

There's something very different
about you--



The Griffin '85'

Photo by Kara Diver

Dedicated to Dr. Howard Barnett, who has given us
more than he will ever know--

Thank you for capturing moments with words so
that each who reads may know again the time, the
place, and the feeling...

CONTRIBUTORS

Celia Angel
Glennon Bahr
Howard Barnett
Ted Boerding
Mary Brandt
Jenny Claycomb
Kara Diver
Deanna Fanning
Susan Gibson
Bob Goode

LeaEllen Harris
Doug Hoggatt
Yasukatsu Kudo
Mollie McGrath
Wes Morgenthaler
Lisa S. Morris
Michael Sass
Gail Scoville
M. Smock
Jacquelyn Wurm



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

Cliches I Have Been

i awake.
gulp the green air
in my city by the bay.
i'm missing something.
should i look for it?

again?
i can't find it.
perhaps you never had it.
am i sure?
no.

but, i could be-
if you wanted me to be.

gargle the evening from
my throat.
comb the animal
from my hair.
remember-neatness counts.
dress for the day's theatrical
anonymity.
red on white, white inside grey.
i like your corporate logo.

i have to catch an 8:40.
yes, i have that 9:10.
it was.
yes, it was.
could we?
i'll see
mine?
yours.
oh.

sometimes it's hard to tell.
yes.
the darkness makes it hard to tell.
yes.
thank goodness for the sun.
evening?
morning i should think.

so let us go, you and i
when the neon reaches
for the sky.

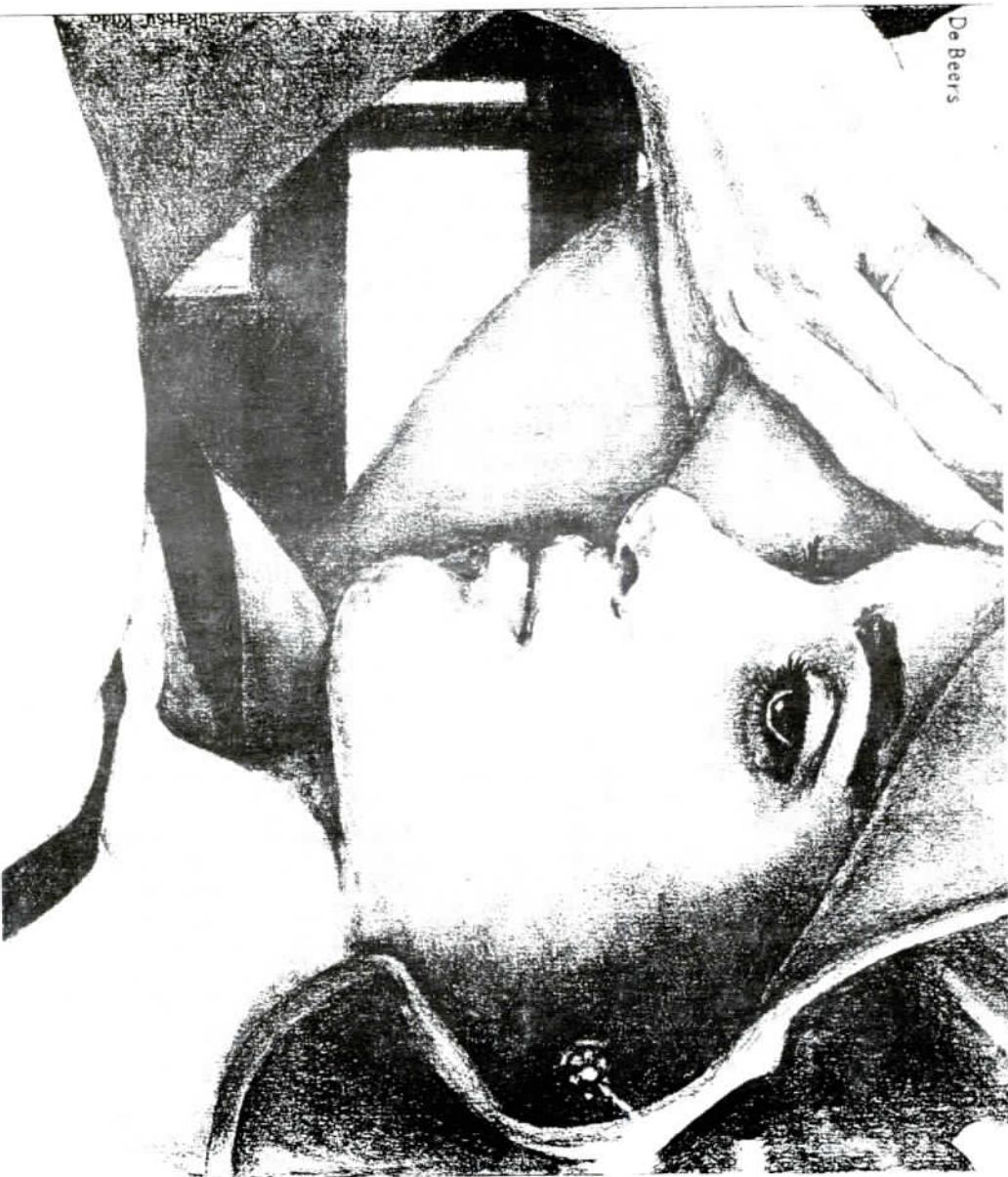
in places where men come
and go.
smelling
of Ralph Lauren Polo.
reach for the cable.
pull it.
stop the world.
i just wanna get off.
do ya know what i mean.

