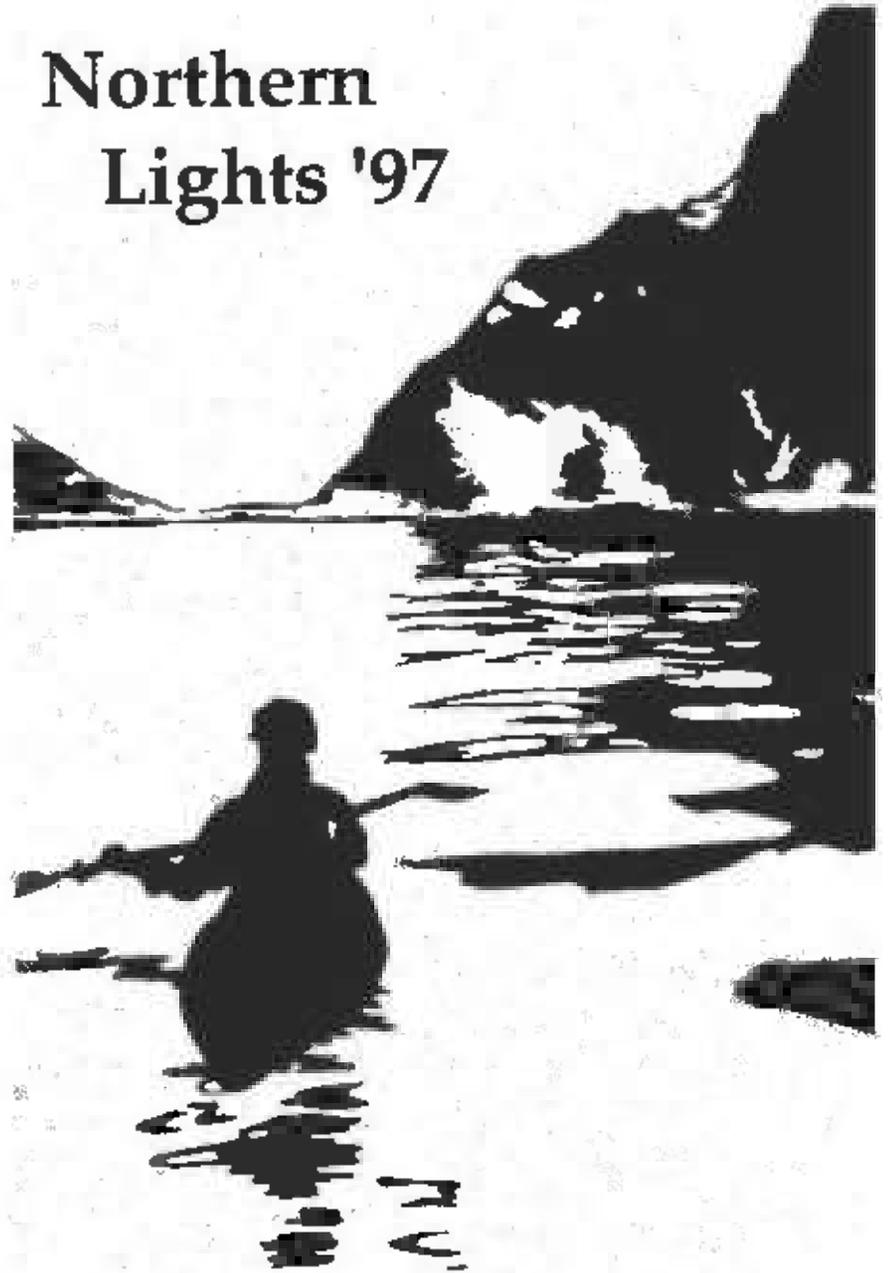


# Northern Lights '97

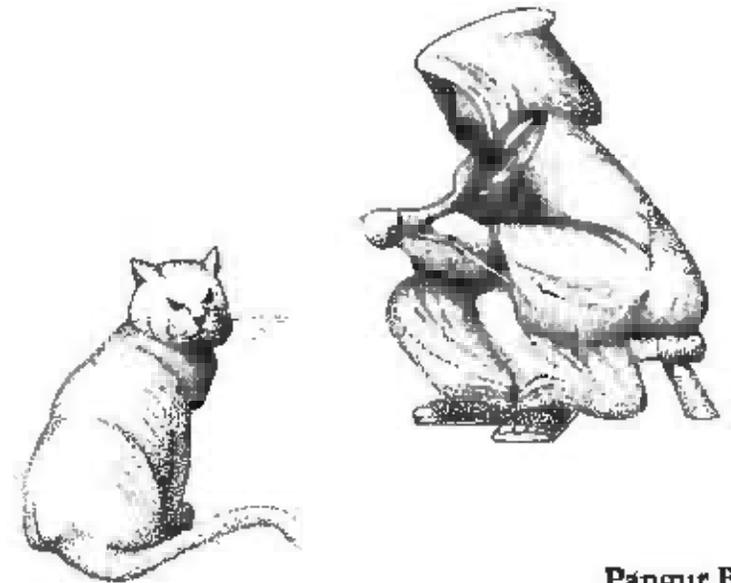


University of Wisconsin - Marinette  
Arts Journal

# Northern Lights

1997

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University of Wisconsin  
Marinette



**Pangur Ban**  
Beth Drebert

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## Home

John Hallfrisch

The place that I call home is a house that my father gave to my wife Jennifer and me. We were able to pick out the house that we wanted and then we were able to remodel a little of the inside. I call this place home because I am able to be my own person here. This is the place that I can walk into and know I can relax without someone telling me what I should be doing. Home is where I can be an independent individual, husband and father. It is the place where I can do what I want, when I want to do it.

The house that we chose is a four-bedroom, two-bathroom house with a dining room, living room and kitchen. There is an attached two-car garage with a tool room just for me. This is my place to get away from everything and do my own thing. Behind the garage is a vast fenced-in backyard for my daughter. I set up a swing for her to play on and think that the two of us will enjoy much time together in that yard. The porch on the house was falling apart when we bought it, so over the past summer I tore down the old porch and built a new one. After reading countless "Do It Yourself" books, I constructed a twenty-foot porch. I had no time to enjoy those summer days sitting out on the porch in the breeze this past summer, but I hope to spend many hours doing just that in the years to come. This coming summer I plan to build a roof over the porch.

