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SUN, ROCK, MOUNTAIN, RIVER

TYGR

The Tyger

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forest of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

On what shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? And what dread feet?

What the hammer? What the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? What dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forest of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

William Blake

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"Give me a staff of honor for mine age,
But not a scepter to control the world."
Titus Andronicus, Shakespeare

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Thought from the editor:

"Do something worth remembering." Elvis Presley, April 1957

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Grandpa's Pace

I remember the day
The Fourth of July
We went to the lake
Hamburgers on the grill
Waiting, waiting impatiently...

Aunt takes Grandpa down by the water
So slow nowadays...

I meet them there
We start heading back
Uphill...so..slow...
What's the hurry?

Suddenly-
I noticed
What a beautiful day!
Sky so blue
Trees so green
Birds happily singing!

Funny-
Hadn't noticed before...
I miss so much when I'm not going
Grandpa's pace...

Amy Brubaker

Sinister Seraph

She walks in beauty,
This angel so fair.
Be bold and approach her,
That is if you dare.
For a taste so sweet,
But a sting so cold;
She'll grip onto your heart
And never lose hold.
So fall deep in love
Because I know you can't resist;
And take her off my hands--
Please, I insist.

Jeremy VanKley

Rose of Innocence

Curly blonde hair, baby blue eyes
Filled with laughter, smile on her face.
So pure and sweet, she sits there
In blue t-shirt and diaper
On the queen-size bed
Like an untouched rose,
The very essence of Childhood Innocence.

The child, like the rose,
Not yet fully bloomed,
Slowly opening its petals
Ready to blossom
Needing a gentle touch
To grow,
But harshness stifles

As one by one
The petals fall!
A part of her dies
With each harsh word uttered,
Each blow dealt her,
Each time she is deflowered
She withdraws into herself.

She withers
Life stolen from her.
A mere shadow
Of her former self.
No more smiles, no more joy.
Her eyes are filled with pain
Where tears replaced the laughter.

Innocence to protect and preserve.
A rose easily bruised
Or plucked from a garden.
Entrusted to our care.
Small, delicate, fragile
So easily destroyed.
Please handle with care!

Karen Austin

Confessions of a Grown-up Fan Boy

"We must be totally nuts to be doing this; get in the car!" Pat's words were punctuated by the trail of icy vapor that streamed out of his mouth.

I threw a bundle into the back seat, and climbed in after it. Mike unfolded the wad I had tossed and held it in front of him, inspecting it.

"What the heck is this?"

"It's my Batman blanket; shut up." Mike laughed we bundled the blanket around our laps. We must have looked like that scene out of Dr. Zhivago, but as cold as it was, I figured I wasn't going to freeze on the most important night of my life.

The wind chill factor was thirty degrees below zero and falling; a night not fit for man nor beast. Yet the three of us; Pat, Mike and myself-set out for an adventure that I personally had waited twenty years for. Tonight I would meet my childhood hero, Batman.

Now, I'm not talking about any imposter, some schmuck in a costume. I'm talking the real Batman, Adam West. He was going to be appearing at McCormick Place in Chicago at a Hollywood Auto Show with that legendary car of cars-The Batmobile.

As a kid growing up in the sixties, there was only one thing I wished for: That Robin, the Boy Wonder, would die and some night Batman would climb into my bedroom window and secretly ask me to be the "new" Robin. Other kids wanted to join the circus; I wanted to wear tights and a mask and live in the Batcave.

Needless to say, Robin never died (at least until the early nineties), and I never got to see the inside of the Stately Wayne Manor. I had to suffice myself with running around the backyard (the "Bat-Yard") with a towel tied smartly around my neck, my kid sister in tow acting as Robin. We would chase the Evil Dogman (our dog, Mustard) all over the yard, and no matter how hard I hit my sister, I could never get those little words to come out of my fist (ZAP! BAM! POW!), try as I might.

Even growing up, I never shook off the Batlust. I coerced my parents into buying anything and everything that had a bat on it. At the age of ten, I remember saving a portion of my allowance each week with plans to go to a tattoo parlor and have the bat symbol emblazoned on my chest; a permanent tribute to the Caped Crusader.

By the time I had turned sixteen, thoughts of Batman gave way to those of the fairer sex; but even while dating, I couldn't shake the thought of how hot Cathy Mae Balint would look in black spandex, sporting a stylish feline type mask. Here I am, fifteen years later, and that vision is still firmly placed in my imagination...

The Chicago skyline was obscured by the flurry of snow that had decided to fall about halfway to McCormick Place. I was hoping to see if someone had projected a bat-signal into the Chicago night to set the mood for the occasion. No dice.

The line into the exhibit hall was relatively short; it looked like we were the only idiots dumb enough to brave the storm. It was my lucky day; it looked like we practically had the place to ourselves! Pat was already trying to work out a plan in case they closed the highways and we were stranded in the Windy City.

"Lighten up," I told him wide-eyed, "Let's find the Batmobile!"

The place was enormous; even with the crowd as small as it was, it would take at least an hour to find the Batmobile. We decided to split up; that way we could locate the Batmobile, find out when Adam West would be appearing, and then mull the various exhibits until zero hour.

Munstermobile. Green Hornet's Black Beauty. Beverly Hillbillies truck. Some car that Elvis drove. ZZ Top-mobile. Big deal.

"Stef! Over here, man!" Pat was waving frantically. I sprinted.

The flashing red light from the top of the Batmobile streaked across my

face. The sleek black body of the redesigned '59 Olds Futura was close enough to touch, if not for the velvet ropes that surrounded it. My eyes grew as big as hub caps. A lump formed in my throat; I thought I was going to cry. ZAP! BAM! POW! I was in heaven.

"Back up, please," I heard someone say. It was one of those goofy Andy Frain security guys. Who did this joker think he was, telling me to 'back up'! This was my Mecca; I was having a religious experience here! Just let him try to back me up!

"The line to sit in the Batmobile starts over here, sir."

"Sit in the Batmobile? Oh."

I sprinted.

It cost three bucks to sit in the Batmobile. A mere pittance for the opportunity of a lifetime. Pat got his camera out. I wanted him to record this entire event for posterity. As I approached the Dynamic Duo's Dragster, I felt my heart pounding. I could see my reflection in the highly polished exterior. I was actually shaking as I reached out to open the door. The most famous car in the world. And I was about to sit in it.

I sank down into the black leather upholstery, and looked up at the control panel. Now, realize that what was 'state of the art' in the sixties now looks like a muffin tin with light bulbs sticking through it; but that didn't matter. I was sitting in the Batmobile!

I ran my fingers over the steering wheel; the same steering wheel Batman used to get to Commissioner Gordon's office, the same one he used to get to the Joker's hideout. I noticed that the Batmobile had an automatic transmission; I guess when a car is powered by atomic batteries, you don't have to worry about gas mileage.

Pat was snapping away. I mugged for the camera; I posed for at least a million shots. My head was swirling; I was actually sitting in the Batmobile! Then a strange panic struck me out of the blue: I had to go to the bathroom.

But that meant that I would have to get out of the Batmobile! Why couldn't Batman have thought of some kind of Bat-porta-potty or a Bat-Dixie cup to use so I wouldn't have to get out of the car? I didn't want to get out of the car! I paid my three bucks! Didn't that entitle me to something? I wanted to live in this car!

