

a sampling

THISTLE

Emily Negus



Welcome to the Spring 2011 issue of *Argentum*. Within these pages, once again, you will find a sampling of the exceptional writing and artwork of the talented students and staff of Great Basin College. We think you will agree that this latest issue of *Argentum* illustrates the continued need for a quality literary and art publication to showcase the abundant talent at GBC. We also know that there are many more writers and artists out there who have something to say and we hope to see their submissions for the 2012 issue. You, as the reader, play the final and essential role of honoring the creative process of each of these artists; for that, we would like to say “thank you.”

This publication is made possible
by the generosity of

GBC’s Office of Academic Affairs,

Intellectual and Cultural Enrichment (ICE) Committee,

Argentum Selection Committee,

Media Services Department,

GBC Foundation,

and Nevada Arts Council.





selection

ARGENTUM SELECTION COMMITTEE

RICHARD HOOTON, Author

Richard Hooton was born and raised in southern Idaho, spending his early years on his grandfather's ranch near Sun Valley. A member of Western Writers of America, he is the author of the acclaimed historical fiction novel, *Soldier Hollow*, and his most recent release, *The Lamb Cart*. He still maintains his roots in the Intermountain West, and is currently a resident of Elko, Nevada, where he is researching and working on his next novel, *The Mustang Riders*.

RON ARTHAUD, Artist

Ron Arthaud was born and raised near St. Paul, Minnesota, and attended the University of Minnesota in Duluth and received a BFA in 1984. From 1984–1987, he was a full-time student at Atelier LeSueur, a small classical realist art school in the Minneapolis area. There he studied under Richard Lack, among others, and focused on learning how to “see,” painting and drawing directly from nature, models, and still-lives. In 1989, he moved to Mendocino, California, where he found a supportive community of artists and had his first solo show in 1990. At that same time, he began teaching and facilitating life drawing groups at the

Mendocino Art Center. In 1992, Ron moved to southern France, in the countryside east of Toulouse. There he painted, taught, and shipped his finished work back to a gallery in Mendocino. In 1995, he returned to the states and traveled around the Southwest, looking for a place he could build a home and live as a full-time artist. At a friend's suggestion, he made a trip to Tuscarora, Nevada, and fell in love with the ghost town, bought an old ruin from the 1870s, and got to work restoring it. Today Ron and his wife, jeweler Gail Rappa, and their five-year-old son, Theo, live year round in Tuscarora, making art and restoring their home.

committee

TANYA LEADER, Student

Tanya writes, “Art has always been a major part of my life. From the day that I got my grubby, kindergarten hands on crayons, I’ve lived in my art. I hope to never stop and turn it into a rewarding career somehow. That’s what brought me to Great Basin, to find out how to turn this dream into a reality. My twin brother and I were raised by our single mother, Laura. She sacrificed so much and did everything she could to give us a chance at living a successful life. We both want to make her proud and make sure that her effort doesn’t go to waste. And while my brother’s ambitions are to become successful with either business or pharmacy, I aspire to turn something that went from hobby to passion into a

career I adore. When I look around, I see art everywhere. And this inspires me.”

KELLY MOON, Educator

Kelly is a long established educator. She is currently an English instructor and Drama Director for the Elko County School District, Elko High School. For the past several years, she has been a coordinator with the Great Basin Writing Project and is involved in various capacities with the National Writing Project.

PAULETTE BATAYOLA, Student
Paulette currently serves, and has served formerly as well, as the Student Body President of the Great Basin College Student Government Association. She is also the current vice chair of the Nevada Student Alliance. Paulette promotes excellence at GBC and lends her many-faceted talents to a number of student-centered endeavors, including those that highlight student talent.

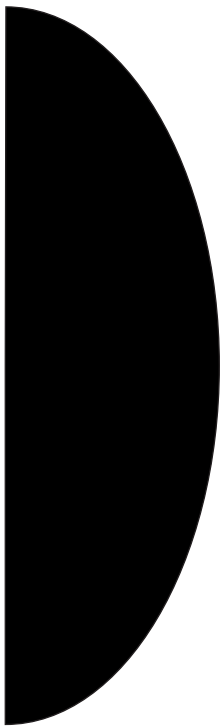


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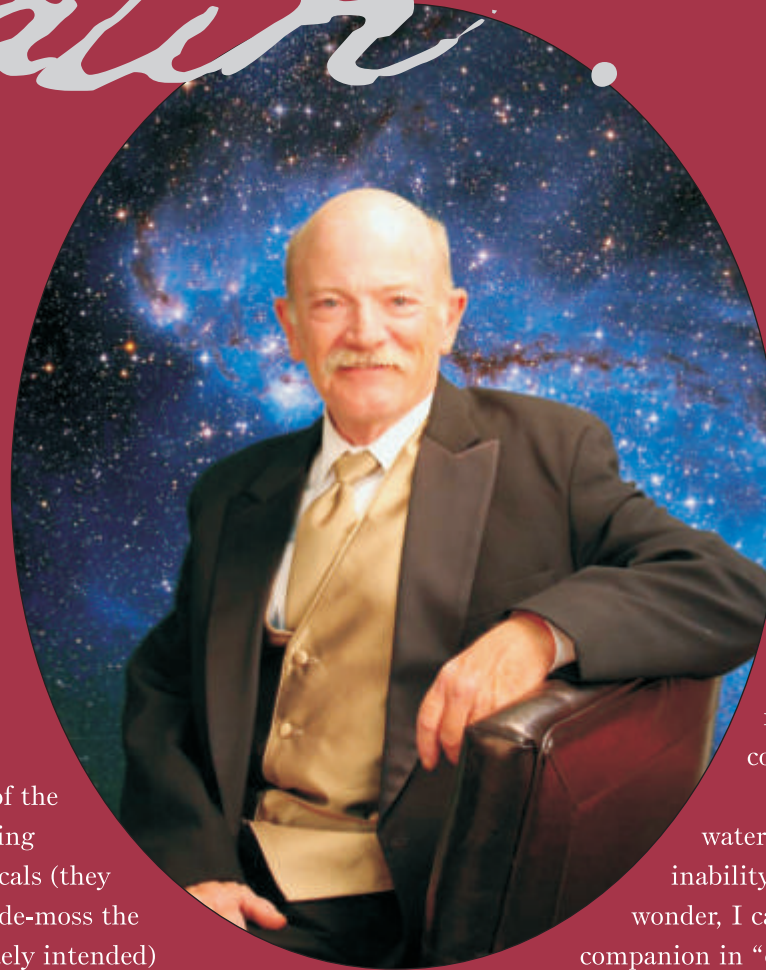
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Chaw

BY THE WATER'S EDGE

Prosser Cox

I came, by assignment, to write about the fountain and the people who were drawn to it, this liquid oasis in a parched desert, but I couldn't do it. The artificial Kool-Aid green of the water with its accompanying smell of putrefying chemicals (they must have been trying to de-moss the surroundings: pun definitely intended) over-whelmed my senses and kept diverting my attention. The spray from the little fountain would mist over my paper as if trying to recapture my attention but to no avail. I was lost in thought about the absurdity of



it—the white string lapped over the carefully landscaped rocks serving as a tether for the fountain that would be retired at the first sign of coming frost.

As I look towards the water's edge, caught up in my inability to appreciate this natural wonder, I can see very clearly my companion in “disrespect.”

I see a gentleman not yet sixty-one. He stands an unimpressive 5'8”, bare head covered with chemo cream. The scales now register a consistent 165 pounds. He is laughing at me, laughing at my attempt

ticbeer

MAC

Peter Connolly

to chronicle the beauty of the campus. Though normally I would see him in blue jeans and tee shirt, exposing his Popsicle stick arms, today I see him in a full tuxedo. The midnight black satin fabric edged with gold satin concealing his tattoos. He is of course laughing at me.

“You clean up real well,” I tease.

“This is my contribution to campus beautification.”

He winks. “Eye candy for the ladies.”

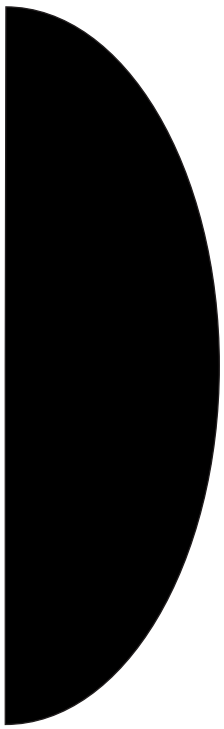
He stands at the water’s edge reaching down to



pick up an errant scrap of paper.

“It would never do to let the Board of Regents see that.” He smirks as he drapes it over a rock so they can see it better.

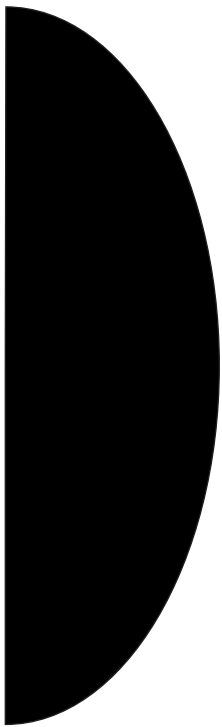
I sit still, willing myself to hold his image. But it fades, just as the blue sky overhead moves slowly behind me and the darkening wisps of gray clouds that portend a late summer shower gather in front. This is indeed a beautiful campus. But the beauty is now subdued, a shadowy whisper of the humanity that gave it life.



