

**RED CEDAR**

**REVIEW**













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*Amalia Gladhart*

## DOUBLE IKAT

I did not see hands  
severed on the pavement  
but I expected to:  
I read the papers.  
The only sirens I heard  
were on TV.

In the capital  
we ask how 'things' are.  
*The military gets everything and  
kills you if you ask  
too much but now  
everyone is waiting, in Cuba  
even the guerrilla leader  
offered the new president  
time.*

(I read thousands had disappeared.  
How then is the city so crowded?  
It is a small country.)

White stencils beside the highway  
to Quetzaltenanga:  
One more work of the Government  
Don't criticize Guatemala  
The Government invests Taxes  
in works like this.

Stickers on buses:  
There is always time. Besides  
criticizing, denouncing, demanding,  
we must hope, work, and believe.

In Salcaja we enter softly  
a weaver's front room. He is just back  
from New Jersey, from working in a factory,  
finishing vans. We ask him, too,  
about the violence.

*Things are better now.*

*Five years ago it was very dangerous,  
they killed 700 people  
in two hours in Huehue  
and right here three people  
were found on the highway with holes  
in their heads.*

*Seven others simply vanished.*

The driver from Zunil says things  
*are screwed, but that's life.*

Sleeping our altitude siesta  
we miss the Friday demonstration  
at the national palace. Instead  
we tour the green granite halls  
listening to our Spanish tour  
and to the sharply different version  
another family hears in English. Polite soldiers  
guard the steps--sweet boys in uniform  
hung with automatic weapons.

Everyone is waiting. The country,  
shabby without past tourists,  
the unpainted buildings,  
women selling yellow soap  
in the market. No  
one is afraid to talk. Possibly  
everything everyone says  
is true.







## ENCOUNTER

(She reads while drinking coffee)  
Dancing delicately on the branch  
above the tall, blue flowers,  
daylight plays on swaying limbs.  
(He watches her from his table)  
Predatory, tense  
fearing to catch that eye  
lost in mottled shadow, watching.  
Branches crackle with sudden motion;  
eyes meet, pupils contract  
in throbbing sunlight.  
Enchantment breaks  
on the twitching iris.  
the silence  
of a heart stopped, waiting.  
Branches tremble,  
flash of wings in startled flight.

Cat eyes sparkle in the grass,  
breezes play through sun-warmed fur.  
Flicker of deadly, delicate claws  
gently prodding the still body,  
making soft sounds  
on the damp ground.  
Fine droplets spatter the flowers,  
crushed and quivering.  
(He spreads a blanket, smiling nervously)  
Stalking in the moist, green field;  
the first rays of morning,  
purple in the breathless sky.  
(She sits down and tears at the grass)  
Green hypnotic eyes dip into the field,  
the startled soft body,  
the quiet ecstasy of claws.



## MIXING BRAINS

### I.

Instructions enclosed.

Please read carefully.

The best way to render someone stupid:  
                  insert a pointed object  
                  and stir the gray matter  
                  as if mixing cookie dough.

Listen intensively as emotion,  
                                  memories,  
                                  fantasies,  
                                  fall gently into a vacuum  
                                  like gelatin crashing  
                                  in  
  space.

### II.

In Alaska, we caught a load of Dungeoness crabs,  
ambling spiders with crackling red shells,  
and let them walk across the lawn--  
like the surface of Mars to a marine creature.  
To remove the edible meat,  
I ripped off their abdomen casing,  
exposing pink gills and a tiny, beating heart.  
Now to incapacitate, so they won't walk again:  
I pushed my index finger into a crab mind  
and swirled it around to make him useless.  
The legs came off next,  
the body falling away half dead,  
half alive.

### III.

Now I'm asking what creature would mix me,  
bursting cells and tearing neuron fibers.  
And if destruction is so easy:  
here's to the brain of a crab,  
here's to a chemical recipe,  
here's to infinite patience,  
here's to the labored breathing of God  
working late night hours in his shop,  
creating a mind that was beautiful.



## THE WHELPING DEN

This is the furthest outpost of imagination;  
only the vaguely insane romantic  
will endure these physical discomforts,  
poor food, untreated water,  
sleeping on rocks and boards,  
incipient bruises, twisted feet and knees.

The only reason we are drawn  
is to be a part of imagination;  
a land where rocks snarl  
in a medieval fantasy.  
The soil is thin, nutrient poor.  
The wind through the trees  
can keep a person awake all night  
staring down forgotten obsessions  
and childhood nightmares.

And then it happens;  
one isolated evening  
when the moon ignites  
like an unnatural orb in the blackness  
we glance across the harbor.  
Three stealthy, ice-gray animals crawl along the shoreline,  
their feet touching rocks like a dream.  
I realize this is my fantasy,  
to see *Canis lupis*,  
the boreal dog,  
the North American timber wolf,  
passing between balsam fir  
breathing steam;  
the creature so shrouded in myth  
and horrible legend  
that my skin turns brittle with fear.

Yet the wolves must return somewhere;  
even gothic hallucinations need a home.  
I've seen them for only a second  
but my mind runs over their bodies;  
their ribs protruding, undernourished,  
ragged beasts.  
Maybe I didn't see them at all.  
Moonlight is known to illuminate  
silver faces of rock never seen in daylight.  
Some day I'll tell my son  
I once saw three wolves  
in the wilderness  
and I'll watch his imagination run  
with fear and fascination.



Robert Joe Stout

## RELATIONSHIPS

Her turning, breaking stride,  
Pulls my thoughts to focus  
On a tree: grapevines bind  
Its straight thin trunk  
In knobby arms; its new, pale branches  
Rise above the fence  
In bursts of silvery  
Leaf.

*I think I hear it screaming....*  
Her voice a presence  
In the dusk between us  
As her fingers turn my cheek  
To face her

And she asks *Remember?*  
*Years ago? the dreams I told you?*  
*Branches wrapping, twisting me..?*

My nod lifts her question  
Past the vine-wrapped trunk  
Where two older trees  
Stretch towards sunlight, branches  
Lightly touching where they meet.







## **LACE FROM BELGIUM, BASKETS FROM PERU**

Nick loves his new job. He dreams of quitting college and working at the Pet Shop full time. You're not being practical, says his dad. Get a business degree, own your own store some day, says his mum.

Bayla owns the Pet Shop, and Nick thinks he might love her. Bayla's skin is the color of slowpoke caramel, her skin is tight, her arms are strong, she teaches aerobics twice a week at the High School. She wears llama wool sweaters she imports from Peru, her Import Shop is across town. Bayla's arms jangle with imported teak bracelets and brass rings, wooden and glass beads switch across her chest when she walks. Sometimes Bayla wears a white cotton blouse with wide sleeves, too big for her really, and at just the right angle, from the side, Nick can see her brown breasts, think how smooth her skin must feel, and he'll shiver and quickly look at the water he's siphoning from the fishtank, or the cedar chips he's dumping from gerbil cages. Bayla smells like hot spiced cider, Nick thinks, and he imagines tasting her skin, and tasting cinnamon and cloves.

It's a rainy day, the day Nick gets hired, and he's been in the Pet Shop for two hours, looking. He looks at the arctic fox, curled asleep and breathing too fast in the Pet Shop heat. He touches the fox through the chicken wire, but it doesn't move. Nick looks at the small bright snakes, king snakes and green tree snakes and albino bull snakes. Some have been fed pinkies: newborn mice or rats or gerbils. They look like pictures of human fetuses Nick has seen in Biology books. The king snake delicately tastes with a black tongue, ten, twelve times, before it opens its mouth, releases jaw hinges and pulls itself around the pinkie. A tiny bubble of mucus comes out of the pinkie's nostrils after the snake has swallowed it halfway, and the pinkie extends an embryonic arm, as if waking up and stretching.

Downstairs, in the aquarium department, Nick forgets about time and the German quiz he has tomorrow on the genitive case. He sees regal bettas parade past guppy serfs, Convict fish and Egyptian mouthbreeders fighting over that special quartz place to mate and lay eggs. Angelfish angle between Amazon sword plants. Some have such long tails they have trouble swimming upright and angelfish correct, and they will have trouble swimming as long as they live. Veiltail angels were bred for elegance, not practicality, and in the Amazon they would make easy, elegant hors d'oeuvres for piranhas and oscars.

Nick walks and looks. There are two aisles of aquariums, each aisle is three tanks deep. The tanks are supported by two-by-fours and



cinder blocks, there is nothing to take his eyes away from neon fins, schools of orange platies, aquamarine gouramis and piano black sailfin mollies. In the Aquarium in the City, with the thousand gallon tanks and the electric eel show, Nick was separated from his parents when he was six. His mum shook him hard by the shoulders when she found him. Where have you been? Why didn't you tell someone you were lost? Nick hadn't known he was lost.

Hey, you gonna buy something, or just look all afternoon? Baya, smiling, purple embroidered shirt, wooden sandals, smiling.

Oh, says Nick.

I don't mean you have to buy something or leave, she says. Lord sure does know there's few enough things left that aren't taxable or immoral. She laughs at herself, silver spring earrings bob and hit her shoulders. You sure must love animals. It's mostly the little ones who look and look and look, eyes so wide.

Quickly she says, like the thought bit her, You know your fish?

Yeah, says Nick. I know a lot about fish.

What are these ones?

Paradise fish. They're related to bettas, but they have to be kept with bigger fish or they're bullies. They can stand pretty low temperatures.

Whoo. What about these guys here?

Glass catfish. They're gentle, and they do best in groups. Do you know, if you shine a flashlight on them in the dark, they turn all the colors of the rainbow?

That I know. You need a job, Mr. Know-about-fish? I surely could use someone Saturdays and a couple nights a week.

Really? For Nick this is daydream time come true.

We'll start you out this Saturday, minimum wage to start, but I pay good to my people who stick around. I go on instincts, you know? I got real good instincts.