Nature was calling, and I couldn't ignore it any longer. With as much dignity as I could muster, I pulled myself from the Batmobile and made my way past the velvet ropes. I figured it would be best to take care of business now before I met-the man himself.

With the emergency now over, I concentrated on finding the stage where Adam West would be greeting the public. It wasn't long before I found it-with a line the length of a football field in front of me!

No wonder there was no one else to be seen in the exhibit area! There was no way we were going to be able to meet Batman within the mere hour he was going to be on stage. My heart sank to the pit of my stomach. To come so far...

Then something caught my eye. It was the the mustachioed face of my buddy Mike, waving frantically from the front of the line and screaming like a madman for us to join him. My savior!!

Pat and I slipped into line with Mike, just in time to see some guy approach the onstage microphone and exclaim, "Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls: I have just been on the phone with the McCormick Place Security, and they informed me that the Batcopter has been sighted circling the Exhibit Hall. Batman should be here in just a matter of minutes!"

A hearty roar such as I've never heard came up from the crowd. To say I was excited was a gross understatement. Then, Mike and Pat stepped out of line and began to walk away.

"Hey," I yelled, "where in the world are you going? The guy said Batman'd be here any minute!"

"Stef, you're the Batman fan; this is your moment. We're going to get closer to get some good pictures. Don't sweat it, we'll be right over here." With that, they joined a group of parents at the foot of the stage. Parents?

It then occurred to me that I was literally standing in a line of midgets. I towered at least a foot over the tallest kid in line. Here I was, twenty-six years old, standing in line with a group of fifth graders.

The lights dimmed. A second roar went up as the familiar "Dah dah dah dah dah dah dah" of the Batman theme filled the air. The moment had come. With a drumroll and the crash of a cymbal, a blue-and-grey cloaked figure jumped from behind the curtain. It was Adam West; the one, the only Batman! I felt like I had to go to the bathroom again.

"Greetings, fellow crimefighters," he exclaimed into the mic. The din of the crowd was deafening. I was screaming, too; I wanted to hold onto this moment forever. "I'm so glad you braved the cold tonight in order to give me such a warm welcome. Do you think this weather could be the work of the dastardly Mr. Freeze? It's a good thing I wore my special Bat Thermal Underwear!"

He went on to tell us that Robin couldn't be with us tonight, as he had homework to finish. Batman was genuinely friendly, and had a kind word for everyone. Then the moment came when the velvet ropes were lowered, and the line shifted forward toward the steps that would take us on stage and to the Caped Crusader.

There were maybe 15 kids in front of me; I figured I'd use the time to my advantage and think of something horrible witty and unique to say to him. "Hi Batman" was definitely out. "How's it going?" was out, too. What would I say? Ten kids in front of me now.

"Can I have Catwoman's phone number?" Hey, that might work! Witty, unique, and it would be something the kids in front of me wouldn't think of. Yeah, that would work! Five kids in front of me.

But what if he asks which Catwoman? Let's see, there was Julie Newmar, Lee Meriwether, and omigosh, who was the third Catwoman? Three kids...I was stumped. I couldn't ask that question now! What was I going to do? Two kids.

There was some guy sitting at the table next to Batman. When I came up to the table he asked me what my name was, and I told him. He gave me a photo of Batman standing in front of the Batmobile. The guy leaned over to Batman, and told him my name. It was my turn.

"Hello, Stefan," Batman said and held out his hand. Who was he talking to? He was looking at me; he was saying my name. Batman was talking to me! My mind went blank, and I had to 'go' again. Real bad this time. My stomach started to stir. God, please don't make me throw up on Batman! I had to think of something to say. I took his hand and shook it. The room started to spin.

"Uh-I've worshipped you since I was five years old," I told him. My heart stopped. I broke out into a sweat. I began to shake. A knot the size of Gotham City welled in my throat.

Dumb, dumb, dumb! The stupidest thing in the world to say and I said it!!! The floor fell out from under me, and I felt myself sinking, but that was probably because I was dropping to one knee...I was meeting Batman, and I was passing out!

"I'm sorry," I told him as I felt myself go weak. My head was spinning. I turned to see Pat and Mike, their cameras in front of their faces, snapping away. I was passing out in front of my childhood hero, and I would have pictures commemorating the most embarrassing moment in my entire life. I was mortified.

Batman was talking to me. He was holding my hand, and telling me that there was nothing to be sorry about. Everything else he told me and everything else that happened after that was a blur. All I remember was the smooth satin of his glove, and the distinct smell of Cinamon Dentyne that hung on his breath. Mr West pointed out my friends waving in the crowd, and he told me to smile for a picture, which I did. I felt my dizziness fade, though I was still a bit woozy. Two Andy Frains got me to my feet, and helped me down the stairs. My meeting with the Dark Night Detective, a total of some 90 seconds in all, was officially over.

Pat and Mike came over to me and slapped me one the back, telling what great shots they got. One of the Andy Frains came overtome and shoved something into my hand. It was the photo the guy gave me of Batman standing in front of the Batmobile. On it was written, "To my pal, Stefan-ZAP! - Adam West."

On the way home, we stopped at the White Castle for Sliders and Cokes. My friends were chattering away about their adventure at the exhibit. I was uncharacteristically quiet. A fluffy, crystal white blaket of snow had covered the town. I had had quite a day. I looked at my autographed trophy. Tomorrow I would frame it and hang it on my wall. With my finger, I traced the words, "To my pal, Stefan" that he had written not an hour before, then I put the photo under my Batman comforeter to keep it warm.

Stefan J. Benoit

Embarrassing Rewards

There's this incredibly beautiful girl
Whom I've had my eye on
For the past six months.
I muster up the courage and
Ask her out for Saturday night;
She doesn't hesitate in saying no.
I finally do get a date with this
Other incredibly beautiful girl
Everything is going well and
I move in to kiss her goodbye.
She pulls back but still I recover with,
"I had a really nice time tonight,"
And a good, firm handshake.
Can anything get more embarrassing?

I'm walking to class with
My fly hanging open. I've got food between my teeth and
I trip going up the stairs in Burke.
When I look back to see
What I tripped over,
I lose my balance and trip
Down the stairs.
I'm surrounded by a crowd of
My peers asking if I'm okay.
"I'm fine," but I sure am embarrassed.

I make it to class and
I'm fairly unscathed.
I was up late studying, and

Now I have to sit through Christian Doctrine.
Of course I fall asleep, but
That's not the worst of it.
I start to drool and
Then I twitch and
Then I blurt out,
"Elvis is still alive!" and
Then I wake up to realize that
The incredibly beautiful girl who
Gave me the pull-back
Sits behind me and
Is laughing hysterically.
When class is over
I leave as fast as I can, but
Every eye is watching me as
I walk into the women's bathroom.

When Saturday finally comes
I look forward to
A home football game where
I can redeem myself with
A victory.
An opposing player hits me so hard
That my helmet comes off and
I go flying through the air.
I land out of bounds
Right in front of
The home stands where
The incredibly beautiful girl
Is sitting.
We lose the game by forty points
And now we're 0-7.
I'm leaving the field with my
Head down and my body on ice
When the incredibly beautiful girl
Shows up (probably) to mock me
But instead she says,
"My, you've had a rough week.
Let's go out tonight and get
Your mind off everything."
Wow! Maybe I'll try
Getting embarrassed more often.

