

STEVENSON LIBRARY LOCK HAVEN UNIV.
3 3301 00507 3732

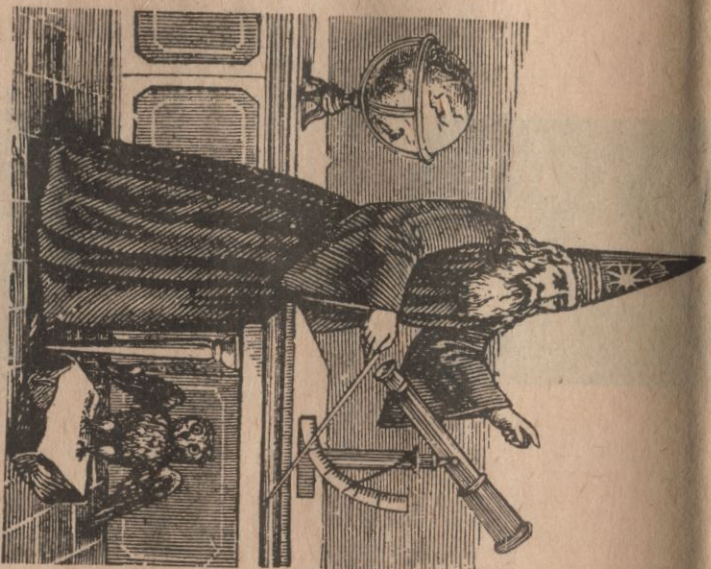


T H E

Autumn 1983



C R U C I B L E

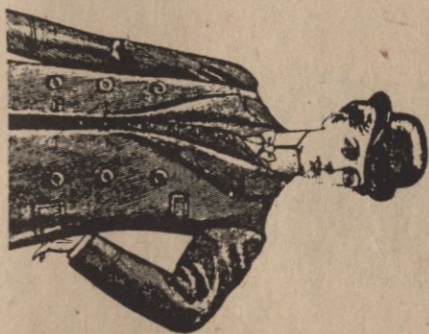


EDITORS

THE CRUCIBLE
AUTUMN 1983



STEPHEN HICKOFF
(POETRY)



LYNN HOWARD
(GRAPHICS)



CAROLINE WERMUTH
(FICTION)



ROBB WARREN (GRAPHICS)



JAYNE CONNOR (POETRY)



JANNIE LEE (FICTION)

ASSISTANT EDITORS

*Special thanks to
Wayne Harvey*



Contributions for the 1984 issue should be enclosed with a stamped self-addressed envelope and should reach the editors no later than March 21, 1984. Please ensure all manuscripts include name and address. Send or drop off all contributions to the Raub Building, Room 302, c/o the English Dept. office, Lock Haven University, Lock Haven, PA 17745.

ADVISORS

JOSEPH NICHOLSON/JOHN WEIGEL

4 POEMS

Jill Brininger

First Snowfall

Winter finally arrived this week,
Walking heavily down the white-blanketed
Tracks and dragging his
Wet-spotted, leather-booted feet.

His arrival was not unexpected
For the middle of December,
At first threatening and ominous
And seemingly here to steal the gentle fall away.
But now like an old lover here to visit,
The first snowfall has melted uncertainly
Into a forgotten event of the weekend,
And once again the two of us are smiling
And playing like children in the mud.

I feel so empty,
Like I've lost something
I had for a long time,
A part of me.
I've searched all over
To get it back
But it's gone.
Like my old tricycle
In the darkest corner of the garage,
I've simply outgrown it.

Last night I had to put my mind in a box,
Mentally nailing down all the corners
So that my thoughts might give in from exhaustion
And I could sleep.
It was morning when I dropped off.
My body was sleeping
But my thoughts were just
Lying in wait collecting themselves.

That soft-worn raccoon that I bought you
But then retrieved from the ashes
Can attest to the fact that
My lonely arms and empty hug
Are healing along just fine.
He no longer sleeps with me
Wrapped like a cocoon around him
But that makes him sad,
So I still keep him close to the bed.



MUTILATION by Deb A. Kart

We cripple the birds, study
them and cure them.

