

Misericordia University

## Misericordia Digital Commons

---

Instress: A Journal of the Arts

Digital Collections

---

2024

### Instress: A Journal of the Arts, 1992 (Spring)

Misericordia University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.misericordia.edu/instress>

---

#### Recommended Citation

Misericordia University, "Instress: A Journal of the Arts, 1992 (Spring)" (2024). *Instress: A Journal of the Arts*. 2.

<https://digitalcommons.misericordia.edu/instress/2>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Digital Collections at Misericordia Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Instress: A Journal of the Arts by an authorized administrator of Misericordia Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [mcech@misericordia.edu](mailto:mcech@misericordia.edu).



*spring 1992*  
*instress*

---

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Grapes of Wrath, 1992	Photo	Jason Lambert	Cover
Grandma, c.1925	Photo	Marie Stolarick	Cover
'57 Chevy	Photo	Marie Stolarick	Cover
Friendships Melt Away		John Zongilla	3
Paper Cat Sculpture	Photo	Marie Stolarick	7
Three Perspectives		Marie Blizzard	8
Just an Observation		Michael Fiato	9
Untitled	Photo	Jenn Garceau	9
The Parable of Two Brothers		Dan Zalewski	9
brother of mine		Anya Musto	10
Faculty Development	Artwork	Dr. Stevan Davies	11
Minority		Joe Dombroski	11
Steps		Robert Enos	12
Untitled	Photo	Jenn Garceau	12
Seeds of Joy (10/90)		Kelly B. Steward	13
Trapped Within		Leah Slattey	13
An Allegory: The Eagle Cries		Brent Montross	14
A Story		Rebecca Ardoline	15
Untitled	Photo	Susan Johnson	15
Tarot Woman		Joe Dombroski	15
A Cold Summer's Night		John Cook	16
Summit, N.J., Alleyway	Photo	Jason Lambert	18
Leap of Faith		Peggy Charnick	19
Ready		Jim Sabulski	19
Untitled		Paulina C. Riera	20
Dust		Nancy Steffan	20
Road to Somewhere		Joe Dombroski	20
A Positive I.D.		Peggy Charnick	21
Dong Ha	Photo	Charles (Scoch) Bergough	23
The Grapes of Wrath	Artwork	Jonathan Sakowski	24

---

**INSTRESS** has been published by the students of College Misericordia since December 1966. The title, coined by Gerard Manley Hopkins, signifies the moment the reader achieves complete understanding of the written word.

**Literary Editor:** Anya Musto; **Editorial Staff:** Peggy Charnick, Rob Enos, Jill Gorman, John Cook; **Advisor:** Dr. Jeffrey Johnson.

Articles or artwork from this magazine may not be reproduced without the written permission of the editors and the author or artist.

---



# Misericordia

College Misericordia  
Dallas, PA 18612

## Friendships Melt Away

Jim's nose was running peculiarly fast during our weekly Sunday night chess match. I hastened to guess why it was running at all. He didn't complain of having a cold, and I was certain he didn't have any allergies, so I couldn't imagine what was wrong with him. Perhaps he had been crying earlier and didn't bother to tell me. I hated to pry, but he was my friend.

"What is wrong Jim?" I asked as I took away one of his pawns with my bishop. "You're really going through the Kleenex tonight."

"I don't know John," he replied. "I'm feeling quite at odds with myself tonight." He finished by taking my bishop away with his queen.

"Damn, I didn't see that," I whined. I then began to take notice that Jim was becoming more withdrawn from our conversation and more interested in playing with captured chess pieces.

"You're not upset about losing your knights too early are you?" I guessed. "I always thought you hated those pieces because of their irregular movement. You know the one." I stood to illustrate my point. "hop, hop, then slide, just like some juvenile fifties dance." I finished by doing a cross between a bunny hop and James Brown style dance. Making a fool of myself usually cheered Jim up.

"I hated the fifties," remarked Jim coldly.

"I didn't like them either," I replied even though I liked that era.

"Damn gel creams, T-Birds, American Graffiti, and Ike." He rambled on, leaving his chair and soon pacing the floor.

"Huh?" I sighed, confused by the tone of Jim's voice and the direction the conversation was going.

"Baby boomers my eye!" Jim cried, and then placed his hands over his eyes and blurted, "My eyes, my eyes! Burn like infectious boils on the bottom of an old man's bed ridden ass!"

"Are you rehearsing for a play or something Jim?" I asked seriously, not understanding Jim's actions.

"Unclean thoughts are the catalyst for evil! Purify your mind!" he ranted, "And you'll purify your soul!"

"Bravo! Bravo!" I applauded being none the wiser. "Is this Shakespeare?"

Jim became silent. He stopped in his place and slowly lowered his hands from his eyes, revealing a vacant stare which penetrated my light heart, filling it with heavy despair. His sinuses seemed to be betraying him as nasal drip intensified. It changed from a clear form into a yellowish green film with blood-laced strips, followed by a gray ooze. It flowed continually from his nasal passages over his lips, around his chin, and then down his neck until it reached his "Bo Knows" T-shirt. The fibers of the shirt appeared to become tie-dyed by the messy fluid. The smell of the goo was repelling which is why I refused to taste it. Jim dropped to his knees, then fell face down. He was dead.

"The horror!" I cried. "My best friend has died of a sinus attack! Oh, what an unheard of tragedy!" Tears poured from my eyes as I rushed to the phone and dialed 911. I explained the events as best I could to the operator and eventually the police



arrived.

When they arrived they asked me a variety of questions, ranging from my age to whether I ever killed anyone before. They seemed to stress questions about Jim's diet and the possibility of him using drugs. I replied to these by telling them he was a vegetarian and a frequent antihistamine user. They ruled out these facts as the cause of death. An autopsy had to be performed. The findings of the autopsy were astounding.

It seems that Jim had a brain meltdown. His brain simply melted. I asked repeatedly what could have caused such a biological catastrophe. A toxic agent? A mysterious virus? Or could Jim have acquired too much knowledge for his brain to handle? The answer to all my inquiries were, "Probably not."