Jeremy VanKley

The Potter

With earthen hands
you molded earth
and made it breathe.
Squared hands
that made round,
breathing bellies
and ribbed necks that pulsed
with life.
I listened to my chest
rise and fall,
the sound of my heart
beat
and watched the wheel
as you made the clay
dance with you,
it waltzed and laughed
with you
yet it breathed with me.
Somehow, you made the clay
breathe with me.
Amazing.
I do not find it odd
that you can make earth live.
After all, you bring life
to so many other things.
I'm just surprized
that I can even hear
the life call
of the earth you mold,
me,
the girl with feet of clay.

Jennifer Hubert

Half-breed Heart

We all suffer through it at some time. Some of us may suffer from it all of the time, while others seem to suffer for only a mere moment. What is this universal human horror? According to psychoanalyast Erik Erikson, it is the fifth stage of human development. It is the search for self-identity. Erikson believes that the major challenge of adolescence is the creation of an adult identity. He theorizes that adolescents experience a life crisis of self-identity. If this crisis is resolved properly, adolescents develop a firm sense of who they are. A firm sense of "who they are" seems simple enough since the redundant question, "Who am I?" is asked by anyone and everyone. The struggle comes when the question is not this familiar one. In my case, the question is not "Who am I?" but "What am I?"

Being part of an interracial family has always been a challenge. My Croatian mother and Filipino father broke any and all barriers when they left their home countries, across the world from each other, and met in the U.S. Since then, my mother bore four girls. Obviously, all four of us are a half-bred mixture of both nationalities. To the Filipinos, I am a mestiza, a mixture of Asian and European blood. To the Croatians, I am a mjesavina. To myself, I am neither. One may think that I would feel an overabundance of acceptance from both sides. However, there is no solace in alienation. I am not part of a stereotypical "minority." I am not African American, Hispanic, or Caucasian. I am not a Croatian or Filipina either. I am a minority within a minority. I am half-Croatian and half-Filipino. Someone tell me in which group I belong.

As a child, description was almost impossible. Imagine a kindergartner trying to explain why her mommy is white, her daddy brown, and herself a tan mix of the two. Not only did it lead me to deny my own father as being my "daddy," but it also built a growing confusion within my five-year-old, half-bred heart.

Grade school wasn't any clearer. I just denied my self-being in a more mature way. Questions such as, "What are you? Where are you from? What do you speak?" were always asked by friends and mere strangers. A very vivid memory of the seventh grade still convicts me today. It was the first day of our national testing week. My teacher instructed the class to "fill in the bubbles" answering our birthdate, sex, and nationality. A friend next to me asked what I was going to fill in for nationality. He jokingly poked fun at the category, "Pacific Islander." I laughed too. It did sound funny at first. It wasn't until I actually came to that section when I realized there was no real category for me. I was not Black, White, Hispanic, or even a Pacific Islander. I was "other." Other? What kind of category is that? Anything and everything from a kitchen sink to a Doberman Pinscher can fit under that category. I filled in that bubble.

It carried into high school. Especially with the recent happenings in the once united "Yugoslavia", the Croatians in my school were quite nationalistic about their home country. I secretly lent my ear to their conversations as they spoke in their native tongue. Since I do not know how to write or speak either of my parent's languages, I was lost in their words. I did try to fit in. One time, when I attended a "teenage Croatian party," I was welcomed by a friend from school who jokingly said, "What are you doing here? This is only for 100% Croatians." I laughed and played it off for appearance's sake. Inside, I cried unceasingly. I quietly left the party. The list could go on, from universities and trade schools sending me Hispanic, Asian, and White "minority" scholarships to the stares of the Filipino club as I entered the room for their first meeting. All my life, I have felt as if I am divided among three opposite cultures and worlds. It is not fair that I should choose one or the other, yet the world seems to be shouting out that I must. How can I divide myself without tearing apart my own identity? I cannot.

In an essay by Maya Angelou entitled, "Champion of the World," the narrator ends with a powerful sentence. "Joe Louis had proved that we were the strongest people in the world." The fight was not merely a victory for Louis but a win for his entire race. In the same respect, I have finally come to realize that the question "What am I?" can be answered. With thier response of a humble yet dignified life, a Godly love for everyone, and simple smile, I can distinctively answer all. I am "a mixture of two pures." Thus, I have the best and am part of both worlds. Through this realization, I acknowledged my uniqueness and won the fight within myself and for my people, the race of half-bred hearts.

Tania Vasquez

Dave and Me

Like a thorn on a rose
like a boogar in a nose
that's Dave and me.

Like lint to a belly
like peanutnutter and jelly
that's Dave and me.

Like Abbott to Costello
like pear in lime jello
that's Dave and me.

like a stain on a shirt
like mud from dirt
that's Dave and me.

Like a mime and silence
like crime and violence
that's Dave and me.

Like a friend and friend
we'll be so till the end
that's Dave and me.

Jay Phillips

The Future

It lies ahead of me
just beyond what's shown.
Years in preparation
yet nothing truly known.

It happened so quickly.
It happened so very fast.
The years all start to blur
from present to the past.

I think of what I'll do.
I think of what I'll be.
A veil of ignorance
permits me not to see.

Nervous anxiety
sets me on the edge.
Like a crazy jumper
about to leave his ledge.

Now in the present
I wish life to stay.
The same as always
every night and day.

Inevitable future.
The much distant past.
The present is here today
but never seems to last.

What does the future hold,
for me I do not know.
I will put trust in God
and pray that I may grow.

Jay Phillips

A Place Called Home

It was their special place, although it certainly didn't start out that way. And it was eventually conquered with life, laughter and tears. This place was a Catholic cemetery near their college. Suzanne approached the iron gate that surrounded the two acre cemetery, and before entering, she admired how well kept it still was. The grass was neatly shaven, the red rose bushes were in full bloom, and the twenty or so maples were well groomed. She was happy to see the headstones had not yet been vandalized by youthful arrogance and were standing as neat and polished as she had remembered. The perfect scene it presented was one Suzanne had imagined in her dreams for the five years since she had last seen it.

She took a deep breath and gently swung the gate open before her, allowing the sweet scent of spring to fill her lungs. She found her way to the statue of Mary and saw the two candles still burning. She allowed the scene to remind her of a time long ago. How majestic a place, how beautiful a time she remembered having here. A time before...

"Stop," she told herself. "He's gone. Don't waste your time!"

But, she remembered. She couldn't help but to recall the scene of their first encounter. How horrible!

Suzanne was sitting under a tree trying to find relief from the noisy dorm to get some homework done when she saw a guy coming toward her.

"Not someone else bothering me," she uttered under her breath.

She guessed by his heavy steps and rapid pace that he was angry about something, and she was sure she would find out about what shortly. She sighed, and awaited his approach.

"Excuse me? Do you know that this is my spot? What are you doing here? I've had a really hard day, and I need to be alone. And, not to be too rude, but, will you please go somewhere else?" he exclaimed more than inquired.

"I guess I didn't realize this was your tree," she retorted. "It doesn't have your name on it! Look, I need to get some things done too, and if you're going to be selfish and rude, I'll just let you have it and I'll go!"