MR. ED

Emily Negus





CALVIN'S THIRD ARM

Dylan Woolf Harris

Calvin unhinged the fishing pole from his belt that protruded perpendicular to his thin body, looking like a long, low branch on a naked tree. And although, with the aid of fishing wire looped over his real right arm, the pole was mobile, Calvin could still not grab objects with his new arm, nor did it have an elbow joint, which would be essential for hugging. The shortcomings of this arm were many, but it was Calvin's best attempt yet.

His first was a grey paper maché arm, which he tried taping to his ribs, but it kept falling off. His second try at a third arm was built with a mechanical robot kit his grandma had given him for Christmas. The various parts—the pulley, the girders, the wire connectors, even the opposable thumb made of a small tube—created an impressive battery-powered arm, but it moved independent of Calvin. It also didn't quite feel like an arm, as it wiggled about through his backpack's pouch. The fishing pole, also a gift from Grandma the year before, was his last, fruitless pursuit.

Calvin wanted a third arm more than he wanted anything else a sixteen-year-old boy might want. It was innate he thought, though he would not deny also abnormal. His phantom limb was one that he had never seen, but the longing was just the same. What he would not say, because he did not remember, was the probable cause of his desire.

Repressed in a wrinkle, this memory of Calvin's sat dormant but dominated his subconscious. One balmy autumn afternoon, when Calvin was eight, his dad had suggested they go out and toss the old pigskin around. The first pass came zipping towards Calvin like a projectile missile. He briefly thought about diving to the ground, but instead opted to attempt the catch. The football stung his palms, and spun his hands and arms before bouncing off his chin and finally dropped, wobbling on the fallen leaves. "Jesus, Bud. You need a third arm or something."

Calvin knew that a prosthetic third arm would not ever satisfy. He needed the real thing. He needed flesh and bone. So he turned to the Internet. After reading about mutated amphibians in a pond near a nuclear silo, he stumbled upon a science article in which the author claimed he was close to discovering a way for war victims to regenerate lost limbs. The science was above Calvin's head. He recognized some of the words (enzymes, stem cell, RNA) but could not make sense of the rest. Calvin next searched the author's name; he clicked on the top link. It led him to a foreign webpage that sold pills and ointments for a variety of maladies. A tab titled, "Regrow any appendage," glowed fluorescent. The payment plan for the medication was five installments of one hundred dollars, but offered a fifteen percent discount if the buyer paid upfront.

Calvin knew his father pretty well. He knew when Dad sat quietly eating his supper with a furrowed look, that he had had a tough day at work. He knew that his father missed his mother. He also knew that his father used one password (his alma mater) for all fits. This included his email, the cable channel that showed naked women, and yes, his online banking. Calvin ordered the pills and ointments advertised and paid to have the package overnighted from the company's New Jersey warehouse.

The next day Calvin's dad handed him the package. "Here you go Bud. Hey, you better not have used my credit card to order more CDs." In his room, Calvin swallowed the pills and rubbed the ointment under his right arm then waited. He waited patiently all day, hardly moving from the chair below his light. That night, as the dust and sweat and grease settled into the pores of his nose, as Calvin lay in his bed, he thought that he felt a budding, a bruise below his armpit. And so he fell asleep, the happiest guy on his block.

Treasure

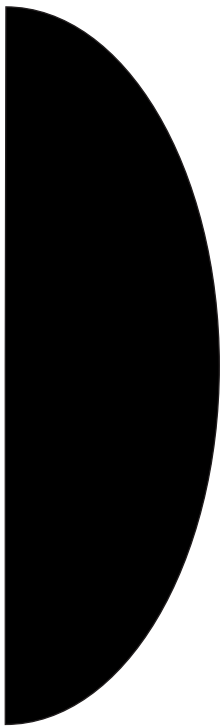
TREASURE
OF FALL

Ashley Nelson

MOVING
FORWARD

Kristie Lostra

Leaves glitter yellow and orange like delicate gems
Upon sturdy marble-white branches.
The Sun sends its loving warmth to the ground.
It's quiet. It's peaceful.
The Wind sighs in contentment and ease.
There is no other living soul to be heard
In this ever-changing grove of secluded forest.
This place is a different world, untainted by anger.
For a fleeting moment, Fall has become a treasure.



SLIP ME SOME SKIN

Lynne Owens

BERLIN (AP)—U.S. officials disclosed that international forces in Dresden, Germany, have discovered a storage unit containing volumes of Nazi research documents. At a press conference early this morning, President Truman confirmed the importance of the find. “This is the largest cache of research that we have found since we began our clean-up operations several months ago. Top scientists are reviewing the data, and they believe that the files contain some very promising research that will be of enormous benefit to mankind.”

Some in the scientific community are concerned. Dr. Jeffrey Combs, head of the biology department at the University of Chicago, urged caution. “Yes, there are some discoveries that will ease the suffering of mankind, but some of their results could threaten the very moral fabric of our society.” While Dr. Combs refused to give specifics, the *New York Times* has learned that included among the Nazi documents is a detailed method for the transmutation of Negro skin that will make it impossible to distinguish Negroes from Caucasians.

South Carolina politician Strom Thurmond reacted vehemently to the news. “We cannot allow such information to fall into the hands of the Negroes. Imagine the miscegenation and the resulting mongoloid children. The white race will become polluted and weak. I pray that President Truman will destroy all of those evil Nazi documents. The risk is too great.”

George Myers folded the newspaper in disgust. “Who do these white folks think they are anyway?” George grumbled. “Polluted race—ha. Hadn’t they already caused more pain and suffering in the world than any other races of man combined?”

George looked at his watch and headed for the mess hall. It was time for KP duty. After the years spent fighting in France, it felt good to be back on American soil, even if it meant working in yet another kitchen in the Deep South.

“Keep me warm and dry and I’ll conform to whatever racial stereotype the Army likes,” laughed George to himself. Suddenly a loud voice cut through the silence of the dining hall, startling George out of his revelry.

“Hey, boy. I said boy, come take my plate away and clean up this mess,” said Colonel McGee. George cringed. He was at least a decade older than the white colonel, and he would bet a month’s pay that the jerk hadn’t even seen any action during the war. Besides, the man’s face resembled the back end of an elephant.

“Yes sir,” said George, silently wishing that he had spit in the colonel’s coffee when he’d had the chance. Some days the humiliation was harder to take than others.

After work, George met his best friend Malcolm at the local colored-only tavern.

“Did you see that article in this morning’s paper about the Nazis turning black folk white?” George asked.

“Yeah. Who would want to do a fool thing like that?” responded Malcolm.

“C’mon man. Don’t you ever wonder what it would be like to be white? Think of all of the stereotypes we could indulge in without anyone being the wiser,” said George. “Why we could be lazy and drink to excess. We could be dumb as a doornail and still rise to the top of any pay scale at any job. And most importantly Malcolm, we could live the black man’s American Dream, fornicating with that model of pulchritude, the White Woman.”

“Negro, are you out of your mind? Just the existence of those stupid experiments is demeaning, as if being white is the end game for all dark-skinned people. Besides, I have known you most of your life. You’ve never wanted to engage in any of those activities. And you’re certainly not ‘dumb as a doornail,’ though I am beginning to question your sanity. So, what—you become white and suddenly you want to guzzle beer all day and lust after white women?” said Malcolm.

“No, you’re missing the point. It’s not that I would do all of those things. It’s that I would have the freedom to do all of those things,” said George.

“Look man, I think your mama must have dropped you on your head when you were born,” said Malcolm.

“C’mon Mal. All I’m sayin’ is that a guy’s got to wonder, that’s all. A guy’s just got to wonder,” said George.

A few tables away, two men had been listening very closely to George’s conversation. They had, in fact, been studying George for a few months. One of them reached to the middle of the table and closed the thick file that they had on George. “It looks like we’ve found ourselves a subject,” said one of the men, smiling.

“Yes, Dr. Heinrich will be so pleased,” said his companion.

Later that night, as George was leaving the tavern, the two men were waiting. When George turned the corner, they hit him on the head and stuffed his limp body into the back seat of their car and then injected him with a sedative. They were taking no chances.

George awoke several hours later with a headache the size of Manhattan throbbing between his temples. The lights in the ceiling seemed too bright, and the room swayed alarmingly.

“Ahhh, Mr. Myers, you are awake,” said a voice with a strong German accent. “How do you feel?”

“Feel? Like the whole of the German Army just marched through my head. Who are you and where am I?” asked a groggy George.

“You may call me Dr. Heinrich, and you are a patient at the Aryan Institute for Better Living, where we have just made your dreams come true,” responded Dr. Heinrich.

“My dreams come true? What are you talking about?” demanded George.

“Look at your arm Mr. Myers.”

George stared down at his arm. His skin was white. Surely this was a dream brought on by too many scotches.

“You are not hallucinating Mr. Myers. My companions and I have successfully transmuted your skin. Welcome to the wonderful world of white,” said Dr. Heinrich as he held up a hand mirror to George’s face.

George looked in the mirror. He recognized his features but his skin was white and his once tightly curled hair was now limp and lank.

“What have you done?” screamed George.