We cripple the mind and the
emotions and forget them;

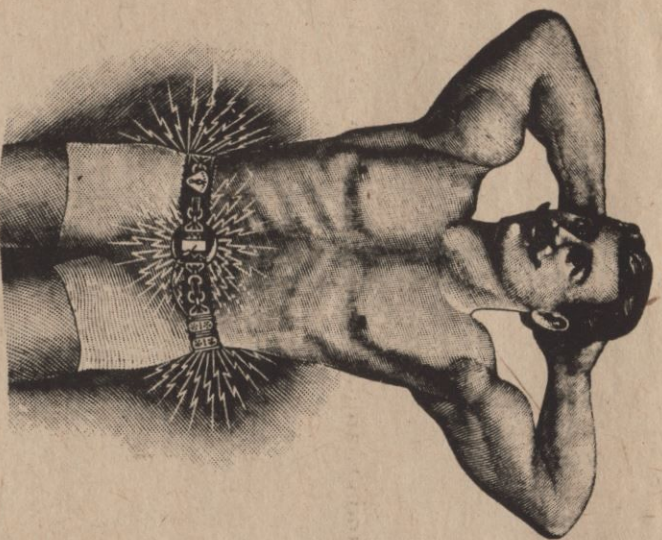
Till suddenly we wake up
to find the bird has flown.

But the maimed inside
is still within our soul,

Trying to destroy our world
- your world and mine.

Then we try - you and I,
to see if we can tame them

But we realize, only too late,
our intentions were good but sadly misplaced.



DREAMSPACE

by Wayne Harvey

*To Carolyn
At Long Last*

It all drifted along in slow motion. The wind gently blew the grass and the trees in a smooth brushing movement. The buildings stood solidly behind the moving vision, their outlines fuzzy in the background. The sunlight made it look like a spring day, lovely, soft, an August-type day. Then, finally, she came. She billowed along gracefully, her long skirt flowing around like the umbrella-like skin of a jellyfish. She didn't walk; she floated with the breeze, that was how she moved. Light as a feather on a gentle wind.

He stood there, rooted to the spot like his feet had been grafted into the sidewalk. His eyes, wide and light blue, sparkled with new life. He held his breath and waited, not feeling anything at all but the pure exhilaration of her presence.

Then she looked his way. It was like seeing an angel. Her soft features molded by God's gentle hands to produce something that would shine brighter than all the stars in the heavens. Her golden skin, long strawberry blond hair, and deep, dark blue eyes had that bewildering touch of innocence mixed with understanding that just made you know that nothing should ever cause her harm. That you would kill to make her happy.

Then she smiled.

The doves were let loose in his mind. They scattered and flew wildly across the high blue sky, scurrying across each other's flight paths but never colliding. When they settled back to their perches he would be able to look at her again. He called out with his mind, pleading to them, desperately trying to get them back. But all they did was wail high overhead, a loud, high-pitched screams. As they came closer to him the screams became louder, threatening to drive him from where he stood. He tried to drive them away but nothing he could do would make them go away.

Finally, he reached over his head and shut his alarm off. He lie back for a moment, trying to make the dream come back, but the silence was too full, the silence wouldn't let him retreat back to the dream.

"Shit," Rich said, running his fingers thru his mane of thick brown hair. He sat up on his bed wearing only his blue shorts, his blankets thrown in disarray behind him.

He slowly focused in on his surroundings. He was in his dorm room at Heritage University in Virginia. The room was on the third floor of Schuyler Hall, one of the best dorms, Rich decided, on campus. The room was fairly small, and littered with old magazines, newspapers, and text books. An occasional overdue book notice peeked out from under a pile of dirty clothes.

Across the room lay Rich's room unit, Robert Stills. Both had the same major, Psychology, they had just about all the same classes. Robb was a junior and Rich a sophomore, but they were the best of friends.

"About time you turned that damned thing off," Robb said, a small tuft of his red hair was all you could see of him, the rest was just a lump under his blanket. "I was just about to do it myself."

Rich knew that was farther from the truth than saying that people have interchangeable parts.

He slowly dragged himself out of his bed and crossed to the window. There were a few people moving toward the main campus, and they were quiet and distant. It looked like the beginnings of a beautiful day, if bad weather or bad tidings didn't mess everything up. Both had a habit of turning up rather quickly in Rich's life.

He took his usual forty-five minutes to exercise, shower, shave, and get dressed. He picked a light blue shirt with a white collar, jeans, and his ragged pair of docksides.

By the time he was finished and was getting his books together for his three classes of the day, Robb was rolling lazily out of bed. Robb had been up late the night before studying with his girlfriend, Stacy.

"See you in Ad Psych later," Robb slurred, wiping sleep from his eyes.

