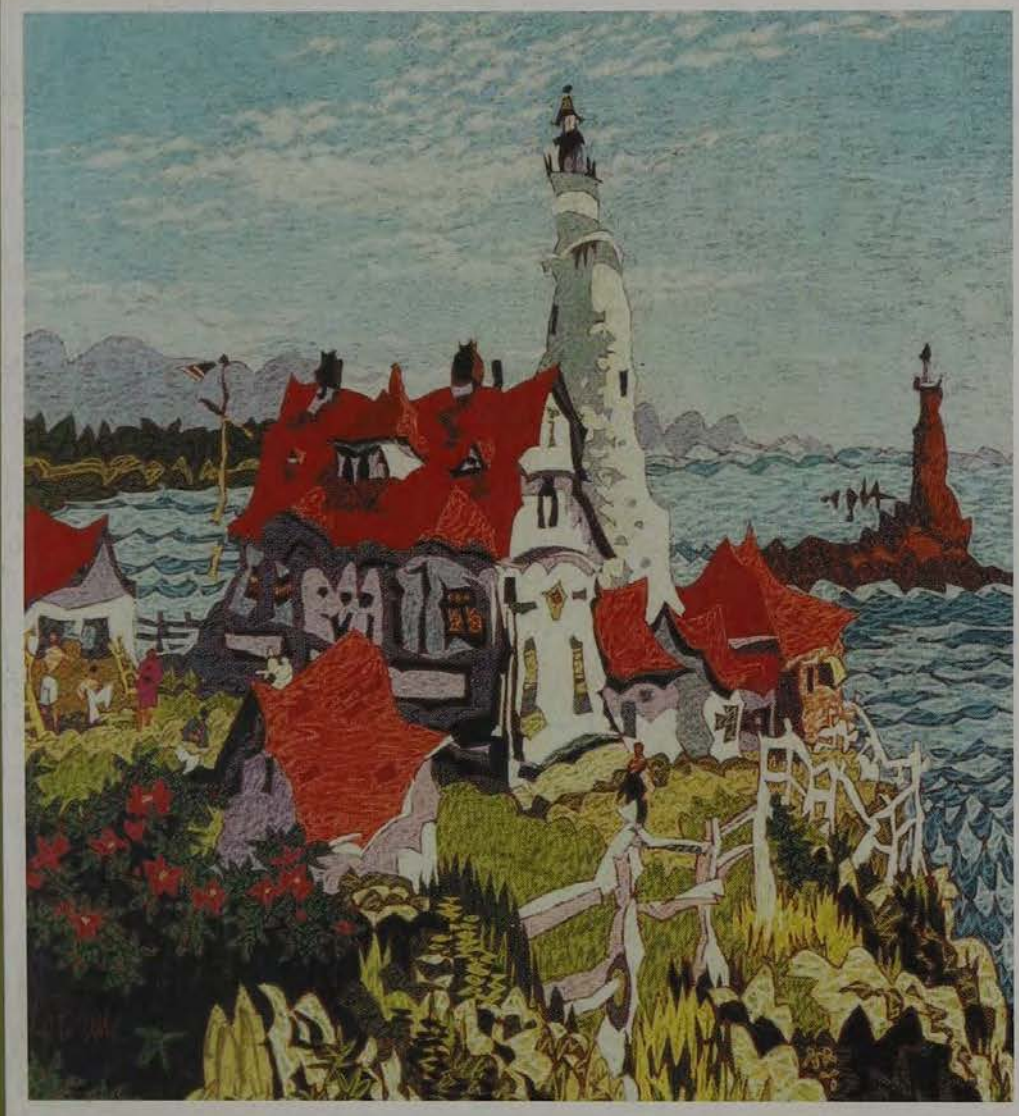
Crosscut

literary magazine



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With an introduction by Ardeana Hamlin

Crosscut

literary magazine

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Crosscut

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Preface

Like the lighthouse on our cover, we broadcast this year's collection of creative writing and images from the Husson community, a broad spectrum of human experience sweeping out through the fog and dark beyond our shore, and then back around through our own. These pages reflect their creators' willingness to engage or to withdraw, to examine or to forget, to seethe or to soothe. Some works travel great distances, tracking mysteries both familiar and exotic; some peer down more nearby streets and the lives within; still others gaze far inward to further histories, further questions. We hope you'll accept the invitation, turn the pages, experience and enjoy all of this year's selections.

We appreciate the efforts of all the people who have contributed to this edition. We particularly want to thank Husson College President William Beardsley and Dean James Kenny of the School of Science and Humanities for their continuing support of *Crosscut.*

—The Editors

Introduction

Ardeana Hamlin

Crosscut: a direct path oblique to the main path; a cut across the grain.

Writing allows us to leave the main paths of thinking and strike off into the unknown territory of heart, mind, and soul. Writing allows us to enter the realm of dreams and ideas where great dark forests of imagination tower toward the heavens. Writing allows us to meet our inner selves, the gnomes and good witches of our psyches.

To write is to go against the grain of ordinary, everyday speaking. When we write, our formless thoughts assume a body in lines upon the page. We create the place where the writer's mind meets the reader's mind, the place where they may mingle, perhaps fuse, perhaps not.

For many Husson College students the writing journey begins in classrooms with teachers who serve as guides, teachers who give the weighty gift of literature. They open books and invite you in. They bestow the magic of audience; they serve as your readers, your editors, your mentors. They teach you to think about what you know

and what you are learning. They encourage you to delve into that knowledge and to articulate your thoughts on the page - for the act of learning is a cut against the grain, a step off the main path in search of a new direction.

It is 1962 in Bingham, Maine. I am in Marguerite Moore's 12th grade English literature class at Valley High School. We are studying essays and the assignment is to write a paper stating our views on open, burning dumps. This is not an issue we, as teenagers, care two cents about. We take the dump for granted. Sooner or later everyone goes there. Garbage is a fact of life. The dump is where boys go to try out their new rifles, to shoot rats. It is where some of our mothers acquire antique furniture, gleaning from the dump what was left behind as others got rid of the old stuff in favor of formica and chrome furnishings.

The class groans and Mrs. Moore grins. She is a tough teacher, with many years of experience, with high expectations and a gift for getting her points across. She makes learning interesting and insists that we learn to think. She says she'll give us a break. If we don't want to write an essay, then we may write a poem - any subject, any length. Another, louder, groan sweeps across the class. Suddenly, the essay looks really, really good - to everyone but me.

I opt for the poem.

I began reading poetry when I was 12; the way the words fit together in verse enchanted me. But until Mrs. Moore gave me a choice, it never occurred to me that I might write a poem of my own.

Thus, I am astounded when a poem 'comes to me' with very little effort, almost as if someone had whispered it to me and all I had to do was write it down. In class the

following week, when it's my turn to read aloud, I read my poem. My palms are sweating and I suffer an agony of self-consciousness. I expect my classmates to laugh at me. But it's worse than that - they don't laugh. They don't say anything. Mrs. Moore gives me a long look I can't interpret and I wish I'd stuck with the dump. Then it's someone else's turn and I slink back to my seat.

Mrs. Moore asks me to stay behind after class and someone murmurs, "Guess you're in for it." My heart sinks. I figure I'm going to have to write an essay, anyway, maybe on a subject worse than the dump.

Mrs. Moore says she wants my permission to submit my poem for possible inclusion in an anthology of high school poetry. I am stunned and can only nod my head, yes. Then I flee back to my homeroom where I read my poem again and I think, oh, maybe this is better than I thought it was.

Writing that poem was my crosscut, my moment of going against the grain, of stepping off the main path. It marked the beginning of the development of my writing self.

The poem was accepted for publication and when I saw it in print months later, I knew I had found my bliss.

Crosscut is, indeed, aptly named. The stories and poems contained in this edition reflect each writer's willingness to step deliberately off well-trodden paths, taking the reader into some unique perspective - to glimpse things rustling darkly, as in Eric Conley's *A Quiet Walk Amongst Friends;* to be dazzled by descriptions of ancient India in Susmita Chatterjee's *In the World of the Moguls;* or to be left breathless by the compelling imagery of Leon Raikes' poem *Lobster Lake Sequence.*

Crosscut is enriched by the work of photographers

and artists whose visions complement the visions of the writers.

Now, it's your turn, gentle reader, to step off the main path and delve into this outstanding collection of stories, poems and art. ❧

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Kaleena Nakowicz

Comfort

Will you find something to praise,
Something to be aware of?
Pull up on the road.
Pull into the driveway.
Can I be there with you,
By your side?
I won't say a word.

Leon Raikes

Lobster Lake Sequence

I

All the way from the Atlantic to my feet
mist fills all the hollows
like another milk—
pouring itself so quiet
into dark bowls of fragrant cliffs
you wonder about this invisible rhythm of waves,
among October oaks this bronze tang
of sweet bell colors.
You wonder how many shoulders
of beachgrass raise themselves into frost
imagining themselves as wings.
How many early winter roses
it will take to bloom into a dawnlight
of perceptible color.
How many spruces all year long
must rub themselves awake all night
into this permanent odor,
this seasweeping longing.

II

How dark are the currents
of Lobster Lake
under the ice and layers of blue snow?
How do the fish know
when it is night?
Or maybe they hunger all through the winter
stretching their fins as in a dream,

suspended in a dark vacuum,
just so that the first green larvae of spring
will taste in their chill throats
like life itself.

III

Straight down from the north
comes the sweet night wind
so pure it comes singing itself
into acre after acre of snow.
You know, the clean smell of snow
that sweetens even the swamps
into a single odor.
This is the clean song of polished stone,
and a sky too the color of buffed rock.
No telling how many colors the stars
are inventing as starlight now,
all of those colors half scoured to white
by the clean north wind
of the sweet snows falling right now
at our very own feet.

And at the same time,
up from the egg-yellow south at noon
comes the salt wind of sea-snow,
the odor of rotted pilings
a rich release of thaw in the mud.