Nick fills out an application for Baya's records. He writes his social security number wrong two times, and he has to cross it out and write above. He whistles on the way home, and the guys in his dorm wonder why the freshman with the pet tortoise got so friendly. Only his roommate and a few guys he's played poker with even know Nick's name, the others call him the Tortoise Kid.

Nick feels silly because while he was at the Pet Shop he forgot to buy mealworms for Willy, the tortoise. He decides he can't go back until Saturday, and he sneaks a banana out of the cafeteria to keep Willy happy until then.

Marcus manages the Pet Shop for Baya, and he's Nick's best friend now. Baya works mostly at her Import Shop. For weeks she won't be



in the Pet Shop, busy with bead sales and wicker inventories, peacock feather arrangements and carved animal displays. Baya was gone for almost all of December on a buying trip. She brought Nick back a cotton blanket, hand-sewn, hand-woven. Nick likes to push his face into folds and smell Ethiopian sun and Ethiopian dust. She brought Nick two wooden bracelets shaped like snakes, and Nick wears them all the time. Nick's hair is very short on the top and sides like it's always been, but he's let it get long in the back, like Marcus', and he has a tiny braid that curls down around his left ear. Marcus tells Nick he should get his ear pierced, and shows Nick his earring collection--feathers and gemstones, and Nick's favorite, a grinning silver skull an inch in diameter.

Don't bother coming home if you get an ear pierced, says his dad. I'll change the locks on the door. Nick's mum shakes her head at the braid, but she remembers beehive wigs, catseye glasses and the polyester pant suits of not many years ago, and says nothing.

Nick and Marcus talk, when no customers come in, on the rainy-snowy nights when they don't really need to stay open, and just the same two Arab boys who live in the apartment above come in, and make the Pet Shop their own private zoo. Baya has spoken with them, they know the rules. They are welcome to look all they want, as long as they don't touch, or tap on the glass, and they can't pester Marcus or Nick, especially when paying customers are in the store.

Nick and Marcus talk of pets they've had, of customers with ignorant questions. They discuss music, and Marcus force-loans Nick cassette tapes, music that never gets on the radio, groups like Black Flagg and the Orgasmatics, the Butthole Surfers and the Circle Jerks. Just listen once, that's all I'm saying, Marcus tells Nick.

People in the dorm know Nick now, they know his name, his new haircut, his music and his tortoise. Nick is invited to parties, people admire his wooden bracelets, and at dinner in the cafeteria he sits with people who write poetry, or start bands, and dye their hair.

After work Nick and Marcus go to parties together. At a Christmas party Nick kisses a girl from Kenya, named Zaneli. She is shorter and plumper than Baya, and her lips don't taste of cinnamon, but Nick kisses her, and they go to his dorm room and drink wine. Zaneli allows him to unbutton her blouse and kiss her, touch her. She kisses him, and licks his ear, nibbling the lobe and then licking inside. Nick laughs, it tickles like a puppy. They kiss more, drink more wine, from the same glass, and exchange mouthfuls. After a second bottle of wine they sleep. Zaneli kisses Nick and tugs his braid in the morning. Nick smiles but doesn't wake up enough to say goodbye.

Nick's roommate slept in the hall, because when he opened the door he saw wine and kissing, and Zaneli's brown back. Nick is congratulated



for getting lucky, at lunch in the cafeteria the guys joke about brown sugar, black is better, once black never back.

The middle of Winter Term, and the shop is busy. Students with winter weather, winter test blahs are buying animals to pep up dorm rooms and add conversations to parties. Tarantulas make for good conversations. Mice sell well, they're small enough to hide from dorm authorities and easy to feed. The mortality rate for dorm mice is high. Two guys down the hall from Nick have had four separate pairs of mice since October. The first pair died in a week, after being fed beer and potato chips, and small doses of speed hidden in cheese spread.

We're conducting a study on the effects of drugs and alcohol on the average mouse, the guys said. Other mice died similar drug-induced deaths. At a Friday night keg party someone put a mouse in a girl's hair as a joke. She had hysterics, and her boyfriend threw the mouse on the floor and stepped on it. The party didn't last long after that.

No, says Zaneli on the phone. I cannot see you tonight. No, says Zaneli on the phone, the black dorm phone crooked on the wall in Nick's room. No, a night is a night, and doesn't mean anything. Of course I will talk to you, if we meet at a party or something. The university is not so big a place, for us to never see each other again. But there is...no. You know what I mean. I'm sorry, no.

Nick sees her a few weeks later, when he is in the bookstore to get some pens. She is walking out of the store, holding hands with a large brown man in a flowered shirt. They are talking in a language Nick doesn't know.

Forget her, Marcus tells Nick, on a Saturday night when they are cleaning the reptile cages. Marcus scrapes crusty lizard droppings, made up of cricket parts and mealworm skins, from the aquarium glass, Nick sprays them out with warm water. Nick sprays himself in the face now and again as he carefully turns the tanks around to get the corners clean. He wears a white t-shirt, so wet now that his skin shows through. His jeans are wet too. It's warm in the basement of the Shop, steam pipes clank with heat ready to escape, but Nick thinks of the snow tails running across the street outside, he thinks of his shirt freezing to his body.

Forget her, says Marcus. A good-looking guy like you. Hell, look at that chest, those arms. You've been doing the Charles Atlas plan or something, haven't you?

Well, I've been lifting weights a little.

I knew it, says Marcus. Face it Nick. You're a god.

They go to Marcus' house after work, they sit in the living room



and talk, smoke pot and listen to music. Roxy Music plays, "Love is the drug".

I don't know, I just wanted to have a girlfriend who was different, says Nick.

Different is right. Zaneli's black, or didn't you notice?

That's not what I mean, says Nick. I mean, some girls here are clones. He takes the clip from Marcus and inhales, holds his breath ten seconds, inhales, and continues: There's the group with the monogramed sweaters and the pearls. They all get cars for their sixteenth birthday or for high school graduation. They may have great career plans and belong to junior business women of America, but if the right man comes along, and the right man is the good-looking guy who got a car for graduation or his sixteenth birthday, a guy who will be Mr. Executive in a few years and buy the girl a new car when the graduation car gets old, if these girls meet this guy, they don't think about careers anymore. They think about children and country clubs and maybe smoke pot in the afternoons when they feel wicked.

Come on, Marcus says. Most the girls we know aren't like that. Most of the girls we know are pretty cool. He pinches out the last bit of joint, and prepares to roll another.

No, says Nick. Most of the girls we know are rebellious, they dress the way rebellious girls dress and listen to rebellious music, (Nick points to the stereo), and they hang around you and me because we're different, their parents won't like us, you've got your two earrings in one ear, I've got my braid. But those girls will find out that they aren't poets, and we're not different, and they'll get married to guys with graduation cars, and look back on the days when they were different.

God, says Marcus. He finishes making the joint, running his tongue across the end of the rolling paper, sealing it with his thumb and forefinger. That's how it is, huh? You've got this all figured out?

Yes. I guess so, Nick says.

God. Life can't be that depressing.

No, I guess not, says Nick. He smiles, and smokes the joint like a weapon. When it's gone he takes a small pipe out of his army coat pocket, and packs it tight. He smokes more than he ever has before. Marcus gave him his first pot only two months ago. Lou Reed's "Walk on the Wild Side" strikes him as very funny. He smiles and inhales, holds his breath, inhales.

Marcus turns on the ceiling fan, it circles round around, just like a fan in a Moroccan bar in some old movie. Nick thinks of date palms and wicker baskets, and camels, and the ceiling fan turns around.

He wakes up a little when Marcus tucks the blanket around him on the saggy leather couch. Keep the fan on, I like the breeze, he thinks he says, and maybe Marcus reaches down and rubs his hand across the



bristly short top of Nick's head. Maybe Marcus says, poor little mixed-up shit.

The next Saturday is busy at the Pet Shop. Baya is at the Shop, wearing a loose flowered dress, red sash tight at the waist. She has red beads woven into her hair, and she's not wearing a bra. Nick doesn't think Baya ever wears a bra. One Saturday he watched her talk to a company representative, a man who might let Baya sell brand name flea collars and plastic cat squeak toys. Baya wore a grey flannel suit for the Visit. She had sensible hose and black pumps and a purse. She spoke with the Important Representative, she lifted her arm once to brush her hair out of her face while Nick watched. Red wooden bracelets ran up her arm like baby toys on a ring, her breasts moved under the white blouse with the hint of lace at the collar. Nick thought of opening the white blouse, thought of Baya stepping out of the grey flannel skirt, cool and brown-skinned and scented. He thought of her brown arms, and how red wooden bracelets would feel run like massage wheels on his chest and stomach, his thighs. Nick thought of Baya's bright red lipstick leaving rings on him. In between selling goldfish to a freshman girl, and giving advice to a ten-year-old boy whose iguana had a cold, Nick went down to the basement, past the large breeding tanks, the sinks for cleaning, past the cages for rabbit mothers and guinea pig newlyweds. He went into the dark employee restroom with the pegboard walls. His hand moved quickly, he breathed quickly, thinking of Baya's lips, and he opened her white simple blouse and touched her for the first time again and again until he spurted, white and hot, mostly in the bowl, but some on the edge and floor. He didn't look at Baya again that day, sure she was a mind-reader.

But this Saturday Nick's too busy to fantasize. He dips fish into plastic bags, blowing air into the bags before twirling them taut and tying a knot in the top. He picks gerbils up by the base of the tail and puts them into small cardboard boxes. Customers are in and about all afternoon, and into the evening, because it's a Moonlight Madness sale, open until midnight, fish bowls and fish tanks twenty-five percent off, mice free with the purchase of a cage, buy one fish, get another of the same breed free. It's busy, Nick and Baya and Marcus all take dinner breaks at different times, alone.

It's two in the morning, Marcus has gone home. Nick is supposed to join him later, to smoke some pot and drink tequila. Baya is trying to catch escaped finches, while Nick sweeps the floor.

