Spring 1986

The Lantern Vol. 52, No. 2, Spring 1986

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Spring 1986

A collection of poetry, prose, photography, and artwork composed for the spring term, 1986, 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.
It is the first day of summer,
Even though the calendar says it is April.
The bus stops at the corner, lights flashing,
And the children tear off
With their lunchboxes swinging.
But when they get to the corner,
They mill around,
Loathe to go home.
The oldest boys stand in the street and watch
As the pre-teen girls walk by, talking of makeup.
Two slightly younger boys
Engage in a brief scuffle,
Then break apart, breathing hard, and dusty,
To join their friends who prove their prowess
At street-pole climbing -- a sport eventually won
By the tomboy in the group.
The littlest girl trudges home,
Strawberry Shortcake umbrella dragging.
She has not gone to school long enough
For the enchantment to wear off
And the long, dreamy summer stretch ahead
Like a miracle or a return to Eden.

Sally Stricker
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Editorial

This semester I have seen some welcome changes in the submissions to the Lantern. There are more short stories than ever before, and for once we had the freedom to cull the best and most intriguing short stories to publish. As you flip through the pages, you will notice many photographs, elicited by our contest. I rejoice to see so many printed this issue, because in years past we have always lacked photo interest. I hope that this issue encourages photographers to submit their work to the Lantern in future issues.

I extend my congratulations to Craig DiLouie, who took a creative risk and wrote his first one-act play this semester. I’m sure that you will enjoy it, and that you will be as impressed as I am at the infinite resources and diverse talents of the Ursinus community.

A special word of appreciation goes out to Miss Tuscano and the circulation aides at the library for all the help they have given us. I also have a fond thank-you for all my staff members, especially Maria D’Arcangelo, and for Dr. Lionarons, and I fervently hope next year’s editor Angela Salas and her staff have a year as successful and stimulating as this has been.

Now I invite you to enter into the Lantern. Read these pages as if you are exploring a great castle and you will be amazed at what you discover. Descend into the dungeons and find human souls in torment -- share their despair. Then escape by the strength of your own inner courage. Gaze upon beautiful tapestries woven across lifetimes. Peer into the chambers and meet the people residing there -- people like yourself, people you will never forget. Mount a spiral staircase to the highest tower, and like a king, gaze out upon the world and know that it is yours. Above all, follow the enticing gleam of creativity and joy as the Lantern shines on.
THE CARTOONIST

His daily notes betray his pain,
Show summer sun when he feels rain,
Belie his hurt with a smiling face,
A contradiction in a four-block space.

His pen and ink draw the mirage
From the drafty corner of a two-car garage;
The laughs of his characters drown out his cries,
In this black-and-white world where nobody dies.

The tests are complete and the doctors have spoken,
Yet the heart in his work can never be broken;
As long as his strip continues to run
Death's just a flaw of imagination.

Cancer's nonexistent in his cartoon bubble
Where childhood's eternal in an absence of trouble;
Ten months to live and and he continues to draw,
His love for his work may be his tragic flaw.

Death is approaching, yet we're unaware
Of a fading man's anguish and the pain that he bears;
We'll just keep on reading until we notice one day
That the strip's been replaced by a blank on the page.

Bill Connolly
"Hey! Where do you think you’re going?"
"Um, I’m looking for something I seem to have lost."
"Well, I hate to tell you this, but around here, you’re not allowed to just jump
down and head back through time just to look for something."
"But it’s really important that I find it."
"Listen, what are you looking for?"
"My heart."
"What?"
"My heart. See, I kind of stopped caring about people a while back. I haven’t felt
any love for anyone in a long time. So, I figured I must’ve lost my heart somewhere
along the way."
"Oh, well, I guess it’ll be alright, just this once. But the Boss doesn’t usually
approve of this kind of thing."
"Thanks. I really appreciate this."
"No problem. Hey, kid?"
"Yeah?"
"You’d better bring some tissues along with you. A walk back through the times
of your life can be a pretty rough experience."
"Thanks again. By the way, who are you?"
"Don’t you know? I’m St. Peter and this here is my gate."
"That’s pretty impressive."
"Thanks. I have a feeling that when you find your heart, you’re gonna be even
more impressed with what’s on the inside..."

Lisa R. Talarico
Scene 1

The setting is Amy's college dorm room. This is what is seen: stage right, a bookcase full of books, stage center, a desk, and stage left, paintings on the wall. Amy is sitting at her desk, sipping from a glass of wine; she is frustratedly trying to write. Pachelbel's Canon is on the stereo.

There is a knock at the door.

AMY: Enter!

H Tucker enters from stage left, glances briefly and disinterestedly at the paintings on the wall, and crosses to the desk.

H Tucker: Hi Amy.

AMY: (Looks at watch) You're an hour late. What happened this time?

H Tucker: (Excitedly) Some of the guys were shotgunning beer in my suite. Couldn't pass it up. You should of been there.

AMY: (Disgusted) Uh huh.

H Tucker: Say Amy, uh, you're not still sore at us for putting your underwear in the "Great Land Treasures" exhibit, are ya?

AMY: (Bristles, then calms) No, H Tucker, why would I still be angry at a stupid, immature, cretinish stunt like that?

H Tucker: Uh, right. (Takes off jacket.) Well, we might as well get started. Ol' Dr. Samsa wants us to write the one act play by Thursday--which only gives us two nights.

AMY: We had a week to do it. (Sighs) All right. Would you like a glass of white wine before we start?

H Tucker: (Now sitting down, he looks around) Got any beer?

AMY: Ugh! I'd sooner drink urine.

H Tucker: Right. I'll pass on the wine.

AMY: (Gulps down her glass) OK. Let's start with the main character. I thought it would be neat to toy with some existentialist themes, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Sartre, focussing on a young woman in Paris--

H Tucker: Wait! I've got something!

AMY: (Excited) Yes, what is it?

H Tucker: We'll get Alan Alda and Meryl Streep to star in the movie version of the play. I can see it now--(hurriedly) "Incredible--brilliant--stunning"--Chicago Tribune.

AMY: H Tucker--


AMY: H Tucker--

H Tucker: "Pretty darn good." Collegeville Independent

AMY: H Tucker! Will you be serious!

H Tucker: (Laughing) Be serious? Why? Samsa really doesn't care about this play--it doesn't affect our grade that much, and we'll slide by. Actually Amy, there's nothing about this school I can take seriously--I just want to have a good time. How's that for Kierkegaardian existentialism? And if you would lighten up a bit and get away from all these books you'd have a good time too.
AMY: Those books are my friends. They’re proof to me there’s more to life than having a good time. There’s art. I don’t want to go to your parties so I can smell cigarette smoke and drink stale beer and have obnoxious drunk men start meaningless conversations with me, thinking whatever they’re saying is verbal foreplay before sex. No thanks, Hocker, I don’t want your parties or your good time. Now then, about the main character--
HOCKER: Should be an average American, a beer drinker, a Bears fan, a man who cheered during Rambo--
AMY: Boring, boring. There’s no flair, nothing interesting in that type of character. I really want to impress Dr. Samsa with this.
HOCKER: (Sarcastic) How’s this for flair: a young sadist driven mad by his own drug crazed world of identity crises and confusion?
AMY: Oh, writing from experience, are we?
HOCKER: Ha, ha. You know you’re sexy when you’re abusive?
AMY: We’re not going to get anywhere on this, Hocker.
HOCKER: What’s the problem?
AMY: You.
HOCKER: Me? What about me?
AMY: You’re an immature, irresponsible, boorish cretin!
HOCKER: Don’t play with words. What do you really think of me?
AMY: (Sighs) Look, I’ll write the play, OK? You’ll still get half the credit--but we can’t work together. I don’t want to just “slide by.”
HOCKER: Hey, hey. (Repentant) Sorry, Amy. Tell you what--come over to my room tomorrow night at eight--OK? Sleep on it for now, OK?
AMY: (Suspicious) OK.
HOCKER: (Starts to exit stage left after putting his coat on and collecting his shuffle of papers) Tomorrow night at eight. (Smiling) And don’t be late, Amy.
AMY: (Cooled off now) Ha. I won’t, Hocker. See you then.

