

PHANTASMAGORIA



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Phantasmagoria

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This magazine is dedicated to the belief that the arts are a necessary and important force in our lives, and to the support of the young artists who bring them to us.



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Old World

One by one, they awoke, bringing new life to the day.

I stuck my head outside, the cool warm breeze filled my pores, lifted me. As I floated out of my window, I grabbed a piece of the earth just to remind me where I belong. I saw everything new.

To observe is good, but to participate is fulfilling. So I landed on the nearest star.

Everyone is uneasy, I was different, they poked and prodded with their eyes, dissected me with their questions. I was accepted, how different didn't matter, we all felt peace.

The insecurity has left. As soon as I felt comfortable with them, I had to leave. So I gave them my piece of earth, my ideas, cares, Love and tears, then said good bye.

I slipped back into the air with the memory of those beautiful ones. On the way back home, I hitched a ride on a satellite. Falling like a feather, grabbing the clouds, I landed on a soft patch of familiarity, I looked up and noticed that I can find newness in my old world.

Everyone is not out to get me, I look behind the angry faces and see a brand new person.

-Danielle Concordia



Our Burning House

Many breeds of little people
run in hysteria, trapped in the
time of punishment.

The ancient alter is crushed,
Monuments collapse in a flash
of lightening as the village burns
while we be for forgiveness

Author: Doesn't Matter

chaos/order

all directions, all ideas
all possibilities, all realities
nothing certain, nothing equal
nothing constant, nothing stable
change is life, and life, change
the nature of existence
what it always has been
what it always will
what we struggle against daily
and what we add to, at every moment
with every thought, word, and deed

-Edward Horatio Von Trapp



Fahrenheit 452

Andrew took a deep breath before entering, assuring himself that he must preserve the knowledge of what was behind the door. He opened the door and casually walked into the library. The sight of the guard at the metal detector made him feel faint but he knew he mustn't lose his nerve. The guard tipped his hat and smiled.

"Good evening, sir."

Andrew's heart jumped at the greeting and looked up in surprise. "Good Evening."

"Nice night, huh?"

"Yes!" Andrew said as he relaxed just a little bit.

"Too bad about the library, but its all for the best. The government proved its case."

"Yes, I suppose they did." As Andrew replied he walked past the guard and recounted the events of the past year. His mind wandered back to the day when the court case was first announced.

"Jones vs. Rodgers! Biggest case of the century!"

Andrew winced slightly at the thought but proceeded with the task at hand. The plan was simple, in theory. Take out as many books as possible, load them in his car outside, and drive away. He started grabbing books off the shelves. Half at random, half with a keen eye for his favorites. He loaded them on his cart. Melville, Shakespeare, Walden. He piled Emerson, Michener, and Milton. He passed over many others telling himself over and over that he could only do so much.

When the cart was full he let out a sigh of both satisfaction and disappointment. He pushed the cart to the front desk and waited for service. A very round woman with grey hair tied in a bun emerged from a back room, light mustache darkening, ever so slightly in the light, as she turned to Andrew.

"I would like to borrow these books for the night." Andrew said with great presence.

She smiled smugly at his failed attempt at a lie and pointed to a sign on the desk.

ALL BOOKS ARE TO REMAIN
IN THE LIBRARY UNTIL THE
DAY OF RECKONING.

(Under the section 343-4B of the State Penal Code)

His heart sank as he read the sign. He quietly announced that he would return the books to the shelves.

"DAY OF THE RECKONING..." he said. "The day of hasty foolishness!" His voice carried and caught the attention of the guard who gave a look of distaste and continued staring into space.

He began replacing the books, leaving a small part of himself with each one. He held the last of his books. A trashy love story. He rolled his eyes at its silly cover. With a last bit of anger he slammed the book into its place.

His eyebrows cocked as he watched the book disappear behind the shelf. He peered inside and a new plan formed in his head. He looked at the closest window and smiled as the idea took shape. He walked over to the control pad which held the hermetic seal on the window. Carefully he cracked off the face plate and his mind flashed back to his sixth grade electronics class. He switched a few wires and heard the seal release. Replacing the front plate he checked one more time to be sure the pad still read ACTIVATED. He quickly turned and whistled as he left.

Andrew's mind drifted to the sounds of the court case which was broadcast all over the country.

"A threat to our natural order our country enjoys today." Jones said so many months ago. The ignorant politicians and law makers fell in line like mindless zombies. Rodgers did what he could, but he lost that war before it started. The jury was just a small sample of the millions who thought reading



was out of date, a senseless pastime for those who couldn't afford a T.V. He never had a chance.

He walked around the building to the window he had opened earlier. After a quick survey of the surrounding streets, he threw the window open and climbed inside one fluid motion.

He ran to the shelf that hid the secret hole and tore it off the wall. With a great crash the works of a hundred authors thumped onto the floor. Andrew kicked himself for making such a loud noise but quickly recovered when he saw the gaping hole in the wall. He chipped away the plaster to reveal the trashy novel and a very good safe. He quickly judged the safe as two feet square. He laughed out loud and begun stuffing one book after another into the safe. His spirits died quickly, however, when he realized he could fit no more than ten or eleven books inside. He fell back hard on a pile of books at his feet and a feeling hopelessness swept over him. He thought out loud.

"If only ten books, which ones? Is one book more worthy than another? How can choose which books should survive and which should burn?"

With that, his mind wandered again. This time to the verdict. He hadn't let himself think about the books burning in an inferno of ignorance, until he said the words.

The broadcasters said it simply and without remorse.

"The verdict is given! Three weeks from tonight all books will be burned. The libraries will be handled by the fire companies. Individuals should take their books to..."

He felt beaten at last. He couldn't choose what to save and he couldn't change the verdict. He leaned his head against the wall, and fell asleep.

Andrew came awake with a start. He looked at his watch. he had less than an hour to fill the safe and get out. He gathered his thoughts and decided to collect some books. He grabbed Shakespeare's plays and a book of short stories. He tossed in a book of poetry and Moby Dick. He picked up a history book and threw it in without a second thought. He stirred in Confucius and Roman Mythology. He put in a book of star maps and a book of math.

"From Addition to Calculus," he said and shoved it in the hole. He sprinkled on a printing of the Bible and had room for one more. He looked down and there, by his feet was a copy of Farenheit 451. He thought for a moment at what he had done. He put in plays and poetry. Math and mythology. Books and stories of joy and tragedy. Now it was time for a little guilt. He slipped the book in place and closed the door. He said to himself in a hushed tone.

"...And the seventh seal was broken and a voice from heaven said: 'It is done!'"

As he closed the door he heard the faint sounds of the engines coming down the street. He ran to the window and turned around to take one last look at all the books. Generations from now he thought, someone will find the lost treasure and they'll place the books on some distant shelf. Eventually the curiosity will get to them and they will sit in front of a fire on a cold winter night and read stories told forever.

He heard the engines pull up out in front. Men and women screamed in the distance.

"Burn!"

He went to the window but stopped short. He thought of the world he was living in and what was happening all over the country at this very moment. He thought of what he had just done, and for the first time, he realized his true love of books. He loved the worlds they take you to and the people you meet. The adventures you go on and the love you can experience. He realized that books weren't just words are lessons. They're symbols of life and living.

The first sounds of firemen breaking down the door filtered into his thoughts. He smiled. The smile broke into a light chuckle as he sat down at a table and started reading a trashy novel.

Andrew Wheeler



"Gramps"

I want you to know that I think of you every second of my day.
I remember the way you'd laugh, the way'd you cry, and the things you'd always say.
I remember the way you looked, and the clothes you'd always wear,
the times I would sit with you, the grapes we used to share.
I remember the summers in the pool and sitting on your knee,
that day you comforted me when I was stung by a bee.
then one day God took you away from me and I realized it was forever.
But one thing's for sure, Gramps, you- I'll always remember.

Desiree J. Shutter

"To my grandfather who passed away on April 18th, 1993."

Blank Paper

Staring at a blank page.
What can be written on it?
There's so much space to be filled.
My mind is as blank as the piece of paper.

It feels like I'm in jail,
all the lines are keeping me in.
I must write something before I can leave.

Nothing is coming to me.
I will be here for awhile.

