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# THE CRUCIBLE

Spring 1988

The Crucible  
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THE CRUCIBLE

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"...The excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it." (Ecclesiastes 7:12)

# The Crucible

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Tomorrow's Memory

for : John Weigel

'57 Chevy goin through the desert  
450 B.C.-- and the sky is blue, still  
beyond the clouds  
the strange sun  
hangs over forests of azure  
a party of killers moves on  
to the next victim  
world.

I pull the cigarette lighter with a  
jerk  
and toss it out the back  
smoking causes cancer  
so does birth  
and real living.  
I'm really burnin' now.

In another universe  
our killers attack  
tire and train  
tracks on his arms  
and as the sun goes down  
the rooster takes off.

Where ya' goin' Jim?  
The other side baby-  
-if ya' need me just knock  
on the door  
find me on the floor  
though I'm not really there.

I'll be watchin'  
above the clouds  
ridin' in my damned Chevy  
carbon monoxide  
smellssosweet  
and the killers come down  
touch ground in me  
and I'm gone  
again.

Robert Burns

Karen Carlson

"Descriptive Narrative"

It was a Saturday night. Barbara and her friend Ann were excited about what lay in store-- a party at Sigma Pi! Too many nights of studying had left them mentally exhausted, and they needed to get out. They had been given two tickets to the closed party at dinner. Little did they know the price they would have to pay for some fun.

Ann met Barbara at WLHU, where she was finishing a radio show. Barbara was all set to go, filled with anticipation. She was anxious to get out and find adventure-- whatever the night would bring her. She wore a purple cropped sweater with a pair of ice-washed jeans. Her long blonde hair was styled to perfection, and her makeup showed off her bright blue eyes that sparkled with anticipation.

Ann had borrowed a black and white sweater from Barbara with a pair of black jeans. She was a short girl with wavy brown hair and large blue eyes.

The two girls made their way to Sigma Pi, chattering excitedly. They received several beeps from passing cars, and they waved and counted their appreciated acknowledgements. Barbara was especially happy, since she was meeting her friend, John, at 12:00 to go to the Alley, a house off campus that was partying from midnight till dawn.

When they reached their destination, two large, stern-faced bouncers were standing outside the house. They were directing everyone to enter by the back door. The girls walked into the house and were promptly greeted by a group of gorgeous Sig brothers, who took their tickets and told them that the party was in the basement.

A set of rickety stairs led them to the "action". It was darker in the basement than on the main floor due to the fact that there were no windows or doors. It was not a very large room, but it could accommodate quite a crowd. The bar took up one whole wall and was tended by about three very good-looking brothers.

It was not yet crowded, but Barbara and Ann immediately met up with a large group of friends and began to socialize. They all had beers and were already drinking. Barbara visited the bar, but Ann, who recently had had mono, could not drink. The bar was not crowded, and it didn't take long for Barbara to obtain her beer.

The driving beat of the music drifted throughout the crowded room, and although not many people were dancing, Barbara swayed to the beat and scoped out the guys. There were several possibilities.

As the evening wore on, Barbara nursed her beer and spoke with several of her friends. Then, across the room, she spotted a gorgeous guy from her Spanish class. Excusing herself, she drifted over to him and began engaging in small talk. Laughing over a stupid joke, she dropped her beer on the floor. Her new friend immediately went to the bar to get her a new drink. Her mind had time to wander to thoughts of John-- she had about an hour more to wait.

That's when it happened. People were rushing around, purposely dropping their drinks, and lowering their voices. A murmur of "State Police!" swept the room. Barbara's eyes widened as she searched for her friends. Spotting Ann, she dashed to her side and asked what was happening. Ann told her that the State Police were in the house and they were

raiding the party. At a time Barbara knew she should panic, a strange calm washed over her. No, this wasn't happening. There were no police. If there were, they would only break up the party and make everyone go home.

Bright patches of light were working their way through the crowd. The police were shining their flashlights throughout the room. One policeman in a cap and plaid shirt stopped and announced that this was a raid. He glared about the room and spoke with unraveling authority. All people over 21 with ID were allowed to leave. The rest were to be loaded onto two buses waiting outside and taken to the State Police barracks.

Barbara's defense system did not break down. This was not real. She was not getting on a bus. She was not going to the barracks. She was going home.

But soon she found herself being herded outside like a cow being led to the slaughter and loaded onto a bus. She sat close to Ann and watched the bus load up with drunks. Couldn't these people see she was sober? Wouldn't they see that and let her go?

The bus took them to Lamar. It was a yellow school bus, seemingly innocent. But the students inside were not ready to be taught a lesson!

Barbara found herself blowing off tension by making jokes and creating amusing lyrics to popular songs. She and Ann laughed on the outside, but inside uncertainty was rising. Glancing at her watch, Barbara realized it was almost 12:00. It looked as though John would have to be put on hold for a while.

Once instead the station, Barbara and Ann were separated.

Ann was taking the breathalyzer test, but Barbara was afraid to take it although she had not drunk much. She waited in a line of intoxicated kids who were being called into a room for processing. Barbara gazed about the white walled room. Police were everywhere-- standing by doors, carrying clipboards, directing people down the hall to some great unknown. This was where Barbara was headed to next.

She entered a room with three large desks and was directed to the one farthest back. There were maps on the walls and an occasional picture. The desks were cluttered with papers, plants, photos, and ashtrays.

A man with a beard and a moustache who did not look at all like an officer, smiled and asked for Barbara's ID. She handed over her college ID and he took it off to be processed. He seemed to be a nice man, but the fact that he was citing her turned Barbara against him and the other officers who were joking about the proceedings to relieve tension.

Barbara waited for about 15 minutes to regain her ID. There was a problem with the computer. Barbara hoped it was jammed for good. Maybe they'd think twice before raiding a crowded college party!

The officer with the beard told her to have her picture taken and then return instead of waiting around. He handed her a number which she took and indignantly carried with her to be photographed. When her picture was taken, Barbara widened her eyes and gave a very faint, sad smile. Maybe a look of innocence wronged would make them pity her and let her go.

An officer was about to lead her to the bus when Barbara



remembered she had to return to the man at the desk for verification. When she tried to explain this, several officers crowded around her asking why she had to do this. "Just what is the problem, Ma'am?" asked one.

Barbara had hit the end of the evening's rope. She was cited, and it would be on her record. She had stood John up. These officers were treating her as if she had no self-control! And the officer had called her "ma'am", Barbara's greatest pet peeve.

"It's Miss, please." Barbara announced with an edge to her voice and swept into the room where she belonged.

After all was finished, Barbara was led into a room full of students waiting for the next bus. She looked about her, but saw no one she knew. For 15 minutes she waited, staring glumly at the yellow citation in her hands. This was what she got for wanting a little fun. Right then and there, Barbara vowed not to drink another beer. That one beer cost her \$88.50.

On the way to the bus, Barbara looked up and saw someone. Her eyes widened. "John!" she cried. "John!" She ran up to him. Never had she been so glad to see him. He had come all the way to the barracks for her. She hopped into his car, and drove her away...far away, Barbara thought, from life in the fast lane. Needless to say, they were not going to a party.

After breakfast I gave him the 25 cent tour of the headquarters company which I commanded, and we spent the rest of the day discussing the other companies, their sites, equipment, personnel, etc. I informed him that he would be assigned to the 268th Signal company in Gian Hua, just 8 miles away. Since he was junior to the other lieutenants in that company, he would probably end up as a supply officer, mess officer, and all the other shitty jobs. There is a saying in the army: Shit floats

## Two Days in the Life of a Young Man

By Ed Chatterton

The colonel summoned me to his office. "There's a new officer coming in tomorrow, Ed. I want you to give him the standard tour, say for two or three days here at HQ before we send him down to company. I guess we'll let him replace Lieutenant Boggs in the 269th."

"Sir, you know we've got to get that Phouc Vinh system up before this weekend. Couldn't we postpone his orientation until next week? I just don't have the time to wet-nurse a new officer this week. Lieutenant Walker and Lieutenant Evans need to go Phouc Vinh, and I certainly don't have the time."

"Take the time. He won't be much good to Captain Knight if he doesn't know anything about the battalion."

The next morning my executive officer, Lieutenant Sam Walker brought in the new officer. "Captain Chatterton, Lieutenant Larry Nichols." Sam knew that I couldn't dump the orientation job on him this time, but he tried not to grin. "Larry, Captain Chatterton will show you around the battalion HQ and go over the overall organization before you're assigned to a company."

"Welcome to sunny southeast Asia, Lieutenant." I frowned at Walker as Lieutenant Nichols and I exchanged pleasantries. "Sam, get Lieutenant Nichols quartered, and then you two meet me in the mess hall."

"Sir, the chopper is leaving in just a few minutes. I don't have the time." The disappointment in his voice was poorly counterfeited.

"OK, come on Larry, we'll see where we can get you to stay while you're here in Long Binh."

On our walk to the quarters, the young lieutenant asked all the usual questions of someone who had been in Viet Nam less than four hours, but he also asked some knowledgeable questions about the operations of our 36th Signal Battalion. Of course I expected him to know all the specs on the VHF systems we had as the backbone of our organization, but I was surprised to find that he was also familiar with the new microwave transmitters we had installed last month. When I was in school, they never taught me much about microwave equipment, so I asked him how he was so familiar with it. It turned out that the guy had a master's degree in electrical engineering. He would be no ordinary green officer.

After breakfast I gave him the 25 cent tour of the headquarters company which I commanded, and we spent the rest of the day discussing the other companies, their sites, equipment, personnel, etc. I informed him that he would be assigned to the 269th Signal company in Bien Hua, just 8 miles away. Since he was junior to the other lieutenants in that company, he would probably end up as a supply officer, mess officer, and all the other shitty jobs. There is a saying in the army: Shit floats

downstream.

One of the questions that every new person asks (some more subtly than others) is "How safe is my assignment?" I assured him that he was indeed fortunate. The Long Binh-Bien Hoa complex is the largest military base in the world. Nowhere in Viet Nam is safer. Of course he would have to fly frequently out to the sites, but about 80% of his time would be spent at the Bien Hoa Air Force Base.

I told him that before I was promoted, I had been the executive officer of the 269th at Bien Hoa and that Captain Knight, unlike many other career officers, was a nice guy to work for, a reasonable man. I told him also of how we used to watch the infantry guys come in from the field, and it made us very thankful for our safe assignments. The 36th Signal Battalion, in its five year history in Viet Nam, had never lost an officer, and only a few men had been killed or wounded. It had to be the safest assignment in the whole war.

