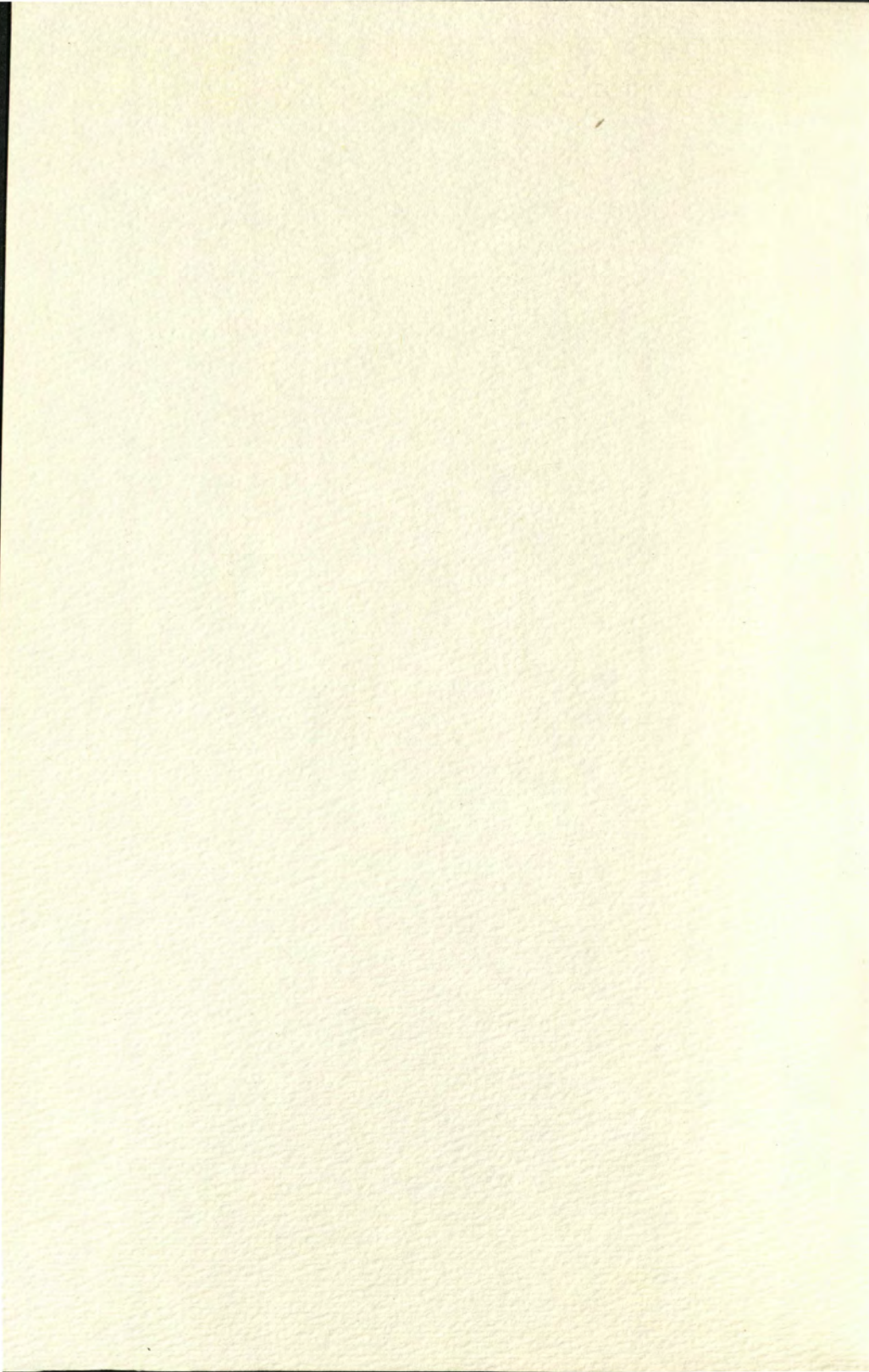


CHRUSALIS



# **CHRYSLIS**

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Vol 14, No. 2

# Whew!

Whew!

After reading through six short stories and nearly two hundred poems by fifty different contributors, the editors of the spring edition of the *Chrysalis* can indeed breathe a collective sigh of relief now that the contents of the magazine have been selected, judged, and (finally!) in print. There were three separate reading sessions, and each poem or story printed survived at least four successive screenings.

The winners for the statewide contest were selected by a seven-member student panel; the Madison contest was judged by a faculty committee.

## WINNERS: STATEWIDE

### Poetry:

- 1st. Prize — "Migration," Patricia Click, Mary Baldwin College
- 2nd Prize — "On the Road," Jean Carter Moffett, Mary Washington College

**Honorable Mention:** "The Flood — 1969," Carolyn Click, Mary Washington College

**Fiction:** No prize awarded

## WINNERS: MADISON

### Poetry:

- 1st Prize — "Another Kind of End," Elizabeth Doss
- 2nd Prize — "Love Song," Diane R. Ivone
- Prize Poetry Prize — "The Assistant," Newton Likins

### Honorable Mention:

"Maturity," Karol Bowman; "Moral Reflection," Deborah Fairfield; "Alone," Douglas Russell; "This is Where I Live," Deborah Wilson; "Paper Mind," Chris Worth.

### Fiction:

- 1st Prize — "On Getting Old," Sara Arason
- 2nd Prize — "Soon," Dan Layman

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# OH

Oh  
curious O  
come  
bouncing  
bubbling  
rolling  
down thru space.

To be caught  
in a word  
put in phrase.

Formulated by the mouth  
To be received by the minds  
of thousands  
who...

Respond with a subtle .....oh,  
what  
did  
you  
say?

*—Mary E. Graham*

# MORAL REFLECTION

What's a woman to do  
through flush springtime—  
when the sun first drags the pulse  
back up in the trees,  
and grass relaxes to a surprising green  
green, with warm rains  
and morning light-shot mists  
birdsong, wet rocks' echo  
and flowers there out of nowhere—  
magic distraction reigns,  
engulfing reason,  
committing treason  
with body,  
soul?

—Deborah Fairfield

## LEERING LEARNING

the words form one.  
i cannot lift my shoulders  
as i swallow my breath  
my eyes pour downward and stiffen.

(over my shoulder i catch a leering face)  
i am not She.  
She floats gentle delight  
as She spills beauty from Her pen.

steam boils in my eyes  
and rises — higher, higher...  
perhaps it will touch a heart  
perhaps it will linger...

i feel steam  
returned as tears.

i have no thoughts  
only one word  
— crumpled —

—Jan Barrett

## **SNOW AS A SHROUD**

Snow, as a shroud, covers dark soil,  
Suspending life, frozen in all its  
Roaring injustice, glad of triumph  
Of ice, so proud.

Its steel-like fingers rigidly fondle,  
Freeze and crush those entrapped  
In the act of humanity where the  
Naive are evil, the good are poor,  
The divine are dead.

Man, being of earth, acts, breathes,  
And is created of earth where  
Rarely relief can be obtained, but given  
As the finality of endless long  
Journeys when  
Snow, as a shroud, covers dark soil.

*—Jeanne Bardon*

## **THE DARK LADY REPLIES**

I, too, have been swept into your backstage drama —  
The scene of warm neck and never-leave-me  
Where curtains are drawn  
And you lie firm in the couch of my body.

Shall I, for your applause,  
Let you cut me out in little stars  
And spend your flame, consuming me,  
In hasty flickerings?

But oh! The softer pull of earth-learned light  
Turns me from your reckless, one-act heat,  
Hangs shadows on your stage-lit face and glows  
Inside the curtains of my eyes, alone.

