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### Instress: A Journal of the Arts, 1996 (Fall)

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Fall 1996



# An Invitation

**Welcome to the game.** We are pleased that you have stepped up to the challenge. No longer are you a passive reader, but an active participant. Be prepared to counter our first series of moves. You may not know that a move has been made, but if you are keen, you will observe the beginning directions, the first questions posed. Perhaps moments of conflict will arise and you must check your progress against our pieces. With the final solutions proposed, you will have to compare your answers to ours.

Special thanks to our sponsors and patrons. We thank Kit Foley for all of her support, without which this issue would have been difficult to produce. To Marilyn Ney and Ney Printing for all of their help with the magazine, we extend the sincerest thanks. To Gloria Bubblo, we are truly indebted for all of her Quark savvy, shortcuts, and maneuvers. Thanks to Dr. Johnson who bravely allowed us to pursue our challenge without interference. Gratefully we acknowledge Molly Riley. Her encouragement and faith pushed us forward to continue the competition, even when the score was not in our favor. Thank you. And to all participants and spectators, thank you for taking the time to contribute.

Let the game begin.

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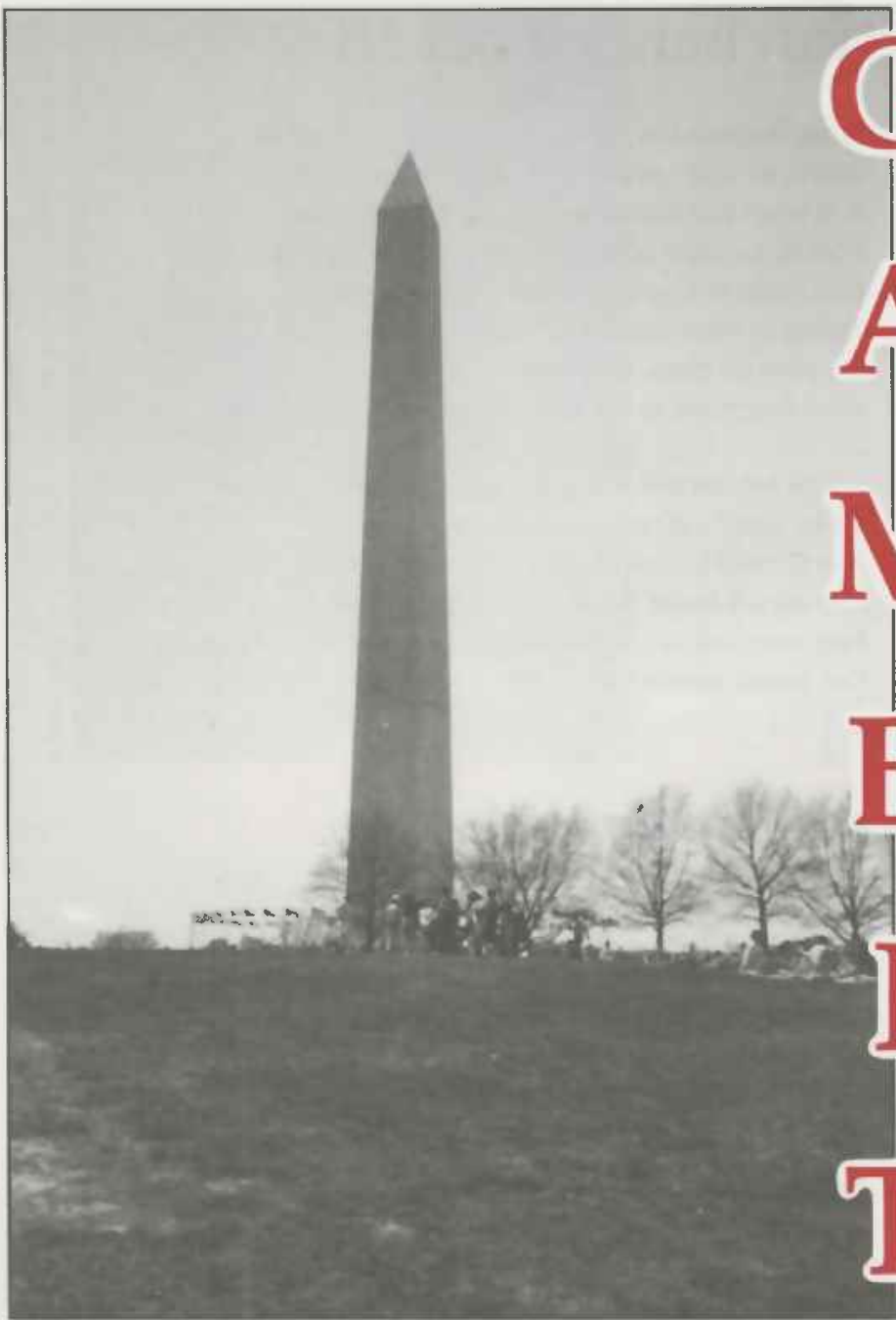
Editor Amy Dunaway

Literary Staff Colleen Chandler, Rihaz Chughatta, Kelly Conway,  
Kelly DiNoia, Dave Donohue, Chad Dreisbach,  
Laura Gamble, Jenn Hoke, Dianne Honis,  
Chris Martin, April Masters, Janet Matson,  
Susan McCarthy, Melissa Spinelli, Cheryl Piersall,  
Stephanie Traver

Advisor Dr. Jeffrey Johnson

Cover Dianne Honis

Layout Amy Dunaway



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"The whole world's a game, and we are merely pawns."



# Petrarchan Sonnet III

What happened to our shimmering gypsy summer,  
Where we ran free in blissful anarchy?  
And when you turned around, there I would be,  
Waiting for night and fire: to always grow number.  
Bob Dylan in disguise of a tone deaf hummer.  
Zoning in flame that week of stolid harmony,  
We were so close, yes, we were: you and me.  
What happened to our shimmering gypsy summer?

Winter will not leave to make way for spring,  
So for now I will read all your written words  
And pretend we are there, together and there  
And we will forget that we've changed, and bring  
Past mem'ries to pretend we know each other and heard  
Our voices anon when we were an inseparable pair.

■ **Melissa Spinelli**

■ Donna Fieher



## Frost

I opened up my heart to you,  
you turned your back to me.  
My mind—it often wanders now,  
I see what used to be.

The way you used to hold my hand,  
loving sparkles in your eye—  
How I long to bring back yesterday,  
is it really fair to try?

Of all things gone that could have been,  
the times I've loved and lost—  
it's you I miss and think of most  
your heart, as cold as frost.

