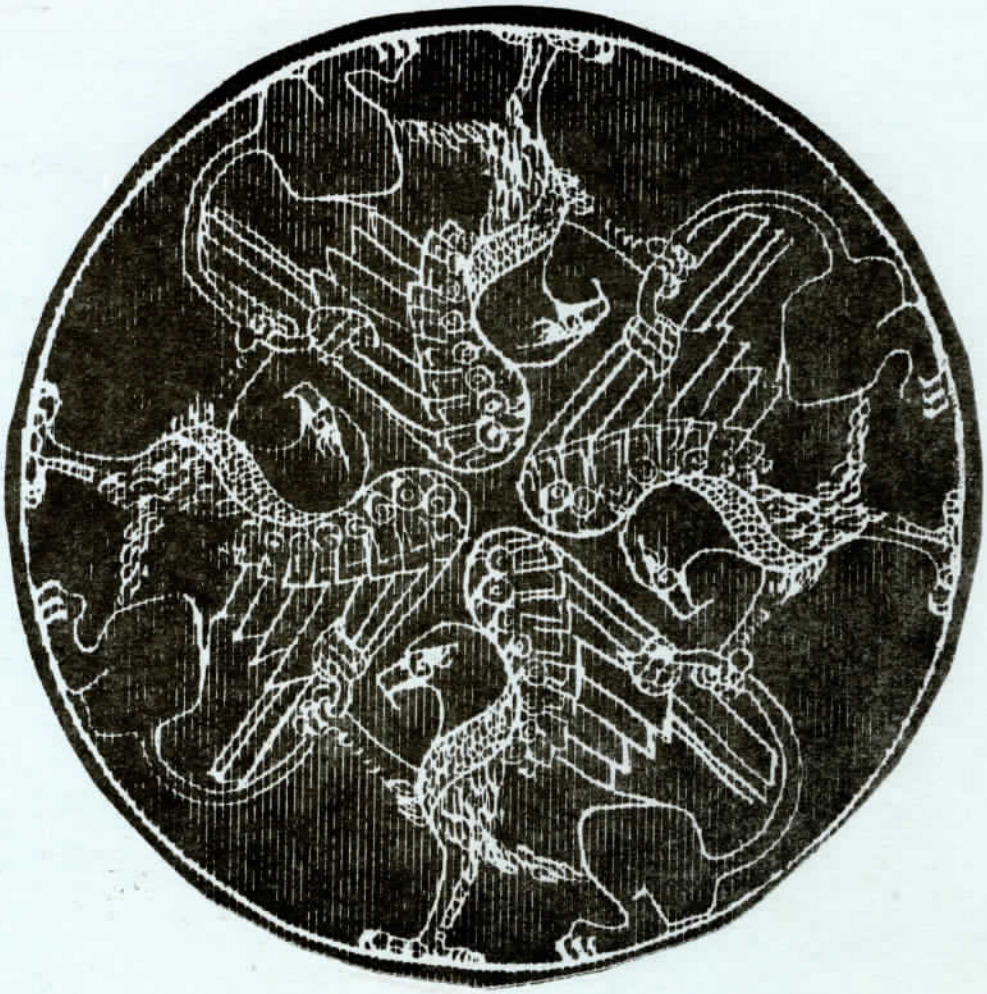

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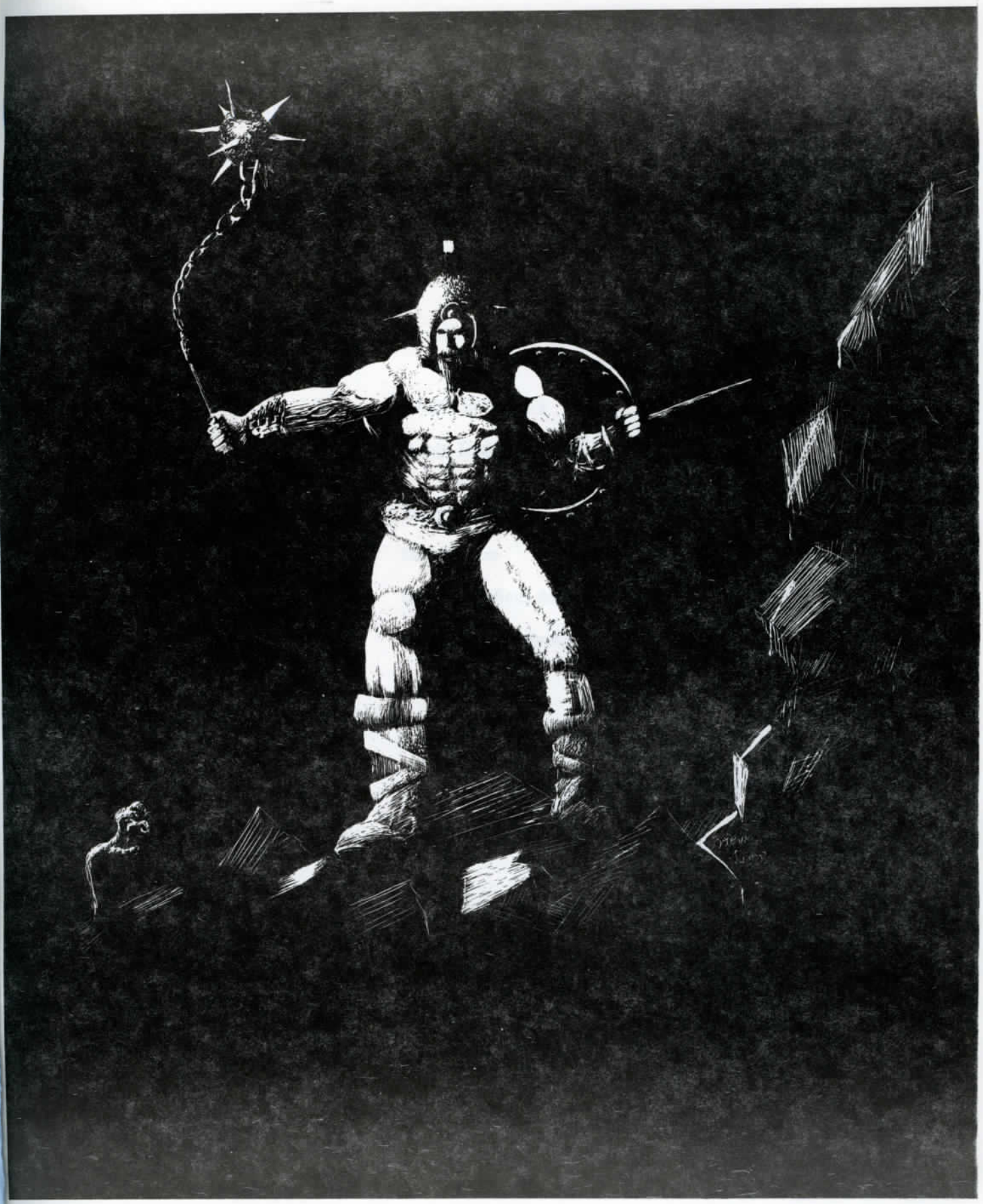

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Special