

1983



the griffin

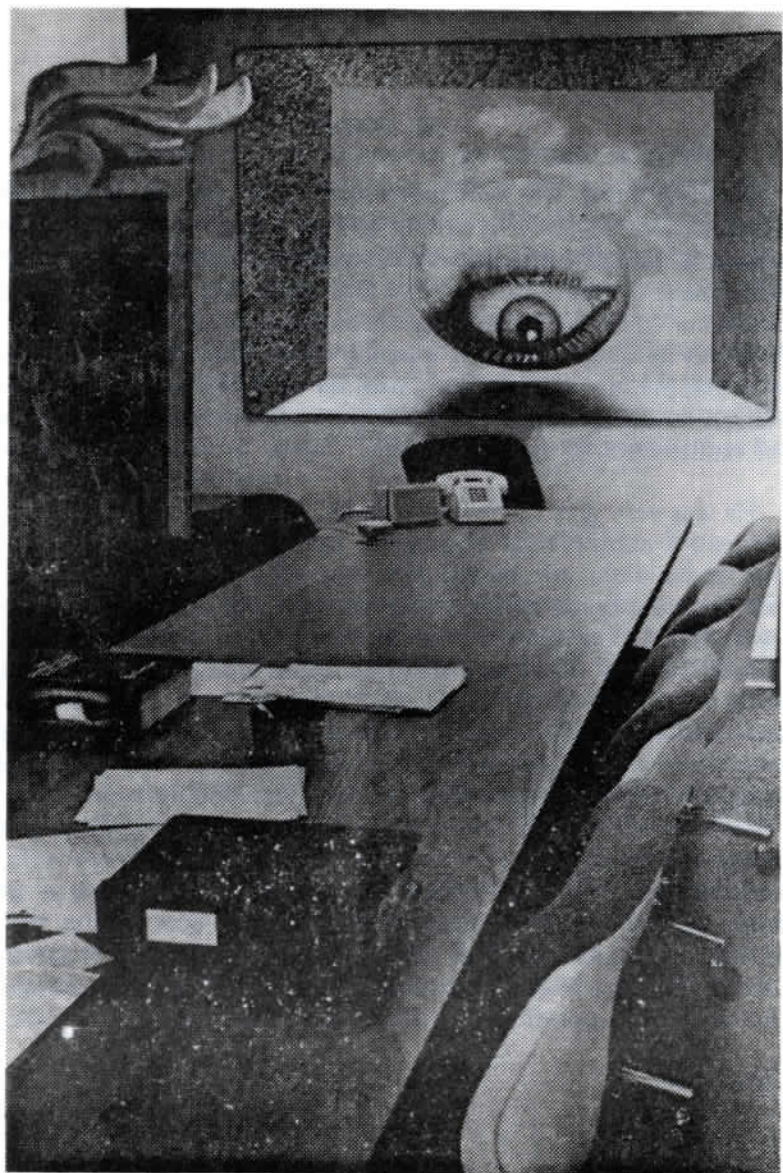




"This creature was sacred to the sun  
and kept guard over  
hidden treasures."

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Dennis Brandt

## THE DOOR

Walking along the hall that morning he glanced at the old wooden door to see if it would still be there. For many mornings now he had been disturbed to see his dim reflection in the dusty pane of the old door. For a long time he had been like all the other keyholders and had kept his head and eyes straight ahead as he passed the old wooden door. But lately things had been happening to make him wonder what horrors were locked behind its dusty pane. He shuddered a little then hurried down the hall toward his own door.

He was very glad to be a keyholder; for if one were not a keyholder he couldn't get through a door. He had heard rumors that some were not keyholders, but with all the doors locked and loitering being forbidden in the hall this could not be true. Everyone had a key, though different keys opened different doors. His key was made of brass and it unlocked the door he went through every day. Behind his door were smokey factories and slightly run down homes and apartments. Some must have misplaced their keys for he hadn't seen Joe, Fred, Jane, or others lately. Maybe they were behind one of the other doors. He had looked through the other big plate glass doors once. Behind one door he could see clean little office buildings and well kept houses with neatly groomed lawns. Behind the other were luxurious houses with beautifully manicured lawns and gardens. But one can't see much from the outside looking in and he couldn't stay long because loitering in the hall wasn't permitted.

