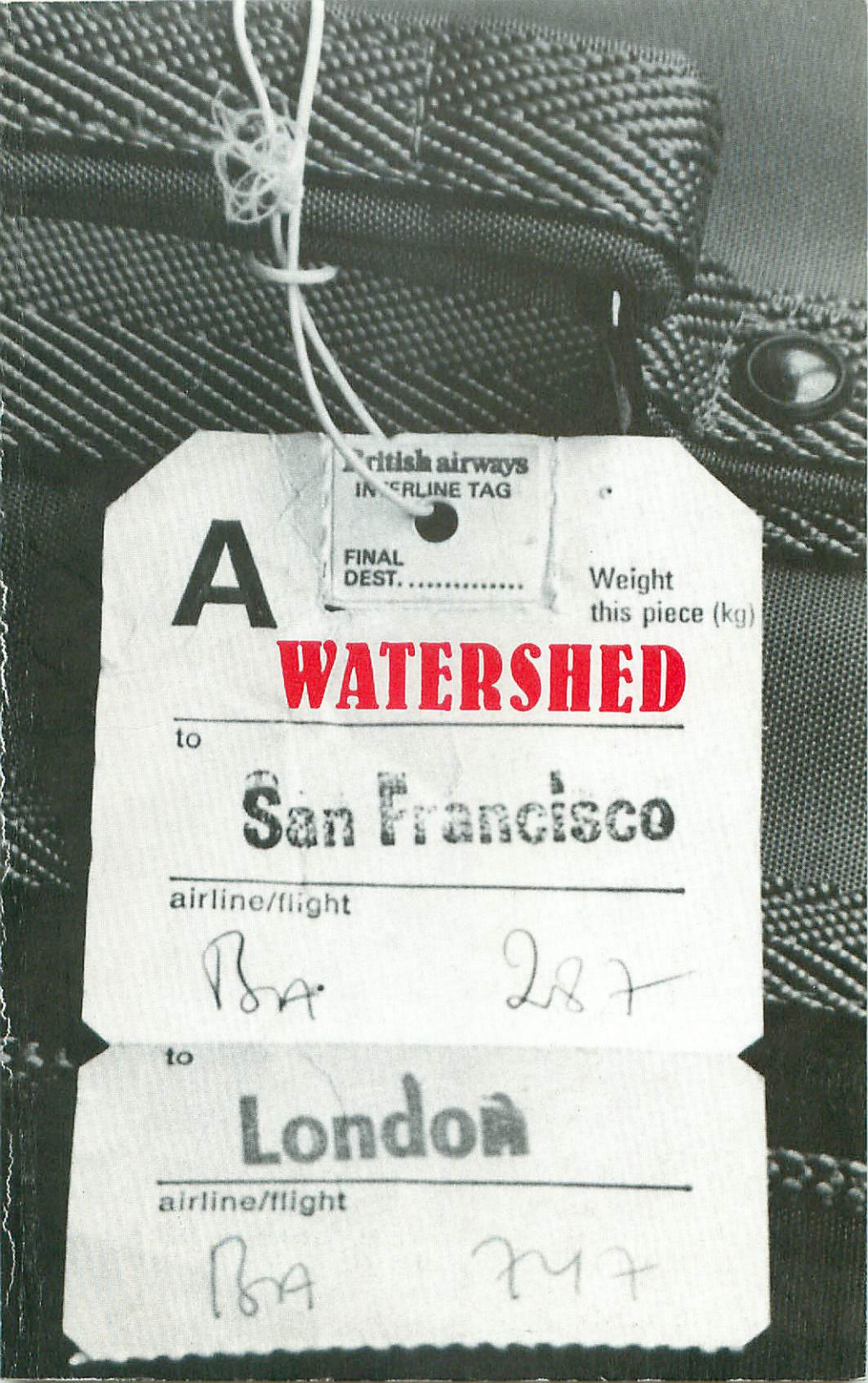
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WATERSHED

A Literary Magazine

Volume 13 Number 2

Watershed Spring 1990

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Editor's Introduction

The editorial staff of *Watershed* would like to thank everyone who submitted work for the Spring issue, and especially those who responded to the theme. Since the number of theme-related submissions was not large enough for an entire issue, we have devoted a special, middle section of the magazine to "Far Away Places." We were impressed by the literary and graphic talent evidenced in the over two hundred submissions we received.

Contents

Ann Edmondson

Kathleen Malone

A Secret Affair

I was ten
when you began avoiding my questions.
I studied your moves,
around his moves,
from behind your black,
towering piano.
I knew your secret then.

You insisted he was just a friend.
But no, your thick, flirtatious laughter
choked me.
And your face, thin and smooth like an ivory key,
happily glistened for him.
You wanted this bliss,
away from a life of motherhood, of babies.

He played your piano,
you never made him stop.
He soothed your restlessness.
He teased me, my stillness, my pouting.
I didn't want his fingers
guiding mine,
across ugly, yellowing keys.

On the red velvet piano bench,
he sat down hard.
Every good boy does fine,
again and again and again.
Do little girls ever feel fine?
He craved you, that smiling intruder.

You pretend you have forgotten
your beautiful mistake.
You claim your old
feelings for him

are worn,
and have faded,
from your heart and mind.

But these sordid memories,
I carry.
For I have carried them
for years,
for you.
Your secret is mine.

April 11, 1988

For JTF

I.

Clothes lie in hummocks about the floor,
And darkness slides in the window
Softly with the heat.
This same night
Last year
I flew to your side.
Mother, my mother, I whisper,
Can you still see me?

All night I descended
Through the heavens to Florida.
The water outside the plane's window
Ran between my fingers.
Did you pass by?
I'd call in twilight
To tell how love had died.
Dark strands of need
Threading through the phone line.
Mother, carry me home.
A reading light came on
Two seats behind
And my reflection in the plastic pane
Fell in rivulets.

The hardened snow of Alaska
Dawned into sand.
The night you told me
What made a woman different
Didn't prepare me for this.
No, mother,
It was the nights

I held you in my arms
While you would shake
And cry
And ask for more
That did.
I passed my brother
In the airport hall,
Surprised the years had made us strangers.

II.

Heat branded my face
As I stepped toward the car.
Only daughter, only mother,
I see us standing by the sink,
Rising duets and
Falling voices.
Did you think I had forgotten?
Traffic wound through palms
Along the Gulf of Mexico
To the street where my father
Sat alone behind his house.

Father, I began, are you all right?
Afternoon clouds drew shadows
Into his face.
Mother, did your heart ever beat with the flush
Of his desire?
You are holding my birth flower in your arms.
Your hair is wild, like my dreams
When you cry.
Your smile is the power
Of Lake Huron's thunder.
We'll go home to Michigan, he said,
This afternoon.

III.

The red clay in Georgia
Gave way to Kentucky meadows
Undulating north.
I stood below the tree
I had climbed as a child.
I am a stream, mother,
Falling down from you.
Your hands are strong,
You clasp them in your lap.
They are fingers of wind
As it shakes the branch I crouch on.
If you do not end where I begin,
What must I do next?
There were pussywillows beside
The white fence along the driveway.
An honest spring, the neighbor said
After he shook my father's hand.
Joanne was a damned fine woman.

IV.

My father clutched my hand
In the church
As light through the stained glass
Dyed the lillies red.
Anger rolls out your eyes
Like molten lava.
It hardens in your path
And you struggle to push on.
Use my footsteps, mother.
You write poems into the silence
Of this family;
Words lick yellowed papers in your notebook.
Must I carry this on?
My hands rested awhile on the sides
Of the black marble urn,
And I closed my eyes.

V.

I packed her butterfly necklace
Between photos of the two of us together
And a book of her poems.
Mother, your curled penmanship
Wraps my dreams
Into words that stream from my fingers tonight.
I whisper them as they fall down
And the curtains move
In the darkened wind.

