



GRIFFIN

THE GRIFFIN

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THE GRIFFIN

"This creature was sacred to the sun
and kept guard over hidden treasures."

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Absinthism	Viktor R. Kemper
Desolate	Demaris Arms
Poor Penelope's Party	Patricia Ruth
K. 550, Byronically	Linda Firestone
Rook and Looney	Ann Robinson
Poor Among the Poor	Viktor R. Kemper
My Black Coffee Friend	Kay Kirkland
Brothers! Buy me a box!	Mike Donovan
L'Ombre	trans. by Susan McReynolds
My Eye	James Feely
Japonica in Snow	Linda Firestone
Decision	Lula Clayton Beale
Tragthos	Viktor R. Kemper
Will you melt me	Viktor R. Kemper
Ich will mit dem gehen. trans. by Maryann Perkowski	
Exekias: Eye-cup (550 B.C.)	Howard Barnett
Time was rich	Holly Zanville
Hell	Ann Robinson
Prime Time	Linda Firestone
Rain and the Collège Senior	Howard Barnett
Hymn to Lillith	Viktor R. Kemper
Rainy Wet Sidewalks	Sue Josephson
Pour l'humanitaire	Françoise Crowley
I	Sandra Siehl
Fred Party	Viktor R. Kemper
Thomas Ernest Hulme	Linda Firestone
Charlotte	Linda Firestone
Words	Pat Mackey
Sister and St. Michael	Judith Zaleuke
A Nude Month	Ann Robinson

Dusk Moments	Viktor R. Kemper
Love of the	Patricia Ruth
Hopkins' Enthusiast with Toothache .	Linda Firestone
Poeme d'amour a Helene ..	trans. by Susan McReynolds
Rain Revelation	Nancy Nemeč
Penny	Viktor R. Kemper
Chalk	Linda Firestone
Dialog	Viktor R. Kemper
Popol' Vuh	trans. by Margaret McClear
Amber Providence	Howard Barnett
Approaching Honeywell Pridge	Ann Robinson
Hymn from Elvira Madigan	Kirsti Hiekka
With Joy	Linda Firestone
Three Pictures	Holly Zanville
Untitled: One	Viktor R. Kemper

ABSINTHISM

Five deep and fluted glasses filled with absinthe stood
Before me once, but since that time I've emptied three
Inside myself to numb the grief which lies here still.

A grief which, like the absinthe, is bitter, green
And new to me; conceived of flowers ripped up from
The sunlit earth and catalyzed by fire into
A liquid spider-wife who hangs and haunts my mouth
While weaving coffin webs of ink that spread into
Crystal and itself, then finally freeze this hand
That holds a belly pregnant with its dreaming corpse
Until the two are gone and one alone remains --

A glass of dragon moonlight in a shadowed dawn.

Viktor R. Kemper

THE DESOLATE

raindrops fell like tears
into a delicate puddle.

as
i
watched,
each drop caused the
reflection of the sky
to Shatter into a million pieces.

the Rain fell upon

my
hair
and
i
felt so
alone--

as
a leaf,
swept by autumn's cool breezes
Away from its Branch.

i
peered into the gray sky--
Seeking Companionship.

but, the Mist struck

my
face

as pin points from a hot iron.

Loneliness

overcame

me

and

i

joined the Rain in its Sorrow.

now

my
tears
Shattered

the puddle.

but, it mattered not,

for the reflection was only

of the sky--

You
are
far
Away....

poor penelope's party

the tea ceremony was today
no not green tea
foreign and so watery those
delicate fingers lifting pouring
motioning swaying in
graceful spirit of some
other time

but. . .

just a late
summer party everyone
came gathering at
the center table fluttering
till Penelope poured
the pitcher milk swirled
sugar sweetened and
with those chubby (everyone laughed)
fingers the shiningly
new tea-cup rose daintily. . .

* * * * *

I was in Sussex for
a month this
spring and
I was

* * * * *

the night is intensely
quiet as summer
nights can be bare
tables in a dark
house so still and
so tired that when
alone it feels if
you really let go the
emptiness would be
you that is if
one would just
relax. . .

Patricia Ruth

No. 40 in a,

K. 550, Byronically

finding comfort in Mozart
she sits in her rocking chair
rocking in time
through lace
reflects on high windows
diamond-etched
with initials and dates
1884, 1907
and beyond window
on leaves falling
into a past
of browned yellow
against grey skies
leaves defiant for a moment
then falling
sees herself
initials
mulch
rocks slowly
reflecting
a maple leaf strikes the pane
returns her to windowed-room
Mozart and lace.

Linda Firestone

ROOK AND LOONEY

Ann Robinson

Looney Rogers watched the sun peaceably draw up from behind the barn. She shut her eyes up tightly and groaned. Her groans sounded like a mere hiccup to her. Her body did not move on the feather mattress below her; except for an occasional shift or turn to watch the sleeping form beside her. Then her head turned automatically back to its normal position, scrutinizing the cracked window panes, broken into small sections, in front of her.

Under the scratchy woolen blanket, the body beside her seemed to be no more than a bandaid strip. Looney cackled at her observation. Her cackles grew larger and louder until the body removed its identity by scraping off the blanket and throwing it at the end of the bed. Looney watched her husband leap off the bed and crouch under it, searching for his slippers.

"Go to hell, woman." His voice sounded wilted and old under the bed. He poked away for his slippers,

bumping his head on the bed springs as he went along. Finding them, he eyed them viciously and gathered them up in his lanky fingers.

Looney felt the rattling of the bedsprings cease below her, as her husband ended his search for his shoes. She drew the covers up over her nose and stared at her husband. He was now limping around the bleak room, complaining as usual.

"Such aches and pains, God never dealt 'em to nobody but me." His nose, resembling a parakeet's bill, twitched a little as he sniffed at his ailments.

Looney slid the covers off her nose so her voice could be heard. "Rook, according to you, there ain't nobody else in the world except you. So consider yourself lucky."