The heck with those birds, says Baya. I'll come in early tomorrow and catch them asleep. The early Baya catches the bird. The floors,



they can also wait until morning. If you could walk an elderly lady home this late, Mr. Nick, I would be appreciating it.

You're not elderly, says Nick. Baya locks the door, and turns the key that sets the burglar alarm. A red light glows next to the keyhole.

My mother, she says, was worn out and dry, with children and sickness and sadness, when she was my age. This country is kinder. But tonight, with a long day at work, I feel old and sad too.

They walk. Baya lives only a few blocks from her pet store, in a large brown house. She rents the top story and attic. Marcus told Nick that the attic was converted into a greenhouse, with solar panels to warm the palm trees and philodendrons. Nick would like to see the attic.

There is a twenty-four hour restaurant on the corner of Baya's street, servicing university students who stay up all night studying, and the after-last-call crowd. Let's get a cup of coffee, says Baya. Decaffeinated. We don't need to be kept up even later.

Nick thinks it will be hard to talk to Baya, but all he has to do is listen. He leans across the table, listening. He fondles his empty coffee cup, runs his finger up and down the handle and listens--to stories of tropical storms and island ceremonies from Baya's youth. Favorite pet parrots and white beach games. Baya talks about her buying trips, tells of negotiating with weavers at bazaars in Hong Kong, arguing with basket salesmen in Peru. She talks about the next trip she's planning, to Brugge, a city of canals in Belgium, almost unchanged since the 1500's. She is going to start selling Flemish lace in the Import Shop, coasters and placemats and wall hangings, shawls and scarves. Baya leans close, her fingers try and convey the intricate design of the lace. She sees how close Nick leans his face to her, how close he listens.

Well, an old woman will babble all night if you let her, she says, but you need sleep for a growing boy, and I at my age need my beauty sleep.

You're not old, Nick says quietly.

Old enough that it's past time for me to be in bed.

My treat, she says, and No, I can make it fine alone from here. No, it is just a block, thank you.

Nick walks slowly back to the dorm. Some kids in a rusty van shout at him. They are very drunk, he's not sure what names they called him.

Marcus telephones at five in the morning, very loud, very drunk.

Where are you, Nick. You're supposed to be drinking with me. No work, no school tomorrow, no excuses. Come over and drink.

I don't feel like it, says Nick. I was asleep. Let me go back to sleep.

Where the hell have you been, anyway, Marcus asks. Shit. I can get worried about people, you know.

I was out with Baya. We got coffee.

Oh. Oh! Brown Sugar, just like a black girl should...



Shut up, says Nick. Shut the fuck up. He hangs up the phone, and takes it off the hook when it rings again a moment later. He can hear Marcus say, hello, hello? And then he hears the recorded voice, pleasantly telling him to please hang up now. The phone beeps for five minutes, then is silent. Willy is quiet in his cage, pulled into his shell for the night. Nick's roommate is home for the weekend, the room is still without the extra breathing. Nick sits on the warm window sill, with the heat register directly below. He plays a game he hasn't played since he was small. He looks at a street light and squints until it expands to a great white star. He blinks and there is a streetlight again, which expands and glows. Blink. Back. Nick looks at the streetlight, he sits on the windowsill and leans his head on the glass until dawn, when he sleeps.



*Sally Allen McNall*

## THE DISTANCE POEMS

1 assembling Margaritas in Bowman, North Dakota

the woman in the liquor store  
said oh Kansas  
you are  
far from home

I thought of the Tasman sea  
of Stewart Island, jumping off  
place for the Antarctic

Helen found fresh limes at the Red Owl  
Clay and Mike brought the blenders from Dickinson

Tim and Anne and all the others  
drank with us

together

before we went all directions

home

## 2 Early Stop (for Clay)

on the west coast of  
the south island of  
New Zealand

after a perilous day's drive  
through the wild green mountains  
--rain through a windscreen shattered  
by road metal, early stop  
where two red haired brothers  
worked late for us--

we walked on the grey shore  
followed by a dog we didn't know

brindled, a hunter, young--  
he brought us a stick  
wet from the sea and the rain and his mouth

we threw until we were both sore  
and he was shaky on his big feet  
but he kept on bringing us  
that stick

I can feel the sand and slobber  
here, in my hand

today I drive south through  
the eastern Dakotas  
there are no mountains  
I have no accidents  
the green is tame in the fields and windbreaks  
and it rains and rains

"Pathetic fallacy of the worst sort," you would say

stranger, continents and oceans and years away  
I'd play that game with you again



### 3 Talisman (for Anne)

The sea voyage to the other side of the world  
lasted more than three months,  
without landfall

in the top of the second trunk,  
packed in the linen napkins,  
the Englishwoman brought her willowware, a pattern  
which travelled to the Staffordshire potteries  
before she was born

in the next hundred years of family use  
it all got broken

halfway to our friends' house on Whale Bay  
we stopped to taste  
the morning's mix of spray and rain  
the bay was glass green  
and on the stony beach  
nothing was blue but this:

the willow tree itself,  
and the steps to the bridge

part of the pattern

Our journey by air  
through China, where the pattern  
began, took more than a month

and years, by various routes  
to this bend in the Little Missouri

It will fit in your hand  
this pattern  
in cornfields or cities

telling of distances  
and of the other side  
of distances











*Jim Davis*

## **A LIMITED GUARANTEE**

I recently saw an advertisement  
for Fine Writing Instruments--Mechanically Guaranteed.  
Interesting phrase if you think what it excludes.  
Crafted by a lawyer, no doubt,  
who didn't want the company  
to be liable for other things  
like poor penmanship, bad spelling,  
and most especially, bum checks.

Sad their product is so limited  
for I would like a fine writing instrument--  
artistically guaranteed,  
that I might produce impeccable plays and novels,  
biographies and poems.  
Shakespeare finally pushed aside  
by Scripto.

I don't see how they could make  
Fine Writing Instruments--Financially Guaranteed,  
but there would be quite a market.



*Michael J. Cesaro*

## NEVER NANCY

"I've always been  
a sucker for a plunging neckline."  
--Nancy,  
from her comic strip  
3/85

Sorry, Nance.  
It is a three-dimensional world  
and you are only a two-dimensional character.  
Maybe your necklines can plunge,  
but there is nothing beneath to keep hidden.  
You cannot entice with a quiet forward bend at the hips.  
Nothing is concealed by wisps of dark shadow.  
Fingertips do not dream  
of softly sinking (why dream of the impossible?).  
Do not tease, kid,  
for the joke would be on you.

Even Aunt Fritzi,  
her supposed big ones  
are not big at all.  
Sure, there is curve,  
and occasionally a sharp point or two  
(depending on her angle).  
It is all illusion, dastardly perception,  
a mere shoop-de-shoop of the pen.  
Size  
is but an artist's whim,  
today a B-cup  
tomorrow a D.  
A hint of bulge,  
but never a nipple.



Pity poor Sluggo,  
your young man  
who fantasizes of paper-cut hands.  
A stud who has no hopes of making a deep impression.  
He will never put anything in anything  
because once a thing is out of sight,  
it is gone.  
A taste,  
a wiggle of the tongue,  
is denied him.

Flat Nancy,  
paper cleavage,  
hemline affixed to your knees.  
you smell of ink and wood pulp.  
Never to open.  
Never to please.  
You are doomed to be shallow  
forever.



*Steve Wilson*

## GIANT FISH FROM MARS

There's no way out. Fish  
the size of Rhode Island  
are this moment reportedly swishing

for the California shore.  
Details remain sketchy. Just how many  
have seen the school, no one is sure.

Noel, said to be the last to spot  
them, is comatose aboard a Navy cruiser.  
His exact condition remains classified, but

a trusted source reports gills  
have sprouted below Noel's ears.  
In gas masks government officials

are even now testing him for clues.  
Some fear the whole episode  
is a grandly executed Soviet ruse

to divert attention from tests underway  
in Siberia, where, in conditions our own  
government has duplicated carefully

on a deserted farm in Wisconsin, newts  
are genetically altered to transmit  
radio signals. The communists dispute

such allegations of course. Nevertheless  
similar specimens of our own have bred true.  
(In the wrong hands, they could endanger intelligence

operations.) "Noel's gills, then, were implanted  
surgically," spokesmen assured us. "Such hoaxes can be--  
in fact have already been--orchestrated



in more controlled conditions  
in our laboratories. Therefore, citizens  
are asked to ignore unsettling speculations

until further reconnaissance missions  
are completed and the devices' origin known.  
Eventually we'll construct a reasonable explanation.”



## 1980, COMING DOWN FOR BRYANT

Bessie, a little down in the back again and carrying too much weight--I've told her, all the good--lets herself down in the rocker in stages, the way she always does, like she's afraid it's going to jump out from under her in sheer spite. But it don't move, the rocker. She don't rock it. It's a sign. She pulls at a fat brown mole peeking out of a wrinkle. A sign too. She's trying to work up to saying something. I can read her.

"Been in there watching the news?" I say, just to get her going. I know what's up.

"Don't I always?"

"Tom and Beth give away anything on Dialing for Dollars today?"

"A crying shame. Three no answers, then this older sounding fellow from over around Stuttgart--I don't recollect-- said his wife had been listening ever day for ten years--he swore it, never missed a day--but today she was off visiting her daughters. The one day they call."

"Always the way."

"Always. It wasn't any story either. That man nearly cried. A hundred and twenty dollars in the pot."

Bessie jabs her finger up underneath her glasses, scratching at the corner of her eye, peeks at me around a knuckle. She's working up to it, the first time in a week or so she's brung it up.

I help her along.

"Hear the farm report?"

"Don't I always?"

"I miss anything?"

Bessie grabs at the arms of the rocker and seems to twist around on them, like she's trying to pick the whole thing up-- her in it and all--and set it down in the opposite direction.

