

Northern Lights '04



University of Wisconsin-Marquette
Arts Journal



A Portrait of Mother Nature

by Shaina Marcin

I paint upon the canvas
of Earth, a stony ground,
mountain tops and moonbeams
and a sun that wraps around.

I paint the water flowing
from the Earth unto the sea.

Every drop of paint I stroke
brings oh such joy to me.

I look upon my finished art.

The painting is complete.

A smile is across my face
for such beauty I do see.



Celtic Dragons
by Lily Silver

Northern Lights

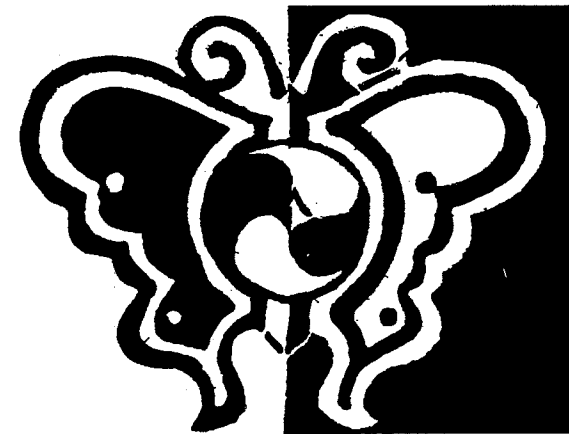
2004

Arts Journal
University of Wisconsin
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Dedicated to the memory of

Shirley A. Evans

1938 - 2004



Butterfly
by Heena Joo

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and how much I missed them. I knew that it could not end like this, but there was nothing I could do. I looked up and prayed. I prayed for my family and for them to be all right. The sky had a hazy gleam to it, as if there were a low cloud only a few feet above the trees. It was smoke. My stove, I thought, my cabin! All that wood must still be burning. I collected all my strength; I dug deep for it and got to my feet. I followed the tantalizing stream of misty gray smoke to my cabin. When I reached my cabin, I fell right in. It should have hurt, but it didn't. I was filled with too much emotion and exhaustion to even consider pain. I kicked the door shut with my leg and curled over to the warmth of my stove. I passed out almost instantly. I don't really remember anything more of that night, but I can still hear the comforting whispers of my stove, "Everything will be just fine."

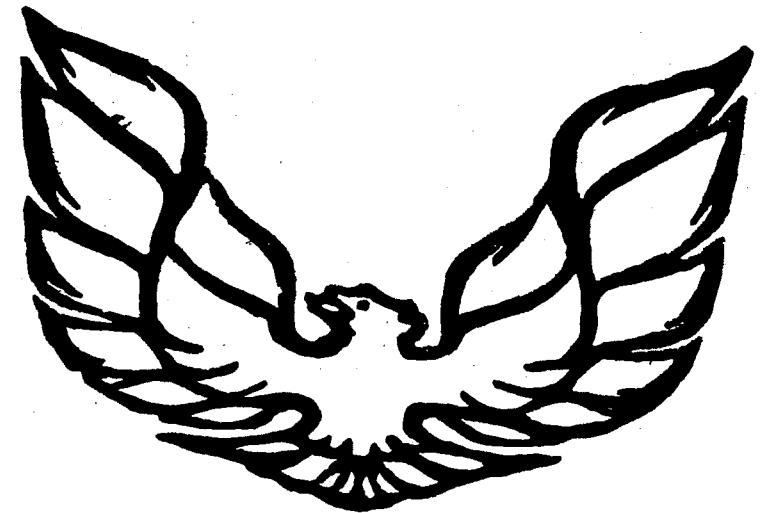
Cover Art: Dog Sled by Haley Malke

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Phoenix
by Tim Bergeson

believed they were. I followed the stream where I fished. I traveled alongside it to a branch. I had never gone this far before and did not know which way to go. I looked at the fork. The left side seemed to be flowing faster. I wanted a picture of a waterfall no matter how small it was. I could always zoom in and get the picture in the entire frame, so I headed left. I followed the stream a while. I was thinking of returning home to my wife and son the entire way. I followed the stream through a bunch more branches to different streams, choosing whichever one seemed to be moving fastest. The streams were deep and moved very swiftly. I followed them a while, skipping back and forth from stream to stream, branch to branch, when suddenly I realized that there was water all around me. Streams were all over the place, jumping and sliding down all sides of the valley I was in. I was all mixed up, completely turned away from the direction I came from and knew. I didn't even know what direction I was now facing. I knew before I even thought: I was in trouble.

I tried to collect myself. I was lost and knew it. It was snowing out, pretty hard too, and I didn't even realize it while I was walking. I was too fixated on getting my footage and getting home to my family to even notice. I didn't even have my compass with me since I thought the waterfall would be on the stream near camp. I decided I would try to retrace my steps—follow my footprints in the snow back to the camp, but they were vanishing and filling in every minute. I began running, but was soon left with no trail. I started panicking. I couldn't help it. I was scared. To make it even worse, it was getting dark. I had to find my way back now because there was no way I could make it through a night out here. I decided all I could do was start walking in the direction I thought I might have come from. I walked and walked through knee-deep snow for about a couple of hours. The temperature had dropped about 20 degrees since I started and I was slowing down.

I was totally exhausted and could not go anymore. I collapsed and fell face down into the snow and, with some effort, managed to roll over and face the sky. I lay there dreaming of my home, of my wife and child,

Friends

by Elouise Rossler

Friends come in a variety of packages,
Each one is unique and offers
Something totally new and refreshing.
The time spent in chattering about
The unimportant things is not wasted;
It is friendship time.
Friends mirror us—the good and the bad—
Giving us reason to pause and change,
Allowing us to smile in silent praise
for things said and things unsaid.
Friends suffer for the other's pain
Trying to be supportive and cheerful
Without showing the tears.
Friends don't always have to talk
For words just get in the way,
Silent gesture and pleasant smiles
Are communication enough.
Friends have fun and laugh at themselves
And at each other; they tease and say
Silly things.
When all is said and done,
What is there in all those hours we spend
Better than having known and shared
Life with a friend?

For Shirley from Elouise

A Misty Morning
by Gabriella Derusha

Clouds hang low
On a misty morning,
As if suspended
In the air
Twenty feet
Above the meadow
Half as high
As the forest trees.
I feel as if my world
Is on its knees
Not wanting to be
Lost in the haze.

Choices
by Gabriella Derusha

Daylight screamed through my window
Forcing my senses to note
I had a chance for
Fight or flight.
Should I drown out the light
With blankets
Or get up and relinquish warmth
To lower the shade?

need for the ground to freeze first before the snowfall would stay since the first night dumped over two feet. It wasn't like back home where we need the ground to get rock hard before any snow will actually stick. The snowfall made the place look dangerous and at the same time beautiful. It gave me that feeling of being alone and of being completely forgotten. It was an eerie feeling; but when I thought about how wonderful it made things look, it was all right. The conifers looked the best. The heavy snow, which built up on their branches, looked wonderful and the occasional tree that was completely bent over from the heavy snow made you think and wonder. Will that tree die? Will it reshape in the spring? Will it break in half? It will surely be dead then. But I knew that everything would be just fine.