Calie Jo Varnell

You, Who Won't Cry

I listen for you. Tonight
like every other night, I am waiting
as women will wait. But you,
you who won't cry
not for me
not this night.
And Mama I want to
release you and me
from this silence
to hold you and to cry
together one sound.
But teeth are clenched
closed locked shut
will not open for me
for you
because I think safety
is sometimes first.
But see now
Gramma's witches are real
to her. Sprinkling red dust
to curse the cross-eyed, wild-eyed
girl/child—to make her insane
this woman with power—
scary, unreal, very real
power.
Tonight I am that witch creating
power not
all to the one side
all around, Mama
all around.

Anne Hikido

Escape

She pulled the laces a little tighter on her shoes and zipped her jacket. She gave herself a final check in the mirror, and then looked at her watch. Ten o'clock, that gave her about a half hour. Her parents, engrossed in the news on television, did not notice her leave.

"George? Did you hear that, George? A whole busload of children went off the bridge and into the river," she heard her mother say so matter-of-factly as she went out the door.

Outside the air was cool, and the night was so dark she thought she could feel it caress her. She started running, slowly loping across the lot behind her house. No one else was out, and she had known no one would be. She laughed to herself, thinking of them, lethargic in front of the television set, night after night after night. She gave a little skip and ran faster, every now and then dodging imaginary snakes hidden in the cracks of the pavement.

Slipping through a hole in the fence at the back of the lot transported her to a whole new world. Instead of lifeless concrete, dirt met her footsteps and puffed up to greet her ankles. Plants replaced the stark lightposts of the lot, plants that rustled with the lives that inhabited them. She came to a small slope, and with two leaps was on top of it. Two lines of steel ran parallel on the ridge, and she tightrope-walked on one of them. Then she ran down the center of the track, touching only the wood, not the spaces in between. She ran in a pattern, run, run, skip, run, run, skip. She ran until she reached a tiny cross street where a single light shone across the track. Here she stopped and looked around. A train bleated in the distance. With the darkness watching, she stood in the light, in the middle of the track, and bowed, first up the track, then down. Standing straight and still, with chin uplifted, she raised her arm with a flourish. Skipping gracefully from one side of the track to the other, she danced alone on her small stage to an audience of crickets. She twirled, first on the right row of steel, then on the left. A spotlight shone, far away, but approaching swiftly, and she

embraced it. She stepped from wooden slat to wooden slat, moving to music performed by her own symphony. Now and then the melody was accentuated by a distant, blaring horn. The rhythm became short and repetitive, and her movements quickened. Right, left, right, left, right, left. The shriek of the train whistle brought her up short, and after a dramatic pause she picked the wooden slat where the light shone the brightest and leaped to the center of it. There she stood, striking a statuesque pose, arms upraised, one leg stretched and foot pointed behind her. The horn called, then shouted a warning, and she acknowledged the train with a slight nod. The light bore down upon her, and she could hear the conductor shouting. For a split second she could see his face, then she bowed and leaped nimbly off the track to the tune of his curses. She bowed to the train once more as it rushed past, and she blew it a kiss. Then she danced home.

Sheri Brakebush

Riding the Wild Range

His head pounded in time
to the thunder of the horse's hooves
thick clouds of dust
swirled around his face
as the white hot sun
beat down upon his head
The wind whistled through his hair
and he tightened his grip on the reins
Tail streaming out behind
making patterns in the thick dust
Muscles corded
rippling
coat shiny with sweat
the stallion reared his head
and screamed in fury
The cowboy tore off his hat
threw back his head
and cried out his joy

The cars drove by
unheeding
the rusty horse squeaked to a slow halt
as the child climbed off the toy
He took hold of his mother's hand
and they walked away

Joseph Kelley

You Ahead

leaving streetlight security
don't be frightened
though I wear the night
only in your mind
do I stalk you
don't look back
it's only your imagination
you think
but your nervous neck twitches
imagining I'm walking faster
you quicken your pace
I wish the very rhythm of my footfall
could distinguish my good intentions
even if they could
you'd not hear it told
caught up in the image you created
you'll be happy
only when rid
of my threatening tread behind

Janet M. Schmidt

Measuring the Distance

His hands are large, steady palms
warm the wood as he speaks,
composed fingers curl
the podium rim.
(yet when they move
through air they

hesitate like children alone
in separate rooms)
At times he can pull us
from the void
of our half-knowings,
the notes in his voice

as measured as bricks set
in this old building.
(but yesterday he moved
past me, the bicycle
creaking certainty
and I saw, in a lurch

of pedals and slip
of spokes, someone
at odds with the awkward
beat of day)

Timothy Bluhm

L.A. to El Paso

Four wheels
And that's all, that's it.
Seven inches off the asphalt
Eight hours out of L.A. and not slowing down.
And Paul screaming get back get back.

Everything's floored and the wind
Is not really wind at all.
It's you and me, my foot, your money,
And sweet Loretta.
Here comes Tucson, you know, Arizona.

The haloed parasite
Hovering crazily on the desert floor
Thirsty and waiting.
This is L.A.'s junkyard; you can see
The air here, too.

Yes, the black man, hand
Stretched out
Got some silver, man?
Hard for a colored man to get a ride
In this town.

Night can't resist
Holding the minute hand but the stereo
Tells time too.
Four more cassettes to El Paso.
You know, Texas.

Winnemucca

bought a
fifty dollar
Resistol
Cowboy hat
cause I got
thrown offa
Charlie's horse
Sailor.

won three hundred
and some dollars
on the crap
table at the
Star Cafe,
let it ride
once too long,
lost it all
on one
roll, even though
my number was
eight.

walked to the
truckstop outsida
town,
bought a piece a
blueberry pie
anna cuppa
coffee.
cost two
seventy-five.
had a buck
anna quarter
by the time

I gotta ride
to Ely
onna truck with
silver
naked lady
mudflaps.

Michael Station

Baseball Ashes

Mildew cool under summer swelter, damp summer's heat and rain only seep through cracks to touch the chill shadows below the right field grandstand, mixing with smells of sloshed beer, hot dog mustard and frosty malts hosed down concrete steps. Sweating groundskeepers and beermen hoot and shout; clanking wheelbarrows and beer crates provide counterpoint. Workers stop quickly for tools, a bucket of clay, a new beer load, then are gone. The ballpark's support teams, pre-game busy in the towering cavern. Jason, a beer vender, introduced Troy, who wore the soiled coveralls of one of baseball's elite grounds crews; Comiskey Park is considered the best by many. Troy knew the plan, but I didn't know yet if he agreed. "Lemme see it."

"It's in the car. A coffee can's worth. It's kinda like gravel and coarse sand. Most of it's pretty fine, but there're some chunks too."

Ducking down a dark tunnel, he slammed back a door, flooding the narrow passage with light. I followed tentatively, blinking. I peered through the door. Right field! The lights' glare negated summer dusk. Sharp field green and foul-line white contrasted with gray-blue uniforms, flashing numbers and visiting team insignia. Crack! Bat met ball sounding sharper, cleaner than I'd ever heard. A lanky outfielder snagged the batting practice fly at the outfield grass edge. Crack! This ball sailed past, smacking and bouncing hard off the cinders before crashing against the wall. Troy stood comfortably on the warning track.

"It's okay; you're with me. Step out here."

I edged from the darkness. Troy and I stood together in the right field corner scratching our toes in the warning track cinders. "Like this?"

"Yeah, exactly. Except for the chunks. You can probably rake those."

"We don't rake the track. We roll it."

Dad never said what to do with his ashes. Funeral parlors like to wait and cremate a bunch together, so my sister Becky and I stalled in the suburbs. The others hatched the scheme while waiting in Chicago. Aunt Lee might have suggested it first, maybe Jack or Sara. We had a friend, Jason, the beerman at Comiskey, and he didn't balk. Jack thought I might; his phone voice was tentative: "We thought we could scatter Dad at Comiskey."

Dad grew up on Chicago's south side; the White Sox were his team, and Comiskey Park was summer's second home. Later, his passion for annual spring training jaunts, ballpark bus trips with buddies and carload birthday outings with kids made it hard to think about the Sox, or even baseball, without thinking about Dad.

We were all finally gathered in the city when Jack interrupted our pre-game festivity. "How will we get him in?"

This practical consideration reminded us we had not even really looked in the can. The can, holding the ashes, was inside a heavy cardboard box, and this large cube would be tough to disguise.