thanks to Jim Feely

Inside Cover by STEVE LAMP

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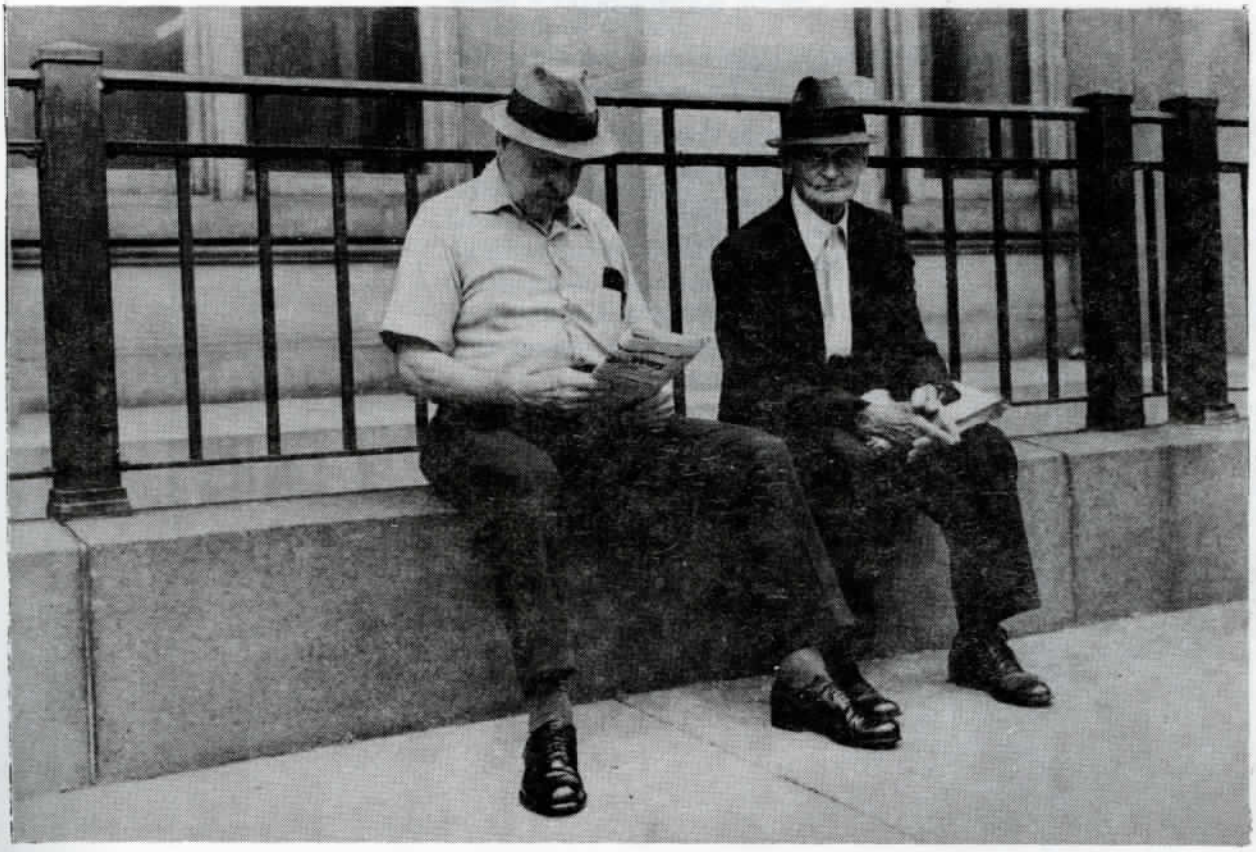
KAREN LUMPE