There had been a door he used to go through once that one didn't need a key for. This was where the Locksmiths had taught about doors and the importance of having a key to open them. It was there he had first heard of the old wooden door. The Locksmiths had told that once the old wooden door had stood open while an uncountable number of tired, ragged people went through. But the Lockmasters had finally arranged it so the old wooden door could be locked forever. All the keys would be destroyed and no one would ever have to go through the old wooden door again. This thought comforted him as he stopped at his own door.

He reached in pocket for his key to unlock the door. He tried another pocket, then a little frantic, he searched all his pockets. No key. Then he tried the door but it was locked. He tried all the other doors, but one. They were locked tight, too. Turning, he walked slowly and came to stand before the old wooden door. Resting a hand on the knob he saw a dim glow through the dusty pane. The door opened as the knob gave way to his hand. Standing huddled around a small flame burning in a battered old trash can was a small group of tired and ragged people. Behind the group, grocery bags stuffed with old clothes and a few other possessions stood. As he approached he could see in the haggard features and hollow eyes the faces of Joe, Fred, and Jane. The door closed as he went to take his place among the group. . . .Outside in the hall a group of keyholders hurried past the old wooden door; and if they glanced at its dusty pane, perhaps they would see . . . . .

—Gary Orick

## JARRED WIND

### I

A child  
In an autumn field  
With the last of the warm season's breath  
Blowing grassy billows  
In graceful dancing motions  
In rhythm with the movement  
Of long, dark hair  
Holds in her hands  
A gallon glass jar  
And its screwable lid.  
A young head turns  
Watching the direction of the billows;  
A hand readies the trap.  
Motion of the nearest blades of grass  
Sings her into swooping action,  
Scooping into her jar the moving air,  
And tightly screwing the lid.  
A child  
Leaves an autumn field  
Her treasure in her arms.

II

A woman  
 In her bedtime garb  
 Lazily, lackadaisically  
 Watches the evening news  
 And wonders whether or not  
 Tomorrow's weather will be nice.  
 When the forecast calls for ghastly gales  
 Casting winds of destructive force  
 Along a predicted path  
 Her attention is called.  
 An evening later  
 The weatherman explains  
 In his technical mumbo jumbo  
 Of sudden high or low pressure areas  
 The actual course  
 Of his otherwise-predicted wind.  
 The woman wonders  
 About the accuracy of science  
 In a highly technical world  
 And hypothesizes that a Mightier Hand  
 Without particular regard  
 For the forecaster's high and low pressures  
 Chose to move His air  
 In an altered direction.  
 He jarred his wind  
 From its original path.

And now the wayward wind  
 Is winding its way back home.

—Karen Lumpe



## A BITTER DILEMMA

Moist, grainy sections placed symmetrically by nature.  
The near perfect circular wheel has been  
Exposed by the unknowing hand of man—  
Not through insolence, but necessary ignorance.

The narrow end brings all sections to a central point.  
At the wide, individual units touch  
The spongy whitish substance that serves to link  
These separate parts into their unity.

Soft as rubber, yet resiliently sturdy,  
The mildly pocked outer shell naturally  
Decorates, molds, seals and protects  
The structured juicy matter within.

Had the original intent been left on the tree,  
The artificially stamped brand name  
Would not have marked its seal of quality  
To enhance its skin for market.

