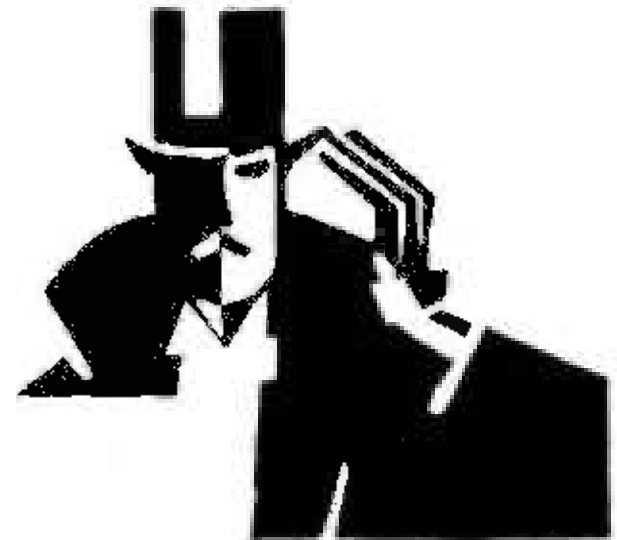




Northern Lights '90

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Cathy Smith

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Piece of Me

by Deanna Biehl

It's been so long
but I still wear
a smile just for you.
It's hard to hide
the way I feel
and the way I'm missing you.
For inside, I have shattered
into a million pieces.
Someday,
maybe,
I can gather them up
and get them almost to fit.
But there will always be one missing
with your name on it.
How long am I going to miss you?
Is that piece going to be lost forever?
Or are you keeping it in a safe place
until the day comes along
when you can put it back where it belongs
and make my smile real?

Equinoctial Repotting: Haiku, Minus the Syllable Spring

by Jane Yarbrough

Jade, fern, ivy too
settle in new soil, while ice
shaves the bay shore

Wisconsin Man

by Lyle Espenscheid

As the years of the '90's inexorably run their course, mankind looks to the future with cringing and fear. Hoping to avoid unpleasantness and possible pain with the unknown to come, he looks backward in time — back to his ancestral roots, back to his beginnings. He searches the archives in Washington, D.C. and Salt Lake City, watches rerun after rerun of *Roots*, *the Next Generation* and visits old graveyards, hoping to discover "Who was der Vater of Mein Father?"

National Geographic, *Scientific American* and many other journals often feature articles about prehistoric man. Archaeologists/paleontologists have debated the stature and doings of these oddies but goodies, and always they are looking for fresh discoveries and insights about the Neanderthal Man and his prehistoric pals: Cro-Magnon Man, Peking Man and the others.

But nothing stirred the scientific community as much as a recent find on a Northern Wisconsin farm.

While out on a winter check of his back 40, Jim Green and his dog were trapped by one of those early freezing rain-slushy snow blizzards that Northern Wisconsin is famous for. Mr Green and Elmer (the dog) found shelter in a tiny, damp cave near a small rock outcropping, nestled in one of the gentle, rolling hills which were the droppings of the last great glacier as it receded back to Canada.

While they waited out the storm, Mr. Green and Elmer poked around the cave, barely illumined from the feeble light of Mr. Green's disposable Bic. Toward the back of the cave, under inches of dust, they discovered an entire, perfectly preserved skeleton. Fortunately, they did not disturb the bones.

After the blizzard ended and Mr. Green and Elmer made it back to the farmhouse, he reported the find to his local sheriff, who called in the State Crime Lab, who then called the University, who then called in the Experts. The bones were dated via radioactive carbon and radioactive iodine methods as *predating* the Neanderthal Man.

This in itself will have Science buzzing for years, and hoards of researchers will roam the farmlands and woodlands of Northern Wisconsin, under Government auspices, looking for additional finds.

What amazes the scientists most -- and what causes the most problems for them -- is the position of the skeleton.

While carefully and painstakingly brushing the centuries of dust off the skeleton, the initial investigators found the right arm laid across the chest, with the right hand nearly covering the neck area. After the last particles of dust were removed, the scientists gasped in awe: the thumb bones of the right hand were caught between the teeth of the jaw! The only obvious conclusion? Yes, the man had been sucking his thumb.

The find was carefully photographed and thoroughly documented. The bones were then lovingly removed, packed and reassembled in the Swink Memorial Historical Museum for the ages to come.

Soon articles will start flowing from the typewriters of various scholars attempting to explain the mysterious skeleton of Northern Wisconsin and the implications of the thumb sucking. However, there is, I believe, only one possible conclusion: as the man pondered the future and the years of his life still to be, he was overtaken with despair and despondency. Having no history to look back to, there was only one thing to do — suck the thumb.

