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Crosscut

literary magazine

With an introduction by James Finney Boylan

Independence Seaport Museum in Philadelphia, PA.



Crosscut

literary magazine

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Preface

In this first true year of the millennium, it is nice to know that there exists in Maine an ongoing pursuit of literary excellence. Despite repeated anguished cries bemoaning the demise of the written word, the endeavor goes on. Since the early days of radio, the revolution brought by the telephone, the advent of television, computers, software, and the all-encompassing "snares" of the Internet, we have heard and heard again mourning wails for the art of putting pen to paper. As the white-haired, white-clad icon once chuckled, "The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated," so we at Husson can firmly assert our belief in the dynamic "pursuit of excellence" in literature and art, here and throughout the State of Maine.

—The Editors

Introduction

James Finney Boylan

Everyday Miracles

It's my pleasure to introduce to you this new edition of *Crosscut*, the literary magazine that flowers out of Husson College in Bangor each year like a night-blooming cereus.

I also need to tell you about the events of the Friday just before Christmas this last year, when my older boy Zach, aged six, swallowed a marble.

I called the poison control center. "My boy's swallowed a marble," I offered.

"Is he all right?" they asked. "Is he breathing?"

"Zach," I said, putting my hand over the phone. "Are you breathing?"

"Yes," he said.

"Is it stuck in his lungs or esophagus?"

I looked over at Zach, who was sitting in front of the fire playing with a Pokemon.

"I don't think so," I said.

"Well," said the poison control lady, "I think you can pretty much wait it out."

I hung up. I knew what she was getting at.

So for the next couple of days I waited for the marble to come out of Zach, in a manner different from the manner in which it had gone in.

Prior to her death, my grandmother Ethel King Redding had been a difficult, unpleasant woman. A racist, a bigot, and a drunk, she had also left me her silver service, all those butter knives and teaspoons engraved with a B. I usually kept her silver locked up and unused, since using the silver seemed like I was making peace with her, which I wasn't ready to do just yet.

And yet, given the situation with the marble, I suddenly found a use for the silver serving fork. Wielding this in a manner undreamed of by its creator, I managed to poke through that which Zach produced over the next few days, hoping that I might find the marble, its journey complete. Still, the days passed, and my hopes had not come to fruition.

Until Christmas Eve, that is, when suddenly I hit pay dirt. Rinsing everything off in the sink, I placed the marble into a small bowl, and presented it to my son.

"Is this the marble you swallowed?"

"I think so."

"You're not sure?"

"Well, that looks like it. Except that the marble I swallowed was blue."

I held before him a red marble.

"You didn't swallow two marbles, did you?"

"No. Just the one."

"So how could it have changed from blue to red, inside you?"

Zach's eyes grew wide.

"It's a Christmas miracle!"

He then put the marble under his pillow, closed his eyes, and went to sleep.

In his own way, I'm thinking that my son has the makings of a writer.

He took a commonplace object and transformed it, using himself, the mystery of his own flesh and blood.

He produced something that surprised even himself.

He engaged in a dangerous activity that resulted in comedy.

He got his father to discover a new use for a silver serving fork.

In the issue of *Crosscut*, which you now hold in your hands, you will see writers producing all sorts of commonplace miracles. Susmita Chatterjee, for instance, will take you on the road to Jalda, where you will see dancers dancing in a circle and drinkers drinking *phool* and smokers smoking *sal*. In "Happily Ever After," Judy Eyerer's heroine will receive a heart-shaped gift which "she can't imagine ever wearing, but that's all right; some things are just meant to be kept." In "Gone Fly Fishing," Kathy Wall will show you the particularly Maineish joys of fishing in blackfly season. And Leon Raikes will admire his grandmother's spoon, which becomes an instrument of memory, of legacy, and of love.

Herein are seventeen poets, five fiction writers, three photographers and a watercolorist, not to mention a couple of artists whose pieces will defy classification. Into their work these artists have poured their hearts and souls, their frustrations and dreams, their embarrassments and their triumphs.

My son reports that he too wishes to become a writer now, and has begun his first novel with a list of chapter titles, including "The Ghost," "The Ghost Hunter," and (the climax) "The Fight." He looked somewhat wistful when he told me this, though, and admitted, "But I kind of got stuck after I wrote, 'Once upon a time.'"

I know just how he feels. Still, I can't help but wonder if the miracle he pulled off at Christmas has anything to do

with his newfound desire. It's not often that you transform the stuff of life—dancers, drinkers, smokers, lockets, blackflies, spoons—and yes, even marbles—but it is the everyday magic that constitutes the chief business art, and of life.

As Robert Juckett concludes in "Atlantic City," "Yep. That's the way it works."

James Finney Boylan is an associate professor of English at Colby College. He is the author of a collection of short stories and three novels, including the most recent Getting In *(Time/Warner).*

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Emily Swartz

Lantern

I am a lantern
With a thousand flames burning in me
The tune they dance to
Comes through my ears
Swirls in my head,
And grows in my soul
Sometimes they sing
And oh, when they do,
It is too much for me to bear
I curl up and smile
Or I get up and jump
They won't listen
No, they don't even care
Can you make a thousand flames
Drunk on life
Stop and listen to you?

Two Poems

Leon Raikes

My Mother's Spoon

On my worst days
I use it as she did: to stir
the sweet milk and coffee
and to smile at the aroma
of some new color.

This spoon has a story: 1847
Rogers, "Remembrance," the last in her house
of its kind — since one day
in August, 1983, her house was robbed
while she had gone downtown on the bus
just to buy candy and a dish to put it in.
This very spoon must have hidden
in the sink after her morning coffee.
It gave her pleasure for years to say,
"At least they left with an incomplete set,
damn them, and they broke two plates
from my mother's china too."
She repeated the same speech just like this
every holiday except her last.

On Christmas Eve she gave me this spoon,
"Remembrance," 1847, and asked me
to remember her. Each day I do.

Whenever I notice, say,
the fretful dip of spruces in an arctic wind
or a blue film of silence on the midnight snow,
I reach for the phone to tell her,
forgetting. Or when I want to ask her
about all kinds of anonymous journeys.
Or about intransigent daughters

or sons too eager to go on their way.
Or feeling, just suddenly, like buying
a new dish of candy.

I remember too,
as I do the same,
with what pleasure she pointed this spoon down
into the pale wedges of grapefruit,
salted, nearly bitter as the winter dawn,
but somehow sweet on the tongue:
a pink burst of small awareness.

It seems the spoon itself
makes coffee sweeter — my mother so close
I can almost smell her perfume,
the pungent savory of her warm flesh
when we had been out walking —

though sometimes the chill of this silver
too perfectly reminds me into what new dark
she has stirred herself, into what deep color
of jasmine, into what cold touch
of metalcraft she is now apprenticed.

1847 Rogers, "Remembrance,"
each day it is something else I am mixing
out of the milk and out of the shadows,
imagining food to go with my coffee —

thick soft cookies for one returning
from too much play, citrus twists
for uncertain evenings,
dark bitter chocolate for the grieved
or betrayed.

She always knew
how to nourish me.
She knew just when to give me
her spoon.

Ocean Dawn

i

You wonder if all your life
you have been waiting for just these colors.

Purple dawnlight
kindles into dark a forest of shadows.

A blue ocean squeezes from itself
pure light.

Even the sky above bare hills
translates itself into an eerie green.

And a drop of starlight distills at once
upon each quill of red spruce

a sequence of hues
polished by one thrush into gold.

ii

No wonder you yourself are longing
also to see

through this clear light
into the very breast of things.

iii

You wonder how long the dawn
can dress in colors of no name.

What else can grow inside this green?

Paul García

The Theatre of War

In 1972, right after high school, Harry enlisted. He'd had his fill of menial jobs, and the Army offered dignity. But he found himself among draftees not interested in soldiering. Most had tried to avoid induction, some were 1-Y, direct from criminal court.

They stayed up late, telling stories, drinking beer and smoking pot. Some of them would sneak off base to bring back pizza. They called bivouac "camping" and went on unofficial manuevers, stealing other platoons' supplies and sabotaging equipment — had it been a war zone they'd have been either decorated or executed.

After one such raid, the sergeant sat with them around him in the dark of a moonless night. Crickets chirped. A cicada buzzed nearby. His voice was even.

"You guys are going to ruin it for all of us."

His cigarette rose and glowed. A few snickered. There was the squish of a beer can opening.

"We are the best platoon, we could win these games."

These words struck a chord. Was he proud of them? The sergeant sipped bourbon from his canteen and talked a long time. Among noncoms, he had the rep of a troubleshooter, preferring these hard case wonders to regular recruits. They were his kind.

As the platoon listened, a sympathetic tone coursed among them. No, they couldn't deny fraternity. Didn't they always stick together? Sure! Well, then, weren't they better soldiers than these other units of gung ho boy scouts? Damn *straight!*

Within days, they were competing against the rest of the Company, and by the end of Basic five had won marks-

manship medals. Harry was one of them. All five were assigned to Advanced Infantry Training.

No one knew why they were waiting in front of this tent. There was always one line or another. Then Captain Psych called for Harry to help unload a truck behind the tent. At the back of the truck, Gilbert Wong and another Spec Four, a drafted conscientious objector named Garrity, were looking over a Soviet air-cooled machine gun emplacement. They'd both scored well enough to get into the Vietnamese language program at Yale. They'd had furlough and soon would go Ivy League for a year before shipping out for Saigon to monitor communications.

"Funny looking sucker, ain't it?"

It was like a spider's defensive pose, a scorpioid warning gesture. Harry tried to fathom the relation of the shrink, the Russian gun and the two men called "cunning linguists." Harry jumped into the back of the truck. Wong and Garrity took the Soviet machine gun, its tripod, and cartridge case into the tent.

Harry carried a clump of rifles across his arms like firewood. He leapt from the tailgate. The metal and hardwoods clattered dully. The Captain, following the Spec Fours, clapped Harry on the back. "Take 'em to that tarp I spread under the stands there. I'll be over in a minute."

Harry examined one of the rifles. Lighter than Government Issue. His eyes adjusted to the dark, and he scrutinized the Chinese characters along the barrel. The Captain returned with a small box. Harry asked, "Sir? What's this all about?"

"Don't think. Just follow orders. They all take these blank cartridges, paper wadding. Fill the clips, or breach-load them. When you hear Wong and Garrity shouting in Vietnamese, commence firing."

"Yes sir."

Harry laid the pieces before him in the dim light. He recognized a Chinese copy of the Kalshnikov AK47 with a banana clip, and a converted French MAT-49 submachine gun from enemy ordinance class.

Troops filed into the tent, onto the bleachers. None saw Harry in the dark below. At the opposite side, because they were on the same plane, he could just make out Wong and, yeah, Garrity grinning and giving him the finger at their emplacement.

The tent filled with four hundred young men. The Drill Instructor blew a long note from his whistle. "Awright. Let's have it quiet."

The D. I. searched for anyone still talking. Silence in the canvas enclosure. He barked at the khaki-clad youngsters in the stands. "Awright. Listen up. There's a noncom here's gonna talk 'bout a resort called Vietnam. I want ever'body to pay close attention. Any questions?"

There were never any questions.

"Good. Sergeant Fluke?"

All but two spotlights at the canvas enclosure's peak were turned off. They met and glowed on the cropped grass floor. Sergeant Fluke stepped into the light. He didn't say anything, only turned full circle, slowly. Muscular, the sergeant from Vietnam coursed his gaze along the top rows of the bleachers. His presence mesmerized the young recruits. The two spots formed a cone and within it, like a pendant slowly turning, he wound their attention around him.

Harry, distracted by the silence, looked up from the clip he was loading. Fluke's hawknosed face expanded into a broad grin and, finally, as the bleachers began to stir, casually, he spoke in a resonant baritone. "Thank you, Sergeant."

The smile washed from Fluke's expression as he surveyed the company. "There are a lot of challenges in Ad-

vanced Infantry Training. Some of you won't be able to meet them. But brass thinks my experiences might help you later, in combat."