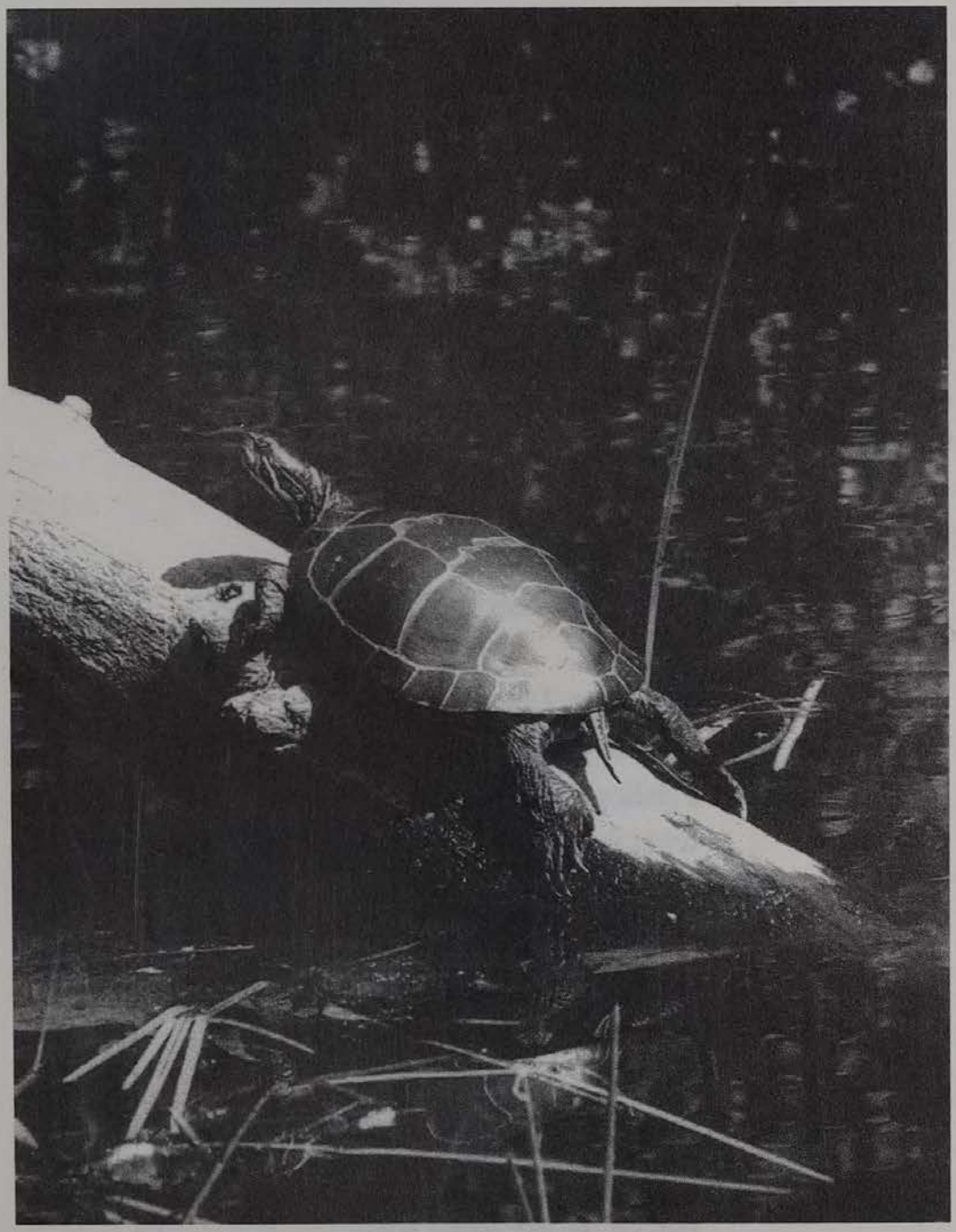
IV

Already I hear the Lobster Lake currents
loading themselves with new fishes.
New generations of simple grasses,
pickerelweed and bittersweet lilies,

already are seeded in the warming loam
remembering, from long ago,
their very own scents.
Even each stone is melting around itself
a green skirt of thawing.
Suddenly the sky has scoured itself
a new shade of blue,
encouraging the willows with false green.

V

Even now a green light is falling
on fresh skin:—
under this iridescent rain,
what a joy to discover
it is yours! ❧



"Turtle"
— Kathy Wall

Marie Juckett

Winged Victory

I am a goddess -
with flowing white robes
and wings lifted in flight
at the start.

The wind forces itself against me
but my powers do not falter.

The sun tries to blind me
but I do not lose my way.
My flight continues -
steady and strong.

But now, I must slow,
with my feet to the earth . . .
I gallop,
with careful steps to cross the water,
unsure of its depths . . .

I cannot see the other side now . . .
...and I feel I've lost my way -

I'm suddenly weak and feel
stripped of my powers...
voices fill my head with
self-doubt...

The light has turned to blackness,
and I'm alone.

My wings are heavy, my feet weighted.

But in the distance, I hear
something...
The sound is faint but its
force is strong.

It's a voice...
your voice.
And I see eyes...
your eyes...
Pulling me...
...across the finish line.

Heather McAnirlin

At the Shelter

At the shelter we call him "Sitting Bull."

Merle lives in the second building on the property, which is the men's dormitory. Unlike the women's house, the men's rooms have little patios outside their doors with a plastic lawn chair stationed outside each exit. My friend Merle eases himself into his chair every morning, leaving little room for breathing space, early before the overnight worker leaves to have breakfast with his girl. He just sits there with a notebook in his hand until the sun is high in the sky. I study him unmoving and wonder if he is in a trance, meditating, or just medicated (most of us are on something or another).

Along with my regular jobs of folding the laundry and setting the tables, my unofficial house chore is to fetch Merle in at lunch time. Meals are dished out buffet-style in the kitchen in the women's house. On our walks to the house Merle sometimes tells me about his screenplay.

He says he isn't really homeless; he has a condo in California. "A modest place," he says. He's here just observing, doing research for his latest project about a man who lost everything and ended up among the common in a small shelter. So Merle left his belongings in California and flew to New England to wander around just to see where he'd end up. He said he fooled the volunteer who did his intake interview and is now considering taking up acting.

Some days he tells me there is a role in the movie based on me. She's a quiet, unassuming girl who runs away with

a handsome caseworker and lives happily ever after. Whether his tale is true or not, I've decided it is the best gift I've ever been given.

I've been here too long and believing in Merle's story is the only thing that keeps me from growing a hard, cold heart. Thinking that someone among us doesn't really belong here gives me hope. Maybe when he leaves he'll take me with him. I could pretend to love him in "that way" if it would get me out of here.

These are the thoughts I have as we walk in for lunch.

I want to lean over and ask him if he thinks he could want me. But I ask him to tell me more about California instead. ❧

Three Poems

Anna Sitarski

Trapped

Oh when in dreams she seeks
A love of unclosed doors
She finds a closet
Locked and without air

The Rose

Your love is like the fallen Rose
Petal by Petal
Leaving the core

Snow

Within the snowy night
My heart melts in the silence
And all is lost again

Amanda Kitchen

Blinded

It's hard not to find a beauty in your movement,
A tinge of a soft memory in your voice when you whisper.
But your careless ways still sting my body,
You call tears to my eyes as if they worship you.

I'll always want to say one more thing...
To make you feel,
To watch you crawl inside yourself,
And see what I see in you.

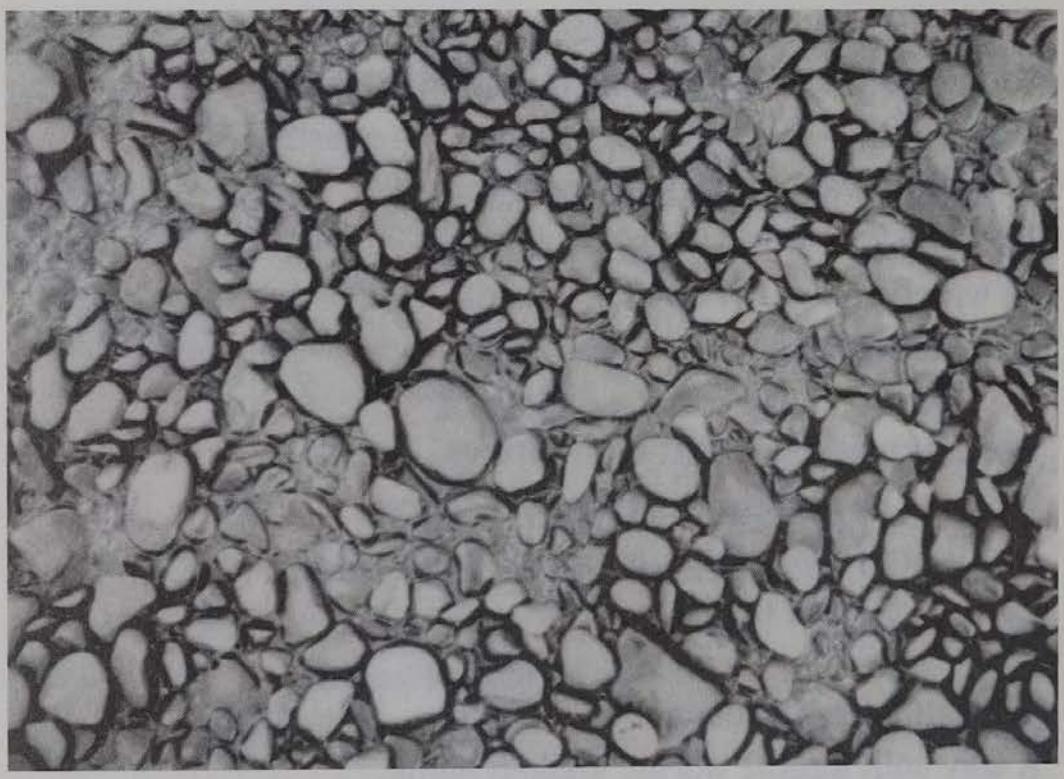
During the silence that night brings,
With the shades drawn, blankets shared,
Everything beautiful found its way to us;
Every drop was tasted.

You taught me patience,
A way with simple words, spoken softly,
Carried in the air like a feather,
Waiting to fall upon my ears.

I saw passion,
Intent to take me into the depths of you,
A desire rich with anticipation,
And no regret to sour it.

But when the day seeped into our night,
With the shades up, blankets off,
The light took what the darkness created;
With one sweeping glance you were shut away.

And I saw no passion, and no patience.



— Lucas Martin

Nancy Nichols-Pethick

Wallpaper

The space between hammer and nail
is thick: nearly forever, or at least as long as it takes
to grow into someone who can sustain such love
as required to hold a nail in place and not hit
the dumb fingers or bruise the wallpaper's
tender flesh. So the picture is hung.
It's no small thing, but taken as such.
For years the afternoon light will scale the wall
and find, inside the frame, a plentitude of greens
less worth speaking of because of their beauty.
So I won't waste words, but only say
that my heart is the picture, my body the house:
you go and a sough of wind throws my heart askew
on its hook. The furniture seems out of whack.
And where the picture has lain there appear, indecent,
bright roses and thorny, curling vines.

Susmita Chatterjee

In the World of the Moguls

The Kalka mail from Delhi was running at full speed and we were heading towards Agra, the great city of yesteryear, to see the Taj Mahal. Delhi and Agra in Uttar Pradesh, India, were the seats of the Mogul empire. The Moguls have given a unique character to the history and culture of India. The art and architecture, the classical music, the unique Kawali folk music, the nine jewels of Emperor Akbar's court, the gourmet food and exotic drinks of Rooabza (meaning "spirit of the nectar") are some of the gifts of the culture. That ice used to be transported from the mountains of Kashmir to keep the emperors cool in Delhi is an example of their luxurious living. The Mogul women, their exquisite beauty, their dresses of silk and the soft, superfine Dacca gauze of nine yards that could pass through a ring the size of the ring finger, their jewels and ornaments of diamonds, rubies and pearls, have forever beguiled the readers of history. Men also used jewels to specify their ranks and wore clothes of silk and satin and velvet with gold embroidery and jewels inlaid. It was a fascinating experience to visit the places where such things happened.

It was past midnight when we reached Agra. The station was full of vendors selling fruits, sweets and snacks. The vendors of hot tea were many and they were hawking garam chai. We left the platform and traveled by a Tonga, a horse-drawn buggy, to our halting place for the night, the Agra Hotel, an old-style building with wide arches all around.

In the morning, amidst bright sunshine, I could see the Taj Mahal from the hotel window. Emperor Shah Jahan, the grandson of Akbar the Great, built this mausoleum for his beloved queen Mumtaz Mahal. I could not believe that

such an exquisite object could exist on the earth! It was as if it descended from heaven, and I was dazzled that such a thing was real. A rare kind of beauty, I beheld it and a joy filled my heart, a joy that we feel when we face excellence.