"Hogs are up a dollar," she says finally, almost whispering it in the tiniest little voice that would make you think she was just the shyest thing, if you didn't know her. But Bessie is a strong woman, a big woman, ever a better woman than a man such as me could ask to be blessed with. She's just run up against the wall of my faith so many times that she weakens around the subject of the hogs. There I am as strong as right. There I am the rock.

"Up a dollar," I say. "They're at a good price. Our friends and neighbors will be living well. I'm happy for them."

"They've been going up steady for most of this month," she says. "They won't stay up forever."



"Only God's word and love and man's misery in this life last forever," I say.

She says, Bessie, "Well there'd be a little less misery around here if you'd sell off a few of those hogs before they all expire of old age."

I get up out of my chair and head for the door, before I get riled. We haven't had a good set-to for some time, both too old. And Bessie a good woman, I know, if a little weak of faith when property taxes come due.

At the door I turn.

"I have man's work and I have God's work, and the hogs are God's work. Leave 'em be."

I walk out the door and let the screen slap shut. I hear her push up out of the rocker and head for me. So she's not finished. I walk out to the little shed and grab the two big buckets, one in each hand, then walk to the big shed where the spigot is. Bessie comes up on me.

"And it could be, Bob Franklin," she says, "that God made a fool when he made you."

I nod as I drop the buckets beside the spigot.

"A fool for God, yes ma'am, that's Bob Franklin, but no fool for man."

"And it could be, Bob Franklin, that God meant hogs to be eaten. Bought, sold, and eaten."

I bend over and turn on the spigot. The water splashes into the bottom of the bucket, but don't drown out Bessie, a big-chested woman, a set of lungs, can talk on when she takes the notion.

"It could be that God didn't intend for hogs to pray, Bob, and a fool tries to make them."

I let the water run in about two-thirds, then shift the second bucket underneath. No use in filling them all the way, just lose it on the carry down to the hogs. Bessie goes on and on; I've heard it. And most of it true as Christ's nails. A hard life my Bessie's had herself with Bob Franklin, God's fool. And a good woman she ever was. A better woman than I had any right to lay beside in any bed these fifty years now, I've told and will tell her.

"You're a better woman than I ever deserved, Bessie. I'll tell that to God and man."

She snorts, throws her arms up.

"Tell them what you like but sell two hogs so I can pay some bills! . . . Look at you. Seventy-two years old and carrying water half the day like a nigger. I'll find you down in a ditch one day. At least wait a few hours for Ester and R.W. to come so R.W. can help you."

I stop short on that one, slosh water on my boots. R.W. I love all men as God wills, but R.W. is a trial.

"And I want you to be nice when they come. Treat them right."



“Have I ever treated my own daughter any other way?” I call back, walking on.

“It’s not your daughter I’m worried about. R.W.’s her husband and as nice a man as you could want and the way you treat him.”

I walk on. She says a couple more things, but I act like I don’t hear. In a minute the door slams. Bessie, a good woman, but that R.W.! He could spoil a cool evening in August, if there ever was such a thing.

The hottest summer, 1980. A bad start to a bad year, a bad year to start a bad decade. It don’t bear to think about what God has planned for America. The hottest time, and dry. The chicks just die. And the corn I’m ashamed to let the hogs out in it. In my pridefulness I consider myself a good man, a Godly man, but what God has done to me.

My own boy, Gerald, just last year, on a cool day in April drops dead on the parking lot of Walt Bennett Ford, Little Rock. A good man who went to the Temple of Light Primitive Baptist Church in Mabelvale, not ten miles from me, for thirty years of his life and sold a lot of Ford’s, a good car. I’ve never owned anything but a Ford, tractor, truck, pickup, or family car, and never will. General Motors leaks oil, a known fact, and Chrysler sneaks in a Jap motor on you. We send them over scrap iron and they shoot it back to kill our boys or send it back in little bitty cars and put Americans out of work. I don’t know what to say about a man who would buy from a Jap, a German, a Italian, or a Frenchy, who we saved twice and they won’t pay their war debt. It burns me.

I come up on the hog pens, awful hot, the buckets cutting into my hands, too old for this hauling for a fact. It’ll take several trips. I had a pipe run down from the house, but in this summer of 1980 with the heat and no rain--I guess it must have been no water pressure done it. I took it all apart, but I could see light through every pipe, so it wasn’t blocked nowhere. Still, no water and thirsty hogs.

As I come up, I see them bunched in the shade on the east of the hog house, heaving in the heat. Pope John sees me first and heads for me, snout down, eyeing the buckets.

“Pray, piggies, pray!” I holler. “R.W.’s coming!”

They scramble up out of the shade, flinging dust a yard in the air, the big sow, Jackie O, leading the pack. They get to the fence and then start bashing each other left and right, each one trying to wedge his snout into just that one spot, where it’s better than anywhere else. Ever notice that with a bunch of hogs at a fence? It seems like there’s just one spot where all of them have to get their snouts, and it’s not a big enough spot for more than one and not even for one alone, so they never find it, just shoulder and snap and hurl oaths and insults. Just like people, if you know what I mean. Always trying to get wedged in to that one spot so tight and safe but never knowing where it is, if it is, which it ain’t. Cause God don’t make spots, he makes worlds, made the whole



pie, not just one piece of it and we learn to love the slice we get or carry a little hell around with us while we search. Pigs and people--not a whole lot of difference. All of them rutting up to anything two degrees warmer than a corpse and worrying more about their bellies than their souls, and why not teach them to pray? We all stand in need of grace, even the least of his, even the beast, and if I can teach the least to send their prayers up to God, why, then I've done a piece of work for the Lord.

"Pray, piggies!" I say, holding the buckets up high, but it don't fool Jereboam, a smart old hog, grey hair curling up his back and across his shoulders. He knows it's just water. The trough still has a couple of inches in the bottom. Jereboam gives me such a look, snorts, and heads back for the shade. Jackie O, the greedy harlot--God forgive me, and here I call myself a Christian man--gives FDR a shoulder trying to get at me and sends him sprawling.

"You! Jackie O! You!"

FDR lays panting in the dust a moment, eyes rolling, then works his way back up. An old hog, the oldest. The first one I started to instruct in prayer. Many have come and gone since him. They don't seem to last. The only thing they seem to know right from their just born hearts is they are bred to be fed on by man, bred for eating so long a time that they've forgotten that their purpose is our purpose--to praise God and wait for the day when we will all sit at His feet in His home.

"Pray, FDR!" I call, and FDR just kind of lets hisself flop back down on his belly, back legs stuck out and front curled under him, head wavering back and forth over his knees. Kneeling for prayer is what he's doing, no matter what the smart boys would call it.

Jackie O rams her nose out through a square of wire and kind of barks at me, bossing, and the others line up on both sides, prancing and barking like they about to wet their britches. Pearl, near the youngest I guess, runs first one way and then the other behind them, trying to find an opening.

"Pray, piggies! Pray, heathens! Down on your knees! Get down there, Jackie O! You, Lou Holtz!"

Jackie O pushes back from the fence a foot or so to get some room, then works her front legs down until she's on her knees, bottom up in the air. But I don't trust it as a sign of faith. She begrudges it to me and Christ Lord. All a trick to get the first chnce at the buckets. Satan would kneel and put on a good show doing it if he had a notion it would get him a shot at another soul to toast. But at least Jackie O's kneeling reminds Clinton what he's supposed to be doing and he hunkers down on his knees, and then the rest just follow along until they're all in there in a row, on their knees, snouts up, ready for the Good News, and I can feel the tears warming up my eyes once more to see the least



of His creation primed for worship. How close they are to God, hogs and even the stones and trees, but man in 1980.

"Now say it, piggies: 'God is love!' 'God is love,' piggies!"

They kind of rustle around and look at each other guilty-like. Holtz stands up but thinks better of it and gets back down.

"God is love! Say it, heathens!"

Old Pope John lets out a squawk like a ruptured turkey, not perfect, but not too far from "God." You listen close enough and you can hear it in there. A cool day and I'd work them more, but in this heat. Besides, all I got is water, almost a trick. Hogs like an earthly reward for God's work, just like a man. I'm working them on doctrine, but it's slow going.

I give in and reach the water over the fence and dump it in the trough. Four or five go right for it, but the rest turn off and wander back to the shade. The ones at the trough lap at it out of politeness for a few seconds, then head on back to the shade with the others.

Pray Piggies!" I holler after them, but they don't pay me no mind. It's worrisome, them putting a price on praying. It's like I'm bribing them, I can't lie. But it's no different from a man--church on Sunday if you'll prosper me through the week, oh Lord. These Sunday-when-the-fishing's-poor Christians got no more doctrine than my pigs, and at least my pigs know how to kneel, and that gives them a leg up in my book.

Old FDR is still down in the dust looking like he don't know which way's up. Awful old. Hardening of the arteries, sure as the world, but one of God's own.

"Praise Jesus!" I call to him. "Praise Jesus, FDR!"

FDR finally focuses on me, then starts working his mouth around like he's got a bone caught in his throat. Then he lets it all out. "Praise!" he says, I'd swear to it. My best learner, FDR, nearer to God than me myself, I sometimes feel. I'm convinced he would say the Lord's Prayer except that a hog's mouth ain't made right for saying F's and K's.

I ponder on it a bit, then head back to the house. The sun's hot and Ester and the other one will be along any time.

By the time I get there I see that little red thing of R.W.'s setting out front. An Escort, I think it is. An 'X' car he calls it. 'X' for about to X-pire, I'd guess. He could of put another thousand with it and bought hisself a good-sized Ford and had hisself a car. I told him, but what can you tell R.W.?

We eat chicken for dinner at 69 cents a pound. Farmers buy it at the store just like anybody else, but you can't tell the city boys that. Bessie serves up some Italian sounding thing with eggplant and cheese in it and a couple of other things I can't place and don't want to think about. It don't taste all that bad. Bessie and Ester talk about whatever they always talk about and R.W. feeds his face. Just stuffs it in.



