

# RED CEDAR REVIEW









# **RED CEDAR REVIEW**

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# RED CEDAR REVIEW

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the kommandant

*for who can make straight  
that which he hath made crooked?*

he saw her again, after years, in the village  
store. he leapt back, his hand seeking the weight of his  
gun. there she stood: frailer than in the yard, faded  
dress hanging loosely from thinned shoulders, more colour

in the scarf on her head than in her cheeks. he barked  
his adjutant outside, strode to her, forced her chin  
up with his baton, found eyes bluer than his own.  
she did not look away. his arm dropped, brushing the

gun on his hip. he unbuckled his holster, laid  
it on his desk. the cork on their third bottle of  
champagne exploded; he gulped the pale liquid, hauled  
his chair to her side of the desk, scooting until

their knees collided, his monologue more earnest  
than usual. she sipped, concentrating on the  
silver oval pinned over his left breast: two swords  
crossed behind an army steel helmet. leather hissed

as he slipped pistol from holster; he leaned forward,  
displaying the cool dark of the weapon. *freiheit*.  
he snapped the two small circles: up and back, urging  
the butt toward her hand. her glass shuddered. she stayed still.

he gripped her wrist, tugging her to her feet along  
with him, slammed the warm metal into her hand, crushed  
her limp fingers around its form, fixing her hand  
there with both of his rough palms: *du — freiheit*, yanking

gun and hands until the barrel butted his chest,  
her elbow rigid. *feuer*. her eyes became less  
opaque. *ja*. he swallowed, squared his shoulders, lifted  
his chin, released her hands. her arm lowered. *nein, nein*,



*feuer.* the piece thudded to her feet. he stared at her; her eyes dulled, leaving him there. the gun lay on the floor between them. he had forgotten that he no longer wore it; his empty hand slid down his

hip and leg as he watched her pay for her items, her long braid pale down the center of her back. sun glowed on her hair as she opened the shopdoor and stepped out, calling a goodbye to the owner. *she*

*writes books,* a squinting wife standing near him in the aisle confided as the german gazed after her. from the bookstore window, her face lashed out him. he leaned, gasping, against the glass. fuller cheeks, hair,

bright eyes — but her. he dragged himself into the shop, forced the slim volume into his hands. *survivor: one who survives.* poems by esther rebekah levi. esther. the publisher supplied him an

address. she had moved by the time he reached the place, though it was easy enough to discover her new destination. so it went. this time, she was here. the engine started almost too eagerly.

after countless european villages, he found her in this mountain town. he wished now he were wearing his uniform. he shook his head: he must go to her without ornaments. the road twisted

through singing summer green, warmed by morning. he would park far from the house, approach on foot. he practised the words in english. *verdammt nochmal!* he slammed the car stopped, jerking the wheel toward flanking trees: her house.

the car door banged; he leaned on the hood. she would not want to see him again: perhaps she had her own gun by now. he should forget he had found her. his fingers sought the door handle, but the look in her



eyes, the taste of her, the smell of her: he made a great show of examining the numbers on her forearm: *S-61856*. she glanced down, dark lashes long on her cheeks. he kneaded her shoulders,

ribs through the threadbare material. her hipbones jutted awkwardly beneath the skin. he rubbed her cheek with the back of his long fingers, murmured, pushed the scarf from her head, ran his hand across the light

stubble; he circled her several times, nodding: *ja*. marta guessed almost from the beginning. at first she said nothing, assuming it would pass as all the others. then: sniping, chiding, remonstrative

silences. in spring she confronted him: *stop with this girl*. he looked up from his morning paper. *there's only so much I can ignore; I must think of my position*. he buttered his toast, scanned the print.

marta pushed the paper down onto the table. *I'll complain to someone if this doesn't stop. my aunt's husband still has influence*. the wrench on her wrist freed the paper. he snapped it straight, turned the page,

sipped his coffee. marta locked herself in their room the rest of the day. a week later he had his things moved into the guest bedroom across the hall. in summer marta took the children to visit

her sister in hamburg for two weeks. he brought the girl to his room: to be with her in a bed. his back to her, he unhooked his weapons, fumbled with buttons. the sheets slid cool, crisp on his thighs. he pulled

her to him, his skin against hers; though he had been unable to teach her german, he whispered her all sorts of things: he told her he loved her. after, he slept. he shuddered to think what he would have done



to the kommandant had he been the girl, with his  
service dagger and pistol by the bowl of fruit  
on the bureau. she did nothing. *in the bedroom  
of the kommandant*: the first poem in her book. his

throat tightened. *verdammt scheisse!* she understood  
german! he bellowed to see himself on the page:  
she had cognac, champagne, caviare; wore one of  
marta's gowns; slept with blankets in the corner of

his office. the girl was not beaten after he  
took her in, except once, when he was inspecting  
the camp and marta bashed her with the wooden back  
of a hairbrush: *schmutzige hure!* the first blows

smashed into the girl's cheekbone; others landed on  
her arms, shoulders, neck. that night, after dinner, he  
found her, huddled in the corner: swelling, bruises.  
he roared into the kitchen, abandoned brush clenched

in fist. his wife started, clutched the dishtowel to her  
breast. he hurled the wood through the window over the  
sink, the falling glass soundless beneath his rage. then  
he stalked outside. marta collapsed at the table,

white knuckles twisting, untwisting, twisting the cloth.  
the thundering of his gun lasted almost an  
hour. he posted a guard at his office door,  
permitted no one entrance unless he were in:

not his adjutant, not his children, not ever  
his wife. he protected the girl, fed her, clothed her.  
and he never forced himself on her: she did not  
resist. true, he did things with her he did not with

marta; his wife disliked his touching, kissing. but  
his girlfriends before the war had told him he was  
gentle, good; some had even fallen in love with  
him. toward the end, he did not touch the girl at all,



except sometimes to caress her face with calloused fingers, or to kiss her scarred palm and hold it to his lined face. howling, he shredded her book, burned its pages in the middle of the hotel room floor,

stamped the flames, ashes. six months later, he purchased another copy, but turned cold when he tried to open it. every day he vowed he would see her one more time, for that time. he went to the trunk of

the car, dug the small parcel from the luggage. his civilian clothes pinched in all sorts of places — his uniform had been so comfortable. thousands of miles of searching behind, her house less than an eighth

of a mile ahead. he pushed greying hair back from his forehead, hoped she wouldn't see him walking up to the porch. *it's her, isn't it?* marta asked. *you'll never see the children again.* he said nothing.

*I'll make them hate you.* yes. *she hates you.* he knew that. he glanced back at the shadowed car; his right hand strained on its object. the porch resounded hollowly under his boots. he swallowed, knocked on the wood of

the screen door: *and if I perish, I perish.* he knocked again. *just a minute,* floated from inside. sweat dampened his shirt; he pressed his arms against his body, bent his right arm so it was behind. she

came from the kitchen, drying her hands on a white dishtowel, humming for two grey kittens who bounded after her, racing her to the door. she smiled at them, laughed. it was the first time he had seen her smile.

then she saw him. morning sun from windows in the office haloed his head, shoulders. he was writing furiously, did not stop scribbling until his adjutant coughed. the kommandant snapped his head up,



scowling, shoved back the dark hair fallen over his forehead. he strode to her, dismissing the other. he paced around her, nodding: *ja*. gripping her arm, he led her to a small bathroom beyond his desk.

he pointed out towel, washcloth, unwrapped a sweet soap. when she did not move, he prodded her toward the sink, turned on water. she was still. he began to drag the shift from her. she closed her eyes. water gurgled

in the basin. he closed the door, leaving her there. he jerked open a cabinet on the far wall, poured a whiskey, quaffed it, splashed out another, smoked an italian cigarette, loosed his collar, glanced

at his watch. he opened the door. she jumped, holding the towel to her. he stopped the water, flattened his cigarette, kicked the door closed, she swallowed, he forced her chin in his palm, roughed his lips on hers, yanked free

the towel. she made no sound. he knelt, wound his arms about, forced her rigid form to him. the kittens meowed solemnly, rubbed their thin backs against her ankles. the bright in her cheeks drained down her long throat

and hid behind her blue-grey dress. *may I come in?* she recognized his voice even in english. a slight snort escaped her flaring nostrils, a hiss from under the towel. he knew then that she had seen him

in the store, had expected he would follow. she drew the heavy german pistol from beneath the cloth. his left eyelid began to twitch. he nodded, clicked his heels together. her eyes were bluer than

anything he had ever seen. he stood straight. she readied the gun: snap! he would not close his eyes. she emptied the chambers into his chest through the screen. he felt himself pounded, flung, in slowed motion, back;

he heard the cats snarl, felt acrid powder sting his nostrils. his head cracked on the bottom step. he hoped he hadn't cried out. the kittens mewed, wrapped themselves around her ankles. *esth . . .* he coughed. *esther, may I*

*come in?* she almost didn't recognize his voice in english. he was slighter without uniform, greying, craggier — but him. her hands shook; she flinched as his right hand swung to the front: the slim volume

opened to its first selection. her brow furrowed. he put on reading glasses and in wavering voice read *in the bedroom of the kommandant*. though the poem spanned two pages, all its stanzas poured from

him without his turning the page. her fingers hid her mouth. his hand faltered as he offered the book to her, looked over the rim of his spectacles at her. she did not even breathe. he removed his

glasses, slid them behind his lapel into shirt pocket; his arm lowered. *ja*. he bowed his head, with a great effort not to click his heels. he laid the open book on the wide porch-rail, stepped down. something

creaked behind him. he turned. she came out onto the porch, holding wide the screen door. the two grey kittens peered warily from her feet. the thin white towel, her book's pages fluttered in the early morning breeze.



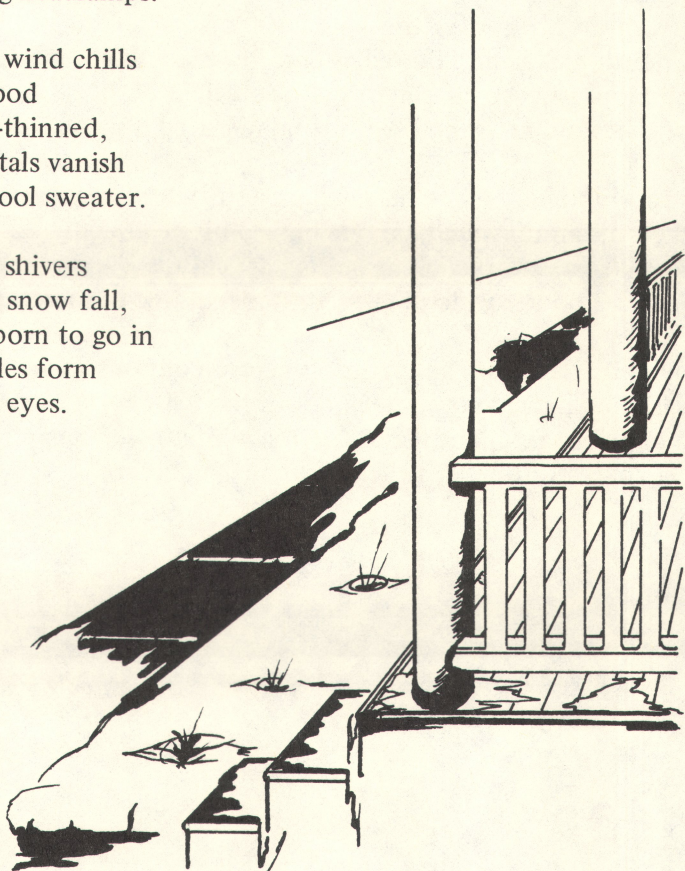
## COLD

Alone on the dark porch,  
bourbon warmed, watching  
cars hiss down the street  
spraying slush  
along the salted curbside.

