

Fall 2003

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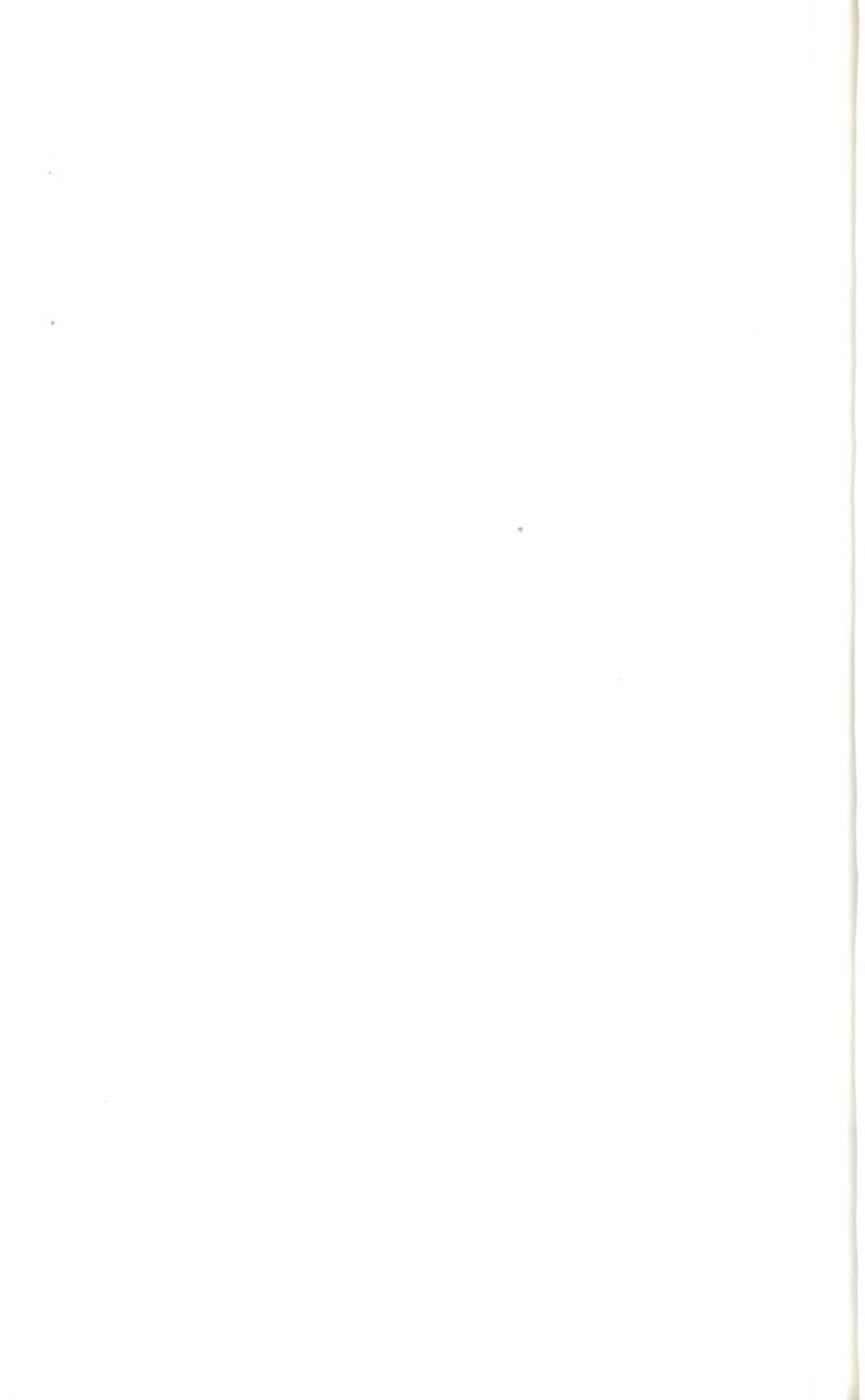
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Lightner





FALL SEMESTER

2003

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All submissions remain anonymous throughout the selection process. *the lighter* welcomes submissions from undergraduate, graduate, and law students of Valparaiso University, regardless of race, gender, religious creed, or sexual orientation. The editor assumes responsibility for the contents of this magazine. The views expressed in these works do not represent any official stance of Valparaiso University.
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for her excellent work as graphic
students who so graciously submitted

EDITOR Kelley Johnson
ASSISTANT EDITOR Benjamin Mueller
GRAPHIC DESIGNER Rebekah Peterson
FACULTY ADVISOR Walter Wangerin, Jr.



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BACK COVER

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Emily Armistead, Lisa Bank, Aaron
Bobb, Andrea Cook, Michael
Foland, Katharine Harmon, Jon
Kirsch, Rebecca Klusman,
Benjamin Mueller,
Amy Sample, Heather Vargas

ART SELECTION COMMITTEE

Emily Armistead, Katharine
Harmon, Rebecca Klusman,
Benjamin Mueller, Amy Sample

untitled - Charity Theiss

Caterpillars in North Carolina - Jenn Klein

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES



Erin Nolan

Public Entrance

Fredrick Barton is an award-winning fiction writer and critic. He holds a B.A. from Valparaiso University and did graduate work under a Danforth Fellowship, taking degrees from UCLA and the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa. He is Dean of Liberal Arts and Professor of English at the University of New Orleans where he teaches fiction writing and film criticism. Mr. Barton is author of the novels, The El Cholo Feeling Passes, Courting Pandemonium, With Extreme Prejudice (to be republished as Black and White on the Rocks) and A House Divided. In addition to fiction writing, Mr. Barton has worked in other media as well. He helped in the writing of the jazz opera Ash Wednesday with composer Jay Weigel, which was the keynote presentation of the Words and Music Festival in 1998. His short film, "Early Warning," played film festivals in 2001. His film commentary appears weekly on WYES-TV.

the lighter: When did you decide that you wanted to be a writer?

Mr. Barton: I think I always wanted to be a writer even from when I was really young. I wrote stories and poems in junior high school. It was a long time before I had the courage to decide to be a writer in a more professional way, and that didn't happen to me here. Here at VU, I continued to write stories. I started a novel. But I started off in grad school in history to prepare to be a teacher of history. It wasn't until I started to write my dissertation in history that I thought, *I'm going to write a book now. But I don't want to write this book, I want to write this book over here. I want to write a novel rather than a history book.* It seemed like a crossroads in that time in my life. *If I write this history book, I'm going to be a history teacher the rest of my life and that's not really what I want to be. I want to be a fiction writer.* So I

started writing fiction at that point and it was something that some of my friends and my parents had a great deal of difficulty understanding. But they adjusted.

the lighter: When did you begin to think of yourself as a writer? Was it here at VU?

Mr. Barton: I didn't think of myself when I was at VU as someone who would someday think of himself as a writer. That didn't happen here; that didn't happen until I left here. That was more of a secret kind of dream, something I wouldn't say aloud at the time. And it takes a long time for any writer to say that about herself or himself because it seems too audacious. You know, that I have things I want to make up that other people will want to read. And so it really wasn't until I finished grad school that I was willing to say to people when they would say, "What do you do," that I would say, "I am a writer."

the lighter: Which authors do you feel had the most influence on you as a writer? Or, who do you enjoy reading?

Mr. Barton: Then [college years] there were two very important books in my life, both read at VU, neither one for a course, but just books that people of my generation were reading. One is Joseph Heller's great novel, *Catch-22*, which is novel about WWII, but seemed to us to be a novel about Vietnam. If you're not acquainted with the book, it is a book that captures the madness of war. It was tremendously influential on me. It is also scream-out-loud funny. I can still read it today and still laugh out loud and I've read it 15 times. The other book was Albert Camus's book, *The Plague*, which is

a story of people in north Africa in the Algerian town of Oran, where plague breaks out in the 1940s, and they have to close the borders of the town. They have to quarantine everybody and they're trapped inside. They can't get out. Plague is rampant, people die, there is no serum, they don't know how to handle it. Basically all they can do is comfort the dying and bury the dead. It's a story of tremendous courage, and of existential philosophy, which appealed to me when I was 21-22 years old. Still a very important book to me. So, those were formative books. Like a lot of college students I loved Hemmingway, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, and Steinbeck. But the two books I just named were the ones that stayed inside me in a different way than great books like *The Sun Also Rises* or *The Grapes of Wrath*, also wonderful books, but they didn't affect me in quite the same way.

the lighter: How do you write? Do you have a strict routine, or are you sporadic?

Mr. Barton: There is no set answer to that for me; there is a set answer for some writers. If you interview, some writers will tell you, "I get up the first in the morning and write for an hour and a half before I do anything." Most writers, the majority of writers, have jobs of some kind. There is not enough money in it for people to just write. And I've done that. And then you have other writers who will say, "I eat supper, get the kids to bed, and I go up to my study and write for two hours." And I've done that too. Since I've made my living teaching at the university, a lot of my writing used to happen during the summertime because, of course, you don't have classes to teach. In those days, I would treat writing like a nine-to-five job: I'd get up in the morning, go to my desk, have a lunch break, work,

and then do something in the evening. Unfortunately, three years ago I became a dean and now I work 12 months a year, so I don't have those summer months anymore. So I've tried something different which is how my novel *House Divided* was written. It was on a regiment that went like this: *I will not go to bed today until I have written at least one page. No matter what, no matter what time, I will not go to bed until I have written one page.* It might be a bad page, I might hate that page but I made myself push it forward. That was a routine I had never used before. It was made up simply to get the book done and, of course, it took me a long time. The first draft was like 969 pages, I think. Second draft was 630. Last draft was 330 pages. The process then became rewrite and cut, rewrite and cut.

the lighter: What do you think the benefits are of an undergraduate creative writing course?

Mr. Barton: Well, I think the best single thing about creative writing courses is the imposed discipline. If you take a creative writing course, and the teacher says to write three stories, most students who want to get a passing grade are going to write three stories. Most students are not going to write three stories in an average semester if they don't have that class that imposes the external discipline on them. And yet they can be proud of the stories they have written because they have to do it. I think early on, at the undergraduate level, just taking the class that requires you to do it is a good way. Eventually, when you become a writer, you're not going to have that external discipline; it's all going to have to come from the inside.

Writing classes are like training. A runner doesn't break the record in the mile without running lots

and lots of miles to get ready to make that record run. I think creative writing classes do that. At the graduate level, something else is added. What's added is a peer group of other people with the burning desire to write and in good programs, in places where the environment is nurturing, as much happens from student to student as happens from teacher to student. Everybody's rooting for each other. Students want to write a good story, and work hard on that story because they want their peers to say, "My, that's a good story." And they read each other's work whether or not they're in the same class, and they get together in the summer when they're not in classes to share their stories back and forth. Writers need an audience. Graduate creative writing education provides that audience--it's built in. It's good for writers to get that kind of feedback.

the lighter: Finally, what advice can you give to aspiring writers?

Mr. Barton: Write. Read and write. Don't be afraid to write and absolutely read. Read contemporary writers. Certainly read the classics. If you major in English anyway, and not all writers do, I didn't... well, I sort of majored in English but my official major was history here at VU, but I got great training in my lit courses. I read major figures because that was required. But what I didn't read was much contemporary fiction at all because contemporary fiction isn't much taught in schools. So, I think aspiring writers need to learn who the literary writers at work today are. And read their books; that will give you some sense as to what things are being published.