*—Suzanne Underwood*





**DEATH MUST  
BE SOMETHING  
LIKE SNOW**

Fragile white dancers stirring the night,  
Whispering  
Softness  
Silence  
Peace.  
With open arms and petulant lips  
They caress fanciful flights of my mind.  
Leveling furrowed fields  
With pillow-snowpearls  
In colorless cares,  
A sea of dreams to drown in.  
Death must be something like snow.

*—Jeanne Bardon*

## **TINBY AND SON, INC.**

Jacob Tinby sits rocking on the porch,  
The street descending obediently from his lawn,  
And criticizes the homes that lie obscured  
Beneath the continuous haze of ash and dust  
Escaping from the Tinby mine.

Old women, their bloated forms and coal creased faces,  
Telling of potato diets and successive births begun too early,  
Move about the littered yards hanging wash  
Which breeze-swept and capturing the blackish lint  
Leaves doubt of laundering.  
But still the women trudge with their bulky baskets  
In futile succession.  
Patient bitches, too empty for alarm,  
Not noticing the incessant demands of their youthful litter,  
They plod habitually through pleas and labors.

Jacob notes with satisfaction  
That the street stretches longer since his father's death.  
A smart man, Jacob's father, counseling for success  
He cautioned against the valley maidens  
Too anxious to escape virginity.  
The timely marriage was of proper state.

Relinquishing his creaking chair  
Jacob enters the clean coolness of his darkened home  
(Where Marth Tinby sits in the parlor  
Stitching hope into embroidery loops;  
Well-skilled through years of practice,  
Her thoughts flow easily into fabric.)  
Jacob lets the screen door slam, proclaiming his presence.  
Unnoticed, he turns for recognition to his barren spouse,  
But she only hears, "Where's the supper, woman?"

—*Deborah Wilson*

## ON GETTING OLD

Adler had seen many springs come and go. It seemed to him, as he sped home for lunch in his dark blue sedan, that as one got older it took more heat to make him warm. He used to feel spring in the middle of March. Now, he didn't take off his grey winter coat until the middle of April. Adler hated growing old. He knew what it meant—the end of everything. With old age came aching bones, loss of hearing, loss of eyesight, and all sorts of awful diseases.

Pulling into his newly paved driveway, Adler took a long look at his house—"his house"—huh. He'd lived there for fifteen years and the bank still owned it. Joclyn came out on the front porch to see what was keeping her husband.

"Adler, what's the matter?"

"Nothin', I was just thinking."

"My, you're getting ambitious in your *old age*. Come on, your lunch is ready."

"What is it, Mush?"

"What?"

"Forget it."

Joclyn was beginning to notice that her husband was becoming increasingly moody. She could see no reason for this behavior and was determined not to let it ruin her sweet disposition. Adler had always been moody—and over the silliest things. She wasn't going to humor him any longer. She was tired of it.

Preparing for the journey in between his air conditioned auto and his air conditioned home, Adler made sure that all the right buttons were in the right positions. Then, he leaped out of the car and walked swiftly (trying not to strain himself) into the house

and up to the lunch table. Had Joclyn not stepped aside, she could very well have been pushed into the garden beside the porch—Adler knew what hot weather could do to a man his age.

Lunch was a bit greasy, but good—so was the conversation.

"Who do you want me to have over on your birthday, Dear?"

"My birthday?"

"As if you didn't know! Yes dear, your birthday; you'll be 47 next week. I thought we could plan a party—We haven't had one in ages!"

"Joclyn, a 47 year old man does *not* have a *birthday party!*"

"I didn't say a "Birthday party," I said a party...period."

"Well, I don't want a *party* at all. I don't feel like having a *party!*"

"But you love parties."

"Not any more."

"Why?"

"Because!"

"Well...what do you want for your birthday?"

Adler was becoming exasperated. Why did she have to keep rubbing it in?

"Nothing!"

"Nothing?! Don't be silly. *Everyone* wants something for his birthday. Adler what is the matter with you?"

"All right! All right!"

Adler pounded his fist on the table and got up. He looked out the window awhile and continued:

"Presents are for kids Joclyn! I don't need to get a present on my birthday. I don't need another reminder that I'm getting old."

"Oh, Adler. I just wouldn't feel right about not getting you a present...come on. You're not being realistic you're not *that* old...I mean you're not old at all...there are plenty of people older than you are. Anyway,

I'm going to get you a present whether you like it or not!"

"Well, make it something useful."

"You can buy useful things for yourself. Presents are supposed to be things that people wouldn't buy for themselves."

"Joclyn, you asked me what I wanted and I told you. Something useful. If it's not useful, I don't want it. Do you understand?"

"Yes, dear."

"Are you sure!?"

"Yes, Dear. If it's not useful, you don't want it."

"Right. Now...I have to get back to work. See you 'round six, O.K.?"

"Good-bye dear."

"Bye."

Joclyn watched the car pull out of the driveway. Her mind was on the present. She would get Adler something useful, all right, he'd be sorry for the way he was acting.

Adler was awake long before he opened his eyes on the dreadful day. He spent nearly twenty minutes thinking about being forty-seven years old—so close to fifty. He carefully flexed all his muscles and bent his joints looking for new aches and pains. He was surprised, if not a little disappointed, to find that there weren't any. Maybe being forty-seven wasn't going to be as bad as he thought. Feeling rather badly about the way he had treated Joclyn for the past week, he wondered why she had quit bugging him about getting a birthday present. Such nonsense! Adler didn't know what to think about Joclyn—she was changing—getting old he guessed.

"Adler, it's time to get up."

"Oh, all right."

"Did you have a nice night?"

"The usual."

"Good...you don't have time for breakfast, so if you don't mind I'll just stay in bed."

"Fine."

Adler got dressed in silence.

He was a little put out that he didn't even get breakfast on his birthday, but he realized that it was his fault.

The rest of the day was average. Adler didn't feel any better, or any worse than the day before. Nobody seemed to notice he was a year older, and nobody seemed to care. At home, Joclyn fixed a regular dinner and made regular conversation until it was time for dessert.

"Before we have dessert, I want you to open your present..."

"Oh, Joclyn, I told you..."

"You told me you wanted something useful. Well, it took a great deal of thinking, but I finally found something. Here."

Joclyn pulled a long white envelope and handed it to Adler. He looked curiously at it for a moment, and then realizing that it was money—his money—his wife was giving him his money for his birthday—he opened the letter with a sigh. Inside there was a business letter of some sort. A deed.

"What's this?"

"Read it, dear."

"Slumber Valley Cemetery... Slumber Valley Cemetery? Joclyn! *Slumber Valley Cemetery?!*"

"Yes, dear. Slumber Valley Cemetery. Go on."

"No, I can't. You didn't."

"Didn't what?"

"Didn't get me a...a...plot!?"

"Well, I knew you would use it—everyone does eventually...you've never mentioned wanting to be cremated...and besides, you're not getting any younger, Adler. You've said that yourself...a hundred times."

"I did not!"

"Adler!"

"O.K. But not *that* old, I didn't say I was *that* old."

"Come on. You've been moping around on your last legs for weeks and I'm sick and tired of it."

"Oh, so you want me to...to... pass away and get it over with?!"

"No, I want you to realize that the black angel is not using the guest room!"

"Gad. A cemetery plot. 'What's you get for your birthday Adler?' 'A cemetery plot.' Gad. Joclyn of all the heartless, cruel..."

"Adler please. I told you to finish it. That's just an ad. Those plots are too expensive. I just wanted to shock you."