Blackout.

Scene 2

The wall swivels around during blackout, changing setting by showing other side. This is what is seen: at stage left, Mick Jagger and other rock posters are splattered on the wall, at stage center, Hocker’s desk piled up with papers, beer cans, and books, and at stage right, a pile of clothes on the floor, a bean bag chair, and a telescope pointing towards stage right. Let’s Spend the Night Together by the Rolling Stones is on the stereo. There is a knock at the door.
HOCKER: (At desk) Come in!

Amy enters timidly, looking around like she’s at a primitive cultures museum. Hocker turns off the music.

HOCKER: (Points to bean bag chair) Have a seat. I’m all set. Want a beer?

AMY: Ugh! I’d sooner drink--oh all right (Hocker opens beer bottle and sniffs the liquid. He falls into ecstasy.)
HOCKER: Ah, what bouquet! (Shakes bottle gently) What body! Oh! (Offers Amy beer cap) Wanna sniff the cap?

AMY: I’ll just take the beer, thanks. (She drinks and winces)

HOCKER: Did you think about what type of character we should have?
AMY: I think we can use an average American male--but I refuse to let him belike Rambo, and he doesn’t like the Bears--I’m a Patriots fan from Boston, you know. I imagined him to be a devoted husband and hard worker during the week, but on the weekends he frequents dance clubs and parties a lot.
HOCKER: Ok, and how does this sound: he feels the weekends are a great release, but he’s unsatisfied with his life--he wants something more out of it. He’s searching... (Makes empty hand gestures like it’s on the tip of his tongue.)
AMY: (Pretending it’s a game of charades.) Sounds like, sounds like--Truth! Uh, uh the Meaning of Life!
HOCKER: No! Beauty! That’s it. He’s searching for Beauty. He always wanted to be an artist. But his family pressured him into getting into business.
AMY: So he quits his job and goes back to college to read the greats--Hemingway, Poe, Frost, Whitman, Shakespeare... 

HOCKER: *(Gives an exaggerated wince)* No no no. He wants to creatively express himself in his own way, not study how other people do it.

AMY: He can’t have an appreciation for art without knowing the greats in literature.

HOCKER: Good poetry doesn’t have to be what’s popular. I was in a public bathroom once and I read on the wall “A sign of maturity is to seek long term satisfaction, rather than pursuing immediate gratification.” Someone else had scrawled underneath, “Does that mean immature people prematurely ejaculate?” Now that’s art! *(Laughs)*

AMY: You read that in a public restroom, huh? I thought I heard a toilet flush while you were talking. You’re such a Dionysian, Hocker.

HOCKER: *(Swigs from his own beer)* And you’re a victim of slave morality. I can quote Nietzsche too you know.

AMY: *(gets up and paces towards the telescope and pauses next to it.)* All right, he goes to art school instead and starts expressing himself and getting involved with the theater. Hey, what’s this telescope pointing at anyway? *(Looks. An expression of horror spreads across her face.)* I can see the girls’ dorm with this—including the second floor bathroom! You pig!


AMY: All right all right. We’re pressed for time. So the main character then realizes he can’t support his family while in art school and goes back to the job, happy he had his big release which satisfied.

HOCKER: No way, Amy. He stays with it.

AMY: He can’t choose his heart over his head; he chooses his head over his heart. Maybe we can find a solution to this dichotomous approach to his dreams.

HOCKER: Dichotomous? What the hell’s a dichotomous? A flying reptile? Why don’t you speak English?

AMY: *(Indignant)* You want me to apologize for a superior vocabulary? You should try speaking English. I heard you in lunch today saying to your pals, “It was totally out of hand man.” What kind of dialect is that?

HOCKER: How did you hear me at lunch? When were you around? You’re never there.

AMY: I was...watching you. *(Quickly)* Well, maybe our man could stick with it until he’s completely satiated by doing something really creative and artistic--like winning a painting contest, or performing in a hit play. We can strike a balance.

HOCKER: Yeah, a balance. Looks like a good plot. We still have a while. Let’s start writing.

AMY: *(Sits on the desk next to him)* Let’s finish our beer first. *(They clink bottles, and drink)* *(Blackout)*

Craig DiLouie

---

**Haiku**

**Candles flaming high**

**Such beauty, simplicity --**

**Share with me your flame.**

Beth A. Long
MOMENT OF TRUTH

Sometimes I conclude I'm a real coward
(Have always been a coward)
And in choosing cowardice I've limited
What could have become (could yet become)
Assuming cowardice is connected to choices and
The fear that dashes wished-for choices.
On rainy February Fridays, when the rain and cold
And mist hang for days,
When the rain beats against the barren trees and
Blackens the bark,
On such days I can single out cowardice.
To get hold of a self-truth, hold it in your mind,
examine it...
I will thus achieve a great thing this day if I manage
To isolate this single truth from the blur of consciousness,
Examine it, grow from it.
In conversations with you, growing now longer and warmer,
I realize that I, too, am fraught with fear of situation,
At once pulling toward and away:
When every atom of my true self cries to linger, to act,
to involve,
I withhold--it is as though my soul were momentarily paralyzed.
I grow inarticulate--something restricts and constricts my
acting self.
(The old familiar tentativeness wins another skirmish)
Becoming friend, methinks an arch enemy lurks inside.
Years gone by the "almosts" of my life remained "almosts,"
And those great "almost" desires of my soul
Died in the ashes of "Never."
And "never" is an ugly word that breathes
Negative finality.
When will my soul learn that a battle is a-raging
And fear (no fantasy foe) would lock me in a deathgrip?
"Never" is led through the nose by fear that would paralyze
My path.
Unless I take on battle gear and steel myself against fear
The fact of myriad "might have beens" is a guaranteed eternity
For me.

Eric Chandlee Wilson
There was a man
Standing beside me
In the dark.
Quietly he asked
If I knew the time
To which I replied
"It’s 8:15."
We stood a while longer
Waiting for his mode
Of transportation
To arrive
Glancing at silhouettes
Hurrying by.

One of the stars above
Turned to his friend
And asked if he noticed
My gloom
“Yes,” said the other
Then started to glow
Just a bit brighter
And waited for me
To notice his shine
To wish upon his life.

The man beside me
Looked up to the sky
And mentioned the beauty
Of the heavens.
I followed his gaze
To the moon.

A loud motor engine
Growled to a stop
Just before us
And waited
Rather impatiently
For the man beside me
To board.
His hands guided me
Into his arms
And held me there
For only a moment
But long enough
To pass his soul
Through my heart
And back again.
His small, quiet plea
Made me so very aware
Of how scared, lost, and
Vulnerable
He was feeling—
"Wait for me..."
I couldn't answer him
For the lump in my throat
Held back every emotion
I was feeling.
We kissed, and then
He walked out of
My life.