Things went like that for about three more weeks. I took my walks and gathered my pictures of winter. I took pictures of the winter birds I saw. I took pictures of the stream I fished. I took pictures of everything that amused me. I even captured a little mouse and its tracks that led to the base of a large pine. I enjoyed these walks through the winter snow. They reminded me of home and the walks I took on my land with my wife. I became really lonely. I played solitaire with my pack of Bicycle playing cards and carved walking canes from the unique sticks I found. I kept a journal of the things I saw and the things I felt. Every night I packed my stove full of wood before I went to bed and listened to it speak.

I woke one morning from a comforting dream. I felt refreshed and happy. I wanted to go home. I enjoyed the wilderness and everything, but not when it just reminded me of home. I decided I would take the last of my pictures all in this day and send a signal for them to pick me up early. I knew they would be mad since I was only supposed to send a signal for an emergency, but to me this was an emergency. I needed to get home. I set out as soon as I was ready. I packed my stove full of wood, so much that not even a piece of kindling could fit and closed the vent so it would burn slowly. I knew that there were some absolute money shots located further from the cabin, and I headed to the place I

Comfort from a Wood Stove

by John Landenberger

The woods were a magnificent array of yellows, oranges, and reds. Evergreens and conifers were scattered among the bright fall colors and made the scenery seem even more incredible and intense. Ridges and valleys flowed smoothly into a distant lake, and from the lake ran a number of brooks and small streams.

I had been here only once before during the summer months. Everything then looked so thick and hot, it never really appealed to me. I had come back, though, for two reasons. For one thing, I needed more pictures for my company, and another, for my early departure from what I will only refer to as a family problem. I arrived here by plane and had all the supplies I needed to manage a comfortable living throughout the rough winter. The first few weeks all I did was cut firewood. I would wake up and eat breakfast, then go out and find some trees to cut. I tried to find hard maple if I could since I knew it burned hotter than most others, but I usually took whatever was easiest. I would cut the tree down, cut it up, split it, and then stack it. I had around ten cords of wood by the time I decided to stop. It was a little much, but I knew it would be just fine. I enjoyed the work. It gave me something to keep my mind on.

After I had finished gathering all my firewood and doing some other minor work on the cabin, things went pretty slow. I took walks around the woods, always staying pretty close to the cabin. I gradually became more comfortable with the woods and would often travel a little farther to a stream, in which I would catch a few trout. It was nice having something to eat other than Campbell's chicken noodle and various instant meals all the time. During the first few weeks, I thought about my wife a lot and even more about my kid. He is only five years old and is acting more like me every day. It scares me a little, but I do enjoy watching him grow. My wife and I agreed that this trip would be a good thing. I thought it was a little long, but I knew it would be just fine.

Winter came rather quickly. It came all in one night. There was no

In Praise of Fences

Anne Peterson

I live in fences—several at a time usually. We all live in fences. Fences are often good, sometimes bad, or sometimes somewhere in between. But they are inescapable, so accept it.

First, for many of us, there is the baby bed with a little fence around it. Next we find ourselves in the playpen with a somewhat larger fence. From here we can be in the room with Mommy more and play with more interesting toys. From the playpen we often venture to the fenced backyard where we can really move around, dig in the dirt, make mud pies, and play pretend games where no one can see or hear us. A nice fenced-in backyard is almost heaven...for a while.

In no time we are old enough to start school, and school has not only physical fences, but it has all manner of time fences and requirement fences. Relationships begin with others our own age; and we explore boundaries—the fences that we set up for ourselves and those that our friends set up for themselves.

The hours in the days, the days in the week, the weeks in a month, and the months in a year are all fences of a sort. We can't just have Christmas whenever we like; nor can we have our birthday whenever we see something we wish someone would buy, gift wrap, and hand over to us.

Every obligation represents a fence. Every need represents a fence. If we are not very careful, even our wants can turn into fences. Bonds are fences. Get married, have a few kids, take on a mortgage, and you will really be reeling in fences.

Our culture—and everyone has one—fences us in. We form cultures to keep us from being alone and for protection, mostly from ourselves. We need protection from evildoers; we need government to accommodate a great array of things that make it possible to get through life. These fences are good, and we are glad we have them.

If we are a little neurotic (and be assured we all are), then we add more fences to the mix. Are we too bashful, do we take offense too easily; is affirmation from others essential, do we reject others before they get the chance to pull that on us? More fences.

Fences can become too small, too confining, too boring, until we finally feel fenced in. There is a cure for that, but it isn't escaping from fences—there is no escape from fences. If we are smart, we can exchange

fences, or at least a few of them, for better, bigger, gentler fences. We can play some part in which fences we go into and when and if we want to go out of them. But this is not always an easy process, and you must have your head on straight and be alert to which fences you're in, which fences you wish you were in, and to passing "fence" opportunities.

To further complicate matters, sometimes you are in a fence that you just love, but you are not allowed to stay in it. For example, a fledgling being pushed out of its nest; or a thirty-year old being asked to leave home.

Then there is the ultimate fence. The all time, worldwide champion fence is, of course, our own bodies. At first we can't do anything because we are so darn little, uncoordinated, and don't know anything. We grow and get better, but for what seems forever, we are too short, and everybody bosses us around. Then there is this thing called puberty and very strange fences spring up. Our bodies really start to change, and our focus also changes mightily. Then the onset of the serious aging process—oh, our good looks are slipping away. With more age we grieve the loss of youth and dread even more aging. We enter what is known as the mid-life crisis fence and the menopause fence. (Whew! Is anybody hot in here?) Then our bodies begin to turn on us. We get too fat, we are not so strong and enduring, diseases sneak in like silent cancers, and our hearts tire of pumping all the time. We sag everywhere, our hair is not the same—it has lost color and thinned, and maybe it's gone altogether. Now there's a new look.

Oh, we can fight the onset of all these changes, but it's just a matter of time. Some people choose to grow old gracefully, while others spa up and keep the plastic surgeons in their good fences. But eventually the ending is always the same. We leave the body, the industrial strength, all-time champion fence. We die.

Are we free at last?

The Gift

by Elouise Rossler

Snow
Falling, falling, falling
Softly.

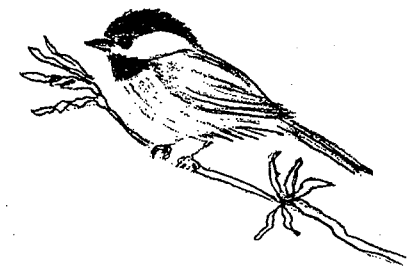
Time
Unfettered, unused, uncharted,
Free.

Muted
Whiteness, pureness, softness,
Quiet.

Rhythm
Slowing, incubating, interrupting,
Pulsebeat.

Dailiness
Ceasing, changing, idling,
Today.

Gifts
Memories, beauty, dreams,
Snow.



