



Apartheid

*James Cloyd*

**1989**

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**SOWER**

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# 1989 Literary and Artistic Awards

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*Hale Evans Cole Award for Excellence in the Arts:*



**Apartheid**

by James Cloyd

**BLACK/WHITE**

by James Cloyd

I KNOW WHO I AM \* BUT NOT WHAT I SHOULD BE \* MY ACTIONS ARE OFTEN  
LIMITED \* BY THIS BLACK AND WHITE SOCIETY \* MY ACTIONS ARE OFTEN  
JUDGED \* LOOKED AT AND ANALYZED \* OBLIGATION WON'T LET ME CROSS  
OVER \* SOCIETY WON'T LET ME CROSS BACK \* I WANT TO BE JUDGED BY MY  
CHARACTER \* AND NOT BECAUSE MY SKIN IS BLACK \* I KNOW WHO I AM \* BUT  
NOT WHAT I SHOULD BE \* I'M STANDING ON THE BOUNDARIES \* OF THIS LIMITED  
BLACK AND WHITE SOCIETY \*

*Joseph Langland Award for Poetry:*

**JOSEPH**  
**(Interpreter of Dreams)**

by Carter Hansen

*Voici, mes freres!*

They sit chained to their oars,  
In rows as neat as Arlington's,  
Faces lit with a greenish glow.  
They stand at the bus stop,  
Cocking an ear to the siren's call,  
Checking to see if the time is right.  
They sing down on Wall Street,  
Navy uniforms in dissonant chorus,  
Monks chanting monotonous vespers.  
Rank and file, they march and fall,  
Broker and bag-lady beggars alike;  
Worms can't tell black from white.

*Nous mourons ensemble!*

Even if I'm lonely,  
Don't ask me who I am.  
Even if I'm crying,  
Don't ask me how I feel.  
Even if I know,  
Don't ask me what I think.  
Even if I'm dying,  
Don't ask if you can help.

*Nous vivons seul.*



## Grandmother

by Danny Hosteen

*Joseph Langland Award for Prose*

## Thousand Years

by Peter A. Sierant

I knew my friend wanted to use my van to haul the swing-set back to his house, for its a lot more convenient—and a bit more sensible. But don't give us any credit for being exemplary figures of intelligent thought. So we discussed the dimensions, the price, the amount of time involved in the construction of a swing-set, the dangers of metal on little children, and came to the mature, rational decision that one with a slide was "cool".

So after a short stop at McDonalds with the kids, where the Happy Meal and Mickey Cruiser Car prize was the topic of discussion, we were off. After a short spin and dropping off Lee's daughters, Katy and Holly, with his wife, we were ready to do some "real men's" work. We knew in our hearts that this swing-set was no ordinary one; there was a smell in the air. A sort of calling or divine providence that said we had a purpose. I looked at Lee and vice-versa, and we both just knew.

"We are on a mission of God."

I started the engine of the van; its rumbling power all packed in a 451 Ford V-8. I was convinced on this day that nothing would go wrong. Lee just smiled as I pulled out into traffic, the sun shining majestically through our windows. I was feeling ethereal and giddy; thinking about children having fun on a piece of technology and metal in this strange and messy modern existence based on instruments of destruction and war. Thank God for Montgomery Wards.

Traffic was rush hour, but all I could think of was the classic line, "once more under the breach, my friends, once more under the breach." I zigg-zagged through ghost-land traffic in my fine American Van, battling Satanic imports. Arriving at the mall in one piece (and a screech that my parents would hate to hear), finding a good parking space, we went to buy (though I was convinced they made it with us in mind) our swing-set. Lee and I were sorry we interrupted the middle-aged salesman and teenage counter-clerk from their game of nerf basketball. But hey, we were on a mission! The salesclerk was a man with a little bit of a waistline hanging over his belly, and the hair combed over the dominant balding spot, but quite helpful and cheerful. "The one with the slide," drawled Lee.

I browsed through things I considered "toys", like sleeping bags and coolers that hold cases of beer, non-fogging goggles, car bicycle racks, refrigera-

## Thousand Years

tors, weight training sets, air mattresses, kerosene heaters, and all sorts of other goodies that made me lick my chops in anticipation; thinking of owning these items and the possibilities they presented. Soon, the check was written and we were off to the loading dock to receive our pre-destined package.

We drove the van into the bowels of the mall, huge fans pulling air drafts and hums of the city into its dark and cavernous maws. The pale and sulfurous lights casting dim shadows on the walls. We had to park a few docks down, because a small red mini-van was in the way, and mission or not, I didn't have the heart to block him off. So we walked up the steps, our shoes reverberating through the tunnels, into the office. I observed the owner of the red van trying to fit a large box inside his luggage rack, and was doing a lot of grunting and sweating, but without much success. I wondered if he was going to be able to make it home with his proudly purchased merchandise, and if I could think of helping out with a solution.

Inside the office, which was really just a cubicle and had more room for the computer than the black clerk behind the counter, we announced we were here for the swing-set. He looked at us dully, and said he needed the number.

Hisssss!! Heretic!! Calling our swing set a number!!

Lee handed him the lurid piece of paper. The clerk in his dark blue overalls, and his plastic hair cover glistening with lights which made him look like some kind of special engineer, punched in the number on the receipt, looked at us and grinned slowly. "Oh...yeah. I forgot about them." He shuffled off lethargically, muttering about meeting us at the door. So much for the engineer theory. But he was cramped all day in that small area, and was probably underpaid and not appreciated, so I could relate (but was still amused).

Out in the tunnels, the man was pushing on the box to get it to fit, but still no cigar. This time his wife was on the runnerboard of the van, saying that maybe the box was too big as she fiddled with the rack's adjustment knobs. The man blinked at her, then looked at us, and agreed sullenly. The door to the loading dock rolled up and our favorite engineer poked his head out. It was time to receive our gift from divine providence. The man with the mini-van asked for some twine, which he duly received, but was thin and plastic. I looked at Lee, and he just shook his head, for we both knew that it wouldn't work, the box was too heavy and would snap the plastic. I started to say something, but the words just got caught in my throat. As he drove off slowly, I was reminded of the coldness of not only the city, but of the world. We put up walls around us, and each face tends to be either out to get you, or just doesn't care. The walls we build up around our selves in order not to be concerned with anyone else but "me". How kids will grow up in a world that is hard and cold. Suddenly, I was sad.

The swing-set came in one box that was long and heavy with an american

## Thousand Years

eagle printed on it. We had to carry it with one end on my shoulder, the other end on Lee's shoulder. I had this vision as we carried it of the Hebrews and the Ark of the Covenant. I was determined at that point to not let any Roman take this swing-set for his minting purposes.

We laid the box inside the van, both of us complimenting the vehicle for its practical uses. Climbing into the driver's seat I was hoping to get the set completed before we ran out of light. Lee said "No problem," we were mature men and should be able to handle a swing-set in no time, and I agreed, after all, we were on a mission, a mission from God.