The star and his friend
Flew across the sky
And crashed into
The earth.

Lisa R. Talarico
Mad Song/Cassandra’s Song

i look at summer
i see snow
i feel white clouds
explode
and cry all over the world
i see the children but they’re only
haunted eyes and bloated bellies
and shadows of what might have been
once i remember
i heard a screaming shell
i felt the world split
in red hot fire
one angry day
but i can hear nothing now
all is silence
all is death
and i crawl under the snow
to watch the bloody moon
creep closer

e.m.
The crowd was everywhere. Knee deep in trash and scum, we all stood restlessly, wondering when they would start. Anxiety was thick; patience was wearing out. If they didn't begin soon, the crowd would go crazy; fear would overrule our better judgment. Suddenly, the siren began to scream out its incessant curse. It was time to begin.

At the top of the grey, crumbling tower which stood before us, an old man appeared. Slowly he made his way to the thin rail which surrounded the cylindrical structure. The old man looked down upon us and slowly raised his hands in the air to silence the crowd's murmur. As we closed our mouths and strained our ears to listen, the old man began to speak.

"You have all been gathered here today for a very special purpose," he cackled. "The Council has reached a decision pertaining to the Huntington case. Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Huntington will be hanged at dawn tomorrow. That is all." The old man finished with a nod to the crowd. Then, as if he'd never been there, he vanished into the tower.

The crowd was stunned. Several women were crying. I felt dead inside; I had no idea how serious the Book of Rules had been to the Council. We had all assumed the Rules were for our protection, not our destruction. But ever since the last World War, we were slowly learning different.

"Crowley?" peeped a small voice beside me.

"Yeah?" I said as I gazed into a sad pair of grey eyes.

"Why are they being hanged? They didn't do anything wrong, did they?" The young girl almost pleaded with me. I didn't know exactly what to tell her, so I explained the newspaper article that Council had written as explanation for the Huntington's trial.

"Sheeda, the Huntington's broke one of the Council's Rules. That's the worse thing you can do these days. Especially for an Inferior. The Superiors make the Rules, we follow them. If we don't, we end up paying for our disobedience."

Sheeda didn't seem convinced of the damage committed by the Huntington's, but there was nothing more I could tell her. The crowd was slowly dispersing; the dank odor of the filthy streets was driving us back into our dank, filthy homes. We had no choice, really. The smell was a little less offensive in those homes which held smuggled powder lightly sprinkled onto the floor, couch, or cot. So, for those of us with powder, we had it a little easier. For those of us without, well, it was easier to live with the smell in the presence of our families, rather than with the rats on the street.

As I entered my father's home on the corner across the street from the old park, I noticed the kitchen door standing ajar. I approached it rather hesitantly, because of the tiny whimpering sound coming from inside. Something made me want to turn and run, yet I knew I must enter. I finally touched the doorknob and slowly pushed the door open until the kitchen came into full view. A tired figure with greying hair was resting her head on the table in the middle of the room.

"Mom?" I asked quietly. "Mom, are you okay?"

"Just tired," she mumbled, her arms crossed in front of her face.

"Did you hear the Council's verdict?"
"Yes. Your father stopped in for a minute to tell me. I can't believe they're doing this to Marge and Ed. Such good people, too." She paused for a moment. "Crowley, you father is out back chopping wood for the fire tomorrow. You'd better go help him." She sounded so sad, so tired, and so old. I went out back to help my father and spent the rest of the day chopping out the heart of the Council. Sleep didn't come at all for me that night. I was too wound up about the next day. After thinking the entire night, pondering and wrestling with a hundred questions, I still didn't understand what had happened to all of our lives. The last World War was over a decade ago, something I hardly even remember. From what I'm told, it was a horrid, terrifying war. In the time since, the survivors had gone through hell; we would have been better off dead. But then again, the Council was working on that anyway. The Inferiors are like slaves to the Council and all the Superiors. When the Huntingtons disobeyed their Masters, they encountered trouble leading to death. Had they been Superiors, they would have been honored for what they did; instead, they would be murdered.

Early the next morning, about an hour before dawn, the Siren sounded and the town awoke. Within half an hour, we all began to assemble in the old park across the street, in front of the biggest oak known throughout four surrounding counties. We hauled armloads of freshly chopped wood with us for the fire afterwards. The scaffold had been set up in the dark of the night, and two long, thick ropes hung from a large oak branch high above our heads. Mr. and Mrs. Huntington stood on either side of the scaffold, each surrounded by 11 Council members. The Council was dressed in its customary black robes while Mr. and Mrs. Huntington wore deep wine-colored robes with hoods large enough to cover their somber faces.

When the crowd was assembled, the Siren blew once again and the Superiors moved into position encircling us. The old man who had pronounced the Council's verdict the day before now walked onto the scaffold. He raised his hand to silence the murmur of the crowd. And then he spoke.

"We have gathered here today to witness the hanging of these two Inferiors! With this statement, each Council member pointed an accusatory finger at the Huntingtons and screamed in unison, "Inferior!"

The crowd's heart jumped in alarm.

"These Inferiors must be punished for their act of betrayal towards the Council," the old man continued. "Let their deaths be a lesson to you all. You are here to obey your Superiors. We are the new race of human beings. You are only our slaves. You are Inferior."

"Inferior!" cried the Council.

"Let them be hanged!" yelled the old man.

With that, Mr. and Mrs. Huntington were rushed onto the scaffold. Their hoods were pulled over their heads and nooses secured about their necks. A small, muffled cry could be heard from beneath Mrs. Huntington's hood. And then it was over. The small trap doors dropped from beneath the couple's feet and they let out their last breath. and yet, one more died at that hanging. Deep within the woman, a love child was yanked from life and thrust back into the world from which it came, a world in which it should have stayed, according to the Council. My insides were torn; a new life was the cause of its own death.

We all brought our firewood forward and threw it around the scaffold, around the hanging bodies. The Council was convinced that if we took part in the burning, the fire would burn images into our minds and we would think twice before betraying our Superiors. The Council was right.

It was the old man who lit the fire. The crowd watched the blaze burn the bodies, and then, the old oak tree. But what I remember most about that day is not the fire, nor the hanging. I remember the slow, droning chant of the Council most of all -- "In-fer-i-or...In-fer-i-or...In-fer-i-or..."

Lisa R. Talarico
Part I - The Descent

Lying alone in a darkened room
Is a woman
She's been there three weeks now
Venturing out only infrequently
for food, or the toilet
It wasn't so bad at first -
She overslept, then called in sick
Stayed home all day - to think
But the thoughts piled up and grew
Came to life on their own. They
Swirled hazily through her brain, then
Grew too large to be kept -
And escaped
They circled her, prescribed her every move,
Constantly bringing new twists
To the fore.
They formed a wall between this woman
And the rest of life
The door was locked, the shades drawn
The phone machine turned on.
She stopped calling in, and
Didn't bother getting up.
Finally, she gave in - couldn't fight them anymore
As they dragged her down and down and down...
She closed off her mind.
She stopped feeling; she stopped thinking;
She stopped caring.
She just lay there, among
the Shadows.

*******

Beth Henderson
"...And then what happened?"

The old man took a very long drag from his cigarette.

"They started to kill everyone that he thought was inferior to his master race."

He did not answer any of the boy’s questions with enthusiasm. He was old and it hurt to remember the past. Small beads of sweat had begun to trickle down his forehead.

Who were the people he killed?" It seemed like there was no end to the boy’s curiosity.