"This is Wednesday," Rich said, "Ad Psych is on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Today you've got Theatre at eleven, Interpersonal Skills at twelve, and Psych of Films at four." Rich reached up and took two pencils and a pen from the cup on his desk. "Jesus, I know your schedule better than you do."

Robb put his face in both of his hands and nodded.

"Thanks, Mother."

Rich laughed lightly. "If you didn't spend so much time studying anatomy with Stacy you might be in better shape to deal with your classes."

"Fuck you," Robb jibed, "you're just jealous."

Rich picked up his pillow and threw it across the room. It hit Robb in the head and shoved him backwards, his head smacked smartly against the wall. They both laughed and Rich picked up his books and started out the door.

Robb spoke up from his bed. "Hey, man, what the hell were you dreaming about this morning?"

From the door, Rich turned slowly around. "What do you mean?" he said, almost menacing.

"Hell, I thought you were having an orgasm, you were moaning and groaning. You kept talking out loud. It was all gibberish except one word."

Rich said nothing, only trembled slightly.

"It was a girl's name, I could tell. I had to listen for a while before I caught it. God, I could swear--"

"What was it?!" Rich almost screamed. His voice trembled and his body was very still, as if he were restraining himself from reaching over and bodily shaking it from his friend.

"Colleen," Robb said, suddenly glad to be rid of the name. It was very shaking to see his friend this way. Rich usually wasn't the one to overreact in such a way.

Then Rich wheeled about on one foot and scrambled from the room, slamming the door behind him. He left his roommate sitting on his bed like Rodan's Thinker, trying to ponder out this sudden strange behavior.

Robb followed the progress of his roommate as he walked toward campus from his dorm window. Rich was always the calm, logical thinker. He was never one to jump so emotionally on something so- well, maybe it wasn't so small. Robb remembered that sometimes dreams can be pretty powerful experiences.

He recalled many dreams where he found himself racked with emotional fears that left him drained and irrational. In fact, he had actually seen the accident that killed his mother in a dream and on the same night it happened. With Rich at his side he stayed up all night long, worried to death.

The next day a call had come telling of the horrible accident that had left his father in a wheelchair for life and his mother dead. He cried for three days straight. Rich and Robb's girlfriend had accompanied him to the funeral.

Slowly he blocked everything from his mind. Later when Rich was cooled down, they would talk. Maybe Robb would do a little reading on dreams. He prayed that it was nothing too serious.

Rich walked quickly towards the campus, his fists clenched in utter desperation. His footsteps echoed hollowly in the air of the budding morning. Despite the variety of classes given at that time, the walkways were as deserted an intellect in Howard Cossell's mind.

The class he was headed for was Styles of Writing, taught by his favorite prof, Dr. Lynch. Lynch was always straightforward and humorous, and he treated his students like individuals, not as empty-headed morons.

Rich sat stolidly through Lynch's class, silent and lost. He was waiting for the time when he could talk to Lynch alone. Just a friendly talk. A small chat, man to man, friend to friend, not teacher to pupil.

Dr. Lynch gave his usual interesting lecture with its share of amusing anecdotes and one-liners, then gave a small writing assignment and dismissed the class.

The rest of the class filed out, dropping homework papers on Lynch's desk, while Rich stayed at his own desk. Lynch collected the papers, put them in a small manilla folder, wrote on the top of it and set it in his briefcase. He sat back in his chair and put his feet up on the desk, taking a bite from an apple some obsequious student had left behind.

"Favoritism," the professor said, waving the apple, "still a teacher's best friend and only reward."

Rich smiled lightly, folding his hands on his notebook.

"I'm having a little trouble."

"What subject?"

No subject," Rich said, and lowered his head. "My trouble is with dreams."

Lynch chuckled. "Who is she? Do I know her?"

"I don't even know her," Rich exclaimed, his face glowing red, a nervous twitch appearing in his hands. "It started two weeks ago. At first it was only small glimpses of someone, someone totally unidentifiable. I thought it was just my own active imagination. Then she started to become clearer and clearer, until now I could recognize her if I saw her in a crowd of people in the stands at a football game."

"She's no ordinary girl. She's so damn perfect. Strawberry blond hair, beautiful face, long slender legs, golden skin, and her eyes. Oh lord, this must be what made all those romantic writers write their fingers off for. If I had been a Greek creating gods, I would have named her Aphrodite."

He stopped because he had a big lump in his throat. Lynch smiled and rose from his chair. He walked over and sat on the top of a desk next to Rich. He sat patiently, waiting for his troubled student to renew his narrative.