# Watered Down Philosophy

Desmond woke up delighted to find that the terrible cold which had filled his lungs weeks ago and haunted him ever since, had dissipated sometime during his sleep. He was not, however, quite as delighted to discover that he had awoke upon a sidewalk in a place he did not remember coming to or ever even seeing before. This new place which he somehow arrived at during his sleep was a street in front of a movie theatre shrouded by the darkness of night and caressed by the gentle breeze of the evening. Further down the street both ways, he could only see the building of the theatre disappear into the shadows outside of the light of a lamp post which he was now lying under. In fact, he could see nothing which lay beyond the light of that lamp post and he heard nothing at all except for himself and a sound which reminded him of that of a running river. Feelings of disorientation and bewilderment came over him, of course, but he did not become frightened for the dark street was, as said, quiet and seemingly harmless on this warm night (he could not remember how he had acquired such an awful cold in such a mild season of the cycle; no worry though, it was gone anyway). Feeling thusly secure and of healthy spirits, Desmond upped himself off of the concrete (unusually comfortable concrete) and decided, since there was nothing else to do, to see what movie was showing. He walked through the rotating door and proceeded into the theatre.

"Wonderful!" Desmond exclaimed upon entering the building. "A dinner theatre!"

And so it was, with many red tables covered with white tablecloths upon several step-like levels within the room. These "steps" ultimately led down to the front where there was a railing directly before a large projection screen. The walls, Desmond noticed, were decorated with many paintings from many recognizable artists. The paintings would have completely covered the walls had it not been for narrow mirrors which hung the full height of the room, one on each end of every "step" of the theatre. The only empty space in the whole room, in fact, was the white projection screen in front.

"Very artsy," Desmond said.

"You're a perceptive fellow," another voice announced from the back of the place (for the entrance put the enterer upon the middle "step" of the theatre). Desmond looked back that way and could see only the outline, or what he thought to be the outline, of a person sitting in the darkness which for some reason hung heavily there. He could also make out the outline of a projector which the person sat very close to.

"Thank you," Desmond returned and then said no more, getting a sense of

eerie-ness and wanting to converse with that as little as possible. The next thing Desmond noticed was the lack of people in the theatre. As a matter of fact, he and the person in the back were the only ones present at the time. Therefore, assuming that he was early and wanting the best seat possible (and also wanting to make his way from the person in the back), Desmond went all the way to the front of the theatre and sat down at a table directly before the projection screen. From here he could now see that there was a crucifix hanging directly above the white screen looking down upon the entire room.

"Odd," he whispered.

Upon sitting down, Desmond noticed that all of the tables were totally empty except for the white tablecloths which covered them. However, after a few moments of sitting there and waiting for the movie to start, he discovered something he hadn't before—that his table had a single glass of water upon it. Looking around, he confirmed that his was indeed the only table to hold a glass of water and he was therefore doubly pleased with what a wonderful place he had chosen to sit. If he became thirsty, which he was not now, he could drink his water without, since he was expecting no company, being rude to anyone else sitting with him. And so there Desmond sat patiently waiting for a movie or a meal (even though he wasn't that hungry) or whatever came.

"How do you feel, Mr. Cart?" a voice asked.

Desmond jumped slightly at the sound of a voice saying his name. He looked around for the owner of the voice and saw no one but those who were before mentioned. He looked to the screen which was still blank and then to the person in the back and asked: "Did you say something?" The person did not answer but Desmond saw movement in the darkness and decided not to question any further.

"I'm right here, Mr. Cart," the voice said again and this time Desmond was able to locate it as being in front of him. However, looking across the table, he saw no one there.

"Where is here?" he asked.

"Right here," the voice replied. Desmond could have sworn that the voice was absurdly coming from the glass of water. Looking in it without touching it, he could only see his distorted reflection upon the surface of the water.

After looking under the table to be sure of his sanity, Desmond whispered to the glass of water: "Are you speaking to me?"

The water replied: "Most certainly."

Desmond, contemplating, stated: "But you're a glass of water."

"Umm. . . Yes!" the water again spoke. "That's what I am! A glass of water! And I am, of course, talking to you."

"Odd," Desmond stated simply.

"Perhaps, if that's what you think, Mr. Cart," Water said.

"I do think," he confirmed.

"Well, then I am," concluded Water.

Desmond was, as can be imagined, slightly confused by all of this and he was, understandably, somewhat frightened. Most of all, however, he was, as is the way of his kind, curious and needing to know what was causing such an extraordinary event, for it did not fit under any of the Natural Laws which he knew of.

"How does a glass of water come to be able to talk?" Desmond pondered out loud, asking the question to no one in particular.

"Well," began Water, "I am actually the Almighty."

Desmond was astonished, not only at the answer but also because he had not realized that the water would be able to help him by answering his questions. This was surely a unique situation.

"You mean God?" Desmond proceeded.

"Umm. . . yes, if that's what you want."

"God is a glass of water?" Desmond was unsure.

"Well, maybe."

"Odd."

"Or maybe I'm a lesser form of the larger being," Water continued.

"So you're not really God, you're just an image?" Desmond continued to inquire.

"Uh. . . yes, I think so."

"You don't sound too sure."

"Well I should be sure and therefore I am sure. I am an image of God put here for you because you can't completely comprehend my entire self."

"So why is an image of God in this theatre?" Desmond was getting most anxious to know the answers.

"Umm. . . this isn't really a theatre, per-say."

"It isn't?" Desmond questioned still, and maybe even more-so, astonished.

"Well, no. I think this is something like heaven. . . but not quite."

"A lesser place between heaven and earth?" Desmond offered.

"Yes! That must be it, or at least there's a good chance."

"Or it could be just my mind."

"What?"

"Well," Desmond tried to explain, "this could be an image in my mind that you, in all of your perfection, have put here."

"Oh," Almighty sounded somewhat disappointed. "I guess it could be that, except that I'm pretty sure you're dead."

"I'm dead!?"

"Yes. I mean I think so."

"This is very strange."

Suddenly, the projector in the back flipped on and the screen filled with color. Desmond looked to the back but still could not make out the person.

"Where is everyone?" Desmond asked.

"This is a private showing," the Almighty replied. "No one else can see this."

"No one else may see this," Desmond corrected.

"Of course."

"Well who is that in the back then?"

"Oh, that's the Great Deceiver. He works the projector."

There was a somewhat violent stir in the shadows in the back.

"So what movie is showing tonight?" Desmond asked, hoping it was something he knew.