ASTERISK and AMPERSAND

Ampersand spoke melancholy,
In sadness, to a friend,
"What use am I but brevity
To a lazy hand?"
Answered asterisk,
"Be glad for what you are.
I am just a directional
In the shape of a star."
"You are fortunate indeed!
Your value clearly stands.
But I," the ampersand said,
"Am the tool of sloth's hands."
"Yes, but you give convenience,
While I'm often a distraction.
You have your purpose and use.
You are not a detraction."
And, so it went
From day to day.
Asterisk and ampersand
Had a lot to say.



SATISFIED ?

Longing
For stars -
Without knowing
The distance
Of their site -
The reaching
Falls short
Of touching
And failure
Brings tears
To eyes
Of one now too disappointed
To try reaching
For flower petals.

NIALL — EDGAR CONES

THE MORNING KNIFE

I

First the scream will come
in the guise of a snake.
Inching its chaos towards
the light between the teeth.
That is the silence's cue.
That is the morning knife.

II

Now the silence will come
in the guise of a sister.
Small and playing cats cradle
in the open wound.
Will you have a strychnine cocktail with her?
Will you play house with her bones?

III

Dusk will announce you
in the guise of a fever,
turning forever in the silence.
Little sister plays dolls
in the stench of the sickroom.
The wound is a believer.

SAILOR JACK

You toss on the couch
as guns and jungles assemble,
as rivers open and python
their way into your dreams.
Come to me from smoke and sweat,
from the damask and the lanterns
of the whores in Saigon,
in your nightmares and drug deals.
Walk battlefields with me
while I stuff ghosts in my pockets
and beg, kill me for a song.
Kill me bullet tongue.
Ring the death bell at noon
and be five I'll be sipping martinis
and quieting you down in some cafe,
or livingroom, or fields foreign
where the blood of our blood of our blood
walked and dropped babies like melons on
our aunt's Cork crystal, on the day of independence
as guns and jungles assemble for the torture,
as the python stalks, as my pockets bear the dead
to paper and words, always words.
I sit and watch you toss on the couch.

SONG UPON THE DEPARTURE OF THE MOURNERS

The rats begin at the toes my children,
precise as European woodcarvers

they sing ballads by their labour.
The little bones go to market as
the saints and apostles.
The big toe is the Blessed Virgin.

This is the village the mourners leave.
This is the bend in the road the bride's
carriage misses.
A shrine of sorts my children,
only cripples do not hang crutches on the ribs.
Not even dreams dare sing the Kyrie.

Only the dire Matin, the worm
and the weary rat
who shall knaw a rosette
form a hipbone.

ANGEL

Angel zipped up
and left his piss
to glisten and croon
to Lowenbraugh labels
and rotten apples.
To last week's news and
this week's tragedy.
Sent his spray flying
like a stream of silver
from that magic wand,
that brag, that dare
and howled.
Threw his face up to
neons of gas stations,
groceries and gave
new scars bright buzz,
gas hum -

let's die let's drunk
let's dance let's roll
down Guadalupe
to the Virgin's feet.
Let's fight let's fire
let's votive let's burn
burn holy burn damned
I box
tonight tomorrow and the best.
Angel's the best.
You seen Angel?
Good as fuckin' gold man
my leather's brown and tough
as my Chicano ass.
You seen Angel pray,
wink at the Virgin,
drink with the devil.
You seen Angel's glove
make the cross
touching shoulder to shoulder
and center.

We sallied up Cathedral Place,
sallied dark sallied knowing
tried for lifelines in
phone booths
and annointings
in all night cafes
as Angel dark Angel of coffee tales
told how Angel sallied into the ring
how brown leather made the cross
before flesh and leather fucked
before hundreds of screaming eyes.