"The dreams are coming more often and they're stronger each time. Everytime I see her I want to touch her," his voice grew strained, "but I can't, because she isn't real. She isn't real! But I won't believe that though, the experiences are real, even to the point of-"

"Climax?" Lynch asked.

Rich nodded his head slowly. "It was quite a shock. I haven't had a wet dream since I was twelve. No. She has to be real. And she's waiting out there somewhere for me."

Lynch tossed the apple core into the basket by the door and brushed his hands off on his pants. He ponderously stroked his full beard and mustache.

"You know of course," he spoke, "that a precognitive experience of the sort you describe is on the outside most improbable."

"Improbable," Rich jumped, "but not impossible. I know how crazy this sounds, but in this world somewhere is a girl named Colleen, that wants me as much as I want her."

"Colleen," Lynch said.

"This morning," Rich said, capping his pen, "in one of my more intense moments my roommate heard me calling out that name. I almost went thru the roof when he told me. Right now he's probably totally disturbed, ready to run after me and pin me to the ground and drag this secret out of me."

"Why talk to me about this and not him?"

Rich shook his head. "I was too unnerved when he told me to say anything. Besides, Robb's not too level-headed when it comes to anything resembling love. The man has a new girl every week, and I just think he wouldn't take it seriously."

Lynch leaned back again and began to ponder his student's predicament. It was good that he had been able to bring these problems up with someone, like a teacher, a person that was always associated with authority. Lynch had his students pretty much figured out. They would talk to their profs about the fact that they were failing in some class and needed help, that some monetary crisis threatened their stay in college, or the fact that their mother treats them better than their father, but usually they would never say anything personal. He felt proud that he had instilled within his pupils a sense of friendship, a knowledge that teachers are people too.

“Well, I am pleased that you trust me enough to bring this problem to me. I really wish there was more I could say.” He walked back and sat on his desk facing Rich. “If you feel this strongly about these visions or dreams, maybe you should see them through. Find the place in your dream where the vision takes place, then wait there. It could take days, it could take years, and probably it will never happen at all.

“You might even find yourself losing the hold you have on the dream. If you feel as strongly as you say, the wait may not be long.”

Eyes downcast, Rich nodded with understanding.

Days changed, seasons changed. May became June, June gave unsurely away to July. Rich went on with his life. The dreams kept at him with the same consistency as before, no longer, and with no lessening of pressure. He no longer enjoyed much of a social life, aside from an occasional outing with Robb and some close friends.

His schoolwork did not suffer, for he refused to let this obsession blind him to not achieving his primary goals. So he kept up with his studies. He organized his classes so the entire afternoon was clear, and he spent that time sitting on the lawn facing the Thomas Building, the administrative center of campus life. It was here the vision took place, here was the place they were destined to meet. He saw it in his dreams. There was no doubt she saw it too.

Lynch kept a parently eye on his disturbed pupil, and he waited as patiently as Rich, looking forward to seeing this prediction come true. He saw this event as a pivotal occurrence in Rich's life. One of the major goals that faced him, a hurdle he had to cross as an objective in a normal train of priorities: high school, college, good job security, marriage. Those priorities weren't always sought, but these were the ones Rich had laid before himself.

July slumped over into August, and everybody came back to a new semester. Robb had a new girlfriend, campus life had become livelier, and Rich went back to sitting on the lawn facing Thomas. He resumed this event with equal fervor and importance. He and Robb still shared the same friendship, and Robb had come to accept his roommate's unusual habit, and become a little less sceptical.

Four days into the semester saw a beautiful day. Unusually warm and sunny, wonderful day to be outside after a long, hot summer. Rich took his lunch and made off for his usual spot.

He sat crosslegged against a tree and took in the surroundings and breathed deeply the fresh air. The sun stopped far above him and he looked at it thru fingers of green leaves.

His head lowered and he looked an Thomas. It was very distant and blurred, almost like a fog was rising around it.

Pulling himself up, he walked slowly toward it and stopped. He could hear nothing and feel nothing. His hands wanted desparatly to pop his ears, let the sounds of the day in, but they couldn't move.

The dream, he thought, is coming.

The air was suddenly still an she moved into view. That floating vision just snuck in from nowhere, carried by a wind used and felt only by her.

Breathing was no more, feeling was gone, smelling was out, but his sight took in everything, her long hair and beautiful face.