Jen Hogan



Together

*Through the stained glass windows shines the light,
distorted and discolored, revealing the faded crimson cloth
which shrouds the crumpled bodies beneath it.*

*The morning brings with it the misery of reality,
unmasking the truth and victoriously capturing the night,
placing it carefully in cobwebbed corners and forbidden
daydreams.*

*The final velvet petal falls from the flower and
awakens the darkness one last time, to claim the
souls of the night.*

*Huddled in each others arms, we pray for the end of the
day
and the safety of the darkness, wondering if we
can survive one more storm-together.*

-Elisabeth Pena

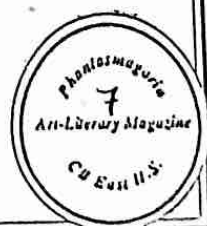


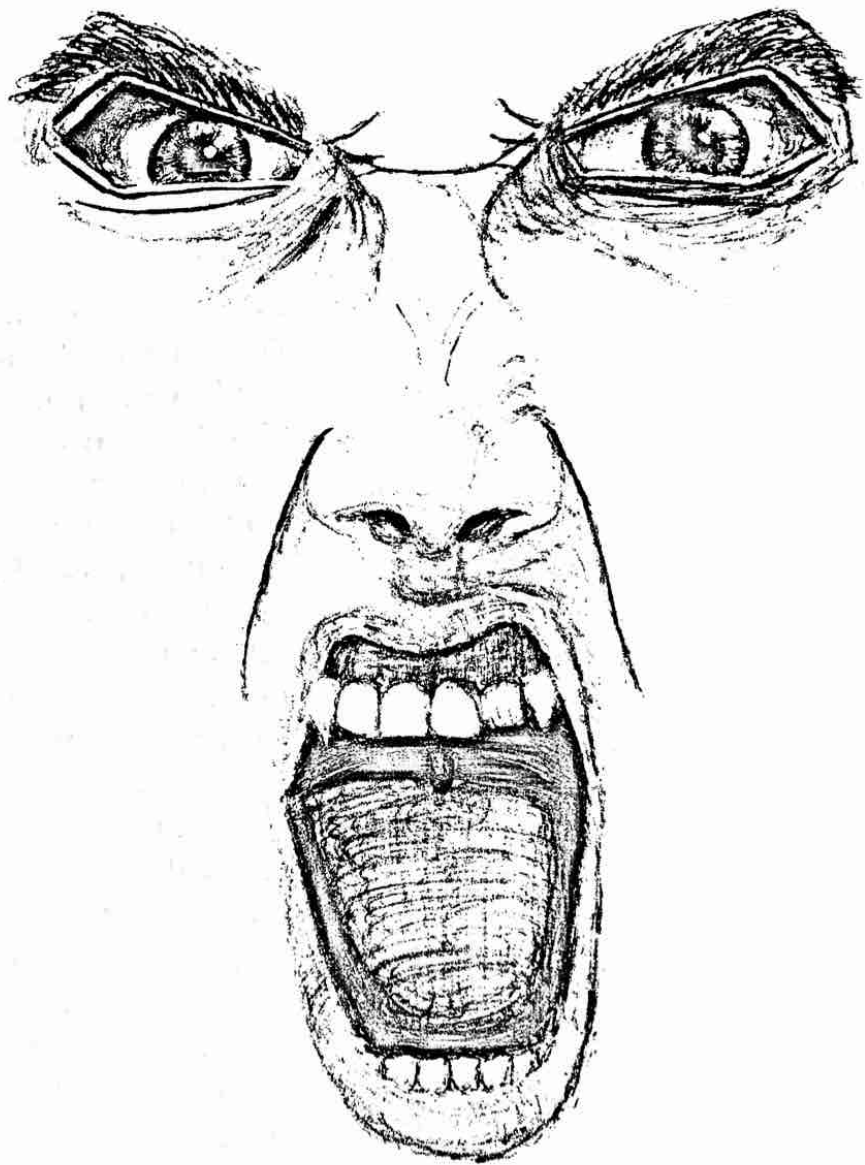
Ashamed by my feelings of
Loneliness.
the chipping of voices and friends
outside my window
empties my heart
and triggers my mind to write.
A visitor of smiles
unlifts my blinding veil.
I say hello and greet him
with my hardened laugh,
unable to be myself
trapped between emotions
of laughter
and tears.
Time drags on slowly
as my father's presence
thrusts my frigid body
into a dream of reality.
I sit
and wait the time to return
to myself.
Eternally and
coldly.
-e.d.

Merry- Go- Round

Glistening in Laughter
Caressed with smiles
Aloft with joy
Slowly turning
Revealing all
Embraced with warm arms
A bond of sunshine
From bearer
To born.
Quickening with amazement
Churning to the top
And down
Near, but far
From the earth.
Little hearts
Pound with tears
Screaming in anxiety
Twisting and turning
Hurricane licking
Maelstrom
Quickening.
A sound
Resounding
not astounding
"Mommy, I WANT OFF!"

Tea Deckman





Brett Niessen

Hard edged thrash played from a portable somewhere down the street. Callins almost couldn't hear the squeals of the projectiles as they whined off the hardplastic street surface, the music was so loud. He gritted his teeth and waited for the next one to whistle past. Should be sixteen, he thought. Standard reload on a needle pistol, he would have some time to put distance between him and the punk as the kid had to put in a new clip. The needle imbedded itself far too closely into the garbage near Callins's leg. He moved.

The first needle buried itself in his leg, but he had enough momentum to keep going through the pain. Two pistols, dammit, or two punks, he grimly tried to figure through the haze of orange agony emanating from his leg. His synthleather jacket stopped the next two shots, and by then he had decent cover behind a RefuseStor, which ought to stop any heavy artillery the boys are packing. Callins smiled at the thought. He drew his plain black pistol and flicked a switch where the hammer would be on a ballistic revolver. It hummed and flashed blue readiness at him.

A leather-clad kid, about two meters tall, dropped from the top of the dumpster, pointing his needler at Callins as he fell. He never saw the bottom though. Callins drew a bead on him with speed that would make an iajutsu student jealous and fired twice.

Firing twice was probably overkill as the first shot blew through his leg and hip, disintegrating most of the joint and ending any hope the boy had of ever walking again.

The second blast took off the top of his head.

The corpse fell steaming to the ground to the left of Callins, dropping its single needle gun in the fall. Callins spun to the exposed end of the alley, still concealed by the large trash receptacle. He waited three seconds before Punk #2 stuck his fool head around the corner.

"Lin? Are you- upp..." His words were cut off by the barrel of Callins's black pistol suddenly intruding in his left nostril. He looked in sudden fear at the man holding the weapon. Callins just looked tired and like he wanted to go home and enjoy the company of a cold beer for the night.

"Who. What. Why." Callins said, not removing the still-warm barrel from his assailant's nose. He looked at the punk's shaking head and felt sorry for the stupid kid. He pulled the gun from the kid's face and broke the punk's hand, still holding the needler, against the hard face of the dumpster.

"Answers, boy. Today?" Callins hoped the punk recognized mercy when he saw it. Killing him would have been easy, but it wouldn't help him with the identity of the man who hired these puke assassins. Or the one before them.

"I...I-I dunno, man..I--AAH! DAMN!" Callins struck him hard in the nose with the pistol butt. Blood began to flow there, and the kid's head reared back in pain. He almost fell backwards, but Callins's grip on his jacketfront kept him upright. "Aaahh, heysoo, man...I meant I dunno why, man..."

"Oh. I'm sorry." Callins dripped sympathy. "Okay, that's one. Care to go for two more?"

"The guy had a grey blanket over him, man...I didn't see 'is face. He gave me 'n' Lincoln 500 creds to take you out, man, I'm sorry, I don' wanna..." He was crying freely now, and he had noted the slaughtered corpse of his friend lying cooling in the night. "I don' wanna get you mad, man...I just wan' go home, man..."

"One more, pallie. Where and when did you get the hit?"

"Braided Laser, last week's end. Never saw the guy before. He...huh..."

The kid's eyes lost focus and he vomited on the side of the RefuseStor.

"Gh-god, god I'm sorry..." Callins dropped the punk next to his friend and left him to meditate his actions.

He moved back up the street, past the thrashheads with the portable. They barely noticed him, engrossed in their dancing and their drugs. He didn't look at them. His eyes were locked on the sight of the Braided Laser two

blocks ahead.

He'd just come from there. He was leaving for the night when the hit was made, back to the little cube on the Edge that he called home. He no longer wanted to go home. He wanted to go back to the bar, drink new and interesting beverages, meet fascinating people.