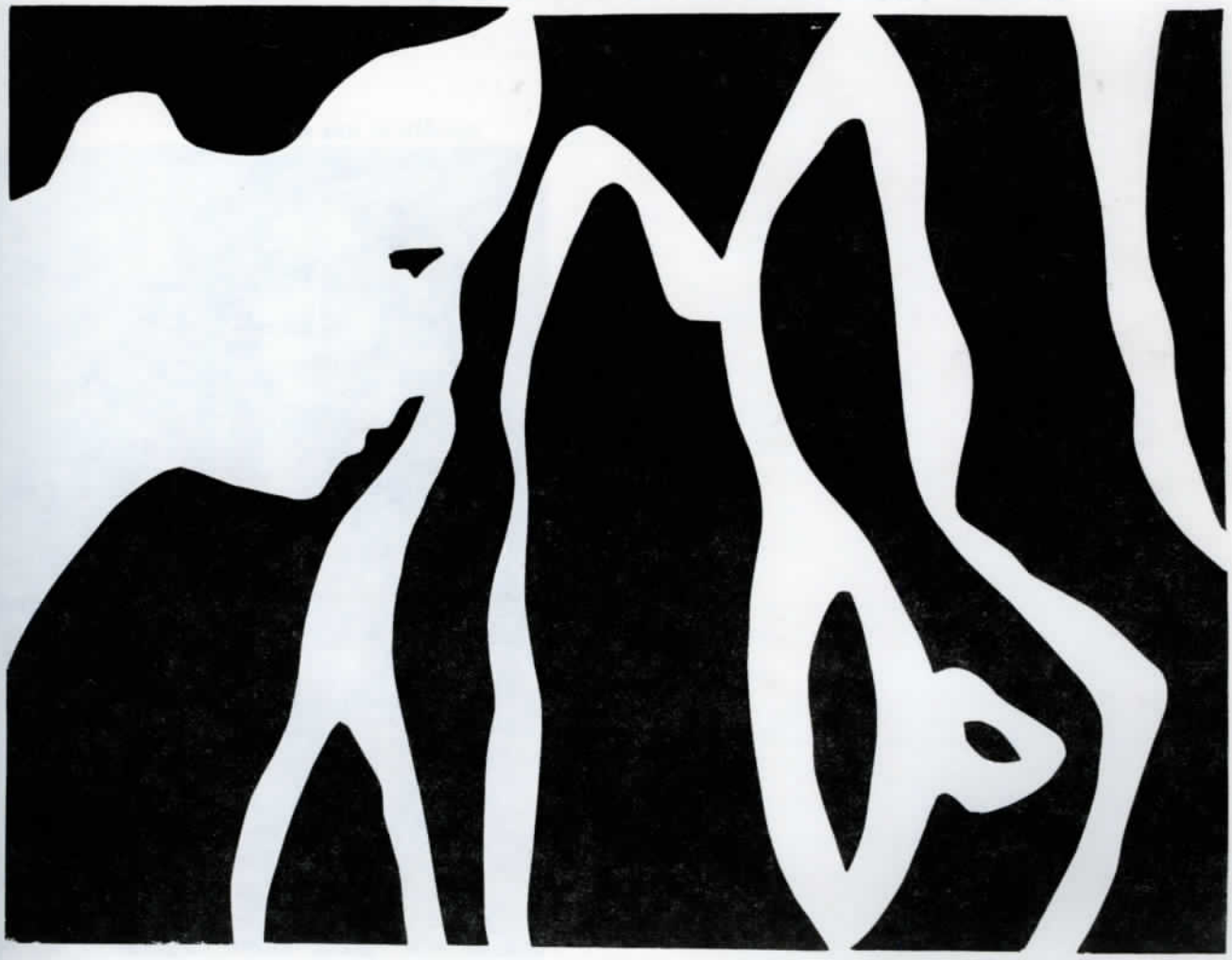
THE CONJUROR'S PEACHES

These windows
these sybils of morning
team with snow.
Each pane a storyteller,
a Tarot whispering
in whites and browns
so dark by comparison
as to be black.
I eat the conjuror's peaches
left on my floor,
beside my arm dragging on my floor
by accident or circumstance.
While I ushered blacks
and heavy silvers back and forth
till dawn - like caged tigers
till dawn when they lept
and left my eyes opened
and the window panes heavy
and fixed and methodical
as witch cards spread for a reading.
The morning is long and weary.
The wounds eat all explorers
as peach blood speaks my lips forever.

JANE HUGHES

THE BALLOON MAN

The balloon man
Carries smiles on a string,
Shines a good day.
Brightens with colours.
True colours
Of true feelings.
Sprinkled with yellow,
Heavy with red,
And with baby breezes
Windy blue.



TO A DE KOONING WOMAN **JIM FEELY**
From A DURRELL CHAUVINIST PIG

I understanding in the blood-warm temple
In the one dark well of desert you
I strength throb through the warm close hold of darkness
    Singing circles ringing
    Muscle
To lap the lip shriek weeping statue womankind.

Tips blossom-bud, slip-whip to ripple touch,
Thrash roses from stark forgetfulness,
Tickle to nothing a certain decorum.
    Mouth, tongue and teeth of lust
    Suckle
Into milk the sandy social shelves beneath your breasts.