"Too expensive? What are you going to do, give me away to science?"

"I'd never thought of that."

"Well, don't bother yourself. I'm not planning on going anywhere."

"Yes, you are."

"Look Joclyn, you've already taken a couple years off my life! Gad, what a horrible thing to do. Why don't you just drop it?"

"I just wanted to shock you. Now here's your *real* present."

"No thanks."

Adler was upset, but not too upset to know that he'd had it all coming. But he wasn't going to put up with another one of Joclyn's "jokes."

"If you won't take it, I'll tell you what it is."

"Joclyn I don't want to hear it."

"I've decided that I'm going to give you a trip to Hawaii for your birthday and..."

"What?"

"I'm going to give you a trip to Hawaii for your birthday, and you're going to give me a trip to Hawaii for my birthday! How's that sound?"

"Hawaii?...What? Oh Joclyn don't be silly, we couldn't possibly go to Hawaii...but then...maybe we could. I guess we could swing it."

"You don't sound very enthusiastic about it."

"Well, it's such a shock! Sure we could swing it! It might even be fun! I'll get in touch with a travel agent..."

"I've already gotten all the information we need."

"... and set up a nice trip. Hey, we could even make a second honeymoon out of it. How's *that* sound?"

"Wonderful!"

"Just think about the beach... and the flowers...those luaus—you know with those stuffed pigs...and the *hula* dancers and..."

"And the salt air will do you a world of good!"

"Yeah."

—Sara Arason

## GOODBYES

Too-loud laughter, uneasy wit,  
formed imperfect maskings  
for pangs of parting friendships.  
Pretending amusement at her own confusion,  
she busied herself with baggage,  
listening for departing train's call.  
Her companions, reluctantly agreeing  
that disunion was necessity's course,  
attempted goodbyes in grown-up style.  
Promise, not easily kept,  
of frequent communications  
during this indefinite banishment,  
undertook to ease the break.  
When the unbidden tears stopped burning,  
they felt more relief than loss;  
each of them had other friends,  
and distance doesn't *really* divide.

—Elizabeth Doss



—Chris Vuxton

## **ON THE ROAD**

Sometimes on long and swiftly traveled roads,  
In moments of complete unthinkingness,  
I gaze upon a distant silent woods  
Or choose a grass-field dimly to the west.  
There comes a numbness to the brain,  
A still-life image of a story old—  
Implanted firmly, strangely in our grain  
Which Satan onced proclaimed most easily sold—  
A certain longing for the bridge rebuilt,  
For ages of estrangement from the Source  
Relived unmarred by pride or guilt,  
Embraced by innocence of choice,  
A single second to perceive a dream  
Before the consciousness of destiny  
Robs all our souls of what must seem  
To God, our final hope—humanity.

*—Jean Carter Moffett  
Mary Washington College*

## STRINGING WIRE

Long tenuous webs of steel,  
Roll them out, cut and reel them back.  
It makes spiders of us,  
To play out standing rooms, not sticky traps,  
To catch nothing that can't be caught.

I like this work; it is work  
To stretch the wires and nail the posts.  
I suspect it is the privilege  
Of picking my guests; I the host  
With prod in one hand, keys in the other.  
But, when taught wire slips,  
It strips away joy with steel.  
The wire sings contempt  
In barbed octaves to my blood.  
It lives and like a snake  
It winds about my arm as binding hate.

Maneuvered by flying wire, views are redeployed:  
Mine fall quickly when my steel comes back.  
Barbed steel spikes and cold,  
That is what I call them,  
Being twisted hours on twisted wire,  
Keeping all out but the wind  
Which, after all, only stops to disappear.

Cows bellow content with only winds  
To stir their hairs.  
It may be enough for them; not me.  
I am not grateful for a physical  
State that prevents prevention  
Of the wind, nor joy I find  
In seeing shadowed legs straddled  
Black widow style over strands I wove today,  
Terrible strands, invisible at distances,  
And had I not been close to one before—  
I must have been feeling the sound of the wind,  
Mistaking wire as wire instead of fences.



I untangle myself, my arm unwinding,  
As I hang barbed strands  
From the twigs of some tree  
And cement them there with staples;  
I drive them in whichever side I choose  
To keep brutes out or in  
As their skin will hang on steel and spikes.

With prod in one hand, keys in the other  
In the morning light I walk the finished fence,  
A half box of staples  
Thrown carelessly against a stump.  
Dew drops twinkle from laced lands  
As a capricious early sun  
Throws a black shadow from my hand.

—A. Newton Likins

## LOVE SONG

Then let this be your charge: where you were one,  
let there be two. Where once you slept for rest  
and passing dreams, let this ignoble guest  
awaken you when all our sleeping's done.  
Where once your eyes found mirrored in the sun  
an equal light, so let me from the best  
learn light revealed, learn darkness put to test  
in swells of hope till my own light is won.  
And if you pray, yet all your words are spent  
in ransom for your passion's anarchy,  
then let this be your second full intent:  
that I, so sleeping, wake; so blinded, see  
the light to make that passion innocent  
in double dreams of finished symmetry.

—Diane R. Ivone

## OLD AWAKENING

Sunlight taps your huddled form and wrestles jealously with sleep  
In the seclusion of your scrawny frame,  
Losing envious moments not allotted in the past.  
Sheets hang sharply from the brittle bones  
(Firm and resilient muscle long seeped into the thirsty cloak of years).  
The worn-soft linen cover (the filmy remnant of repeated bleaching)  
Saves the sight of sagging flesh.  
The pallor of unfilled dreams dragging through successive nights  
Whispers vehemently in your breath.  
Glancing into your stained and rotting teeth  
I shudder — snap opposite my gaze — to the memory of my own reflection,  
A dried-apple expression of skillfully gouged wrinkles  
(Carved by an unshameful blade whetter)  
Testifying to a hardened core.

“You have endured much.”

Do you remember, too, the youthful pride and urgent love,  
The vows of everlasting—  
An unknowing pledge that has molded memories into a sceptre—  
Left hollow when unshared.  
Fears of loneliness rest swallowed in disclosure  
And peace pervades your repose,  
Betraying the freedom of unbittered thoughts—  
The contentment of unremorseful draining.

So, still, we sleep together dutifully,  
Though in a less cluttered embrace.  
Your skin, loose but warm, trembles beneath my touch,  
Responds unnecessarily to a past annoyance,  
(Smiling to reflexes still partly possible)  
I tingle to recalled anticipation  
Inhale the pungent smell of living flesh;  
Am thankful for your livid presence beneath the sheet.

—Deborah J. Wilson

# ALLONE

I'm allone...

I'm the only two in the room,  
For two are one, in me  
and in him.

I look around my room  
and feel his thoughts,  
Steaming from the envelope on my desk,

And my eyes fog as I see him lift my chin  
and kiss my freckled nose.  
I smile in the warmth of his breath.

I recall one winter night  
when I turned to answer his warm hello  
And was stopped by a wave of breathlessness.

The wave became a candle  
which shone through my eyes  
And browned my cheeks.

The wind blew, the candle flickered...  
then bellowed into logs in a fireplace.  
Two coals, sharing warmth.

The fire grew white-hot  
then cooled to gentle Spring...  
I held a white nosegay  
and, tenderly, purity fell from my shoulders.  
*Two are one.*

One morning I found him gone.  
Forced to deny his gentleness,  
he squirmed snakelike in his uniform.  
He turned to greet his brother  
with darkling eyes.  
The snake slithered around his neck  
and strangled him.

The envelope on my desk  
is stained with tears.