Something was wrong about dessert. It was some concoction that had to go in the freezer and it hadn't yet "set up" right--sounded like they were talking about pouring concrete--so R.W. and me takes a walk down to the cornfield until the dessert finishes doing whatever it is it needs to do.

I don't see a stalk that would come up to my nose, this summer of 1980. R.W. shakes his head. He's not altogether a bad fellow except he started calling me "Bob" from day one without even asking--not Mr. Franklin or nothing--and grins all the time, which can get on your nerves after a few years. And then of course he's from Little Rock, lived there all his life and seems to be proud of it. Hard to figure it.

I guess Little Rock ain't as bad a place as Memphis or New York or some of them others, but whatever comes down the road stops at Little Rock before it gets on to Bryant, and most of what's come down the road the last fifty years I'd just as soon kept on traveling. Bryant didn't used to be so near to Little Rock. I remember when I was a boy before the first war we'd ride the wagon from my daddy's farm, which was just down the road from me now, and it'd take an hour to get the three miles on in to Bryant. Then if we went on in to Little Rock it'd be the whole rest of the day. We'd stop at a little store that still seemed a ways from the city--about where the university is now--a place with a red and white sign said ROBINSON'S -- EXCELLENT MERCHANDISE, and we'd eat crackers and cheese and I'd get a bottle of strawberry pop and think how it was gone so fast. Every man wore a hat and a white shirt and a tie then, and Little Rock didn't seem so bad. Today I can get in my pickup and show you the face of 1980 in fifteen minutes. And the thing that scares Hades out of me is that it don't stay put. It just keeps on spreading out like some yellow blight, Little Rock and 1980. Sometimes I get this feeling, you know, like when a goose walks across your grave, but more like a vision, that something is just over the hill, some big awful thing coming down the road for Bryant. But I don't never even bother to look. I know what it is. It's just Little Rock coming, Little Rock and 1980.

R.W. looks at the corn and grins his grin. He jams his hands down into his pockets and hitches his pants around, and I can tell he's closing in on some wisecrack or something to get my goat. R.W. can frost you just by being in the same county.

"Those golden arches are going right on up, Bob," he says. Bob. "I saw them hauling machines in there just this afternoon on the way out. Bryant's getting to be a big place."

"That's grand," I say. "I can't wait. I'm going to be in there ever day having myself a Big Mac attack. Maybe three or four of 'em a day."

"Yessir, Bob, Bryant's coming right along. McDonalds, paved streets, electricity, indoor plumbing--coming right in to the twentieth



century.”

That’s what passes for humor from R.W. Takes one of the city boys to laugh at electricity and paved roads. Let one of them haul ashes a few January mornings or try to get a wagon down a mud-rutted road--and I can remember not many years ago when not all Little Rock’s was paved by a long shot--and they’d be laughing out the other side of their face. Try to tell R.W. though.

“Yessir, Bob,” R.W. goes on, got a load in him today, “Bryant’s coming along. Bryant High’s coming on too. Did you hear about that one?”

“No,” I say, “but I figure you’re going to go ahead and tell me.”

“Sure. Bryant High’s going 4-A next year.”

“Going 4-A. Ain’t that grand. Course you’re not going to tell me what 4-A means.”

“4-A, you know. Their high school classification. In sports. They’ve been 3-A for awhile but they’re getting too big, so they’re moving up to 4-A.”

“Hot damn. That’s grand. Now I won’t know what to do first--have myself a Big Mac attack or wet my pants over Bryant H.S. being 4-A.”

“Big stuff for Bryant, all right. They’ll be in there with the big boys now. Hot Springs. Texarkana. Little Rock Catholic and Mills.”

“Wonderful. I’m thrilled all over. Now Bryant H.S. can have dope fiends walking the halls just like Little Rock. Maybe I can even get me a part-time job selling some marijuana. Lord willing we might even borrow us a few niggers to run the ball and win a game ever year or two.”

R.W. throws back his head and laughs.

“You might at that,” he says. “Then again, maybe in a couple of years we’ll just annex you like we did Mabelvale and you won’t have to borrow any. We’ll bus down a few hundred every day.”

I feel that goose walking up on my grave again.

“What in Christ’s kingdom are you talking about--‘annex Mabelvale’?”

“What do you mean? Don’t you read the papers? Little Rock annexed Mabelvale--the biggest part of it anyway--a few months ago. April I think.”

“I’m a farmer. I don’t have time to fool with reading the papers every day,” I mumble and move off, not knowing hardly where I’m headed, like I’ve been in the sun too long.

So they got Mabelvale. Not that I’m especially partial to the place--go down Baseline Road and you can’t tell where Little Rock leaves off and Mabelvale starts--but it’s been holding the fort for a long time. The only thing between us and the Little Rock city limits. I see Little



Rock like a fat old whore loosening her belt so's she can gobble up another place where a good man could live once upon a time.

I head on out for the road and down toward the hog pens. So hot. I hear R.W. coming on behind.

"Hold up," he says. "I want to see those good Christian pigs. You got 'em singing 'Nearer My God to Thee' yet?"

Before I can say something he'd regret Bessie pokes her face out the door and says that dessert's ready, so of course R.W. lights out in that direction. Good for him.

I go on down the road.

"Pray, piggies!" I call out, coming up on the pens. "Little Rock's on the way! 1980 coming down for Bryant!"

They lay over in the shade, six o'clock and the sun still well up on an August afternoon. Awful close. I don't even call 'em again to prayer. A bad day, a bad time. Bad times. The water is low in the trough. The ground dry. Piggies can't sweat, need to keep their bellies wet. I should of hauled more water. I'm neglectful. I'll pay.

I just stand leaning against a fence post the longest time, I couldn't tell you how long, staring at the hogs. The sun beats right on me. You can't hardly turn your face towards it. The hogs lay in the shade and I stand in the heat of the sun. Tell me a man's smarter than a hog.

I see Jackie O and Pope John and Fatboy and Jereboam, but I don't see FDR. I move along the fence to get a better angle, but I still don't see him in the shade of the pens nor over under the sweet gum where he likes to lay sometimes.

"FDR!" I call out. A couple of the hogs twitch an ear at me and grunt, but no FDR. I open the gate and move on into the lot. Lou Holtz gets up and waddles on over and takes a sniff at me, but as soon as he's sure I ain't got anything, he saunters off and lays back down. I stand right there at the edge of the block of shade and count them up. No FDR.

I move on over to the hog house and squat for a look through the door. He's over in the far corner in the deepest shadows, over on his side. I move on in, kind of hunched over at first, but the roof slopes so that by the time I'm abreast of the window I got to get down on my hands and knees. Been too long since I cleaned out the hog house. Now I pay.

FDR lays with his head up in the corner. Even before I give him a little nudge in the shank, I know he's gone. Yea, though I walk through the valley. I feel my chin start to jerk. I've grieved at the graves of men who praised not Jesus, so why not beside a hog who did?

I catch him by the rear legs and start to work him toward the light. It's hard work, on your hands and knees, trying to drag dead weight across the earth--even a skin and bones old hog. I get him up by the



window before I hear R.W. coming down the road. I rub the tears out of my eyes but he's out of sight beyond the hedge that borders the road. I know it's him by his whistle, though. Only time he don't grin is when he's whistling. If it's football season he'll whistle the Razorback fight song until you're ready to choke him. Other times it's usually a Hank Williams tune. Man lives in the past.

R.W. comes up around the hedge, stops and looks around, takes a couple of steps back and looks up and down the road. I ease on back into the shadows a bit more. He kind of shrugs like he figures he's missed me and good riddance, and then he hikes his foot up on the fence and hunches over and rests his arms across his knees, eyeing my hogs. He's stopped whistling by now and has taken to grinning again, but now the grin is more like a sneer. A sneer for a fact--the kind of look Satan must have had on his face when Eve bit into the apple. Then he kind of laughs and says,

"Pray you hogs."

Then he says it louder.

"Pray hogs. Let's hear the Lord's Prayer. Praise God!"

It'd take a godless man. I shudder when I think of my Ester.

"Sing 'Nearer My God to Thee'!"

He's just laughing, and FDR dead here in my arms.

"Say 'Praise God'!"

"Praise God!" I let out before I realize what I'm doing. It comes out in kind of a croak, and R.W. stops laughing for a second, then laughs again real short, more like a hiccup, then stops and stares in.

"That you, Bob?" he calls.

"Praise God!" I let out again, not even thinking about it, like wet from a baby.

R.W. squints into the sun, trying to see into the dark of the hog house.

"You in there, Bob? . . . You gone off, Bob? Too much sun?"

"Praise God!" I squawk, and this time I put a little more pig into it--deliberate this time, I admit to it.

R.W. laughs loud, real loud, throws his head back and laughs, but the kind of laugh that tells me that old goose was walking across his grave. He moves over to the gate, opens it, and comes on in. The hogs start up and head for him. R.W. backs out real quick, a city boy. I almost let out a holler, figuring he'll leave the gate open, but he locks it, probably so's the hogs won't get out and chase him into Oklahoma. He stands there a second, looking like he'd like to grin but can't work one up, then moves off up the road toward the house. In a couple of seconds he's out of sight beyond the hedge. I don't hear no whistling.

I lay there for a time thinking on the mysterious ways the Lord moves and his works performs. Then I catch FDR up by the feet and



start hauling. By the time I get him out I'm about done in. The hogs and sows are milling, restless. They know it. One of their own gone.

"It's the Lord's own way, piggies," I say. "Praise God!"

"Praise God!"

At first I don't hardly believe it myself. Just as plain, with only the slightest bit of pig in it. I look around me, but I can't figure which one it was. Not a sow, I don't think.

I lift my arms to the sky.

"Praise God!" I shout.

"Praise God!" it comes back before I can even lower my eyes. It might have come from over by the sweet gum tree. Jereboam and Pope John are over there. Or it could've been from over by the fence along the road where Fatboy and Pinkie and Lou Holtz and Jackie O are.