"Try dumping it into a plastic bag, maybe."

"Let's look at it. We don't even know what's there." At this suggestion a shoe box appeared, and all four kids huddled out back. As we slowly poured the ashes into the box, a small dust cloud drifted to the garden.

"Put him back, you guys!" Our sisters stood back, watching the cloud pass.

John and I were both sifting the ash. We had gone to see him laid out, cold and white. This was better, a settled state. Though another dust cloud drifted off as we clanked the ashes back to the can. The cardboard cube holding the can ended up in a shoulder bag. We would leave it in the car and make our decision once inside Comiskey.

The ballpark's white, wedding-cake hulk reflected the sun's early evening glare. Inside, the sun was muted by the upper-deck shadow. A cool, fervent smell drew us to the familiar field and evening batting practice, cracking wood on cowhide, popping leather on leather. Hustle and chatter echoed off the near-empty concrete park. Players fooled on the verdant carpet. We found our seats, pretty close boxes above first. The others waited while I met Mel.

When I returned we decided Becky was obvious choice for the smuggling job. Disarming little-sister looks disguised a level-headed radical. As a high school news editor, she had asked Ronald Reagan an insinuating question about the Equal Rights Amendment that made the Republican room gasp and earned her a public scolding in the local press. Dad was proud as hell. Innocence and fearless cool were required here, so Becky was off.

Wearing the shoulder bag, she retraced our steps. A short box office line stopped her a moment, and passing through the turnstile, she stepped up to the biggest Chicago cop in sight, flashed her gray-blue eyes and general admission ticket, smiled and said, "Does this ticket mean I can sit anywhere?"

"Sure, little lady." He pointed Becky toward the outfield grandstand and, once away, she darted safely to the park's openness. Back at our boxes, we discovered an extra seat, so the bag and its contents wouldn't have to spend the game at our feet.

Sox pitching gave up three runs that night. The Sox scored twelve or thirteen and couldn't do wrong. Back when teams played 154 game seasons they said: "Fifty games you lose no matter what you do; Fifty games you win, no matter what you do. The other fifty four is where pennants are won." The White Sox never won many of the other fifty four. Dad certainly couldn't have had much to cheer about as a kid. Still living with 'Black Sox' shame, the team became perennial second division finishers. They got tough some in the 1950's when Dad was young, but even in 1959, the 'Go Go' Sox won on speed, pitching, and luck rather than power and glory. Dad grew up loving the underdog and so did we. By believing in the White Sox we learned to believe the impossible—and live with disappointment.

Each new season, optimism bolstered even poor prospects. "Ya gotta believe," said Dad. But like life's passage, spring's optimism faded in early June, and July's mid-season crisis foretold August's decline, September's collapse. But with baseball we could 'wait until next year.'

Troy dragged the heavy tarp over the infield. Taking the shoulder bag, I watched and caught his nod. Jack, Sara and Becky walked out to the emptying right field seats as I ducked below the grandstand. I could hardly see Troy waiting in the tunnel. He carried a paper shopping bag that seemed to have groceries in it. I handed him the can and he set it among the stuff

in his bag. Light flooded the tunnel again, and we stepped to the warning track. I didn't notice the others in the front row above. Troy carried the bag between us. We followed the track toward center field, each reaching handfuls of ashes and scattering them as we walked. At center field, we turned back. I now saw my brother and sisters sitting up by the foul pole. The can was half empty.

"So your Daddy was a ball player?" Jason must have told him.

"Just 'A' ball. He was a pitcher, southpaw. Played softball too. Nobody could hit him."

Troy stopped and picked up an empty beer cup. He set the shopping bag down, and gently poured some ash into the cup, folded it closed and stuck it in his coveralls. "Tomorrow, I'll get this on the pitcher's mound and in the lefties' box."

Scattering the rest, we walked toward the tunnel, my arm around Troy. Tearfully, the others called softly to him when we passed. Safe in the dark, I tried to dry my eyes. Releasing Troy's shoulder, I squeezed his hand and passed him the fifty-dollar bill I had folded in my pocket. This seemed both too much and too little. Death's service rendered. Jack, Becky and Sara waited to greet us when we stepped from the dark.

We gathered together, all four now, by the right field foul pole. We split a couple of beers. The park was empty; the field was cleared and covered. No one said much. We all gazed down the red-gray cinder track toward center field.

The year after Dad died the Sox won their division, their best finish since 1959. They were killed in the playoffs, which didn't surprise Sox fans, who expect bitter along with their sweet. Cormiskey Park will be torn down soon. Once America's first sports palace, the park's 1910 art-deco splendor seems tarnished to some now. The White Sox have broken ground for a 'modern' park to be built across the street, and to generations that won't know otherwise, right field will be a parking lot.

And the welfare pays just a little
for having a kid.
A little's something
but my man can't be here
and soon another woman's
in a family way 'cause
hey
he ain't got no other job
to do
he ain't got no way
to feeling proud
'cept for kids
and women.
Now I'm sitting here
with the baby crying
watching
TV
romance on the TV
just wishing he was here again.
Waiting again
to close my eyes
to the peeling paint
peeling floor
the cracked and peeling ceiling
looking down on me every night
imagining his brown eyes
on mine instead.

Calie Jo Varnell

Bitch Is Fucking Fine!

i am walking along dark streets
dropping boxes of matches
trying to pick up the diamonds
from my shoes

they fell
while i was sleeping

i showed them to Dave
and to Doug who laughed
at my sad eyes
said
"Bitch is fucking fine!"
"Fucking fine, Bitch!"

diamonds are now
covering the streets
my shoes
smoothed over like glass
dancing hysterical
beneath the glare

i am stepping on them
there is no clear step

my mouth then cracked
spoke of fallen diamonds
crushed by those men
with their frozen language
"Bitch is fucking fine!"
"Fucking fine, Bitch!"

now the rock and roll man
who's hip
in the rock and roll trend
sings for the homeless
political change

until Doug says they should *all*
Go back to where they came
from

boys don't enjoy
stepping over bitches
with melting grimaces
or diamonds cluttering
THEIR streets scratching
THEIR shoes
"Bitch is fucking fine!"
"Fucking fine, Bitch!"

until that's all
i am

Christine Szuggar-Martinelli

the moment your tiny

almost fingers
lost their last
grip

i cried

as you were
sucked
screeching through
the indifferent
cannula can you love
me for not
bringing you into
this world?

it has already just been
a few days
my breasts still
ache with the broken
promise
of milk
my stomach still
says no
to spaghetti
warm baths
try to comfort me

sometimes
one's pain does
not
bring one flowers

alone we cry alone

FAR AWAY PLACES

Somewhere Far, Far Away Ellen Roehne

Margaret Kirk

The Muezzin's Call

I had gone to Cairo.
My bags were in Paris.
Now my slacks were flappin'
in the early morning air,
unconcerned with the life that
flowed below on the ageless green river.

There, Cleopatra's barge,
pushed by the oars of sweating slaves,
glided solemnly toward her destiny—
a rendezvous with Mark Antony
union with Caesar
a tryst with Death.

I had purchased a dress
in the hotel shop.
A sheer thing of brown and gold.
Something for Cleopatra
stepping out of her milk bath.

I swayed in front of a mirror.
Fantasizing
to a sing-song chant
floating into the room—
hanging in the air—
the Muezzin's call.

The street below would empty.
Prayer rugs would protect the knees
that bent in shops and temples.
Whispering voices would send out
the same pleas for love
and protection
that once fell from the lips of Pharoahs.

Tuan Nguyen

Freedom in Far Away Places

Saigon, Vietnam 1973: After the American troops had left, the communist soldiers took over the city. Life under the communist system became miserable—there was no money to buy food, starvation increased dramatically, people had no shelter to protect themselves from the bad weather and they had to sleep out on the street during the frigid night. Life was not worth a penny or dime! Many innocent people had died and the country was totally destroyed. Many people had escaped to the United States and other far away places to search for their freedom in the new world.