Soon we were in front of the Taj. It was just after monsoon and the waters of the Yamuna river were flowing in abundance. With the blue sky above, the translucent white marbled Taj Mahal stood silent against the background of the dark waters of the river. Sunshine played on the latticed marble walls of the Taj and glistened on the luminous dome. Only with great effort could I take away my eyes from this breathtaking beauty. As I looked around I could see the gardens and the fountains and the cool water pools that surround the Taj. Pathways run skirting these pools. Slowly we climbed the marble stairs and reached the gorgeous entrance. On the side walls of this entrance were colorful designs of flowers and leafy stems embossed in marble and inlaid with stones of various colors. Our guide, a young Muslim man, told us that once only rubies and diamonds filled those places, which are now either empty or filled with artificial stones for purposes of decoration. When the Taj was built, artists and builders came from Damascus, Syria, Persia and even China to work on the beautiful and artistic designs of this unique creation. The filigreed walls of marble are of a lacy design fretted with conical shapes. It is all in marble and appears amazingly smooth and dainty. The sunshine and the moonbeams both play coolly on this.

As we entered we saw a latticed wall like a lace of triangles surrounding the two marble tombs decorated with a simple design of flowers. But these were not the real tombs. To reach the real ones we had to climb down through a small staircase on the side of the room, into a sort of spacious basement, and walk a few steps to the foot of the two tombs. One was that of Mumtaz Mahal the beloved queen, and the other was that of the emperor himself. Even in death

he was with his very own Mumtaz who gave him fourteen children, of whom four sons and two daughters survived. At the tomb the atmosphere was heavy with the fragrance of soft incense. We stood in silence in that silent room, then at last we found our way out.

We came out into the sunshine where in the garden the birds were chirping. As we went round we saw the four marble pillars on the four corners of the area standing like the sentinels of the past. In the morning and in the evening the call for the Namaz (Prayer) is rendered from the tops of these pillars.

After this wonderful experience, we went to see the Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikhri, both great tourist attractions. The Agra Fort is a huge area surrounded by high walls and gates of enormous size. Emperor Shah Jahan was kept a prisoner by his son Aurangzeb who ousted his elder brother Dara Sheko, the amiable crown prince, a lover of literature and philosophy. He and his family members were killed by Aurangzeb's men and so were his other brothers. His sister Jahanara was imprisoned with his father in the Agra fort. His younger sister, Roshanara, however, joined him in this intrigue. The room in the fort where Shah Jahan was imprisoned had a spacious window and the Taj could be seen from there. There was also an in-built mirror on the wall where the reflection of the Taj fell. Each one of us looked into the mirror to have a glimpse of the Taj and we could see the vision of it. Our guide, the young Islamic man, said in his inimical way, "InsaAllaha, (by the grace of God) the emperor could see the Taj when he was sick and even when he could not stir from his bed." Jahanara was the only other soul around the emperor. Both were confined in the Agra Fort under heavy guard. This was only one of the intrigues which abound in Mogul history.

We went round the fort and saw the gates that stood few and far apart in the high walls. The biggest gate is the

Bhuland Darwaza (Big Door), which is 40-50 feet high, with huge iron- and brass-plated doors that are seldom opened now. The other gate we saw was the Amar Singh Rathore gate. Amar Singh Rathore, a Rajput chieftain, was imprisoned in the fort and had to escape in the dark of night. A horse was arranged for him and he rode on his horse and climbed the high wall to jump from that height. He fell on the marshy land below, and before anyone could catch him, he rode away on his horse to safety. Since then, this gate has been known by his name. Our journey took us to Fatehpur Sikhri, and we were amazed to see the beautiful city that Emperor Akbar had built as his capital. It is a red sandstone city. Emperor Akbar is the most celebrated of all the Moguls and he believed in harmony. He wrote a book of law named Ayne Akbari, which contains his liberal rules. The other astounding gift from Akbar was his book Din-e-Ilahi. This is a book on a new religion. Not only did he respect all religions but suggested that the good of every religion be embraced. He was married to Jodah Bai who was a Rajput princess and a Hindu. Her apartment, which we visited, was of red sandstone. Inside this apartment was a Hindu temple where Jodah Bai had her deity installed and a Hindu priest from her father's kingdom was brought to perform the daily worship. Jodah Bai was also the mother of Jahanghir, who became the emperor after Akbar the Great. Though the Mogul women were not generally directly involved in politics, Jahanghir's wife Noor Jahan was an exception. She administered the state and also had her face inscribed on the gold coin of the day, along with the face of her husband. Noor Jahan had all the elegance and beauty for which she was named the Light of the World.

As we moved through the spacious area, which looked like a big courtyard, we came across the two astounding halls. The first, the Dewan-e-Khas, was a hall for the emperor to sit and consult with his advisers, ministers and

other important people of his state. The Dewan-e-Aam was for the emperor to meet with the common people of the kingdom. The word "Khas" means special, just as the word "Aam" means general.

The most attractive building at Fatehpur Sikhri was the Hawa Mahal or the wind building. Its walls were like the sails of a ship, and as the wind blew it appeared as if the walls were flapping. It is a beguiling architecture, a seven-story building with its red stone walls which seem to be moving each time the wind blows.

The sun was about to set. It seemed with the nightfall the whole area would come to life. A thousand lights would be lit to ward off the darkness, bands of women would suddenly appear and the queen would be in the center bejeweled and dressed in her royal attire, with soft music of the shenai playing at the entrance gate. The kawals, both male and female, would come out to give their performance at night and continue to sing and dance till morning, as if they took turns with the guards to secure the place. I felt that I was in a Stephen King movie where the dead come alive, as if the hungry stone would come alive. Before all this could happen we left for Agra.

On our way back, my mind was enraptured with the thoughts of the first Mogul emperor Babur, who crossed the Oxus River or the Amu Darya as it is known. He crossed the HinduKush Mountains and the Khyber Pass through which he came to Kabul and declared himself the emperor of Afghanistan. Then he marched to Delhi and declared himself the emperor of Hindustan (or India). While Babur was marching amidst the forests into Kabul, his wife gave birth to a son. Babur celebrated the event by serving venison to his chiefs and declared that the fame of his son Humayun would spread like the fragrance of the musk of the deer.

The Moguls continued to rule India for almost four hundred years. Their great contribution was the Urdu language,

a mixture of Arabic, Persian and the local Hindi, which is a language of sophistication, and of the finest poetry. The last Mogul emperor was Bahadhur Shah Zafar who died in exile in Burma (presently Myanmar). His famous couplet in Urdu haunts the ramparts of the Red Fort, Delhi, India:

How very unfortunate is Zafar
That he did not get two yards of land for his burial. ❧

Greg Winston

Mid-Winter Cartography

A cold morning near the middle of January and
I'm sitting in the kitchen at breakfast.
My early-hours companion is
A four-year-old North American road atlas.
It's a weathered and coverless book,
A seasoned veteran of backseat storms
And floor-mat glaciations. Now it has sat on the table
Open for two nights to the Canadian Maritimes.

A bowl of oatmeal cools by the Grand Banks
While I peer out on deep snow pastures, black line of woods,
And lightening sky,
Till my eyes return, reorienting map-wards:

Nova Scotia looks porpoise-like,
Surfaced now, yet
Poised to plunge
Down
Across time zones
For Cape Ann and for Boston,
Or otherwise to invade the Gulf of Maine
Shocking frigid swimmers, summer tourists and whale-watch captains.
Meanwhile, Prince Edward Island floats like a phone left off the hook
By steadfast New Brunswick—
A long distance lost call from the coast.

Place names are an entirely different dimension.
They tell of history's highest and lowest tides of language
On these shorelines of comings and goings:
Quispamsis and Kouchibouguac.
Grande Anse and Petite-Rivière-de-l'Île.
New Castle and Windsor.
Any dissonance left in all their music is harmonized,
Any wrinkling difference ironed out
By the equalizing fonts and measured black points of
Rand McNally and Company.

Veins of red and gray, and a few blue artery stretches
Eventually connect each someplace to everyplace else.
Along one of these routes, once, stopped with a jolt
Elizabeth Bishop's westbound bus
For that darkly plodding moonlit moose.



— Lucas Martin

Ellen Bryan Obed

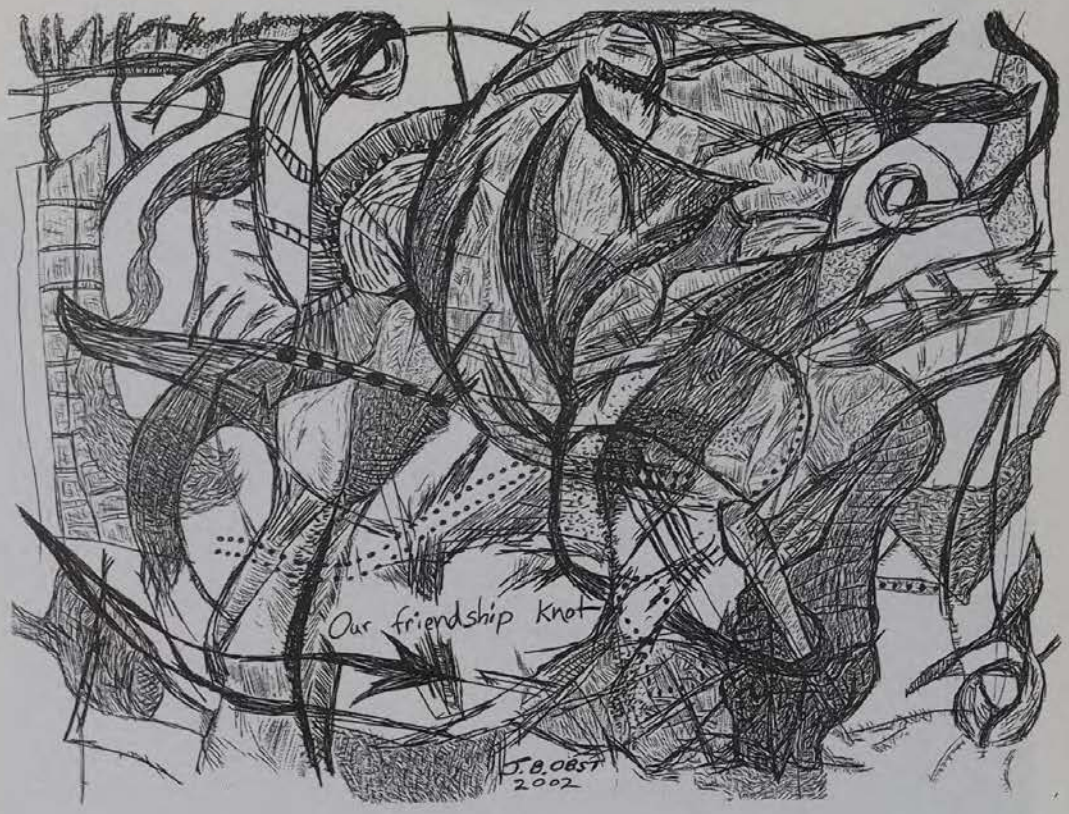
Dinosaur Poem

Said Brachiosaurus
to Brontosaurus
(from under the bed)
"Be quiet, be quiet,
keep your tail still.
They think we are dead.

"When they have gone out
to play in an hour,
we'll fill up the tub
and turn on the shower.

"We'll splash and we'll soak
as in times long before
when we lay in the swamps
and walked on the shore.
We'll stick our heads out
of the windows for leaves
and nibble the tops
of the neighborhood trees.