I in a twisted arc of neck soar frothing
Into slough-tongued slobbered whispers come
I from liquid chains burst star hot prickly night
    Shivering new through you
    My soul
To silence "peopled" words wise cold as stretching day.

ROBIN RAGSDALE

BEAUTY OF THE BEAST

The haughty beast slipped
and
red flushed his
translucent
skin,
it is time to
begin
a worthless
piece of
art.

Beauty becomes whim
so
everybody swim
swim
swim
to the top
STOP

Art is not worthless
Haughtiness always
false
and
Beauty need
not
swim,

All is but a whim.

ST. FRANCIS FAILED THE BIRD

ROBIN RAGSDALE

The night was a bad place, a time of unseen danger. The night was the friend of stalking dark shadows, of growling men with huge clawing hands.

In the park, soft lamp light scattered in the humid night air, while mists moved through the glow in smoke-like designs. The light embraced the lamp post, descended to the cement pavement, and rolled out feebly into the immense darkness.

The walk through Trinity Park was filled with shadows, hushed angry whisperings, and the sound of following footsteps that crunched on the gravel trails. Christy walked on the grass because the soft ground made less noise than the walk-ways. She saw that the darkness could be her friend as well as her enemy, but Christy knew they were following; they were always following.

There was a small rest area where Christy always stopped. It contained a bench and a statue of St. Francis by a pond. Sitting on the shadowed bench, we felt a strange protection. The pond was smooth, black, and seemed deeper than it could really have been. Moonlight touched the ebony surface and made the dangerous night beautiful. The Saint held a stone bird toward the stars as though he were trying to persuade the winged thing to fly. Christy envied the bird its safety and the pond its peace; the moon reflected on its surface - - soft and constant.

Deep in the pool's blackness was the reflection of St. Francis. He nodded in ripples and seemed to say, "Yes, you are safe. I keep you in my hands secure with this sparrow."

Christy knelt beside the water's edge and lightly touched the gentle image - - creating patterns of moonsilver circles that expanded into miniature waves which rolled to the soil by her knees. As they became weaker, the water again smoothed.

As she waited for the ripples to fade out, his details slowly straightened. His eyes were black and his face bearly discernable from any other, but Christy knew this new image was not her Saint - for there was an angry scowl, and clenched fists.

Christy jerked around at the sound of leaves crunching and she found a man glaring at her. She forced herself from the bench and tried to run, but the man grabbed her wrist, twisted her arm, and forced her to kneel beside him - - a grin upon his face.

"Please", Christy began, her voice a coarse whisper; and before she could continue, the man threw her into the water, directly in front of the statue.

She looked to the Saint and, seeing the kind bend of his draped shoulders, stood up and reached out to him. The stone was cold; it did not give way to her fingers but put up gritty resistance. Christy pulled back in surprise as though she had expected him to be human.

She looked with horror at his empty hands. Not even his hands were there, his arms stopped at the wrists in a jagged break, and the bird was gone. The force of her body had knocked it off.

Frantically, Christy fell on her knees and put her hands into the water where the bird should have fallen. She reached deeper, but touched nothing.

Finally, she waded in up to her waist, feeling with her feet for the stone creature.

As she pushed heavily against the water's weight, Christy heard a quiet splash at the edge of the pond. She felt fear compress her stomach; it moved upwards into her heart and throat as water rippled against her chest.

Under the water the man grabbed her knees. Christy was pulled down into the cold liquid coughing and choking for air. The man held her there as he entered her body, then lifted her into the night breeze braced upon his pelvis. Christy did not fight - - she clung to him helplessly.

She thought she saw the black shadow of her blood move across the dark water. As she screamed, birds seemed to fly into the night crying for her pain, and when Christy looked to Saint Francis, she saw him mirroring her tears. He could not help her; he had no hands. Surely she would drown as had the bird.

Another storm of pain rushed in, and Christy fainted. She floated into a black sleep that held no dream or memory, and the pain was gone.

When she woke, a tube hum was above her. A nurse was gently touching her shoulder in an attempt to wake her, and smiled when she saw that Christy had opened her eyes.

"Dr. Freedman is waiting to see you. Do you remember your appointment?"

"Huh, yes. I think so.", Christy murmered.

"I'll go get your robe. Don't get up, I won't be long." The nurse gave her a tentative smile and then swished out of the room, a blur of white.

When the nurse returned, Christy was hustled out into the corridor. Other patients shuffled along the hallway, some talking, some leaning on the white tiled walls staring at the other white tiled walls; and some of them examining imaginary objects between the walls. Two women turned around when Christy came out of her room, but lost interest as they recongized her.

Christy was ushered into the doctor's office. Inside, she pressed against the wall and warily watched the man at his desk.

"Please sit, Christy, you know by now that I won't hurt you". He gave her his smile that was meant to comfort, but he knew that Christy would never trust him.

She moved along the wall and sat in a chair across from the doctor. She was well acquainted with the doctor-patient procedure; she had been a patient for a long time.

"Have you been dreaming again, Christy?"