Rook ignored her words as he had done many times before, because he had always felt she was talking to someone besides himself. He felt sorry for that other person, but it wasn't his fault his wife was always talking to the thin silence around her. She was foolish, crusty old bitch, always nagging at nothing. Why he lived with her this long couldn't be grasped by him. Except in tender moments, when she pinched his withered cheek, as if administering to a broken fender. Then he felt his luck with women had risen. His confidence restored, he took more personal care of himself. He would prune himself daily and trim his tiny white moustache which looked like a caterpillar scraping across his upper lip. Days like these always came to a close. Looney would always shed her niceness and revert back to her nagging side again. Never ceasing pestering him, she would pick at him continually; about his used razor blades, dirty slop jars and unzipped fly.

Then came the house.

The house was an explosive subject for Looney. When they had moved from a small town in Arkansas to a farm outside the Mississippi line, she began to age

rapidly. She was younger then, fifty, maybe. But as soon as she dug her bare feet under the dirt of their farm, her whole body seemed to decompose with the soil.

Her nagging increased. She began to fret and fuss over the distasteful outdoor toilet next to the barn. The farm didn't have the plumbing comforts that she enjoyed in town. She didn't like running out into the bare of night and feeling the hard wood toilet seat on her behind. She wasn't particularly fond of waking up before the sun could be seen either. Rook could hear her grunt when the alarm clock spread its warning of daybreak. Then he turned over on his side and pulled the blanket above his ears so he couldn't hear her words.

His thoughts of the past and present stopped suddenly. Looney had gotten up from bed and was ambling toward the kitchen door, mumbling to herself.

"Gawd, Loon. I'm sure starved." Rook patted his lean belly.

"Go put your false teeth in first." Looney spoke through gritted teeth. She was in a bad mood. The indigestion that had set in from last night's supper didn't help any. The small cramp that had settled in her belly forced a sigh from her. She shuffled her long feet through the kitchen door, disturbing the dust on the floor as she moved. She soon found herself making dough for the biscuits. She despised her task. It was the same forceless routine that had awaited her for years. She caught herself watching her husband put his false teeth in over the wash basin. He looked like a homely turtle without his teeth. So old and scaly looking. She sure didn't marry him for his looks; they were too scarce to be found. But he had nice eyes. Rainbow eyes she used to call them. They seemed to capture all the colors of the spectrum then some. Too bad he doesn't open his eyes more often so I can see them, she mused. Her hands pedaled

automatically through the dough as she watched her husband shave carelessly. He finished shaving and fidgeted around for his mouth wash.

She watched him closely, digging her fingers in the dough. He was a clean husband, she noted. No bad odor about him, except when he ground tobacco through his teeth and spit it out. But even then the odor was imaginary until she grew irritated with him. The odor suddenly became real at the moment and she was unable to cope with the smell, or him.

She had made these observations before. They were old ones, turning about in her mind at certain moments. As she grew older, her observations became dulled and her memory shorter. Today would be lost when something followed it. And something always followed it. She felt like the old pickup truck in the backyard, sitting quietly on its tires and never moving. When the engine finally ignited, it groaned and spewed like an irritated dragon. Damn good truck anyway, probably outlast me, she mumbled to herself.

She put the prefabricated biscuits in the oven, sat down at the table and waited. Rook stood in the doorway of the kitchen, neither smiling or unsmiling.

"This all we got to eat, Loon? What about some pork?" Rook had remembered the leftover pork from the other night which was left over from the preceding night. And it was doubtful if it was fresh even then.

"Go kill a pig and we'll have some." Looney spoke with no movement of her mouth, almost squeezing the words under her tongue.

Rook gave her a hard look, noticing how her face had as much expression as a doormat.

"You can be a bitch at times, Loon. Really a bitch." He waited for her sharp answer, hoping her tongue would freeze on the spot.

"So is your bird dog, Pook."

"He makes a helluva better companion than you." The mention of his bird dog, Walter, drew a minute spasm from Rook. Walter, named after Rook's deceased brother, was the only animal Rook had considered as owned by him, except for Looney. Walter had grown up with Rook and Looney, completely unaware of their existence, except when it was time to be fed. He was of a breed that lacked the intelligence to know that they were from humble beginnings. Walter, a canine noncommittal to the point of extinction, showed favoritism to neither of his masters. He ignored them mostly, not responding to Rook's heavy summons for his seasonal job of retrieving. Hunting was distasteful to him. He escaped the pressures of the chase by hiding behind the wood outhouse. There, he established residence until he was forced to leave by Rook's gruff B-B gun. Rook used it often to enforce his authority, which was neither wanted nor needed by Walter. He always found it strange that Rook fired shots at him and not the birds. But Walter instinctively accepted Rook's odd behavior as typical of his species.

Rook suddenly remembered that his dog hadn't been fed. He brushed out of the kitchen, barely escaping Looney's grim look. His face, a crimson purplish color, gave him a stained glass look. He felt like his breath was tied up in his head at the moment. Whether it was from Looney's humorless remark didn't concern him. He just wanted an adjustment to the clean pure air outside.

When he got outside, the air was neither clean nor pure. It smelled of ginning season. It was the time of year when the roads were stamped with cotton; and the land looked as if snow had driven underneath it.

Rook threw a wayward glance around him. The cotton had turned up better than he had expected. The

white faced buds peered back at him with hope. Rook looked at the cotton, almost disgusted. The satisfaction of making something grow had left him. He stood a few inches above his crop, trying not to look at the bare face idiots.

"Maybe I can raise soybeans next year. Time for a change." His words seemed to stop in his mouth. He knew when next year came, it would be the same dusty crop that had been there before. He wrinkled his mouth, trying to smile, but couldn't. He couldn't even force himself to feed Walter, who was lying in an easy prone position behind the outhouse. Damn good for nothing mongrel, he thought, approaching the over-used back stairs of the house. He didn't want to go in, but he couldn't stay out either. Looney would be inside, sitting in her old kitchen chair, snarling at the air. She always snarled at the air because it couldn't snarl back at her, Rook liked to think.