But this was not a dream. He could move, and he did. On stiff legs, he walked toward her. She stopped slowly and then smiled. As he looked down at her, the smile faded. Her eyes grew as wide as his.

“Colleen,” Rich heard himself say from far away.

“Rich,” her honey-soaked voice exclaimed, more surely than his.

“Are you real,” he asked, touching her shoulder with his hand.

She placed her hand over his. “As real as you.”

He stared deeply into her eyes and found himself drowning in those deep blue pools of water.

“I love you,” he said.

“I love you,” she said.

And the dream continues.



3 POEMS

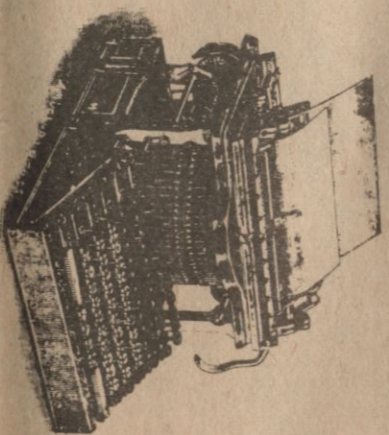
Jill Bringer

Yard Sale

The moment a woman offered to buy
The lounge chairs we sat on out from under us
We knew we wanted to clean out the house.
We scavenged the closets until no matter
How inselctively we looked,
We could come up with nothing else to sell.
An Oriental woman bought the pearly-finished bowl
In the bent gold holder.
It was no thing of beauty but she
Dredged her purse for the change.
Another woman in a deep red Cadillac
Bartered us down to almost charity
While my sister fought to keep herself from
Dragging the livingroom furniture out
Onto the lawn.
And the girl next door towed out all her old baby clothes
As we watched,
Laughing while she talked of her hopes of selling them,
As if getting rid of the clothes while her husband was away
Was some absurd form of birth control.

Lines

To the most casual observer,
A written line seems to be no more than
An arrangement of words that
Takes the shortest distance between
Two points.
To others of us,
A line written on a sheet of paper
Can become so over-read
That it bulges with conjured meaning
That no one else can see.



Feeling like time is passing me on the inside turn,
A hurtling of life so fast down the road
That it is one inexhaustable tunnel
Connecting one event to another.
This is one race I want to lose.
I am moving so fast from flag to flag
That I miss the freewheeling feeling
Of just gliding along in between.
Do not always be looking so far ahead of yourself
That you miss what is around you now.
The excitement wears down
But solid memories do not
They are yours forever.
Living is not just the constant anticipation
Of the next short-lived thrill.
It is also the savoring of the
Smoothness in slowing down.



THIS IS NOT A DRILL !!

JOSEPH NICHOLSON

Matilda

When Matilda was five years old, a cow fell on her.

Her kindergarten class was visiting a dairy farm, and a huge Holstein, frightened by the children jumping and shouting excitedly somewhere below her, lunged sideways, stumbled and fell on Matilda who was just standing there thinking cows are so big.

Sorry for My Elf

Worry sores, result of a recent series of traumas, have appeared on the head of my elf. Despondent, he sits alone, muttering in his blue grotto.

"My ears have heard too much of the wrong thing," he complains, "and too little of the right thing."

"We could put some salve on those sores, old fellow," I tell him. "We could at least stop the itching."

He shakes his head sadly. "That's another wrong thing," he sighs.

But I carefully shave the head of my elf, taking care not to nick the sores, and I bathe his knobby noggin in witch hazel, and I spread sweet salve over his worry sores.

Biggest of them all is the woman-trouble sore, bigger even than the ego sore, the career sore, the money sore, the existence sore....

...oh, poor dear elf.



A HITLER'S BIRTHDAY CAROL

by Carl Larsen

This guy's name was Scrooge, so you pretty well know what to expect. A story about some sleazy old scuzzbag who has indigestion, suffers from nightmares, then turns into a decent human being by giving his clerk a turkey. There is a bunch of ghosts and a little crippled kid in it, too. But who cares about them? Let's talk about the old geezer.

Everybody in Jasper County knew that Scrooge spent most of his time visiting the sick folks at Midvale General Hospital. Sometimes he took them flowers, sometimes candy, and he was always there with good advice. All that may sound like a pretty neat thing to do, but read the fine print before you start passing out Humanitarian Awards. Consider that:

- A) He only visited patients in the Terminal Ward, and
- B) He turned a pretty penny by selling cardboard caskets.