He talked as easily as if he were in his mother's kitchen, with the clear, Middle American emphasis of a radio announcer. The light carried his lats and biceps flexing through the tailored shirt. The Army had paid for acting lessons and used him in recruitment films. Fluke had earned his decorations at Dong Ha, at Da Nang, and at the airbase in Hue. Now he was put out to stud, as an image, a formal example. The recruits never thought of a performer on stage, only gaped, like children, at this mythic warrior.

Harry listened as he loaded blanks into the strange bolt actions and semiautos in the dark, then turned his attention to Sergeant Fluke's story.

"After three days of hacking through undergrowth, we approached a clearing."

Fluke's deep voice was relaxing. The focused spots, like a campfire at his feet, added to the severity of his features. The gallery of untried boys surrendered to this spellbinder.

"Air so thick you had to swallow it. The ground steaming. No sky, just the canopy of leaves. One man was muttering with fever. Finally, a clearing! Hah! What beautiful blue sky! And a light breeze. We stopped to cool off. One of the sentries found a trail heading south. We followed it. Until point position stopped and raised his arm."

Fluke froze in tableau.

Then the lights quit. Under the opposite stands, Wong and Garrity shouted in Vietnamese. They lost their faces and became Cong. Harry ran through the AK47's clip on full automatic and reached for the next carbine as the machine gun began to chatter. He emptied it into the dark. The rifles hammered themselves spent in his arms and then the machine gun, also, became quiet.

The spots shone on Sergeant Fluke. A nervous murmur died into embarrassed laughter. As the lights rose, Fluke calmed them, cautioned against "the beaten track" and made his exit to some applause. The fake firefight hadn't taken ten seconds. The contingent was siphoned from the tent and rewarded with mess.

Harry packed up the collection of weapons and waited by the truck for the Captain. Troops taking the shortcut to mess hall jogged past.

"Hey, Harry, was that you firing in there?"

"Yeah. I hit anybody?"

"I think you took out that row of officers."

Laughter.

"Harry, they gonna hang you ass faw chootin the Coinel."

Harry drew to attention as the Colonel and his Aide passed with Sergeant Fluke.

"....very pleased with the, uh, show. You know, if you turned civilian you might enjoy a career in Hollywood, not that I'd want to see the Army lose a good man!"

The Aide chuckled at this. Fluke smiled. "Thank you, Sir. Actually, retirement's not far off..."

They ambled casually past, followed the troops scrambling toward the dining hall food lines. The Captain came for the carbines. Harry rushed to chow with Wong and Garrity. They were late. The hall was full. Mess Officer sat them at a visitors' table with the silent group of psychologists sent to observe the unit. ❧

Nancy Henry

Before the Revolution

Frogs thronged
shallow ponds
near the great chateaux,
their primal music
despised in France
when lords were lords.
On warm fragrant nights
peasants engaged
by moonlight and torch
in strange work,
beating and sweeping
the thrumming ponds
with leafy boughs
till dawn,
silencing frogs
so drunken gentry
could sleep in peace
in tangled silk.

Michele Suber

Light

Am I here—
Or maybe there...
There in your world
Filled with mystery and fantasy?
I do not know nor can I distinguish
It seems all but a mystery.
The lighting is good though—
Never really had the luxury of good lighting
What a difference!
Oh, but now I can see what I am writing—
I am terrified...ashamed!!
This is nonsense!
I shall write no more—
Not till tomorrow
Not until the lighting is good no more.
I am gone.

Lucas Martin

Seasons of the Mind

People change their minds
their finds
like flippin' a dime.
Like traffic lights

I'm green....no wait yellow.... ah, how about red?

People wander along their path.....
yeah, this is my path, this one's for me.

Take the tests, answer the questions, do the work.
Books are right, teachers are right
they know who I'm trying to be....

A bead of water slowly rolling down the
center vein of leaf after leaf
collecting baby beads, tiny seeds....
yeah, this is me, I'm a bead.

Leaves change, center vein? How about side vein?
bead takes a sharp left... looses some baby beads
some tiny seeds.
PLOP into the ground the bead is now a moist egg of soil...
yeah, I'm a moist egg of soil.



—Lucas Martin

Thomas McCoy

At the Barber's

He was four on Sunday.
Tuesday he asked,
"Can I go at the barber's?"
And so we are here.
Here, on my lap,
The pressure of his
Small fingers on mine;
Here, into lewd laughter
And pipe smoke,
He brings his golden head.

When it is his turn,
When the white robe
Is in place,
My mind attempts
A melancholy link
with Clytemnestra,
But my forced sacrifice
Is only a surgical act.

When it is over,
His face rounder,
When he is parted and wet down,
The source of his complaint,
"Daddy, those kids
Called me a girl,"
Visibly gone,
He accepts the prize
For his ordeal
And brandishing his lollipop,

Rushes from the shop
To engage the living,
The wounded and the dead.

On the way back
I want to tell him
That three years
Of memories await
The barber's broom.
I want to tell him
I feel my death
In this April sun.
But as I watch him
My intentions go numb,
And in silence,
The old and the new
Come home.

Judy Eyerer

Happily Ever After

The pictures are the first things to go, secured with bubble wrap and tissue paper, then settled into a moving carton. Grey dust webs mark their spots in the corners of the ceiling above Nori's stripped-down bed. The movers work quickly, hoisting her rocking chair, then easing her dresser out the bedroom door and through our living room. I help Nori take down the sheets she and I tie-died and hung as curtains when we found this apartment. The room fills with an unaccustomed lightness. Our voices begin to echo in the gradually emptying space.

Finally, Nori's bed is taken away. I lean against the wall and watch as the movers dismantle it and carry it out, piece by piece. With each departing section, my throat grows tighter. Despite all of the preparations for David and Nori's wedding and the arrangements for Nori's move into the apartment they've found on the other side of the city, I've somehow avoided dealing with her leaving until now. Watching her things leave the apartment we've shared for the past three years makes the change impossible to ignore any longer. I swallow hard and cough a little to clear my throat.

A light breeze flits through the open window, sending dust kitties scampering across the floor. Nori returns from the kitchen with a broom and dustpan, and I watch through moist eyes as she sweeps the floor. After a moment, I wander out into the living room and then onto the porch, leaning against the railing and watching box after box disappear into the big orange truck.

Near the end of the long, hot afternoon we find the box. It's in the back of Nori's closet, pushed deep into the corner. She grabs it and has backed halfway out from the closet,

her bottom sticking up in the air, when David enters the room, looking for more cartons. He stops in the doorway, and a buck-toothed grin spreads across his face.

"Nice view, Hon," he says, then steps forward and slaps Nori on the rear.

"Hey!" There's a scurry of knees and elbows, and then the rest of her appears, box in hand. "Very funny," she says, taking a quick swipe at him, but he dodges her. They laugh, and David gives her ponytail a playful tug. I feel suddenly awkward.

"What's in the box?" I ask, hoping to distract them.

"Mementos from the past," Nori says with a secretive air. She smiles at David and raises her eyebrows. "Old love letters, stuff like that...."

He reaches for the box. "I better have a look at that," he says with consternation too exaggerated to be real. "We don't want any surprises, right before the wedding."

Nori swivels away from him, hugging the box to her chest. Her eyes are teasing him.

"A little mystery never hurt anyone," I say, happy to join in. "Of course, if you're worried about competing with Nori's former lovers..." I hold his gaze until he glances away.

"What former lovers?" Nori asks, seemingly bewildered.

"Shh—don't give him any clues. Make him wonder."

David pauses. He seems to be searching for a snappy comeback. His eyes shift from Nori to me and narrow. "Right. Now, if we were talking about you, Faith, I'd believe it."

"Low blow, Bucko."

"Come on you two," Nori says. "Take the gloves off. Let's get back to work." She glances around the room. "There's another box, with my shoes and uniforms in it, honey, on the top shelf. It's ready to go."

David steps around us and reaches into the closet. I eye his tall lank form, the greasy blonde hair, the polyester pants. It's hard to imagine what appeal he holds for Nori. She's

had other boyfriends, guys who took us dancing and to parties. Guys who were fun. David is definitely not fun.

His cotton shirt, the usual button-down model, bears a dark sweat stain beneath each arm and down the center of his back. His shoulder blades stick to the shirt as he raises both arms to lift the box from the shelf. He groans and staggers under its weight.

"You sure this is just your nurse stuff? Feels like there's a dead body in here." He looks to me for sympathy.

I can't help sneering at his feeble effort. "Careful, David. Your he-man image is slipping."

"Ha, ha."

"Enough, you two." She shoots me a warning glance. I gin up an innocent look and smile sweetly at David. The agitation on his face sends a ripple of victory through me.

After he's gone, Nori returns her attention to the box and begins pulling things from it and setting them on the floor. The gold tassel from her college graduation cap; a bunch of letters bound together with an elastic; a shriveled corsage, its white ribbon frayed and graying. She murmurs over each one.

I pick up the letters and flip through them. The envelopes are all addressed to Nori, with David's University of Wisconsin return address. I toss them back onto the rug.

Nori reaches again into the box and lifts what appears to be a yellowed scroll tied up with a thin, pale-pink ribbon. "Oh, Faith." She loosens the ribbon and carefully unrolls the paper. "Do you remember this?"

Her eyes run down the page as I watch with curiosity. "What is it? Let me see."

David sticks his head in again. "Let's go, ladies. We'll never finish if you two don't quit gabbing."

My eyes don't leave the paper. "Oh, stuff it, David."

Nori hands it to me and sends David to the living room to check through my record albums for any of hers she might

have missed. His curiosity is evident, but he trots obediently off. I unroll the paper and am relieved that David's not here to see this. It's the blood oath Nori and I took, back in eighth grade, and David would surely tease us if he saw it. "Remember how we stuck our fingers with that pin?" I say, laughing at the memory. "Hurt like hell, but you said we had to sign it in blood, or it wouldn't count." The oath is in faded ink, the words barely legible.

I, Eleanor Johnson, swear to always be true to my friend, Faith Greeley. I, Faith Greeley, swear to always be true to my friend, Eleanor Johnson.

There are two red-tinged fingerprints beneath the writing.

"You kept this, all these years?" My eyes begin to mist up at the thought that this meant so much to her. I rub a hand across my forehead and blink away the gathering tears before looking at her.

She nods.

I glance at it again and smile. "Well, we've done pretty well, wouldn't you say?"

"Made it through your mother," Nori says with a laugh. "Did I tell you she sent her acceptance to our wedding invitation? I guess she's decided I'm not such a terrible influence on you after all."

"Actually, she's done a 180 on that. We had a fight the other day, and she said she wished I could be more sensible, like you."

"Amazing."

"I guess we survived just about everything. Except David."

"Faith...."

"Did I hear someone mention my name?"

The guy has an incredible knack for showing up at just

the wrong moment. I sigh and hand the paper back to Nori. She ties it up again and puts it into the box.

"You can take this now," Nori says to him. "Just be careful. I don't want the things in it to get squashed."

Nori looks at me after David has left. "I wish you'd give him a chance, Faith. You two could be friends, you know."

"Right. Cinderella, the Prince, and me. Sounds charming."

"Well, can you promise me you'll behave yourself at the wedding, at least?"

"Of course I will. As long as it gets over by midnight. I turn into a pumpkin after that."

"Funny, Faith. Very funny."

The summer's drought breaks on Friday evening, the night before the wedding. It pours. A deluge. Thunder and lightning. On my way to the church for the rehearsal, I shake my head in amazement at this, the latest in what I consider a string of bad-luck omens.

Nori had called, in a tizzy, earlier in the day. Her nephew Jason, the ring bearer, had managed to fall from a tree and break his leg. His mother offered the services of Martin, her 13-year-old, but Nori didn't care for the notion of a three-foot flower girl and a five-foot ring bearer, and her nephew thought even less of the idea. What was she going to do? I suggested she try Rent-a-Kid—the local Boy Scout project. They loaned out boys for leaf raking and snow shoveling, why not ring bearing? No response.

Around noon, the phone rang again. Father O'Malley had laryngitis and was calling in a priest from a neighboring parish, just in case he was still speechless tomorrow. Had I ever heard of Father Tierney? Nori wanted to know. I said yes, but didn't add that the last I'd seen of him, he was closing in on 80, hard of hearing, and slightly senile.