"Yes," she hesitated and then continued, her voice sounding like that of a child who expects a scolding. "I know that you don't want me to see the man again, but I have to. Don't take him away." Her eyes filled with desperate tears. She was afraid that Freedman would find some way to take the dream away. It was only in her dreams that she could be "outside", with no bars on the windows, no nurses constantly looking for new abnormalities, no more medication with every meal, and no more sessions with Dr. Freedman.

The doctor hesitated, then reached into his white coat pocket for a pack of cigarettes. Slowly, he puffed, and laid the match in an ashtray. As it burned, Christy watched the flame jump around. Gradually, the flicker died out and only the smoke was left.

Freedman did not say anything while he smoked, Christy knew that he was considering what he should do with her. At the same time, she was thinking of ways to keep her dream. She would have to fight Dr. Freedman.

Finally, the cigarette had burned to near the filter. The doctor methodically smashed it in the ashtray, working it down until all hint of ember was snuffed. He had decided what he would do. He was going to remove the dream by using hypnotic therapy. It would be simple, a few sessions, a few talks, and she could be on her way to normality.

"Christy?"

She looked up, surprised out of her own thoughts, then said, "Yes, Dr. Freedman? Are we finished?" She was hoping to get out of this with no struggle.

Freedman smiled, "No, before we end this session, we are going to try a little relaxation exercise." He ignored the panic in her eyes and continued, "You know, Christy. It will make you feel better."

Christy did not answer; she knew very well how these exercises worked; she had done them so often before that they were almost a habit. Once the doctor started, she would naturally follow his lead. She nodded her consent.

The doctor began, his voice deliberately without inflection as he droned on about how tired she was, how she wanted to sleep. He told her that her body was at rest and nothing could hurt her. Nothing mattered except his voice and where it took her. Christy felt her body slipping with each syllable he spoke.

Her eyes were heavy, body numb, and mind relaxed, and when the doctor told her to lift her right hand, the arm rose with no forethought or intent on her part - - she was in the trance he wanted. The hand would stay in the air as long as he controlled.

"Christy, go to the park you often visit. It is dark, but nothing can hurt you. The dangers you once found are no longer there."

She saw the park entrance and walked into the shadows. The darkness became more dense as she progressed further into the trees. Moonlight filtered through branches in slender geometrical streaks, thin broken lines in the black.

She was looking for someone, every sound from the darkness caused her to turn in expectation. The trees stood in silent height, also waiting. The entire park was tense.

"Go to the pond, Christy." Dr. Freedman continued. "Find the pond and look into it. There is nothing in the water. It is only a pool of green water that has been there for a long time."

Christy saw the pond and ran to it. It was a deep dead green and still. It was wrong; this pond was dead. She bent down to the water's edge and cried.

"See the statue, Christy; it is stone. It is nothing but rock made into the image of a Saint. A man made object in a public park."

Panic forced Christy to jump up and stare at St. Francis, fearing that he, too, was dead. At first, he seemed as stony as the doctor had told her; but then he winked at her, and the bird was again in his hand - - it stretched its wings and neck.

"Christy?" Her arm had fallen. Freedman leaned forward and called her name again. "Christy? Christy, you are no longer asleep. You will wake up now, feeling rested and refreshed."

There was no answer. Christy no longer heard his voice. She reached forward and touched the Saint, feeling his warm flesh, and he smiled as he put the bird into her hands. The small creature snuggled as it repositioned its feathers to the smaller grasp.

