Spring 1983

The Lantern Vol. 49, No. 2, Spring 1983

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Authors
There is no other publication like the Lantern at Ursinus.

The Lantern, January 1944

Vol. XLIX, No. 2

Spring, 1983

A collection of poetry, prose, photography, and artwork composed for the Spring Term, 1983, by the students of Ursinus College.

The Lantern, the literary magazine of Ursinus College, symbolizes the light shed by creative work. It is named after the structure on Pfahler Hall, which has the architectural design not of a tower or spire, but of a lantern.
Time

Nothing can delay the future
And nothing can destroy the past
But we can stop the present
Hold it in our hands,
Ponder over its outcome,
And then,
Let it fly . . .
and become
Images of the past.

Lucinda Iezzi
The Lantern would like to thank Mr. Barnes, Mr. Broadbent, Gina Daviso, Dean March, Dr. Perreten, Mr. Rue, Michael Renninger, Dr. Snyder, Edward Stemmler and Dr. Wickersham for aid in the production of this special issue!
TABLE OF CONTENTS

"Very often, good writing may be pastel shadings of our thoughts, which, as they gradually take form, reveal to us a harmony of feeling so fragrant that it seems to gratify our senses without really arresting them."

The Lantern, December 1939

| The Phoenix                                      | Cover - Joanne Kohler |
| Time                                             | Frontispiece - Lucinda Iezzi |
| Computer Graphics                                | Dr. Martha C. Takats |
| House                                            | Marjorie L. Angstadt |
| The Lantern - 1933-1983                          | |
| Letter From First Editor                         | P.E. Eugene H. Miller |
| Untitled                                         | Joanne E. Kohler |
| The Battle                                       | Timothy B. Raithel |
| Lady Number 9                                    | Timothy S. Weible |
| Scene                                            | Marjorie L. Angstadt |
| Untitled                                         | Anonymous |
| That First Night                                 | C.L.F. |
| Boy                                              | Catherine R. Benedict |
| Wavering                                         | the pear |
| Untitled                                         | LDH |
| Untitled                                         | Anonymous |
| If I Dared                                       | Sara D. Seese |
| The Hack                                         | Christopher F. Godor |
| Dog                                              | Catherine R. Benedict |
| H₂O                                              | Timothy S. Weible |
| The Island                                       | Dorene M. Pasekoff |
| Library                                          | Timothy S. Weible |
| Photo                                            | Kevin L. Kunkle |
| Unicorns                                         | Sara D. Seese |
| Prisoner of Myrin                                | Walter S. Keehn |
| How The Universe Was Won                         | Jonathan A. Nigrine |
| On Success                                       | F.S.W. '83 |
| I, The Poet                                      | Timothy S. Weible |

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"In order to provide for the students of Ursinus College a medium of literary expression, the Faculty ordains the establishment of a literary journal which shall be published by an Executive Council under the style and title of the Lantern." Preamble of the Lantern Constitution

"For this we believe is one of the purposes of the Lantern . . . to be a medium by which creative work and individuality can receive just recognition." March 1940

"The whole point of the foregoing is to show that nothing I might say has not been said before, and probably better, by other editors. The history of the Lantern is there for the critics to look at. One editor boasted that it had lasted ten years. We thank our predecessors that it has lasted nigh onto twenty. With some hopes of another twenty, God willing." Fall 1951

The Origin:
"The Lantern, begun in May, 1933, was founded to provide a means of literary expression for Ursinus students." December 1934

"It was a twenty-four page number, bound in red, and bearing as cover design the symbol of the Science Hall Tower, for which the Lantern is named. Both are representative of the progressive attitude which promotes definite activity directed toward the desired goals—the new structure presenting facilities for more adequate scientific study and investigation, and the new publication offering wider possibilities for the development of literary expression and art." June 1934

"It occupies a unique position on the campus—that of fostering only literary interests. It affords the chance for making use of initiative and originality as no other campus publication does, in writing of things which you know most about." December 1934

On Survival:
"The outgoing members leave with regret, having been unable to see the fulfillment of their hopes, but with words of encouragement to those who carry on, hoping that the desired success may be realized in the near future . . . The present staff passes on the work, not with a feeling of accomplishment, nor with a sense of defeat, but rather with the conviction that all has not been in vain—that it has opened the way for achievement by laying the foundation for an activity that is worthy of perpetuation, which should—and shall be—enlarged and improved, until it becomes an integral part of Ursinus life, a tradition, an institution of our liberal arts college, equal in popularity and importance with the established publications, and one of unquestioned excellence." June 1934
"Once again a revised and partly new staff takes control of this magazine... but we do not assume our duties with any illusions. To make this magazine interesting and salable to the Ursinus student body is no easy job." May 1940

"The sudden and tragic materialization of the spectre of war has chilled our hearts. Tears and apprehension are natural results of such a shock, but we must control unreasonable hysteria. Our ultimate victory is sure. But it can be accomplished only by each individual's victory over himself." December 1941

"It is true, there is a war in progress—still, doing creative writing affords relief from nervous tension just as the reading of what others have written offers relaxation. The Lantern must become a stronger magazine than ever!" March 1943

"The war has written its story even on our pages... it struck a harder blow by calling most of the men on our staff into the armed forces... It is more important now than ever before that Ursinus should have a literary magazine. At no time are the finer aspects of life unessential, and now in a time of anxiety and sorrow, they are most urgently needed. The world and civilization will lie stunned and weak in the muck and mire left by the war. People's souls will be suffocating for light and beauty... This is why the Lantern must not die... We dedicate ourselves to the Lantern, remembering always that 'the pen is mightier than the sword.'" May 1943

"The Lantern received quite a thrill when it found that its circulation had been increased about one hundred per cent, and that it was to be perused by the critical eye of the United States Navy." June 1944

"Every time an issue of the Lantern appears, we are bombarded by wave upon wave of criticism." December 1953

"Our readers cried: 'Give us that we may read!' And we replied: 'It shall be.' And it came to pass that there was a renaissance, a rebirth of the Lantern. And we saw that it was good." March 1956

"The limp and nearly lifeless Lantern was resurrected this year by kind words from our friends and bold promises of financial success from our editor." December 1956

"Some time ago a staff of individuals of rather diverse interests and opinions was thrown together in an eleventh hour effort to save the Lantern. These people, two radicals, a conservative, a mystic, and a transatlantic were guaranteed enough freedom and money to experiment with a Really Big Issue. And, eyes alight with childish wonder and dollar signs, they began to do just that. The radicals proposed lead articles on the values of free love and marijuana. The conservatives countered with an issue devoted to the Republican Party, birth control, and a campaign to popularize..."
snuff. And the transatlantic suggested tea breaks and Teddy girls. All, however, seemed to agree on a change." 1960

"The Lantern has survived." May 1963

"This issue of the Lantern is composed entirely of selections from previous issues of at least four years ago. The quality of the material is good; the content, interesting; and all of it, produced by previous Ursinus students . . . someone will ask why this issue is a composite of the past . . . There was simply an inordinate lack of submissions. Therefore, in order to present a Lantern containing readable, intelligent, original, and uninsulting literature, we delved into the past. Good, bad, or mediocre, this Lantern is a reflection of past student interest and the present lack of interest. The best literature is yet to be written. WRITE IT." January 1965

"The Lantern, it seemed for a while, was to pass into oblivion, to just fade out of the Ursinus scene—due to who knows what. The staff points the finger at the student body, yelling 'Apathy!' in the most accusing manner. The would-be contributors shout back 'Poor organization!' and the magazine goes on gasping for life . . . We ran this contest in order to save the Lantern from a sure and impending death . . . So here you have a fine issue of the Lantern reborn—what happens now is, of course, up to you." January 1966

On Finances:

"Perhaps it will be surprising to most people to know that the first Lantern was financed with seven small advertisements and student subscriptions." December 1935

"Believe us, it is no fun putting out a magazine when you don't know where the next paragraph is coming from!" December 1937

"Certainly I'll stand by my college magazine! Christmas shopping has drained my purse, but I'll pay next semester. Enter my subscription at once for three issues at fifty cents." Advertisement, December 1937

"The financial situation . . . is of utmost concern to us of the staff, especially to our ad-seeking business managers who struggle in all variation of humility to secure nourishment for the dollar-consuming operation of publishing a magazine." December 1953

"The Lantern, so long the financial weak sister of the College, had fallen into bad days and was unable to even contemplate operation with only the dole of the Activities Fund. The accumulated back debt alone was more than the Lantern's entire year's endowment . . . If the Lantern were unable to operate at a profit this year, the College would discontinue its literary publication for good . . . Six months later, as we glance backward, the Lantern has operated completely in the black and has accumulated enough surplus to repay the five years debt in its entirety." May 1957
On Contributors:
“Everyone is cordially invited to submit a manuscript at any time.” December 1934

“The primary requisite is, of course, that there is real literary value in the articles accepted.” December 1936

“Even though the sheaf of articles submitted to the Lantern has grown steadily larger, imparting to us that coveted joy of every editor, the privilege of selection and rejection, still some of the best potential writers have remained among the missing.” March 1938

“Yet we feel and know that there is much fine writing drifting around that owes its origin to someone who thinks he or she has not been gifted with pen-painting ability… We know that when one writes he suddenly discovers that what he started out to say has become something else… we know that on our campus millions of words are written each year, and written in a form that easily can be rounded into final Lantern publications. Why not try it?” May 1939

“We hope that the new editors will be even more successful than we were in obtaining the support of the student body. Students of Ursinus, this is your magazine; this is the only outlet for your creative work.” April 1942

“The plea in past years has been this—give us more material. Since there were numerous contributions for this issue, my plea is—give us superior material.” December 1942

“Remember that we can print only what the student body writes for us.” January 1944

“Among our contributors this month, we find the name of Richard C. Wentzel who is at present serving his country in the United States Army. Although it is the policy of the Lantern to print only the work of present students, the staff agreed that an exception may be made during these abnormal times.” March 1944

“Our biggest problem this year has been that of obtaining suitable material for publication. This is the perennial problem for Lantern staffs… perhaps you’ve been appalled by the regularity with which the three column editorial has been appearing this year. We have hoped, before each issue, that there would be sufficient material to make it possible to get away with one column of editorial, but on each occasion we’ve been disappointed… Each editorial has contained a plea for the silent, the shy ones, to submit their material… The usual excuse is that ‘My comp isn’t good enough for the Lantern,’ but how can that excuse stand up when one sees what putrid stuff is occasionally printed?” 1952

“There are three classes of people who write and do not submit their work: those who are not interested to submit works, those
who are interested but do little more than revolve the consideration around in their well-intentioned minds, and those who have submitted one work, have had it rejected, and then lost all enthusiasm in the matter.” December 1953

“How often people wait until their senior year before placing a manuscript in the box at the desk in the Library, and, only then, find that they can write something that others want to read.” Fall 1954

“Having been vehemently called to task recently for neglecting to draw sufficiently from the untapped wealth about us, we licked our wounds and started digging around.” Spring 1957

“For the first time in several years the Lantern was not forced to take everything in order to fill space. The selections in this magazine are one-third of all that was submitted.” 1960

“The greatest literature has yet to be written. Write it!” December 1961

“This issue of the Lantern is smaller than the last; there were fewer worthy contributions. We know that you can do more, better. We also know that you damned well won’t.” Spring 1962

“We have included a novelette, and to do this have excluded a great deal of prose—to no one’s detriment.” May 1963

“The contributors are the Lantern, and as long as they exist so will the magazine.” January 1966

“What has the Lantern done for the campus? The Lantern has given the Ursinus campus a medium for literary expression . . . Each issue offers new opportunities for constructive criticism; each issue offers new opportunities for improvement on the past issue; each issue offers new opportunities to help make the Lantern what the campus wants it to be.” Spring 1955

Compiled by: Elizabeth M. Osciak  
Dorene M. Pasekoff  
Sara D. Seese
The Lantern was born in the Spring of 1933 when a group of students and faculty who were involved in editing the Weekly and the Ruby decided that although they were excellent publications they did not provide an outlet for creative writers in the student body.