I grew frustrated. I needed answers and pledged to find them. My imagination began to fly. I thought perhaps an evil witch sect was behind Jim's demise. So, I spent a week staking out Walden Books' occult section of the store in hopes of spying a witch. I failed and managed to get banned from the store for dousing holy water on customers who I felt looked like witches. It was a hasty decision on my part. I then thought maybe a jealous lover used some exotic, non-traceable poison on him. But I forgot Jim was celibate. His delusion of saving himself for the up and coming pop star Elisa Fiorillo was to blame. I now think that this was why Jim liked it when dogs licked his face so much. He was a lonely man. I ran out of ideas.

I felt helpless. I turned to the bottle, but had to quickly get off, being diabetic. I couldn't risk my health just because my friend had died. I had other friends. I gradually began to accept Jim's death as the weeks passed by. The Sundays were still difficult though. I bought a personal computer and played chess on it, but it lacked Jim's witty disposition.

Then one Friday morning almost two months after Jim's death I got a phone call.

"Hello," I began.

"John," came a familiar voice. "I can't stand."

"What? Who is this please?"

"I can't stand the resurgence of the Nazi party in Germany!" It came wildly. "Zieg Hail! Zieg Hail! What about Ich bin ein Berliner! The only other German I know."

"Is this some kind of joke?" I asked confusedly. The voice ceased. "What is this about please? Who is this?" I slammed the phone down in anger. "Imagine the nerve!" I said aloud to vent my anger, and later that afternoon the police arrived at my door. They wanted to ask me a few questions. I complied.

"Did you receive a call from Barry Magnione this morning?" the officer asked.

"That trickster!" I laughed. "Yes, he called to confuse me earlier."

Well, he's dead," the officer said coolly, awaiting my reaction with unjust eyes. My body felt as if pins pierced outward from within my shell, numbing my reaction to this horrifying news.

"How?" was all I could say sterily.

"The same way Jim Zimmerman died, a cerebral meltdown. So mister, what kind of arcane chants of demonic origin did you cast,

warlock?" he accused.

"What?!" I was surprised by this. "Are you suggesting that I had something to do with their deaths?"

"Yes."

"But all I said was..."

"Silence!" He cut me off quickly and placed his hands over his ears as if to block any unwanted words from reaching his head. "I will not fall victim to your voodoo."

"I can't believe you suspect me of killing my friends. Are you giving up searching for the real killer in order to prove an innocent man guilty?" I then snapped. "You must be a stupid, doughnut-stuffing, gun-toting civil servant of incompetence!" The officer replied to this with a shot with his night stick into my groin. I fell to my knees.

"I may not be able to prove it yet, but be assured when I do, your vocal chords will be no more." He clubbed me again as he left for the door.

I was really upset by this, but even more so in pain. I needed to get an angle on the past events in order to solve this mystery. If the police weren't going to, I must. I decided to hold a solo brainstorming session. I had to figure out what Jim and Barry had in common before their deaths. I sat down at my desk and took out a pen and paper and began writing.

They were both my friend, but I know I didn't do it. They both became ranting maniacs before they passed, but that was probably because they were losing their minds, literally. They both wore Levi's, but that meant nothing except that they bought American. They were both Catholic, but I doubt there was any type of religious retribution involved, being that God has toned down lately on acts of vengeance. They were both math majors, and complained of having too much homework, but I doubt that was relevant.

My thoughts were interrupted by a knock on my door. When I opened it, my friend Louis was revealed holding a bunch of bananas. I was suddenly stuck by the fact that he was a math major too! A clear fluid was seeping from his nose.

"Hi Louis," I said calmly. "What are you doing with that bunch of bananas?"

"I've come to feed your monkeys," he replied happily as a forced grin showed on his face.

"But I don't have any monkeys."

"Then I'm too late!" he cried, as the grin and the bananas dropped to the ground. The clear fluid was gradually metamorphosing into ooze. Louis tried to run away, but I tackled him.

"Tell me Louis, what were you, Jim, and Barry working on before their deaths?"

"Our tans?" he replied dumbfounded.

"No!" I exclaimed with a slap to his face. "In math class."

"Oh, the forbidden formula of Nurcklestopheles," he sighed.

"Good ole Nurckle stated that  $x(\pi) (33) = x^2y$ , but where the hell does the y come from?" He placed his hands over his mouth as a child does after saying something they shouldn't have.

"I don't know," I replied, being in the humanities department,



but I thought it wise not to ask.

"Well we did, and now I must join those who have done so before me," he ended, as a blank stare shown on his face. I figured he was approaching the end. I only had a few moments left to help my ailing friend so I had to come up with a new solution for him to ponder over.

"Louis, perhaps the  $y$  is some residue left over from the original theory from which his formula derives?" I stabbed. Louis dropped dead. My bluff failed. I did gain valuable information though. I had to find this source of evil from which all my woes sprang. I decided to go to the university's math department and retrieve the formula.

The math department shared a double family home with the chemistry department on the campus. It was a three story house set off from the main drive with concrete steps leading up to a neglected porch. And through its weathered doors lied enough brain power to figure out why men had nipples, if afforded enough time. I knocked on the door and stood in silence for five minutes before moving to the chemistry side. The door opened instantaneously as I knocked, and a vision of great relief opened my heart wide, lifting the weight of heavy despair placed on it by the melting death.

"Hi, I'm John," I sighed to this lovely vision with long auburn hair let loose over her shoulders.

"What do you want?" she breathed, her breath, the air, filling my lungs with vitality.

"Your help please," I begged. I would beg for her hand, her smile, her cry.

"What do you want?" she repeated. I would never forget those sacred words she used so well.

"Is anyone next door? I need a word with them," I answered my love.

"What do you want to speak with them about?" she asked, adding to that phrase engraved in my heart.

"About a formula they've been working on," I replied. She seemed to develop a facial tic after I spoke. "Do you know of the formula?"

"No, so why don't you leave now. They left for break," she said coldly.

"But break doesn't begin for another three weeks," I realized.

"So," she finished as she closed the door. I was shut out by the lying nymph. Her alluring scent was nothing but a facade. She was cold. I began to suspect a conspiracy involving the chemistry department. I decided to break into the math department that night.