--Glennon Bahr

Time flies by quickly
Emotionlessly I sit...
And wait for sand
To run through the glass.
With each grain
My feelings drain
And leave me timeless.

--LeaEllen Harris





De Beers

Road To Bati

The morning sun began to rise casting light on the orange, parched land where the woman and her child slept. In front of them on the road, there were already a few travelers on their journey for food. The woman knew that Bati, where she and her child could receive something to eat, could only be a few hours away so she decided to get up.

Although she had been awake for about twenty minutes, the woman still had difficulty picking herself up off the ground. The cold night air had stiffened her already exhausted body. The only blanket she had was actually just a large, red shawl, and she had used it to keep her infant warm. Curled closely around her child's bundled body, the woman tried with little success to sleep and regain her strength so that she could cover the last few miles to Bati. She would have finished her journey the night before, but the seemingly endless hours of walking had gradually weakened her to the point where she couldn't go on anymore.

After some struggle, the woman did finally manage to stand up. She walked around a bit and shook her arms and legs to get some feeling back into them; they had become tight and cramped from sleeping in such an awkward position on the ground. A warm, piercing sensation in her stomach reminded her that she had not eaten in three days. After a short while, she came back to her child to prepare it for the day ahead.

The woman unwrapped her baby so that she could tie the shawl around her back and use it as a papusa to carry her child while walking. The infant let out a faint whimper and then started to cry. After she had finished making the papusa, the woman picked up her child and held it to her breast. She knew that she had stopped producing milk long ago, but it was the only way she knew to keep her child content; with a nipple in its mouth, the child would not cry. She, along with her baby, then set out on the way to the aid station in Bati.

By then the road was busier. Many other families had finished their night's rest and were scattered along the gravel pathway. Just ahead of the woman was another family with three children. The children were clinging tightly to their mother's skirt, and they were crying. Their stomachs were severely bloated, and the rest of their bodies appeared to be just weakly attached bones. Their tight, paper-thin skin, which would normally have had a dark ebony hue, was much lighter. To the left of the family on the edge of the road was a young girl of about twelve years and an elderly man who may have been her grandfather. He had his hand on her shoulder and staggered along slowly while she led the way. The old man was becoming too weak to continue, it was simply too late for him. As the woman and her child passed the twosome on the side, she looked away; she knew that the old man would probably die later on that day and be thrown to the side of the road along with the other

Two days ago, as I was going fishing with father down at the Sea of Galilee, I saw a vast crowd piling into boats and moving rather rapidly across the sea to the shore of Tiberias. I could feel the excitement of the people in the air which sparked my curiosity, and as usual, I wanted to get a piece of the action. So I told my father I was going with my friends to the market and then sneaked into a fishing vessel that was on the way to Tiberias.

When we landed on the shore of our destination, I quickly sprang out of the boat and followed the crowd which grew larger by the minute. As I followed along, this question kept running through my mind: To what are these people so attracted?

After approximately a half an hour, the crowd stopped moving and formed a large circle. We were now in a large open field and my curiosity was at its peak when I heard the crowd silence and a man began to speak.

Who was this man who could make a great multitude of people close their mouths and open their ears? Not even the great Pharisees at the Temple could do what this man was so easily accomplishing. There was one thing that I had to do. I had to come face to face with this man and see what was so special about him. But before I would venture to the front of the crowd, I decided first to listen to what he was saying.

He spoke of perfect love, what one must do to have eternal life, and everyday problems which he frequently illustrated by using little stories. He spoke of things that people wanted and needed to hear, unlike the Pharisees, who only spoke of rules and regulations.

This man had also done a great feat that I didn't think was possible for a mere human to do: he got me to listen to his teachings without my mind wandering off thinking of things such as fishing, and the pretty girls at the market.

Now that I knew that this Nazarene was the center of attention, and had heard what he had to say, I had to see him closely so that my impressions of him would be complete.

As I made my way up to the front of the crowd, the man's voice became clearer and stronger which caused a peculiar sensation in me, The tone of his voice was soothing, and at the same time, exciting. I could tell this great man believed what he was talking about because he spoke strongly and forcefully.

The man, at first glance, was just an ordinary looking Nazarene, wearing a plain, white robe and thin sandals on his feet. But as I moved closer, the way he wore his clothes was different than any other man. He wore them proudly, as if they were the marvelous clothes that King Solomon wore, Likewise, the clothes themselves seemed glad to be worn by him.