“Really, Mr. Myers, don’t act so surprised,” Dr. Heinrich said mildly. “We have studied your file extensively. We know, Mr. Myers, that you have struggled incessantly with white authority. We also know that you have way above average intelligence. We have freed you from a life of second-class citizenship.”

“You had no right; this was not my dream. Talking about a thing and doing a thing are two different things. My friends and family will think I betrayed them,” said George.

“Really, Mr. Myers, is a little social discomfort such a large price to pay for a life of freedom? Besides, the process is irreversible. I’m afraid you’ll just have to reconcile yourself to a new life. You’d best get dressed now; we’re taking you home,” said the doctor as he walked out the door.

“Siegfried, Johann,” Dr. Heinrich called to his assistants. “Prepare the van and take Mr. Myers back to his apartment. Then leak the news to the FBI that a white Negro has escaped. Give them enough evidence to prove that our operation was a success, but do not release Mr. Myers’ name or description. We do not want him found too easily. He’s only useful as long as he remains at large.”

George arrived at home tired and angry. “I’ve got to tell Malcolm, but he’ll be devastated. What about my mom and my sister? The military will kick me out. Where will I

work? I can't get a dishonorable discharge. I've worked so hard," said George. He could feel himself spiraling down into the unsettling realization that his life as he knew it was over. He wandered into the kitchen, turned on the radio, and poured himself a drink. "This just in," intoned the local radio announcer. "The FBI has just confirmed that Nazi scientists have been successful in transmuting Negro skin and that the subject of their experiment has escaped. He is believed to be in our area. Local police are urging women to stay indoors. Report any black behavior in white males to the police. Again, our lead story tonight, a white Negro has escaped..."

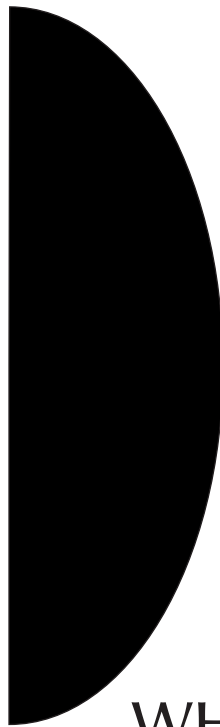
George's heart sank. He would be lynched if people found out that he was the white Negro. He had to go underground, and he dare not contact his family and friends. George packed some essentials and headed out the door. "So begins my new life," he thought to himself.

At the local police station, the desk sergeant was overwhelmed by calls about lazy and drunken white men who were thought to be the white Negro. All medical facilities were put on alert to report white males with larger than average penises. White women had to be accompanied by male relatives when in public and could stay out no later than 10 p.m.

"Dr. Heinrich, you have done very well," said Dr. Mengele, the head of the secret society of Nazi scientists. "Are you ready to begin stage two of Operation Jim Crow?"

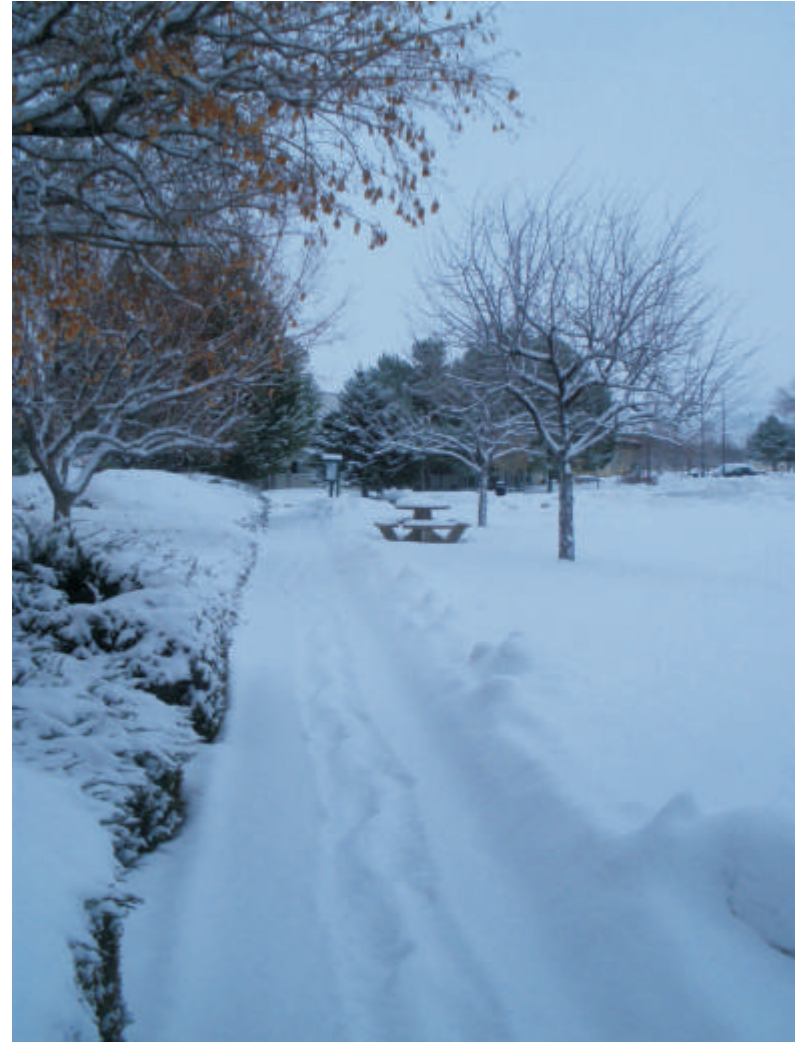
"Yes sir, we have set up secret transmutation centers throughout the south," responded Dr. Heinrich. "We are ready to plant white Negroes in every major city. Their very existence will ensure chaos and panic. The local governments will topple, and in a year, America will be ours."

Dr. Mengele smiled. He loved it when a plan came together.



WHITE ON THE SURFACE

Gim Briggs



standing

“OUT”
STANDING

Gim Briggs





Judgement

JUDGEMENT

F. V. Edwards

Strong or weak
and loud or meek,
all people feel and think.
They love and hate,
and sometimes stink,
while they're often late.

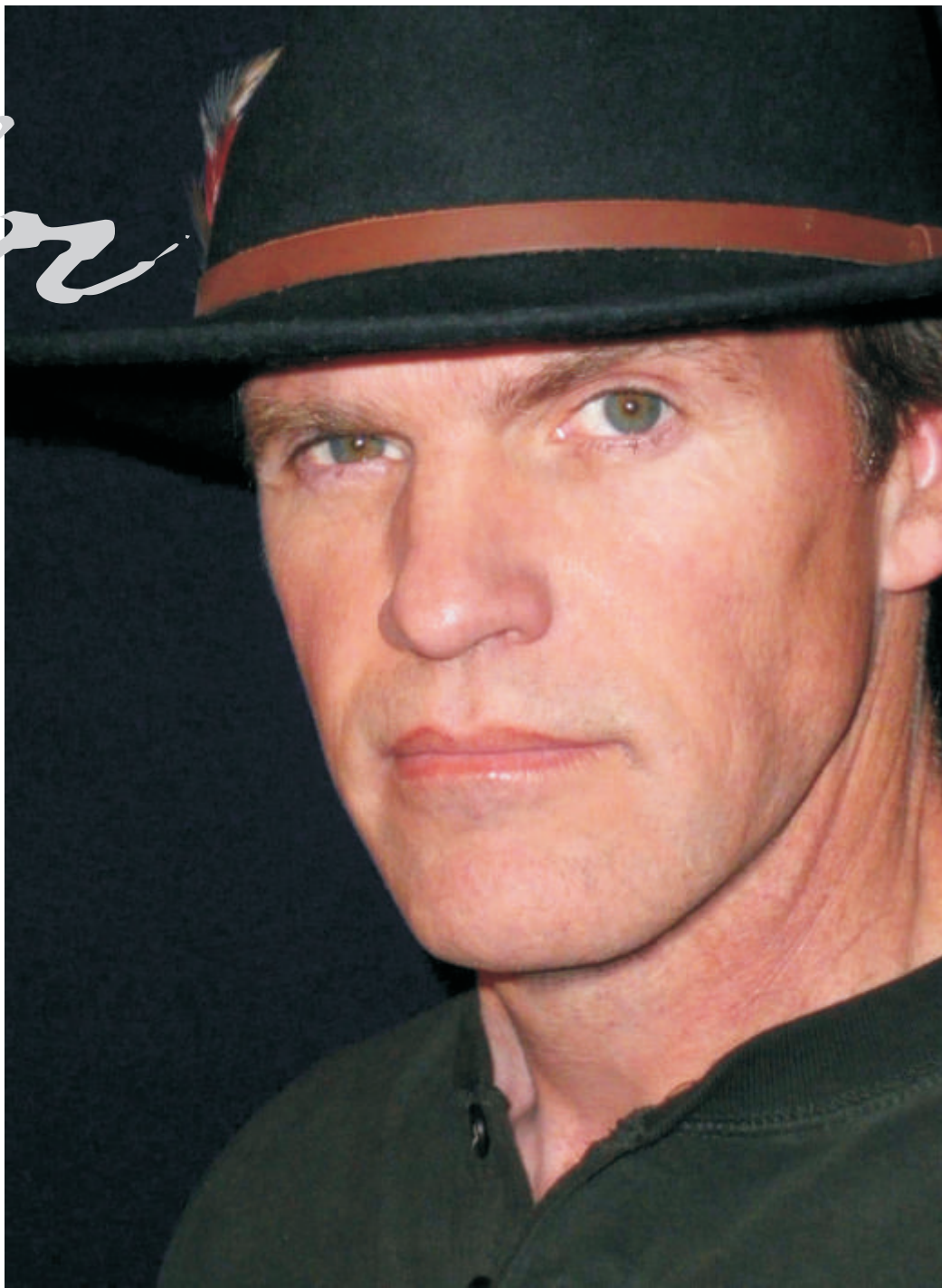
Sometimes I'm strong;
sometimes I'm weak
and I've been loud
as well as meek.
I've been known to stink
and sometimes been late.