I forced open a back window and pulled myself through. It was dark, the air was stale. I brought a flashlight and used its powers to guide myself around. The rooms were empty of life, no plants or even pests, just books. I perused through some of the books, but all contents inside flew over my head. There was no mention of Nurcklestopheles, though, in any. I searched each room with similar results. There was nothing to be gained here. But just as I started to head for the opened window, I heard the front door open. I stopped in my place, not knowing what to do. Should

I confront the intruder, or hide behind a desk? I chose the latter. The intruder turned on the light in the room I was hidden in and began to search through one of the books located in a bookcase. It was the false vision I encountered earlier. I decided to confront her, seeing that I could take her in a fight if necessary.

"What are you looking for woman?" I asked.

She was startled by my presence, but not frightened. She continued to search through the book despite my expectation of an answer. She finally stopped at a page and tore it out.

"I've found what I'm looking for mister," she finally answered and started for the door.

"Stop!" I demanded. "Is that the forbidden formula?"

"Yes, and I must take it away from here so it doesn't do any further harm."

"You mean, you're not behind the unnecessary deaths of my friends?" I asked, confused by her unexpected reply.

"No. It was an accident. Your friends checked a book out of the library by mistake. It was supposed to be left on the reserve shelf for reference only, not research. I retrieved the book, but not their notes. The formula is the product of a mad mathematician who devised a way to destroy brain cells using different combinations of numbers and signs. After the cells were killed, the brain would have a violent reaction and dissolve into a liquified state. It was an ingenious method, albeit deadly," she explained to me, so well informed.

"Well, I guess that's plausible, but who are you to know all this?"

"A library assistant," she replied.

"Oh, then just one more thing if I may ask?"

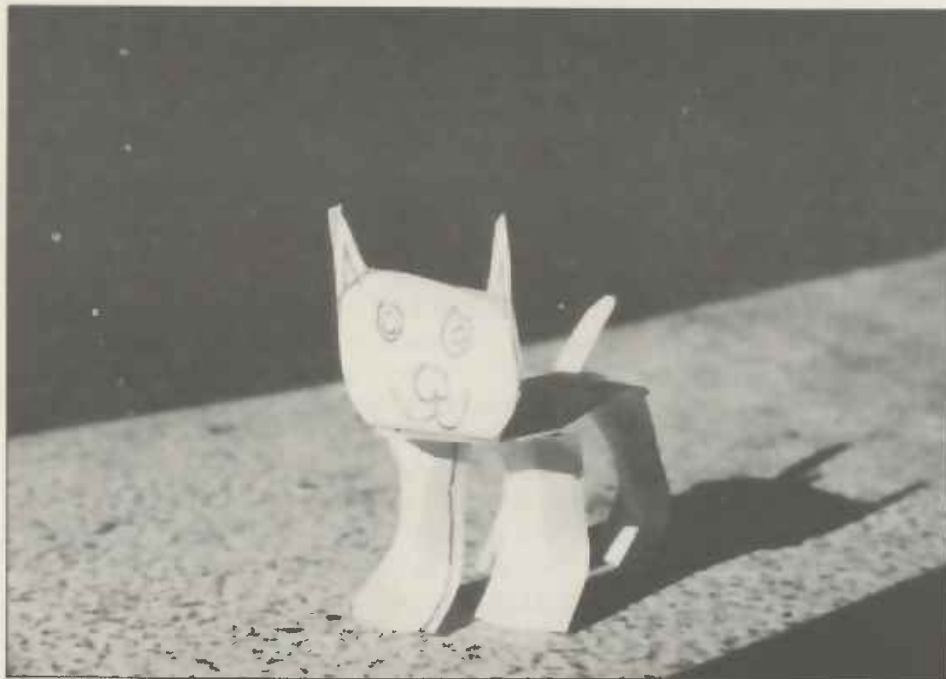
"Yes."

"Would you hold me? I've been through so much."

"Sure." She smiled and opened up her arms, which is where I lay for the better part of that night being comforted by the vision of great relief.

the end.

JOHN ZONGILLA





### Three Perspectives With A Beer Chaser

#### I.

We jetted down the highway in his sleek, black Plymouth Duster with open-out opera windows. The radio blared out a country tune with Gary accompanying George Jones no the lyrics. He thought it was so romantic. I would have preferred something by Jackson Brown, but that was just one of the things we didn't have in common. Gary was easy to look at with doe-like brown eyes and arms like Robert Blake in Baretta. He was handsome and rugged and liked his Rolling Rock and lots of them. We pulled into a gas station and Barry Manilow came on the car stereo, his mellow tones telling the story of a week-end in New England. Gary leaned over and gave me a bear hug, and murmured words of everlasting devotion. Then he got out and used the facilities and I pondered our future, at least what the rest of the evening had in store. When he returned to the Duster, we rode up to an isolated hilltop where all the lights of the city looked like candles on a huge birthday cake, and parked. We sat quietly for a moment and he asked me how I felt about him. I said I cared about him a lot. "Enough to marry me?" I opened my mouth to say, "Yes, yes, yes!" but it didn't come out. "What?" I blurted in disbelief. "I don't believe you said that." The weather inside the car became somewhat chilly, in spite of the balmy autumn weather. We drove home in silence.

#### II.

I picked up Maria around 8:00 and I was feeling pretty great. The Duster and I were both shined up and looking good and I knew it was going to be a good night. As we drove along the country roads, I sang to Maria the words of the great George Jones. She loves it when I do that. She thinks I have a sexy voice. We stopped at this gas station, since I had to take a leak, and before I got out of the car I gave Maria a big hug and slipped her the tongue which drives her crazy. After that we motored up to this romantic little spot on a hill where I take her to look at the stars. I was feeling no pain and I said to her, "Babe, what do you think of me?" She said she adored me. So I said, "Oh yeah, enough to marry me?" We were both struck dumb. She said she'd have to think it over, but I felt like a fool. We drove home in silence and I knew I'd made a mistake.

#### III.

From the back seat of the sleek, black Plymouth, Terry and Babs stopped in mid lip-lock. "Did Gary just say what I thought he said to Maria", Terry whispered to Babs. She sat up and smoothed down her pink turtleneck sweater and retrieved a hairbrush from her purse. "That's so sweet!" Babs purred. "I'm sure he just proposed." Terry looked like someone just sucker punched him in the gut. "No, it was the beer talking. I hope she doesn't take him seriously. I wouldn't want to see either of them get hurt or rush into anything so suddenly. They've only been dating for a couple months. They couldn't possibly want to get married." Terry really did care. He always felt he was put in the middle when Gary and Maria fought and made up, which was a weekly event. Both would call him on the phone the next day and relate their side of the story. Both knew that he was on their side. Tomorrow would be the same. He had only to go home and wait for the phone to ring to hear the whole story-both versions.