"I'm not sure, but we probably shouldn't watch."

There was another, even more violent stir in the back.

"Oops . . . maybe I'm wrong," said Water sounding worried. "So, why don't we sit back and watch this flick."

"Wait a sec," Desmond said, "if you're God and he is the Great Deceiver and you're both right here, which one of you is running the show?"

"What?" Almighty was confused.

"Well," Desmond again explained, "if I am not dead, which I am pretty sure of but can only assume, than this is only an image in my mind. If this, therefore, is only an image in my mind than something had to put it here. Now it either had to be you or the Great Deceiver since, of course, you are the only ones here."

"Then it would have had to be me."

"But you're a glass of water."

"Well, it's just an image!"

"Right!" Desmond was becoming excited. "It's an image perceived by me and my senses, and if he is the Great Deceiver then he could be just playing with my senses."

An image of the angels and a great golden kingdom came onto the screen.

"Well, I guess that could be true. . . it'd really be bad for me though. Ha.

Ha. Say, let's watch the movie.

"No," Desmond persisted. "We must solve this."

"Why?"

"To gain more knowledge."

"I'm the Almighty though. I know it all."

"How can we prove it?"

"How should I know?"

"I've got it!" Desmond exclaimed.

"Great. Now shut up and watch."

"If he is the Great Deceiver than he is either Deceiving one of us or else he is just a guest whom you invited to this image. If he is Deceiving someone, than one of us doesn't really exist beyond the other one's senses. As for me, I am holding onto many thoughts, therefore I am existing."

"Uh-oh, what's that mean?"

"That means that either you don't really exist and I am being deceived by him or her, or it means that you do exist and I am being deceived by my own thinking, which, I must admit, I sometimes think way too much."

"Umm. . . I think I'm thinking. Oh yes I'm definitely thinking . . . maybe. No! I'm sure of it. So there you have it. You're deceiving yourself."

"No, I can't be sure. There must be something."

An interesting look came over Desmond that made Water quite nervous.

"Wait a minute, Mr. Cart. Think about what you're doing."

"You understand this is all for Knowledge. Knowledge is a virtuous thing."

"I can throw fire at you."

Desmond grabbed Maybe-God and brought him close to his face. His reflection on the water's surface was slightly clearer.

"Umm. . . I'm thinking of. . . of. . ."

Desmond parted his lips and gulped the water out of the glass. The drink was slightly warm and on the most part unrefreshing, but it was good tasting. The glass he dropped to the floor, upon which it shattered quite easily. He looked at it and laughed, delighted at the further knowledge which he had today acquired. Standing up, he noticed that the screen was now displaying a quite horrible scene of something burning.

"Not a very good movie to enjoy dinner with," he stated.

Making his way to the door, Desmond noticed that all of the tables now contained glasses of water. He got to the door and then paused to look at the darkly shrouded Great Deceiver.

"Farewell and better luck next time, my tricky friend," Desmond said.

"Sorry you didn't like what you saw," the Great Deceiver apologized, leaning forward. The light barely caught the head of this person and Desmond thought it looked more like a dog than a person at all. With great reason, he left the building in a hurry.

Outside the sound of the river seemed now much closer and much more violent. To further add to things, it was raining and poor Desmond had, of course, forgotten his umbrella.

# The Great Polygamist

The red-headed militia man sits in his Navaho patterned sweater, looking into the distance, through the books in the case, deep into the future, into the pockets of air, the hidden pockets — the secret caches within ourselves. A ring-hungry hand supports a heavy, sagging head, filled with enlightening, yet nevertheless melancholy impressions. Black wire rims sit on his tired face. Rims reflecting the fatigued and unfulfilled, the hopeful but idle people. Hopeful because they must be, lest they confront the truth of their own hopeless pursuits and lost ventures. For furtively, out of the corners of blood-shot eyes, they all see the reality, the tragedy: Life, masquerading as the devoted bridegroom, cannot deny the elusive bachelor underneath his faithful exterior. Wooing all with promises of futures, he scores without fidelity and embarks for more conquests. And after one taste of his vitality, the masses whine and nag, wanting more and more of his time, neglecting to treasure memories and failing to realize their own hand in the pretentious union.

■ Amy Dunaway



# Analysis of a Poem

You look at me and smile in  
admiration,  
comment "what a talented  
young lady"

But you are fools, you are all fools  
Can't you see beyond the outward appearances,  
Read the fine lines of the smiles I give to you—  
when I need them most  
My heart is full of love  
but none is so deserving  
Instead I turn to myself for pleasure  
Focus my anger and loneliness on my work  
Place ME among the ranks of the best  
I am Dickinson, Plath—even Poe  
Sharing with them an unseen bond  
I understand why they have written  
For I too, have experienced such pains  
The question still remains—  
will you find me in a corner drunkenly numb  
trapped within my mind of misery  
laughing at the wrongs and injustices of life?  
Or will YOU be too late?

**Cheryl Piersall ■**

## Gander Hologram

Carry me out  
through the hole  
in the center of the Universe.  
Don't forget to write.  
Send me your picture parcel  
express.  
I found you out but you don't want to admit it.  
Your mother would be ashamed  
IF she knew what you had done.  
How can you carry on like this?  
It won't last forever.  
Nothing ever does.



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*"In order to understand, we must solitarily move against the difficult."*

I am surrounded  
by friends, family, loved ones,  
a sea of smiling faces.

Some sleep peacefully  
a few feet away,  
others carry on their lives  
hundreds of miles from here.  
Whether near or far,  
something binds us together,  
keeps us close.