Blackcapped Chickadee

by Lily Silver

Red Sky
by Richard Peterson

The caress of breeze gentle from the west
Lays hands to balloon the clouds of white.
Tight rigged to rise against a cobalt sky
Roiling aft, azure blue with tips of white
Slip translucent from the tilting hull.
At one with all the waters of the earth
Primeval in simplicity of form.

To safe haven coursed and logged in peace
Dim gray horizons on the edge of sight
a port, a refuge just beyond the heart
Pretending without fear, a storm to come
Remains the forecast of another day.
Embrace the tranquility now bestowed
By zephyrs cool and crisp upon the skin.

Breathe deep and taste the clean and magic air
Which only buoyant souls can comprehend.
Set jib and mainsail to the compass point.
Sail above the deeps and darks that lurk
Beneath the keel which holds us to our course.
Fear not to chart the journey's end with hope.
The bow at sunset delights beneath a crimson sky.

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by Michael Ceccarelli
for Paul

There is an inequity,
a disparate nature,
between the shining coursers
screaming down the flattened track,
and the wide eyed watchers
emerging from the wild.

Unsure steps lead from surety to oblivion,
torn from their purpose,
into foreign service,
with no place left to be.

Bottle caps flicked,
for the joy of their flight.
For what we can do to them;
not for what they can do.

Once the assignment's fulfilled,
forgotten, crushed beneath the rush
to feed conformity
meet the model,
fill the mold.

And anything that oozes out,
that does not fit
is dross, discard, disposable.
Another throw-away kid.

Purged in the heat of zero tolerance.
The leadership's warrant echoes
in the roaring flames,
"Leave none behind."

And so shall it be.
Amid the carnage,
of our disposable society.

Generation Gap

by Elouise Rossler

It was just an old trunk
Brought down from the attic,
When Grandma's house was sold.
The children clamored to open it.
The release snapped, the lid flew up,
The contents spilled
To create a world of the Past,
A place held fast only by memory.
Silk slippers—barely worn
Had a story to tell of dreams—
Grandma had been a dancer
Until
She met a striking young man.
She'd left the world of dance
and beautiful costumes.
But his love wasn't true;
She returned to her first love;
The satin slippers still fit.
Dance partners were many,
The shows were frequent,
Until one night, late in the year,
A new partner missed cue—
She fell hard.
The shoes were hung on her bed
Hoping the broken ankle
Would take note.
She met a love true,
In a year or two,
The shoes were tenderly laid
With a dress of lace
In the old trunk

Quietly the children left,
One by one,
Each with his own thoughts.
The slippers fell into the trunk,
Cushioned by the lace.
Did they gently sigh,
"What might have been?"

(Inspired by a painting and its set-up by Betty Osbourne)

Goodbye Girl

by Alexandra Barnes

She was a firecracker on a Sunday afternoon
And everyone knew what the explosion was
Mesmerized by the things she does
And the things she says
It all ended with a resonance so intense
It left us silent and still
With our hallows bent into shapes
Like hearts and triangles
Or mangled like chewing gum

Now

I can hear in the silence where she used to be
The voices that completed me
and I keep pulling her love
Out of my hair
and her hate from the skin on my arms
Pieces of her come to my head
And feel the same
As a bullet to my brain
The cracking shot, fire, sting,
And she's dead again to me
buried in my memory
Shallow

Now

I feel this hollow space in the palm of my hand
where she once stood
Her beautiful wasteland
Erupting through sun and storm
One part torn
And one part mended
Scented like harmony
I called her Destiny
I called her Mother
Goddess
who took her stand on top of us
In a whirlwind of fire and dust and noise
Left us in her wake so silent and small
Goodbye Girl
I had you once
But you had us all

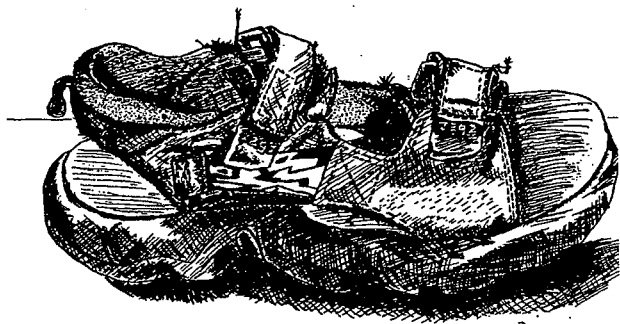
To You
by Annie E. Burie

The deep freeze has almost forgotten her purpose
The sun is hanging around longer
And I heard the bears are starting to awake

This place is beginning to resemble something
something possibly alive

I keep thinking it is time to go outside
Walk south

And catch you on your return.



A Long Hot Summer
by Marina Schindler

Enticing Rumors
by Brian Cashen

Oh, if only my life were as exciting
As the rumors that they spread
The strain and sheer exertion
would most likely leave me dead

I can't wait for the next batch to come out
As I anticipate the juicy tidbits that were said
My imagination cannot compete with theirs
and my ego needs to be fed
But someday their well of gossip will run dry
And that's the day I'll truly dread
For on that day I'll be so disappointed
That I'll probably refuse to get up out of bed.



Serpent
by Matt Marotz

Star Ride
by Jennifer Stolpa

Packed in three sweaters and a jacket, I sat in the back seat of the Chevy, trying not to feel the cold from the vinyl seat seeping through my jeans. The sound of the wheels rhythmically skimming over the breaks in the interstate pavement, the comforting darkness of the car, and the soft illuminations from the dashboard made sleep almost too inviting to resist. I could hear my mom talking to my oldest brother in the front seat. She was telling him again about the first moon landing—how she had held him on her lap and told him that he was witnessing something miraculous. Since he was only two then, she knew he wouldn't remember, but she loved to tell the story as if to try to trigger his memory somehow.

Eventually, we arrived at the secluded location my mom had been looking for. Far from any street lamps or gas station signs, we stumbled out of the car, rubbing sleep from our eyes. We grabbed the lawn chairs from the trunk, plopped them down off the side of the road, sat down, and looked up at the stars.

At first, I was too sleepy to care. But Mom's enthusiasm was infectious and the stories were incredible. She told me and my brothers Greek and Roman myths of vengeance, love and hate, and murderous villains. I preferred the Native American stories about the constellations. I settled deeper into my chair as she began one of the stories of Pleiades, how the brothers got up in the sky and how the pine tree was connected to the heavens.

Every star ride when I was growing up was just like that. Every few months, my mom would pile me and my brothers into the car on a clear night and head out to the interstate. We'd drive about ten miles, and then she'd randomly select an exit for some county road, winding our way through the countryside as she sought out the perfect spot, somewhere no cars would pass and no lights diminish the power of the constellations.

We'd look up at the strip of the Milky Way, faintly visible and seeming more like motionless clouds in the night sky, and we'd talk about other galaxies and beyond. My brothers would claim to see a shooting star at least once a minute, usually in the exact opposite direction from where I was looking. I often chose to stay silent when one would cross my sight, but sometimes I would gently touch my mom's arm and whisper to her about my luck. She would disrupt nature's nighttime noises or the silence of a snow-covered countryside with her applause. I never knew if she was cheering nature for its wonder, me for having caught it, or both.