The belief that there was an untapped reservoir of literary talent on campus was supported by the veritable flood of material submitted when the call went out for submission of manuscripts. The editor's main problem was choosing which of the many excellent stories and verse to publish.

With the inaugural issue ready for the press, the staff was in a position to go to the business community for advertising support. A mock-up in hand, the editors turned salesmen and sold the idea that even in the depth of the Depression such an excellent new publication was bound to achieve a wide circulation.

A basic question remained, the name of the new journal. A contest was held and of the many suggestions the Lantern, surmounting the recently completed Pfahler Hall (Fall, 1932), was chosen as a symbol of the light that not only illuminated the campus in the Spring of 1933 but would continue to project its wisdom into the future.

The celebration of its Golden Anniversary is proof that the Lantern has lived up to the promise envisioned in its title. As the first editor, I congratulate all those staff, contributors, and authors who have kept the flame alive for half a century. I'm confident that each new college generation will carry on the Lantern's tradition as the voice of the Ursinus literary community.

Eugene H. Miller '33
Professor of Political Science
Emeritus
Right or wrong?
A question asked millions of times daily—
both consciously and unconsciously—
From insignificant matters,
to things affecting our very existence . . .
What is Right?
Obviously, what is just, and fair,
and subjects others to no physical
or mental harm.
What is Wrong?
Necessarily, what is thoughtless,
and corrupt, and subjects oneself
to physical or mental harm.
Who can truly judge these two?
Is there one among us so daring
as to claim he holds the answer?
Concerning matters of considerable doubt,
Let only the one who is perfect judge.
On these, we must make our own
decisions, and hope that we
choose wisely.

Joanne E. Kohler
Marching along this hot and dusty road, I sometimes wondered if the cause of Southern independence was really right. Could the cause be worth so much human sacrifice? Yet my father is a true man of God and he is fully convinced that it is worth any cost, in spite of his disbelief in slavery. I must also be convinced of its righteousness and I must be willing to fight for its ultimate victory.

I would soon get my chance if the reports about Yank cavalry in Gettysburg were true. It had been passed down the line that Pettigrew's men never reached the shoes they so desperately needed and it was now up to our brigade and General Archer's brigade to get rid of those horse-riding devils. I was very excited over the possibility of meeting the enemy, however, most of the other soldiers seemed more interested in getting the shoes that our boys failed to get the other day. My father had provided all my equipment, even my Enfield, and our shortage of rations were supplemented by the Pennsylvania farmers. I had concluded that Pennsylvania farmers grew the best corn in the world, though it was a little green this time of season.

Yet a good many of our boys were still marching barefoot, so I understood their attitude. My friend, Jake, was no exception. He wore no shoes and, perhaps, was even more shocking and filthy than most of our other boys that I had seen since my arrival in late May. Jake was a nice sort of fellow in his own way, but he was a rather rough character who managed to intimidate most everyone that he met. While on the march, he would often give a harangue about the cowardly aspects of the Yank army. This time was no exception.

"Well, t'ain't gonna be no problem to whip them Yanks. Them boys done all the runnin' befo'. Ain't no call for 'em to stand up and get theirselves killed now."

"Are they really just going to run when they see us?" I dared to ask.

Jake glared at me as if I had questioned God's own words. No sooner had I decided never to question my friend's word again than our unit was ordered to deploy in column formation on the left side of the pike. Jake commented that our skirmishers had probably spotted the Yanks and that there would be shooting very soon. Of course, he was absolutely right. For, immediately, we heard shots being fired ahead of us. I couldn't hold back my excitement any longer and exclaimed, "Jake! Do you think we'll win? What do Yank soldiers really look like? What do we do if we lose the battle?"

Jake totally ignored me, although I thought I saw him crack a smile. After feeling a bit ashamed, I felt a hand on my shoulder. Jeremiah faced me with a friendly smile as he had so often in the past. He was a Godly man and very kind to everyone. He had helped me adjust to army life and he often comforted me when I needed it.

"Tim Erchrist, you'd be doin' yerself a mighty big favor by just keepin' calm. 'Marse' Robert's sojer boys needs to be brave and calm befo' they gets into a fight. If we have mo' calm than them Yanks and keeps our faith in Lee, then we'll lick 'em."

"Have faith in Lee?!!" Jake roared with laughter. "Don't you go leadin' that po' boy astray, Jeremiah. The only things a body needs is hisself an' his rifle."

"Quiet in the line!" shouted Captain Daniel. "Beyond these woods is a
run and there is Yank cavalry behind it. Fix your bayonets! Men of the 55th North Carolina—Forward!"

We all accordingly fixed our bayonets and followed our captain into the woods and down an embankment. I was so thrilled by our attack that I barely noticed anything around me.

When we got down the embankment and passed the trees, the whole Confederate line broke into a full charge to clear the run and force the decision of battle in our favor. Several men fell around me after being hit, but I didn’t look back at all. I was becoming afraid and no longer wanted to go on. When we jumped into the water and ran across to the other side, I couldn’t resist the urge to take cover behind the shoreline which rose about two feet above water level. I couldn’t seem to move any part of my body, and fear began to pervade my whole being. I did manage to look up just in time to see one of our boys get hit in his right cheek and fall over into the run, holding his face in painful agony. I made my decision right then and there that I would never look up again and that I was going to stay where I was for a good piece of time.

“Git up!” a voice bellowed.

I managed another look and found Jake standing over me.

“You is supposed to be fightin’ and not hidin’, boy. Now git yerself up and foller me or else I’ll be havin’ to drag ya into it myself.”

At that point he grabbed me and threw me up on the bank and poked me with his bayonet. Naturally, I quickly arose as if I had been given new strength and, being led by Jake, I charged forward.

I rushed past some shrubs and trees and immediately came upon the dead carcass of one of the enemy. He wore a dusty blue uniform with yellow chevrons and was laying there with his eyes and mouth wide open as if in some vast mournful cry of anguish. His throat was torn open and blood had issued forth all over it.

I had to look away from the gruesome sight and avoid the torment within the enemy’s eyes. Upon looking up, I saw that Jake had caught up with Jeremiah and that they both were continuing to press onward. I quickly followed them so I wouldn’t get lost in the midst of the battle.

Unfortunately, I did lose sight of them among all the trees and brush. All I could see was the forest around me that seemed to be ever-closing in. All the men of my unit were nowhere to be found. The smoke and sounds of battle appeared to be growing more distant—to my right and left. I decided to go towards the right because I reckoned Jake and Jeremiah were going in that general direction when I last saw them.

I travelled for what seemed like an eternity until the edge of the forest loomed before me. Moving carefully forward, I came to the edge of the woods and peered out. I saw a road slightly in the distance apparently leading to the town; and quickly marching on the road from the town were some infantry in blue. For a second, I wasn’t sure whose side they were on. Many of our boys wore blue jackets taken from the enemy, but all of these fellows wore blue. I was about to conclude that they were the enemy when I was grabbed from behind and gagged.

“Boy, you is the biggest problem this side of heaven.”

I ventured a glance toward my attacker and found Jake firmly in control of my movements, and Jeremiah watching the Yanks. However, he immediately let me go and I began to wonder whether these two really knew any more than I did.
"Jake, hear them guns? I can tell its turnin’ our way and them Yanks is gonna git licked. I say we git ourselves to them hills over yonder an’ I reckon we’ll meet some of our boys there by noon."

Jake scrutinized the idea and then decided the plan was a good one. So we picked up and carefully walked along the edge of the woods near the roadside in an effort to reach the hills while in enemy territory.

After a long time of evading enemy troops, we had made our way to one of the hills just south of the town. Our journey was so amazing that it appeared as if those Yanks couldn’t have seen us, even if they had looked straight at us.

Once on the top of the hill we reckoned that we could see the battle better so we went on up the hill until we reached a small cottage about half way. We were on the east side of the hill and could see to the north that our boys were still pushing this way, but they hadn’t gotten this far yet. Still behind enemy lines we decided to take cover inside the cottage. We closed in with extreme care and then broke inside through the door to find two very frightened women.

****

They were both young and very beautiful to look upon and I was certainly pleased at our choice of sanctuaries. I expected that they would get angry and tell us to get off their property. Needless to say, I was quite surprised when they hesitantly stepped forward and introduced themselves as Dana Goodman and Marsha Grace. They were friends and Dana had come for a visit.

Dana was of medium height with long brownish hair and a rather thin-looking face that only added to her physical beauty. Yet, it was Marsha that really caught my eye. She was a little shorter than Dana with short curly blonde hair that was extremely lovely. Her eyes seemed to pierce my very soul as though she was an angel from God. I felt that I had to get to know her better.

Jeremiah closed the door and watched outside for any enemy activity nearby, while Jake went to make a search of the cottage. I volunteered to guard the ladies and went about to let them know how we came to be here and how General Lee was going to lick the Yankee army.

“Oh, yes. I have no doubt that he will,” Dana said.

I was a bit surprised over this remark, but it occurred to me that it must also be obvious even to the enemy and his people that they will be ultimately defeated.

"In fact," she continued, “we are Southern sympathizers and want General Lee to win."

"Why do you live in enemy territory then?"

"It is our home," Marsha asserted, “and we refuse to leave it for any reason."

I couldn’t help hiding my disappointment, but I found comfort in the knowledge that there must be some of our followers up here. Jeremiah didn’t trust them, but Jake learned to like them well enough—though he seemed to like all pretty girls.

The day passed and our boys never made it up the hill. We saw them make some grand efforts, though, and we remained confident that we’d be on the road to Washington tomorrow. I decided that I would make the best of the situation and so I made several attempts to get closer to Marsha. She seemed to accept my company, although I sensed a certain reluctance on her part that did cause me some worry.
I wanted to smooth this worry and so I confronted her friend Dana, hoping to get some insights into Marsha’s feelings. “How does Marsha feel about me and what does she say about me?”

“I don’t really know,” Dana answered. “I think both of you should just try to communicate better.”