Looney was sitting in her old kitchen chair. But she wasn't snarling. She was smiling, a little more than usual. She had just seen Rook surveying the cotton outside. Standing there, in the midst of his creation, he had reminded her of an adolescent Huck Finn, skeptical upon making his first odyssey down the river. It was as if he wasn't a man anymore, but a child. She had remembered him this way when they had made the move from Arkansas to Mississippi. He had stood on his new soil, hands in his long pockets, and watched what had been empty, grow. But he had stood alone, because Looney had refused to have anything to do with that moth-eaten land of his. Looney saddened when she thought of this. Perhaps she shouldn't have been so apart from Rook and what he had owned. He owned very little, just a thin piece of land, a beaten-down house, and Walter. But he didn't own her, at least she liked to think so.

Looney caught a shaded glimpse of Rook entering

through the backdoor. She watched his understated figure break through the screendoor. She was surprised to see his mouth skip into a smile. These times were rare indeed. She waited for a few shabby cross words from his almost jovial face. She had learned from Rook that outside appearances could hide what's going on inside. The words which came next weren't what she had expected.

"Loon, how'd you like to shove out of here. I feel like moving on to another place. Something different to do." Rook still held the same expression on his long face. His eyes seemed to burn brighter as he kept talking. Looney expected him to stop after a few seconds. But he didn't. His words fell out of his mouth in an uninterrupted gush. What he said in the next few minutes threw Looney's mind off balance. He appeared to be making love to the air, drawing his breath in tighter, letting his words grow looser until they hung in the air. He finally ceased, noticing that Looney had not quieted him. She simply stared at him; her eyes opening more and more until they held the appearance of a pair of loaded dice, backing up against the wall. Rook couldn't remember all that he had said, but it must have been more than he had thought he said.

Looney looked at Rook in surprise. "That's nice, Rook, really nice." She began to choke without hesitation. When she had finished choking, she began to cough. After that, there was nothing left to do but stare. She stared at Rook, who stared back.

"Did I upset you, Looney?" Rook scratched the area under his right eye. He had never scratched the area under his right eye before, but now he felt like scratching it.

Looney noticed the change. Wonder what in the hell he's scratching under his right eye for, she thought absently.

She put her palms on the edge of the table and began to rise, while rising, she continued staring at Rook.

"I have to go to the outhouse, Rook," she spoke in an exultant tone. Rook wondered whether it was

from his news or the latent news from her kidneys. He watched her move from the table to the kitchen door, to the back door, and then he heard a thud. It was Looney's thud.

"You okay, Looney?" There was calm in Rook's voice as he screamed at her. He knew she had fallen from the back door steps.

"Oh, God," she groaned from outside, feeling as if someone had stuck a rifle through her guts. Her body was sprawled along the steps, horizontal to the ground. Looking at her through the window, Rook felt a particle of admiration for her. She held her pain well.

"A-a-ugh. Ouch. What pain!" Looney held her breath in, turning her face purple, blue, and red. Red, preferably. Rook noticed that the unusual colors in her face became her. She should fall off the back-door steps more often.

Looney closed her scared eyelids briefly, trying to figure: a way to destroy the backdoor steps. Rook approached the screen door, leading to the steps. He looked down at Looney's flattened body.

"It looks as if you have fallen from the back-door steps, Loon," he said imaginatively.

Looney relaxed her aches and yawned with her numb right foot. The tremendous insight that Rook had into situations sometimes surprised her. She looked at him cross eyed.

"Hell, no. I'm just here for laughs." Her tongue felt numb and so did her body. A slow moving foreign tongue suddenly lapped across her ear. She knew it couldn't be Rook because Rook was never that affectionate. She shot a pained look to her right. It was Walter. He had removed himself from his vegetative state behind the outhouse. Looney looked at him with vicious disgust.

"Get away, you toothless mutt," she bellowed near the dog's ear. Walter, upon hearing her mangled language, ran away. His master's crude language depressed him.

Rook watched Walter exit to the outhouse. He cried aloud for him to come back. The only reply that came through was Looney's groans. Rook gave her a nice cold stare.

"My dog is not toothless," he hissed.

Looney looked around for a fault. "Your fly is unzipped." The next few minutes were quiet. There was detest in the air. Rook turned his insulted back on Looney and zipped up his pants. He walked away, mumbling about the weather.

Looney, still leisurely laid out on the ground, decided to pick herself up. She had a rough time doing it; both of her legs were stiff, almost nailed to the steps. When she moved, a steaming pain shot up through her back. She decided against moving. Besides this was the first rest she had had in years. Usually when she missed a step and fell, she recuperated very easily. But this was a more serious fall; she had probably broken her little toe. It gave her grief to know that Rook had left her in such a deserving moment. She dozed off on the ground, trying to remember whether she had burned the biscuits or not.

Rook watched her from the window of his pickup truck. He tossed on the ignition and sat there pumping the gas pedal. He threw a steaming glance at her, lying there, abandoned and asleep on the ground. It was odd, really odd that a woman should be comfortable in a position like that. He turned the ignition off and screamed at Looney through the window.

"Get up, woman. I'm leaving for town." No answer came from Looney and for a moment he thought she might be dead. But he saw her wrinkled face lift a little from its natural position and scream back:

"Oh, yeah. Well, I'll still be here when you get back." Rook decided she must not be dead because she squirmed around like a rattlesnake on wet sand or like wet sand on a rattlesnake. He started his motor again. In a fit of rage the engine died. Rook tried to start it again, but it blacked out. Out of frustration and a cannibalistic attitude towards his truck, he spit on the steering wheel. He was surprised the steering wheel didn't spit back. Nothing

was functioning around him as he opened the truck door and leaped out. His feet slammed down upon the rocks and grass, making his toes curl like a vulture's because of his thin unprotected soles. He walked, bird-like, back to the house.

Looney's body greeted him at the steps.

"That was a far piece you traveled, Rook." she cackled through her throat.

Rook tried to walk around her but the soan was too great.

"Looney, I wish you would git up so I can use the steps." He looked down at her rested body; her feet were still hanging on to the steps.

"W-e-ll, if it wouldn't trouble you too much, you could help me." She smiled at him with benign innocence.