We made it back to the house in no time, all excited and rarin' to go. Holly was all eyes and was telling us "guys" to hurry up because she wanted to play on it before it got too dark. Lee and I tore open the box, the staples popping in resistance, and the set was free. The shocking part was now before us.

Now I'll never understand the reasoning for the designs of swing sets on directions. And why American designers make it so hard on people who have no mechanical abilities. Or maybe Lee and I just aren't as smart as we had hoped. With the innards of the swing set before us, we went through the hieroglyphics of the directions with the hope of making some kind of order out of the chaos.

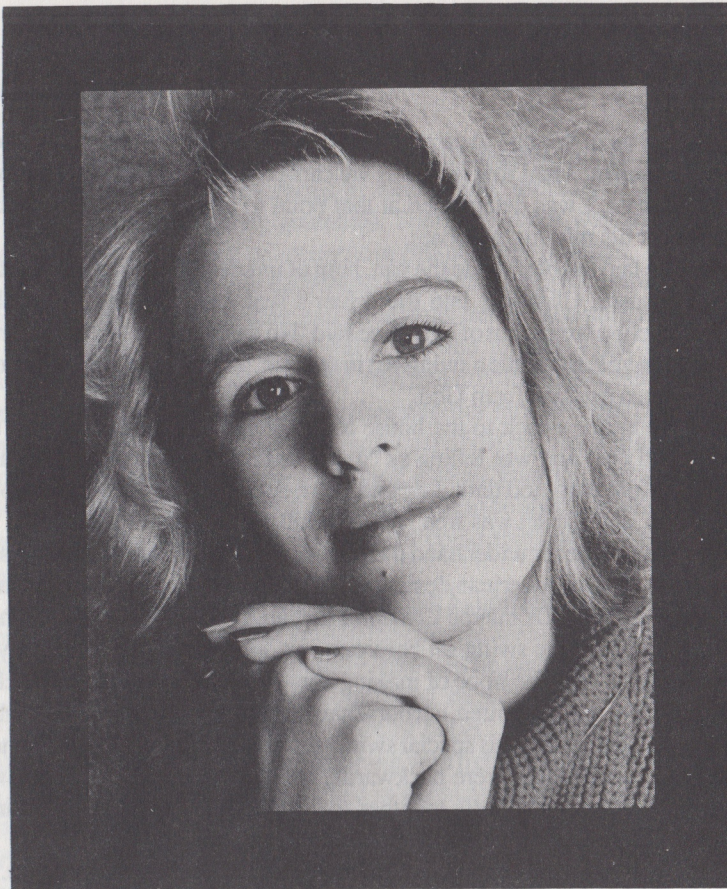
We grunted, perspired, cut ourselves, cursed, shouted, screamed, whined, fought, cried, and kicked this special swing-set. We even put it all together to find out that the anchor legs were backwards, and had to start all over again. We twisted a lot of nuts and bolts together that night, but soon had the swing set completed. The children were asleep, but they had tomorrow.

I went over the next day to find Holly and Katy on the swing sets. They were smiling and laughing, making noises like "Zooommm" and "Wheeee". It made me appreciate my parents efforts when they built my brother and I a swing-set. As children we climbed the set, and dreamed of heights that would take us to the moon. Thoughts of jumping around in outer space, or being a mountain climber who pushes to the summit. Where troubles were not taxes and nuclear holocaust. I longed for those days again, and was sad.

Lee came up and handed me a beer and we toasted. "To the swing-set that will last a thousand years." We both clinked cans, smiled and looked at each other, sipping the brew in content.

I sat down on the grass cross-legged in order to enjoy the sun, air, and sounds. Lee pushed his daughter Katy on the swings. I heard the pitter-patter of feet behind me. I looked, and there was Holly, framed in sunlight, her blond pony-tails shiny. She had this radiant smile shaped by two blue eyes.

"Pete, I love you," and a huge hug was exchanged, and I knew in my heart that this swing-set would last a thousand years or more. After all, we were on a mission.



*Claudia*

*by James Cloyd*

*[when words don't come easy]*

*by Mark Smeby*

*when words don't come easy  
it's best not to say anything  
feelings have a way with words  
that only eyes can hear*

## The Moment of Truth

I believe in.....

peanut butter bagels  
smiles  
chocolate milk on cereal  
cutting loose  
golden brown tans  
Santa  
helping out friends  
God  
looking out for #1  
carriage rides  
ice cream cones  
being organized  
long slow wet kisses that last for three days  
sunshine  
knowing what you want  
and.....E.T.

## Cutting Your Own Throat

I don't believe in.....

tomatoes  
love at first sight  
people who drive slow  
plastic smiles  
one night stands  
fish  
disposable lives  
expendable people  
growing old  
fast food  
dogging your friends  
drinking and driving  
the Easter bunny  
snowless Christmases  
just knowing your in love  
and.....Gumby.

*by Carin Mayr*

## Go Irrational With Me

by Jeff Tebbe

Go irrational with me  
For life is not what it seems  
The downfall of man is in the heart  
Go irrational with me  
Throw away your senses and follow the light  
Put your thoughts at rest and live  
Go irrational with me  
Walk amidst chaos to a golden peace  
Stride about the heavens without a care  
Go irrational with me  
Go irrational with me brother  
Follow my lead  
Leave your pain and sorrow in the wake  
And go irrational with me



## Untitled

by Larry Overbeck



## Creating Poetry

by Peg Crannell

Of poetry in me  
There may indeed be,  
However, the extraction  
Is done painfully.  
I must reach deep,  
Tug from up my feet,  
To put the inside on the outside.

Use the head; make it shed  
What it knows and wants to hide.  
Get it out before I'm dyed-  
in-the-wool OLD.  
Use your heart in your art.  
Spill your guts (they bleed tart).  
In essence, give all of me for quality.  
For in unity of my entity  
a tidy poem I would see.

Towards this end I do spend hours  
Prying, trying, grinding, anesthetizing,  
Chipping at my armor, grappling with my wall,  
Just to create an entry wide  
Enough to reach inside my hide  
For purposes of extraction.

*Patterns of 5*  
by Stacey L. Lien



**Untitled**  
by Larry Overbeck



**Letting Go**  
by Gina Roden

The bleakness of the night  
Tugs at my vivid recollections  
of June, 1984.

Complete soberness of the room  
Impairs the mind to garner  
at the steadfast door.

Enticing glossiness of the album  
Helps hide the biting pain  
of sensations I once bore.

Utter awareness of the blessing  
Encourages me to go forth  
and let her spirit soar.

## Of Sound and Silence

by Karyn Hillesland

The thin cold light of dawn lay in the room as Ed stretched and opened his eyes. Sleepily he rolled over and reached for Eva, coming fully awake as his hand found nothing next to him. He sat up, puzzled. Why would she be up this early? Then he remembered: today was Easter and the children were coming home.