This was easier said than done. Every time I talked with her I felt as if there was a big wall between us, and that she wanted to hide something from me. I just couldn’t seem to communicate my good intentions and my growing affection for her. Sometimes my efforts appeared partially successful, but my frustrations remained to haunt me at every turn. Yet, in spite of this foreboding, I decided to keep an optimistic attitude because I believed God to be faithful to those who follow His purpose.

Most of the next day passed without any incidents. Jeremiah insisted that we continue to guard Marsha and Dana and I was only too glad to volunteer for this valuable service. Jeremiah and Jake continued to watch the progress of our army in its attacks upon the hill across the way—Dana called it Culp’s Hill—and on the enemy infantry and artillery in the valley between the two hills. Jeremiah commented that we were fortunate that no enemy officers had decided to set up their command in this house. Jake commented that those Yank officers were the lucky ones.

When darkness had swept over the land and the hour became rather late, the women made their apologies and headed to their bedroom for the evening. Naturally, I followed in order to keep a guard over them. However, once Jake and Jeremiah were out of sight behind the kitchen aperture leading to the bedroom Marsha turned toward me with an embarrassed expression on her face.

“You aren’t going to come in my bedroom to watch us, are you?”

“Oh, no,” I answered, “I would never intrude upon your privacy. I’ll guard outside the door until you let me know everything is all right, and then I’ll come inside.”

She looked relieved and went on in to the bedroom. So I stood there guarding nothing but the door. I stood, and I stood, and I stood. I waited for a good while until, finally, I knocked on the door and asked if they were ready or not. There was no answer. I slowly opened the door and searched for any sign of life. There was none; only an open window and a slight breeze.

Jake called me from outside on the porch in an urgent voice. I wondered if he had seen them as I grabbed my Enfield and followed Jeremiah out the front door.

“Foller me,” he said and started on down the hill at a run.

We followed him without a word. I could feel there was something definitely wrong, but I dared not even think about it. A numbness began to run through my whole body as I ran. I was afraid to conceive any thoughts. All I could do was run in dark silence.

We hadn’t gone very far when Jake stopped and knelt beside a huge tree. It was a ferocious looking tree that looked as though it would grab and destroy any living thing that wandered in its way. Yet beyond the angry tree was a sight that brought my movements to an abrupt end. Marsha and Dana were talking with one of those blue devils and pointing back up to the house. Then the blue-clad man ran off and disappeared in the darkness in the direction of a group of campfires. Marsha and Dana were about to follow him when they spotted us watching them. For a moment our eyes met, revealing for the first time all her fear and trepidation. There also seemed a revulsion.
toward what she saw against the background of a hot and muggy July night. For a fleeting moment I had caught a glimpse of the truth, then she disappeared with Dana in the blackness of the evening.

I felt as though God's promise had been violated and I was to be condemned to all eternity. I felt that there was no comfort nor hope in anything; but Jeremiah brought me back to reality. We knew that we had to get off of this hill and back to our own lines. Taking what belonged to us, we headed around the hill and toward the west because Jake believed they would try and cut off our northern escape route. By careful evasions we made it back to our lines and to our own regiment early in the morning of the third day.

* * * * * * * *

We didn't get a chance to sleep too long before we were awakened by the sound of heavy gunfire. Lee was still trying to take Culp's Hill. It was only for a short time, though, before we got our orders to line up in battle formation for an attack upon the enemy center on the ridge. We marched to the edge of the forest on our ridge amidst the roar of a tremendous cannonade and awaited the order to charge.

It was late in the afternoon by the time we formed ourselves into three long lines and paraded out across the road. After stopping and dressing our formation once more, we started forward with our artillery opening up again upon the enemy, who was strangely silent. Captain Daniel ran about and shouted, "Gentlemen, for the honor of the good old North State, Forward!"

When we came into effective range of the enemy cannon, there began a merciless shelling that shook us up considerably. Nevertheless, we continued our advance under increasing fire of grapeshot and canister at close range. We couldn't seem to get in close and some of our men began to fall back. However, I refused to pull back and Jake noticed that many of our men had managed to break the enemy line near a clump of trees to our right. I couldn't seem to find Jeremiah anywhere so I just followed Jake over to the right. The air was so thick with flying metal that I was surprised Jake and I had made it this far.

Once there we joined a band of our men about to charge over a stone wall. The officer stuck his hat upon the top of his sword and bolted across with about a hundred men behind him. Bullets were in the air as thick as molasses and many men fell in that charge. Even the officer that led us met the same fate as poor Captain Daniel, who was laying in a bloody heap back in the open field.

"Git back, boy," Jake shouted to me. "Thars' too many of 'em here. Git . . ."

That was the last thing Jake ever said as he was struck in the chest by a minie ball. The expression of shock and betrayal in his face was forever seared into my memory. I could do nothing but turn and run back in the direction from whence I had come. I stopped running halfway back and just wandered in a confused and disoriented manner across the haze and smoke on the battlefield.

When I finally reached the edge of the woods, I saw an elderly gentleman riding among the scattered troops in tears claiming the defeat was his fault and imploring us to form a defensive line against a counterattack. I didn't believe that I had the strength or courage for any such thing. I just walked on toward the woods, intending to walk all the way home.

"Tim, where you goin'?"

"My God! Jeremiah! I thought you were dead—just like Jake."
"No, sir! I is alive an' kickin'. I dunno where you think you is goin', but we gotta defend these here woods. We has to keep fightin' til they is all licked."

"But it's all over, Jeremiah. The enemy has won."

"No, son. They has won the battle, but the war is for us to win. Keep fightin' and the enemy will be ours."

Timothy B. Raithel

Lady Number 9

I wish I could sit down and write out a poem
to the lady I dream about.
I sit and think with a pen in my hand
but the right words never come out.

I've tried many times to write of her eyes,
which hold me transfixed in a vision,
of sunny new days in a summer forgotten
where I stand in a massed indecision.

Her hands are so warm when they touch on to mine,
she calls without saying a word.
And I happily follow on feet light as air
my interests she's onwardly spurred.

So my thoughts have been voiced by the poem I write,
I just hope the Lord hears up above.
The happiest days that I ever could live
would be spent with the lady I love.

Timothy S. Weible
My friend, who would have thought that we would be so well matched?
At first, the novelty carried me away—
Friends and lovers . . . a dream,
But always I awaken to find you there . . .
a Reality.
The feelings run far deeper now than the words “I love you” can express.

I am happy, and I am afraid . . .

Gone is the confidence,
Confidence gained only through the knowledge that I was free and safe from pain.

I long to grow closer, yet to do so I must reach inside and open doors:
doors kept locked for so many years;
doors behind which lie my scarred feelings of faith and trust.

The doorkeepers are wary—they have been fooled before.
Their eyes seek to pierce through the present’s golden glow; to gaze upon what lies ahead . . . but they cannot.
They are reluctant to step aside, yet they know they must—
For the treasure kept behind those doors is worthless unless it can be shared with another.

You are the one for whom they wait, and your love is the key . . .
Hold my hand, and unlock the doors as you will.
Behold what is offered, and offer of yourself in return.

Anonymous
That First Night

In the midst of the crowd, I saw him
His dark hair reflected the light.
He intently watched the guitarist
Who sang of a raven in flight.
And my lonely heart at this moment in time,
Dared to hope that he'd be mine.

As he looked my way, I smiled.
He appeared pleasantly surprised.
He greeted me kindly, we talked with ease.
Laughter seemed to dance in his eyes.
As the guitarist sang his final line,
I wished even more that he'd be mine.

In the darkness of his room, alone,
He gently touched my face.
His blue eyes soft and so sincere,
His kiss like a sweet embrace.
And as we silently sipped our wine,
I dearly dreamed that he'd be mine.

That night the moon enchantingly glowed
And captured us in its light.
We discovered a tiny seed of love
That could grow to a marvelous height.
And together we prayed that it was a sign,
That I'd be his, and he'd be mine.

C.L.F.
Waver ing . . .

I'm tired of falling in love,
with a fine, fine delicate wrapping,
All innocent and free
yet shy and delicious;
and then—
Learning to hate and despise,
the despicable truth now uncovered,
disfigured and cautious.
And arrogant and sour;
It's too hard!
For it tears one apart,
and keeps two from getting together.

I fell
head
over heels
in love,

and skinned my knees.

LDH

If 'twere for thee to decide—
Thou wouldst have me up astride.
But as 'tis for me to lose,
Doubt I that I so shall choose.
For perchance that I be late,
'Tis better that we wait . . .
And as I've yet to be below,
Me thinks 'tis best that I say no.

Anonymous
IF I DARED

If I dared accuse you of not listening
You'd start, look up, say, "What?"
And I'd say, "Never mind"
Because I know you would mind
If I repeated my words.

I'd offer you a penny for your thoughts
But your newspaper cost a quarter
And the investment you put into that
rug you're reading
Would never, in your opinion, be recouped.

Once it wasn't that way
You sat on the sofa, and so did I
And we talked about our day
Not wanting the other to hold back
any occurrence
Not bearing to keep a secret
Or not share an event with the other.

But what's to talk about?
I did the wash today, on Lady Kenmore
Cycle Two.
I watched two soap operas.
You drove to the city, worked in the office,
and drove back.

The kids, maybe, I could talk about
But you know Jim's at college
And Sally is in her little apartment
Waiting for her roommate to come home.

The dog? Well the dog
Went outside twice today
Barked at the mailman
And played with his ball.
You're almost done reading the paper. Now you'll go out back And fertilize and water the tomato plants Remark that it's been a hot summer.

I'll bring the lawnmower out and you'll mow the lawn. You'll ask for iced tea. I'll get some leftover chocolate pudding. It's your favorite, Isn't it?

And we'll watch the eleven o'clock news together, Then we'll go get ready for bed, and turn out the light, Then go to sleep.

Another day will go by without you telling me you love me. Do you?

Sara D. Seese
THE HACK

How’s it going? The name’s Walt Stevens. I drive a hack in the Big Apple. Tonight’s gonna be a scorcher; the T.V. weatherman is predicting a record temperature of 103°F. The heat doesn’t bother me, though; I’ve never had air conditioning. Other people can’t handle the heat; they start drinking and don’t know when to stop. This convention center, up ahead, isn’t helping matters . . .

“Tweeeeeet, taxi!” On duty again.

Where to, mae? “Hootal Jefson.” I guess you mean the Hotel Jefferson. I see you’ve had a good time, tonight. Me, I can’t drink; I’ve got this stomach problem; ulcers, the doc said. Driving sixteen hours a day, seven days a week is the cause, I bet, but there’s nothin’ I can do about it.

Hooooonk! Get your shaggy ass out the the street, you dumb mutt. Sorry about that, pal. They’re all over the city nowadays.

That convention center you were at sure is giving my bosses a lot of business, tonight. You must be my thirtieth customer since I started workin’. Let me know if you feel like you’re gonna puke up your guts; I don’t want to have to explain it to the dispatcher. He’s not the kindest person in the world, you know.

Yeah, I’ve been workin’ ever since I was seventeen. I’ve been workin’ for the Arachnida Taxi Company for the last fourteen years. I’ve given rides to a great many people in that time, some beautiful, some smart, some young, some old, some drunk like you, and others I’ll tell you about later; however, they all have at least one thing in common. Well, anyway, that’s what the owners keep telling me. If I was to classify you, I’d guess you were an important businessman from a very large corporation.