Innocent people. Young, old, male, female, but they were mostly Jews."

"Jews?"

"That was their religion."

"Oh."

World War Two. Now there was a war. The old man thought about his grandfather who had fought in that war. He had been decorated for bravery (which probably meant that he had volunteered to do something that no one else was stupid enough to try, and that he had been lucky enough to survive).

The boy had been especially fascinated by this war. In fact, the old man had the impression that the boy thought Hitler was someone to look up to, like some sort of superhero.

World War II had been before the old man was even born. Now, seventy years or so into his own life (he had lost track some time ago), he sat here below the earth’s surface being grilled by a ten year old.

He had not adjusted well to living underground, but it had become necessary since the ozone layer had been destroyed in the last war. He had been told that there were a few humans still surviving on the surface, along with numerous varieties of insects, so they had to build chemical barriers to keep the surface inhabitants from contaminating the artificial underworld. Even so, it was hard to say which of the two, humans or insects, were ruling the surface now. The old man knew in his heart though that the humans were keeping the old traditions alive.

He had been writing in his diary when the boy came to him with the spherical object in his hands.

“What’s this?” he had asked. The old man had thought he would have a heart attack on the spot. He looked into the boy’s obviously curious eyes and replied, “It’s a globe.” That had been twelve hours and six packs of cigarettes ago.

“They ended the war with a bomb that destroyed an entire city in this country.” He pointed to the old islands or Japan on the globe. “That was the beginning of the Atomic Age."

“What does that mean?”

“Well, they didn’t use their old stuff anymore. They started to invent better...ah...newer...”

“Toys!” the boy exclaimed.

The old man was not sure if this was meant to sound like a question or a cry of joy. Then he looked across the cement walled room to the boy’s toy chest. A few of the child’s playthings were visible: a cap gun, a rifle, and some toy bullets (so you could practice your aim on a friend). There was also an old china doll. The bright colors of its dress had long since faded. Most of the doll’s head was either cracked or missing. Now he wondered how old the girl was that the doll had once belonged to.

“Yeah, I guess you could call them--toys, adult’s toys.”

He started to go into detail about Korea and Vietnam. The boy seemed to have trouble understanding these. Maybe they weren’t exciting enough for the boy, he thought.

“But didn’t they take a break?”

“From what?”

“From fighting?”

“No, someone always had something to fight about.” The old man was tired and was hoping this interrogation would end soon. He wondered what time it was. Looking out of the ceiling bubble he tried to observe the moon’s position, but the clouds were covering it tonight. He would just have to guess at what time it was and hope that he could seal off the bubble before the sun rose.

He wanted to end this discussion so he could get some rest. “The last known recorded war was thirty or so years ago” (he was guessing, of course, at the time span), “It lasted one day.”

He couldn’t help feeling sorry for the boy. There had been a lot of good things on the surface: flowers, trees, animals. That was all gone now, all gone.

Those who had survived the war were all dead now, except the old man. There was still a large number of people living underground, the children of the survivors (like the boy), but the average life span was only about twenty five now (which made the old man a freak of nature, but he knew his time was rapidly approaching). On the surface, the life span was even shorter (but they had to be keeping the old traditions alive; they just had to be).

“It only took one day to fight the war? It couldn’t have been that great. What were they fighting about?”
"The same things they had been fighting over for thousands of years."
It was time to terminate this conversation. "Do you have any more questions?"
"Yeah, which one was the 'War to End All Wars'?"
"It should have been the first one...the very first one."

Epilogue

The western surface tribes remained alert.
Suddenly, the tribes from the east advanced over the hill.
They held their weapons--mostly sticks, metal rods, and stones--over their heads. They drew closer, screaming and yelling.
They had come for the food and shelter which belonged to the tribes from the west.
They were keeping the old traditions alive.

Thomas F.V. Prisco

---

Beast

I met a small beast all warm and furry;
He was to be killed because he had claws.
He meant them no harm; thought they were silly
He was to be stilled for he broke their laws.

If there were no fangs then how could he eat?
If there were no claws then how could he itch?
But still they feared him. From him they retreat.
With a silly cause and a fearful twitch.

So I met this beast; doomed to rest finally;
Killed by another for his tragic flaws.
He didn't fear me; we didn't scurry;
We watched each other and then we shook paws.

Stephen Pote
Questions Yet Unanswered

Where are you now? What are you doing.
Did you finish school - did you find a way
to harness that raging flame in you
and make it do
as you wish?
Have you put those ideas of yours on film
Is your creativity
showing the world
who you are?
Did you lose yourself again - did you fall back
on your world of booze and drugs
becoming who you want to be
only in your
illusions?
Has that raging flame taken over
controlling your life
out of control
destroying you
Did that semi-dormant threat within you
awaken once again - one final time
Did it take you by surprise
did you tire of fighting?
In the years I knew you, I saw glimpses
of all these paths. You may have
chosen one
or one chose you
If the first path was the one, I am glad.
It is the one you turned around for,
and worked so hard
to reach
If the second loomed too large, I have hope
You may still find the nerve
to show the world
who you really are
If the third was your fate, I mourn
your lost chance, your unclaimed dream
your burning rage beaten down
from within
Where am I now? What am I doing.
I am pondering a lost friend
and wondering
if I will ever know.                   Beth Henderson

Aphrodite: A Lover's Lament

I have a cache
Where the memories stay
Erected as a cenotaph.
Locked behind escutcheon,
Means of slow destruction,
Lasting as a photograph,-

She was born of the ocean,
Wafted by the breeze.
My absolute devotion -
Hopeless to appease.

Geoffrey Allen
The Most Limber Boy

It had been a tough week at work and Janet Fisher was more than ready for a drink as she headed for her favorite Friday evening bar. Feeling her usual weekend joy, she paused as she entered, taking in the usual scene; all the other people slowly losing their harassed workday appearance as they mingled. She scanned their faces, looking for her friends, and seeing they hadn’t arrived yet, she let her eyes fall on a figure sitting alone at the far corner of the bar.

He was an attractive man, dressed in the typical business wardrobe of all the men there and she judged him to be in his late twenties or early thirties. She felt a pang of sympathy for him, because he seemed lonely, and she decided to approach him and thought perhaps he’d join her with her friends when they came in.

“Hi, mind if I sit here?” she asked with a smile. He looked up, startled as if he’d been deeply asleep and dreaming. But he smiled, and when he spoke his voice was unusually gentle.

“Oh yes, please do,” he said. “Here, let me buy you a drink.” he continued as she settled herself on the stool beside him and tucked her purse and briefcase underneath.

“Thank you. My name’s Janet, Janet Fisher.” she began, as she turned to face him. He was looking at her and she noticed with a vaguely uncomfortable feeling that his eyes were very pale blue and seemed to be focused not on her, but on something very far away. “Perhaps he’s just drunk” she thought to herself, doubting the words even as she thought them.

“Glad to know you Janet. I’m Tom Smith.” he answered. The bartender appeared with their drinks and as he set them down he gave Janet a look that puzzled her but before she could give it any thought Tom was asking “What do you do for a living?”

Giving him her attention again she said, “I’m in public relations. What do you do?”

“I’m an accountant. It’s a small firm about 20 blocks from here, but I always walk here after work on Friday. I only just got here.” he answered.

“Oh” said Janet, not quite knowing how to reply to that. “Are you...umm...interested in keeping fit then, an athletic sort of person?” she finished.