Ed swung his bony legs out of bed and stood stretching, listening to the creaking and cracking of his stiff limbs. Slowly he shuffled to the kitchen in search of Eva. The house was warm and fragrant with the smell of coffee; in the little kitchen Eva was bustling about, her round face pink with the heat of the stove and a cheerful tune humming beneath her breath.

"Happy Easter, Ed!" she smiled as he came in. "It's a beautiful day for the family." Her gray curls bobbed busily as she continued her dinner preparations.

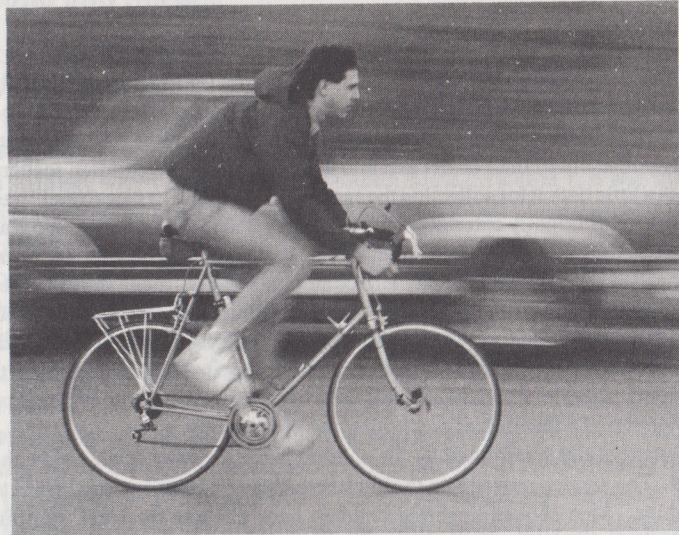
Ed smiled and nodded, enjoying the sight of his busy wife as much as the rich coffee she poured for him. These family gatherings were her specialty - his job was to keep quiet and out of the way and let her go at it.

The morning hours passed swiftly as they made everything ready. In spite of her age, Eva was still a meticulous housekeeper, and everything had to be spotless, even if it was "justfamily". She wouldn't let her children and grandchildren or even those precious great-grandchildren think badly of her or the way she kept house. So she scurried from room to room, cleaning her already pristine house once more. Ed puttered along as she asked him to, but most of his tasks were designed to be out of her way. He swept the front steps, hung extra towels in the downstairs bathroom, restocked the refrigerator with pop. Then as Eva put the finishing touches on her holiday dinner, Ed began his most important job: hiding the eggs for the annual Easter egg hunt.

It was a challenge to come up with new places to hide the plastic eggs filled with jelly beans and chocolate; it seemed that the children got smarter every year. By 10:30, though, he was satisfied that the eggs wouldn't be found without a good search, and he went in to hurry Eva along so they could make it to church in time for the 11:00 service.

They had not been home from church for long before the children and grandchildren began arriving, and soon the little house was overflowing with family. Ed and Eva had four children, each of whom had several children, and some of these had children of their own. As each group came through the door there was a flurry of greetings all around.

"Hello! Happy Easter!"



**Panning**

by Eva Zeuthen

**Life**

by Peg Crannell

Hurry, scurry, everything's blurry.  
My vision's myopic  
Cuz my speed is hypnotic.  
(Do this, do that --  
I've hurried so much my feet are flat.)  
Do I want to see what's going by me?

Sometimes....



**Untitled**

by Larry Overbeck

**Grandpa**

He sits in mist,  
foggy vision narrowing  
his weary world,  
drawing in his life  
until the circle  
soon is closed  
and clouds converge  
in sunshine.

**Grandma**

In three months she has  
aged a dozen years,  
the dancing eyes now  
slowed by tears,  
since he has gone  
and the harmony  
has died.

by Karyn Hillesland

## Attention / Recognition (the easy way)

by Coleen Lennemann

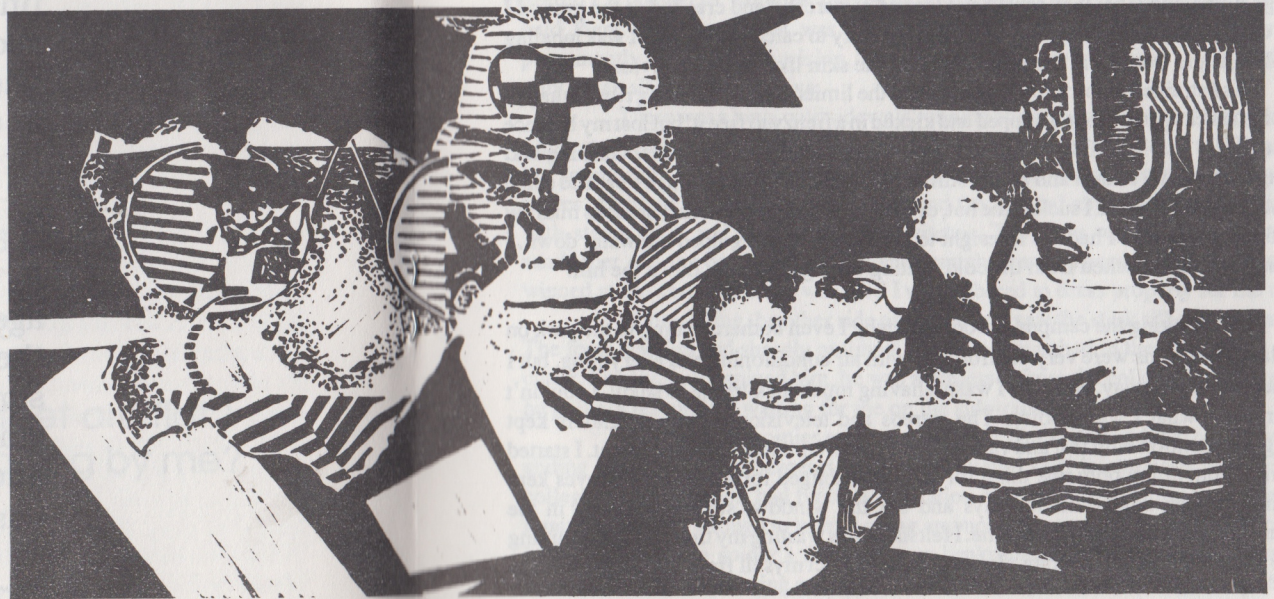
"A penny saved  
is a penny earned."  
So Franklin says.  
He doesn't know how  
I've yearned  
to create a phrase.  
If he wanted to save,  
why didn't he save  
that phrase for me to say?

Maybe I should  
coin a word  
perhaps no one  
has heard.  
No, I want to coin a phrase  
one day.  
But to whom shall I say  
this newly coined phrase?

Why coin a phrase?  
It is just a word play  
to change another's way.  
Well, I'll coin a phrase  
anyway.