A sculpture sets in
as I am with space.
A painting chisels my shape into linear
differentiation.
Music
depict my speaking.
Poetry reshape the wholeness
of what makes me.

Aesthetic
Be-

ing

accumulates the movement
toward a Be...

Was me been in being to be to be.
To be to be holds tight of your dancing.
Dance speaks us beautiful;
fingers play a keyboard in air;
feet touch upon earth being
of which steps
synchronize me and you.
Then
my face sings you
your face echoes me.

phenomena around me bound for you

by Shinsuke Takasaki

The field was dead with poppies
Burnt red hanging in the little
 churchyard where the poetry
 bloomed.

We were asleep and the poppies were dead.
Sleeping in the shade with the street
 bustling past.

Together in Canterbury

] 1 4 [

by Laura Potratz

We did not consider our smallness,
and for that our poem, too, will not.
No, for we stood always fair and tall
when against the wooden yolks
of shoes our toes came taut.

We needed nothing but those shells of eggs
with their precious stumps inside
and ribbons wound about each leg,
to keep our swanny necks stretched
high, made more bright against the sky.

We thought this made us dancers,
though for most, it was not easy.
Such round and winged grace
our stiff limbs could not convey,
not even in the bright air of Tchaikovsky.

We did not consider our smallness.
No, we wore stilts plucked from branches, nests.
But rather than flight at that height of birds,
our shoes gave us roots.
We resembled only the trees, at our best.

] 1 5 [

by Kelley Johnson

Mister with that cross look,
He said we are angels
Trapped in animal bodies
And that is why we want to love.
He tipped his hat, paid his bill,
And the bells that hung from the glass door
Jingled his glad departure.

I sat marveling
As the waitress with the tiny gold cross
Cradled between her breasts
Cleared his coffee cup and spoon,
And wiped the counter clean
For the next flirt to fill his seat.

Marveling

by Benjamin Mueller

Obey the Black Night Ocean

Obey the black night ocean.
It grasps the eternal,
pulsing over sand and shells,
dying to the tide.

In darkest silence
that black, lapping bowl
echoes always
the cry of God and stars.

] 1 7 [

by Katharine Harmon





by Jenn Klein

Zumpango, Mexico

] 1 9 [

by Rachel Nagy

On the way to work
I pass through a cloud
of butterflies--
monarchs!--
orange-gold and black,
a living maelstrom
or daybreak-color and light

This outside
the office, my working floor,
electronic silicon and florescent
lamps that don't reach the corners.
Opening the door, I enter
a dim tomb where hues
balk, wilt, and fade to beige.

But beyond windowless walls--
butterflies!-- still flying,
purple flowers still bright
and a breeze
of sunset-painted wings
still begging me to breathe.

Oh Suzy Betts, she was my girl.

Those ninety-two days were a whirl.

The day she broke my heart she said,
while looking in my eyes, rubbed red,

"I like you hon, you know I do,

but I've a reputation, too.

I'm a two-month girl, no, not three,

'cause three means 'love,' that's not for me."

I looked at her with furrowed brow,

and said, "I win, now listen how:

ninety-two days do three months make,

my earned 'I love you' I'll now take."

She sighed, shrugged and gave me a kiss.

"I must love you," came out a hiss.

Ten years now since that fateful day,

we've two kids, a third on the way.

We fight sometimes, and when we're done,

she tells me it's day ninety-one.

Matthew Schaefer

Megan Frances



Woman, why this crying?
It penetrates my mind
As sky screaming lapis
Between the arms of pine.

Your son is dim and dying.
The Dürer hung askew
Upon the wall will be
The last thing that he sees.

And you, for all your sighing,
Cannot change that fact,
Yet still can lift your hand
To set the frame aright

And could soon be lying
Close beside your husband
Where in pleasant ardor
You would conceive again.

Instead you will be lying
About the dead one's pictures
You tore apart and ate,
His birthmark that you kissed.

And you, in all your sighing
Will not dispel that air
Of death cloistered calm
Above his hairless chest.

Your son. Your son is dying.
That flower which bloomed between
Your thighs is dropping petals,
Shall soon be pressed in a book.

] 2 3 [

Woman, why this crying?
I bear this weight and moan
At night. I sit for days
And trace a leaf on paper.

by Michael Foland

The Attendant

by Mark Gaspar

The contrast was deafening.
The milky whiteness of the frozen snow-covered lake
And the complete and utter blackness of the Minnesota sky in late December.

And in the middle of it all sat an odd little man on a stool by a hole in the ice.
It seemed that he was not aware of the fact that he was the only witness to the death of
another year.

But rather he sat on his stool pondering the hole
Nothing moving but a smoky wisp of breath and his arthritic hands,
He liked that his hands shook; he said they attracted the fish.

Fishing is an activity that requires patience and focus and the
Uncanny ability to blend into the nothingness, to become one with the sky, and the ice,
And the waters below.

He sits alone because few have mastered this becoming as well as he,
They can't take the cold.
He is like an ice fishing Buddha.

He is happy when the fish take his bait, and he pulls them above the ice,
And he is happy when he can feel the warmth of his truck, and he can appreciate the
generous cold that makes him feel more alive than his eighty some odd years let on.

The fish fill his stomach as he sits in the chair by the television,
And he naps while PBS plays Lawrence Welk.

And he is happily aware that he has witnessed the death of another year.

An old man ice fishing on lake Minnetonka

My last escape,
No more illusions,
No more slight-of-hand.

I'll step from the drawn curtains,
Into a single spotlight,
And with a bow and a smirk

I'll end my greatest disappearing act
With my anxious heart
Tucked in my hat.

] 2 5 [

by Benjamin Mueller

by Kate Olson

Ave, Pietro! Two crosses- neat, cold and stone-
mark your burial here. Gesu's cross could
not be common, no! No-then there were two
for your Lord and for you, and yours oddly
planted: head down as one newly come, and
sanguine with labor. Had you guessed how
the flow would settle here? Thy cross, tomb,
Basilica: Pietro, our church on you.
Hail, Christ! Solemn, we drift among your cold
immediate saints. Out from the pocket-
fingers quick on plastic beads, and shifting:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.