Bourbon sensitive  
think of stars  
falling from the sky,  
glinting in the dirty light  
of passing headlamps.

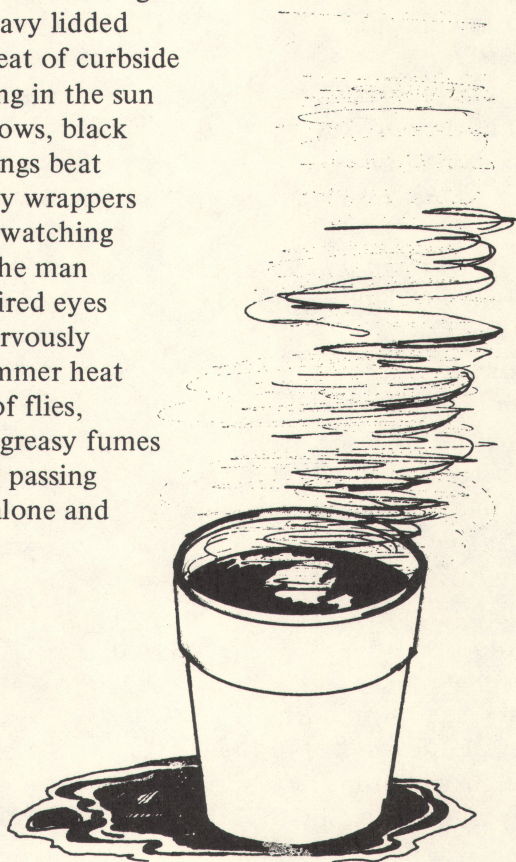
How the wind chills  
warm blood  
bourbon-thinned,  
tiny crystals vanish  
on the wool sweater.

Bourbon shivers  
watching snow fall,  
too stubborn to go in  
until icicles form  
in frozen eyes.



## WALKING

tired tears reflecting darkly  
wash in dirty streams across  
the surface of a paper cup  
calligraphy in steam rising  
heavenward a prayer and a curse  
a chant for the ears of the lonely  
Buddha, heart pounding on the street  
beggar bowl and Lotus sutra  
in the firm flesh concentration of  
young girls damp from August heat  
smiling at the sad pain twitching  
restlessly dry and heavy lidded  
drunk in the oily sweat of curbside  
puddles, colors oozing in the sun  
like hell's own rainbows, black  
and subtle crow's wings beat  
back flies from candy wrappers  
baking in the gutter watching  
with tiny curiosity the man  
weeping dust from tired eyes  
black eyes flicker nervously  
unfocused in the summer heat  
suffering the death of flies,  
the smell of tar, the greasy fumes  
of passing cars while passing  
through the streets alone and  
unconsoled.





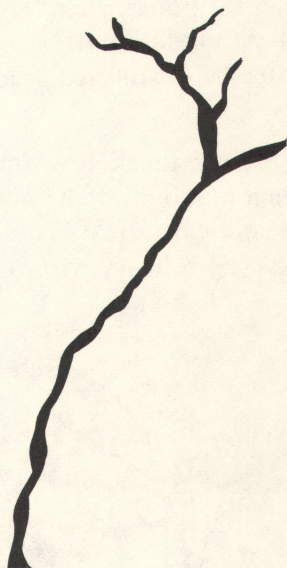
**THE DREAM IN WHICH YOU MAKE CHOICES  
IS YOUR LIFE**

There are said to be  
dreams of falling  
that can kill you in  
in your sleep.  
If that happens,  
everyone will believe  
you died unexpectedly,  
but painlessly,  
after a good dinner  
with a half-finished book  
still open on your chest.  
No one will guess  
your terror,  
how it has lurked  
just under your skin  
like a case of hives  
about to break out,

or how tempted you have been  
to keep yourself comfortable.  
You can live  
a cooler life,  
bathing in ice water  
to prevent the rash,  
soothing yourself with lotions  
until they form a protective crust.  
By hanging on  
where it is safe,  
you can become  
one of those fruits  
that ripen  
but refuse to surrender,  
a marvel of shrivelled insistence  
someone will prune next spring,  
uneaten, undefiled by the earth.

Instead, you pour yourself  
like the long drink of a river  
down a cliff.  
Giving yourself  
completely to your drowsy vision,  
you can't even sense  
the moment of danger,  
the exact instant of going over—  
only the weightlessness  
with nothing to hold you  
or let you stand.  
There is no good reason  
to subject yourself to this hazard  
unless it be  
the possibility  
of arrival in a new place,  
shaken awake,  
strangely possessed  
by your own existence.

JAN





## SILENCE

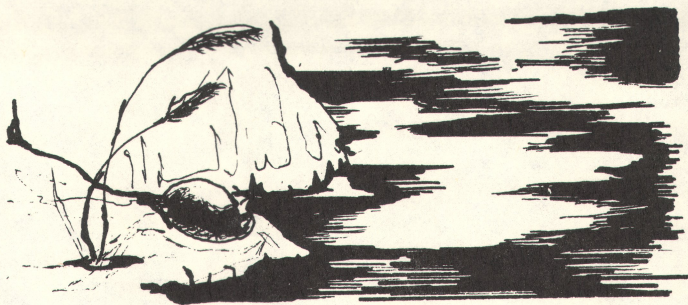
It is not an ordinary silence,  
it's an emptiness  
as if a fetus had been aborted.  
It's like a membrane surrounding me and  
I'm afraid my thoughts will scream through.

It is the silence of winter,  
season of separation  
of falling snow.

It is the silence of loss  
as when I saw my mother die too fast.  
When my father took too long to die.  
When my husband died.

It is the kind of silence that cries  
through the house when the void is so great  
I sleep on my husband's side of the bed.  
Let mine be the unused space.

It is a silence that follows me always,  
a stream numb inside its own shell of ice.  
It is a cold clear night  
and the sky is heavy with it and stars.



## THE BOTTLE

I have a picture of my father held  
in uniform: limp green tie end tucked  
between the buttons of his khaki shirt;  
no jacket, medals or insignia;  
soft cap cocked to self-deceive  
and fir green trousers pressed to kill.  
The worldwide peace has brought him home.  
Ten years older than the other vets  
but not yet forty, against a looming Ford  
he poses in the leaves, beside his Ma.  
A fat square form, her starched apron blued  
to cloudy white across her speckle-printed dress,  
she makes a bankment for his fluid pose.

Before the war, a photograph predicts  
the broken figure, a returning son.  
Under an arching arbor in that past,  
the white, curved slats a roof and halo,  
the naked grapevine lattice sieving sun,  
he had at twenty-nine been limpid as  
a shallow stream, loosely elegant  
in pin-striped wool his Pa  
might well have woven at the mill—  
his grey eyes cringe against the autumn sun.  
A handsome dancer with a nicked sax,  
he holds a Lucky in his blunted grasp  
while some young female shuts the Kodak, now.

One war, one wife away, the yard is green,  
and he a slender trickle in the firs.  
A color photograph has changed the man.  
“The old place,” he says, his mind all fluid,  
his eyes a leaky cork for bottled soldier’s tears,  
and looks around and hears the clickling scrape  
of stone on scythe, the chickens gurgling  
in the sunny arbored shade, the frog  
throats swallowing loud and hard in Tastevino’s pond,



a shallow marsh, the source of the thin stream  
that runs across our yard and disappears  
into the ground, a slender limpid  
brookline running thin and clear as wine.

*Richard Raleigh*

## LOVESICK MENGELE

They say you were in love those last years  
With a woman forty years younger than yourself  
And that when she became engaged to another man  
Your neighbors saw you weeping in the streets.

Oh that must have been rich Mengele  
The Angel of Death crying in the streets of Sao Paulo.  
We had thought that lovesickness was for youth  
The shirtless wing-shouldered boy  
Trying to do his homework in his room  
Turning the pencil in his mouth and biting it in despair  
Putting on his sneakers and jogging to the beach  
To dry his tears in the salt air.  
But you  
So old and mean  
You never surfed the Jersey Shore in your life  
Or bought salt water taffy for a pretty girl in July.  
Too late to find love at sixty-six, my friend  
Hard to imagine that yours are the tears of the pining boy.

Oh Mengele, if you can love  
What pure thing is left for us?

**THE LIZARD IS WELCOMED BACK**

You've gone back to him,  
That black swan,  
That lizard.  
You've taken him back to your bed  
And have broken your two day juice fast for him,  
Drinking wine and calling it grape juice,  
Eating lasagna  
And saying you sucked it up like a liquid.

You were afraid we would talk about you  
Say that he was sullying your bed,  
Spilling wine on your sheets  
Leaving purple spots on them  
Like bruises.

You've spoiled your grand finale  
After you stained his bed  
With the red roses he gave you  
Leaving them there to die  
Making us think the show was over.

But I would have done it too,  
Thinking about him  
While trying to sleep  
My space heater turned up to ten,  
My clean flannel sheets wrapped around me.

I would have done it too  
After waking up at night  
To the slight tinkling of my chinese wind chimes  
When my window is closed

I want to tell you  
Not to do it,  
But as I lay here in bed,  
My feet warmed between two legs  
And listening to the grumbling  
Of another person's stomach  
I know I can't.



jack-knife

i can't find the jack-knife.  
the red  
and yellow  
haft should show clearly  
against brown pine needles  
but it isn't  
here  
under the saddles  
or among the blankets.

the horses snort  
and plunge  
rolling their eyes  
and sidling away from me.

i can't find the jack-knife  
but i used it today  
when we rode  
through the burned land.  
the silence was unnatural  
like the trees  
with their natural shapes exposed  
grey and black  
against the pale sky.  
even the horses stepped more softly  
over the blue-green lichen.

the jack-knife  
was so useful,  
sharp  
for mending the broken  
stirrup leather.  
i haven't sharpened it yet.  
your hands are  
still  
the last to hold it  
against a whetstone.

i must find that knife.  
it was among your effects  
the hospital returned—  
with your wristwatch and wallet,  
the knife, red and yellow.  
i remember your hands  
smoothing it  
over the stone, honing  
the cutting edge.

“it’s a great life,”  
you said, shrugging a little  
against the tubes and wires  
“if you don’t weaken.”

*E. Suzin Odlen*

## LONELINESS

I’ll tell you  
what loneliness  
is: a pint of milk

I want to open  
that cold door  
and find gallons.



## COOKING TOGETHER

I married Deborah  
because of how she cuts mushrooms:  
her square palms  
and short fingers  
wrapping the handle  
of a paring knife  
given to us by her mother;  
cutting each mushroom in half first  
and speckling the halves  
round side up  
(so they cannot roll away)  
across our mahogany cutting board—  
the wood dark  
like rich soil  
showing around melons  
in a patch.

Then she moves the knife  
across the board,  
her free left hand  
appearing to feel the way,  
dicing each half,  
letting the slices  
slump  
to one side  
like exhausted lovers;  
cutting fast,  
drawing the knife high  
as if perfection is her least concern.

And I hold before me  
the cutting board scattered with slices  
and notice the  
the uniformity of their thickness,  
the evenness of her stroke,  
and become bold  
with my dashes of basil, oregano,  
and parsley,

yet careful to check  
my ingredients  
against the recipe  
one last time  
before folding the ricotta  
and mushrooms  
into the moist pastry  
of the calzone shell.

*Paul Humphrey*

### SEMITAPH

Her life was all a noon:  
No morning rays of bright anticipation,  
No evening shades of muted recollection  
No midnight and no moon.  
What stills the breath  
Of one in want of only half a death?





**AT THE 7-ELEVEN**

This man's good eye  
glints like a ceramic  
as he counts my change.