## Scenes From A Night Dream

by Greg McBride



## [i met a guy who looked just like me]

by Mark Smeby

i met a guy who looked just like me -  
i asked him what i felt like  
he said he feels the same way i do -  
that we really are not different.  
but when i looked at him  
something made me feel uncomfortable -  
it was something i wanted to change.  
but i didn't have that much time  
and i was basically OK  
anyway

# Coyote

by Carter Hansen

*Once there was a time, not so long ago, when the earth was not blessed with rain for a very long time. The food-giving earth was baked hard by the fiercely burning sun. The ground was split with jagged cracks, torn as lightning sunders stormy skies. The dark soil was dried to dust and scattered by swirling winds. Time seemed not to pass as one hot, dry day followed another without relief. On one especially hot day during this drought, I left the comfort of home and the company of friends to walk alone. It was on this day that I met Coyote while wandering in the woods alone.*

Each step was at once a retreat and an advance as I left the confines of the college and headed for the park. I paused at the base of the slope which rose sharply behind the campus, rolling up my sleeves and loosening a button on my collar before climbing the hill to the park. Knee-deep grass persistently tugged at my legs as I lurched and heaved up the hillside. I was panting for air before long, and my side cramped up, making me clutch at my ribcage though I knew it wouldn't help. The air was so hot and dry that it stung my throat and lungs. I imagined that they must have looked as parched and cracked as the ground I walked on, judging by the way they felt. Trying vainly to catch my breath, I was inhaling so deeply that the tendons in my neck stretched the skin like supple canvas.

As I strained to force my lungs beyond the limits of my expanding ribs, a shaggy clump of grass caught my foot. I hopped and kicked in a frenzy to free it, but lost my balance in the struggle. I twisted fell and rolled back down the hill a few yards. Gasping and coughing in the cloud of dust and pollen stirred by my fall, I laid there on my back to catch my breath before going on. I sucked the hot, dry air more hungrily than a dog sucks marrow from a bone. I was glad I had the foresight to fill a canteen as I gulped the water down. I drank until my throat ached from the cold. Sitting up, I gazed back down the hill.

Overlooking the campus, I wondered why I even bothered going to the park on such a day. The dorms were very comfortable with air conditioning and everything, but I sorely needed to get away. Besides, I wasn't having much luck trying to study. I couldn't concentrate on what I was reading. The stereos and televisions of my neighbors kept grabbing my attention with fast and various bits of entertainment and enticement. I started to get apace from doing only one thing for so long. I longed for a change. My eyes kept wandering through smoke-filtered rays and out the window, staring wistfully in the direction of the park for minutes at a time. I felt like I was wasting my time. So, after putting on some jeans and a patterned long-sleeve shirt, to protect myself from the tall grass of the

# Coyote

park, I set out looking for company.

I stopped by a friend's room, where all the regulars were gathered around the set. Some commercial was blaring a pitch of individuality to a mass-market as I entered the open door. I seized the opportunity presented by the commercial break and did some advertising of my own. I asked if any of them wanted to come with me to the park, but apparently there was an important game on, so none of them were interested. They all thought I was crazy to go out in the heat. Discouraged, but still determined to go, I walked on down the hall, through the din of the mingled broadcasts, their discord magnified by out-of-sync echoes bouncing back from the smooth, sterile walls of the dormitory.

It was hard to leave the comfort of a controlled environment on such a scorching day, especially without company. Nevertheless, I left, trying to convince myself that it was just as well, if not better, that I go alone.

Now I wasn't so sure it was a good idea after all, as I sat gasping for breath on the hillside. I even considered returning to the dormitory. Realizing it was too late to turn back, I decided to keep going.

My knees quivered as I tried at last to stand. Tenuously maintaining my balance, I gazed on up the hill. I hadn't realized that I was so close to my goal already. I was concentrating so much on each step that I might as well have been wearing blinders. Each step lighter than the last, I easily strode the rest of the way to the top.

Sunset struck me as I finally peered over the apex. Shafts of light held me transfixed, piercing my eyes and gripping my soul. I couldn't have pulled myself away, even if I'd wanted to. Minutes, maybe only seconds, I can't say for sure how long, I was held there. When my soul was released at last, I looked away, but an image was permanently seared into my vision, hovering about whatever I looked at like a spirit which only I was allowed to perceive.

There was a long, cold sidewalk running about the perimeter of the park, forming a distorted circle. I strode to the nearest point in the pavement and started to follow the path, but soon decided to cross the enclosed field and head directly into the sunset. Vicious waves of brome grass lashed me as I crossed the isolated chunk of prairie, whipping me with stems thick and long as willow switches. The grass was dried to the texture of sandpaper and the coarse leaves cut and scratched any exposed areas of my skin. As I winced at the sharp blades, I was glad I remembered to dress properly for the trip.

Approaching the other side of the circle, I saw the stark silhouette of a stranger. The form was flat and sharply outlined, like a hole punched in the sunset with a cookie-cutter. Finally, I recognized him, he was a professor from the college. I called to him and he politely responded, waiting for me on the sidewalk.

He was an economics professor, notorious for watering down his classes to meet sliding admissions requirements, part of the overall shift in emphasis happening at the college. The institution had built its reputation on a solid humanities program, but that reputation wasn't enough to keep it going anymore. It was never in good financial shape, hanging by a mere spider's filament over bankruptcy ever since it was founded. The humanities weren't drawing enough students these days, and according to the administration, changes were necessary in order to preserve the institution's academic integrity in the

## Coyote

long run. To appeal to a larger market, the emphasis was shifted from humanities to business. My head was swimming with these thoughts and judgments as I neared the sidewalk, in a way determining the nature and outcome of our meeting before it had even begun.

I finally reached the path where the professor waited, carrying a cloud of dust with me which settled with the gravity of theatrical fog. I slapped little puffs of dust from my clothes and brushed away the grass seeds which still clung to me while stamping the dirt from my shoes. I was sweaty, and the heavy, protective fabrics clung to my skin. I felt stifled and suffocated. When the commotion and dust had settled, he finally addressed me.

"Fantastic view! You can really see forever," he blared as a greeting. He was looking down a long valley with gentle hills, sectioned into fields like a fertile Mondrian, brushed with the subtle browns of harvest. Since this was the highest point for miles, we could see beyond the first bluffs to where the hills gently rippled into the infinite embrace of the prairie. "I really love to come up here and walk this same path, night after night," he enthusiastically declared. "I come here every evening after dinner. A sunset and view like this are good for one's digestion." He chuckled, patting an over-ripe belly to punctuate the remark.

"Some say the plains are just that," I replied, disregarding his debatably humorous attempt to break the ice. It was clear he wasn't following me, so I explained, "Plain, I mean. But I've lived here all my life and seen alot of sunsets like this. I paused a moment to reflect, consciously allowing his anticipation and curiosity to build. "Not one of them has ever failed to strike me as beautiful." I stopped again as the meaninglessness of what I just said sunk in. Shuffling my feet, I sighed, then decided to pursue it. "Of course I can't say exactly what that means — beautiful — but I certainly know I've felt it."

