remembered, turning to the others. "She had just awakened and was staring into my eyes. She whispered, 'Why weren't you here Leonard? You weren't here.' 'Hush,' I said, trying to comfort her. I said that I was

here now and that's what was important. But she wouldn't listen. She flew into a rage and began ranting. At first I thought it was because of the drugs and such. The nurses ran in and had to sedate her. Margaret began making all type of outrageous accusations about how I had abandoned her, how I should have been there to prevent our child from dying. She went on about how it was me who had killed our child, because I never wanted her anyway. Can you believe someone could be so cruel? So insensitive to the feeling of another person?" For the first time that morning, it was becoming obvious that Leonard was actually feeling the haunting of the past.

He continued, "I often have thought what life would have been like had we not lost Mary Beth. I imagine a peaceful existence where our family would have grown and prospered, nothing like what it has become today."

The prostitute interjected, "But the two of you seem to have been so happy once. Sometimes tragedy pulls people together. It seems to have torn you two apart. How sad. It's like one of those Greek tragedies." Her eyes were now bright with tears.

As if out from the past, Margaret cried out again, "You killed our baby because you never cared. You never cared what might happen if you weren't there."

"What was I to do dear Margaret?" Leonard defended himself. "I'd be damned if I did and damned if I didn't. What was I to do? What would me being there have changed? It is God who sets our time to live and die, not me. I am not God, regardless of what you might think."

Margaret seemed to pay no attention. She picked up her beer and drank.

"If I thought it would change anything," he continued, "I would go back in time and I would be there. Yes, I would be there to face our loss together. But that can't happen, and even if it could, Mary Beth would have still died. God willed it that way, can't you see? There was nothing my presence could have changed, nothing you or I could have possibly done to change what God had put into motion. Nothing. And long ago I stopped trying. I suggest that you should too." Leonard delivered the lines with finality, as if they were the last lines of a play.

"You are mean, who you are and what you did." That was it. Margaret seemed to have said it all. Leonard just lowered his head.

The prostitute and bartender seemed more an audience than simple onlookers. It felt as if someone should begin applause.

—Terry Haywood '81

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