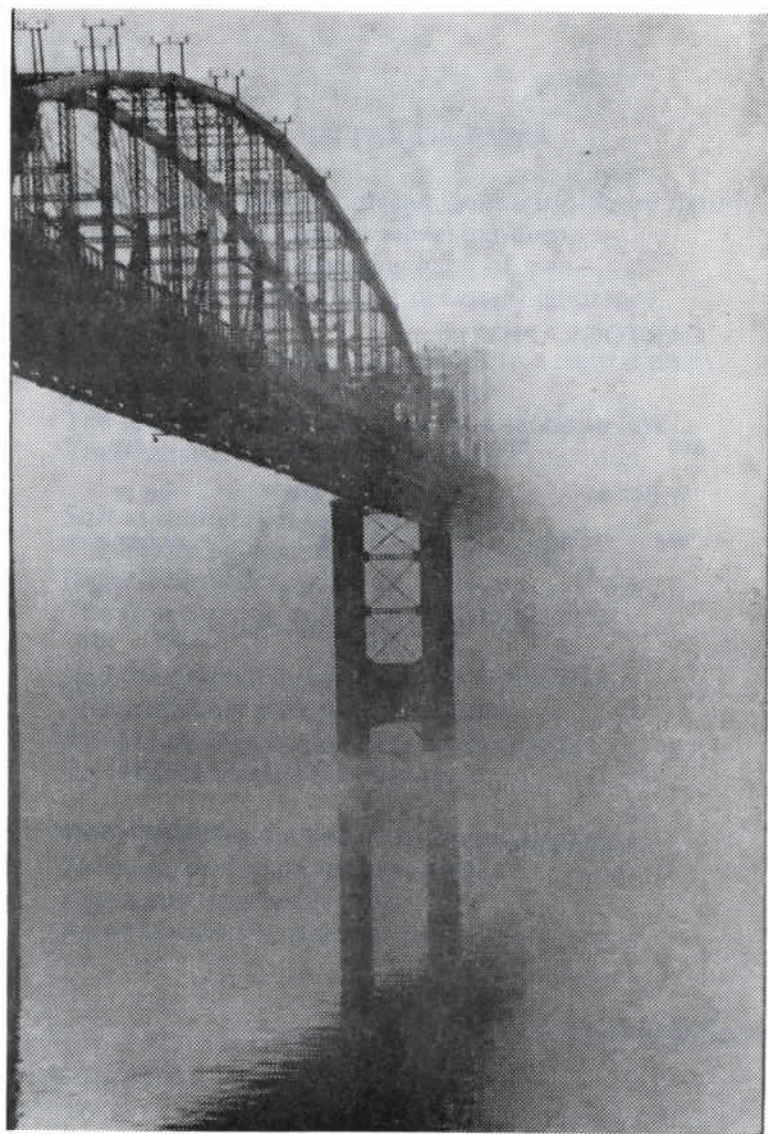
While grappling for one of its multi-purposes,  
We twist, peel, slice, squeeze and  
Degenerate this lovely fruit  
As we borrow its name for used cars.

—Linda Cox

## CARTOGRAPHY

are            he re            we            are  
w her e            we            are            he re  
we       are            he re            w her e  
   we            are  
   where            we are  
   ?            here  
              ?

—michael castro



David Hanlon

## ST. LOUIS BLUES REVISITED

Blue is the blues of this town  
& blue are the bars that burn  
the night down like a candle  
Blue is the blues of this town

Blue is the blues of this town  
Blue heat street sign blue core flame  
Gas blue blaze haze glazes a name  
Blue is the blues of this town

Blue is the rain song that never comes  
from blue whale clouds that rumble like drums  
Blue is the blues of this town  
Blue is the blues of this town

Blue is the whiskey that gnaws in the gut  
Blue is the uniform makes a man strut  
Blue is the lead in the gun chamber rut  
Blue is the blues of this town

Blue is the ghetto, blue the stone rubble  
Blue the dope powder, blue the hope bubble  
Blue are the veins & the brains & the trains  
Blue is the blues of this town

Blue is the ballpark, blue all the museums  
Blue the caged monkey who swings between screams  
Blue is the Arch, & the Gateway of dreams  
Blue is the blues of this town

Blue is the hit-man, blue in a bottle  
Blue is the street girl, blue her eye shadow  
Blue is the beat of the street & the news  
Blue is the blues of this town

Blue is the song, blue the bird songster  
Language as long & as strong as a dinosaur  
The trees' teeth are chattering—airplane chainsaw  
Blue is the blues of this town

Blue is the smoke over rims of the stacks  
Blue is the waterfront, blue both sides of tracks  
Blue is the love that is eaten by cracks  
Blue is the blues of this town

—michael castro

FROM THE FAMILY GALLERY

1

Lord, this Adam was innocent:  
utterly senseless, but not insentient,  
and thus to be kept out of harm's way.  
Then why was he damned to be so tested?

Had you made Eve  
less lissome,  
less dewy-breasted,  
and poor witless Adam  
more disinterested,  
one might believe  
the trial made sense.

But given a choice  
between mindless obedience  
to a bodiless voice  
and virgin man's first orgasm,  
should Adam have had the Devil to pay?

—Aaron Miller

2

Her smile and inscription fading  
-Berlin, Unter den Linden, 1934 -  
Anna Landau at eighteen:

last seen (or was it smelled?)  
by Rena Gerstenfeld  
(late of Lublin, later London)  
from the bone-grafting ward  
as a rancid glow of light  
in the cartilaginous night——

Quoth the Ravensbrueck commander:  
"Send me more."

3

Here broods Camus, bondsman of hope  
whose every earnest breath  
—redolent of African heliotrope—  
was taken in the darkened milieu  
of doubt.