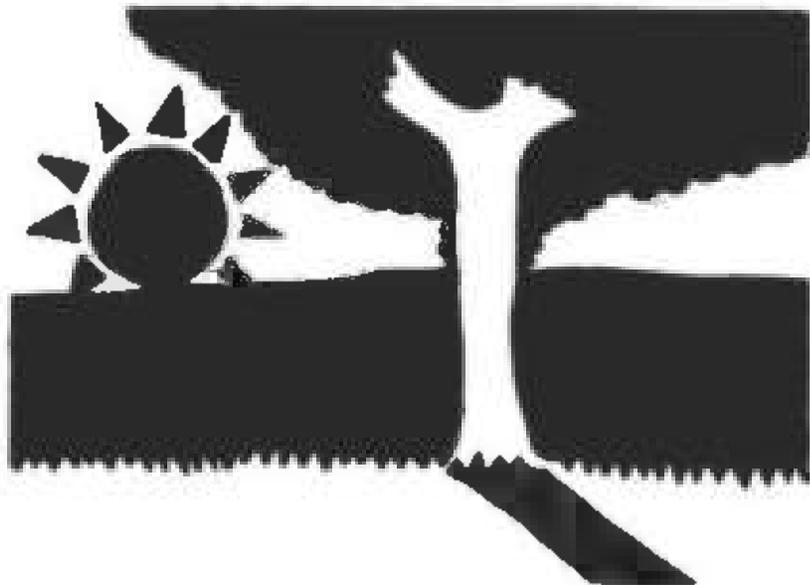
Our house is located in a quiet, friendly neighborhood where everyone knows everyone else, and folks have neighborhood barbecues. I can not get over the closeness of all our neighbors. The first day we were at the house, people from the neighborhood stopped and introduced themselves and offered their assistance with everything we have been doing at our house. They told us about all the other neighbors along with the general routine of the neighborhood. Our next door neighbor even snowblowed for us all winter and never asked for any payment. This friendly atmosphere makes me feel accepted and even more at home than any other place I have ever lived. It feels good to walk down the street and have people greet you and call you by your name. This neighborhood is definitely part of what home is for me.

I call this house home because my ideas and hard work went into remodeling the inside. A part of me went into making this house what it is now, home. For example, I fixed the kitchen ceiling, changing it from flat to vaulted with a skylight. After hours of planning and making up blue prints on the computer, I began changing other things. Waste deep in blown insulation when the ceiling caved in on me, I was the one to clean it up. My hands put hardwood flooring in the dining room and

linoleum in the bathrooms and scraped centuries of wallpaper off the walls. I put up drywall, picked out the paint and painted the walls. Every square inch of this house is a part of me, of my ideas and of my spirit.

The other reason I call it home, and this may sound absurd, is the fact that none of my brothers or sisters live there and definitely not my parents. This is so important because my wife and I lived with my parents for eight months. Those eight long months nearly drove us both insane. It seemed like I was in high school again. In a way, it seemed as if I had to answer to my parents for every little thing that I did. This was not an easy thing to do after we had been living on our own for one year. They always say you can never go home again. Now I know why.

Home is peace and freedom. It took a lot of hard work, but I have created a home for my family, a home the way I think a home should be, not just a house, but a sense of self. I really enjoy the independence of my own home where I am not being judged or ruled over like an indentured servant. I can just be myself.



Nice Day  
John Hallfrisch



What Lies Beyond the Open Door?  
Sheri Seefeldt

Eavesdropping  
Gabriella Sheldon

Can't say that I remember any quite this long.  
Nope. Extraordinary you might say.  
Back in 1983. Now, that was short.  
You can say that again. Remember old man Holmsted? He fell off his  
rocker.  
Kicked the bucket is what you mean.  
Bad timing  
Couldn't have been worse. Next year was almost as bad.  
Sally Mae got hit in the eye.  
Good thing it was a McIntosh; otherwise, she might've really got hurt.  
Bad luck. The whole family has a lot of bad luck.  
At least they have some luck.  
If they didn't have bad luck, they'd have no luck at all.  
Yep. That's about it. Jeff Dover. Hear about him?  
Battery?  
Blind in both eyes.  
That's bad luck.  
Uncommon bad luck.  
Hey, look at Mary Miller.  
Gone to seed, she has.  
Dandelion at that.  
Funny thing, ain't it?  
Can't say that I blame him.  
I dunno. I reckon she's a good cook.  
Looks like it, eh?  
Ain't that a fact.  
It's almost over.  
Thirty-five minutes. I think it's a new record.  
Nobody keeps track.  
Somebody should.  
Why?  
It's important.  
Not that important.  
Suppose not.  
How about an ice cream cone?  
Sounds good. Sure is hot.  
Feels like rain.  
You mean your hip.  
Been bothering bad. Standing too long.  
Next year you could drive your Chevy.

Could at that. It's an antique.  
What you gonna throw?  
Don't know.  
No rush. You've got a year to think about it.  
Yep.  
If you're lucky.  
Don't be planting daisies on me yet.  
Probably wouldn't grow.  
It's over.  
40 minutes.  
Longest Fourth of July Parade I've ever been to.  
Yep. I reckon it is.