It was also a plush job: color TV, stereo, air conditioned quarters, and air conditioned offices. One congressman who visited us suggested a new theory on how to end the war quickly: just take our air conditioners away.

We also had the finest cuisine in the history of warfare. The men would sometimes complain that they only had three flavors of ice cream until I would remind them of our brothers in the combat branches. That usually shut them up, and I recommended that technique to the new mess officer.

That night, as a part of his orientation, I felt obliged to take the lieutenant to the officer's club to have dinner, sip some suds, and give his poor bewildered brain some unofficial perspective about the Nam experience. I'd been there for 10 months - 2 months to go - so I felt completely qualified to tell him all the truths. Larry and I hit it off fine. I knew that we would become good friends.

The next day, Wednesday, promised to be especially busy for me. I had most of Tuesday's work left undone because I'd spent the day with the new officer, and I had to work all day in Batcom, the heart of the battalion communications network. I had saved Larry's Batcom orientation for today. Sergeant Davis could keep the young officer occupied while the rest of us went about our duties. It would be a particularly busy day because of testing out the new Phouc Vinh circuits, and there were other troubles that day as well.

Batcom was a large complex of radios, telephones, computer terminals, and teletypes. It was restricted to only those whose duties required that they have access. It was always inconvenient to have someone there who didn't belong there, but of course every new officer had to become familiar with it.

Larry and I arrived at Batcom right after breakfast. Never had I seen it busier. Overnight, the VHF shot between two of our sites, Dian

(pronounced "Zee-on") and Lai Khe had had so much interference that six of its circuits were down. All six circuits belonged to an artillery battalion of the 1st Infantry Division, and the brass had been calling us since 2 AM. All of us were harried and testy. Men's lives depended on our getting the circuits back up. This was really not the time to be showing a new officer around Batcom.

"Sarge," I whispered, "What can we do with this lieutenant until we get this show back on the air?"

"Sergeant Davis was no novice. He'd been in the army 20 years or so, and he knew all the ropes. "Leave it to me, sir."

"Lieutenant Nichols, I want you to meet Sergeant Davis, our key man at Batcom. Sergeant, show the lieutenant around, will you?"

I've never seen a quicker tour. Because Larry had such a strong background in electronics, he quickly picked up everything the sergeant told him, but the pace of the sergeant's explanation slowed remarkably when they got to the teletypes.

"Sir, this is our battery of teletypes. You can see that we are a little short-handed today, so, with the captain's permission, I've found a way you can help us out.

"Sure, Sarge, anything."

"Sir, you can see that these teletypes punch tapes, encode the script on three layers of perforated tape. One layer is green, one pink, and one blue."

"Yeah, I know, they showed us these in school before I came over."

"What they usually neglect to tell you in school, sir, is that the confetti from these punctured tapes is, like the tapes themselves, classified."

The lieutenant looked confused, but the sergeant went on quickly. "Now, sir, the green confetti is Confidential, and the blue is classified Secret. The problem, of course, is that the confetti must be burned, but unfortunately, they are all mixed in there together."

"So?"

"So, sir, they have to be separated before they can be burned."

The lieutenant stared in disbelief for a moment. "But sergeant, why don't you just burn them all together?"

"Sir, you know that army regulations prohibit the burning of classified waste with unclassified waste. If you would just separate these pieces of confetti into green, pink, and blue piles, we can burn them separately." The sergeant winked at me.

"Sergeant, that will take hours. Why don't you get a private to do that?"

"I'm sorry, sir. We are really short-handed today."

Larry looked over at me, his face pleading for mercy. I just nodded my head authoritatively, deperately trying to keep a straight face.

The rest of that day the poor lieutenant sat and sorted thousands of infinitesimal pieces of confetti into three piles while the rest of us went about our business. I felt terribly sorry for him, but we had to have him

out of our hair that day.

Late that evening, I arranged for Lieutenant Nichols to be driven to Bien Hoa early the next morning. We were exhausted, and retired early.

I was eating breakfast the next morning when the news reached me. The road between Long Binh and Bien Hoa, long considered the most secure in Viet Nam, had been mined overnight. Lieutenant Nichols and his driver never knew what happened to them.

Many times since then I have thought of how Larry Nichols spent his first two days in Viet Nam, the last two days of his life.

My feet taps semi-voluntarily  
In time but out of synch  
Like the marching of a motley revolution,  
But with no such noble purpose.

No great revelations  
No lines pregnant with clever hyperboles  
Thoughts tread slowly, with hesitation  
Through my head

Before trickling upward  
Through my groping psychic fingers  
As they rise slowly, with the smoke,  
And disintegrate.

Paul Chatterton

Perspectives  
(Through the The Poet Glass)

I watch as the smoke from my cigarette  
Trickles upward through my fingers;  
Slowly tainting them an ugly brown  
Before it rises and disintegrates  
Into the ceiling.

My foot taps semi-voluntarily  
In time but out of synch  
Like the marching of a motley revolution,  
But with no such noble purpose.

No great revelations.  
No lines pregnant with clever hyperboles.  
Thoughts tread slowly, with hesitation  
Through my head

Before trickling upward  
Through my groping psychic fingers  
As they rise slowly, with the smoke,  
And disintegrate.

Paul Chatterton

Perspectives  
(Through the Looking Glass)

I walk along the gray, clay wall,  
I like to dress up in dirty jeans and t-shirt  
Unshaven, unkept, with hair down to here  
And walk into town and look at the people, looking  
At the rude little shit all hopped-up on drugs  
Looking for trouble and knowing he's found it.  
I walk by the people and flash them a smile,  
smile they're sure they've seen before on a wall  
At the post office.

People spring up clothed in white dress,  
I like to dress up in jacket and tie, hair  
Cut, freshly shaven, and look at them look  
At America's future through rose-colored glasses.

Ushering them back to their rightful places.  
I glance at the corner at a couple of guys  
Unshaven, unkempt, with hair down to here,  
Looking and laughing at the L.L. Bean yuppie  
With a Bloomingdale's stick up his ass.  
I flash them a smile they're sure they've seen before  
On the cover of Youn Republican's Weekly.

Passed this sight without seeing -  
I, too, shall live here.

Janine Cuccaro

Paul Chatterton

## Tunnel

I walk along the grey, clay wall,  
Crumbling under the weight of the years.  
The once jagged stones shaped smooth by time  
Tell of laborers' lives lost.  
Millions have passed here without stopping to see  
The fire burning in the ditch.  
Others look but find only remains  
Of irrelevant objects once alive.  
The wind blows; a pebble falls.  
People spring up clothed in white dress;  
Their speech, foreign and lingering,  
Yet vivid in its meaning.  
A fragment of clay hits the ground,  
Ushering them back to their rightful places.  
But their voices can still be heard -  
Above the wind, the rain, and the ages,  
Above the children playing  
And the men scheming -  
Forever trapped in this crumbling wall.  
And after another million have  
Passed this sight without seeing -  
I, too, shall live here.

Janine Cuccaro

Andrew Bailey



On Eagle's Wings

soaring on eagle's wings  
through skies misted silver white  
over land new born by a rising sun  
as spirits blaze with morning light and the ecstasy of the heights  
burnt beyond pain or fear of life  
by cold and currents that dwell there  
and fight as demons against flight  
but blood and bone that was our truth  
summon us aloft to these fearful roosts  
where dwell our souls if only in dreams  
the heights are our lifeblood or so it seems  
and we shall ride them on eagle's wings

I stare as the candle melting  
waxes upon all my memories  
Covered by shadows in each moment  
mistaken, makes my future opaque  
  
Life's mysteries used to haunt me  
Now I'm just amazed  
tired and tired  
but still here and  
waiting for someone else to show  
  
As I wait for the  
to burner away  
I watch the candle  
Wandering of my  
because I'm burnt

images

In the heart of the paradox that lights the soul  
there rests the reflections of dreams untold  
that dance and ripple across the glass  
as images in water as showers pass  
that sparkle and glow in spectral glory  
as a glimmer of regret at roads untraveled  
images that endure in the heart and mind  
that were lost before they could be found  
dreams that echo in sadness their unfulfilled hopes  
that have no voice but reflections memory  
and still dance in the dark tunnels of time.

Andrew Dailey

Voices

A soft whisper  
A loud echoing scream  
Different voices speaking in unison

CANDLES

As I sit waiting  
for the changes  
I watch the candle burn  
Smoke another cigarette  
And laugh at the lessons I've learned

I stare as the candle melting  
burns upon all my memories  
Covers my dreams in opalescent  
mistiness, makes my future opaque

Life's mysteries used to amaze me  
Now I'm just amused  
broken and tired  
but still here and  
waiting for someone else to show

As I wait for the changes  
to summer away the sadness  
I watch the candle melting  
Wondering if it will take me through the winter  
because I'm burning it at both ends...

Hot iron belts to a  
Red seeping river  
Distant shouts  
Screech through the wind  
A blind rage  
Hot fury releasing  
Flowing  
Always flowing  
Until the eruption ceases

Nicole Dammeyer

ART

FOR ANDY WARHOL

The museum guard walks slowly  
along the corridors at night,  
cradling his can of Coke.

Voices

He passes the Renoirs,  
the Gauguins, the Monets,  
the da Vincis,  
Artwork  
as beautiful and accurate  
Passed along by  
generations,  
Suddenly, he comes  
a montage of different  
colored soup cans  
unobtrusively in  
each other.

A soft whisper  
A loud echoing scream  
Different voices speaking in unison  
Panic and chaos  
Confusion  
All of which are found  
In the dark  
Ancient memories  
Rise to the occasion  
Voices of a past time  
Scream and lecture  
Tearing at the edges  
Always negative words  
Tossing and turning  
Trying to shut out  
The voices in my mind.

Then, he sees the same configuration applied to  
a picture of Marilyn Monroe.  
Seemingly unobtrusive, unoffending,  
simple.

Art for a generation.

As he pops open his can  
of Coke, pulling the tab,  
he studies for a moment  
the multi-colored Marylins.  
Then he makes his own embellishment.

He gently hangs the tab  
from a corner of Marilyn.

A heartfelt award for  
unassuming brilliance.