# Surrounded

Being  
surrounded  
I should be  
happy, and  
I am.  
Most times.  
But when i  
get a quiet time,

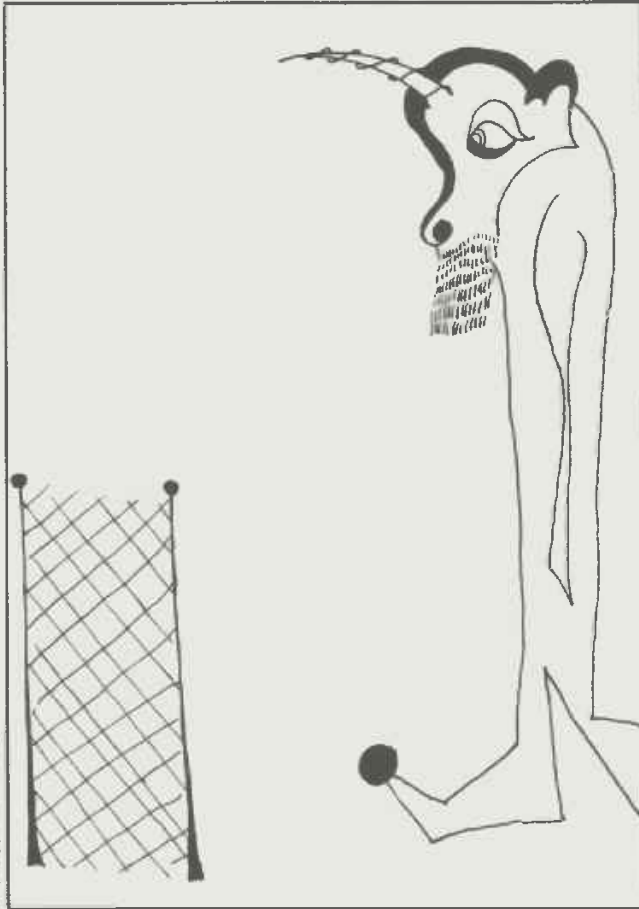
time all to my self,  
i realize  
that which is surrounded by friendship  
is merely an empty shell.

All the love around me can not  
fill this vessel. i seek a love  
i can not find. Or can i?  
Others have. i watch, envious.

No, it is not meant to be.  
It always eludes me,  
teases me.  
i see it lurking  
just around the corner,  
the corner  
i never reach.

Jenn Hoke ■

■ Dr. Stevan Davies



# Hard- Labor

Sweat, running in

rivulets down my

back,

stinging my eyes,

drenching my

body, cleansing

my soul—sweat.

■ Janet Matson

# L

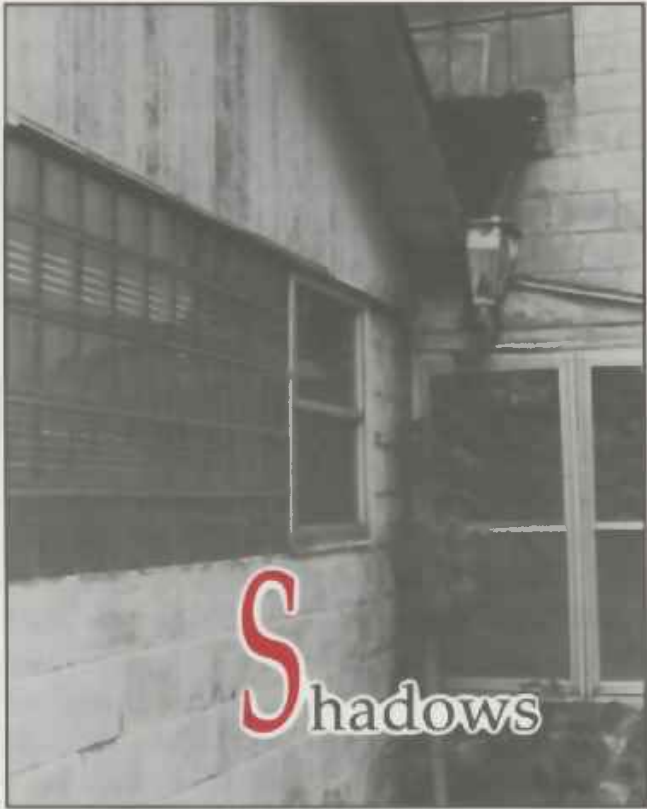
## Listening

A little voice  
inside my head  
shrieked,  
"MADNESS!"  
And so,  
I stopped  
and listened.  
So still  
so silent,  
I listened.  
But,  
the little voice  
came and went  
in that instant.  
Yet,  
when I stopped listening  
I heard the faint sobbing of a far off distant soul.  
So,  
again I listened,  
again so still,  
again so silent.  
Again the voice was gone.  
Now,  
I can not stop listening  
without listening  
for the lost little **voice**  
and cried  
inside my head.



■ Donna Fisher

■ David M. Engelhardt



I sleep—I think  
I toss, I turn, I can not sleep  
I think—  
thoughts racing, keep me  
awake  
My life has no direction  
it has no anatomy

You can't examine it, or take it apart  
There are no pieces to put back together again  
There is no purpose, no function  
What are the colors of life? —Green?  
but what kind of green; pine or pistachio?  
Why not violent reds or depthless blacks?  
I don't know where the answers lie,  
under my socks or sweaters,  
perhaps in the dark corners of my closet  
I sleep—I think  
I toss, I turn, I can not sleep  
I can not escape

on the

Wall

# Sir Jeffrey Blue Eyes

Last night the local weatherman assured me winter is over. I am not certain it is a wise idea to take everything he says as gospel—one can definitely put trust in the wrong person. However, it is doubtful if anyone would argue that spring is long overdue in Pennsylvania.

It seems I am noticing the happenings outside my home with a wonderment that has vanished over the years. The birds seem like long lost friends that have finally found their way home to my lonely birdfeeder which stands forlornly outside the kitchen window. Bright tips of different colored flowers are beginning to protrude alongside what will shortly be the lawn from hell. Why do I give this extremely attractive and painstakingly landscaped area such a name? As I stand outside surveying my lawn, hours and hours spent riding my lawnmower come vividly into my mind. There is a task at hand—one I have put off for years. It is time to teach Jeffrey how to use the riding lawnmower.

As the sound of the front door reaches my ears, I watch this young thirteen year old child slowly plod his way off the porch and up to my temporary place of peace. As Jeffrey approaches, I look at this innocent cherub-faced child with those big beautiful blue eyes. I know for a fact that his peaceful countenance hides a mind working in over-drive. There has never been a lesson in parental frustration to match this one!

One might think the task of teaching a thirteen year old to use a riding lawnmower is quite simple. I have lived with this child since his conception and I can assure you the word “simple” is not in his vocabulary.

First things first. Safety is an area that must be covered. I explain to Jeffrey, (who is sporting a parent pleasing, “I’m all ears look”), that a lawnmower is not a toy and can be very dangerous. As he abides my banter patiently, I go over safe driving practices and any other problem areas I can think of. Why do I get the feeling he is waiting for the checkered flag? Secondly, information covering proper mower maintenance must be explained. He looks innocently into my face as I

explain how to check the oil and tire pressure. Jeffrey feigns total interest and assures me he understands my instructions completely. I wonder how he can comprehend this when a simple “brush your teeth” eludes him completely.