When I was nine years old in Vietnam, my mother came to me and said that I had to leave the country immediately. ALONE. I had to make a big decision that usually only the adults had to make. I had to choose whether to stay or leave. If I stayed there, I had nothing to look for in the future. The worst thing was that when I turned sixteen, I would have to bear arms for those communist soldiers, to fight for them. If I left, I would leave behind my family, friends, and school. I had no alternative to solve my problems. I still had a lot of uncertainty about the decision that I had to make. I knew that if I made a wrong choice, I would have to live with it. I also did not realize how hard it could be for me to leave behind so many memories that I had of my country. It took a long period of time to think it through carefully. Finally, my resolution was to leave my home. It was a painful decision that I had to make for my life.

It was April 19, 1979. I could see the moon brighten the entire earth. The stars were sparkling throughout the sky and there was no sign of people in the street. The absence of people horrified me. The silence was very mysterious and I felt like I was hiding somewhere in a cemetery.

There were eleven of us sitting patiently inside the peculiar wooden house. They were all strangers to me. The feeling in the room was intense and there were no words exchanged between us. This old shack could fall down at any moment and as I walked, I could hear a squeaking noise and felt like the rotten wood was about to break. It made me grit my teeth together

every time I moved. There was no light in the house except for the moonlight that crept through several small cracks. The moon was our only source of light for the night. In back of this sagging house was a river which was an outlet to the ocean, and our ticket to freedom.

When I saw the moon directly overhead, it was about one o'clock in the morning. We were waiting for the right moment to arrive so we could proceed to our destination. We began to transfer all of the necessary equipment down into a nine-foot boat. After packing everything up, we dragged ourselves down to the boat. Once inside, we had to lie down side by side. There was not enough room for stretching out or rolling around since there were eleven of us in this nine-foot boat. We were covered with a giant blanket to hide us from the guard's tower.

At this time, our journey started. We were breathlessly waiting for the engine to start so we could head directly to the open sea where we could be free. This destination could cost us our lives. At this point, we knew we could never return. We had accepted the orders from the owner of the boat and we curled up inside like lobsters caught in a fishing net. I was very nervous and my heart was pounding violently. Suddenly, I heard someone jerk twice on the engine's starting cord, and then there was a loud roar from the engine. Our boat began to move gently in the direction of the ocean. Soon it was moving quickly, tearing its way through the water. By now, we were very happy.

After two hours, we left the river and began to approach the gigantic ocean. Our boat kept moving faster and faster. As I was lying down, I could feel water splash into our boat. I was afraid our boat would sink. I kept praying to myself, "God, please don't let me die while I'm awake. Please let me die while I am asleep so that it won't be painful." I kept repeating it over and over again. It took us two-and-a-half days to reach Thailand. I was very glad that I was still alive. I could not believe it. After I resided in Thailand for six months, I transferred to the Phillipines to stay for another six months. Finally, my last destination was America.

Indeed, this was an adventure I would not want to do again! God had given me one chance, and He probably would not give me another. I was very thankful that I had survived. Obviously it was not my turn to die. This adventure taught me a great lesson about both life and death as a part of growing up. I had learned to appreciate freedom and life in a way that most people were

not aware of. I didn't ever want anything to make me forget these hard but meaningful times.

Now I am living in a free country: the United States. I have freedom to pursue a much better life, an education that I never used to have, and a prosperous future. As for my mother, she was the one who made all the sacrifices so that I could be free. She borrowed the money to pay my way to the new world and she stayed behind to pay back the money she now owed. No television or newspaper praises her story, and I don't have the chance to say thanks to her in person, but I want to thank her from the bottom of my heart. My mother is still in the shattered, crumbling country of Vietnam, her future uncertain, so that I can have a better life in such a far away place.

Janet M. Schmidt

9-10-67

Jungle blanket
on fire
Hanoi earth
cradles
your cold face

Geri Mahood

Here and There

We were visiting the coast
with a dog, of course
cause I never really liked the sand
till I ran through it
with a dog
chasing a stick
thick
with sand, stuck to my hand
and wrestled it from her sweaty teeth
for another try.

We were visiting the coast
and after the beach
went for coffee
but our dog couldn't come inside.
So we sat by the window
watching each other and the coffee
didn't take too long.

We were visiting the coast
and after the beach and coffee
we saw *Salvador*.
Massacre of assault
rifles in the hands of innocence
and experience
and songs of liberation silenced
by army helicopters
whose?
able to put the arms
back on the people, legs
on the children
so they can stand up
on their own?
But there were parts
of people

all over a hillside
and in the end
they couldn't walk
across the border.
No land
of the free for them
as we were visiting the coast.

We were visiting the coast
and outside the theater
were the fog and the signs:
jumbalaya, strawberry pie, sushi
everything
we ever wanted
but a way out of El Salvador.

Susanna Wallace

A Poem for Poul Who Doesn't Really Like Poems

Seeing KØBENHAVN in a poem
about death & Jews
has nothing to do with you
yet
just the word KØBENHAVN
written on a page
forces you into my consciousness.
You send a postcard one day
"I think I want to live here."
a short sentence really
but by the end of it
I am exhausted.
here
KØBENHAVN
here is such a misleading word
whose here?
who's here?

Bill Helmer

Blue Corn Travels

for Jim Ginestra

Tarahumara hillsides
planted with blue corn
maiz azul
the good strains of southern civilization
brought north, planted by hand.
summer rains, harvest...blue corn.

Luego, las semillas come farther north,
en el otro lado de la frontera
en las manos
de otro campesino
who knows what to do with them:
with the hands of his father
he plants them in the family ground,
growing blue corn
through Ohlone soil,
rooted deep beyond
the surface slaughter,
finding taproot ghosts
who never left
and who'll never give in.

And in a pack-beaten pouch
seeds are taken to the antipodes,
across continents of water
through ghost gum tracks
of shattered patterns
pieced together
in ochre dreams of stone.

Tarahumara...Italian...Ohlone...Eora...Pandjima
Blue corn, maiz azul
same soul, synthipode soil
maiz azul sagrada
de los regiones de refugios

norte y sur
growing up another country
whose people will never give in—
blue corn travels.

Alice Springs/Chico
March 1985-March1990

Sarah Vocelka

Kristallnacht Germany 1938

The moon, full
reflects silver
The crunch of snow
beneath my feet
grazing my un-booted ankles
Diamond shards, shimmering
Illuminating the trees
The snow, clinging
to forest green

Lights in distant windows glow
Frozen marble, freshly chiseled
Children's dreams capture cold-

But, keep this-
It will be gone
tomorrow.

J. G. Moldenhauer

Bon Appetit

I am hamburger on the grill
of my back porch in Tijuana—
    detailed in daylight

You are pâté de fois gras on a silver plate
on the family terrace in Paris
    (subtle in moonlight)

Garlic
my talisman,
Fines herbes,
yours.

We bite because
We're both
hungry.

A Semester in HELL

Eschew Goodness!
Embrace Sin!

Distinguished Visiting Lecturers:

- **Faust**
- **Lucifer**
- **Mephistopheles**

Field Trips :

•Heaven. St. Peter floats you through the Pearly Gates into this white wasteland.