White splinters flow with rage  
Hot iron melts to a  
Red seeping river  
Distant shouts  
Scream through the wind  
A blind rage  
Hot fury releasing  
Flowing  
Always flowing  
Until the eruption ceases

Laurie Guillermin

Variation on S.L.'s "Falling"

A R T

FOR ANDY WARHOL

The museum guard walks slowly  
along the corridors at night,  
cradling his can of Coke.  
He passes the Renoirs,  
the Gauguins, the Monets,  
the da Vincis.

Artwork revered through centuries  
as beautiful and accentual.  
Passed along by art-loving  
generations.

Suddenly, he comes upon  
a montage of different  
colored soup cans, set  
unobstensibly in rows above  
each other.

Then, he sees the same configuration applied to  
a picture of Marilyn Monroe.  
Seemingly unobtrusive, unoffending,  
simple.

Art for a generation.

As he pops open his can  
of Coke, pulling the tab,  
he studies for a moment  
the multi-colored Marylins.  
Then he makes his own embellishment.

He gently hangs the tab  
from a corner of Marilyn.

A heartfelt award for  
unassuming brilliance.

Wayne Harvey

Variation on S.L.'s "Falling"

The same warm feeling rises

new.

Heat curling in crazy

spirals

from cartops.

June, and wasps

buzzing around the old hunger.

Behind the old shoprite in Lackawanna, Pa.

through a crack

in the abandoned

tarmac rises

a solitary thistle

thriving

Ol' Mountain

Ol' Mountain,

I been wondrin:

How you so calm

when Tech holes in yo side?

Ol' Mountain,

spoze you must be patient-like.

Tech worsen volcanoes,

wiv de smokin,

and now guy on t.v. say

they find holes in de sky,

so mad Sun cancers those folks.

Why you just sittin dere?

You Amish?, O you of de sittin religion?

River all choked up,

roll white bellies

and crazy eyes skyways.

Ol' Mountain, least she run.

David Houston

The crisp air of early morning . . .

I

The crisp air of early morning  
feels good in my chest,  
and the walking feels good in my legs.  
Crossing the old concrete bridge  
means less than a mile to the highway,  
and then maybe another mile  
to an optimum waiting place  
    where cars pull over easily  
    and I can be seen in time  
    to be stopped for.

I stopped to look over the edge  
and to peel the first orange of the day,  
and as I throw the peels onto the water below,  
I sing a quick prayer to Carp:

    god who sleeps under snags  
        in mud.

    god of the dogs sleeping across the feet of old people  
        on back porches where bluegrass sounds  
                floated past, June.

    of canoes drifting downstream  
        through willow shadows.

Wind blows a strange curl,  
    turns the kind of wind  
    that in summers turns shaking  
    the undersides of leaves up  
brings evil spirits to leaves up  
sinister orange, jack-o-lantern orange,  
all fallen, the evil spirits raise them.

A rain on the river  
sprouts suddenly  
like tiny steel dandelions.

It may be a bitter walk home, after all.

David Houston

II

I can hear the Dopler effect  
in the fuse-burning sound of tires  
as they slice through the rain,  
and I watch headlights  
pushing great walls of darkness  
up the long slope of the highway.  
this afternoon I made the mistake  
of leaning against a guardrail,  
now the wet spot on my jeans  
drapes cold against my leg.  
My head, too, is wet and cold  
but I don't wear my floppy black hat  
with the psychedelic hatband,  
for fear of scaring off rides.  
It hardly seems to matter,  
I haven't had a ride in hours.

III

I'm tired,  
tired with fear.  
A woman in Relix  
talking about "Jack Straw"  
says, "the reason for their desperation is not explained."  
I can't explain why I'm here  
standing at the side of the highway  
26 hours after I decided I'd be home by sunset,  
with no money,  
and down to my last orange,  
which hangs heavy in my shirt pocket.  
I've been saving it,  
though its bright color has brought me no luck.  
The rain has stopped,  
but everything still hangs with grey.  
Colors are blocked by mist,  
seeming washed out,  
overexposed.



David Houston

"The Etymology of Confusion"

Rusti Williams woke up, shifted in his cardboard home, and listened to the pounding of the train as it passed a few feet above. The sound didn't exactly awaken him; he could sleep through the sound of a train if he chose. It seemed to him that one could grow used to anything; he hardly noticed the cold, hardly felt the discomfort of the weeks since he'd bathed, the way his long and unwashed hair felt different, heavier; the way his grey corduroys, flannel shirt, and socks clung to his skin. Even the hundreds of pigeons that lived on the bridge, nesting in nooks and crevices in homes built, like his, of the world's refuse, seemed to have grown used to the train.

The bridge was old, decaying, crumbling. A wide white scar of clean concrete had appeared on the weathered-brown supporting pillar when the ice squeezed up, and at about the same time he had begun to hear a new sound in the train's rhythm, a higher-pitched echo of the heavy metallic beat of the wheels. Rusti knew that the bridge was dying. Men had come out in a schoolbus-colored pickup truck and looked at the white scar. From where Rusti was hiding he could hear them talking about "the site of the new bridge" about "starting work as soon as it begins to get warm in the spring". They had returned with more men who startled the pigeons and left stakes in the ground marked with fluorescent tape. At the Raven's Eye, Rusti had overheard the old men complaining about the company that was "bringing in men from outside to work on the bridge this summer, while men right here in town are out of work."

And suddenly it was quiet again, the train had passed. Rusti crawled out of his box and into the night. He pulled his dirty green sleeping bag around his shoulders and looked up at the sky. It was dark, but the moon glowed through the clouds, seeming to move as the whole sky slid slowly in front of it. He looked down the river valley towards the lights of town. The landscape was mottled with patches of still unmelted snow, which glowed ominously in the pale light. The air held the crisp smell of another snowfall on the way, and Rusti blinked to be sure there weren't already a few flakes being carried in the breeze. It was very late, he decided. He didn't have much time left before he would have to leave.

There were two routes from the bridge where Rusti Williams lived to the Raven's Eye Lounge. During the summer he could only walk up the access road to the two lane highway that led into town. During the winter he could climb down the bank and then walk along the frozen river to where the riverside bar was located. As long as the river was firmly frozen, he preferred to walk that way, not only because it cut the distance in half, which he would have given as his only reason, but because he was thus able to avoid encounters with townfolk.

Rusti was fairly sure the river was safe to walk on, though it had been above freezing several afternoons in a row lately. He decided, his legs being stiff, to take the longer route and he knew he had to get going right away.

When James and Billy McCullen hired Mr. Williams to work at the Raven's Eye, they were looking for someone

willing to work strange hours and for little pay. They were also looking for someone sympathetic to their particular problem, or at least quiet about it. The fact that Rusti's mother had been Irish was just another pint in his favor.

Rusti glanced up at the glowing orange sign, "Raven's Eye Lounge", then pushed the door open. He stepped into the warmth without shaking the melting slush off his feet. As his eyes adjusted, he noted that there were still several customers seated at the tables, though there was no one at the bar but James and Billy. Johnny Vito was on the stage, talking to the audience as he built up to another song. His keyboard man fiddled around with the organ, bored.

"Well, I've only got time for one more song tonight, I'd love to go on but James wants to close the place, an ...  
...

Rusti stopped listening to Johnny Vito, and began collecting glasses from unoccupied tables. At the bar the two owner's prepared to cry. Rusti walked into the back room, pulled the string on the dangling lightbulb, and illuminated the ugly yellow paint which blistered and peeled from the walls in large patches. He filled the sink with hot water, added soap, then began adding the glasses he'd collected. Dead bugs from last summer lay in the dust on the counter, legs in the air like cartoon rigor mortis. When Rusti returned to the barroom, Johnny had begun to waver and moan his way through a song. "The last one", Rusti thought with a suppressed sigh.

Rusti moved the chairs into place, dumped the ashtrays, then vultured around the last few customers, so that they did

not hesitate to leave when Johnny's song finally came to an end. Rusti swept in to clear the last tables before their owners had even buttoned their coats or wrapped their scarves.

Johnny joined the two men at the bar, which occasioned fresh drinks for all. Rusti moved the last of the glasses to the back room, then began sweeping. He remembered to lock the front door, and crossed to where he could hear Johnny Vito telling a story. He paused to listen. As far as Rusti knew, Johnny Vito was the only act that the Raven's Eye had ever had, and he had been appearing once every couple of weeks for a long time. Still, every time, Billy and James would praise him for his singing, comparing him to other imaginary acts they'd had. And then one of them would ask to hear Johnny Vito's story, just what ever had led him to take up his life of mournful singing. The answer was never the same, though it was always interesting. Usually it involved a cruel woman, a cheating partner, a tragic misunderstanding, or something like that, always something to justify his blues.

"...so we had a couple of tons of canaries to haul up to this research center, and we were almost there when we got to a bridge that had a three ton limit, and from the looks of that bridge it didn't seem like it would take one pound more. So I figured the truck itself weighed a ton an' a half, and the birds were two tons, so we and the birds was over three an' a half tons. And we'd come too far to turn back now. Well, even then I was singing some and my son would accompany me on the trumpet sometimes. And so I says to my boy 'I want to try a little experiment, now you go in the back and let the birds out of their cages and when we start

over the bridge you play on your trumpet. That way we'll scare enough of them into flyin' that the weight'll be less enough and we can get over okay. Well, my son was playing his own funeral song back there, cause the experiment failed and that old bridge went down like a house of cards. I was thrown from the truck, but my son went right down in that dark water. And I've been singing the blues never since, all 'cause of that old failed experiment."

"The birds were deaf?", James checked to see if he'd got the story right.

Johnny hesitated for a few seconds, then answered, "yeah, that's right." He knew his story had failed. Too much silence and not enough feelings, he figured.

Rusti realized he'd been waiting for the story to end, though the three men were oblivious to his presence. He returned to his work and finished up, finally. He then turned out all but one small light, but the men were still engrossed in the story telling. Rusti knew that the stories would not end until the bottle of scotch that they were passing was empty. He also knew that they wouldn't, at least at this point in the morning, mind if he sat down and joined them.

"... so there we were standing in the train station with all those people around, and keeping it quiet, though I was clenching my fists in my coat pockets, and sucking in air between my teeth, and, you know, rolling my eyes, the whole bit. The whole time she was glaring I was mad like that. But than she walked away. Just slowly turned around and strolled away, without glancing back. Well, I knew this was it, she wouldn't come back this time, and I walked after her. I know she heard me but she wouldn't turn around. I wanted

to at least say good bye and that I'm sorry things turned out that way. 'Wait', I said, and she spun around, a glare already beginning to build up in her face. And she said 'What?' all sarcastic.