“Why yes,” he said, pulling himself up proudly. “In college I was elected Most Limber Boy” he continued with a kind of triumph in his voice. Then he took a sip of his drink and seemed to drift away into his own world.

Janet paused, wondering what to say next. “Should I pursue it?” she wondered, “or should I try to change the subject?” Before she could do either, he spoke again.

“What times, what times they were.” he said. “Of course I’m not so limber as I was then, but I can still do some of my best stunts. Walking here is good for me, have to stay in shape if you want to be limber you know.” He turned to Janet expectantly, waiting for a response.

Janet smiled weakly and unable to say more murmured “I suppose so.” He seemed satisfied, however, and went on.

“I still remember my first Limber Cup. I won it in my freshman year. I was the first freshman in the history of the college to take the Limber Cup. Such a fuss.” He smiled, remembering. “I was front page news in the college paper that week and even in the local town paper. From then on, it was well known that I had the Limber Cup in the bag every year.” Now he looked smug. “But of course the competitions continued, because there were still some boys who thought they could out-limber me. They never did though. I took that Limber Cup all four years of college. Would you believe some of those boys competing with me were still doing this?” And he stood up, held his arms out to his sides, and tilted to the right, balancing on his right foot while bringing his left foot up. His right hand touched the floor and he swung upright and sat down. “Can you believe that?” he asked, sipping his drink.
“No, how ridiculous.” responded Janet with a worried laugh. “Listen, why don’t you let me ask the bartender to call a cab for you? I think maybe you’ve had enough for tonight O.K.?” she asked gently.

“Nonsense. This is my first drink and besides I never get drunk, dulls the senses and then well obviously you aren’t as limber. Now when I won the competitions it was a tradition to hand the winner a huge bottle of champagne which they shook, popped the cork, held up in triumph and then chugged down while holding the Limber Cup aloft. Ahh, that was such a thrill standing on the stage, the crowd going wild. Naturally that was the only time I drank - I was always in limber training you see.”

And, as if to prove this true, he began to stretch his limbs out, smiling to himself.

“I guess you must have been.” Janet replied, wondering how to politely end the conversation.

“Where are my friends?” she thought.

“Oh,” he sighed. “If only times like those could last. I have to admit, every once in a while I put on my old Limber Suit and do a few routines.”

“Your Limber Suit?” Janet couldn’t help asking.

“Yes, my limber suit.” he answered as if shocked that she didn’t know what one was. “It was a long sleeve baggy shirt and baggy pants that came to mid-calf. Of course the Limber Suits I wore for my award winning routines are in the showcase at school along with my Limber Cups and photographs of the competitions.

There’s one photograph of my junior year when I had injured my back a month before the competition. They weren’t sure I’d heal in time, but I pulled through and won. You should have seen the crowd and when I came out on stage, they hadn’t been told I was performing and when I came out and began my routine, oh, they just went wild. The cheers and clapping. Why, they needed campus security to hold back the mob when the judges presented me with the Limber Cup.” He looked at Janet, who managed to give him a slight nod, and he went on. “Then in my senior year, well the anticipation was high because they knew it was my last year. The crowd was crazed with excitement as I performed. And, well, let me show you what I finished with, and you’ll know why they were so excited.”

As he stood up to perform, Janet signaled to the bartender and when he came over she whispered “You better get him out of here, he’s really in bad shape.”

The bartender smiled sympathetically and started to whisper “No, he’s not drunk he’s...”

At this point, he returned to his stool and said, “There, you see. Let me tell you, when I received my last Limber Cup, everyone had tears in their eyes.” The bartender shook his head at Janet and went to serve a man at the other end of the bar.

He went on, “Before I left college, I passed on a few tricks of the trade to some of the more upstanding Limber Boy competitors. Why, they were so grateful and honored...”

As he talked on, Janet spotted her friends coming in. She stood up and waved and they made their way over.

“Hi Janet, how ya doin’? Sorry we’re late, we got held up at work. Listen, who’s your friend?” The jumbled voices of her friends surrounded her and she felt an immense relief at this rescue.

“Yes,” he went on not noticing the new arrivals. “They named the Limber Cup after me. They announced it at graduation. The “Tom Smith Limber Cup”.

“Oh, just someone I was sitting with. Let’s go get a table.” she said giving them an urgent look. She said a hasty “good-bye” to him, and they walked away. He took a sip of his drink, a grin slowly spreading on his face.

Jennifer Healy
STYLE AND...

As I make my
Grand Entrance (gracefully)
A burst of applause?
I have (finally)
Entered my life
Suddenly
It occurs to me
There's no applause
Only cold...
Clear...
Ringing...
Resounding...
Silence.
And I realize
I'm missing my lines
Missing my cues
Missing myself
So - -
I exit
Gracefully.

Rebecca Moore
Thoughts From My Confusion

I’m not you
You’re not me
I’m glad it worked out this way
I’m not the kind
To live your life
And you’re sure not the kind to live mine.

You enjoy the
highly intellectualized
discussions
I find them
contrived.
The talk I love is
of you, of me
The tree
on the hill
The water on the shore.
What I think
What I feel.

So you’re almost a CPA
You know
(and have known)
all the right people
and read all the right books.
You’ve hit all the music festivals
and intimidated Norman Mailer.
Even if “Huis Clos” is better than “No Exit”...
I still can’t read French.

So I’m going to be a gym teacher...
I do what I can
out here where the buses stop
at 7:30 p.m.
I fight back in my own little ways.
And some aren’t so little.

But... ah yes - the muse
has once more descended
from the rafters. Is she
Thalia or Melpomene?
Or perhaps Erato, to entice you
from your sleepy state.
Am I no more than a teddy bear?

To you, perhaps, I am like Oblio.
By your standards, this
might just be.
By my nature,
the point
is this.

I can love you
I can support your goals
and your dreams
Only if I hold my own;
Yours don’t all fit me.
No do I want them to.
And I won’t try to force you
into mine - They won’t fit.

Beth Henderson
ANDY

Grassy fields
Where little boys played baseball
In the summertime
When the sun burns hot and bright
And the air smells of
Roses growing wild over the
Backyard wall.
Summer joy
Fishing and running barefoot
Eating watermelon on the back steps
And catching fireflies in jars
With holes poked through the lids
In the twinkling twilight air.
Winter came too early for you
And claimed you to be his prize.
Still wearing the flush of summer
On your cheeks and hair
Winter clutched you in his icy arms
and bore you away
Into forever
And the baseball game
Goes on without you.

Jennifer Healy
Momma Wake Up

Momma wake up  
Momma, wake up  
There's army men outside  
You know, the ones who took daddy to Heaven?  
Momma wake up  
They're breaking the neighbor's windows  
They can't do that, can they?  
Momma  
The neighbors are lying down in the street  
Why are they sleeping there?  
Wake up  
Wake up  
The bad men are banging on the door  
They're trying to get in  
I'm scared  
Momma wake up  
Momma, wake up!  
Momma...?

Craig DiLouie
In the suburbs,
   Fog doesn’t roll in from the ocean,
   Or drift down from the mountain’s heights.
It is extruded
   From microscopic pores
   In the earth’s face
To be the wan pall
   For those whom she mourns,
   And for herself.

   I was watching cartoons
When Mother walked in
And stood by the door.

I think your daddy’s dead she said

   Daddy?  Daddy’s the man
Who put the arms back on the Barbie doll,
The man who made stories come to life.