The basics out of the way, step three can no longer be avoided. I instruct this pint sized Richard Petty to hop on the mower. It is hard to miss the toothy grin that engulfs that angelic face or the instant sparkle shooting out of those baby blues. My future passes before me like a runaway stage coach headed for a mountain cliff. Projection is not a good thing at a time like this!

Jeffrey starts the mower and charges off across the lawn like a knight riding into battle. No blade of grass, no innocent butterfly, no stray flower will ever be safe in our yard again. I want to tell Sir Lancelot to slow down. Did you ever try yelling above the roar of a lawnmower? It’s funny Sir Blue Eyes can hear the refrigerator door open above the wall shaking sounds of Aerosmith. Small wonderments like this sometimes flit into my burnt-out parental brain.

As the afternoon passes I survey the scene and assess the damage. I suppose the grass lines up and down the lawn can be used as lane markers for the next race. And I remember thinking several months ago that it would be nice to plant a new variety of roses in the spring. Now I have room—right where my old roses used to be.

This brings me to the final step in this lesson, which is cleanup. The gas can must be stored in the shed, and the mower should be rinsed off after it cools down. It comes as no surprise to me that during this step Jeffrey has conveniently made himself scarce. I think he has gone up to his grandparents house to see if they need some help in their yard. What a shame—my mother had such pretty flowers!

## ■ Barbara Myers



# M y Story

Two giraffes glided into my story. . .

I was six years old when they were given to me.

Wooden, chiseled, finely painted spots.

sturdy in the middle, lona smooth necks and delicate limbs

... how they were treasured.

The 1 giraffe did not resemble the other, even though they shared the same height. Thus, they earned the right to be named.

After long deliberation, ten minutes to be exact, and consultation with Paco the Polar Bear, I titled them:

Sir William and Lady Lorraine.

Crowning them with such honor, I proceeded to cautiously station Sir William and Lady Lorraine out of little Davy's vicious reach—with fear that the royalty would succumb to the fatal blows of GI poachers on the prowl.

The Great American Hero always seemed to have an air of predatory arrogance about him, to me.

Perhaps that is why the dolls of the round tea table wink secret codes to each other when Davy's GI's take cover under their chairs.

As the giraffes proudly continue their courtly stance, an explosive type sound is heard from Davy's direction.

A brown crayon hand grenade is launched by one of his men and with convenient accuracy hits the wall behind the noble creatures.

It was just the move my forces had been waiting for...

**MOM!!! . . . DAVY'S WRITING ON THE WALL!!!**

Colleen Fritz ■

# Red

It's raining as I sit in the car waiting for the light to change, on the radio Tori sings about a girl with a strong mind and a broken heart. I wish her well but right now I'm busy trying to count the raindrops as they fall on the windshield. They're coming fast and I figure I must be too slow to track the thousands, or at least hundreds of drops which smear and run together making me angry that I can't even accomplish this, an inventory of water.

## ■ Trisha Harrington

# t hen

there once was a time i slept at nite and  
worried not. males were no object  
although i cannot remember,  
there once was a time my heart was  
whole. but for now, it is in pieces.

Sarah Lenahan ■

# Sorry, this lane closed. . .

I hear the screams every day—I see the pushed up, malformed faces, I see strings of snot hanging midair from a dirty nose, I'm acutely aware of their presence, trying to intimidate me, trying to test me. Children, they're everywhere, trying my patience, asking stupid questions that I can't answer. Questions that require me to holler for the manager to verify how much "this" is. Flustered mothers throw their groceries on the black conveyor belt, itching to take their anxiety out on something. "This belt is dirty, miss..." a woman helpfully points out. I nod sweetly, and when she turns her back, I roll my eyes at a fellow employee in the next aisle, who's having a similar "episode" as we like to call them. Pushing a mopful of stringy hair out of her face, the woman focuses her beady eyes on the register, mentally comparing "her" price to the store price. "That was \$1.59 on the shelf," she says accusingly, like I personally set out to gyp her. I monotonously call for a price check, and the woman is satisfied for at least another minute. Suddenly, her attention is drawn to her toddler who, seeing his chance at freedom, is lumbering out of the shopping cart. "Milton, no! No!" she reprimands, giving *me* a dirty look, I guess for not warning her of a potentially dangerous situation. I shrug and continue scanning, used to this type of customer.