Well I just wanted to grab her up in my arms, you know, and kiss her and tell her she was okay, that I wished I could change, that I loved her. I wanted to at least kiss her goodbye if this was the last I was going to see her, but there was another part of me that didn't want to do that. I couldn't get all that in words, couldn't decide what I was going to say, so I just reached out and put my hand on her shoulder. Well, she didn't move, didn't react, just stood there stiff, and I couldn't do any more. Suddenly I was very sorry my hand was out like that on her shoulder. I wanted it to shrink away, I wished I hadn't done that, or that she had understood, understood what it meant. But I couldn't just yank it on back again, not right away. She waited for me to say something, and I sighed and looked away, avoided her eyes and let my hand fall, and just sort of swallowed hard deep in my throat.

Well, a train pulled up and spilled a lot of people out on to the platform. A large family led by a large chattering woman with a brown suitcase barged between us. I stepped back, and a crowd of commuters took up their path, growing thicker as more people moved in. I guess something distracted my attention, cause I looked away for a minute. When I looked back she was gone. I stayed there 'till the last train left, searching through that crowd but I never did see her again. Yeah, that's when I started dr... singing the blues, I mean."

With both McCullens now sobbing away, Mr. Vito knew it was time to ask for his pay. When neither of the brothers could get the key into the cash register, they turned it over to Mr. Vito. Rusti reminded him that they also owed him ten dollars. Johnny gave him a twenty, and a look of conspiracy as he stuffed a wad of bills into his pocket. As the men dressed to leave, Rusti noticed Johnny heft up a bottle of Vodka and slip it into a tear in the lining of his coat.

After sitting inside in the dim light for so long, the four men were dazzled by the sunlight that was beginning to illuminate the street and buildings outside. A thin layer of snow lay undisturbed on the sidewalk. Johnny Vito turned to Rusti and said, "Have you ever noticed how a little snow covers all the world's imperfections?" Without waiting for an answer he lurched after the departing McCullens.

The footfalls of the three men faded. An orange striped paper cup scraped along the street, dragged by the wind. Otherwise it was silent. Rusti considered Johnny Vito's final statement, not sure if he agreed. He didn't want to catch up with his friends, so he stepped down the bank to the ice.

The wind whistled through his coat, stronger out on the river. The sun had risen straight ahead of him, and the light reflection off the plane of snow-covered ice forced him to close his eyes as he trudged headlong into the wind. The ice creaked and complained under his feet. There was the far off sound, also, of a train approaching. He kept moving into the light and against the wind, so that it seemed the sun was pushing him back. Suddenly the light was blocked, and he

looked up to the welcoming shadow of the bridge.

And then out of the shadow came a dark pounding blur. The scream of wrenching metal tore the air, as what seemed a giant black fist descended, a huge silhouette of blackness, then the huge train crashed down on the ice directly in front of Rusti. The shadow was gone, the whole thing was coming down into the water, crumbling in a great roar that was still overpowered by the screech of metal. The pigeons were spiraling upward in a great grey fluttering explosion. Cars were crashing at crazy unpredictable angles, randomly creating new and terrible points of gravity. He felt the ice moving under him, felt the whole thing tipping up, hurtling him forward into the conflagration, the great burst of flames, only it wasn't fire but the incredible whiteness of the bubbles rushing up between him and the sun, of ice fragments flying, dripping, and glistening in the cold white light. He felt a great weight going down, drawing him, so that suddenly he was in the water sliding quickly against the up rushing current, and it was getting brighter as the heat pressed into him.

Melissa Kauffman



The jerk behind me honked his horn. I snapped my head up, instantly alert, with the guilty knowledge that I'd been daydreaming, actually zoning, holding up traffic, what life there was. I looked from the jumbled pavement and stepped on the gas. I wasn't going anywhere; I was just driving, letting the concept of motion, the sight and sound and feel, delude me into a sense of purposefulness. It was easier that way.

Is Anyone Paying Attention ?

Today was wrong. I was that feeling of disconnection, fuzziness.  
His voice drones on meaningless. I searched for reasons, coming up  
Losing itself amongst rows of things behind my eyes made me  
of children slumped in chairs. I drank less, or  
He does not care about stale classrooms  
And lead-eyed students, I wish but I clenched my teeth and  
But of things he thinks  
He could have done.

He fingers the knot in his tie  
And remembers when he was president  
Of his fraternity in college days gone by.  
( - Wanted to be a Congressman, I don't want to be here.  
or something such. ) I thought. This is not my  
He spies Jimmy's drooping lids -  
" Jimmy ! Who was our 26th President ?"  
And Jimmy has no answer. But there isn't anything there for  
He shakes his head in frustration.  
(But Jimmy will be Governor one day)

He retrieves a broken piece of chalk  
That had rolled underneath his desk...earlier  
And begins to roll it between his hands. I always accompanied  
He remembers the cane and top hat  
From his senior play in high school. I was every imaginable  
(Dreamed of being an actor, I was a kaleidoscope of edible color,  
or something such, but...) I was Denny's. Orange, red, and  
" Carolyn ! What is public opinion ?"  
And Carolyn has no answer ... I was flannel shirts and  
For no one is paying attention. I was spitting chew all over the  
(Though Carolyn wins two Academy Awards one day) I was Beauty

The bell rings...  
And he goes home to his empty house  
Full of dirty dishes, half smoked cigarettes and  
Empty picture frames in the attic. I was little shoe box houses  
He has no need but memories  
To keep him from deeming his life a failure. I was their first  
He doesn't know why he goes on, I was fresh cut grass. Newly sprung  
And in a few years he will die  
From neglect or some other social disease. I was I was carefully to cling to their  
Never knowing that it wasn't the students  
Who weren't paying attention. I was cradling large  
I was the "House of Dreams" blared on  
my radio. I thought about all the work I had to do that night, pushed my  
hair back and leaned on the steering wheel, driving with my elbow

Melissa Kauffman

The jerk behind me honked his horn. I snapped my head up, instantly alert, with the guilty knowledge that I'd been daydreaming, actually zoning , holding up traffic, what little there was. I looked from the jumbled pavement and stepped on the gas. I wasn't going anywhere; I was just driving, letting the concept of motion, the sight and sound and feel, delude me into a sense of purposefulness. It was easier that was.

Today was wrong. It had that feeling of disconnection, fuzziness, that made everything seem meaningless. I searched for reasons, coming up empty, without answers, and a nagging twinge behind my eyes made me wish I'd gotten home a little earlier the night before, or drunk less, or stayed home. I don't know what to wish, but I clenched my teeth and squinted slightly against the pain, and the light.

The late afternoon sun cast a glare on the rear windshield of the car in front of me. The road was pitted, crumbling, and my car jiggled and rumbled over the worn spots, complaining that it didn't want to be here. Here, in this dying town. I shouldn't be here, I thought. This is not my town, this college town where nothing ever changes, this stagnating landmark. I should be home, in the city. But, there isn't anything there for me either.

I slowed down behind a faded blue pickup and turned on the radio, remembering why I'd decided to stay here for the summer in the first place. Frowning, with the sense of inadequacy that always accompanied the reason, I kept driving. Driving on the strip, where every imaginable fast food place crowded together, forming a kaleidoscope of edible color, scents mingling. McDonald's, Dairy Queen, Denny's. Orange, red, and yellow. Trying not to notice the locals, in their faded flannel shirts and heavy work boots, leering at the traffic and spitting chew all over the sidewalk in front of the firehouse. Passing Mr. Donuts' and Ruby's Beauty Shop and turning onto a side street I never knew existed, just to get out of the stupid traffic.

It was a quiet street, residential and subdued, little shoe box houses on little postage stamp lawns. The June yards had tasted their first mowing and the air held the sharp tang of fresh cut grass. Newly sprung Panzies bordered driveways and Azaleas tried desperately to cling to their ever dying blooms. Old men crouched on front stoops, cradling large bellies. I drove on slowly, pensively, while "House of Dreams" blared on my radio. I thought about all the work I had to do that night, pushed my hair back and leaned on the steering wheel, driving with my elbows.

## Earth and Stars

I kept wondering what was the point. Not driving certainly. I know the point of that was an excuse to keep from doing what I was supposed to do. But, what was the point of doing anything at all? An inane Madonna song came on, happy, plastic, and I wrenched the dial savagely, losing the station, replacing it with another, almost as foolish but better song. At least it didn't deal with love. I'd been working too hard; I was thinking too much; I found myself looking for answers and I didn't even know the questions. I blew off work today and class to drive around and be depressed.

At a stop sign, I sat listening to the radio and wondering what the next step was. With life; with now. Left or right? Did it matter? Left. Onto a treelined road. No Cars Parked On The Right 8AM to 6PM. Precise little houses with well-pruned shrubs. On the right came a child with a well worn cat. The child was four at most; the cat, significantly older. Both were engrossed in themselves, and each other, and the day. I slowed to watch them.

The cat, tabby-ish and grey, stepping sedately and blinking in the sunshine, watched the child. The little girl, completely unreserved, a frizzy halo of fair curls framing her smiling face, sang to the cat and danced a skipping little dance around him, the short skirt of her jumper twirling smartly around her legs as she tossed petals from a daisy, probably snatched from some unsuspecting neighbor's garden.

The venerable old tabby suffered himself to wear a gaudy daisy chain -- most likely from the same garden -- and walked on while the child paused to adjust the chain and rub the old fellow behind the ears before tossing aside the petal-less daisy stem and dancing on, the flower-printed skirt swinging, the soles of her saddle shoes barely skimming the sidewalk.

I realized I had stopped. Driving. Thinking. Breathing. I stepped on the gas and turned off the radio. I had a class in fifteen minutes.

Sarah McMillan

## Earth and Stars

I walk through timeless darkening Space  
carrying with me a host of  
Others  
who whisper inconsequential thoughts  
and cling to my shoulders  
increasing my Burden,  
stuffing raucous, maniacal laughter  
into my pockets,  
creating bills I cannot pay  
as they gleefully shread the back of my shirt  
with their overgrown toenails,  
inciting those who shriek  
goblin-like by the wayside  
to join my journey.