*Yet, two are still one.*

—Jan Barrett

## **LIFE LINES**

I am there  
Sitting on the dusty shelf among so many others,  
A closed book, waiting to be read.  
If you would only touch my cover,  
But then, perhaps it's dull and like so many others.  
Those pages tell the story of my life—  
So few are fully written.  
Pull me out. Spread my cover.  
See the Gothic painting of my page.  
Add the marginalia to make my life more clear.  
Hold me on your pounding thigh,  
And when you're bored, The End.  
Place me once again among the others on the shelf,  
As you have done so many times before.

—*Susan Fernandes*

## **PHOTOGRAPH**

time caught,  
complexion of thought,  
reflected,  
subjected,  
directed;  
tangible expression  
of character.

—*Karol Bowman*



—Frank Marshman

## **ANOTHER KIND OF END**

Conceiving of life conceived  
as herself in re-creation,  
she wore her hopeful maternity  
like a secret, invisible honor,  
proudly, yet careful  
lest anyone know too soon.

More concerned with fraternities than families,  
sheepskin than sacraments,  
he countered her wonder with anger,  
then calmly made suggestion.

Amazed he could not share her love,  
she wept for their first child's unborn death.  
Her fate long decided by civil necessity,  
she searched for an answer within herself  
and found none but his.

*—Elizabeth Doss*

## **NIGHTLOCK**

I, safe within the confines  
Of security lights,  
The policeman on beat,  
The lock latched tight  
Against the door sill,  
Read a letter from a friend.

With a hall light burning, the  
Marvels of science secure in a  
Glowing box at the end of the bed.  
A library to browse in if I please,  
The howl of a wolf pack on the hill  
Pads softly and curls about my feet.

*—A. Newton Likins*

# SOON

TO:

THOSE WHO ARE GONE:

MR. ETHRICH H. ROGERS, JR.  
MR. JAMES W. McCLUNG

THOSE WHO ARE LEAVING:

DR. RALPH VON T. NAPP  
MR. FOREST E. MCCREADY JR.  
DR. EDWARD D. LIPTON  
MR. RICHARD L. CHAFEY

THOSE WHO REMAIN:

MR. ROBIN MCNALLIE  
MR. TODD ZEISS  
DR. JAMES E. POINDEXTER  
DR. LAWRENCE M. FOLEY  
DR. WILLIAM E. CALLAHAN

AND TO PEGGY

The awakening device vibrated the bed slightly. Austin opened one eye briefly, then rolled over pulling the covers tightly around him. The vibration increased to a quaking that rattled his teeth. He crept slowly out of bed and the quaking stopped. He looked at the calendar clock and frowned.

Monday morning! There must be a way to eliminate it from the week. If I had the time, I'd work on a theory myself. His mind filled with thoughts of the weekend, yesterday was so pleasant. Margaret is such a good companion; wish they'd let me see her more often. Sunday's just not enough. Three years of Sundays, with so many things I've wanted to say to her still unsaid, so many things I've wanted to do with her that we haven't had time for. There's never any time. He pulled

on his grey coveralls and paced across the room thinking. He's grown so much! Guess it had been longer than I thought since Margret and I had seen him. Wish they'd let him go with us on Sunday. It's nice of them to give us a chance to see him through the glass. But with so many boys passing by, it's hard to pick him out. We were lucky we didn't miss him yesterday. I'm sure it was Timmy who waved. I couldn't be wrong about that. I felt so strange when he waved, wanting to reach out and touch him, pull him close to me and hold him for a while. If only they'd let me work the camp he's in, I could see him more often. Why couldn't Margret work there, too? But that's nonsense! She couldn't work in a boy's camp!

Austin smiled at his foolishness and at the tiny stubbles of hair he saw reflected in the mirror. Somebody should think of a way to keep them from growing, he thought. It's too much trouble to cream them off every morning, and sometimes I miss a patch on the back of my head and the supervisor gets angry. I can't understand what difference a little patch of hair makes. He applied the cream to his face and head, using more than the usual amount in the back, spreading it carefully, not taking any chances. He thought of Margret, I'm glad she doesn't have to cream her head. Her hair smells so sweet and it looks so nice in the sunshine. When she said she wished she didn't have to keep it short, I laughed and said if it were longer, it would tickle her ears and neck so much she wouldn't be able to stand it. I kissed her and said it looked fine just the way it was. He tried to picture Margret with long hair, but he couldn't. Anyway, he thought, she couldn't be a better companion, so I guess it doesn't make any

difference. He wiped the cream from his face and head with a towel. There, that's over with. Hope I didn't miss any in the back. He congratulated himself by smiling at his reflection before walking to the kitchenette.

Austin dreaded eating, but he had put it off as long as he could. It would soon be time for him to leave. He always enjoyed the bun that was served on Sunday, but he could hardly swallow the tasteless wafers he got during the week. He muttered to himself as he pushed the button and the wafer was dispensed, "Wish it was Sunday!" He looked at the wafer knowing he had to eat it. He remembered the morning he had tried to do without. I won't try that again. If they hadn't found me lying in the hall, I probably would have died. They had carried him in, sat him at the bar and fed him the wafer. When the helmet descended, the lecture came to him just as it always did. I was only a few minutes late for class. My students were still waiting for me. I don't think they noticed I was late, but I don't want it to happen again. I have to eat to keep going, to keep going for Sunday! He ate the wafer hastily. Austin sat motionless as his eyes became glassy. The helmet descended from the ceiling until it encircled the top of his head. The memory tape was played into his ears at an increased speed. The process took no more than a minute. The helmet disappeared into the ceiling. Austin batted his eyes. Shakespeare! That's what I'll lecture on today. Shakespeare! Austin's door closed behind him as he stepped into the hall, his mind working like a computer. Born April 23, 1564, third child of John and Mary Arden, daughter of Robert Arden, a wealthy gentleman of Worship of Wilmecot... The entire life of Shakespeare flashed before him as he walked down the long grey hall to his classroom. He passed several of his fellow teachers without seeing them. It was just as well because their vacant

stares were directed straight ahead, and they seemed as deep in thought as Austin.

The guard spoke to him as he reached the door to his classroom. "Hi Austin. How's Margret?" He smiled when Austin entered the classroom without so much as a look at him then continued his "beat" checking each room on both sides of the long hall.

The class was seated, waiting for Austin to begin. When he entered the room, the students automatically put on their headsets. His eyes still vacant, Austin stepped to the microphone, "William Shakespeare, born April 23, 1564. He was the third son of John and Mary Arden, daughter of Robert Arden, a wealthy gentleman of Worship of Wilmecote. November 27, 1582 - Marriage license to William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway of Stratford. May 23, 1583 - Birth of Susanna, daughter to William Shakespeare. January 31, 1585 - Birth of Hamnet and Judith, son and daughter to William Shakespeare. April 18, 1593 - *Venus and Adonis*, May 9, 1594 - *Lucrece*." Austin went on and on, reciting every known date and happening in Shakespeare's life. Then he began his reflections, "Shakespeare is one of our greatest writers. He was educated in the same classroom you are being educated in now. If you work as hard as he did, you too will make a place for yourself in history. Shakespeare expresses a fundamental truth in the three plays we are going to study today: *Macbeth*, and *King Henry the Fourth, Parts I and II*. He tells about bad people, greedy, dangerous men who tried to overthrow our beloved government. They wanted to rob you of your right to education in this fine school and murder all the fine and dedicated people that safeguard our rights and watch over us. These traitors failed because good always triumphs over evil." As the bell rang the students



removed their headsets and filed out of the classroom while the guard held the door for them. The next class filed in. Austin repeated the lecture to them and to the next class, and the next, until it was quitting time. Austin followed his students from the classroom. The guard locked the door behind him, "Goodnight, Austin." Austin walked past him without seeing, down the long grey hall. The door to his room opened inviting him in. He stepped out of his coveralls and climbed into bed. He was asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow.