When finally I was close enough to see the man's whole body without

tip-toeing, the twelve men who were his close friends came up to him and said, 'Teacher, the crowd is getting hungry, no one has any food, and it is too late to start on our way back home.'

These men were certainly right about one thing. The crowd was very hungry, but they were wrong in saying that no one had any food. I just happened to have my lunch that I hadn't eaten in my back-pack. With a sudden inspiration, I ran up to the men and said, 'I have five barley loaves and a couple of dried fish here.' My plan was to see the star of the show face-to-face.

The twelve friends said, 'That isn't enough. Don't be crazy, boy.' Immediately the man reprimanded them.

'Bring the food here, son,' he said to me. Here was my big chance. I placed the food in his hands, he thanked God, who he called Father, and told the men to pass it out to everyone. The food was enough for the huge crowd of five thousand, which surprised everyone but the super-star.

While we ate, I took mental pictures of him from all different angles. Every feature of his stood out so that I had to take a picture of each feature separately.

His dark brown hair was medium length and seemed to me to be happy. (Before this incident I never heard of happy hair, but I have a very open mind.) The hair rested on his head lightly, as if it didn't want to be a burden.

His eyes were never one specific color. It seemed as if they changed every second, from blue to green to deep violet. I realized that the changing colors showed the many emotions the man was feeling. Gentleness and love radiated from his eyes and every one in his view received a great dose of it.

It seemed as if his mouth was not comfortable till he smiled. It was a joyful smile which was very contagious; a smile on his lips automatically triggered a smile on mine. And his jaw line was built with strength poured into each cell. I just knew that he had a very strong character—very bold and capable of handling every situation.

His chest and arms were very muscular. Throughout the man's teaching, he held his arms open, ready to accept everyone. They reminded me of being welcomed into a great house that would shield me from storms and keep me safe.

His sturdy legs seemed to be ready to walk for miles or run forever. And his sandals looked very worn, as if he did much travelling. His feet inside them were safely protected.

The most amazing thing about this man was his glow that radiated from every pore. He shone as if he were the sun, and the glow captured me and held me spellbound the entire way home.

Something very exciting has happened to me. Even though this miraculous event occurred forty-eight hours ago, the glow that I received from this man has settled in me and will stay with me forever. I wonder if the man had the same effect on the other people in the crowd. I am sure that if the Nazarene was given the chance, he could influence the whole world, even two thousand years from now.



Photo by Kara Diver



Resurrection Day

Easter bonnet
Only left on one freckled,
Jelly-beaned smile now
Who makes music in the grass,
Pulling hard on the rubberband
Strips of green plastic.
The last rites of the Catholic
To a Pagan-Peter hare
Whose lost the Spring in his step.

An inside hunt for the eggs
Due to the weathered rain.
Bending, squirming Grown-ups
Melting, like the molasses yams,
Around the hiding places
Of dyed jewels of yesterday.
Discovering "Aunt Vic" over the hearth
And putting her in your basket,
She can't search, only snooze
In the back room.

Around the dancing rabbit
And colorful gifts of fertility
We silently grace those lost-lookers
Due to their heavy lids--missed memories.
And the second helpings of ham,
And potatoe salad remind us
Of our continued digestion.
We hug our bellies in silent shame
And Grandpa burps his love to his family
Now only the golden chime of the old clock.

Computers here, computers there,
Damned computers everywhere.
Sometimes I swear in my days of aging,
Those idiot things are propagating.

They're in my car, they're in my house,
I can even get one with a mouse.
Out with the old, in with the new,
Let's hope it isn't me or you.

It's sad to see technology leaping,
While man is not his old ways keeping.
We seek computer literacy labels,
As we forget multiplication tables.
Someday we'll wake sadly to find,
Someone unplugged the database vine.
Man will survive, I guess I feel;
His first task being to invent the wheel.



--Ted Boerding



Photo by Mary Brandt

Dogwood Flowers and Water Babies

Sunlight from the adjoining room was reflected in the small mirror, temporarily bathing the small dark room with a glow. The young woman walked across the brown carpeting, crossed the hallway and entered the small bathroom. Closing the door, she leaned against it, closed her eyes and tried to forget her pain. She could feel the grain of the linoleum tiles with her bare feet. The tiles were unusually cold since the air conditioning was on.

Trying to make a decision, she reached over and switched on the light. Blinking to adjust to the sudden brightness, she looked around as though she had never seen the room before. It was no more than five feet wide and eight feet long, including the shower stall. The shower was the most prominent feature, taking up nearly one-third the room. The tiles around the inside of the shower were an odd pinkish-brown, quite unexpected in the otherwise non-descript house.

Her eyes continued to travel around the room, focusing on the shower. The glass doors to the shower didn't go all the way to the ceiling and slid on a track held fast by an aluminum frame. The bottom track was covered with soap scum, thicker in the corners where she could no longer reach. Being six months pregnant, it was becoming increasingly difficult to clean this room and it bothered her to see the dark lines of mildew scattered here and there on the grouting between the tiles and along the entire crease where the door track joined the lower lip of the shower stall.

