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INSTRESS



FALL '93

TABLE OF CONTENTS

IN MEMORIUM		DR. REGINA KELLY, RSM	3
UNTITLED	ARTWORK	JONATHAN SAKOWSKI	3
THE TEST		M.T. GLYNN	4
SUB ZERO		JOE DOMBROSKI	5
ELEVATION		COLLEEN YANORA	5
FINGER BOY	ARTWORK	DR. STEVAN DAVIES	5
THROUGH MY EYES		JIM SABULSKI	6
UNTITLED	PHOTO	JENN GARCEAU	7
EVERYONE'S STORY		PAULINA RIERA	8
CONFUSION		PAUL SOLLIDAY	11
TAKE HOLD OF THE FLAME		JOE DOMBROSKI	11
UNTITLED	PHOTO	MATT McCLINTOCK	12
THE LAST TIME		PEGGY CHARNICK	12
UNTITLED		MARY MULLER	13
THE QUEST FOR THE CITY OF SUCCESS		MOLLY BRENNAN	13
UNTITLED	ARTWORK	NANCY LEWIS	14
CONFESSIONS OF THE SOUL		NANCY LEWIS	15
THE ENCOUNTER		OLIVIA SINCLAIR	16
HANDS		KATHLEEN HAENTJENS	16
WHEN THE CHILDREN WHERE THERE		SARAH ROSE	17
UNTITLED	PHOTO	OLIVIA SINCLAIR	17
PERCEPTION		JOE DOMBROSKI	18
UNTITLED	ARTWORK	DR. STEVAN DAVIES	19
UNTITLED	PHOTO	OLIVIA SINCLAIR	20
A CHORD OF BELLS		EILENE S. WENNER	20
THE NURSERY WINDOW		PEGGY CHARNICK	21

FRONT COVER: UNTITLED, ARTWORK, JENN GARCEAU

BACK COVER: THE SUSPENDED LEAF, PEGGY CHARNICK

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: Jennifer Garceau; **Editorial Staff:** Nancy Lewis, Olivia Sinclair;
Advisor: Dr. Jeffrey Johnson.



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IN MEMORIUM

Mary Kintz Bevevino,
a Liberal Studies major
who graduated May, 1987
passed away 8 October 1993

"A poem," critics tell us, " makes nothing happen." However, when a poem happens everything is re-visited, remembered, re-named. Those of us who worked with Mary in the Literary Club, in the pages of Instress watched her re-name the memory and the vision of her life as poem after poem began to happen. The act of re-remembering, the act of re-naming are acts that belong to the limited life and language we know. Re-visioning is an act that frees us to learn the language of eternity.

REQUIESCAT IN AETERNUM



THE TEST

by M. T. Glynn

In sweats and sneakers,
 With chests proclaiming CHAMPION and ESPIRIT
The Corps bends into the work--
 Body, bones, wit and memory
Held in laser-like focus on a text.
 Now an abstracted cough, or a smothered sneeze,
The dry flutter of a turned page
 The crackle and snap of small blue books
Being filled line by line, with the best they know,
 With the most they can remember.

The Underground Man in his meanness
 Has them by the throat.
Breaking loose they pit themselves against Voltaire
 Then scribble off a return letter to Pope--
As they use their texts with familiarity
 Of best-beloved baseball cards.
Jane Austin smiles smugly as the "barbarians"
 From the colonies break open her plot.
Her pride and their prejudice go to the mat
 And the outcome is inconclusive.

An ordinary day in March, the snow hangs on.
 A small college in Penn's woods. Mid-Terms.
William Blake burns in a hip pocket
 Whitman waits in a purse.
It's for this intense moment that they're here
 In the hands and grasp of their children
Who are engaged!

"To what avail", I groan; "they will not remember
 The gold and the glory they now wade through."
But excellence replies, "While they may not remember
 They will never forget
What was called forth from them, even once,
 By those who made them.