All the fears,  
all these nameless Fears,  
nameless because I dare not  
call them properly,  
simmer on the back burner  
and threaten to boil over.  
I forgot and left the lid on.

Whereas you,  
sparkling with the joy of naivete,  
do not realize  
and carry no Burdens  
of overwhelming thought.

Somewhere  
you found my lost Innocence  
and claimed it as your own,  
making you shine brighter  
as you headed for the Stars  
on this crisp winter night.  
Orion tightened his belt  
to guide you  
while I remained Earthbound,  
held immobile by the Others,  
who dragged their scaly Claws  
at my doorframe  
and stared with loaded bloody eyes  
in my window,

Sarah McMillen

moving only to let you pass  
as Artic winds whistled down the mountainside  
and the last brittle leaf  
on the antique maple in the yard  
fluttered to the ground.

Before  
I warmed my hands  
over the blazing coals of your Intensity  
basking in the brief warmth  
until darkness came,  
and you were lost.

When you came to me  
with Sincerity pooling in the  
depths of your eyes,  
speaking quiet words of  
contemplation,  
molten metal seared my stomach  
and clenched tight around my lungs.

Why did you sit there  
asking stupid questions,  
watching the flames flicker  
into Nothingness,  
when I did not know the answers,  
and do not know them now.  
Blackness descended  
as you stepped on me,  
grinding your heel in the steaming  
warmth of my open gut  
and the razor Claws of the  
mindles Others  
tightened on my throat,  
bring Blood and gleeful, insane  
Chortlings  
as I curled, fetus-like,  
inward on myself.

Orion marches across the Sky  
relentlessly hunting  
you soaring skyward,  
a weightless, eluding illusion,  
while I remain Earthbound  
laughing quietly and holding my head

Underneath

Unfortunately,  
You know me too well  
and read volumes  
into my every utterance.

Grant me  
some illusion of privacy  
And  
although you can reach  
to the depths of my soul  
tell me that you can  
only see  
the two goldfish  
skimming on the surface.

as Tears trickle through  
my Claws.

Sarah McMillen

Ever ride the subway? I do every day. For hours. I get off work from the deli and go home to change; get rid of that slimy salami smell and the greasy hands from processed cheese. Showered and dressed, I walk two blocks to the subway entrance. I step carefully down the lit-red steps, over old newspapers and

Late In Life

Thick sunlight

Blazed

Through the crisp

Blue sky

And rested on orange-yellow

Leaves

And me

Walking on the white

Sidewalk

Greeting smiling

Faces and

Experiencing the childish

Sweetness

Of a peanut butter

Cookie.

Underneath

Unfortunately,  
You know me too well  
and read volumes  
into my every utterance.

Grant me  
some illusion of privacy  
And  
although you can reach  
to the depths of my soul  
tell me that you can  
only see  
the two goldfish  
skimming on the surface.

Sarah McMillen

Ever ride the subway? I do every day. For hours. I get off work from the deli and go home to change; get rid of that slimy salami smell and the film left on my hands from processed cheese. Showered and dressed, I walk two blocks to the subway entrance. I step carefully down the littered steps, over old newspapers and candy wrappers, into the dim and dingy station.

The resounding clink of the subway tokens sliding into the slots and the rolling squeak-brraaackk of the turnstile are my favorite sounds, next to the steady thrum of the subway train itself. They're the ovation to adventure, appetizer to the main course, the "show's about to start" feeling of an opening night. This welcoming fanfare, combined with the ambiance of the subway terminal, makes me stand a little straighter; breathe a little quicker; smile a little wider; basically, feel a little more alive. It's the anticipation of the never ending ride.

For just one token, a funny looking thing costing less than a can of soda, you can ride all day and all night if you want. It'll take you the full length of the city and back, over and over again. You decide when you've had enough; you're in control. Choose a stop and climb up to the sunshine. Up there's the real world where little guys like me get stepped on and high school drop outs like me "ain't worth much". That's what my boss says. He graduated from high school and talks worse than I do.

I quit school in my senior year and came here to see if I could make it in the theater. School wasn't helping me; I didn't fit in. Everything moved so slowly that I felt like I was standing still. I don't have any thing against education. I mean, if you really want to learn about photosynthesis, or study the table of elements, or find out exactly what an adverb does, that's great. Just don't expect me to stand around watching. I guess I'm not super-intelligent, but I'm not stupid, either.

Once I got here, I found an apartment and started work at the deli. I have to take a bus to get there; it's almost as good as the subway, but not quite. I also found out the theater's almost as bad as school. You line up to sign in; you wait to audition; you go crazy until the show is cast. Then you start all over again. I gave up on the theater, but I still work at the

deli. It's been four years now, and I've got my own apartment, my own bank account(with almost nothing in it), my own life, and my nearby easy-access to the local stop of my favorite Entertainment Express. It's a simple life, but I like it that way.

I like living alone. No one asks me where I'm going every night when I head for the subway. No one messes up my apartment, except me. I've also got my own mess. No one disturbs it. I rarely do; I'm never there, really. Usually, I'm running somewhere.

I'm always on the go. I get up at eight, run to the shower, speed through breakfast, and fly to the bus stop. When I get to work, I run all day, slicing, wrapping, weighing, preparing, cleaning. Although, I do hate rearranging the deli case. You have to stand in one place too long, lose momentum. My boss always comes back and tells me what to do . . . . Put the capicola here, no, there, wait, put it back; start with the roast beef; make sure the cheese is wrapped real tight . . . . Mostly, I ignore him. I do my job and do it well. He can't complain; he'd never get someone to put in the hours I do.

Most nights I can't wait to get out. I work 9:00AM to 9:00PM, slicing meat and making hoagies. I stock shelves when there's no one to wait on. I'm on my feet all day and all night. I go through a pair of sneakers every two months. The boss lets me eat for free, though.

After work, I wrap up a hoogie and grab a can of soda. I say good night to the boss and listen to him grunt. Then I'm free. Down the street there's a bench across from the drug store where I sit to eat my dinner. Watching the people is great; they fascinate me and make the subway that much more interesting. But that comes later.

The boss doesn't like people; they bother him, always wanting something we don't stock. He'll stomp around after a particularly annoying customer has left. His boots make a calumph noise . . . . Calumph! I hate people! Calumph-calumph! . . . He never bothers to include himself in this category. Sometimes I wonder what he thinks he is, while I hide in the back and laugh.

I watch people coming and going to the drug store, mostly quick shoppers. A pack of ciggarettes here, toothpaste there, usually only one or two items. The prescriptions are the best. People come out carrying little prescription bags of their medicine and look around, paranoid, like they're afraid someone will think they're an addict or an AIDS carrier. After fifteen or twenty minutes of this, it's time to move on.



The bus shows up five minutes after I do, on a good day. It's usually pretty empty, lots of seats and few riders, but I grab a strap and hang on. You feel the wheels turn better through the bottoms of your feet. The vibrations have an intoxicating rhythm; the elixir of movement flows through me.

The ride lasts longer that way and my feet know each jiggle and every jolt intimately.

Then, it's home for an hour, to clean up myself and wade through my mess. There are sheaves of papers everywhere, notes and things. I write plays sometimes when I come home from the subway. It's usually late and everything is quiet. I'm too full of a mindless, driving energy to even think about sleep. It's easy to take the subway passengers and the scraps of their overheard conversations and turn them into real life. Families fighting, lovers loving, whinos whining; it's all there to be transported to a new location like a street corner or a super market to a new location like a street corner or a super market or even a home, completed with my ideas on life outside the subway. I did publish a play once. Copyright and everything. They put it on in a little out of the way theater down town. I didn't go see it. I wouldn't have been able to ride the subway. God knows I wouldn't be able to do without that.

I'm always running; I have to keep going. Being on the move, on edge, in the running, keeps me alive. Run hard enough and long enough, you forget what you're running from. Look at other people instead of yourself and your problems become theirs. Try not to think too deeply and never probe your mind. Frightening things hide in there, too deeply and never probe your mind. Frightening things hide in there, dark and ugly and lurking that are not even fit for the light of day.

What to know a secret? I didn't go to work today, and I'm not going back again, either. I found out the truth about life on the subway. Today was my subway token day. I go once a month to buy a bunch of tokens, enough to last me for a long time. They fill my whole pocket and I keep them there until I'm done with work and home again. I like to touch them and here they jingle. Each step I take brings forth plings and cla-links from my pocket, sweet music of the turnstiles, reminiscent of the steady thrum of the subway.

I got up early today to get my tokens. Judy, the attendant, knows me. She babbled while she counted and I responded, reading graffiti and savoring the distinctive subway air.

"Stocking up again?"

"Yeah," I answered absently. I was reading "Caffine

Kills," in bright red letters three feet high.

"You sure do buy a lot."

I didn't think that needed an answer, so I looked at the floor and nudged a cigarette butt with my toe.

"I haven't seen you in a while."

That didn't need an answer either, but I said "Um," just to be sociable.

"So, how've you been? Is it nice out?"

"Well, the sun's shining; I've been running."

"Orange and green swirls spelled out "Die now before someone kills you."

"Oh, that's good. Getting in shape for spring? It's almost here. You know how time flies. I threw in a couple extra. Anything else?"

"No." I was scraping my tokens off the counter and shoving them in my pocket as fast as possible. I needed the subway; I was dying to ride.

"Don't wait so long to come back! See ya!"

I barely heard her. I was already at the turnstile, listening to the clink-squeak-brraaackk of safety. One token spent and an empty train just pulling up with the hiss and screech of metal upon metal as the train slowed on the iron tracks. I almost ran to the last car. It was empty, The plastic seats were chipping and greying. The metal poles were finger-smudged and the hanging-straps were frayed. The route map on the wall, covered with cracked plexiglass, was obscured by magic marker graffiti, "Dead or Alive?" Beside it was a wrinkled, curled poster stating "Uncle Sam Wants You."

I took a deep breath; I was safe. Safe and moving. The strap felt good in my hand. I ran my thumb along the rough canvass. It was worn, but it was real. This was real, the subway taking me underneath the city, not the above-ground, "real world" of opposites. Light versus dark; sun versus rain; rich versus poor; hot versus cold; day versus night; life versus death. It was all there and I was part of it. But now, I was on the subway and I was running. Running on a steady track in a world that never changes, except the faces.