] 2 7 [

by Katharine Harmon



by Leah Bunk

by Lauren Davies



by Katharine Harmon



Wartburg Castle Window

] 3 0 [

by Edward Mullner



by Leah Bunk



] 3 2 [

Rainy Day in Cardiff



by Laura Potratz

God is seen all around



] 3 4 [

by Laura Potratz

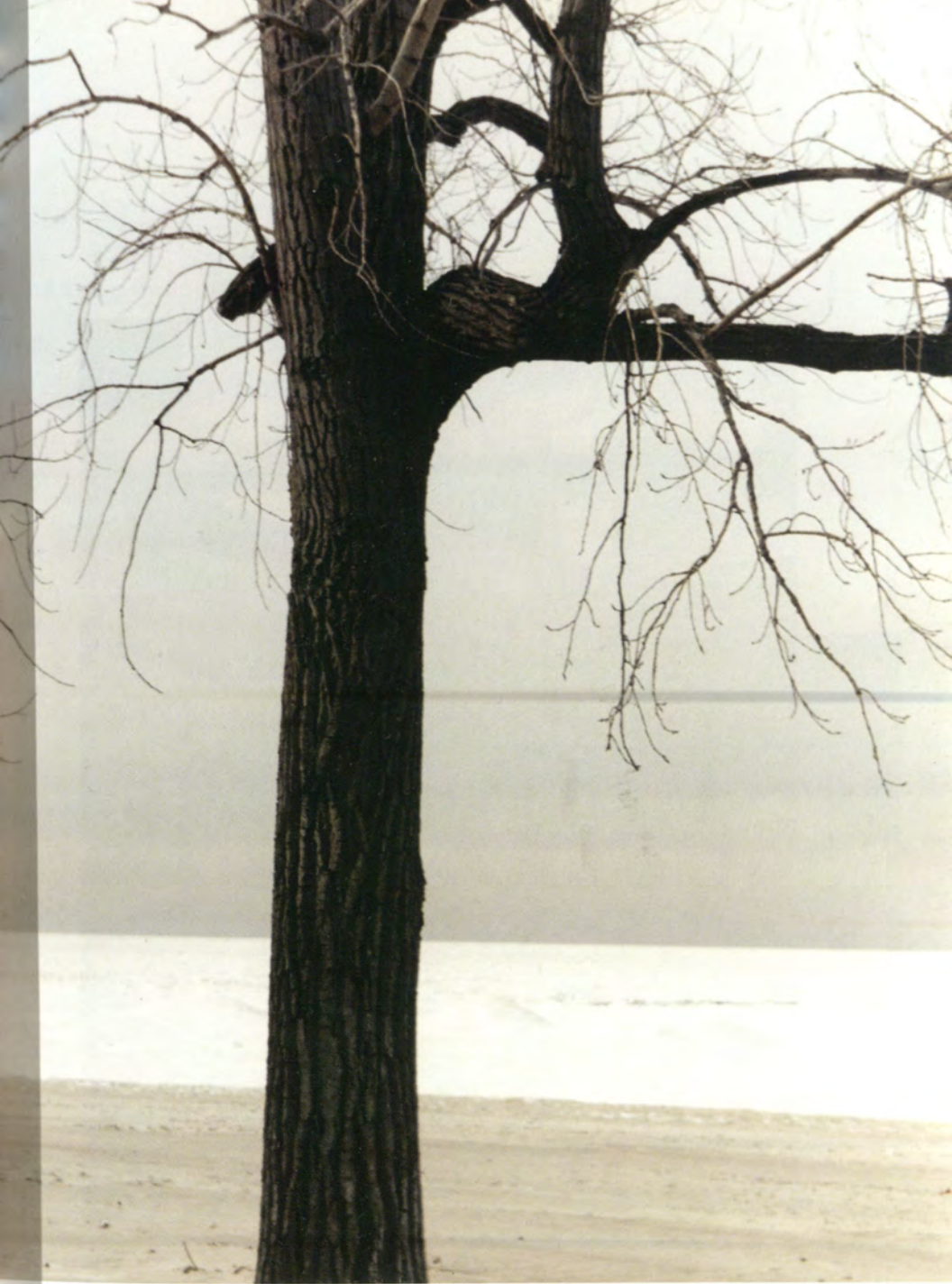
Pumping out the Corn

by Lynn Borden





by Laura Potratz



by Leah Bunk



by Laura Potratz

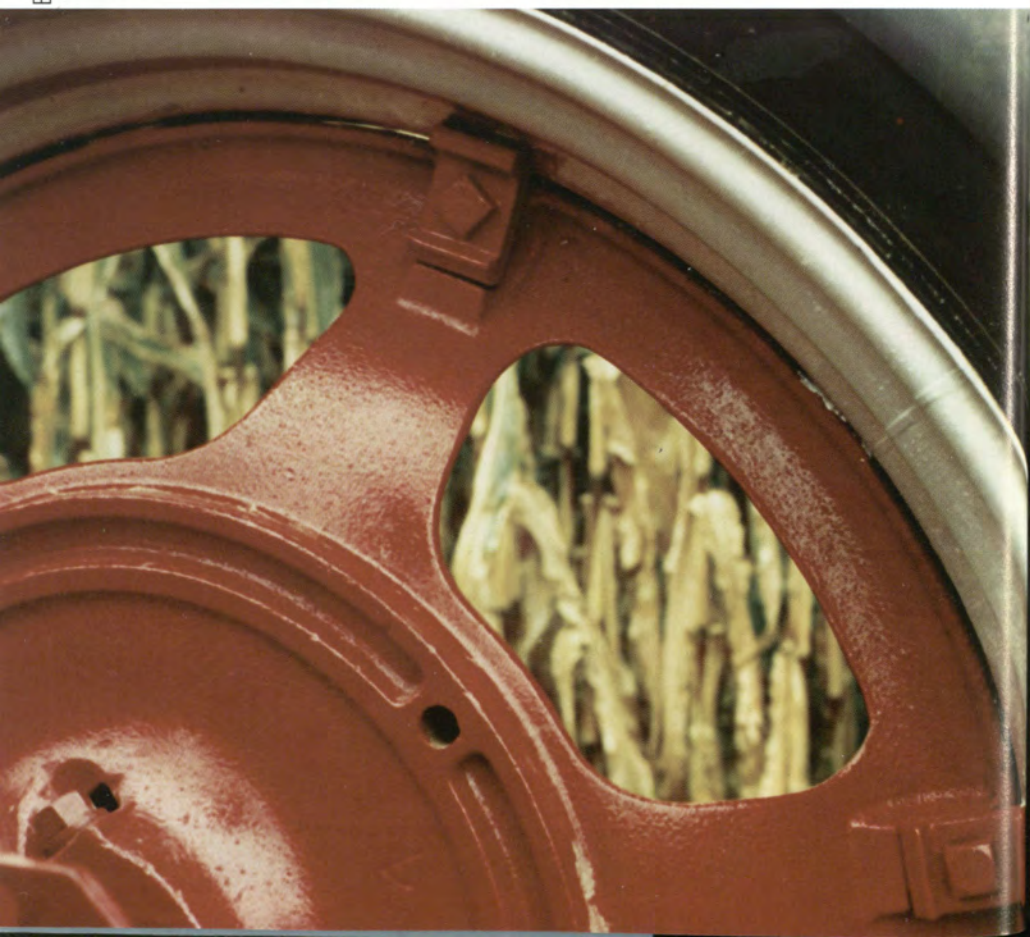
by Jeff Haanen

Chiapas



Lynn Borden

Big Red Indiana





First Glimpse of Antiquity

by Veronika Pentecost







by Laura Potratz

I miss the green days
That sprung new in all their beauty,
When hope slept in the bud,
When possibility lay wide as the lawn.
Promise floated on every note,
Sure as tomorrow.
Dreams of you once came easily as the sun.

The lark has sung her song.
Only silent, unspoken melodies hang heavy on the air.
The laurels are barren,
Their leaves lost on the wind.

The east is dark,
Bleached moonshine rules,
Chasing hope into a shadow,
Fading the memory of dreams.
Fancy, now stolen by the cold wind of reality,
Mourns for the days of her youth.

And you, clothed in mists of uncertainty,
Left,
Simply kept walking,
This place not your home.

I miss the green days that you took,
Rolled under your arm like a blanket,
Ready to spread out
For you to sleep upon
When you next stop
On the doorstep
Of another girl's heart.

by Tracy Hammond

The rain fell heavily, slamming against the car window and running in mesmerizing rivers down it. Beyond, dense black clouds shielded from view the dying remains of a sunset, leaving the world darker than the latest hour of night. Jen's eyes were fixed on raindrops on the window as she watched them colliding and gathering speed on their journey downward. They gleamed an array of subdued colors, reflections of the dim lights from the closed shops lining the street. The light barely penetrated through the pouring rain. Jen glanced quickly at her boyfriend Matt, amazed that he was not only driving through this rain but also had enough attention to spare to tell her a far too complicated story of his college's football game the previous weekend. Every few seconds he took his eyes off the road to glance in her direction and make sure she was still listening to him. She wished he would stop doing that. She felt a whole lot safer when he kept his eyes on the road. All she really wanted at that moment was for him to get them to their destination as quickly as possible. As she turned back to the window, she realized with relief that they had pulled into the parking lot just outside the train station. Through the rain she could see that the black train had already arrived.

"So the final score was thirty-one to nothing. It was so amazing. You should've been there," he finished as he killed the engine and turned to her. "Next year I could sneak you in a

couple. Joe's gotten his girlfriend in half the games that way."

"Sure. But we can talk about it later. I've gotta go," she answered as she unbuckled her seatbelt and retrieved her purse and coat from the floor. Unlocking the door, she reached for the handle.

"Hey," he grabbed her arm, "are you sure you don't want to stay longer? There's a mass tonight and after that we could--"

"No, really. I've got a ton of homework to do and I have that ten page paper to write by Monday...." Did a couple of calculus problems constitute a ton of homework? And if seven of those ten pages were already written, what then? He didn't need to know that though, because if he did, he would inevitably want to know why she was so adamant about returning that night and of course he wouldn't buy that she would rather not go to church. She hadn't gone in years, since that horribly dark night when her brother died, and she certainly didn't want to start going again now. Matt had probably attended church every Sunday since the day he was born and there was no way he could ever understand.

"You could take the earliest train back tomorrow," he countered, his hand still gripping her arm. "It's not like you'll get anything done tonight anyway."

"I really should go...it's about time for the train to leave," she replied with a smile that almost instantly faded away. "Maybe next time."

She pulled her arm away and without waiting for an answer shoved the door open and jumped out, landing in a deep puddle that soaked her ankles and sent a cold shiver through her. But she didn't stop to think about it and instead ran as fast as she could to the covered platform where she knew she would be safe. Had she paused for even a moment, she knew, the rest of her would have ended up just as cold and wet as her feet. Her steps slowed once she was under the protection of the overhang, and after a moment she stopped just long enough to watch as Matt restarted the engine and drove away, his car vanishing through the black veil of rain.

"Hey, miss! The train's departin' any moment now!"

She sprinted to the door where the conductor was impatiently waiting for her and hopped inside. A blast of hot, stifling air slammed into her and she was instantly grateful that she hadn't taken the time to put her coat on before getting out of the car. She didn't pause there, instead continuing past all the people who were little more than a blur to her, and only slowed when she passed into the next car.

There were significantly fewer people in this one, the result, she supposed, of the dimmer lights and colder air that she instantly felt when she entered the car. The first half of it was occupied by seven or eight teenagers dressed completely in black. Their loud voices rang in the air as they cursed the weather and the probability that the train would be delayed

somewhere along the line due to rain. She strode quickly past them, keeping her eyes ahead of her.

In the first row of the second half of the car sat a woman reading a thick book clutched tightly in her hands and her small son, whose dark brown eyes were wide with intrigue as he stared at the teenagers, taking in each and every word, storing them away for later. Several rows behind the woman and her child was a teenage boy with a bulging backpack on the faded seat beside him. A small silver cross that glinted in the artificial lights of the train hung on a thin chain around his neck. He gazed intently out the rain-soaked window at, as far as she could tell through the dark veil, the faint glow of lights from the nearly vacant parking lot. She couldn't understand what he could possibly find interesting out there. Not far behind the boy sat a man whose hair was whiter than the purest of snow. His head rested heavily on a coat propped against the window and she knew immediately that he was already fast asleep. How would he know when the train had arrived at his stop? Across the aisle and several rows behind the man were a couple of women whose shopping bags spilled past their seats and into the aisle. The chatter of their voices collided midway through the train with those of the dark teenagers in the first half of the car.

All Jen wanted was to sit in a quiet corner away from everyone else so she could spend the next hour and a half getting some work

done, but her options were limited. There was nowhere she could go to get away from the other people, so it was a matter of choosing the least unfavorable option. After a moment or two of debating, she slid into a seat across from the boy with the backpack.

She removed a small copy of Flannery O'Connor's *The Violent Bear It Away* from her purse as the train began to move, soon leaving the dimly lit parking lot far behind. The two women behind her gratefully stopped talking and she opened the novel to its middle, there beginning her search for quotes for the paper she had mentioned to Matt. She'd been through it several times before and hadn't been able to find that perfect sentence. She knew it was something about faith and the main character's lack of it, but it somehow was still managing to elude her. With a small sigh of frustration she glanced up, noticing that the boy across the aisle was still staring out the window. What was he looking at? The lights of the city had long ago fell away behind them and had been extinguished far in the distance by the black rain, leaving little but darkness in view. She turned back to her novel, but the words immediately became invisible as the lights flickered for a few moments, then went out completely. The blackness beyond the windows began to seep into the car and the hum of the engine died away as the soft hiss of the heater ceased. The only sound left was the gentle patter of the rain as it made contact with the roof above her head. Her throat tightened.

Jen had ridden the train only once before and that had been a bright sunny day at the beginning of the semester. She and several of her friends had taken it to Chicago early in the morning and returned long before dark. It had been Matt's idea that she should visit him, see his campus for the first time and, in the early stages of the plan, take the train both there and back. Then she had found a girl who lived down the hall from her who had wanted to drive there early Saturday morning, providing Jen with the perfect opportunity to avoid using the train for at least one direction. Unfortunately, the girl had wanted to remain until late Sunday evening, leaving the train as Jen's only option for transportation back to her own campus on Saturday night.

As her eyes uselessly blinked in the darkness, she began to wonder if she should have stayed with Matt that night. Maybe then she could have ridden back in a car. After all, she really didn't have to have the paper done by Monday. Her professor had pushed its due date back to Wednesday, though she had failed to mention that to Matt. So what if she would have had to go to church? It wasn't like she hadn't been thousands of times before. And afterwards they could have gone out to a movie or something and she could have been drawn into some imaginary world that would have made her forget her own. Yes, she should have stayed.

At that moment the car was suddenly flooded with light. The engine hummed once

more and the heater began pumping out oppressively hot air. The teenagers were once more trading insults and the child began talking to his mother, his soft voice barely audible. Jen's eyes darted quickly over to the boy across the aisle. He had stopped looking out the window and was instead unzipping his backpack, reaching in to grab one of several large books she could see inside. Multi-variable Calculus was written in bold letters across the front of the book. The door at the far end of the car banged as the conductor strode in and began punching holes in the teenagers' tickets. No one else seemed the least bit disturbed by the blackout. Maybe it was something that happened all the time when the trains were used at night and she was just too inexperienced to be able to ignore it like they had. Or maybe she had imagined the whole thing.

"Dest'nation."

Jen jumped at the sound of the conductor's loud, demanding voice. She hadn't seen him take the tickets of the last of the teenagers, or of the mother and her son. She could have sworn that just a second before he had been at the far end of the car. Now he was staring down at the boy across the aisle.

"Oh, right. Dune Park." The boy rummaged around in the bottom of his backpack and pulled out a tattered ticket that the conductor punched a hole in and handed back. As the boy opened the calculus book, the conductor turned to Jen and repeated the command.

"The same," she answered, handing over

the six dollars and fifty cents. She shoved the receipt into the novel on her lap and, as the conductor moved past her, picked it up again to resume the search. The door behind her slammed and she knew without looking that the conductor had moved on to the next car. She flipped to the last chapter.

At that moment the lights once again died. The engine's dull roar faded away, the steady rhythm of the wheels against the track lost its power and ended altogether, and the heater ceased to provide even the smallest amount of warmth. She could no longer hear the small boy's faint voice and the teenagers must have felt that derogatory comments weren't necessary anymore. Nothing there was any different than the first time. Then she realized that even the sound of the rain no longer reached her ears. And as the blackness began to invade, slipping in through the tiniest pores of the windows, a faint, surreal glow filled the car. A dark fear hidden within that dim light crept up inside her. The greenness of it, emanating from the emergency exit signs above the doors at each end of the car, scarcely illuminated everything around her. Even so, she could see that the boy across the aisle was looking directly at her.