The storm makes the third omen, and being a firm believer in the significance of threes, I'm convinced that it's up to me to bring these signs to Nori's attention. It's not smart to argue with fate. David should just fade off into the sunset, so we can go back to life as it's meant to be. No small task, I know, but someone has to do it.

While David's busy introducing his brother, the best man, to Father Tierney, I approach Nori. The reward for my concern is a look of annoyance.

"Suit yourself," I say. "Just don't blame me when it all falls apart."

"Thanks for the blessing." She hurries off to help David, who's shouting his brother's name into Father Tierney's ear.

Later that night, at the rehearsal dinner party, I pass David on my way to the bathroom. After drinking most of a bottle of wine, I badly need to pee. I smile, then step around him. He scoots into my path.

"Just a minute, Faith. Can I talk to you?"

"Not unless you like seeing a grown woman wet her pants."

He blushes and shuffles aside. When I come out of the rest room, he's waiting for me.

"I just wanted to check with you about the toast you're supposed to give tonight." A line of sweat has popped out on his forehead. He pauses, then says, "It's okay, if you'd rather not do it." His hand goes to his mouth, and in a vain attempt to conceal his protruding teeth, he uses a finger to comb the mustache that droops over his lip.

I study him with suspicion. "Why wouldn't I?"

His eyes dart away. "I don't know. Maybe you'd rather not."

"You mean, maybe you'd rather I not." I reach into my purse for a cigarette and matches, ignoring the lighter that

he manages to produce at the last minute. Leaning against the wall, I take a deep drag, then exhale in his direction. "Afraid I might embarrass you, David? In front of the folks?"

David's parents are uptight, old-school Baptists. It had been a battle getting them to agree to alcohol for the festivities.

"You don't have be so hostile about it," he says. "I just want to make sure everything goes all right, for Nori's sake."

I'm ready with a quick retort, but the mention of Nori's name stops me.

Warily, David watches as I take another drag on my cigarette. I stare back at him. After a moment, he shifts his gaze and begins to fidget with his tie tack.

I press a hand to my cheek. The wine makes me feel vulnerable, weepy. A lump forms in my throat. "You don't understand, David," I finally say. "I'm gonna miss her."

He pauses, as if the sudden change in tone has thrown him. His voice is uncertain when he speaks again. "She'll be right here in town."

I shake my head and speak without looking at him. "We've been best friends a long time. It won't be the same."

He doesn't respond, but I can feel his eyes on me. When I can't stand the silence any longer, I turn back toward him. His expression has softened, and I instantly regret my comments. I stub my cigarette out in a nearby ashtray and flip a loose strand of hair over my shoulder.

"Don't worry about me, David. I'll behave myself. For some reason, Nori's intent on marrying you, so I'm gonna help her do it in style."

The worried look returns to his face. I punch him on the arm. "Lighten up, Bucko. Everything'll be fine. Just like in the fairy tale. But David, a little advice..." I pause, allow a smile to come to my face.

He gives me an expectant look.

"Don't forget to kiss your princess after the priest pro-

nounces you man and wife. A toad at the altar is a pitiful sight."

The rehearsal dinner is uneventful, unless you count the moment when Martin, the too-tall ring bearer, barfs into the watermelon boat, or the fact that the lights go out just as the sorbet is being served, plunging the Stonybrook Inn into pitch darkness, which causes Nori's Aunt Nellie to shriek out that someone's pinching her ass. Turns out it was just the janitor groping around for the generator.

More signs, I say, but only to myself. I find comfort in the arms of Marc, David's unattached cousin, and give up my stop-the-wedding crusade. By the time the lights come back on, he and I are halfway through our second bottle of Chardonnay. Unfortunately, it's about this time that my presence is required at center stage with the best man.

Teetering forward on Marc's arm, I give David's mom and dad a big smile, and step back to listen to the first toast. David's brother is eloquent. *For good times shared...love to come...blah, blah, blah.* He has all the old ladies reaching for hankies. David beams and slips his arm around Nori. She keeps her eyes on me.

I'm prepared. I've combed every joke book I could find and am ready with a couple of zingers. Looking at Nori, thinking of all we've been through and of her hopes for this marriage, my mind goes blank. I grip the lectern and gaze out through the candle-lit haze. The room grows still, so still that you can hear the rustle of organza. I take a deep breath, turn toward David and Nori, and raise my glass. Nori smiles her encouragement.

"This is for Nori, a friend through all seasons. And David, her charming prince."

Nori's smile widens. David leans toward her and presses his lips to her hair. There's a sweetness to that gesture, a

tenderness too real to be denied. My eyes dim with tears, and I look again across the heads in the crowded room.

"May they begin with the joy of friendship, and live happily ever after."

I lift my glass to my lips and drain the champagne in one swallow. Turning back to Nori and David, I raise the crystal flute above my head. "Now I throw this in the fireplace, right?" I ask, taking a step in that direction. David pales, but Nori just laughs. She's known me long enough to recognize a bluff when she sees one.

The next day, the wedding goes off without a hitch. Father O'Malley miraculously recovers his voice, the flower girl carries the rings in her basket of daisies, and the bride is beautiful.

Later, on my bed in what used to be Nori's and my apartment, I discover a tiny box, wrapped in wedding paper. There's a card attached to the top. I recognize Nori's flowing script: *For a friend through all seasons, both now and forevermore. Love, Nori.*

I open the box and find, beneath several layers of tissue paper, a gold heart-shaped locket, strung on a pale-pink ribbon. It's the most sentimental gift I've ever received—totally like Nori and unlike me. I can't imagine myself ever wearing it, but that's all right; some things are just meant to be kept. ❧



The Carrying Place
— Karen Stonebridge

Marie Juckett

Fracture

I find beauty in things
that have become broken—
like
windows
statues
branches
dreams
promises
and
people.

The beauty I find has nothing
to do with the fact that they
were once whole
But lies in the strength
they earned in their broken-ness.

(For Brian & B.K.)

Susmita Chatterjee

Aspiration

I want to delve deep
Into my dreams
Till the end of time it seems
In the march of a dynamic universe.
My infinite love is stored
For mankind, with that shall I
Anoint knowledge, for I
Desire to synthesize.
For I aspire to have
In my clasp the earth
And the heavens above
And the pangs of striving.
I aspire moment by moment
To consecrate myself in
Such desire maddening
To behold God in creation.
Insatiable is my desire
And it seems that
In pain shall it show and
In fire shall it burn.

Two Poems

Bart McCarthy

Junkie's Waltz

In a breath, drink a deep sweet lavender flow
That spirals and thickens and rich bubbles mutter
Till long-dry nerves are drowned in warm water.

Penobscot River Blues

Mine eyes cast out, gray over and dark
Rimmed with warm blood runned deep.
The bones of the pale winter sky turn over and moan
And return to their long, ashen sleep.

Two Poems

J.T. Kenny

Persepolis

A drug your sadness,
  used to hold, make me know
  squander a lifetime in a pilgrim's verse.
Dark eyes – faster than words – recite it daily.
Should trust my senses, not your beauty.
Believe in endings?
For comes a going time
  when I will move through daytime shadows,
  still alive, but choking back a soul of dust.
Who then to bear your lovely, binding sorrow?

Quaternity

She dreamed the birth of four last night,
Mystic quest, natal delight?
So arched in labor, genesis wife,
Straining to square the circle of life.

Edges to orbs; box up the round.
Beginnings in nature's quads abound.
Mandala's plunge to psyche's plains.
Lovely loops are called quatrains.

A crapshoot rolling pass of fours
Or digit ordained in holy laws?
Reckon it took three Earps plus pal
To square things up at OK Corral.

Apocalypse riders?...four elect
So quadpeds seem politically correct.
So how many winds blow from corners?
And pallbearers?...quiz the mourners.

Bauer's compass points say four.
Lakota wisemen say there's more,
A circle with depth...up and down,
Black Elk knows his way to town.

Nicaea hailed THREE in Christian lore
'Til affirmative action ruled it four
Citing plaintiff's spotless core
Let the circle be unbroken...

Physics maps an exegesis of a
Cosmos in quaternity thesis.
But it could be round, a unified field,
A wheelchaired giant has revealed.

The secret's buried deep within
This *locus mentis*, collective bin.
The circle is life...I'm cautious sure.
May corners let our selves endure?

Susmita Chatterjee

My Travels to a Forest Village

It was springtime in India and I was traveling the road to Mandla from Jabalpur, both of which are in Madhya Pradesh. The area is thick with *sal* (teak) forest and the road meandered through it. The leaves had fallen in abundance, covering the road; the wheels of the bus crushed the dried leaves and made a noise that I still can hear. On the left was a slope covered with trees and shrubs and a signboard told about an historical site. It is the site of Queen Durgavati's tomb. She was a queen of the Gond tribal kingdom and lived and ruled after the death of her husband. She herself died fighting a Mughal general during the reign of Emperor Akbar the Great. We passed this sacred site and our bus started off towards Mandla. When we reached Mandla evening had spread against the sky. At this point some other members joined me. They were all from the Institute of Regional Development, Bhopal, and they had brought their jeep. Now we were all traveling by the jeep and started our journey for Manot, the place where we would make our night halt.

Early morning, I was awakened by many voices. Right in front of the rest house where we stayed, a big market was in operation. Tribal people call it the *haat* that was held once every week. The tribal women thronged to the shops selling printed cloth, hair tussles, ribbons and other attractive things. Soon we left this colorful market and moved on toward the forest village of Jalda, which was our destination. Deep inside the forest we traveled until we reached our journey's end. I was eager to see this wonderful village where I would stay for four days. It was bright and sunny and I could see the tribal village, which was a forest village, in the valley down below. Sunlight overflowed the houses and fields

and now we were right in the middle of the village. We were received by a group of villagers who were waiting for us. These men were lean and thin and had sleeveless tops, which they called *bundis*. Their thighs and legs were bare and they wore only a cloth around their waists. Their hair was long and was tied in knots hanging at the back of their heads.

The first to come forward was the village social worker, a young man from the town who was a government employee working for the development of the village. He introduced us to the village chief, Agarla Baiga, also known as Mokaddam, meaning chief. Agarla was a tall lean man with an intelligent and bright face and a strong pair of teeth that showed when he smiled, and he smiled often. He spoke in his tribal language and the young social worker interpreted it. Agarla welcomed us and asked us to have a field trip of his village, to which we readily agreed. In fact there were two villages, Ahiritola and Tikritola. (*Tola* obviously meant a village.) Ahiritola was on the level ground and Tikritola was on a small mound; between them ran a rivulet. The houses were all thatched cottages made of wood planks and wooden posts and the roof was covered with hay. Each house had a big garden where tobacco was grown along with a few vegetables like beans and gourds along with millet, the staple food. Though the government had made some brick houses for the villagers, those were never occupied.

Their food was millet soup, which the women cooked for the day, and thrice a day they ate a soup called *pej*. They also ate fruits and roots from the forests and drank *sulphi*, the local drink. The Baigas worked in the forests under a forest contract. The village was to be inhabited by the tribal people when they entered into a contract to work in the forest. The work was simply to collect forest products like *harra*, *boira* and *katha*. These are products of medicinal value, and middlemen from the town markets came to buy them. The wages, which were paid weekly, were Rs. 1.25 for an hour for men and Rs1.0 for women. At 5 P.M they were

let off. The workers ran home to have their grab of *pej* and then in groups went to dance. In fact, on the second day of our stay we went to see the dance known as *karma*.

It was a moonlit night and people gathered together to watch the dance in an open space in the heart of the forest. It was a dance of men and women. The women entered in a row from one side and the men entered in a row from the other side. Women wore red-bordered white saris with red and gold tussles in their hair lifted in knots. Men wore wraps round their waists and black embroidered tops with their long hair tied in knots. The dance started with drumbeats, slow at first then becoming faster, and continued till midnight. The dancers, men and women, danced in rows, holding onto the waist of the next dancer and going round and round. There was not much variety in the dance itself, but the music and the steps of the dance became intoxicating, and at the final stage even the audience started moving their heads and their bodies in rhythm. *Karma* dancers are also meant to choose mates, and getting married was next.