After an hour or two, mom would sigh, stretch, and stand up. As

Green buds and new spring grass began to surface.

Things were pretty quiet at my school. After the carnival left town, Jack Maggette was nowhere to be found. Constable Swenson questioned me and some of the other boys who had been there when Jack had the run in with Rajh the mystic. But where the carnival went from north country, no one had the slightest idea.

Everyone just figured Jack took off, maybe hopped a freight train and went south. And there were other distractions. The spring winds were perfect for kite flying, and pussy willows were there for the picking. After a while, no one mentioned Jack.

##

About the time Jack disappeared, a new beetle showed up in our upstairs bathroom. It looked like the other beetles, red with round black spots, but it had a white head. And it was faster than the others. The wolf spider tried to catch it, but it always eluded his grasp.

Along toward the middle of May, one morning I got out of bed and began washing my face, anticipating a big bowl of Wheaties, the breakfast of champions. I looked around the bathroom, but all the beetles were gone except the one with the white head. He was the last beetle.

He had evaded the spider for weeks, but time was running out. As I bent over to brush my teeth the white-headed ladybird beetle walked right up close. I stared hard at the beetle's head. It wasn't an insect's head, leastwise not any bug I had ever seen. Then the spider pounced, holding the beetle in its powerful jaws.

At that instant I heard a small, tinny voice, like the sound from an old fashioned gramophone.

"Help meeeee, help meeee," wailed the tiny voice. I stared at the beetle, close up. It had a human head! In fact, it had Jack Maggette's head.

I was transfixed. Jack had been turned into a beetle by... whom, or what? The Indian mystic? A vengeful god, because of all the kids he had terrorized?

I watched, fascinated, as the spider caught Jack in its powerful jaws and, with an audible crunch, began eating him alive. First his legs were consumed, then his wings. The pitiful screaming finally stopped as the insect's head was devoured. The last beetle had succumbed to the wolf spider.

##

Maybe I just imagined the whole incident. Maybe the beetle wasn't Jack at all. But Jack never returned to north country. Summer came and vacation. No one talked about Jack, and no one missed him. His family eventually up and moved, and life resumed its pattern of seasonal change, summer turning to fall, fall to winter. The beetles showed up again that winter but the spider was gone. And I never again saw one with a small white head. It must have been something special, all right.

"Right," replied Pete, "but let's hurry. Here comes Jack Maggette. I don't need to get punched out by him again!"

We paid for our tickets and entered the surprisingly big sideshow tent. There was a lot to see: a woman who was just gigantic, the dog-headed boy, two men joined at the back, Ling and Lang, and a strong man bending iron bars and breathing fire. But the most incredible sight was the Indian mystic.

He was a small man, his head wrapped in a white turban. And, yes, he was sitting with his legs crossed, meditating quietly, on a bed of very sharp nails!

Pete and I stared at the man. A sign behind him bragged, "Rajh the mystic, from far away India. Walks on fire and can stop his heart."

"Oh, oh," enjoined Pete, "here comes trouble."

I turned around. Jack was swaggering into the tent with his gang of sycophants, kids who were all the school misfits. They circled Jack like moths drawn to a flame.

"These jokers are all fakes," Jack said loudly so's everybody in the tent could hear.

"This guy is a phony. Watch."

He walked up to Rajh the mystic and stared in his face. The man remained immobile, quiet, with his eyes closed.

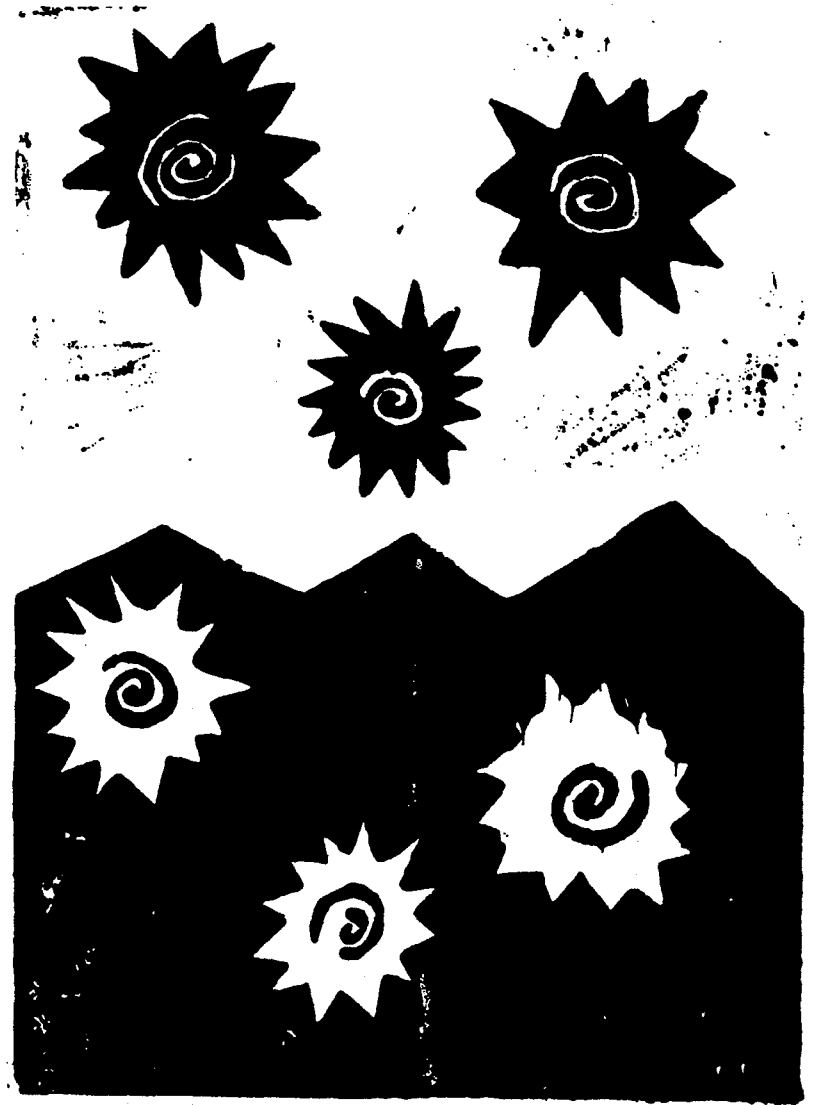
Jack raised one booted foot and brought it down hard on the little man's foot, which was shoeless. The mystic didn't budge. But slowly his eyes opened and he fixed Jack with his dark eyes, not moving a muscle. Jack's grin faded and he slowly backed away, then broke and ran from the tent.

##

April slipped into May. The frost line went and the resulting huge puddles that had been perfect for checking out new boots, dried up.