SUB ZERO

by Joe Dombroski

He is king of all below
in the kingdom of the snow
of a time tomorrow.
He rules the groundslaves and the freemen
in a land of frozen hearts
of an age tomorrow.
He was destined to rule
for human life is his fuel
on the land called Sub Zero.
Body heat (a warm heart) is your life
without it you will die
on the drifts of Sub Zero.
Without a woolskin you would freeze
on the drifts and ice disease
in the village of Poikilothermous.
It is a land that's rich in blood
the snowriders and the (lorry) cuds
that are called the king's regime.
He is a messiah supreme
laying dormant in the spring
and will take the queen Aphrodite.
With the power to foresee
or to look into the past
he is ruler of the veins.

ELEVATION

by Colleen Yanora

Wake up little boy.
Your day is just beginning.
Consume your surroundings.
Conquer your realities.

Take control of your weakness.
Strengthen your spirit.
Make determination your side kick.

Understand little boy,
your day will always be your day.
Hold on to each moment.

Move ahead.
Your body will compensate your losses.
Your abilities will take you on an endless voyage of accomplishments.



Keep your entire person intact.
Together mind and spirit become one.
The struggle decreases and the mind achieves.

Grow little boy.
Grab onto the highest mountain.
Conquer your realities.

THROUGH MY EYES

by Jim Sabulski

Words drip from my pen, flow from my heart
I am a painter, my phrases my art
The fiber is my canvas, mind's eye paints the scene
Emotion is my color, tears are my terpene.

Character is my utensil, every bristle someone I've met
It builds with every new acquaintance, the older I get.
The pallet is my individuality, new colors I now seek
Evertones primaries are the same, but their secondaries are unique.

A baby ripped from the womb as easily as a thought from my mind.
A warm, moist home for just a little while but now death she must find
Mangled and torn like a crumpled piece of paper
No chance to grow up, no one to shape her.

The violent reds now work their way into this art
Thick and dark like fluid from my heart.
And the welts of life drip down my thumb
In the thought that the fruit of the womb can be forced to succumb.

The huge grain fields can't supply enough to meet their needs
Skin grows tight against their bones and the children never too weak to bleed
Thousands a day grow hungrier than hell
Worms fill their stomachs and cause them to swell.

The dropcloth catches my frustrations there's nothing I can do
Surrounded by unnecessary death, and add a touch of blue.
A mistaken splash of sienna looks like a small patch of mud.
Good painters don't make a mess, nor do they paint with blood.

The earth turns to meet a star, the beauty of a sunrise
I've seen them so many times, yet was too blind to realize
How easily it could be destroyed, how quickly it could end
A foreign hand depresses a switch, the missiles they now send.

Revenge is not so sweet in this situation
It would only result in useless annihilation
This may be the wound that even time cannot mend
What the planet looked like in the beginning, It will look like in the end.

My wildest nightmares have become my greatest fears
The way I've seen this world change in my seventy some odd years
This painting now near completion, captures all this color
The paint is getting dry now, the colors growing duller

I adjusted the mirror and felt the dog's tail on my shin
Some last minute touch-ups as I scratch the stubble on my chin
And now at last the horrific masterpiece is done
A portrait of my own eyes
I look and have to shun.



EVERYONE'S STORY

by Paulina Riera

Once her favorite outfit, the Navaho-print blouse and complimentary black jeans still remained where Stacy had stripped herself of them. She'd had some reservations about purchasing the tight-fitting blouse partially because she was unsure if it would be flattering but mostly because she knew if it wasn't, Steve would notice. Since their breakup a month ago, Stacy's days were consumed with actions whose sole purpose was to impress Steve while undermining his new relationship with Leslie. Today had been a fruitful day in that her blouse did indeed flatter her figure and in that she'd received compliments from her female friends and occasional glances from her male friends, including Steve. However, as she sat in her dimly-lit room, Stacy only felt disgusted by the orange and black heap of clothing which commanded her attention. Since she was a young girl, Stacy had repeatedly heard that a woman's attire was no provocation for any crime committed against her, but she could not help wondering if Matt noticed her only because her blouse and jeans fit too snugly over her figure.