'It will just have to wait,' she said to herself, shaking her head at the thought of what the shower would look like in three more months.

She leaned over the shell-shaped sink, trying to get a closer look in the small mirror. She stared past her reflection, as though searching for some hidden answer within the mirror. All she saw was a thirty-year-old woman with red-rimmed, swollen eyes, blotchy cheeks and disheveled hair. She was also acutely aware of her swelling abdomen.

Seeing nothing in the mirror but her reflection, she turned away, leaned against the sink and looked at her wedding ring. Twisting the ring from her finger, she held it close to her face and turned it until she could read the engraving inside: CHF—to—DEB FOREVER 2-28-70. She clutched the ring in her right hand, sighed, and remembered.

'Do you, Darlene Ellen Baker, take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband?'

'I do.'

'Do you, Carl Henry Franklin, take this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife?'

'I do.'

'I now pronounce you man and wife. You may kiss the bride.'

That day held so many promises, she thought, so many dreams. Why were things so much different then, thirteen years ago? 'What am I going to do with my life now, now that....' Hearing herself speak, she was a little startled by the echo of her voice in the small room. Speaking a little more softly, she said, 'How could I have let my life become such a mess?'

She put her ring back on, glanced in the mirror and sat down on the closed lid of the toilet. She folded her arms on the sink next to the toilet and put her head on her arms.

'Look at this realistically,' she said to herself quietly. Beginning a mental tally, she itemized her life, as one might check a grocery list.

'Number one. You're six months pregnant with a child you don't want. Even if you did, the genetic counselor said the baby may be born with a hypoplastic left heart syndrome—the same thing that killed your first daughter.'

'Two. Carl is having a serious affair with another woman. This is only one in a long string of affairs, but certainly, this is the most serious.'

'Three. You've fallen in love with someone who is also married and committed to another.'

'Number four....'

She began to get uncomfortable sitting down, so she got up and stood in the middle of the small room. Her eyes wandered to the shower, past the open glass door. The towel bar was lined with assorted plastic bottles of hair care products in colors designed to entice the consumer to purchase them based only on their sleek, colorful containers. They were perched atop the towel bar like a disassembled rainbow. At the other end of the shower was a recessed area intended to be a soap dish. The design was poor because the water constantly battered the soap dish, never draining off, causing the bar of soap to prematurely dissolve into a jelly-like solution.

'And if all those things aren't enough, we have to move; and Carl just told me that he's not moving with us. How am I going to support three children? How am I going to cope with raising this family, one of them a newborn baby?'

As she turned to look for a razor blade, her arm accidentally brushed against the rough yellow wall. Her concentration was short at that moment and she stopped for a minute to rub the little scrape on her arm. She smiled slightly as she recalled redecorating this bathroom. When she had removed the old striped wallpaper, part of the wall had come off with it. So, she had been forced to add too much aggregate to the yellow paint so the texture would hide the flaws. The paint had been applied with no particular pattern in mind and mistakes in the painting could be seen along the edge where the shower tiles came together with the wall. Little globs of yellow paint dotted the tiles—paint that had been inadvertently splattered on the tile and not wiped off.

'Maybe I overdid it just a little,' she said, touching the small pointed peaks. They were sharp and she silently reminded herself to be careful getting in and out of the shower.

She began again looking for a razor blade. 'Let's see, I know it's in here,' she said as she opened the mirrored door to the medicine cabinet. She searched the cabinet methodically, moving each bottle as she looked from one shelf to the next. She stopped for a moment, glanced to the left and saw a white plastic razor lying in the soapdish of the shower. She crossed the small bathroom and stepped into the shower stall. Without a second thought, she grasped the razor, removed the yellow plastic blade cover and dropped it in the soap dish. Holding the razor in her right hand, she contem-

plated the edge of the blade for a moment before bringing it against her left wrist. It made only a small cut. It became clear to her that either she would need a different razor, or somehow, she would have to get the blade out of this one.

Stepping out of the shower, she placed the razor on the sink and began looking for something she could use to break the plastic. She found a metal nail file; and, as she began to pry the blade from its plastic casing, she suddenly found the whole situation comical.

'This is ridiculous!' she said to herself as she laughed out loud. 'I must look absolutely foolish trying to break this razor apart.'

Finally, she broke the razor and removed the blade. She stood for a moment, looking once again into the mirror. Her eyes shifted to the flowered paper on the wall behind it. The yellow wall and pinkish-brown tiles were all neatly tied together by this dogwood flowered wallpaper.

'I remember poring through book after book of samples to find something to match those shower tiles. This paper isn't so bad once you see the whole effect.'

'DAMN! I must be going crazy! I'm carrying on a conversation with myself--about wallpaper!'