### Just An Observation

I know it's coming when  
Your lips begin to melt skeptically together,  
Your head doesn't bother with a tedious turn,  
Your eyes stay focused on a straight highway,  
When I say anything remotely serious,  
When you drink those hellish mixed monsters,  
When we remember something that made you do what this is about,  
When we skim the waters of the St. Lawrence in a purposeless hurry,  
Yes, there it is!  
That trademark,  
Smirk.

MICHAEL FIATO



### The Parable of Two Brothers

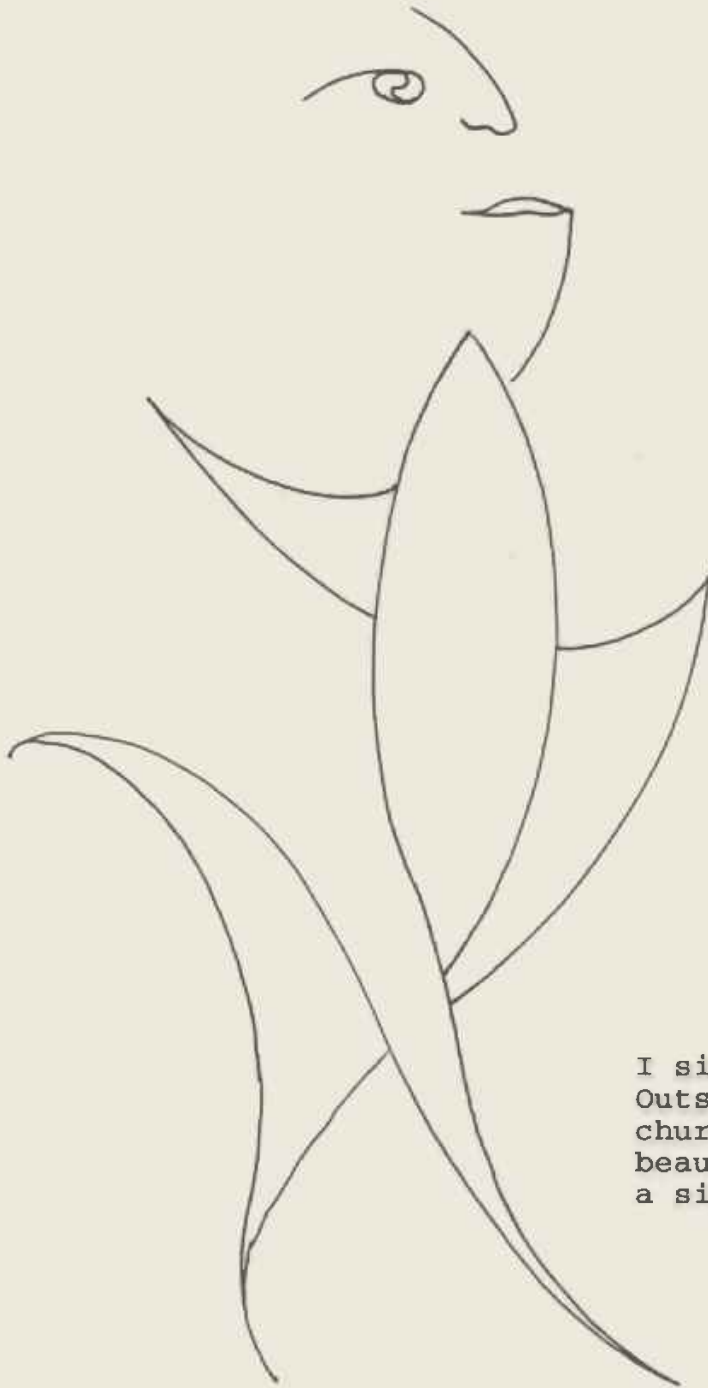
Two brothers went into a corner restaurant after a long day. After they ordered their meal, the two began discussing various events from the day and some memories of the past. When their salads were delivered, the server informed the men that the kitchen was out of tomatoes. "Out of tomatoes? How can I eat a salad without tomatoes?" the younger retorted. "Brother," interrupted the elder, "one can't always have tomatoes."

DAN ZALEWSKI

brother of mine  
 flesh as my flesh,  
     blood as my blood....  
 from the  
     dankness  
         and  
             darkness  
                 and dripping  
 absence of all lightness  
 of the alleyway  
 they took you in  
 gun half-loaded  
     and whiskey-laden breath  
 leaving the  
     all-pervascent stench  
         of fresh-spilt  
 blood.  
 as i look past the bars  
     i don't see you  
 brother  
 sibling  
 kin.  
 but i remember a little boy  
 dirty blond hair swept over left eye  
     holding that mouse  
         caught in an old Nike shoebox  
 SQUEALING!  
 mommy said- let it go.  
 but no, you were sun happy  
     with white light making your face angelic.  
 you could take care of the mouse with your love....  
 when we got to the rest stop  
     and you opened the box  
 i watched your face tighten and eyes harden  
     heart  
         break.  
 i saw you  
     squat down  
         diligently, intently  
 digging a gravesite  
 with a stick.  
 a proper burial- flesh must go to dust....  
 there you were  
     five years old  
 in suspender pants and striped shirt  
     left strap hanging  
 drenched in virgin sunlight.  
 asking- why did he die, mommy?  
 it belonged in nature- said my mother....  
 you looked up  
 scraping out a little hole  
     pushing dirt back into dirt  
 realizing.  
 i cried for you that day.

ANYA MUSTO





### **Minority**

I sit listening to the sermon.  
Outside the window of the  
church the fragrance, color and  
beauty of spring persist. Am I  
a sinner, or am I human?

**JOE DOMBROSKI**

## Steps

...The mossen stone steps stood still as they should, and for those brief moments I was sure of my foundation.

Stepping forward and up, I beheld a vacant plot. Beneath me, hard stone bled into fleshy soil. It was a Saturday...no a Sunday, yes, because I recall the smell of the breeze -- sickly sweet. The air always smelled that way on Sundays -- on the way to church and home again. Its presence, condescending and heavy as if it were a holy veil.