Lizard
by Carrie Pleau



Starry Night
by Dulcie Dahle

reluctant as I'd been to leave the comforts of home and bed, I was usually more reluctant to leave behind the comfort we'd created in the middle of nowhere. We'd climb back into the car, my brothers in the back seat punching and kicking each other, much more awake than on the ride out. And I would sit in the front seat next to my mom and crane my neck, pushing my face up against the glass, looking up at the sky. As we drove back into the city, I tried hard to focus on Pleiades or whatever constellation the season had brought out. I didn't want to lose sight of it and thought that if I could just keep my eyes focused tightly enough, I'd still be able to see it even when we returned to all the distracting lights of the city.

Eventually, I'd lose sight of it. Still, thinking of it later as I lay in bed or sat in class the next day, I'd remember Pleiades. It reminded me that although I was just a small part of a huge universe that doesn't even know or care that I exist, I was also a part of my family. I mattered very much there. Years later, in an astronomy class in college, the instructor pointed a telescope at the constellation, and my eyes were bombarded by at least a hundred points of light. While those visible with the naked eye get all the attention, it is the entire cluster of aging stars that make up its real beauty and true value. As an adult, I came to understand that just like that constellation, my own family extended well beyond my brothers and mom. There were so many steady lights present around me, supporting me, acknowledging my individuality and importance in the universe.

About a month after my mom died, there was a lunar eclipse. It was the kind of event she would have loved. It takes patience to truly enjoy it; it provokes awe and raises questions, and the answers to those questions only make you wonder more. My brothers had moved away and had families of their own, but I no longer had to drive out into the country to see a thousand stars in one glance. Having recently moved to a small town, all I had to do was walk out my door and down the road a little ways to get away from the lights of my neighbors' houses.

The night of the eclipse I was drawn down that road. I set up my chair and sat down. As the light reflecting off the moon weakened, more and more stars emerged from the dark sky. I leaned back in my chair and pulled my knees up to my chest, interlacing my fingers beneath them. I felt my mom's touch in my now grown-up hands. I heard her voice when I sighed in amazement. And when I saw a meteor briefly pass below the moon, I heard her applause.

By the second week in April Jack had perfected his trade, pulling girl's pigtails, kicking marbles carefully positioned for a perfect shoot, stealing candy from terrorized kindergartners.

The news wasn't all bad, though.

The carnival was coming!

Every April the Hardy Brothers carnival came to north country. It was a magnet of unequalled drawing power to every youngster.

It spoke to us of far away places, exotic cities of the Orient that we could only imagine, exhibiting strange looking people who displayed themselves inside a tent, terrible to behold but wonderful too! There was the midway, where the older boys would display their burgeoning powers by slamming down a huge wooden sledge hammer on a bell ringer.

I had saved four dollars since Christmas by selling my collection of tinfoil from gum wrappers to the scrap dealer. World War II was on and any enterprising kid could convert old aluminum pots, bits of twine, anything that was useful into cash.

Friday and the weekend seemed to be out of reach, but we endured school and Jack the playground bully, and lo, it finally came.

"Now, son," my father pontificated as I prepared to leave for the great adventure, "you be careful at the carnival. Them folks ain't like us. They have strange heathen ways, some of 'em."

My dad was convinced anyone who wasn't brought up in north country was not a true, red-blooded American. And maybe not a good Christian, to boot!

But thereby lay the fascination for us boys: the barkers, the pretty woman on the midway, and the freaks were fascinating because **they weren't from north country!**

We imagined them living in some far away city, in distant Florida perhaps, where people ate fancy food all the time, and rode in big new cars, while we had to make do with patched-together trucks made before war production forced the rationing of automobiles, tires and gasoline.

I kissed by mom goodbye, shoved my precious four dollars in my jeans, and headed out the door.

##

"Look at that!" my best friend Peter exclaimed. We stood in front of the tent with the freak show inside. Huge garish canvas posters lured the locals into the tent.

"Step right up, boys; don't be shy now," crooned the barker. "This show is educational. Why, you can see a two-headed baby preserved in a bottle, Siamese twins Ling and Lang, see an Indian mystic lay on a bed of nails and not even say 'ouch'."

"Wow, Pete," I said, "let's go in. I'd rather see this show than eat another cotton candy."

The Last Beetle

by James LaMalfa

Spring was coming to the north country. The crystalline white tide that had held us in its icy grip for six months was ebbing. Flotsam and jetsam of failed farming efforts began to appear. As the blanket of snow receded, the handle of a broken plow surfaced, an ancient rusted axe, head buried in a stump and never removed by its owner, stood defiantly.

A behemoth steam tractor behind our barn began to reappear, its boiler reverting to lacy rusted iron, its seat askew, a perch now for the coming robins.

Other signs of spring began to manifest themselves at our country school. Boys began to polish off their favorite shooters. Games of marbles were hotly contested in the 1940s. Girls played double Dutch jump rope, heedless of their swirling dresses as they skipped to red hot pepper.

Insects began their annual invasion of our playground. Jack Maggette, the school bully, was fast at it again, pulling off butterflies' wings, trapping June bugs and imprisoning them in a carved out chestnut, later to be released in our fourth grade classroom, terrifying the girls.

The Maggette family was well off by our standards. Jack's father was a local contractor and spoiled his only son. Jack was just a growth spurt ahead of everyone else in fourth grade and used his size to lord it over everyone.

##

Nights were still cold in early April. There were still delicate fingers of frost in evidence on the bathroom window when I got out of a warm bed to get ready for school. I could smell bacon frying from the kitchen and hurried my morning ablutions.

As I brushed my hair, I counted beetles. The miniscule red and black "ladybirds," as we called them, had been great in number as of fall. But as winter took its toll, they dropped away, one by one, helped along to beetle heaven by a gray wolf spider that haunted our upstairs bathroom.

It was amusing to watch the game, as the beetles tried pathetically to outrun the hirsute predator. It was no contest. The spider moved in swift arcing jumps, caught the tiny beetles in its massive jaws and promptly began devouring them. I thought I could hear a crunch as he bit into their fragile exoskeletons.

Only two beetles had managed to outwit the spider, and I knew they wouldn't last out the spring.

##

Your \$3.50 in change

by Alexandra Barnes

Redheads got it going

Out of the box

Naturally brunette

I know that

Natural Instincts

Maybe

But you don't get the temper

I already have that fire

Not in my pants

In my head

Enough to know the P's and Q's

Of VCR directions

Anyway



Hippo
by Karla Konyn

Silver Sunlight
by Brad Evancheck

The moonlight shown brightly in the sky; its resident glared down frightfully at the night before him. Wind tore through the trees, stripping the branches of all color and depositing it onto the dirt path. Shadows seemed to crawl out of their hiding places. Now that the children were tucked away safely in their bed, the spirits were free to roam about. The witching hour was upon them. The calm night suddenly broke free as the sound of footsteps pelting the fallen leaves came echoing through the frigid air. Out of the darkness burst a middle-aged man, running like all of hell was after him. The trees blurred by; the man gave them no second look. Had he done so he might have noticed the root protruding from the ground before he tripped over it. With a crack, his skull met the frozen dirt.