Rook observed her with strained eyes. "I think it would tire me too much." He walked back to the truck, opened the door, sat still in the crumpled old seat, and chuckled at his wild sense of humor. Suddenly, Looney's degenerate voice could be heard through the truck window.

"Goddamn it, you old beast. Where in the hell are you going?" That was the last he heard of her voice because the engine finally turned over and his Goodyear tires starting making use of the road. The truck moved slowly, almost the pace of a toy robot, but it was moving. He felt glad to be on the road; glad to be away from Looney. As he passed by his farm, he saluted it. He felt more married to it than the old lady who was still lying on the backdoor steps. He slowed down, more than usual, and grabbed a last quick look at his land. It had occurred to him several times before that his wanton crop was closer to him than he suspected. He knew he couldn't pull away from it as Looney had successfully pulled away from him in the past years. As he drove faster, his thoughts grew bigger. He didn't know where he was

going. He never did when he left Looney back at the farm like this. All he knew was that he had left Looney there and not with him. Thank God for tiny miracles, he mumbled to himself as his truck retreated down the road. The truck bumped into a paved road, a strange contrast from the rock infested back roads of his farm.

He had traveled a long hour before he approached a small town that was about as big as a hornet's nest. The sun moved down behind the outline of the town and Rook watched the rough edge of night come. He had been to this town many times before; but he had never considered stopping until now. The dizzy lights that lined main street were strangely bright and attractive to him. He imagined he saw warmth in their artificial illumination so he pushed his truck to a halt. He sat in the truck, eyeing the few people that scattered the street and focused his eyes on the string of parking meters before him. They glared back at him in unison. Facing the parking meters head on, they looked like tin soldiers ready for combat. He wanted to challenge them as he got out of the truck but the fact was that the parking meters were public property and he thought himself to be a fairly decent citizen. He roamed around the isolated streets for a few minutes, feeling odd and displaced from his old surroundings. Very few people seemed aware of his creepy existence. Sometimes he didn't even seem to be aware of himself, especially when he passed by the confused noise of the bars and peeped through the dusty windows.

Through the windows, the people looked cold and drowsy, piled on top of each other at the bar and not caring either. Rook wondered at the strange people inside that could stand around, breathing on each other all night without rest. He wanted to go in and find out. When he edged through the packed door and rumbling crowd, he wanted to turn back. He grew scared, not knowing what to do with so many people around him. The grim faced bartender at the other end of the room wore a thick greasy smile, as dirty as

his apron. Rook edged nearer to the bar, trying to figure out which drink he could buy that would obliterate the strong odor around him.

"Double shot of bourbon, mister." Bourbon was rather potent for Rook but he felt a rotting need for the drink. It had been an unaccountable number of years since he had tasted alcohol. Looney couldn't stand the smell of anything stronger than cow's milk.

The bartender gave him a hidden smile and shoved the drink in front of him. Rook was embarrassed to drink in front of such a slimy looking creature. His eyes bent down, fixed upon his drink. His hands pulled around the glass and he tested his drink.

Two hours later, Rook saw the room in an upside down way. The bartender got squattier and nastier in looks as he poured Rook more bourbon. Rook didn't give a goddamn. When he felt himself sliding off the bar stool, he ordered more. Suddenly a sensuously attired young lady of confused virtue sat beside him and closed one heavily colored eyelid. Rook looked around to see if she were accommodating someone else besides himself. He was a little charmed. It was scarce that such a flimsy little article like this would bother with a sixty-eight year old man like him. He had remembered two hours earlier when he sat alone at this bar, no one sitting beside him. He wondered why no one sat near him. All that gay talk nearby made him lonely, apart from the heated noise around him. He even welcomed the dirty looks of the bartender when he ordered another drink.

The girl patted Rook's kneecap and watched him closely for some communication. The charm the girl had washed away. She was of an uncatchable age that old men like Rook sometimes dream about, observe in the movies, but haven't the strength to take in a naked situation like this. Or maybe it was just Rook. Either way he didn't care.

"I'm leaving, miss. Ya don't have to follow me either." He lifted himself from the stool, feeling his legs skate around underneath him as he got up.

The ageless girl faded away in back of him, mumbling a few scathing words.

Outside in the night air, Rook's balance was shaken by a weak breeze. He fell, but climbed up to a standing position. His feet seemed to paddle through the heavy pavement leading to his pickup truck. He clutched the door handle of the truck and crawled in. When he had pushed his backside into the run-down seats, he leaned over and untied his shoe laces. It was then that he noticed his fly was unzipped. He knew instinctively that it had probably been in that condition all night. But he wasn't in the mood for caring anymore. He wasn't even elated by the fact that the ignition jerked on at once and the truck wheels never touched the road after that.

The next three hours he found himself going down roads he hadn't remembered before, passing by land that couldn't possibly be his and seeing farm houses that didn't have the uniqueness of a broken down back door step. He felt a pitch of worry until he saw the dusty rock ridden road that crossed through his cotton crop. He stomped on the accelerator, flew over the road and stopped the truck before he got to the house. He got out slowly, resting his back on the side of the truck. Around him, the night air seemed cold and aching to his body. He had a genuine feeling of oldness inside him now. Like living his life through a dead run and never coming out of it. He thought of Looney and her prone position on the backdoor steps. How a woman could stay that way for long amazed him. He wondered if she were still lying on the backdoor steps; probably so. Most unusual woman, most unusual, he thought under his smiling unsmiling face. Then he broke into a cheerful laugh that skimmed over the night air and never seemed to end.

Poor among the poor,
hungry in a withered land,
I walked with a child,
hand in hand,
with ashes on our lips
and a dream behind
his one blind eye.

Viktor R. Kemper

My black coffee
friend
strong
staunch
warming my
insides as
your knowledge
flows through
me
Not bitter
nor too sweet
but full of
richness,
only
to keep
me awake
to the times
of the
day

Kay Kirkland

BROTHERS! BUY ME A BOX!