Brushing past some foliage to my right, I entered the space of land where there were no stony things or wooden frames. Just earth and weeds. Oddly, the twisting loops of grass did not choke the site as weeds often do. They invited me, blending into the pale colors of the tiny flowers they bore. I wondered if the flowers knew their fate. Someday they will try to breath and find they cannot. But at that time, they, as I, were deceived by the weeds; sickly yellow and long. I stepped through them carefully, childishly avoiding their reach.

Stopping at near center of the plot I forgot the weeds. Looking about, I daydreamed that I was not witness to a neglected space, nor the site of a fallen temple, but of a loss -- a loss so known to me that I felt it far away as I do now; so naked to the light as the darkness would be; so silent....Behind me, the weeds, like kneeling patrons, gathered upon the steps...so empty yet deceiving....

ROBERT ENOS



## TRAPPED WITHIN

Trapped within the whirling storm  
That envelopes its immediate surroundings,  
The cry for serenity is washed out  
By the galing winds and clapping thunder.  
As the storm subsides in early evening,  
A fog emerges out of the dark  
That hovers like a protective layering.  
Even though the rain has stopped,  
The flooding continues.  
Only when the water dissipates,  
And the ground is solid once again,  
Can we begin to rebuild  
That which has been lost.

Leah Slattery

## Seeds of Joy (10/90)

Before me stretches a landscape.  
On my shoulder rest a bag of seeds.  
Seeds of joy, seeds of life.  
The wind blows cold and hard  
across this bleak, barren landscape  
that is my soul.  
No one walks here anymore, but me.  
Alone with the wind and my thoughts.  
Just putting one foot in front of the other,  
throwing seeds left and right,  
till I reach the evening.  
Now I can rest, the sleep of the dead.  
Nothing intrudes, not the wind, not thoughts,  
not dreams till dawn breaks.  
I rise to face another day; another day  
trudging across this landscape  
that on few occasions has a seed  
bloomed into a flower.  
Even rarer does a seed become  
a tree gracing the land.  
These I treasure and hold dearly,  
till they fade away into a memory.  
Only to be brought back  
as a forgotten joy.  
Will one seed ever give life again  
to someone who will walk with me?  
Will any of the flowers and trees  
last longer than a month, week or day?  
Before me stretches a landscape.  
On my shoulder rests a bag of seeds.  
Seeds of joy, seeds of life.  
The wind blows cold and hard  
across this bleak, barren landscape  
that is my soul.  
No one walks here anymore, but me.

KELLY S. STEWARD



---

## An Allegory: The Eagle Cries

And there was atop the highest mountain an eagle, whose wisdom and experience justified his view. The intent of his majesty was to ensure that the forest was properly guarded against the plague that could destroy all of its kind. This eagle was educated to the perils of such a malady, for he is all that remains of his kind, which was raped by the disease. Every tree of this forest maintained a healthy diet of sermons from the eagle, and were instructed to be wary of the symptoms of this affliction, deception and greed.

One autumn as the trees displayed their yearly fashion, several of the elders in the forest remained undressed; the years had stripped the trees of their past glory and now they lay barren. The others expressed their regret of this misfortune and were consoled in the remembrance of years gone by.

On a day as the sun shone down with all its grace, the disease rode into the forest on the back of the serpent called Industry. It spoke to the youth of the forest, who were brash and full of themselves; these were the easiest to afflict. The disease praised their beauty and bolstered their egos, and as a result began to speak freely with the trees, who pondered if the eagle was just in his accusations made against this so-called devil. The trees spoke of the sadness of the passing of their grandfathers and hoped that they would never loose their memories of them. The disease, with the slyness of a fox, saw its opportunity and suggested a means that would enable the trees to remember the deceased forever.

It told the youth that it would give the elders a proper resting place by using their remains to produce monuments where the others could utilize their resources, and most importantly admire their beauty everyday. They were ecstatic about this tribute that would be paid to their grandfathers and wished to begin the project immediately. The disease then pulled out a slab of rock and informed the trees that if they wanted to proceed then they must mark the slab with their sap, as to indicate the deal. Each complied with such vigor that they didn't inquire as to the side effects of such a process, and more critically, didn't consult the adults to seek approval. The deal was done, and the disease had spawned.

The next day the sky grew dark with an evil sense of foreboding. Piercing through the early morning air was heard the eerie war cries of the disease; this time it rode not on a serpent, but on a scorpion whose tail possessed the strength of ten thousand ailments. At this moment the eagle high above on his perch screamed emphatically at the trees to be on guard. However, because of youthful impetuosity, their fate was sealed. The disease butchered first the deceased, then the adults, and finally the youth. With one foul swoop it ravaged the entire forest, and all that remained were the dead carcasses of what was the very history of life itself.

High atop the mountain, the eagle stared down upon the utter devastation that seemed all too familiar to him. He wondered if the disease, which thrived on destroying all that is naturally beautiful, would ever be content. Alone with his thoughts of the future, the eagle cried.

BRENT MONTROSS

---

## A Story

Elizabeth's hair, professionally done last Thursday, now seemed to simply lay on her head. Her obviously old clothes, hung limply on her gaunt body. As she slumped into the over-stuffed easy chair, she let her head fall back onto it. Turning her head to the left, she gazed at the porcelain vase on the table beside her.

Elizabeth picked up the vase and turned it slowly in her hands. "Oh, George," she sighed as she turned to the portrait on the wall. It was of the young couple on their wedding day, fifty-six years earlier.

Although she knew she would not have much time, Elizabeth seemed at ease. Staring at the portrait, her mind flooded with the memories of those happier years: She and George and the three girls traveling through the country to the lake in his brother's car, borrowed for the week. To repay him, while the girls swam playfully and Elizabeth hauled water for the cooking and cleaning, George had painstakingly stripped and repainted the car. "You always were such a kind man, George," Elizabeth blurted aloud.

Staring at the vase she held tightly in her arms, Elizabeth wept. Then, as quickly as it had started, her sobbing ceased. Elizabeth fell forward in the chair, her head resting on her knees. From her lifeless fingers, the vase slipped to the floor, spilling its contents--ashes.