Find out why a guy in a grey blanket should want him dead. That kind of thing.

Shara was tending bar when Egan came back in. She'd thought he was gone for the night. He was back now, and he was burned. Shara hadn't known Egan Callins to be an easily angered man in the time she'd known him. She saw him endure an intentionally insulting stream of crude remarks from a cocky one-fifty kilo shipjack with just a smile. Sure, the shipper got his ass handed to him when the idiot started ragging on that little old man in the corner, but that was his own fault. Egan was a good one for defending the innocent. Not a common trait on this world.

Shara had seen angry men in her time behind the bar, and Egan was not one of them. But his time her subsense definitely read <TICKED OFF. HANDLE WITH CARE>, and the intensity of the emotion led her to believe she didn't need her empathy to sense it. Others in the bar turned to look his way when he entered. He scanned the room visually, and frowned. He moved to a seat at the bar, and waited for Shara to come over.

"Still on Slingers, Egan?" Shara smiled as she began assembling his drink. The DeGoren Slinger was a wonderful drink for a quick buzz, and the synthchem in it wore off quickly, making it good for a quick clearing of the mind. Some complained the effect made drinking it pointless, but it had a fan club nonetheless.

"No."

Egan looked right at her as he dropped the single cold word on the bar. He sat there as she shrugged and set the mixers back down behind the bar. She took a rag and wiped down the wooden length of the bar. She seemed unaffected by his hard manner, even though they both knew she sensed his rage.

"So." Shara stopped wiping and smiled at him. "You look like someone tried to kill your dog." The joke hung in the air.

"No. Someone tried to kill me." Egan said in short, clipped words. "Someone who got contracted in this bar, and I'm a little upset about it." He waited for her response.

Shara looked at him. She waited.

The other customers stared resolutely into their drinks.

She finally said, "Really? You don't say." She nodded interestedly. He narrowed his eyes at her. "Yes, in fact. The puke said it was a guy in a 'grey blanket'. Got a clue for me, Shar?" Egan said. He smiled a grim line. "You know I wouldn't rat you to anyone."

"Grey blanket?" She answered. She looked perplexed. "The only grey blanket-wearing guy's been in here was one of them priests, the Dawn Order guy. He was only in once, last week's end." She frowned, worry curving her face. "They really aren't guys that order hits, Ege. They're more the type who keep to themselves, ponder the universe, sing mantras, that kind of stuff."

"Hey, singing mantras doesn't hurt. I used to run that way some years back." Egan had learned self-control with an order of martial priests. "Just because they sing and pray and meditate doesn't mean they're a peaceful order." Egan's knowledgeable tone told Shara that he learned this from personal experience. Egan's skill at fighting, hand-to-hand and pistol, was obvious from the few brawls he'd been involved in. He'd been instrumental in helping Shar stop more than one fight, and his do-gooder streak was a lot larger than most of the swine who frequented the establishment. Shara had noticed.

"Anyway, maybe the order doesn't seem warlike to the public. They could practice in secret. It's been seen before." Egan was concentrating on the problem. His face was creased with lines of thought.

"Egan," Shara said warningly. "You can't go off after this guy. If he really think he didn't, then he's done so and left the planet. If he didn't, and I don't think the kid had inclination to lie," Egan smiled a little at the picture of the punk in his mind. "He was a little more concerned with his continued breathing habits."

"Look, Ege, be careful, okay? I don't want to see you get hurt." Shara was genuinely concerned. It was obvious in her face and he way she'd gripped his hand.

"Hey, Shara, c'mon now, I'm always careful." He smiled. Shara wasn't convinced as her friend turned and left the bar.

Callins reached his home apartment without incident. He'd deliberately taken dark alleys and perfect hit sites on the way, but no more attempts were made. He was almost a little disappointed. He dropped his jacket on the couch and sat in front of his omnicomp.

He switched it on, and let the comp do a diagnostic of local functions before requesting an entry to the White Radio Net information source. White Radio, as it was called, was the only way humankind had of moving information across the inhabited world of the galaxy at hyper-light speeds. The men who had discovered it, it was said, were actually researching a form of waste disposal at the time, leading some scientists to theorize that even the inventors didn't really know how it worked. Every time a dissertation was made, it seemed so contradictory and confusing to even the quantum physicists that no one else even cared to try and understand it. It worked, and that was all that mattered to the billions who used it daily.

The connection was made and Callins had access to the library stacks of all the worlds that accessed the Net. He'd done reading, research and pleasure both, through the Net. He knew that he could find out anything he needed to know about the Dawn Order. His eyes flitted as the information buzzed the screen before heading for his disks to be stored for later use. The Order was a group that proclaimed "Inner peace through understanding of self and universe alike." They were responsible for many of the advances in technology from the previous two centuries, mostly in an advisorial and researching role. They used to be consulted on most forms of scientific inquiry, before the Confed had put all technological research on a tight rein. Since then, their work had been restricted, and because they didn't acquiesce to a Confed grant and control, they were left from most of their colleagues's work. They hadn't done much of mention since around 2750.

Callins thought of the way the Confed ran things. The Confed, as the Galactic Confederation of Free Planets was called in common speech, had begun as a rebellion movement in the frontier worlds, and had eventually taken control of the explored universe. All of it.

They hadn't stopped at just governing the "free" planets. They expanded their influence to business, exploration efforts, and commercial ventures in order to recoup the galaxy's losses after the Fall after the Rebellion wars had been fought. The recovery was a success, but the Confed never returned any power to the individual. Eventually interstellar travel, military and martial studies, and scientific research were all brought under Confed domination. The rule was quiet and unobtrusive, except for the occasional demands for human rights and civil liberties.

Those usually ended in blood.

The Confed, utterly controlling all necessary factors for a military power, had made massive advances in the area of military technology. Ships in orbit around a planet could annihilate a target on the surface up to the size of a major city, or destroy the heart of a metrosprawl.

The Dawn Order, the screen displayed, was involved in one such atrocity. Sources reporting to the Confed claimed that they were funding and training rebels for an uprising against Confed control on Dirisha. Afterward

the sources were executed for providing "inaccurate" information, but that didn't happen until after 40,000 humans were wiped off the face of the planet by the giant particle weapons of the cruiser Moscow.

Callins was brought back from his mental wanderings by the information on his screen. The Confed was in control, and there wasn't any way anyone was going to solve that problem anytime soon. The comp changed subjects and showed Callins an estimation of Dawn Order membership.

The Dawn Order took acolytes selectively, rarely taking initiates from those who actively sought membership. The priests-to-be often "found their way" into the Order, guided by an unseen hand. Yeah, thought Callins. Sure. The membership studied the sciences, and were always expected to be able to work in a variety of fields. One Brother Gyun, of Bibi Arusi, had the equivalents of Ph.Ds in chemistry, molecular biology, particle physics, and engineering. This was all the result of his stay at the Temple of Dawn, on Rift. Before he was smart, but nothing special. This Order definitely had something going for it.

They weren't just compheads, though. Every member was said to be in perfect physical condition. There were isolated suggestions that the priests studied a specialized form of tai chi. They were apparently not a martial order, though. Good. Callins didn't need another khon'zukan student like the first assassin had been. Screaming and kiaiing like that had really annoyed him until he had to shut the bastard up with his pistol.

Callins dumped the information into memory for later. He stretched and yawned. Sleep would be a good thing right now. He cycled the bed out of the wall and set security for privacy.

His dreams were of a silent man in a grey shroud.

Callins awoke in a room that had been neat and orderly but had had a decidedly chaotic personality change overnight.

The few books in the wall unit had been pulled loose and strewn about the floor. His couch had been turned over. The omnicomp had been turned on and was still running. It had a listing of recent functions on-screen. The only piece of the room left untouched was the bed he had been sleeping on.

And he'd slept right through it.

Callins walked carefully over the wreckage of his apartment to the security pad near the door. It still bore a green light for privacy and no interruptions. He stopped and thought about what he knew about privacy programs. It wasn't much. He checked the maintenance panels for signs of tampering or breakage, finding nothing. He called the security cool downstairs and asked about any suspicious activity in the building that night. Nothing.

He sat at the omnicomp and ran a diagnostic check. Everything was intact, but showed a deleted usage for last night, while he was asleep. The intruder had used his access for something and then covered his tracks. Callins made several attempts to break the cover-up measures and failed miserably. He clenched a fist in anger and killed the power to the omnicomp.