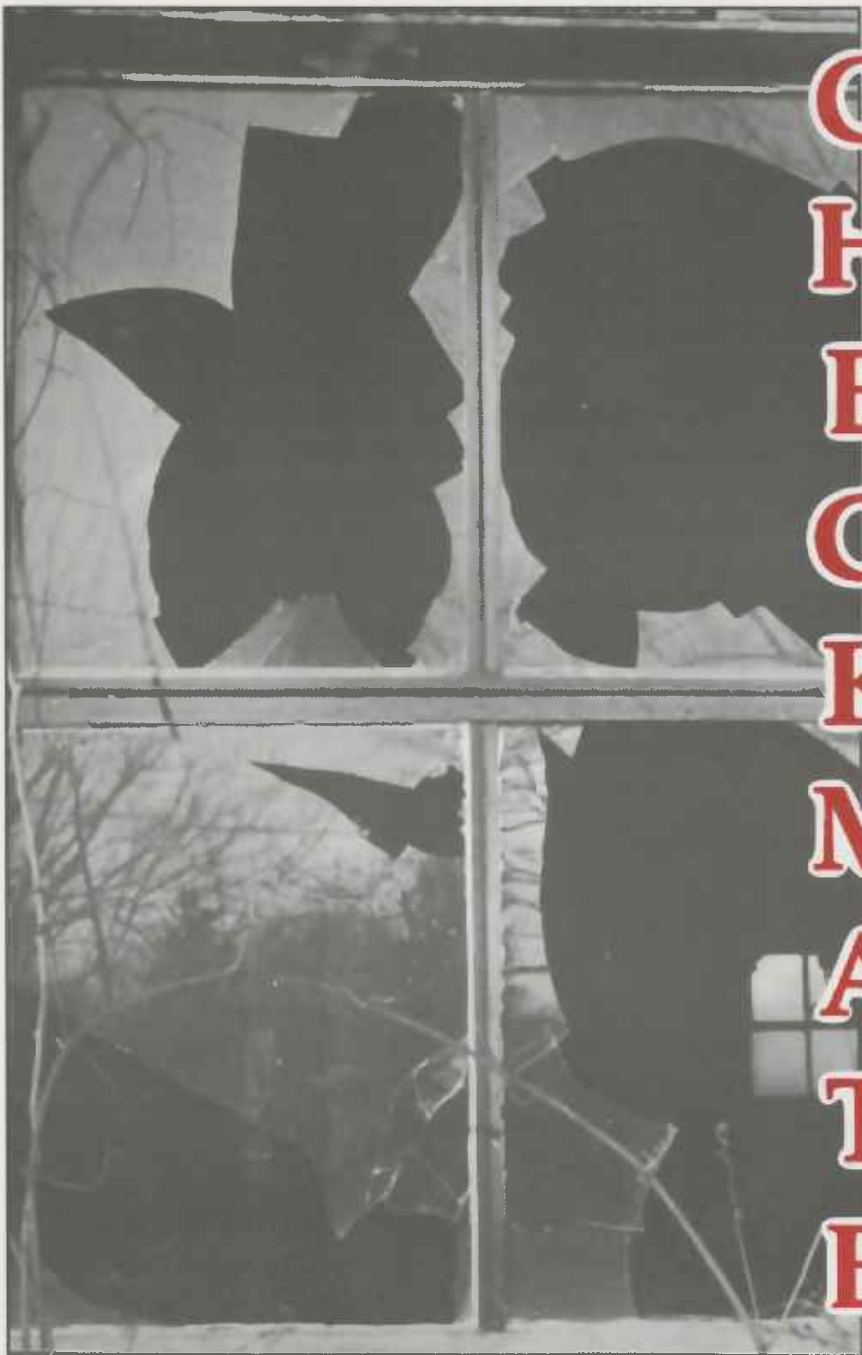
Finally, the price check comes through, verifying that the store price was indeed correct. The woman lowers her eyes in obvious embarrassment, but redeems herself by saying "I'd like all the cold stuff in one bag, and I'd also like to have paper in plastic. ♪ if you don't mind." She says this with a curt tone of voice, dripping with disdain for me, the lowest form of humankind—a cashier. I smiled, as if I cared, mentally ripping her "I love Blairstown" T-shirt to shreds, smashing her huge sunglasses, and shoving her Bonus Club Card down her throat. But instead of all that, and instead of telling her that I was fortunate enough to work at the A&P for two long years and have those two years to perfect my bagging skills, I simply comply with her Commando-like attitude, making life a lot simpler for me. "Milton!" (Milton??) or the monster incarcerated in his jail like residence, whimpers and starts to put up a (loud) fuss. The

beep beep of the scanner mixes in, and seven registers down on Express, a feeble voice can be heard calling for “the key.” It’s Sunday, it’s raining, and all 5,500 inhabitants of Blairstown are crammed into the A&P after deciding that today would be a swell day to shop. “You know, there isn’t any more of the dried Chinese apple seeds. . .” the woman goes off on a tangent and I tune her out, but every now and then I throw out an “uh huh,” or a “really, I’ll have that checked out.” After what seems like an eternity, the end of her order appeared. “Is *that* the total?” she asks in disbelief at the amount of \$179.98 shining in bright green on the scanner. “Yes, it is!” I say in obvious satisfaction. “Do you need a pen?” I offer ever so helpfully. She doesn’t appreciate my wise-ass attitude and decides to hold a conflict concerning her total. The customers behind her start to sigh and pick up the trashy magazines in impatience. She asks to hear the most expensive items on her receipt—mostly of which belong to her sniveling, mucus filled cherub, Milton. “Huggies, \$7.99, Enfamil, \$9.99. . . and Gynelotrimin, \$10.50. . .” I made sure to raise my voice a few decibels so Melissa over in Register 5 looks over and recognizes my smart mouth, giving me an appreciative look. The woman backs down, and I win, obvious forfeit of humiliation on her part. Score 1, I think. She scribbles the check out hastily. Milton pops his head out of the cart, and she not-so-gently shoves him back in. I look up vaguely, trying not to make eye contact with anyone, but a customer trying to decide between Register 4 & 5 sees me and smiles widely, thinking that I must have silently been begging for them to come through my line. I sigh inwardly, longing to find a way out of the rat race I call work. Beep beep. . . I snap back to reality and rip off bitch-woman’s receipt and basically throw it at her. She grabs it out of my hand and turns to leave. Not to be outdone by her, I smile brightly, wishing her a great day, and thanking her for bagging, which she didn’t do. . . A&P courtesy, I’m full of it I tell you.

# The Light

A match flares brightly in the darkness  
And for one brief moment the darkness flees the light  
Running to the corners of the room  
And the fear vanishes.  
The match burns out  
Allowing the darkness to rush in upon me,  
Sitting alone in my solitude.  
My shaking hand flicks the cigarette  
And seemingly from afar,  
I hear a desolate cry, and I realize—  
—that forlorn sound comes from me.  
My mind and soul are consumed.  
The fear, the despair—these are now part of me.  
My cigarette burns low  
And I notice a solitary bit of ash  
That struggles to burn—  
like my hopes and dreams.  
But the ash is extinguished.  
Complete darkness has taken its place.

Jennie Lee ■



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"Arrange whatever pieces come your way."

—Virginia Woolf



## ode to the Rain Goddess

I sit here listening to the rain  
letting it wash away the pain.  
The gentle drops falling down  
could never cause me to frown.

In the streets the people are shielding themselves.  
Afraid that the water will wash them away.  
Their fear keeps them from hearing  
what the gentle voice has to say.

Like the flowing refrain of a song  
the orchestra of the storm tells us nothing is wrong.  
We know it will be all right,  
behind the clouds the sun is shining bright.

Through the clouds a message we can send  
to a faraway friend.  
If you look closely through the dark  
Their face is revealed by the storm's spark.

I am free  
to enjoy the falling sea  
because through the rain  
I can hear a soothing refrain.  
And I will never be EMpty.

# Fortitude

In my soul there is a . . . longing.  
A yearning.  
A yearning for some thing.  
Something that is hiding within.  
The omnipotent feeling within my  
    chest,  
Feels as heavy as a hindrance of  
    bricks.  
The bricks are great upon my soul  
    and  
My soul is imploring me for help.  
What form of help, I do not know,  
    but  
I think that my heart will crumble,  
And set my soul free.

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T.

Dispersing among the clouds,  
I will no longer,  
Feel the yearning. . . longing of my  
    soul,  
Begging me to displace it and  
get on with life.



# The Dead Wagon

"Look in their eyes," she used to say. "You can always tell much about the creature by looking in their eyes." Mom was raised with the love of equine and due to her influence, so was I. She taught me to respect the horse and every other living creature. She was my coach whom led, pushed, drug, and ultimately walked beside me in my search for identity. She taught me to question, argue, and speak out for what I believe in. A horse was never allowed to just be lame, she would always ask, "What do you see? Which joint is afflicted? What is the cause?"