Damn it! I hate traffic. Hooonk, hooooonk! I’d love it if I could just roam my city all by myself, but I doubt my bosses feel the same way; they have to eat just like everybody else, ya know.

Like I was sayin’, people are the same in some aspects, even the classy ones. When the clothes are off, it’s tough to judge one from another. People make of themselves what they want to be; grant ya, some lucky bastards have it easier than others. But, that’s not the point. The point is . . .

Hey, buddy, you okay. “Yeah, just a little tired.”

I love this town, don’t you? Anything you want is here. Anybody you want to meet is here; all kinds walk in the streets of New York. People you’d never see anywhere else. Personally speakin’, I enjoy people; I like seeing the variety of humans. I don’t pick up just anyone. I have a sixth sense, ya might say; it tells me what clientele would be most pleasing to my employers.

“Thissss isn’t the wway to the hootal iss it?” Yeah, sure it is; there’s more than one way to your stop.

The people that interest me the most are the three-piece suiters; I call ’em the brown-nosers. They’re the ones that kiss up to the boss; they go in the president’s office, and they put their name on the work of others. They take the credit; they receive the promotions; THEY GET THE PAY RAISES! The poor worker, the nobody, gets the shaft; he’s like a little spider that is crushed under the mashing hooves of a cow in the fields.

“What happened to the lights?” Don’t worry about it; we’re under-ground right now, and my bosses don’t particularly like the light.
“Ssstopp, right noooow.” Can’t do it; I’m on a tight schedule, and talking with you has slowed me too much as it is.

Screeeeech! Well, here we are; the Arachnida Taxi Company. “Wwhere’sss the hootal?” Oh, you won’t be going there anymore. I’ve got your new reservations, right here.

Come along, please. “Lleet goooo.” Don’t make it any harder than it is. Before long you won’t have anything to worry about.

“What are you doooing?” The bosses like their meals tightly packed, first. You have to get into this vat of white plaster-type goo; the bosses make it themselves. Unfortunately for you, from then on you won’t be able to suck the creativeness out of others and use it for yourself.

“Nooooo! Please ssstopp!” I just can’t; here come the owners now. Allow me to introduce you to my employers, Mr. Black Widow and Mr. Tarantula.

Bon appétit.

Christopher F. Godar

The Beauty of a Rose

Our love is like a rosebud,

beautiful in its newness,

full of life,

a lovely sight to behold.

So mature as its petals unfold,

yet delicate to the touch.

Fragile,

yet with a sturdy stem.

Just as a rose wilts

and gradually dies,

so may our love for each other

fade.

But just as the stem

is left standing

after all the petals fall,

so will our love remain with us

Embedded deep within our hearts,

forever,

like the beauty of a rose.

Barbara A. Foley
Cutting, winding,  
wavy and cool.  
Shimmering, shining,  
creating a pool.

Crisp and depthless  
of green and blue hue  
giver of life  
a collector of dew.  
Earth eroder,  
natural barrier.  
Hot summer pleasure,  
boat and raft carrier.

Cold drink creator,  
cubes and chips.  
Precious in deserts,  
taken in sips.

Beginning for tadpoles,  
home for the otter.  
By now you’ve guessed,  
this sweet juice is water.

Timothy S. Weible
While Mark consulted with my mother in the next room, I stood staring out the front window with unseeing eyes as my fingers idly picked at the flaking paint on the windowsill.

The door opened behind me, and I waited without turning around to see if Mark would speak to me before going out. Sometimes he did, and sometimes he didn’t. It made no difference to me whatsoever. I did not like people to encourage my mother in her delusions.

“What are you going to do, now that you have graduated?”

“I don’t know. I’m not sure. Until I am, I plan to take a few courses at the University.” I pulled off a long strip of paint from the windowsill.

“What are you planning to major in, Sharon?” Mark’s voice was sharp. “Not psychology. I won’t allow it.”

“Oh, really?”

“I’ll cut off your father’s pension from the State Department until you come to your senses. Don’t press me, Sharon. I could manage it if I really wanted to.”

“History.”

“Ancient or Modern? Comparative or just this planet?” There was a slight edge to his voice.

“Ancient and here. Comparative is a bit much to start off.” I turned. He had relaxed slightly. “Maybe it will knock some sense into you. I hope you find what you seek.” His voice was slightly mocking. “It’s a sorry thing when a stranger believes what a woman’s own daughter won’t.” The door almost slammed as he left.

I savagely ripped off a long streamer of paint from the window frame, and turned to glance at my mother’s door. She was still within, but she was always still within, as she had been for most of my life since the deaths of her brother, her son, and her husband, all within three weeks of each other.

That was the explanation of her withdrawal, talked of and accepted by all in the apartment house, here where she and my father had come to settle soon after their marriage. It had not been fashionable, but a quiet acceptable place for a man with a promising position. Time and the city had passed over it, however, and it had become a little shabby, not a slum, not yet, but slowly heading for that end in its decay. My father’s pension was our only income, but due to his usefulness, it was enough to support us here. Astrology was popular and money-making as always it seems, and the place was right for it, but I would not encourage my mother’s imagination.

It was the deaths of my uncle, father and brother that affected her, I said. It was the loss of her brother and my brother that affected me, said my mother. “I was not meant to function without him, none of us were,” she said. “That is why you are so much more awake than I am. You have to know and be aware of everything. You cannot share the rule.”

My uncle was a reporter for a respected newspaper in the city. One day he took my brother with him to a parade. No harm in that, my mother thought, he was her brother, whom she trusted above all others. Her son could not be safer. A city shelters all kinds, and a maniac came to that parade. By chance, a short-circuit suddenly in the brain and he peppered the air with bullets. “A quirk of fate, internal and sudden, where Chance beats against the fibers of life, and the pattern is altered, slightly, for an instant. Such are
impossible to predict. Foresight is limited and subject always, although rarely affected," says my mother. Wild with grief, frightened for the succession, and worried for the fate of her unconceived daughter, my mother called back my father from his office immediately. He calmed her, and for the first time told her the government worker's lie of a calm assignment for a hazardous one. She did not go with him. He was killed three weeks later. My brother and I were never in this world together.

We lived quietly, although uneasily until Mark found us. He believed my mother's stories, the bulwark, I said, of her defense against her grief and loneliness. It never failed to amaze me that a steady, hard-headed young man such as the State Department employed could believe such things. Yet Mark claimed it was suspicion of these talents of my mother that lead him to us in the first place.

"Your father was one of the most promising men in the Department in his time," Mark said. "He always did the right thing at the right time, almost as if he had prior knowledge. And when your mother was with him, he never lost anything or got hurt, even though there were attempts on his life."

"They can't possibly be allowing you to see reports of my father's assignments. Most of it is classified!"

"No, but researching what is not classified, comparing the events of the time, and with a knowledge of the inner workings of the Department, conjecture can carry one far. And to be successful in the Department depends on the ability to form logical conjecture from known facts—and study of those successful in this business doesn't hurt."

I couldn't argue about my father, but I knew my mother, so I switched the attack. "ESP is only beginning to be suspected to exist. The University is only just beginning to study it. You know what happened when you gave mother the cards."

"'Will the University raise my land if I can play their silly games? I think not,' she said. 'I feel no compulsion in it, no real necessity to it, and no real benefit from it. Only a scratch on the page of some research data sheet—notting that anyone will notice.' Your mother is instinct and essence—it is not in her to make herself noticed or to influence others to do her bidding. That was for her brother to do, acting on her information, but he is gone."

"Excuses, excuses!" I yelled. "What would you have me believe, Mark? That long, long ago on Aerspath there was a holocaust that pushed an island beneath the waves? Somehow the Princess and her brother survived, but due to unfavorable conditions in the land they dwelled, she was forced to leave her brother in an ancient relic of a space shuttle that flew only because she had to leave! She came here and we have been here ever since—so my mother says, but is this reasonable, Mark? Does it make sense? Do you realize how long a time we are talking about? Did you ever pay attention to anything in school except political science? Radioactivity doesn't disappear overnight! How can anyone even pretend to be accurate for so long?"

Mark looked pensive and quietly brought out the large book under his arm. "Another of your mythologies?" I asked scornfully. "Why must you read the things? I thought you dealt with facts in the State Department."

Mark bit his lip, the first nervous sign that I had ever seen him make, and looked across the room. He thought a minute, closed his eyes, then the words came. "Myths contain the realities of the experience of life of a people. Perhaps they are woven with a bit of fantasy to make the truth a little more interesting in the telling, and the pill easier to swallow. Yet their values and their struggles are expressed in myths as nowhere else. To truly understand a
people, and in my work, success depends upon it, one must understand how they think, what they feel. And that is most clearly expressed in their mythology. In some cultures Sharon, these stories, legends, or whatever are passed down for hundreds of years without change. The State Department is currently investigating this ability for use in developing the memory capacity of its own employees.”

“I prefer printed records. I searched the official census files for my mother’s family. Four generations do not an interplanetary dynasty make! A brother, a sister, a husband, a brother, a sister, a husband, and so on down to me. Unusual to be sure, but to claim it has been always so? Records of the early colonial period team with confusion and met disaster often which nicely clears away any damaging evidence I could lay before my mother. And the shuttle? I have found no mention of any such thing in the major archaeological digs, and by my mother’s description it would surely have rusted away by now. How am I to know that it ever existed? I know the here and now. I can see it, and feel it all around me. I am in a crumbling house in a large city, just over the edge of poverty. How can I accept a tale of an ancient bond to an island on another planet that is a mere speck in the twilight? My mother says she is a Queen. I cannot share these delusions of grandeur to support me through emotional and physical hardships.”

“The concept that a ruler is bound to the land is an ancient one. Perhaps hopeful conjecture at its earliest, but selective breeding was not unheard of in ancient cultures. Some were even quite skilled at it. As your mother describes it, the sister ruled as Queen and had special talents to keep her in touch with the land and anything relevant to it. Based on this information the brother saw that appropriate measures were carried out in her name. Thus to rule, both needed the other, eliminating competition for the throne and dividing the tasks of rule to assure maximum proficiency. It is the mark of very ordered, very ancient cultures. There were never any more than two children, a boy and a girl by the Queen. Your mother blames many of your difficulties on the death of your brother. She says you have no outside security so that you might abandon yourself to discover and use your own talents.”

I had been pacing around the room and getting more restless by the minute. “My brother, my brother, it’s always my brother! Well, it’s a pretty theory, Mark, but I’m tired of theories. Show me something real, Mark. Don’t spout philosophies! I’ve looked and I . . .”

“Looked! I’m surprised to hear that you’ve done as much as you have, if you really did it!” Mark was really angry now. “Remember the mineral data sheets from Aespath I brought? The high percentages of certain elements indicate that at some time the planet suffered intensive radioactivity. You still won’t look at the topographical map of the Pnerian coastline. Don’t talk to me of looking! And don’t tell me you don’t have any talents! Have you ever tried, Sharon? Or are you too afraid of what you might find? Why are you always so tense, Sharon? Put that bowl down! What are you trying to block out?”