Bubbles  
Barbara Byers

## The Attack

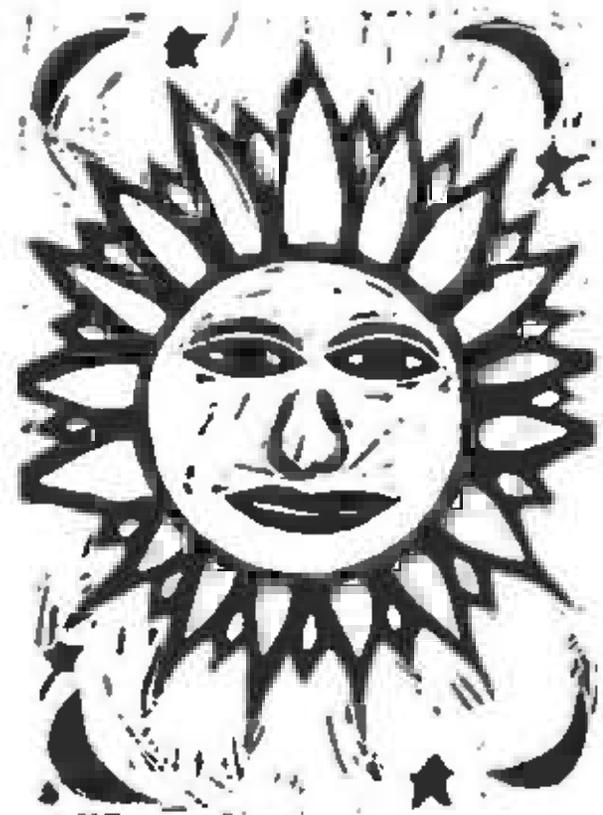
Ray DeRousha

The whine of the engine seemed to travel everywhere. It pierced the surrounded landscape screaming, "Here I am." Not a soul knew how they had gotten as far as they had without discovery. Although the mission was of the gravest necessity, success also was considered impossible to achieve. How many men would have to die was the thought that went through Captain Dan's head. Because he knew they would not be able to go all the way to their objective without being detected, what happened next did not take him by surprise. A huge serpent-like head flashed out of the woods and clamped onto the turret of their tank. As the beast tried to shade the tank from side to side, an interesting thing happened: reality started to shift. The tank got smaller while the woods transformed into tall grass. Captain Dan was instantly changed into plastic. With a frightened shout, I ran home as fast as my little legs could carry me.

I burst through the front door of our trailer, screaming my fool head off. Tears of fear flowed down my face, and into my mouth. Each tear tasted like a grain of salt wrapped in a drop of vinegar. My mother seemed to fly from her bedroom into the living room, instantly sizing up the situation. I could tell that I had scared her because she began searching my body for some sign of injury or hurt. She noticed only two things, my tear-stained cheeks and my terrified expression. After she scooped me up into her arms, she whispered very softly into my ear that everything was all right. Her hug was so tight that I imagined her squeezing all the fear from my little body. Soon everything was almost all right. It was at that point I realized I would probably never see my little remote control tank again. It was as if my mom had read my mind because she called my dad at work. She told me that he would be home soon. Now I knew that all would be well with my world.

Perhaps the day had been too exciting for my little body, because I fell fast asleep on the living room floor. I was awakened from my sleep by my father. He rocked me gently from side to side and said, "Wake up little one." I knew that he had not even taken a shower, because I could smell a mixture of gas and oil on him. He had come home from work to help save his son's world. My father picked me up and carried me all of the way to where my tank was. As my father picked up my tank, I could almost hear Captain Dan yelling that he had been saved from certain death. My father, Captain Dan, and I spent the rest of the day fighting the evils of the world.

Although that was one of the most frightful days of my childhood, remembering it usually brings tears to my eyes. I can remember being held by my mother, and I can still hear her warm voice in my ear. I think it is a shame that I don't remember any other times when my mother held me like this. If only I could remember what it was like to look at the world through those innocent eyes, perhaps I would see more of the wonder that is life!



Sunlight  
Jenni Patz

## The Whisper

Jessica DeGross

Did you call me? I could have sworn you called my name. You didn't? Oh, of course not. How silly of me to think that. We've just met. What did you say? Oh yes, I'm feeling fine. I just thought I heard something. Yes, that is right. A whisper, but how did you know? Did you hear it too? No? That's too bad.

Do I hear these voices often? No, but isn't it strange to be standing here. Then, all of a sudden, you hear your name on the wind. I agree; it is very windy out. Do you see that owl? It seemed to have appeared from nowhere. Why are you so pale? Was it something that I said?

No, that is just an Indian's tale. I don't believe that an owl saying a name could cause a death. Yes, I guess we are being silly. Did you say something? No? Well, I heard it again except this time I heard it clearly. What did I hear? Oh, nothing. Hey, there is that owl again! Are you sure you want to know what I heard?

If you insist, I heard a name but it wasn't mine. It sounded like... Oh, my, are you all right? You look as if you've heard your own death sentence! I wasn't joking. Please sit down. Are you feeling better? No need to worry, but my, you look as if you have a fever.

Please don't cry. Yes, I know you're too young to die. Calm yourself. Wait! I know just the cure, but I suppose it wouldn't interest you. Now that you're better, I'll be on my way. What's that you wish to know? Well, I heard that if you throw money into the wind, it will be a bribe and maybe the spirits will let you live.

You have to go? Be careful. Of course, I know you're not superstitious... What's this?? Money blowing on the wind! Ah yes, there is a sucker born every minute. I must thank them for the generous donation.



Looking Inside Looking Outside  
Uri Gressel

Neon Lights  
Michelle Kamin

I had been driving a black and gray mini-van for four years. During that time, I was in three accidents, none of which were my fault by the way! I was beginning to think the words "Hit Me" were written somewhere on the back end of the thing! With this thought in mind, I decided it was time to get something different, something smaller. The van was just too big a target! So I brought the subject up to my husband. "Honey, I was thinking maybe I should get a new car," I said, smiling.

"A new car? Why?" he asked.

"Well, the van is too big and I'm tired of driving the dang thing! I figured it out, and I can afford to make payments with my paycheck. I won't need any help from yours. So, what do ya think?" I asked, still grinning at him.

He rolled his eyes at me and said, "Seems to me, you already have your mind set on getting one, and we know how you are when you get your mind set on something, don't we?"

I giggled, "If you don't think I should get one, I won't, but . . ."

"I know!" he interrupted, "I'll hear about it until you get one!" He smiled at me and then said, "As long as you can do it without involving me, go for it!"