The week crept by as it always did. Every morning, just as he started to dream about Margret, he was awakened by the vibrator. He continued to think about her as he dressed and creamed his face and head each morning, planning things for Sunday that he thought she would enjoy. Each day the calendar clock brought him a day closer to her. He thought of nothing but Margret, being able to hold her, to watch her eyes when the sunlight played in them. Austin couldn't understand how he managed to put Margret out of his mind for the rest of the day. At times he wasn't sure what he thought about. He only knew that there was work he had to do that somehow he managed to get done. That's the way it had always been, from breakfast to bedtime, except on Sunday.

Austin opened his eyes and smiled; the dream he had awakened from would soon become a reality. The vibrator wouldn't go off for another hour, but he leaped out of bed, too excited to sleep, rushed to his closet, and peered among his grey coveralls until he spotted a blue sleeve. He held the hanger at arm's length and admired his "Sunday's." Besides being a pale blue, they were cut differently from the dull grey ones he wore during the week. They were tapered to fit his body. At least I don't look like a grey bag of laundry. He smiled as he

admired himself in the mirror. But I must admit Margret's look better on her! He was extremely careful not to get any cream on his outfit while he did his face and head. I think I'll take her to the lake today. It's so beautiful up there. He hurriedly wiped his head and face and jogged to the kitchenette. His mouth began to water as he pushed the button and the bun was dispensed. The helmet did not descend. He bit into the delicacy hastily, then decided to savor each mouth-ful. But if he hurried he could see Margret sooner. He finished it in three bites and was in the hall before he had hardly started to chew the third mouthful, which he planned to savor all the way down the long hall to the parking lot. Austin decided to swallow when he saw Jim's door open, "Good morning, Jim!" The two men approached each other and shook hands as if they hadn't met during the week. Austin smiled, "Where are you and Beth going today?"

"Thought we'd head down to the beach," Jim grinned. "We haven't done that for awhile. How about you and Margret?"

"The mountains! You know, up by the lake. Have a nice time Jim."

"You do the same."

Both men hurried to make up for the time they had lost. Austin wondered why he had taken the time to talk.

He had trouble finding his car when he reached the parking lot. Its identity was lost in the sea of grey boxes. At last he spotted the pale blue license plate with the black number six on it. The motor responded immediately when he pressed the starter. The road was clear. He increased to maximum speed and leaned out, so that his head was to the left of the windshield. At forty-five miles per hour the wind made his face tingle. He felt free, alive. When he settled back down in the seat his face felt numb. It was a pleasant feeling, refreshing. "Margret's

camp is around the next turn," he smiled to himself. He pulled the car up in front of her barracks and went in to page her. "Would you call Margret, please?"

The girl at the desk obeyed, "Margret, you have a guest." She turned to Austin and smiled, "She'll be right down."

Austin's heart pounded and mouth became dry. He swallowed and forced a smile at this reaction, "After three years..." The hum of the elevator caught his attention. His heart rose to his throat as rapidly as the elevator descended. The doors opened, yielding her to him like the gates of a reluctant nunnery.

"Austin!" She ran to him, throwing her arms around his neck. "I thought Sunday would never come! I've missed you so much."

She smelled clean and pure...like the air after a spring shower. "I've missed you too. You could never know how much." Austin squeezed her, then held her at arms length. Her eyes sparkled as she moistened her lower lip in expectation. Their lips barely touched, then as they kissed again their lips parted.

Margret looked up at him, her eyes misty.

"What's the matter, Margret?"

"Oh nothing Austin, not now!"

He pulled her close trying to comfort her, puzzled. They were together now. He was perfectly happy. I guess I'll never be able to understand women, he thought. His lips brushed her ear lobe as he whispered softly, "Come on, let's get out of here." He took her by the hand and they ran down the steps to his car. "What's in the bag, Margret?"

"A surprise, you'll see!"

Austin opened the door for her and she got in. He hesitated a minute before closing it thinking. She looks beautiful, so very beautiful. He leaned down and kissed her and then remem-

bered to close the door.

As they drove off Margret asked, "Where are we going?"

"I thought you might enjoy the lake. We haven't been there for awhile."

"I'd like that very much," she smiled, stroking his arm as if she needed proof that he was really there. "Do you think it will be very crowded?"

"I don't think so. Anyway, there's a place I want to show you, a very special place."

"Where is it, Austin? Have we ever been there before?"

He smiled. She sounded excited. "Just wait. We'll be there soon."

"Darling, I love being with you. Just when I think I can't take anymore, Sunday comes and you make everything all right."

"You know, it's funny."

"What's funny Austin?"

"No, it's nothing."

"Please tell me."

"It's just that every morning before breakfast I think of things I want to say to you, and now you're really here with me and I can't think of a thing to say."

She smiled at him and squeezed his arm.

"You're my whole life Margret, and I want so much to make you happy."

"You do Austin. The only time I'm happy is when I'm with you. You know, this morning I woke up at least an hour and a half before the vibrator went off. I'll bet I was ready an hour before you had me called."

The scenery became very beautiful as they approached the mountains. "This is real. This is life," he murmured half aloud.

"What?"

"Freedom."

"Yes....yes I know."

He watched the wind play with her hair as she stared at the scenery, trying to take it all in as it rushed past.

Austin slowed the car down,

"Well, here we are. We have to walk from here. It won't take long. We just have to climb up there," Austin pointed at the steep bank covered with heavy underbrush. "There's supposed to be a trail," he reassured her as he squeezed her hand. "Do you think it's too steep for you?"

She smiled at him, "I can make it." As they started up the bank, the brush began grabbing at the legs of their coveralls.

"I don't see the trail," Austin panted. "We're almost half way up. It will be easier to just go on up from here than it will be to hunt for the trail. "Do you think you can make it if we stop and rest for a minute?"

She nodded.

Austin held her until the rising and falling of her chest slowed, then he kissed her, took her hand, and pulled her to the top.

"Oh, Austin!" Margret's eyes widened as she examined the lake below.

"You like it?"

"Oh, it's beautiful. I've never seen anything like it. The water's so smooth, so peaceful, like no one's ever touched it. Why it's such a clear blue that you can see the sandy bottom. See how the beach just runs into it, getting bluer and bluer all the time. Oh thank you!" She threw her arms around his neck.

"Shhhhhhh. Listen," Austin whispered as he detected the cheery melody of a nearby bird.

"Where is it?" Margret whispered.

Austin indicated a small tree some distance to their left, "Let's see if we can get closer without scaring it." Austin crouched, treading softly and slowly; motioning like a cavalry scout for Margret to follow. They were within ten feet of the bird when it stopped singing and seemed to look at them. Then it began again, even more cheerfully, as if it was glad to have an appreciative audience. After

a ten minute concert, it flew toward the lake.

"There he goes," Austin commented as he applauded the bird's performance.

"How do you know it's a he?"

Austin thought for a moment. "You don't think a *female* would show off like that for *my* benefit do you?"

"If she had any taste she would!" Margret replied planting a quick kiss on his cheek. "Try and catch me," she teased, starting to run down the side of the hill toward the beach. The slope wasn't as great as it was on the other side, and the heavy underbrush was missing; a blanket of grass and clover replaced it. As she looked back to make sure Austin was following, she lost her footing and rolled down the gentle slope of soft ground cover. Unhurt, she lay still waiting for Austin to reach her.