Callins sat on his untouched bed and thought very carefully about how he was going to hurt the individual who was making his life such a living hell. He decided maybe it wasn't so healthy to think overlong on such a thing. He dressed and left for the Braided Laser.

Again, there were no hits made on the way. He was getting anxious for some sign of the grey-cloaked guy, after the silent raid on his home last night. It spooked him. He was the kind of guy who liked a "sweat and bad breath" up-close and personal confrontation. He entered the bar alert and on edge.

He was disappointed.

Shara entered the bar behind him. She grinned and said, "Little early for you, Egan. Sure you wanna start drinkin' this time of the morning?" She

moved behind the bar.

"Shut up." Callins said good-naturedly. "I've got better things to do than drink your swill before noon." He sat at the bar.

"For example?"

"For example, I'm currently very interested in why a crazed priest of knowledge wants me dead. My cube got B&Eed last night, and I slept through it all. Don't know how. Got any leads for me this morning, Shar?"

The look on Shara's face went serious. "You want to come with me?" She moved out from behind the bar and went to the door in the side wall. She opened it and gestured for him to go in. Callins had seen her enter this room before, but had never gone in himself. He walked in.

The room was covered in electronic circuitry and antennae. There was a low buzzing and Callins could tell that the gadgets all around him were bafflers. Bafflers were handy gizmos that disrupted all scanning efforts in their effective range. Good bafflers could stop a four mile directional pickup from a top-line Confed surveillance team. These looked good.

Shara closed the door, and locked it. She looked at a table with detectors lying on it. Callins knew Shara would check anyone entering this room for transmitters or concealed weapons with them. She didn't bother to check him. He was a better friend than that.

Shara drew a breath. "His name's Armahno Kitun. No," She held up a hand, "don't ask. I don't give up sources. But he's on-planet, and he's in the sprawl. Northern 'plex, in a monastery or some house of worship called The Sun's Rays Palace. He's supposed to be there for another three days. You didn't hear it from me." She looked at him meaningfully as she handed him a disk.

"You got it, sweetheart. I don't give up my sources either." Callins smiled appreciatively and took the disk. "I owe you one. I'll be back after I do some religious research. You know. How priests react to their spleens getting ripped out, that kind of thing."

"Ege, please." Shara frowned. "Don't go into this like an idiot. The priest is very possibly a sincerely dangerous character. I don't want you getting killed."

"Shar, come on... don't worry about me..."

"You?" Shara looked surprised. "I'm talking about me. They could encephaloscans your corpse and find out who told you where to find them." Her look of mock reproach broke into a teasing smile. "Seriously, watch yourself. I know, I know," she said before he could. "You're always careful."

Shara watched as Egan left. He'd gone for it. She was done here.

Smiling, she opened a small recorder in the bar surface and took the disk of the conversation out. She put it into a small pouch on her belt.

The Braided Laser closed early that day, and when it opened again that night, it wasn't Shara tending bar.

The crowded hoverbus skimmed the dirty streets, and Callins grimly stared out the grimy window. The graffiti-covered buildings flew past and the night fell again on the citysprawl.

The distance between the Edge, where the bar and Callins's cube were, and the northern 'plex was too far for Callins to walk comfortably. He could rent himself transport, but the feeling he had made him far too nervous for an easy target like that. Blending in with the crowd on the public bus seemed far wiser. The bus wasn't too packed, but carried enough people that an attack would not go unnoticed.

Callins was thinking this very thought when the four passengers in the front of the bus rose, tapped the driver on the shoulder, and turned Callins's

way.

They were all carrying. Callins saw two of the men had long-barrelled guns, probably rifles or flashguns. The other two were hiding their weapons in their pockets, snub-nosed protrusions in the synthleather pockets of their casual jackets. The driver was pulling into an alleyway that looked far too dark and not on the route assigned by the Transport Authority. Callins was sure he was in trouble.

The men began to advance on him. The riflemen stayed back, the other two moving forward carefully. The seat in front of him covered his movements as he drew his black pistol. He was careful not to let his slow draw be visible in any way to the oncoming thugs. He looked at the men, saw that they were a little on edge. He decided that he would try and push them over that edge and have some fun. "Kitun must not have told you what to expect or you wouldn't've tried me this way." Callins smiled a devious line. The men in front looked at each other, their eyes widening in alarm. When they looked back, Callins wasn't there.

Earsplitting blasts from the riflemen took out the seat where Callins had been moments before. The two pistolleers looked around in fear, drawing their machine pistols from their pockets. They were surprised when a seat just in front of them began to melt away, as if suddenly becoming liquid. Behind the seat, kneeling on the floor was Callins. He took two quick shots, killing one pistolleer and maiming another. He moved again, ducking back under the seats he'd crawled forward under to reach his targets. The riflemen held their fire, seeing their friends mown down silently.

Most weapons, ballistic or energy, make some sort of report or sound, a recoil or backblast accompanies most firings. The two unlucky pistolleers had been dropped with neither a sound nor a lightshow. This is the kind of thing that shakes a fighter in the midst of a firefight. One rifleman began to frantically search the bus for the vanished target, and started shaking. He turned and ran for the front access 'port of the hoverbus, opened by the already absent driver. His ally tried to stop him, turning to grab his arm.

He lost most of his spinal cord as Callins fired into his back. Callins watched the last man run. Perhaps he would find his master and tell him to do his own dirty work, come after Callins himself. Nice thought, but the punk would probably just turn tail and run like a bunny.

Belatedly, Callins realized he'd neglected to cover his back. He looked back and saw two derelicts, lying half-prone on the rear seats. They appeared drugged-out, and hadn't moved during the fight. Callins didn't trust that, but didn't make any sudden moves.

He returned to his seat, but didn't reholster his pistol. He kept it in his hand, under his jacket. Sitting still, he faced forward, and listened to the sounds of the bums behind him. Soon, the sound of rags moving came from the back of the bus.

Callins showed no reaction. If he could take this one off guard, he might be able to take him prisoner and learn more about his mysterious enemy. He waited for the deliberately quiet sound of the derelict's steps to almost reach him when he spun and pointed the black pistol at the approaching figure.

The foot that kicked the weapon away was moving fast enough to break Callins's hand. He let the weapon go involuntarily as the twisting finger-guard pushed his index finger the wrong way. It clattered to the floor behind a seat several meters away. He cursed silently, and sized up his opponent. The bum was so well insulated against the cold night air that his body was indistinguishable from the mass of rags and old clothes that covered him. He stood in a vaguely defensive stance. The character looked ready to take another shot, when he suddenly dropped all appearances of wanting a fight. His arms fell to his sides, and the tenseness left his frame. Callins studied the figure for some moments, waiting for a trick. When none came, he began subtly moving backwards, toward his pistol.

"Egan Callins," came a voice. Not from the man facing him, but from

the other derelict. He rose, and shed some of the rags he wore. When he stopped, he wore a grey shroud about his body. His face was hidden. He carried no obvious weapons.

Callins was immediately filled with joy that his nemesis was finally out in the open. He watched his foe, the still-covered bum, and decided to take a chance.

Callins had trained in acrobatics, but mostly in conjunction with his pistol. Without it, he felt a bit awkward. He vaulted himself over a seat to his rear and moved to where he had heard his gun drop. He ignored the movement of his shabbily dressed enemy, knowing he could evade the guy. He saw the black glint of his weapon and dove for it.

Snatching it up he rolled to the aisle. He snapped it up and pulled the trigger once.

"Ege! Wai--"

The bum gasped and buckled over, grabbing at his stomach.

"NO!" The grey cloaked man screamed.

Callins saw a grey-hued blur move over and around the seats to his position in less time than seemed possible. The man's fists and feet struck him more times than he could count. He fell to the ground, releasing his gun once again. The man standing over him stopped, looking at his prone form. Then, with deliberate movement, he stepped on the black pistol and crushed it.

"Buh..." Callins tried to protest past a broken jaw and missing teeth. "My....dis-disrup..."

"You murderous bastard." The grey man said from above in a swirl of pain and oblivion. He moved to his wounded friend's side, kneeled beside the bleeding form. He began to strip the rags from the wound, and Callins could see the ragged edges of a grey shroud on this one too. His vision was clouding more and more....

"You...you're hurt..." The grey figure said to his dying ally. He cradled the still covered head of his friend in his lap, unwrapping the rags that concealed the face...