I hugged him, thanked him, and shortly thereafter, set out looking for a car. I was very excited about the whole thing. This would be the first brand new car I had purchased all on my own. I've had brand new vehicles before, but they were always in my husband's name and paid for with his income. This one would be different. It would be mine!

It was a beautiful day. The sun felt warm on my face. The air smelled fresh, and the sound of birds' chirping filled my ears. I was having a great time! I stopped at a few car dealerships in town, talked to a few salesmen, even took a few cars for a test drive, but I knew deep down, I already had my mind set on getting a Neon, so I drove out to the Dodge dealership in town, and that's when it happened!

I was walking around outside the dealership looking at the Neons when a short, chubby salesman approached me. "Can I help you?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied. "I am considering purchasing a Neon and I would like to take one for a test drive." I noticed the strange look on his face, but didn't really pay much attention to it.

He, in a way, looked me over. "You're married?" he asked, but not really asked, more like stated.

"Yes," I answered, wondering what that had to do with anything.

He looked around the parking lot, then back at me, "Is your husband

here?"

"No," I stated. "Is it possible for me to test drive one of these?" I asked, motioning toward the bright, shiny red Neon I was standing next to. The salesman excused himself, saying he'd be right back. Even though he hadn't answered my question about driving the car, I thought he must have been going in to get the keys. I watched him walk into the showroom, then motion to a tall, thin man with a mustache. The man walked over to the salesman and they started talking. Soon they were joined by another man, then another and so on, until they were all standing in the middle of the showroom. There must have been five or six of them by this time. It reminded me of a football team in a huddle discussing the next play, except from their actions. I knew they were discussing me. Every couple of minutes one of them would look in my direction. I think at one point, one of them even pointed at me. I couldn't, for the life of me, figure out why these men would all be standing there talking about me. I only wanted to test drive a car!

After a while, the tall, thin man with the mustache broke from the pack, came outside, and walked up to me. He stopped a foot away from me and the strong smell of his cheap cologne stung my eyes.

"Are you going to purchase a car today?" he asked. The question set me back a step. It wasn't actually the question itself, but the manner in which it was asked: Rudely.

"Well," I replied, making sure to put a little rudeness in my tone. "I am thinking about buying a Neon, but I would prefer to test drive one first."

"Well," he said, with the same amount of rudeness as before. "I don't know how things work in your family, but if my wife were going to buy a car, I would be with her. Where is your husband?"

I was shocked! Speechless! I'm sure I was standing there with my mouth hanging open, my eyes bugging out. I felt intimidated, confused, shocked; that's not even the beginning of the feelings I had. The one that took over at the time was anger. Looking that man straight in the eyes, I said, "Where my husband is at the moment has absolutely nothing to do with me wanting to test drive a car! My husband is not buying a car. I am! I have a job! I have money! I am buying a car! Now, are you going to let me test drive a Neon or aren't you?!"

He looked at me with no expression at all and plainly stated, "I think you should come back when you can bring your husband with you," then turned and walked away.

I stood there for a minute, with all the salesmen in the showroom staring at me; then I got back into my van and drove away. I could taste the tears as they ran down my cheeks and over my lips. I could hear the voice of that man still echoing in my head.

I couldn't believe what had just happened. I had heard so much

about discrimination, but I had never realized what it was all about until this event. I thought that we had come so far since the days women were expected to stand meekly behind their husbands and not speak unless spoken to and then something like this occurred.

Needless to say, I didn't buy a car from them. I went to a dealership out of town to purchase a Neon. (Identical to the one I wanted to test drive at the dealership in town!) Then, with a very satisfied, proud look on my face, I drove my brand new, bright, shiny red car into the parking lot of that dealership, parked in front of the showroom window, got out, walked around my car, made sure they all got a good look, got back in my car and drove away. Never to return!



Attitude  
Dina Krause

## A Twinge

Gabriella Sheldon

You can go back  
But you can't return  
To the places of youth—  
Without a twinge  
Of regret,  
For nothing's ever  
Quite the same.

Take, for instance,  
The dock I loved.  
The water now isn't as deep.  
The boats are smaller,  
And they have no speed.  
The sails are shorter,  
and the winds subdued.

And the island creatures  
And those scary guys  
Have all gone off,  
Taken the treasure  
We never found.  
Even the fish  
In the cove have shrunk.

You can go back  
But you can't return  
To the places of youth—  
Without a twinge  
Of regret,  
For nothing's ever  
Quite the same.

## Hunting is My Life

Jessica DeGross

My alarm rudely awakened me from my deep sleep at approximately 5:25 in the morning. The reason I knew the exact time was because when my alarm went off, I jumped up in a panic and fell on my clock. What a way to start the day with an imprint of a big hand pointing towards my nose and the little hand pointing towards my eye! My blankets were still wrapped tightly around me, threatening to take away what little breath I had left.

Since my arms were locked tightly inside, I inched my way, like a worm, into the hallway. I am not the quietest person at such an early hour, and my dad came to see what all the racket was. I must have looked pathetic because all he could do was laugh. Finally, after a few spasms of laughter, he managed to untangle me. When I rolled out, I was not in a good mood. I had a headache and all I wanted to do was climb back into my nice warm bed.

Dad had to remind me of the joys of getting up before the sun only to sit out in record freezing temperatures on the off chance of seeing some wild life. When it was explained to me like that, I became even more determined to crawl back into my bed, but Dad had a good grip. The next few moments were a blur, but I somehow ended up with a whole lot of orange on. There was no turning back now; besides, it would have broken Dad's heart. Before I headed to my stand he excitedly gave me some last pointers about hunting.

"Now don't forget to take the safety off before ya shoot."

"I know, Dad."

"Oh, and don't forget to aim."

"Dad, for the last time, I know."

"Ok, ok, just checking."

On my way into the woods, I thought I should make the best of my situation and try to enjoy myself. With that in mind, I plodded towards my stand. When I got there, I accidentally disturbed a couple of gray squirrels who yelled at me from a nearby tree. I just ignored them and settled in as best I could.