Until tonight, Matt had only been a casual acquaintance who visited Sue's room and on one occasion had told Stacey that she dressed as if she came from a big city. Matt wasn't an unattractive guy; in fact, Stacy had described him to her roommate as possessing "menacingly-good looks." Stacy had noticed Matt's finely-chiseled cheekbones and had been enthralled by a voice which reminded her of those heard on the other end of a lewd phone call which, although perverted, hypnotized its listener.

Tonight's encounter with Matt began as she settled in the lounge to study theology and watch some television. Half an hour into Barbara Walters' special program, Matt peeked around the corner and began a conversation with Stacy.

"Hey, Stace. What 'cha up to?"

Their conversation began as nothing more than a greeting but quickly progressed to a flirtatious and insinuating level. Stacy saw nothing wrong with their conversation and regarded it as a nice distraction from work and a welcomed revenge tactic to use against Steve and Leslie.

"I've never seen your room. It's that one, right?" Matt said as he began to walk to the door marked 311.

Stacy raced past him in an attempt to haphazardly straighten it before he got a full look.

"This is nice. Hey, who's your roommate?"

"Lisa Crispell. You probably don't know her. She usually goes home on the weekends."

Matt began to move around the room, his fingers glancing over her shelves and stopping when something caught his attention.

"Is that why she's not here?"

"Yep. I'm all by myself this weekend. Good thing I'm not scared of the dark."

Matt excavated a book of matches which Stacy kept in a champagne glass along with loose change.

Lighting one, he said, "Most people die in the daylight."

"Ooh, that's deep," Stacy replied, half seriously, half flirtatiously.

The next thing which captivated Matt's attention was a wallet-sized picture of Steve which Stacey had not had enough anger to take off her mirror.

"This your boyfriend, right?"

"No. If you'd asked me a month ago I would've had to answer yes, but not today."

"What happened? You dumped him?"

Although Stacy had no feelings for Matt, the idea that he thought it was she who had ended the relationship appealed to her and made Matt someone she could confide in.

"Yeah, it was my decision," she lied, "I felt my choker-chain tightening in his grip and I wanted to see what other guys could offer."

Matt discovered the top shelf on which Stacy kept melted candles in cheap wine bottles. Without exerting any effort, he struck a match and lit one of the more reclusive red candles. Stacy felt uneasy with the confidence with which Matt explored her room and returned to the lounge hoping that Matt would follow. However, she sat alone for ten minutes, and when her curiosity became unbearable, she returned to her room. As Stacy entered, she was baffled and intrigued by the setting that Matt had created. He had turned off the lights, lit five candles, and pulled down her floral comforter. As Anita Baker whispered through the speakers, Matt sat at the edge of her bed and watched his mirrored image swaying to the hypnotic rhythm.

"Mmm, I love Anita. Come, dance with me."

Stacy knew that this encounter was not ordinary, but his outstretched hand and mesmerizing voice were enough to make her forget all the warnings her mother had preached over the years. As he drew her into his arms, he managed to close the locked door and create a very romantic setting. As they made soft circles in her carpet, somewhere in the distance Stacy's mother spoke:

"You're going away to college now, so remember, if it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't."

Although her mother's message reverberated in her mind, Stacy knew that it didn't apply to Matt. After all, he was holding her gently and she didn't feel too uncomfortable. Matt made her feel attractive and when he stopped dancing and seated himself on her bed, she didn't mind being maneuvered to stand in between his legs.

"Candles and Anita Baker. Did you know they were my favorite, Stace?"

"Sorry to burst your bubble, but they aren't for you."

As he methodically licked his upper lip, he replied, "Good, then they'll be for us."

She was attracted to the desire she saw in his eyes and felt comfortable in the knowledge that Heather and Alicia were in the room next door.

As she concentrated on the shadow cast upon his face by the candlelight, he placed his hands on his hips and pulled her closer to him. Matt kissed her gently but persistently and, for the first time, Stacy began to feel slightly uncomfortable. However, she didn't feel threatened and the idea that Steve was doing this with Leslie encouraged her to return Matt's advances. His kisses felt welcoming enough so that when Matt pulled her onto the bed and rolled her over, she didn't mind.