I could tell I was quickly losing his interest. He started fidgeting uncomfortably, scratching his neck and eyebrows. I thought an illustration might save him, so I gestured back toward the college. From our vantage point, we could see the roof of the administration building. "Like that old building. Despite its frugal design and construction, it still has a certain inexpressible charm. Somehow, the whole transcends the sum of the parts." I couldn't help laughing inwardly at myself as I realized how pedantic the statement was. It sounded so pathetically hollow and devoid of feeling.

"I have to agree," he responded apathetically. Then, more heartily, "It's also really efficient. We've come a long ways at the college, you know. Even that old, run-down moneypit has seen a great deal of progress."

I could see the lists forming in his head as his face was animated with the spirit of self-congratulation. I strongly disagreed with his notion of progress, and tried to capitalize on the opportunity presented by his reflective delay. However, when I broke in to express my objections, I found I could only mutter softly, "Oh, I don't know..."

He must have read the reservations behind my out-of-focus vision since he quickly moved to support his position, saying "I mean all those new computers — the renovation of that decrepit building — the updated programs, facilities and curriculums — the new marketing campaign..." A cautious veil was slowly being pulled across his visage as he perceived my disapproval. Defensiveness tempered the tone of his voice as he continued his presentation. The change was subtle, but a perceptible overtone of

## Coyote

hostility tainted his speech. "We really needed a shot in the arm like that to get us back on our feet and headed on the right track — Make us competitive — Open doors — Provide opportunities for the students to capitalize on."

"It will never be the same without the ivies," I said simply and quietly.

The professor was paralyzed by the remark. It was not at all the sort of response he was expecting. He finally composed himself enough to say, "I don't understand you."

"The ivies that used to cling to the walls of the administration building," I explained.

The walls of the building were once covered with the embracing vines. They were a beautiful, natural ornament to the otherwise utilitarian brick facade of the structure. Last year they were cut back so as not to interfere with the opening and closing of windows. However, the plaintiffs weren't satisfied with a simple, harmless trimming. The solution was far too temporary, they'd tried it before. To insure that they would never have to deal with this obstruction again, the hardy perennials had to be completely rooted out. The vines hardly resisted and the building's character was soon reduced to a stark, incompassionate wall of bricks.

"They were just a nuisance — Real pain in the ass to maintain," he responded, utterly lacking sympathy or sensitivity. "Every year they pruned them back out of the way, but they always grew back — maddening persistence — jamming the windows — blocking the view of downtown."

"That's progress I guess," I muttered, almost apologetically. He asked me what I meant, but I declined from a confrontation, saying "Nothing, really."

He shifted somewhat uneasily in the pregnant silence which followed, then decided just to drop the whole thing and make his exit.

"By the way," he said, the way people always do when consciously introducing an irrelevant topic. "I was just going back to the monument to take another look at it before leaving." Pride in the monument pricked his imagination again, coloring his voice with anticipation of the scene. Distracted, he took a few hesitant steps toward the monument, turning away from me. "All the professors think it's great, they really adore it. It's especially beautiful at sunset. Here, follow me." He had already assumed his characteristic fast pace before I gained his attention.

"No, thank you," I replied with polite forcefulness. "I prefer to strike out on my own. It gives me a chance to think things over. It's very therapeutic," I concluded, with a smug wink for punctuation, as he had done.

He chuckled and said he'd see me around campus, then continued down the cold cement path toward the monument, where other professors from the college were already congregating.

The monument preoccupied my thoughts as I left the path. It was erected to commemorate the forgotten religious myths of local Indians. Somehow, though, the cheaply manufactured and inorganic materials; the cold, lifeless concrete and decorative bits of colored glass, seemed so inappropriate and insensitive. It was designed by a distinguished art professor from the college, who also happened to be an ordained minister. This, no doubt, is where the monument got its cruciform shape and byzantine-inspired

## Coyote

mosaic. The synthetic form and materials seemed comically misplaced in the vast, vibrant fields of the plains. As I neared the edge of the trees, I tried to remember if I had ever seen an Indian admiring the monument.

The edge of the grove was a thickly overgrown barrier. Trying to find an easy way in, I traced the perimeter, searching for a break or some sort of path. The generations of deadwood which had piled up suggested that I was perhaps the first person to visit this place for years.

Mustering my resolve and resigning myself to the necessary pain and difficulty ahead, I forced my way at random into the woods. The trees were not hostile, but the entry was somewhat violent. Brittle branches scratched, snapped and whipped at me as I struggled to find safe passage. After penetrating the woods only a few yards, I came to a point where the brush and branches were too thick for me to go on. Each way I turned seemed more hopeless than the last. Generations of deadwood knit a dense, tightly meshed net which slowly closed in around me until I was unable to move. I started getting scared and claustrophobic. I kicked frantically at the ivies which bound my feet, only ensnaring them even worse. Then a thin branch slashed across my eyes. I shut them tight in pain, squeezing out a flow of salty tears. In my blindness, I panicked, hysterically punching at the branches which held me like heavy iron shackles. I didn't see the Hawthorne bush, but soon recognized it as sharp thorns pierced my clenched fists, tearing the skin in bloody gashes. I felt so trapped and helpless I was ready to scream. Then I realized that my eyes were still shut, more from fear and frustration than the injury itself. I quit struggling and tried to relax, leaving my eyes closed until my breathing calmed and the staccato echo of snapping deadwood subsided in my head.

When I opened my eyes, I found a gap in the cover which I could slip through to a small clearing where two fallen trees lay crossed. I made it to the clear space with little difficulty now. In this serene space, I felt at last safe, accepted, protected, and welcome.

Since I felt so free and isolated, and the coming twilight provided additional cover, I stripped the patterned fabrics off and cast them aside. While undressing, I noticed the scars of my violent passage. I was bleeding from my ankles where I kicked at the coarse, dry undergrowth. My hands, too, were bloody from the struggle with the Hawthorne.

These injuries didn't bother me at all. Despite conscious recognition of these wounds, I actually felt no pain. I felt comfortable, naked in my own secluded little clearing. I took breath after deep breath of air. Though it was dry, it tasted fresh and crisp. I felt so clean and whole and pure then. I saw a simple bed of grass and vines. I sat down and leaned back, stretching my arms out along the log, and relaxed.

I didn't close my eyes, but gazed through thinning branches at the delicate crescent of the new moon, suspended low in the twilight sky. In the hazy dusk, I could just make out the shadowy outline of the dark side. The predominant weight of darkness seemed too much for the fragile eggshell bowl. I wondered that it didn't break, spilling the darkness earthward. As I settled into the bed of ivies, still gazing at the moon, I heard the solitary call of a coyote not far off.

