

The Griffin



the GRIFIN

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

ASHLEY POND

My dearest love,
How often when I wish to hold you I am reminded
of the ducks that spend the summer months on Ashley Pond.

Like you, they are wary,
And I cannot walk right up to them,
But must hold my offering at arm's length,
Lest I frighten them away.

Then I must wait patiently, quite still,
And it takes a long time for my duck to decide
if it's safe to come near.

And if my duck decides to take my gift,
Even then I can't try to hug him to me,
Though I should dearly like to.

But if I tried I know he would fly away -
Even though I only meant to hold him for a moment -
Even though I would never, ever hurt him.

He needs to be free

So I sit quietly,
Thrilling to his gentle touch
as he takes my offering.

And if I'm very, very lucky...

sometimes

he will allow me to softly stroke

his beautiful head.



Brian Samuels

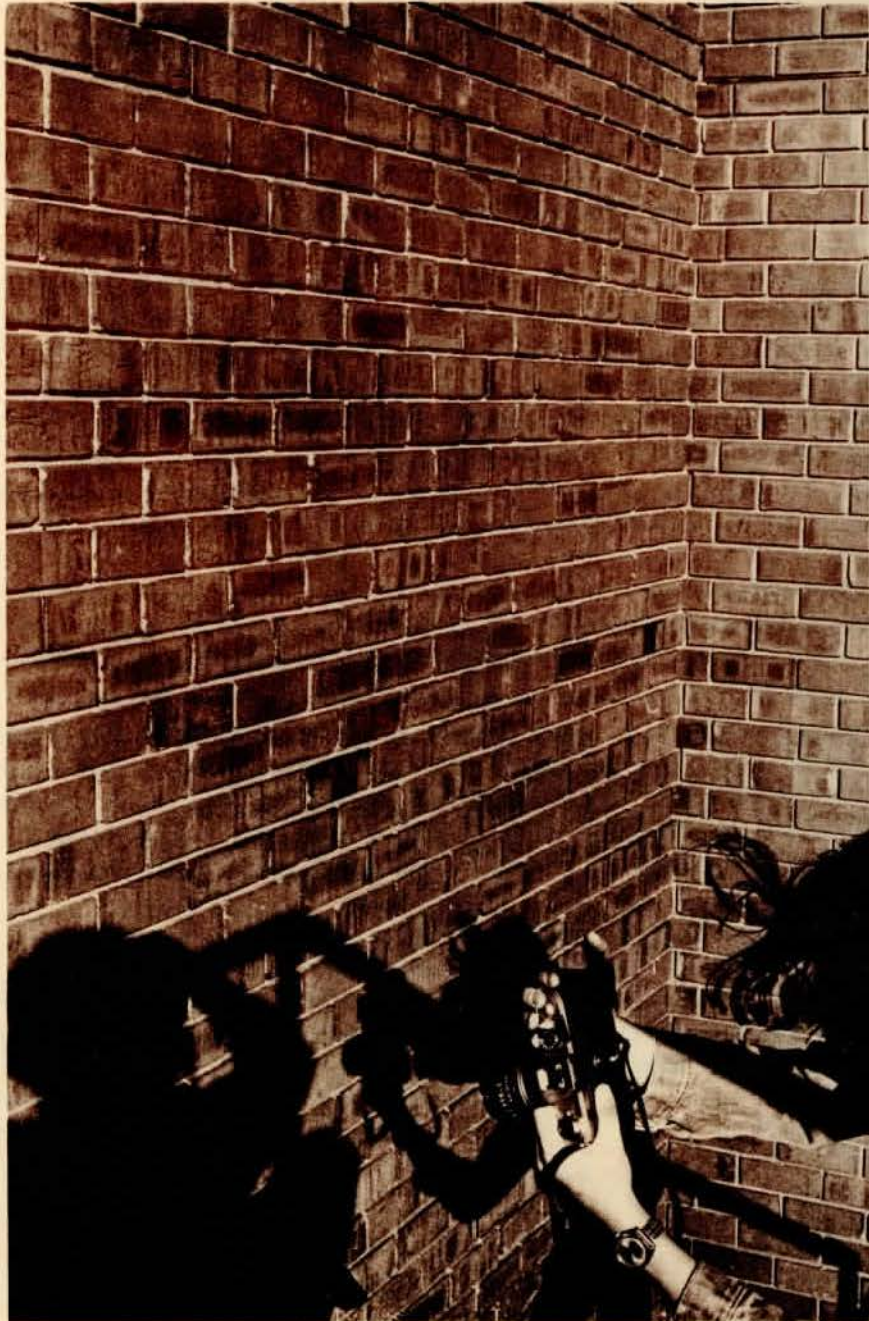
Variation on
A Tete a Tete Supper,
for Toulouse Latrece