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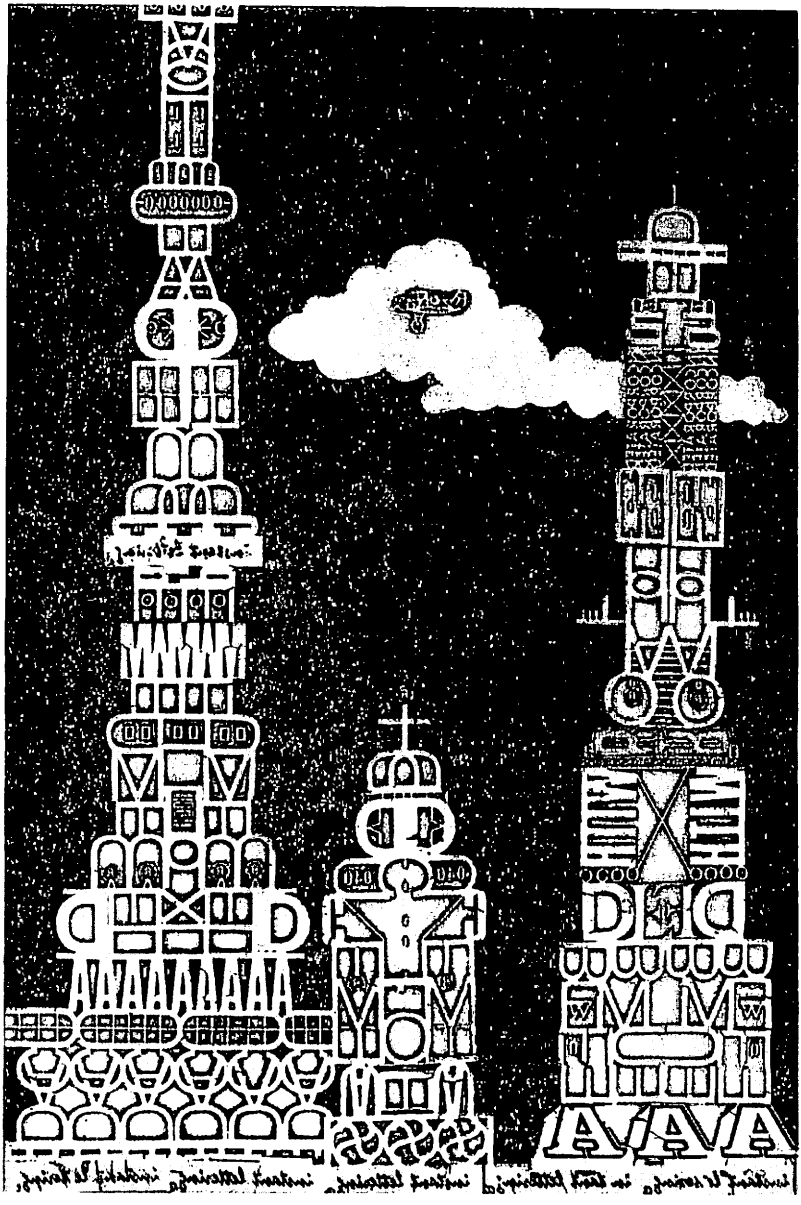
Julianne Olmstead



Aviator's Dream Mike Halldorson

Melissa Link

"Speak English"

"Speak English,"
she says
to the dirty little urchin
holding his money
pointing to the jar filled with long red licorice strands

Dejected
but mute
slouching he shuffles off
"He'll have to learn,"
she pronounces the sentence while I'm thinking, "he just did."

Catherine Aaron

The Bag Lady

She arose at her usual time, before the alarm clock, whose jolting ring might disturb the others in the house. She reached for her tattered bathrobe, plain and solid blue, the same one she had worn for years, and headed for the small bathroom. She flicked on the light, rubbed the sleep from her eyes before the mirror, brushed her teeth, and ran a comb quickly through her short hair. The lines around her eyes showed her 45 years, but it did not bother her.

She dressed quietly in the dark, choosing a blue skirt, white blouse and tan sandals that were comfortable for walking long distances. She slipped on her Timex watch and threw her purse over her shoulder. It was heavy, stuffed with coupons, a tape measure, mail-in rebate vouchers collected from three local newspapers, countless box tops, and about $40 in cash.

From her house it was a 20-minute drive to the once-magnificent Belmont Drive-in Theater, which still showed PG movies at night, but kept itself in business as a swap meet by day. Her pulse quickened as she drove past the nostalgic arches at its entrance, but instead of pulling the car in, she checked the street for traffic officers and made an illegal U-turn, parking across the street in the residential neighborhood. Why pay 50 cents for parking when it was just as easy to walk across the street?

The predawn crowd was just arriving for a long day of bargain-hunting, bartering, selling, and swapping of small talk and hand-me-downs. The small-framed woman darted across the four-lane intersection and toward the gates. Instead of waiting in line with the others, she bustled to the front. She always bought a buyer's pass for the month, which cost $15, instead of paying $1 to get in every day.

"Thank ya, Sam," she said to the fat man sitting in the booth, who punched another hole in her card.

"Have a good day in there, Ann," he called back.

Some of those in line recognized her, the red-haired, freckled woman who always arrived alone, but few noticed. The long line was moving quickly enough. Most of the others were there in groups of friends. Some came out in huge extended family

groups—toddling grandparents who got tired and had to sit the day out at the snack bar, harried parents, and children, from infants to teens, ranging in size from one-foot long to six-feet tall. A 14-year-old girl grunted, shifting the weight of her three-year-old brother, Ramon, to her other hip. He was getting too big to carry everywhere, but moved too quickly and got lost or into trouble if a close eye wasn't on him constantly.

The woman seldom paid any attention to the others there. Californians were an odd breed, and she had to be careful whom she talked to. She had gotten used to it, though, having lived in Southern California for 15 years. Nonetheless, this wasn't Texas and it never would be. She had started coming to the swap meet to make ends meet, and as a hobby. There wasn't much for a young newly-wed to do, with no friends in the entire state. She had since made friends, naturally, but not with anybody from the swap meets. How she missed her southern friends, and her parents, she thought sometimes—but only briefly.

Once inside, the woman scanned the aisles, trying to decide where to venture first. The hilly concrete landscape of the Belmont was still only sparsely populated, but that was when the best deals could be found: before the dealers arrived. Some of them owned their own shops in real malls; others had their own regular spaces to stock at other swap meets. The woman caught a glimpse of two such dealers, Jean and Bev, on aisle 16. They owned a cute consignment store near the beach called "Second Time Around," and they were always snatching things up from other, more timid shoppers. Yes, they would be the ones to beat today.

Ann spied the huge green van driving in and headed for its regular stop: space 32H, on the aisle. Suddenly, as though a silent battle cry had been trumpeted in her ear, she charged full speed for the van.

Others, too, knew the silent call, and dozens started flocking around the van. Rex jumped out of the driver's seat and met the forming crowds. "Hey," he said to the two women trying to pry open the back doors of his vehicle. "Relax and give us a minute. There's enough here for everyone."

That was a lie, Ann thought. Once that stuff came tumbling out of the van, it was a free-for-all. Rex had an "in" with some retail distributors and regularly bought out their odd lots. Trendy merchandise that hadn't stayed "in" long enough, "slightly irregular" merchandise, things that even half-price sales

couldn't clear out, products that either too many were made of, or too few sold, or both.

Rex and his two nephews did their best to wrestle past the grabbers and put the tarp down over their space, and then began emptying boxes of clothes onto the ground. When none of them was looking, the eager and impatient pulled boxes out of the van themselves and started sorting though them.

Rex pulled his big wooden sign out and set it up:

Pants 50 cents
Shirts 50 cents
Suits $1
Shoes $1
Socks, underwear, hats 25 cents
Everything else make me an ofer.

Ann was always amused by the grammatical errors in the signs the sellers put up. Her favorite was the one that said, "Free puppies—There mother was a bagle." She had told that story to her friends a hundred times.

She didn't stop to read Rex's sign today, though; she knew exactly what the prices were. Instead, her task was to spot the hot merchandise and grab it before someone else did. She picked up two white shirts with her husband in mind. One was dirty—the dust would probably come out with some bleach—the other had a tiny hole under the collar in the back of the neck. She could fix this easily when she got home. She eyed them carefully—first the front, then the back, then she stretched each sleeve out in front of her and checked for missing buttons or sloppy construction, all the while scanning for snags, tears, and other imperfections. If it were something she could fix in an hour or less, she'd throw it over her shoulder and seek out another prize. But if her assessment revealed that new buttons would cost more than the cost of the shirt, she'd probably throw it back. Next she took out her tape measure to see how closely it would fit her husband's dimensions. She had all her family's measurements memorized.

"Okay, Rex," said a Vietnamese fellow. "I two shirts, two pair sock and three pant. For my daughters," he added with pride.

"Well, my arithmetic ain't too good today," said Rex, rubbing his head to relieve the nasty hangover he had. "Ya think it's all worth three dollars?"

"Yes, yes, thank you," he said, handing over the money. Rex tucked it absently into his shirt pocket.

"See you next time," said the buyer, dashing away.

"Yeah, sure," Rex said, accepting some more money. "Need a bag for that?" he asked a new buyer.