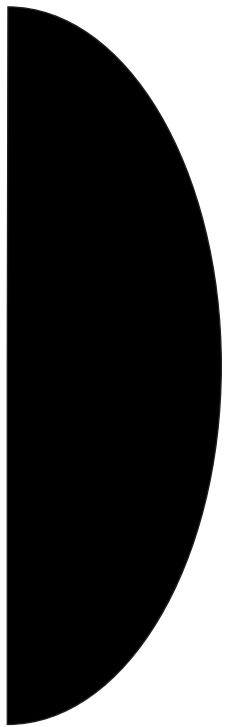
Can I truly judge another?
Can you?

John

MAN OF
MYSTERY

Jim Briggs





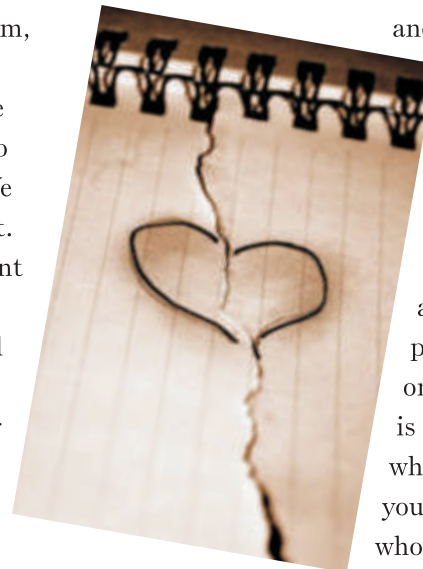
DANGERS OF A BROKEN HEART

José Torres

dangers of

A friend once told me, “You know what they say, it’s better to be the owner of a lonely heart, than the owner of a broken heart.” I’m starting to think he was right. Lonely hearts have hope, while broken hearts have scars. A broken heart is by far more dangerous, but not for the reasons you might think. It isn’t about the pain or the tears and anger. The danger of a broken heart is not loneliness or heartache. It is definitely not the quiet room, the empty passenger seat, or how the bed suddenly feels so much more spacious. The danger of a broken heart is what we have to repair it with. We are left with mistrust. We are left with hopelessness and false comfort. We suddenly have to learn to be independent once again. The danger is that we have to somehow put ourselves out there again and sometimes not make the brightest choices. The danger is being vulnerable and relying on oneself. The danger includes that over time, the wounds will still be there, maybe not as deep and not as fresh, but we are hoping that the stitches in our heart don’t fall out.

The hope is that they are there to stay because wounds like that must never be opened again. We run into the danger that a broken heart impairs our way of thinking. That what we know isn’t about love anymore and that it isn’t about how perfect we are in the world, that it suddenly becomes about how perfect we are in theirs. We become closed off from the world, and we are unable to open our hearts for another, passing up the opportunity to maybe be happy. A broken heart does this to us; it leaves us with fear. There is so much more to repair with a broken heart than with a lonely heart because broken hearts have a past. Broken hearts have memories, while lonely hearts only long to make memories. I ask myself sometimes, after so much time has passed, am I still the owner of a broken heart or have I become the owner of a lonely heart or is there such a thing as a lonely, broken heart where you long for someone new to come into your life but at the same time, you want the one who broke it in the first place to come back in... It’s really hard to tell.





coldness of

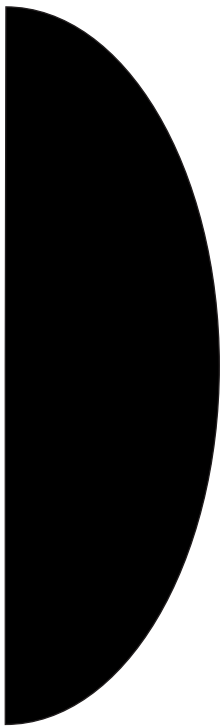
MY WEATHER

Ronni G. LeMarsa

WINTER DAZE

Michael Bail

Like the weather, I'm always changing.
Yet you're still there, through it all.
You collect the multitude of drops
When my rain begins to fall.
You gather all the rays
When my sun shines down.
You admire the beauty of the clouds
When they form my frown.
You warm the coldness of my snow
When it falls all winter long.
And when the wind sadly howls,
You listen to my song.
I've finally come to realize
Just how much it means to me
To know how tolerant of my weather
That you'll always be.



THE HALLWAY

Laurie D'Ghent

The hallway was dark and narrow, the ceiling high. Integrity could hear the steady beat growing louder as they walked down the corridor, an occasional musical note breaking through. The pace was frenetic, almost panicked. Evan moved forward steadily, though Integrity sensed he was uncomfortable.

Integrity began piecing together the tune. Surprisingly happy, it reminded her of a circus. She felt nervous. Why in the world was circus music playing in an abandoned warehouse in the middle of nowhere? A building filled with the undead? Are they all going to be wielding chainsaws when we turn the corner? she wondered, only half joking.

They drew beneath a light, dim even in its illumination, and Evan hesitated, looking left, then right. It was obvious the music was coming from the left, but he seemed to want to go right. Is he running from something or to something? Integrity thought, shrinking back into the hallway they had just traversed. He moved toward the music.

Down another long passage, the hallway angled to the right and left once more. Integrity sensed, more than heard, that a group of people was gathered just out of sight. Evan's steps slowed; he glanced at her, then pressed on once more, subtly shifting in front of her. At the junction, he stopped abruptly and Integrity almost bounced into him. He held his hand behind his back, palm out, as though telling her to wait. She had no qualms about remaining hidden and silent. She glanced nervously down the hallway from where they'd come, feeling eyes watching her.

Evan stiffened, and Integrity peered nervously around his shoulder. The king stood before them. Extending one arm to Integrity, he asked the girl, "Shall we?"

With a nervous glance at Evan, which was unreturned, Integrity snaked her hand through the monarch's elbow and allowed herself to be led away. She glanced back, hoping to see Evan following close behind, only to have her hopes dashed. An image of Evan smeared with blood flashed before her eyes, and Integrity turned her gaze forward.

"I'm afraid we were forced to start the party without you, my dear," the king said conversationally, patting Integrity's hand with his free one, his flesh uncommonly cool. Though he looked no older than Evan, he spoke with such quiet wisdom Integrity felt as though he could have been her grandfather. The king smiled at her reassuringly. "One can only expect to have the program go ahead without them if they are so drastically late," turning his attention to the crowd before him. Integrity glanced at them momentarily before returning her gaze to his face, not wanting to miss a word in the increasing cacophony. "You've missed three contestants already, but I'm sure you'll do fine anyway." Another condescending, though friendly, pat. Integrity shrank away, but the king seemed not to have noticed. Somehow, she didn't think she was fortunate enough for appearances to be reality. They never are here.

The king seemed to be done speaking, and they were drawing to a gradual stop as they neared the group of people hovering together in distracted conversation. They were all staring through a plate glass window into a room from which the music seemed to be emanating.

She could tell, instantly, that not all of the gathered spectators were vampires. Off to one side, in a dim corner, corralled by two men, stood three girls, who looked completely terrified. One stared forward mechanically, seemingly forced from reality by whatever horrors she had been exposed to. The other two were huddling on the

ground, near each other, but not touching. They did not seem to be aware of the other's presence, their world focused to the air immediately around them. One was rocking back and forth, the other visibly shaking.

Integrity was wondering if she would be shunted to the corner with the other mortals when a gasp, half despair, half pleasure, oozed from the watching group. The crowd had turned from the window, talking animatedly among themselves, laughing, grinning.

"She lasted longer than most," a woman at Integrity's left said, one of the few standing near the window. "Although, I'm not sure they'll ever pay attention to where they're stepping. I mean, really!" She shook her head in delighted amazement.

"Oh, we missed the last one," the king said, mild disappointment coloring his words a sickly puce. "Come." Setting his free hand lightly on top of hers once more, the cool temperature of his skin no longer noticeable above the numbness of her own, he led her forward a few paces. Integrity's presence became known with the slam of an unexpected wave.

The undead began to swarm around her and the monarch as one, chattering over the top of each other until they became unintelligible. Integrity felt like the neighborhood ice cream truck. My arm for 50 cents, legs for 75, she thought, macabre.

"Yes, yes, the guest of honor has arrived," the king laughed, seeming to enjoy the attention of those around him. "Evan brought her just in time."

"Oh, let her go next, please?" Another woman nudged nearer the king. Integrity almost expected her to start hopping up and down in anticipation. One of Integrity's hands snaked up, clasping onto the base of her neck.