She's only playing, yet she might be..., "Margret are you all right?" His tone betrayed his concern as he knelt over her.

She smiled, opened her eyes, and pulled him down beside her, "Now I am."

"You schemer..." They wrestled for awhile, playing tenderly on the soft carpet. Austin looked at her laughing eyes. She wasn't ready yet. "Come on." He started to pull her to her feet.

She resisted. "Why?"

"Let's go exploring!"

Her face brightened as she stood up, "Where?"

"Over there. In the woods by the lake." Hand in hand, they began running through the field toward the woods. Their bee-line path took them across the empty beach. The sand slowed their pace as if it was inviting them to stay. They ran on.

"Oh, if only it could always be like this!" Margret bubbled.

When they reached the edge of the woods, they slowed to a walk. Austin pointed to the mountains on

their left, "See how smooth and flowing they look, but they're made up of trees." He turned to the woods. "Like these." They began walking slowly, surveying the scene, memorizing it. Austin broke the silence, "Each tree is different. See how the trunk of that one divides?"

Margret nodded.

"And how that one is almost perpendicular to the ground. And those two," he paused, "see how they seem to hold each other up. So neither will fall."

They embraced, envying the trees that never parted, then continued to walk. A dot of color among the grass caught Margret's eye. She pulled Austin to it.

"What?"

"Look at the colors!" Margret ran her finger along one of the deep red veins that seemed to stand out from the pale pink petal. "I've never seen a flower like it before."

"See how rich the red is?"

"And the rest of the petal seems to have absorbed just enough of it for a hint of color. It's very beautiful."

"Do you want it?"

Margret eyed the flower, hesitating. "No, it wouldn't be right."

"Why?"

"I couldn't take it back there. It would die. The pink would fade first and then the red...I couldn't take it back there."

Austin nodded. A fluttering of wings caught his attention. "Look, there's our friend."

"You were right it is a 'he', but I'm afraid I wasn't his inspiration." Margret pointed toward a nest of three baby birds with the mother close by. "That's what he was singing about!"

"That's the way it should be."

"Yes...all together. I suppose it's too late to go see Timmy."

"Yes, I'm afraid so. I'm sorry Margret. I've been selfish again. We'll go first thing next week." Austin

studied the three nestlings as the father fed them a worm. "I wish I could reach them," he murmured half aloud.

"Who?"

"My students." Austin changed the subject hurriedly, "Are you ready to go back up the hill?"

Margret smiled, squeezed his hand and nodded. Neither spoke until they reached the top of the grassy slope.

Margret led Austin to a grassy spot and pulled him down beside her. He put his arm around her shoulder. They lay on their backs looking at the sky.

"Watch the clouds," he whispered.

"Look at that one, over there," she pointed to a large fluffy cloud to their left. "It looks like an eagle."

"Yes. But watch it for a minute. See how the sky seems to be moving behind it? Now it's starting to change its shape."

"Maybe it's tired of being an eagle."

"Now it's a boat, see how the sails are billowed out?"

"Yes, and now one of the sails is breaking off, ...no, it's a bird, a small bird flying from the ship. A dove I think."

"Yes Margret, a dove," he whispered and kissed her on the cheek. He was so glad she understood.

They lay silently for a while, staring at the sky.

Margret turned to him, "Do you want me Austin?"

He smiled and touched her cheek.

Margret stood and stepped shyly from her coveralls; her white body glistened in the sun. Austin removed his "Sunday's" and embraced her, her softness melted into him. They clung together as they sank into the deep grass. Each tried to give the other enough warmth, enough love to last through the long week.

"Don't ever change Austin."

Austin tried to smile knowing

that he would be forced to change again soon.

"What's the matter?"

"You're my whole life, Margret. Today I'm living. When we're together I can think, I can feel, I can love. The rest of the week I'm nothing..."

"That's not true, Austin. You're my reason for living."

"I'm sorry Margret. Let's not think about the rest of the week, now." The two remained silent. There was nothing they could say. Love was to be shared, to be felt rather than spoken.

The warmth of the sun and their mutual embrace eventually lured them to a peaceful sleep, where dream and reality were synonymous.

Austin awoke when a chilly breeze blew across the back of his neck. Sun must be going down, he thought. He turned to the glowing western sky, Margret?"

"Hmm, what is it?"

"Look! See how blue the clouds are, and the sky's almost white."

"Why do you suppose it gave them its color?"

"Perhaps it knew that it would be dark soon."

"Look, it's changing to pale gold now."

"And see the deeper gold around the clouds?"

"Like a halo."

They watched silently as the gold sky turned to red, and then to a deeper gold.

"I guess we'll have to go soon," Austin whispered. They got up reluctantly and put on their coveralls. Austin pointed to the beach below. "Look at all the people leaving the beach."

"It's hard to believe that those spots down there are really people. They all look the same, so small and insignificant."

"We'd look like that too, if we were down there."

"But we're not."

"No," Austin smiled, "We're

not." He put his arm around her as they turned to leave.

"Look, there's the trail. It's easy to find from up here." They walked slowly down the trail to the car, and began the long drive home. Margret leaned against him, clinging to his arm. They drove on, neither speaking, neither knowing what to say.

Austin had to fight back the tears when they kissed goodnight.

Suddenly Margret's face brightened, "Oh, I almost forgot," she whispered. "Don't forget to look in the bag. My dispenser went haywire this morning and released an extra bun. I know how much you like them so...oh, goodnight." She kissed him as he started to demand that she keep the bun for herself and then, before he could speak, she was gone.

He called after her, "Goodnight Margret!" But she was gone. "Goodnight," he murmured. "Thank you."

As sleep came, she returned to him and they remained together until the vibrator forced him to begin a new week. Six days, he thought. Six days until I see her again. He relived their day together as he got ready for class. Time to eat, he thought, and then he remembered *the bun*, I won't have to eat the wafer this morning! He smiled as he pushed the button and the wafer was dispensed. He picked it up with two fingers and threw it into the disposal; then he opened the bag. A little stale, he thought, but it sure beats the wafer. He ate it slowly savoring each bite. The helmet descended from the ceiling as it did every morning, except Sunday, and encircled the top of his head. But without the wafer the memory tape was only an unintelligible hum. His mind returned to the hill overlooking the lake. He thought of the trees, all the different shapes, and the clouds constantly changing..."

"Hi Austin. How's Margret?" the guard smirked. But Austin didn't hear him. He was too far away.

The students dooned their headsets as he entered the room. Austin walked to the mike, "Good morning. Today we're going to do something a little different from what you are used to. I want to share something with you, something that I feel you are ready to know. What did you do yesterday?"

The class remained silent.

Austin repeated the question, "What did you do yesterday? You there, what's your name, son?"

"Jace," the boy replied astonished.

"What did you do yesterday, Jace?"

"I got to play ball with the fellows...I got three hits."

"Good for you." Austin smiled at him. "What else did you do?"

The boy returned the smile, "I got to go to the glass and watch for my parents. I saw them. They waved to me!"

"Do you ever wonder what it's like on the other side of that glass?"

The class remained silent.

"How about you Jace? Do you wonder what it's like?"

"Yes sir," Jace replied shyly then more firmly, "Yes sir! I *do* wonder!"

"Well," Austin began, "I could try to tell you what it's like, but I hardly know myself. Sunday just isn't enough. . ."

The boy behind Jace spoke up, "They only let *you* out on Sunday?"