In addition to the valuable scientific knowledge gained from the amazing Wisconsin Man find, there are some lessons for the common man to learn: thumb sucking has some noticeable benefits and is not harmful, as our orthodontists tell 20th century mankind. First of all, sucking the right thumb prevents striding out with the right hand of anger. Secondly, it prohibits offering your handshake to strangers who might want to knife you in the back. Thirdly, thumb sucking completely eliminates wringing both hands in despair or twiddling thumbs in boredom. Fourthly, with thumb in place between the teeth, one cannot speak without thinking. But most importantly, sucking the right thumb fosters increased use of the left hand.

The Crystal Egg

by Jim LaMalfa

In the year of our Lord, nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, there was in the land a prophet named NOA. NOA was wise in the ways of interpreting dreams. The great leader of our land was haunted by troubling dreams.

Many high priests and wizards were called forth to meet with the councils of the wise in the capital, which was called the town of Washing, or as the ancient scrolls called it, Washington, Doe Sea. They assembled in the palace built for the purpose of dealing with the occult, a pentagon.

There, the leader of the people rose up and spoke saying, "I have dreamed and lo, there appeared unto me a fiery furnace. Lucifer himself stood before it holding a great blue-green pearl. And the multitudes cried out, 'cast not our pearl into the fiery furnace.' But Lucifer laughed most cruelly and thrust his claws into the fire. And the pearl was utterly consumed.

"Then came one dressed in white, with wings the color of the rainbow, and a countenance that shined with golden light. He did reach into the fire and remove the pearl. The winged man carried it to the heights into the blue sky. There the pearl was restored, but the heights chilled it and it was encrusted with ice. Then the one dressed in white raiment carried the pearl higher until the heat of sun melted the ice. At this, the pearl was rendered pure as driven snow and was renewed."

Those attending the leader strove mightily to unravel the meaning of his dream, but to no avail. The NOA came into their midst and sayeth, "Verily, I say unto you, the pearl is our own planet and the fire is the coming of a mighty drought, the dreaded Greenhouse Effect. Lucifer is none but your own wickedness, for you have fouled your own nest, mankind. All will perish on this world, yea, none shall be spared. And when all humanity is destroyed, there will come an age of ice, wherein the earth shall be cleansed. Then shall the small and weak rise up, for none but the fumble shall inherit the earth."

NOA, having uttered his prophecy, went to his reward. He had been prophesying for decades and was aged and bent.

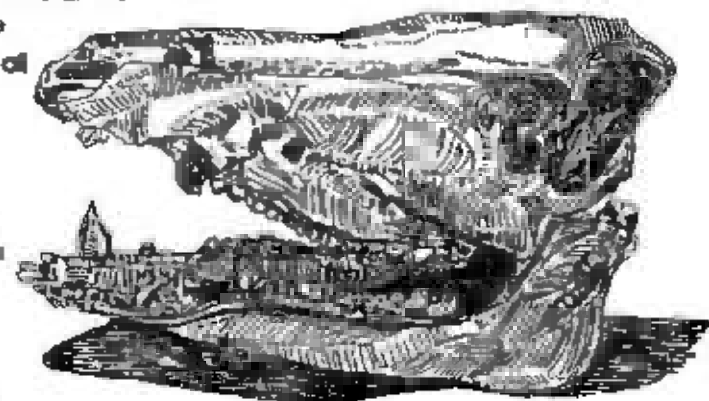
Such was the truth of his interpretation of the leader's dream that all men knew it was a prophecy. The great nations called a conference in the palace of the Pentagon to deliberate on what to do. Among those

wise men who gathered were the patriarchs of the city of Washing, including the leader himself.

But NOA was not there, for he had died the death of the prophet, his bones placed in a weather satellite named after him. Those at the conclave of the Pentagon, without the firm hand of NOA to guide them, were exceedingly wroth and angry, and each sought to put his plan forward above all others. What they contended over was how to preserve some remnant of humanity while the age of fire and ice consumed the earth. If humanity could survive those epochs, they would be the inheritors of a new earth. Had not NOA predicted it?

After much strife, the wise men and their wizards arrived at a plan. All the nations of men would contribute their treasure and they would build an ark. The ark would be buried deep in the earth, and within would be the seed of man, the best of the best, a select group of humans to repopulate the new earth for many centuries hence. Also in the ark, which would take the form of a great crystal egg, would be all the knowledge of the present age and all the spells and magic of the wisest of necromancers. Thus would NOA's prophecy be fulfilled.

It took ten years to build the crystal egg. During that time, the councils of the wise argued as to who should be placed within. The egg itself had been buried in a place called Newton, Kansas, and a tube connecting it to the earth above was reodded. The prophecies of NOA, in the meantime, came to pass and heat and fire ravaged the earth. Those who were chosen to pick the seed of humanity never did arrive at a consensus. All about them plagues and droughts raged unchecked. Who was there to carry the race of mankind into the new world? In desperation, those who were left said, "Let us pick eleven



The Boar
Florence Oleksy

young men and eleven young maidens from amongst the population of Newton, Kansas, for we don't have much time left. We'll all be history soon."