I was frightened by the realization that a wild animal was near. I tried to listen carefully, so I could figure out exactly where he stood in relation to me. The next howl was definitely closer. It seemed he was standing right at the edge of the thicket. As I turned

## Coyote

cautiously to check behind me, a dry twig snapped under me. The coyote must have heard it, or it sensed my presence in some other way. He started pacing back and forth, peering through the trees in my direction. My heart pounded and I felt shaky from the adrenaline hitting my system as I wondered what was going to happen next. Just then, before I could plan for a response, he started coming towards me. He was crafty and had no trouble navigating through the undergrowth. Before I could decide whether or not to run, he was in the clearing. There I was, naked and defenseless, face-to-face with the coyote.

The coyote made no threatening advance, but held his position as we stared at each other. He must have known that I intended no harm since he just sat there cautiously, waiting for a sign from me. I was probably more scared than he was, though he was definitely surprised to find me there.

I suddenly felt very thirsty and slowly, carefully reached for my canteen. I figured he was probably at least as thirsty as I. I couldn't help wondering how he survived in such a drought. The water of the city is polluted or inaccessible. If he drank water at a farm, he could be poisoned by chemicals from the fields or shot for his fur coat by a territorial farmer. I knew that the coyote, like me was a survivor, he would always get by somehow. In an act of good faith, I poured some of my water into a natural bowl, formed by a smooth depression in the side of the log. I lightly splashed the water with my fingertips, gazing at the coyote with a look of invitation.

*Come. Be seated beside me, my brother, let me share with you my water.*

Either he was desperate for water, or he somehow understood my unspoken message. He cautiously crept nearer and nearer, to my wonder. Still more amazing, I didn't feel threatened at all. Somehow, I knew we were brothers and we had nothing to fear from each other. The coyote continued his advance, taking his rightful place beside me as my brother, and in brotherhood we shared the cool, refreshing water. As he gratefully lapped at my gift, I felt the first few cautious drops of rain caress the arid plain.

Coyote

...the coyote's howl...  
...in some other way...  
...the coyote's howl...  
...in some other way...  
...the coyote's howl...  
...in some other way...



### Stop Action

by Kellee Siemers

Coyote

### Disney America

by Peter A. Sierant

Stars adorn my sheets;  
along with Goofy, Donald, and Mickey.  
Trying to sing a song.  
An anthem that has meaning.

(my country tis of thee).

America it sez (my sheets)  
with flute, drum and flag.  
Land of the Free and Home of the Brag.  
Power of might held in the thermonuclear light.  
Purple Mountains Majesty.  
Waves of Grain—the boiling images  
inside a crack induced brain.

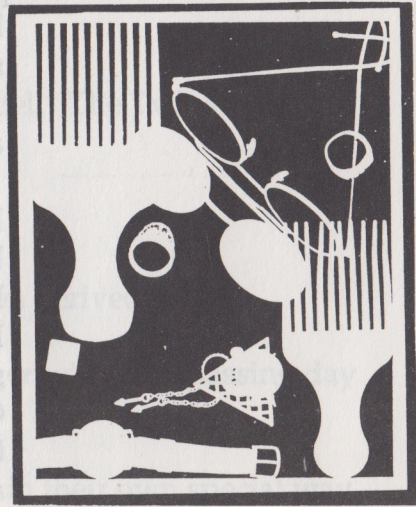
(land where my fathers died)

Toxic waste and acid rain,  
America gone insane.  
Five Children lying around in the sun  
Stockton, California man to run their blood.  
Microwave Pizza next to the condoms.  
Pay right up and you can have both of them,  
for a price.  
Aint it nice,  
that Grandma baked apple pies.

(let freedom ring)

### Toiletries (Photogram)

by James Cloyd





## **Stop Action**

by Eva Zeuthen

## **To Kelli**

by Peg Crannell

Smiles, reflecting from  
pale curls bouncing,  
blue eyes cavorting,  
smiles expanding.  
In her crib, one year old,  
arms outstretched to me.

I pause to admire,  
Life-beat filling me,  
brimming to my eyes.  
I gaze at you,  
surprise of mine,  
Child of smiles, smiles.  
Bouncing, loving, chortling,  
arms outstretched to me.

## **Stop Action**

by Debra Schramper

## **Identical Twins**

by Carin Mayr

One egg fertilized

Divides into two  
Two beings, a single womb

One breaks free and slips through

Always separated by distance, yet still as one  
Two individual lives have now begun

One single identity - "The Twins"

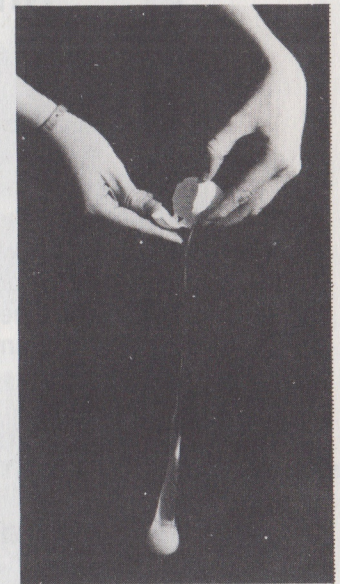
Individuality flares a spark  
Two different personalities tell "The Twins" apart

One becomes two

Their paths divide  
Two separate lives have been derived

One bond grows still stronger with each passing day

Insecurity has built wisdom  
Two twins together forever in their own special way





## Snowflakes

by Julia Hansen

Like a snowflake,  
they all are different.  
Yet When massed,  
they are all the same.  
Why are we ever searching  
for that snowflake in the drift?  
When time forever melts them  
until finally no friends are left.

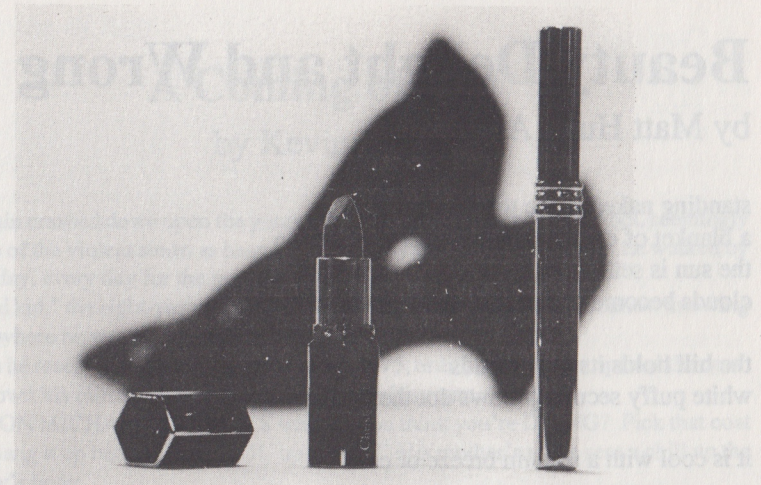


**First Day of Snowstorm** by Napawan

## Child Abuse

by Diana Jones

Child abuse is on the rise  
Stop to listen...hear the cries!  
Black and blue, scars galore  
Oh, I ran into a door.  
Loving the one who gives the licks  
Death in near...the clock ticks.  
Child abuse is on the rise  
Does anyone care if Johnny dies?