"No, forget it! I'll go somewhere else," he stomped off.

"What a baby!" she thought.

Suzanne didn't see him for several months, which was fine with her. Then one day in October, she decided she would go back to the cemetery because it was a peaceful place to study and enjoy the fresh fall day, only this time she planned to sit on a bench instead of by that stupid maple. To her dismay she entered through the gates, and she saw him there--in his spot. She sat on the bench facing the opposite direction. Soon however, she felt a hand on her shoulder. He was standing there with an agonizing grin on his face. This time, without the scowl, she noticed a difference in him. He was a tall dark-haired man with sympathetic eyes and a distinguished nose. She guessed he was just the average American male; however, he was somehow more. His face, although chiseled, had a softness to it that, being covered with his irritation months before, certainly wasn't obvious until now. It seemed to glow almost like sunshine.

"Please don't walk away. I won't bite your head off this time, I promise. Hi, my name is Jacob. I know I was a real jerk to you a couple of months ago, and I don't even deserve your forgiveness, but will you forgive me anyway?" He asked as he tilted his head. "It's just that I come out here to think sometimes and I was surprised to see you under 'my' tree."

Suzanne noticed his eyes twinkling with innocence as he said this. Not only his looks, but also the way he presented himself in such a gentlemanly way, triggered something in Suzanne that prophesied to her she would soon fall in love. Although she felt an interest in him, and she knew he was really sorry, she was still angry.

"You had no right to yell at me; if that's the type you are, you can just leave me alone!" she declared as she, this time, stomped off.

Suzanne and Jacob saw each other in passing around campus several times after that, and each time, she would ignore him. Secretly, however, Suzanne excitedly anticipated these times. Something about his humble going out of his way to not cross her path, yet holding his head up proudly, attracted her. She knew he was truly sorry for what he did, but she wouldn't let him be forgiven, just yet.

Suzanne pulled herself back to reality and tried to shake the thought of the past out of her head as she gazed around their cemetery. She only wanted to visit once more. On this visit, she would bury his memories.

She came to that bench in the middle of the cemetery where she had not forgiven Jacob years before. She wondered why she had wasted so much time being angry with him when she should have been loving him. But, then she remembered it was better than the first.

The next year of school came, and Suzanne decided to go to the cemetery once again. She hadn't visited it for a year, but it was a beautiful day, and she knew she could enjoy it on her quiet bench. When she got there, she sat down and allowed the last summer rays to soak her. Suddenly, she felt a familiar hand on her shoulder.

"Not again!" she whispered to herself.

It was him. He had a determined look on his face as he spoke.

"Look, I know you're still mad at me, but I really would like to make up. Don't you think it's been long enough?"

Suzanne knew she had secretly forgiven him already, but seeing the almost desperate look he gave her, she knew she had to confess to him.

"Yes, I forgive you."

Slowly lifting her hand to shake his much bigger one, Suzanne introduced herself and invited him to sit with her. Immediately after he sat down, she admired how their features contrasted but somehow complimented each other. He had a long six foot frame compared to her five foot one; his brown eyes were as dark as her blue ones were bright; and, his one-half inch blond hair was distinctly opposite her waist-length brown hair. However, the way they conversed was similar. They both listened by looking each other in the eyes, shaking their heads in agreement, and, this time, smiling with respect. They talked for over an hour; and they both knew that there would be more talks to follow.

They were right. In fact, Jacob and Suzanne went through four years of college together plus more than sixteen summer months of phone calls and visits. Every chance they could find, they went to the cemetery to be alone, to talk, and to grow. She could remember their conversations. There were talks as serious as discussing their parents' divorces and both of them working on ways now that would prevent them from having to go through this with their own spouses, to conversations as silly as learning that Jacob had the ability to flip coins into a cup forty-feet away. Somehow, despite their rocky beginning, they grew to love each other, and they were even eventually engaged. That time was born and with its passing, her future died.

Near the end of their senior year, she received a letter in her mail box not too long after their engagement asking her to meet him on the cemetery bench.

"Suzanne, over here," Jacob called. "Come and sit down with me. We really need to talk."

He gently took her by the hand and sat her at his side--a place she loved to be; she felt so secure nestled in the curve of his neck. But this time she felt an uneasiness. A worry. She knew something was wrong.

"What is it? What's the matter?"

"Here; read this." His voice carried a strange coolness with it that she could tell was present to cover the quivering in his chest.

He handed her a letter. It was from the U.S. army. She read through it quickly. And then...

"No! No, Jacob. They have the wrong person, they can't take you! Please, NO! You can't leave me!"

"Suzanne, I've been drafted. I have to go to Vietnam. I can't just sit

back while all our friends risk their lives. I really have no choice. The last thing I want is to leave you," he said as he drew her closer. "I'm scared too, Suzanne; but please help me be strong."

Suzanne hated the thought of that day, the day Jacob left her. She allowed him to escape her once she couldn't do it again. She had waited so long to be with him; but he did leave her. He flew out of her life as abruptly as he had flown in. Of course she heard from him, but he could not write often, and then finally, he ceased writing at all. Soon, she received a letter from his parents informing her that his plane had been shot down over the ocean, and he was missing and assumed dead.

Suzanne once again pulled herself back to reality and after an hour, she went on. She must finish what she came here to do. So, she bent down on her knees and took out of her purse a garden trowel and dug a hole. As she did this she couldn't help but to remember the time Jacob and she came here one evening during their last year together to get away and be alone.

"Do you know we're crazy?!" She heard herself asking him. "It is pouring rain and it's freezing! We're going to get pneumonia!"

"Hey, if we get sick, I'll simply remind you it was your idea to come out here!" Jacob said playfully. "Hum, what will people think if we both get sick at the same time? Oh, well! Who cares!"

"Jacob! You're so bad!" Suzanne teased back.

She thought about this as she was working. Then the hole was dug and Suzanne's memories were held in the box she caressed in her hand. It contained the letters he had written while gone and her engagement ring.

"Oh, Jacob! Please forgive me! I can't go on if I don't try to bury you! I'll never forget you. You've taught me how to appreciate people who are precious to me. I'm sorry it cost you your life to teach me this, Jacob. I'll always love you," Suzanne whispered as she kissed the box and placed it in the hole.

"Good-bye for now, my love."

Amanda S George

Auditorium

The back seats are taken by dreamers who've never been
 Backstage is taken by dreamers who wish they were seated for
 those 15 sanctimonious minutes
 At best, empty
 Dreaming is all there is to listen to from my backseat-sanctum-
 stage
 Left at 15

Joyanna Wilson

Still Life is Fleeting

Food, wine, books, and music call to indulge.
Perfume bottles remind of far-off exotic places.
Flowers and fruit beckon to partake of them.
Books quench the continuous quest for knowledge.
Life's sensuous pleasures of materialism.
O, but all is in vain.
A tortoise reminds of long life,
But a watch warns of the passage of time.
This life is temporary; God's Kingdom eternal.
Still life is fleeting.

Heidi Salter

Forgotten Memories

In the middle of the night
When the seconds slowly pass;
My mind begins to wander--
My eyes become like glass.

Enveloped in a dream--
A catatonic state;
The persistence of my memory
Isolation, my sad fate.

The memories of the times
I spent with loved ones every day;
Now the melting of the clocks--
Those times have ticked away.