"Does this happen often?" Her voice sounded weak and immaterial. It couldn't possibly make it across those few short meters to the boy.

"No, not often. Not that I recall, in fact," he answered. His voice was strong and bold as it cut through the dark green air.

"But you don't sound concerned." Her voice wavered and she took a long, deep breath. It didn't help.

"No. All will work itself out in the end. It always has and always will."

No, it hadn't. At least, not for her.

"How can you be so sure?"

"You can't be," his voice dropped to almost a whisper, but she could still hear him better than herself. "You just have to believe that it will, and it does."

That didn't make any sense...did it?

"Yes, but--"

"No buts. You can't question everything in your life or you'll never get past that."

"I can't not doubt everything, or wonder what would have happened if..."

"The lights *will* come back on." He sounded so sure of himself. There was a certainty there that she hadn't felt in a long, long time.

"When?" Was it just her imagination or did her voice suddenly sound almost normal again? The darkness didn't feel quite so black anymore.

"Whenever you want them to."

She stared at him for a moment, noticing for the first time that his eyes shone despite the darkness of the car. He looked right back at her, and she began to feel a deep, insatiable curiosity.

"So...who are you? Where'd you come from?"

He simply smiled in answer.

Then the lights flickered dimly, and suddenly became blindingly bright and strong as they

resumed their normal strength. The sound of the engine returned along with that of the teenagers' voices and the heavy rain slamming against the roof. She blinked. The boy's smile broadened as he turned back to his calculus and scrawled something illegible on a slip of paper resting on the seat beside him. Was she still involuntarily staring at him? She shook her head, then picked up her book and opened it to the beginning, this time determined to put an earnest effort into finding that quote.

When the train came to a halt at Dune Park nearly an hour later she was the first to descend the stairs. She crossed to the parking lot where her friend's car was waiting for her and as she slipped inside, her friend turned to her with a sly smile.

"So how was *your* day?"

"Not too bad," she answered softly as she turned to the window. Through the veil of black rain she could just make out the boy behind the wheel of a silver car as he drove away, toward the lights of the nearest town.

Adrian Casalano sighed as he unpacked his dusty guitar. Patrons trickled in, slowly filling the small diner. Ralph's Cajun Café had a rather rustic look with an echoing wood floor, creaky stools, and a few flies buzzing around the flickering fluorescent lights. Dust drifted like soft whispers in the air, settling quietly over the counters. The only people smiling in the sun-streaked room were tackily dressed, sunburned tourists, cameras swinging from their necks, their exuberant chatter rising above the silent dust as they poured over maps and slurped weak coffee. The few regulars there positioned themselves at the counter sipping coffee or tea and debating local politics. Occasionally, a loudly dressed woman with fake blonde hair would flick her cigarette ashes in a stained coffee cup and tell the waitress she could get her a great deal on a manicure. Gossip, talk of the upcoming festival, and the yearly harvest could be caught in bits if one stopped to listen. Adrian sighed again, wondering when he would get out of a place filled with humid heat, sweat, poor fisherman, old timers, and the constant smell of sea-life.

The bass player, Noah, sat slumped on a stool next to him, a dreamy glaze over his eyes. He longed to be in New York or LA, but instead was trapped with Adrian and the others wandering the

North Carolina coast. He'd told them every stop would be his last; that he was going to be discovered and leave them all behind.

"You know, Adrian, someday I'll live in a huge mansion, girls will scream whenever I step outside, and I'll sign autographs 'til my fingers break. This stop..." His voice droned on, but Adrian listened instead to the rhythmic pounding of the Atlantic outside.

"Noah! Adrian! Get your heads outta the clouds! We've gotta get set up!" the drummer, Shae, shouted. Noah moaned and wandered toward the wobbly stage propped up by rotting wood supporters. Adrian stared at his back and silently finished his sentence; *this stop will be my last. We know Noah. You always say that, but it never happens. Never happens.*

"Where's Adrian?" lead guitar Raynn Harper questioned Noah, her eyes darting about the poorly lit café. Outside the sun was slowly receding to the moon, throwing bright oranges and reds across the dusty wood floor and casting long elegant shadows against the splintery walls. The air-conditioner hummed, working overtime, but was losing the battle to the blazing setting sun. Sweat trickled down Raynn's face as she eyed Noah, who gestured toward a dusty forgotten corner where Adrian sat staring like a zombie at the peeling green paint on the wall, guitar loosely resting in his lap. The band had struggled just to eat all summer, like all the summers past, but Adrian had lost his grip on time and need long

ago. Life was nothing more than an endless sultry July night that could never break into day.

"Adrian! Let's go!" Raynn hissed, dragging a microphone stand across the floor. "We'll get our big break. You just wait," she grinned, always the optimist, but Adrian's forlorn expression never changed. It was chiseled into his sharply defined, sun kissed face forever. Turning his back to her, he stumbled onto the stage, his untied shoelaces picking up the whispering dust from the upswept floor. Noah glared at Adrian's wobbling frame. He was the problem, the one holding them back.

"Adrian, have you finished that new song yet?" Noah demanded his anger boiling under his cheeks. Sweat dripped from his spiked, dyed blonde hair. Adrian only rubbed his red-rimmed, bright green eyes and assisted the others in setting up the stage. The loud blonde woman stopped pushing her flimsy nail products, intrigued by the ensuing argument. She took a final drag on her cigarette and stuffed the butt in her coffee cup to rest with its ashes.

"Adrian!" Noah screamed. Now the whole café stopped and stared wide-eyed, anticipating a fight, wishing for one; wishing anything worthy of being called excitement. Adrian just looked at Noah. It wasn't the vacant wistful stare that had overtaken those emerald eyes lately, but something else. His eyes had a certain spark that caught the attention of a young runaway girl sitting alone at a table near the stage. She stared at him, mesmerized.

"Yes, Noah, oh great one. The song is complete. Work your magic. Make us whole again!" Adrian proclaimed, his voice swelling with flatness and sarcasm.

"Does it suck like the last one?" Noah growled. Adrian merely rolled his eyes and shook his head causing a few inky black strands of hair to fall over his face. He kept working on the stage, stopping only to steady him against those rotted support beams when his head spun and ached. Noah growled again and stomped outside to pout like a spoiled child who didn't get his way. Raynn looked intently at Adrian's back wondering and worrying as he signed and leaned his head against the wooden beam, eyes shut, sweat trickling down his face.

"Shae, what are we going to do about him?" Raynn whispered, keeping her eyes locked on Adrian's back. The runaway girl still sat alone at the table covered in cracked green Formica, overhearing.

"There's nothing we can do," Shae answered, glancing at the girl who quickly pretended to be fascinated with her placemat. What could possibly be wrong with Adrian? And what a name. Adrian. It fit him somehow, she thought. He pushed his midnight silky hair out of his eyes, exposing them more, and pulled a crumpled piece of paper from the pocket of his jeans. He threw it in the direction Noah had exited earlier, mumbling a few choice words. Tossing an orange, dirt-covered, extension cord out of his path, he shuffled sluggishly

offstage. The girl glanced around Ralph's. No one paid the band any more mind. The fleeting moment of excitement was over, and the customers were back to squabbling over which city councilman should be re-elected.

Shae and Raynn exchanged puzzled looks and glanced at Skullie and Nadia, two other band members, hoping for answers. They shook their heads in utter confusion. Raynn stooped down to pick up the paper. She uncrumpled it and glanced at the scrawling handwriting.

"It's good," she whispered in disbelief. "Real good."

"So, is this it? The thing we've been searching for?" Skullie inquired, peering over Raynn's shoulder, his eyes skimming Adrian's eloquent words. Raynn shrugged.

"I don't know what we're looking for Skullie, but right now, we've got nothing. We need the entire band to do anything with this." The others groaned. Raynn slumped against the feeble stage, weary of Noah's over-inflated head and Adrian's constant state of melancholy.

* * *

"Hello?" the runaway girl stepped outside, her feet tripping awkwardly over the uneven steps. Adrian lifted his head from where it rested on his knees.

"You all right?" the girl asked, concerned. Adrian nodded.

"We argue a lot, Noah and I."

"Those two girls in there thought your song

was pretty good. You're still gonna play tonight right?" she asked, hopeful. Adrian nodded again. They still, after all, had to eat.

"Do you need someone to help the band out? I can sorta play the piano," the girl offered.

"How old are you? 15?" Adrian snapped, eyeing her, suddenly angry. She was pretty: soulful brown eyes, a full mouth, all framed by a shiny mane of brown hair. The girl's face flushed with embarrassment.

"Yeah, I'm 15."

"Don't you have parents? Don't you think they're looking for you?" Adrian scolded, seeing a mirror of himself in her eyes.

She shrugged, "I guess. But they won't miss me. I'm practically an adult, and they just can't realize that. Besides, we live on a barely functional farm about 10 miles inland. There's nothing for me there."

"Well, there's less for you here. Go home!" Adrian shouted. The girl was taken aback. Her lower lip trembled slightly, and she squeezed her eyes shut. Sighing, Adrian put his hand over hers.

"Listen," he said, his voice softening, "do you really think this is paradise? Did it ever occur to you that we could all have it a lot better without this?"

"W-What are you talking about?" the girl asked, staring at him and wiping her red-rimmed eyes with a slender hand.

"Look, when I was sixteen I screwed around a lot. My parents gave me the ultimatum, knock it

off, or move out. I decided I hated their rules. After all, it wasn't fair. And like you said, I was practically an adult. So, I packed up one night and left. Didn't even say goodbye. Now here I am. I never went anywhere. Never really did anything worthwhile," he whispered, his facial expression softening. She shrugged.

"What about the others? Why do they stick it out with you?" she whispered.

"Raynn, the guitar player, was my best friend back home. She came along so I wouldn't have to go it alone. It's not like she left a lot behind. Her parents never knew she was alive, and she didn't have any other friends. But she's great you know. She'd be better without us, and knows it, but she won't leave. That says something about a person." Adrian leaned back against the door, shut his eyes, and swallowed hard.

"Then there's Noah, the bass player. He's got an ego the size of some state capitols. Problem is, he sucks, but can't admit it. Otherwise, he'd definately be elsewhere. Shae and Nadia are two people Raynn and I met in Charleston. They were trying to start up a band. I guess that's where this all started. We met Skullie, the keyboardist, about 10 miles north of Charleston. He's the best pianist I've ever heard. In fact, he was offered a full ride to college, but he dropped out after a month. Couldn't handle the academics I guess. His parents kicked him out for that move, so here he is. And that's it." He smiled slightly and kicked a rock off the stairs. The Atlantic pounded the shore; never

breaking the rhythm it set thousands of years before. Raynn poked her head out the screen door.