"When we hear them coming,
climb back under," he winked.
"Remember we're dead—
we've long been extinct!"



Our Friendship Knot
— J.B. Obst

Elizabeth Ramirez

Friend

Friend
Why do you have to leave?
Even though we don't live near,
Why must you go
To the other side of the country,
To a new life?

Who will write to me someday
To tell me you have left forever,
That God willing, we will meet again
In a much better place than here?

I cry tears of sadness;
I don't know why.
We haven't met in years, but
Letters keep us together when
Miles keep us apart.

I am reminded of many farewells,
Of sadness which emanates from them.
I can't go on like this.
I, too, need to go
Somewhere new and different.

But here I am, living out this
Sorrowful existence, wondering
Day to day, why am I here?
I can't discern the answer,
So here I stay.
Good-bye.

Melissa MacCrae

Growing Pains

This essay is dedicated to Berneice "Bunny" Thompson

Some good things are tied to bad times. Like Victory Gardens and war.

That thought came to mind when I visited my mother, Joyce MacCrae Howe, last August. Quart-sized canning jars packed with rosy red tomatoes laced with glistening seeds lined her kitchen counter tops. A big speckled pot simmered on the stove.

"I just delivered a quart to Bunny. She remembers canning vegetables as a home ec teacher at Brewer High during the war," Mum said. "I remember during the war, everybody grew what they called a Victory Garden. It was a patriotic thing for civilians to do, to support the war effort by growing their own food."

"Why does it take a war for people to show their patriotism and their commitment to one another?" I asked.

A couple of weeks later, the unthinkable happened.

That was September 11, 2001.

I'm young enough that war has barely brushed my life. What happened on 9/11 is close enough for me, though. What I can do in response as a writer is to collect and write the stories of those who lived through and helped others survive and move beyond wartime.

Turn the clock back to our nation's entry into World War I when the U.S. declared war on Germany on April 16, 1917. President Woodrow Wilson asked Herbert Hoover to serve as National Food Administrator. Hoover said, "Food will win the war."

An enormous propaganda campaign ensued. President

Wilson appealed to American homemakers: "Every housewife who practices strict economy puts herself in the ranks of those who serve the nation." Secretary David Franklin Houston of the U.S. Department of Agriculture said in 1917, "To save food, the housewife must learn to plan economical and properly balanced meals." While their husbands and sons went off to war, Hoover enlisted a vast army of mostly women and children food conservers. They lent their hands, pots and pans, not for hand-to-hand combat, but to cultivate beans, beets, cauliflower and tomatoes, among other basic produce. Backyard gardens actually produced crops valued at $350,000,000, according to a Website on Victory Gardens.

The U.S. claimed further victory at the end of The Great War, and the country returned to its business of making money, making Model T's and making babies.

Then the unthinkable occurred.

The Japanese launched an attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, which drew a previously reluctant America into World War II. That was 1941. Demoralized Americans, still recovering from the Great Depression of the '30s, were asked to contribute to a new war effort. Like an echo, the government asked for and received the aid of everyday American families to support this new war by raising some of their own food. Nearly 20 million Americans dug deep and answered the call to plant a Victory Garden and focus on home economics.

Berneice Thompson was one of those people.

Berneice "Bunny" Thompson is my parents' longtime neighbor. She welcomed my family and me to the neighborhood in November, 1963, when I was 5 years old (the same month President John F. Kennedy was assassinated). All I knew about her was that she was the librarian at Husson College and had summers off, as I did then. What I didn't know was that before she served as Husson's librarian, she

enjoyed a 20-year career, beginning in 1943, teaching home economics at Brewer High School.

She and all the other home economics teachers nationwide were told to place an advertisement in their local newspapers soliciting Victory Garden produce that could be canned and conserved for the war effort. To bolster those efforts, the U.S. government propaganda machine sponsored several campaigns and associated booklets bearing such titles as "Groundwork for Victory: Grow More in '44," and "Plant a Victory Garden: Our Food is Fighting." Those gardens produced 40 percent of all produce that was consumed in the U.S.

Then the fighting ceased. The government stopped enlisting citizens to grow their own food. Victory Gardens lay fallow. When spring dawned in 1946, many people chose not to plant. Ironically, since the nation and the agriculture industry were still recovering from the war, food shortages were widespread by summer.

Return to the present. So, why does it take a war for people to show their patriotism and commitment to one another?

Some people already are behaving in decidedly 9/10 fashion, as if the events of September 11 mean nothing more than an anomalous blip on the radar screen of history.

What did we learn?

As history has illustrated, we should expect the unthinkable to happen again.

What can we do?

Candida Bohnne-Eittrein considered that question as she recovered from witnessing jetliners slamming into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. She posted this message on her Website: "My hope is to start an agency dedicated to peace through the establishment of worldwide Victory Over Terrorism gardens."

That's a good start. But it's going to take a whole lot

more people such as Ms. Bohnne-Eittrein, Miss Thompson, my mother and me to spread the news — like seeds — of the fecundity of individual acts of caring, teaching and sharing. A single act of kindness spreads like a seed caught in the wind. Wherever it lands, it takes root and grows. Imagine the possibilities if hundreds — thousands — millions of people nurture that potential, planting seeds of peace as part of their daily lives. ❧



— Michelle Suber

J.T. Kenny

Laura

She escaped
eighteen years of hard time
in the cold custody of an
Illinois farm family

Laura's days were black bordered.
She told of a first-grade afternoon,
the time a tornado chased down her home-bound bus.
She cried, recollecting a hideous vacuum
sucking the air from children's death songs.

How she hid in a corner
watching a headless wee body tossed
in a swirl of harmless prairie debris.

Later, when she got free,
Laura chased all that was daylight,
her intensity earning her a small part
in that colorful aquarian play.

She was there.
She was theatre,
her character denim direct.
She traveled light,
a few props in
a worn shoulder pack.

Becoming bone brave, tall ideals.
The frail behind the cheap lenses
morphed into Utopia's blunt weapon.

Love once drove her all the way to Pittsburgh,
but she had to get back alone,
heart hurt, exhausted.

A driver found Laura on the home-bound bus,
tight in a corner
where the whirlwind couldn't reach.

Judy Eyerer

Family Laundry

Eva knew, without looking, that the squeaking noise came from the pulley at the Italian woman's window. She'd heard it each morning, had watched clothes roll out to the twisted lemon tree in the piazza below. She'd seen the woman pull dingy t-shirts and briefs back at dusk.

The sound, so grating in the beginning when she and Robert had lain silently in their lumpy bed, now comforted. It made her feel she belonged in this courtyard community in Florence.

Robert had paid for a month's stay at the small side-street hotel. Pronounced it perfect for their second chance. The Hotel Magnifico. They'd laughed at the name.

And then, his tooth broke.

Hadn't she done her part? Sliding a hand across the greasy oilcloth to console him. He found the name of a dentist and said he'd be back.

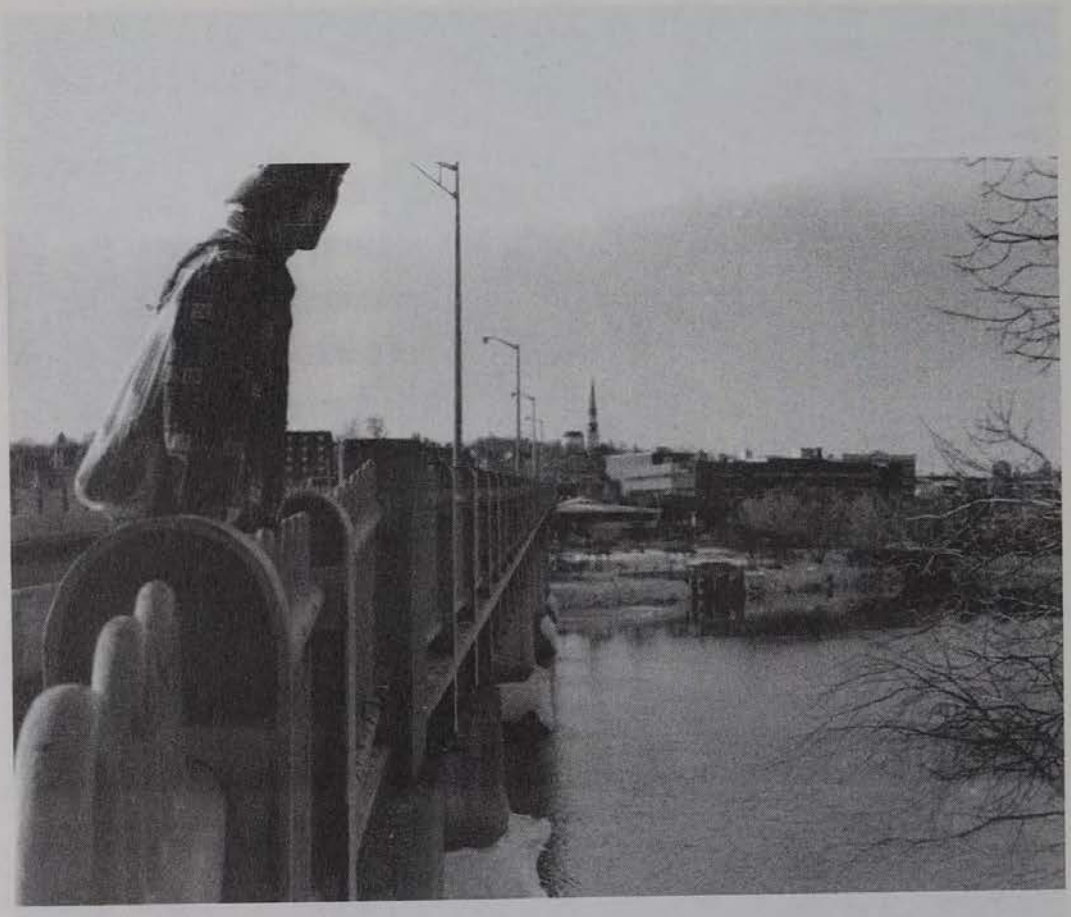
How many mornings had she taken a tepid cup of tea to gaze alone out her windows? A week? Maybe two.

And so she waited, listening to the husbands cajole and berate their wives. She wondered at the women's placid responses. Were they agreeing? Trying to please? What made these strong, dark men return each night to kiss their wives and drink in the shade of the lemon tree?

She sipped her tea and watched the woman send laundry out, piece after piece, the morning sun glinting off the metal pulley. Later, Eva would take their own things to the porcelain sink and rinse them in the hard Italian water. It would give her something to do. ❧



— Judy Eyerer



—Lucas Martin

Garth Danielson

A Robin's Song

You came to me on a dark and lonely night
A cold rain fell around us, but a fire burned inside
You said not a word
No conversation was needed
You fell into my arms, and for the first time felt at home
I had the comfort of a young child
Safety and security
Warmth and love
I could feel the passion I have building inside
And for once I could see the love in another's eyes
You looked into me, deeper than I thought possible
But I had no fear within
For once I wanted to show it all
And I wanted to show it all to you
The people who normally surround us did not matter
No one was near to interfere in our time
For a perfect connection, we were as one
Our hearts and our souls intertwined
The wind blew outside as we took shelter in each other
The warmth from within kept the bitter chill out
Yet despair began to creep in when I felt cool around me
Never before have I felt such disappointment
As I did when I awoke and was alone again.