To begin with, it was December 31, 1995, when I spotted our grey mare Melody, standing by herself in the pasture. I knew something was ailing her because she was always one to be in the herd. As I approached, her eyes looked dull and sickly, and there was mud on her sides from lying down in the pasture. I screamed to mom, "Melody, looks like she has colic," and she called our veterinarian, Don. Horses cannot regurgitate their food like other animals can, which causes blocked and twisted intestines, usually resulting in death. We began walking her while waiting for Don to arrive.

Twenty minutes later Don pulled into the driveway and inspected Melody's actions. He thought it may be colic, but felt her prognosis was very positive for we found her early. He flushed her system with mineral oil, injected some pain medication and instructed us to keep walking her, never allowing her to lie down. The next three hours were exasperating for the mare and for us. Mom called Don to inform him Melody's condition was worsening and he arrived with more medication and pain killers. He asked us how important it was to save the foal she was carrying and we responded the foal would not survive if its mom were dead. He stated, "I can give her a higher dosage of pain killer but she may abort." He was told to do whatever it would take to save her life. I remained optimistic about her condition for in the past, I had doctored horses the medical community had told us would die, and they beat the odds. I was hopeful.

It was 10:00 pm and mom and I were rotating hours between walking her and napping. Mom was resting and I was in the barn when

I heard Don's vehicle pull in. He came down the stairs with hope in his eyes saying he was just in the neighborhood. He lives forty minutes away and went off call two hours previous. He injected her with more pain killers, mineral oil, and said her condition had worsened. He was sickened at her lack of response and stated, "I did not get into this business to see them die." We consoled one another, and he told me to call if we needed him. Mom came down to the barn about mid-night and ordered me to the house for a nap. I resisted with tears in my eyes for I was afraid if I left, she would be dead when I returned. Mom tiredly said, "We have done all we can do it is not in our hands anymore. We cannot save them all." I stroked the mare's neck, said a prayer and left.

She awakened me an hour later and I went to the barn. It was eerie walking down the steps because I knew she was dead. I forced myself to continue with tears of sorrow and joy streaking my face. I was crying for our loss and also the end to her pain. Melody's eyes were open and empty.

I returned to the house to inform mom who, stated, "She was alive when I left, I would have never sent you down there if I knew she were dead." In my heart of hearts, I knew Melody wanted to be alone when she died for whatever reason. I gave mom a hug, wished her a Happy New Year, and fell fast asleep on the couch.

Well, it is tough to dig a hole big enough to bury a 2,000 pound horse in the middle of winter, so we called the rendering truck, also known as the "dead wagon". They were set to arrive that afternoon to take her body away. Mom was running errands when the man arrived. He stepped out of the truck and introduced himself to me, I cannot remember his name, but his eyes, they are what I recall. He had a look that spoke volumes about the amount of death he had seen, but there was something else . . . a hardening about life, a lack of respect for it. I thought maybe I was being oversensitive so I passed it off.

He backed as close to her body as possible and began opening the ramp. I thought I had already been through hell, but I was mistaken. On the truck, where the body of our dead, grey mare was to be loaded, was the carcass of a black and white Holstein cow. There were also two bodies of calves, and something else, altogether unexpected.

Lying on top of the bodies was a calf whom was looking at me with eyes of hope, very ALIVE. An anger rose in me which I have yet to

duplicate. I screamed at the man, "What is that calf doing on a truck filled with dead bodies going to a glue factory?"

"I just came from a veal farm where they raise calves for meat. The other two died of a respiratory disease and they feel this one will too," the man weakly explained.

"Has the vet looked at him? Medicated him?" I demanded.

"They said they cannot give him any other antibiotics than penicillin for he is intended for human consumption, and they did not want to waste their time on him."

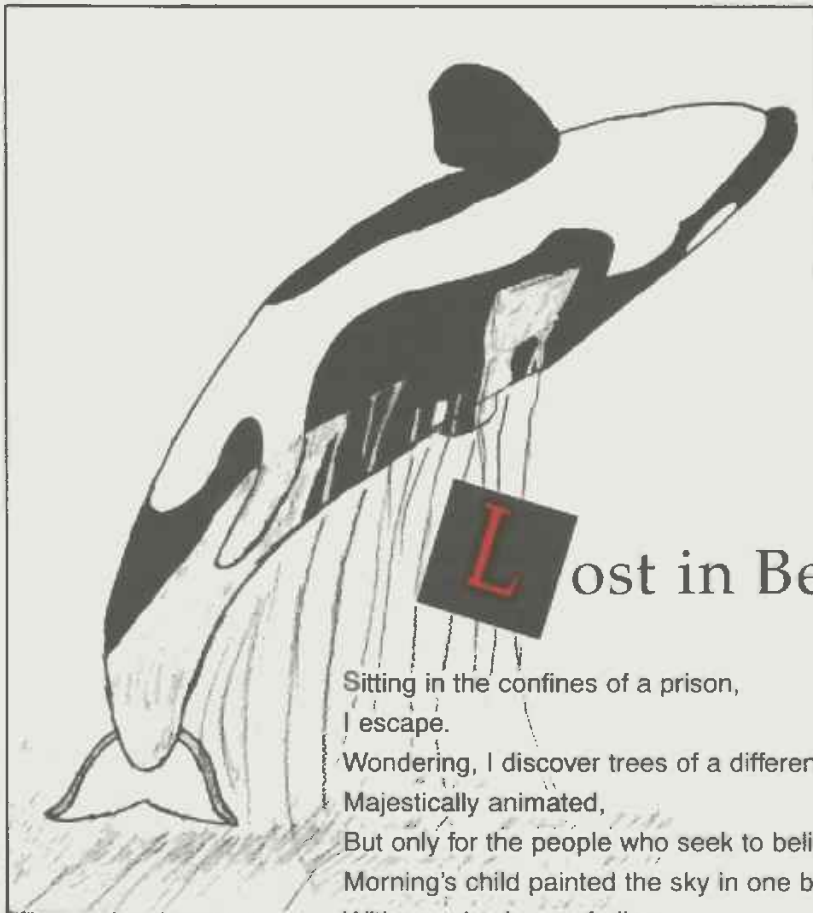
"Waste their time? Did they think of giving him to someone else who raises cows whom would take the "time" to doctor him? Did they think of "wasting" their money to have a vet examine him to determine if he is sick?" I asked forcefully.