Mon vieux Albert,  
you of the melancholy face,  
you who sounded bells for life  
and died so dissonant a death,  
you who sought a humane grace  
(I see you now, like Sisyphus,  
pushing that god-damned rock up the slope  
of your life, the rock of hope  
for meaning in a Masterless universe),  
now that the evidence is in,  
does the torment end—or just begin?

—Aaron Miller



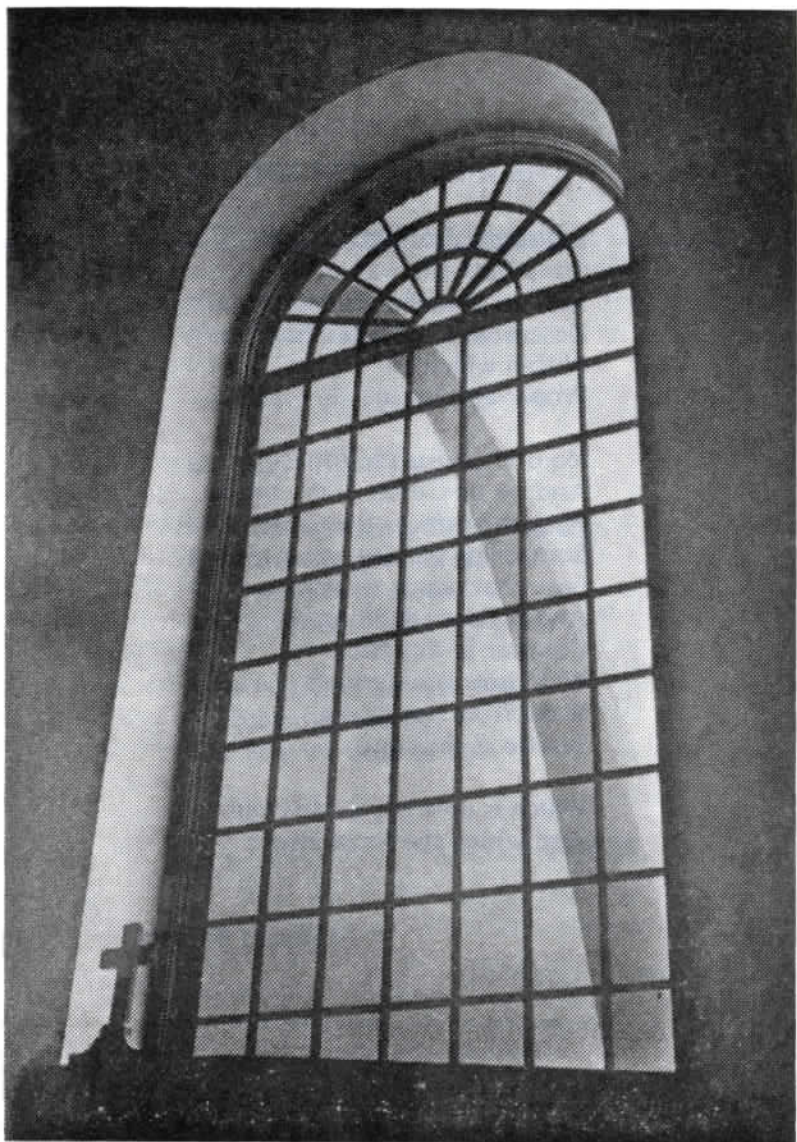
4

And you, poor punctured Nazarene,  
your pain so lavishly celebrated,  
bottled in bond and incorporated,  
what did your terrible trial mean?

About to die, you blessed the living.  
What transpiercing twitch occurred  
to make you vomit forth the words  
that shattered heaven with misgiving?

Rebellious Rabbi, passion's thrall,  
were you Perfectly Human, after all?

—Aaron Miller



Carol Brosius

## THE WILDE-BEEST AND MAN

Indiscretion and discretion  
Constitute the way of life.  
Indi- in that abandonment,  
Descre- in that sacred hall  
Within which all  
Proper acts occur.

No one counts the times  
And no one, even in the news,  
Plays steward to the cause.  
Something presses on us  
Sure that plants will grow  
And children running  
Counter to direction  
Will know the summer,  
Wake from pathways,  
Startle at the sun:

Which is now the wilde-child  
And which the social man?

—Howard Barnett

## HOLIDAY MEDLEY

You missed me! Now  
You'll have to clean it up.

I have always missed you.