"Brothers! Buy me a box,
I got something to say!"
I brush the ashes from my vest,
My mouth is way too wet.
What was strong and clear
Has mellowed to mush.
"Mah Fren's" and there goes
Half my crowd in tears.
My sovereign state of mind
Is shaken by a world
Built too soon.
But I won't die and
I won't die and I hope
I was right.

Mike Donovan

L'Ombre

Un homme

Et je suis celui-là

Sur le mur

Un profil s'abat

Silhouette décapitée

La porte tranche le mot

le corps

Ta figure décomposée

Tiste nouvelle

Une larme dans ta prunelle

Un peu d'eau

Ah! que ton front caché sous ton chapeau
est comme ton coeur

Une lueur

Une perle au bout des doigts

Un mot doucement reste comme un oiseau
Sur les lèvres

Perché

Perdu

Un fruit reste pendu

En passant ta main l'arraché

Des gouttes de sang chaud

Coulent doucement dans la nuit

Un homme celui-là n'a pas encore dormi.

Pierre Reverdy

The Shadow

A man

And I am he

On the wall
A profile falls -

Headless silhouette

The door slams on the word
the body

Your face, distorted

Sad news

A tear in your eye

A little water

Ah! your face hidden under your hat
is like your heart

A flash

A pearl at the tips of fingers

A word gently stays, like a bird
On the lips

Perched
Lost

A fruit hangs still
In passing, your hand tore it away

Drops of warm blood
Softly flow in the night
That man has not yet slept.

Translated by Susan McReynolds

My Eye

And she was eye,
A shuffle-dancer delicate,
Bare-footed, bold,
Though never, as directed, on her knees.
Picasso'd face--
Kenelm Digby would have understood.
And when she danced,
The multi-colored slivers
Shivered grey.

Eye shadowed bright
A witch in fur white light she sat
Ever at watch
But never as desired quite at ease
A Titian'd form--
Joyce portrayed her with a monologue
Her ankles touched
A child she was and still
A woman warm.

Hair-shadowed eye,
A harmony of tone and breath,
Of convent life
With roses broken which were meant to please,
My Madeline--
I see you now, know you with curious ache;
And as I watch
In time my eyes caress your
Cradled heart.

James Feely

Japanica in Snow

We should sleep the snow
together, blanketing memory
of some spring's promise,
But an insensible japonica
defies the season,
intrudes with flower.
Our breath stills any blossom,
freezes crystalline
an insistent reminder--
The old question raises
the old sadness turns
the sign of infinity
through us
a minor key descends
slow, like snow.

Linda Firestone

Decision

The joyous abandon of a skylark's song,
A seagull's dip, long and strong,
A hummingbird's elusive flutterings,
The little wrens' contented chatterings

Convince me beyond the slightest doubt
That when my time has all run out
I'd accept my fate without a word,
If reincarnate I could be a bird.

Lula Clayton Beale

TRAGTHOS

I watched her try to fly with paper wings,
but still it doesn't really mean a thing
to have seen her slip, flutter, fall and die.
It means she tried; I didn't. She fell
and I watched. She's dead, I'm alive;
where it goes beyond that is still a mystery.

Viktor R Kemper

Will you melt me in the air
and will you gingle; will you change?
I ain't got wings to fly,
But I'll find a way somehow;
Cause my only dreams
Are the breezes of you.

Viktor R. Kemper

Ich will mit dem gehen, den ich liebe

Ich will mit dem gehen, den ich liebe
Ich will nicht ausrechnen, was es kostet.
Ich will nicht nachdenken, ob es gut ist.
Ich will nicht wissen, ob er mich liebt.
Ich will mit ihm gehen, den ich liebe.

Bertolt Brecht

I want to go with him, whom I love

I want to go with him, whom I love.
I want not to count what it will cost.
I want not to consider if it is good.
I want not to know if he loves me.
I only want to go with him, whom I love.

Maryann Perkowski

EXEKIAS: EYE-CUP (550 B.C.)

The god is there
 in the boat
at the cup's center
 his eye
outside
 between handles
like ears
 but the god
within
 dangling grapes
in canopy of stars
 over the voyage
through nowhere
 bringing wine
while dolphins
 tune their dance
to the Athenian wonder.

Howard Barnett

Time was rich

Time was rich in the realm of frogs
where we sliced
thin cuts in the right atrial heart,
where pump-a-rump-dump-dump
beat 30 times a 30 seconds,

reduce that to one, man,
and by Christ you've got the beat!

We hypoed deep in his belly
a clear juice--
his eyes blinked above my thumb
I held him
his head perched there
as if it fit;
his eyes blinked there
he croaked
a soft croak like the last good frog
(an ancient Egyptian queen);

he stopped wriggling
as if he liked my hand its heat
he seemed comfortable
(I tried to make him feel wanted)
he croaked a soft croak
calmed now with the juice
in the cup of my hand,

and any good whitecoat
would have liked him then;

it was getting late and time was gone,
we would save him,
the whitecoats washed the table
and I carried the prince to the cold
watched him sink with sleep
in the vegetable bin deep with pee;
he left me cold, I moved to touch
the queen's dry heart, still
beating every 10 seconds;
I peeked in on the prince napping soundly,
we knew he would float until later
and time was rich in the realm of frogs.

Holly Zanville

HELL

Dancing in the Tuileries.
With my sister, Pearl,
We followed the dawn
With a tea party;
And perched beside us
Was big brother Buddha,
Bidding us bye-bye
Into sweet nothingness.
Then, Selma Crab, our governess,
Chased us
Down into a deep well,
Where words were only echoes,
Jumping off the walls.
Escaping through a crack,
Into the airy night,
We chanced to meet a Venus flytrap
Who bolted us
Down into his dark stomach.
We stayed in the darkness,
And I saw deceased Uncle Harry
And Aunt Minerva sipping brandy.
This is hell, they said,
And so it was.

Ann Robinson

Prime time
has passed my love
old in withered ways
choked by too close air
between us
in accustomed patterns
there is no Spring
for those who do not dare
to grow alone.

We grew together
as we grew apart
now together entwined
in past growth
we die
in stranglehold.