Once I got comfortable, I noticed how peaceful my surroundings were. In the distance, I could hear birds calling to one another, and I watched as the first rays of sunlight crept slowly across the field. Except for the occasional gusts of wind that managed to rob me of my heat, I was at peace. It was so relaxing that, after a time, I fell asleep.

I would have slept a lot longer, when, like an alarm clock, gun shots



Antique Bicycle  
Sheri Seefeldt



Kia  
Dina Krause

rang out and managed to wake me with a jolt. Being a bit alarmed, I sat straight up and tensely watched the field. At first, I didn't see anything and was about to settle back down when I saw some movement in the brush. It was a little spike that must have been driven out by all that shooting which had occurred earlier.

I was amazed at how quietly and gracefully he moved through the thickets, stopping every once in a while to listen. My heart was pounding as I raised my gun and set him in my sights. Through the scope I had a good chest shot that would have sent a bullet straight into his heart. I flipped off my safety and was about to squeeze the trigger when I bumped my seat.

The noise I made was loud enough for the deer to hear. He stopped eating and stared directly into my eyes. The deer didn't run and I didn't shoot. I often wondered what went through that deer's mind, if anything. Perhaps he knew he was safe or perhaps he didn't know what the danger was. At any rate, I was content just to watch him.

As gracefully as he had come, he left. The sun was higher in the sky and I felt a lot warmer. It could have been the sun or the fact that I had spared a life. In a way, I felt like God; as arrogant as that may sound, that's the way I felt. To know that I could have killed the deer, but didn't, gave me a sense of power that I didn't have before.

My feelings of triumph did not last long and were soon replaced with a sense of loss. A shot rang out in the direction of where the little spike was headed. A small part of me wanted to believe that the neighbors had missed, but it was a small part. Later in the evening, Dad and I went over to see what the neighbors had gotten and there hanging from a rope was my little spike.

At that moment, I felt terrible and didn't wish to be there any longer. It also struck me as odd because I felt that way. Over the years, I have seen hundreds of dead deer and I wouldn't have even batted an eyelash. I guess it was because the other hunter had robbed me of what I had set free or what I had wanted to be free.

The rest of the season, I didn't see another deer, but that was fine with me.



Trinity  
Beth Drebert

## The Journey to Redemption

Kathu Pollard

The swish of a starched crinoline veil  
pacing up and down the aisles

The rapping of a ruler  
on tender, questioning knuckles

Tattered catechisms piled atop  
a rarely-opened edition of King Arthur's Court

The pledge of allegiance  
recited far too quickly

A benediction to the Virgin  
sung off key much too slowly

Mother waxes philosophical while  
father quietly pontificates

The clacking of crystal rosary beads  
fills the distance between the two

I, by the grace of  
a still unknown Deity,

Fall between the rare but  
precious cracks of silence and

Find courage to begin my quest  
in search of the Holy Grail.

## Movin' On

Jane Oitzinger

(An excerpt from a long story that has already started, set in contemporary, rural northern Florida)

"Hope springs eternal," Mema said with her dying breath. Mema was my mother's mother, and her first name was Hope. I planned to name our first child Hope. "Hope springs eternal," I thought as I hung the wedding-ring quilt Mema'd given us over the hole George'd made when he smashed my new oscillating fan against the wall. "Hope springs eternal" I was chanting six days later when Opal burst through the back door and yelled, "George's Bronco's still parked in the woods near Tina Starling's trailer! Get dressed. We're gonna see Fred Fish."

I untangled my legs—I was getting good at the lotus position—and made it clear I had no intention of seeing a lawyer, especially not a new one who also happened to be an ex-boyfriend.

Opal frowned and scanned the room. "House's a wreck. You're a wreck. You've gotta getta hol' of ya'self, Reenie. Damn that George!" She kicked the fan's skyblue blade; it skittered across the old oak boards and came to a halt next to the K-Mart oriental rug covered with our cat Dolly's golden hair. I hadn't done any serious housecleaning since George'd stormed out.

"How's about some coffee?" I asked. "Smells great, don'cha think?" I had a Mrs. Coffee that George's sister'd given us Christmases ago, but I hardly ever used it because I liked seeing water slowly turn deep brown as it bubbled up into the little glass bulb of Mema's porcelain percolator. Perking coffee had become a reason to get out of bed. I love the pop-pop-poppity-pop.

Otherwise, I like quiet mornings, ideally in solitude, a little time alone to come back to my homeself from the far-away places I walk in dreams. But no chance of that with Opal around. She gulped coffee and smacked down two or three bran muffins, all the while yammering about what a dirty rat George was and what a fool I was for putting up with his shenanigans. I didn't know which was worse, her sympathy or George's betrayal. He hadn't so much as called; and although he'd come over to pick up a few clothes, he'd come when he knew I'd be taking kindergarten kids to visit their adopted grandparents at the nursing home—and he didn't so much as leave a note. I'm a teacher's aide at the Baptist school and get kids whose family life is a bit scratchy involved in a summer "adopt-a-grand" program. George calls me Miss Goody-Two-Shoes, but I'm not. It's just that I feel like myself, somehow, around the

very young and the very old, and I've found a way to put the two together.

"Married 'neath ya'self, ya know. Sure, he's got a purty face and pumped up muscles, and some say he's charmin', though I don't see it, but he's not in your league. Short and simple, he's a scallywag, and if ya've got any gumption at all you'll go see Fred right this minute." That's the kind of thing Opal was saying.

She'd never taken a fancy to George, and to make matters worse, about a year and a half ago, I'd given her our hibachi for helping me through a flu so bad I could hardly lift the phone, let alone drive to Dr. Hardwick's office. A wedding present from my aunt Maybelle, it'd never been used; after all, we had a barrel-drum grill and a concrete-block barbecue pit. I figured George'd never miss it. What I didn't know was that he often checked the utility room in the carport to make sure his tools were all there. When he noticed the hibachi missing, and learned that Opal had it, he was furious. They had a shouting match in Robinson's pharmacy that people talked about for weeks; then George dumped a truckload of overripe watermelons on her front lawn, and in the middle of that mess stuck a placard saying "Opal Baker is a rotten sow." But she wouldn't give it back. It wasn't exactly that she was greedy; it was more like she believed that right was right and by all rights the hibachi was hers. She'd earned it, she said, and went around Tupelo Springs telling everybody George was meaner than a water moccasin.