Loneliness absorbs me now
But someday I'll see you again;
For now the clocks continue to melt--
Desolation, my only friend.

Jeremy VanKley

A Job

I see in the world a job to be done.
There is misery to be comforted and lives to be won.
I need to get started. It won't go away.
The longer I wait, the longer it'll stay.

I see cruel children who hurt
a little boy named Cecil Bert.
They utter words that tear him down
and put on his face a frown.
My heart aches and goes wild
for this poor lonely child.

And I see a world so lost, empty, and blind
searching for something they never find.
They are blinded by darkness, they are empty and lost.
They don't know that Jesus already paid the cost.
My soul longs for the day when I can show them the way.

And I see disease destroy a brain.
Thoughts are confused, the person is not sane.
Life is lived in a world all its own,
Terrorized by voices from the Twilight Zone.
My mind thinks clearly, and I thank God dearly.

And I see a man who is not so old
Sleeping in an alley, in the cold.
His future is uncertain and full of doubt.
He has nothing and no one to help him out.
A clock gongs a new hour, but for him each note is sour.

My heart aches, my soul longs,
My mind thinks, a clock gongs.
Time is passing, and I've done nothing.

Stephanie Spence

Meet Me at the Library

Jacob sat alone in his room, listening to the sounds of silence. He could hear light footsteps above him, along with the sounds of running water, dishes clanging, and faint voices talking. He was always considered the odd one of the Kalber family. He had two older brothers who enjoyed sports and girls, the usual interests of high school boys. Jacob, on the other hand, preferred being alone with his science fiction books and his computer. He wasn't an ugly young man, but just a little different. With his bright red hair and thick glasses, most people considered him a nerd. He hadn't had many friends throughout his life, and the ones that he did have all seemed to disappear eventually. Basically, Jacob was just very shy and innocent, therefore, no one wanted him around because he wasn't much fun. But underneath his unique appearance was a young man who just wanted someone to get to know him, and that would be enough to make him feel important. And feeling important to just one person was possibly all Jacob needed to build his confidence.

He had just entered high school a little over a month ago, and in that time had not met one person. He just wasn't the type of young man who attracted the interests of others, and because he was so introverted, he wouldn't make an effort to change that. At school, even his brothers avoided speaking to him as much as possible. Things weren't much different at home, even his parents never appreciated the true person that Jacob was. So that is why he was so often alone in his room.

This Sunday evening was the same, only now Jacob had something to smile about, even if no one else knew what it was. About a week ago Jacob's path crossed the path of a girl who had changed his life forever. Maybe it wasn't noticeable to others, but on the inside, Jacob felt like a new person.

It was Thursday evening when Jacob got on his bike and headed toward the library with a backpack full of science fiction books to return. He arrived at the library, walked to the counter, set the books down and said hello to who he thought was Miss Smith, the librarian. As he walked toward the science fiction books his mind recreated a picture of the woman at the desk. It was not Miss Smith!

Jacob nonchalantly turned to glance at the woman again. She was a young woman, probably seventeen or eighteen, he thought, with long blond hair, and the most beautiful green eyes Jacob had ever seen. He quickly turned back toward the shelves of books, trying to remain unnoticed. As he chose four new science fiction books, he slowly walked toward the counter where the girl was standing. Not once looking up from his shoes, Jacob set the books in front of her.

"Hi!" she smiled as she opened to the front of each book. "Do you have your library card with you?"

Jacob mumbled, "Yes," as he retrieved the card from his pocket and handed it to her over the counter.

He glanced at her as their hands met to exchange the card. He noticed her name tag read Jenni, and Jacob believed there was not a more appropriate name for such an angelic girl.

As Jenni typed his ID number in the nearby computer she spoke enthusiastically.

"Oh, so you're Jacob? Miss Smith told me I'd get to know you very well because you're a regular here at the library."

Jacob smiled faintly at her, his palms sweating, and his insides shivering. Wanting to say something, anything, but not finding the words, Jacob returned his stare to the brown carpet.

Jenni continued to talk as she stamped each book.

"I see you like science fiction. I never could get into it very much."

Then, all of a sudden, as if someone was forcing him to do so, Jacob began talking endlessly, not about very important things like politics or the weather. But about things that were important to him, things that no one else

had ever listened to before.

"Yes, I only read science fiction. I don't know what it is that just keeps drawing me back to it. But it was hard for me to understand at first. Maybe that's why you don't like it. Now I just find someplace quiet where I can really concentrate and I just read for hours. I like to read books more than once; it helps me to understand them better. I always catch something new the second time."

Jenni handed Jacob his books.

"There you go! Maybe I'll have to try your suggestions and give science fiction a chance. Well, enjoy your books. Bye, Jacob."

"Bye, . . .," he paused to look at her name tag again, "Jenni."

And that's where it began. Every day after that Jacob went back to the library to return a book, check out a book, or pretend to do one or the other. He and Jenni would always share a short conversation over the counter. Jacob would tell her about a book he had read, or she would ask him questions about one she had read. They never talked about anything deep, but Jenni was the only person who took time to listen and respond to what Jacob had to say. And then they would part until the next day.

Jacob never saw Jenni outside of the library, but he didn't mind because that made it even more special to make a routine trip to see her each day. Besides, without the counter between them he wouldn't know how to act.

As Jacob sat in his room this Sunday evening, listening to his family's life go on above him, as he often did before, he wasn't lonely anymore. He had his new science fiction book and thoughts of Jenni to keep him company.

Jenni never realized the impact she had on Jacob's life, and Jacob never realized that Jenni wasn't doing anything special to change him. But in actuality, he was changing himself.

Even so, whenever he closed his eyes, all he could remember was her long hair and green eyes and her face smile as she said,

"Bye, Jacob. See you tomorrow!"

It was so nice to know someone would actually be expecting him tomorrow and maybe even miss him if he wasn't there. It was a feeling that Jacob had never experienced before, and a feeling that he was going to try to hold on to, forever.

Britta Mitchell

The Poem

I didn't have a poem
 for my writing class today.
 The neglect of this assignment
 would be the loss of my "A"
 But I really had no feelings
 that I could express through words,
 Except by void—the page left blank—
 but that would look absurd.
 So instead of handing over
 my true poem and facing strife,
 I wrapped the page with verse
 like I have been all my life.

K.W. Mann

Inevitable

the End came today
 it draped itself on You
 like a dead animal skin
 its smell is in your hair
 tendrils of End curl around
 your Face,
 masking your expressions
 making your eyes
 hard to read
 I don't know
 why You can't
 see
 the End.
 I can't seem to
 see anything
 else.

Jennifer Hubert

Ode to Mortality 20th Birthday

I saw a teenager in a truck, shirtless, striations straining,
 much like his companion in the bed,
 muzzle eating, challenging the air.

Effusion of humanity's mantle, purposeful in purposelessness
 -nineteen years on the pedal-
 until he runs the Green Light,
 "May I see your degree, please?" (for such an offense, growth is
 revoked)

A bronze Age, of instantaneous devotion, pollen-affection,
 (pseudo?)solipsism,
 never Lived until it can't be
 Wherefore art thou?

Joyanna Wilson

Home's Victory

Yesterday I turned eight,
and I had a personal talk with Home.
She disclosed that Mom and Dad's eternal love,
not the mortar and wood,
created Her.