At the entrance of a *shade* at a corner some people were drinking *phool*, the local drink. They were also smoking tobacco in a pipe made of *sal* leaf, which burnt along with the tobacco. The *shade*, which was owned by Agarla Baiga, the village headman, was interesting for it served as the local brewery. The fermented material was kept in a big earthen pot and the wine fell in drops into another earthen pot. It was kept cool with wet cloth covering both pots. The wine was served in *sal* leaves tagged with little twigs.

Near Jalda was the village Bona, where the school for the children was located. It was a fifth grade school and had about ten students, of whom a few were girls. The teacher belonged to the Gond tribe. A bright boy, Jhanaklal, sang the national anthem for us.

On our way back to Jalda we saw the Baiga method of cultivation, which is unique. They use the "slash and burn" method of cultivation, slashing down the trees and burning

the branches and twigs into ashes which they spread all-over the field and then cultivate millet, their staple food. This method has made them land hungry for they have to move in three years to new land, where they practice the same method.

The healer of the village was also the priest. He could fix broken bones with an herbal wrap kept tied round the fracture for a few weeks. The most exciting thing was to know how they catch birds. They put some glue on the windowsill and the birds get stuck when they come and perch. We left Jalda and on our way we came across another village called Dhobi. Here the Baigas dressed like town people and had a hair cut at least once a month.

I left the forest village of Jalda with mixed feelings. I was thrilled to see and experience four days of a joy that is rare. The aboriginals, their home and hearth, their music, their dancing, and their harmonious community life gave me a rare vision of the days of the past, almost a prehistoric glimpse of life as it used to be. By an unprecedented stroke of luck, I became a part of this life enjoyed by the Baigas, a tribe remote in history, and said to have a similarity with the Maoris of New Zealand. The mystery of this deep dense forest and its dwellers fascinated me. Yet I knew well in my heart that this village will disappear; the trees will be cut down and this village will vanish into the land of oblivion. The march of time and the march of civilization will obliterate any trace of the life that I saw. And why not? For did not Nehru say that they cannot be treated as museum pieces? In fact they should join the mainstream of life of the nation. Tribal children should be educated to become doctors, engineers, lawyers, teachers and other professionals. Change for progress is what we need. In my mind, however, this forest village will remain as a wonderful memory of "somewhere in the past." ❧



—Meredith Roth

Robert Nichols

Kitten Power

We shared the soft sofa,
a sweet cozy pair,
I reading and lazily petting
small calico purring upon me,

when
suddenly smitten
by mystery lightning,
the kitten flew up,
wild eyes life-dilated,
launched from my forearm
(digging fine-needled bloodlines),
the power surge fueling
her skittering, tail-spinning frenzy,
then boosting her blastoff
to her next mystery mission.

Nursing my wounds, I muse:
Oh Energy, so miserly with me,
are you too charmed by youth?
I don't covet unbridled lightning,
but dream about snaring some surplus
for storing and calibrating,
to meter medicinal doses,
to charge the insatiable Golden State.

N.K. Steinhart

My Love Is Only This

There is pain in knowing
Your heart aches because of me.
That I could not love you
Like you deserve to be loved.
That you needed me
At a time I did not want you.
That you think of me always
But I am so self-consumed.

There is pain in knowing
Someone else is near you.
That she glows because
Your smile warms her heart.
That she truly listens to you
To hear you voice sweet nothings.
That she wishes for her and you
Like you wished for you and me.

All this time, the pain has been here
And you have not.
Though I know you would have come,
If I had just told you to.

But now it is only this...
That we are the memory
Of two people
Who were so right
For each other
At the wrong moment in life.

Kathleen Wall

Gone Fly Fishing

Spring draws near, I sit here wishing
I could be outside fly-fishing.
Step into my hip-length waders,
Don my vest and fine sun shaders;
Slip into my upper pocket
Luscious bar of Hershey's chocolate;
Stick some flies into my hatband,
Rod in right and net in left hand;
Find some line without a knot in,
Just one thing I have forgotten:
Bug repellent! For delighting,
Only black flies now are biting.

Two Poems

Elizabeth Ramirez

The Photograph

New photograph not well taken.
Dim, dark, off-center subject.
Yet, within the framework of this picture
Lie memories which have not been —
Memories which have yet to come.

Sentimentality drips from my heart and mind
As I drink in this photo.
The note perched up against the lamp,
Penned by little hands,
Sends my mind on a journey yet to come.

Where has the time gone? Where is it going?
Thoughts rush through my mind; they touch my heart.
But stop! I must not think these things now;
I must wait for a future time.
Then I can rightly be sentimental and weepy.

Time

Time – an immense sea of emptiness
Filled up with a myriad of thoughts
Concerning this and that and nothing much,
Floating in and out of our minds
On an endless flow of tides.

Time – how it seems to stand still
As if there is no place to go,
Nothing to do except watch
Sailboats, seagulls, lobster boats,
And nothing in particular passing by.

Time – endless unto eternity
Never lost, yet always wasted;
Squandered by those who
Abhor the emptiness and stillness
Enjoyed by those with time.

Amanda Kitchen

The Path

The trees' arms bowed up slightly to the sky as if inviting the fresh sunlight of spring into a warm embrace, making her smile after she had found her footing on the narrow dirt path and stopped to appreciate the beauty of the moment. She recalled walking down this path for the first time as a small child, but even now she had not forgotten one detail about each tree and each stone along its edges. These strangely embedded memories made her able to see how much the familiar scene had changed. She looked up at the embracing trees that had grown somewhat crooked over the years, and was warmed by memories that she couldn't believe she had forgotten until then. When she was little, her neighborhood friends would run all through the dense woods on each side of the path, finding new games to play and places to explore. A tree had been broken and hinged on its trunk, lying across a small, fern-filled clearing. Moss made green and brown paths like rivers through its old, weathered skin. She remembered the tree always being like that; her friends used to make tents with sticks and bamboo leaves against it and stay in them for hours, making a shelter from the uncomfortably hot summer sun.

She recalled the first trip she took up the steady incline of the beaten path. She thought it was when she first moved to the neighborhood, but no, it couldn't have been because she was only two when she moved; it must have been a few years after. She had felt as if she walked onto the path and came upon a new and strange land. She almost believed she saw fluffy gray rabbits and fluttering butterflies, as if she walked into a Disney movie, but she knew now that was all her imagination. She wished she still believed it, though.

She wished she could get her imagination back, feeling her heart sink. She felt as if something had replaced it, as if her mind didn't have room for it anymore. It seemed when she was younger her imagination had allowed no room for anything else. Taking her thoughts away from the moment, she remembered her schedule and some errands she had to run before an early bedtime that night. How things had changed, she thought, from when she could enjoy all the beautiful things before her, real or imagined, without a thought of the future. In those days she never got older, always woke up with a clear head and an open heart, and never worried about her next car payment.

She took one last look at the path that lay ahead of her. She waited to see if she could glimpse a butterfly's wing or the tail of a bunny, but she saw only a lonesome crow cleaning its wing on the weak limb of an even weaker tree. She turned and slowly left, her eyes consciously glued to her feet. She shuddered and felt that the woods were thickening behind her, leaving no sign that a path was ever really there. ❧

Dawn Nickerson

Fingerprints in the Rain

I remember your stained glass window—
The beautiful way it cast colored shadows.
I can still picture the perfect blend of colors—
The soft glow as the warm sun hit.
I remember sitting there just staring outside—
You said my hair glistened with rare beauty.
I liked that moment—
I savored everything you said.

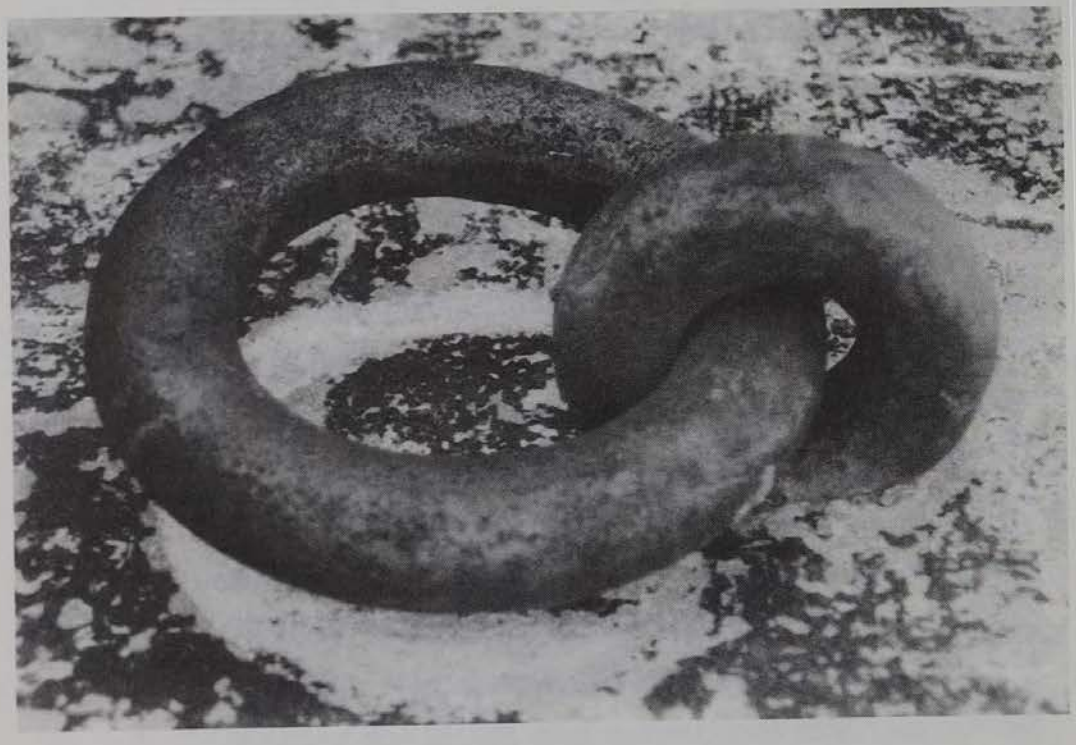
I remember your antique rocking chair—
The melody it played as it rocked.
I can still see you rocking yourself into a trance—
With your pipe in your mouth.
I remember the fictional stories you would tell—
Making me laugh and sometimes cry.
I enjoyed that moment—
I treasured everything that happened.

I remember your tattered throw rug—
The lazy way it clung to the floor.
I can still envision us sitting on it—
Holding hands as young lovers do.
I remember the smiles we shared—
You were always so charming.
I loved that moment—
I took in everything that went on.

I remember the tiny hole in your ceiling—
The way the summer's rain always came in.
I can still feel the raindrops on my skin—
The simple way the rain covered us.
I remember how you cursed the rain—
I told you to just patch the hole.
I held that moment—
I claimed everything we shared.

I remember your lively eyes—
How they burned into my soul.
You could always make me happy—
You knew just what it was I needed.
I remember the way we said goodbye—
The caring way we shared our last hug.

Your memory is like fingerprints—
Slowly the summer's rain we laughed at
Will wash it away.



— Lucas Martin

Doug Porter

Litter

Camera fades in.

I see a profile of a pair of rugged army boots crunching down on piles of filth and garbage as they walk along a dark and menacing landscape. That's all I see at this point. These boots walking along, stepping on garbage, paper bags, Styrofoam, plastic soda bottles, tin cans, candy wrappers, car parts, rotten food, mounds of crumpled paper, boxes, hypodermic needles, beer bottles, cigarette butts, junk, garbage, filth everywhere and these two army boots crunching down on all of it very slowly and softly. I hear the sound of factory foghorns and bits of rusted industrial machinery grinding together over the crinkle and crunch of the garbage walked on by these boots. Camera pulls back very slowly. I can see that the boots...yes...the boots are being worn by two slender legs, a woman, beautiful, wearing a soft white wool sweater and a colorful skirt, lavender with pale yellow flowers, blond hair, blowing around in the wind, and army boots. I see her lift a small red flower to her nose. She sniffs and closes her eyes as she walks, smiles, strides along over these heaps of trash and garbage as behind her I see smokestacks choke and spew out poisonous green fumes into the smoldering brown sky. She is smiling. She is walking past what looks like a garbage bin. She stops in front of it and backs up enough to see what is printed on the bin, which is a picture of a flower and the words "PITCH IN." She takes her small red flower and sniffs it one last time before dropping it on the ground in front of the bin. She smiles. She walks on out of the camera's view. Camera zooms up very slowly to the red flower lying on the ground, until it fills the entire picture. Huge, gaping, bright red petals.