...the face of his friend, Shara.

Callins knew he was definitely spacing out. Shara was back in the Edge. She couldn't be here, he couldn't have shot her....

"Did we....is he going to...." Shara's voice trailed away as she spat some blood onto the floor of the bus. "Is he joining us?" She managed to say.

"Yes. Yes, he's in. He's passed initiation." The cloaked figure smiled at the dying woman in his arms. "You've succeeded. Done the Order a great service. You've..." His voice stopped.

Shara was no longer breathing.

He lay her head back down. He looked back at Callins. Callins was watching him, bewildered, waiting for the man to say something. When he spoke, his voice was deep, stern, and full of pain.

"You were her first recruiting project. You had promise, potential. She was truly excited about inducting you into the Order. The test was held in order to find if you had sufficient building blocks in spirit, mind, body. We kept tabs on you throughout." His voice turned hard and bitter.

"Your body is fine. A very nice shooting machine. You mind is sharp, you keep your head in a fight and in a search.

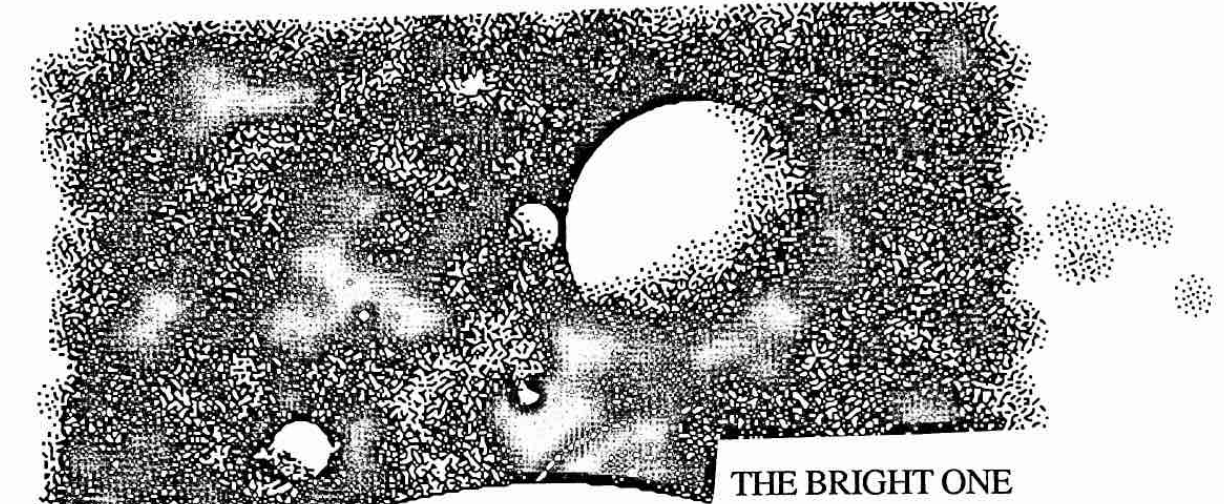
"But killing so wantonly... do you realize you murdered five--six people in the past week? Shara wasn't even threatening you when you...you..." He stopped, his voice choked with grief.

He spoke again when he could. "You'll never be anything in this existence without spirit, Egan Callins. I hope you learn that sometime before you die."

The man took up his friend's body and walked past Callins, ignoring him as they moved by him. Callins looked at the man and his burden, disappearing into the night, and thought of what he had done.

He lay there for the better part of the night.

Years and years later, after the Confed was overthrown in a rebellion of a coalition of renegade soldiers, a sect of rebel theoreticians, and a quiet group of priests known as the Dawn Order, Egan Callins knew he had had a chance at greatness but once in his life.
And he knew he had wasted it.



THE BRIGHT ONE

The sun was high in the sky
it shined brightly on the earth
The sun makes the flowers bloom with beauty
and helps the trees grow big and strong
It makes water gleam ever so lovely
and the sky a beautiful blue
The sun is the most wonderful sight
but it all goes away with the night

Julie Thoman

The Actor

The curtain rises in the dull, expectant air
The audience with batant breath waits to be entertained
Last night he played in "The Psychiatrist"
The week before it was "The Fool"
Oh, how he grows weary from his dreary roles
But the show must go on and on and on
But oh, how they drool when he breaks a leg
Their insatiable, carnal drive for performance
With their pompous binoculars peering ever deeper
Their pointing fingers poking, probing, prostrating
The critics are caustic, dropping acid remarks
They cut down his diction and intonation
Yet, they always return for more, every night
More, more, more, consume, produce, digest, digress
Their incurable, animal appetite for performance
They want to be moved to laugh, to tears, to rage
They need the conflict to be solved in two hours
They need to be entertained or they will die
Self-centered, self-serving, self-loathing, they see not the actor
but only the masks he wears
Ah, but isn't it beautiful, the pageantry, the rococo
the coal grey eyes and the burnt-out soul
If you look close enough, you can see sleaveville lies
upholding his dirty limbs.
"Play on!" the audience cries fiercely
And they see not with their cold, corpse, cadaver eyes
The pale shade which is not attached to the ground
Rise with the final curtain.

Brett Niessen

House of Feelings

*The chairstrings are stretched
Some threads are fit to fray
The children no longer live
Or eat or sleep or play,
At the House of Feelings*

*The door is closed, yet unlocked
The lights are out, but
Electricity still buzzes
Water lays dormant in the pipes
And the House longs for contact*

*The intensity of love
Greater than the sun,
Filled the walls, held up the walls
Built on a foundation of open minds
The House of Feelings will never fall*

*The children keep the House alive
In their hearts and simple minds
And spread the legend to the people
Until the most outstanding day
When the House's roof covers the world*

Brett Niessen

Sound

When the winds are singing to
me, I can't hear a thing.

A sweet melody, a piano being
struck in the distance, notes floating
through the air and landing gently on
my lap.

An overture played only once
and never heard again, everytime
a different piece.

I can't play a tune.

Or carry a beat.

I don't know which
chords to strike.

I can only listen.

Danielle Concordia



Penguins Are Flooding The Skies

Memories flow through my mind
haunting me;
Chaos inside my head,
Never relieving the Pain,
Never relieving the Agony of the past.

Scenes renew the Despair.
they fade but are never forgotten,
eating away;
Destroying the Sanity, they come,
A tidal wave of life, without love.

Sadness breaks through
A rush of emotion,
Anger, Elation, Fright, and then-
nothing.
Indifferance permeates my every pore.

Depression,
the Hopelessness grows
Eclipses the light, and Hope.
Thrown into a hole from which you cannot escape,
Depression.

Geoff Ferraro

*The eyes of a child, so innocent and pure.
A future so bright, and will always endure.
Their feeble features, so young and naive,
They're blinded by the world - eager to believe.*
S. C. F.

BENCH

Sitting on the park Bench,
next to some old lady
I watch as she throws Bread crumbs
to the Birds.

Sitting on the park Bench,
the heat is very sticky,
(New York city heat always is)
I watch as the Birds rip ferociously
at the rotting carrion.

"Is that a man?" I said to the old lady.

"Where?" she said, flinging Bread crumbs.

"Over there, with those Birds. Is that a man?"

"I don't know," said the old lady. "I ain't got my
glasses."

She flung a handful of dry, stale Bread crumbs to the Birds.

(New York Birds Are Strange)

JAMES YOST



A Lesson in Maturity

The boy peddled quickly and held tight to the handlebars. He rode his bike the way he always did, quickly and for fun. When he saw a piece of the sidewalk that was broken he would hit it in order to receive an exciting jolt or to have a small jump. He did not look much further than a few feet ahead, concentrating on the challenging terrain.

The young man saw the boy on the bike from far away. He watched a practice that he himself was not unfamiliar with and smiled as the boy's bike gained air off of a broken piece of cement in the sidewalk.

The man walked out of the doorway of the church (he was standing in) and down the stone steps. These steps met with the sidewalk a few feet below and the man went to meet the boy. He stood at the base of the steps with his hands in his pockets and played with his keys and his change.

The boy rode on and did not see the man standing in front of him, staring at him. The man stepped forward and waited. The clock on the church rang once. Twice. Three times. The man ran his fingers through his hair and then looked at his nails, already well bitten.

"Hey kid, I mean, son." The man's voice was uncertain.