"If you decide to engage in sex, please know your partner, Stacy."

Her mother's advice echoed within the confines of her dorm room and Stacy noted that she didn't know Matt. Pulling her head away from their kiss, Stacy asked, "Matt, you don't even know me, so why are you here?"

"I've been watching you. You walk with presence in the cafeteria and you are one of the hardest people not to notice."

Stacy liked his answer even if she didn't trust its sincerity. Not feeling threatened, Stacy conceded to escalating their intensity and followed the lead he set. Matt's only flaw up to this point had been his excessive eagerness and Stacy had not minded until his hands reached down to her pants. Her fear rose as abruptly as his hands had moved in unbuttoning her button-fly. Under the

pressure of his kiss, Stacy began to wiggle in an attempt to loosen his grip, but Matt only smiled as he knelt above her. Although he ceased kissing her, his goal was made very clear as he grabbed her jeans by their pockets and attempted to pull them off. But the tight fitting material and her wiggling body offered enough resistance and, in the interim, Stacy attempted to regain control by sitting up. This advantage, however, was short-lived as Matt grabbed her ankles and pulled, causing Stacy to fall back onto her cluster of pillows.

"If you ever get into a sticky situation, use your mind to get out."

The soundness of her mother's advice seemed appropriate now, especially because Stacy was not physically capable of removing Matt. Making out with Matt had been fun, but she knew that if anything happened, he would not even acknowledge her the next day. Besides, Stacy was aware that Steve would ultimately find out and she was not ready to be unfaithful to his memory with someone she hardly knew. No, she'd had enough. It was time for Matt to leave.

"Matt, stop. I don't know anything about you."

Matt tried to silence her with his harsh kisses, but Stacy persisted.

"Gentle, Matt. You'll get what you want if you're gentle."

Stacy's only hope was that Matt would believe their goal was the same. With carefully calculated kisses, Stacy cajoled Matt into relinquishing his control and was allowed to roll over on top of him. Stacy could feel the edge of the bed and knew that three feet from there was the door. Slowly she began to move down his body, her mind filled with raging voices.

Don't let him know you don't want him. Make him believe there is more to follow. Quickly. The edge of the bed is at your shins. Quickly! Jump! Jump!

Matt sprung up, distress glaring in his eyes.

"What are you doing? You can't leave me like this."

"That will teach you to never let a woman take control," Stacy said in an amused manner, so as not to alert him of her anxiety and fear. Feigning calmness, Stacy began to tuck her shirt into her pants and walk toward the door.

"Too much of a good thing leads to indigestion, Matt."

Perhaps she should have run as soon as she had the chance. Perhaps she should have screamed. But Stacy thought that she'd won and, with all the confidence of a victor, proceeded calmly to the door. As she turned her back to him, she felt the ground disappear from under her feet, and when she opened her eyes, she found Matt on top of her again.

"Don't fucking play games with me. You can't tease me and think I won't expect you to deliver."

The hour since Matt left had seemed like an eternity. In disgust, Stacy had stripped herself of every article of clothing he had somehow not been able to pull off. Now, her black jeans, Navaho-print shirt, navy underwear and stockings lay in the middle of the floor, an array of clashing colors. Stacy knew that she had to be examined, but what would she call it. Rape? No, she'd invited him in and had even spoken as if she had wanted to sleep with him. Maybe he just misunderstood. After all, she did kiss him back. The only reason why she would even think of labeling it rape was because she didn't want to make love to him. But there were no bruises to show that he had been forceful. The hot melted wax from her candles remained as evidence that he had been romantic and that she had consented. Even while they had sex, he had kissed her. Yeah, maybe too hard but, maybe, that was his style. Was it rape? As her mind grew more muddled with questions and "what if's," the only clarity was found in Matt's voice coming from Sue's room.

"Hey, Sue, what'cha up to?"