"That's right. . . uh. . ."

"Mike," the boy interjected.

"Thank you. That's right, Mike. I only get out on Sunday, and when you're old enough, they'll let you out, too. But only on Sunday."

"Tell us what it's like," Jace pleaded.

"Yes, tell us . . . uh . . ."

"Austin, Mike. My name's Austin."

"Tell us what it's like, Austin!"

"That's enough!" the guard barked as he threw open the door. "Come with me."

As the guard was coming toward him, Austin looked at Jace and then at Mike, "Find out what it's like, find out what it's really like before it's too late." The guard grabbed his arm and forced Austin from the room.

The slamming door echoed in the silence.

Jace turned to Mike, "I'm going to find out."

"Me, too. I'm not going to wait for Sunday."

—Dan Layman



—Chris Vuxton

## ALONE

A man stands  
     "alone"  
         in a room  
     full of people, who say they're alive  
 But I wonder. Can they see what they say,  
         Do they bother to listen,  
 Or talk to fill spaces in air?

A man with a thought he wishes to  
   share,  
 So he speaks to an unyielding stare . . .  
 And the other will speak, and so  
 They trade places/  
 And neither can say that he cares,  
 They speak to fill spaces in air.

A Man sees a girl as he looks from his cor<sup>r</sup>  
 AND SHE SEES HIM IN RETURN<sup>e</sup>  
     a glance they can talk<sup>n</sup>  
 THRU  
     a glance they can listen,  
         and  
 No one can say they don't care.

—Douglas E. Russell

## UNTITLED

Sun mist seeps through damp woods  
As, weakly walking,  
She chores her prebreakfast minutes,  
    snatching new laid eggs from still sleeping fowl,  
    bundling woodslits to freshen smouldering night-fires,  
    opening cellared preserves for cooling butter-melted bread.

Knife clatter breaks morning thoughts,  
While work chatter of weather-dressed lumber-cutters  
Unstills her household worries  
    of damp wrinkled newly cleaned clothes,  
    soaking dishes,  
    and mussed, sleep-impressioned beds.

Boisterous good-byes reach lightly to ears,  
And door-slammed ressonance echoes faintly beneath labor moving feet.  
Forenoon activities busy her minutes,  
Till, alone, she browses her midday meal.  
Then finished, continues the unending chores;  
    mending work-torn shirts,  
    cleaning mud-trampled floors,  
    and baking for evening-time hungers.

Decline of day brings familied devotions,  
Bright crackling of night-fires shadows on psalm book. . .  
Verse strengthened faith weaves through sleep prompted dreams. . .  
Visions of ruffled skirts, hayrides and laughter  
    she reveals on teared pillow.  
But, forgotten by rest, she wakens refreshed,  
Before sun mist breaks through the damps woods. . .

—*Karol Bowman*



## ***THIS IS WHERE I LIVE***

In the security of united pleas, united funds, united seals,  
Pasting fast the window pane  
The mailbox emptied daily testifies the profit  
Of advertising with address,  
And proclaims the rent-payer resides  
Between his monthly payments.  
Along the street  
Repentant sinners lead a procession for salvation soup  
Recommended for their God-sent effort  
Nor forgotten in their reoccurrence.

One street back,  
Peeling bells call women behind masks of middle-age,  
Spirits tightly folded in their sombre shawls,  
Down the concrete carpet.  
Safety strips of weeds and dirt shield them from  
The throbbing pulse of traffic  
That courses furiously between curbs and  
Forces fender dodging in an effort  
To leave one milk delivery uncanceled.

Across the park lives neighbor Lincoln  
Reclining on a well-carved throne  
Behind columns whiter than the fairest split-log rail,  
Presiding over smooth stone walls and words  
Engraved in bronze perfection, his spirit  
Well preserved in its marble cube.

*—Deborah J. Wilson*

## TALLY

Let us count significances —  
Spots on the ceiling, moles on your face  
*Come close* — you tempt this unblemished lover,  
These mapmaking eyes  
To chart all suggestions:  
    Slant of smile  
    Span of your lips  
And, bending to read them,  
To brush hotly away  
The silence that sits on the brink of your mouth  
As breath-intervals, unwhispered,  
I count the places visited by your hands,  
Total your touches as "love you's,"  
Hold tight, hope your tallies  
Are equal to mine.

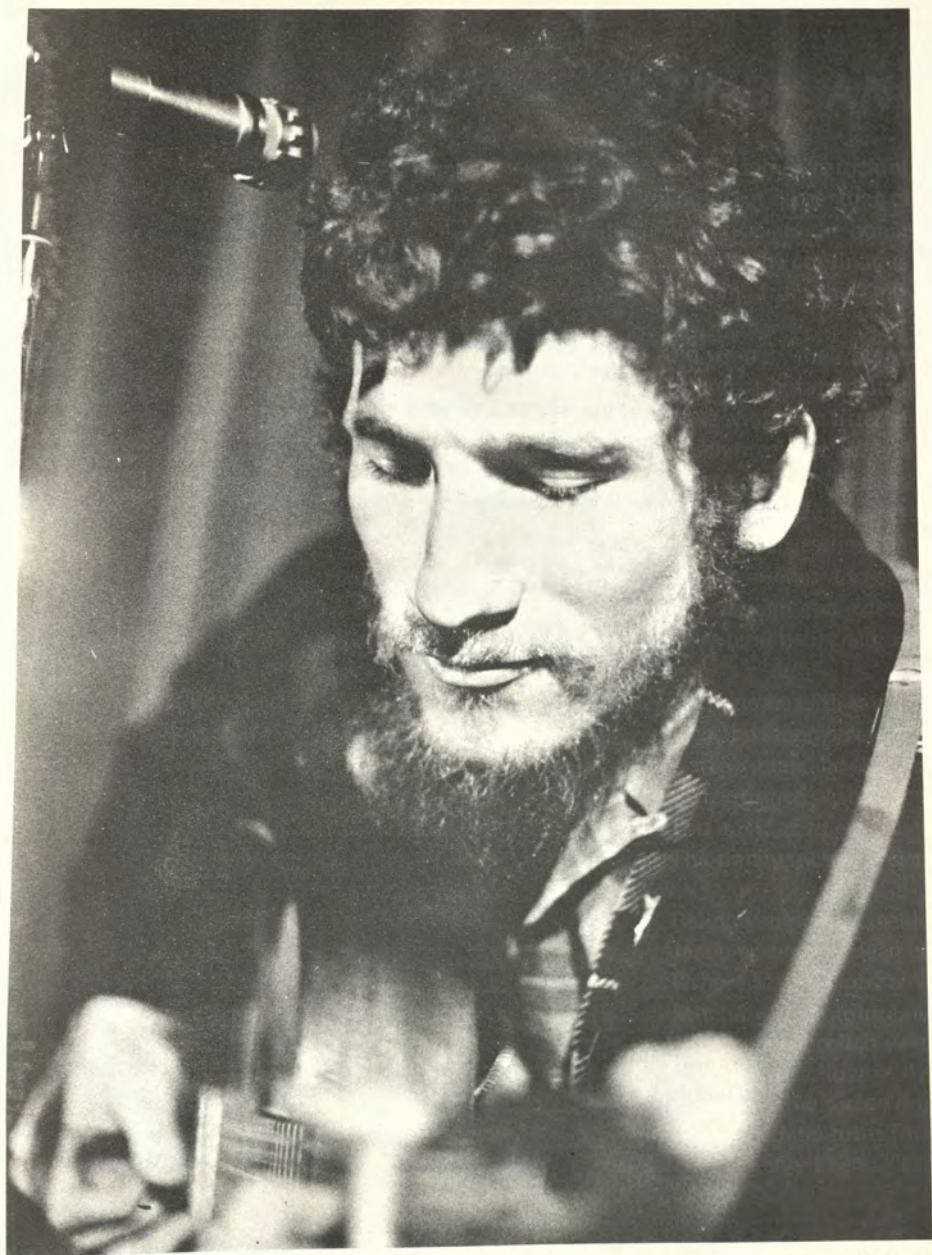
—*Suzanne Underwood*

## MIGRATION

Grandfather says it's instinct,  
As though one bird would know  
To lead  
And others would be wise enough  
To follow.  
    He still believes in heroes.