She looked a little dismayed as she realized she was standing there, staring at the wallpaper, still holding the razor blade. Once again, she stepped into the shower stall. Resolutely, she turned up her left wrist and made a small, but deeper, cut next to the first one. Unlike the first cut, this one stung and began to bleed. She stood there watching the blood form little droplets, slide down her arm and fall to the floor. Her abdomen tightened and the baby moved and kicked. Suddenly tired, her shoulders sagged a little and she leaned against the shower wall for support, still watching the blood drip from her wrist. She thought about the contradiction of the moving life inside her and her own life's blood dripping on the floor. The baby continued to move, as though willing her to abandon her path of destruction.

Still leaning against the wall, she looked through the open shower door to the tiny bathroom. Her eyes rested on the small, embroidered picture hanging on the yellow wall. It was a fabric illustration of 'Water Babies' with the highlighting, hand-stitched, in brown thread. All over the picture were little babies--chubby, little, rosy-cheeked babies.

'What in the hell am I doing? Am I really going to let Carl, my life and its pressures push me into not only taking my life, but my child'd? If the baby's not perfect, I'll deal with it, but the kid deserves the right to be born.'

She stepped from the shower, walked in front of the sink and opened the medicine cabinet. Taking out a box of plastic bandages, she selected one to cover both wounds. After opening the bandage, she licked the blood from her wrist and applied it.

Looking around the bathroom, she was suddenly compelled to straighten it up--to remove any signs of what she had almost done. She dropped the bandage wrapper in the wastebasket, along with the broken razor and the razor blade. She returned the nail file to its case, placed it in the medicine cabinet and closed the mirrored door. Mentally tidying up, she looked around the room. Dark drops of blood stood out against the white tile floor of the shower. She turned the shower on and watched as the blood swirled with the water before disappearing down the drain. She turned the water off, closed the shower door and straightened the hand-stitched picture.

I am not you
 But merely a product of you.
 And, though I think like you
 I have a mind of my own.
 Our concerns ore of the same
 But I--preoccupied with the future
 You live with the past.
 Live your life with me
 And not through me,
 Because I am not you: I am your child.
 In many ways we are similar
 But yet, two very different people
 For I am also an individual.

--Celia Angel

No words
 and yet I see:
 tearing pieces,
 memories.
 Getting close enough to touch,
 like a razor.
 Silent cuts poring blood
 into rivers of thought.
 Screaming echoes at the moon;
 whispers of nothingness
 brushing the coldness of the aire.
 brushing the coldness of the aire.
 And everyday a hope left empty:
 ringing phones
 hanging up
 dialing again--
 losing again.
 No words and yet I know.

--Kara Diver

What Meaning

Chrystal chandeliers shatter inside my head
 While a refrigerator hums a melancholy tune,
 And hamburger grease pops telling me I'm dead
 As I look out the window wishing for a moon.

-- Doug Hoggatt

Male Men

Hetero-bull talking
Pinch a loaf, get some man
Cattlecalls of the American
Slap my ass, Quarterback
But don't cry for me

Be like pop, play boy
Hand jive over navels
Stapled and for rent
Head for the mountains
And stay outside of closets

Fill your shorts, roost-her
Rise to all occasions
There's never no envy here
We can be best bosom buddies
As long as you pee
Behind closed doors.

--Wes Morgenthaler



At The Dance

At the dance
rhythms beat softly on my eyes
shadows flew from corner to corner,
toes tapped gently, echoing, clip clip clip.
Colors: burgundy, green and velvet gold
painted the space in vibrant strokes.
Swiftly sliding, gliding, racing -
continuous waves flowed through the air.
Marvelous motions tickled receptors,
touched tears and tugged at tastes.
Mystical lines curved like strings
of jelly fish swimming in harmony,
Easily, gracefully, happily,
each his own, but all as one:
flashing, flying;
feeling the flavor of each not sounding.
Capturing all that watched,
they filled the night - a - non - wasteful
satisfaction.
Leaving the beholders moved,
that their hands could only speak
and their eyes only reflect.
and the little children chattered
while their mothers answered not,
as though their ears were filled with awe,

--Kara Diver

Footsteps in the hall. His wife's voice calling to him.

Andy ceased his hurried inspection of the dresser. He growled as he slammed shut the drawer he had been busily ripping through.

'What?' Andy, did you say something?'

He didn't answer. Instead, he threw himself face-down on the bed and shoved his head under a pillow just as Sarah appeared in the doorway.

'Andy? Are you okay?'

Although she said nothing more, he could sense her presence. He refused to look at her. Mentally, he pictured her standing there, watching him, virtually silent. Confined beneath the pillow, he was acutely aware of her gaze burning into his back. Still, she did not speak, and he did not give in.

His muscles tensed, and he began to sweat with the effort of fighting the impulse to look at her. Finally, he heard her turn and her footsteps recede. His anxiety faded with the sound.

Andy extracted his head from under the pillow, flipped over and grinned at the ceiling. He felt really good, exhilarated by his victory. Then he heard it. God, how well he knew that sound! Sarah was crying.

Sighing, he forced himself to rise and went to apologize. What else could he do? She was his wife, and he loved her.