He works too many hours. I tell him  
I also used to stagnate behind counters,  
but gave it up.

The store is a fluorescent palace,  
the young light white and lonely.  
There is no dust. A few potatoes in bins  
rot with slow dignity like cadavers.

He doesn't want to talk. Forbidden  
to sit down, his hours grope ahead  
like sprouts from the eyes of potatoes.

The orderly shelves force me outside  
toward the car, into rain and darkness.  
Something from the past enables me to know  
how his feet flatten and spread  
in his shoes, the way dawn balks  
when you dust packets of Kool-aid ten years old.

## A SUBURBAN EPIC

I am  
in just  
my Sears bra  
screeching  
fists and arms  
whirring out of control  
an angry windmill  
(he thinks)  
trying to make a point  
that got lost  
in hysterical language  
he at least has his  
underpants on  
including shirt and tie

I remember when I was 14  
whoever saw me in  
my lace bra (I had 6)  
an intimate  
a girlfriend sharing secrets  
at the mirror we experimented  
with make-up  
both getting ready  
for good-night kisses  
or a boyfriend  
the 1st one to see my  
lace bra  
the seashell pink one  
his anxious blush and mine  
his gentle awkward touches  
nice shivers  
I still feel in the afternoon  
when the kids are  
taking a nap



Now  
I am  
married  
inside a hothouse  
of flowers blooming  
rage  
we fight  
we argue  
(we tell the children) we discuss  
we scream  
about socks  
still damp in the dryer  
unpaid parking tickets  
car windows left open in the rain  
my sister  
his brother  
I can't even  
afford a lace bra

This is not  
what I expected  
in a million years  
years spent  
not married  
seeing friends marry  
before me  
they looked so happy  
finally  
every day  
when the kids  
are napping  
I wonder if  
there are  
any married women  
with a closet  
full  
of lace bras

A SCHOLAR, HAVING DEVOTED TWENTY-FIVE YEARS TO  
WORK ALONE, FINALLY FALLS IN LOVE AND IS ASTONISHED  
TO DISCOVER HOW LIMITED THE SCOPE OF HIS KNOWLEDGE  
HAS BEEN TILL NOW

The fires contained over so many years  
    have built up enclosed in my being a treasure  
of hoarded emotion undreamt-of till now—  
    rich beyond measure.

And the whole of my life, in this hour's recollection,  
so full as it has been of thought and reflection,  
and of labors and works, but devoid of affection,  
seems now but a desert, a long misdirection,  
    of cruel duration;  
an unspeakable exile, a dreary subjection,  
    a time of probation.

I live now indeed now I live for love's sake;  
if the trial was long the reward is as great;  
I have no more to seek her and no more to wait  
in the dark for a dubious morning to break,  
or to bow to the bitter allottings of fate,  
    or to hopelessly pray.

    She is not far away.

It has come that would come though it comes to me late:  
I slept and endured. Now I live and awake.

    And with wonder I say:

    "I shall see her today."

    And nothing exists

of real in the manifold world

    Except this.



TAKE BACK THE DARKNESS

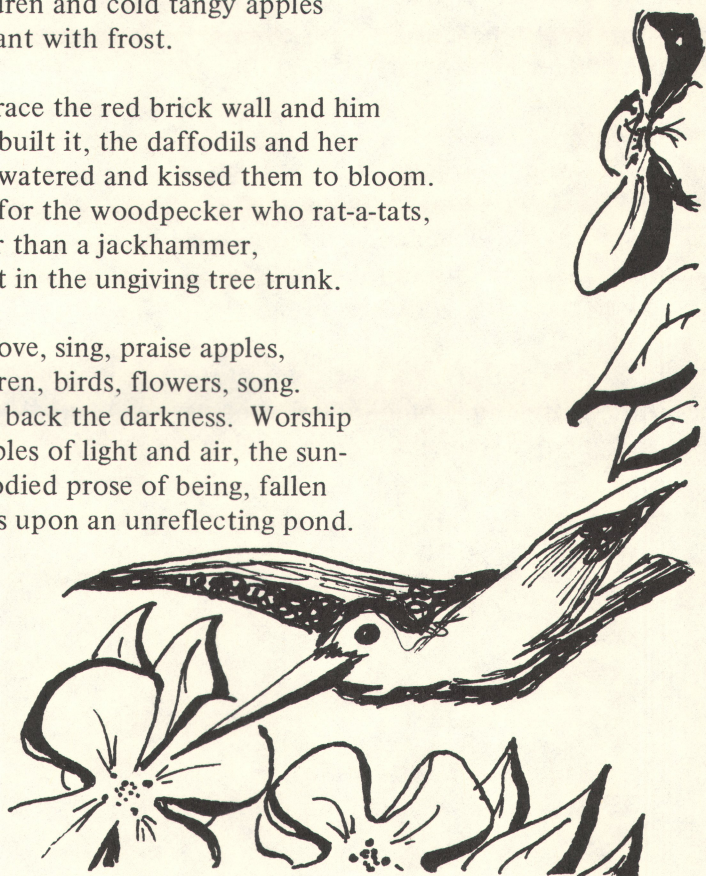
*for Abby and Colin*

Shadows flitter on the window frame  
like hummingbird wings, and the birds  
sing as if morning were an ecstatic  
awakening, but still  
we kill each other, daily, hourly,  
every living, singing moment.

Take back the darkness.  
Care for, worship, adore  
our tender, eager, living,  
striving selves, celebrate  
hummingbirds and wild, awakening  
whildren and cold tangy apples  
brilliant with frost.

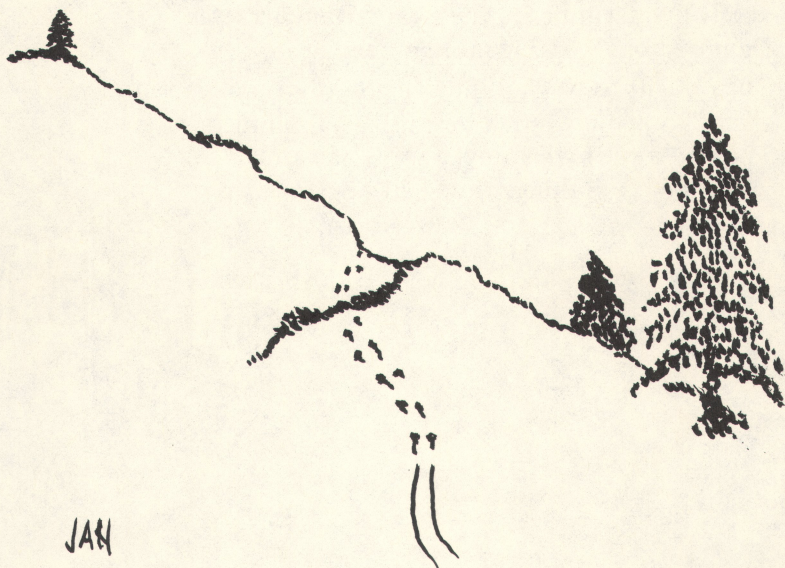
Embrace the red brick wall and him  
who built it, the daffodils and her  
who watered and kissed them to bloom.  
Sing for the woodpecker who rat-a-tats,  
faster than a jackhammer,  
a nest in the ungiving tree trunk.

Oh, love, sing, praise apples,  
children, birds, flowers, song.  
Take back the darkness. Worship  
syllables of light and air, the sun-  
embodied prose of being, fallen  
leaves upon an unreflecting pond.



SEPTEMBER,

the river rises  
swollen  
by two months  
of rain  
this and news  
of a friend's child  
born too soon  
gone back now  
to its place  
of silence  
that night  
I dream  
of my child  
tracks  
of her wheeled bed  
winding through snow  
cries of a blue fox  
calling up ahead  
as I wait  
for the animal  
to walk out of her





## BELOW ZERO

It woke me, the ice snapping at my window  
sometimes before I'd hear Mamma downstairs  
warming the baby's bottle. Last week I found  
a few of Grandma's silver spoons wrapped  
in a piece of cotton flannel blanket.

I had forgotten how you could sprawl  
all over if you had cotton flannels  
on your bed and never hit a cold spot.  
Even the sheets of ice-blue  
morning light breaking across my bed  
couldn't chill me. I felt warm. I'd  
hear Dad cranking the stove and  
the coalbucket retch. I'd listen for  
the squall of smoke up the stovepipe.

He and Mamma would talk.

That's when I felt warmest. When they'd talk,  
even about sad things. It's below zero.

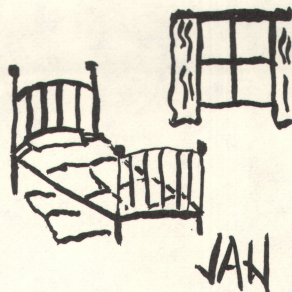
Not even Christmas yet. We got another  
coalbill yesterday. Their voices ran  
together. It was always Dad complaining  
about the headlines in the Grand Rapids Press.

Damn unions wanting more money again.

They ought to be glad they've got jobs.

Don't know how much longer I'll have mine.

Then he'd start whistling, always whistling,  
whistling when things were bad.



THE POND ON A SUMMER AFTERNOON

Stillness

silently captures  
the air holding it  
hostage until ransomed  
by a soft long-awaited  
zephyr.

Sunlight

skims the skin  
of the water sprinkling  
it with a hot luminosity  
of a multifaceted  
emerald.

Water

lying so greeny-gray  
opaque until suddenly  
a fish plops and gentle  
rings ripple outward and  
die.

Movement

has now ceased completely  
even the birds seem to  
take an afternoon siesta  
for their twitter has  
stopped.

Naked

lies a boy on the  
soft verdant moss on the  
rim of the pond totally  
attuned to this summer  
stillness.





## SPARROW HAWK

Beneath that delicate layer of felt  
There is nothing but verb, pure muscle.  
Sparrow misleads, saying shy, emotional:  
The resident of a feeder in your backyard,  
The author of sweet, trite songs,  
A mundane attribute of dawn.  
But the black bars beneath the eyes  
Like warpaint, the roan crown, these  
Should give it away. As it turns sharp,  
Lights, shudders once before shredding  
The field mouse, you wonder how something  
So small, so doll-like could be so cutthroat.  
Do not expect it to sing. It is, after all  
Hawk: terse and hard. There is only  
The lean screech that silences  
The meadow. The flitting, direct strike.



A FEW TIPS TO ANY WOULD BE POETS  
THINKING OF SPENDING TIME IN  
RAPID CITY, MICHIGAN

Don't expect to sit up all night passing the bottle with a bunch of geniuses, talking about everything there ever was that was supposed to be profound.

There aren't any grain elevators to compare to gothic cathedrals, so don't even think about climbing one during a gentle cloudburst in order that you might contemplate your existence.

You won't work shoulder to shoulder with one of the locals and then go back to his humble cottage where his simple but sturdy wife is brewing tea in a samovar and stirring a big pot of buckwheat porridge on the stove. But even if you did by chance put in an honest-to-God full day in the fields it would take more than the harmonious crow of the rooster to get you up the next morning.

Chicken dinners down by the river on the Glorious Fourth and Saturday night dances at the Grange do not exist here anymore. I'm not so sure they ever did.

If it's summer, be thankful. If it's winter, give up looking for infinity in an icicle. Stay inside where it's warm and do your best to avoid the Cabin Fever/John Barleycorn syndrome you used to think was so romantically tragic but now seems so possible that it goes beyond tragedy. Think about summer and the poems you'll write then.