The boy looked up from his bike and slowed down. His front tire bumped up against the man's foot. For the first time the boy looked up into the eyes that had been following him for the past few moments. He pushed his sandy locks away from his forehead and smiled.

"Looks like I need a haircut huh?" the boy's voice was sharp and clear. He blew his hair out of the way again and showed his gray eyes.

"Yeah, I guess so kid. Listen, where you headed?" The man turned and looked at the church and then back to the boy.

"Could you do me a favor?" The man looked at the boy eagerly.

"What's your name? Are you a stranger? I can't talk to strangers."

The boy was not frightened, but said this as a formality. He turned his head both ways before he crossed the street too, his mother had taught him this, but he never really looked for cars. He was always willing to appease himself as well as his mother.

"My name is Dan. I mean Mr. Bartell. See, now you know my name, I'm no longer a stranger. Now, can you do me a favor?" He looked at the little boy and waited for a reply.

"I'm Marky. I'm nine. How old are you Dan?"

"Mr. Bartell, well okay, Dan. I'm twenty-two. So can you help me?"

"Can you fix my bike?"

The man looked at the bike. The handlebars were slightly bent from thousands of bumps and cracks and jumps in the sidewalk taken head on. The repair required a simple twist of the body of the bike while the man held the wheel tight. He tried to brush some of the grime off his pants and nearly swore. The boy was smiling.

"Thanks Dan." He was missing his two front teeth.

"Sure kid."

"You mean Marky."

Yeah, Marky. Listen Marky, can you help me or not?" The man was growing impatient.

"Sure. You helped me."

"Do you know where the Magic Mart is? Up the street two blocks, down the alley on the left and in the shopping center."

"Yeah, that's where I get baseball cards and where Timmy bought that lollipop that sounds like a flute when you blow through it and where Jim-" The man cut the boy off.

"Great. Here is five dollars, now you hop on your bike, it's all good and straight now, and speed on over there. Buy me a pack of cigarettes. If the clerk gives you a look, tell him they're for your dad. You can keep the change if you hurry." The man looked up at the face of the clock on the church. "Hurry. Please."

The boy looked at the man and showed his absent teeth again. With a quick flick of his hands he pushed his hair out of his way, and rested his chin on the handlebar. He began to growl.

"What are you doing?" The man put both hands in the air.



"Countdown." The boy's face was stern and focused on the course ahead. The man remembered this ritual and obliged the boy with his first sincere smile of the day.

"10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1-0 Go!" The boy put both feet on the pedals, learned his bike and let the kick stand fly up. His feet kicked madly and his small body rose up as he set forth on his mission with fever and speed. The man yelled to the boy, who was nearing the end of the block.

"Hurry Marky! Hurry!" He smiled and then showed his serious face again. "Be safe though, hold tight. Watch for low branches. And look both ways before you cross the street!"

Marky went on, back borne against the advice from the adult behind him, thinking only of his mission.

The man wiped his brow with his handkerchief and walked back up to the church doorwell. He took out his lighter, flipped the lid, and lit it. Then he closed it and repeated the process until it became a quick habit. Open. Light. Close. Open. Light. Close. He shut it quickly and put it in his inside coat pocket. He looked at his tuxedo and made a vain attempt to straighten the wrinkled legs. The clock rang quarter past and the man tried to bite what was left of his nails.

The man stood under the church and considered what he was doing. He decided that it was okay because he had not smoked in a while and he was certain that one cigarette before would not cause any trouble. No one could see him here. They were all in the front with the relatives and the church and-her. He was hoping that it would calm his nerves but he was wrong.

It reminded him of when he and his friends would steal smokes from their parents and dare each other to try them at the creek behind school. He pictured a crowd of boys in a close circle. They were watching as one victim; scared to inhale, but even more scared of being called a chicken, brought a trembling hand to his lips. The process usually resulted in a loud series of coughs followed by a slight feeling of nausea. It was just one of those stupid things that every boy does before they become a man and know better, like the habit of growling like an engine when riding a bike.

Later in youth, the man smoked cigarettes quite regularly. He would find a pretty girl at a party and ask her for a light. He was hoping that this would spark more than tobacco and that it would end up with a conversation. Here the man could try any of the millions of lines that had been passed down through lockerooms for centuries. Sometimes, if the girl was young, or eager, or had enough of the refreshments, the man would take her out to his car where they would "talk." This was why the man used to smoke cigarettes.

The man quit smoking when he realized what a stupid and deadly habit it was. She told him this. At college he forced himself to mature, and while dropping the habits of a boy, adopted those of a man. He now held a job at a broker in the city and all of his parent's friends were told that "he had made it." He was no longer on his way to adulthood, he was there. There was no going back. He had not had a cigarette since they had met.

The man played with the ring in his pocket and listened as the clock rang half past. A glance up the street showed a boy on a bike approaching rapidly. He clutched a brown bag in his hands. The man waved to the boy, but the boy's eyes were focused on the path ahead as he bounced and rode on.

The man came down the steps and to the street. He was glad to see the boy was back safely. He was also glad to see the bag. He hoped the cigarettes would calm his nerves. It was not like one would kill him, but it bothered him. He knew the principle was wrong. Last night he had resisted all of the temptations that his friends had shown him, but he needed to indulge a little bit, just one last time. It was only one cigarette like old times.

"Here you go, Dan. I've got to run, thanks for fixing my bike. Bye." Marky took off before the man could thank him.

Frank Smith



A Poem

*To write a poem
And have it loved,
that is true beauty.*

*To win a fresh girl's
heart and make it mine,
that is true love.*

*To craft wonderful
words into spring, crisp and bright,
that is true magic.*

*To lose your body
as your spirit drifts into rhythm,
that is true heaven.*

*To lap up luscious
alliteration on your lolling tongue,
that is true speech.*

*To make a stranger smile
and a friend cry sweet tears,
that is true poetry.*

Brett Neissen

Mattel Dream House

I'm no Barbie.
Get your sticky hands
OFF me!
Don't try to pop
My head OFF!
Only one fits
This model.
Don't crush
My chin to my forehead
And distort my eyes!
My head isn't squishy
and full of air.
Sorry.
My bust isn't
as big as my butt,
And my waist
Isn't as small as my neck,
But I'm going
to live in that
Dream House.

Just because
You drive
That cool corvette
Don't think
That you're Ken.

-tammalicious



PRAYERS FOR ARMAGEDDON

*Streaming to the rhythm of my gasping breath
My face is soiled with tears,
Suffocating in a foreign mind.
Drowned and flogged in social hatred,
I am crippled in my search for purity
Decayed in monetary value.
The budding flower bleeds at its severed root
For selfish admiration,
Nature's fate in society's hands,
To witness poverty and prejudice, uncaring,
...inhumane.*

- Michael Cuba

ALONE

...four years ago a boy stood atop a trestle in front of an oncoming train. A simple teenage dare was the reasoning. Just as the train approached an ear shattering distance he leaped off. That is, tried to leap off. A miniscule shoelace, which he had neglected to retie earlier, restrained him from leaving the tracks. He carefully stood up to free himself from the nuisance but was rammed by the train. He didn't remember the fall or the impact of the water. Later, he was found floating in the river...

A single sunbeam shone through the window. The window was covered by a torn bed linen. The dust from the room floated in and around the beam of light. The only noise heard was steady beats from a nearby machine. A boy of seventeen lay unconscious, strapped to an old decrepit hospital bed. The room smelled of an unchanged bed pan. A door on the north wall was the only exit. The knob on the door slowly turned. A drunken nurse stumbled in singing gayly. "How dry I am..."

He said while pointing to the boy "Why don't you just die...so I don't have to...ruin (hic)...a good poker night."

He took a used intravenous needle from the floor and thrust it into the boy's arm. "There...let's make that one your last."

He tripped on a thin oxygen tube as he walked out. In a desperate attempt to regain his balance, he reached for the bed linen covering the window, tearing it down. It gave him no support. He hit his head on the corner of a machine knocking him unconscious. A thin tube that was connected to the boy's throat was dislodged. Sunlight now flooded the room but the boy's life support was slowly slipping away. Then came the sudden twitch came from his left hand. It was a miracle, after four years of a deep sleep he had awakened. He forced open one eyelid and then the other; the light was blinding.