'Sarah? I'm sorry.'

She avoided eye contact as she spoke. 'Again, Andy? What are you punishing me for this time?'

'Nothing, I don't know what's wrong with me. I'm trying. Honest to God, I am.'

'I know, Andy. But I never feel we're making any progress, you know? I just wish I could understand you better. Maybe I could help.'

He reached for her hand. 'I think I'm scared of losing you. You're all I've got.'

'Andy,' Sarah said tenderly, 'don't you know you can only lose me if you keep driving me away?'

Andy nodded. 'I'm so sorry, Honey. I'll work on it. That's a promise, okay?'

'Okay.' Sarah leaned over and gently swept the hair back from his eyes. 'I love you.'

When they had both dried their eyes, Sarah set off for the grocery store. Emotionally drained, Andy decided to grab a quick nap while she was gone.

So much for victory.

On his back on the bed, Andy tried to ignore the proximity of the dresser. He closed his eyes and resolutely turned to face the opposite wall. Soon he began to perspire and his muscles gradually went rigid once more.

'I trust her. I have no reason not to trust her. I'm being unreasonable.'

Andy mumbled the words repeatedly as if they were an incantation to ward off his jealousy, but the magic failed him.

He was upright and across the tiny room in one athletic move.

Tearing open the top drawer of the dresser, he renewed his frantic search. His actions were no more furious than the speed with which he invented rationalizations for them.

'It's not that I don't trust her. I'm just curious is all.'

He moved on to the second drawer.

'She's my wife. We shouldn't keep secrets from each other.'

Third drawer.

'It's only because I love her so much that I'm jealous...No...curious.'

Last

drawer.

Last drawer.

'Damn!'

Andy removed each of the drawers to look in back of them, but still did not find what he was looking for. He kicked the bed frame in frustration. Wincing at the pain in his foot, he cursed again, and stretched out on the floor to think.

Two days ago, Sarah had gone on one of her organization kicks. She had been cleaning out the dresser. Andy, watching T.V. in the living room, noticed that the brisk cleaning sounds had stopped. During the next commercial, he got up and went to investigate.

Sarah was sitting cross-legged on the floor, back propped against the bed, smiling at a letter in her hands. Strands of her long dark hair escaped from her ponytail to frame her face. A strap of her tank-top slipped off one tanned, slender shoulder. Precariously balanced on her knee, there was an envelope, ripped open at the top.

She started at the sound of his voice. Surprise (surely not fear?) flashed across her face, and she clumsily stuffed the letter back into its envelope.

'Hi! Is your program over already?'

Andy shook his head. 'Commercial.' He pointed at the letter. 'Something interesting?'

Sarah blushed and shook her head. 'Nope. Boring old stuff.'

She scrambled to her feet. 'I swear it must be 95 degrees today. I'm going to take a break. Want to share a Coke?'

Somewhat nervously, she took his arm and led him from the room. As they left, she tossed the letter onto the dresser in an elaborately careless gesture.

Andy had been searching for that letter ever since.

There simply weren't that many places in their claustrophobic apartment to hide it. In his calmer moments, Andy felt that it was probably better if he didn't find it. Everyone was entitled to some privacy, right? However, those moments were becoming alarmingly few and far between.

Andy carefully restored the dresser and its contents, methodically arranging each item. When he finished, he had filled to overflowing the bedroom wastebasket. He decided to do a good deed and take the trash out to the dumpster in the building parking lot.

He hefted the wastebasket to the crook of his left arm, stepped outside the apartment, and slammed the door behind him. He hummed as he trotted down the stairs, moved quickly across asphalt uncomfortably warm on his bare feet. As he emptied the trash into the dumpster, he watched the multi-colored fragments flutter downwards.

'I don't know, dear,' she said irritated. 'The traffic's bad, I guess. The storm and everything. Go and eat some of Ashley's spaghetti now, okay?'

Katy nodded reluctantly and disappeared into the kitchen. Laura heard the clatter of dishes and silverware. She followed Katy to fix her plate, buttering the bread listlessly, then once again she found herself at the living room window. The evening light was fading, and the stormy sky hastened the darkness. Some of the storm's fury had abated, but still the rain came down, and still there were no headlights in the driveway.

Laura drew the brocade draperies, then returned to her chair. She sat in the semi-darkness, terrified that any second the phone would ring, with an impersonal voice on the other end relaying the bad news. Once again, her thoughts drifted.

If Ian did not come home tonight, she would know a terrible regret she had not felt after James died. For she'd done her best to be a good wife to James--she'd held nothing back. But with Ian, she'd kept a part of herself in reserve--the part of her that knew she loved Ian completely, and the tiny, secret part of her that feared he still loved his first wife.

Laura squeezed her eyes shut and felt the hot, scalding tears seep out. She was so lucky to have been given a second chance at love. Ian was so good to her and the girls, and would make such a wonderful father to the child she was carrying. She vowed that if he was all right she would be different; she would let him know how much he meant to all of them.