At that very moment, a bus was passing by the place of the egg with the Newton High football team and Miss Teen America finalists from the State of Kansas, all of whom were to appear at a fund raising banquet that night. When the wizards explained what was happening to the earth and the great mission that was to be their lot, the football team and Miss Teen America finalists volunteered to be placed in state in the crystal egg.

One amongst them, a blue-eyed blond, urged them to volunteer, saying, "This is rod!"

All followed her into the shaft. Shortly thereafter the earth became like unto the nether places and the cities of men were consumed by fire. But a mile beneath the Kansas prairie, the egg lay safe, awaiting the passage of the millennia.

Blood Betrayal

by Laticia Niemi

The wind whispered through the black-draped trees of the forest. Branches distorted the moonlight, casting jagged shadows on earth. Mary, wrapped in a cape, dashed through the forest. Branches tore at her legs, vines sought to trip her feet, and she clung more tightly to the bundle in her arms.

The heavy hood fell away from her head and the branches eagerly combed the tangled, red hair. Her breath came quicker. Mary slowed her stride to calm her heart, which pounded from her pace and from an anger at a betrayal she could never forgive.

A shout, too close behind her, startled her into flight. The forest suddenly broke open upon an enormous meadow, bathed in moonlight. The woman stopped abruptly, letting out her breath in a despairing sob. Her pursuers would catch her before she was half-way across. Tears brimmed in her emerald eyes. Angtly, she brushed them away, and hugged the now squirming bundle to her chest.

She moved from the shelter of the forest to skirt the edge of the meadow, staying close to the line of the trees. She could no longer hear signs of pursuit, but dared not pause to rest.

A low roar began to build in her ears. She thought it was the sound of blood pulsing through her head until she nearly stepped off the cliff. For a long moment, Mary gazed at the tremendous waves pounding the rock wall upon which she stood, her eyes wild with the sudden desire to fling herself to the merciless ocean. The infant squirmed and she glanced indecisively about her.

To her left was the forest leading back to nowhere, with possible hiding places along the way. To her right was freedom, but exposure. She glanced back the way she had come, half hoping she had lost her pursuers, but a flash of steel betrayed their presence.

Abruptly, she veered back into the forest, glancing in surprise at the well-worn path beneath her feet. She followed the path deep into the forest.

A boulder, twice the height of the woman, cast a thick, black shadow across the path, stopping her as effectively as if it had been a barrier. Death was close behind. With this knowledge, a sudden calm diminished the terrors and bitterness within her. She gazed down at the child's face.

"Little Catriona." Mary's breath closed the infant's eyes; her lips brushed the paper-thin lids.

"Mother will not desert ye." She struggled violently to hold back tears. The infant seemed not to notice her mother's discomfort. She gurgled happily now that she wasn't being jostled. Her wide, leaf-green eyes



Vietnamese Mother and Child
Kim Hohman

watered slightly from the cool air.

Mary choked back a cry, imagining a trust in those innocent eyes that she could not bear to disappoint. Suddenly, she could understand her husband's betrayal. She could not forgive him, but she could understand. Perhaps this child— if she lived — would someday be able to understand why her mother had abandoned her. Perhaps even forgive her. The thought consoled the woman.

She stepped quickly around the boulder into tangled weeds and moss, and lay her precious bundle carefully upon a bed of woodland flowers. She placed a kiss on one pink cheek, before folding the blanket over Catriona's face. Then she stood, listening intently. Above the low murmur of wind and the distant waves came the pounding of many feet.

Gasping, Mary flew from behind the boulder and down the path. A shout let her know she had been seen. All too soon, grimy, hardened faces and lethal blades surrounded her.

"What do ye want with me?" She cried, circling warily, and listening for any sound from her baby.

"The babe is the King's bastard and must die. By order of the King." A soldier with a yellow beard and relentless eyes answered her. He hefted his blade as if he could hardly wait to use it. Mary swallowed the sickness in her throat.

"I do not have her," she gasped.

"Where is she? The innkeeper saw ye leave with her."

"She is with a friend," Mary announced with feigned triumph. "Ye will never find her!"

Yellow-beard grabbed her slender throat with one hand, forcing her to her knees.

"Ye will not be defiant with me, lass. Now, where is she?"

Mary couldn't have answered if she had wanted to. She clawed at the hand that cut off her air supply. The soldier looked up at his companions, a malevolent smile curling his lips.

"Lads!" He ordered.

Several hundred feet away, the child heard her mother's screams and began to cry. But the wind blew with sudden force, shaking the trees angrily and stirring the leaves into wild dances. The infant's cries went unheeded.