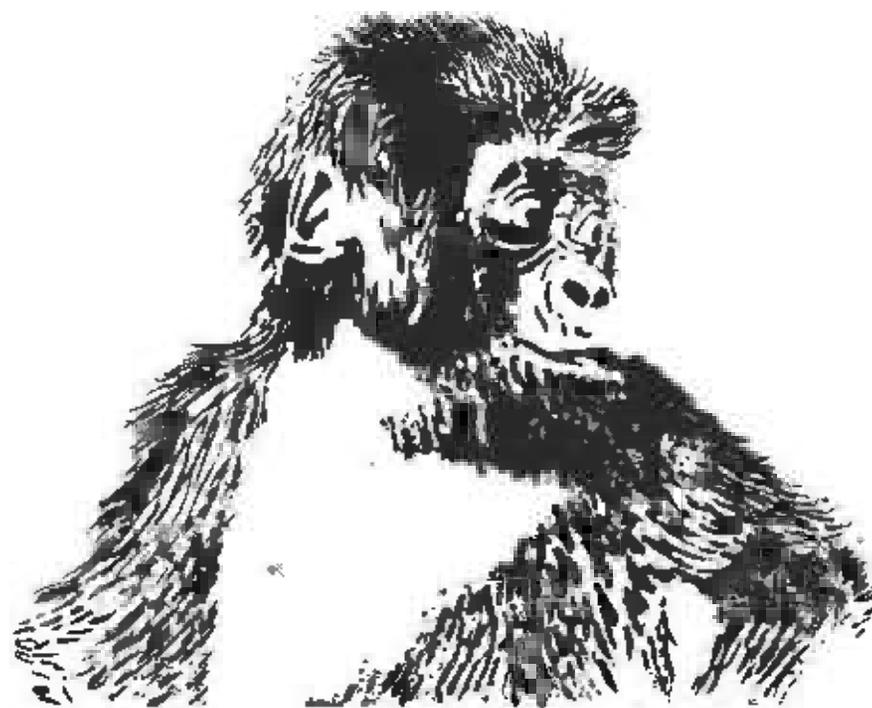
I was sorry she did that. At heart he was still a little boy splashing aimlessly along the edge of the Okefenokee with a .22 on his shoulder. A motherless child. An alligator poacher's son who struggled with the pride he took in rising above his swamp-rat rearing. Almost everybody liked George, but sometimes he didn't know how to act. Opal's bad-mouthing didn't help any either. But what could I do? She'd been my best friend ever since first grade, ever since she got the whipping I deserved for putting "I love you, Teacher" on the blackboard with Mrs. Wiggins' nail polish.

The coffee grounds on the bottom of my cup seemed to be forming into a meaningful pattern when Opal said, "This'll never do. I've decided. We're gettin' you outta here."

"Outta where?"

"Outta this town, this cesspool. I've half a mind to go with ya, 'cept my flower shop, ya know, and my poor papa who'd starve to death if I didn't--"

"Opal, I don't want to leave. George'll be back. He's just mad right now. He'll get over it." Hope springs eternal. Pepa, Mema once told me,



Who Me  
John Hallfrisch

was no angel in his youth, but time and love ripened him into the fine man he turned out to be: a county judge, elected again and again, he died on the bench of heart failure.

"Get real. That asshole ain't comin' back."

"Oh, how do you know?"

"Oh, I know." She sat silent for the first time since she'd barged in.

From the dinette set I couldn't see the wedding-ring quilt, so I tried to see it inside my head—its overlapping rings of printed patches from fabrics Mema, Mom, her two sisters, my sister Bobbie Sue, several cousins, and I had worn, clothes Mema made for us, all brought together against an off-white background framed in a skyblue border. I couldn't hold the image. "Geez, Opal, get on with it."

"Okay," she sighed, smiling, "but you're not gonna like it." She popped half a muffin in her mouth, which garbled her telling, but it went something like this: "Yesterdie Sara Jane Birchfield, ya know, the littlest of Noey's family who works at Winn Dixie, tol' me her sister Clarissa, who works in the city in Ivey's lingerie department, tol' her that Mondie George bought an outrageously expensive, hot-pink teddy in a size six. Ya know he knows ya take a ten."

"Did he charge it?"

"What's it matter? Christ almighty, Reenie, ya just don't get it, do ya?"

Of course I knew the business with Tina, a barmaid at the Rebel Yell where George and his cronies hung out, was pretty serious, but I couldn't see the whole picture: worse yet, I couldn't see myself in even a tiny part of the picture. I tried opening my eyes wider.

"What's wrong?"

"Huh?"

"Your eyes, like ya've seen a ghost."

"What?"

"You've been mopin' 'roun' here much too long. It's drivin' ya bonkers. Yep, we're gettin' ya outta here." I nodded, not really knowing why, and just let things happen.

Opal arranged everything. That afternoon on the phone she recruited Bobbie Sue to help pack and managed to borrow Mackie's precious pickup by telling him she needed to help her uncle Clive, one of the few people Mackie admired, round up calves for the Saturday auction. She also discussed temporary living arrangements for me in the city, forty miles away, with her sister Ruby and lined up a mini-storage unit on the city-ward side of town. In the meantime, I got to thinking I should stick around the house a while longer. George'd taken only a few work

clothes and underwear the time he snuck home, so sooner or later he was bound to show up for his suit. People in Tupelo Springs died just about everyday, and George was a great one for attending wakes. When Opal finally got off the phone, I told her I'd changed my mind about moving out. "Hogwash," she replied.

[This whole story, still in draft form, is about Irene's struggle to find her own self and voice. It mostly takes place in one day, several days after the scene above, but has a number of flashbacks. Her best friend, sister, and mother help her as much as they know how, but often make things even worse. In the end Irene draws on Mema Hope's wisdom: "The spirit knows when it's time to be movin' on." I don't claim there's a moral, but if one's to be found it's that the influence older folk have on younger folk can grow very deep.]