Two Poems

Michelle Suber

French Friend

Drunk on Mozart and Beethoven—
He daydreams through tomorrow,
Dreaming of a crowded Venice.
Oh, how nice to be whisperkissed by delicious
desire.

After the Rain

Soft mushrooms,
Rosemary and thyme
Rhyme with grapevine.
Spiraling rainbows
Sparkle above
Deliciously.



— Lucas Martin

Eric Conley

A Quiet Walk Amongst Friends

To Dave

What an absolutely beautiful afternoon it is, the birds are singing, the wind is blowing, and I have you to keep me company in these lonely woods.

Okay, so sarcasm is not my strong point. What do you want from me anyway?

At least I am trying to lighten things up a little. Which is more than I can say for you.

What the hell is in this bundle? And why the hell are we two hours into the woods on a Wednesday afternoon? I mean it is one thing to ask me to come with you, but why do I have to be the pack horse? Do I look like a jackass to you?

Shut up, that was rhetorical!

How much farther do we have to go? I can hardly walk another step.

You have got to be kidding me, that's a long way out. I can't believe that I let you talk me into this. Why are we out here anyway?

Oh it's that bitch's fault; oh I see, thanks a lot that is much better. Now I understand.

You know I can see that she did some bad shit to you but I don't think that is any reason to drag me out here into the middle of the woods.

Would you please stop it with "that Bitch, that Bitch, that Bitch." It's all I hear from you these days; what did she do that was so bad anyway?

What...

What...

She used you emotionally...what a crock of shit. Do you expect me to believe that that crazy bitch broke your heart? You only knew her a week. And you expect me to

believe that you have emotions.

Yeah, right, honestly, come on now, what happened.

Oh I see, you thought that the two of you had something special, right! Did you take into account the fact that she was a crazy whore! I mean, honestly, what did you think you were getting into when you met the friggin alcoholic—a long term relationship? If I were you, I would have gotten a quick piece of tail and gotten out. You shouldn't be torturing yourself with this bullshit. Maybe you should tell her how you feel. Maybe you could find some closure in all this.

What do you mean you can't talk to her now? She still lives in town, right?

So what is the problem? It's not like she is dead or anything...right?...right...thank you.

Maybe you should bury what the two of you had and move on. You shouldn't let the bitch be a part of your life anymore.

And you haven't explained to me why we are out here. I mean, I like hiking as much as the next guy, but I do like to have a reason to do it. You know it's crazy shit like this that is going to make people think that you are insane. I mean, seriously, at this rate you are going to be talking to yourself. And I don't mean a little. I mean whole conversations, like both sides. The next thing you know, I'll be waking up, and your picture will be on the front page of the paper. You will be wanted for mass murder or something. And stop acting so damn nervous. You are freaking me out, you act like you just killed someone.

James stopped after he said that last phrase, looked around to see if anyone had heard him. He placed the shovel on the ground, looked around again ensuring that he was alone. He placed his burden on the ground next to the shovel. He then found a spot of soft ground and began to dig, quietly muttering to himself, "that Bitch, that Bitch, never again that heartless Bitch." ❧

Kaleena Nakowicz

Condemned

My emotional makeup is determined to
screw me over.
It is draining my cool self.
I'll flatten like a pancake
and maybe some home fries on the side.



"Squirrel"
— Kathy Wall

Thomas Butler

My North Star

The frigid breeze swept through the winter night,
As the delicate snow fell down from the west.
Here I lay amongst the pale moonlight,
While thinking of the one I love the best.

Thinking of you makes my heart swell,
It seems to remove the callous air.
But my heart feels trapped in a cell,
Since I can't tell you how much I care.

While I see the snow basking in the evening glow,
I only think of what could be.
A feeling of warmth in the cold snow,
For a vision of you is all I see.

I wish that one day,
That we may be,
Locked in winter's eternal fray,
But I feel it cannot be.

To see you hurt would wound my soul,
With distance and time as my foe.
So here I lay on the snowy knoll,
As I wait for that which is unknown.

But my distance I must keep,
For intimacy is like the spider's kiss.
But not even the waters deep,
Can keep me from the one I miss.

I arise alone amongst the flurry.
Alone against the frosty spite.
Alone under a starless night,
Alone under nature's might.
Alone...
...Without you as my guiding light.

Bob Nichols

Lullaby Mother

What will tomorrow bring,
dear cherished Mother?
How long can you linger,
our own troubled one?

Lullaby Mother,
lie down and rest now.
Allow us to care for you;
we are your loved ones.

Lullaby Mother,
allow us to comfort you;
lullaby Mother,
rest all cares away.

Mother, forgive us;
we labored to please you.
We never would hurt you;
trust us and sleep now.

If you die we cannot live,
if you die you will not see
your beautiful garden
grow lush in our hands.

Lullaby Mother,
allow us to comfort you;
lullaby Mother,
rest all cares away.

Raised in your garden,
we studied dark flowers,
learned powerful secrets,
and mastered them well.

Now we are able
to care for and hold you;
trust us and bless us,
and give us your all.

Lullaby Mother,
allow us to comfort you;
lullaby Mother,
rest all cares away.

Mother, you gave us
this sweet, delicate life;
you gave us everything
out of your love.

We are what you made us.
Dear Mother, forgive us.
Lullaby Mother,
trust us and sleep now.

Lullaby Mother,
allow us to comfort you;
lullaby Mother,
rest all cares away.

And what will tomorrow bring,
dear cherished Mother?
How long can you linger,
our own troubled one?

Patrick McManus O'Connolly

A Marine Island Camping Adventure

There comes a time in every man's life when he needs to head out to some small abandoned island in the middle of a remote lake or untravelled bay and face the elements of nature head on, or face down, depending on the weather. If you're an introverted social misfit, you go alone to accentuate your independent spirit - or you go with your son because you make him. Either way, you're sure to discover how unprepared you were for your venture. Now I do not wish to imply that I am an introverted social misfit, but since my dream job would consist of substantial financial compensation to work with mold spores and fungus, I suspect a survey of normal people would place me among the geeks.

Being a man trying to break my own mold, I decided to venture forth with my son and another father-and-son pair. I figured this was a pretty good bet because if anything went wrong I could use the other dad as cover. The "other dad" went by the name "Brick" Underbridge and he was using me for cover too, although I didn't know it until later. It turned out that he bought a new boat and had been dying to use it for some worthy father/son adventure. That was perfect for me since my primary reason for wishing to go on a *small island* camping trip was to avoid large–nocturnal–carnivorous–animal tent visitations.

The great day arrived, and my son and I met the other pair at their house on the bay. Brick's boat was moored outside the house and Piecemeal Island, as it was called, was just in view around the point. I told Brick this would be a good dress rehearsal for any future adventures. Of course, to say that it was a dress rehearsal gave us another level of

cover for any buffoonery that lay ahead. At first we figured we would sleep out under the stars and enjoy the nice salt air of the bay, but the 70% chance of thunderstorms killed that idea. That meant we would need a tent. Brick went to his garage and pulled out the remnants of an old canvas boy-scout tent from his youth. It still had a scouting seal on the fabric, or that is what it looked like anyway. We spread it out and a multitude of spiders and daddy longlegs crawled out from the brown mass. The mold spores and musty smell that puffed out at us like flour from a baker's creative efforts almost hurdled me headlong into a lecture on fungus of various kinds. Brick was spared only because my son was present. I suggested that this tent might be beyond hope, and Brick agreed that a new tent was necessary.

Brick headed down to the beach where his wife was assiduously attending to some flowers that were sure to be eaten by the coastal deer population. He informed her that the family needed a new tent. I realized quickly that my son and I were unwitting accomplices in Brick's 4-year effort to obtain a new tent. He and his wife went around and around on which comes first, the tent or a family that camps. May (Brick's wife) would say "But Honey, we don't camp." Brick would then respond, "You can't go camping if you don't have the equipment." Now, with a camping trip imminent, and evidence of a putrid cover from the elements, a new tent was "in the bag."

After a brief tent-shopping trip that is worth a story of its own, we went to the local grocery store to procure the essential supplies for the camping trip. In typical male fashion, we were embarrassed to find ourselves in a new habitat. This habitat contained rows and rows of food categorized by theme. Lost and confused, we grabbed what seemed essential for a one-night survival stint on an island. All the food groups were represented: frito chips, poptarts, soda, peanuts, chocolate, and donuts. Neither of us thought to

bring money and we both learned that our wives were the only ones who ever carried any money with them. Now we knew why. Opting to pay by some means rather than risk prison, Brick offered to pay with his credit card which was somewhere in his wallet, if he could ever find it. He opened his wallet and examined its contents as if it held dozens of lost friends, now rediscovered. He withdrew a card with a corner snapped off and handed it to the cashier. We left the store only to be chased down by the cashier so that she could return the card. She also insisted that Brick sign some sort of a slip. The similarity in the way Brick and I go through the world became clear when I learned his interests were biologically inclined. He was a surgeon who went about his day focused on other matters.

The fact that we were both biologists instead of engineers also became evident when we attempted to set up the brand new 4-person tent that Brick had just purchased. He was an M.D. and I was a Ph.D., and there wasn't a scrap of evidence that we had even a third grade education as we tried to assemble the new tent in the dark on the island. We were certain that the colored loops for the rod assembly meant something, but blue looks an awful lot like black in the dark. Joining the blue with the black rendered the tent in the shape of an arthritic dinosaur marching across the desert pan in search of water.

"Well, that could be right. There sure is plenty of room inside of it."

"I dunno, looks weird."

"I think we should try again."

"I don't think it will help, this is our fifth try."

All the while, in a typical multitasking and distracted state, Brick (the brilliant natural historian) kept insisting we keep on the lookout for seals that sometimes lie on the island for a nighttime snooze.