"Hey Adrian, we're on," she said softly, smiling slightly. Adrian nodded, stood, and brushed the dust from his jeans. He took one last glance at the girl before trudging inside behind Raynn. The girl gazed out at the dune grass blowing in the wind. She sat there a long time, just staring, longing for something. The music playing inside drifted out and danced with the salty breeze. Raynn had been right. The song was good. Real good. But it wasn't the band's. It was Adrian's, and it was hers, and no one else's. Standing, the girl faced the rickety screen door of Ralph's Cajun Café, staring at the mesmerized small crowd inside. This was all there was, all there ever would be. Adrian's song, and her's.





by Erin Nolan



Droan Caul
"Iron Forge" or "Laughing Child"

Droan Caul, The Legendary Laughing King of the Dwarves and Uniter of the Clans. He was raised in an orphanage by the old troll, Ssim, who taught him how the Great Expanse dwells in everything and everything dwells in the Great Expanse. His best friend, an actor and bard, Wilhelm, fell into horrid times after failing to make a living. His drinking consumed him and laughter never shined from his eyes again. That is, until the Laughing King asked him to accompany him on his quest to reunite the Dwarven Clans.

A peal of thunder rent the sky and laughed with the night wind over the house of drunkards. The sweet smells of rain entered Droan Caul's nostrils as he surveyed the tavern's façade. It was no proper place for a man or dwarf to get drunk. Dreams drowned in disgusting liquor inside those walls, gasping for the breath of acknowledgement. Aye, he thought, Wilhelm has fallen far from the laughing bard he was in their days at the orphanage. A smile bugged the corners of Caul's mouth. He shot his eyes to the clouds above and wondered if old Ssim watched out for Willy from heaven or Droanholm or wherever people went when they died. He braced against the rain's chill and pushed open the knotty oaken door of the "Jolly-Jolly Tankard."

The air smelled like vomit. No feast of the dwarves would ever smell so rank, Caul decided. The drinking arts had never achieved

perfection by these sons of Beil. Instead, they preferred pouring gallons of whatever they could find into their stomachs in the hope of gaining the blissful state of intoxication. The swinging lights overhead and the cackling fire laughed at their mockery. The baker and the smithy drank together here, all sharing in a crime against inebriation. These men and women thrust their problems into a mug of sick liquid instead of reveling in life's celebration. By the Creator at His Everblistering Forge, Caul thought, these humans are pity incarnate.

And on a stool by the bar with a stag's head trophy glowering over him sat Wilhelm, the most pitied human of the lot. Caul's heart weighted his steps, and the laughter in his voice ceased on seeing his companion in such a miserable state. Utter defeat read clearly in Wilhelm's dry eyes. His jerkin and hair smelled of badly brewed Godder Grog, cheap and imitative.

"Hiya, Willy," Caul said as he eased into the seat next to his friend.

"...And the two sat together again, drowning out the world with their din," Willy said and sipped his own vomit. They exchanged moments of silence as only two old friends could after years of separation. Then the bartender with his stained apron noticed Caul's lack of drink.

"What do you want to quench your fire, Mister Dwarf?" the bartender said. He had an ugly scar running through his left eyebrow that missed his eye by a fraction of an inch.

"I'll make a bigger one with some of Azatot's

Bottled Flame." A few heads near the bar looked up at what they took to be a crazy dwarf. "With a glass of cold water on the side." The bartender smirked, grumbled a low laugh, and went for a solitary bottle on a high shelf above the barrels of Godder. Willy's eyebrows arched so high they disappeared into his thick brown mane.

"Caul, what in the name of old Ssims are you doing?"

"Just warming up my innards. 'Tis chilly out there tonight." His friend's actions had nearly turned Willy sober. He pushed his mug of Godder away and clasped Caul's shoulder. Caul's eyes turned sour on Willy; did he not remember Caul hated being touched by other people?

Suddenly he did remember and removed his hand.

"You are a mad dwarf, friend Caul." Caul smiled at the complement.

"I plan on uniting the clans, and you're going to help me." Willy staggered and spilled his Godder all over the bar. The bartender set the Azatot in front of Caul's expectant maw and began scrubbing the bar with his dirty apron.

"By Vi, Caul, you haven't even taken the first sip of Azatot and you're already spouting nonsense." Willy drew back as if wondering if Caul had been drunk when he walked in out of the storm. Caul fired a stern countenance without the gleam of spirits. A mug of water thumped on the bar by the Azatot.

"I said 'cold' water," Caul said. The bartender leered over the dwarf.

"My ice chest is broke and the gnome who fixes that kind of thing is under a table in the corner." Caul sneered at the mention of a gnome.

"Good-for-nothing tinkerers anyway," Caul said. Willy's right ear twitched, a sure sign that Caul had dashed his nerves to pieces. "Wait a moment, Willy, whilst I get my whistle wetted for a good long blow." He could see Willy pleading with him not to drink the draught—but Willy knew better than to come between a dwarf and his drink.

The fire of Azatot traveled down Caul's throat and the infernal piping of horrid flutes filled his ears with the spirited insanity of blind gargoyles. Blood drained into his eyes and imaginary hellfire burst in his eye sockets and rattling mouth. The piping rose from Caul's mouth in a long-winded howl.

"HOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOWL!" he rang out and drew the attention of the entire bar. Willy grabbed the water and doused whatever infernal creatures had been roused in Caul's bowels by draining the liquid down the dwarf's open throat. Caul sputtered out what had gone into his lungs instead of his stomach and crashed into the wooden floor back first. The patrons roared in hard laughter while the winds outside laughed the loudest. Willy knelt at his friend's side and repeatedly slapped his reddened cheek.

"Caul?" he said. "Caul!" The dwarf's eyes bolted open. He thrust a Dwarven thunderharp into Willy's face as if to say, "Play the damn thing, Willy!"

Willy fell onto his barstool as if the harp had

the weight of a corpse. He cradled the harp by the neck and heard it laughing and daring him to play. His brow furrowed. Caul imagined Willy smashing the harp against the ground in drunken vengeance. His muse had drained his well of creativity a long time ago and now would be the time for revenge. The lightning rage flashed in Willy's eyes, sparked by the liquor. His fingers trembled around the harp's neck.

The wind gave pause. Then Caul watched the bard's hand reach into a belt pouch... and pull out a Thumper-Thug pick. Caul wanted to smile, cry, and cry out at the same time. He drank his tears and leapt to the barstool while the Thumper-Thug went to work on the harp's strings. The muse's hiatus ended as the thunderharp's strums rose above the clattering laughter of the bar and the weather.

Caul's bones cracked as he wrenched himself into a standing position on the barstool. He threw up his arms as if to dispel the stank of debauchery and let the thunderharp's hymn give impetus to his invigorated mood. In the depths of his mind and in the low halls of Creation, Caul felt the unswerving gaze of the Creator at his forge. He prayed for truth to fill his lungs and deafen the cruel amusement nature took in watching these poor creatures huddle about.

"A good midnight's greetings to all ye dregs under the cruel stars of fortune!" Caul bellowed to all present while the thunderharp hummed. "I have tasted the best your kind has to offer... and now I shall have the worst! Scarface, a mug of Godder's!" The bartender

gave Caul an ugly grin and an even uglier mug of sick Godder. Upon touching the dwarf's lips the sick became sweet and mocking nature defiled. "Now we be brothers under the Ale Moon!" He raised his mug and the bar toasted him in brotherhood.

The thunderharp mellowed and the lights seemed to dim. "Yet my Dwarven brothers have no reason to celebrate like us. While we laugh in the face of all horrid fate has thrown against us, my brothers lie apart from one another." He slammed his fist on the bar and made the host jump one and all and the harp's tune sprang up. "Separated by meaningless rivalry and bloody feuds." A smile alighted his eyes. "Not to mention a dispute over who possesses the finest in Dwarven women."

The crowd howled and Caul pointed to each man and said, "We make due, lads, we make due!" He leapt off the stool and began circling a pretty wench with a dress hugging her chiseled hourglass shape. She had taken to him with his mad words too. "Oh, she be a tall one, a trait every dwarf finds incredibly... *lust* filling."

He thrust out his chin and licked his lips while the wench feigned to fawn and the harp grew sappily romantic. He hopped onto a table top and penetrated her with his eyes. "You smell of the finest brews that swirl in the Creator's trunk." He dropped to a knee. "I swear my fealty to you, lass, if you but wait for me whilst I go to unite my people."

Flashing her yellowed teeth with a bright face she said, "I'd rather sleep with—"

"A pig, a stag, a duck!" Caul said.

“A harp player.” She turned her eyes on Willy and the crowd howled and expected chairs to soon fly between close friends. Caul turned his back on Willy and the harp stopped. He spun around, thrust his finger at the bard and said, “You may take my wife but you’ll never take my music. Play on!” The crowd shouted with glee at the new dancing song and Caul leapt down and returned to the stool.

“I may be unlucky in love, but great clans have need of a ruler descended from the clan of Droan, and I be the Son of Hyll to do it!” He clapped his hand on Willy’s shoulder. Their bond cemented in laughter and their hearts united in joy, the two became brothers once more. “And because I have not the tongue for epics, I shall have the greatest bard of all time accompany me to write my story.” His laughing eyes looked into Willy’s with humored knowledge. “Do you know where to find him?”

“You can find him five minutes from now in a room upstairs with a pretty girl and the Creator,” Willy said as his fingers flew on the strings.

“Well, when you do see him, tell him the Great Laughing King, Droan Caul, requests his presence six minutes from now on the doorstep of the Jolly-Jolly Tankard WITH his clothes on.”

Caul twirled, bowed, and rose. “For now my story ends, but there will come a time when the clans have united.” He withdrew his hammer and axe from their sheathes and held them aloft to glitter in the firelight of the bar.

Twin symbols of power, they towered above the dwarf and he displayed his own strength by handling such fierce objects. The runes on their surfaces seemed to dance in the light's dazzle. Though silent, they laughed with the assembled patrons for the victor of their wielder. "By this hammer and this axe, I shall unite the clans and we shall have peace!" He sheathed his weapons and finished with, "If your best daughters suddenly vanish, don't come bawling to us." With this final hoot under his belt, he took his leave from the brotherhood of Godder. Outside the rain had stopped, and even the moon had taken interest in what he had said. The road from horizon to horizon fell silent to his presence.

The door swung open and let out a burst of joy. "We will do it together then," Willy said, "eh, Caul."

"That we shall." They began striding together away from the pool of drowned dreams. "But what about that pretty wench?"

"I do not take pleasure in the castoffs of a dwarf." They glanced at each other and chuckled. "Do you realize something else?"

"What?"

"You never did pay for that Azato's Bottled Flame."

The winds carried their bellows all the way to heaven.

Now hunched, now erect, Emry Spink sits on the curb in front of Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church practicing his pose. Four weeks earlier when he was fresh off of the bus from Bloomington, Illinois, Emry had unexpectedly received five dollars from a member of the church and kept coming back. He had been sitting sullenly on the curb with his cheeks cupped in his hands, when a small woman in a lime green dress walked out the front doors of the church, paused, and pushed the folded bill between his hand and cheek. When he looked up to thank her, she pulled her gaze from his and mumbled, "God bless." Then, haltingly, she stepped away. Emry sat looking at the money for some time before he abruptly shoved it in his pocket and ran off to buy lunch.