Psychotherapy on a Budget

by Karen Lundquist

They say change is good for the soul, but I wish it wouldn't hurt so much. Why not pour yourself a cup of coffee, pull up a chair and listen to my problems?

You see, I grew up securely rooted in a two-parent household, believing my future would hold a wealthy doctor, 2.5 children and a Cape Cod in the suburbs. Domestic bliss, I thought, was *wiling* the days away in a perky shirt waist, feather duster in hand, with a pot roast in the oven but not much upstairs (Dr. Wonderful, of course, could do my thinking for me). I even believed in baseball, hot dogs and apple pie. This was my Donna Reed, Jr. phase.

What the heck. The 60's came along and I was ready to chuck it all for life on some god-forsaken commune above the tree line or the edge of the desert or any other spot most likely to qualify as the armpit of the world. I figured life in a tepee with 20 or 30 of my closest friends wouldn't be so bad as long as I was safe from the corrupt, materialistic bourgeoisie in the cities. No running water? No problem. No supermarkets? No sweat. No electricity? Not to worry, I and several others of my time were going to live off the land. Although there were actually some who tried it and lived to tell the tale, I kept postponing my flight from society to catch the next installment of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* And let's face it— I couldn't face life cut off from my stereo headphones and the Moody Blues. Fortunately, this was the era before the battery powered boom box or I'd probably still be out on the fringes. This was my Earth Mother phase.

In the 70's I returned to safer paths. I traded in my love beads for a wedding ring and proceeded to become a homemaker. This is where things start to get confusing. The Donna Reed Jr. in me lusted after frilly aprons and chintz curtains while the Earth Mother in me wanted to slap homemade bread dough into shape and walk barefoot in the garden, knee deep in sheep manure. Believe it or not, I balanced both and, in between, managed to raise three kids, four cats, two dogs and a husband. This was my Perfect Wife phase, until I realized more effort was going into raising the latter than all of the rest combined.

It was then, after 16 years of marriage, I embarked on my Independent Woman phase. This one fit like a \$2 shoe at first. Donna Reed, Jr. cried a lot because the Cape Cod went on the auction block to pay the divorce lawyers, and Earth Mother moped because apartments don't come with gardens. Perfect Wife really took it on the chin and occasionally still stumbles over the word "I." "We" had felt so comfortable for so many years.

Independent Woman is definitely in charge now, and it's not all bad. She takes as much pride in her career as she used to in her house. She

learned to compromise a lot in order to survive and found she doesn't even need Dr. Wonderful to do her thinking for her. Her vegetables come out of a can and her bread from a plastic bag.

As for trusting in baseball, hot dogs and apple pie, times have changed. I've watched Pete Rose rewrite the rule book like a Watergate pro and I've learned that eating a hot dog is just one step below slipping toxic waste through a straw. And we all know apple pie has enough lard in it to send your cholesterol level higher than the Dow Jones average.

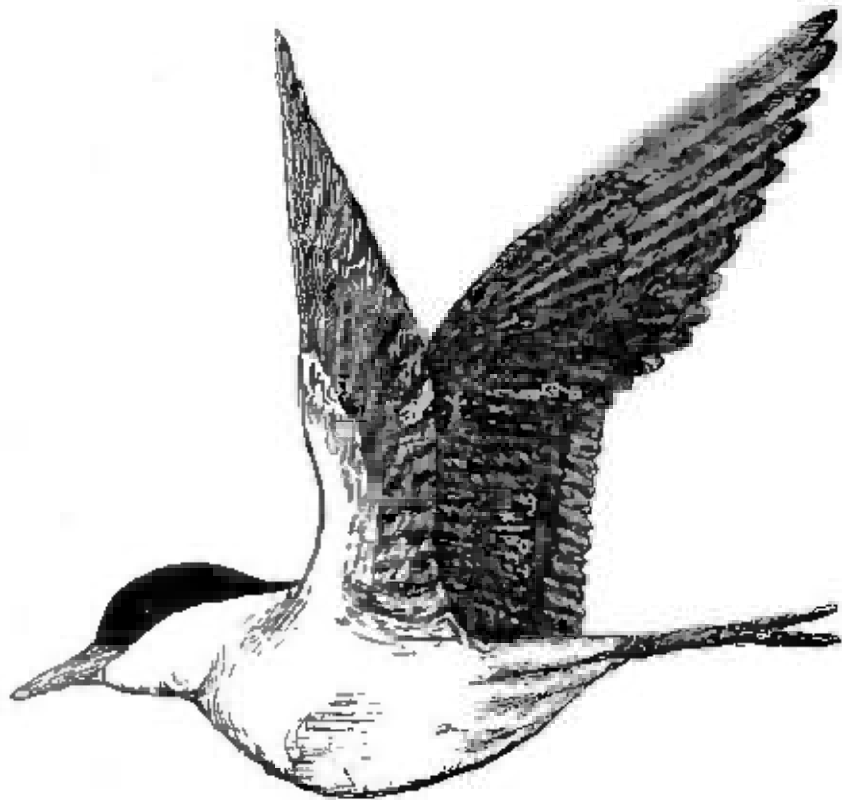
I've developed a certain fondness for the corrupt, materialistic bourgeoisie and couldn't live without my Cuisinart. As for tepees, I've come to realize the only way I care to see the mountains or deserts is from the Winnebago I hope to buy from the proceeds from my IRA.