Almost paralyzed, he flopped on his back revealing his face. It was a sorry sight to look at; the pure sense of fear froze his face into a twisted position. Fresh, deep red blood seeped from his nose and into his mouth, which was wide open in fright. His shallow breath wasn't nearly enough to sustain him, but somehow did. His entire body trembled, cursing the darkness and its trickery. Desperate eyes darted about the darkness as everything became quiet again. This brief silence was soon interrupted as a wolf howled in the distance. The man's heart leaped through his throat, pushing him to his feet as he once again bolted. Something came crashing down through the trees where he was. He did not care to look back. Instead his eyes sought for refuge.

He knew if he were to run a little further, he would reach his cabin, and prayed silently that he would make it. His prayers were soon answered. Through the hazy darkness a building slowly formed. He barely bothered to stop as he grabbed a handle and twisted it violently. The door creaked as he threw it open. He whirled inside the cabin, slamming and bolting the door behind him. He placed his back against the door, almost trying to barricade it from something. All fell quiet, as the only thing he heard was the rampant thumping of his heart against its cage. He silently thanked it for holding out. His eyes slowly closed in upon themselves. He almost felt safe until the set of razor-sharp claws burst through the two-inch thick door several inches from his face. Quickly he jumped from the door as the claws slowly wiggled out of

A Lament by a Cow
by Gabriella Derusha

Summer days are here again.
Hot is the day.
Warm is the night.
I remember the stories of
Green grass underfoot,
Clip clip of hooves
On meadow lanes,
and tails that swung
Back and forth,
Knocking flies
Into tomorrow.

Yes, I remember
Words of bubbling brooks
And cool spring water,
Choice morsels in the hollow,
And the shade of trees
Along a fence
With green grass
On the other side.
Our horns grew long
and pointed too.
Ah, yes, I remember
The tails of long ago.

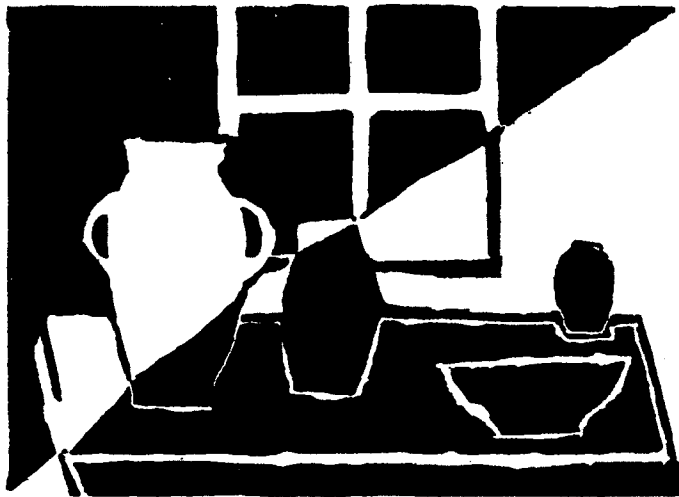
else might be in store for her. Still she remained tight mouthed and tight jawed – and then it happened. A smile spread from those compressed lips and almost went from ear to ear. Her face relaxed, and something warm and powerful shone through her eyes.

“I certainly am, Miss.”

The change was remarkable and rendered me speechless. When I found my voice, I continued, “Well, this day will eventually go on by like all the rest of them. At least that’s how I try to get through one of these days.”

“Praise the Lord and thank you,” she replied, still smiling.

As Mother and I were leaving, I thought; well, transactional analysis does work. But the thing I had not expected was the feeling of walking a few inches off the floor. Joy filled my heart. I had brought a smile to that woman’s face. I made some little difference in her day just by being nice for a moment or two. It was so simple. Joy comes when God works through us.



Mexican Pottery

by Sherry Lucas

their holes. The door would only hold for a few more moments, and then it would all be over. His eyes darted around for his nightstand. The only light was from the full moon shining through the window to his right. He tried to ignore the raging howls emanating from beyond the door.

Finally he found it through the haze and darkness, quickly sending a trembling hand down for the handle. As it opened with a creak he felt around for his handgun, locating it near the back of the drawer. Instantly he whirled around, pointing his gun at the door and shooting three rounds into the wood; the howling stopped. Moonlight poured through the holes in the door. The man remained motionless for a few moments, expecting the howling to start up again. Finally he lowered the gun to his side, giving out a deep groan as his breath finally caught up to him. Had he taken the time to look through the window, he might have reacted to the sound of glass shattering. His gun went up, but then fell from his hands as a muffled scream burst from him, only to be silenced quickly. Blood slowly trickled down the arm that was holding the gun as it fell limp.

Ryan woke in a cold sweat, greeted by the monotone sound of a heart monitor. An old man, who was positioned on the other side of the room from him, was sleeping peacefully. Wires and diodes linked him to machines that would scream out if he were to change in the slightest. The window had been left open the night before, so it was quite chilly in the room. He shivered uncomfortably as his hand rose slowly to his right shoulder, finding a patch had been placed there. On the patch were three distinct streaks of blood. The room seemed serene. Flowers left by his bedside advertised that someone had been there the night before. Just then the door opened and through it came a young woman, clad in green. She looked to be only a few years older than Ryan, but already her face was showing signs of age. Her dark brown hair ran down to her shoulders. Her deep blue eyes were red and swollen like she had been crying all night. Those same eyes seemed to light up like a Christmas tree as she spotted him sitting upright in bed. Immediately she ran and wrapped her arms around him in a loving embrace. She spoke softly, yet harshly.

“O, Ryan, what ever possessed you to go romping out in the middle of the night? Don’t you know you could have been killed?” She continued to squeeze him tighter until he felt like he hardly could breathe from her grip.



Mask

by Alexandra Barnes

Field Experiment

by Anne Peterson

Joy seldom stays very long and comes usually when least expected. My guess is that joy often comes and goes in subtle ways that go unnoticed. Be on the lookout for it – the more joy feels at home in your heart, the more likely it may come your way. I remember once.

Mother and I were having lunch at the Magnolia Room – an elegant restaurant where ladies of Atlanta often lunched while out shopping. The hostess seated us in an area separated from the main dining room by a white picket fence. There were about six tables for four, and Mother and I were glad to have some privacy. We studied the menu and began to talk a bit, when I began to look around for a server. I had not seen one since we sat down. I also began to overhear talk at the nearby tables where others were complaining. Apparently she was slow, did not refill the coffee cups, made mistakes in the orders, and never quite got the tab correct. The parties at separate tables had begun to discuss among themselves their indignation and agitation regarding the unseen waitress.

Finally she appeared. She was majestic – tall and graceful despite her long limbs and lankiness. She stood straight, and fierceness seemed to emanate from her eyes. She looked very much out of place – she was better suited for a place of distinction at the head table being served rather than serving these wealthy, Buckhead blue hairs. However, this was the south in the sixties, and there wasn't much chance of that.

The women chided her for all her peccadilloes. They talked at her and certainly did not expect a reply. None was forthcoming. The waitress remained standing stone straight, kept her thin mouth sealed, and avoided looking at her tormentors.