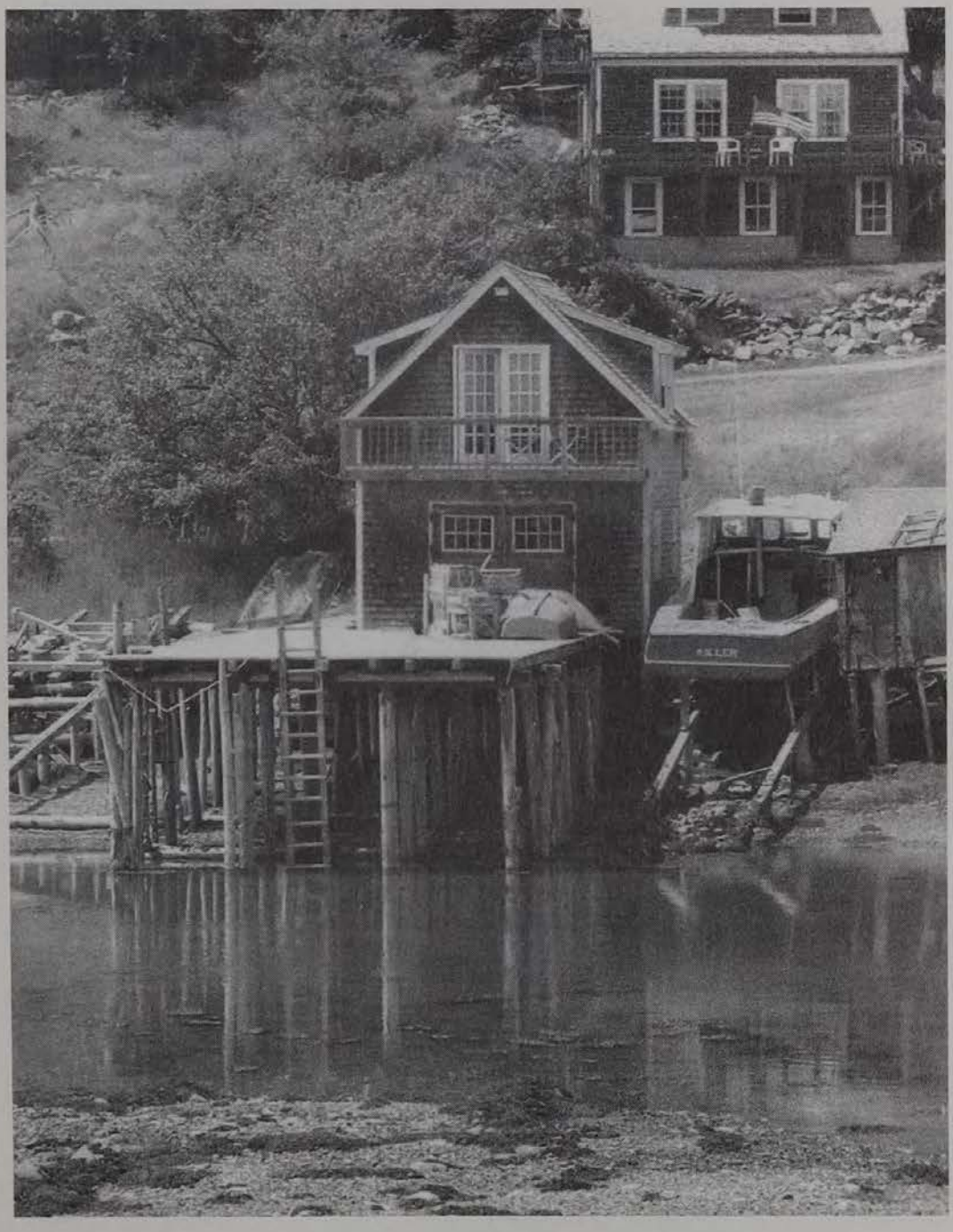
As the tent was undergoing its metamorphosis, our sons

were fidgeting in the tall grass we had commanded them to guard. Every time they tried to move we threatened them with certain death. The mode of execution became more primitive with each new attempt to transform the bag filled with rods into a shelter for sleeping bags. Soon, however, my son advocated for his right to exist as an active participant on the camping trip. He claimed that the marine grass had sharp edges and some kind of pointy tip that was hurting him each time he moved. Fathers have a wealth of experience that children rarely appreciate and so I was forced to SHOW him how soft the grass was. Dropping one half of the tent (and thereby collapsing the only escape route, leaving Brick trapped inside emitting professorial vernacular) I walked over and rapidly swept my hand across the grass to demonstrate how soft and downy it was. I don't remember the next moment the same way the other campers do, but they claim there was a howl of pain and surprise that was released from my general location in the darkness. Although I was trying to demonstrate by visual means, this usually works better when there is some light hitting the human retina. Since there was none on this occasion, the howl was misconstrued as an attack by angered male seals competing for mates. The boys scrambled from the grass towards the boat as best they could. Perhaps due to their greater flexibility and young reflexes, they navigated the masses of tidal barnacles clinging to the rocks with relative impunity. Brick was less fortunate. The bellow left poor Brick trapped inside the tent with two options: (1) try to find the exit and run for it, or (2) just run for it. Brick chose the latter. He screamed to his son to head for the boat, and he took off hoping his momentum inside the tent would carry the day and propel him into the boat. This may have worked if he had chosen the correct direction. However, trapped in the tent, Brick ran through a different batch of marine grass, hit a rock, fell onto the barnacles, down a modest cliff and

into the water while still inside the tent. The tent did not save him from a multitude of razor-sharp grass tips. Nor did it soften the blow as he tripped and ripped his way through the barnacles and into the cold salt water.

Brick screamed out "start the boat, I'll be..." Then there was a garbled noise as the tent started to sink. Fortunately, the tent captured a great deal of air despite the numerous holes caused by the barnacles. I do remember hearing an extended ripping noise and figured that Brick had extricated himself at the expense of a mortal wound to the L.L. Bean tent. Of course, my bleeding hand preoccupied most of my energy and I left Brick to pull himself out of the water via the barnacle-ridden rock face.

May was rather unimpressed when we returned to sleep in the living room. For all I know Brick designed the whole fiasco on purpose, so he could get the 8-person tent next time. ❧



"Frenchboro Lobster Shack"
— Kathy Wall

Paul Miller

Delusion

Each one cherishes
about his neck
a tainted, flopping albatross—
to curse
or lovingly endure.

Like the mongrel chicken thief
who wore, as garland round his neck,
the feathered object of
his passion,
we dupe ourselves
to hope for freedom
—respite—
from the lust for blood.

Yet daily find,
not loathing
for our coddled nemesis,
but bitter yearning
for the taste of death.

Brendon O'Neil

Two and Two and Two...Down

What should I call, number one or the deuce?
This guy in the box thinks he's the man.
Either will do, the hook OR the juice
Waste one up and in, he's down on his can!

Last one may fly by with quickness and speed
Be ready be ready time waits for no one.
Last one may break over with sharpness or ease
Don't fail don't fail being booed is no fun!

I know what's coming I know that he doesn't,
Three is the call he stands there so still.
I knew for the change-up ready he wasn't,
The look on his face not happy but ill.

He throws his bat down in a fit of frustration:
The batter has failed in a clutch situation.

Rick Doyle

A Visit To The Governor

They found him in the neat ten-footer:
Old mage perched on the edge of the bed,
Black frock coat, pantaloons, white shirt,
Straw hat, red kerchief tied around his neck,
An image of the potent medicine man
As randy and sly as resigned to age
And hard-of-hearing innocence;
An old man, legs a-dangle off the bed
While girls and women came and went,
By bateau to Old Town, one of them,
Among them the helper for whom he reached
When conversation turned to moose,
As it was bound to do.

Such strange lore!
Half looking forward, half turning back—
Half Darwin, half Ovid. How the moose
Clambered up from water onto dry land,
Reminiscent perhaps to the old man
Of his encounter years before
With the sea monster, Wiwiliamecq:

he prods the sleeping monster
letting ash paddle blade rest
upon the broad flat forehead
of the bloated dozing beast
in whose eye well dark clouds.

Philosopher in virgin's-bower,
The locust-classicist waits for the boat,
A toe unearthing flints, to native joy,
At the conclusion of the visit.

September, 1853:
The age of revolution gutters to a close
In the European states from which the U. S. arose,
Nothing save a blistered and peeling *egalite*,
Of all it promised, unguillotined.
Imperial suns dawn on an age of iron and steel—
On slavery and masonry, iron and steel—
On transcendentia, iron and steel—
On a monstrous century, crowd- and progress-haunted:

the ragged carcass of a horse, afloat,
eye sockets brimming elvers, clouds of little eels.

Rick Doyle

The Governor's Daughter

I brewed the pussy willow
Fed eggshells to my sons
I went down to the salt marsh
When my father's strength was gone

The heron did not know me
The alewives dared not ask
How the lightning's white baptism
Moved me forward in my task.



"Frog"
— Kathy Wall

Rob Juckett

Christmas With The Who

After the great tragedy there was a benefit concert to raise money for the families of the victims. Because it was *such* a great tragedy, and because there had been so many victims of so many nationalities, all the stars agreed to appear and sing and play. There were *so* many stars that the concert was actually several concerts held simultaneously in different cities. The big one was held, appropriately, in New York, and it was all televised live across the nation and the world. We watched in our living room.

Mia watched more than I did. It's hard for me to just sit there. Makeeba was in and out of his room for snacks and he stood by and listened to a couple musicians or groups that he had heard of. I was in the kitchen emptying the dishwasher.

"Here they are, Ben," Mia called.

I walked out and saw the stage in darkness. Then the lights came up and the cameras zoomed in on two big flags above the performers. One flag was the Stars and Stripes; the other was the Union Jack. The camera switched and there they were: left to right, Entwistle, Daltrey, and Townshend.

"My god, doesn't Roger Daltrey look good," Mia said.

I watched their entire fifteen minutes or so. They were really good, as they had always been, and finished up with Won't Get Fooled Again. Makeeba stood there with me and I know he enjoyed the performance, even if he didn't get that rush to stomach and tear duct from Townshend's perfect chords. Even if it didn't bring back memories as it did for my wife and me. We talked about them off and on for the rest of the evening, Mia and I. And when she had gone to

bed and I was alone, putting the car in the garage, turning down the thermostat, and locking the front door, I realized I was humming Behind Blue Eyes and remembering...*no one knows what it's like...*

We were busy in November. Besides work, I had chores around the house, normal, domestic things - husband things, dad things. Ready the house for winter; close up the sunporch, rake the leaves, cut that huge limb that hung too low over the driveway and blocked Makeeba's right-side jump shot, stack a cord of firewood, clean out the rain gutters, get new brakes and a muffler on the Nissan, then two weeks later get the Jeep repaired. Homeowner's stuff. Middle-age stuff. Plus, we had Mia's sister and three kids coming for Thanksgiving. It all took planning and scheduling, mental and physical energy. We drove to New Hampshire to see a NASCAR race. Then it was December, suddenly and coldly, and money disappeared for Christmas gifts and extra oil. Christmas is coming; Christmas is coming ...

I got a two-week break for the holidays. That's one of the advantages of teaching, time off between semesters. It finally snowed just in time for the 25th. I was shoveling on Christmas Eve when Ryan pulled into the driveway from Boston, laden with gifts and news. I got a friendly handshake; Mia got a big hug and kiss. Dugan came by about seven in the evening for our traditional get-together, easy Christmas Eve meal, and gift exchange.

"Now I'm happy," Mia grinned when supper was done. "All my boys are home."

"Yes, gramma," I teased her. She's not a grandmother yet, and won't be anytime soon, but she claims to be looking forward to it. I on the other hand . . .

We opened gifts, telling stories of how they were acquired and when. I always hand out the packages. "This one's for Mom, from Makeeb. Here's a good one, I know, for Dugan, from Dad." Of course, occasionally I have to open one my-

self. Pleasant task. It was a small one, square, and fancifully wrapped. "Ah! One for me, from Ryan." I tore off the paper. "Oh! Great!" I held it up for them to see. "Quadrophenia. The Who. How did you know?"

"Mom told me."

"What's that?" Makeeba asked. "Quadra...?"

"Quadrophenia. It was a big hit back in the seventies. It's really good."

"Oh, yeah, The Who," Makeeba knew it now. "We saw them on TV after the tragedy."

"Right."

"Were they good...I mean, back in the day?"

"Next present! Next present!" Mia called.

"Okay. let's see...here's one for Ryan, from Makeeb."

So we opened all the gifts; I built a fire in the fireplace; Mia poured eggnog for herself and the boys. I cracked a long-neck; I can't stand drinks that are, umm, viscous. Everybody was talking and Mia was 'in her element' as they say, right where she wants to be, right where she functions the best. She talked to Dugan about the special running shirt she bought him. It supposedly 'wicks away' the moisture as you sweat. He showed appropriate gratitude. I looked out the front window at my newly shoveled driveway. It gives me a good feeling to see freshly cleared space for four cars.