My mind runs green, like a waterfall of gin,
My boa constricts around a frolic of sin,
My date... he just sits near, starched to the tie,
And whispers, "Please pass the kidney minced pie."
In two hours he's touched me thrice, on the hand.
I wish once he'd try for a foreigner land.
The room is seductive, air teases with spice,
But a little h'ors d'oeuvre would surely be nice.
If soon he doesn't crave my basket of fruit
I'll dance ever so slowly and undo his suit.
And there on the dance floor, he'll understand why
I claim to taste better than kidney minced pie.

-Claudia Stedelin-

Salted bitter
the eyes break
Shattered blue
in wet palms
Tunnel lips
now howling green
Vestibules
on a bed
Squirming, born
umbilical leftovers
Like a casserole pie
dished out
washed up
forgetting to die

- Claudia Stedelin -



Brian Samuels

Mother's Day for Marybelle

Pineville was a small, quiet, farm community where the only excitement for the two local policemen was to write an occasional speeding ticket. In the Spring, the fragrance of honeysuckle permeated the air and in the Fall, the aroma of burning leaves. All the lawns seemed to be luxuriously manicured, but there was no evidence of either real wealth or poverty; although there were a few rundown shacks scattered discreetly around the community. Marybelle Whitten lived in one of these shacks. It was located off Route 13, the main highway, on the other side of town from my own house.

I met Marybelle when we were in the first grade. She was skinny with dull, matted dishwater blonde hair and dark circles accented her sad, grey eyes. Her small hands were cracked and dirty. Her bony legs were a scaley white down to her dingy white socks, and her clothes, some days too big, other days too small, were always ragged and dirty. None of the kids wanted to sit by her or hold her hand when we played musical games. I didn't want to take her hand either but when the others began laughing at her and holding their noses, something inside me began to hurt. I felt as if they were making fun of me, and I was forced by this inner turmoil to take her hand and be her partner.

After the first few days of school, I told my Mom about how the other kids treated Marybelle. She said sympathetically, "That's terrible, Deborah. You must not mistreat her, but you stay away from her. The Whittens are all trashy people. She might even have lice, and we wouldn't want people to think we're like the Whittens."

Marybelle and I never became playmates. She didn't follow me around or pester me to play with her at recess. I don't even know if Marybelle liked me. She seemed only to accept me as her partner during those years when we played games.

In the third grade, it became more important to me that Marybelle feel accepted. I invited her to Sunday School at the First Baptist Church. Here, I knew people would accept her and no one would make fun of her or be afraid to sit by her. She did come, but not often. She told me once that she had to help with the smaller children at home, and that it was difficult for her to get away on Sunday mornings. The times she did come, everyone was nice to her, and they always invited her back.

By high school, I had almost completely lost touch with Marybelle. We weren't in any of the same classes, so I talked to her only if we happened to pass each other in the halls. I tried to get her to join some of our clubs, but she said the problems at home made it impossible for her to be a part of Pep Club or Hi Tri. She didn't seem to want to explain much about her home life, and I didn't want to pry.

One day, as I walked away from Marybelle, I remembered thinking that she was much cleaner looking than she used to be. Her body was thin but well developed underneath her shabby, misfitting clothes. Her eyes though, had not changed. The dark circles had remained, and her eyes seemed as sad at fifteen as I remembered them at six.

A few weeks after this, I heard Marybelle had quit school. The rumor was that she was pregnant, a terrible crime in Pineville, where gossip was a pastime. By the time Marybelle's baby girl was born, the rumors had grown to implicate her own stepfather. I wished I had been closer to Marybelle. I wanted to know if she needed help, but she had never really encouraged our friendship and my mother certainly didn't.

Five months later on a warm, sunny Mother's Day, I sat comfortably admiring our church before the Sunday Service. I looked around at the towering white walls that turned into a luscious pink when the sun penetrated the stained glass windows. Our choir looked impressive in their navy blue matching gowns with big white satin collars. The soft organ music covered the pre-service noise and created an atmosphere of peace. I was confident that some mysterious, holy force kept all the world's problems from entering through the doors of this, the biggest and prettiest church in Pineville. Marybelle and her baby were nowhere in my mind.