"I do not know lady. Listen, my job is to drive this truck," he lamely stated.

He would not wait for me to call friends of ours who raise cattle and said he could not give the calf to me anyway. I was furious. Mom and I had spent eleven, exhausting hours trying to save Melody's life and the calf's owner did not even try.

As the dead wagon pulled away with a life contained in it, I was shaking with emotion. I ran to the house to call the authorities to see what could be done. Melody's struggle for life had ended but my passion to save them had not. The look in the calf's eyes was all I needed.

Janet Matson ■



## Lost in Beauty

Sitting in the confines of a prison,  
I escape.

Wondering, I discover trees of a different attitude,  
Majestically animated,  
But only for the people who seek to believe it.  
Morning's child painted the sky in one brush down,  
Without mistakes or fading.

Each creature stares at me to receive applause,  
For they helped to create,  
This world that stuns me.  
Inspect each alcove,  
Each tree,  
Every leaf that floats to the ground.  
I am lost in it's beauty,  
Daydreaming.

# reenest Grass

The light illuminated the grass,  
it will never after not have been  
for the grass was stained with the hues of sun  
but when the grass does die and never afters arrive  
with all of the darkness and deceit  
the light will still shine  
into the bizarre future  
but the future is for those who live for tomorrows  
And the Supposed Grass,  
that is Greener on the Other side  
but those that are dreamer—  
and he who lives for now  
will use the time which is given to him  
and a dreamer's light shines for all who care  
and for those who refuse to see it  
the light will eternally exist  
through all the silent, teary nights afterward  
it will shine upon the grass which was chosen  
to be seen as the Greenest  
for the grass beyond will never touch the light  
as long as the trees admire it  
and do not dig their wicked roots into the sweet and sour soil  
Though all their limbs are blind to the light

I see it  
I feel it  
and I know it  
for never afters will Always Be  
truer than what IS

■ **April Masters**

A

## New Beginning

As we walk down the path of destiny,  
Our past grabs at our soul and pulls us from behind  
While our present expectations and hopes push us onward  
We deal with our fears and yearn for a new beginning,  
Distancing ourselves from a somber end.

I think of you, a sobering peace engulfs me,  
I think of you, a sun-filled sky comforts my inner being,  
I think of you, a lasting impression, a soft glance,  
a warm touch, a feeling of want and need, a cautious love  
I think of you, a tear of joy shed for answered prayers  
The realization of dreams past and present, intertwined,  
A chance, a new beginning...

■ **Timothy A. Hartmann**



■ Maggy Wolfe



■ Keri Leitzel

## Judgment

Up there on stage  
Hot lights blinding you gray  
The weight of excitement in the air  
The performance  
Then that silent second when you  
wait to hear,  
How they will judge what was just there,  
The anticipation of straining to hear,  
The APPLAUSE !  
Like thunder in the night  
Rinsing the tension away like raindrops  
falling from the sky.

# **T**he Beach

Crisp, salty spray splashed as a wave broke.  
Overhead the sun fused an aquamarine sky  
Into a gold shimmer of light clouds and hovering seagulls,  
As I stood alone upon my beach  
Gazing into the blue-gray horizon  
When a cool wave broke, showering me  
With mist.

Another figure stood silhouetted by the sun,  
Also searching the sea and the waves;  
A different ocean, it seemed,  
Than the one that bordered my familiar beach.  
Yet mine now appeared lonely and gray,  
and I wished to go to hers,  
Uncertain of where the boundaries of my beach ended,  
And hers began.

A pastel sun now just brushes the ocean,  
Fading shimmers dance across the calm sea.  
As twilight shades of color caress the evening sky,  
And a fresh marine breeze brushes past us.  
Together we sit, neither on her beach,  
Or mine,  
But somewhere in between.

Something had changed, although I was unsure  
The water seemed calmer, warmer  
And the beach more familiar than mine.  
The boundaries of our beaches had faded and changed,  
Yet although new, it was somehow  
The same.



# Defined

Happiness is the smell of smashed pumpkins and burning leaves on a crisp October morning. It is the twinkling brilliance of Christmas lights in the dark suburban night. It is the warm reassurance of a mother's cool hand on a child's fevered face. Happiness is a rocky beach in Maine and the foamy surf that dwells there. It is hearing, for the hundredth time, your grandfather's favorite story or your grandmother's school girl laugh. It is the old, black sweater with the torn sleeve and shredded hem. Happiness is getting to the prize in the cereal box before your little brother and seeing



■ Maggy Wolfe

his anguished expression. It is hearing a song that reminds you of a time you thought you'd forgotten. It is coming home to the cinnamon smell of your mother's favorite candles and her soft voice as you walk through the door.

Happiness is the wind in your hair, the fresh, linen smell of spring and the way the wet grass feels under bare feet. It is the decadence of Godiva chocolates and Ralph Lauren sheets. It is the feel of a fuzzy wool sweater on a frigid winter day. Happiness is knowing the answer and the reason. It is the smile on the face of the boy with the limpid brown eyes. Happiness is having endless opportunities and brilliant prospects, it is knowing who and why you are. Happiness is an elusive stranger who keeps refusing your invitation to tea until one day he shows up unannounced. Happiness is a fickle and demanding guest but one who is always welcome.

Trisha Harrington ■



# Book

Hard work, perseverance, outlining, writing  
Re-writing, organizing, perfecting—  
A beginning

Pages of words coming together  
Indenting a new thought  
Absorbed in emotion  
Love  
Hate  
Hope  
Sadness  
Laughter

Tying thoughts together in a neat package  
To keep it strong

Ready to send - clearly marked

? ! " " : , .

Finally a conclusion, an ending  
So final

Hard cover or soft  
It doesn't matter

It's what's inside that will continue on

On the seventh day God looked  
It was good

A new beginning, slowly unfolding  
To perfection

Each day, each month, each year  
Looking between the lines for understanding  
In the mystery of it all

Emotions stirring inside  
As we look for answers to questions  
That can never be found

We hold on to hope as we read  
Through these chapters of life  
And when the ending is near  
The memories will remain  
Close to our heart

# Score Card

Congratulations on surviving the game. With churning minds and furrowed brows, a sense of confusion may still linger. For those searching for the winner, we suggest retracing the moves of the game. The players within these pages question, challenge, and yes, sometimes perplex with their answers. But their voices reflect all of us, all the players of this great game. To the wise competitors who have captured our pieces, we commend you. Thank you for making the move.





# Misericordia

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