Today I turned eighteen,
and I perceived Home as a liar.
She proved vincible.
We had no talk, and I repressed my need for Her.
She had ripped open my heart.

Tomorrow is my twentieth birthday,
and Home's hot breath creeps down my shoulders.
She lures me back, revealing Her fresh definition,
convincing me I can't exist without Her.
Her prevailing love heals, and with her
I think I will comply.

Amanda George

Old Country Store

Old pickups sit in the gravel parking lot
Red clapboard building
Rotting from years of harsh weather
Warped plank floor pulling apart at the seams
Makeshift shelves in disarray
Tin cans rusting
Dusty boxes faded by the years
Children run through the aisles
Mothers stand chattering
Gossip flows freely
Time passes slowly

Barb Garner

Untitled

I could call you my one true love,
my knight in shining armour.
I could call you my best friend,
or I could call you my lover.

I could call you the one to soothe all my hurts,
to make sense of my madness.
The one who shines a light on reality
when all other paths are obscure.

I could call you the one who always listens to me
and loves me unconditionally.
And the mentor in my self-guided walk.

I could call you the one who holds my hand
when I'm frightened,
the one to caress my head while I cry.
The one to whose shoulders I clutch when I grieve,
You, who I cling to when the storms of life
rush over me.

I could really call you all these things,
Because that's who you are.
And all of these characteristics can be summed up
in one special word,
I will call you husband,
You are truly the one God destined for me.

Shelli Fletcher

A Politically Correct Poem

Since mentioning anything
Might offend someone
This poem is now over.

Stefan J. Benoit

The Touch

I want to be like you, Benjamin, but I'm too weak.
Worldly pressures confine me, and I'm debilitated.
My joy slips;

Where can I lean?
Then, revitalized in your neck's nook
and I'm strong.

I want to be like you, Momma, but I don't persevere.
Adverse situations arise,
and I can't find the hope you see.

Where can I hide?
Then, you wrap your arms around me
and I'm safe.

I want to be like You, Christ, but I'm too foolish.
Life engulfs me, and I'm drowning.
Desperately, I search for living breath.

Where's my Savior?
Then, I remember Your Word,
"I have laid My hand upon you,"
and I'm wise.

Amanda George

A Cry

alone...

She sits, her dress hanging like curtains on a rod.

staring...

People walk past, viewing her twig-like body.

whispering...

They pretend she doesn't notice.

sadly...

She knows their thoughts.

softly...

She cries out for help.

desperately...

She wonders how to make them hear.

frantically...

She rocks as the fire in her belly burns once again.

slowly...

She fades away like the afternoon sun.

eventually...

She is gone.

Britta Mitchell

Blinded

Great is the battle

For our pure virginity.

The Light tries to enlighten

The hideous and repulsive deeds of the darkness,

While the darkness tries to overshadow

The purity of the Light.

If we know that the pure Light,

That we have accepted,

Tries to preserve our purity and virginity,

Then why are we so quick

To embrace the darkness?

Perhaps it is the horrific and grungy pillars

Made from our own little deeds of darkness,

That create secret, dark, putrid, rancid alleys in our soul.

Of which, the pure Light

Has yet to penetrate,

Because we have come to like the sewage

That has soiled and reeked our soul,

And so, we have diminished the penetration of the pure Light.

Maybe then, we are not as pure

As what we thought we were.

And the darkness has made us blind.

Jonathon VanderSchuur

Savior

Who's your savior, child,
who's your god?

Can you keep him in your pocket,
or cork him in a bottle,
can you hide him in a dark, dark closet?
Is he your fun, your cool, your latest trip?
Does He lift you to new heights
or does he just getcha high?

Is He there when you're lonely?
Is He there when you're sad?
Is He there when the money's run out
and so have the friends?
Or is he a good-times god
with no time for your whining.

Can you touch him?
Does he snatch his hand away?
Or are His nail-scarred palms held out for you?
Does He speak to you,
have you seen Him smile?
Or does his greasy whisper make you shiver?
Are you afraid to look up and see his grin?

Who's you savior, child,
who's your god?

When you meet him, are you knocked flat,
do you crumble and weep?
Or do your knees bow,
and your tongue confess that He is Lord....

Nicole White

Hurt Before

Complex, mystifying lover
Shadowy soulmate, wounded hero.

You offer your heart,
but trust is battered
you have to hold one corner
just in case...
"I don't want you to see me this way."

One step in, two steps out
The maddening, frantic dance.

"Maybe we could be something.
Only don't you look too close.
(Scrutiny is painful and where will I
be if you hate what you see?)"

Love cuts like a serrated blade
when it's grudgingly given then snatched away.
In and out; the saw teeth rip,
A jagged hole bleeds uncontrolled.

Hope in your eyes flickers,
Fear attacks it violently.
You want so much more
than you believe you're allowed to have.
Will risk earn reward?

"You too will tire of me someday.
I know the game, I've seen it before."
Risk is rejected for safer ground.
The hero
runs away.

Nicole White

A Moment

I inhale her beauty with my eyes while silently gasping for air.
 Every detail absorbed, every feature branded into my mind.
 Her presence unleashed, enveloping my being.
 I cannot speak, I have no voice,
 And if I did, I would remain still.
 I cannot breathe, I have no need,
 Oxygen is not necessary to fuel this fire.
 I wish to touch her and prove her reality, for I doubt her
 existence.
 But I am paralyzed by her gaze,
 And energized by her stare.
 I see myself, I see the stars, deep within pools of ebony.
 As I search, I see her world and completely lose my own.
 I stay for an eternity, lost in bliss, until somehow I regain
 control.
 I must exist in my own world, but will never forget that moment.

Dan Dillinger

My Big Loss

When I was a baby and a young child, I was cocooned in a sense of security that one only feels in a mother's arms. I knew as only a child could know that I was loved and protected. Every girl dreams of an ideal relationship with their mother, I was no exception. I was happy with my family, I smiled a lot. There's an eternal record in my family's photo albums of those big, happy smiles, unlike many that now seem pasted on my face. I loved my mother and wish I could recall more of my younger years. I wish I could remember my mother holding me in her arms, her concern for me when I had spinal metigitis at 9 months, her taking me to my first day of school, our family vacations, and how she helped to make God come to life for me. I wish I could remember my first Christmas and my first birthday, what my parents bought me, how we celebrated.

But I can't remember any of these things, nor much of anything else. My mother died of cancer in August of 1981 when I was eight. With the loss of my mother came a loss of security, the love and protection I instinctively felt. But I lost more than that, I lost the chance to really know my mother, the chance for her to share in the most important events in my life. She wasn't there when I needed to feel someone's arms around me, to let me know that I was loved when I was hurting. She wasn't there for my graduation, she has never read any of my poems, and she won't be there for my wedding day.

I grew up without my mother there to encourage me to make something of my life. I made it through school graduating with honors, but something was missing. My mother wasn't there to congratulate me. She wasn't there to applaud when I received recognition as A Golden Poet in San Francisco. She wasn't there to see the write-ups in the local newspaper about the townspeople sponsoring my adventure in San Francisco. I couldn't tell her how thrilled I was to fly, to stay at the San Francisco Hilton, and to be recognized as a noteworthy poet. I couldn't share with her my secret dreams and ambitions. Unlike other people, I was unable to receive my mother's stamp of approval for my achievements and goals in life.