Now, now," the king said, chiding over-excited children, "we ought to let at least one more of the other young ladies go. They have been waiting for so long." He turned his gaze to the guarded corner, and Integrity could see something bestial lurking in his pupils. She began to draw her hand from the crook of his arm, but he placed his other hand once more on hers, freezing her in place without exerting any pressure.

A few of the spectators grumbled good naturedly, but they drew back and resumed their places before the window, looking toward the corner rather than the void beyond. The girl who was staring blankly into space was propelled forward. She stumbled, still blocking her surroundings, then stopped. Several people in the crowd grumbled, one or two moved forward. Hand still laced through the king's arm, Integrity was taken aback to see Evan reach the girl first, grab her arm, and forcefully propel her through the waiting door. An elderly gentleman slammed the door home, slid a bolt into place, then hurried back to his spot near the window.

"May I?" Still focused on the doorway, and the human that she could still see standing near it, Integrity jumped when Evan spoke. He extended his arm to her in the exact manner the king had earlier. "Why don't you enjoy the show, your majesty?"

"I think I shall," the king said, releasing Integrity smoothly. She slid her opposite hand through Evan's arm, doing her best to not actually touch him. "Don't go too far, now," the king said, something in his voice making Integrity cringe. He glided away.

"Come on," Evan grunted, removing his arm so she was forced to drop her hand. He jerked his head toward the wall at the back of the crowd, a short distance from the guards and remaining performers. The music was really

beginning to irritate Integrity.

“Okay, listen up,” Evan said, stepping closer and lowering his voice. He looked over her head, then to either side. Once he was sure they were not being monitored, he rushed forward. “I’m going to create a distraction. When I do, you bolt for the hallway, get outside, and take the car.” He thrust a set of keys at her, and she took them mechanically. “Drive, fast, and don’t stop for any reason. You stop, you die.” He glanced around once more.

“What?” Integrity asked, flummoxed. “What are you going to do? Where am I supposed to go?”

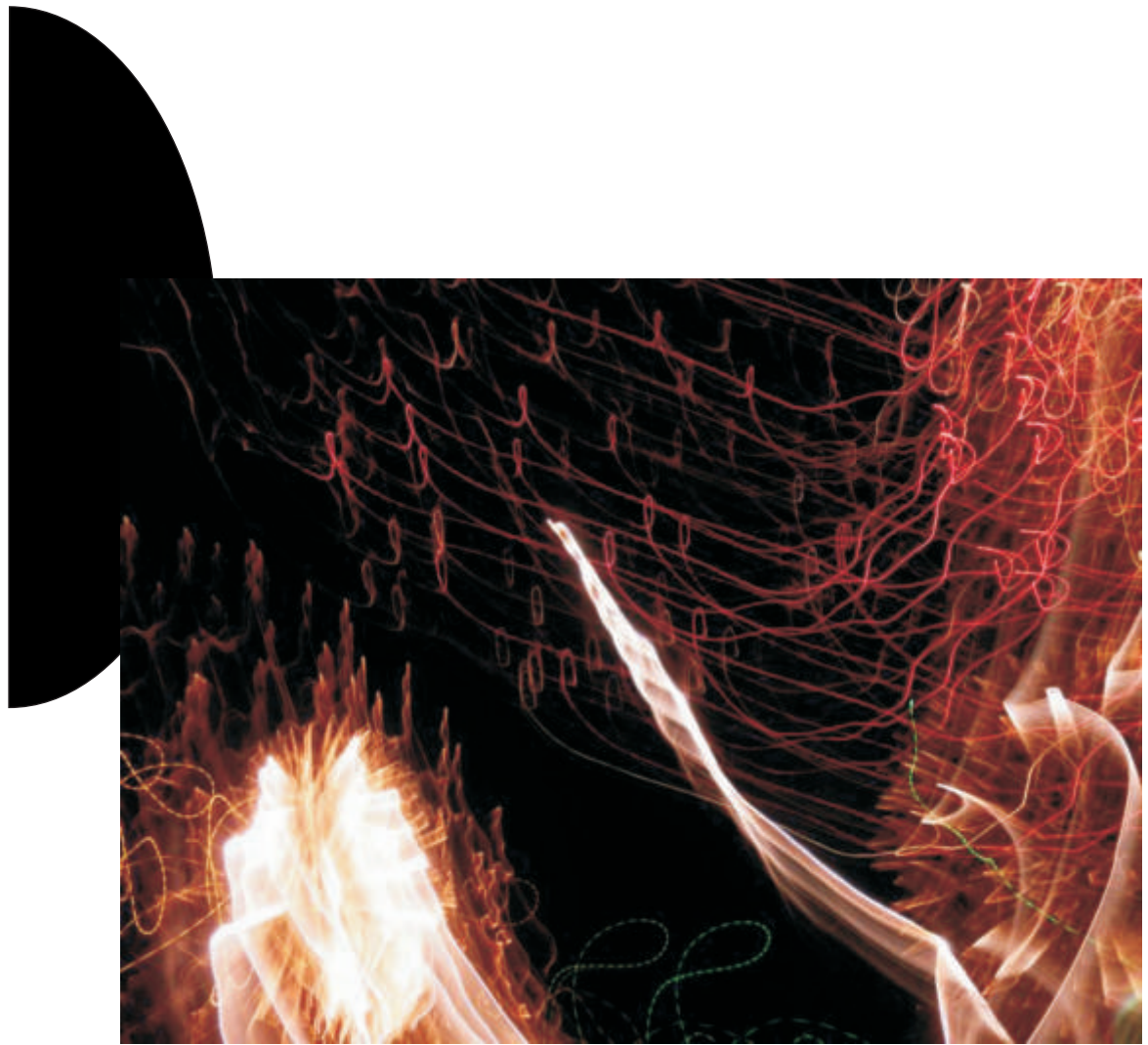
He whipped back to her, hissed, “I don’t know what I’m going to do, and I don’t know where you’re supposed to go. Just drive until you run out of gas, then run.

Integrity looked at the keys in her hand. “This isn’t a good plan,” she said. “It’s not even a decent idea. How is my running going to help anything? And what in the heck is going on, anyway?” She clamped one hand over an ear, trying to block out the music.

Evan blew air out of his lips in frustration, pointedly ignoring the keys she extended to him. He shook his head, redirecting the conversation. “They set up an...obstacle course,” he waved behind him, “to prove that you can’t do any better than any other untrained teenage girl.”

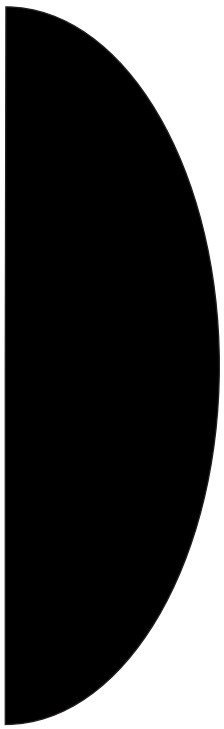
“Okay,” Integrity said, trying to stay calm, “so why don’t I just go run the stupid course, fail, and we can move on with life?”

“Because if you fail, you die.”



FIRESKY

Amanda Forry



long endure

THE HOUSE IN TOWN

Richard Hooton

It was late one cold November
And the frost was on the ground
When Katie Pilgrim came in her pickup truck
For one last look around

From the ranch near Tuscarora
She drove the fifty miles to town
Stopped by the old family house in Elko
And found it shuttered and run down

She sat and stared into the past,
Her gaze fixed far away
To a time when young Hank Pilgrim
Came to court one summer's day

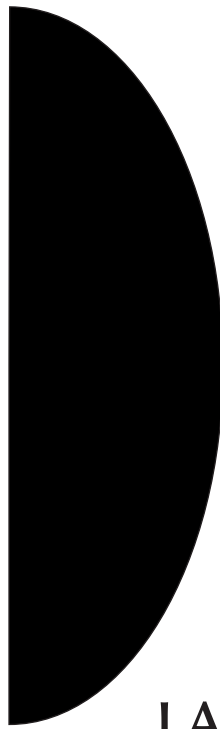
She remembered how her folks looked on
From the porch swing where they sat
As the freckle-faced young rancher's boy
Climbed the steps and tipped his hat

Her mom thought he was so polite,
But her dad, he wasn't sure
Still, he saw that something special,
Meant to last, might long endure

Kate spent her summers at the Pilgrim Ranch
And her weekends now and then
Helping Hank's mom in the kitchen
Then driving hay truck for the men

The days flew by for Hank and Kate
She lost track of the years
First wedding bells, then children came
Shared joy and toil and tears

Their daughter wed and moved back east
And Hank Jr. went away
To join the Army and see the world
Where he'd gone, Kate couldn't say