**Lipstick**

by Eva Zeuthen

**[you make it look so easy]**

by Mark Smeby

you make it look so easy  
the way you know how to  
turn your head a certain way  
and half-close your eyes  
so that people look closer  
and feel something special  
something special that isn't there

you make it look so easy  
the way you know how to  
wear the colors that work  
and walk so straight  
so that people look closer  
and feel something special  
something special that isn't there

you make it look so easy  
but i feel that it's hard for you  
to be so seen  
so people look and expect  
that something special  
that you know isn't really  
anything at all

# Beauty Delight and Wrong

by Matt Hugh Allen

standing naked at the top of a hill  
a blanket of clouds seek to cover the horizon  
the sun is setting  
clouds become illuminated with shards of red gold

the hill holds its own clouds  
white puffy secular pillows dot the decline

it is cool with a solemn breeze of care

making a run  
diving head first hands outstretched  
through the pillows on a blanket of air  
gliding on a whim the excitement of inertia carrying me down

reaching the base my body slows to a lotus position  
faced with a marble staircase

rising I begin my climb  
marble cool on my feet

reaching the top stair  
confronted with a door  
turning I see I can't go back  
the sun is gone  
my place is dark

the door is locked

Still Life  
by Napawan



# A Coming of Age

by Kevin White

The rain crashed down upon the youngster as he trotted home from school, seemingly unaware of the violent storm as he made his way by the Hy-Vee store that he walked by twice a day, every day for the past three years.

"Stupid kid," the eight-year old grumbled as he kept his head down, somehow knowing exactly where he was going nonetheless.

When he reached his house, a middle-class, 1975, ordinary house, he opened the door, threw down his raincoat, and headed straight for his room.

"JASON MICHAEL ANDREWS what do you think you're DOING? Pick that coat up and hang it up before I hang YOU up with it!" His mother's voice sent a chill up the little boy's body.

Without a word Jason made a 180-degree turn in the middle of the dining room, walked back into the living room, and hung his coat up.

"It's just not fair, Mom," said Jason as he walked back into the kitchen, after waiting an extra few seconds for his mother to cool down. "Why is everybody bigger than me? I'd like to punch that ol' Jimmy Jacobsen right in the mouth the next time he tries buggin' me. But he's three times bigger than me, Mom. It's just not fair."

His mother quickly changed into that soothing, calming, mother voice that always makes children feel better.

"Now, Jas, you know fighting won't prove anything. You could poke an eye out." (Mothers were famous for the "poke your eye out" statement at the worst possible time.) "Besides, if you just ignore Jimmy he'll probably stop bugging you."

"But Mom, he pushed Stacy today!" Oops, he didn't really mean it to sound like that. It sounded too much like he really liked Stacy. Well, he did, kind of. But not as a girl friend. Just as a friend.

"Well why don't you just tell your teacher, and she'll take care of it," said his mother.

Moms could say the dumbest things sometimes, Jason thought. Teachers are too busy taking attendance and drinking coffee to worry about who's pushing who. Without trying to explain this to his Mom, Jason walked into his bedroom, wondering why a third-grader's life had to be so difficult.

The slam of the front door broke his train of thought immediately. Jason knew it was his loving sister Annie. Jason just wanted to hide; he didn't want to have to talk with his five-year-old sister.

But sure enough, she came barging into his room not more than five minutes after she walked in the door.

"Let's go to the park and play!"

"No!"

"Come on, Jas, the rain stopped and it will be fun and besides you promised me you'd play with me today 'cuz you never play with me. Come on, Jas!"

"Leave me alone!"

"Jas, Mom said you have to start playin' with me more and besides it will be fun and

## A Coming of Age

we can play that new game we made up. Come on, Jas. Mom said you have to play with me more."

Jason streaked out of his room and out the door down to his favorite place to be alone. There was a big oak tree behind Old Lady Rayburn's house. It was easy to climb and you could see the street and just watch people as they walked by without them knowing you were there. But Jason didn't climb the tree necessarily to watch people today. He just wanted to be alone and away from his sister. The tree was still wet, and so was his bottom when he sat down, but it didn't matter. He was away from Annie.

As he was sitting feeling sorry for himself, a recognizable figure came and stood at the base of the tree. Jason knew who it had to be, since his sister didn't know about the tree. Yep, it was Stacy.

"Aren't ya gettin' wet up there?"

"Yeah. So."

"So why're ya up there if you're gettin all wet?"

"Because I wanted to be alone."

"Why? What's the matter?"

He couldn't tell her that he was mad because he was smaller than everybody else and because Jimmy had pushed her earlier in the day. He just couldn't.

"I came up here to think about a lot of stuff."

"Like what?"

"Oh, just stuff."

"Oh. Well, do ya want to come to the park with me?"

"Yeah, I guess. It is kind of wet up here."

So Jason jumped out of the tree and walked to the park with his friend Stacy. Jason just hoped she didn't keep asking why he was in the tree and what he was thinking about. They had been swinging for about ten minutes, not saying much, just being happy, when a boy rode up on his Huffy dirt bike and stopped in front of them.

"Well, if it isn't the two lovebirds."

"Shut up, Jimmy," said Jason.

"And who's gonna make me?"

Well, it was do or die for Jason Andrews. Here he was, being heckled by his chief rival, Jimmy Jacobsen, and he was tired of it. It was time for one particular short little eight-year old to stand up for his rights, especially since Stacy was here watching.

"Jimmy, why do you always have to act like such a dork?" He noticed Stacy's eyes get very big all of a sudden.

"Don't you call me a dork, you little twerp. I just might have to hurt you for that."

"You couldn't hurt a flea," answered Jason. That had become a little overused these days, he thought. But it was the first thing that popped into his head.

"You know I've beaten up kids twice your size for saying things like that." Jimmy started pushing Jason backwards ever so slowly as Jason tried to hold his ground.

Finally, as Jimmy started pushing harder, he had had enough. All the frustrations of the past day, his little sister, his mother, and most of all the boy he stood facing now, combined and produced a big, sharp, looping right hook that stunned Jimmy and sent him stumbling backwards. No, it didn't knock him out, or even down, but nonetheless Jason had made his point.

## A Coming of Age

Jimmy regained his balance and his respect for Jason after the startling punch, but still knew he had to somehow show his superiority over Jason. So he grabbed Jason's left arm and held it behind his back with great pressure.

"Say uncle," screamed Jimmy.

"No," was the answer.

"Say it!" Jimmy applied as much pressure as his 115-pound body could.

"O.K. Uncle. I give."

Jimmy was satisfied now and rode off on his dirt bike, still amazed at the punch he'd taken just five minutes earlier.

"Geez, where'd you learn to hit like that?" asked Stacy.

"I don't know. I guess from my dad," answered Jason.

There was a long, awkward silence.

"Race ya to the stop sign," Jason finally said.

"Sure." And they sped off like they were free again.