THE END

WANITA ZUMBRUNNEN

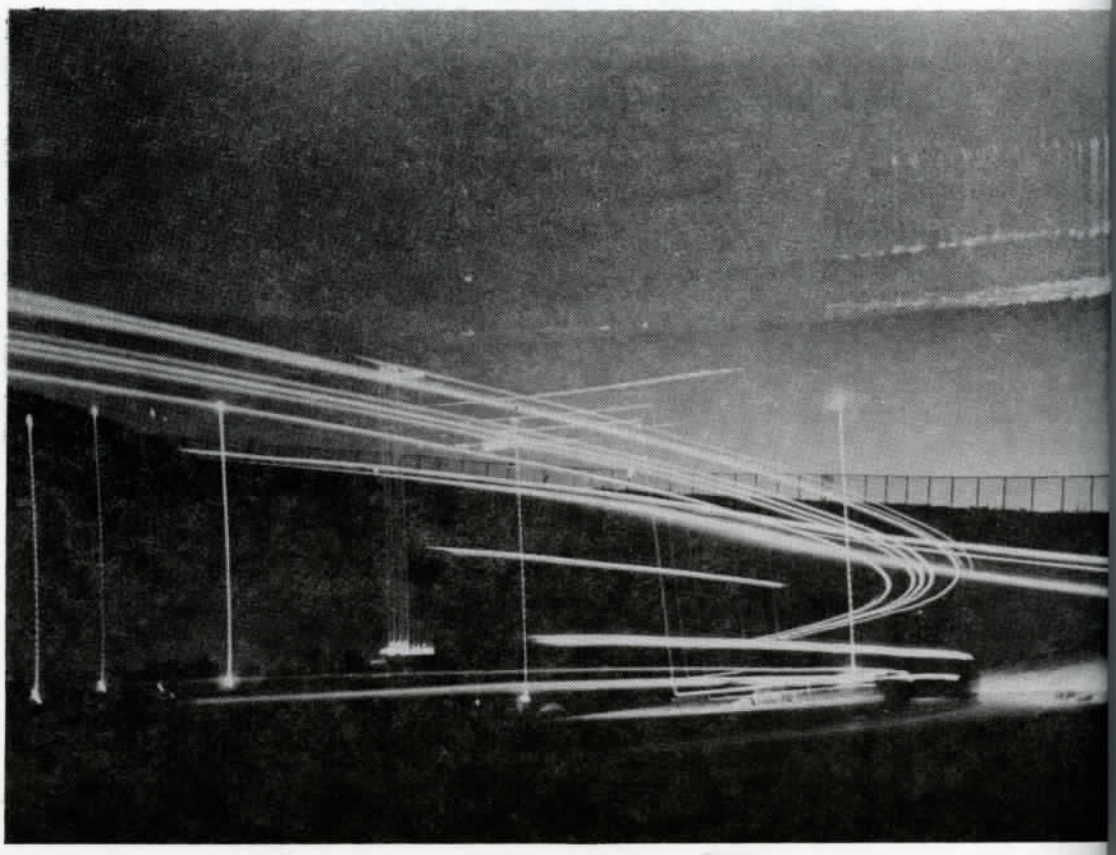
BLISTER BABY

It attached itself to me like a blister
filling with water tongue cheek and eyebone.
I could never see in it feel of it
but had to watch it ballooning me out
until it grew too large and broke surrounding
me with pain and people waiting for it
and leaving me bleeding gasping but whole.

For although it grew in of and from me
leaving scars etched on skin like metals
I am still in a clean cocoon safe from contact
except by my probing fingers weaving
pliant female chains that bind child and man
by delicate enchantment to woman.
I make good luck charms out of pubic hair.

THE CLOTH OF OUR SKIN

The old schoolhouse is a ruin
of dead desks and blackboards
and erasers dustily garmenting
the shambled space with decay.
Fibers of fingers and chalk
twist into echoing threads on
a spool of still intensity.
The shallow warp of now
can no longer be felt
as the deep texture of then
wraps and knots infinitely
onto the shuttling spindle
supreme in interweaving
the cloth of our skin.
That chaos to which we cling.