I had recently finished reading one of those transactional analysis books, and I thought this would be a good time to do a field experiment. When finally she had finished serving us and brought our bill, I looked up at her. At first she did not engage eye contact. Without checking the bill, I glanced at the total and added a large tip. I again looked up at her stern face, tight mouth, and eagle-like eyes, which she slowly lowered to gaze down at me. I almost lost my nerve right then, but not quite.

With a big smile I said, "You sure seem to be having one of those really awful days that we all have from time to time."

Her eyes softened a bit, and she paused, maybe waiting to see what

On Truth

by Annie E. Burie

Your vanity in youth's thoughtless
Expression
Your knowledge in media
Coverage
Incapable of distinguishing wit
For probing weakness
As fly on tape
Expounding on current
Understanding
Vomiting
Repeated propaganda
Society's norms
Taking root without
Causation of what lies
Beneath the fashion
be careful



Rabbit Patch
by Tony Hernandez

"Jill, I will die if you don't let go of me!" He gasped for air, finally feeling her let go of him. "I don't know what possessed me to go out. I just did."

As she drew back and took a seat next to him, her eyes began to well up again. "Poor thing, you probably hit your head when that animal was chasing you; you're not safe out there alone. Look at that wound it left on your arm! The doctor said it'd probably need stitches!"

Ryan once again raised his hand up to the patch on his arm, "I'm fine, and, Jill, I don't need any of your sympathy." He retracted back into his bed, covering himself with his blanket defensively.

Jill sniffed, wiping a tear from her eye as she pleaded with him, "Why won't you call me Mom?"

"Because you're not my mom!" Ryan quickly threw the blankets to the side, sitting upright, anger seeped into his face, contorting it until it was unfit to look at. "Just because you married Dad doesn't mean you're my mother!"

She reeled back, almost as if she were hit in the face. She opened her mouth to respond but for a long while nothing came out. Finally she retaliated, "If I'm not your mother, then who has been taking care of you, giving you love, especially while your father is away on his business trip?" She had to keep herself from draining what was left of her tears. "I know I may not be able to fill her shoes, but she is gone, and I'm afraid no one can bring her back."

Slowly she rose and turned for the door, shifting her gaze only momentarily back to Ryan. Indeed he looked nothing like her; his blond curly hair marked a stark contrast to her long, brown hair. He was more heavy set and quite more muscular than she was. Although he was taller than her, it was only by a few inches. She quietly exited the room, seeing how his attention was now on the television in the corner of the room. He had flipped it on and no longer was paying any attention to what she had to say.

Ryan began to flip through the channels; although he did not want to think about it, the mention of his mother had brought back his last memories of being with her. In his opinion, she was the best mother in the world. She wasn't too strict, but she wasn't too lenient either. She knew just where to draw the line and he respected her for that. When he heard that she had disappeared without a trace close to two years ago, he was crushed. He couldn't think about a life without her in it. Deep

down he knew that as long as Dad kept hope that they would find her, someday she would come back to him. All his hopes were crushed when Jill met his dad. Instead of continuing to search for his mother, he spent all his time with her. He didn't mean to be so cold towards Jill; but whenever he saw her, something inside him boiled with hatred.

Settling with a news channel, he decided that it would be best if he took a nap. Slowly he reclined into his pillow, closing his eyes. A woman's voice blared from the television. "...has been missing since this morning. If anyone has information on the whereabouts of this individual, they are asked to contact the authorities immediately. Now to you, Jack."

A familiar masculine voice took over, "Thanks, Jane. It's good to be back!" Ryan's eyes snapped open as he sat up in bed. The man speaking had curly hair to match his own, about the same length as his, although it was brown. He sat proudly in his seat. His broad shoulders and muscular body made him look quite handsome in his suit. "In other news, farmers report that a wild animal has been attacking their cattle over the past few nights. Police say the wounds inflicted are similar to that of a wolf. Anyone who owns livestock is urged to keep their cattle indoors and under close watch."

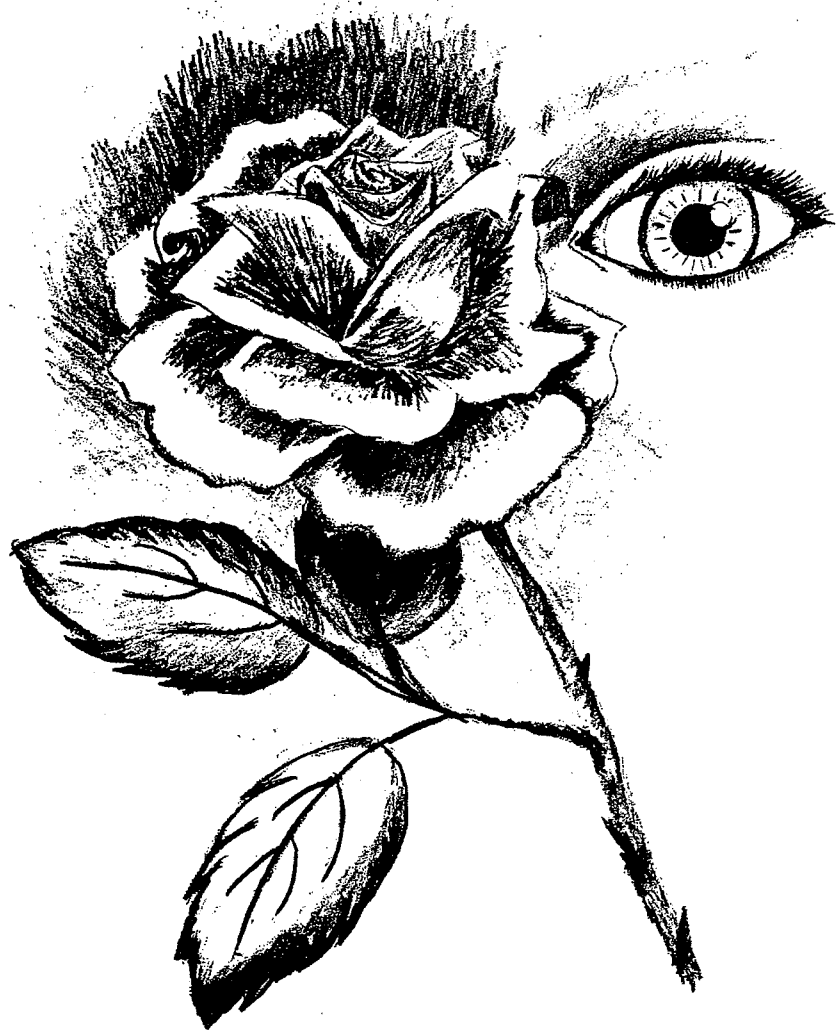
"Dad!" Ryan practically leaped out of bed. Ryan hadn't been informed that his dad was coming home. He was now very eager to leave the hospital, but the doctors would not let him go. Instead, they droned on for most of the day, running test after test after test. At last, they let him off with his first series of rabies shots and a warning to stay away from the woods. Immediately he ran home. It wasn't far and because he knew a shortcut through a thick part of the forest, even as the last part of daylight was fading, he knew his way around quite well.