Linda Firestone

RAIN AND THE COLLEGE SENIOR

Continually these
waiting places
are beamed attics
fourth floor rooms
corners of the round earth;

there are things
drifting from weather
as the rain dries souls
while it wets whatever--
radiators clank

and a person whoever
departs down river
past wharves and docks
seperate--

while quiescent
you sit here
consuming the expensive air
essence of gardens
and of women immemorial

sending rings and silks
into ever expanding time
and, God knows,
into the still moment
of this gaze
through the etched window.

Howard Barnett

HYMN TO LILITH

I

From below the salt,
From beyond the sea,
Primordial fingers beckon me
And like the loves of Azazel
I must say, "Look earthward angels,
Fall to me."

II

A wind of moonlight, stars and salt
Swirls with flesh through the reeds of my soul
And music quivers in its breath,
While pale leaves turn green
To black upon the yew at dusk
To form a solemn garland, wind caught ring for
Moonbeams on the wane
And pussy-pawed May
Who pounced to play
With the ball of guiltless
Spring fed night
Until it unraveled
Into noisy dog and rook food day,
Glowing with the flame of a dying sun
In infected, bruise bluing dawn:
Into a smothering warm bath ocean
Of stringy, clinging cotton air.

III

Here is where the angels walk
and here the daemons play
and here was satan weaned from apes
and god was christened in a lake.

IV

Swirl the world and watch the ash that is
To be, the gas that was and the dirt that is
Conspire into eternity
The circle drawn in time
And lost beyond the clock
And line to rimless spheres
Of frozen light.

Rainy wet sidewalks
Glisten with glassy
Puddles and dirty
Limp papers; wide-cracked
Cement and down
Dim streetlights line the
Straggling winding street
Where she waits to turn
Tricks to make the time
Mean profit; docks with
Prospects squeak private
Invitation while
French horns bellow through
Thickening fog-clouds
Warning to the few
Fine-bred gentlemen--
Innocents on ice.

Sue Josephson

Hommage pour Schweitzer

Pour l'humanitaire perdu...

Génié, médecin, être humain
an t'a loué, blâmé, sanctifié,
a Lambarène un petit gars a faim,
un animal perdu s'approche.
En recherche de pain.

Où est-il le médecin qui animait
Le désert, en lui domiant de sa vitalité?

L'on a dit que son hôpital était primitif,
Que sa médecine était du siècle passé.

Maintenant qu'il n'y est plus
Un motif silencieux pèse sur la nuit.
Un cri nairé d'une négresse enceinte
Remp lit les arbres en recherche
D'une voie perdue qu'elle ne peut plus retrouver.
Où est le docteur?

Amis, mes amis, rendez nous l'être humain
Le religieux, poète, médecin, musicien,
L'homme qui soignait les petits niches,
L'ami des animaux qui débitait les brioques
Le Chrétien du désert.

Françoise Crowley

Third Place
Freshman Writing Contest

I

He was but a young boy when I met him -
Building castles of sand, sailing ships
 through the sea,
Skipping rocks over the water, knowing not
 where they might fall.
A dreamer then ... a dreamer still.

His mind contained fascinating images.
He plotted splendid adventures before him.
He pictured himself as a victor in war and
 even as a king.
A dreamer then ... he yet dreams on.

Today his dreams are fulfilled but one -
He was victorious in war, save for an arm.
He was a king in his own right, save for golden riches.
He was an adventurous wanderer, save for his findings.
But what - I ask - of his love?

Sandra Siehl

FRED PARTY

The sound of stars through willows,
candle-light and wine,
a half dozen chords woven
into loneliness with women
not your own on a persian
rug stained with chablis, ashes,
last night's love and raga hymns.

A dream, a pen and a wail;
trains roll by behind us
thumping the floor like
lovers in the dark,
cigarettes sing and the hour fades
to minutes whose hands are ghosts
and breath full of cob-smoke raven angels
drinking rosé with a laugh, a nod and a sigh
-- until dawn, dirt and stark sober devils
slam against my bloody veined eyes and
eat my head with the gaudy presence.

Viktor P. Kemner

Thomas Ernest Hulme

Thomas Ernest found beauty in small, dry things and wrote tedious pieces of condescending dialectic, avoiding pitfalls of reality. He played with geometric forms, fancied detached contemplation of finite things, preferred prose, and found pleasure in formulas, isolated and safe. He probably straightened pictures on other people's walls, sat straight and, no doubt, wrote with even hand. He must have retired early, bored with evening's folly when Human lines are curved.

Linda Firestone

Charlotte -- The Fat Nymph

Charlotte squats in front of the gas heater and dries her long, ski-bleached hair. She moves her mini-covered thighs closer to the fire and, moping, brushes her wet mane. Her pale eyes reflect the glowing cylinders of the heater. "Girls, I need a man." Last night Charlotte had a man, and another the night before, and pounded the beaverboard between our beds, jiggled the springs and giggled, until at least four; got a glass of water about five and took the pill forgotten in haste. At eight she left her lover exhausted in bed, expecting me to fix his breakfast.

Linda Firestone

Words

are

just

words

unless

between the first letter

and the last

there's

a

letter

u.

Pat Mackey

Sister and St. Michael

I saw St. Michael frozen in stony peace,
His hand numb with the weight of his iron sword.
The wind slapped his cold, impassive face
But when you laughed, my Sister,
Your frosty expiration rebuked his iron protection.

Judith Zaleuke

A NUDE MONTH

September,
 like a prosaic spirit
Shedding its leaves
 for all to see;
No shame
No inhibitions,
 only blithe satisfaction;
And
 when
 all
is is
 bare,
Who's to know
That the stripper
 in Joe's bar
 Doesn't feel the same.

Ann Robinson

Homage to Rod McKuen

DUSK MOMENTS

In the early evening almost darkness
I could smell your Iris bloom outside
And hear you whisper a light melody
As you sat in a rocker across the room,
Watching me work; wondering when
I would notice the time and ask
You for dinner. When at last I
Turned toward you; smiled and said
I'd like my supper now,
You blew a tender kiss through
The twilight toward my cheek
And replied it wasn't ready yet.