"If you have them," said his customer, arms full of stray clothes, as well as a teapot and radio from another vendor. One of Rex's nephews fetched a bag that said "Gucci" on it and the man felt relieved. Rex took $4.50 from the customer before another one besieged him.

Finally, Ann had collected all she wanted. She figured it would come to $9.75, but she was going to try to talk him down. She always did. Before her, a dealer gave Rex $13.75 for a huge pile of clothes. Ann wondered if she'd see those pieces down the aisle at another space, or at another store or swap meet sometime in the future. The dealer would probably quadruple the prices and, in a normal store, they'd probably sell.

Rex didn't care. He'd make a good amount of money for the day, more than enough to pay for the gas, the cost of the space, the merchandise, lunch, something to give his nephews, and still some to keep for himself. He had thought about pricing his things individually and asking a little more for them, but, on foggy mornings like this, it was a lot easier not to.

"I've got $9.75 here," Ann said to Rex, as he eyed over her picks. "How about I give you $7 for it?"

"Oh, come on, lady. You're always trying to cheat me. Aren't my things cheap enough for you yet? Whatd'ya expect?"

"All right, how about $8.50?" she said, missing the point.

"Look, you ain't doing me no favors taking the stuff off my hands. If you don't, someone else will. Why should I do you a favor and sell 'em to you for less?"

"Eight?"

"Lady, ya tell me ya got $9.75 and I believe ya, don't I? I don't check your math. Ya got $9.75, then it costs $9.75," he yelled.

She rummaged back through her stuff and decided she'd not buy the yellow blouse. She grudgingly handed him $9.25, a five, three ones, and five quarters, and moved on.

She hoped her husband could use the white shirts to wear to work. Otherwise, maybe her son could use them. He was getting almost as big as his dad.

While she hadn't been looking, Dorothy, the jewelry lady, had driven up and Jean and Bev were already there, darn it all. They could always mark up Dorothy's stuff and sell it in their overpriced store.

Even though she never wore jewelry herself, Ann got to Dorothy's space in time to get her hands on a few valuable pieces. They were mostly for her daughter——some brightly-colored bangle bracelets, some hoop earrings, and some hair clips with polks dots and stripes. It's hard to know what teenagers were going to like these days. Maybe she'd get some extras, in case her daughter had some birthday parties coming up in the near future. At 30 cents each, you couldn't really go wrong. She could always store them in her gift cabinet at home in case someone was having a shower or until the church's gift exchange at Christmas. Why dash out at the last minute and pay store prices for presents, when you could take advantage of 10-cent earrings here? Almost everyone had pierced ears these days; you could give them to women of almost any age. Earrings were a good, safe gift to have on hand. Ann herself didn't have pierced ears, but a bargain was a bargain after all.

The trinkets clanked and jingled as Dorothy put them in a Sears bag for her. Ann knew that, in 12 years, Dorothy had never budged on her prices, so she paid the $2.40 and headed down the row.

Ann didn't recognize any more of her favorite sellers there, so she started down the back row, glancing side to side, as she trudged forward in search of more deals. Halfway down, a guy had half a dozen new alligator shirts, still in the plastic bags. Her daughter's boyfriend, from the chemistry club, wore a lot of those.

"How much for the shirts?" she queried.

"Fifty cents apiece," said a man in a wide-brimmed straw hat.

There were exactly six of them—navy, turquoise, burgundy, white, yellow, and pink. Ann decided they were colors he might wear. Those shirts went for at least $15 in department stores. The man also had a crate full of banged-up cassette tapes. Ann retrieved from her purse a list her daughter had made up of "in" groups to be on the lookout for. Ann scanned a few of the tapes but didn't find any names that matched.

"How about $2.50, and I'll take all the shirts?" she offered.

"Okay, sure, lady," he said, smiling vaguely, getting up to stretch and check the patchy clouds gathering in the sky.

She was intrigued by the space next to it that seemed to have no order at all to it. That was often where the bargains were: in the spaces that looked like the biggest junk piles. She

rummaged through the old National Geographic and Playboy magazines, a bathroom scale, a couple of rakes, some ashtrays from Disneyworld, a vacuum cleaner, some old tools. She decided to see exactly what was in one of the scattered boxes, and liked what she found. It was stuffed with greeting cards for every occasion—birthday, Mother's Day, death in the family, new baby, bon voyage, new home, and Hanukkah. She didn't know anyone who was Jewish, except that family from the P.T.A. at her son's elementary school. Some of the envelopes were stained and yellowed, but she could probably find replacements. There were also some jewelry supplies, loose chains and beads, some necklace catches, and tiny screwdrivers.

"How much are the cards?" she asked the couple in sunglasses, both bouncing barefoot babies on their knees.

"We'll let you have them for a quarter each," the woman said. "They're brand new."

Ann could see that much. There must have been 100 cards in the box. "Would ya'll take $10 for the whole box?"

"What do you think, honey?" the woman asked her husband.

"Whatever you think," he said with a shrug.

"Okay," said the woman, standing up to take the money.

Now she had to reshuffle her packages or she'd never make it to the end carting them around. She put the box at the bottom of her pop-up wheeled cart, then the shirts, then the jewelry. Her purse always stayed at her side; some of the people here shouldn't be trusted.

Over the loud-speaker came a few announcements.

"Greetings, swap meet shoppers, and welcome to the Belmont. There's a green, 1976 Chevrolet, license plate 284 KDN, in the parking lot with its lights on. Repeat—green 1976 Chevrolet, license plate 284 KDN, with its lights on. Thank you."

The woman recognized her friend Dolores, the crocheting fiend who collected Buzzas and Depression glass, across the aisles.

"Oh, hi, Ann," said Dolores, waddling through a Mexican family with rainbow-colored snow cones dripping down their hands and faces. "Look what I found."

She pulled a rumpled blue bag out of her cart and proudly displayed its contents. She had picked up some tennis balls for her husband, Ernie, the couch sports buff, and some dishes she quickly peeled the newspaper wrappings from.

"How about this?"

"Ah, amber Florentine dishes—really hard to find."

"The lady didn't even know what she had," Dolores said secretly. "She was asking $2 apiece for them, but the latest Depression glass catalog says they're up to $6.50 each at shows. Not a chip on them."

Dolores proved it to Ann, and again to herself, by running her tongue around the edge of a saucer, a regular practice of hers guaranteed to reveal any chips around the edges.

"I gave her 20 bucks for the full 12-place setting," she went on. "It's my sister-in-law's pattern. Boy, will she be thrilled! Of course, they'll never eat off of them, but their anniversary's at the end of this month."

"Well, I'm just tickled for you!"

"The best part is the creamer and sugar," Dolores related excitedly. "It's down here at the bottom somewhere. They're just gorgeous."

"Wonderful!"

"And I picked up a charming little Buzza," Dolores added, picking the collectible wall hanging out of one of her bags.

"It's not doing the things you like to do, but liking the things you have to do that makes life blessed," said the yellowed inscription, dated 1929.

"Very nice," said Ann, genuinely touched.

"Have you run into anything great?"

Ann ran down her list of finds, as well as their intended uses and recipients. So far, so good, they agreed, before heading separate ways down the aisles, which were now densely packed with merchants and sellers.

"Will Mr. Fairbanks please report to the main office, please? You have a telephone call. Repeat—will Mr. Fairbanks please report to the main office? You have a telephone call. Thank you."

The booming announcement made her wince. She was near the snack bar/main office complex, right next to the loud speakers. Pooped shoppers sat under the umbrellaed picnic tables, munching corn dogs, microwaved hamburgers and greasy pizza. Kids were kept quiet with cotton candy and cokes. Overpriced junk food, Ann thought. None of the food from the Belmont would ever touch her lips nor her family's, not even the fresh produce at the Japanese market. She didn't trust them. She was getting hungry, but knew she'd be home soon. There were

only two more aisles she hadn't done, before she would make her final sweep of all 32 rows—excluding the produce, tool, and furniture rows. She had no use for that stuff.

She walked past the man with the microphone attached to his tie, who was barking about his food processors. How he made a living there she could never understand. There was always a crowd around him. Perhaps they were just interested in the free food samples.