Up front, I noticed the two beautiful floral arrangements on the altar for the traditional Mother's Day presentation. One pot of the pink and yellow Mums would be given to the oldest mother present and one to the youngest mother present. Just then, the Sunday School Superintendent stepped up to the pulpit to begin the service by reading off the attendance statistics. When he finished, the Song Leader stepped forward and in a booming, rich baritone voice said, "Let's turn in our hymnals to page 319, What a Friend We Have in Jesus."

As we finished singing, our minister walked up to the pulpit to announce, "We will now honor the best friend any of us can have other than Jesus, our mothers." He leaned over and held up the first pot of Mums for the oldest mother and after a brief screening of ages in the congregation, the flowers were given to Mrs. Etta King, who was ninety-five years old. Then he held up the remaining pot of Mums and started the countdown of ages in search of the youngest mother present. He said, "Do we have any mothers younger than twenty?" By now he had begun to sound like a carnival barker or an auctioneer. Two girls stood up who were both nineteen. He asked if anyone was younger than nineteen, and I could feel someone stand up a few rows behind me. I tried not to turn around impolitely when I sensed a peculiar hush go over the congregation. I turned my head to the side just in time to see Marybelle move slowly toward the center aisle. She walked to the front and Rev. Swinson shook Marybelle's hand and presented her with the pot of Mums for being the youngest mother present at sixteen.

When she started back down the aisle toward her seat, I noticed how radiant her face looked. The same light that gave the walls their pinkish glow erased the dark circles from beneath her eyes and she was actually smiling.

As she passed, my mother leaned over and whispered, "She has her nerve accepting those flowers. She's not even married."

"Mom," I whispered, annoyed, "this isn't the place for discussing Marybelle's problems." I could perceive from the look I received that we would discuss it after church, and we did.

My mother started lecturing me the minute we stepped out the door. She said, "I didn't send you to Sunday School and Church all these years for you to approve of that girl having a baby out of wedlock. I hear that baby belongs to her own drunken stepfather."

"But Mom, maybe it wasn't her fault. Did you ever think of that?"

"Look, Deborah, she must have enjoyed what was going on or she wouldn't have been able to get pregnant."

It was quite evident during the next week that my mother and I weren't the only church members discussing Marybelle's flowers. By the following Sunday, the church board had voted to discontinue the practice of presenting flowers on Mother's Day. Rev. Swinson made the announcement to the congregation that the traditional Mother's Day ceremony would be discontinued. He paused as if he were searching for the proper words to explain the church's action. Then he said, "It just doesn't seem fair to single out only two mothers as special when all mothers are special in the eyes of the Lord."

— Sally Reed—

Greg Wearly



Working in the "real world"

Dinner-time and other Fantasies

Momma, let me linger
To kiss your satin breasts
They're the part of you
That I like the best
Your neck is a fantasy -
A portrait of silk
But since I'm a baby,
I prefer now thy milk.

-Claudia Stedelin-

Chanson Romantique

Rabbit heart burst, convulse
vibrant, blood in foam (soon
still flow). Now honed exhale, breath
like fur, rippled rare flail
reconciles pulse to bone.