REBECCA ARDOLINE

## Tarot Woman

The lines inside my hands  
the faces in the sands  
tell me to go.  
How will I know?  
Ride the first train  
don't avoid the pain  
just go.  
Something in the air  
warns me to beware  
a one-winged bird's stare.  
Love is like a knife  
to carve away your life  
say no, no.  
Take heed of a place  
a smile on a bright shining face  
you'll never return.  
How will I know?

JOE DOMBROSKI



## A Cold Summer's Night

### CAST

MARIA: Hispanic young woman  
JOE (Bum): Defeated man in late 30's  
Police Officer: Young male  
Paramedics: Typical ambulance crew

### ACT I

SCENE I: A dark alleyway. One dim light overhangs and is swaying in the steady wind, creaking monotone. MARIA sits in the far lefthand corner. To the right of her is a dumpster overflowing with boxes and trash.

MARIA: (Having given herself an abortion, she is trembling and wailing with her head between her knees, sitting in a pool of blood. Her wailing is accompanied by choking noises and is echoing throughout the alleyway.)

MARIA: OH GOD! -OH GOD WHAT HAVE I DONE! I NEVER DID ANYTHING TO DESERVE THIS. -All my life I tried to do the best I could, but EVERY TIME I FAILED!

BUM: (sticks his head in from around the corner) HELLO?

MARIA: (trying to hide her sobbing, lifts her head) -Who's There?

BUM: It's me.

MARIA: Who's me!

BUM: (shakes his head in reflection as if he was thinking about it) -Doesn't matter.

MARIA: (violently) WHO'S ME?

BUM: (angrily) I'm a BUM! (begins walking towards her)

MARIA: (violently) -STAY AWAY FROM ME!! -STAY AWAY FROM ME!! (pushes herself up against the wall and hides her head between her knees)

BUM: (concerned) What's the matter? (even closer) Almighty God, You're Bleeding to Death! Let Me Get Help!

MARIA: NO!! (screaming) -DON'T GO ANYWHERE!! -STAY RIGHT HERE! (breaks down and cries) -stay right here (pause) -please, stay with me, here.

BUM: (walks up to Maria sits right next to her in some blood) Honey, may I please help you?

MARIA: (pause) You are.



BUM: I'm no doctor- I don't know anything, not even your name.  
(pause) What's your name? (pause) Why do you want to die? (pause)  
Let me help you....

MARIA: SHUT UP! (wailing) SHUT UP! --JUST SHUT UP (crying)

MARIA: (pause) I don't know (pause) (violently) I'M A DEAD WOMAN.  
I JUST KILLED MY BABY AND I'M DYING MYSELF SO LEAVE ME ALONE!  
ALONE TO DIE!

BUM: (gets up-)

MARIA: (pause) NO! DON'T GO PLEASE! (latches on to him)

BUM: (feeling needed, sits back down)

MARIA: (long pause) (sobbing) Did I do the wrong thing? -Am I  
going to hell? I really loved my baby, really, I'm just scared.  
I'm scared of everything, I'm even scared of dying. (long pause)  
I know I'm dying. Do you think I'm going to hell?

BUM: No, no, (pause) No! God could condemn you!

MARIA: (violently) BUT DO YOU THINK I AM!! -I JUST KILLED MY  
BABY!

BUM: I don't think so. You're too nice to go to hell. (pause) Any  
God can see that (under his breath) if there is one. Besides it's  
not like you're filled with hatred or evil or anything; if you  
were, then you wouldn't be feeling like this.

MARIA: (pause, shaking) I guess you're right. (pause) I hope  
you're right. I'm not a bad person, am I? My whole life has been  
nothing but failures even this.

BUM: Believe me, I know....

BUM: Many years ago I came to the land of opportunity to find a  
better life. Great life, eh?

MARIA: (weakening) I hate my life. (pause) I'd be glad I was dying  
if I wasn't so scared. (pause) Hold me? (Bum puts his arm around  
Maria and moves closer to her) (slowly becoming delirious) What's  
your name?

BUM: JOE

MARIA: (delirious, desperate) I love you Joe.

JOE: (confused, feeling out of place) I love you too.

MARIA: (begins to cry again, slides down into fetal position with  
her head in Joe's lap, -whispering with all her might to Joe) I  
could never bear to be separated from my baby for eternity. It

won't happen, right Joe?

JOE: (tearing, can't speak)

ENTER POLICE MAN

POLICE MAN: (shining his flashlight onto Mary and Joe...he sees the blood) -Oh GOD! (takes radio in hand) This is officer Johnson...I need an ambulance in... St. Anthony's Alleyway..NOW!

JOE: (gives policeman look of desperation)

POLICE MAN: (now recognizing Joe) -Joe, get out of here!

JOE: (Takes off his coat and places it under Maria's head, gently placing her head on it -kisses her on the forehead and whispers) Goodbye Maria, I'll always love you.