Camera fades out. ❧

Richard Shain Cohen

Monday: End of the Week (a novel)

Excerpt from Part I "Flame"

The impact of Marion Sanders' decision struck when the telegram arrived while she was in London on her way to Aix-en-Provence. *No. Do not want to hear from you again definitely ever. Warren.*

Warren Canterbury had given her money, not as pay for sex but as an expression of an honest, consuming love. When she hesitantly consented to marriage, he wrote, *Darling—Please do not mind that this note is not a long letter. Believe me, I am so happy. I really don't know what to say. I am just thinking and thinking, and I am lost wondering where to start with sharing the happiness of planning together.* His thoughts were of houses, in the United States, in Italy, of having captured an effervescent complement to himself. For Marion was not the typical rotogravure female of society. In her youth, as in later years, she was gregarious, a vivacious extrovert whose personality attracted people, especially unafraid, intelligent men. Her full red hair and personality softened her rather mannish face, a thin sharp nose, narrow cheeks that would later fill, and prominent chin, and brown eyes piercing and laughing. The popular notion of Twenties and early Thirties thin women who apparently benefited and befitted successful professional and business men was not a necessity for Marion. She had full, sensual breasts that bounced when she danced uninhibitedly and set males to watch, feverish to touch. Her waist was wider than she wished but pleasurably stimulating for the way it dipped to her suggestive hips and thighs, though her legs were somewhat muscular from her enjoyment of physical activity.

Marion was competition despite one's notion of the imperfect body. Marion left Maine to attend school in Boston. From school to Warren to Giselle was unforeseen as were the consequences.

Giselle found Marion in 1934, on a return trip to the United States, her native country which Giselle abhorred. Her aversion became delight when introduced to Marion who realized her attraction to Giselle and abandoned her hesitance despite the restraint of a commitment. Now, just out of college in 1935, she traveled to Aix to rejoin Giselle who had gone on before. Marion carried with her Giselle's first letter.

Knowing you those first months in Boston, helped me to this wonderful joy of heart, my own! The times we spent together. I loved you so much...

[Eventually, Giselle and Marion quarrel, for Marion is jealous of Giselle's devotion to art. Marion believes she does not receive enough attention.]

Giselle was unforgiving and mumbled to herself or spoke to the house that Marion was jealous, that there was something wrong with her, that she was having a nervous breakdown because she could not adjust to French life or to the way of living upon which she and Marion settled. Crossly she decided to write Warren and ask him to take her back, or at least back to the United States...

The first time he read through the letter he forced a loud, "Ha! Haaah," with a joyful slap at his thigh for their conflict and Marion's distress. After reading again, he felt contempt until another and faster perusal for particular sentences and words aroused the love and happiness he remembered. He would rescue Marion who would gladly relinquish herself to his care...[and his friend Dr. Aaron Lobel] would tell him her aberration was pseudo, therefore, if not curable, at least manageable so she could marry, appear to live normally, have children who would help her to

overcome past ostracism. Of course, what he denied, was justification for himself. Nor did he admit the depth of his condemnation of Giselle and Marion. He wanted, would have his revenge.

[Marion and Warren seem to accept one another. Eventually Marion relents and consults with Aaron, then meets his wife Jocelyn, a concert singer, who becomes one of Marion's close friends. Marion returns to a small town college in Maine where with difficulty she becomes one of the leaders. In the meantime, there is a flashback to the meeting between Aaron and Jocelyn.]

Jocelyn looked down on the Charles River from her third floor room, staring at the cold-appearing water. People strolled along the Esplanade, women in their long, close-fitting dresses and their broad-brimmed hats demurely or provocatively shading their faces. How often Jocelyn walked there and how often she lay in the grass, reading or watching the people, listening to the barking of the dogs or to the water.

She turned away, breathed deeply, left the room, and walked down the flight of stairs and to the sitting room. She began to feel faint, breathed deeply again, and walked in.

"I've been holding tea for you."

Jocelyn stared at her mother.

"What's wrong?"

She went toward her mother, trying to hide her fright, the slight shaking, then stopped before the imperious woman.

"Sit down, will you? I hate when you look so dramatic. You're not a diva yet."

Jocelyn straightened herself. "I'm pregnant." She tried hard to assume her mother's impassive face.

Startled, her mother's hands began to tremble. "What

are you talking about?" Her voice rose as she began to lose her usual composure, her face pale, then hardening in the bright redness of dismay and disbelief and then outrage.

Jocelyn, shivering, sat, and began to cry. Her remorse was not so much for herself as for her mother and father, perhaps even for the family. She had defied her parents. She glanced at her mother.

"It's true." It seemed a senseless thing to say.

"That immigrant. How could you?" She rose, looked to assure herself of a closed door, started for Jocelyn, stopped, and in a frightening sound Jocelyn had never before heard nor thought capable of her mother, she spurt ferociously, "Slut."

Stung, Jocelyn turned away. She forced herself to rise and to face her mother, stood close to her, slightly taller, their blue eyes taunting one another, "I am not. I love him."

"What kind of excuse is that?" Her mother started to raise her hand, stopped. "Our name. Everything. Everything we've given you." Her eyes watered in disbelief. "Always allowing you..." she seemed to be searching, "freedom." Her voice broke, recovered began again, low, menacingly. "You've had your share now." She tried to hold back but pain and despair would not permit her. "Slut." The vicious stab paralyzed Jocelyn. Recovering, she slowly reached for her mother.

Mrs. Ferrand moved back. Weeping now, she tried through tears to see her daughter she loved so deeply, but Jocelyn remained blurred. "Not you."

Jocelyn moved closer, their bodies slightly touching.

"Don't. I don't want you to touch me." She returned to her chair. "Your father." Her voice was soft. The incredulity and outrage rose again. "Get out of here."

"We'll marry." It was threat and hope. Jocelyn started to regain her courage.

"Get out," her mother breathed fiercely.

Jocelyn walked slowly from the room, shaking, glanc-

ing at the high ornate ceiling, the walnut of the wainscot, as though she were never to see the room again.

In her room, she stood by the window, watching the water. A reflection of suicide beguiled her. She stared at the choppy blackness, crying.

Late in the afternoon she left the house and walked rapidly across the Public Garden and the Common. Out of breath, she sat on a bench looking up at the gold dome of the State House under which she lived for so long, taking for granted it belonged to her, to her family, and everyone they knew. She looked away and at the ground, wanting to cry, but she would not. She heard the angry banging of doors by her father, imagined the fury in the privacy of his bedroom.

The air was warm. She wiped at her forehead with an embroidered handkerchief. As she rose from the bench, unaware, the handkerchief dropped.

She hurried in the direction of Scollay Square, fearful of being seen, and finally came to the candy store.

The dim light annoyed her. "Aaron." Her voice rose crossly. "Aaron."

He came from a back room and stood behind the glass counter. "What are you doing here?"

"Can we go in back?" She appeared forcibly controlled.

"You shouldn't be here." It was a warning and an admonition.

Not caring whether she hid her temper, she answered quickly, "Don't tell me what I should and shouldn't do."

It was darker in the storeroom. She could barely see his face. She looked at him more intently. "I'm having a baby."

He didn't answer.

"We're having a baby," hurled in exasperation, not quite in desperation. "Did you hear me?"

It was Saturday, and he took her through the market.

"I want to see it all. I want you to take me everywhere in the city I could never go." Her excitement weakened his doubt. He felt protective, in control of their lives.

They were below the court houses, below the gold-wrapped Bullfinch dome, below the church yard where venal Ben Franklin's parents lie, twelve satanic minutes from where the witches roamed and the elders persecuted Hester, from where laborers transformed the cow lanes into narrow brick streets, below these, sloping down, flattening out to the tenements by the river and stretching to the waterfront-there was their Boston. There was their Boston in the impoverished shrill voices hawking newspapers and groceries, where maids came to touch the hands of street workers, a moment of rest, until they returned to their work of keeping the sweet breath of Boston pure in the enviable large homes leaning upward.

But down below, the odors, the crowds and the noises were distinctive, peculiar and exciting where Aaron and Jocelyn weaved among maids and carriages or car drivers and sometimes stumbled on the cobble stone streets lined with carts. Though she was apprehensive, Jocelyn told Aaron, "I love it." He smiled and gently pulled her forward among the stalls of sweet-sour and spice of groceries and meats.

There were women in kitchen dresses bending over windowsills, shouting in foreign languages above the clamor of the streets below to the dirty children running among carts and people.

There was a store where dried Italian meats hung in the window. Jocelyn stopped at the door, breathing deeply of the aroma, and then, for no apparent reason, she looked up. In an apartment above the store, leaning out, enjoying the masses below her, was a young, quite beautiful young woman with white skin and very black hair, a petal.

"She doesn't belong there." Jocelyn started to raise her

hand. The young woman smiled, acknowledging her admirer, and Jocelyn finished her wave. There were times much later when Jocelyn would think or talk of her.

They shoved past the throng and away from the carts and began walking up a hill, rising above the noise, up a narrow street lined with old brick buildings that lean against one another to prevent themselves from falling completely. Dark was coming. She became apprehensive again. She began to ask whether it was safe, and he laughed, knowing what she would have said, what she thought.

"I've lived in places like this all my life." For a moment he was proud.

He embarrassed her. "I know," she answered barely audibly.

"You're ashamed." The familiarity of the streets faded into an image of her home.

"No. Yes." She put her hand on his arm. "Be patient. I'm not like that."

"You are. Why be ashamed?" And he said what he thought he could always keep from her. "I'm ashamed. I hate it. Look at me, at these clothes. You're one of those women who walk along the Esplanade. You're one of them. I don't even know how you let me near you."

"Stop it. You think rich or poor women are any different from men when it comes to that? Look at me. I cover myself with these fine clothes; you take them off, I take them off, what's the difference, and suddenly I'm dirty. What have you got to be ashamed of?" Her self-pity embittered her, because she was not as ready as she feigned to renounce her family or comfort for the rejection and poverty she feared. She walked away by herself and further up the hill.

Gas lights turned brighter. She looked into some of the houses trying to discover what was so different. A gust of wind blew down the street, lifted a scrap of old newspaper, the movement startling her.

"Aaron."

He ran to her. "It's nothing. It was the wind just now. I want to go to the top of the hill." Despite her ambivalence, at the moment of this brief wisp, it did not matter whether her family would miss her. It was too late. Her father avoided her. Her mother spoke briefly and curtly, once about arrangements being made, but more often than not, after as little conversation as possible, dismissed her. Shroud and cold enveloped Jocelyn's former shelter.

At the top of the hill was a walled space with a wrought iron gate entrance. The wind still blew, yet it was very quiet. She walked through the gate into an ancient cemetery, one spot undisturbed by the decay about it. She could see down to the bay and beyond to a tramp steamer against the red-yellow and deep blue sky, moving slowly toward its berth, and she heard its faint whistle.

As they watched the sky metamorphose into its deeper darkness, she took his arm, led him among the stained white or crumbling slate markers, questioning the silent force directing them.

Starting from the cemetery in the dullness and shadows of the gaslights, she began to feel the isolation of the alien, the loneliness.

"I feel hollow, despite the child in me. I don't want it." She was wretched. Quickly she added, however, "I didn't mean that."

Aaron remained silent.

"You think I want to kill it."

"Yes." Perhaps he wished she would. He did not know. Were that to happen, he would lose twice, she and the child.

"That's despicable. I couldn't. I can't. How would I? I told you I believe in my priests." An image of witches and potions flicked through her mind. She had heard the whisperings of dead children and the contortions of painfully hemorrhaging women.

"Stop." He wanted to tell her not to lie but did not want to upset her more.