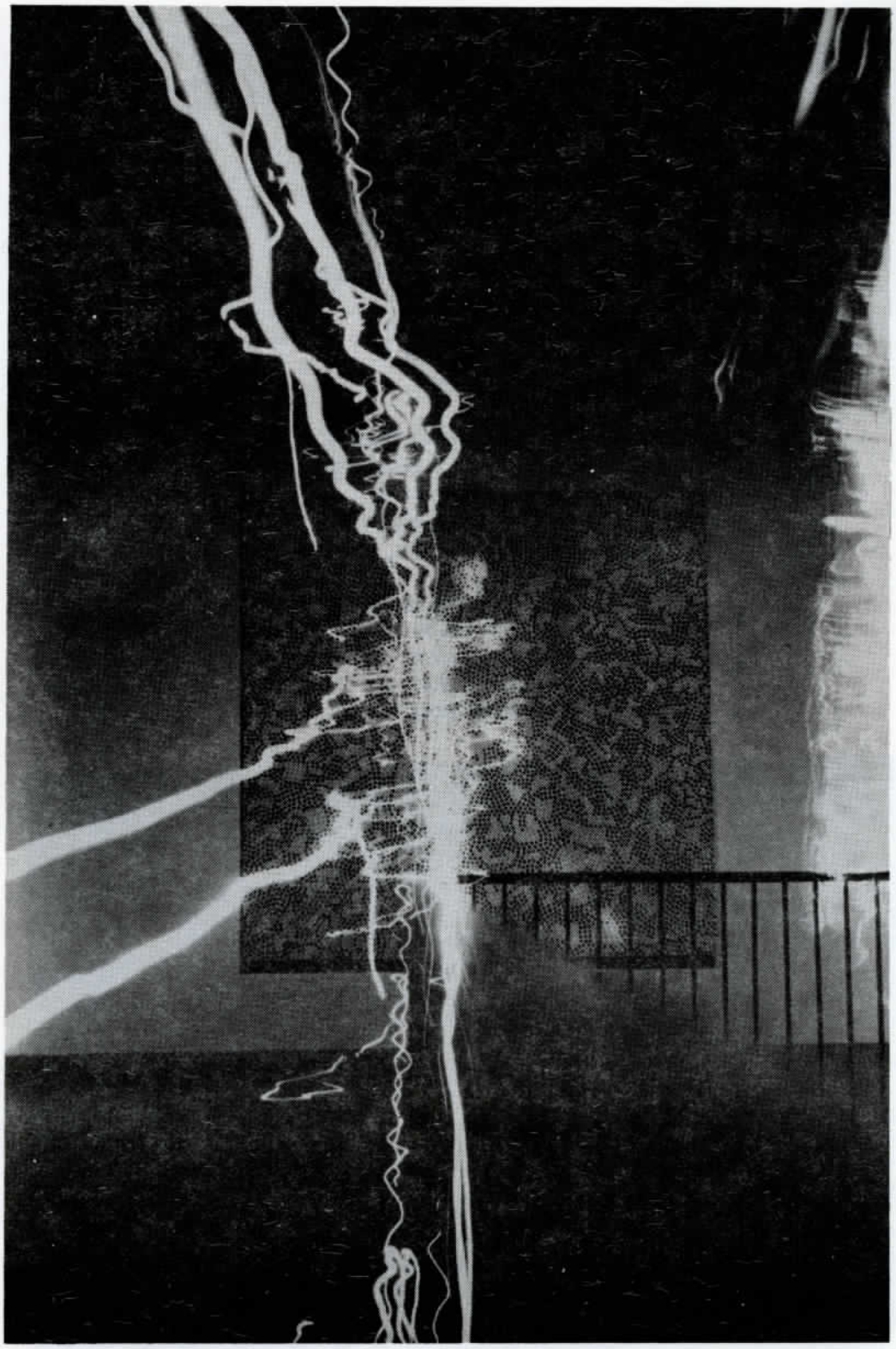


TO STOP THINKING ....

Is the process like racing up a hill
for the view at the top
but cannot be stopped
and plunges downward
like a speeding nerve?

After the crash what happens?
I would like to say it is surgery
but, no, surgery is to save.
To open the sound violates
a place, a forbidden site.

I have one remaining question.
Does the urgent knife
that kills the soul slice
with a delicate stroke
or a violent wrenching?



A HOSTILE WITNESS

The girl was called "a hostile witness"
after she said, "I can't remember."
"That's not the way I remember it now."
When asked if her father tried to hide the gun.
She sat in the witness chair quiet, quiet now.
She had been prepared for this
or had thought she was prepared
but had always wondered what it would be like.
She would be questioned
but what would it really be like?

At first she had been angry with the father
coming in with the gun mostly hidden
but the cost and saying "Go to your room."
But that was her anger
he was hers to be angry at.
She did not know at first she would
resent their trying to punish him
didn't know she would be afraid for him
didn't know she would be afraid
he would be no longer hers
to love and hate at the same time.

Or was it partly the fear of obedience?
She was his to tell, she was to do.
Now she was expected to undo.
Now there were others to tell her
she must do this -this-
But there was no time
to undo the years with him
no time to do up a habit with them.
Yet they expected and she could
no longer be easily expected
-fourteen- the year of no expectance.

But more that this -more-
He was hers to have.
He was there with a giving
she could not easily bear.
They were separate and yet the same
-she and he- and she suffered to part
and moved again like an infant closely.

Or was it the awakening woman
who reaches without reason
the earth mother surrounding all.
Was he now her child to protect?

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THE SPELLING CONQUEST

The cold still space
of the bleak March land
poured over the schoolroom
conquest of words
and left her frozen
in a dim distance.

I remember that she stood there
knowing she was expected to be defeated
that if she won she could only lose
who did not want to win
and yet did not want to win
but didn't really believe she could
but knew she must
and when the work arrived,
slicing obliquely across the room
like a whip lashing her there,
- the word her sister missed -
she knew she could spell
knew she must spell and did
she was left alone
with her victory.

Now here at my desk
while looking out
through the glass
past the railing
into the grass
and swaying trees
there is no separation
even the shadows
are warm and winning.

BARRY BASORE

TEMPORARY TRUCE

Pretzel logic twisted in salt,
non-sense zeros dance the waltz.
Lecherous virtue waits its turn,
the band played "ode t'a grecian urn."

The Ball arrangement, a wild chartreuse
Red Death waited in a wav'ring truce.
Music chanted without care,
flourishing in a decadent air.

Vanities danced to glories past
awestruck o'er the historian's craft.
seeing what was, not the present wreck,
Death will take the unwary quick.

PROSPERO'S TEMPEST

A fog crept,
rains lept,
and a hurricane ran wild.
Tornados spin,
hail descends,
clouds cow'r in the hour.
It is not long,
the weather's song,
singing down in showers.
My window peeks
on searing heat,
I'm in Prospero's tempest power.

ANCIENT BURNINGS

Fire crackles from the tongue,
the eyes sparkle bright
and coal is always flaming
at center of ancient sprite.

Opulent coals twinkle,
the cinder turns passion brash
and flame scorches with its touch;
burning to brackish black.

The coal sits in recent ashes,
the ashes of fire past.
It's the site of ancient burnings,
where new fires forever catch.