"It slices, it dices, it does just about anything in half the time it would take with the traditional knife," he announced smoothly, stuffing a zucchini in the top. "What would you pay for this in the store? Fifty dollars? Thirty-five? Twenty-five? Don't answer yet..."

Soon his amplified pitches were out of earshot. She spied a toaster-oven in one of the junk piles. One of her teenagers might be able to use it when they moved out of the house. It was filthy, she thought; somebody must have burnt up a pizza or something in it. Nothing a little scrubbing couldn't remove. All the pieces were there; it just needed some shining up. She looked up to see who was manning the space. A 12-year-old boy with dirt on his face and no shirt was the only one around.

"Can I plug this in and see if it heats up?" she asked him. He frowned, trying to translate her southern drawl into words he recognized.

She wondered if he spoke English. Fortunately, an electrical outlet was nearby and she went ahead and tested it without waiting for his consent. She saw the coils turning orange and the top started to feel hot. A piece of masking tape stuck to the side said $1.

"Will you take a quarter for it? It's pretty roughed-up looking, after all."

The boy walked over and looked at the price his parents had put on the item. "One dollar," he said.

"Will you take a quarter?" she asked again, loudly and more slowly this time.

He acted like he didn't understand. "One dollar."

She sighed, handed him a dollar, thanked him, and walked on.

New vendors had filled up the spaces on the previously empty rows, so she doubled back and walked the rows of the Belmont again. She picked up some shorts for her daughter, some books her son could use for his report on Greek mythology, a pair of binoculars, some kitchen utensils, and a desk lamp.

As she left, she noticed how heavy her cart was. It had been a profitable day so far. She scurried across the now-busy street with her keys in her hand, one key between every finger, to fend off any attackers. You never could be too safe in this neighborhood.

She was glad to get to the Volvo, and checked it for any paint chips, dents, or scratches. As she loaded her bags into the back seat, she thought about how glad she was to be getting out of this side of town. She swung by Alpha Beta on the way home to pick up a few groceries. If the butter coupon wasn't used by today, it would be expired. She checked twice to make sure all four doors were locked before she went into the store. Some people would take anything.

The groceries filled the front seat. On the way home she clicked on the a.m. radio to listen to one of her favorite preachers, Dr. James Dobson. He always had some inspiring words for her, even if he wasn't a southern Baptist. Today the message was about faith, but she didn't hear much of it. Her mind was filled with thought of how to fix up the things she had bought.

She turned the corner to her street and saw her house with the gates at the end of the tiny, manicured cul-de-sac. She reached next to her for the electronic garage door opener and slid the Volvo in between the Mercedes and her husband's BMW.

It took her three trips to get everything inside the house, and the rest of the family still wasn't up. She went up the carpeted stairs and woke her husband, then into the children's bedrooms to get them up. "Come on, now, breakfast is almost ready."

She then went into the kitchen to start preparing the morning meal. Scrambled eggs and toast with fresh fruit, she decided. One by one the three came to the dining room table.

"Ya'll are gonna like what I got ya this morning," she said to her daughter.

Oh, boy, Connie thought. "Really? What?" she said, trying to sound interested.

"Look in the yellow plastic bag."

"Oh, these are cool," Connie said, slipping on a bright red bracelet and admiring her tanned, slender arm. "What else?"

"Some alligator shirts for your friend who always wears them. What's his name?"

"Oh, Mom," she said, sliding them out of their bag. "These are so out!"

"Oh," Ann replied, hurt. "I thought he wore those a lot."

"That's because he's a nerd, and *he's* out."

"I thought you liked him. Wasn't he just over here on Thursday?"

"That's because there was a chemistry test on Friday," she said, rubbing her eyes.

"Good mornin', David," said the mother, setting his scrambled egg in front of him. She only liked to scramble one egg at a time, so everyone got the same amount. "Will you try on those button-down shirts on the table before we go? I want to see if they'll fit you or I'll give them to your dad."

"Oh, please, Mother," he said disgruntledly. "It's too early to even get dressed, and you always want a fashion show. I have enough shirts."

"Do as your mother says," said Dad, lumbering down the stairs and into the dining room. He groaned as he bumped his head on the chandelier while reaching for the butter. "This thing's too low, Ann."

"I know, dear," she said, returning with his scrambled egg. "That's the one I bought last week. It was only a dollar and it's just lovely, I think. There's no other way to hang it. Connie, will you wear that nice blue dress I got you today?"

"You mean the one you sewed the lace collar on to cover the rust stains? I'd rather not."

As the family left the table, Ann sat down to write out the check for this week's tithe. She cleared the dishes and started the dishwasher. All the assorted bags she had collected were folded neatly and stacked in the utility closet for use during her next swap meet run. She took a two-minute shower to wash all the grunge from the Belmont off her body, and donned a practical but expensive-looking dress.

Then, at exactly ten after nine, she called for them all to come down.

"We'll be late for Sunday School again..."

The neatly-dressed and immaculately-groomed family of four piled into the BMW and Dad hit the electronic garage door opener. The kids were bored, looking absently out the windows, and Mom changed the radio station to hear her favorite preacher.

"Thriftiness is next to godliness," he bellowed, as Ann raised her eyebrows and smiled.

Joseph Kelley

Little Man Under My Breath

There's a little man
under my breath,
just out of reach.
He gets me in trouble,
speaks only the truth.
If I could catch him
between my teeth,
I'd bite off his head
and with—a gulp,
be done.

Calie Jo Varnell

Big Guns

Bush is terrified
of Noriega
(who's hiding under God—
his only ally)
because of the CIA in the USA—
all acronyms which define
in comfortable boxes
all that we are afraid
to really understand
because if Mr. President
allows his guilt to murder many
boys to catch one man
with the scoop on him
what's going to happen
to me when i ask
What's going on?
Why doesn't anyone
understand
that the MEN in POWER
are all evil, ego-tripping
fucking assholes
with GUNS so much
bigger
than any words called
truth?

Sheri Brakebush

The Late Night Shift

It was nearing closing time, and Stella was griping at me to start cleaning the place up. "C'mon, Sher," she whined, "It's late, and I'm supposed to go out with Gerald tonight."

"What?" I said, turning to face her, "You think I want to be here?" She just smiled. We both hated the place, but what the hell, it was money.

Working at The International House of Pancakes had not been a lifelong aspiration of mine, but here I was anyway. It was a lousy night job. Who wants pancakes at ten o'clock? The best business was on weekend mornings, but the girls who worked then had all been at I-hop for a hundred years . . . grubby waitress-moles in brown pinafores. Stella and I weren't so lucky. Doomed to the night shift, we passed the slow hours by joking and swapping funny stories.

This particular slow night was a Wednesday, or Thursday. It doesn't really matter. Every night was a slow night at the I-hop. It was nearing ten, and we were both counting the minutes. There were only two customers in the whole place, and they had come in together. Worse still, they were only having coffee. This meant (A) they would only leave a small tip, if any, or (B) they would sit and talk for *hours*.

It was only nine thirty, but we had already drained one of the coffee urns, as well as cleaned up the salad bar. This was a no-no because, unlikely as it was, someone could still come in and want a salad. If this did happen, we'd have to make some lame excuse about how the cooler was broken and then hope the customer didn't mention it to the boss.

The couple finished their coffee and walked to the register. I headed after them. With no hostess on duty, it was the waitress' job to "take cash." As the customer opened her purse to dig for her wallet, I looked over her head at Stella, who was back at their table tossing napkins and dishes everywhere. She paused in the midst of her burrowing frenzy and looked up at me. "ASSHOLES," she spelled out silently, looking disgusted. I just smiled. Poor kid,

it had been her table. This was the third time Stella had gotten stiffed tonight. I had to wonder if maybe she was doing it to herself. They left, and we cleared their table.