She ignored him, "But I don't feel guilty," Aaron heard though she spoke to her images. "That's part of the strangeness. And I don't know how to give up everything. Can you understand?" Then to Aaron alone. "It has nothing to do with you."

"But it does."

His somber reply made her suddenly aware of his sensitivity. He also gave her little time to think of what she had said.

"It does," he repeated. " And I do know. I know what it is to leave the only place you have known, even if it was dirt and a wooden hut. When they packed, I objected, struggled with my father. He had to throw me into the cart. My mother cried. My father's face. You don't ever forget things like that." He looked at her. "There isn't really that much difference. The same thing's happening to you."

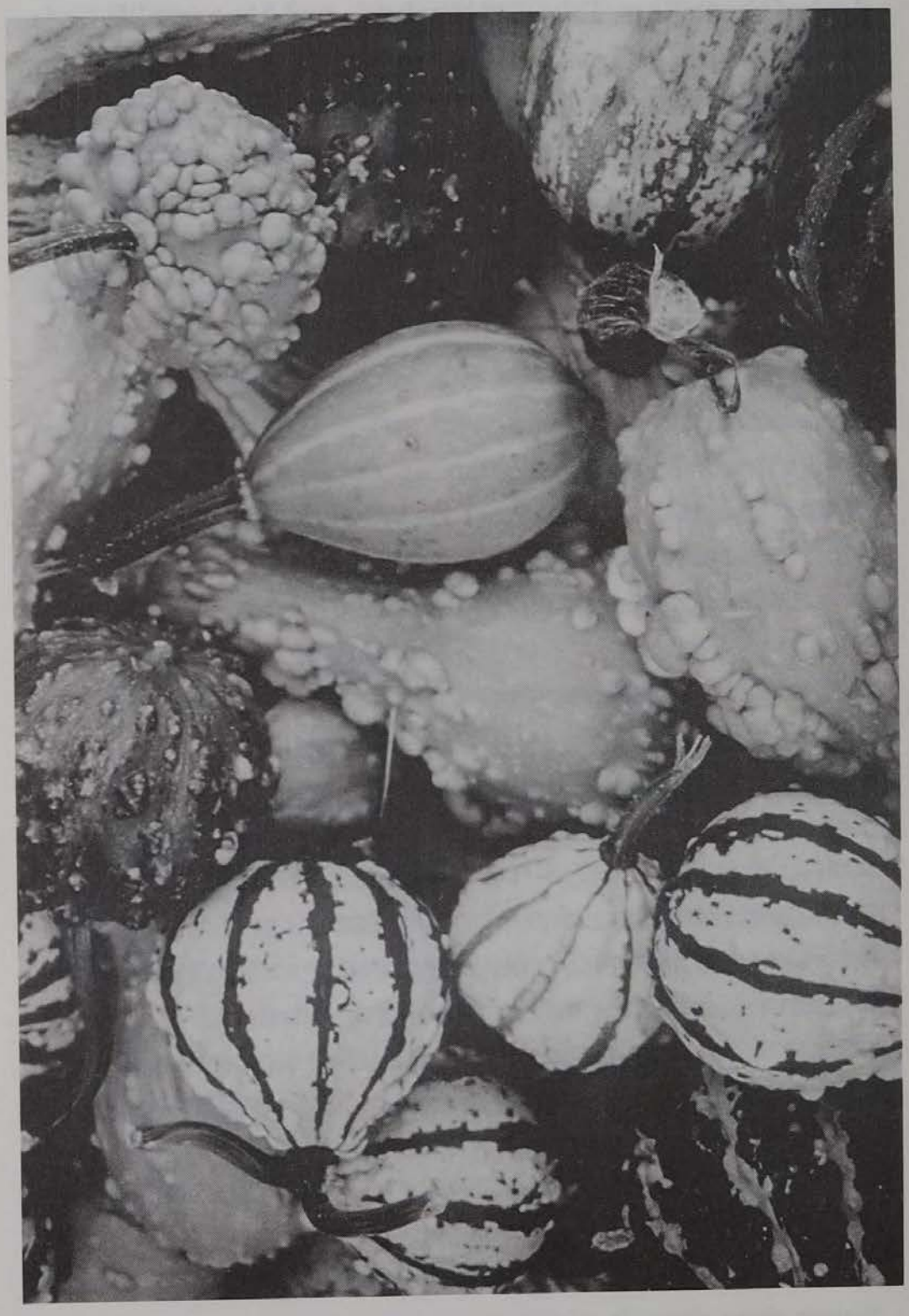
"I'm sorry." She was uncertain whether she apologized for herself or to him.

They walked until he was sure the Sabbath had ended and then led her into the deep well of the West End.

She hesitated at the door, but he took her arm, gently pulling her along the hallway, as they became wavering shadows from the dim yellow gas flicker. Later, after the fearful noises of the many children and the raucous blending of languages and the calming effect of the strong tea, the women settled into their tentativeness and suspicion. Neither was weak, shown in Jocelyn's determination to conquer the alienation she felt, in Aaron' s mother her decision to defy her husband; for despite her religion, she could not deny her oldest son. The mother and young woman wavered before one another, yet appeared unmovable, though each would surrender to the other but knew not what. Aaron and Jocelyn left the shadows of the room and walked out into night hid-

ing the poverty of the West End.

[After the story follows the Lobels through their beginning triumphs and conflicts, the narrative turns to the president of the college, Edmond Worfield, and his early life and then marriage to Lisa Worfield. It is this college to which Marion has come in Cheshireville, Maine. The lives of the Lobels, Marion, and the Worfields intermingle and bring to the fore the major theme: that persons either sustain or destroy themselves by self-indulgence or commitment to social benefit.] ❧



— Ann Rackliff

Rick Doyle

A Memory

A woman in a ranch house cries.
It is summer. It is early
In the Cold War and the day.
The breakfast table, only half cleared,
Is the only thing that separates her
From a hand paint-spattered and raised.
Her dark head lifts, unsilenced, unassuaged.

Summoned like a sleepwalker
From illuminated dreams
To a blinkered waking state,
Baffled in the racket of cicadas,
You want her to explain, but not until
Too late, the man having been gone

A quarter century, now, the woman
Having attained half your age.

Nancy Nichols-Pethick

Threesome
a poem for the primary colors

First we find
yellow

and blue, swing-
dancing at 2 a.m.
in the Jungle Room, cool
music jazzing their emerald shoes.
Then later, blue

and red, late rising
on a rainy day, tea
in the teapot, a bouquet
of tangled violets
on the eyelet
tablecloth. Finally, red

and yellow revving
up the engine of
their union down
on Lover's Lane. Each kiss
throws a bright spark
like a lit match up
past the cool green tips
of trees, to burn
in the purple sky.

Lindsey Glasheen

redsugarcandyrain

red and round
on a stick
children find
and they will lick

on a stick
candy sits
the children lick
the sugar fix

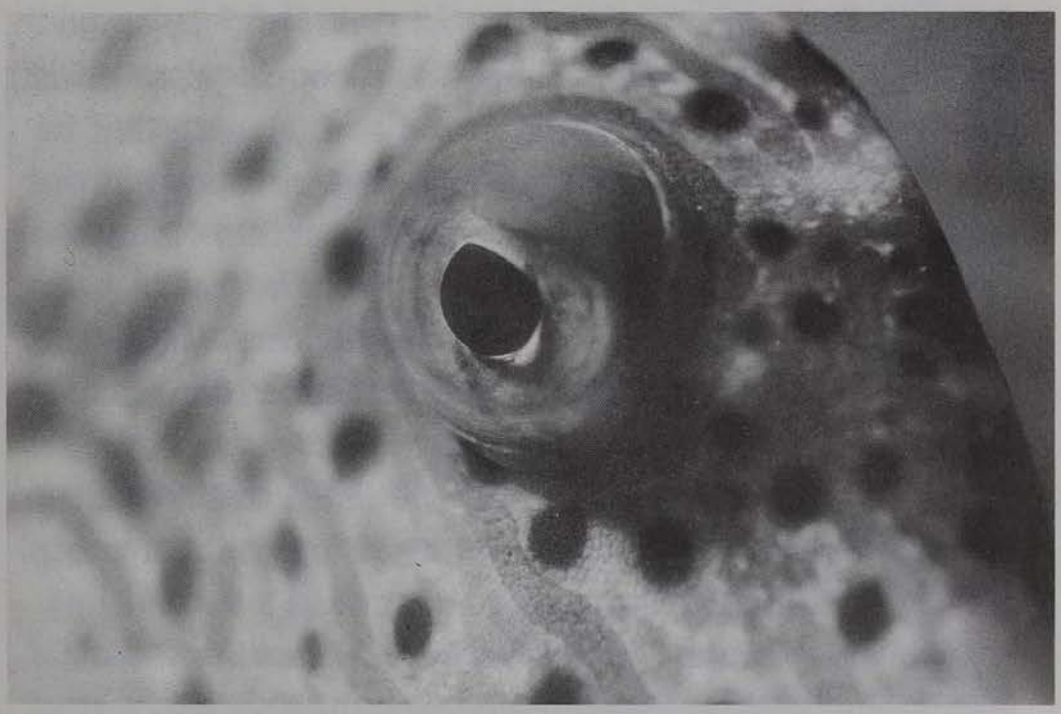
candy sits
and glows like gems
the sugar fix
energy sends

glows like gems
hyper gain
energy sends
to the brain

hyper gain
the children find
to the brain
red and round



— Karen Stonebridge



— Patrick McArthur

Robert Juckett

Atlantic City

I don't remember the drive from Philadelphia to Atlantic City, but I remember arriving. It was sunny and my second cousins were there too. Michael was a couple years older than I was and he was snotty-nosed and whining that he wanted his goggles. His blond hair was crew-cut and he didn't seem to have good control of his mouth. He talked funny.

We were still on the street next to the cars. Maybe the ride had been too long for him. I liked his sister, Jane, much more. She was my age at the time, about seven or eight. Michael's mother was in no mood to listen to his wailing and she told him to be quiet. He started to cry. I remember thinking that I was being good and he wasn't.

We were second cousins because Michael and Jane's grandfather and my grandmother were brother and sister. They were staying at a red-brick hotel (that's where we were parked) and we were staying at the Morton, which I thought was terrific because it had an indoor pool. Our grandparents were with us, so it must have been wonderful for my mother, being in Atlantic City on vacation with her parents, her cousin, her uncle and aunt, and the kids. My father drove the car.

This was 1958 or '59, in the days when Atlantic City was surviving on its history and going down fast. The casinos hadn't appeared. Things weren't bad enough yet. Families like ours still came and stayed in the hotels and spent money. We had two rooms at the Morton, one for my grandparents and one for us: my parents, me, my four-year-old sister, and my six-month-old sister. In the red-brick hotel were my grandmother's brother, Uncle Gene, his wife, their daughter Anne and her husband, and Michael and Jane. In

our hotel the tagalongs were my father and grandfather. I don't recall much about Dad at that time. I guess it's because I was so excited about seeing my grandparents. Since my mother was an only child, my sisters and I were the only grandchildren. I can imagine that my mother and grandmother were caught up with their relatives in the other hotel, so that left Dad and Papa to take up the slack with my sister and me.

Days were hectic. We went to the beach. Atlantic City has always had great beaches, wide and long. The beach umbrella was raised, chairs set out, suntan lotion slathered on us kids, and someone would take us down to the water, probably Dad or Papa. Mother and Mom stayed in the shade with the baby. I wonder if my parents ever got the opportunity to go into the surf together. I don't think they did. Dad couldn't stand the beach, with sand in everything, no escape from the August sun or the crowds.

I liked to dig. It was more fun playing at the water's edge than in it. I had light blue swimming trunks. Papa sat nearby, his shoes and socks off, long pants rolled up to the calf, the long sleeves of his shirt rolled to the elbows; he'd smoke a Lucky and squint down at me. "You should go in the water and cool off a little bit, Rob. You can't get overheated."

"I have to finish my hole, Papa. Anyway, I'm not hot."