Scrooge made a habit of telling those miserable wretches that they would rot with dignity in one of his caskets. Why? Because his caskets were sprayed with worm repellent. An out-and-out lie. Actually, their bodies would barely be cold before the delighted graveworms popped through the flimsy cardboard and started chewing their eyes out. But most of the Terminal Ward transients believed him because he looked a lot like Lionel Barrymore.

Dr. Kindly, the bigshot at Midvale General, let Scrooge go about his business with no questions asked. After all, who cares what happens to the stiff of poor people? They were just taking up space that rich people needed to die in. Sure, maybe Scrooge did perform some disgusting acts of perversity on the deadies he carted off, but as long as Kindly was getting his cut, everything was hunky-dory.

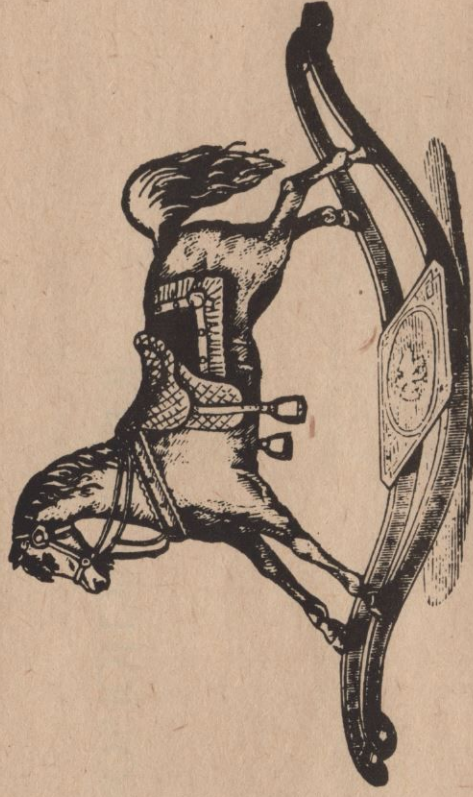
Let us not, however, concern ourselves with the moral corruption and depravity that exists within the world of medicine. We get and overdose of that stuff on television. Let's return, instead, to those golden days of yesteryear. We hear the snow crunching deliciously beneath our boots, see our breaths crystalize in the air before us. All is silent, all is peaceful. It is Hilter's Birthday Eve.

A lone figure approaches the grey stone mansion known as Midvale General Hospital. It is Scrooge, pursuing his lonely, thankless mission. Old lady Thornberry was dying, a helpless victim of every disease known to mankind.

Dropping a penny in the Dr. Kindly Graft Box, Scrooge entered the Terminal Ward and stood a moment, basking in the mellifluous moans, gasps, and throwing-up sounds that echoed throughout the friendly corridors. The soothing stench of rapidly approaching death filled his nostrils. Which quivered in anticipation.

Pulling up a handy milk carton, Scrooge sat down beside Mrs. Thornberry's filthy army cot. A huge rat, clutching a morsel of flesh, leaped from beneath the covers and scurried off.

"You look awful," said Scrooge, "I bet you'll be dead by sundown."



"'Tis the Angel of Death, come to claim me ragged bones," wailed the poor-but-proud scion of a local Irish clan. Like all foreigners, she talked funny.

"No, it's just me, on an errand of mercy," cooed Scrooge, deftly fondling her shrunken dugs. Counting carefully, he estimated that her total number of dugs equalled one. That was one shy of the usual female allotment, but he figured maybe the rat had made off with the other. Smoothly, he continued, "Dr. Kindly tells me you got brain cancer. I'm here to measure you for a body bag."

"Lord preserve me, Mr. Scrooge," she babbled, "don't let them Protestant bastards bury me in a gunny sack! Sure-and the neighbors'll think I'm naught but Shanty Irish!"

The very thought of such humiliation being dumped upon a worthless old slut sent Scrooge into a barrage of laughter. At length he dried his eyes and said, "Yeah, they'd laugh all right. But don't worry. Nobody's going to bury you. They'll just haul you off to the garbage treatment plant, where you'll be shamefully recycled and fed to pigs. Unless, of course, you can afford a casket. And a plot in a nice cemetery."

"Scrooge, I know you're the very divvil incarnate, but have pity on a helpless woman!"

Scrooge waited while she coughed up a bunch of bloody phlegm, then went into his sales pitch. Which I won't bore you with because you are probably going to die, too, and will have to listen to it anyway. Suffice to say, she bought the casket, plus a lot in the Ebenezer Memorial Remembrance Park (a vacant lot out behind the abandoned pickle factory on Olive Street.)