First stop. The train stopped and I balanced carefully, pushed forward by momentum. This terminal was almost empty, but a few people got on. Mostly mothers with children. No one got on my car to my disappointment. I wanted someone to observe, some mortal in this instrument of technology. The train started with a jerk and I was glad I hadn't let go of my strap.

I watched the walls of the terminal cruise by, grey and

sooty. Picking up speed, we reached the tunnel. Immediate darkness. It's funny; far underground there are these little bright spots. Each terminal is an oasis of light in an unending maze of tunnels. The tunnels are darker than night, lit only by the subway trains. You reach a tunnel and the windows go black. I like that part of the ride best.

Inside the train, it's safe and bright. Rain and snow never reach the subway world. Trains come and go with regularity. There's a continuity here not found in any other place in the city. If you look at the window, trying to stare through the intense blackness, and then look quickly at the ceiling of the train, it's more dazzling than sun light. This light in the dark is comforting, accompanied by the rattle and clank of the train cars following the endless tracks. And it's comforting to know you've paid your token; you can ride all day. Time doesn't matter.

Down here, away from the bustle and distractions of the real world, there's no need for time. You can't tell day from night; it's all the same here. Time is an interchangeable currency. You can be a miser, stretching minutes into hours, hoarding every second, or you can squander those same minutes and spend oblivious days and delirious nights running and running like the wheels on the tracks.

I did that once. I don't wear a watch and subway time is so very different when you have no appointments to keep. I went down after work one night, riding and watching, picking up new ideas and knowing I was safe. It was wonderful. I came up three days later, hungry and unshaven, amazed to see the sun and nine-to-five activity. I went straight to work, to an angry boss and harried customers all wanting to know where I'd been. I told them I was sick; I looked it, but I felt great. Since then I've been careful. I ask people for the time and store their answers and accents and faces in my mind for later use in my writing. But, I hadn't missed work again, until today.

I was feeling the exhilarating rhythms of motion. It could have been seven in the morning or seven at night. The second stop brought as much entertainment as the first. I was still alone, but I didn't mind that much. New faces would appear eventually. I had plenty of time and no time at all. Time was irrelevant. I started playing my favorite game of sitting in every seat and holding every strap, each time becoming a different person of the assortment I'd observed through my years on the subway. I was about half through the game, and having a great time when I reached the third stop.

That's when I stopped counting.

The doors opened with a throaty whoosh and I looked up expectantly. A herd of people pushed in and milled around, choosing seats. A man sat down next to me wearing a tweedy, threadbare coat and an expensive watch. He was exceptionally clean and well-groomed, smelling faintly of cologne. I figured he was about sixty, a businessman, with a military past. I'm good at that, picking up little clues to figure out what someone is like. He seemed the most interesting of all the passengers, followed by a bag lady, two young lovers, and a sixties throwback with long hair, beard, and ripped jeans.

"Excuse me, young man. Do you have the time?"

A deep resonant voice interrupted my reverie.

"What? Oh, no sir. I don't wear a watch."

"Well, that's all right. It's not important. My watch needs a new battery, I think. I keep losing time."

"Sorry I can't help you, sir. Where are you headed?"  
Getting people to respond is always interesting.

"To work, of course. I'm in real estate. Fascinating stuff. Been at it twenty years. All sorts of properties."

"Really? Where did you work before?" I asked politely, almost sure of the answer.

"Army. I travelled a lot. Fought in Korea."

"What was it like?" I wasn't being polite now; I really wanted to know.

"Don't usually talk much on the subway. But, since you asked, it was ugly. I was glad to come home and set myself up in business. We had some hot times over there, I guess. War is war. People die; your job is to go on until they get you."

"They?"

"The enemy. anyone I guess; death."

"But why? I mean, why go on?"

"Now you're getting philosophical. that's just how it is. You can either give up, or stick it out. It's your choice but the result is the same."

"Pointless?"

"Oh yes, definitely. But, no matter. I like life. Face your problems and keep going. A most enjoyable occupation."

"Life?"

"No, real estate. Are you interested?"

"I write."

"Just so long as you like what you do. . . and do what you like. Here's my stop. It's been interesting. Good-bye."

I watched him go and thought about what he said. He was right; it was interesting. I studied the floor and took a

deep breath. A faint trace of cologne still lingered, spicy and clean compared to the flat, exhaust-ridden subway smell. I wondered what time it was. The next stop found me out the door and through the terminal. It felt good to walk. I went up the stairs; daylight grew brighter. Out on the street, the city hummed with activity. A light breeze was blowing and the sun felt good on my back. The sidewalk was busy and the streets were filled with traffic. The bustle was compounded by car horns, engine rumblings, street vendors, and snatches of conversations. Music poured out from stores' open doorways. The sun flashed off high-rise windows and the smell of roasted hot dogs reached out to me from the corner stands.

Swept along with the crowd, I started thinking about the play I was working on. It wasn't very good, an old man in a shopping mall. I could do better. I wondered what people do in places where there aren't any subways. that started a few wheels turning. Maybe I should find out.

In cracked and sawing lines  
That crested the prodigy  
Like sandpaper feline tongues  
Who  
Cinged as he  
Shivered in the stiff wind  
Of whispers  
  
A hundred angry shaking claws  
Raked the hide of the prodigy  
—Ted was rased down his back  
Pooling in the blackness—  
As they screamed  
"I need" at the prodigy  
Who  
Managed to stammer  
"I only tried . . ."  
As the hands engulfed him  
Stripping the flesh from his bones.

Sarah McMillen

Prodigy  
 A hundred empty hands  
 Reached out through  
 Blackness  
 Reaching, grasping,  
 Awed by the power,  
 Seeking the prodigy  
 Who  
 Cowered in the corner of  
 His own insecurity,  
 Naked and afraid.  
  
 A hundred hungry voices  
 Whispered  
 "I want"  
 In cracked and aching tones  
 That caressed the prodigy  
 Like sandpaper feline tongues  
 Who  
 Cringed as he  
 Shivered in the stiff wind  
 Of whispers.  
  
 A hundred angry shaking claws  
 Raked the hide of the prodigy  
 -- red trails raced down his back  
 Pooling in the blackness--  
 As they screamed  
 "I need" at the prodigy  
 Who  
 Managed to stammer  
 "I only tried . . ."  
 As the hands engulfed him  
 Stripping the flesh from his bones.

Sarah McMillen

His footfalls echoed in the cool summer night. He looked down at his worn boots, faded a light brown from sun and daily use. They were too comfortable to replace despite their appearance. Above them were equally faded jeans, palest blue and broken in the way he liked them. His white shirt would have been appropriate with any outfit. Now, tucked in the front, loose in the back, it gave him freedom of movement; the rolled sleeves and turned up collar completed his casual, jaunty look, as distinctive as a trademark.

Glancing up, he caught his reflection in the mirrorlike glass of a darkened storefront. The whole street was like this, one row of closed stores facing the other. His image followed him in each window as he wandered the nearly empty street. He paused at the camera store, closed like the others. Its showcases were empty; the expensive stock was out of sight. The mirror-window showed him perfectly. He puzzled over his reflection, not totally disappointed in what he saw. He pushed back an overhang of dark hair. It needed to be cut, but he kept forgetting. Dark eyes stared calmly into dark eyes. His face was just a face; some were better, some worse. Mouth, nose, eyes. Change a feature, be someone else, he mused. Turning, he continued his seemingly casual stroll.

It was late for him to be out, and he wasn't sure where he was going. A restlessness was brewing in him. He came to this town to relax and meet people, to get away from his humdrum life. He was looking for a meaningful encounter. Few people were roaming about this time of night. Most were home, or seeking diversions in a multitude of bars. Vacations always depressed him. A fun-filled time, parties and whatnot. You're supposed to have a good time. Too bad they don't sell fun in cans, like beer. But, beer can give the illusion of fun. He left the business district, heading for the nightlife he'd heard about.

He turned a corner too quickly, walking right into someone. Startled, he drew back, but the other person fell to the ground. It was a girl in a waitress uniform, probably just getting off work from some late night cafe. Bending down, he asked softly, "Are you all right?"

"Oh, I'm fine," she said quickly and smiled to emphasize her words.

"I'm sorry," he said, reaching to help her.

"No, I'm sorry," she answered, taking his hand and standing up.

"I wasn't looking where I was going," they said together and laughed.

He inspected her curiously, caught by an amazing flash of blue eyes. Unselfconsciously, she looked him in the eye, glancing pointedly at their still clasped hands. Flushing, he released his grip, and she shook back her dark hair and smiled. "I should be going. I have to meet my friends." He was staring and felt foolish. She started walking, disappearing into the night, but called, "Nice bumping into you." He watched the night air swallow her, stuffed his hands into his pockets, and resumed his quest.

The lights were brighter now; laughter and music filtered to him. The first bar he came to, The Bopper, glittered and twinkled and seemed to pull

him off the street. As he reached for the door, it was thrown open by a burly bald man in a red t-shirt, who shoved a sloppily drunk and obviously underage boy. "I told ya to keep it cool," he bellowed. The boy got up and staggered off, Red t-shirt looked up. "Yah comin' in or what," waited a second and slammed the door.

The street was cool and relatively quiet again. This was not the place. Shuffling his boots and pushing back his hair, he looked around quickly and then started walking. He passed the Fox Club, Hattrick, Magic, Greenback Saloon, and the Surfside. At the end of the strip, he saw a bar, not quite as gaudy as the others but just as noisy, The Matchbook. This could be it, he thought. Unwittingly drawn by the loud music and raucous laughter, he walked into a different darkness.

A light ahead illuminated a cash register; a wizened little man held out his hand. "Five bucks," Took a quick look at his watch, "No, it's after one; three bucks." The cash register shrieked, opened, and swallowed the helpless bills. "Thank you." The little man grinned and bobbed, showing his teeth as uneven as his register keys, and waved him inside.

Here the sweet, humid air of summer has been stifled. The atmosphere is thick with scents, sights, and sounds. Smoke shrouds the room as frenzied bodies circulate. An air conditioner pumps out a fresh, synthetic citrus fragrance, overpowered by the smells of alcohol and smoke, and too many intermingled perfumes. A sense of cheerfulness is stamped on everything from faces to napkins. But, stronger than all this is the beat of the band. It echoes through each body, overwhelms the heartbeats of the patrons, reverberates through the very barstools and glasses, and emerges in the rythmical gyrrations of those on the dance floor.