My sister was usually nearby. She tanned more easily than I did. "Let's go jump over the waves," she suggested. That would bring Papa to his feet and he waded in behind us, but it wasn't a risky game. I had learned that if I jumped waves with her, she would dig with me. Two more hands made a big difference. I sat in the inches-deep water and felt the waves hollow out the sand beneath my legs. A tiny silver fish suddenly flipped across my thigh. "Papa! Look, a fish!" It was gone in the receding foam. I realized the ocean was alive. "Did you see that, Papa?"

"A little one?"

"Yeah."

"That's okay. It's not dangerous."

I hadn't thought it was.

My father walked down to where we were digging again and said, "Why don't you two go in the water and rinse off. We're gonna go back to the hotel pretty soon." He wore swimming trunks and a beach shirt. Dad burned easily.

"Are you going in the water, Daddy?"

"Okay, we'll go together." He didn't remove the shirt, but waded in knee-deep and my sister clung to him. I stood and splashed and watched as Dad picked her up and turned to me. "Ready? You get all the sand off?"

"Yeah." I jumped up as the waves came in, rolling foam, and let them carry me closer to shore.

Dad and my sister splashed free of the water and I watched them begin to walk up over smooth brownish sand toward the umbrella. Papa watched me. Then I saw my mother coming down the beach toward the water. I waved but I could tell that she didn't see me. She didn't know where to look. She was walking toward Papa. I think I was standing in water no higher than my knees. She was wearing her white bathing suit. Whoosh! I was under. My hands hit the sand but the force of a wave pushed me around and kept me from gaining my feet. It happened so fast. I wasn't afraid. My hands couldn't find the bottom but my knees did. That was enough for me to push myself up. I had salt water in my mouth and in my eyes. I was still of the age when I didn't like to go under the water. I found myself standing, slightly lost, looking in the wrong direction.

"Rob! Rob!" Papa's voice turned me. I saw him and my mother. They were laughing not twenty yards from me. "Wow! That was a big one!" my mother said.

"A lot of people got knocked down with that one." Papa splashed in and took my hand. "Are you okay? Did you hit your head?"

"No. I hit my knees."

Walking back to the hotel Papa told me I was a good boy for not crying when the wave knocked me down. He got such a kick out of it. I didn't care. I was already looking forward to what we would do for the rest of the day . . . eat dinner and then go to the show? The Morton provided some entertainment early in the evening and we had gone the night before. There was magic and singing and audience participation bits. Or we could go to the Boardwalk. That was the best. Of course, my mother was simply looking forward to relaxing in the hotel for a while.

"The baby needs a nap," she announced. "And you can rest before we get dressed." That was not very appealing, but we were just kids. Maybe it would be okay. The excitement of staying in a hotel had not worn off. I think Mom and Papa needed a nap, too.

Dad and Papa wore open shirts, creased trousers, and leather shoes. This just confirmed that we were doing something special, something different. Dad always wore a tie and a suit coat. He dressed like that for work and he dressed like that when we went out back at home. But now we were going out in Atlantic City and he had no tie, no jacket. This was special; this was vacation. I liked it.

Mother and Mom wore dresses, printed things, colorful, sleeveless maybe. But they didn't wear high heels. Mother said they were "deadly on the boards." My sister was all excited about getting dressed. She had a dress and patent leather shoes with straps over ankles socks that had lacy trim around the tops. My mother dressed me. "Those gray pants, your brown shoes, and your new shirt."

"What shirt?" I was unaware.

"The one with the red and blue triangles."

"Oh." I didn't like that shirt. It had too many things on it.

We had a stroller for the baby. Mom pushed it.

The Boardwalk was absolutely wonderful. But it was a lot of walking. There were ramps from the street up onto the

boards and Mom asked me to help her push the stroller up. "You're a good strong boy," she said.

"But watch out for them waves," Papa said. I was getting tired of the wave talk.

Everybody went to the Boardwalk in the evening. It was so wide and the wheels of the baby's stroller clickity-clacked along in front of Mom. Mother and Dad walked together and Papa walked beside Mom. My sister and I ran ahead. "Don't go too far," Dad said.

"Are we going to the ice cream place?" I asked.

"Yes, we'll go there if you're good."

Some people rode in big wicker carts with two seats facing each other and a man behind pushing. There were so many lights on the shop fronts and restaurants, hotels, bars, and of course, the piers. The Steel Pier was the big entertainment area. They had shows and they had the Diving Horse. The amusement pier was the one that interested me. They had rides and games. I saw the salt water taffy shop and we rushed over to the big display window. There it was, the machine kneading a huge glob of taffy. Everybody stopped to watch. They had all the colors, white pink yellow green, each one a different flavor. Nothing was as good as a mouthful of salt water taffy.

And the smell of popcorn was always in the air, mixing sometimes with the smell of roasted peanuts, especially when we approached the big Mister Peanut above the Planter's place. Some places had hot dogs, but we had eaten "a good dinner at the hotel," so I never expected to get one. They smelled really good though.

We never really indulged. We looked. We never went all out. Maybe money was an issue, but this was vacation. There were some things we did. I saw the Diving Horse. There was some sort of show I sat through, I remember. And finally the loudspeaker announced the finale. We were sitting in high bleachers, looking down at a relatively small area of open water. The horse was a dirty gray and a woman in a tank

suit was riding him. I had expected the horse to jump, but he didn't. He slid down a chute at the top of a high platform and then fell free, landing in the dark ocean water below with a tremendous splash. The show was in the evening. I remember seeing the woman jump clear at the last moment and then the water shot up and the ocean breeze caught it and blew it straight toward us. It hit my face, cool and salty, the crowd cheering. We were surprised by the mist that fell on us. But basically I was disappointed. The horse wasn't as nice as the horse on the marquee and the woman wasn't as pretty as advertised. But at least we did it and I remember getting wet.

Mom stopped pushing the stroller in front of the "nut house" as Papa called it. The smell was overpowering. I saw people eating peanuts from little white paper bags. It was okay to drop peanut shells on the boards. Pigeons were all over the place here. My sister picked up discarded peanut shells and tossed them and the birds swooped in, pecked, and walked off. That looked like fun so I tried it.

"Don't touch them things," Papa warned. "They're dirty. Now don't put your fingers in your mouth."

"There they are!" Mom said, and I turned. Uncle Gene and Aunt Regina were here. And Jane and her mother. The adults talked. Jane came over to me. "Hi," she said.

"Hi. Where's Mike?"

"He went someplace with my father. I don't know where."

It was hard for me to believe that she didn't know where her father and brother had gone. Jane had blond hair; we had red hair. "Where were you?" I asked.

"We ate dinner in a restaurant and Grampa and Gramma had to go back to the hotel before we came to the Boardwalk."

Grampa? Gramma? Is that what she called Uncle Gene and Aunt Regina? How come she didn't say Papa and Mom like we did? I heard my mother say the terrible words "It's getting late," and I thought, "Oh, no . . ." But we all started

walking farther along toward the ice cream place. I looked in the stroller. My sister was awake, wide-eyed, looking around. That made me feel good. I liked it when the baby was awake.

" . . . and splash! Down he went!" I heard Papa telling the wave story to Uncle Gene. I hurried ahead before the adults started teasing me about it. "Hey, Jane, what kind of ice cream are you gonna get?"

"Peach. It's a wonderful summertime fruit."

"What?" I knew she'd heard that from an adult. Why was she trying to talk like an adult? I waited, but she didn't ask me what kind I wanted. How come?

When we finally arrived, Papa and Uncle Gene took the orders. My father had butter pecan and my mother ordered cherry. I watched as Papa handed it to her, but it wasn't red or pink as I had expected. It was white with pieces of dark red cherries in it. I didn't want that. I went by color. "What's that green?" I asked.

"Pistachio," Dad said.

"I want that."

"Really?" He said it as if I was making a big mistake.

"Yeah, I want the green."

It tasted pretty good.

"What are you having, Daddy?" my mother asked Papa.

"I'll have that banana."

"Daddy!"

"I'll have that banana."

It was yellow and I watched him taste it. "Is that good, Papa?" I asked.

"Yep. You have to get it when you can."

I didn't know what he meant by that, but I remember thinking that I wanted to try banana next time.

In the morning it was raining. It seemed so strange to look out the hotel room window and see an overcast, graywhite sky rather than bright sunshine.

"Hey, Mommy, what are we gonna do?"

She sighed, not trying to hide it, and said, "I don't know. Maybe we'll go for a ride."

"Can I ride with Papa?"

"We'll see. Mom and Papa might stay here."

"Where are we going?"

"Maybe Cape May."

"Cape May. Where's that?"

"Not far. It's a place like Atlantic City only smaller."

"Oh." That didn't sound too good to me.

We had breakfast downstairs and the dining room was more crowded than usual. I didn't like eating breakfast there. They didn't have cereal. I had to have eggs and bacon and fruit cocktail that had too many pieces of grapefruit in it.

There must have been a conference among the adults because when we'd finished eating my father took me aside and said, "Would you like to stay here with Papa while we go to Cape May?"

"Just me and Papa?"

"Yep. Mom will go with us in the car. We'll be back this afternoon. Papa has something planned for you. But you don't have to stay."

"I want to. I'll stay." Papa had something planned. Magic words.

Dad brought the car around and we waited under the Morton's front canopy, watching the rain but staying dry on the protected section of sidewalk. They all got in and we waved and Papa said, "You can get your bathing suit on and we'll go to the pool."

"Okay!"

"And then we'll try out that snack bar. Maybe they have chocolate malteds."

There were some other kids in the pool but I didn't play with them. There was a lifeguard who sat at the edge with her feet dangling in the water. She had a whistle but she didn't blow it. Papa sat at the counter of the snack bar and

smoked his Luckies. I saw him get up and walk toward the lobby and when he came back he said that it had stopped raining and would I like to get out and change and go somewhere?

"Where are we goin'?"

"Oh, someplace nice, I think."

We went up to the room and I put on my dungarees and sneakers and Papa combed my hair. Before we left the hotel we had the chocolate malted milkshakes and I felt good.

Wow, it was hot outside! The sun was shining and the streets and sidewalks were almost dry. There were still a lot of puddles though and I was sweating as we walked toward the Boardwalk. "We used to come to Atlantic City on the train," Papa said. "The D&H gave me some free passes and we'd come down here from Scranton with your mother."

"When Mommy was little?"

"Yep. We stayed in a hotel and walked along the Boardwalk just like now. But things were different. You know that, don't you?"

"I guess."

"Nice people came here and it was classy."

"What's classy?"

"Oh, you wouldn't understand that."

"Yes, I would."

"Well, not as many coloreds."

"Oh."

"Here we are!" He led the way up the ramp to the Boardwalk. There were not nearly as many people as at night. I ran across to the ocean side and looked down.

"Nobody's on the beach, Papa."

"That's okay. Come on. We'll find a way down to the sand."

"But we can't go swimming. I don't have my bathing suit on."

"We'll be okay."

A lot of places on the Boardwalk weren't open like they

were at night, but the little tram cars, three or four coupled together in a line, were operating. We passed the Steel Pier and the nut house and Papa found some steps leading down to the beach. We went down and started walking along where the loose, dry sand flattened out to a firm but dry surface. "This is the high water mark," Papa said.

We approached another pier, stretching across the beach to the water. Many many tall, thick posts supported it and it was dark underneath. The posts were wood and had seaweed and small, black shells clinging to them on the lower parts where I could touch.

"Don't put your hands on them," Papa said. "They're dirty and there's bugs and nails."

Now I was interested. "How come they're only on the bottom? There's none up there," I said, pointing higher on the pilings.

"They only grow where the water covers them."

"There's no water here."

"Not now there isn't."

"Huh?"

"The tide comes in and the water gets deeper." Papa looked up at the black underside of the pier. "I'll show you. Come on."

We walked into the sunshine on the far side of the pier. "This is good right here," Papa said. He walked around looking down until he found a piece of driftwood, a stick, and then he looked at me. "Okay, let's walk down here a little ways," and we walked a few yards closer to the water, which was still quite a ways out. "You know the fat man?" he asked.

"Who?"

"The fat man. Here, look at this." He bent down and began to draw what looked to me like a huge circle on the smooth, firm sand. I watched as he walked backward, completing the circle, then added legs and feet, arms and hands, and finally the head, with a smiling face and big eyes. "There we are." He stood up, slightly out of breath. "The fat man.