While I miss sharing important things with my mother, it is even sadder that I don't remember much about her. I can't remember what she looked like before she became sick. I have only one memory of her alive. It took place a couple months before she died. My family went to the Camp Barakel Rally hosted at our church. Every year we would sing songs, watch slides, receive candy bars, and play the Guessing Game to see who would win a free week of camp. But this year was to be different. Thanks to my mother helping me pick a number, I was standing on stage recognized as the winner. I remember a small, bright, red and white pillow with a big red button in the middle that she bought me to take to camp. Faded though the pillow is, I will always treasure it because of its association with my mother. It is the only material thing I remember my mother giving me. Sometimes, when I need special comfort, I sleep with my arms wrapped around the pillow, wishing it was my mother's arms holding me.

When I think how little I remember of my mother, I think about my younger sisters and how they probably don't even have one precious memory of our mother. I know that if I don't remember my mother, how can they. I will never forget the sense of anger and unfairness I felt when I heard about my youngest sister, Amanda's, reaction to our parents wedding picture at my high school open house. She asked Kathy: "Who's that with Dad? Is that our mother?" She vaguely knew that the woman we called mother was not our real mother. And so it wasn't until June 1, 1991, about 10 years after our mother died that Amanda even had a picture of our mother.

Even now, I feel an emptiness, a void that could only be filled with a mother's love. When people ask a simple question like: "What does your mother do?", they trigger the sense of loss I feel. I can only tell them she's dead, that I don't remember much about her. At times like these I start to wish myself back in time, that I could go back to what the pictures hint at. I can see in them a time of true happiness, a time of love and security. These pictures are an inheritance from my mother, something to look back on and know that once I had a mother's love. I, too, wish to leave an inheritance behind, a part of me. I want it to be more than a picture of a few material things. It will be a record of my existence: my experiences, my emotions, and the important role God plays in my life. Then, hopefully, through my writing others can receive a glimpse of me, and insight to who I really am.

Karen Austin

Simple Season

I stare out the window,
a picture painted before me.

My mind remembers that time so long ago,
when the leaves would smell like dying summer.

Now I see the color,
and wonder where the time went.

Amy VanSwol

The Exemplar

In the anticipation of patience I am engulfed in a mirror of
the reflections of you, your image, inside and out.

A rapport unequaled, a month framing a relation that set my
ideal.

Skirting perfection, transcending any other experience of
mine.

A backbone of leadership and the epitome of confidence,
enveloped in a subtle romantic

Large eyes that sang of honesty and earnestness with a
tinge of care that you couldn't fully conceal.

Our separation was an intense torrent of pain that struck me
as so real... so real and flooded me with passion.

Despondency found its way into each time that I saw you, and
each glance of you was accompanied with a prayer that your
absence was temporal.

With childlike faith, I wished for you on every star and with
every fountain-tossed coin, for a moment of attention.

My thoughts, words were often drenched and dripping with your
name, hinting that I was beguiled.

My hands, heart, lips, soul obsessively belonged to your
memory.

Now I realize just how much you added to my life.

Though sometimes I wish you weren't a part of only my past, I
know that my highest hopes for love will reflect you.

Tricia Bushey

An Angel in Overalls

The sun was beginning to set as I drove down I-57 south on a crisp, cold day in late November. This was the first time I had been able to make the trip home to Kansas City, Missouri from the university just south of Chicago since the school year had begun. As a senior nursing major, I was run down from putting in long hours of clinicals for the past several weeks. Being a member of the recent Homecoming committee also hadn't left much spare time for leisurely activities. Making the eight hour journey home at last, I felt excited about the thought of spending six days at home with my parents and

little sisters. It would also be a chance to take a break from the stresses that had taken their tolls on me since I'd started school way back in late August.

With the windows rolled down in my 1994 royal blue Toyota Camary, I tapped my fingers on the steering wheel to the beat of the bass coming from the speakers in the back of the car. I cherished the time I had alone on the drive, time to clear my head and collect my thoughts. I was secretly glad that no one had asked me for a ride home this holiday break.

Even through the volume of the music on the radio, I could still hear the popping of the tire as if someone had fired a pistol in the back seat of the car. My heart pounded as the Toyota veered to the right and I struggled with the steering wheel. Tapping the breaks, I was able to maneuver the car to the side of the road, coming to a complete stop in what was actually a matter of seconds, but what seemed like an eternity. Still breathing heavily, I closed my eyes hard and said a short prayer, thanking the Lord for sparing my life. Taking my flashlight out of the glove box, I got out of the car on the passenger's side and stepped onto the graveled shoulder. Noting my surroundings, it looked like I was in the middle of nowhere, with rows of corn fields as far as I could see in every direction.

By this time the sun had almost completely disappeared and traffic was light. I stepped to the rear of the car and shined the flashlight on the rear right tire. There it was staring back at me. My heart sank as I saw the head of a rusty old screw protruding from the tire. I opened the trunk of the car to see a spare and a jack that were useless to a person who didn't know the first thing about changing a tire. I began to remember the stories I'd seen on television and in the newspaper about what happened to single female travelers on the road at night. I shuddered from the thoughts and pulled my unbuttoned coat closer around me.

"Havin' some trouble, are ya?" said a soft-spoken voice from behind me that made me jump out of my skin. I shined my flashlight toward the place from where the voice had come and saw a slightly older man looking to be somewhere in his sixties who appeared to be a farmer. He wore a red and black checkered flannel shirt under faded denim overalls that looked a couple of sizes too big for him. Tufts of gray hair hung out from around his warped yellow hat that had the word "CAT" in black blocked letters printed on the front. His tan, leathery face was covered with a gray stubble and the drawn in mouth, from which a toothpick protruded, was evidence of a few missing teeth. His piercing blue eyes looked at me earnestly over a crooked nose as he inquired again, "Havin' some trouble?"

Coming out of my stupor, I squeaked in a higher than normal voice, "My tire just blew out, and I'm not quite sure how to change it." Shuffling over to me standing at the opened trunk, he peered inside muttering, "let's see what we can do." I stepped out of his way as he lifted the tire and the jack out of the trunk, setting them both to the side of the damaged tire. He rolled up his sleeves and got right to work, making no small talk. I just stood there watching and holding the flashlight for him, for once at a loss for words. After a matter of minutes, he got up from his knees, took a bandanna from his back pocket to wipe the perspiration from his face and said, "That oughta hold ya 'til ya can git where you're goin'." Nodding my head, I said, "Thank you so much, sir," and went to the driver's side of the car, opening the door and sliding my hand underneath the seat to get my wallet. Pulling out a ten dollar bill, I looked up saying, "I'd like you to take this..." but he was gone, disappearing as quickly and as strangely as he had appeared.

After relating the story to my parents later that evening, I still couldn't get the image of the tattered, old farmer out of my mind. My father had an explanation for the strange incident. He said that in out times of distress and need, God sends us angels to watch over us. My angel just happened to be wearing a red and black checkered flannel shirt with overalls.

Renewal

They appear similar,
from a distance,
to any observer.

They are unique,
different patterns,
in actions and in residue.

Two Hands touch,
slowly at first,
one finger at a time.

Making contact,
sharing a bond,
initiating a trust.