   But the Barbies are relegated
To corrugated cardboard boxes
In the back bedroom
   And pieces of fiction
Are evaluated, essayized, thematized, and analyzed
For plot and counterplot
   And daddy has metamorphosed into Dad,
The man who says no
When Mother refers questions to him.

   He’s just asleep, I checked on him
a little while ago --
Before Bugs Bunny, it was.

   But he’s not alseep
His bed is empty
And there’s a shapeless form
Underneath the white sheet
And that can’t be daddy
   can’t be daddy
   can’t be daddy...
   Where is he?
He’s asleep
He’s here...somewhere!
i just know he is
They say that infants have no concept
Of object permanence:
If you hide something,
They think it stops existing
    and daddy's hidden under a white sheet

Fog emanates from the mind
  Misting events over,
  Blurring details.
'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished.

e.m.
Tommy

Tommy,

It’s been fifteen years since we’ve been parted,
Yet a pain still sometimes throbs in my heart.

I don’t understand why...
Echoes of your voice are too distant to hear
And mists have obscured the features of your face.

Looking back,
I would have told you I loved you--
Even though four is too young to really know.

Looking ahead,
I’ll remember the warmth of a single hug,
And lament the fact that six is too young to die.

Beth Riccio
When The Phone Rings

The phone is ringing. It’s after midnight and the hall phone is ringing. I wish someone would pick it up already. Or maybe the person who’s calling will hang up. Who could be calling this late at night anyway? Certainly no one for me. Everybody knows I go to bed at twelve.

Maybe it’s for Karin. Well, she’s not about to get up. Listen to her snore. Good gravy, even my dad doesn’t snore that loud.

My dad -- could it be him? Or about him. I worry about him a lot. Sometimes he’s not altogether well. But I worry about my mom, too-- she’s always doing too much. Maybe that phone call’s for me. Maybe something’s wrong at home. Oh, God--mom? dad? or maybe Steve got into an accident--that brother of mine is always driving too fast. Or Sue --maybe she’s been skiing and broke her neck this time, instead of her leg like last time. Will someone please pick up that stupid phone??

Good. It stopped ringing. Now just turn over and go back to sleep. What do you mean, go back to sleep? You haven’t slept a wink yet. You’ve been lying here thinking about that test tomorrow and then that stupid phone had to ring again. As if it hasn’t all night and most of those calls were for old Helen and she wasn’t even here. She should get her own phone-- and an answering service. All those calls, and she’s hardly ever here to take them herself. Out with Tom studying-- or so she says-- while every Dick and Harry rings up and wants to talk to her. Well, I’m going to sleep...

Dammit to hell, that stupid phone again! Will somebody please answer the thing? It’s probably for Kim. She’s been waiting for Greg to call her all night and of course he didn’t. Typical guy.

Maybe it’s for Jan. Her mother’s expecting her seventh kid. Maybe. Jan’s a sister-- again. No one has picked up that phone yet!

It’s for me. I know it. Something’s wrong at home. Mom fell down the stairs. Or the dog attacked the Thompson’s mangy cat again. Or dad-- no, dad did not have another heart attack! Kevin probably drank a bottle of ink, the little twit. When I come home for break I’m going to break him. Dad-- are you okay? No, you’re not. Will somebody pick up that stupid phone? If I have to get out of my nice warm bed for another of Lucy’s calls from that jerk Stu--

Good, somebody answered it. I’m going to sleep...


“Thanks, Meg.” I’m off and running down the hall. Dad’s in the hospital again, I know it. Or Mom’s been hit by a car -- Steve’s been in an accident-- Sue’s hit her head on the gym floor from cheerleading-- Kevin fell off his bike. Something’s wrong. Or maybe it’s Jim-- all the way from New York State? Cornell to here isn’t cheap...

“Hello?” My voice is shaking but I can’t help it.

“Donna?”


“Donna, calm down. Everything’s fine. But it’s Thursday-- or, at least it was Thursday an hour ago--”

“Mom, so what? What’s wrong?”

“Nothing’s wrong-- except for one number.” Mom giggles.

“What do you mean, one number?” Frankly, I am a little confused.

“We got five out of six numbers on the lottery!”

“We what?”

“Your father and I were out at Marion’s tonight and when we got back, we were watching the late news and found out we won-- or at least, second won, you might say...”

Mom rattles on but I don’t hear her. The lottery. She calls at midnight about the lottery after I worry about the world coming to an end...

“And we’re coming up to school tomorrow night, since it’s Friday-- which actually makes it tonight, I guess-- to celebrate! About seven, so be ready. Good-night, darling, and get a good night’s sleep. Love ya!” And she hangs up.

The lottery. Money. That’ll help. And yet, I worry. Silly me. So on I go back to bed, snuggle under the covers. Well, I resolve, I will not worry about anything anymore. I promise.

Until the phone rings again...

Julie Ann Corish
Haiku

Enter, sweet music -
Caress of the purest sound -
Forever Complete.

Beth A. Long

There's something soothing
About classical music.
I think its the violins
Who make you sit still
And listen to their white sound
While the bassoons
And the big bass viol
Give you something blue to lean on...
Or it might be the oboe,
Who paints melancholy landscapes
Of muted greens and browns.

Arwen Evenstar
STARTING OVER

I saw my life as a string of pearls,
    Each strung close together in perfect harmony,
One second of carefree running through the forest,
    and the string was yanked from me.
Then I saw my pearls scattered at my feet,
    I saw them fall, yet I did nothing to save them.
Each one was by itself; totally alone.
    They had no connection anymore.
I turned around and saw one small pearl
    left on the string,
    Waiting...
    Waiting...and
    Waiting...
    waiting to be one with the others once again.
I found the strength through all my heartache
    and tears of sadness,
And picked each one off the hard ground
    with loving care.
I took them home and began all over again,
    stringing pearl by pearl, to achieve my happiness lost.

Denise Kathryn Wayne
A Day in the Life of a Flower

It was a bright summer's day when I first spread my petals in the Garden. I was the flashiest dresser there, and I knew it; I am not ashamed to say I flaunted myself, showing off my bright corolla to advantage, waving and nodding in the humid breeze. Soon enough, I heard a buzzing sound, and I quivered in anticipation and fear. Somehow, I knew that I had been waiting for this moment all my life.

"Come down, little bee," I beckoned. "Come to me!" And with the satin rustle of her clear-skinned wings, she alighted. Her six tiny feet teased and tickled my curling sepals and kneaded the taut cells of my petals as she firmly pressed on to me.

She didn't say a word, but I could see her great, wide, wondering eyes. They gleamed in pleasure as she looked at me, and my beauty reflected from the deep facets. She breathed more rapidly, more deeply, into her spiracles, and I could feel her tiny body tense with excitement.

It was inevitable, what came next. With a barely audible sigh, she searched out my nectary -- a roseate mound of burgeoning sweetness. At her touch I could feel it swell -- then she stroked it with her deft forefeet. She bent her head (it was an act of worship), and I could feel the swell, the need for release, rise in me. She opened her labium and her labrum and gently -- oh so gently -- and then with more determination -- began to suck at my nectary. The rich sweetness spilled out, and she licked up every last precious drop. Full to repletion, satied with sweet nectar, she wriggled and spread her wings. She brushed against my thin filament and set it swaying rhythmically.

Surprised, she looked up and saw my anthers rise majestically above her head. The first few pollen grains showered down; she held one gracefully in her forefoot. It touched -- just brushed against -- one of those tiny, ultrasensitive hairs on her leg. She gasped in delight and stroked my filament yet again. Swaying with more urgency now, the filament found a rhythm; the tip of the anther dipped down and the little bee caught it between her legs, held it, squeezed it.