Most importantly, I've learned to know this person I've become— the person capable of an occasional noble deed who can't stick to a diet, kick the cat, or tell a lie with a straight face. I like most fellow human beings and on a good day I even like myself.

All in all, life's been interesting— lots of peaks and valleys. So far I've had enough steam to pull myself up out of the low spots and back to the top of the hill. Maybe someday I'll get to the point where I can coast a while, if not, maybe I'll run away and join the circus.

Coffee gone? Pour yourself a warm-up and I'll tell you about my operation and these funny dreams I've been having about riding the bus without any clothes on and these anxiety attacks I get whenever I think of the Junior prom and...

Gee, thanks. I feel better already. You ought to think about going into private practice.



Quiet Heart

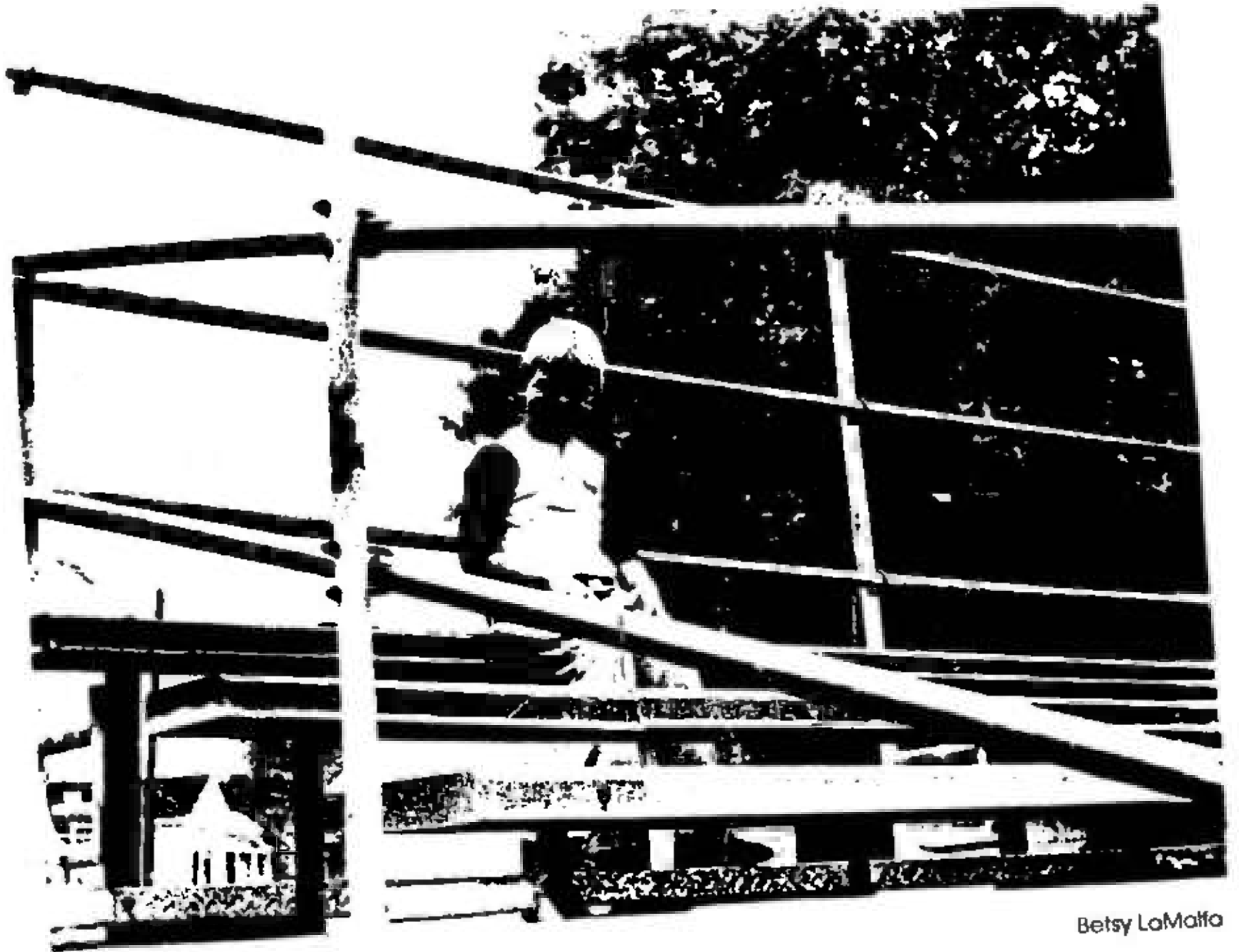
by Roberta Sulk

Judge not what you see without light;
do not shadow the quiet heart.
Look beyond the wall that exists in your mind;
our worlds are not that far apart.