We sat at an empty table, looking over the restaurant like generals surveying the carnage. We were joking about how nice the place would look in flames when the last customer of the evening walked in. Stella gasped and said, "He's *yours*!" as she scurried to the bathroom. I turned and saw the reason for her quick departure. He hadn't seen either of us, and he stood there nervously clearing his throat and shuffling his feet. He was a short man, no more than 5'5" or 5'6". His thick gray hair hung past his neck and down his back, matted with leaves and dirt. His brown and deeply lined face was mostly hidden by his bushy eyebrows and his beard, both the same dirty color as his hair. He was wearing so many layers of clothing, it was hard to tell where one layer started and another stopped. His feet were covered with old, worn shoes, and on his hands he wore black mittens with the fingers cut off. He looked up at me and smiled hesitantly, showing brown teeth well into the advanced stages of decay.

He held out his hand and opened it, exposing a few dirty coins. I quickly counted his money. He had twenty-eight cents. He asked me what he could eat, and my mind raced. The cheapest thing on the menu was tea, and it was sixty-five cents. I didn't know what to do. I showed him to a table, gave him a menu and a glass of water. I told him I'd be back when he was ready to order.

Stella, who had emerged from the bathroom and had been watching the whole scene, walked over. "*Shit!*" she said with a snort for added emphasis. "That guy looks like death!"

"He's only got twenty-eight cents," I said. "What am I going to do?"

"It's up to you. He's gross. I'm gettin' outa here!" With that she left, probably to go back into the bathroom. I gritted my teeth and walked back to his table. "Are you ready to order, sir?" The words sounded foreign. "Co . . . coff . . . ee, coffee?" He said, with that same hesitant smile. He looked down at his menu and pointed at the breakfast section. I took out my pad and pen and ordered him eggs, bacon, and pancakes. I put the ticket in the cook's window and brought the man a cup of coffee. By the looks of him, he hadn't eaten in weeks. Stella was watching me again. She held out her hands and gestured "money." I figured what she

was thinking and could only shrug. She looked at me quizzically and then turned away, as if to say, "Go ahead, it's your problem now!"

"THREE please THREE!" shouted the cook. I walked over to the passbar and tried to avoid his stare as he handed me my order. I picked up the plates, balanced them on my arn, and carried them to the table. The man's eyes opened wide with surprise as he saw all of the food coming. I set it down and got ketchup before he asked, out of habit. He lifted his coffee cup to me, as if in a toast, and fell to frenzied eating.

It only took him a few minutes to finish everything on his plate, as well as several refills on his coffee. He was soon standing up at the register, waiting to pay. He stood there like the first time I saw him: feet scuffing the ground, head down. He looked up at me and slowly blinked. He had eyes like a deer—large, brown, and sad. Only they weren't sad anymore. They were shiny with tears but they were smiling at me. Aware that the cook and Stella were both watching, I finally lowered my eyes from his. Slowly, I shook my head, turned, and walked away from him. He shuffled out of the restaurant into the night, and I never saw him again.

Stella galloped over to his table to clear it. She stopped short and gestured to me. I tore up his bill as I walked over to her. Sitting on the table next to his empty cup were three dull pennies.

Timothy Bluhm

The Night at Prison Camp

(General's Highway, Arizona)

Under the sweeping southern sky
my little stove squats and roars
Boiling beans, tortillas
and cheese hiss in the pan.

The fire favors us over wrecked cars
They creak and cool, still rusting
And spook us from their ritual circle.
What kind of coffins are not buried?

We looked for blood on the dashboards
but the sky had washed it off
or someone took it, along with tires
And seats, back to the city.

Up the hill in the piñon grove
a prison cell opened like a skeleton mouth
As long empty as filled, and always lonely
Hell to the names scratched on the walls.

I didn't stay long but it's hard to tell
The fire called me to its side
where my friends poked with sticks
That which separated us from the ghosts.

J.G. Moldenhauer

Wild Rose Country

A cold wind it is
that flattens
the prairie grass
battering the four girders
of the old windmill,
landmarking
frozen fields
with broken slats
that clatter still,
shattering
the morning
of Kneehill County.

The wind has found
gears that need grease
groaning years of neglect,
mourning the memory
of Karl
who no longer strides
this Canadian quarter,
can't generate the motor
for the old windmill
shrieking to the sky,
arms flailing for
what was pioneered—
still remains
near
Acme, Alberta.

Contributors' Notes

Catherine Aaron is finishing work on a Master's Degree in English at CSUC. She has worked as a newspaper reporter, free-lance writer, English teacher, tutor, and public relations officer. Her greatest achievement of the 1990s is her appearance as KFM's first ever Dial-A-Date Contestant. This is her first published fiction.

Timothy Bluhm is a nineteen-year-old first year English major. Most of his poems are drawn from his experiences travelling and rockclimbing throughout the western United States.

Sheri Brakebush is in her third year at CSUC, and hopes to graduate in two more. She is an English major and hopes to teach someday. She enjoys reading and watching old Brady Bunch reruns.

Bill Helmer has lived in Chico off and on since 1974. His is now enrolled in the graduate program in Geography at CSUC and continues research on old trails in the Mojave and Sonoran deserts.

Anne Hikido graduated from CSUC with a degree in English and is currently working on her Editing and Publishing Certificate.

Joseph Kelley was turned on to poetry last semester by Gary Thompson and it is becoming more interesting to him all the time.

Margaret Kirk is a resident of Chico, a writer and a member of the Elder College CSUC club: The Prime Timers.

Melissa Link is a poet who was raised a fiction writer. One of her goals is to be wealthy enough to pay someone to type her manuscripts. She passes the time by talking to her plants and roommates, and she takes her writing more seriously than she takes life.

Geri Mahood teaches part-time in the English Department at CSUC. Her poems have appeared in a number of previous issues of *Watershed.*

Kathleen Malone is a native of St. Louis. She received her B.A. in Speech Communications from The University of Missouri—Columbia in 1985 and is currently working toward an English Teaching Credential at CSUC.

J.G. Moldenhauer has, since her last publication in *Watershed* (Spring 1989), earned a degree and credential. She is a single parent who continues to grow emotionally and professionally. She is currently employed as a Teacher's Aide and is taking more writing classes at CSUC.

Tuan Nguyen is a student in English 17; his teacher is Diane Hilzer, his tutor is James Eaton.

Julianne Olmstead is a Gemini who lives with the four coolest girls in Chico. She also thinks Marty Hansen is a pretty hip guy.

M.E. Parker lived the bulk of her adult life in rural Alaska and is now in the nursing program at CSUC. She writes, skis, and hikes at every opportunity.

Janet M. Schmidt is an English major, graduating in May 1990. She says she will miss Chico.

Roger Shaw is a student at CSUC majoring in English. He is forty-five and returned to school to get a teaching credential.

Michael Station is a senior at CSUC and will graduate in May with a B.A. in History and a minor in English. He plans to attend graduate school at Chico while continuing to work at Butte College where he has been employed for the last five years. He is still a baseball fan, a bluegrass singer, and a rhythm guitar player.

Christine Szuggar-Martinelli is a senior, majoring in English and Social Work, and the mother of Benjie.

Calie Jo Varnell is a woman, an English student, a feminist, and a poet. She will graduate in one more semester and hopes to go to graduate school to continue her quest to become a college-level instructor and a writer.

Sarah Vocelka grew up in Yosemite National Park and has lived in Chico for two and a half years. She will graduate next December and hopes to return to school for another B.A. in Art. She has written poetry since grade school and feels it clears the mind of the daily muddle.

Susanna Wallace is a former English major turned Communication major who will graduate in May but will not really leave Chico. She will go to graduate school to combine her love of English with her knowledge of Communication, hoping to achieve Professordom.

Ann Edmondson, Mike Halldorson and **Ellen Roehne** are students in Marion Epting's Printmaking class. The editors would like to thank them, Professor Epting, and the many other printmakers and photographers who submitted their work for this issue.

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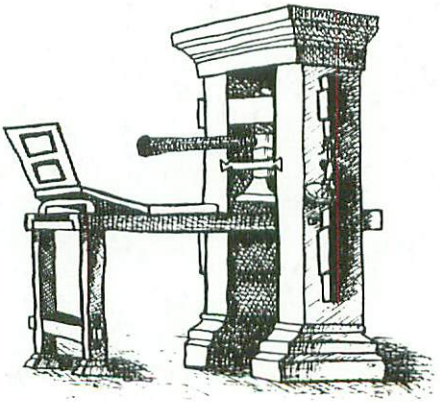

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