He returned the next Sunday morning to see if he would be as lucky. Positioning himself on the same part of the curb where the woman in the lime green dress had seen him, he waited for her to return. He was earlier this time, and before long people began to exit the church. Emry turned to watch them, but did not see the woman from the previous week. A middle aged man and woman paused when they saw him. The man's hair was brown and he wore a brown suit that hugged his thighs and stomach as though threads had been pulled tight in those places. He took a big slow breath and retrieved his wallet as he exhaled. Then he walked over to where Emry sat and handed him a few dollar bills. Emry searched the man's eyes, expecting some explanation, but the man ran his eyes over Emry like he couldn't keep them still and

then quickly walked away to join his wife. Several seconds later Emry turned around to see an old woman smiling down at him. The skin on her face was puffy and wrinkled, but her eyes were light and kind beneath. She opened her mouth to speak, but instead pulled some things out of her purse as if they were rabbits from a hat. A dollar bill, some loose change, and a piece of hard candy landed on Emry's lap. Then, still silent, the woman ambled away. Emry watched her go -- short, jerky steps as though her ankles were tied -- and said a few words aloud to assure himself that he still understood speech. No one handed him anything more, although he did see the woman in the lime green dress. She left the church last, and was startled when she saw Emry sitting there on the curb. She looked like she had been caught doing something embarrassing and wavered up on the steps. Then, forced down when the church door opened behind her, she turned away from Emry and walked off.

Emry had returned every Sunday since, and always managed a few dollars from one or two parishioners. He had experimented with different poses -- sometimes huddled and tired looking, other times straight-backed, confident and friendly -- but his self-carriage didn't seem to make any difference. He had a strong, narrow frame, and pale skin that was pulled tight over his bones; an appearance that had always made Emry look slightly emaciated. His hair, straight and a deep carrot red, was greasy and matted down, and the loose, green shirt and blue jeans that he had worn since he left home were now dirty and tattered. All

this made sure that his posture or the look on his face didn't do much to change the impression he made.

This Sunday, while Emry was practicing his pose, he was also running through the story of how he came to live in the streets. No one had asked him yet -- no one had even talked to him so far -- but he had eventually worked out a feasible story to tell anyone who asked. His father, once a great and holy man, had died when Emry was just learning to walk. Determined to finish one of the best golf games of his life, Emry's father was in mid-stroke when lightning struck his club and killed him instantly. His mother was never the same after the incident, and lately had been suffering from a series of mysterious illnesses that kept her from working to support her young son and daughter. Emry feared that he and his sister would be taken by the state if he didn't do something about it. Since he was only 10 (in reality he was older) and couldn't get a job he set out to the streets to see if he could beg some money until his mother pulled herself together.

His back was bent over crossed arms, and his face was pulled into a false grimace when a young girl, about his age or maybe a bit older, walked out of the church. Emry quit the pose and watched as she furtively closed the door and stepped down the stairs. Her hair was bright and blonde, and she wore a short, white dress. She frowned. Now, thought Emry. You can talk to her. He was looking at her with the friendliest face he had practiced with and liked, but she just looked away and started to walk down the sidewalk. Wanting to reassure her that he

could, in fact, speak, Emry called to her, "Hello!" Her steps continued in sharp clicks as she walked down the sidewalk, not turning to respond. Emry's lips dropped, drawn and disappointed. Several minutes later the doors opened and the families left the church. Emry didn't look up at anyone, and no one came to drop money on him. His eyes were fixed down on the street, and he stayed sitting until everyone had left the church.

There was a real story, one which Emry had no intention of telling. It stood at the back of his tongue as he ran over the fake story, swelling in his throat until he felt like he was gagging. The truth took place four weeks earlier. Emry's mother was not sick -- her last missed day of work had been six years ago, taken in order to keep Emry from picking at his chickenpox -- and his father wasn't dead. He lived with Emry and his mother and was an accountant for a company that made computers. He was never struck by lightning, and he didn't much care for golf.

Four weeks before, Emry had come home from the last day of school to find his father at home, sitting on the recliner with a bottle of beer in his hand. This was all very new for Emry, because his father was never home before five 'o clock and he rarely drank. Whatever had caused these two things to happen, Emry decided to wait in his room until his mother got home from work. When she stepped through the front door, Emry ran to his bedroom door and crouched down, pressing his ear against the carpet and the door. The words were spoken softly at first, so Emry had trouble hearing what

was said. After a few minutes went by, however, the voices got louder and Emry could take his ear away from the door and still hear.

His mother had a way of keeping her voice natural while speaking at twice her normal volume, as if she were talking over a loud noise, so that if you started to raise your voice, too, you were suddenly the only one yelling.

"So is it serious enough to send you to jail?" Emry heard his mother say.

"They didn't say anything about pressing charges, yet. Paul feels bad about the whole thing, and he might just let me go without--"

"This is the worst time you could have picked to go and do this, Steve."

"You knew that I was doing it, Lorraine!" his father shouted. "You didn't have any moral crisis before!"

"Honey, don't yell, all I'm saying is that"--and his mother's voice began to soften to a hush again so that Emry could no longer hear what she said. By the end of the conversation, Emry understood enough: that his father was in trouble for stealing money from the computer company. If it was money that they needed, Emry was suddenly resolved to find it for them. So the next morning, after his mother had left for work, Emry set out of the house to look for work of his own. He had seen fliers before where kids offer to do yard work or help with pets, and he figured he would do something similar.

Just as he was opening the front door to leave, his father called him from the living room. Emry

walked over to where his father lay on the couch. His eyes were rimmed red and he still wore the clothes from the day before.

"Where're you headed off to?" his father asked.

"Out." Emry avoided the question, anxious not to waste any time in his search for a job.

His father looked up at him from the couch for a long time, making Emry uncomfortable. He seemed much older than he had the day before.

"Look, I've been having some trouble at work lately, and I'm going to be finding a new job."

Emry kept his eyes down.

"You're not ashamed of your old man, are you Emry?" His father's voice was weak. "Your mother and I, we're going through a tough period. You've known that, I'm sure."

Emry shrugged; he had known. He glanced towards the door impatiently.

"I don't want you to think that I'm.." His voice dropped. Instead he said, "Okay, you can go."

Emry rushed out of the door, not looking back at the man. Once outside, he walked to the neighbor's house and rang the doorbell. Several hours later when he returned home, Emry was hungry and had made fourteen dollars. An elderly neighbor had confused Emry's offer to mow her lawn and, after several attempts at clarifying what he meant, the woman gave Emry fourteen \$1 bills.

"I think I'll just make a donation to your charity instead," she had said.

Emry returned to his house to find his father standing at the top of the staircase, gripping the railing, with a bed sheet tied around his neck. He

looked down at Emry and his mouth puckered. Emry looked up at his father's face for some explanation, but his eyes were empty, no different from his ears or nose. He had tied a white bed sheet around his neck at one end, and then had tied the other end to the railing at the top of the stairs. Images from Westerns and pictures he had seen of lynch mobs converged in Emry's mind and he vaguely understood what was happening. Neither one said a word. Both stood still, shame pulsing red in their ears and hands. Emry had an urge to take the fourteen dollars from his pocket and hold them up to his father, but he did nothing. His father finally released his grip and untied the end of the sheet from the railing. His fingers worked clumsily at the knot, which had been tied several times over. When he was done, Emry's father walked down the hall and to his bedroom with the sheet still tied to his neck.

The house made Emry's mind race, so he left and started walking. Almost an hour later he was at the bus station. He took the fourteen dollars from his pocket and bought a ticket to Chicago.

Emry rode the bus with his cheek pressed against the cold window. Unable to sleep, he watched the dark countryside, swathed in night. The sky was clogged with a wide flat cloud that allowed only a little gray moonlight to filter through. For a moment he was seized with the fear that there was no sky and no stars deep above, but that everything ended at the slate of tired, gray

cloud. It was a sinking and suffocating feeling. To keep his mind off of the thought, Emry read road signs and billboards as the bus traveled slowly through the night.

When the bus arrived in Chicago it was early morning and the skyline was gritty and hazed. Emry got off the bus and walked along the sidewalk in the early morning air. Not many people were out yet, and Emry felt terribly afraid and alone. The stores still had "closed" signs up in their doors and windows as Emry passed them. He wasn't hungry, but even if he were, he had no money for food.

As the sun rose over the buildings, the stores began to open and people filled the streets. Emry walked without direction and looked heavily at the scattered faces he saw, searching for something that would allow him to return home. It surprised Emry that no one ever looked down except to avoid running into him. He had always assumed that if you were someplace you weren't supposed to be, or if your parents were looking for you, then every adult you saw would understand this and immediately stop to ask your business. Instead, people seemed unable to see him. He felt like just another part of the streetscape; as bland and easy to overlook as a parking meter.

Emry walked for hours. He noticed that he had passed some of the same storefronts several times, and he quickly became aware of how tired and hungry he was. He finally stopped in front of a tall, gothic church and sat on the curb.

Now, weeks later, he sat on that same curb, still tired and hungry. His days were all the same, and it

felt as if he had been traveling the same leg of a hopeless journey over and over again. He slept in the alley behind the church, and was driven each morning to search the city. As he roamed the streets, wandering in and out of stores and alleys, he would sometimes think of home. The empty, broken figure of his father at the top of the stairs and his mother's tired and lined face would fill his mind until the buildings, the cars, and the people dropped away. At these times he would feel tremendously guilty that he had nothing to give them. Initially, he had dreamt of returning home with gifts and successes from the city. After getting some sleep and something to eat, Emry felt like Columbus boldly sailing western waters. Amidst waves of people, Emry was searching for a hidden land. There were no maps, and he did not know its topography, but it was there, he knew, just up the steps of some building or rushing under a manhole cover. He would reach the edge of the world and bring its mysteries back to his parents, showing them proof of what he had suspected all along and hadn't been able to express.

But now the excitement was gone. Other than what he could buy with the handouts he received on Sundays, Emry ate one meal a day at a nearby soup kitchen and whatever had been thrown out behind LaMar's bakery. No one had approached him with any secret keys, and it began to seem like the only hidden thing was disappointment. When he finally found someone he thought he could talk to -- a girl his age, even -- she had rushed away from him. Emry lifted himself from the curb and began to

walk away, but someone called to him before he could take more than a few steps. Emry turned around and saw a man standing at the top of the church steps looking down at him.

"If you need something, you can go ahead and come inside," the man said.

Emry shook his head and started to hurry away.

The man called, "Wait!" and moved down the stairs, so Emry stopped and turned to face him. His hair was gray and cut close to his head. Below this, his face was round and his skin was loose and drooped on either side of his nose, which hung on the front of his face like a strawberry. The man's suit was a solid, clean black except for a white collar that showed through under his chin like a single tooth.

"You've been sitting on that curb every Sunday for weeks," the priest said. "This is a place you can come into. You don't have to be shy."

Emry was startled that the words were directed to him, and didn't say anything.

"Come inside and you can tell me why you're here."

Emry was roused from his surprise and said, "There was a storm that killed my dad, so Mom can't pay for my food anymore." Then he added the last part of his story, "And I'm only 10."

The priest beckoned for Emry to come, and Emry walked up to him with his eyes fixed on the priest's black shoes which reflected his own strange image back up at him. The man lifted his large arm, placed it on Emry's shoulder, and led him into the church.

When Emry stepped under the enormous ceiling

and felt the cold air and the smell of old books rush at him, he shivered. The entrance to the church was bare, but the ceiling arched high above Emry's head while stained glass windows sat just beneath it. Emry couldn't make out what the pictures were supposed to be, but the sunlight sent down pieces of colored light that sat on the bare walls and floor. This was only the second time he had been in a church. The other time had been a year earlier, for his grandmother's funeral. Then, the church had been loud and full of people like the lobby of a movie theater. This time, however, the church was empty and quiet. It made Emry uncomfortable, and his eyes slipped around the building restlessly until they settled on the fat, white tooth on the priest's neck. He was filling a Styrofoam cup with lemonade from a big orange cooler. Emry was uneasy when he looked at the priest for the same reason he was uncomfortable in the church. It wasn't because he was expecting something hidden to slip away before he could reach it, but because he saw something there, brazen and shameless, and he expected it to lunge at him first before he had a chance to recognize it.