But you watch them again,  
Not a leader  
And many,  
    But many together;  
Once impotent dots surge beam of black  
Across a violet sky.

—*Patricia Click*  
*Mary Baldwin College*



*—Chris Vuxton*

## FOR RUSKIE

the television is blaring and blahing too loudly  
and someone thinks i should be content to scrape dishes  
but i am laughing inside and i know  
sunday afternoons were meant for "bettah things"  
(and giggling quietly, locking a secret lock  
wishing away i collapse past my door)  
and sit on my bed and smile and smile and smile

the window in front of me frames a three-d movie of the tempest (a real one)  
and minus the popcorn i can see it all—  
heaving clouds and blocks of steely rain and bushes shaking violently  
(and i know it is a movie because i can see and hear but cannot feel)

i must doubt the sunshine poets  
for glory is a storm, ruskie  
and peace is me inside my room  
(remembering at the same moment chicken noodle soup and  
crushed ice cubes in a coke)  
thinking how i must share this  
but half my friends would stop the projector  
and the other half overpaint the film

but if you were here i could sing the rain-song  
and show you stories in the drops on the screens  
(you might understand) but i expect  
that you might as well be a throw pillow  
sunk deadly on the bedspread, content and blind  
and i would have to hang you  
out on the line  
(plump that brain! air that mind!)  
for then you would know  
(or then you should know)

what rain and i are all about, ruskie

—Chris Worth

## **THE FLOOD – 1969**

And the people screamed, and prayed for a miracle  
as the water rushed over them, toppling their houses  
and their lives.

And the water roared and laughed at the bizarre trick  
It had played on those who thought they were indestructable. . .

And, later, the people stared  
at their gutted houses and numbed,  
slowly began reconstructing their lives and homes.

And the water slowed and tremors of regrets rippled  
through the stilled waters.

And then the people wept as the numbness wore off  
and the deep loss sank in, as all remembrances of past  
life were swept beneath the swirling water.

And, now as sunlight skips along the placid streams and rivers,  
the water sobs softly at the awful destruction it evoked.

And the echoes of its silent tears are all that remain.

*—Carolyn Click  
Mary Washington College*

# PAPER MIND

i find it most depressing

to lose my mind in poetry—to pin a thought to paper,  
mutilate by capture an elusive fantasy and  
cover its delicateness with plastic and carbon

i hate to be neurotic

about using letters where only eyes are proper,  
to take a silent oh  
and harden it with words

and yet i think if i did not write poetry

my mind would have left me long ago—  
for i would be so clogged up and lost in undescrivable events  
that my hands (which commonly flutter over typewriter keys) would  
tremble at the strange

spiders creeping in my head, weaving confused and baffling  
webs from one corner to the next,

pulling some sort of thought veil over  
what used to be my imagination  
and closing in forever

what i used to release on a patient machine that pounded out disgusting banal  
words for minds—

and so imprisoned, i would sit and toy with baby rattles,

missing forever the tender mess  
of what i could have ruined  
had i written poetry

—Chris Worth



## IN THE DARKROOM

In the wash your face rises, a shadow here, a curve there.  
No driad this, nor lorlei,  
angel set with langour, nor grinning witch with flowing hair—  
nor it is, alas, your own final self gazing back that undoes me.

All grays, black. All whites, complete,  
all longing is pathos and pain, geometry.  
Over and again, beloved, where I would pray, you match with silence,  
where I would want, you have outgrown desire,  
where unfinished in fact, your face is done in light  
and stills with that slow-turning smile my practiced word.

Love's hostage to a look: the comedy runs on.  
A glance beyond or slightly to the left  
shall hold me at a brutal radius within it's orbit's curve.  
Or some fine turn of lip or lid, slightly blurred,  
transposed exact from flesh to print,  
some childlike helplessness suggests an infant's head:  
not closed but rent to world, to love.

Choirs, roses, all metaphors explored.  
Your own mythology shall chase me down the years,  
so stumbling first, so falling fast,  
you are this earth, this child, this final home.

—Diane R. Ivone

## LEFTOVER

Affair over, lovers part,  
not hating, yet  
not caring enough to continue.

Honest emotion long since drowned  
in passion's vent,  
they shielded uncertainties  
in flowered phrases,  
declaring unbounded love  
to avoid honesty's pain.

Hopes replaced by regret,  
they looked into the selves they knew,  
and wept with silent tearless sobs  
for the lovers that never were.

—Elizabeth Doss

## BUBBLE

Bird of my bathtub  
What sentiment do you render clean?  
Rounded soap emotion of my telling...  
    I am a luxuriant princess  
        without ruth  
        and I decide  
    that I am in love.  
watching the pale pink stretch, writhing, over your dome...  
    Such a beautifying state,  
        my dear mind,  
        conducive  
    to a benevolent body!  
The blues now, faster...  
    The charms tally forth  
        my spreading radiance sums the telling symptoms;  
        my limbs lie with arrogant grace,  
        moving deeply in the languid water.  
Now the indifferent yellows...  
    My love is lofty,  
        I am myself too gorgeous...  
The swirling blacks...  
    ah, contentment—  
Burst!  
comes crick neck  
cold tub  
damp jelling into gooseflesh  
and my scorn—  
to have caught myself losing my senses!

—Deborah Fairfield



## **A LUNCH COUNTER ENCOUNTER**

An old man passed a  
corner coffee child who smiled  
to watch a vein-laced hand  
tip a much felt hat.

Hesitation made a game.  
Perhaps he thought about  
gray fur inside his ears.  
Nonetheless, his wife was dead.

"A dish of ice cream  
for the gentleman here!"  
—And hurry so he may sit down  
to vanilla days again.

—*Cherdi*

## **THE ASSISTANT**

The undertaker stares, wrinkles twitching  
At the corners of his eyes—  
Smile lines, for he knows he has something  
That makes his white teeth twinkle  
As he hands the obituary in.  
Standing in the shadow of the parlor door  
He measures and fits us as we walk by  
With a practiced intuition—  
He knows the situation.  
We will lie equal measure on his table,  
Cords of wood beneath his painless scapel,  
And writhe to his merry tunes.  
Hovering at the fringe of a shaded plot  
Where a family's grief allows him somber thought,  
He feels the gaze of his young assistant  
And finds no need to turn and face the smile.

—*A. Newton Likins*

## MATURITY

Melting from the wall,  
the gaze worn poster lost  
its scotch taped grip . . .  
soon to be replaced  
by paintings hung with nails.

—*Karol Bowman*

## GOHIM

I guess I'd better write this down.  
Poems too long considered  
Shatter like stained glass in  
A high wind, leaving pieces  
Of color I cannot glue together.

You are  
Everywhere I turn, it seems,  
Staring at me from across  
A room, or a hall, or a dream.

Maybe a piece of my stained glass  
Is caught in your eye.

—*Andrea Fisher*

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