## PIZZA ON THE RUN

*an original play*

Cast of Characters: The Gunman: An unexpected visitor  
Mrs. Hyder: The middle-aged manager of  
Dough-Re-Mi Pizza  
Craig: A teen-aged pizza cook  
Dennis: The teen-aged delivery person

The scene:

The play takes place in a small, one-room pizza shop called 'Dough-Re-Mi Pizza,' in a small town called Rueben City. The pizza shop has a large, clear window (through which the audience will see the play) and a door on the left of the window. There is a long counter near the front of the store which extends to the halfway point of the room. There is a pad of paper and a telephone on the right side of the counter, and a cash register on the left. In the back of the room there are two pizza ovens, and a large table on which the pizzas are prepared. On one side of the table are flat un-built pizza boxes. On the left side of the room, near the door, are three chairs, for customers who are waiting for their orders.

It is a quiet Tuesday night at Dough-Re-Mi Pizza, and since the pizza shop is located on a small side street in Rueben City, it is quite dark outside.

As the curtain rises the action begins with Mrs. Hyder standing behind the counter next to the phone writing something down on the pad of paper. Craig is in the back of the room by the oven.



Mrs. Hyder: We've got another order, Craig! We need a large ham with double cheese. Is that mushroom pizza for Jones done yet?

Craig: Let me check (he opens the oven). I'll say it's done; it's black! Whoops! Want me to make another one?

Mrs. Hyder: Is it black, or just dark brown?

Craig: Somewhere in between I guess.

Mrs. Hyder: Good enough. Box it up and get it ready, Dennis should be back shortly to deliver it.

(Craig pulls the crispy pizza out of the oven with a large pizza spatula and sets it on the table. He quickly builds a box, slides the pizza into it, cuts it, and closes it up)

Craig: I'm glad I don't have to eat that one!

Mrs. Hyder: I'm glad I don't have to eat any of our pizzas. I hate pizza. I'd rather gnaw on an old bone.

(Craig laughs and begins making the large ham pizza. He tosses the dough carelessly up and down until it looks like large pancake, then sets it down on the table and begins slopping sauce on it with a large spoon. Some of the sauce splashes onto Craig's hand, and he licks it off. Craig continues making the pizza and the phone rings)

Mrs. Hyder: (Answering the phone) Dough-Re-Mi Pizza—wedeliver within 30 minutes or 50 percent off. What can I get you? (She writes as she listens) Uh-huh. (Pause) Uh-huh; got it. It'll be there in less than 30 minutes. (She hangs up the phone and turns to face Craig). We need a small bacon and onion.

Craig: 10-4 boss. Gotcha!

(Craig puts the finishing touches on the ham pizza he was building by throwing a handful of ham way up into the air. Some of the wayward ham lands on the pizza, some goes onto the floor. He slides the pizza into the oven. The sound of a car driving up is heard, followed by the sound of a car door slamming. Dennis, the 19-year-old delivery boy enters through the door)

Dennis: (Walking over to Mrs. Hyder) Here's the money from the Thomas pizza. No tip again. Mrs. Thomas said we're too skimpy with the cheese, and our prices are too high to give tips.



Mrs. Hyder: Did you tell her to go soak her head?  
Dennis: No, I told her that I was only the delivery boy and I couldn't do anything about it. I told her to call you.

Mrs. Hyder: Great. Just what I need--another pain-in-the-neck customer. (She goes and gets the crispy, black pizza and hands it to Dennis) Here, take this to 219 South Bridge Street. But you'd better leave their house quick, before they look at it. It's burned to a crisp!

Dennis: Why didn't you make another one then?

Mrs. Hyder: You know why. Because we only have 30 minutes. Now get going.

Dennis: (Mumbling as he exits) How am I ever going to get any tips delivering this swill?

(Craig continues to work carelessly in the back of the room. The sound of Dennis getting into his car and driving away is heard. Mrs. Hyder takes a seat in one of the three chairs near the door and looks at her watch)

Mrs. Hyder: (Sighing) Two more hours until close. (Just then a gunman enters the front door. He's wearing a Snoopy the dog Halloween mask, blue jeans, a leather jacket, and black gloves. He's holding a gun in his right hand and points it at Mrs. Hyder)

Gunman: All right. Nobody moves or the old bat gets it right between the eyes

(Mrs. Hyder looks surprised and stands still. Craig tosses his pizza dough on the table, and puts his hands straight up in the air).

Mrs. Hyder: If you're looking for money, Snoopy, you've come to the wrong place. We're having a hard time just staying in business!

Gunman: (Motioning to Craig with his gun) You--pizza-boy--get over here and sit down next to the old lady.

(Craig quickly walks over and takes a seat next to Mrs. Hyder)

Mrs. Hyder: Why do you keep calling me old? I'm not old. (Pause) All the money is over there. (She points to the cash register) You're not going to get rich here though. You'd have done better holding up Quality Dairy, or 7-Eleven.



Gunman: Shaddup lady! I don't want your money. I know you're not making any money with the shoe leather you serve. All I want is a decent pizza. Every time I order one from this place it's either undercooked, or burned, or cold. And you never put enough cheese on your pizzas. What's wrong with this place?

Mrs. Hyder: If you don't like our pizzas, why don't you order from some other pizza place?

Gunman: Because you're the only place in this god-forsaken town that delivers, and I don't have a car. Now, get pizza-boy here to work on a large pepperoni pizza for me before I start shooting holes in his head.

Mrs. Hyder: (To Craig) Go ahead and make him his pizza.

(Craig gets up nervously, and walks over and begins slowly making a pizza)

Mrs. Hyder: If you don't have a car, then how did you get here tonight?

Gunman: I took a cab. (He turns toward Craig) Hurry it up pizza-boy. I haven't got all night.

Mrs. Hyder: What's the hurry, Snoopy? Is the cab still waiting outside?

Gunman: Shaddup, lady! You've got a big mouth. (Craig nervously works on the pizza as the gunman paces slowly back and forth in front of the picture window. The gunman keeps a watchful eye on Mrs. Hyder and also on the dark road outside)

Gunman: (To Craig) How's it coming, Galloping Gourmet? (He walks to the back of the room) More cheese, kid! You're not making pancakes—this is pizza. P-I-Z-Z-A.. Pizza! (He takes off one glove, grabs a handful of cheese and sprinkles it on the pizza. Then he puts his glove back on) And you've got to get the lumps out of the dough! That's wles there's always bubbles in your lousy crust.

Mrs. Hyder: We don't have time to make our pizzas perfect. (She gets up and begins to walk to the back of the room) We only have 30 minutes



to get them to our customers, and it takes  
12 minutes to cook them.

Gunman:

Go sit down, old lady. Who asked for your  
two-cents worth? (He gives her a push) Sit  
down and shut up. I'm talking to the kid.

(Mrs. Hyder crosses her arms and storms back to her seat)

Gunman:

Now listen, pizza-boy. This better be the  
best pizza you've ever made.

(The phone rings.- Mrs. Hyder and Craig both look at the gunman.  
The gunman points his gun at Mrs. Hyder, then at the phone, then  
at Craig. He then heads over to the phone, waits until the fourth  
ring, then picks up the receiver. He holds the phone a few inches  
away from his Snoopy-masked face, but compensates for the distance  
by talking louder).

Gunman:

Hello, Dough-Re-Mi Pizza. How can I help  
you? (He pauses to listen) You ordered an  
anchovie pizza but got a sausage pizza in-  
stead? I'm sorry about that ma'am. What's  
your address again? (He grabs a pen and be-  
gins writing) I'll tell you what ma'am, if  
you'll excuse our foul-up, we'll send our  
delivery man back out with a free anchovie  
pizza, plus a coupon for a discount on your  
next order. Okay? Great, and again, I'm  
very sorry about the mistake. Good-bye.

(The gunman puts down the pen, walks over to Mrs. Hyder, and  
hands her the slip of paper with the address written on it. He  
presses the gun against the side of her head)

Gunman:

Well, you screwed up another order, lady.  
(He turns toward Craig and takes the gun  
away from Mrs. Hyder's head) How's my  
pizza coming, Chef Boy-ar-dee? You'd better  
get cooking, cause you've got a recall order  
to do next.

Craig:

It's in the oven.

(The gunman walks over to the oven and opens it. He examines it  
for a moment)

Gunman:

It looks good kid—except you should raise  
the edges a little more next time. It makes a  
better crust. (He shuts the oven)



Mrs. Hyder:

You've got a screw loose under that mask buddy. What are you, a robber or a pizza cook? What business do you have barging in here and telling us how to do our business?

Gunman:

(Pointing the gun at Mrs. Hyder) This business, lady. I've ordered four or five of your pizzas in the last couple of months and I haven't gotten a good one yet. I'd like to know that if I get hungry at midnight that I can get a good pizza without having to leave my house. You guys are the only place in town that delivers, but you're too blasted busy trying to be fast and you don't give a hoot about the quality of your product.

Mrs. Hyder:

So what do you suggest, Mr. Smart Guy?

Gunman:

I'll tell you what I

(The gunman stops in midsentence at the sound of a car driving up. He runs toward the door to look out)

Mrs. Hyder:

That must be our delivery boy, Dennis.

Gunman:

(Motioning to Craig with the gun) Have a seat, pizza-boy. Hurry up!

(Craig hurries over and takes a seat next to Mrs. Hyder. The gunman goes to the third chair, jumps up on it, and stands with his back to the wall. The car door slams and a moment later Dennis enters, stage left. The gunman jumps down from the chair and lands a couple of feet in front of Dennis, who is startled and jumps back)

Gunman:

Okay, kid, have a seat.

Dennis:

Wow! (He takes a seat along side the other two pizza workers as he talks excitedly) Finally some excitement in this place! You're not going to make much money holding this place up, though. Most of what we make goes toward refunds on goofed-up pizzas.

Gunman:

(To Mrs. Hyder) I like this kid! What's he doing working for an old battle-ax like you?

Mrs. Hyder:

He won't be after tonight! (She gives Dennis a dirty look)

Gunman:

He's right, old lady, you're—

Mrs. Hyder:

(Interrupting) I'm not old!!



Gunman: Shut up!! (Pause) Now as I was saying, you're not ever going to profit from this place when all you care about is fast service. People want good food and fair prices, too. They don't mind if they have to wait a little longer. Why don't you take a little extra time and make that your gimmick? Every good business has a gimmick. (He holds his chin in his hand and pauses thoughtfully) You need a gimmick like—(Pause) Like—have a t.v. commercial that says: (Pause) 45 minutes for delivery—We're not the fastest pizza shop, but we strive to be the best. (Pause) We need 15 minutes to make it; 15 minutes to bake it; and 15 minutes to take it to your home, (Pause) hot and delicious. We're sure you'll be calling us soon. (Pause) Remember, at Dough-Re-Mi Pizza the 'Mi' stands for you. (He points at Dennis, then smiles at the slogan he has created)

Dennis: I like it, I like it! If you were managing this place instead of this old lady (He motions toward Mrs. Hyder), we'd be making big bucks!

Mrs. Hyder: You're fired, Dennis. And I'm not old!

Dennis: You can't fire me; I quit! Maybe I'll start my own pizza business. And you ARE old!

Mrs. Hyder: You little son-of-a-

(BUZZZZ.....the pizza oven's timer goes off, drowning off the end of Mrs. Hyder's sentence)

Gunman: There's my pizza! Go check it out, pizza-boy.

(Craig walks over to the oven and opens it up. He pulls out the pizza)

Craig: Here's your pepperoni pizza. Was that to go? (The gunman walks to the back of the room. Mrs. Hyder and Dennis continue to argue and gesture toward one another though the audience doesn't actually hear what they're saying)

Gunman: You call that pizza done, kid? What are you? The old lady's son?

Craig: Yes, sir, I am.



Gunman: I should have known. Put it back in the oven for a minute more; I don't like eating raw dough.