LASSO

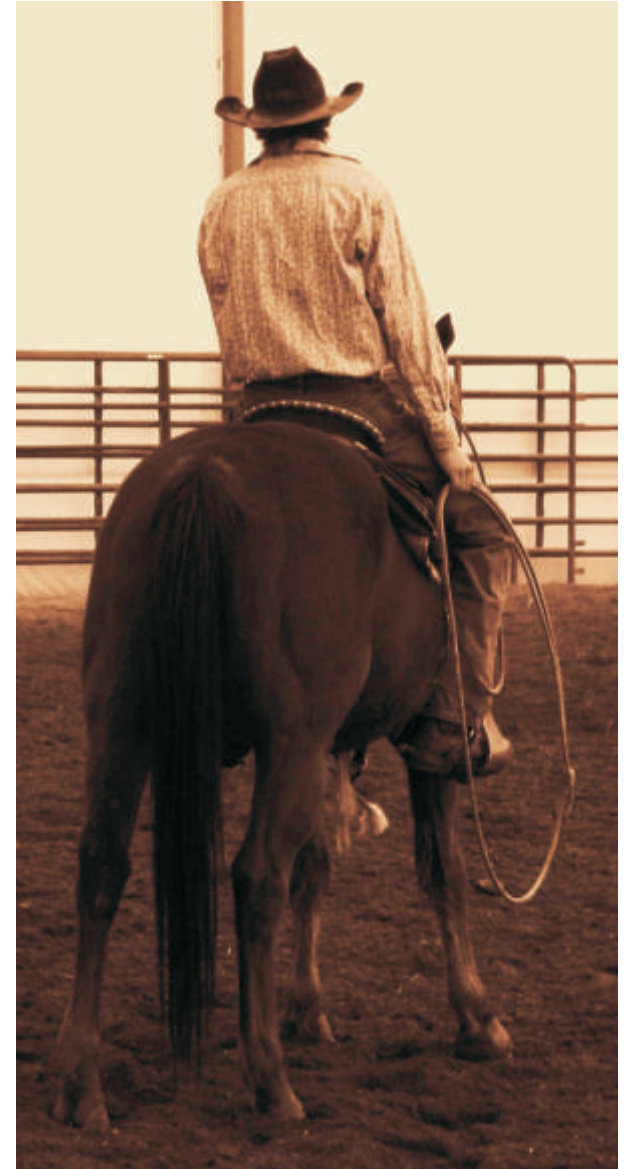
Emily Negus

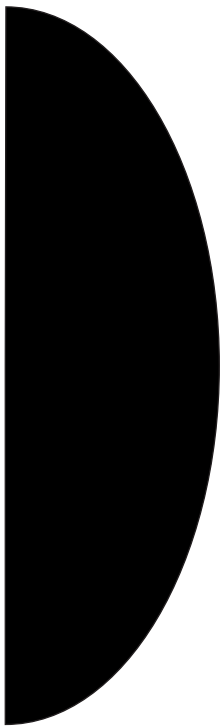
“No, I think I’ll go back to the ranch
Where the memories are all good
It’s time to sell the house in town,
You can help me if you would.”

“I’ll go back to Tuscarora and bide my time
Till I go up on the hill
Hank is there beneath the apple tree
And he’s waiting for me still.”

“With his two old scruffy cattle dogs
And a calico cat named Sam
And Hank’s folks are there with our teenage boy,
Back home from Vietnam.”

“It’s mostly been a good life,
To expect more would be wrong
So I’ll say goodbye to the house in town
And go back where I belong.”





DARING TRUTH

Gail Rappa

if only

It was getting worse every day and he knew it. He had functioned before, not great, but he had managed. Now he could not even close his mouth completely and wasn't even aware of the drooling until he saw the stains on his lapels. Well Damesh, old man, you never could keep your mouth shut, that was your problem, he thought wiping absently at his chin with a large white handkerchief. If only he had continued using lab rats and white mice for the truth trials, he might have avoided the damage. Well, if he had a nickel for every "if only" he could buy his sanity back ten times over. If wishes were fishes we'd all get wet; no that wasn't how it went, well close enough, he didn't have time to obsess on it now, he'd think about tonight; buried treasure I shall seek, while the hours slowly creep, as I dig through my head, while reclining in bed, on the endless Isle of Insomnia.

"Can I interest you in some of our tasty Jell-O today Professor Partain?" the short Persian nurse in his doorway interrupted his random musings. Could you still say Persian? He couldn't remember. He vaguely recalled

being reprimanded by one of the nurses for referring to a patient as Oriental; apparently the term was Asian; he couldn't keep up. Nevertheless he liked this one, whatever her title; her voice had a soothing lilt and she was one of the few around here who still called him professor. Plus she always squatted in front of his wheel chair when she spoke, not making him strain his neck to look up like the other looming white clad amazons.

Starlight, star bright, you twist and shout with all your might," he hadn't meant to speak, but she just smiled indulgently and he winked. He still got away with much in the name of flirting.

"I am going to take that as a yes," she placed two plastic cups in front of him, one filled with a glob of red the other green, "I'll stop back around later when you get a break from your visitors, OK?" she smiled and patted his good hand and stood up. She's got the cart with the wonky wheel again, he thought annoyed; why doesn't someone fix that, just take it off and reverse it, it's clearly backwards. Wibbily wobbily, walk along hobbily, Jell-o's a giggling with

your wheels a-wiggling he muttered to himself. Yet another example of how people just got used to things being broken, that was this place's problem in a nutshell. He laughed at his unintended pun.

Well he had better eat up, old Mrs. Woe-Is-Me would arrive at ten o'clock on the dot, he could set his watch by her if he could only remember where it was. Hickory dickery dock, the old lady will soon knock, and so I'll sit with my brows knit, while her mouth runs non stop. Damesh licked the last of the sheer green coating from the plastic spoon, wiped his chin and looked at the handkerchief, nothing but a smear of red Jell-O across the stitching of his initials, the morning medication must have slowed down the drooling.

Thirty minutes into her visit and he was sure Mrs. Ogilvy had not stopped once for breath. He wondered if somewhere along the way she had mastered circular breathing and thought what a waste she had not channeled it towards something useful; with such skill she would excel at Tuvan throat singing, he thought absently. You'd be improvin if you'd get groovin with a Tuvan.

"I'm sorry I missed that?" Mrs. Ogilvy's high pitched voice broke into his wanderings. Dingy dandelion fluff, had he said that out loud? Crushed crocodile crucifix he had! He could tell by the expression on her face; okay Damesh, don't panic, simply smile and do the rolling thing with your hand to indicate she should go on. She paused for a split second and inhaled for another round. His own breathe escaped in a long sigh, and he swiped at his chin with his handkerchief; Careful Damish, you don't want to end up with the smack talking Touree's in "B" ward. Yeah, he thought wryly, and end up dodging soggy tea bags from old lady Hesterbalm; and Hesterbalm was one of the tame ones, only prone to outbursts if you didn't let her win at Scrabble with her nonsense words. At least with her you

could usually see it coming, a certain glint in her milky eyes right before she'd reach down into her diaper, pluck out a tea bag and hurl it at you. Old Lady Hesterbalm was a great believer in the medicinal benefits of black tea for shrinking hemorrhoids. He had never been Tetleyed himself, and he would like to keep it that way. See, Damesh, old man, it could always be worse, he thought, hiding a smile behind his handkerchief. As much as he knew he shouldn't, he couldn't help but imagine Old Tetley Hesterman sitting across from Woe-is-Me lopping tea bags into her perpetually open mouth like the bean bag toss at the state fair.

Damesh couldn't see the clock but he could tell by the small pyramid of shredded tissue that Mrs. Ogilvy was winding down. He sighed heavily and conjured up his warmest smile, tilting his head to one side to simulate compassion. He reached for his pad, scribbled a line, tore it from the stack and pushed it across the desk to her.

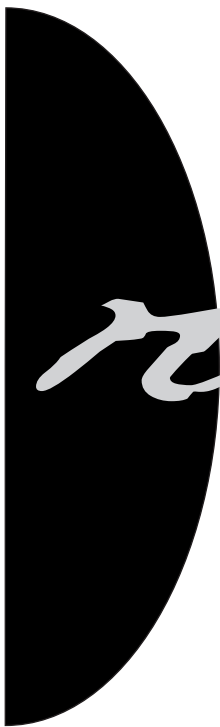
"Oh, Dr. Partain, you know how hard it is for me to rely on this medication, it makes me feel so weak, so flawed, as if there is something inherently wrong with me."

If the shoe fits, take it off and use it to hit the nail on the head, he thought, but clamped his jaw shut with the extreme force to keep from saying so. "But I never feel judged by you," she dabbed the crumpled tissue to her eyes, "You don't think I am weak, do you Doctor?"

Damesh's heart sank; almost got through the whole session without a direct question. He didn't think he could get away with a simple head shake with this one. You can do this Man; Hocus-pocus you've got to focus. Damesh looked up at the pale pudgy egg-shaped woman and opened his mouth, "Even all the kings horses and all the kings men couldn't put Humpty back together again." She looked at him with something like awe in her eyes, "Well if that isn't the God's honest truth," she said her eyes

tearing up again, "None of us can do it all on our own can we? Such simple wisdom and so easy to forget. You are so wise Doctor, so very wise."

Damesh exhaled as he rolled towards the door escorting her out; 10:50, ten minutes till Mr. Mamma-Done-Me-Wrong, maybe if he hurried he could track down the nice Persian gal with the Jell-O.



no explosions

THE SAME

Laurie D'Ghent

You've been home for years, now.
Others didn't return, but I don't think of that.
It shrinks my airway
Until I can no longer breathe,
Hurting me.

It could have been me,
Trying to put my life
Back together
Like a hundred piece puzzle
That's missing the center,
The purpose.

I listen to you breathe.
I've awoken more times than you know,
In the compacting darkness,
And reached for you,
Spasmodically,
Afraid you never came home,
That I only dreamed it.