Music  
Michell Hampton

## A Prayer

Katherine Holman

Well-meaning people  
Paid their respects,  
Went to the viewing,  
Said, "She looks good."

Numb, dumb  
I jerked a nod, forced a smile,  
Choked on the obscenity  
I wanted to shout.

Please, God, when I die,  
Let them burn me  
Quickly, quickly, quickly,  
Before someone can say,  
"she looks good"

Dead.

## The Joy Ride

Jessica Lorenz

The door flew open and someone screamed, "They found a body in the ditch!" My first thought was that someone had been murdered and thrown into the ditch, or possibly that someone had been struck by a car while walking down the road. I envisioned the mutilated body of a young woman in jean shorts, a white logoed tee shirt, and tennis shoes, lying face down, her long blond hair shielding the side of her face as she was covered with blood, dirt, and colored autumn leaves.

My first instinct was of morbid curiosity, to run out the door of the bar and grill where we were and follow the stream of onlookers. I felt strange, as if my feet were nailed to the floor. My knees felt rubbery, my hands were cold and clammy, and I could hear the blood rushing through my head. In the distance I could hear patrons yelling, "Call 911, call 911!"

As I finally made my way to the door, I was able to see that a pale blue mini-van had failed to negotiate an L-shaped curve in the road and had mired itself around a large oak tree. I don't remember running out to the scene. Suddenly I realized I was standing next to my mother who was administering first aid to a teenage girl who had severe injuries and was going into shock. She lay thrashing on the ground and combative. Her piercing screams made her gaping wound bleed more profusely, making her appearance even more grotesque. Her right wrist looked twisted and swollen as it joined her hand and her fingers appeared awkward and discolored. I felt myself become short of breath as I watched her chest shift from side to side. "Oh my God!" I thought, "She can't breathe. She must have broken ribs and possibly punctured a lung." There were six teenage victims, some not so seriously injured. I was thankful to learn that no one had been killed.

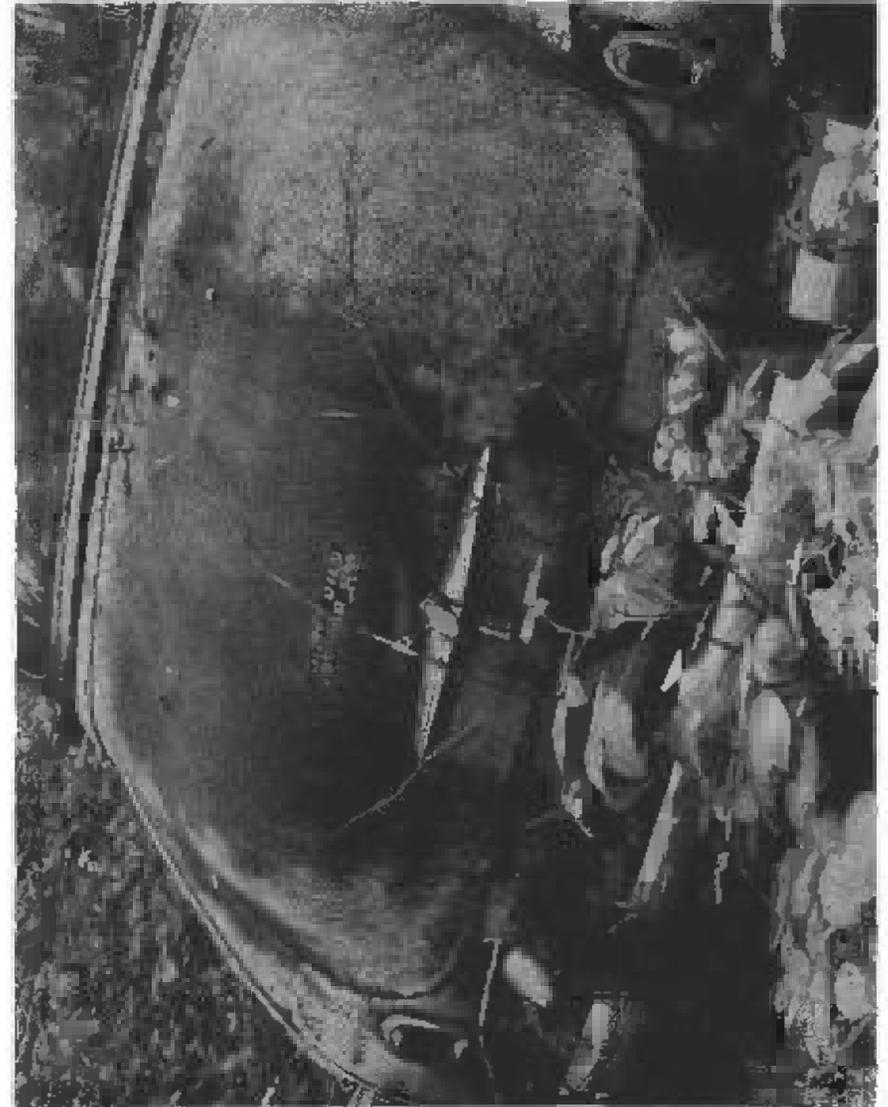
Someone brought out a first aid kit from his car and began handing out sterile gauze bandages. I peeled packages open to expose the snow white sponges needed so desperately to stop the bleeding. I felt like a robot waiting for the next instruction to come. It seemed like I had no thoughts of my own, being in almost a dream-like state. I watched my hands manipulating the wrappers as if these trembling hands belonged to someone else.

Above the buzz of the bystanders' voices, I could hear sirens in the distance. After what seemed like hours, the rescue personnel arrived with equipment in hand, desperately trying to make their way through the sea of people that had gathered. They took over treating the victims and began loading them into waiting rescue units for transport to the hospital. As reality began to set in for me, I could feel the cool air on my face. As I stood in the shade of the grove of large oak trees that loomed

before me, I was amazed at how the mighty oak had withstood the impact of the crash. It would now bear the scars as evidenced by the bark ripped from its side and diamonds of glass embedded into its meaty flesh. At its base lay sheets of white sterile wrappers and gauze pads soaked with bright red blood. I wondered how many others had fallen prey to this mighty oak tree.