With a golden explosion, pollen was suddenly released, all over the bee -- tormenting her, provocative, those beautiful, sensitive hairs (a proverbial mound of Venus, fountain of passion) erotically stimulated. She was pleased, she was more than pleased. The shower of sensation caught her, swept over her like a tide, and each pollen-coated hair felt to her like an unendurable pleasure, like an erogenous torture. Gasping, she flung out her wings and, in a last burst of effort, flew off into lands where I could not follow, while cascades of pollen fell on me in her wake. Most coated my corolla and calyx with a sweaty golden sheen, but one or two settled on my secret parts: the secret parts between my petals, my stigma. The pollen grains quivered on the surface for a second or so, and then I felt it -- one pollen grain, one tiny, shrunken little pollen grain -- began to grow in size. Yes, it became a veritable pollen tube. Never
before had I felt anything like it. Insistently it thrust into my style -- I could feel its male hardness within me, taking me, piercing me, possessing me. Deep it thrusted until it found the resistance of my micropyle. I tensed in fear and trepidation, yet I felt poised on the brink of some great sensation. Deep inside me, I felt a quiver, an ache, a yearning for satisfaction and fulfillment. And then the breakthrough -- the brief fierce moment of tearing pain, then the waves and waves of ecstasy and satisfaction that washed over me until I knew no more.

Well, since that day I've looked for that little bee, but she hasn't returned. The other flowers look at me in disdain: the great sunflowers looked down, one rainy evening, and scoffed; the roses on their bush laugh among themselves, and even the lowly peonies mock me, saying "Morning-glory you might have been, but now you're an Afternoon-Infamy!"

But I don't care about their comments. I would like to see the bee again, to ask her to explain -- but that's OK, because I can endure it all -- the rumours, the nasty comments, and all the innuendoes about "parthenogenesis" and "masturbation". You see, I know that, carefully and gently nurtured within me is the tiny seed, the fruit of passion, the growth of the future. I am content.

Anonymous

Pretension

I always wear my heavy socks
When using the johns in filthy bus stops,
Wandering the stacks of famous libraries,
Speaking to all the senseless creatures.

Yes, I don my "good grey" socks
Not only in the dry winter months
But even when sweaty summer comes sweeping.

Geoffrey Allen
It seems like so long ago...
like ages instead of years
since I saw you last.
The healing has begun,
my scars are fading
into pink-white reminders of our past.
I'll never forget the day you said "good-bye".
I wanted nothing more than to hurt you,
to see you cry.
Then.
But not now.
Now I realize that what we had was not worth tears,
Not yours or mine.
It tore us apart, yet we endured.
We siphoned off of each other our life forces,
clinging to afterglows, empty words
and broken promises,
as if we were dependent upon them saving us from life.
Now I'm older,
my scars are healing nicely,
and I can love again,
real love,
with passion, but not without tenderness,
or meaning...

Denise Kathryn Wayne
I walk along  
The crowded city streets  
Scanning the faces  
Of the never ending mob  
Hoping to catch  
Just one glimpse  
Of you.  
I know you won't be here  
You're somewhere far away  
By now  
And you've probably  
Forgotten everything, even  
My name.  

Jennifer Healy

Insignificant Man

Blue,  
Immense -  
The Heavens,  
Reaching upward  
To Celestial Heights  
Unknown to Mortal Man -  
Who stands gazing - stupefied  
At the creeping realization  
Of his earthly insignificance.

Debra L. Ritter
Variations on a Latin Theme

Oh Fortune! ever changing
Like the moon
Waxing, waning.
My mind but a sword
You forge
Only to falter and fail
In life's cruel tourney.
Your favor a frozen illusion
That dissolves in the mire of another's spring.

With useless tears
I bemoan a life
On which Fortune granted me a lien.
It now appears
That all's but strife
And she scarcely heeds the scene.

Of my small world she made me a king,
Awarded petty triumphs by the score,
And then I heard her anthem sing
A voice, now still, "No more, no more."

Some say a wheel
Is turned by Fate
By which all men arise and fall.
Did I but steal
The shared estate
Of Illos' queen and David's Saul?

I look again on returning Spring
That once brought light to this wretched soul,
And question whether 'tis too late
To capture that which Fortune stole.
The magic's there;
the world awakes!
The fledgling heralds sing.
But where the love, the hopes, the goal;
What tinders now the flame you bring?

Frank R. Moulton, Jr.
The castle that rests at the top of the cliff
Overlooks the frenzied sea below
And the forest before it holds many a beast,
Pouncing on even the wariest of travelers.
There is but one road, from the forest to the gate;
To each side are scattered corpses of past crusaders.
The mischief of night ever surrounds these gray lands;
The wind is from the north--but the moans come from all round...

The builders of the castle knew this land well
(Each stone has withstood the severest of attacks)
So the inner walls hold a myriad of deathtraps
As if the engineer was sick with paranoia.
Yet...Looking closely, one can perhaps understand---
Every barrier protects the great tower and the treasure within

Only the brave warrior can approach this keep
And only the clever thief can walk through it
But only the pure cleric can enter the spire
So the dear treasure can serve him.
So what of this treasure, and why do men seek it--
What could be worth having so badly?
And that, dear friend, is the riddle.
Roll the dice— it’s your turn.
Damn it I need a light.
Raining- Hear it?
Running- I feel it.
Understand?  Comprehend?...
Nothing.
    Everything.
Emotions.

Make your move- you have the dice.
I’ll take the fruit you didn’t want.
Red and Polished (peeled it’s rotten).
See it?  Don’t say it.
No one can change it...
Lights flicker
    (it’s time).
Roll the dice— it’s your turn.

Sally Umble
THIS IS YOUR DAY

One day, if you look my way
you may understand what I say
but now, you know is not the time
to figure the reasons to the rhyme
to try to explain would make it too weak
to give maudlin platitudes—the answers you seek
cheap conferences in smoky rooms
won't give us insight to our individual dooms
(give me a Kool)
in a film it would be easy-so
does art distill life (this I know)
but you want answers, company, solace
and a warm room in a solitary place
a great, big, god-damned illusion
when lost only leads to confusion
don't look here because what you see
I swear to god really isn't me
(I need a Kool)
there's comfort, I'm sure, in feeling alone
in drinking alone and starting to moan
about not being understood or having love
shouting abuse at the being above
but it's really rather minor, you see
I'm talking—don't you dare look at me
getting lost on a jumbled tangent again
I'll remember what I want to say--don't know when
(pass me a Kool)
go on out and stare at a tree
watch a young bird, alone, flying free
you'll feel a lot better, try it, you'll see
and know that I love you—don't look at me
(just give me a Kool)

-alt ego
One Night Stand

The sunrise filters
In the window
Through the foggy air
Turning it pale, rosy pink
Almost as if it’s blushing
Embarrassed by what it’s seeing
In its own light,
Cigarette smoke
And pale, tired faces
With eyes ringed in black:
Did anybody sleep last night?
Too embarrassed to look each other
Straight in the eye
They part.

Anonymous
"Make My Day"

WHICH of these nice boys is going to jump first?" I think to myself as I size up the enemy. Probably the one on the right. He's a big dude, all right. Two-twenty. Two-thirty, maybe. Smiling at me, huh? You think that broken bottle is enough? We'll see. This guy sure is anxious. He keeps smacking the broken bottle into his free hand, grinning at the sound of glass hitting flesh.