"I'm Father Flynn," the priest called back to him from the cooler.

It sounded strange to Emry that the man would refer to himself as a father. Emry wondered if he was implying that he could be Emry's father.

He approached him with the cup. "Here," he said. "Lemonade."

Emry looked down at the cup but didn't reach for it.

The priest held it closer to Emry. "You can take it," he said. "Go ahead and drink."

Emry took the cup but didn't drink it.

The priest kept his eyes on the lemonade, waiting for Emry to try it, but soon took them away and led Emry over to a bench where they both sat.

"So, what's your name?" the priest asked.

Emry told him.

"Emry, what are you doing out on the sidewalks? Every day I see you around this church, sitting on the curb or the steps, or going into the alley."

"There's something I'm looking for," said Emry. He had forgotten his story. "And sometimes I rest on the curb."

"Where are your parents? Why aren't they out helping you look?" said the priest.

"I have a dad," Emry said, looking the priest in the eyes to make sure the man understood, "but he's dead. And my mom can't help because she's sick." Emry took a quick gulp of lemonade and considered what he had just said.

The priest put his hand on Emry's shoulder and said, "I'm sorry, son."

Emry cringed at the word, but didn't respond.

"Doesn't your mother have someone who takes care of you during the day?" said the priest. "Don't you have a sitter, or maybe an aunt?"

"I take care of myself okay," Emry said.

"Well, I'd like to talk with your mother. I think that we could help you to--"

"I'm not looking for anyone to help me," Emry said, setting his cup on the floor.

The priest started to say something but caught himself.

Emry continued, "It is okay that I'm alone. That doesn't make me sad. Sometimes people come out of your church and they give me money to buy some food with. But I don't need it. It's nice that they do it for me but I don't need it. If you want to tell them to stop doing it, or if you want me to stay away from your church, that's fine. I have other places I can go and I can get full there. I just need some time so that I can find what I'm looking for, and then you won't see me anymore." He sat fidgeting with his hands after he had finished, and then abruptly stood to leave.

Before Emry could take more than a few steps, the priest called, "Wait," and stood up.

Emry turned around to face him, his eyes set like two gray stones.

"What are you trying to find out there?" the priest asked.

Emry slipped his hands into his pockets and tilted his head down. "I'm looking for a different world," he said. Then he paused and looked up to meet the priest's gaze. "My dad is dead in this one"

The priest said nothing, and Emry walked out of the church.

Emry rose from the dumpster like he was emerging from a cave. It was morning, but the air in the alley was night air. It was cool and still, and was huddled down beneath the tops of the buildings on either side of the alley. Above the buildings it was day, and the sun had already shot through the air, skidding on the rooftops under a young blue sky.

But in the alley it was still night. Emry awoke in this air, and slowly lifted himself out of the dumpster. His small body dropped down on the street, and he stood beside the dumpster to stretch. After almost a month in the streets, Emry's features had become stark and ancient-looking. At the center of his face two heavy eyes crouched deep in the flesh, strikingly dark in the boy's pale face. Pouches hung underneath them as though age had come to nest there prematurely. His deep red hair hung limp around his head, resting on his eyebrows. The entire face had the look of submersion, of places at the far, dark bottom of the sea.

Emry exited the alleyway and surveyed the street. It looked remarkably different to him than it had on the day he arrived. When he had first stepped off of the bus the streets were mysterious and strange. Each door held secrets behind it, and every person he passed was headed to deep and hidden parts of the city, places that would soon open up and reveal themselves to him. As he looked at the city now, though, the buildings were just as hopeless as his own home in Bloomington. The faces he saw concealed only pain.

First, Emry headed over to LaMar's Bakery. A week after Emry had arrived in Chicago, he noticed a dog eating donuts from a bin behind the bakery. He waited until the dog left and then found a bag of old donuts and rolls sitting torn open in the bin. Since then, Emry checked behind LaMar's every morning for baked goods that had been thrown out. Lately there had been a run of pecan rolls, which stuck in Emry's mouth when he chewed them and

made him thirsty. After he had a few rolls, Emry walked into the store and asked for a cup of water, which a middle aged woman at the counter gave to him. Then he headed down the sidewalk toward 131st street and crossed the park. He decided to head North and into an area he hadn't explored much yet. The day was still new and people were heading to work. Above, tall clouds slid along invisible planes as their tops bubbled over like neglected pots on an oven.

After walking for several blocks, Emry came upon a sign that read "Sidewalk Closed." A chain link fence closed off the sidewalk and half of the block, which was under construction. The old buildings had been completely demolished, and the only signs that buildings had actually occupied that part of the block were a few piles of brick, concrete, and bent pipes, and a large gaping hole that had been the basement floor of a tenement building. The hole looked like the rotted out hollow of a hasty tooth extraction; the old walls had begun to collapse in and debris clogged the floor. A huge yellow excavating machine was silent in the middle of the construction site. It had a long arm that stuck into the air and hung limp at the elbow. Emry gripped the fence and looked around the area for workers. At the far corner of the site two men stood talking next to a dirty blue pickup.

As quietly as he could, Emry climbed up and over the fence, using a sign that read "Keep Out -- Hard Hat Area" as a foothold. When he dropped down to the dirt, Emry surveyed the area where he stood, feeling uncovered and obvious. He slinked along the

fence and toward a building that hadn't come down yet, careful to keep the men at the far end in sight. Several bags of cement were piled along the fence, and when Emry started to crawl over them a big white dump truck entered the fenced-in area and rumbled toward him. He scrambled back the way he had come, looking for a place to hide. Quickly, he decided to run over to the yellow excavator with the big arm. There was a large, cupped hand at the end of the arm that dug into the ground a little, and Emry crawled under it. Then, drawing his knees up against his chest, he listened for the truck. It growled to within ten feet of the yellow machine and then shut off and was quiet. Emry didn't dare crawl out to look, so he waited and listened for movement for what seemed like an hour until he heard footsteps coming closer on the dirt. The footsteps passed him, and then the excavator shook to a start. The big, cupped hand covering him started to move, so with a shout he clambered out from under the machine on all fours and ran towards the fence. The man in the excavator shut the engine off when he saw Emry and called out, "Hey! Kid, come back here!" The other two men at the truck heard this and chased after Emry. He hit the fence and as he was pulling himself over, one of the men reached up and grabbed his shirt. Rather than concede to the man's grip, Emry jumped from the fence, leaving a ratty piece of his shirt in the man's hands. He landed safely on the other side of the fence and raced down the street, away from the shouts of the men behind him.

Emry ran south to the park and, once he was sure

that the men had given up and returned to their jobs, kept running anyway. He laced through trees and jumped over park benches, laying a foot on the seat to hop from. He ran into the alley behind LaMar's bakery and stopped to pet the dog that waited for rolls, then continued running back out on the sidewalk where he zigzagged around people and ran from streetlamp to streetlamp like he was running bases after an outfield hit.

Emry had played softball since he was six, and his father would occasionally gloat that his son was a natural at the game. At these times Emry would spend hours in the backyard tossing a ball up in the air to hit or running around a diamond he had marked out with rocks until the sun started to turn colors at the edge of the sky and his mother called him in. When he grew tired of running, Emry found some empty steps in front of a hotel and sat to rest.

There are distinct memories of pride submerged in Emry's mind, and while he was living in the streets these memories would surface like old corpses of once beautiful bodies. Memories of baseballs hit, fish caught, or grades earned made his past a series of painful and distant episodes, but one memory remained uncorrupted and had even become radiant while the others became ugly. It was to this memory, the only one that didn't take place in the spring, that Emry's mind wandered as he caught his breath on the steps.

It took place in a hard winter. His parents had bought a new car and were fighting more. At night, when Emry was in bed, they would argue in the kitchen. It would start with whispers, but eventually

their voices would travel down the hall and into Emry's room where from his window he would listen to them argue as he watched snow fall outside.

Every night for two weeks the snow fell. At night it traveled downward like a flock of migrating birds and in the mornings it slept on the earth. Incandescent white snow thickened the grounds, nestled in the trees, and swelled womb-like against the houses. By day's end, feet and tires had mixed the smooth white plane of the morning into gray sludge, but for two weeks straight the night's snow would fill up every rut, gash, and footprint so that the morning's landscape was once again a clean slate. Towards the end of the two weeks, when the snowplows couldn't keep up with all the snow that kept falling and the snow-swells were creeping up to the windows of houses, school was cancelled for Emry. He had slept lightly all night and awoke much earlier than he would have on a school day. After all of the mounting talk of troubled school busses and angry teachers, he knew that today, this morning, he would be free.

He slid out of bed and crept into as many clothes as he could fit over his body, careful not to wake his parents. After nearly giving up on fitting his boots over four pairs of socks, Emry pulled open the front door to gaze on the morning. A wall of snow had formed up against the doorframe, almost as tall as Emry, so he shut the door and ran over to the window. He pulled off the screen and climbed out of the open window, walking directly from the window ledge to the snow which had reached the

same height. He toed his first step out in front of him, feeling the fresh snow that had fallen hours before. It was still and cold outside, and the sky was hazy with light but sun-empty. Pushed by a sudden fear that his parents would wake up and make him come back inside, Emry plunged from his warm house into wet snow, sinking halfway down until the old, packed snow below supported him. Then he dropped down on his back and leaned against the new powder. With his head propped up so that his chin pushed into his chest, Emry looked across the street -- past the snow-thick branches of the Allens' oak trees, and into the gray sky. As he watched, the sun cracked against the horizon like an egg and ran golden over the snow. Soon the entire neighborhood was covered in sun-yolk, and it struck Emry that he was the only one aware of the display. Tucked under roofs and the weight of sleep, everyone else was oblivious.

He didn't know how long he lay there in the snow, but eventually something caused him to turn around, and he saw his mother standing in the window above him. A tired blue robe was wrapped around her body and her erratic hair signaled a sleepless night, but her eyes were fixed on the sunsnow outside. Her lips had a slight curve that he recognized as a smile, and the skin on the corners of her eyes cracked in appreciation. Emry beamed up at her from the snow, and then turned back to watch the morning. After the gold had all run out of the snow and the sun had pulled away from the horizon, she closed the window and receded into the house. He was slow to finally get up. He longed

for the morning to simply stall and forgo the day, but cars soon tore through the snow in the street, and the sun rose in the sky to become tangled in clouds, so he ran off to make snowballs that he would later throw into the air and smash with a baseball bat.

Emry stepped into the alley and blinked. There was a path below and a path above. The path below was all grimy and littered with trash. Empty paint buckets were stacked against one wall, and across from those black trash bags were huddled together, gaunt and deflated with bottles and things poked through them. Two tire ruts ran through the street with a crooked, asphalt spine rising up between them. In places the asphalt was broken away so you could see that the street had been brick at one time. Signs, old and new, were stuck on the walls of the buildings ordering people not to park in the alley or to litter in it. This was the road below. Above, tall and up, there was a stretch of blue that hung between the two buildings. It loomed what seemed to Emry a great distance up, held in place by bands of sunlight that put down in the gap between the two roads and ended in the grime. You couldn't see it when you just looked forward, so Emry would often forget altogether that it was there until, for no reason, he would look up and see it. This was the road that Emry blinked at, and although he was kicking empty cans and rocks and things, he kept his eyes tilted up at it while he walked.