(Craig puts the pizza back in the oven. The phone rings and the gunman walks over and answers it on the second ring)

Gunman: Dough-Re-Mi Pizza, the Mi stands for you. I'm sorry, but we're closed for a realignment of our management. Please call back next week. (He hangs up the phone. The oven buzzes again. Craig pulls out the pizza; the gunman walks over to inspect it) Now that looks like a halfway decent pizza. Box it up kid. I've got to get going.

(Craig puts the pizza in a box and hands it to the gunman. The gunman pulls his wallet out of his back pocket, and pulls out a \$10.00 bill. He walks over to Mrs. Hyder and hands her the money)

Gunman: Here, old lady. Keep the change. I'll call you tomorrow and let you know how the pizza tasted. (Mrs. Hyder looks surprised; Dennis laughs. The gunman starts toward the door, but stops to look at Dennis) Good-luck with your pizza business, kid. (Pause) Here, have a souvenir. (He tosses the gun to Dennis) I bought it at a dime store. Looks real, doesn't it?

(The gunman exits into the depths of the night, pizza in hand)

Craig: (Excitedly) Quick, Ma, call the cops! (Mrs. Hyder stalks over to the phone and picks it up. She begins to dial, then stops when Dennis begins to talk)

Dennis: (While he stands up) This ought to be good. You're going to call the cops and tell them that a man wearing a dog mask, carrying a toy gun, came in and demanded a pepperoni pizza. Then he paid for it, and gave you a tip. He even gave you pointers on how to make a good pizza, and how to get people to buy them. This is going to be good. Go ahead and call.

(Mrs. Hyder, After absorbing Dennis' words, looks around the room, at the ceiling, and then back at Dennis who has a big smile on his face. She looks at the phone and slams the receiver down with a loud bang. Dennis begins to laugh)



Dennis:                      Good-night, old lady! And don't forget  
                                 to send me my last check in the mail!  
(Dennis heads for the door. Mrs. Hyder begins to pick up the  
phone, then slams it down once more and yells at the empty  
doorway through which Dennis has just left)  
Mrs. Hyder:                I'm not OLD!!  
(The curtain falls)





## SHADES OF GORPAL

"Your inability to maintain a firm erection Mr. Gorpall would seem your only remaining problem of substance."

So said Dr. Seymour Fiddlesticks seated behind his large mahogany desk as he scrutinized a thick Manila folder that was chock-full of Gorpall's numerous peculiarities.

"Your blood pressure is down, your psoriasis is in remission, and once and for all your daughter has forgiven you for wearing her favorite pair of panties to her high school graduation."

Acknowledging to himself that Gorpall was no longer to be numbered among the dregs of human mentation, he closed the folder and curtly responded to the inquiry his patient had made a moment before--an inquiry that during the past year had come up at least twice per session.

"In view of your dramatic improvement, I see no reason to offer you a refund of any kind. Besides Mr. Gorpall *mine* is not a warrantied profession."

That said, the good doctor craned his head up and to the left where for a fleeting moment he contemplated a scatological rendering of life on a dairy farm entitled *Defecating Cow*, and marveled at the fact that he'd actually accepted this bucolic commentary on bovine evacuation in lieu of six months in fees from his by now famous patient.

Continuing his lecture for the day, an obviously irritated Fiddlesticks could not help but comment aloud, "Why in heaven one uses a palette that consists solely of a muted thalo blue, an off white, and a strident series of cadmium hues is beyond me. But then again, I'm not the artist."

On this particular day the noted artist had rejected all forms of audible communication, and in view of this he'd insisted on limiting all of his discourse to succinct notes rendered in meticulous calligraphic script. Studying the latest communique from his most famous patient, an eloquent plea for at least a twenty-five percent rebate, Fiddlesticks was amazed that this devotee of barnyard excrement had the penmanship of nothing less than an old master. Commenting, "If I had your facility with a pen and brush I sure as hell wouldn't waste my time painting cowshit," Fiddlesticks went over to his cabinet, and upon removing three bottles said to his patient, "My advice to you Mr. Gorpall is to go home. Keep taking the magenta pills in the morning, the thalo green capsules after lunch, and use the naphthol crimson syrup approximately eight minutes before you attempt intromission of any kind."



And with that, the good doctor pinched a rubber syringe, and in so doing introduced some 300 mg. of ultramarine tinted cyanoaphrodisiac into a catheter that was attached to Gorp'al's body at some point above his vas deferens. Feeling a tingling in his bladder a suddenly vocal Gorp'al announced, "I do believe I've peed in my pants."

"It happens occasionally. Don't worry about it, after you clean up your pecker will work better than ever."

"Elmer Gorp'al's scatological art is by now legendary. His latest work, a massive silkscreen that hangs from the main span of the George Washington Bridge, depicts a dozen barnyard denizens—cows, goats, chickens, and one oversized peacock—all precariously perched on a clothesline, defecating into a group of Grecian urns that have been arranged into a pattern which conforms to the perimeter of the United States. Deftly intermixing the somber tinted vases with the cheery colored bronze, copper, and ivory tinted droppings of the animals, Gorp'al has given this country a monument which it can long be proud of. Commissioned by the National Council on the Arts, the latest effort by this prolific genius will undoubtedly silence those critics who continually decry the use of taxpayer monies to aggrandize public edifices."

Edward Fabian Rosenquist IV  
Curator of Fine Art  
The Smithsonian Institute

As she inserted an iridescent green needle that was thinner than a cat's whisker into what was left of Gorp'al's third molar, Dr. Isabel Beryl-Bunyan informed her half-awake patient, "I don't know of a dentist in this country who guarantees root canal. For that matter, until today I didn't know of any who accepted paintings in lieu of fees."

Glancing toward the aqua tinted wall directly in front of the prone Gorp'al, the endodontist could not, for the life of her, understand why she'd accepted a 20" x 36" enamel and metallic leaf panel that depicted three bronze tinted piglets loitering in a half-filled landfill as full credit for three month's work on the right side of Gorp'al's by now completely closed mouth. In her estimation *Piggy Litter*, as the work was called, did not at the moment, by any stretch of the imagination, seem destined to become one of the masterpieces of modern art. So, why did she capitulate to what her well known artist/patient had declared to be an equitable piece of barter? That one she couldn't answer. For beginners, artsy or not she didn't much care for Gorp'al, who at that moment was suckling erotically on the tips of the mint flavored fingers of her right hand. Going a bit further, she didn't even much care for the man's art. In a word it was like the person who created it—tasteless.



Removing her by now blistered digits from Gorpals foaming palate, she spurted some persimmon tinted listopeptic oral detergent into a transparent, conical fluorometal container and told the artist, "Rinse your mouth and when you're through make sure you keep it open. And Mr. Gorpals I want to make it very clear to you that if you ever again attempt to touch my breasts or put your hand up my dress I will insert a needle directly into your trigeminal nerve."

With that the lady pinched the mans gumline under his lower lateral incisor, and as Gorpals all but jumped out of the chair she suggested, "I would approximate that a full thrust of my needle into your trigeminal nerve would produce a sensation of pain at least ten times the intensity of what you just felt."

As she resumed work on the mans third molar, she glanced up at the painting on the wall and casually observed, "Perhaps if you spend enough time in my chair you'll get the inspiration to paint rotting teeth and bleeding gums."

"Gorpals is without a peer in contemporary art. So far as I know he is the only artist, living or deceased, who has been gifted with the ability to cover a 600 square foot canvas with images of refuse and excrement and yet not nauseate the observer. Indeed, five minutes in front of a Gorpals original both delights and uplifts the viewer. His *fecal follies* provide a veritable garden of delights for both the connoisseur as well as the uninformed layman."

Christopher Isham McGint  
Art Critic  
New York Times

"An erection as a result of a needle being inserted into your trigeminal nerve. Impossible! In my estimation your erection was due to the aphrodisiac I gave you earlier that day. In any event a refund is definitely out of the question."

So said Fiddlesticks who at that moment was really not at all interested in Gorpals erectile problems.

"In all candor Gorpals, your continual ruminations about my fees are becoming a bit tedious. Actually the only reason I agreed to see you on such short notice was not to discuss your erectile difficulties, but instead to consult you on a technical matter relating to the bronzing of booties."

Behind the amber tinted lens of his monocle Fiddlesticks detected a sneer on Gorpals lips.

"No need for such negativism Mr. Gorpals. You know your real problem is that you only want to take from people and that you're nev-



er willing to give them anything back in return. Well, now I'm giving you a chance to be a giver. It so happens I have in my possession a size five boot that once belonged to a shoe fetishist whose case I wrote up a number of years ago in *The Journal of Peculiar People*. This morning I received an invitation from the Neo-Freudian Acrylic Museum of Fetishishes to donate the boot to their permanent collection. This I can assure you is quite an honor. They do, however, require that for both sanitary as well as insurance purposes all footwear be preserved in bronze. Being a master of color and materials I am putting the matter in your hands."

Handing Gorpall the boot, Fiddlesticks suggested, "If you do a workmanlike job and have it back to me by Friday, perhaps I'll consider giving you a free session."

"For years Elmer Gorpall's sensitive and haunting renderings of organic decay have left viewers spellbound. His latest and most ambitious series of works, entitled *The Trial of the Impious Cow*, consist of a set of fifteen exquisitely detailed huge enamel murals, each piece depicting in various stages the evacuation of a stool by a ponderous speckled cow. The cow, whose spots are rendered in garish hues that gravitate between purple and the darker shades of blue, is defecating onto an old splintered cross that bears the inscription, "And the Lord shall soon be among us." Once and for all, this series serves as irrefutable testimony to Gorpall's stature as one of the greatest living American artists. Indeed, never before has one with so steady a hand and so firm a purpose devoted such care and feeling in depicting the dross which for years humanity has attempted to relegate to the lower layers of both the mind and the earth. Blending stark cadmium hues with off whites, Gorpall displays the rare genius of a Rembrandt as he creates what this critic considers to be the ultimate work of art—one in which a joyous spirituality totally obfuscates a seemingly profane act. This could well be the most important piece of art to be produced by an American artist during the twentieth century."

Alma Wickham Blueshoes  
Editor  
Contemporary Art

"Podiatrists fix feet Mr. Gorpall. We don't have any interest in boots that once belonged to pervers."

Submerging Gorpall's calloused feet into an astroenergized sitz bath that was filled with a tepid mixture of cranapple phosphomassage medium and vinegar, Dr. E. van Normal Peoples informed his patient, "Bronzing boots just happens to be one of those electives they offered



at podiatry college that I avoided like the plague. It just so happens I'm allergic to any metal that begins with the letter *b*. ”

Looking at a large oil painting entitled *Chickenshit*, a strident impressionist work utilizing pointillism that Gorpall had brought in earlier that day, Peoples declared, “Reluctantly, I've decided to accept your painting. I'm willing to concede that in today's demented art world it's probably worth what it's cost me to clean up your feet. But we should get one thing straight. They'll be no more talk from you about refunds. Callouses are almost without exception hereditary, so as far as I'm concerned your treatments are strictly ameliorative. There's just no way I can guarantee that your feet won't go bad on you again tomorrow.”

Hanging up Gorpall's latest creation, a chaos of colors depicting a bevy of foul fowls—specifically, a dozen poorly groomed chickens, countless dozens of shattered eggshells, and a rusted garbage dumpster filled with chicken droppings—Peoples observed, “You know, to be perfectly candid your painting makes me want to vomit. How about if I give it a try bronzing the boot and in return you promise to take back the painting for the cash value of your treatments?”