CONFUSION

by Paul Solliday

at times I wonder, yet why I do ...
what's the meaning?
why do I hurt so?
why do I let it defeat me?

i am a rock, i am an island.
nothing hurts me.
yet reality strikes!

regression.
comforting thoughts ...
a comfortable cup of tea ...
dots ...
love me, love my dots, love my thoughts ...
it is a wounder ...
yet why do i wounder?
silience kills the night.
curiosity kills the ignorance.
why are things?
existence ...
pain ...
i wonder ...
acceptance (?)
yes - acceptance ...

TAKE HOLD OF THE FLAME

by Joe Dombroski

Rainbow eyes cast hard in hearts of gold.
Those who paint with their mouths so bold.
The chair racers who manage to fly.
Immortal artists who never died.
Innocents bound to an Olympic pride.
Obscure minds that sail against the tide.
The blind who see the world complete.
The deaf never hear defeat.
This world can never pass them by
Caring not if it hears them cry.
Realize that faith must find a place to hold.
See the distant suns unfortold.
These are children of the fire, and must remain.
There is nothing to lose, but everything to gain.



THE LAST TIME
by Peggy Charnick

Had I known it would be the last time,
I would have spoken of greater things
 Threads woven together in patterns of life
 Concentric circles of mother and child
 Harmony blending from divergent sounds

Had I known it would be the last time,
I would have spoken of weightier things
 Knowing the love you found hard to express
 Regretting the years that unfolded too fast
 Longing to reach beyond self-imposed walls

Thinking it wasn't the last time,
I spoke instead of mundane things
 Peeling paint
 Silly squabbles
 Unpaid bills
And it seemed enough to say
I love you.

UNTITLED

by Mary Muller

Awakened senses trigger memories
Memories, hand in hand with emotions
Emotions that have been dulled
Dullness had created false contentment
Contentment destroyed by the smell
The smell of his cologne
His cologne worn by someone else.

THE QUEST FOR THE CITY OF SUCCESS

by Molly Brennan

Perseverance and his twin brother Ambition set out to reach the city of Success. Traveling with them were their friends Hard Work and Sacrifice. The four travelers recognized that the road to Success would not be an easy one, but not one of them had any desire to turn back to their village of Mediocrity. "We should continue on no matter what happens," said Perseverance.

Hard Work agreed by saying, "All things worth attaining require a lot of sweat and toil."