He stood in the doorway, taking it all in. Fun, he reminded himself, is not found in aimless wandering on almost empty late-night streets. He walked in, avoided a couple in an intimate embrace, and approached the closest bar. There were several here, at least six, all lined up and competing with each other. Each was a study in activity, as fluid and rythmic as the beat of the band. Pressed between a tropical print and a flourescent stripe, he was plainly visible. He nodded to the print and smiled at the stripe, who in turn looked at their drinks and pumped up their biceps another half inch.

He looked for the bartender, a picture of efficiency, and attempted to catch his eye. Immaculate in a ruffled shirt and crisp black bowtie, the bartender performed a mindless function. Never changing expression, the bartender worked the crowd, drawn by a flash of green. Approach, pour, take money, keep change; relentlessly inebriating the customers who do not notice as their piles of cash dwindle to a scattering of coins. Wanting a drink to still his restlessness, he pulled out some bills and laid them on the bar. The bartender immediately stopped and looked up inquiringly. "Whiskey sour, please." The bartender nods, pours, shakes, and serves. A glass appears and the cash on the bar magically disappears as the



bartender glides swiftly to the other end of the bar.

Stirring his drink, he eased away from the press of oversized muscles. A pin stripe shirt with black suspenders weaved uncertainly toward him, sweating profusely and slurring "Bob, 's at you?"

Suspenders knocked into him. "Really sorry man. Slipped."

"Wrong guy," he said, and twisted away, squeezing through the dancing bodies vying for drinks..

He approached the next bar, stopped short, and looked up in amazement. A line of women, every imaginable shape and size, clothed in a myriad of colors from boldest black to flaming fuchsia, preened and posed for maximum effect. Appearing identical, their similar mannerisms compensated for their diverse features. Sculpted hair and painted mouths made them look vulnerable but inapproachable. Legs crossed precisely; shoulders flared slightly forward; each portion of the body positioned artfully. A pervasive sweetness filtered past him; each woman's perfume mingling with the others, becoming one unidentifiable scent befitting their sameness.

He watched them cautiously, sipping his drink, and ran a nervous hand down the faded smoothness of a jean-clad thigh. The one on the end was lovely, but there was a rigidity to her and an arrogant tilt of the jaw. She gripped her glass too tightly and drank through clenched teeth. Next to her, a kaleidoscope of color was ordering. Bright red hair stood on end, supported by a band of gleaming gold. Brilliant green silk cascaded over flaming orange leggings. The effect was dazzling, but it hurt his eyes. Apprehensively, he continued his study. Jet black hair glistened over silver lame. Shining, as if in armor from head to toe, she defensively held her seat and fanned herself rhythmically with a matching lame clutch. To her right, a woman in a black sheath looked past him, strategically leaning on the bar with her ankles crossed provocatively. He'd seen enough. Running his fingers through his dark hair, he took a deep breath and immediately regretted it. The air was stale, not unlike the inside of an old shoe, and in no way resembled the summer sweetness of the evening streets. He turned away with a nagging image of blue in his head.

The voice of the DJ cut into his thoughts. "Summer Silence will be right back, but now boys and girls, it's magic time. Grab a special someone nearby and get close on the dance floor." He heard the beginning of a popular ballad. Then, overcutting the romantic tones, "We're working to please you all night tonight. Here at The Matchbook, we want you to enjoy your vacation. Remember, 'If you can't have the one you love, love the one you're with.' So come on, get up and dance." The song continued and couples wandered out on the dance floor.

At the next bar, his money disappeared just as quickly, and was replaced by another drink, stronger this time. Again no change. He glanced at the woman on his left. She appeared like the others; no heavily muscled companion hovered nearby. He knew a good thing when he saw it. She

looked up coolly, feeling his glaze. Her heavy lidded blue eyes narrowed slightly as if to focus. "Would you like to dance?" he asked, feeling the music pound inside him. She smiled stiffly, more a grimace than a grin.

"Pardon?"

He flushed and repeated the question. "I said, would you like to dance?"

Her interest returned to her drink. Stirring, she said to the nearly empty glass, "I think not."

Undaunted, he asked, "Then, can I buy you a drink?" But, she was lost in an intent study of the water rings on the bar and the tightly drawn tightly drawn bicep of the madras shirt to her left.

He moved on in the darkness, not sure what to do next. Pausing to get his bearings, he wished he were somewhere else. There were too many people here, too many superficial assignations, too little air, and too little room to breathe it in. Out was all he wanted; he didn't care how. Barely avoiding the writhing bodies moving in precise, involuntary rhythms, he crossed the dance floor. He set his glass down on a bar in passing, hard enough to scatter the ice across the immaculate surface. Tucking his shirt further in the front of his jeans, he searched for the door. Finally, he saw the reassuring gleam of an EXIT sign. Smiling for the first time since arriving, he walked quickly toward the door, feeling his boots connect smartly with the polished parquet.

The door handle felt cool and good in his hand. He pressed down, and pushed the door open into the night. Breathing deeply of the night air, he stepped into the safety of the streets. he shook back his dark hair and smiled as he turned the corner, thinking of blue eyes. He was still looking and it was late. Listening to his bootheels echoing on the pavement, he pulled back his shoulders and laughed. He passed the Hattrick, stepping in time to the loud rock beat.

The night was glorious and he was on vacation. Relaxation and entertainment. Life, it was said, is a tragedy full of joy. Who said that? Was it Horace or Malamud? Malamud, he decided. Well, he could use some oy. Hearing sounds of revelry and diversion, he turned to face the Fox Club. This could be it, he thought. Unwillingly drawn by the loud music and raucous laughter, he entered the bar.

and I feel the heat through my gloves  
and as we burned, quickly numbing tongue,  
singing or words came out  
quick and fuzzy and senseless.

I hear before I see  
the long lazy V of wild geese  
above the oak branches  
flying effortless lengths, coasting on currents of air,  
going home to warmth and security  
and long-missed faces,  
to their own territory and half-indulgent  
examinations under paternal eyes.

(no break)

A Homecoming

We walk through the dry grass  
of the park a block from home,  
stepping over the late brown leaves  
the crisp December wind scatters in our path,  
snuggling our chins deeper  
into the high collars of thick wool coats,  
you in precise linear hunter's plaid  
and me in the solid navy of your choice,  
as we discuss the weight of the world,  
nations firing on nations,  
arms treaties, hostage scandals,  
predictions of the first heavy snow,  
and your plans for my life.

I compare our faint shadows  
on the crunchy brown footpath  
in the thin light of this grey afternoon.  
Mine still looks so small next to yours  
which is square and solid,  
moving under the thick dark shadows  
of the oak branches overhead that  
determinedly cling to their long-dead leaves  
as I still hold my beliefs.

Maybe that's what this walk is about.

Hot chocolate sends small clouds of steam  
rising from styrofoam cups  
like words of rational thought from your mouth.  
We drink in unison,  
slow warmth stealing down our throats  
to loosen reserve,  
and I feel its heat through my gloves  
and on my burned, quickly numbing tongue,  
making my words come out  
thick and fuzzy and senseless.

I hear before I see  
the long lazy V of wild geese  
above the oak branches  
flying effortless lengths, coasting on currents of air,  
going home to warmth and security  
and long-missed faces,  
to their own territory and half-indulgent  
examinations under paternal eyes.

(no break)

They travel companionably southward,  
telling jokes and stories for all to hear  
and their loud honking laughter  
carries on the wind.

We pause and you point,  
cup in hand, at them  
barely visible in the dull sky  
between a break in the trees,  
and say something about hunting.  
Cold, I pull my collar closer,  
dragging my ragged sneaker toe  
across the loose gravel  
which clatters ~~xx~~ beneath my feet  
but crunches under yours.

You turn ~~wix~~ to me with that  
Let-me-tell-you-something look in your eyes.  
A false blush of chill belies the solemnity  
& of your voice and I know  
I am in for another soliloquy  
on responsibility and growing up.  
This conversation brought to me today  
by the word Maturity  
and the number Seven,  
to steal a line from Sesame Street,  
Maturity, as in lack of  
and Seven, as in months before graduation,  
an inconceivable time period  
stretching out before me in long langorous coils  
as the path before us wanders off into the woods.

Your voice rings out, weaving through tree trunks,  
deep and impassioned,  
but I am no longer here with you.  
Mentally, I am literally hundreds of miles away  
on a roadway heading here,  
singing to a too-loud radio  
with windows down and heat cranked high  
accompanied only by scant luggage  
and visions of homemade pie  
in the warm kitchen with the family dog's chin  
on my knee as she begs with her eyes  
for some scrap or even my hand on her head  
and your wife fussing  
over my too-long hair  
and ragged jeans, setting a cool  
white glass of milk before me,  
wiping her hands on an apron.

No one really wears aprons anymore  
and no one ~~x~~ really knows what I should do  
with my life except to get out of this cold.

We turn back and you drape  
a heavy arm across my shoulders,  
giving me the standard  
Its-only-because-I-care ending  
and a few transparent  
tattered snowflakes trickle through the trees.

You stop to tie your shoe  
and I walk on, listening to the crackle  
of leaves under my dirty sneakers,  
stopping only when I see  
a solitary goose flying across the winter sky,  
westward, and laughing to himself,  
a great loud honking laugh.

Spill through my head  
Don't let us forget  
To forget  
I don't want to know

So much time  
So many are dead  
Don't you forget  
To forget  
That no one will know

Deep red wine  
Empty our heads  
Don't let us forget  
To forget  
We have nothing to show

All this time  
We're hard to be dead  
Don't anyone forget  
To forget  
How little we know

Stephen Zolli

"Good morning, America. I'm your host, Paul Janely, and on our show, Women of the 80's, we are fortunate indeed to have as our guest, Mrs. Virginia Over-Achiever, a wife, mother and professional career woman who has been elected this year's Super-Man. Good morning, Virginia.

Deep Red Wine

It is a tremendous honor to have you to our show."  
"Why thank you, it is a pleasure for me to be here to represent the women of the 80's across this nation.

Deep red wine  
Spill through my head  
Don't let me forget  
To forget  
I don't want to know

I feel my appearance is not as good as other women around the country that they are all if they are willing to plan and organize. They, too, can be as

So much time  
So many men dead  
Don't you forget  
To forget  
That no one will know

fulfilled as I am."  
"That's wonderful. Let's begin with a look at your background. Did you attend school?"