Do you still reach for your weapon,
The one that rested on your chest as you slept
There,
When you wake in the same darkness?

I'll never know what you saw.
Even if you told me,
Which you won't,
I've never had mortars drop on me every night
For fifteen months.
You couldn't sleep when you came home
Because there were no explosions
Or gunfire.

It was too quiet.

I don't know what it's like
To watch
As insurgents shove their own children
Into the roadway

or gunfire

To stop your convoy

And kill all of you.

I don't know what it's like

To know

That you have to

Keep driving,

Even when one

Is under your tires.

You'll never know what it's like

To stay "safe" in America,

While everyone around you

Slams the war,

Saying it's all about

Oil.

Did the little girl,

Who scooped up a dollar store doll,

That you threw from the window

of your Humvee,

And ran

As though she had found the Bread of Life

Care about oil?

Did someone take the doll

Because it had been touched by an infidel?

You're not the same.

You never will be.

I screen every movie we watch

Knowing

That explosions will collapse you,

All 6 feet 2 inches of you,

Into a shell of your former self

That shakes until I fear you will come apart

At the seams.

This happens,

Even in front of my parents.

I can't fix it.

I'm glad you went.

I'm glad that they have a chance at security

Now.

But I hope you never go back

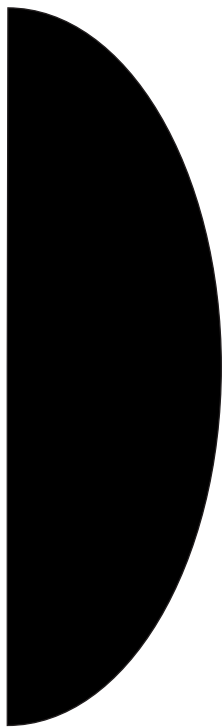
Because I'm not cut out

For War.

GO FOR
IT

Jeri Tout





THE CONVENTION

R. E. Burnham

Karen and George, her steady beau of about ten months, were almost late for the convention. She had asked him to escort her only a few days earlier, and he had forgotten to enter the time in his day planner, which was not uncommon, which led him to forget the special event, until she called to inquire about his tardiness at her front door.

As they entered the convention center, George noticed a huge banner over the door that read “Welcome COPS members.” As they sat down, Karen said, “Uh-Oh Lady Cathcart is here; she’s the society’s number one financial contributor, but she can be so ... difficult.” A moment later, Karen tapped George on the shoulder and said, “Look, there’s the famous statesman, Lord Finkley, sitting at the end of our row.” Just then, the master of ceremonies, Herman Shplinks, stepped to the podium and said, “Welcome friends, to the 18th Annual Convention of the Communicatively Disadvantaged Philosophers Society.” George whispered, “You’re not Communicatively Disadvantaged... are you?” Karen gave him a long icy look before replying, “I used to stutter George.”

Mr. Shplinks continued, “Reverend Schleisterbroad will now deliver the invocation.” The good reverend who was severely dyslexic, whispered to himself, “Blessed be, Blessed be, Blessed be.” He had memorized his prayer, hoping to avoid reading it. Then he saw Lady Cathcart in the third row, and panicking looked down at his notes. “Desselb be the mane of Dog” he stammered, completely destroying the first line of the prayer.

Lady Cathcart an attractive, silver-haired woman of about 60 years, sprang from her seat and screamed. “What horse’s arse assigned him the prayer?!”

Mr. Quigley, her escort, pulled on her sleeve and implored, “Please Evelyn, sit down, your behavior is scambulous.” “Quite so,” agreed Mrs. Petropholis, “I’m

completely flaberbusted.” Lady Cathcart sat back down, muttering. “I can’t believe I keep paying for this crap.”

Reverend Schleisterbroad, now trembling, pulled another piece of paper from his pocket and proceeded with his backup plan to recite an old classic; certainly the audience could appreciate that. He struggled mightily, but finally finished the invocation. As the Reverend concluded, George remarked softly, “Interesting, who knew that the Lord’s Prayer could contain so much profanity?” Karen said nothing, but elbowed him sharply in the ribs.

Mr. Shplinks then introduced the first speaker, Professor Sylvia Gnu. “What’s her problem?” George asked. “She’s metaphorically challenged,” Karen replied. Professor Gnu began her presentation saying, “Ladies and Gentlemen, I am delighted to be here this evening, but I must admit, I’m as edgy as a cat on a hot fudge sundae.” Everyone in the room glanced nervously at Lady Cathcart, who somehow managed to remain calm. The rest of Professor Gnu’s extensive speech actually went quite well. George easily grasped the intent of having one’s “ducks in a square,” or letting the “fox guard the cow farm,” however, he was unsure of just what it meant to “kick the apple far from the tree.”

The next speaker was Mr. Sven Hashimoto. “Tell me about him,” George said. “Well,” Karen responded, “He inherited Bilateral Progressive Syntactic Sclerosis, which has been renamed for a recently retired politician.” “You don’t mean” George started to inquire. “Yes I do.” Karen interrupted, “Bush’s syndrome.” “Wow,” George said, “I didn’t know it was genetic, but why don’t either of his parents have it?” Karen answered knowingly, “It’s a recessive gene. I’m just glad it’s not contagious.”

Mr. Hashimoto, who was the keynote speaker, launched into a lengthy dissertation on his philosophical views regarding energy policy. He quickly came to the

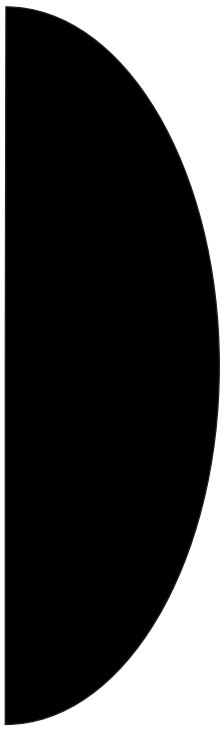
subject of nuclear energy and remarked, “While I agree with Mr. Obama’s support of nuclear energy, his opposition to Yucca Mountain is inconsistent with that view.” George winced. He knew exactly what was coming, having heard it before, but never when stated inadvertently. Mr. Hashimoto then declared loudly, “Barrack Osama should support the nuclear waste suppository!” Lady Cathcart sprang from her chair once more and howled in righteous indignation, “Sven, you moron, we need to bury the waste, not shove it up our ... ! Lord Finkly cut her off with a roar, “Cathcart, you old bat, why don’t you just go to the Turret’s Anonymous meetings where you belong!!” Lady Cathcart looked stricken, but Lord Finkly continued. “That’s right, go hang out with your own people!” Evelyn Cathcart’s face was pale, her lips quivering, as tears began to flow down her still beautiful cheeks. “I tried Rodger” she moaned, “I really did, but those people are just so, rude.” Lord Finkly was instantly mollified. He strode to her and embraced the lady warmly.

Reverend Schleisterbroad was deeply moved, and said loudly, “In this present mood of camaraderie,” I believe we should give the dyslexic’s cheer by chanting that grand and glorious name. Those who knew the name, accompanied him in yelling, “Bob, Bob, Bob, Bob.” The Reverend spoke once more, exultantly, “Do it again, louder, and backwards!”

The entire assembly screamed, “boB, boB, boB, boB.!!” Mrs. Petropholis remarked to the lady next to her. “I wish there was a name like that for girls.”

Lady Cathcart walked slowly to the podium, and in a voice filled with emotion, said, “My friends, I can’t remember when I’ve had a better time, thank you so much; I just love all you rubberbutts.” The applause that followed was nearly deafening.

As they were leaving, George put his arm around Karen and said, “You know dear, I can’t believe you come to this every year; it’s actually quite stressful. Karen pushed him away, annoyed, before responding, “Don’t be obtuse George, this was probably the best meeting we’ve ever had.”



DAYDREAM

Hailey Forry

Free me

The clock Ticks...
The clock Tocks...

and still the teacher talks...
and talks...
and talks...

My eyes stray towards the floor...
Then the door
But still I sit for...
The lesson is not done...

But all I want to do is run
And reach towards the sun

Oh no!

Don't fall asleep
I'll simply take a peek
Into my own world

SLAM!

The force of reality
The return of normalcy
Could bring me to my knees

Oh please!

Release me from these chains
Free me from this rain
That pours and pours

But no one Hears for no one is Here

Well into my own world I fall
Goodbye to all

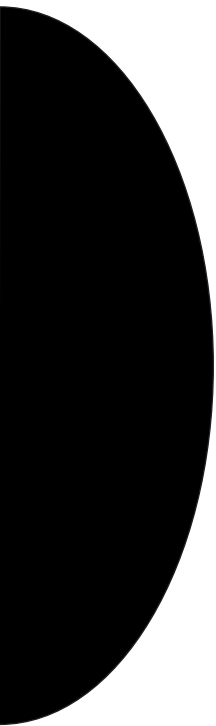


Truly

LOOK
TO THE
LIGHT

Tanya Leader





His name was Earnest, just Earnest. His first name was Earnest, his last name was Earnest, and he was, for the most part, a very earnest individual. He came from a long line of Earnests, from his great ancestor Nicen Earnest, to his late grandfather Hardly Earnest. Earnest however, did not exhibit his family's infamous characteristics. His demeanor was jaded; his clothes were faded, and his most prized possession was the fine felt fedora he wore atop his plum shaped head. Most importantly, the young boy never, ever smiled. He was quite unhappy.