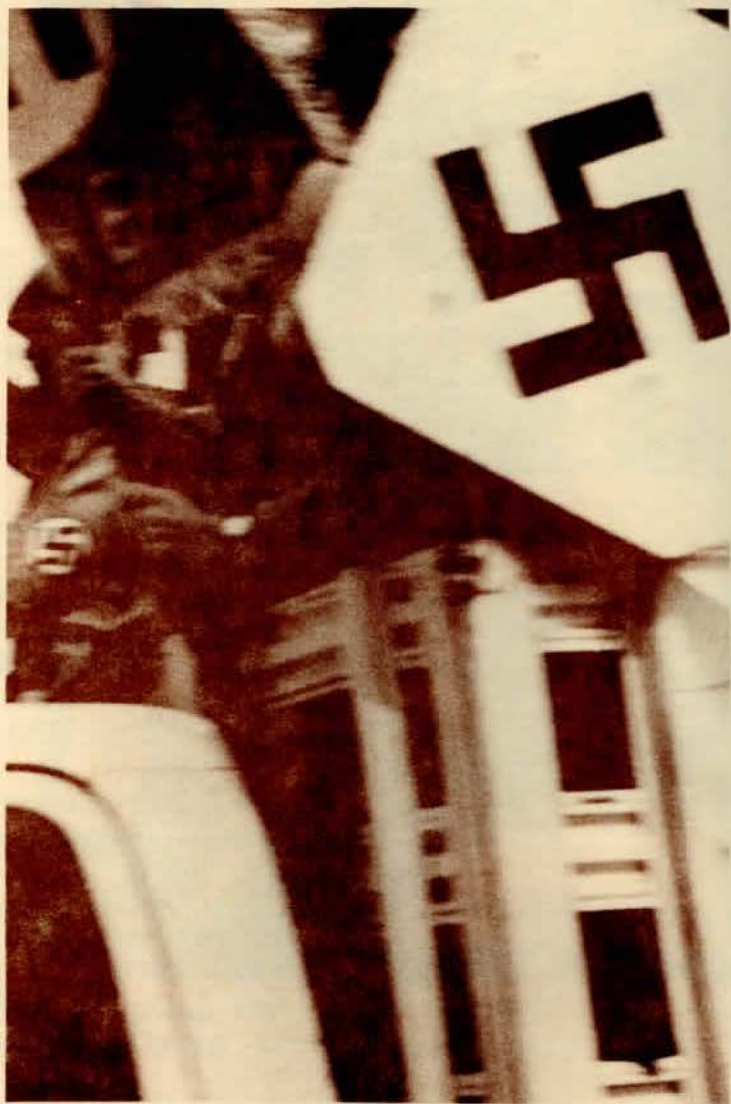
-Sherry Park-

How crazy his behavior seems to be
If I were he,
it would make sense to me.

The powdered snow fell dusting shrubs and trees;
Moist, sparkling walks had not begun to freeze.
This lovely scene I missed; my radio
Blared: "Freezing rain! Beware! Two feet of snow!"

Epigrams written January 1979

by Grace Poertner



Brian Samuels



Lois Boschert

SUMMER HEAT

THE GERBILS

"Mom, Mahhhhhhhhm, one of the gerbils is loose in the basement."

"Did you let it out of the cage?"

"No, I just looked in and all I could see was one gerbil running around. Probably someone else left the top open."

"Did you find the top open?"

"No, but the hook was loose."

By this time we were downstairs by the cage and I knew what we would find. I remembered smelling that odor yesterday near the cage and thinking that it must be past time to clean it.

"Honey, your little gerbil is dead. See the fur showing from beneath the cedar shavings? The other gerbil tried to bury her."

She was crying. All I could think of was to get that nauseating thing out of there. "Get a box to put it in."

She stood there crying. I made myself stand there. I took her into my arms and listened to her cry. She needed time to mourn.

Death. That deteriorating little pile of fur was a playful gerbil such a short time ago.

"When did you feed them last?"

"A couple days ago, but I gave them enough food for several days." She was still sobbing.

"Honey, your gerbil was four years old. She died of old age."

I remembered several years ago when her brother had called to me. "Mom, he's stiff." He had gone to the cage to feed his guinea pig. He found him dead that cold, cold January when we all conserved heat and our basement was so cold and we forgot that guinea pigs had to have a 70-degree climate in which to live. In the city some old people died that winter from exposure to the cold.

"We need to bury her. Here's a box to put her in. Later we'll dig a hole in the back yard for her." We cleaned the cage for the gerbil that was left and put him back in. She played with him and fed him.

It is July. It has been extremely hot for a long time. I remember the article in the newspaper several days ago. Some old people died in the city because they lived in stifling hot apartments. They were alone. Their bodies were found in varying stages of decomposition.

"Have another sunflower seed." I heard her, still by the cage. The temperature in our basement was 77 degrees and the air-conditioner was running.

—Grace Poertner—



Greg Wearly

Fair Winds

An autumn air contorts the spring
In park of violet roses drawn.
Cool blue blown bundles of humans fling
down terraces of April lawns
Hourly tides far on the shore
collaborate the earthen day.
No other crevice to explore,
Except your lips to part away.
Your books surmounted in my mind
Your hands still touch me differently
A curious web, no eye can find,
Lays dark within my memory.

-Claudia Stedelin-



Brian Samuels

GRIFFIN STAFF

BARRY BASORE

LOIS BOSCHERT

TOM JOY

PAUL BUTTS

ETHAN HOSKIN

TONY CLARK

NEAL CONES

KARL KELLEY

JEFFIE FEELY

MARY EVELYN MARTIN

SHERRY PARK

BRIAN SAMUELS



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