Oh, say! There's a pun.

Then on that early Christmas day  
My true love gave to me  
Two empty gloves  
And a white silk for my poetry.

Now how can we ever sing  
Hey ding a ding  
The way we used to do?

—Howard Barnett

## CAROUSEL

The real thing is the hour,  
with night clouds shifting over trees.  
At this time in the East  
I know the sun is bright still  
in the deserts of the West—  
a moment like this yet to come  
for them, but with no trees  
to line the sky. Somewhere  
along a road laid down like carpet  
on an aisle in church, there is a long  
wooden building with a restaurant and store  
where the sun stays late.

I remember now—how it stood  
above the cactus, how at the counter  
a sweet-faced woman with eyes creased  
from turning back the glare  
of the Arizona sun waited for the clerk.  
Her hair fell to the middle of her back  
like a breeze from yesterday's wish,  
though it pressed her forehead  
moist and close. She leafed through  
a magazine taken from the rack  
to see what there was to see  
before she paid its price—then walked  
out where the sun cast a silhouette  
through the white, blue-flowered dress.  
Someone must have been waiting.

As we watched, a pick-up truck turned  
into the livid stream of roadway.  
And she was gone. The moment too is gone  
and the sun itself gone, here, now,  
where the air is cool  
and I hear only city sounds.

So are we all adrift, all clinging  
to what is close, but clinging only,  
wishing for something more, for which  
the not having makes each moment dear.  
In truth our daily time is linear—  
only history gives us cycles and this trip  
through the northern year  
of summer, autumn, winter, spring—  
this circle we like to attach ourselves to  
lest we lose the thread, seeking rest  
each night to find our place  
upon the carousel—as it all comes round  
again, again, again:  
this long run of sympathy at dark.

—Howard Barnett

## SHADOW TIME

I have been locked in time by a bird  
for the red bird was a key to sight  
as I stood in the shadows of the past  
cast by the "in-the-dark" writer whose  
flaring editorials blackened the man  
commissioned to head the prison project  
and touching me in its preumbra over  
one hundred and ten years later shortly  
before a third man, of this time, waited  
hidden, lurking to surprise and attack  
my life also marked for extinction and  
we both remained victims of the two  
shadows now blending and connected ever  
in a separate eon of time marked from  
all that was written before and all that  
is to be written after though neither  
of great importance or worthy of record  
in a history book but still the matters  
of great gray graveness with the only  
pen point of light the sight of the bird  
the brilliant pinnacle of meeting high  
above the flat shadow gloom in the color  
red against green contrasting with gray  
and what I want to know is from when  
I have taken that moment of sight that  
rush of feeling the release and rise of  
that light free from within flung out  
past shadows in self-recognition and in  
acknowledgement of being to all time.

—Wanita Zumbrunnen

## FATHERS

They rise each year  
in covenants of continuance.  
The earth is a link  
stronger than life.

Their tears purchase  
promises of corn and oats  
a daily contract with cows  
a compact with pigs  
that root them.

I have scattered grain  
attempting to bond  
coast to coast  
but the seeds solemnly  
swear a mid-west vow.

I have been raised  
through generations  
cultivating allegiance.  
My fathers have planted me.

—Wanita Zumbrunnen





Amy McCracken

### STARLINGS

Starlings in the sky by thousands  
Swinging through the air in an elastic bunch.  
Hordes rising, hordes sliding in descent  
Black spots plaguing a cornfield for lunch.  
Starlings, the first two someone transposed  
To these shores were a good natured joke.  
This day somewhere up there in gentle repose  
Alfred Hitchcock is waving his baton a stroke.

—Loy Ledbetter

## ASTERS

Friend, you are golden asters to the touch  
In this my early autumn afternoon.  
Strong and delicate, you give me much  
More than I ask for, whether late or soon.  
Bowing unto you, I bask within your light  
Briefly, and hesitate, when you are gone,  
To breathe again, as day draws on to night,  
And my high happiness with you is flown.  
You leave me heaven's peace the months between  
Encounters that occur with soft surprise.  
Then heaven's holiness once more is seen  
In the gentle radiance of your dear, dark eyes.  
So firmly do you come and go, you shine  
With purpose that must have a source divine.