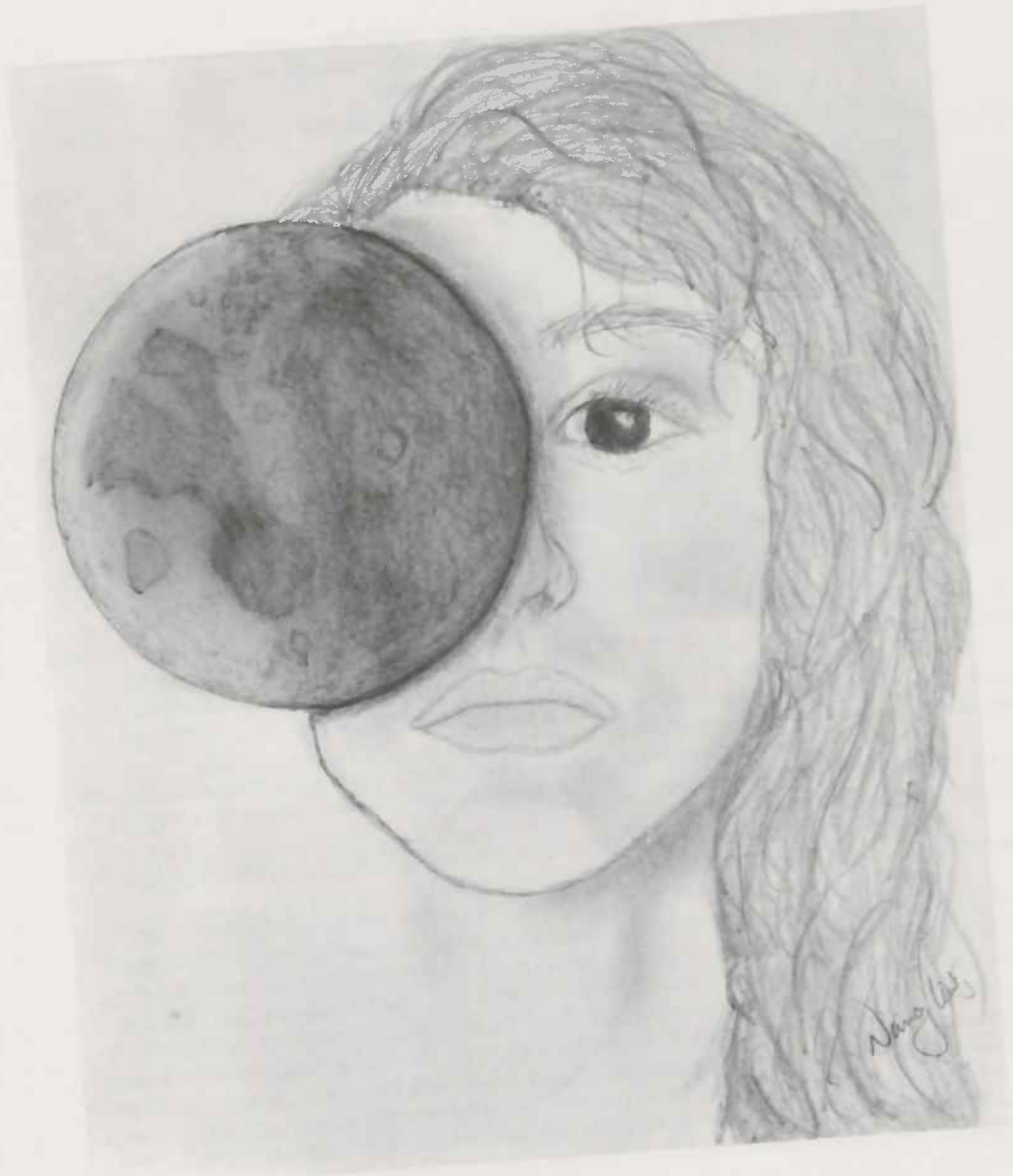
"I agree," said Sacrifice, "We should do whatever is necessary to achieve our goal no matter what we may have to give up in the process."

Ambition, the founder of this adventure, was pleased by the spirit of his friends. "I see that I have chosen my traveling companions well. We will face any foe we meet on the way and win because we have what it takes to make it to Success."

Just then Rejection and Failure, two individuals who were notorious for turning travelers off the road to Success, jumped up in front of the four travellers, ordering them back to the village of Mediocrity whence they came.

Perseverance flatly refused saying, "You, Rejection and Failure, may have turned others away from the city of Success, but you can't do the same to us."

At this, Rejection and Failure began to throw rocks, sticks, and whatever else they could find at the four in an effort to turn them back. Sacrifice saw that the situation was getting desperate and if their journey was to see its completion, he was going to have to act fast. Sacrifice rushed at Rejection and Failure and engaged them in a fight. Perseverance, Hard Work, and Ambition saw what their friend was trying to do, so they slipped past the two tormentors and continued on the road to Success. When the fight was over, Rejection and Failure lay slain on the road next to the body of Sacrifice. The three companions were saddened by the loss of their friend who gave his life for the cause. They recalled his words: "We should do whatever is necessary to achieve our goal no matter what we may have to give up." The three promised themselves that Sacrifice would never be forgotten because it was he that cleared the path to Success.



CONFESSIONS OF THE SOUL

by Nancy Lewis

When I sleep, her eyes will ultimately see me in my barest truth. With all my shades of emotion cast off, leaving me cold in her light of judgement.

And although I can still wear the clothes of maturity, in her sight I am only a shadow of the youth I once held. I fool myself thinking that these threadbare garments are symbols of my accomplishments. However, she knows them as the garments of atrophy, waging their silent war on the mask that I hold on my face.