My eyes just flood with tears. All the works of my days and years. To be laughed at and scoffed. Always the way with the prophet in his own land, his own time. I look around at my piggies, all holy. And no vanity in me. Hogs too good for Bob Franklin, hogs with the Lord's work to do.

I cross over the gate and throw it open, raise my arm to the open road.

"Go forth!" is all I can get out before I choke up.

They head through the gate real quick. I never saw such joy, such readiness. I watch them go up the road past the house. Even after they're out of sight I still see them, praising God and His Son all the way into Bryant, then turning off north, and even as the darkness falleth bringing the Good News to Little Rock.



## THE FISH

Mother always introduced me on a crowded pier, her little fish.  
I was known around the Liberty Boathouse.  
I was known to the Polacks camping near the clump of oak trees,  
bringing me salted pumpkin seeds;  
by the Irish around their fires near the water;  
the Italians and Bubbles and the Boatcrew.

When I passed they greeted me--the Fish--,  
and watched me darting around picnic tables  
and parked cars, with my gookie-shoes snapping  
at my heels, while I speared litter and beer cans  
with a nail at the end of a broom stick, hooking the trash,  
flipping the cans into one sack and paper in the other.

From the beginning of May to Labor Day they emerged  
on our summer resort. They would leave the city on Fridays and,  
like remora, followed the Northwestern,  
to catch all the green lights,  
and poured down the hill to the camping grounds,  
like the best catch of the day  
being dumped down the shoot to a holding tank.

There they stayed at the bottom of the hill,  
in, near or on the water, until Sunday  
when they'd stream up the hill to return to the city again.

And weekend following weekend, with my swim suit tied in a knot,  
pulling the front up to my chin, I was dragged,  
by red-haired mother in her sundress, with straps  
slipping off her shoulders, grasping my arm,  
leading me down the pier with the bar crowd following behind.  
I protested, futilely clutching every post, driven deep into the sandy  
bottom, to save myself.

After prying me loose and nudging me to the edge of the pier,  
where I'd curl my toes over the boards, close my eyes  
and hold my breath, while she, laughing proudly to the followers,  
would pitch me in the water, then bending at the knees,  
coaxed me to paddle dumbly back to the pier.



Breathless I'd climb out, first resting my head on the boards,  
then after heaving myself up, she would pat me on the head,  
tell me to go all the way under the water. And stiffed armed  
I was cast into the lake again, floundering with my eyes closed,  
my arms straight out in front of me, like feelers,  
searching for the pier.

I was flung again to dive for dimes at the  
bottom, dive for quarters at the bottom, dive for rocks at  
the bottom or bring up sand to prove I'd really been down that far.

As the summer passed, I was hurled, and spun out and  
over the water, farther and farther away, like a broken toy  
left in the driveway.

I was tossed, holding my nose, with my eyes closed,  
and fearing I'd be catapulted onto the raft at the next beach,  
or plunge into an anchored boat.

Repeatedly the Fish was caught, lured off the swings,  
hauled away from the sand castle and thrown back and back again.

Every summer I waited.

I waited.

I waited to lie unattended,  
unnoticed on the beach to dry--a fish out of water.







*Robert Swanson*

**JANITOR**

He moves slow, sideways,  
with a shy grin on his face.  
He's friendly  
to all the professors  
who speak to him.  
Whatever they say,  
he agrees with it.  
Though a white man,  
he's seen all the films  
of Stepin Fetchit  
in his dreams.  
When he was a boy,  
he found out  
that bullies rarely hit you  
if you're smiling.



*Ruth Berman*

## **SNOW GAMES**

Running on snow  
Where the streetploughs piled mountainrims  
Along the boulevards  
Wading in snow over lawns

In snowdrift hills excavating  
Snowcaves for the snowqueen  
Drilling away with mittened hand and woolcoat arm  
Then stuffing a wet white mitten in a pocket  
To melt and freeze a hassock in a hand  
For a crystal throne

Winter's small loyal subjects  
Wander alone careless of cold  
In gardens of cold

Snowangels forbid them the icy paradise  
Send them shivers to send them in  
Out of snow and castles  
Home



*Ruth Berman*

## SUN CAT

Sun cat                    gold furred  
glistens over the grass  
hindquarters swaying lordly in the light

even in bushes waiting for slow birds  
glows in the shadow  
Coal in the ashes

so cool  
to the touch  
sun cat                    gold furred



*Linda Schandelmeier*

**SWEETPEAS**

A network  
of color  
laces the fence  
while rain  
tarnishes petals  
and frost  
still to come  
before moose swim  
soundlessly  
from the woods  
lifting ancient noses  
to withered vines  
gathering the lost garden







## **DRAWING WILD BIRDS**

The land was poor, the soil acid and thin. In 1920 the pine forest had been cut, and the scrub pine and oak that replaced it were short and often diseased, stunted by the extreme winters. I played in this dwarf forest when I was a child. Once I found iron spikes driven into the bare, white trunk of a dead tree. The naked torso of this giant was several times the diameter of the living trees surrounding it, and at one time it must have towered over even the other pines. This explained the iron spikes, which my father said the loggers would drive into the sturdiest trees to aid, by means of ropes and pulleys, the downfall of the others. I imagined, perhaps incorrectly, the gentle lowering of these trees, some over a hundred feet tall, like the ones preserved in the state park. When the forests were cleared, an Ojibway Indian was heard to say that the sky was now empty.

The first farmers planted corn and kept dairy herds. Except in a few isolated pockets of rich prairie, these farms went under during the Depression. My father bought one of these farms and ran sheep. The sheep trampled heedlessly over the fallen strands of barbed wire that had once separated cropland from pasture. My father also grew hay near the creek. Although we did better than the corn farmers, sheep made a poor living. My father toyed with the idea of growing timber for fence posts and telephone poles. "The land is meant for pines," he would say in the evening when he settled his thin hams into the easy chair by the TV and pored over the literature on soil types that was sent to him by the state. "Sandy soil with a high acid content," he would say, wrinkling his forehead, significantly. My father had glasses, and, at those moments, I thought he looked more like a scientist than a farmer, like the ones with glasses on the TV who talked about acid build-up and heartache. But, I must have heard it wrong--it must have been heartburn.

I was born first, a girl who at birth had curls as long and black as an Indian's, so that my mother was held under suspicion until my hair faded with age and sun into a proper Scandinavian blond. My brother was born six years later, a tardiness unheard of in a farm family, and my father, thus, for many years had to make do with me. I carried tools and fed the bottle lambs and played "marbles" with the round sheep turds when he wasn't looking. The fresh ones were soft and smelled like wet hay left in the field when there's too much rain for cutting.

When my brother, Lester, could walk, he joined me in these tasks. I remember standing with him on cold spring days to watch the shearing, our mittened hands clutched together. We were afraid of the shearer,



a big, beer-drinking Finn with a red flannel shirt, who wrestled the sheep down with his long, heavy arms. The sheep rolled their stupid eyes as he worked, leaping away when he finished, embarrassed by their uneven coats and the pink, tender skin that showed in patches. When my brother and I followed my father around the farm, my father always handed Lester the tools to carry. Lester always dropped them, and I would pick them up and come along behind. When the Finn was finished with the shearing, my father offered the shears to my brother, who rolled his eyes and retreated like an unshorn lamb. I was delighted, waiting for my father to offer the shears to me, but he didn't. He handed them back to the Finn.

In the late '50s, a state program called "Soil Bank" gave money to farmers who took their land out of production. My father took this as a sign. He fenced the sheep out of the hill pasture--the driest, sandiest land on the farm--and planted it, a few acres each year with cheap red pine seedlings from the state's reforestation program. His idea was to sit back and collect money each year until the trees were big enough to sell for fence posts and telephone poles. He did collect the money from "Soil Bank," but he didn't get to sit back--raising trees turned out to be a lot of work.

I was 11 and my brother was five when the work began in earnest. Lester had been in charge of keeping the family's half-acre of vegetables free of weeds since he had learned to walk, and I had been shoveling manure from the sheep shed and helping with the hay crop for a number of years. The young trees, however, required more arduous labor. Each fall, after the harvest, a neighbor came to bulldoze the brush and sapling oaks off the acres my father intended to plant the next spring. When the red, raw soil was exposed, Lester and I would stumble among the clods of earth, picking out the large rocks and carrying them to piles at the edge of the field. This work would continue in every spare moment until the end of time, for, with each rain, with each plowing, with each winter's frost, more rocks heaved up to the surface like lost teeth from a massive, prehistoric jaw buried in the earth. I learned years later that my imagination had approached the truth. The granite of the Canadian Shield lay under the soil of our farm, rising to the surface not a hundred miles north of us where the land was too rocky for planting.

In the spring we planted the seedlings, little red pines about 10 inches tall with long, soft needles. My mother drove the tractor while my father sat on the planter, a rusty, old contraption with a blade that opened a furrow just long enough for a quick hand to push in the roots of a tree. Then two more blades closed the furrow around the roots. My brother and I followed behind to stamp down the soil around the roots, making sure each tree stood straight. "Can't have no funny trees," my father would say. "You ever seen trees growing every which way?"



Except for the incessant rock-picking, our labors were supposed to end after the planting. However, dry summers were the rule in that country, and we lost over half of the seedlings before my father managed to buy a portable water tank which he drove up and down the rows while Lester and I scrambled around with hoses to water the trees. As the trees grew larger, my father also grew impatient to see a profit from them. A pamphlet from the state gave him the idea to turn some of them into Christmas trees. "We have to thin them out anyway, if we're going to get any big enough for telephone poles," he said. To make Christmas trees, however, one must prune the new growth each summer so that the trees grow in compact, triangular shapes. Every June, Lester and I walked up and down the rows, trimming every other tree into the proper shape. June was the hottest season, and we would rest together eating our lunch in the shade of the oaks that grew at the edge of the field. When we were still very young, my father worked with us to be certain we didn't rest too long. Left alone we might stop for water and, sitting in the shade, spend an entire afternoon talking about the birds and insects that we'd found, wondering if the trees that were allowed to grow wild and tall weren't happier than the ones we trimmed. Surely the pruning hurt, for the branches always bled sap that hardened into clear droplets like tears. When my father was there, we worked steadily, while the sheep watched us forlorn but free on the other side of the barbed wire fence.