Makeeba had disappeared into his room (as I'd suspected he would) to try out the new video game I got him. Forty-nine ninety-five, and once you slit the cellophane it's yours. I wandered in to see how he liked it. He did. Ryan's girlfriend was being discussed when I returned to the living room. Mia advised Ryan as he fed her information on the relationship's ups and downs. The fire was burning low, so I knelt and added two good pieces of Maine maple to the hot embers. I slumped back against the couch to see them catch and flame. Mia, Ryan, and Dugan were in the kitchen; I could hear the chuckles and hoots. I felt good for her. A

quick flame trembled and claimed the corner of a maple piece. It flickered and faded, then rose and burned brightly, as it should.

"I can build a good fire."

"Maybe you can."

The Pile On Inn was small, but there was a good sound system. The fellas from Woodcraft Camp liked to go there and mingle with the girls from Camp Cascade, especially on weekend nights. I was at a table with Jim Chase and two female counselors from Cascade. Next to me was Chris Callen, blond, t-shirt and blue jeans, pretty face, had her own car, smoked Winstons and drank Bud. I'd seen her several times during the summer and had always been polite, but cool. At least I thought I'd been cool. I wasn't sure what she thought, but nothing had gone wrong to this point. The music stopped and I looked at her in the tight space between songs. "I don't think I should drink any more."

"How come?" she asked.

"I don't want to be stupid."

"I don't think you're stupid. After all, you know how to build a fire."

Just then the music came back and it was The Who and Won't Get Fooled Again.

"Oh!" I rolled my eyes. "This is the greatest."

She pushed me. "Go, go!"

"What?" What the hell was she doing?

"We have to dance," she said.

"We do?"

"Yeah. This is my favorite number."

I can't dance now, and back then I couldn't either. But it was easier to fake it and enjoy myself at the same time. When we sat back down Chris decided to put her left leg up over my right, half on my lap. A little while later we walked out.

"You've got your car?" I asked her.

"Yeah. And you've got yours."

"Well..."

"We can make a switch," she said quick. "Whose car is bigger?"

"Mine."

She grinned at me. "Yeah, I know. Terry can give Jim a ride back to Woodcraft in my car. Then she can go back to camp."

"And we can go in my car."

"Well, I hope so. I don't like giving up my car, but there's a first time for everything, isn't there?"

School started up again in September, my junior year at college. Frank, Nick, and I had formed a musical group the year before, but we hadn't gotten much actual 'on stage' experience. The school had a coffee house in the basement of the big old towered and gargoyled administration building and we got the keys. It was the social center of our student lives for the next two years. Of course we booked ourselves as the closing act that first Saturday night, and we played to about a dozen people. The opener was a guy who played Bach on an old, gut-string acoustic. He was really quite good. But I think the dozen were happy to see us get on stage. They clapped. Every other Saturday for the first semester we managed to put on two or three acts. We closed every show.

One day we sat in the commuter cafeteria, drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes, with Jean and Janice, two cute girls who helped us in the coffee house and whom we referred to as our groupies behind their backs. I liked them both, one green-eyed Irish, one brown-eyed Italian, and they were our best and most faithful fans.

"You know what you guys need?" Janice started.

"Dates," I joked.

"Just ask, Ben." She was so direct.

"So, what do we need?"

"Well, Jean and I have been talking about it. First of all you need to audition at the other coffee houses in Philly. Penn has a big one."

"And LaSalle and Villanova do too," Jean added.

"I guess we don't need dates," I smiled. "I guess we need two girl managers."

"Yes, you do. But, even more importantly, you and Nick both need to have solos during the act."

"How about me?" Frank spoke up.

"Frank, your ego is too big to put out there all by itself with a microphone and an amp cranked all the way up." Janice rarely held back.

"Oh."

"So, why don't you guys come up with something."

"And we'll call around and book you at the other places," Jean said.

"And I suppose you'll want a share of the money if we get paid?" Frank asked.

"Of course. By the way, I happen to know that Penn pays a hundred dollars an act!"

"Call them!"

By our next performance, we had worked out the solos and tried them on the crowd. We were now drawing fifty or so people each show and were very full of ourselves. I reworked a song I had written about race horses and performed it, accompanying myself on my Gibson. Everybody told me it was good and I remember watching a couple girls in the audience tapping their feet and swaying to my melody. Nick was our singer, however, and he needed accompaniment because he didn't play well enough to pull off a solo. Frank suggested Behind Blue Eyes. Nick had a good voice, a nice stage presence, and a sultriness about him (if guys indeed have sultriness) that Jean and Janice said was sexy. He and I worked on the number and it was a big success. We closed the show with it and everybody stood up and

cheered ...*no one knows what it's like* ...We went on to play all the area coffee houses and we always closed with Nick's rendition of the Who song. One spring night in the parking lot outside the coffee house at Temple two girls came up to Nick and asked for his autograph. That was about as good as it got.

"You gonna make me a drink, baby?" Mia stood with an armful of discarded wrapping and ribbons.

I turned to her from my fireside reverie. "You bet."

Christmas morning I had to put the turkey in about 6:30, since we wanted to eat about two in the afternoon and it was a big bird. Santa Claus had come during the night and I checked out the display of snow sled, basketball, sound system, and last minute additions to stockings that hung. Then I went back to bed. Makeeba got us up at 7:30 with "Come on. Let's go see what we got!"

"I think you and I already got it," I said to Mia.

"You never know."

We oohed and aahed over the sudden appearance of such nice things, then we opened the little gifts that had been pushed down into the stockings. Seems that Santa always thinks I need socks and Hershey Kisses. Mia and Ryan made a big eggs-and-sausage breakfast.

"Ya know," she said, "I think I can smell that turkey already."

"Sure you can," I said. "Look at the cat; she's goin' nuts." And she was, running at top speed from the hallway, through the dining area, and into the kitchen, where she put her paws up on the cabinets to stand tall and beg.

"She knows she's gonna get her fixin's," Mia laughed.

We had eight for dinner. Dugan, his girlfriend, and her little girl came by about noon. And our friend Susan always comes for Christmas dinner, usually with her two boys, but this year they were away in California and Vermont, so she came alone.

Mia and I were busy putting out snacks and getting the dinner ready, but we had a good time. We weren't rushed, guided only by when the turkey would be done, and socialized Christmas-ly. Of course everyone got stuffed at dinner, including the cat. Afterwards Mia and I cleaned up together, amazing Susan with our teamwork. Everyone sat around drinking Martinelli's and sagging beneath the sleepy stupor that turkey brings. Pecan pie, pumpkin pie, cherry cheesecake, and coffee had something to do with it, too.

I wandered into the living room and sat down to go through the gifts I had received, heavy on the books. There was Ryan's gift to me. I picked it up and glanced around. They wouldn't miss me. I went downstairs to the rec room and put the CD in...*Can you see the real me? Can ya? ...* Oh, I hadn't heard it in so long.

After college I went into the Peace Corps and ended up in deepest, darkest Africa, in a big country that was better off then than now. I taught for two years and then got a free plane ticket home and back if I would do a third year. I took the ticket, came home and saw all the people from college; they were pretty much still together. Frank was married and working for the Philadelphia Department of Sanitation. He could thank his father for that job. I had to go back in the middle of August and went downtown to re-route myself to Africa through Paris. Everybody said I should go. I should have taken notice when the ticket agent said she could get me to Paris, but that I would have to book my flight to Africa from there. But I didn't take notice...until I arrived at Charles DeGaulle airport. I was a little nervous being in a country I'd only read about and being in a big, non-English-speaking city. But my French was passable and I decided I would arrange for my flight to Africa before I went into the city.

I walked to the Sabena desk, since my African country had a Belgian history, and inquired. I put the ticket on the counter in front of me.

"When do you wish to go?" asked the girl.

"September first." School started on the sixth, but I needed time to get out to my post.

The girl didn't even look at her computer, but instead, smirked at me and said in plain French, very easy to understand, "That will be impossible, monsieur. Everything is full."

"Okay, how about the second?"

"No, monsieur, you do not understand. Everybody wants to go to Africa."

I paused, but it didn't sink in. "Okay, when *can* I go?"

If I were a day or two late they would have to understand. Now she turned to her console and typed a bit. She picked up my ticket and glanced at it.

"You can go on September 17." She was so damn unfazed.

"Excuse me?"

"Yes, the 17th. Nothing before. Unless you want to go standby."

"How about that?"

"Let's see..." She typed again. "Very well, you can go standby on September the first."

"Thank you, very much."

"You are welcome. You are number seventy-three on the standby list."

"What!?"

I got the same line from Air France, Olympia, Swiss Air, Air Zaïre, East African Airlines, and Lufthansa. No one could give me anything other than a standby number of about 75. Boy, that was a lousy start to my Paris adventure. And, of course, it was there in the back of my mind for the entire week.

But I did manage to enjoy myself most of the time. I saw the sights, visited the museums, ate the food and drank the wine, rode the Metro, and took photographs. I did, however, make one major mistake, which really was unavoidable but

nonetheless unfortunate - I went alone. After a couple days I was getting tired of walking the streets. I started sleeping late, until one morning when I came down so late I had missed my daily croissants and coffee. Bummer, that's what we used to say. But I saved myself when I discovered French movies. At that time you could smoke in the theaters. Yeah! I saw a few Alan Delon movies for cheap. I spent a little more and saw The Story of O. Wow! Vive le cinéma français! Then I saw on a big marquee - TOMMY. I went in. It was in English with French sub-titles. Perfect. I sat through it twice. Roger Daltrey was blind, deaf, and dumb and Anne Margaret was his mother. Paris wasn't so bad after all.

When I finally went out to the airport on September first I got the last seat on the Air Zaïre flight to Kinshasa. I don't know how, but it was a good thing I did. If I hadn't I would have been begging the next day because my money was gone.

Can ya see the real me? Can ya? A month or two after I'd settled into my new post in the Lake Region I got a package from Frank. It was Quadrophenia. "Listen to this while you're chasing around the gorillas and wondering why the hell you left civilization." I did.

I got a house on the side of a hill overlooking Lake Kivu, three bedrooms, living room, dining room, kitchen, storage room, and bathroom - all for me. And it was furnished. A week later word came that another volunteer, who had been assigned to a school across town, needed a place to live. I asked the regional rep who it was. "His name's Jim Ross, English teacher like you, Cornell grad. It's his first year here and we don't want him to get off on the wrong foot. Two can eat cheaper than one, heh?"

"More cheaply. Yeah, send him over."

So Jim arrived and we got along fine. A month later he says to me, "Hey, Ben? You know that girl I was tellin' you about who teaches at my school, the African?"

"Umm..."

"Kayirere?"

"Oh, yeah."

"Well, she's from up north of here, Kinruanda, and she's havin' a hard time finding a place to live. Tribal stuff, ya know? And I was wonderin'..."

"She nice?"

"Really nice. Pretty. And she's got personality. She'll liven the place up."

"We need livening up?"

"Yes."

So Kayi moved into the third bedroom. She decided we needed a cook to have the big midday meal on the table when we all got home from school about noon. Jim hired Rutega as our houseboy/cook. Unfortunately Rutega was a short Hutu and Kayi was a lithe Tutsi type. They glared at each other more often than they talked. But Rutega could cook, so she said nothing to me. Any changes about the house were always cleared with me first because it *was*, after all, my house. Kayi had a sister who was a high school student in town. Claudette. She had a withered right leg and stomach problems that I never completely understood.

"Oh, Ben," Kayi would sit down next to me and hold my hand. "Claudette cannot eat the food that they make for her at the dormitory. She needs a special diet, you know?"