Deep red wine  
Empty our heads  
Don't let us forget  
To forget  
We have nothing to show

"I was fortunate to be accepted at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. where I majored in business management and political science. Not only did I do well in my studies, I also participated in student government and sorority activities. I barely had a moment to myself, but the experience was extraordinary."

"Didn't you have any problems keeping up with such an active and demanding schedule, Virginia?"

"Well, I did suffer from an eating disorder, anorexia. I believe it was called then, and I also had to overcome two bouts of mononucleosis, but as you can see,

Stephen Zoldi

Holly S. Webster

Super-Mom of '88

"Good morning, America. I'm your host, Paul Janely, and on our show, Women of the 80's, we are fortunate indeed to have as our guest, Mrs. Virginia Over-Achiever, a wife, mother and professional career woman who has been elected this year's Super Woman of 1988. Good morning, Virginia. It is a tremendous honor for me to welcome you to our show."

"Why thank you, Paul, it is a pleasure for me to be here to represent the Super-Women from across this nation. I feel my appearance can help assure other women around the country that they too, can have it all if they are willing to plan and organize their lives. They, too, can be as fulfilled as I am at this moment."

"That's wonderful, Virginia. Let's begin with a look at your background. Where did you attend school?"

"I was fortunate to have been accepted at Georgetown University in Washington, D. C. where I majored in business management and political science. Not only did I do well in my studies, I also participated in student government and sorority activities. I barely had a moment to myself, but the experience was extraordinary."

"Didn't you have any problems keeping up with such an active and demanding schedule, Virginia?"

"Well, I did suffer from an eating disorder, anorexia, I believe it was called then, and I also had to overcome two bouts of mononucleosis, but as you can see, a

determined spirit and a will to succeed will help overcome any adversity."

"What happened following your graduation, Virginia?"

"Hard work and aggressive determination made it possible for me to be interviewed and then hired by the State Department in Washington. I was recently promoted to Director, Personnel Section, Security Division at State. I find this is a challenging and rewarding position which has fulfilled my every dream for success in the business world."

"What do your co-workers think about your fabulous success?"

"I am afraid I have to say that I really don't know. Unfortunately, time constraints have made socializing completely impossible, so very few people know me well enough to know how I feel about my success. I must say, however, that everyone who works for me is very polite. Last Valentine's Day, for instance, I received a small bouquet of daisies with a red heart that said, 'Roses are red, apples are green, if you said let's party, we would all scream.' This let me know they have a great sense of humor, something I appreciate."

"It certainly sounds, Virginia, as though your career is offering you rewards other people only hope for, but I see by your hyphenated last name that you are a married woman. May I ask about your family?"

"Of course you may. I am so proud of my family. My



husband, Oliver Achiever, is a Lieutenant Colonel in the Marine Corps. He has always been so supportive of my career ambitions and my desire to retain my own last name in some form after our marriage. My hyphenated last name is not so much a statement for feminism as it is a statement of my own personal independence. Oliver and I met here in Washington, and we see each other as often as possible when he isn't actually stationed in the area."

"When he is living at home, how do you manage the housework and chores?"

"We are again fortunate to have a live-in housekeeper. Suzanne not only looks after my children's needs while I'm at work; she also assists Oliver when needed. It is wonderful to have such dedicated domestic help these days. We couldn't afford her if I weren't working."

"Yes, I know finding good help is hard these days. Does Suzanne do all the cooking?"

"No, only breakfast and lunch; she has another regular employer she must tend to in the evenings. If I'm not going to be home, Suzanne will fix something for the kids and their evening sitter will serve it to them. When Oliver is home, he helps lighten the load by eating at the club every evening. This way, if I do come home for dinner, I can simply stop by a fast food restaurant and pick up supper for me and the kids."

"Oh yes, Virginia, how many kids do you have?"

"I have two terrific kids, a boy 12 and a girl 6. I am so lucky to be able to financially provide for all their needs. Both attend the private Montessori School in Washington, and they are both doing OK. We are fortunate that the school keeps in close contact with the parents when any problems arise. I speak with the administration often. They really care. My boy is very interested in sports and never gets home till after 7 p.m. because of the various practices he must attend. My girl takes dancing, gymnastics, piano and riding lessons during the week, and both go to the Athletic Kid Club each Saturday to workout and swim."

"Virginia, your children seem to have an exciting life. Do they have any favorite hobbies that they like to share with you?"

"Well, Paul, I go to one recital and one sporting event each semester. There just isn't time in my schedule to permit any more. As a matter of fact, my children's favorite hobbies change so quickly I can hardly keep up with them. My daughter's last known favorite TV show was Sesame Street, but that WAS quite a while ago. I'll have to get together with her again sometime in the future to talk about her favorite things. We'll do lunch."

"Do you and Oliver own your own home in Washington?"

"Oh no! We feel that ownership really restricts our ability to do what we want when we want. Since we are

rarely home for any length of time, we rent a beautiful four bedroom apartment located in the Watergate Complex near the Potomac River. It has every convenience without the hassels of yard work and 'Mr. Fix-it' projects that take time away from necessary homework time. Yes, Paul, our home is our castle, a place where we can go to get away from the outside world."

"Virginia, you sound as if you have everything fully under control. What would you say is most important to you this minute?"

"As of today, my family is most important. It is necessary for me to make sure that they are all provided with the best clothes, equipment, transportation, education and quality care at home. My family is my first priority".

"And how often do you get home?"

"Oh, I check-in at least twice a week when I am really busy at the office to make sure all is running smoothly. My job, you know, requires me to travel quite a bit. Next week I will fly to Saudi Arabia for a two week conference. At times like these, the kids, Oliver and Suzanne are on their own, but because they are as enlightened and ambitious as I am, they will all do fine."

"I'm sure they will. Virginia, what is your reason for flying to Saudi Arabia?"

"Paul, I am so excited! I will be representing

America at a woman's conference being held there. I will speak on the subject, "A Career Woman Can Have It All." Of course, before I go I must see my doctor for any shots required and get my prescriptions refilled."

"I hope you don't mean you have a health problem."

"Oh no. I get 15 minutes of exercise daily in the State Department gym at 6 a.m. No, I find that when I am over stressed, my heart begins to race and I lose my breath and sometimes consciousness. My doctor told me I was having severe anxiety attacks."

"Isn't that dangerous?"

"Goodness no! In our marvelous society two little pills twice a day, a seditive and a beta blocker which slows down the heart beat, correct any problem."

"Well, Virginia, wouldn't it be healthier to just change your lifestyle, slow down some and get to know your husband and kids again. Wouldn't you like to enjoy life?"

"What? Slow down! Enjoy life! What do you think I am doing. This is the most wonderful time of my life, and if two little pills are all I need to keep going, then so be it. After my speech in Saudi Arabia, I hope all the women there will be motivated to want to be a Super-Woman just like me."

"I am sure, Virginia, that you will affect many attending the conference. Thanks again for being with us on Women in the 80's."

For years now a rather simple proposal has been inadvertently overlooked in the war for world peace. As I assume I will very soon fall prey to this madness, I intend to present as my legacy to mankind a foolproof design to end all war. The proposal consists for the most part of this: simultaneously launching every instrument of nuclear capability in the two great superpowers, thus relinquishing all sources of tension and controversy. Now this relates several areas for consideration. First, it will eliminate all war-causing elements. Second, it will purge the world of the pain, both mental and physical, which emanates and multiplies with war. And last, it will eliminate the extravagant expenditures of several countries for national defense and the military. With the resolving of these three issues, there will be no means of disharmony remaining to unsettle the nations and individuals of the world.

By strategically aiming all the United States and Soviet warheads towards evenly distributed cities throughout the world, the potential will be created to destroy every weapon, large and small, on the face of the earth. The nuclear weapons of either the U.S. or U.S.S.R. possess the ability in themselves to annihilate every city on every continent billions of times over. However, I feel once will suffice. Deductively, this will result

in the destruction of the forces of violence in these cities as well as the cities themselves. Now the only possible difficulty with this is that Gorbachev and Reagan may not be able to cooperate long enough to press the buttons launching the attack within a few minutes of each other. However, provided (this is an assumption) that the leaders of our countries can be original enough to communicate for the length of time it will take to synchronize their watches, there shall be no problem with the execution of this plan.

As our second consideration we must examine the extreme anguish caused to both the direct and indirect malefactors of war. The most obvious suffering incurred is physical. Many soldiers and civilians never recover from the physical injury caused them in war and are forced to carry these burdens the rest of their lives. But perhaps the most excruciating pain is mental. Millions of veterans of wars such as Vietnam suffer tremendous guilt, rage, and despair due to their personal involvement in the mass slaying of other human beings or the witnessing of such actions. There is also the emotional stress which the families of the deceased and mentally impaired must undergo. With the type of impersonal destruction which I proffer, not only will there be no blame to place, but within minutes no one will be alive to feel the slightest regret nor suffering.

However, the predominant concern of all higher-thinking persons of any merit or compassion is national defense spending. Billions of dollars are being spent in the U.S. alone to protect this country. An equal amount is being needlessly expended by the President and Congress to campaign their respective sides of the cause. The circumstance for this will be immediately removed since there will be no weapons against which to defend. With the elimination of both defense and excuses for arms initiative (occasionally referred to as SDI), the government-supported military can be all but wholly disassembled, relocating the unspeakable amount of money distributed in pay and benefits to the receding upper class. In addition, all costs of retribution to allied and victim countries will be eradicated, as will costly research concerning the inevitable disease and illness associated with nuclear warfare. And as an extra benefit, Reagan will be neatly extricated from the embarrassing predicaments into which he seems so prone to involve himself when it comes to arms and the supplying of such.

Several other solutions to this perplexing problem have been offered in the past. One is aptly referred to as Star Wars -- probably because it resembles a poorly-acted, far-fetched, science fiction/adventure movie. Another proposes to wipe out the land and evacuate the Earth so that when all-out war erupts, there will be nothing left to destroy. And still a third suggests murdering the world's children through any one of a

number of atrocities currently being promoted, vanquishing all future soldiers and statesmen and eventually causing the natural extinction of the human race. While each of these possesses obvious merits, the foremost drawback to each is the terrific expense of such proposals. As can be readily seen, my solution is overwhelmingly beneficial and the only plausible remedy. Hopefully, the leaders of the world will soon tire of the present distress and tribulation and use their initiative to employ the above-suggested peace-making action.