The Wizard  
Julie Dombrowski

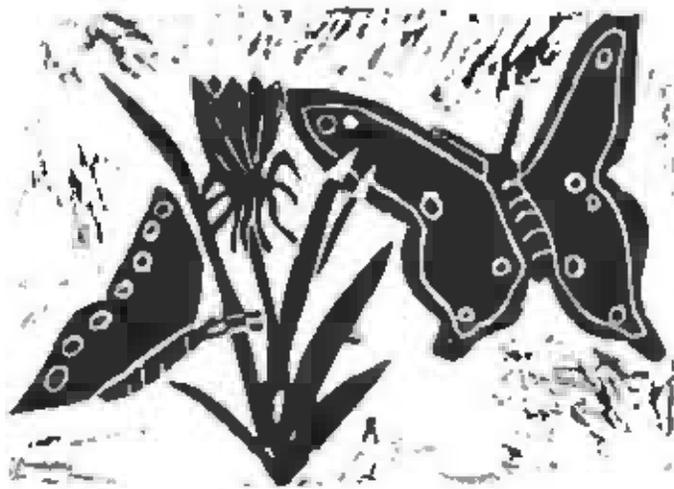


Rusty Automobile Trunk  
Sheri Seefeldt

## Mother

Maureen Molle

May sings songs of life eternal.  
Melodies and rhythms vernal  
spring from wintergreen and sweet fern,  
shepherd's purse and slender purslane,  
curly dock and tender plantain,  
proving life is earth maternal.



Butterflies are Free  
Christy McKenney

## Defiance

Gregory LeGault

In a world of imbalance, she is  
balance personified. One foot  
hugs the narrow beam in a  
momentary domination over  
Newton's law.  
Limbs outstretched, she is  
flowing line  
sculpted perfection

a poem in space

## Fallen

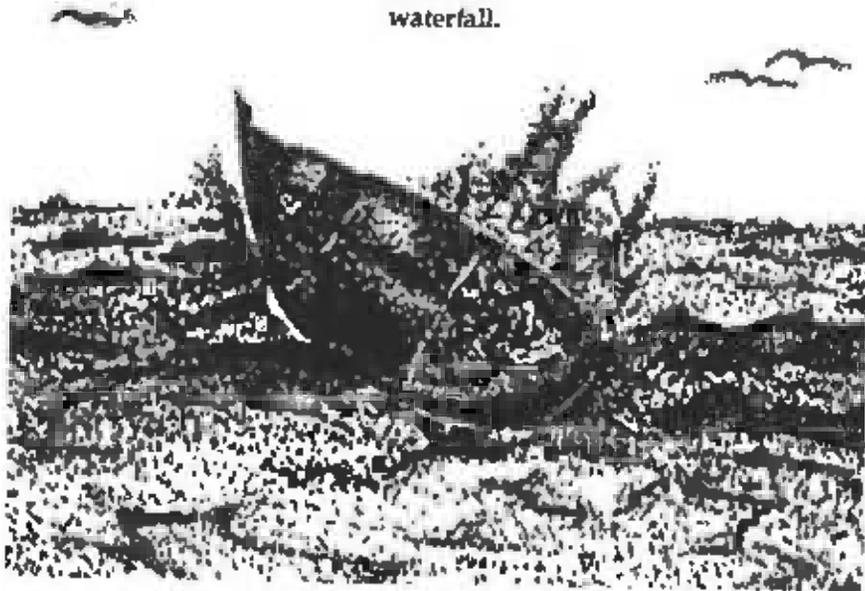
Kathi Pollard

Sparkling light across  
celestial midnight blue  
plummets to its destiny  
into obscurity  
barely noticed.

Tell me, little one,  
have you fallen from grace  
or do you simply  
no longer care  
to put on a show?

Journey  
Maureen Molle

Rancor clings  
to the whale-  
smooth sides of  
the soul and  
anchors there  
like acorn  
barnacles on  
the hides of  
grays making  
their ways like  
tankers from  
Baja to  
the frigid  
waters of  
the arctic  
and there it  
catches cold  
and dies while  
a whale sings  
in the shower  
of a fresh  
waterfall.



The Sea  
Michell Hampton

Begging for a Crust of Bread  
Gregory LeGault

They huddle on a tiny patch of sidewalk  
while hell blooms full around them,  
begging for a crust of bread. Wrapped

in torn cloth and shoeless, she cries, her face  
a chiseled study in agony . . . The tortured madonna  
weeping for the innocents at her feet. One boy

grins and tips his hat to their tormentors,  
hoping, perhaps, that a starving smile might  
move an empty heart. His brother

holds their tiny sister, his mouth frozen in  
mute request for a scrap of food or a morsel of pity —  
an equally scarce commodity. The little girl

wrapped in swaddling rags, stares in silence  
at a world gone mad. It is her face that  
haunts us most, for it speaks of a past too brief,  
and a future that will never be.

Blessed are the meek

who must inherit hell  
before they inherit the earth.

## Smoky Mountain Woman Far From Home

Katherine Holman

### I.

Smoky Mountain Woman  
looks at the flatness,  
sees no shelter,  
no place to hide—  
too much sky.

Finds a small hill, one day,  
lies down at its base,  
pretends to be a valley,  
discovers a proverbial truth:  
can't make a mountain  
out of a molehill.

### II.

This moon arrives too soon,  
Smoky Mountain Woman says:  
Hasn't anybody ever taught her  
how to make an entrance?  
She's much too forward,  
this moon in this place,  
a brazen hussy,  
mountain mamas would say.

Oconoluftee Valley moon  
announces her coming more subtly:  
peeks above the mountain  
to see what's what,  
scope out the scene,  
make sure folks are watching.  
Only then does she make her grand entrance.  
No gaudy, gushy rush, but slowly  
and with oh such grace  
until there she is

Radiant  
Beautiful  
Ready to be adored.