I had met Claudette; she was a nice girl. "We don't have another bedroom, Kayi."

"She and I will share. I don't care."

"Okay. We will be a big family."

Kayi stood up, gave me her beautiful smile, and walked to the front door. Then she looked back over her shoulder at me and did a slow bump and grind against the door.

"Kayirere!"

"Thank you, Ben." She pushed the door open and stepped out onto the porch. "Claudette! Come in! He said

yes!"

Now that Claudette was a member of the household the kitchen became a danger zone. Rutega felt that it was his job to cook for everyone, but Kayi had to fix special meals for her sister. To say that there was tension doesn't accurately describe the situation that developed. Finally, Kayi gave in and knocked on my door one night when I was tokin' up with Jim.

"You are both criminals," she grinned.

"And you are the moll," Jim said.

"May I speak to Ben for a moment, Jim?"

"Sure." He walked out and Kayi closed the door behind him.

"I have made a decision," she said as she plopped down on my bed.

I was still standing by the big front window, through which Jim and I had been expelling drafts of pungent smoke. "A decision?"

"Yes. I cannot work in the kitchen with Rutega. He is an idiot."

"Kayi..." I used my pleading voice, "Don't ask me to fire him, please. He cooks fine for Jim and me."

This she dismissed with a wave. "Yes, yes, I know. But at my home there is a boy, Gatanazi. He is very nice, eighteen, and he can cook."

"Kayi!"

She flopped back on the mattress and raised her arms as if imploring God's help.

"This house is full," I said. "And I cannot pay someone else."

"Gatanazi will not ask for money. He only wants to come to the town from the village and live. We have the storage room next to the kitchen. And there is the cot. He is an honest boy; he can do the food shopping. I trust him."

"And what about Rutega?"

"He will cook for you and Jim. And do the cleaning in the house. We will pay him the same money, but he can do less work. He will not complain."

"I am not so sure. He may be proud."

"I don't care about his pride. I only care about Claudette."

"Okay, okay. You win. Write the letter. Or is he waiting on the porch?"

Now Kayi smiled and rolled over. "Ben."

"Kayi."

"You must tell me."

"What?"

"What is a moll?"

I laughed and sat back against the window sill. "She is a woman who socializes with criminals."

"And what does she do?" Kayi sat up.

"Bad things."

Slowly she rolled over onto her hands and knees, looked over her shoulder, and grinned. Then she jumped up, adjusted her pagne about her hips, and opened the door. "I don't do bad things."

"I know." But I'd been paid again.

"I will write the letter."

She walked out and I put Quadrophenia into my cassette player, turned up the volume, pushed play, and closed the bedroom door. *Can ya see the real me? Can ya?*

"Ben!" Mia called down. "Susan's leaving."

"I'm coming."

The dinner crowd left at a decent hour. Ryan and Makeeba were deep into a video game competition. The house was lit up inside and out with colored lights. Our Christmas tree shone a warm light in the living room. For the first time we had used all white lights on it and we were very pleased with the effect. Mia had neatened up the kitchen and dining room after the company left and now she sat with a cup of coffee at the kitchen counter. I stood next to her.

"Well, kiddo, I think everyone had a good time, don't you?"

"It was wonderful. Did you listen to your CD?"

"Yeah. It brings back memories."

"It's nap time," she said.

"I know. Take a good one."

She had to go in to work at eleven o'clock. She works the night shift and each year she has her choice of having Christmas Eve or Christmas night off. She always chooses the 24th. "It's only six o'clock now," she said. "Make sure I'm up by nine, okay?"

"Don't worry."

After she had lain down in the bedroom I returned to the rec room and lay down myself on the old couch we have there. I was drowsy and kicked off my shoes. That school year ended in June, but I didn't have to report to the Peace Corps headquarters until August. I had two months. Everyone left. Jim was off to Kinshasa to ask for a re-assignment. He knew I wouldn't be back the following year and he wanted to be closer to the 'action' of the capital city, rather than 'stranded', as he put it, in some backcountry burg. We'd promised to keep in touch and we did. Kayi, Claudette, and Gatanazi went back to their hometown for the vacation. We took a slew of pictures before they left and I pledged to send them copies as soon as I got home to the States. I did. I let Rutega go, with a bonus that I could not really afford. But despite all his troubles, he had never complained to me and had always been there when I needed someone to be my Swahili translator in the market. I settled into a daily routine of sleeping late and having bread and coffee for breakfast. Then I would walk down the hill below the house to go for a swim in Lake Kivu. I could lie in the sun for as long as I wanted. I've never had such a tan since.

Afternoons I usually spent in the house writing in my journal, smoking the local weed, and listening to music.

Quadrophenia was my most recent recording and probably my best. Being alone in the house I could really crank it up. I would sit on the front porch with my feet up on the railing and The Who blasting in the living room behind me, and gaze out over the lake, the islands, the distant green shore, the blue, white-clouded, dry-season sky, and write letters. Or I would go over my good map of East Africa and plan my adventure. In the evening I walked into town and had dinner at either the Fiesta or the Central restaurant. The nights were dark and a bit lonely, but I had my tapes and two or three good books. It was a good time alone, more than I'd ever had to that point in my life. Occasionally I wish I could have some of it back.

I got Mia off to work with a kiss. It was cold outside and the snowbanks were high. I watched from the front window as she backed out of the driveway and waved as she started up the street. She honked. Ryan and Makeeba soon appeared, hungry. I made them turkey sandwiches. Then I made one for myself. They were both tired and went to bed sooner than I had expected them to. I brought my new CD up from the rec room and put it in the good sound system in the living room, but I didn't push play. I mixed a drink and grabbed a handful of cashews. It took me a minute or two to get the fire going in the fireplace again, but finally I had a flame. Then I pushed play and sat on the couch with my feet up on the coffee table. The clock on the mantle chimed eleven.

Mia had her last checkup with her obstetrician on a sunny morning in September about ten days before Makeeba was born. I drove her to the hospital and walked in with her. But I knew she wouldn't get out of there for 45 minutes, at least, so I went back and sat in the car and listened to the radio. Anything is better than sitting in a doctor's office reading ancient Good Housekeepings. The local FM station came back from commercials straight into a Who set. I listened,

pleased, through three numbers until the DJ cut in and said, "Still sounds pretty good, wouldn't you say?"

"Not bad. Not bad at all. Don't know if I could get those high notes today though." I sat up. It was a British voice.

"Sittin' here with Roger Daltrey, reminiscing a bit and talking about his upcoming concert schedule here on the East Coast."

"Well, well," I mumbled, and turned the volume up a touch. Daltrey talked about what he was doing and they played old Who songs every ten minutes or so. The highlight of the interview came when Daltrey picked up the phone in the studio and called John Entwistle in England. "He'll curse me blue for this trick, ya know?" It was all live and I heard the phone ring and a woman's voice, "Hello?"

"Hello, mum. It's Roger."

"Oh, hello, dear! And how are you?"

"Fine, fine. Is his nibs there?"

"Well, he's here, in bed though. But I don't think he's asleep. Hold on a sec."

"I knew he'd be at his mum's house," Daltrey said to the DJ. "This may get dicey." So Entwistle came on and Daltrey told him they were live on American radio and Entwistle did indeed call him a bastard, but then settled down and spoke for a few minutes. I thought it was terrific. When the telephone call ended the DJ played The Real Me from Quadrophenia and I turned it up loud. It made me remember. I associate that music with Makeeba's birth to this day.

The CD played on through I'm the One, Helpless Dancer, 5:15, and finally Love, Reign Over Me. I felt good. Christmas was over; midnight had passed. I closed up the fireplace and turned out the lights on the tree, lowered the thermostat, and walked down the hall toward the bedroom. *Is it me, for a moment...for a moment?* I was humming again.

Ellen Bryan Obed

The Old Man and the Pigeons

The pigeons
nod
and mumble
over bread;

The old man
nods
and mumbles
as they're fed.

They speak
to hear
each other
what is said;

One talks
of company,
the other, bread.

They feed
each other
day long
in the park
with nods
and conversation
until dark.

The pigeons
rise to night
in crowded eaves.
The old man
follows with his eyes
then leaves.

Ellen Bryan Obed

Mourning Doves

In the early morning gray
I hear doves mourning far away—
Mourning morning's early gray.
    Under the interrupting crow,
    Above the shrubs where grackles go,
    I hear their cooing slow and low.
I, sleepless in the early gray,
Know sleepless sounds before the day.

Contributors

Thomas Butler is a second-year computer information systems major from Oxford, Massachusetts.

Susmita Chatterjee has a PhD in Regional Economics and a Masters in Philosophy. She has long experience in college teaching and administration in India. Her personal efforts are to synthesize eastern and western philosophies.

Eric Conley is a student at Husson College.

Garth Danielson is a fourth-year physical therapy student who has always enjoyed the arts as a release from the world around us. He enjoys writing fiction and poetry, playing/writing/listening to music, and reading.

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Judy Eyerer teaches composition, creative writing, and speech at Husson College.

Marie Juckett, a student at Husson, is the mother of three boys. Raised on a dairy farm in the Mohawk Valley of New York, she has lived in Maine for the past 26 years. She enjoys running and baseball.

Rob Juckett has been with the International Center for Language Studies (ICLS) at Husson College since 1977. He has been interested in writing for quite some time.

Jim Kenny is Dean of Science and Humanities at Husson. He has a background in history and political science and, of

course, an interest in writing. He shares a modest home with his wife, Delia, and Sammy "the Cat." The latter is a family pet living in the federal witness protection program. In his spare time, Jim enjoys carping and meddling in the lives of his adult children.

Amanda Kitchen is a second-year student at Husson College majoring in Marketing. She enjoys writing mostly short stories and hopes to publish a collection of her own work.

Melissa MacCrae is the author of numerous articles, essays and book reviews. She has published two books: *No Place for Little Boys*, a collection of letters from the Civil War and *It Takes a Woman*, that pushed for women's inclusion in shaping public policy.

Lucas Martin is a fifth-year physical therapy student who enjoys writing very small amounts of poetry and shooting many pictures in the Maine environment. He is involved with the Husson outing club and enjoys hiking, biking, skiing, or just going for a walk in the woods.

Heather McAnirlin works in the ICLS office at Husson and lives in Newport with her family. She doesn't consider herself so much a writer, as a volcano that lies dormant and then erupts with a story from time to time.

Paul Miller, formerly an ICLS instructor and a teacher in Indonesia, now lives, writes and paints in South Carolina.

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Bob Nichols, an ICLS and Husson instructor since 1994, has long dabbled in several creative arts and is still trying to choose his best vehicle with which to enlighten the world.

Nancy Nichols-Pethick (sister of Bob Nichols) is a painter who teaches art at Indiana State University. Nancy grew up in Maine, and spends most of her time trying to come up with nice things to say about Indiana.

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Jonathan Obst is a psychology major from Louisville, Kentucky. With pen or paintbrush, he likes to experiment with visual experience.

Patrick McManus O'Connolly (aka. Jon Connolly) teaches and studies biology at Husson College. Within the last two years his family has grown from one dog to two cats, two dogs, two gerbils, four perfect children, and an extraordinary wife who understands that love is what is required to survive the camping trips of life.

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Kathy Wall teaches anatomy and physiology courses at Husson College. Most scientists have an artsy side, and her current artistic compulsions are photography and classical guitar.

Greg Winston is an Assistant Professor of English at Husson College. His teaching and writing interests include Irish and American literature. ❧

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