The punk on my left looks like the type who's only tough when he's with his friends. His brown hair is long and in his face, almost completely covering his eyes. He's skinny, not half the size of his buddy. A wooden match stick is clenched in his teeth. He's smiling, too. We'll see for how long.

The third guy is obviously the leader of this "gang". He has good size. Not quite as big as Broken Bottle, but he's no wimp. This guy is cool about the situation. He's going to hit me, or so he thinks. The question is, When?

What do these guys want with my wallet anyway? I amuse myself with the thought. Could it be the money? Such sarcasm from a guy out-numbered one to three! Oh, but I'm not worried.

I was right. Broken Bottle breaks the tension by lunging at my throat with his weapon. Immediately my right hand grabs his wrist. Out of reflex, he drops the bottle. Now he's mine. I pivot off my left foot, now standing sideways to him. Cocking my right leg, I bring my knee up to my chest and deliver a blade kick into his ribs. As the bones give way to my foot, I hear a soft crack. "Nice try, buddy," I say to myself as he staggers backwards.

His partners are now aware of my ability to defend myself. But they don't retreat. These guys want my wallet real bad. The wimpy guy flashes a glance at his gigantic buddy, now coughing up blood on the parking lot asphalt. Then suddenly, out of stupidity, he comes running towards me. I laugh to myself over how open he's leaving himself. Should I go for the throat? Nah, too dangerous. I might kill him. Ribs? Possibly? How about the knees? Could hurt! Maybe even permanent damage. No, I think the face will be fine.

When he's a little less than a yard away, I shift my weight to my left foot and clench my right fist. There's no way he'll be able to block this one in time. I step up with my right foot, a cocked arm held way back. His face is about ten inches from my fist even before I unleash the blow. Then Wham! My knuckles hit his nose before my arm is even half straightened. I put everything into this, arm and back. I almost forget that I don't want permanent damage. Lucky him.

His head snaps back, and weak knees wither beneath a limp body. Blood is gushing big time from his twisted nose. He starts crying out of fright. I almost laugh. At least he's not dead.

The only healthy one at this point is the leader. I turn and give him a Clint Eastwood look. This guy is scared all right. Oh, is he scared! His eyes are wide open, not in half squints like when he was sizing me up. He's not going to move, he's too scared. I could mess this guy up good. Then I relax. Enough damage for one night. I turn my back to him and begin to walk away. Still, I can't help but wish he'd try something. He won't. He's too smart.

Anthony Fiore
YOU REALLY CAN'T EXPECT THESE THINGS FROM ME
QUICK ANSWERS, MORALS AND A FLASHING GRIN
I CAN'T BE WHAT YOU THINK YOU WANT TO SEE
I SEE YOUR EYES AND KNOW THAT I CAN'T WIN

I THINK I REALLY OUGHT TO GO TO SLEEP
TO LET DEEP SLUMBER CARRY ME AWAY
TO CLOSE EYELIDS BEHIND WHICH I CAN WEEP
AS I PREPARE FOR ANOTHER DRAINING DAY

I'M TIRED OF THIS WORTHLESS ACTING GAME
AND ANGRY WITH MYSELF FOR BEING TIRED
I KNOW NOTHING ABOUT MYSELF EXCEPT MY NAME
AND THAT THERE'S A DEEP MORASS IN WHICH I'M MIRED

IN YOU'RE OPEN FACE YOU KNOW I SEE
THAT YOU'RE IMPATIENT AND YOU WON'T WAIT LONG
I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS YOU WANT FROM ME
I SOFTEN MY EYES AND PRETEND THAT I AM STRONG
A.M. SALAS
If I only had some way to show you
And if I only had the time to hold your hand
I'd show you how you look to those who know you
And prove that you and your life aren't so bad
But my life is speeding on
When I blink I see you've gone
I search for you inside my mind
Since your brightness strikes my blind
You are sovereign and don't know it
Get destructive when you're sad
Remember yourself or else you'll blow it
Can you miss what you never knew you had?
You're sapping me, but I don't tire
I'm drawn to you because you're tragic
Your self-destructive balls of fire
Always have a kind of magic
I'd like to carry you through time
Like in "Footprints in the Sand"
I wonder if my life is mine
Is it an accident? or planned?
You know we all are damaged goods
Longing to be three again
We'd snatch back that innocence if we could
Were we ever innocent? I wonder when
I know I'm weak -- my days are few
I'm only able to feel and care
I stumble about, searching for you
But even in blindness -- I know you're not there
- alter ego
(Don’t think)
Singular thoughts echo in your mind.
A myriad of stars in the sky --
One shines for you
(Don’t think)
Dreams pound in your eyes.
Foreign drums on a distant shore
Their beat is for you
So don’t think
Don’t bring on the rain.
Tears in your eyes,
I cry for you.
The rain falls.
It weeps on the windows
As it slides to the ground
Let your tears slip through your fingers --
And cry.
Let it fade,
As the clouds after the storm
Then,
And then
Don’t think

Rebecca Moore
Broken chain
Miss Lonelyhearts
Trying to find
The missing links
Buried in the carpet somewhere
   Under the sofa
Where many a love filled night
Was spent
And forgotten.

Jennifer Healy
LIFE... A HAMMOCK?

Life is like a hammock --

As I lie on the hammock, it cradles me, it rocks me, it lulls me into a seeming Security --

As I sway, gently, blithely, in one sudden brutal movement, the hammock overturns, throws me from its bosom, and I land with a thud on the cold hard ground of Reality.

Debra L. Ritter
To My Friend (Laurie Winchester)

You must think me awful strange sometimes.
You who know me so well.
You who smile and befriend me
And show your hopes and fears.

Do you know the source of my life?
Do you comprehend my need to write?
I have been doing it now
For close to eight years.

You have touched the raw nerve endings of my soul.
I have allowed it.
You have permeated and soothed it,
Made love to it.

I know this when I wish to see you.
Disregarding being called (who's to say?).
I am a living entity, a pulsing hope,
A child of tomorrow.

I love the day and solace of night.
I enjoy times of sharing
For they are as much a part of life
As pondering alone on my inner flame.

Who is to say what tomorrow will,
Who is God?
Our time together is precious
And I value it without dreams.

Timothy S. Weible
Ode on a Grecian Keg
(with sincerest apologies to John Keats)

Thou long-ago ravaged whore of loudness,
Thou bastard of extroversion and fast time,
Epps historian, who canst thus express
A flowery ale more sweetly than our rhyme:
Thy days are numbered, glistening keg;
Have valiantly tried but never, never canst beg
For your salvation; In Reimert of the dales of Ritter
Nevermore, shall ambrosia be our babysitter.

For 'tis unwritten somewhere, for none to see
That responsible drinkers under 21 canst not be;
Thou art doomed to a-dolt-hood, until you yourself
Mature on your birthday at one after twelve.
But they refuse to believe us, O forlorn half-of-ale,
Even though we are today's college, not '48 Yale.

What little college by Perk or Berlin store,
Or Limerick-powered with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of its folk, this pious weekend?
And, little college, thy campus for evermore
Will a suitcase be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, my tear-dry friend.

Desperate, in vain, these words may amuse,
And I admit that amusement's their primary use;
Please, before thou dost turn this page into litter,
I pray thee read on and pause to consider:
When old age shall this generation waste
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
"'Ursinus is dry, dry is Ursinus,'"--that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

Bill Connolly