Earnest's mother Bluntly Earnest was a round, apple-cheeked woman who adored floral patterns and possessed a fine set of straight white teeth that glimmered in the sun when she flashed her million-dollar smile. His father, oil tycoon Frankly Earnest, was a tall man with broad shoulders, a handlebar mustache, and a hearty grin that was as thick as the crude he pumped from the earth. Earnest the Younger was different. His face never wavered from the melancholy stare he wore in every picture, every birthday, every year.

This did not mean that the young boy did not know what happiness was; indeed, he had heard rumors of this emotion that turned sour prune faces into caverns of laughter and elation. But the boy named Earnest had never felt such a thing for himself. Where was his happiness? Other children laughed, played, and enjoyed their jovial fancies, while Earnest scowled and drew pie charts in the dirt with a stick. Where did happiness come from? The young boy wondered but never received an answer, and every time he asked, people would look at him with a funny face.

Finally, on a warm summer day while he walked to school with cheery faced Truly Devine, who loved to show

off her gapped teeth when she smiled, he learned the answer.

"Well that's a stupid question." Truly giggled. "Happiness comes from the place where all emotions live."

"Where is that Truly? Some magical dimension of grey bearded men with clipboards and abacuses?"

Truly licked her lime green lollipop and grinned. "No you grubby faced boy! From The Gilded Countenance; it's that small little shop near the billiard hall across from Munchen's Merchandise."

Earnest scoffed at such a clearly ridiculous idea. This was obviously some ploy for Truly to make a fool of him. "Why should I believe this farce? Truly, you won't be making a fool of me today!" Truly frowned and stuck out her now green tongue.

"Fine, don't believe me! Go soak your head for all I care! Just trying to help." The girl stormed off leaving Earnest scratching his head like a primate.

The following Saturday, Earnest made his way across town via the trolley to the street where the billiard hall and Munchen's Merchandise made a muddled marriage. There, just as Truly had described it, was the small shop dubbed "The Gilded Countenance."

The outside of the shop had been nothing special, and the inside failed to impress as well. Stacks of books and charts were piled up in eclectic towers; papers were strewn across the floor and walls, and a thin layer of dust covered everything like cinnamon atop a rancid pastry. A bony man with mounds of red curly hair and a horrid overbite lay in blissful sleep hunched across the Venetian style wooden desk. A slightly perturbed Earnest smashed his hand against the poor oaf's thick skull.

The man's hair cushioned the blow enough to prevent any real damage, but the force roused him like a

FIND A "HAPPY" PLACE

Micah Trainor

bucket of ice water.

“Can I help you?” The oaf had a voice like a mule sucking on a shoe.

“I don’t know if this is real or a steaming bowl of bull urine!” Earnest shouted. “So if it is real I’ve only one thing to say. Where...is...my happiness you blasted lazybones!”

The man pointed to the open door at the back, yawned, and resumed his slumber.

Hurriedly, Earnest pushed past the stale parcels and dusty tomes to the back. Once inside, the small shop seemed to grow roomier. The hallway opened into a large room stacked with every manner of oddity he could imagine. There was a large glass jar filled with lemons in a bath of vinegar, a live puppy running inside a large hamster wheel, and a vial of solution made from hot peppers.

Earnest then noticed the old man hovering over a glass beaker. His face was a wrinkled peach, his hair was bushy and uneven, and he wore a pair of black rimmed spectacles attached to a dainty chain. Lifting his eyes from his work, he eyed Earnest with curiosity.

“Well, I don’t get many visitors. Good afternoon little man.”

“Talk sense you old goat!” Earnest spat. “Do you have my happiness or not?”

The man frowned and removed his spectacles. “My, it seems someone has been drinking my lemon tonic. You certainly have quite a sour attitude. Give me a minute to search through my files.” The ancient scientist muttered something inaudible as he shuffled over to a large file cabinet and rifled through various files. “Name.”

“Earnest,” the boy replied.

“Last name.”

“Earnest.”

The man shook his head and continued his search. Finally, he produced a pale orange file with auburn trim and quickly read its contents. “Oh my,” the old man murmured. “It seems that when you were born we gave you all your necessary emotions, except for happiness. My guess is that one of my interns accidentally lost the formula.” Formula?” Earnest wrinkled his brow. “For what?”

“Why your happy pills young man.” The scientist replied. “All emotions come in the forms of medications. Some can be a pill, while others are easier to digest. We have quite a variety indeed: pills, salves, ointments, vapors, tonics, potions, lotions, lozenges, chewable, shots, aromas, enemas, suppositories...”

“Wait!” Earnest interrupted. “You mean one of your idiot interns lost my formula!”

“Yes, that seems to be the case. So sorry.”

“You’re sorry!” Earnest yelled. “I’m completely miserable! I’ve lived my whole life without so much as a happy thought, and you’re sorry!”

“Quite right.” The old man coughed. “It doesn’t mean you can’t have your happiness; it just means I cannot fabricate it for you. As with many individuals who choose to do so, I would suggest you try to make your own.” The old man pointed towards the various ingredients. “We have everything you might need: puppy sweat, lemon extract, essence of unicorn dandruff, and I even found a rare case of youthful optimism. You are welcome to all of it.”

Earnest tried to protest, but the man vanished into the warrens of the shop front. Aggravated, yet unimpeded, young Earnest began to mix together ingredients to produce his happiness. He tried puppy sweat and felt queasy. He drank a lemon and pepper tonic and ended up dazed and confused. The youthful optimism was pleasant, yet left him in a state of needless contemplation. Finally,

after several hours of mixing potion after potion, Earnest found one that worked.

“What is it?” The old man had returned and was now looking intently at the bundle of papers in the boy’s hands.

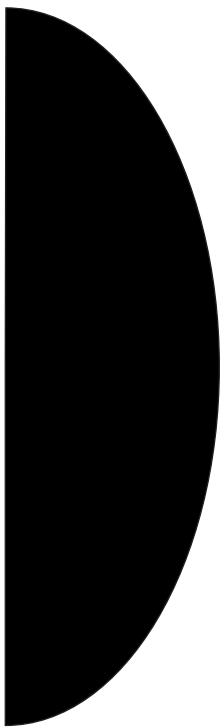
“This, my good man,” the boy said with a wonderfully toothy grin, “is a stock portfolio.”

“It is quite odd,” the old man replied.

“It is, but it makes me happy.”

With that, Earnest left the mysterious little shop clutching his happiness in both hands.

He went on to become an accountant in his later years. When he was a success, he asked Truly Devine to become Mrs. Truly Earnest. She graciously accepted and the two married and had a daughter whom they named Surely Earnest. And the young boy, now a young father and husband, could now smile.



improverise

MAN-GLI-FI-CAT -ING WORDS

Timothy R. Burns

It's easy to manglificate words. All you have to do is add a few unnecesary extra syllabables here and there, and prestatato! You've screw-upitized a word! But alternatively, manglification can also improverise expressification of thoughts and feelings.

For example, have you ever heard music that was so quiet and calm, so peaceful and serene that it made you want to fall asleep? Well, how do you describe such music? You could use a lot of words and poetical language, true, but it's much faster to just say that the music is sleepatizing. Gets it across, doesn't it? Think of the time you'll save!

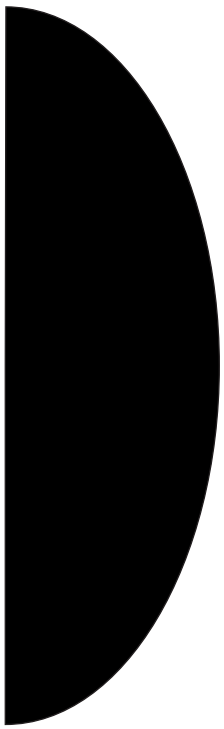
The manipufalation of the English language is easier than ever! It was barely comprehensible to begin with, but now we can really start complexerating things! You thought English was bad before? Now we have a way to make it even worse!

This is the 21st century! Who cares about stuffy old rules like "grammar" and "proper speech?" We're Americans! If we want to make up words, we're darn well going to make up words, and you'd better learn 'em fast or get left behind! Speechification is essential to communicarizing with our fellow man!

We're the young generation! It's our sworn duty to make ourselves incompramaehensibile to anyone more than ten years older than we are!

Confoundicate your English teacher! Mystiferize your parents! Perplexify your relatives! Come on, people! Let's make ourselves heard but not understood!

Manglificators unify!



THE HERO AND THE DRAGON

Ronni G. LeMarsa

his prey

Quietly trodding through the wood,
Hand on the hilt of his sword,
He came upon the fearsome beast
And planned to reap his reward.

Carefully each stalked the other
Considering him his prey.
They glared into one another's eyes
For the rest of the dying day

And into the night, they stood in the wood.
And finally the beast poised to fight.
So then the man went charging in
Waving his sword with all his might.

Eyes flashing, nostrils flaring.
Flame singed here, hide wounded there.
Sword slashing, teeth baring.
The man collapsed, no more could he bear.

As the moon rose above the wood,
And the beast sat hungrily munching,
Blood soaked the spot where the man once stood
And the beast continued lunching.