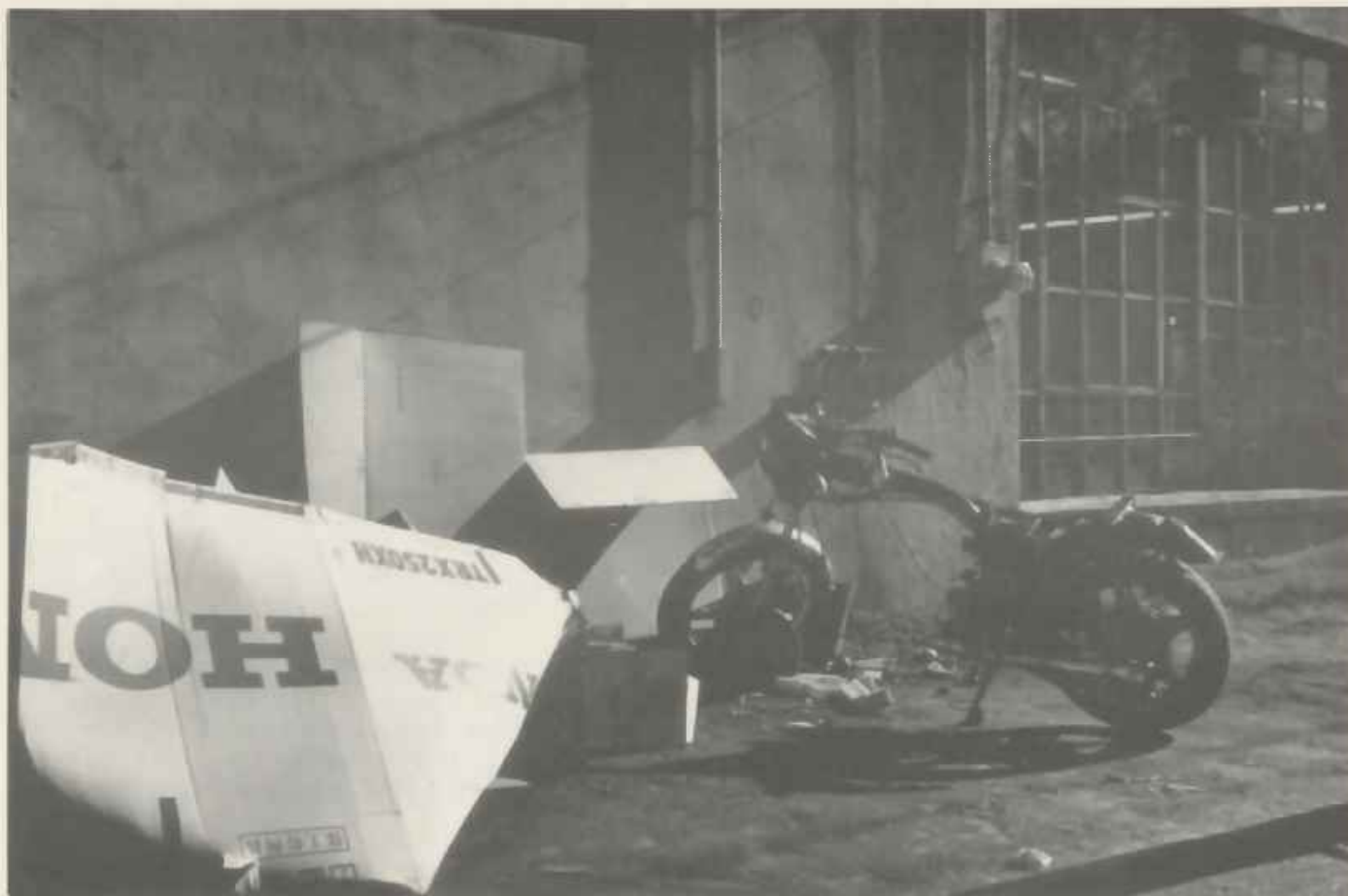
MARIA DIES

(Ambulance arrives. Paramedics run past Joe to Maria)

PARAMEDIC: (taking her vital signs) -She's dead...

curtain

JOHN COOK



---

## A Leap Of Faith

It was hard to believe when I came to the end,  
That all I had been given to do was completed  
Or forever left undone.  
When I felt the grip of all that held me fast  
Begin to loosen  
So that only love remained,  
I stood on the brink of the crumbling edge  
Needing to believe he would be there.  
And there he was,  
Standing below in the cascading waters,  
Patiently waiting to call me by name.  
"Jump!" he called. "I'll catch you."  
And lifting strong arms to show me his love,  
He made me believe that my last act of courage  
Would be letting go...

Of the fear of the fall  
Of the uncertain depths  
Of the tug of regret that beckoned me stay.  
Yet in joyous defiance of rational thought,  
My last act of will  
Was to fling my self forth  
Launched over nothingness  
Fully believing I'd found what I sought

As  
I  
fell  
toward  
the  
love  
of  
my Father's arms.

### Ready

The rope was thick,  
Its pull on my ankles  
Steady and hard.  
Feet first I was dragged toward the abyss  
As if a heavy weight hung on the other end.

I scratched and clawed  
With raw fingers  
To save myself.  
My body weight against the gravel burned  
As I was rolled back to stomach.

Just when I thought  
I was over the edge  
When the rope had won,  
The weight touched bottom  
The pull had ceased.

Wearily yet hastily  
I managed to untie the rope  
And set myself free,  
But curiosity led me to edge  
And peering over

Without hesitation, I dove in.

JIM SABULSKI

---

PEGGY CHARNICK



From me they were not born  
From me a mother's love they had  
From me their life did not come  
Silent, sweet and fresh  
Sister, they called me; yet, I was more.

PAULINA C. RIERA

#### Dust

The tiny beads of sweat trickle down the side  
his face,  
Carefully unwrapping the cellophane to reach the  
active powder  
"Line it up"  
"Quick shoot it"

As the woman lies in the corner,  
The black veil gently touching  
the woman's blood stained face,  
creating an aura of unrest  
The aroma of stale flesh permeates the room -  
"Do you have another?" Mr. Death

NANCY STEFFAN

#### Road to Somewhere

Night, cold, dark, damp.  
To me the engine is silent.  
Two yellow lines, pelted wet.  
Two yellow lines against the shiny black.  
The shiny black reflecting motley luminations.  
Violet, blue, green, yellow, orange, red.  
No more pink.  
Decorations on the trees.  
Nothing can change the past.  
The rainbow is only in the season.

JOE DOMBROSKI

## A Positive ID

Michael Bradley stepped from the sandbagged tent and peered into the morning stillness. As always, the oddly sharp silhouette of the mountains of North Viet Nam loomed dark and jagged on the horizon. He could clearly see areas where the lush vegetation had been blasted away by artillery and napalm. The lifeless patches left the mountains looking barren and mangy.

As he studied the distant skyline, he realized with a start that he was not really looking for danger so much as listening for it. The thought bothered him. He remembered hunting trips he had taken with his father when he had watched deer twitching their ears and scenting the wind, cautiously trying to determine if it was safe to enter a clearing. Many times he had crouched in silence, rifle cradled in his arms, waiting for the deer to make a fatal mistake.

His eyes scanned the horizon, picking out the rock formations that marked the forward U.S. bases known as the Rock Pile and the Razorback. There had been heavy shelling the night before. Bradley wondered with professional detachment how many casualties there had been in other units. His own unit had been notified that Parsons, a new replacement, had been killed while on perimeter duty. Parsons had resembled Bradley. He remembered that someone had once asked if they were related.

He shrugged off his thoughts and looked across the compound. Although it was early morning, it was already hot. The tent radiated the heat of the sun, giving off a pungent canvas smell which seemed forever melded with the oily stench of the diesel fuel used to burn off latrines. The noxious combination had become forever burned into his brain as the smell of Viet Nam.