The eye only sees but one single point,
fading into the distant sky.
The warmth and strength of the quiet heart
lend wings for your freedom to fly.

The only life that you shelter within
cannot change and thus will not grow.
Accept the gifts of the quiet heart;
only then will you truly know.

Bird in Flight
Annette Lutri



Betsy LoMalfo

Visiting Church

by Minor Salas Solis

It was a very hot and dry afternoon on December 24th, 1975, in the middle of one of the most arid summers I have seen. Clouds of dust were going UP into the deep blue of the sky. The sun, shining like a great ball of fire, was burning the almost dying bushes along the dusty and fractured road.

That afternoon, all people from the small village of Santa Carmensita were grouped together in front of the old Gothic-styled church, which was the most luxurious and well-constructed building in the whole area.

I was a seven-year-old boy among that mass of peasants, most of them wearing their black outfits. The ladies had their faces covered by an almost transparent veils, through which one could see wrinkled faces and white hair tight in bun fashion, while men with their straw hats would try to fan their flushed and perspiring faces.

Some of the more unfortunate and wretched two-legged animals were moving from one spot of dry grass to another in order to protect their bare feet against the infernal and almost unbearable heat of the reddish ground.

Amazed by the turmoil of all those beasts, I asked my grandma what was going on. She, with a skeptical face, told me that people that day were going to be saved; that was a very strange phrase for me.

Suddenly, all the people—like a herd of cows—started moving in one direction, almost in an hysterical manner. I could only see a car coming up the dusty road. Slowly it moved into the crowd and stopped in front of the church. The door of the car began to open, while a white, almost heavenly figure came out of it. He was shining like a spark of fire; and with a golden cross in his hands, he went into the church while the biped creatures were throwing, applauding, and screaming their happiness into the air.

He stood in front of the few wobbly pews where the domesticated animals were seated. He had a golden belt on his fat waist, tightening up his silk soutane stamped with bright Latin letters. I had never seen a more splendid and magnificent creature in my life.

With a halting voice I asked my grandma who that character was; and she said he was the *santísimo obispo* (blessed bishop) from Alejuellita; and that he came to bless our community, our church, and to forgive our sins.



Standin' Easy
Nikki Twork

At that moment, people began kneeling down on the floor and raising their hands, their epileptic bodies shaking rhythmically and their eyes turning white. From their salivating mouths I could hear a moaning, which for me did not make any sense. After ten minutes of this praying and shaking, their deformed faces were totally covered by sweat and a stinky odor came out of their horse-like bodies.

I raised my head to see the *sanctísimo obispo* saying something like, "en nombre del Dios poderosísimo yo los perdono de todo pecado" (on behalf of the all powerful God I forgive all your sins). After that, he went out of the church and got into the car. There was a deep silence in the atmosphere. A minute later people started going out also.

I was very intrigued by what had happened, so I asked my grandma if all those people had been forgiven for their sins. She said an emphatic.... YES. That was a strange and mysterious answer for me, because I could not see any difference in them. They were still walking without any shoes on their bare animal feet.

How Long?

by Marge Kehoe

How long will she let them suffer, this woman who works with you?
They're daddy's little victims, after a six pack or two.

She played a trick on daddy to win that band of gold;
And now it's six years later and she says she feels so old.

The Christmas tree learned to fly this year, the carpets filled with food:
I guess it all boils down to "just one of daddy's moods."

Co-workers give advice: there's support groups throughout the land;
But one can't help and wander, why none will lift a hand.

A boy of ten can't handle being pinned against the wall;
But daddy says the dog's not fed, which seems to be about all.

His remarks to their little girls get ma-ma oh so mad;
But still one has to wonder, why she won't leave you, Dad.

At seven Susie wets the bed, that seems to be a shame;
Ma-ma says she's lazy, but could fighting be to blame?

How long will she let them suffer, this woman who works with you?
They're just daddy's little victims, after a six pack or two.

Journeys

by Trish Gignac

My name is Feather Walker and I would like to share with you a part of my journey into beingness, becoming a medicine woman. I think it is important to share and to keep a record of our journeys to help others find their way.

When I was three I knew I had the ability to calm animals and sooth onry people. In kindergarten at the reservation school, I was able to see and hear things beyond the obvious. I could feel the magnetic pull of the universe. I could even make things happen if I really concentrated. For example, once I made a rope swing break when Little Beaver was on it. It was brand new.