He tried to speak but couldn't. His throat was bone dry and unable to be dampened. The leather straps restrained him from any movement. The blood that usually flowed to his limbs was not circulating, because of the leather straps. Tubes protuded from every part of his body. He was alone, trapped in a bed where he had slept for four years. He took a quick glance around the room. He saw that the nurse lay in a pool of maroon blood. Once again he tried to call out but he couldn't. The nurse began to move. The nurse pulled himself to his knees, glanced at the boy and fell back to the floor. The boy was unaware that he had no other forms of communication with the hospital. Outdated machines that were scattered throughout the room were his only company. Obviously his company was not appreciated for the room had not been kept well; dust had built for years.

He began working to free his right hand from the old leather straps that restrained his arms. The little energy that he possessed was far too little to free his hand. He squealed, grunted and finally began to cry. He decided to try again. He drew a deep breath, for what he could, ground his teeth, and put all his remaining strength into freeing his hand. The old leather straps began to stretch to the point where finally they broke and the boy's hand sprang out.

What a rush! His bony right hand, fingernails long, skin dried and chapped, was free. Blood circulating through for the first time in years. Through all his attempts to free his hand though, it was useless. The arm was immobile. The blood was useless in his arm. Now his arm lacked all feeling, those feelings were gone for good.

Although his right arm was limp at his side, the boy, now free of one of the straps, was able to rock to his way onto his side. Freeing his arm would be easier if only his legs could be freed. Tugging and pulling he began to slide his arm out. His arm caught the buckle of the strap. All his work was for nothing. As a last desperate attempt he jerked his arm gently. The arm slid out.

The feeling of accomplishment now rushed through his veins. Suddenly a tingling sensation rushed through his arm. That tingling was a sign that blood was truly flowing. The feeling was slight but enough to move his arm.



He slowly clutched the side of the bed to prop himself up. After extending his arm he started to lift slightly. With just the littlest amount of pressure his arm began to tremble then it snapped like a twig. Once again his body flapped back down and he lay flat. Tears filled his eyes. Time seemed to be running out.

Frustrated, the boy began banging his head on the side bars of the bed, over and over again. The pain, although great, was immeasurable to his suffering. The banging ceased when he broke the safety latches and began falling to the floor. Then, unable to withstand the pressure the tubes jerked out from everywhere: neck, stomach, throat, arms, and nose. The removal was so unexpected that he began to bleed profusely. He was dangling by his feet, which were still strapped to the bed, and they were broken also. His legs broken, his blood pressure dropping, head throbbing, arms dangling....

.....A great flash of light. I find myself laying on the ground in a serene place. A thick mist covers the ground which I am engulfed in. The pain and suffering is gone, with that the hospital room and the decrepit bed. The air is clean and easy to breathe. I decided to sit up to see what there is to see, nothing.

Could this be heaven I wonder? This place where I am, is just one vast ocean. Rolling mist, the color white in all its splendor. I checked my back to see if, maybe, the old tale is true. Nope, I'm wingless. I panic for I knew I was alone. I began to walk frantically to see where there was to go. My feet began to grow tired. Frustrated I sat down and began reflecting on my past for that felt like the right thing to do at this moment. If this truly is Heaven, then where are all the famous people you're supposed to meet here? Am I ever going to see my family again? What if this isn't Heaven? I deserve to go to Heaven! Hasn't someone felt that I have suffered enough? Then perhaps someone had heard my cry because a sharp pain went shooting through my legs. My feet felt as if they were being pulled. My body began to convulse. It was uncontrollable, then nothing...

A single sunbeam shone through the windows for the curtains were cracked slightly. The curtains were decorated with flowers of all sorts and beautiful colors. Dust floated throughout the sunshine. The machines that were surrounding him were blaring with excitement. A boy of seventeen lay in an immaculately clean hospital bed with neatly pressed sheets. The knob on the door slowly turned and a rather clumsy nurse stumbled in singing "I once was lost but now am found..."

Bob Mortland



Hopes and Dreams

Everyone tells you to be something.

Kindergarden:

'You're Brilliant!'

'So Smart!'

Fifth Grade:

'You can do anything!'

'Never Quit!'

Tenth Grade:

'Take your Responsibilities!'

'What are you gonna do with your life?!'

Everyone gets persistent:

'Your not trying!'

'You can't make a living like that!'

Everone gets angry:

'You expect to graduate with these grades?!'

'You better shape-up or get out!'

You are Brilliant.

-Ann Hilbert



Looking Glass

In her room I hang alone waiting for her.
Occasionally I shut my sore eyes hoping that the
perfect flowered print on the wall across the room
will disappear and leave me at peace to stare blankly at nothing.
It never does.

Like an army of still soldiers, the perfect pink blossoms
eternally watch their twins at my corners and extend beyond
the confines of my sight.

I think of her and envision her image between my rigid face
and the perfect militant flowers. Her long fingers will tug at her
tossed hair and she'll smile as she squirms in her dress
till it lies comfortably over the curves of her body.
The motions of her temporary presence will remind
me of the life the pink flowers mimick
- the life I forever long for.

Finally she comes in to faithfully see the reflection of herself
and I hold my breath as I momentarily look into my own eyes.

-Xenia

How Much Longer?

Aftertastes of self-pity
Fester like bloodied stench,
Confusion builds fire,
Automatic cremation.
Gravity carves with acid tears,
Flesh peels gently,
Starving soul revealed.
Wail in burning fury,
Writhe in worthlessness.
I steal the blood of screaming children,
Immerse my face to wash away burnt flesh,
Which flutters to the ground like the
moist and fragile petals of so many flowers,
Silent,
but not yet dead.

-Michael Cuba



Intensive Care

I remember when we were small,
Playing in the sunlight,
Laughing and yelling, tossing the ball.
Yes, we had our fights,
But never anything serious,
Always rekindling the light.

I took my side,
The lifeless rocking chair that everyone sees,
But not me, you and your spirit as full of life as the tide.

Who is he?
He comes everyday pretending to be you,
He's not you at the side of me, and never will be.
He sits by my side with a familiar look, yet with loneliness,
I want to be his friend but I can't; I have you,
He leaves, pledging his faithfulness.
He and I will be gone soon,
But I'll bring you with me, always by my side,
Always there, like the moon.

- Kristin Helstrom

EXCUSE ME FEAR

FEAR, YOU ARE NOT WELL LIKED.

WHY DO YOU DISGUISE YOURSELF IN THIS SILLY RED?
A COLOR THAT TURNS STOMACHS FOR SOME.
DO YOU ASSOCIATE YOURSELF WITH DEATH?

YOU SEEM TALL.
TAKE OFF THAT COSTUME YOU WEAR.
FOR I AM NOT AFRAID OF YOU, FEAR.
FEAR IS ONLY OF THE MIND.

LIFE HAS FEW REASONS TO FEAR.

SIT DOWN,
YOU UNWANTED MOOD

ROB MORTLAND

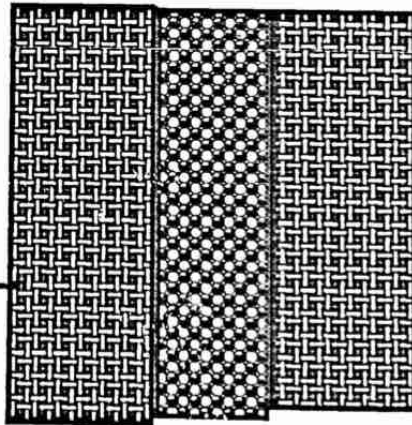
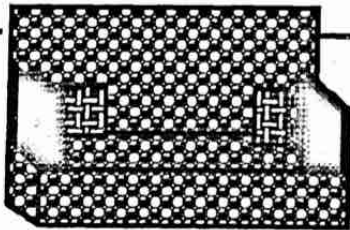
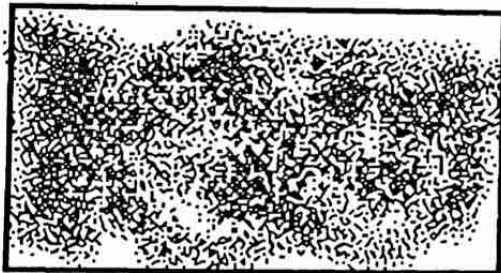


Selfishness of OneSelf

The house was quiet with no sound or noise about it.
One man sat in the den, frantically near the window
Only puzzled by his own imagination as he talked to himself,
vacant with some sort of sound inside him.