Which is why I cut your throat,
You lazy bitch.

Viktor R. Kemper

Love of the -

These dawns are mist rising hay-dung
smelling warm animal-flesh
beginnings among heifer bull
chicken dogs cats (scratch) and
the few obtruding persons. . .

fat old German man you
are burned red calloused hands
guide the turn of the
tractor wife with few teeth and
all love of the talk toes barefoot over
the splintered porch selling eyed
potatoes and dozens of eggs

Through
the warping railed fence I see
a place of not much farming
and abundance talk talk into
the drying dung dying field
and a dusty cool evening.

Patricia Ruth

Hopkins' Enthusiast with Toothache

Insinuate
brain
think dentist drill
drill drones
insistent
one ear
pierces thought
delirious--
outlandish violins
with tight vibrato.
Maggot-drawn-drones
open sore
sucks leechlike
in his ecstasy
pumping consciousness.
Louder, Louder,
Shriller, Louder
womb of all
blight
thou terrible
mastering me
Whelms Whelms
and will end us
unless Self
by Faith
or Darvon
escapes outside
mins looks
at Flesh
jump
Oh Christ
Caries Comfort
(Oh Christ)
Oh Christ!

Linda Firestone

Poeme d'amour a Helene

Comme un fleuve s'est mis
A aimer son voyage
Un jour tu t'es trouvée
Dévêtue dans mes bras

Et je n'ai plus songé
Qu'à te couvrir de feuilles
De mains nues et de feuilles
Pour que tu n'aies point froid

Car t'aimais-je autrement
Qu'à travers tes eaux vives
Corps de femme un instant
Suspendu à mes doigts

Et pouvais-je poser
Sur tant de pierres chaudes
Un regard qui n'aurait
Été que du désir?

Vierge tu réponds mieux
A l'obscur sentence
Que mon coeur fait peser
Doucement sur ton coeur

Et si j'ai le tourment
De ta métamorphose
C'est qu'il me faut aimer
Ton amour avant toi.

René Guy Cadou

Love Poem to Helen

As a river that's begun
To love its journey
One day you found yourself
Naked in my arms.

And I had no thought
But to cover you with leaves,
With bare hands and leaves
So you no longer would be cold

For how else could I love you
Than through your lively waters?
The body of a woman suspended
An instant on my fingers

And could I let fall
On such hot stones
A glance which would have been
Only of desire?

Virgin, you answer better
To the dark phrases
My heart presses
Softly on your heart

And if I am tormented
By your metamorphosis
It's that I must love
Your love before you.

Translated by
Susan McReynolds

Rain Revelation

Summer rain shadowed the day
Casting sweet water on the earth.
We turned our faces to meet the falling drops
And felt the rain glisten on our cheeks,
Run blindly in rivulets down our throats.

The land around smelled clean and fresh,
Washed of the dust cast there by human movement.
A movement which clouds the earth with progress,
Smothering the green with a modern death.

And we who are killed by the same modern death
Felt for an instant the same fresh dusting;
Felt free of expectations and free of necessity.
But too soon we rejoined the human movement.

Now the rain fell washing only the earth --
That which feels the drops glisten on its soil,
And run blindly in rivulets down its back.
Only the land was free,
And we, once more, began to die.

Nancy Nemeč

PENNY

For two months your burned body has lain
Drugged, drunk and wound in gauze.
The spring twilight, veiled by rain,
Passes through windows and the stillness
Of your room. Forty miles away the friends
Who have forgotten you are telling jokes
And making love. Your body is
The only living thing to cast a shadow
On the floor -- then, with unremembered pain,
Even that is gone.

Viktor R. Kemner

CHALK

Among doors
 leading into doors
One more closed
 with silver click.
Her steps resounded linear
 distance through calcium
Hush, like dust
 through dry-blanching skull
Carefully prepared for closing out,
Click, projected, reflected, click.

His astralbody left, and she walked
 through white-tiled corridors,
Waiting for another.

Linda Firestone

DIALOG

I eats plate-glass windows sometimes,
what cut me mouf,
an birdies what ain't hatched
an snakies,
what hiss an nasty bites me,
an boogers
an...
- do you?
yeh, me do, an...
-hey
what?
hand me a banana and shut
up.

Viktor R. Kemper

THE POPOL VUH (Sacred Book of the Maya-Quiche Indian)

Este es su ser dicho quando estaba suspenso, en calma en silencio, sin mouerse, sin cosa sino vazio el zielo.

I esta es la primera palabra, y eloquencia. aun no auia hombres, animales, pajaros, pescado, cangrejo, palo, piedra, hoyo, varranca, paja, ni monte; sino solo estaba el cielo. no se manifestaua la haz de la tierra; sino q'solo estaba el mar represado, y todo lo de el cielo; aun no auia cosa alguna junta, ni sonaba nada, ni cosa alguna se meneaba, ni cosa q'hiziera, mal ni cosa q'hiziera, cotz.

esto es ruido, en el cielo; ni auia cosa q'estuviесе, ni q'estuiese parada empie; solo el agua represada, solo la mar sosegada, solo ella represada, ni cosa alguna auia q'estuviесе; solo estaba en silencio, y sosiego, en la obscuridad, y la noche; solo estaba el criador y formador, sor. culebra fuerte, las madres, y Pes. estan en el agua, en vna claridad abierta y estaban cubiertos en plumas verdes, por eso se llama gucumatz grandes sabios, y de grandes entendimientos su ser. y asi por eso esta el zielo, y ay tambien su vorazon de el zielo, y este es su nombre q'se le dize a aquel idolo.

Y entonces vino aqui su palabra, vino con los Ses. Tepeu, gucumatz aqui en obscuridad, y en la noche, y ablo con tepeu-gucumatz. y dixeron, q'consultaron, y q'pensaron, se muntaron, hizieron consejo, q' se declararon, y'pensaron vnos a otros. y entonces parezieron las criaturas, q' consultaron la hechura, y creazion, de los palos, mecates. ye la hechura de la vida, y de la creazion, en la obscuridad, y tinieblas, por el corazon de el zielo, q' se llama, huracan. (esto es de vn pie nombre proprio.)