My mother Standing Eagle has strong medicine. She has healed most of our tribe in the last forty years, but she is getting old. She was already 37 when I was born.

I never knew my father. He died in one of man's wars. My mother loved him very much, but their time was short together. He chose the ways of the world. And because of this he was weak and died. He did not belong to the Council of Thirteen.

They are called the Council of Thirteen because when it began they were that many in number. Now they are forty-four. And this is just in our tribe; I have heard there are others outside.

Standing Eagle has called a meeting of the Council of Thirteen. It is time I join the inner circle with my other sisters and brothers and become a medicine woman. They will remind me of the potions, curses and spells which will heal and enlighten all souls. I say remind, because this is all that is needed. Within me are souls as ancient as the universe. I need but only remember all I have known.

Our medicine lodge is the sacred place for our ceremonies. All babies are birthed there and all dying are brought there to pass through. It was built in the shape of a circle about 100 feet across. In the center is a massive fire pit. Its flames reach to the open flaps in the roof, through which the stars glisten and the moon shines bright and full.

As we sit around the fire, we share potions and pipes. As I feel this magic, my senses become keen and my awareness of the world slips away. A heavy blue mist surrounds me. The others from the tepee are no longer with me. There is a swoosh of birds taking flight above my head.



Frankly Gallant
Andrea Royal

There are now two guides with me, a bright white one to my front left, a darker guide with long hair on my right.

I begin to see the walls of a passage way. On them are signs and symbols which I do not understand on a conscious level, but I know their meanings deep within. My guides are reminding me of things I've known but am not aware of. They seem to be speaking backwards, yet I understand perfectly.

As we leave this great chamber, a serpent appears at my feet. I glide over him and land in a great field on Mother Earth. There are a million shades of green. Healing grasses and trees. All of humanity seems present, but we are one, not a mass of separate entities. I cannot distinguish between my brothers and sisters and the trees. It seems as if we are all in the process of healing and renewing with the trees, becoming one. We are remembering the laws of the universe, which is a mirroring of our separate entities. I then awaken to a fresh green morning of spring.

I will remember my visions and record them on my new medicine shield. My mother will teach me to do this today. She has always told me I have strong medicine and I have always known it. She says my visions will now take on a new meaning. All visions are passages to humanity and I must not forget the teachings. They must be passed on.

I can't tell you all the things I learned on my journey, but I can say it is all within you only to remember. We have all crossed souls through eternity. And what I have seen, you have also. I can say we are not 20 or 30 souls. We are but one, with many faceted consciousnesses, much as your Jesus, Buddha, and others. All is for the purpose of healing and enlightening the souls— so that we all, as a collective consciousness, will rise to the perfect humming pitch of light.

Neon Lights

by Ronda Straitt

The neon light cuts into the night. It burned its impression into my memory. Who cared what it said; I sure didn't. The only form of "life" in this big city: A meaning, a message... then again... nothing, pure and simple. Nothing.

Like a memory. Here... gone... here... gone... A beam of existence in the conscious memory. And then there's none. A dream perhaps, a sudden realization of the moment that once was or may've been, but not really sure. A point in time where reality escapes all bounds and lets senseless reasonings filter in, yet not entirely senseless... within reach, but just far enough away where the graze of a fingertip is in itself just a dream. Just a space in time... a certain blinking moment... a fraction of a second... a blinking of a light....

Self Defense

by Steven J. Thayer

I had managed to have several near misses with Daphne. She had managed to weave her way into and out of my life for the past seven years. I shouldn't have been surprised that she was back. We always seemed to be crossing paths, missing each other at our favorite hang outs by five minutes. There was always a lot of talk about that. I would be reminded about how unlucky, or lucky, I had been to have missed bumping into her.

I knew it would have to happen sooner or later.

I was feeling kind of bummed out and decided to sneak off by myself to the local pub. There was a rock band playing, and I figured that a couple of hours of loud music might pick me up. A few drinks couldn't hurt either.

I had just started my second beer. I was sitting there, toying with the bottle in my hand, not paying much attention to things going on around me, when I heard something and looked up. There was Daphne, walking towards my table. I froze.

She was wearing an emerald green dress that came just above her knees. Black high-heeled shoes. Her long, raven hair fell neatly about her shoulders. She was smiling, and her eyes were glancing about the room. I felt the hair rise on the back of my neck.

She worked her way across the room and had nearly reached my table before she recognized me. Those dark eyes of hers sized me up as she approached. My hand tightened around the bottle.

"Hi Bill," she said as she stopped. "I haven't seen you in ages. How've you been? Well, I gotta go. Talk to you later, maybe." She waved and sauntered off.

"Yeah, maybe," I thought, as I watched her walk away. I turned my attention to the now empty bottle.