We'll see him better from up above. Let's go."

A little farther along the beach some steps led up to the Boardwalk and we circled around until we could look down. Now I saw the fat man, clearly outlined on the gray-brown sand.

"There he is," Papa said as he lit a smoke. "We'll see if he's still there in a little while."

"He will be."

"We'll see."

Even though the rain had stopped and the sun was out and hot, there was a breeze off the ocean. I watched as Papa smoked and the white puffs rose into the air and disappeared. One of the electric trams passed behind us with a loudspeaker.

" . . . leading song and dance man . . . celebrated performer of stage and screen, Donald O'Connor. Eight o'clock tonight at the Steel Pier. Three days only. Donald O'Connor . . . entertainment for the entire family . . ."

"Your mother wants to see him," Papa said.

"Who is he?" I asked.

"A hoofer." The cigarette butt dropped to the sand and Papa turned to me. He put his hand in his pocket. I heard him jingling coins and he was grinning. "You know what pier this is here above the fat man?"

"The pier with the games?" I knew I was right.

"Yep," and he pulled his hand from his pocket to show me the quarters. "We have to get rid of some of these. Too heavy in my pocket."

"Okay!"

The amusement pier was doing pretty good business that day. There were so few people on the beach. We walked along, past the rides for little kids, the merry-go-round and boats that went around in a circle in real water. On the left side were games of skill. Throwing darts at balloons and shooting BB guns at targets. I walked over to see.

"You don't want to play them things," Papa said.

Next to the BB guns a small crowd of people had gathered. I saw three or four sailors in their white uniforms and they were laughing with some women. The women had their arms linked with the sailors' arms and they were watching another sailor throw balls.

"What's that?" I asked.

"Let's see," Papa led me into the crowd.

I got a look at the sailor who was throwing. He was trying to knock down some white bottles that were stacked up 3,2,1, and he was missing.

"Ha! Charlie, you couldn't hit the side of a barn!" one of the other sailors said.

"I'm just gettin' the feel of it," Charlie said.

A man with a big mustache handed him three baseballs. "Take your time now. Win something for your girl there."

The sailors and the girls were all laughing and teasing Charlie.

"What do you think of this, Rob?" Papa asked.

"Oh . . . I don't know . . ."

Charlie threw the balls but he couldn't hit the bottles. Every time he missed the other sailors laughed. With his last ball he knocked the top bottle from one of the three stacks and another man appeared from the rear and replaced it.

"Well . . . there's a pair of them in it," Papa mumbled to himself. And then he stepped forward and said in a loud voice, "Here we go! I've got a boy here who can do that."

"Okay!" the mustachioed man said. "Twenty-five cents, three balls. Plenty of prizes. Knock down the milk bottles. Plenty of prizes!"

"Oh, look," one of the girls said. "This boy's gonna try it. Watch this kid, Charlie!"

Papa did it so fast I had no chance to object. He put a quarter down and the crowd moved back a little bit. I looked at Papa.

"Go ahead, Rob. You can do this. Michael's father took him here last night and he didn't win nothing. We'll show them how to do it."

So, that's where they went last night, I thought. I looked at the display of prizes that hung from the sides of the booth. There were stuffed animals and pennants. Some of the stuffed animals were bigger than others.

"Here ya are, sonny." The man held three balls in one hand and placed them on the flat-topped barrier in front of me. I picked one up.

"Go ahead, Rob. Show these guys."

Maybe twenty-five feet away were three small tables and on top of each one stood a stack of six bottles. The ball felt soft in my hand, too soft, like a very cheap, imitation baseball. I had a real baseball at home. My father bought it for me. We both had baseball gloves and mine was a Rocky Colovito model. I liked that glove a lot and we threw the ball to each other in the back yard. He threw me pop-ups and ground balls and I threw back to him on a straight line. Dad was trying to teach me to "Keep it down. Keep it down."

"If this kid does it . . ." a sailor joked.

I didn't like the feel of the ball but I knew the bottles weren't too far away. They didn't present much of a target though. I saw the man in the back of the booth watching from behind heavy curtains they'd hung there.

"Fling it, Rob."

The girls were laughing again.

I aimed at the middle display of bottles, reared back, and threw. I was trying to hit the middle bottle on the bottom but I immediately sensed that I had "kept it down" too much. The ball didn't hit a milk bottle. It hit the narrow front edge of the little pedestal with a thud and all six bottles tumbled easily to the ground.

"Whoa!" the man with the mustache grinned at me. "A winner!"

"Ha ha! There it is, there it is!" The sailors shouted as if

they'd known what would happen.

I turned around to Papa and he was smiling and nodding his head.

"Oh, honey, you should play for the Yankees," one of the girls patted me on the back.

"Not the Yankees," I said, "The Phillies."

"Ya got a couple more balls there," the man said.

"We don't need them other balls," Papa announced. "We only needed one. Come on, Rob, let's take your prize."

I pointed to the pennants. "I'll take the green one."

"You don't want one 'a them animals?" Papa asked.

"They're for girls. I want that green pennant."

"That's right, honey," a girl said. "They're for girls, but I'm not gonna get one today, I guess."

The sailors hooted and laughed. "Hang your head, Charlie!"

"Come on, Rob," Papa took my arm. "You got your prize. We're all done here."

"I looked up at him. "Did you see that, Papa? Did you see?"

"You bet I did."

I held my pennant up above my head and the breeze pulled it straight out. The big white letters were easy to read – ATLANTIC CITY N.J. – and there was a blotchy image of waves and seagulls. We walked along the Boardwalk until we came to the salt water taffy store and Papa said, "Come on, let's go in. Mom would like to have some of this stuff. She likes to have a little sweet sometimes."

In the shop they had a small basket on the counter next to the cash register. It was full of the long pieces of taffy and a little sign said 3 for 10¢.

"Look at that, Papa."

"Go ahead."

I took a green one, a white one with pink stripes, and an orange one. As we walked out, Papa held the white paper bag with Mom's taffy and I showed him my three pieces.

"Which one do you want?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't want none of them. My teeth'll pop out!"

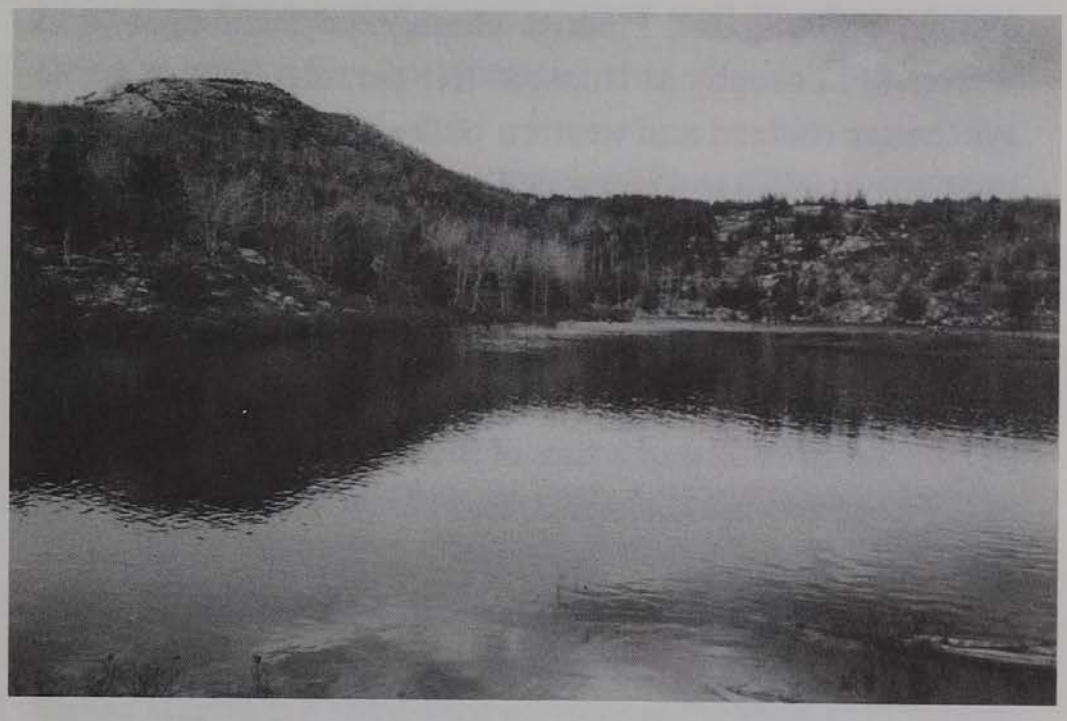
I had the green one first.

We walked back toward the amusement pier. "Well," Papa said, "Let's see how the fat man is doing. Then we'll go to the hotel and wait for them to get back."

As we approached the pier I hurried ahead and looked down over the railing. Papa sidled up beside me. Below us the sand was washed clear and the running foam pushed right up under the Boardwalk, then slid back before rushing in again.

"He's gone, Papa. The water came in."

"Yep. That's the way it works." ❧



— Lucas Martin

Contributors

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Richard Shain Cohen was head of the English Department at Husson in 1962 and editor of the *Husson Review: A Journal of Business and Liberal Arts*.

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Nancy Henry is an Assistant Attorney General with the State of Maine, handling child abuse and neglect cases. Writing is her first love and she is widely published in the small press, most recently in *Atlanta Review*, *Oxford Poetry*, *Penwood Review* and *The Church World*. Her chapbook *Brie Fly* was published in 2000 and reviewed in the *Maine Sunday Telegram* in November 2000.

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 25 years. She enjoys running and baseball.

Robert Juckett has been with the International Center for Language Studies (ICLS) since 1977 and has been interested in writing for some time.

J.T. Kenny is Dean of Science and Humanities at Husson. A historian and political scientist by training, he has long been interested in creative writing and has produced two novel-length manuscripts. In his spare time, he enjoys worrying, carping, and making psychic connections.

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

Lucas Martin is a third-year survivor of the Physical Therapy program from Bangor who exhibits and supports any form of creative expression.

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Nancy Nichols-Pethick, sister of Bob Nichols, has recently completed her MFA program at Indiana State University. She is a painter and poet.

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Ann Rackliff is a first-year Computer Information Systems major from Spruce Head. Her photographs will be published in an upcoming book by Twin Lights Publishing.

Born in Salt Lake City, **Leon Raikes** has also lived in Montana, Lebanon, and Michigan. He now resides in Steuben, Maine, and will never move again. An Associate Professor of English at Husson, his major interests include poetry, comparative religions, writing about nature or the wilderness, and birds. He lives with his wife Kim, now a Methodist minister, in Downeast Maine, and their youngest son Jessey (age 18). Leon and Kim have two other children: Mary, now a student at College of the Atlantic, and Nathan, residing in Colorado.

Elizabeth Ramirez has been an instructor with ICLS for the past seven years. Before that, she was an English instructor in Japan.

Meredith Roth is a student at Husson.

N. K. Steinhart was a contributor to the 1999 *Crosscut*, under the pen name Nikolas Kristophe. She was raised in the rural woods of Small Town, New England. There is no truth like the one you lie about. There is no place like the one you dream of. There is no hate like the one you run to. And there is no love like the one you hurt from. Discover thyself, and thy happy medium.

Karen Stonebridge, who has been teaching in the undergraduate Nursing program since 1992, enjoys living on the coast, and coastal scenes are the focus of her work in watercolor. She has been studying watercolor for the past year and finds a synchronicity in the practice of Tai Chi.

Michele Suber, a transfer student from Thomas University in Georgia, is a second- semester nursing student. She likes to write, camp, play guitar and hang out with her basset hound, Charlie.

Emily Swartz is a second-year Occupational Therapy student. She has been writing since a young age. She loves animals and wants someday to have a therapy dog.

Kathleen Wall has taught Anatomy and Physiology and related courses at Husson for 20 years. Besides the sciences, she enjoys many other activities that are more related to the arts. Some examples are writing, drawing, photography, and classical guitar. She speaks German and is studying Mandarin Chinese. Metal detecting and kayaking are high on her list of fun things to do. ❧

"Delaware River Morning" (1997 oil on canvas, 53



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