A woman sat in the kitchen sipping her milkless black coffee,
flipping a magazine, only hearing the sound of the pages.
A boy sat on his bedroom floor playing with his toys and thinking
nothing of it, except the vacnancy of his car toys crashing together
with a violent sound, interrupting the silence for a moment,
then losing itself once again

-Frank Smith-



Andie Nelson

Gallery

The head is the best part
my head cut my wood cut

I saw you in the gallery
with your torso and family
a huge smiling face
with eyes and lips cut out
but smiling and eating
lots of other lips

A beautiful mask in a plastercast
such a beautiful mask in a plastercast

Can I take it back with me
Back to the flat with me

- GARIN NORTH



This Is *Not* a Poem

The **night fall** comes.
Darkness encloses me
The swirling **blackness**, like a whirlpool,
Sucking
me
in.

The talons of the **vulture** clasp around my neck.
Dragging me
d
o
w
n.

Death is upon me.
His hand is over my mouth
Suffocating, I am suffocating,
I am dead.

The pretty petals of the pansy perpetuate my perversion perfectly
The orchids, roses, and tulips in the wind do sway
So many colors: red, yellow, orange, green, blue, purple, and gray
Glorious in a splendid way
A happy, joyous summer day.
The sun shines like a ball of fire
The blue sky is like an infinite placid lake
To walk among these wonders is a joyous experience.

I love you
You are my soul, my being
Without *you*, I am nothing myself.
My heart pines for *you* and *you* alone
I am consumed with *love* for *you*
Every waking hour is spent in thought of *you*.
To glimpse *your* visage is to look upon **Beauty** herself.
I love you.

-eDwaRd mALachI bEhrEnS



Looking Outside

I flew by my window and landed
in a tree, drove down by my street on my
Harley, played an Improvisation on
my jazzy afternoon.

Me and my bunnies, oh we ate
from the garden, not a soul caught us,
and then the mailman sent me to a
house before I got chased up a tree by
a dog.

So I collected pollen from some
flowers, took the empty trash cans
back to the house and got hit to left
field.

It got really hot, so I dipped my
feet in the pool, popped a wheelie, slid
down the sliding board, then closed
my eyes and feel asleep outside.

Danielle Concordia



MOTHER

You stare at me with green irised eyes
Your lips curl with a lime's sourness
I have stolen the youth from your face
And you shudder in the mirror.

The dew of life has been absorbed in my skin,
Along with poisonous fumes to your delight.
Yet still I radiate with the light of purity
Long taken from you.

Ultra Violet rays stream from your eyes
Melting my outer shell.
I am exposed to foreign sinuous chemicals
And you lay down your bed of tin cans and laugh.

The shine in my eyes has vanished,
Along with the warmness of once my velvet skin.
My hair is straw from the vinegar rain and my aura reversed,
Yet you pull the barbed wire blanket to your chin and giggle.

My heart is chilled, oil black
And my bones are brittle and flaking away.
I am falling, slowly collapsing into a pile
And you close your eyes and softly smile.

Dizziness falls upon me. . .
My light head, my depressed eyes
See swirls of red, and white, and black
The blackness turns about my head
Diffused into the beams of twisted light
And I try to fight, fight off the twisted
Dreams wrapped around my wrists.

My restlessness begins to fall Silent, to fall victim
To exhaustion, and again the light
Succumbs to darkness; again the endless
Swirling of unconsciousness whirls about me.

Again, your head rests upon my lap
Again, your hands
cool
soft

Rest in mine
Again, our eyes fall close together, and
We drift to the seas of swirling light
Where the white of the stars
the red of our passions
the blackness of dreams forgotten
Once more --

Fall upon us . . .

-Bill Haban

Gardening

He glances her way.
She bursts into roses, glistening roses.
They sprout suddenly,
Climbing up to her ears and crawling down
to the tips of her fingers.

Masses of roses escalating to a fiery red.
They grow.

Roses on her cheeks.

The heat has made her realize--
she knows.

He sees her gardened face.
he knows, too.

In a split second, her head is snapped downward
At her paper.

The roses retreat
Falling back into their
Pale; exquisite
earth.
To grow again..

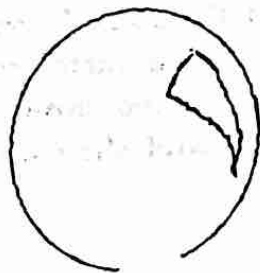
The next time the rain falls.

- Deborah Perisho

Congratulations to Debbie Perisho who has been named first runner-up in the Bucks County High School Poet of the Year Contest sponsored by Bucks County Community College and the Bucks County Community College Foundation.

Charles Muonoz, 1993 Poet Laureate judged this contest. He said, Gardening is a remarkably pleasant poem, and the image of the woman's response to the man's attention is brilliantly carried out."





Sunglasses

Grey shadows cover crunchy ketchup red plastic
Nothing but shadows reflecting off tinted lenses
Blocking out the sun from deprived eyes
Fear of nature's wrath, growing old, death
Too much fear, too little sun.

They look miserable in the shiny metal corner
Shielded on all sides by impenetrable metal
No sun is getting there!
No use for tasty, candy glasses.

Never touched by coconut-scented hands or
tossed in sandy mounds or dropped in
chlorine-scented water.

The woman will shield her eyes with her
God-given hands (unthinkable)
And the glasses will sit in this cold, forgotten corner
-abandoned.

And the U.V. rays will wrinkle the corners of those eyes.
And the woman in the mirror will scream and gasp
Rubbing Greasy Oil of Olay in frantic circles
And she'll call the doctor
Slice. Slice. Slice. Slice.
More scared of those little lines than big bloody knives

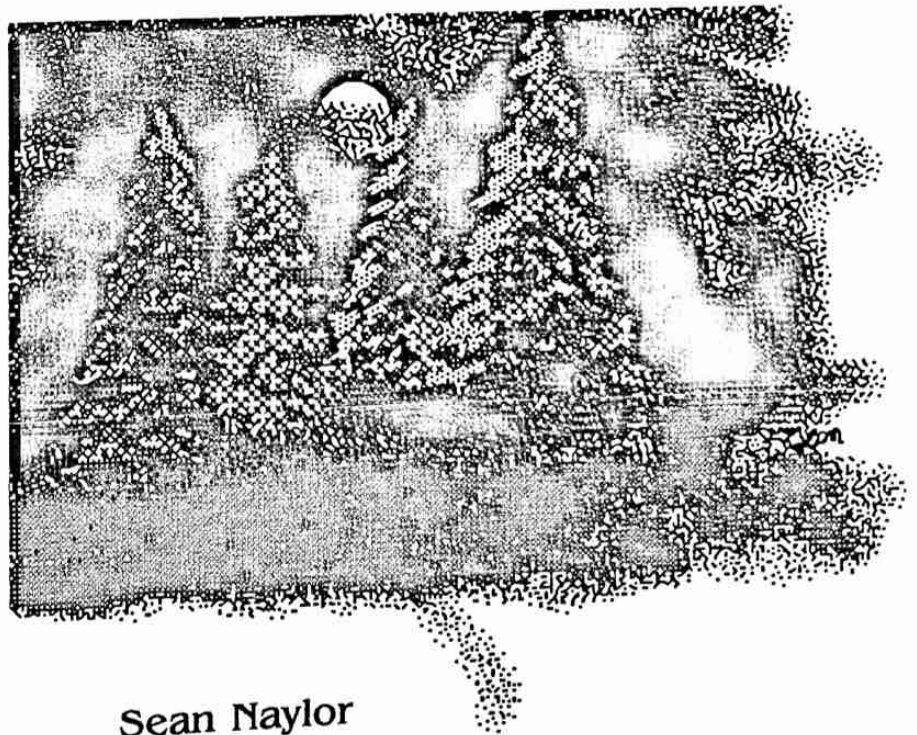
The sun continues beating down bringing
crumpled paper-bag faces to forty something women.
As those distinguished looking bald men
gaze at their wives drooping faces
The woman watches in terror as the man
gazes at the taut-bodied girl and longing
sigh escapes his "handsome" wrinkled lips
And the sun-glasses lay hidden in shadows in
their metal corner
And the woman lets the sun enter her shielded eyes
And she smiles.

- Kirsten Lynch



I often feel that things aren't real,
and sometimes I wish they weren't.
When things go wrong I think of a song,
and I wonder if it's about me.
I dream of love like a pure, white dove,
flying high to wonders.
Sometimes we feel that it can never be real,
but we find it's part of our wishes.

- Christina Capó



Sean Naylor