More and more as my brother grew up, though, I found myself left to help my mother and grandmother with their work. I found myself taking care of my brother's old gardening chores, keeping the soil between the rows of vegetables cultivated and free of weeds. I did this in the mornings, which were relatively cool and which was the time I wasn't welcome in the house because my grandmother cleaned and baked. My mother, also driven out, spent the mornings on the little John Deere tractor, plowing the fire brakes. The fire brakes were swathes of bare earth cleared between the stands of young trees, wide enough to stop a fire. My mother hitched a cultivator to the John Deere and lightly turned the soil to prevent the weeds and brush from taking over. As my father put more and more of the land into trees and the timber grew tall, the farm began to take on the character of a forest. My mother told me a fox often followed the tractor, catching the mice disturbed by the cultivator. She was certain that deer watched her whenever she approached the oak woods.

Afternoons our work varied with the seasons. We planted or harvested vegetables from the half-acre garden, froze peas or sweet corn, canned tomatoes and pickles, or combed the brushy hillsides for chokecherries to make syrup. There were also trips into town for groceries or parts for the equipment, and, of course, we helped with



every kind of farm work in the busiest seasons. What I liked best, however, was the blueberrying. Blueberrying involved long hours in the forest and, therefore, did not seem like work at all, even though the picking was often as difficult as any farm chore. Blueberries preferred the jackpines that grew in dense thickets on the abandoned farms surrounding us. The bushes thrived in thin, sandy soil that was enriched only by the few dead pine needles that fell each year. The bushes had wiry, woody branches and sparse, elongated oval leaves. They flowered in early spring--small, white blossoms that I have rarely seen. The berries themselves were half the size of domestic berries and had a wild, acid tang.

Blueberries grow best on land recently logged off or burned. My mother's favorite picking spot was a section of state forest burned five years earlier and covered only with hazelbrush and young jackpines. My grandmother, whose old farm was nearby, had witnessed the fire. She said that a small, shallow lake had been completely dried up by the fire--the water evaporated and the mud at the bottom left drought-cracked like the inside of a pottery bowl shattered in the kiln. Fringing this lake, now full again, the blueberry bushes grew as thick as a beard around a mouth.

My clearest memories of the blueberry picking come, not from my childhood, but from the summer of 1972 when, years after leaving the farm, I returned to spend a summer with my family. That was the best year for blueberries in anyone's memory. The season, usually two or three weeks in late July and August, lasted until an early September frost ended it with berries still on the bushes. There they stayed, wrinkled and leathery as old grapes, until the snow covered them.

My mother always checked our picking spot in mid-July to estimate how soon the berries would be ripe. In the summer of 1972 she came roaring back from this activity, the pickup bucking on the gravel driveway and her hair flying out of her bandanna. "They're already ripe," she announced. Like desperate conspirators we donned our woods clothes--boots and old denim pants, loose shirts, and wide hats with insect-netting veils. We gathered buckets, took water in a thermos jug, and left for the state forest.

A frenzy came over us that summer. Every afternoon that we could get away, we spent in the state forest, hunkered down under the jackpines, miserable in the windless heat, filling pail after pail with blueberries, and remaining as insatiable as Stone Age gatherers who fear they might never eat again. At home we filled the refrigerator with blueberries, ate them three or more times a day, and froze them with sugar until the freezer in the basement overflowed, and my father placed a concrete block on it to keep the lid down. Undaunted, my grandmother began making jelly and pancake syrup with the blueberries, until



a blue army of jars greeted the opening of every kitchen cupboard.

Throughout this bountiful summer, my father and brother persisted with the farmwork, plowing the dry furrows of a new plot of sickly, young trees, oblivious to the rich, wild land beyond their fences. I rarely saw my brother except as a distant figure on a tractor. However, one evening when the house was hot and the air sticky with the dark odor of blueberry syrup, I went with Lester to pick stones out of the new field. When we were children we had worked at this chore together and had developed a system of piling and carrying that allowed us to talk while we worked. Now Lester did things differently. He parked the tractor near the section of field we were clearing, with the loader attachment on the front, and we piled the rocks on the loader. When it was full, Lester drove to one of the rock piles, raised the loader high above it--much higher than necessary--and let the rocks fall. They made a sound like huge marbles cracking together, and some of them fractured into several pieces, but not easily, the way sandstone breaks; these rocks were composed of a dense granite, only a deep anger could find their fault lines. In the growing dusk, I was afraid to talk to Lester when he left the tractor and worked next to me. Even though I sensed him pausing at times to straighten up and rest his back, I worked on, stooped over and ignoring him. During one of his pauses, he poked me in the back.

"Don't care what the old man says, you gotta rest your back doing this kinda work."

I straightened up and stood next to him. I looked down, though, and kicked at a weed growing in one of the furrows. Then I looked up. He was watching me, and I realized I hadn't looked at him, really looked at him, for years. His hair was now sandy and thin, and, around his eyes, the skin was parched from the sun. His eyes were still blue, but not the clean, freshly scrubbed blue of childhood. They were now the blue of the sky on those days when the wind carries the topsoil into the atmosphere to choke the sun.

"I want to leave," he said.

"Why?" I asked, but an acrid taste from the sweat on my lip closed my mouth. What I wanted to say was this--that as he stood there, taller now than me, smelling the way a man smells after a day in the fields, his feet firmly, almost arrogantly, set on the ground--that I could have no sympathy for him. He fit exactly the life that he had. No, he fit exactly the life that had been given to him. My father had given Lester the farm, just as he had intended to from his birth.

"I'm going crazy," he said. "I've got to get away."

I interrupted him, my words tumbling out precipitously. "Well, of course, everyone should get out and see the world when they're young...and the farm won't go under if you leave for a while...We all



need to run away from home when we're young..we all need to run away..." I stopped, embarrassed at myself. I stared at the furrow again and kicked the weed to a bloody, green pulp.

"I can't just run off."

That was it, I knew. I looked up. "Mom and Dad could go it alone a little while."

"Yeah, but I don't know, not for long," Lester said. "I'd be worrying about them, wondering what was happening, and that's what I want to get away from. And they'll be going crazy, too. No matter how I say it, Dad'll think I'm never coming back. I just don't know." As I looked away from him again, he said, "Would you come back for a while? Things would be OK then. And I wouldn't be gone too long. I've just got to..." He paused. I didn't look up. He said, "I don't know..."

I looked at the pulverized weed and the furrow, speckled with rocks, feeling the "no" rising in my throat.

"You don't have to make excuses," he said. "It's getting dark; let's go in."

He got on the tractor, and I climbed automatically on the back, balanced behind the seat. Just before he started the engine, drowning all conversation, he turned back and said, "Just think about it, OK?"

I thought about it. I thought about it on the ride back to the barn as the yellow dusk rose behind the trees then subsided into night. I thought about it during the next days, hunkered down among the blueberries or weeding the garden. And I thought about it as I rode away on the bus, feeling sorry for Lester--yes, I did feel that--but more, feeling the value of my freedom. I found it valuable now, perhaps for the first time, because someone wanted it. When it had been given to me, my freedom had been a cheap thing. I remembered a day when my brother was still a baby. He was almost a newborn, I think, for his eyes had been pale and unfocused like the eyes of an old man with cataracts. My father wanted him to have his first tractor ride, and I remember my mother handing Lester up to him. He put the baby between his knees on the cracked vinyl seat, then stepped on the clutch. The baby moved a useless fist toward the stick, laughing, but when my father made the engine roar to life, Lester pulled back and began to cry. And when the tractor lurched into motion, and my father wheeled a proud circle around the aunts and uncles who had gathered to watch, Lester screamed like a small rabbit that a dog had caught by the leg. Nonetheless, my father finished the circle before he gave the squalling baby back to its mother.

I got a ride on the tractor that day, and I didn't scream or cry to get down. The aunts and uncles cheered almost loudly enough to drown Lester's crying, and I felt bold, almost bold enough to take the stick in my hand. I didn't know it then, but that day that Lester got his first



tractor ride was the day I was given my freedom.

I didn't accept that freedom until much later, though. At 18, I went to college, but I returned to the farm the first summer to work. However, I noted a change working with my father that summer. He seemed to have grown deaf, or perhaps the quiet library at the college had hushed me somehow. My father rarely heard me, even when I shouted, and especially when he was on the tractor driving away from me beyond a fence of dark furrows.

The next summer I didn't go home. I went traveling with a man I met at college. We hitchhiked, trying to live the romantic lives of bohemians--trading drugs and stories with truckers and sleeping in ditches with the diesel smell of the freeway permeating our dreams. We stank worse than the truckers we rode with, and we often went hungry.

When I was very young my parents had thought of moving to Alaska, lured by stories told by an uncle who owned an airline near Fairbanks. The airline was actually little more than a bushplane outfit, but the uncle made a great deal of money, nonetheless. He visited a number of times, impressing us with slides of his rustic cabin, silver wolf pelts nailed to the walls, and slides of his laughing-eyed huskies pulling salmon from the rivers. I dreamed about Alaska long after my parents gave up the idea of moving there. Aimed by those dreams, I now convinced my companion that we should go north to British Columbia where the Alaska Highway begins its journey from Dawson Creek to Skagway. We hitched our way through mining and lumbering towns, while I watched hungrily for the woodsmen in chamois shirts which were as light and soft as deerskin and smelled of woodsmoke and the frontier. We reached the Alaska Highway and went north almost 50 miles, still far short of the border of Alaska, though. The "highway" began as a smooth, gravel road teeming with logging trucks and Landrovers, but soon it degenerated northwards into a rough, narrow track paved with loose rocks the size of dinosaur eggs. These rocks bounced menacingly toward us in the wake of every vehicle that passed us. The rides grew scarce, and when they stopped for us, the bearded drivers said very little, but drove on, staring with blank, friendless eyes at the point where the gulch of road disappeared in the trees. When one of these men told us the story of a hitchhiker eaten by grizzly bears, we turned back. We took the road to the coast, to Prince Rupert.