The stop sign was the halfway point between their two houses, and they both knew this was good-bye for another day. They were both still panting rather heavily when Stacy spoke.

"Weren't ya scared of Jimmy at all?"

"No, not really," he lied.

"Well, when everyone at school hears about it, you're gonna be a hero."

Jason thought about that for a moment and made another decision.

"How 'bout if we don't tell anybody. Just keep it between you and me."

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah."

"O.K. Well, I guess I'll see ya 'round."

"O.K. Bye."

Jason walked home more proud of himself than he had been in a long time. He wore a half-smile all the way home from the stop sign, as his thoughts wandered through the day's events.

He walked into the house, and his attention focused on a cartoon that his sister was watching. He dropped his coat on the couch and sat down, gazing at the television.

"Jason Michael! Hang that coat up RIGHT NOW!"

"Sure, Mom." He jumped up and hung his coat up with that same half-smile on his face.

At the commercial break Annie's attention turned to her brother.

"Jason, you have to play with me after supper 'cuz I asked Mom and Dad and they both said you have to play with me."

"O.K. We'll play whatever you want after we eat." Jason replied.

Jason's mother overheard the conversation and couldn't believe Jason's sudden change of attitude. She walked into the living room.

"Jason, did anything special happen today?"

"No, not really, Mom."

As his mother walked back into the kitchen, shaking her head, Jason was grinning from ear to ear, eager for school the next day.

# Ruby

by Peg Crannell

Ruby, smiling to herself, puffed slightly as she bustled around her kitchen, preparing dinner for her son, Tom. She meticulously arranged dishes on a red-patterned placemat. The bit of red was a bright spot in its monochromatic, neutral surroundings. The other bright spot was Ruby herself. Ruby liked to think that she faced the world as flowers did — looking towards the sun with an open smile and colorful wrappings. On this chilly November morning tulip-red knit pants and top clung to her, petal-fashion, revealing her increasingly generous curves.

"The Young and the Restless" was just beginning as Ruby finished cutting the lemon meringue pie. She nodded briskly to herself; the soap opera's theme music signaled her self-imposed deadline. She liked to have everything in readiness for the noon meal by 11:00 so that Tom could drop in whenever it was convenient and not have to wait for his meal.

Ruby had spent the morning in the kitchen, now she headed towards the porch, her workroom. The porch was one of those added-on affairs common to white frame houses. It had windows on each of its three exterior walls which filled the room with sunlight. The porch served several uses: it was the entry, the coat closet, a catch-all, and Ruby's workroom — her studio. Ruby's pace quickened as she walked the length of the house, brushing against light brown walls. As she crossed the threshold of the porch/workroom, Ruby paused to admire her work. A dozen paintings lined the walls or were propped on tables and easels. Pictures of barns, bowls of fruit, flowers, and animals peered back at her. Ruby had carefully chosen the off-white color for the walls of her studio to enhance her paintings and reduce glare. Now she squeezed a blob of paint from its near-empty tube onto her palette. A frown creased her face as she thought of the inconvenience of replacing the tube of paint and the time away from her easel. But soon she was working industriously, concentrating so intently on the details of her obsession that she didn't hear Tom drive up.

"Hi, Mom, how's the painting coming?"

"Oh Tom," Ruby breathed rapidly, clasping her hands together and almost jumping up and down, childishly. Her face radiated smiles; her eyes sparkled as she gave him the details of her recent efforts.

Mentally switching gears, remembering Tom's purpose and her duties, Ruby added in a more subdued fashion but still smiling, "Your dinner's ready, let's go to the kitchen." Already moving in that direction, she added, "How are Pat and the kids?"

"They're fine," Tom responded.

"And everything on the farm is alright?" Ruby questioned as she moved food from stove to table.

"Just fine. I'm moving some grain today."

## Ruby

They ate companionably, Ruby gently probing into his days activities. "Will you be going into town anytime soon?"

"I'll be in town several times with the grain. Why do you ask?" Tom leaned back in his chair, placing his fork on the edge of his plate.

Ruby hurried to serve the pie. "Look what I made you — your favorite, lemon meringue pie."

"Mom, you shouldn't have gone to all that trouble," Tom said, eyes lighting up. "Give me a small piece please, you know I'm watching my weight."

Ruby placed a huge wedge of creamy yellow pie in front of Tom. White meringue billowed in heavenly clouds dotted with droplets, waiting to entice the most reluctant tongue.

"Mom, you're ruining my diet!" Tom protested, smiling but serious.

"Nonsense, Son," Ruby answered, "you don't need to worry about your weight. Enjoy yourself. I know its your favorite and I made it just for you."

Tom began to eat, his fork moving more and more slowly as the pie decreased in size.

"I'm almost out of a tube of paint I need," Ruby returned to the previous conversation, "and I was wondering if you could pick it up for me when you're in town."

"Could you wait a day or two?" Tom asked. "I'll be driving the truck today and it's very difficult to park and go into a store."

Ruby hesitated, then smiled a small smile. "Oh, that will be fine. I really appreciate all you do for me, you know. You take such good care of me." As Tom rose, Ruby gave him a quick hug. They walked towards the door together. When they reached the porch, Tom bent to pick up his work boots and began preparing to leave. Ruby wandered among her paintings, gazing longingly towards the unfinished work. She smiled her bright smile again as she turned to Tom. "I haven't had any trouble with my heart today," she said.

"That's great, Mom," Tom said. "Have you been taking your medicine?"

"You know I always follow Doctor's orders," Ruby answered. "Did I tell you he told me to take it a little easier?"

"Yes, Mom, you told me, and are you?"

"Oh yes, in fact, I'm going to take a little nap this afternoon. I'll probably run out of paint soon so I'll have to quit anyway."

Tom zipped his jacket. "What kind of paint did you want?"

Ruby glowed. "Vermillion," she said, removing a piece of paper from her pocket. "Here, I wrote it down for you. Thank you, Son. I don't know what I'd do without you."

Tom reached out for the paper, glancing at it briefly before slipping it into his pocket. He turned to the door, twisted the handle, and stepped out. The cold air stung his cheeks. He was aware of discomfort as his too-full stomach pushed against his belt.

They are contemptible. Ruby gently brushed his hair activities. "Will you be going into town tonight soon?"  
"I'll be in town several times with the girls. Why do you ask?" Tom leaned back in his chair, placing his feet on the edge of the table.  
Ruby burst to leave the table. "Look what I mean you—your favorite, James message pie."  
"Mean, you shouldn't have gone to all this trouble," Tom said, eyes lighting up. "Give me a small piece, please, you know I'm watching my weight."  
Ruby placed a large wedge on the table. "What message followed in January only to find it was the most relevant."

# Babel

by Carter Hansen

A smattering of lines,  
Arbitrarily scattered,  
Form a pattern  
Of tattered images,  
Battered,  
Bleeding,  
Retreating,  
Misread or miswrought,  
Miss their mark.