“Gorpall's recent flirtation with the world of three dimensional art is, to say the least, a dazzling success. What this modern master of color and design has done is to produce a work that is simultaneously a painting, a collage, and a piece of sculpture. As usual he has elected to deal with the topic of defecation using the barnyard as his background. This latest and most persuasive untitled production depicts an elderly humpbacked farmer administering an enema to a large ominously colored bull whose teeth are hopelessly decayed. The residue induced by the enema is dripping down the bull's right flank into an antique boot that the artist has elected to bronze and solder a sheet of gessoed steel that supports the painted portion of the work. In the end, however, it is the boot that catches the viewer's eye. The marvelous coloration, the deft geometry achieved by tying the lace into a sheepshank knot, and, of course, the unique texture of its surface, the result of the artist having implanted the crushed remains of three of his molars that didn't survive root canal into the tongue and instep section—all of these factors contribute toward making this charming boot the focal point of Gorpall's latest visual adventure. All in all this is one smashing piece of art!”

Filomina Unge  
Curator and Director  
Sotheby's Gallery



Dear Messrs. Rosenquist and McGint and Mmes. Blushoes and Unge,

The bootie that is currently ensconced in our National Gallery as the centerpiece in Elmer Gorpel's so-called latest masterpiece is to coin a cliché, "nothing more than purloined goods." In view of his utter disregard for a personal possession which I entrusted to his care six weeks ago, I do not believe that I am violating any confidences by publicly stating at this time that in my professional opinion Gorpel, who is my former patient, is inextricably mired in the anal stage of development. I would, of course, expect that the uninformed layman would view Gorpel as a classic example of the anal expulsive. This perception would, no doubt, be predicated on the fact that in his artistic productions, all of which revolve around fecal thema, the man gives the appearance of being a bit overzealous in his use of paint as well as in his allocation of space. Yet his thinly veiled generosity within the realm of his creative endeavors is little more than a reaction formation to cover up what is essentially an anal retentive personality. In truth, Gorpel is as stingy and as obstinate a patient as I've ever had to deal with during my thirty years as a board certified psychiatrist. The problem which initially brought Gorpel to me, sexual impotence, is a symptom that is totally consistent with his basically retentive nature—specifically, his inability and unwillingness to share any part of himself with other people.

Frankly, during the two years I treated the man I could not help but gain some familiarity with his work. In truth, I find that which he passes off as art to be essentially worthless. Put simply, he seems to thrive on projecting the decay within himself onto a canvas or some other means of support. In essence, each time he paints a picture he is engaging in a symbolic ritual which amounts to little more than a small boy soiling his pants. But why go on? A man like this should not be accorded any more verbiage than I already have.

To return to more practical matters, six weeks ago it was my intent that Gorpel's by now infamous boot should become a relic of psychiatry. Yet in essence it still is. By stealing the boot that once belonged to a man, who at best was an obscure fetishist, and metamorphosing it into an instrument within some excremental testimonial, Gorpel has provided psychiatry with a far better monument than it ever could have hoped for. Indeed, instead of reposing in the Neo-Freudian Acrylic Museum of Fetishes among garter belts and patent leather leotards, the infamous boot has assumed amore visible posture in our National Gallery. So long 'as it is there it will communicate to humankind the precarious nature of the toilet training experience as well as the utter depravity of this man who masquerades as, of all things, an artist.



His teeth fully functional, his feet as smooth as silk, and his psyche reasonably intact, Gorpel is perched on a scaffold dangling from the rotunda of the Capitol tinting George Washington's hair hyacinth blue. Below, a handful of people gape upwards as the world's premier trans-neurotic impressionist artist puts the finishing touches on a fresco depicting the father of their country, attired only in fluorescent leotards that match the garish color of his coif, wrestling with an oversized chicken in a barnyard that is littered with all varieties of animal droppings.

This man has definitely made it! In spite of a letter of protest (which those who are knowledgeable suggest has left Gorpel more than a bit depressed) from a certain psychiatrist, *he* was the one who was selected to baptize the dome of the newly renovated Capitol. Swathed in a chocolate brown jumpsuit he employs long delicate strokes to create the thin filaments of Washington's mane. As he applies the finishing touches to his latest masterpiece it is apparent to all that this is by far the most exciting piece he's ever executed.

"In view of his recent success in our nation's capitol, Gorpel's suicide did come as something of a shock. Tragic implications aside, however, it was a spectacular *Happening* in the world of art. Clad in that familiar brown jumpsuit, he ascended one of the towers of the George Washington Bridge, and upon reaching its summit released hundreds of flyers at which point he summarily dove into the swirling waters below. In doing the latter he provided the world with a dazzling display of living kinetic art. Among other things, the flyers he'd distributed noted that his final descent, which, by the way, has been immortalized on film, was, indeed, intended to be a work of art. Its title, *The Terminal Turd*, vividly evokes the dramatic visage of that brown blob plummeting into the polluted river below. All in all, I'd say that Gorpel left the world one hell of a legacy!"

Frieda Fiddlesticks Shoeboot  
Curator  
Neo-Freudian Acrylic Museum of Fetishes

The End











## WHEN LOVE BREAKS DOWN

The first thing I noticed when I look at him are his hands. We are sitting in his new Mazda, in front of my house, and all I can look at are his hands. There are new scars on them since the last time I had seen him. How long ago was that? I wonder. I can't even remember. Maybe Christmas. Yes, I think that is it. And I remember exactly how his hands looked at Christmas, because he had cut the palm of his hand pretty badly. It was bandaged then. Now all that's left is a scar. Many scars, actually. But this one is a new detail on his hands.

It's warm out, sunny, while we are sitting in his car waiting for my brother to come out of the house. I feel compelled to stay until he does come out, though it seems as if he is deliberately staying inside so I have to talk to my dad. The conversation is stilted. We both feel awkward. I sense his uneasiness; I feel mine in the pit of my stomach.

I look up from his hands, cast a quick glance at his profile which is strong. He has a long patriarchal nose. Almost royal-like. It is thin and his lips protrude slightly from under it. Bushy eyebrows top deep-set hazel eyes. A strong, definite chin finishes it all. I know this face, this profile so well. Of course they are only superficial features.

He asks me how I'm doing. How my job at the factory is coming along. I answer fine only once, the reply meant for both questions. He looks out the window, comments on the house across the street. The grey paint is peeling in places. The bushes need to be trimmed. My father likes things to be in order. To be neat.

I ask him how his foot is. He had broken, or rather fractured it, while saving someone from a burning house. No, he's not a one-time newspaper hero. He is a firefighter with strong hands. His foot, he tells me, is a little sore now and then, but basically fine.

I wonder where my brother is; the silence is almost over bearing. The heat is still and hanging in the car. Somehow the rolled down window just isn't enough, and I open the door. I want to escape, but the obligation is still there. I can see my sanctuary only feet away. I wonder again where my brother is.

I remember a time, not long ago, when I was at his old house on Harvard. It was a week before my prom, which for some reason was a big deal to him. The talk was centered on what I was to be wearing. I had my dress already, and all the outfit lacked was long, white gloves.



We were arguing because my stepmother had gone to Jacobsens and was told that long, white gloves were definitely 'out'. I didn't care; I still wanted them. My father was insistent that I didn't wear them, though. His reasoning was that everyone would laugh at me; I would be remembered as the girl who was 'different' at the prom. I laughed and said that he was crazy. "I wear my hair standing on end, and they're going to think this is odd?" I told him again and again that he was crazy, and turned up the radio. We didn't 'discuss' anymore that night.

He doesn't look at me, but asks when I dyed my hair red and if I'm still listening to that 'punk-rock' music. I look at him for a long moment. I study his thinning hair, which has been parted on the right side for as long as I can remember. I wonder if maybe he dyes his. He becomes restless under my relentless stare; he turns to me. I look away, mumble, "yes, Father." I don't bother answering about my hair. It doesn't matter anyway.

I lean up, turn on the radio. He has the car running, as he always does. Almost as if he would like to make a quick get-away. There is nothing on that I like; I fiddle a while longer with the selector buttons, turn it off. He drums his short, stubby fingers on the steering wheel

I'm trying to remember a poem that I like. It's called "Love", and I knew it by heart, once. For some reason, though, I can't recall it all. Parts of it come back; something about I am me because you love me... I'm not too sure. I think, am I me because you didn't love me. At least not enough.

I start to feel claustrophobic even with the air blowing in. I take a stick of chewing gum from my pocket, and offer it to him. I know he will refuse it, because he has problems with his teeth and gums. Instinctively, I realize I offer it because of that, not out of niceness. I unwrap it slowly, stare at the neat edges, then shove it in my mouth. I chew it loudly, knowing it will bother him.

I look down at my own hands. Short fingers like his. Scars, too. I'm always cutting myself. My hands are strong, capable hands. Man-hands, just like his.

I wonder why I don't resemble him physically, other than our hands. Mentally maybe we are more alike than I would care to admit. Sometimes we are cold, distant, quiet. We keep ourselves away from other people. I Don't like this sameness. I want to tear it out of me right then and there



and give it back to him. All these unwanted qualities. They are not what I want from him.

I think aloud, "You made me what I am," and he asks me what I'm talking about. I mention something about a song. I look over at my house. Jumping at the side door is Deke, my dog. I whistle to him and he wags his tail.

The front door opens at last. My mother's head appears. She waves, calls out hello. My father responds in kind. My brother is next to come out on the porch. He kisses my mother on the cheek. She goes back inside.

I look once more at my father, he looks at me. He pulls me close, gives me a bear hug. He kisses my cheek for a long time. The stream of tears down my cheek are a surprise. He says, "I love you." I reply, "I love you, too, Daddy." I jump out of the car, run up the driveway, onto the porch, and into the house. I don't look back, I don't wave. I walk over to my mother and hug her. She hugs me back.











## WALTZING

"One wish. What would it be?"

"Why only one? Most people get three."

"We broke up," she said. "Again. For the last time." Each word was accented harshly. She blew smoke in his face. She had only been smoking for a couple of weeks, and she still had control problems. Back at his apartment, there were several burn marks on the rug, melted nylon, where she had been careless with her ashes. Here, where we worked, the floor was a safe, marred tile. "We broke up," she said. "Again. For the last time."

"Come on in. You want to talk about it, or ignore it?"

"Whatever works. Whatever works."

At work, he was distracted even before she showed up, not that it mattered any. So late at night, it was rare for the phones to ring, and as long as the phones were quiet, he was free to do whatever he wanted. A phone company operator in a small town, the last of a dying breed. Directory assistance, maybe five calls a week. Another five calls of helping place long-distance calls. Once, an over-seas phone call. Paris. Every now and then, a panicked voice, an emergency. A choking baby. A robbery, a fire. "What does a gas leak smell like?" Nobody in their right mind used the phone in the middle of the night. It was a quiet job. He read a lot. He was being paid nearly five dollars an hour to become incredibly well read. He had a small combination t.v. and tape deck he took to work with him. Once, he talked someone out of committing suicide. Or maybe he didn't. The person agreed to flush the pills, but never called again.

Whether that silence meant the pills were flushed, or swallowed, he had no real way of knowing. No deaths were reported through his office. If the person did change their mind, flushed the pills, he believed they would be too embarrassed to ever call again.

Instinct: never show the same person the same weakness more than once because their first instinct would be to kick it.

She agreed to quit smoking that night, after she broke off with her boyfriend. If she didn't get back at him in any other way, she would simply outlive him.



"I should hate men," she said. "So why am I here with you?"

"I'm your best friend."

"Isn't there something wierd in that? Men and women just can't be friends, can they? Really? Surely not best friends."

"I thought we'd been doing pretty well."

"Maybe so. Maybe so."

"You've been off and on with him for four years. Maybe fifteen breakups. Can you think of any fights we've had during that time?"

"Only one. I decided to start smoking and you told me I was being stupid."

"I was right."

"Don't rub it in."

"Remember that suicide I told you about? She said every time she made a mistake, her lover rubbed it in."