I didn’t have to take this, so I threw him out. One day as I sat studying a rather boring account of a famous excavation outside the city, the door flew open and Mark strode in, breathless and excited. I ignored him, thinking that as always he would merely pass me by to speak with my mother. He did not, however, he strode right up before me and watched me closely.

I felt nothing, I would feel nothing, and finally, I closed the book and looked back at him.
Well?"
"It's finally happened, Sharon. I've done the right things and got myself noticed."

I raised my eyebrows.
"I've been transferred—off-planet. To finish my training so I can be trusted in a hot-spot if needed sometime—and I do hope to be needed."

"One must be indispensable in this job to succeed, yes."
"I gave a bitter laugh. "Where?"

I felt nothing. I would feel nothing. I didn't know. I couldn't know. I wouldn't know. "Pner, on the planet Aespath."

Aespath, the nearest planet to this one, from whence my ancestors came? This, this alone was my planet! As for Pner, off its shore there was an island, submerged—through swirling water in memory I saw a land, sitting, waiting. I shook myself, then looked up at Mark through narrowed eyes.

"You planned this. You pulled strings."

"Is that all you have to say, Princess?"
"He cut off my protest. "I leave in three days."

They were the longest three days. Would they ever be over? I wondered as I paced around the room. Surprisingly, my mother said nothing. She only watched, and I could not meet her eyes. One day passed, and then two. There was deadly silence.

It was impossible to study. I picked up my Early Colonization textbook and threw it against the opposite wall. The clock rattled in angry protest. If I hurried, I could make it to the spaceport before Mark's shuttle left. Not that I cared, of course.

He was just entering the boarding gate when I darted into the area. A security button beeped. "Shut up!" I said, distractedly, and with a surprised squeak it did. I hardly noticed. Tears fell from my eyes, and I realized that I was almost hysterical.

"Mark," I said, grabbing him by the arm. "Mark, I don't care how you do it. I have to go with you to Pner. I can't take it anymore. I have to know. I'm tired of dreams and emotions. I need cold reality. Tell them I'm your mistress, I don't care, just get me there, please, Mark?"

"She said please!" he said, almost aghast. He thrust a ticket into my hand. "Don't worry, Sharon. I had hopes."

I don't remember the voyage or at least very much of it. I couldn't say how long it lasted or even what class I flew. I don't know if I shared a room with Mark or if I was alone. He always seemed to be there if I needed him. I don't know what he told the other passengers. I hardly remember what they looked like. I had left totally on impulse—I brought nothing with me at all, yet I seemed to have everything that I needed. I didn't really notice. I don't think I needed much. The whole voyage is blanked out for me in a miasma of nerves and fear. Which of us was right? What would I do if... but I couldn't finish the thought either way. The implications on both sides scared me.

I remember suddenly coming to in a small cabin. I was wrapped in a blanket and shaking so hard that my teeth chattered. Mark was there and handed me a cup. "Eat," he said, and I did, but it was like dust.

I was standing up staring out a window in the lobby and I didn't remember coming in. Two passengers were beside me talking.

"See that third star on the left? We're sending an exploratory probe to one of its planets. Our company wants a testing ground for some new plants before they're let into..."

"It's worthless. Nothing green can grow there."

32
"What did the young lady say?" Someone leaned toward me.
I grew pale as I realized that I had spoken. "Mark," I called, weakly.
"It's all right, Sharon." He was leading me away.
"Mark, my mother, that's one of her talents..."
"I know, Sharon. Rest. We're almost there. It's almost over."
I did not speak again until we landed.
"Formalities are dispensed with. Where to, Sharon?"
I met his enthusiasm with a wan smile. "We need a boat."
"Do you know where we're going?" Mark called above the waves as we stepped into our rented craft.
I looked a little uneasily at the waves. I had never seen the sea before, and what I must say next was very hard for me. I took a deep breath. "If I really am who my mother says I am, then I will know where we are going. If not, we will roam the seas until we starve."

With a forced laugh, Mark bent to start the motor. It didn't start. "Oh, let's get on with it!" I cried, my nerves snapping under the strain and a tug at me that only grew more insistant by the minute. Suddenly, the motor roared. Mark gave me a sharp look. He had not touched it. Don't talk about this now, I silently pleaded.

I knew where it was. I knew where to go even though I'd never seen the sea before. I knew just what it looked like deep under the sea, the silent picture that rose every so often in my memory that I always tried so hard to suppress. The spray struck my face, and the wind blew my hair, and I felt better than I ever had before.

"Stop!" I cried. Mark halted instantly.
Who says the sea is blue? The water around me was grey and choppy. We bobbed alone in waves of icy water. Pter could not be seen.
What had I expected? Grey water was around me and a pale sky was above me. There was nothing to see. I crossed space for this?
An image rose before my eyes like a vision, more powerful than ever before, of the island laying under the sea. I saw the broken artifacts of an earlier time encrusted with heavy coral. Seaweed grew in the fields and fish played in their fronds.
The image faded, and I was left with grey water before my eyes. I peered down into the depths for a glimpse of what I felt, but the grey water hid all.
Angrily, I slapped the waves before me. An image was not proof! If I had allowed myself, I could have seen the same thing in the city!
"All right," I said at last, very firmly, and very, very carefully as I stared before me at the empty water. My fingernails bit hard into the soft sides of the boat. "I said that I wanted to know who I really am and I do. I'm tired of feelings and emotions and yes, hallucinations. Any of it could be the result of an overactive imagination and too much solitude. It shows me nothing. I want proof, solid, and tangible that my mother is right or wrong. Until I see the land before me and feel its soil between my fingers, I will not believe her. I want reality, not dreams. I shall turn my back upon this place. Therefore, if there are any talents within me to say otherwise should be my fate, let them come forth, and LET THE LAND BE RAISED!!!!!!"

"Sharon! NO! What are you doing?!?" I wish I had seen it. For the first time since he had walked through our door, Mark totally lost the cool, confident manner he wore so well. Real panic was in his voice.

At first I felt lighter, because Mark had been right, I had dampened my talents. Then a crushing load came upon me, and I slipped to the bottom of the boat. I remembered no more.
When I came to, my head felt fuzzy, and all around me I could see lines of force and various waves of different energies pulsating around me looking rather like the confused scribblings on the blackboard when my long-ago physics teacher had attempted to explain the Unified Field Theory. I had been following these pathways for some reason and had made a few alterations... They slowly faded and Mark’s astonished face came into focus. I remembered and looked up. Darkness was under the waves, and as I watched it broke surface. Clods of heavy, wet soil flew up in the spray. Suddenly, we were in a cove and a rough hunk of dirty coral was in my lap. The dirt smeared my fingers. The land lay before me, the seaweed fields flat and wet against the ground. The air was filled with gasping fish trying desperately to get back into the sea. Great broken chunks of coral lay littered about, and the form of an abandoned village could be seen in them. I think it stank, for it had been under the sea for a very long time, but I did not care.

“I am the Princess,” I said to Mark.

Dorene M. Pasekoff

Library

Building tall with pillars high,
stretching pentacles to the sky.
Carpeted floor, open space,
rows of shelves locked in place.

Long deep halls to many rooms,
many books, so one assumes.
Hanging lights shining down
upon the quiet, not a sound.

Windows wide while we all work,
through the aisles, hunters lurk.
Seeking here, seeking there,
outside life give not a care.

Find it, seize it, take it down,
the dusty book you’ve finally found.
Read and learn it, study hard,
many countries’ books lie charred.

Timothy S. Weible
Wha t d o yo u m ean,  
Saying, “Unicorns aren’t real”?  
Of course unicorns are real.  

Well, no, I’ve never seen one.  
But, I don’t have to see them  
To believe in them.  

No, I don’t think anyone I know  
Has ever seen one either.  
But no one I know has ever been  
To Africa or to Asia  
Or seen a jungle or a desert  
Although I’m told they exist.  

It’s not the same thing?  
Not the same thing at all?  
Why, of course it is.  
Have YOU ever seen a white tiger?  
Climbed the Pyramids?  
Toured Buckingham Palace?  
I haven’t either, but others have.  
They’ve told me they have.  

So, I say unicorns are no different.  
I’m sure I’ll find one  
If I only search hard enough  
If I’m in the right place  
At the right time  
And if I’m doing the right thing.  
I know I’ll find one some day.  

Where will I find it?  
I’ll find it inside me!  
In the place where I dream.  

What do you mean,  
Saying, “God isn’t real”?  

Sara D. Seese
Prisoner of Myrin

I always wanted to write something like this. The library is dead. The batteries in my walkman have died. There is snow on the ground, and they’re calling for a real blizzard now. The only people in the building are my partner and me, and the few occasional dweebs that slowly plod up the hollow stairs as they fade into darkness, their second residence. It is only six p.m. My partner and I glance at each other, at the endless rows of books, and back down to our newspapers and magazines. Once in a while there is a casual yawn between us. I am not studying, even though I should be. The flourescent lights buzz.

I sit with an air of power, or is that just a state of mind? From my throne I watch an empty kingdom. We sit here in the library. Sitting and staring, staring and sitting, we read novels by Kilgore Trout. We think of Sartre. We daydream, travel in time, or just remember pleasant times. I wonder what is happening on the outside. Does anything exist on the outside, on the inside, or is it just an empty crevass?

Does reality exist; do we? Or are we just prisoners of ourselves; captives of our own minds? I must do some studying now. So it goes.

Walter S. Keehn
DISCLAIMER

Of course this story is based on reality. What kind of story would it be if it weren’t? Some of the situations and characters in it are distorted representations of real life. But don’t get all upset, because none of them have anything to do with you.

And the Lord descended to Earth and he did say unto the Prophet Sam: Behold, for I am come to Save man and to bring unto you a joyous Rebirth.

The Book of Sam
2005, Charles Scribner’s Sons
$14.95, $8.95 paper

One balmy August evening in 2002, Sam Furton is taking a leak on Government property somewhere in Tennessee when, with a thunderous crash, a brilliant hundred-foot pillar of light descends behind him. Thinking he is caught by a ranger, Sam quickly turns and puts his hands up. Of course, it isn’t really a ranger, just the Creator of the universe, and Sam presents a rather shabby image of man to the supreme being. He stands bathed in the divine luminescence, open-mouthed and open-flyed, with his tattered, right Hush Puppy in a small puddle whose stench is lost in his own.

A rich, vibrant voice, fairly demanding with its power that it be heeded, flows from the pillar. Sam would certainly heed it if he knew twelfth-century Mandarin, but speaking only twenty-first century English, he says, “Huh?”

The voice pauses for a moment. Then it continues in English, “I am the Creator of all you know and infinitely more. I came into existence millions of millenia ago and made the universe because I was bored. I created the seeds of life on a billion planets in the belief that someday a species equal in power and wisdom to Myself might evolve. With that race, I hoped to share the majesty of My Cosmos.