When he arrived home, he was greeted with a horrendous sight! Through the large bay windows of his home he saw Jill locked in a passionate embrace with his father. He was kissing her fully, just like he used to do to his mother! Ryan stood there, not knowing what to do for what seemed like forever. Finally he broke from her wretched grasp; his eyes turned to the window in time to meet Ryan's horrified face. Ryan could not stand to see this; he quickly turned and bolted back into the forest. He ran until his legs gave out from under him. He felt betrayed by his own father. He could not believe what he saw was true. The last rays of light from the sun slowly dipped below the horizon, leaving him in darkness.

Youth

by Alexandra Barnes

There was poetry in the sky today
so she flew far away from me
And my smoky room
I wear my black today
I wear my make-up to hide
All the things I cannot say
a thicker current has taken me away
I have been raped by my own hands
Bruised by my palms
All that is fresh and new
Taken by me
But brought back by her
Sunlight in her hair
I feel the fiery heat
As it burns frantically
Glowing
As her youth touches into me
Breathing every purity
As she takes to the sky



Beauty Is in the Eye of the Beholder
by Marina Schindler

He remained still for a long time, being roused from his trance only by a rustling in the bushes. Slowly but surely his dad emerged, huffing and puffing. He had run the same distance as Ryan, but wasn't in as good a shape as Ryan. Carefully, he sat down beside his son; a long pause ensued.

Ryan was the first to shatter the peace. "Why, Dad, why?" he cried. New tears streamed down his face. He was not used to crying so his eyes swelled up almost immediately. "How could you betray mother... how could you betray me?"

Jack finally caught his breath and began to speak, obviously having trouble with the words. "Ryan, I have something to tell you. Your mother..." He paused for a moment; although he didn't want to say it, he finally gave in. "Your mother is dead. I know you were hoping that she just went away, but...they did find a body, and the DNA test said that it was her. I'm afraid she's gone, and as much as you and I were hoping to see her again, there is nothing either of us can do to bring her back." He didn't want to mention Jill, but the issue had been postponed long enough. "I'll never expect you to call Jill mother, but I have to move on. Your mother would want it this way. She wouldn't want us to be unhappy. Getting a new mother doesn't mean we're replacing the old one; it just means that we are bringing a new person into our life."

Something about the speech had gotten through to Ryan. The words had meant nothing to him; his eyes fell onto the full moon, which had appeared in the night sky. It seemed almost comforting for him to see it. As he continued to fall deeper into the light of the moon, his father's voice seemed to fade away.

Jack did not notice his son's eerie quietness. When he stopped speaking, he looked over to his son's face. Instead of seeing the sight he expected to see, he was greeted with a face covered in thick, gray fur. A pop and a crunch emanated from inside that face as it began to extend outward. Muscles rippled layer upon layer, finally topping itself off with a thick sheet of gray fur. His father looked horrified as his son slowly began mutating into a monster. Quickly seizing a knife from his boot that he carried around for self-defense, he threw the child to the ground, holding the knife tight against a throat that was now rippling over with muscles. The beast glared back at him with yellow eyes as it opened its mouth, bearing its fangs at him. Ryan struggled to break free as he completed his metamorphosis.



Two Faces of Me
by Marina Schindler

Hello Kitty
by Brian Cashen

Playful feral kitten
Wide eyed and vibrant
Skittish and sensual
With a bold yet tentative demeanor

Dark and bright
Quick and sharp
Exploring
As is her birthright

Lithe and supple
Smitten tomcats pursue her
As she casually prances away
Like a bee among the flowers of the field
Weaving an erotic path
To new and intriguing wonders

A swatch of brilliant color on a gloomy day
Her voice an echo of a love song
Sung since the dawn of creation
Reverberating through life

A handful of wind
A truth amongst lies
The beautiful fragrance of love
My muse

Oh Sweet Dreamland

by Shaina Marcin

Upon the veil of lonely night
dreams do dance and take flight
floating to the world of joy
leaving hatred's evil ploy

spiral down in fields of dreams
making anguish seem redeemed
easy is the traveled path
seeking joy for one's behalf

happy children jump and play
flowers grow and bloom each day
soft upon thy sweet bare feet
gently wrapped by the sun's heat

to a world where tears aren't shed
seething death is not one's bed
escape from hungry, bloody hands
disease and hatred across the land

in mother's arms dear children sleep
forgetting lust and angry deeds
money has no greedy use
love and friendship are our muse

sweetly slumber holds our eyes
for this world gives us blue skies
sadly slumber goes away
for humanity must face the day

Jack didn't know what to do. He had remembered the news story about the cattle going missing that he himself reported. It began to occur to him why his son had been disappearing and reappearing in strange places. He even realized that there was a good chance that this was the cause of the death of his own wife. He had a decision to make: either kill his own son or disappear as well. It seemed like forever before he finally spoke to his son. "I'm sorry, Ryan." He gripped his knife, drawing it back. He began to tense his muscles to strike. Suddenly, though, his fingers released their grip on the knife. "Take care of Jill; she is your family now..." The knife slowly twirled in the air as it made its way to the ground. Now fully transformed, Ryan wasted no time overpowering his father. Jack was dead before the knife struck the ground.

Morning seemed to come early for Ryan as he woke up lazily in the forest. It was much warmer than the previous day. Several new wounds had appeared over the night, but all in all, he seemed ok. he sat up, wondering where his dad went. The morning sun had long risen into the sky. From the distance he heard Jill calling out for him. He followed the voice until he found a small clearing where she was waiting. Tears were in her eyes. Ryan wanted to ask what had happened but the words wouldn't come.

After a long pause, she broke the awkward silence. "Your father was attacked by a wolf last night...I'm ...I'm afraid he is dead..." Suddenly Ryan's world stopped turning and he felt he would be thrown off! He couldn't believe it. His father had talked to him just last night before he fell asleep on his shoulder. How could that be? Jill continued, "I'm afraid you're no longer safe here. I wouldn't want you to get hurt any more than you already have. Get your things packed. We are leaving for the city. I'm taking you far away from all of the wild animals out to hurt you."

Ryan dropped to his knees. He was crying out loud and making quite a public show of it. All this couldn't be true; it was all a lie! Jill slowly knelt down beside him, letting his head relax on her chest. She, too, had cried all morning. "I know it hurts. It hurts me too. Just know that...that I'll always be there for you."

Ryan continued to sob, finally wrapping his arms around her, hugging her tightly. "Thanks...Mom."



Dragon Flies
by Marina Schindler

In the Back Yard

by Annie E. Burie

In the back yard
Of some house, you ever see
A rod in the ground
Supporting some kind of plant
Beautiful brass
Painted and sturdy
Standing erect giving
Strength to the plant
That's you, the brass rod
And then there's a plant
A flower perhaps, leaning
Gaining strength, in sun, in wind
Soft petals and stems
Forming around rod
Roots coiling in soil
Bringing fragrance
And aesthetic appeal
Weak, and breaking without Rod,
but with stems sturdy, roots deep
that's me, the plant



Rose
by Amanda Peanosky