—Helen M. Rice

## THE EULOGY OF NANNY

### CHILDS PLAY

You play with my earth like a child plays—  
With a doll house and Barbie and Ken;  
Playing war with a G.I. Joe  
Or pretending to be superman.  
I'm Mommy she says as she slaps at the head  
of the doll she throws to the floor  
Your dead, fall, get on the ground—  
or I'll stab you and shoot you again.  
These children play and then put up their toys  
On the shelves in the back of the room.  
But you have destroyed, confused, and abused  
and try to ignore what you've done.  
You play with my earth like a child plays  
Tell me where do you put the toys.

—Ed DeLeal

## FOR HENRI ROUSSEAU

of painted moonlight poured from the heart  
of wild things motionless in the moving dream  
wrought from the sunstill jungle,  
framed carnival in the waiting grass.

patient lions venerate you  
on your sky shaped hills  
breathe in your gentle air  
women with voices in their naked eyes  
are waiting

for you to fall asleep, Henri  
and people them with dreams.

—Diane Hunt

## THE EULOGY OF NANNY

The minister shook his bottle of holy water and threw a handful of dirt into the hole. He droned a final incantation and then left in silence. I remained and stared into the grave, seeing not the coffin of an old woman, but a container of my childhood terrors and nightmares, tightly sealed and soon to be buried. "Rest in peace," I told the box, and added almost fearfully, lest she hear me, "you old hag."

She was my old nanny, and my father's nurse before me. I remembered her vividly, even though I had not seen her in years. Fear had etched a lasting picture of her in my memory, and it was clearer than any photograph. She was old and pitifully thin; age had played its nastiest tricks on her. She always wore a black dress to cover her crooked body, and only her hands and face were visible. Her hands were claws, with ugly spotted skin stretched tightly across gnarled bones. Long yellow nails at the ends of permanently bent fingers made them look like dangerous talons, poised to spear an unsuspecting small animal. Her face was more frightening. The thin lips were nearly invisible, and when she opened her toothless mouth, I saw a threatening cavern which would swallow me if I came close enough. Her nose had an ugly mole on its hooked end, and her cheeks were sunken in a dry sea of wrinkles. The eyes were the most fearful feature of her forbidding face. They were small and dark. At times they were black ice, calculating and shrewd. Then they would melt and swim in their puckered cavities, making her

look like a lost old woman. I was never fooled by her pretense of confusion, because whenever her eyes were focused on me, which was often, they would glitter with her hungry scheming. I always thought she looked like a vulture, bent and waiting—waiting for me to turn my back to her.

She terrified me. The stories she told me were full of horrible characters and frightening details, and I was certain she was telling me of my own doom. On the cook's day off, Nanny would take over the kitchen and spend the afternoon chuckling over concoctions she mixed together for me. I had to stay with her every minute and listen to gruesome stories of demons and witches, murder and gore. I did not trust her alone in the kitchen because I was afraid of the wicked spells she would cast over her cookery. I eyed carefully every ingredient she used, and was suspicious of anything I could not recognize. Nanny was very proud of her creations. When they had cooled from the oven, she would hand me a plate of cookies or cakes and give a grotesque bow. "You are my special boy," she would crow, "so I baked you some of my special gingerbread." I was wise to her tricks, for I had heard the story of Hansel and Gretel. I knew she only wanted me to grow fat enough to be her special roast. I could feel her checking my ribs every time she hugged me to her bony chest. In spite of my suspicions, I always ate my treats and stood by meekly while she squeezed me and patted my head; I was afraid of what she might do if I protested.

She was sly. No one but I ever suspected her macabre plans for me. When an adult was near, a milky veil would fall over her eyes to mask the evil schemes working inside her mind. When I tried to explain this to Mother, she told me I was lucky to have such a devoted nanny, and I should be a good boy and not complain about her sometimes odd ways. "Nanny is getting old," Mother would tell me, "and she loves you very much, so you must treat her with kindness and understanding."

Nanny had put a powerful and frightening spell over me. I was afraid of her, but I wanted her to see everything I did, great or small. When she left me alone I would call to her, "Nanny, Nanny, where are you? Look at what I can do!" Whether I brought her pictures I had drawn or a scraped knee, she would cackle and screech with glee. In my desire to show her my accomplishments, I would forget my fear, until she laughed and reached for me with her bony claws. Then I would regret my impulse to run to her; I was certain this hug would surely mean my death.

Now she was dead. I had survived her game of fear. As I looked down at the sealed box, a triumphant cry tore through my body. I hurled it into Nanny's grave, "Rest in peace," I repeated maliciously, and then left in silence.

—Denise Hakenwerth





Jim D. Amos

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