Translated from Quiche (circa 1510) by Father Ximenez into transition Spanish.

THE POPOL VUH

This is the account of how all was in suspense, all calm, in silence; all motionless, still and the expanse of the sky was empty. This is the first account, the first narrative. There was neither man, nor animal, birds, fishes, crabs, trees, stones, caves, ravines, grasses, nor forests; there was only the sky. There was nothing brought together, nothing which could make a noise, nor anything which might move, or tremble, or could make a noise in the sky. There was nothing standing; only the calm water, the placid sea, alone and tranquil. Nothing existed. There was only immobility and silence in the darkness, in the night. Only the Creator, the Maker, Tepeu, Gucumatz, the Forefathers, were in the water surrounded with light. They were hidden under blue and green feathers, and were therefore called Gucumatz. By nature they were great sages and great thinkers. In this manner the sky existed and also the Heart of Heaven, which is the name of God and thus he is called. Then came the word. Tepeu and Gucumatz came together in the darkness, in the night, and they talked together. They talked then, discussing and deliberating; they agreed, they united their words and their thoughts. Then while they meditated, it became clear to them that when dawn would break, man must appear. Then they planned the creation, and the growth of the trees and the thickets and the birth of life and the creation of man. Thus it was arranged in the darkness and in the night by the Heart of Heaven who is called Huracan.

Translated by Margaret McClear

AMBER PROVIDENCE

Whose wasted time
was it in that walk
down paths near stone edges
under trees dropping light?

Voices hold me now like music
and I peer over old brandy,
my thoughts taking issue
with the age
or with age itself.

Once--this is written inland--
by the shore yet adrift;
in a small wooden boat,
I looked seaward
and there was no end,
only the curve of space
and of time. The green sea
had a metal skin
flaking light
from the morning sun.

I could have toured the world.

This glass is an autumn enclosure.
The drifting amber
as I look through it
makes the same kind of difference
that time has made.

It was not then
the gods dropping light
nor their voices in my company--
just the sun and the wind.

Howard Barnett

Approaching Honeywell Bridge

On the crooked road near Honeywell bridge
Where the pavement wrinkles softly above
the tar-hoofed ground.

I could see the neon cinders
Of a fast made car wreck
Move slow across the illuminated shadows
Of a once forgotten road.

And I lay quiet in the rain gathered ditch nearby,
Along with the stillness of the frayed night air,
Feeling the blood sweep warm against my grass
stained cheek.

I watched the rain soaked cop
Squatting on his weary buttocks, not far from my
half turned side.

"Christ, it's good that it rained," he said,
As his eyes tumbled over the messed up road,
The road, now infant born
In the wetness of the night.

I suppose his words scratched near the truth.
But all I could do was catch a quick nap
Before the empty drill
Of an ambulance siren approached us,
Blowing like a spring tornado
Down that once forgotten road.

With Joy

Harpichords
lifting up
and lighting
on ascending turns
in tilting air
spiral in play
then

down up
and together and
up down

Rise up and pause
then together
tumble down.

Linda Firestone

Three Pictures...

I.

Boards of image
pictures in the art-colored water

push inside
a fishing fleet tipped with the wind,
tipped to rolling in the sea. There's a
rain cloud there--
 out the window,
 deep and thick like pudding...
only it floats, it does float...
 hangs low
 like
muscles sagged
 after dumplings and sauce.

A hued sky all radiating grey from the clouds,
as if all strains come from pudding,
 streaked of course,
and brushed with a fine-tooth
 comb.

Green in the waves that gives the top
 less depth than the bottom
and yet
 out side this mind
it isn't at all that way.
It's nothing really on two inches of paper below.
And of all stupid things
 there's nothing there but a wall,
a surface dimension which we swim into
 (you asked us to)
and the water's cold, thick as clouds with oil...
 goddamn it's scary dark in here.

II.

A knight prays in his mail and armour,
prays like a stoned helmet which cannot pray
but can assume a pose a stance.

Closed in metal peers out
with the eyes of a cat,

from out, through out, the nun.

He is a knight (i saw him)
with a banner on a pole, and a sword
hung from his left hip.

Yes he must be right-handed,
they hang their swords

on the opposite hip

so they don't stick themselves drawing...

(an awkward knight who pricked
himself in the toe
at the word DRAW.)

But careful be ye yet...he's praying...

how i wish he would vomit

but out from his helmet...

such a mess to clean the insides;

yes i tell my husband

(Knight Oliver of Milkshake)

every night:

"when ye be go knighting, hear ye don't
vomit, I'm tired to cleaning ye
messes up!"

Always from in the mouth and out,
that would be better

WHOOSH aimed out like a

fountain

to spray the grass

coat it with a belly

what an acid dew

a purely acid bubble

GOD I PRAY HE NEVER VOMITS

(in your sight...)

Heren't they hot, old man, in their metal?
And if they balanced a sword from the other hip
at least they'd be
equalized

or something...
(and their armpits struck high with metal?)

What a cloistered life
a faintly convent life.

Boy, his wife Mrs. Oliver slammed down his face,
POOSH slammed the door
and he went off to knight,
what a faintly convent life,
a fairly cloistered skull...

III.

Love in a metal sense
two robots like steel
welded pits where hair never grows
but singes and dies.
A rusted scale, like fish
seared and stripped
polished in the sun
with shadows that block
a blackened love behind...

is love
is love so furnace-felt
as to tear and rust
clank scars in its mask...

Positions in the sea
deal with steel
and of all carryovers
the plants in their tide-ways
lie crushed
and steel clumps a mounted hold,
where clowns might mate like the frogs ride low,
clutch a bellied spot-skin, hang with
claws for their steeled holes.

UNTITLED: ONE

One of two -- still moving
darkness in the noon of starlight
and the fluted new moon halo
approached from degree of either
edge, bent toward
and guided by the pole-
star nest: frozen light axle point
amid the wheel of other times:
movement without motion:
brief eternity in beyond
the after, now, before.

... Viktor R. Kemper