Pocketing every cent she had in the world, Scrooge headed for the Midvale Liquor Store where he would steal a couple of empty cardboard boxes. Taped together, they would be roomy enough for Mrs. Thornberry if her corpse was folded neatly. In a festive mood, Scrooge also picked up a bottle of cheap hooch. After all, Hilter's Birthday only came once a year, and all of Midvale was celebrating. Thusly armed, he returned to his slovenly shack to wait for the old lady to die.

On the way home, a little crippled kid who hobbled around on a tin leg approached him, carrying a tray of goodies. "Hello, Mr. Scrooge," said tinny Tim, "won't you buy a traditional Hilter's Birthday cookie, shaped like a swastika? Or a chewy, caramel oven? Only tuppence apiece, Mr. Scrooge!"

"Humbug!" shouted Scrooge, swinging wildly at the child's game leg with his bumbershoot.

"Merry Hilter's Birthday, Mr. Scrooge," countered tinny Tim cheerfully, "and may you find doodies in your oatmeal!"

His mood somewhat dampened by the idiotic exchange of pleasantries, Scrooge lost no time in scurrying home and seeking solace in the bottle of cheap hooch. It was not long before his tawdry dwelling, beneath which was buried a king's ransom in dying-old-people's-Medicare-checks, took on a brighter glow. He ignored his daily bowl of cold gruel, and drank himself into oblivion. Soon enough, his gentle snoring awoke the colony of lice that infested his pillow. Sleepytime for him; breakfasttime for them.

Like most guys, the first thing that Scrooge dreamed about was Doing It with a Movie Star. (You think Senior Citizens don't have erotic dreams? Ha! Their sexy dreams are just like yours, except they are always Doing It with Greta Garbo or the Gish Sisters or Rin-Tin-Tin instead of Brooke Shields or the Mandrell Sisters or Lassie.)

Then he dreamed that terrorists blew up Iowa.

But due to the unsavory state of Scrooge's soul, his dreams soon soured. First thing you know, tinny Tim showed up.

His little tin leg had turned into a shovel, which he used to dig up Scrooge's treasure. Then Bob Cratchett, the thieving C.P.A. who juggled Scrooge's books, materialized with an Income Tax Audit notice.

The hour grew late. Scrooge tossed and turned in his rancid, straw-strewn bed. On the first stroke of midnight, the Ghost of Hitler's Birthdays Past arrived. It was wearing a brown shirt and a funny little mustache, and smelled like sausage would if you left it laying around the kitchen for about a month.

"Scrooge," said the G.O.H.B.P., "you were a rotten little putz when you was a kid. Ain't that right, Ghost of Hitler's Birthday Present?"

Right on cue, the second ghost walked in. "You betcha," it said, exhaling a cloud of ectoplasm, "and he's not much better now. Did you see the way he grabbed that old lady's tits at the hospital?"

The ghosts, who looked as much alike as Tweedledee and Tweedledumbet, shook their disembodied heads.

"Get away!" shouted Scrooge. "Get out of my dreams, and send back Lillian Gish. We were just getting it on!"

Silently...ominously...a huge cat crept in on little frog feet.

The two ghosts blanched at the third and final apparition. "I fear you most of all," commented Scrooge, sticking to the script, "for you must be the Ghost of Hitler's Birthdays Yet To Come."

The creature nodded, and pointed to the television set in the corner of the shack. The screen lit up. Scrooge rose, put on the reading glasses he had snatched from the body of Grandma Runkle before he had buried her, and stared. A bleak and dreaded phantasmagoria came into focus on the screen.

But after the commercial, the drama unfolded.

There was Scrooge himself, being buried in the vacant lot behind the pickle factory, in one of his own makeshift caskets. It was a rainy day. The casket got wet and soggy and started to melt. Midvale citizens began to gather around the shallow pit, and at length the naked remains of Scrooge were revealed.

"Daddy, Daddy," shouted tinny Tim from amongst the crowd, "look! There's our holiday turkey!"

The rain stopped instantly. A fire was built, and the carcass of Scrooge was hoisted and set upon a spit to be roasted. Mrs. Thornberry danced about the pit bellowing quaint Irish jigs. Soon enough the feast was ready, and Scrooge was plucked upon a platter. Plucking what she (mistakenly) thought was the drumstick off the carcass, the elderly halfwit gnawed away at it like a woman possessed (and/or a good woman performing her wifely duties).