He spotted Carwell across the perimeter. "Hey, hurry up," he shouted. "We have to ID Parsons." Carwell waved in acknowledgement. As he waited, Bradley thought again of the shelling the night before. He accepted the fact that artillery, rockets, mortar fire and death were a part of every night, but the night before had been especially brutal. A barely audible "whomp" far out in the night had signalled the start of the shelling just after dark. He and two other men who had been in-country the longest had heard the sound in their sleep and yelled the familiar warning "Incoming!" The dozen men who shared the tent scrambled for the deep sandbagged bunker by the entrance, instinctively diving for safety before the rounds began to fall. All night long they had crouched, waiting for the direct hit that never came.

Bradley remembered the month before, when Parsons had first been assigned to the unit. Parsons was astounded that Bradley could hear the faraway belch of the mortar tube in his sleep. Watching Parsons during those first days, Bradley had recalled his own bewilderment when he had arrived at Dong Ha. He remembered how he despaired of ever being able to hear the distant warning thump. Yet within a few weeks his ears had become so sensitized to the sound, even the feel of incoming fire, that he could estimate with astounding accuracy how many seconds would elapse between firing and impact. With just three months left in his tour of duty, there were times when he found himself in the bunker before he was fully

awake. The thought made him realize how tired he had become. His eyes suddenly felt gritty from lack of sleep.

Carwell returned, and together they checked out a jeep at the motor pool for the drive to Graves Registration. As he drove, Bradley glanced toward the wreckage of an F4 Phantom which shimmered in a rice paddy just beyond the curling, lethal Concertina wire which encircled the base. The sleek, expensive fighter had been disabled over North Viet Nam, and had crashed just short of the runway at Dong Ha. Most of the jet had been cannibalized for parts, but enough of the fuselage remained to throw off ripples of heat into the still morning. The Phantom's skeleton seemed to swim in the air as it slowly rotted in the sun and muck.

"God, I feel bad about Parsons," said Carwell. "He was a nice kid."

"Yeah," replied Bradley bitterly, pulling savagely on the gear shift. "He had his stuff together."

They drove in silence, then Carwell spoke again. "Do you ever think about it? You know, wonder if you'll make it home?"

"Not much anymore. I just do what I have to do and hope I make it through the night."

"Yeah, but it still sucks. Look at Parsons, he knew what he was doing, and he got wasted anyway."

"I don't think it matters a damn if you know what you're doing. Remember a few weeks ago when that shell hit? I should've bought it. But when it hit, every damned piece of shrapnel went flying over my head. If I was two inches taller, I'd be dead. If I was one foot nearer, I'd be dead. It's all luck. That's the only thing that matters."

"Yeah," Carwell agreed. "But it's too bad Parsons wasn't lucky."

They drove the rest of the way in silence.

Graves Registration, the receiving point for all casualties, was located next to the Army hospital at Dong Ha. Like all the other buildings, it was surrounded by a four foot wall of sandbags. Inside were two huge refrigerator units where bodies were stored. Assignment to Graves Registration was on a volunteer basis only. Anyone volunteering was waived from a one year tour of duty, serving three months before being rotated home. Even so, there were few volunteers.

As they entered the building, both Bradley and Carwell were grateful to escape the relentless glare of the sun. The interior seemed unnaturally cool, and reeked of disinfectant. On the far side of the building, the doors to two refrigerator units gleamed coldly in the glare of the electric lights. They approached a plywood counter, the only furniture in the place.

"Jesus Christ," Bradley swore softly.

Beyond the counter, near the middle of the concrete floor, a corpsman was busy with a toilet brush, scrubbing the grime and blood from a naked body which lay face down on the floor. A hose was left running on the floor nearby, and although there was no visible wound on the body, a constant trickle of pink flowed into the center drain.

As he noticed the men at the counter, the corpsman stopped



what he was doing and, wiping his hands on a towel, approached the counter.

"We're from Third Battalion, Third Marines, Kilo Company. We're here to ID one of our guys," Bradley said, forcing the words out in clipped controlled syllables.

The corpsman pulled some forms from beneath the counter. "You gotta fill out this form, and both of you gotta sign it if you're sure it's him."

Bradley snatched a pen and completed the initial paper work. The corpsman automatically scanned the form for the name and unit before leading both men around the counter toward the refrigerator units. Bradley averted his eyes as they passed the body which lay in obscene stillness on the stained concrete floor.

The corpsman opened one of the refrigerator doors. Bradley could see the bodies, stored in greenish-black rubberized bags, stacked two or three deep along the walls. The corpsman, sorting through the bags for the correct tag, found the one he was looking for and pulled it out from under two others. Grabbing one end, he dragged the bodybag out of the refrigerator, laying it down in front of the two Marines. He unzipped the top of the bag and stood back.

Bradley and Carwell looked quickly at each other, and then down at the face of the dead Marine. The fleeting thought that this was all a mistake filled Bradley with a fierce joy. This strange white face wasn't Parsons'. He and Parsons resembled each other. He scanned the features for any recognizable trait, but the man at his feet didn't look anything like him, much less like Parsons. Bradley looked up at Carwell, hoping that he too could see that it was all a mistake, but Carwell stood rigid, his face infinitely sad. With a sudden feeling of shame and dread, Bradley looked back down and recognized the young face, blanched white now, forever frozen in its metamorphosis from teenager to adult.

"It's him."

The corpsman zipped the bag closed and led the two men back to the counter. They walked past the naked body on the floor, now ready to be encased in a body bag and stacked with the others in the refrigerator. They stopped at the counter only long enough to sign the form which positively identified their dead Marine as Joseph Parsons, aged 19.

As Bradley stepped out into the fierce heat of Viet Nam, he squinted his eyes against the painful glare. The heat, the smell, and the noise of Dong Ha assaulted his senses.

He looked at Carwell. "Nineteen," he said. "Same age as me."

He swung into the driver's seat of the jeep, catching sight of his reflection in the rear-view mirror. Bloodshot eyes stared coldly from a harsh and weathered face. Feeling old and empty, he started the jeep for the drive back to his unit.



PEGGY CHARNICK

John Steinbeck  
◀ THE ▶  
GRAPES of WRATH