"Rubbed what in?"

"She didn't specify. I assume the mistake."

"Maybe so. Maybe so."

"Cancer."

"Is that your sign, or your condition?"

"My sign."

"Lucky you."

"Hey...."

"Sorry, but I've got a call on another line."

"She wanted to pick me up over the phone." He laughed. "She said I had a nice voice."

"You do have a nice voice." She got up from the hard metal chair, and turned on the television, not looking at it, but instead, pacing the floor. "Why do I want a cigarette? I only smoked for three weeks."

"I've got a couple of joints left. In my coat. Leave the door open, and it'll suck the smoke out of the room. No one will ever know. At least they've never noticed before."

"Not even the cops strolling around outside?" She shook her head. "I just want to get my lungs cleared again." She turned, and looked at the television, where Marilyn Monroe was pushing a flower pot off a ledge, barely missing Tom Ewell's head. The t.v. was snapped off, angrily, in mid-apology.



"One wish. What would it be?"

"Why don't I get offered three wishes?"

"What the hell do you think I am? A genie? If I were you, I'd take what I could get."

"Do you want to talk about it now, or keep ignoring it?"

"Whatever works. Whatever works."

"You at least could have had the courtesy to break up with him on my night off."

"Well, it's not like you have a lot of work to do here." She sighed.

"Don't you go leaving me too. Please, don't you go leaving me too."

"Directory Assistance. Can I help you?"

"Shit. Wrong number."

To her: "How could somebody mistake a three digit number for one with seven?"

"I don't know. How?"

"That was rhetorical. Not a riddle."

She worked in a women's clothing store, and, with her employee's discount, always managed to look fabulous. Working alone, for the phone company, at night, he wore a lot of old jeans and ragged flannel shirts. They drew stares wherever they went together. He forgot to shave much of the time. Once, she wore brown shoes with a black dress. Once. It was at her father's funeral: the heel of the left shoe on her only pair of black shoes broke when she was stepping into the limousine, ready to leave. Holding the broken heel in her hand, she began to cry. At the time, it made more sense to just change her shoes, instead of changing her dress as well. "It can't be helped," she told everybody. "It just can't be helped."

They had known each other for fourteen years, since the age of twelve for him, fourteen for her. Half her life. Her family, father still alive, moved next door to his. She was from Omaha. He had no idea where Omaha was. Although she was the girl next door, he never entertained thoughts of romance.. It would have been just a little too traditional, and even if, at age twelve, he was not yet an iconoclast, he was working hard at becoming one.

"What's tradition ever done for me?" he asked her, years later. She shrugged, and changed her mind about asking him to the country club dance.



"I'm pretty, aren't I? I'm a nice person, aren't I?"

"I like you."

"Then why'd he dump me? And why do I always keep going back for more?"

"My job is just go give assistance. Not answers. There's a big difference."

"When I was about eighteen," she told him, after she had finally quit pacing, and had sat back down next to him, "when I was about eighteen and was getting ready to go away to college, I thought I'd never see you again." She laughed. "Remember when we went to the prom together? It was really a drag, going to the prom with my best friend, instead of a real date."

"That cuts both ways, you know."

"I know. But you got another chance later. That was my only one. But, anyway, you know, when I was at Bryn Mawr, I thought I'd finally do things the normal way. Have a close girlfriend. Indulge in girl-talk. I hadn't done any of that since I was fourteen. But it was so God-awful boring, I had to come back. One semester at that school was all I could handle." She sipped the Coke he had gotten for her from the machine. "It's so quiet in here. I'm used to noise, because my neighbors are so loud. Can I turn on the tapedeck?"

"Why not?"

"If this was the prom, and you were a real date, we'd be headed out to the lake now."

"If it had been 1873 instead of 1973, we could have been doing a proper waltz instead of the bear hug."

"'American Pie' was an awfully long song to bear hug to. And the tempo's all wrong."

"I know. See what a difference a hundred years can make? Timing is everything."

"One wish. What would it be?"

"How could I pin it all down to one thing? I've got more problems than one wish could possibly cover. Way more."

When she came back from school, tired, discouraged, and depressed, he was the only one who understood. To their friends, her parents said



it had to be a drug problem. Why else would a girl with 750's on the SAT drop out of college? One night, they woke her up, looking for needle tracks on her arm.

"I could have been shooting in my eyes," she told them, helpfully.

"I thought school had been bad," she told him the next day. He was pushing her on the swings. She was in a childhood regression phase, and he was being cooperative. "Have your parents ever checked you for tracks?"

"No, but when my mother was studying to be a nurse, she practiced checking • for hernias on me. Does that count?"

"Not hardly."

"How do they check women for hernias?"

"They don't."

Elton John on the tapedeck, singing softly. "Goodbye, Yellow Brick Road."

"Have you ever wondered what happened to all the flying monkeys after Dorothy melted the wicked witch? I mean, who took care of them?"

"One wish. What would it be?"

"How the hell do I know? What would you wish for?"

"Easy. To have back everything I've ever wasted. All the time, money, energy, food, opportunities. All of it."

"You'd just end up doing the same things again. I know that sounds cynical, but I'll bet that's the way it works."

"Maybe you're right."

About four in the morning, clouds blew in. They watched through the tiny office windows. The moon, a more or less fixed spot, and the clouds, blowing rapidly across its face.

"Do you think people are ever aware of it when they invent a "That would take a pretty smug mind, don't you think?" He shook his head. "Are we talking about it yet, or are we still ignoring it?"

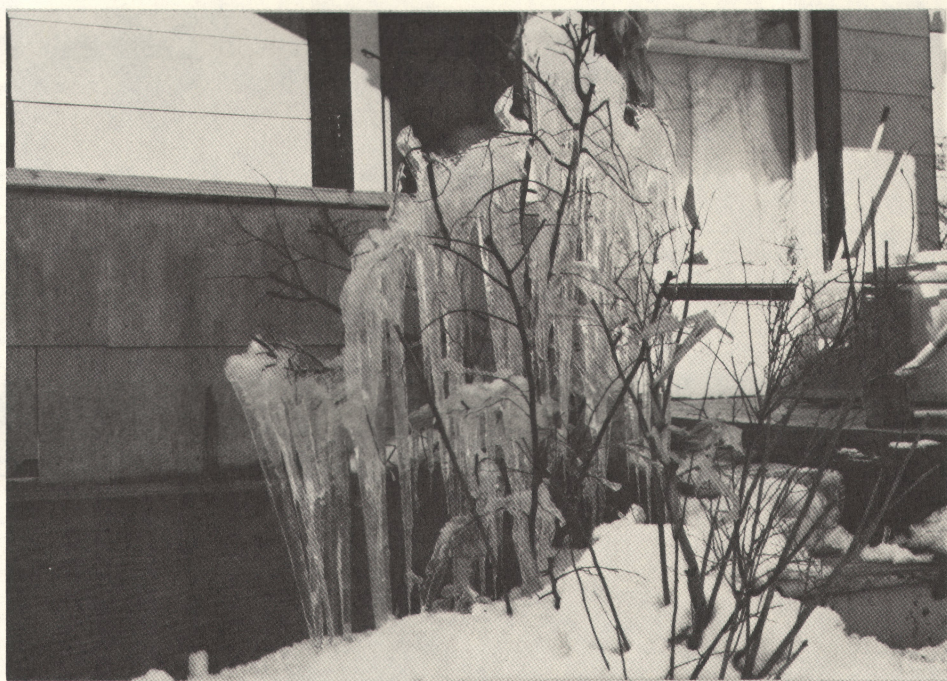
"I don't know. I'm too depressed to see straight. I can't believe he dumped me. I cannot believe it."



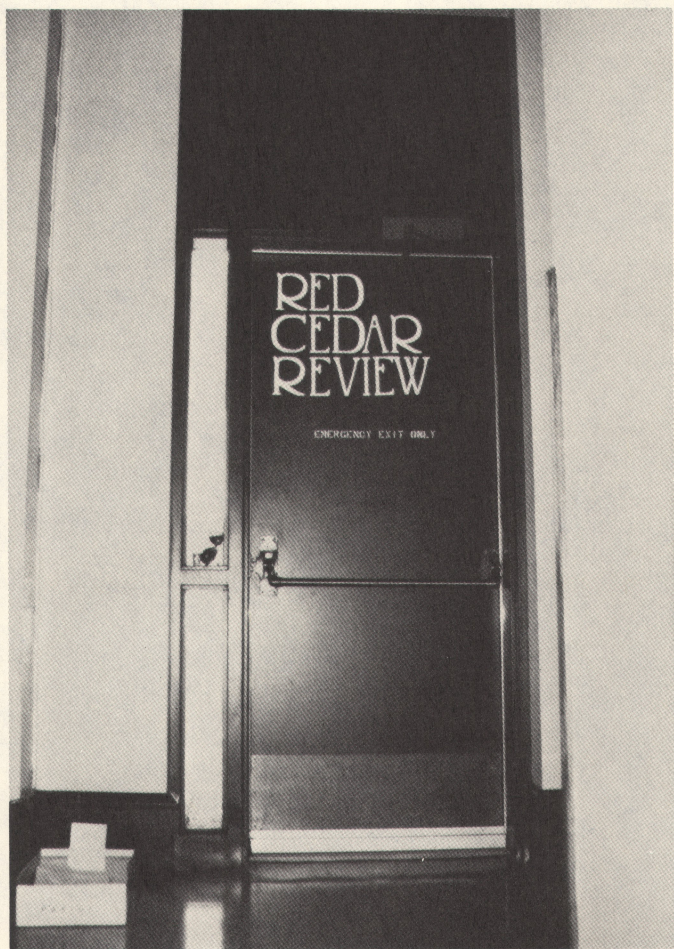
"I know. If you want to talk, I'll listen."  
She touched his hand. "Whatever works. Whatever's right. Just,  
please, don't you go leaving me too."  
"I'm listening."