The road to Prince Rupert was paved, but it was still little more than a gash in the steep, coastal forest. We caught a ride with a scrawny, beardless man who was delivering a 10-foot-wide, 50-foot-long trailer from Vancouver.

"Thank the Lord, it ain't no 12-wide," he commented casually as the trailer lurched from one eroded shoulder of the road to the other.



The outskirts of Prince Rupert were festooned with trailers, mostly of the tin-can variety, shored up with bales of straw underneath, perhaps to insulate them from the winter cold. Houses of tar paper and corrugated steel clustered wherever the hillsides allowed them a perch. In the center of town, close to the water, the buildings had weathered to a gray that looked as though it tasted of salt. The ocean sighed out its stale breath of diesel and fishguts.

My companion's parents had wired him money to take the train back to the states, and since he didn't plan to do that, we found ourselves with a relative fortune. We plotted to spend part of it on seafood and a night in a real bed before returning to the road. In the early afternoon, we found a small restaurant in one of the gray, weathered buildings. Its dining room crouched on pilings above the sea, and our table looked out across the cluttered harbor. We stuffed ourselves with crablegs, prawns, and beer, watching a white Beaver seaplane taking off and landing repeatedly on the bay. When we asked about the plane, the waitress told us that it took tourists up for an aerial view of the coast.

Twenty Canadian dollars got us on the plane, which rocked gently on the waves as we belted ourselves into our seats. I had never been inside a plane before, and a kind of wildness took hold of me as it moved away from the dock and eased out into the harbor.

"How much to take us far enough to see Alaska?" I asked the pilot.

"Another ten, maybe," he said, and I peeled out a bill from the stash I'd gotten from my companion.

The plane now faced the open water. The pilot goosed the engine, and the plane moved faster, reluctantly, as though pulling away from glue. As the pontoons rose, at first they sawed off the waves, then, rising higher, they were slapped by the crests which, at that speed, became as hard and solid as the ridges of a plowed field.

I know that the mountains of Alaska as we saw them that afternoon were as gray and low as the backs of whales looming up from the sea. Nonetheless, the images I have of them are white. Fear, or excitement, may have been the cause, for the wind seesawed the plane unmercifully, it seemed to me, although the pilot was unconcerned. With each jolt I lost the comfortable illusion that I was gazing down at a map, and I felt the empty air grasping at the belly of the plane. My companion asked if the plane came equipped with Darvon. The pilot snickered and then banked the plane out over the ocean, turning south to return. My eyes, however, followed the path we might have taken, over the white mountains, north.

Years later I followed that path in a DC-10, over the mountains to Fairbanks. I had just completed a master's degree with Dumond at the University of Oregon and was en route to an archaeological dig--



the first of many which were to occupy my summers as I worked towards a doctorate. Every summer I found my way to Alaska, more easily than most because I had a farmgirl's strong back and tolerance for dull work. However, the work never seemed dull to me; even when permafrost allowed us to remove only an inch of cold mud each day, I was delirious with anticipation of the tiny flints and finely shaped stones we uncovered. During the day my head was filled with the constant whine of Arctic mosquitoes--smaller and meaner than the ones that plagued me in the blueberry woods--and at night I fell into exhausted sleep hearing the screams of cats fighting over fishguts in the Inuit villages.

When I returned to the farm again, it was only for a brief stay, and I saw my brother very little except for glimpses of him on the tractor grubbing rocks and stumps out of the new field. But at the end of my visit, Lester and his wife invited me to see their new house, which they had built in the center of the old woodlot. The new house was ranch-style and modern in contrast to the old Queen Anne farmhouse. Lester now had the settled, paunchy look of a farmer in his late twenties--from too much beer in the evening, from the TV and the appliances and the expensive imitation Swedish furniture, and from the already too crowded kitchenette with blond birch cupboards and walnut-veneer bar. I sat on a stool at the bar while Lester poured me a glass of wine--wine that he had made himself that winter.

"Ma had all these old blueberries she wanted to clean out of the freezer," he explained.

From 1972, I thought, remembering how the freezer had overflowed.

"It's only my second try," he continued, "but Francie thinks I'm getting the knack."

Francie smiled from the plush sofa, cozily sipping a beer. I noticed that her pretty, chipmunk-like face already had small, hungry wrinkles at the corners of the mouth. With the glass of wine in my hand, I turned to study Lester's face as he talked to Francie. There I found the same empty hunger that I'd seen in hers, the lipless, tongueless hunger of the bones under the skin, a hunger beyond any hope of satisfaction. I listened to them talk about their plans--the new carpet to replace the one ruined by muddy farm boots, the new pickup truck, the baby they wanted the next year, the neighbor's forty they were going to buy, the interest they must pay on their debts. I sipped the wine. It was watery and bitter, but caught in the bitterness was the thin, wild taste of ancient blueberries.

I remember my brother when he was five. I remember him following my father and me to the fields to pick out the rocks with us. I remember how he would get lost in the weeds of the pasture, following the lambs



or examining the strange beetles that scuttled away under the grass. My father would call him back to the field and nod with approval as Lester created small piles of stones next to our larger, more industrious piles.

I remember that when he was five, Lester learned to draw with crayons. He drew everything--his mother, his father, the tractor, the lambs, the rockpiles--but mostly he drew wild birds. Not the ones that we saw outside, the blue jays and meadowlarks that occasionally flashed across the drab fields. No, Lester drew the richly colored, wild tropical birds from the National Geographic--the plummy egrets and cockatiels, the parrots and peacocks and birds-of-paradise that filled the glossy pages. He was unusually inventive for a child that age; he didn't copy the birds exactly as they appeared in the photographs, but used the pictures only as clues to the correct shapes and colors of the birds. Then he drew his own birds in a variety of positions--perched or standing, sideways or upside down--whatever was necessary to completely fill the sheet of paper he was working on. He filled every crack and crevice with birds, with their furious reds, greens, and yellows, and then he would cut the birds out with no paper wasted and tape them right sides up the the walls of his bedroom

In spite of Lester's skill in reproducing the exact markings and coloration, something was strange about the appearance of his birds. They did not look three-dimensional, and, in particular, they looked as though they had no wings. One day, laughing, I asked him, "Do any of these birds fly?" And he answered with the solemn manner of a child, "No."







*Allen C. Fischer*

## **SEED**

Were all things round  
to come alive...  
sand the seed  
of wild grass,  
each pebble an egg  
of strange wings;  
were river stones  
to send up trunks,  
and boulders hatch  
their huge bodies;  
if all eyes bore different lives  
and our heads split  
with primeval birth,  
then what of this world?  
What would come  
from its sphere, the sun  
and curved space?



## CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

RUTH BERMAN resides in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She has had poems published in *Saturday Review* and many literary magazines and anthologies including *The Poet Dreaming In the Artist's House*, *Burning with a Vision*, and *Alien Lover*.

JACKIE CARLSON won 2nd place for poetry in The 1986 Jim Cash/Red Cedar Review Creative Writing Contest. She is an Office Automation specialist in the MSU College of Engineering. She received her Master's degree in English here at MSU and is working toward a degree in computer science. She also does local poetry readings and has been published in the *Burning World*.

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AMALIA GLADHART is the winner of 1st place for poetry writing in The 1986 Jim Cash/Red Cedar Review Creative Writing Contest. She is a sophomore in the Social Science Multidisciplinary Program in International Studies at MSU where she enjoys combining creative writing and Latin American Studies. She has traveled to Guatemala and Ecuador and she has been published in *Seventeen*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *The Albion Review*.

RICHARD TODD JULIUS lives with his wife in Ann Arbor where he works as Security Coordinator for the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology. He is currently in the Master's program in Asian Studies at the University of Michigan where he also received his B.A. in English and Comparative Literature. He has had his work published in *Ripples Poetry Magazine*, *Cutting Edge*, and the *San Fernando Poetry Journal*.

ROBERT MCDONALD is the winner of 1st place in fiction writing in The 1986 Jim Cash/Red Cedar Review Creative Writing Contest. He graduated from MSU with a B.A. in German. He currently lives and works in East Lansing and is working on a collection of short stories.



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LINDA SCHANDELMEIER lives in Goldstream Valley, Alaska. In 1985 she was awarded an Alaska State Council of the Arts Individual Artist's Fellowship to work on a book of poems. She has been published in several magazines and anthologies including *Permafrost* and *Orca*.

LYN SCHUMAKER was awarded 2nd place for fiction writing in The 1986 Jim CASH/Red Cedar Review Creative Writing Contest as a graduate student at MSU.

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# RED CEDAR REVIEW

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Our thanks here to Albert Drake, Michael Lopez, Victor Paananen, Phyllis Ryan, Sharon Tyree, and Jim Cash of the MSU English Department.

Our thanks also to Barbara King of the College of Arts and Letters, and to Riswan Nasar of Market Media for graciously allowing us the use of his equipment and expertise in the preparation of this issue.

*Red Cedar Review* is a student-run biannual magazine of the literary arts published at Michigan State University. Submissions may be sent to 325 Morrill Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, 48824. Include S.A.S.E.

Typesetting and keylining by Carey, Smereck, Bracewell, and Steinberger.

Printing by Thomson-Shore, Inc. of Dexter, Michigan.

*Red Cedar Review* is partially funded by the ASMSU Funding Board.

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Year subscription.....	\$7.00
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