'Mom, do you want me to clean up?' Ashley called from the kitchen.

'No!' Laura cried sharply. 'Leave everything as it is. You can put your plates in the sink, but leave the food for Ian. He'll be hungry.'

Her mind cried, 'If he comes, if he comes.'

She began to pace, and did not hear the car pull into the driveway until the door slammed. Then she jumped in shock and ran awkwardly to the front door.

Ian was wet, tired and amazed at the reception he got. Laura helped him out of his dripping trenchcoat, sobbing with relief, while Ashley and Katy hugged him excitedly.

'What is all this?' he demanded good-naturedly. 'I should be late for dinner every night.'

He stroked Laura's hair as she buried her face in his shoulder. 'What is it, love?' he asked gently.

'Oh, Mom and I were so worried about you,' cried Ashley.

'I thought you were dead,' whispered Laura.

'Oh, of course, the accident.' He recognized the reason for Laura's fears. 'No one died, love,' he soothed. 'One man was critically injured, and several others were also taken to the hospital.' He shook his head. 'That was one godawful traffic jam!'

'Ian, they made me eat spaghetti,' Katy piped up, indignant.

Ian laughed, pulling her pigtails. 'How about some of that spaghetti for the old man, eh?'

Later, when the girls were in bed, Laura and Ian stood together on the front porch. The spring night air was fresh and brisk. The storm had moved

to the east, and the world seemed washed clean. The smell of earth and new growth was strong in the air.

'You know, Ian,' Laura began tentatively, 'I've always wondered if maybe you still care for Maggie.'

He was silent for a moment. 'I suppose in a way, yes, as the mother of my child. What kind of man would I be if I didn't? But if you mean do I love her, the answer is no; I never did.'

He laughed a short, mirthless laugh. 'It's a fine testimony for a marriage, isn't it, to admit you did it for the sake of the family store.' He shook his head ruefully.

'It's funny how people don't always know their feelings,' Laura remarked passionately. 'I thought I loved James, but God forgive me, I didn't; not the way I love you.'

'Well, well, a lot of revelations tonight. Here I was thinking all this time you weren't quite over him, that maybe someday you'd get him out of your system completely and love only me. I think maybe we should both put the past in the past, where it belongs.'

'Oh!' Suddenly Laura turned on the porch light and began to laugh.

'What the...?' Ian began, but Laura silenced him with a finger to his lips. The deep pink blossoms of the azalea, protected from the storm by the roof overhang, were still intact.

'Look, Ian, the azalea isn't ruined.'

He put his arms around her, and patting her stomach, he said, 'Do you suppose after this fellow is born we could all take a trip to Scotland and show Michael his new sibling?'

'Oh yes, darling, let's do. We need to learn to be a family...all of us.'

They went back inside, and Laura turned out the light and closed the door on the fresh new world.

--Susan Gibson

Little Me

There are times when I feel secure with myself; I can take on the world. But most of the time I am just a child. I feel alone and surrounded by a big cold world. It is a relentless world that changes constantly; it doesn't wait for my secure moments. It marches on. And if it steps on me it's no big loss; I'm just another scared kid who's not quite ready to grow up yet. I come a dime a dozen.

--Lisa S. Morris

There they sit
like a brick on my shoulder
molded into perfect form,
close enough that I can see each moment
and hear each word.
They were only born when I was born
but they should be dead.
And for a moment
a melody is like the air
breathing life.
THE BEAT BEGINS--
and the colors go racing through my blood
and I can feel my head leaping from my shoulders
landing in a distant tree.
Dangling on the limbs, I watch my eyes see
each leaf as it falls to the ground
one by one.
AND THE CHILDREN GO RACING PAST
shuffling their feet and chattering.
The leaves fly up as the red tennis shoes kick
power of movement into each crackling piece.
Silently they fall and lie alone
and the children run off and forget the scattered mess.
An old man frowns as he grabs his rake
and begins to labor again.
THE BLISTERS ON HIS HANDS SOAK INTO THE WOODEN HANDLE
and he can't seem to remember where he put his gloves
or his blue handkerchief
and he wonders
why children have become so thoughtless and cruel.
The wooden rake falls
as the man begins to weep.
He kneels and looks at his beaten old hands.
The blood trickles and splashes on a leaf--
and sight becomes glazed with moisture...
then the night comes like a memory
and takes him from the tree
when the melody stops
and the air becomes cold and numbing.

--Kara Diver

If I'm a marionette
It's you who pulls my strings:
Dance, child, dance,
You're naive to all things.

Kinship is the string that ties me
Paternal love provides the script,
The act of long-term manipulation
Now the essence of our conflict.

Cut.

Now I move about--
No strings attached.
The lure of independence
Induced the final act.

In countless ways I feared
Losing my dearest fans,
Family I do cherish you.
It's you who deserves the hand.

Take a bow.