She has the right to judge me because I invade her peaceful domain. I stole her dignity with my selfish heart and found too late that I could not give it back. She at one time inspired dreams and myths with her pallid face. It was the mystery with which she veiled herself and the distance she kept that made us all love her unconditionally. Though we could not see her eyes . . . the wells of her soul which were hidden as delicately and quietly as cat's breath in the early morning mist. Never allowing us to truly embrace her to ourselves. It was then we decided that if she would not give herself by will, then we would take her by force, regardless of the silent screams that she would voice. The screams that only poets and dreamers would hear.

We invaded her, but that was not enough. We raped her, but that was not enough. We left a scar on her face so that we could show with our foolish pride that we had finally seen into her eyes. It was then, unforeseen to ourselves, that we felt anger when we looked into her eyes, her soul, not her soul . . . ours. When any man sees his own soul, the child he has within him dies. No tear was shed for our dead soul children, for we did not fully understand the price we had to pay for our selfishness. We could only understand anger for we had come to take and we were taken from. We profaned her name and turned away. She was once the rich mother of dreams but now she was barren. I myself was determined to never love her again. But I could never stop now. I tried to forget her, but I knew I could not. Then when she turned her face away and left me in the dark despair it became too clear that without her luminous love, I was no man. I called to her aloud; begging her to love me again. I searched for her, wanting her to love me again. I felt more fear in her loss than her presence.

As all mothers can continue to love even their most wayward child, she returned blessing me with a long downcast glance. I was fraught with an insane joy. I lived again. I remembered.

So you see, when she looks down on me when I am sleeping, my true self unguarded, it is only fair. She will always keep her distance, but I still embrace her with my dreams. When I sleep childlike under her watchful eyes, the wells of her soul, my soul. All this I tell you my child, as a confession of the soul.

THE ENCOUNTER

by Olivia Sinclair

A serene waterfall splashes gracefully
A crystal clear pond trickles,
White roses open for another day
As the sunlight travels through a willow.

The river bank whispers in solitude
As a young girl watches a figure,
It gradually wanders near
To reveal himself to her.

A man of grace has appeared
The girl courageously emerges,
As they meet the sun envelopes the water
The rainbow defines the emotion they feel.

HANDS

by Kathleen Haentjens

Hands that are very old,
That are mottled and stiff,
Hold things more tenderly . . .
Less tenaciously.

Dresden teacups or manila envelopes
Or baby fingers rest delicately
In quavering hands that have finally
Grasped the value of things

WHEN THE CHILDREN WERE THERE

by Sarah Rose

She wanders through the empty rooms like a phantom
staring

wondering

trying to remember each room as it was
when the children were there

They are gone now

grown-up

have their own homes

their own children

and their own lives

But she remembers

she knows

Four children entered the house

They had some good times

Baking chocolate-chip cookies

Decorating the Christmas tree

Buying a puppy -- watching it grow

Easter egg hunts

And there were hardships

Arguments and angry words

Trips to the emergency room

Loss of a job

Death of a child

The woman reaches for the door

and opens it wide

A feeling of freshness and

new beginnings enter the room

It beckons her beyond the threshold

She turns

for a moment

sighs

and steps out

into her new life.



PERCEPTION

by Joe Dombrowski

Twas all that she could hope to bare
that radiant splendor of his stare.
The day of joy had finally come
the day that bonded them as one.
Day beams, choir sings, organ rings, still only one . . .

The birds outside those stained glass walls
keeping time in melody called.
The bride upon the alter perplexed
as friends and relatives are vexed.
Babies cry, ushers sigh, Reverend hums, still only one . . .

Bright day withers into evening
thoughts of love become deceiving.
The bride a bolt of frantic pace
down the isle, and out the church does race.
Drawn within, fading black, slips away, none . . .

Her spirit running in the church yard
toward the woods, religion scarred.
A line of evergreens emerge
peaceful against the night sky's dirge . . .
desperate decision, tranquil vision, body and soul division.