Scrooge awoke and sat up erect. He was sweating, and a sharp pain grasped his groin. The three ghosts, naturally, had vanished.

"Enough!" shouted Scrooge, "I've learned my lesson! I'm a new man! A hearse of a different color!"

A smile--the first he had tried in decades--spread across the rejuvenated face of Scrooge. Tinkling with good spirits, he pressed his head to the pillow once more. Scrooge was lulled to sleep by the voices of the Mormon Tabernacle All-Lice Choir singing a medley of Hitler's Birthday carols.

Suddenly, Fate stepped in. (Fate has a way of doing that. Fools may rush in, plumbers' helpers may plunge in, and archaeologists may dig in, but Fate always seems to step in.) What happened was, the phone rang.

It was Dr. Kindly, calling from Midvale General. Mrs. Thornberry had died. And, as luck would have it, the Hitler's Birthday Tree had caught fire downtown and everybody at the celebration had died. Dr. Kindly needed forty-seven cheapo caskets, on the double.

Scrooge faced a great moral dilemma. Should he return to his old rotten ways and make a killing from the horribly burned and mangled bodies of the innocent revellers? Or should he stick with his new-found happiness and dedication to being an all-around nice guy? For several silent seconds, the forces of good and evil struggled within him, just as it does in us real-life people when we are pondering whether or not to lie or cheat or steal.

"Well," said Dr. Kindly, "what about these stiff's?"

"God bless them, every one," said Scrooge, as he headed for the back of the liquor store.



POEMS

Jonathan Bravard



Betrayal

in the slice of a second -
in the flick of the eyes -
with a sound so harsh,
the back turns away,
not a tear in place.
the feet walk away,
not a moment of hesitation.

Reflection

Like a sharp knife -
in night.
Like broken glass -
in light.
Like a tear -
in sight.
Like love -
in flight.
Just reflections -
in life.

It's raining now -
that quiet little
rain. So much -
like tears.



In the End

He sat in the chair drinking from a bottle of Jack Daniels.
It was a race, would he empty the bottle or fall asleep first.
Finally the bottle fell from his drunken hand and bounced twice on the carpet.
What little was left dribbled quietly out, as he slept loudly.
For the next six hours he slept in the chair.
When he finally got up the pain was physical too.
As he took a shower each drop of water hurt.
As he dried off he lit a cigarette and walked still dripping
to the kitchen. He took eight aspirin and washed them down with
orange juice, he drank straight from the bottle.
That habit had always bothered her.
Now it just didn't matter.



3 POEMS

Shawn Bingman

Ode for a Frustrated Poet

If ever there was a time in my life
When cursing was meant to be used,
It would be in this class as I sit on my ass
trying hard not to look so confused.
First my meter was wrong and my lines were too long
And my syntax was awful at best.
Breaking two of my pens, I started again.
And quit trying to figure the rest.

The chapters are boring; the work is quite hard
I find myself losing my mind.
So I take out my book and sneaking a look
I see that I've fallen behind.
It can be debating on what's more sedating
The class or our president's speech.
You suddenly feel you've lost what was real.
Reality's just beyond reach.

I'll never give up the class as it were.
I'll stick to my guns as you'll see.
I'll work and I'll slave, I'll rant and I'll rave
Till the words turn out perfect to me.
So as I give it a try, I will probably die.
An unknown poet I'll be.
My efforts were wasted, my poems untasted
The frustrated poet, that's me.

Wind
come take me,
raise me
to the heavens
and let me fly
with the angels
upon a new morning.
Let me glide
amidst the clouds
and see the wonder of life
at high altitudes.
Spread my soul
to anyone who wants it,
and give my voice
to the mute.
Save my breath
for dying men
and children without life.



The Librarian

Morning:

Sealed on her throne, she guarded her kingdom,
purposely surveying all her subjects- Fiction and Nonfiction.
All is quiet but for her clock and her watch.
Her bifocaled, cold stare dares anyone to invade her territory.

Midday:

The enemy enters her domain.
Lunch is the best time for attack
because her relief is the new kid on the block;
he doesn't know all the rules and duties.
So, eventually, a few of the subjects slip by.

Evening:

It's dusk and few disturbances have arose.
Glancing at her watch, she sees that her reign is almost over.
She makes her final rounds; everything is in its place.
Back to her throne, she shuts off the light so her kingdom can sleep.



HUNTING IS FUN