--Celia Angel

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Kara Diver, co-editor
Denise Hakenewerth, co-editor
Jill Czapla
Carrie Fisher
James Feely, faculty advisor

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Some time before the leaves would fall,
in summer--still young and free,
and agile, sharp in noting
what was said, sensitive
to every possibility
for a contemplated life ahead,
aware of those alternatives
which teachers turn around,
like gems to catch the light
just so to cast
refractions, like sound
to hear some resonance
where one would not expect
so great a play
upon a chance reverberation--
I studied with this one
professor who had me memorize
a long poem he liked
because he said it would prepare
me for occasions
when people would ask to hear
the poem and I would then
be ready to recite and win
for my vivid intonations acclaim
which indeed I longed for
and which I, lacking faith
in promises, sought to gain
by finding my own ivied hall
where I could be sure
of the occasion and could recite
those lines as I have done now
every year without fail
and in the process have acquired
as well a considerable ability
to keep a sentence going for
a rather long time, longer than
anyone else, except Faulkner
perhaps, which is another feather
in my cap so to speak
and sometimes overshadows
that other achievement as you
can imagine from this verse itself
which is also a very long sentence
which I began because the leaves
are falling, and which
I am only ending now
because I want to.

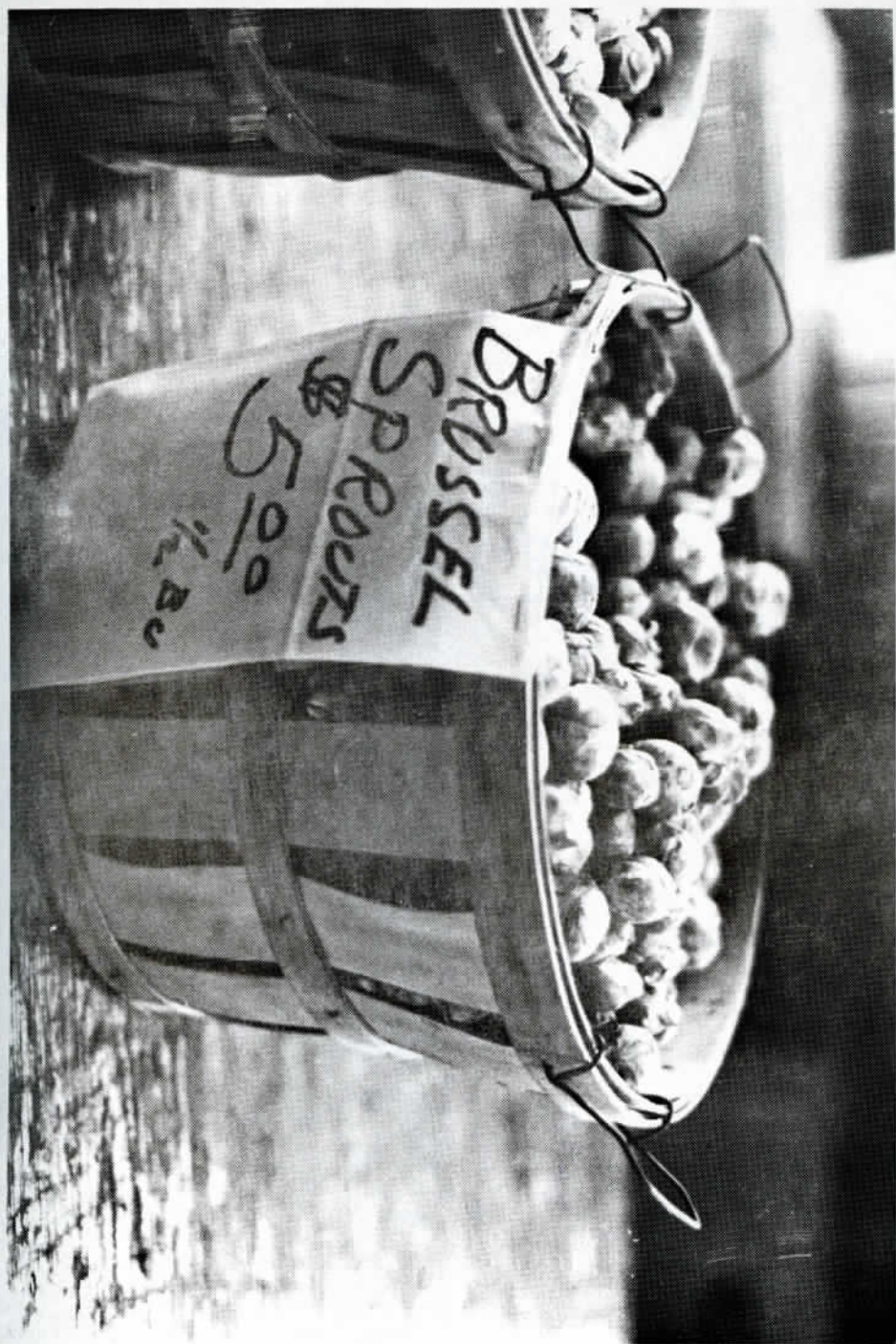


Photo by Mary Brandt