“After billions of years, I have learned that no beings capable of joining Me can survive to become great enough. Each time a race begins to become advanced, it destroys itself.

“I come to you because the signs of impending extinction are evident in your society. Nuclear war is inevitable by the end of the decade if I do not save you, for each individual holds far too much aggression in him to be safely released within the strict limits your civilization has set. To progress, you need your highly efficient and hence rigidly-structured societies. You cannot afford the inefficiencies of dissension or aggression, and these emotions build up, dangerously unreleased. As you become tenser, each of a million petty frustrations contributes more to your mounting anxiety. Some part of the system must eventually break down under the tremendous pressure, and as soon as one global faction begins to weaken in the inevitable ensuing riots and crime waves, the other will attack with all its strength. Of course, once all-out thermonuclear war has begun, all life will be doomed.

“I have seen more races die in this way than you could count in your lifetime. I am lonely and weary of death, so I shall save your species from annihilation.
"Samuel Furton, you are My Prophet. I have caused a large bank account and excellent credit ratings to be created in your name. You will use them to make My Coming known to all humans. I will return five years from this instant, on August fourteenth, 2007. Do not fail, for the life of your race is at stake."

A bankbook, a few credit cards and a thick sheaf of twenty-dollar bills fly out of the glittering pillar like Dorothy and Toto out of the tornado and land in the noisome puddle at Sam’s feet. Sam doesn’t look down; he stares fixedly up at the brilliant column. Suddenly, silently, it is gone.

After a long while, Sam looks down and zips up his pants. Then he bends and fishes the Creator’s gifts out of the puddle where they lie. He inspects the credit cards and the soggy money—they seem to be legitimate, and there’s enough cash to keep a frugal man out of work for half a year. Sam removes the bankbook from the lucky protection of its plastic envelope and opens it. He stares inside for a moment; then his eyes roll, and he collapses.

** And the Prophet Sam went among the people and he did begin the work of the Lord. **

Well, Sam might have often been called a slob and a waste of the $9.06 that the human body is worth, but no one has ever accused him of not knowing how to live when he got the chance. He sets himself up in a Manhattan penthouse and rents a luxurious Park Avenue office suite with the words

GLOBAL ORGANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT, INC.

in golden capitals on the door.

Behind the door are some of the world’s most competent and highly-paid advertising agents, accountants and secretaries, each in his own comfortable office. GOD, Inc.’s suite also includes a luxurious conference room and an opulent, oak-paneled, chandeliered chamber for Sam, each equipped with a well-stocked bar.

Let’s peek inside the conference room, where a meeting is about to begin—

(SETTING: A luxuriously-furnished conference room dominated by a long, oak table. At the head of the table sits SAM, dressed from necktie to shoe soles in spotless, meticulously-creased white. Two DEPARTMENT HEADS and SAM’s AIDE sit silently around the table at widely-spaced, regular intervals, except for one empty space. In front of each man lies a briefcase. The briefcases seem to be the foci of attention of their proprietors, except SAM, who quietly practices mediocre card tricks, pretending he doesn’t think he’s being watched [he isn’t] and occasionally looking up covertly to see if he is. The group seems to be waiting for someone or something. Suddenly, the door flies open, and a harried-looking man with unkempt hair and a stylish but sloppily-worn suit rushes in and takes the vacant seat. Everyone looks up.)

MAN: Sorry I’m late. Sartire (he pronounces the name “Sarteer”) was still asleep when I went to get him. He wouldn’t get up. Said he was up all night decorating his parlor.

SAM (smiles like a benevolent monarch): Don’t worry about it, Ed. We all realize how those writers are—complain, complain, and never an ounce
of work. I don’t know how you agents survive dealing with them. Well, anyhow, let’s get started. (Stands and pulls a thick sheaf of papers from his briefcase. He shuffles through them importantly but does not stop to read them.) Today it has been exactly one year since the Creator’s appearance to me. Let us review our progress in fulfilling His directive to alert the world of His presence. I began by seeking out the best personnel available for our purposes; that is, I hired you and your subordinates. Next, I created and incorporated GOD, Inc. and established this headquarters and the twelve domestic and foreign branch offices. We have begun investment projects in order to remain solvent during the next four years until the reappearance of the Creator, when our work will be finished. I have narrated my experiences to Mr. Sartire, who is represented here by Ed Silvers (SAM nods to the agent); we may expect a first draft of the Book of Sam—that is, the new Gospel of the new Prophet, me—within a year. We are also preparing a publicity campaign to assure that we reach all the people during the final months before the Creator’s arrival. And that’s where we stand today. Let’s hear some departmental reports now. Mel, how are our finances? (One of the department heads stands. He is fiftyish and obviously an accountant. His briefcase is open and full, but he never refers to anything in it.)

MEL: Well, Sam, after the initial expenses of getting GOD, Inc. rolling and of building a strong portfolio, we’re a little short on capital. But we should be getting good returns on some of our short term investments pretty soon. In a couple of years, the Book will be out, and we’ll have royalties on that. Our net worth is $61,243,107.88 as of four PM yesterday. In short, we’re doing great, and we should make it through the next four years with no trouble. (MEL sits.)

SAM: Excellent. Thank you, Mel. Pete, how’s the publicity going? (Another man stands up and leans stiff-armed on his briefcase. He is around thirty years of age, blond, tanned, and extremely muscular. He smiles at Sam, revealing a large number of shiny, perfect teeth. Obviously carnivorous.)

PETE: Of course, we have nothing ready for release yet, but we do have a number of interesting plans on the drawing board right now, ranging from thirty-second holovision spots to children’s food. Here’s one rough idea. (He presses a button on a small box in front of him, and the lights go out, and the image of a cereal box appears in the center of the table. On the box are a picture of a galaxy and the legend

SAM FURTON’S COSMO SNAPS
The Creator says—
A BIG BANG IN EVERY BITE!

We plan to be ready by October, 2006 and to begin our campaign in February, 2007. We’ve also got plans for marketing the Book. We’ve reserved thirty-second spots during the three most-watched holovision shows in the country, The Mother-Clones, The Signal 30 Files, and Naked Classics Presents. Here’s one preliminary idea. (He presses another button. A cube of blackness replaces the cereal box on the table, and we hear synthesized bass rumbles from some hidden speaker. Flecks of light dart about in the dark cube. They grow into stars and galaxies as the music swells. The crystal tones of a brass choir accompany the plunging fury of luminescence. The frenzy of motion and sound grows. Galaxies are exploding, colliding. The choir plays staccatto runs and trills. Waves of
light and sound crash down on us. Then it stops. There is silence. The screen is gray. A rich, vibrant voice, fairly demanding with its force that it be heeded, flows from the cube.)

RICH, VIBRANT VOICE: The Book of Sam. The most astonishingly true tale of divine revelation the world has ever seen. You can't afford not to read the True Word of the Creator's Prophet, Sam Furton. The Book—read it or be Lost when He arrives. Available at fine stores everywhere. (The gray cube vanishes, and the lights come back on.)

SAM (genuinely impressed): Marvelous! What do you think, gentlemen? (Looks around the table and receives noncommittal nods.) Excellent. Thank you, Pete. (Pete sits.) Now let's move on. How's the Book coming along, Ed?

ED (stands and hands SAM a sheaf of papers): Here's what Sartire's produced this week. He's getting the job done, and he seems to be giving you what you want, but he—well, he complains a lot about writing for you.

SAM: What do you mean?

ED: Well, he doesn't seem to believe in what he's doing. Says it's bullshit.

SAM: Bullshit! Every word I told him is the Truth! The Creator chose me to spread His Word, and I chose Sartire to write it with faith that he would set down what I know to be the Truth! Kindly advise Mr. Sartire that he is not fulfilling his contractual obligations.

ED: I knew you'd feel like this, but the contract says only that he has to write acceptable material, not that he has to believe what he's writing.

SAM: Yes, but, all the same, I don't feel he can honestly relate the depth of the meanings if he doesn't understand them. (Glances at the top sheet of the papers ED has just handed him, and jabs his finger at it.) Look here, for instance—the bus ride to Newark when I was six, he's got the emphasis all wrong. The black lady had nothing to do with it: it was the poodle that was important. (Turns to his AIDE) Bob, do I have time to run over to Sartire's now?

BOB: You've got tennis at four-thirty and a Jacuzzi at five-thirty, but you're free until then.

SAM: (Hurriedly) All right. (To the room in general) Just keep doing whatever you've been doing. Meeting is adjourned.

So Sam sets out in his Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow. He enjoys driving, and flying up the Harlem River Drive, across the George Washington Bridge, and down Route 4 is a pleasant challenge at eighty-five miles an hour. He slows to fifty-five for the Queen Anne Road turnoff and zips through the side streets to 53 Cresskill Circle.

Sartire's house is the most ordinary of dwellings, a white three-story colonial with black shutters. All the windows are shaded. Sam walks up to the door and presses the doorbell button. A Chinese gong sounds from somewhere in there. A distant, excited voice follows it: "Come in, come in!"

Sam gingerly turns the knob and pushes on the door. As it swings back, he squints into the dark, cluttered interior.

"Come on in!" calls the friendly voice. "I've been waiting for you to bring the story my way for seven and a half pages!"

Sam steps through the doorway.
“Follow the sound of my voice!” calls the distant speaker. He seems to be upstairs.
Sam goes to the stairs, leaving the front door open.
“Come on up!” the voice says. “I’m on the third floor!”
Sam goes up the stairs slowly. When he reaches the second floor and is out of sight of the door, I slam it. He starts at the noise.
“Come on! I can hardly wait!” calls the voice.
Sam cautiously mounts the second flight of stairs. He arrives in a hallway with a door at either end. One of the doors is open, and the room behind it is lighted.
Sam makes his way to the open door and peers in. The room is decorated simply, with a plain but comfortable couch along one wall and a large, flattering picture of me, Jon Nigrine, on the other.
On the couch lies Sartire. He has black, wavy hair, a dark complexion and light brown eyes. He is averagely built, or maybe five pounds overweight. He is smiling ecstatically and staring blankly at the ceiling.
“My God! You’re here! Welcome!” he gasps.
“Yes... Uh, Thank you,” replies Sam. He walks to the foot of the sofa, hoping to get Sartire’s attention.
“Hmmm?” murmurs Sartire, raising an eyebrow and looking at Sam.
“Oh, I’m sorry,” he says suddenly. He sits up. “I’m just so thrilled to finally be in the story. I was just welcoming the readers. My God, I feel great!”
“I understand,” mumbles Sam. He is beginning to suspect he’s dealing with a lunatic. Well, nothing to do but push on, anyway.
“I came to talk to you about your beliefs in regard to the Creator,” continues the Prophet in a serious tone.
“He’s bullshit,” says Sartire matter-of-factly.
“How can you—”
“Everything you know is bullshit.”
Sam is beginning to turn red. “I spoke to and received the true Word of the Creator. You cannot deny that He—”
“That’s ‘he’, lowercase ‘h’, bub. He’s ‘He’.” Sartire points at my picture.
“Who is he?”
“‘He’!”
“All right, who is ‘He’?”
“Jon Nigrine, the one Who created everything. Even the Creator.”
“None can be greater than the Creator!”
“None can be wiser than the Surpriser,” mocks Sartire.
“Who’s that, him?”
“Yes. (‘That’ and ‘Him’, by the way.) He’s the Surpriser because He invents the plot twists and complications in this story we call life.”
Sam is incredulous. “What?”
“Don’t you understand? Everything you and I know, the Earth, the Sun, the Moon, Peoria, dog food, John Cameron Swaze, everything is just Jon’s idea of how the setting should be for this short story of His. It happens to be patterned closely after the real world in many respects, but it isn’t real. We can never know the real world. We’re only characters in a story. If you wondered why I was so happy when you came in, it was because you brought the story with you. I’m finally alive and Jon’s presenting me to everyone who’s reading this story. Just to be alive and to be noticed is ecstasy—I’m fulfilling my one purpose in life.”
Sartire pauses thoughtfully for a second, then continues, “I guess you wouldn’t understand. Since you’re in every scene and the story is told mostly
from your point of view, the bubble of what passes for reality in this universe moves with you. It seems to you that everything is consistent. Whatever you notice, the reader is told about, and your sensations become part of the false reality built in the reader's mind. You never know that as soon as you turn your attention away from something, it disappears as the reader forgets about it. As soon as you turn your head back, though, it is recreated as Jon describes it or implies that it's there.