The band, just back from break, started its next set. I started another beer and leaned back in my chair to watch the action on the dance floor. Sure enough, she was out there. I didn't know who it was she was with, but it didn't matter. She had positioned herself so she could watch me, like a cat watching a mouse.

I was feeling a bit uneasy, among other things, as I glanced at my watch. Twelve-thirty. "I should be going," I thought, glancing around the bar. "Escape while I can."

Just as I was reaching around to take my coat from the back of the chair, her voice interrupted. I looked up. She and what's-his-name were standing there. They were leaving too. Together.

"I was pleased to see you again, Bill," she said. "I really wish we could've talked. I'm sure we'll bump into each other again, so maybe later."

"Well, where to?" I heard what's-his-name ask as they turned to leave. I never did hear her response. I just sat there, watching. Watching her. Watching them. Leaving.

I wanted to pound my fist into the table, to scream out every obscenity I could think of. But I couldn't scream. I couldn't think. The only thing pounding was my heart.



Femme Fatale

Kinda Boring



Walker
Kathy Siemes

My Great Wall

by Linda Rice

Constructed of disappointments,
loneliness and fear
is this great wall I've built to
prevent you from getting near.

My cold wall serves a purpose,
as I deeply sob inside;
it shows that on the surface,
what have I to hide?

Violent attempts and verbal abuse,
prove my wall withstood a test;
so kicking and shoving is of no use,
my wall grows stronger yet.

Only the bravest sort of fellow
dare approach this construction site;
self-assurance may turn yellow,
to prove again I was right.

My wall is built of time unshared,
every layer has its face;
understand my past, and be aware
I've already reserved your place.

My advice is bring your tools,
have a chisel in your eye,
armor plate your heart, you fool,
my wall is built sky-high!

Wrong Man for the Job

by Jeff Boivin

Walking in and out of the shadows of the alley, Tony stepped maliciously out of the shadows. He tried to slide the revolver back into his front jacket pocket, but a heroin needle jabbed his forefinger. Wincing with pain, his arm jerked back and sent the gun spiraling horizontally through a glass window. The glass crashed inside the cage setting off the burglar alarm. With a loud thud and shattering crunch, Tony jumped through the opening to retrieve the gun. If he left it there, the pigs would finger him by morning, and the gas chamber wasn't anywhere near his next destination.

"Open the door before I kick it in!" Tony said, yelling through the imitation oak door. No answer. Kaa-rack the door slammed to the floor, and the hinges reeled to the ground like the stunned, dying corpse from the alley. He found a not on the table, it said,

Tony,

It'll be back later, maybe.

Love, Lia

He crumpled it up and threw it in the trash. Tony grabbed a beer out of the fridge. The touch of it made him coil back in apprehension and he let it drop to the floor. The moist, chilled sides of the beer can made him think back to the scene in the alley where he had left a dead cop. He remembered every last detail as if it were engraved upon his brain. Earlier in the same shut off alley, he was shooting up with drugs when a man tried to help him, but Tony knew better. "No pig really wants to help me," he rationalized. Tony raised his gun and fired with deadly instinct, like he was a robot, trained for it. Somehow thinking the incident through justified the action, making it seem less harsh, less diabolical, and he distanced himself from the shooting. He picked up the beer, drank it, and left the apartment.

After ten hours of busting hookers, pimps, killers, and drug pushers, Johnny Law stepped out of his cruiser. As he shut the door he read the emblem on the side. "To serve and protect", and laughed out loud. His home was a travesty compared to the wealthy pukes he was assigned to protect. He was not their equal yet they relied on him to uphold their laws and keep "undestrables" off their plush estates.

Johnny knew the double standard the rich held for policemen. He was allowed to check out their homes when trouble appeared, but he had better leave as soon as possible so as not to "inconvenience" them. Maybe they were laughing. Johnny thought to himself. Johnny Law saw the whirlwind of mistrust that brewed between the classes. But Johnny thought does that mean any one group is more worthy of salvation than the other? "No, this is who I am" Johnny moaned out, the sound echoing

throughout the house. He decided to take a walk and let his emotions radiate over the streets. He wondered what to do. He knew he was no longer a policeman for he despised the work thrown on him. No longer would he do their dirty work.

Striding past a desolate, unit alley, Johnny saw a man lying on the ground, his face knotted in anguish from drugs, and wanted to help him, maybe straighten him out. The stranger snarled in a deep, foreboding voice, "What do YOU want?", and Johnny started to reply, but it was too late. Two shots rang out from the gun in Tony's outstretched hand and penetrated deep into Johnny's chest. All of his instincts and training as a policeman should have warned him, but Johnny Law lay dying, a victim of his own solicitude. All he could say is, "You've got the wrong man."



Cool Cat
Kim Hohman