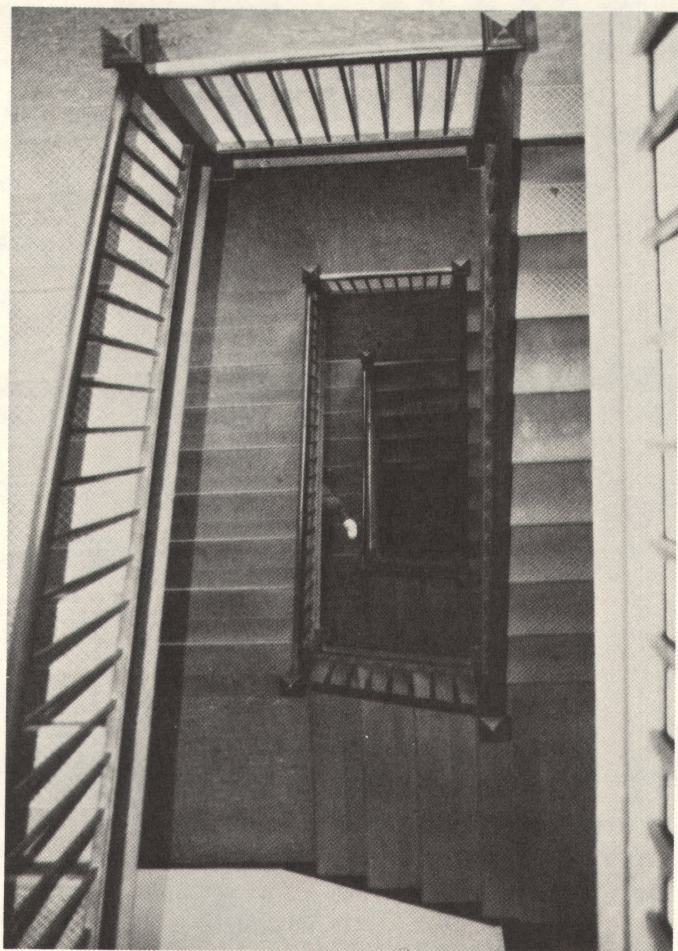




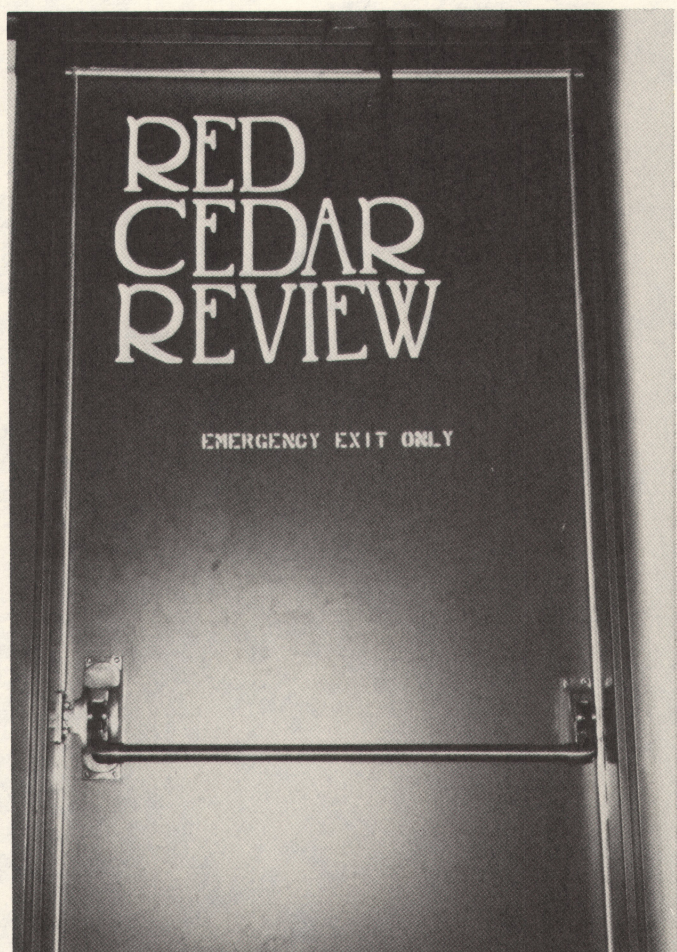




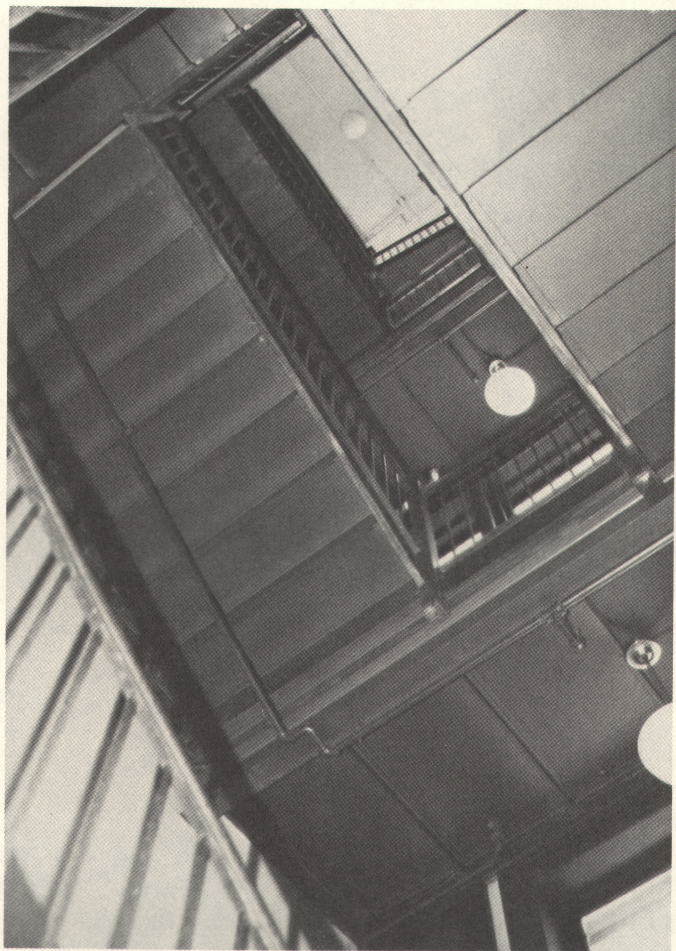




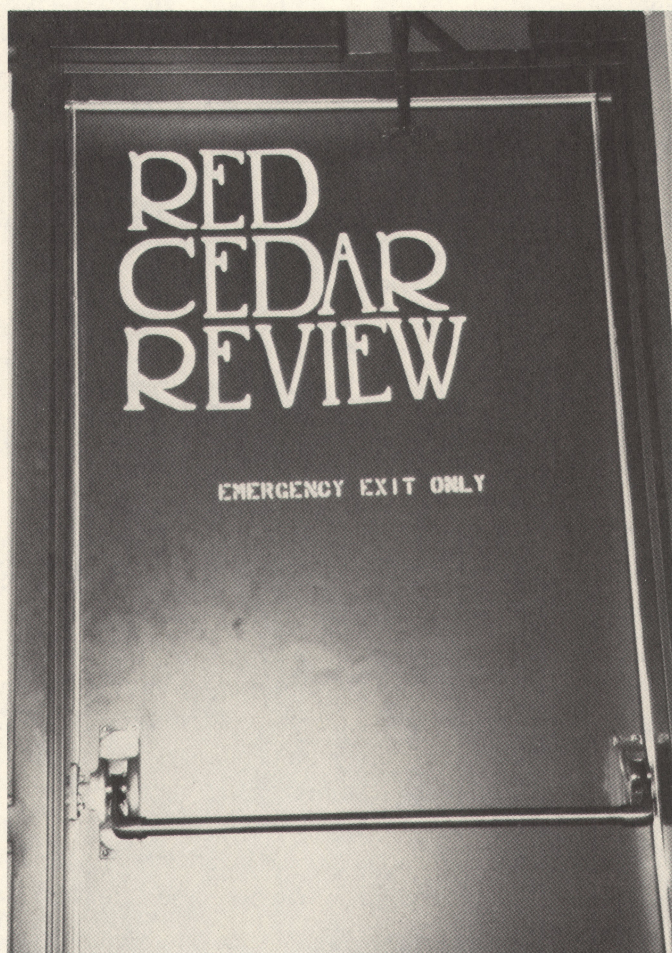














## CONTRIBUTOR'S NOTES

### FICTION AND POETRY

**FATHER BENEDICT AUER** is a monk of Marmion Abbey and serves as the Chairman of the English Department of their Academy. His book **TOUCHING FINGERTIPS WITH GOD** will be published next year.

**MARSHA TRUMAN COOPER** works for **ROOTS & WINGS** where she teaches functionally illiterate adults how to read. She has recently completed her first full-length book, **AGAINST ODDS**. Her work will soon appear in **BLOOD TO REMEMBER: AMERICAN PASTS ON THE HOLOCAUST**, and other literary reviews.

**MARK D. DAVIS** is a psychology senior at Michigan State University. He will graduate in June of 1986, and after that will try to pay off his loans and write some. *Cooking Together* is his first published poem.

**SUE SANIEL ELKIND** was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and began writing poetry with no formal training at the age of 64. Her first book of poetry, **NO LONGER AFRAID**, came out in 1985. She organizes and runs the Squirrell Hill Poetry Workshop sponsored by Carnegie Library.

**MARGARET GREIFENSTEIN** is a hospital administrator originally from Charlevoix, Michigan, and now living with her physician husband in Little Rock, Arkansas. She has published in **LIGHT YEAR** and **THE CHAUCER ANTHOLOGY**, among others.

**e.e.h.** lives in Scottsdale, Arizona, where he spends most of his time wishing desperately that he were somewhere else. He is currently working on a novel.

**BUD HALEY** lives in Rapid City, MI, where he pulls the tap at Ginny's Steak and Spirits. He insists that his hometown is very poetic.



**M. L. HESTER** is the consulting editor for Tudor Publishers, Inc., co-authored **MERYL STREEP: A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY** and has published fiction and poetry in **KANSAS QUARTERLY** and **CONFRONTATION**, among others.

**LARRY HOOK** is a journalism major at Michigan State University, and has an Associate degree from Lansing Community College. He has been a sports editor for four years, and hopes to become a sports writer in baseball or basketball, for a large daily paper.

**CHRIS HOTTS** is a graduate of Michigan State University in English, and currently resides in California. She is a former editor of **RED CEDAR REVIEW**.

**PAUL HUMPHREY** lives in Spencerport, New York, and although we are unable to find his bio information, we are absolutely certain that he is an extremely fascinating person.

**KIM LOCKWOOD JOHNSON** recently moved to East Lansing, MI, with her husband and family, and is currently working on a Master's degree while teaching community writing workshops.

**RICHARD T. JULIUS** lives in Ann Arbor, MI, where he works as the Security Coordinator for the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology. He is currently in the Masters program in Asian Studies at the University of Michigan, where he received his BA in English and Comparative Literature.

**ANN KEITH** lives in Europe and writes acoustically orientated verse. Her poetry has been published in Scotland, Canada, and the USA.

**THOMAS LISK** lives in Sumter, South Carolina. Unfortunately we no longer have his bio information, but in such a beautiful place in the South, he must be reasonably happy and content. (We hope)

**DAVID MOOLTEN** lives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and is studying medicine, perhaps leading neuroradiology. He has been published in **DESCANT**, among others, and won second prize in the William Carlos Williams Graduate Poetry Contest at the U of Penn.



**E. SUZIN ODLEN** works as a cocktail waitress at The Sands Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City, NJ. Her poems have appeared in Cedar CEDAR ROCK PRESS, and her first short story was just published in QUARTERLY WEST.

**LOUISE PEACOCK** lives in East Lansing where she is working on a PhD in English with an emphasis in medieval studies, as well as working as a graduate assistant. She has published in CHAPTER THREE and the BLUE HERON.

**RICHARD RALEIGH** is the Chairman of the Humanities Division at St. Thomas University in Miami and co-director of a study abroad program in El Escorial, Spain. His poems have been published in a collection, ABRAHAM'S PUB, as well as in many literary mags.

**KATHRYN REEDER** is a native of Traverse City, MI, and is studying for a Master's degree in Creative Writing at San Francisco State University. Her poems have appeared in reviews in Canada and California.

**LINDA SCHANDELMEIER** lives in the Goldstream Valley, northeast of Fairbanks, Alaska. She has been published in PERMAFROST and ORCA, among others. In 1985 she was awarded an Alaska State Council of the Arts Individual Artist's Fellowship for a book of poems.

**DAVID SHESKIN's** fiction has been published in such magazines as OUI, DESCANT, and the FLORIDA REVIEW.

**SHERRI SZEMAN** teaches English at the university level and is the Assistant Poetry Editor of the ANTIOCH REVIEW. Her poems have appeared in JEOPARDY, CENTENNIAL REVIEW, and OHIO JOURNAL, among others.

## GRAPHICS

**TODD GAST** is a senior in Graphic Design at Michigan State University. He graciously consented to work under a ridiculous deadline to contribute to this issue.

**JUDY A. HARTJE** is a senior in English at Michigan State University, and is currently Senior Poetry Editor for RED CEDAR REVIEW.

**WES HENRY** is a student at Michigan State University, and an amateur photographer. He is also a staff editor on RED CEDAR REVIEW.



## RED CEDAR REVIEW

Senior Editors    Mike Fuller  
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