"You're lucky that for you the universe seems to be susceptible to a simple set of rules—cars never fly, things never vanish, people always stay the same size. You have a base on which you can build your life, knowing that you can make plans and count on their working.

"Every other being in this universe has to take what comes to him. What's the point in planning if Jon might decide to change everything around as soon as you got started?"

"I don't know," says Sam neutrally. He is now certain that Sartire is deranged.

I let Sartire read Sam's thoughts. "I am not deranged," the author says indignantly.

"What?" Sam is sure it's only a coincidence. No one can read minds.

"I can read minds if Jon wants me to," says Sartire. "I can and must do anything Jon feels like making me do. Watch." He lies flat on the couch and levitates straight up about three feet.

I make my voice ring throughout the house; reverberating down the halls and brushing against the gong, it gains a susurrant, vibrant quality.

"Sam," I say in my most impressive tones, "Sartire is sane. This is my universe. You are my puppet and nothing more."

I rotate Sartire until he is in a standing position above the sofa. I make his arms and legs begin to twitch. Soon he begins to almost convulse. He looks (or all the world like a marionette whose strings somehow got caught in the works of some complicated machine. I detach his arms and legs and make them dance around by themselves. I make his head spin all the way around on his neck.

"What do you think, Sam?" I ask.

Sam stands silent, pale and not even blinking.

I put Sartire back together (having a little trouble getting the arms on right, at first). "Here, have a seat," says Sartire. He motions to an armchair directly behind Sam.

Sam looks back at the chair, which he hadn't noticed when he came in (in fact, it wasn't there, as I only thought of it a second ago). He sits in it, gingerly at first; then, convinced that it is real, he leans back heavily. His mind is blank except for a tenacious kernel of ego that whispers softly, "It's a hoax. It must be a hoax. A practical joke, a trick. That's all, just a prank."

Sartire sits on the couch, watching Sam. After a long, stagnant pause, Sartire asks, "Can I get you anything? A drink, a sandwich?"

"No. I think I'm going home." Sam has convinced himself that if he escapes the truth, he need not believe it. He is already beginning to forget what happened this afternoon. Poor Sam. He has just made a big mistake. In my universe, you don't ignore problems, you face them. If you can't deal with what comes your way, too bad. I put this scene in the story for a reason, and I'm not going to let Sam ignore it.

He's feeling a little dizzy and not up to driving. "Can I send someone to pick up my car later on?" he asks Sartire.

"Sure. You want to phone a cab?"
“Yes.”
“Right next to you.” Sartire indicates a telephone table next to the armchair.

Ignoring the fact that the table definitely wasn’t there a minute ago, Sam reaches over and calls Information and then the cab company. The taxi will arrive in ten minutes. Sam gets up. “I think I’ll wait out in the fresh air,” Sam tells Sartire. “I’ll find my way out.”

“OK. Take it easy.”

“Good bye.” And Sam goes out the door, through the hallway, down the two flights of stairs, out the door and down to the foot of the driveway, where he leans against a tree.

As the cab pulls up, Sartire leans out of a third-story window. “I’ll be seeing you,” he shouts. “Take it easy.”

Sam ignores him and gets into the cab. Closing the door, he tells the driver, “In the city. Sixty-first and Park.” The driver zooms them away from the curb without a word. Sam pays little attention, as he is busy examining the interior of the cab. This is the first time he’s ever been in one—he’s always been too poor or too rich. He reads with interest the stickers telling him to fasten his seat belt, not to spit and not to pay with a bill bigger than a twenty. He looks at the laminated card stuck to the right side of the dashboard. It says

YOUR DRIVER
E. RITRAS
COURTEOUS, SAFE, RELIABLE

Next to the words there is a photograph of the driver. Sam glances at it, then does a double take. No, it couldn’t be, it can’t be . . .

Sartire turns around and grins at him.

********

And there did come over the Prophet Sam a time of revelation and then a time of great peace when the spirit of the Lord was in his mind and in his body and all the Lord’s Truth was known to him. And during the hour of supreme Revelation, the Disciple Sartire did assume the holy duties.

Ibid., p 1876

“What are you doing here?” cries Sam.

“Convincing you that your idea of how the world works is way off.”

“You already convinced me. Take me home.”

“You’re full of it. We’re taking the scenic route.”

“I believe, I believe!”

“Too late now.”

I send Sam and Sartire on the most incredible joyride the world has ever known. I make them zoom over Manhattan, slaloming them through the skyscrapers. Then I plunge them into the East River, shrink their Dodge Aspen to the size of a matchbox and take them through the sewers to a men’s room in Grand Central Station, where they emerge from a urinal and are forced to dodge between the feet of the rush hour commuters in order to get to an escalator and escape to the street. By this time, Sam is whimpering helplessly. Sartire simply closes his eyes when he doesn’t need to drive. I return the taxi to its normal size and put it six hundred feet underwater in the Pacific Ocean, where I cause it to play chicken with a Soviet nuclear
submarine. Then I fly Sam and Sartire over the arctic Canadian coast at Mach 3, and their sonic boom causes the premature birth of hundreds of seal pups.

When Sam finally curls into a ball and becomes completely silent, I decide he’s had enough. Sartire brings him to the Park Avenue offices of GOD, Inc., which are deserted at eight o’clock.

With a great deal of coaxing and wheedling, Sartire manages to get Sam out of the taxi and into his private office. Sam leans back in the expensive leather chair behind his desk and is cradled in it like a gerbil held in the hand.

Sartire asks him, “Are you going to be all right?”

Sam nods vaguely.

“OK. Take it easy.” Sartire leaves.

Sam sits motionless for a long time. Eventually he realizes he needs to go to the bathroom. This is a problem he knows he can handle, and so he shuffles through the hall to the mens’ room.

After having performed the necessary rituals, Sam stands still for a long time, not knowing what to do next. It occurs to him that he is thirsty. He makes his way to the conference room, right next door, pours himself a Scotch and soda, and sits in his chair at the head of the long oaken table.

After a little while, he notices the trick cards he had been using before the meeting this afternoon. He picks them up and shuffles them. He fans them out to an imaginary audience. “Pick a card, any card,” he says in a nasal voice. He lets a card drop to the table. “Don’t tell me what it is.” He peeks at it; it is the three of hearts. “Now replace it in the deck.” He scoops the card into the middle of the fanned-out deck, then stacks the cards and manipulates them fairly quickly but a little clumsily.

Now for the big moment: Sam sits forward in his chair. He says, “Do you remember your card? Was it the THREE OF HEARTS?!” He flips the top card of the deck over triumphantly. I can’t resist having a little fun, so I turn it into the ace of spades with a leering black face with crimson eyes for the central figure.

Sam stares at the face. I make it wink at him. He screams inarticulately and slaps the cards off the table. He goes to the bar and hurls all the Waterford crystal against the wall. He tries to throw a couple of chairs through the window, but it is unbreakable. Sam rampages through the rest of the suite, breaking and destroying whatever he can. Finally he collapses in his own office.

Early the next morning, Sartire comes to check on him and finds him sprawled on the thick carpet amid a thousand crystal fragments of the chandelier. Sam is conscious but limp.

“Here, sit up and have a drink,” Sartire offers. Sam props himself against his desk and thirstily gulps the gin and tonic Sartire brings him.

“Let’s get you home, all right?” asks Sartire.

Sam gives an affirmative grunt, so Sartire hoists Sam to his feet and half-carries him down the hall, into the elevator, and finally into the waiting cab. The exertion of the walk on top of physical and emotional exhaustion and a stiff drink is too much for Sam. He falls deeply asleep and never notices when Sartire injects him with chlorpromazine, a powerful tranquilizer. You see, it would never do to have such a violent, irrational man be the Prophet of the Creator. But since the Creator made the choice (completely at random, by the way), and he’s not around to pick somebody else, all that can be done is to change the man. Sam’s going to have to spend the next four years (and maybe the rest of his life) drugged. The survival of the world depends on
his not making any mistakes. Sam will appear in public occasionally to
make hypnotically-taught speeches in order to keep up appearances, but
except for that he'll be little more than a mascot to GOD, Inc.

It's not as if Sam were suffering all that much anyway. He's as comfort-
able as he could ever be, he's got a nurse to take care of him, and he's so high
he doesn't even know that anything is different than it ever was.

Sam's life is a series of misty, distant sightings of islands of reality
peeking out of a vast, featureless sea of numbness. Sometimes a very nice,
pretty lady comes in, and she gives him a shot or brings him food.

Once in a long while, they put him in a wheelchair and put him in a room
with a lot of people. Then he says things he doesn't understand without even
trying to talk. Like he remembers one time when he talked and he said,
"Fellow humans and mortals, I come among you today to take my leave of
you. I must turn my mind inward to unravel the secrets of the life the Creator
has given us. Take as my word that of my Disciple, Sartire . . ." And he talked
like that for a while, and then all of the people started asking him questions,
but he fell asleep.

II.

And the Lord will return at the appointed time, and he will say
unto man: "Are you prepared for Judgment?" and men will
gleefully rejoice and sing, "Yea, verily we are," and the Lord will
make his Decree.

Ibid., p. 1878

One day they come and put Sam in his wheelchair, but they don't take
him to the big room with all the people. Instead they have a big hovercraft,
and they go on a long trip to the woods. When they stop, the place seems
familiar to Sam. Everybody gets out of the 'craft and they wait until it is
almost dark.

Then, far up in the sky, a dot of flame appears. Sam watches, and as it
approaches, it gets long and thin like a knife cutting through the air. It roars
like a thousand angry lions. The flame draws closer and closer, and Sam
begins to tremble. It is sure to hit them and burn them all up. The flame
shoots down at them, just barely veers off in time and shrinks to nothing in a
clearing a hundred feet from the hovercraft. In the flame's place stands an
intercontinental rocket with "WRMT" painted all over it.