In the middle of the road like a halfway lodging

was the church's dirty green dumpster. "Hightower Refuse" was stenciled white on the sides, and the lid was black and warped. The dumpster was never locked -- and usually it contained little more than papers and empty Styrofoam cups -- so after spending a night trying to sleep on the hard floor of the alley Emry moved into the dumpster.

The things that the church threw away were consistent and generally uninteresting. Old Sunday school drawings and bulletins were the bulk of it, although occasionally he would find something out of the ordinary, like an empty bottle of wine or a broken candle. In the case of the candle, he would hide it until he found some matches. With the bottle he would try to get a few drops of wine out and then lick the rim. Then when he left he would heave the bottle into the air so that it hung suspended between the two roads for a moment and run off just before it exploded in the alley, covering the filthy floor with broken glass.

When he looked back down from the long stretch of road above, he saw that there was something new sticking out of the dumpster, and as he walked closer he saw what it was. There were two feet resting along a wooden beam that was tilted sideways and extended out a few feet longer than the feet reached. He stood in front of the dumpster and stared at the feet, which were just above eye level. They looked cold and empty, like whatever was normally inside feet -- blood and bones, he guessed -- had been taken out. The pale ankles disappeared into the dark dumpster, and some dull red blood crept up the skin like it was

trying to escape the dumpster. Emry jumped when he noticed this and made as if to run off, but he realized that for some reason or another he didn't feel scared. So he stood there and studied the feet. They were hairless and quite large. Emry decided that a considerably large body must be lying in the dumpster underneath those feet, maybe dead. He reached up and touched one of the feet. It was hard. He put a foot up on the base of the dumpster and pulled himself cautiously up until he had both hands underneath the lid. Very quickly, he threw it open so that it rattled on the side of the church and stayed there. Lying beneath him was a man. His arms were stretched out and his neck was arched down so that his face pointed up at his feet. Blood was on his hands and in his eyes, and Emry immediately jumped back down and onto the street. He called up at the man, and his voice sounded like it was coming from an old record.

"Are you all right?" he said. No answer. "You need help?"

He sucked in some air and hoisted himself back up onto the side of the dumpster. He peered down at the man and noticed that he was still holding his head up, but his eyes were closed and his hair was all matted down and stuck to his face. It was dark, but Emry came to the slow conclusion that the man wasn't real, that he was just a statue. After deciding this, he reached out his hand and ran his fingers along the statue's leg. Hard, not like skin. He knocked on it, and decided that it was something like fiberglass. Finally he got the courage and pulled himself into the dumpster so that he was kneeling

up against this statue of a man. Because his arms were too long for the width of the dumpster, he was tipped to face Emry. All he had on was a torn piece of cloth that hung around his waist, and his ribs stuck out as if he was taking a deep breath in and holding it. He saw now that there were two wooden beams to which the man's hands and feet were nailed: one that ran along the man's entire body, and another just for the arms. It was meant to hang from something, was why the man's chin rested on his chest like it did. Emry knelt in the bulletins and the Sunday school drawings, unable to figure out why any church would have the statue of a dead man, and especially one that was all messy with blood. The man's eyes were closed but it seemed like his gaze was still strong underneath them, like he could see right through his eyelids. He stood on the side of the dumpster looking the man's closed eyes and his wounds for some time, until he finally stepped down in the alley and walked to the front of the church to see what else they had hidden inside.

The door was unlocked, so he pulled it open and stepped inside. The scent of old pages still lay in the air, and the front room with its high ceiling and stained glass was no less intimidating than it had been the day before. There was no one in sight, so Emry walked through the front room and entered the sanctuary. It was a long, quiet room with rows of deep brown benches, shining under faint light that shot through the stained glass windows. The area at the front of the sanctuary was open, and Emry approached this, brushing his hands over the

pews as he passed them. Once he was halfway down the aisle he noticed two beams, one long and one short, crossed like a telephone pole and hanging up on the wall. He continued up to the front of the sanctuary to inspect the cross. This one was cleaner, and it looked newer than the other, but it served the same purpose, Emry was sure. He walked to within feet of the wall and studied the cross, picturing in his mind the dead man that this cross lacked. He wondered if the people in the church knew what the two crossed beams were used for, or if they knew about the bloody man.

He turned around to the empty pews and noticed that they weren't empty. Halfway down sat the woman who had given him five dollars weeks earlier. Her neck bent her face down, which was pressed into fisted hands. Her dark hair spilled over her face and hands, and the only way that Emry recognized her was that she wore the same lime green dress he had seen her in weeks before. He had an urge to yell out a question, but before he could speak she raised her head and met his gaze. From halfway across the room Emry felt close to the woman. He could make out her features through the distance, as though he could touch her if he reached out. Her eyes were dark and watery, and her hair was black and straight and fell to the sides of her face as if a curtain had been pulled back to reveal it. Emry began to walk towards her, but her gaze remained where he had been standing. He looked back, and realized that the woman had been looking past him and at the cross all along. She may have noticed him, but she did nothing to confirm it.

Emry did nothing to get her attention. Instead, he continued past the woman and walked quickly out of the sanctuary, out of the church, and into the alley. He headed down the alleyway with his eyes on the dumpster, and saw that there were no longer legs sticking out of it. When he stepped up on the side of the dumpster and peered inside everything was gone. It had been emptied, and the man and the cross had been taken along with all of the garbage. Emry looked down at the empty space for some time, and then he realized that the woman in the lime green dress knew about the bloody man and what the two bare beams were used for.

He hopped down from the dumpster, stepped out of the alley, and blinked. The buildings and the streets were gold, as though the sun had spilt itself out into the city and shone up to the sky. The street gushed between the buildings like a great river, and the people walked its banks in brilliant clothes -- and Emry knew that this had been the case all along, but only now had he the eyes to see it.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

Ralph Asher is greatly indebted to many authors from whom he has stolen technique, voice, subject matter, and tone. He is a literary Frankenstein, but since he has achieved Nirvana (i.e., *the Lighter*) he is unapologetic and arrogant. A few of the coattails he has ridden to the top are those of Dave Barry, Garrison Keillor, Tony Horwitz, and P.J. O'Rourke. He wishes he could say that "What a Difference a Day Makes" came to him in a dream, or that it is his heart's outpouring after finding true love. In actuality, he was scratching out verse late one night when the poem's basic plot popped into his head. The rest more or less fell together. Not so poetic, huh?

Lynn Borden is a senior double major in public relations and studio art from Massachusetts. She enjoys the finer things in life and hopes to bring all of her unique experiences to life through her love for the arts. She hopes to explore the world and see what is over the next horizon.

Leah Bunk is a sophomore French major who is smitten with foreign languages. She grew up in the far-off country of Cameroon, and next year will be moving to the far off-country of Canada. Her photo of the tree on the beach reminds her of Baudelaire's poetry, which is often morbid and full of despair. The photo of the girl in the hat was taken at the antique mall in Valpo, where she always has fun browsing and playing dress-up. She thinks that "American Beauty" illustrates how there is often too much emphasis on the outward and materialistic aspect of beauty. Her hobbies include photography, ballroom dancing, playing hockey, and climbing trees. She has a big crush on Spiderman, and an even bigger crush on her fiancé, Nathan.

Last semester, Jeff Haanen had the chance to study abroad in Mexico. During semana santa (spring break), he traveled with two friends first to a small beach town called Huatulco, and then to the southernmost state of Chiapas. In Chiapas, he stayed for 3 days in the capital of San Cristobal de las Casas. There, he explored the most indigenous part of Mexico while taking in the rich culture and the breathtaking mountain landscape. He took the photograph of the indigenous woman in a marketplace selling blankets, pottery, and numerous other crafts. He asked her, in Spanish, if it would be alright to take a photograph of her if he bought some pottery. Many indigenous shy away from the camera because they believe capturing their image on film is synonymous to capturing their soul. The elderly lady did not understand him because she only spoke the local indigenous language. But her daughter interceded and said that it would be ok if he bought some pottery. So he chose a bowl to buy and proceeded to take the photograph. As soon as he was about to take the picture, she looked away in what was one of the most beautiful displays of humility he has ever seen. The color in the picture turned out brilliantly, while the expression she left for the camera was an intense testament to the deep culture of Chiapas.

Katharine Harmon is a senior church music and English major from Columbus, IN. Her interests- which stretch over the realms of literature, art, music, history, and theology- include such disparate elements as the work of Willa Cather, 20th century minimalism, and John Lennon. The most recent formative event in her life came from a summer session of study in eastern Germany.

Charles Lemme is a sophomore with a non-existent theatre major. He loves the writing of David Gemmell, H.P. Lovecraft, Fritz Leiber, and, of course, J.R.R. Tolkein and J.R. Rowling. Fantasy is not a vein he ever saw himself falling into, but it is a niche he has come to accept as his home. He met Droan Caul in a dream back when Willy and he were growing up in their orphanage. He was very happy to reunite the two friends. He is writing a roaring fantasy novel and it will be published 'when it is done' and whenever a publisher likes it. Until then, he is happy meandering in his imagination.

Kate Olson is a senior English major. "At the Basilica" was inspired by St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Adam Ortman has never been to Chicago.

Laura Potratz is an organ performance major/art minor. She likes colors, Monet, poetry, chocolate, dance, theater, Durufle, and the mountains. Her creative inspiration comes from solitude, great music, and the great outdoors. In this issue of *the lighter*, two of Laura's photographs ('First Glimpse of Antiquity' and 'Rainy Day in Cardiff') and the one poem (Together in Canterbury) were created in England and Wales.

Matthew Schaefer is a sophomore student of computer science from Victoria, Minnesota. He enjoys various activities such as running, digital photography, computer programming, reading texts by Wendell Berry, and good discussion. He aspires to spend the rest of his life serving (in whatever capacity that happens to be) well. "Megan Frances" was inspired by a good friend of his whose name shall remain anonymous.

Adrienne Traen is a sophomore from Naperville, Illinois and

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

has always loved literature and poetry. From a young age, she's been writing and reading everything she could get her hands on. Her poem is a somewhat wistful remembrance piece, reflecting on such mundane topics as love and loss. Around the time she wrote this, she'd been reading a lot of Dylan Thomas and, as he sometimes does, she used natural themes as a vehicle of expression, weaving them in to highlight other themes within the piece.

Shinsuke Takasaki likes playing in a poetic arena where anything can be signified. There he can let himself free from semantic stigma, and open to the freedom of language. About the poem "phenomena around me bound for you"- What's happening to him right now is all about the way he perceives reality. In such an all-embracing phenomenon, any kinds of art come into one. But this "oneness" has to reflect itself by virtue of the other: "you." This poem is trying to allow a literal ambiguity as it is and back to you, leaving the distinction of pronoun "I" (me) and "you" unmarked. About poetry- Writing a poem gets him in introspection; at the same time, it reminds him again and again that he cannot be entirely dependent of feedback: that is the presence of readers. He needs to write for the sake of HIS WRITING and, simultaneously, for the sake of YOUR READING. It is a quite hard task.