Healing the past,
living the present,
sharing the future.

One hand adjusts,
the other responds,
Two Hands touch again.
More confidence,
more strength,
more hope.

Dan Dillinger

Mt. Timothy

It took me a year to climb to the top;
This mountain stretching far beyond the clouds.
The sharp rocks gashed me,
The snow washed my wounds.
Many times I fell,
But I always landed in streams of tears.
Toward the top, it became difficult to breath.
I was ready to turn back.
Then I saw the summit.
I grasped it and pulled myself up.
Before me lay the most perfect place,
And I became part of it.
I knew the mountain.

Amy VanSwol

Kids (ad infinitum)

In the best class I ever had, I also had the best seat-the right back-seat of a red Honda-while my teacher sat on the left. For 20 years I've been taking this same course: "How to be a Little Sister." Some days I haven't wanted to go to "school." Somedays I have. There's no syllabus, no text, and no objective evaluation, which explains why I've never passed.

My father worked a second job when my brother and I were kids. He was a frozen-foods stockman and a "Meat Department" custodian. Not having been tainted by occupational status prejudice, I assumed that North Second Street "Jewel" would close down without my dad. And, of course, we shopped there.

The same route was taken every trip. Once let loose, we pushed through the automatic doors, past the bubble gum machine, to the check-out; on all fours, we'd slap our cheeks to the floor and squint under. Here began my lessons in Economics. My instructor had the juvenile, but acute and practiced, eye of a prospector, so, rare and beautiful was the day when I found a nickel or a penny. I'm pretty sure that had I found a quarter or more, tuition would have increased. Next stop was the skids of rock crystal softer salt, second only in value to landscaping rocks. Hence, Geology. Lastly was the "cart stop"/comic rack, where we'd wait to hitch a ride from Mom to the ice cream aisle. Here at the "Jewel Public Library," we were mainly interested in the "Donald Duck" and "Archie" holdings, feeling free to sit directly on the displays where, of course, other kids couldn't.

Everything I know about sports, too, I can credit to my big brother, and although I never became a little brother, he tried. I especially remember running-a lot. Assigned the dishes together, as always, one Saturday morning, he surreptitiously put a bit of oatmeal on his finger and convinced me, which didn't take long, that he had just pulled it from his nose. In my house, when all the doors are open, a perfect track is made from the kitchen-to the dining room-to the living room-to the foyer- and back again to the kitchen. After a lap or so for the sake of pursuit, he pinned me to the floor and, with a malevolent giggle, stuck the oatmeal to my lip. I screamed that I was going to throw up, so he let me go, and I did.

I can still give the starting line-up of the 1984 Cubs, the year that began my baseball-love: Leon "Bull" Durham at First, Sandberg at Second, Larry Boa at short, Ron Cey "The Penguin" at Third, Keith Orelan in Right, Bob "The Deer" Dernier in Center, Gary "Sarge" Matthews in Left, Jody Davis catching, and, ideally, "Cy Young" award winner Rick "The Red Baron" Sutcliffe as starting pitcher with Lee Smith, "Smitty," to save. I learned to mimic the wind-up and toss of my brother, the pitcher, and at recess I'd bring my black "Rawlings" glove, his glove, and practice against the gym wall of Walker Elementary. That year, fifth grade, my career goals changed from missionary to First Woman Major League Baseball Player, or, if I only made it to AA ball or something, sports journalist. Book report topics for school became, instead of Abe Lincoln or Martin Luther King: Willie Stargell, Lou Gehrig, and favorite, maybe the only book I've ever read twice, Willie Mays. Together, my "coach" and I dented neighborhood siding, ripped base paths through pampered lawns and broke nearly every one of the 48 panes in the windows of our turn-of-the-century garage.

I haven't been scouted too often at church softball these past few years, but maybe, to a ten-year-old, being "the first girl picked" was just as good as a contract or a World Series ring.

Adulthood has made it a little difficult, but I take by correspondence.

Joyanna Wilson

Dumpster Diving with Jesus

Went dumpster diving with Jesus today
And had ourselves some lunch
Some twinkies, some Pepsi, some oranges
And some left over Cap'n Crunch

We walked along the railroad tracks
And hung out at the docks
Told a couple of silly jokes
Broke some bottles with some rocks

We came across a lonely man
Who offered us a drink
We sat and drank; Christ talked to him
Said something that made me think

"Some people get themselves washed up,
And there's nothing wrong with that;
But their piety gets in the way of their faith
They forget it's with me that they chat."

"They must think I eat in the finest cafes
Or dream that I'm all dressed in white
They think that I hang with the posh and elite
I've got news for them: That isn't right."

"I'd rather hang out where the people are real
And know that their lives have been fudged
They're apt to accept a Savior like me
They judge not, 'cause they have been judged."

"Don't cut yourself off and hide in a cocoon
Don't put yourself up on a shelf
Accept that there's billions of Christians out there
And each one's unique to himself."

Went dumpster diving with Jesus today
And had ourselves something to eat
We watched as the sun sank out of the sky
And I knew that my life was complete.

Stefan J. Benoit

The Goodbye

Words finally died. Word after word had been exchanged, but they had failed to clearly communicate the true feelings. So, the words died, struggling, but failing in the end. Silence settled in between the two. While he was not comfortable with the pause, he did not feel the need to fill it in.

"I'll leave now" she finally said, but she couldn't. She remained motionless on the couch, with her head bent down. The tears started to course down her cheeks, and her nose began to run. She asked him to get some tissues for her. He silently complied.

He walked to the bathroom and returned after a moment with a handful of Kleenex.

"Here" he said in a low voice as he handed her the tissues. A sniff was the only reply.

She dabbed the tears from her eyes and blew her nose at least a half dozen times before she felt ready to leave.

He held out his hands to receive the used tissues. She lightly laughed.

She headed for the nearest waste basket and dropped the pile of tissues in. Then she slowly shuffled to the front door.

She turned, giving him one last look. He stared at her with dry eyes. He stepped forward and spread his arms wide. She entered into the embrace. He hugged her for a final time, his eyes wide open and gave her one last kiss on the forehead.

She turned, opened the door, and walked out. He closed it behind her and stood for a moment, lingering, unsure of what to do next. Finally, he wandered off to the bathroom.

He stripped, leaving his clothes in a pile on the floor. He turned on the shower and climbed in after waiting for the water to heat up.

The water splashed down on him, hypnotizing his body into rest. Externally, he felt clean and refreshed. Internally, everything he felt was jumbled.

Eventually, he turned off the water and stepped out of the shower. He reached for a towel and dried off. He slid his body into a pair of clean boxer shorts, the ones with the smiley faces.

He returned to the living room where he turned on the radio. He stretched out over the soft, faded, tan cushions of the couch.

He reclined for a moment, his damp body hair against the cushions, the radio playing. The thought occurred to him that perhaps he should cry. He waited, but no tears came. Numerous thoughts raced into his mind, overlapping and contradicting one another to result in an incoherent mess. He did not see any point in trying to clarify his thoughts. It was easier, and he thought better, to leave it all behind him.

Lying still on the couch, his attention turned to the song on the radio:

It's the end of the world as we know it,

And I feel fine. I feel fine.

A tiny smile crawled from his soul out onto his lips.

Dave Johnson