A man hops out, trots over to Sam and extends his hand. "Rick Rafferty,
WRMT News Squad, Mr. Furton," he says.

Sam talks without trying. "It is with ecstasy and deep gratitude that we
greet you, O Master of the Universe. We have eagerly . . ."

A man nearby hears Sam, runs in front of him and cuts him off. "Hello.
I'm Sartire," he says. Sam misses the rest of this interesting conversation
because he falls asleep.

When he wakes up, the whole area is covered with cables, lights, micro-
phones, holovision cameras, and technicians. Everyone is waiting for some-
thing.

Suddenly there is a thunderous roar, and in the center of all the commo-
tion a great shining column of radiance appears. Sam tries to rise to go to it,
but he doesn't have the strength; he passes out in the attempt. The nurse
wheels him away from the crowd to attend to him.

Sartire steps forward and says, "You are the Creator?"

"I am," replies the booming voice. "What has happened to my Prophet?"
“Sir,” answers Sartire, “the strain of assuring that all of humanity is ready for your arrival has proven too great. The excitement of your arrival caused him to lose consciousness.”

“Very well. You will pass my Decree on to all the inhabitants of this world.

“There will be no aggression,” proclaims the Creator. “Any person who strikes, injures or abuses another will be instantly destroyed. It is My hope that if you survive this weeding-out, you will evolve into a more placid race capable of joining Me. To my Prophet and his Disciple I grant eternal life so that they may guide man. Learn to live in peace—or die.”

The brilliant pillar vanishes into the sky.

All is still in the woods except for a technician who is replaying his tape. “Shit!” he spits. “He didn’t come out on tape!”

“What?” demands Rick Rafferty. “Let me see!”

As he stares into the monitor, Sartire approaches and tells him, “I’d advise you not to get too worked up, Mr. Rafferty. You heard what He said. Anyway, what we just saw and heard was in our minds. It can’t be filmed.”

Rafferty looks up from the monitor. “You don’t really believe that crap, do you?”

“Some of it, in a way.”

“Oh, come on, we both know this is all some kind of publicity stunt. Who are you working for? General Motors? Coca-Cola? The Army?”

“Global Organization and Development, Incorporated. Please don’t get upset; you’ll die if you even threaten me.”

“Oh, come off it, you lousy, lying . . .” While reaching for Sartire’s lapels, Rafferty vanishes, and in his place, a small pile of lemon-yellow dust stands. It begins to blow away.

“What did you do?” cries the technician so loudly that everyone stops and watches.

“Nothing,” replies Sartire. “Didn’t you hear what the Creator said? If you fight, you die.”

“I don’t know how you did that, you sonofabitch, but you’re not doing it again,” the technician growls, stepping up to Sartire and grabbing him by the arms. Sartire stumbles, and a streamer of yellow dust blows off into the woods.

Pandemonium breaks out as technicians and businessmen panic, running into and shoving each other. Within a minute, only Sartire, Sam and the nurse are left standing in a yellow fog. They stand silently for a moment.

“What now?” asks the nurse.

“We get the hell out of here,” answers Sartire. “I had a feeling the Decree would be something like this. Civilization can’t last, you know. Some idiot’s going to decide this is the perfect time to win a nuclear war. We can only hope that the defenses hold out until all the launchers have been killed off by the Creator.”

“Where will we go?”

“I have a hideout prepared in Northern Canada. Let’s get out of here.”

The nurse wheels Sam into the hovercraft they came in, and they begin the three days’ journey to the hideout.

The first day is spent without a word other than necessities. But on the second day, the nurse asks Sartire, “How long do we have to hide out for?”

He replies, “I’ve been figuring on two years. We need to let things cool off. Remember, people are going to identify us with the Creator’s decree. All our media coverage is working against us now.”
"It'll be impossible to live together for that long without fighting. We could both wind up dead."
"I know," answers Sartire gravely. "I've been thinking, one of us ought to suicide."

The nurse looks down. "I guess you're right. How do we decide who does it?"

"Flip a coin?"
"All right."
"Now?"
"Yes."

Sartire stops the hovercraft and gets out a half-dollar. He shows it to the nurse. She says, "Go ahead."
"Call it in the air." He flips the coin.
"Heads."

Sartire catches it and slaps it onto his wrist. "Tails."
"I'm sorry," murmurs the nurse.
"It's all right," smiles Sartire. "I'm not going to do it anyway."
"You're not?"
"No."
"But you said . . ."
"Make me, then. You can't."

The nurse is trembling in anger. "I would have! I would have killed myself to save you and Sam! You bastard! You evil bastard! I'll kill you, you son of a bitch!" The cabin is suddenly filled with yellow powder, and the nurse is gone. Sartire and Sam cough and gag until Sartire opens the door and lets the dust out.

"Where did she go?" asks Sam in his drugged voice.
"She had to leave," says Sartire curtly as he starts the 'craft.

Sam is confused. The pretty lady has been there for as long as he can remember. Oh well. Maybe she'll come back later. After a while, Sartire brings Sam into a house, and Sam looks around hopefully, but she isn't there.

They stay at the house for a long time, and Sam knows that she has gone forever. But he doesn't really mind. Nothing really bothers him at all.

He has almost forgotten all about her by the time Sartire takes him back into the hovercraft where he saw her last. Sartire tells Sam they are going to New York. Sam thinks he saw a picture of New York once.

When they finally arrive there, it is not very much like Sam thought it would be. It's very quiet, and there are almost no people. Sam and Sartire go to live in a building Sartire calls City Hall.

After a while, some people find them and come to live with them. There is a pretty girl who wheels Sam down the street on sunny days. One day, Sam notices she is not pretty anymore. She is old. Soon she dies, but another girl takes over. Eventually, she dies, and another takes her place, then another, and another. They stop giving Sam needles, because they say his brain doesn't need them anymore. It has atrophy, they tell him. Sam likes atrophy better than needles.

Now New York is different than when he came there. There are more people, and the girl has to wheel Sam on the sidewalk because cars drive on the street now. When this girl dies, another takes over, and a multitude more, and after a while, they don't talk with words anymore, but instead they think to Sam, and they are so sweet and gentle and beautiful on the inside as on the outside.
One day the girl comes in and tells Sam, “The Creator is coming!”

Sam shivers and trembles, for he had almost forgotten his earlier life. He knows the Creator is important, but he can’t remember enough. He is terribly frustrated. The memories are too deeply rooted in the soil of centuries.

With warm hands, the girl reaches into Sam and gently worries at them. It hurts. He is afraid. She strokes his forehead, and he relaxes, and they come free. They are dreadful. Sam feels as if he has swallowed sharp shards of bitter cold dry ice. A leering face on a card, a terrifying ride in a taxi, a marionette dance. He tries to scream, but he can’t breathe. He is paralyzed by the cold, cold past.

But then the girl helps him. She cups him, all of him, the good and the bad, the pleasure and the pain, in her warm, soft hands, and Sam breathes her gentle scent, and he feels more alive than he ever has, anytime.

“Thank you,” he says.

“You’re welcome,” she says. It is the most sincere exchange he has had in his life.

“When will He be here?” he asks.

“He should arrive any minute.”

“Let’s meet him outside.” She wheels him out.

Sartire is in the crowd that has formed outside of City Hall. He sees Sam and gives him a big smile. His millenium and a half among these placid people have mellowed him a great deal. “Finally made it out of the rut, huh?” he grins.

“Yeah, I guess I did,” replies Sam with a smile.

The Creator arrives. He seems a little less majestic when you’re not afraid of him, Sam reflects.

“Welcome to Earth, Creator,” he says.

“Are you prepared to join Me?”

“We think so.”

“Then come to Me!”

Millions of small flecks of light race in from the horizon. They assemble loosely in the shape of a column similar to the Creator. One by one, the people in the crowd become radiant and shrink into brilliant darting points. The new sparks take their places in the pillar. The pretty girl with Sam begins to glow.

“Good bye,” says Sam. She chuckles, then shrinks and darts away.

In minutes, the only human beings left in the form of man are Sam and Sartire. Then they begin to glow.

“They saved the best seats in the house for you and me,” says Sartire. Then he dwindles to a point and shoots to the top of the pillar.

Sam finds himself shrinking. He suddenly realizes what is happening. He will be the keystone in the tower. Shrinking, shrinking. He is a light bulb, a match flame, a firefly, an atom, he is—Sam! He takes off, does a loop-the-loop and flits to his spot at the top of the pillar.

With a thunderous crash, he/they is/are one/many. An entity called Man exists in which every part is unique but the whole is unified. Somewhere near the middle is the girl who helped Sam. “See, silly,” she whispers, “it’s not ‘goodbye,’ it’s ‘hello’!”

Man and the Creator depart together into the universe to play—there is no other word for it. For an immeasurably long period of time they manipulate matter and energy in every way possible. They dive into black holes, make galaxies collide, inhabit every type of body that could ever exist—they do literally everything.
When they’re all through, they come to rest on a planet, and the Creator says to Man, “Well, now what?”
Man replies, “I thought you would know. You’re the god.”
“Well, let’s think some more.”
“All right.”
They try for another immeasurably long time to invent something new to do, but They can imagine no combination of matter that They haven’t tried, no energy field that They haven’t experimented with.
“I give up,” grumbles the Creator. “You were a waste of four billion years and a good planet.” He makes ready to destroy Man.
But there is still some animal left in Man, and He strikes first, obliterating His creator.
Now Man has to make His own fun.
I’m sure He’ll think of something.
ON SUCCESS

Remember all those hours spent years ago?
In search of things to do, to see and to know.
The thousands of games played with best friends,
who have now all grown up, strayed apart, gone to different ends.

The years start to blur,
and the incidents begin to fade,
But one never forgets the friends made.

Regrets? No, they are not murmurous as yet,
But time seems more treasured,
the older one gets.

One views friendship in a different light,
As the heart objects more and more,
To postponing delight.

Hours in a day?
To be sure they are few,
But longer shall they seem
If you choose to spend them with only you.

A vital message?
To most there is none,
But in four long years,
I think I've found at least one:

"Bring back some of those hours,
Spent years ago,
In search of things to do, to see and to know.

Remain not idle,
For it is too easy to be,
A face in the crowd,
Using another's path to prosperity."

Advice is often given,
Almost as much as it is seldom taken.

But in regard to the path that I have outlined,
As you no doubt will hear;

"Real success, my man, cannot be obtained in this way"

Or so they say.

F.S.W. '83
A poet oft is as he writes
from me to me to you.
He places sparkle in the stars,
to light its golden hue.

He aids the stench of dragon’s breath
the dead he brings to life.
Endless mazes in his mind—
from joy to war and strife.

The longing desire to love he’ll sate
you’ll give your heart away.
His stanzas were the needful bait,
they said just what you’d say.

And I am he who reads your mind
I place your thoughts on paper.
Don’t think of me as too sublime
as thoughts might tend to taper.

I hold command o’er all I write
my wishes all come true;
yet I cannot control my heart
for that belongs to you.

Timothy S. Weible