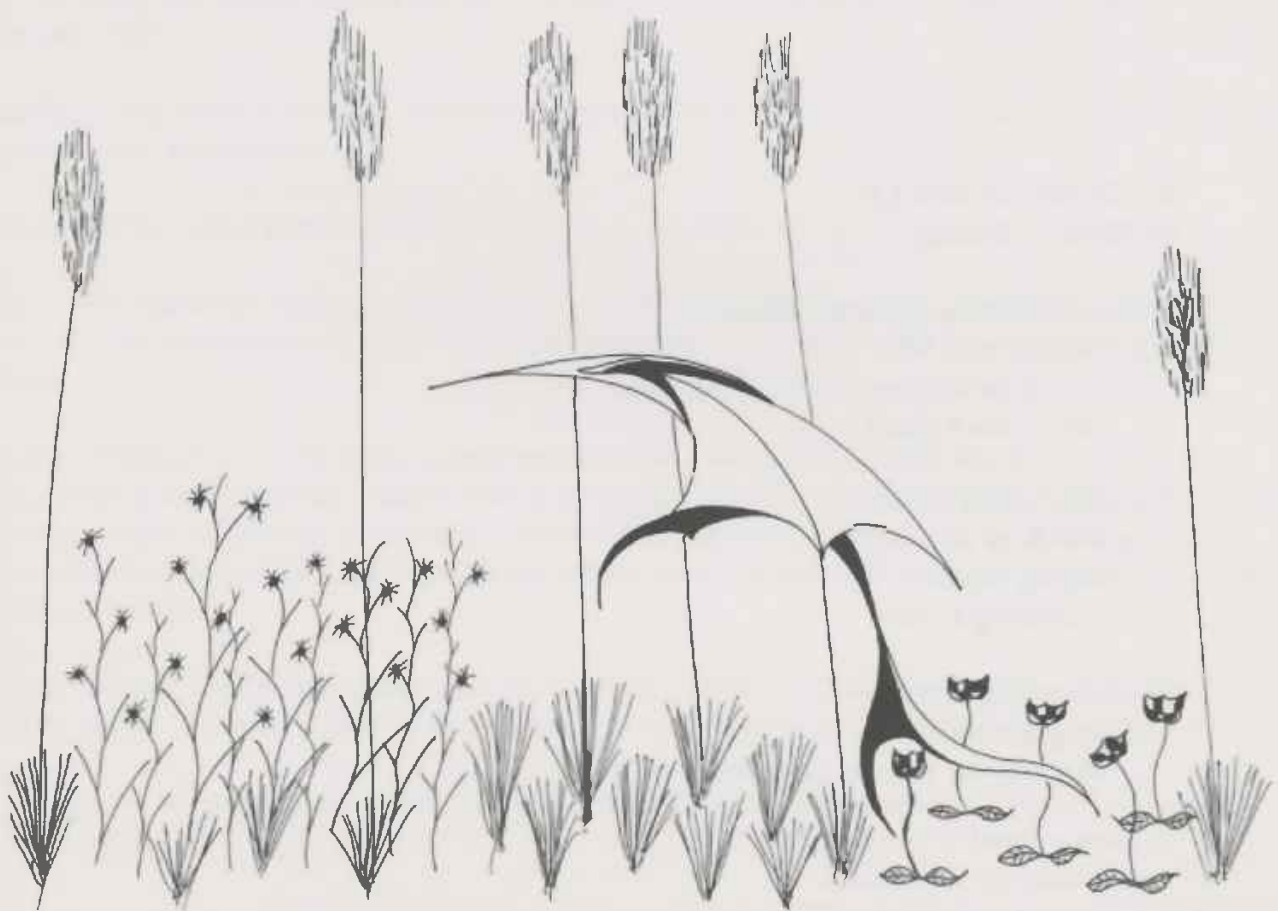
Behind the row of limbus pine
a second row appear sublime.
Before sleeps an icy stream
ankle deep and spirit deems.
Pulling, snipping, clipping, away . . .

The branches of the second row concealed
a mysterious world now revealed.
Here clouds of scarlet black prevail
rank sedge and pines of ash curtailed.

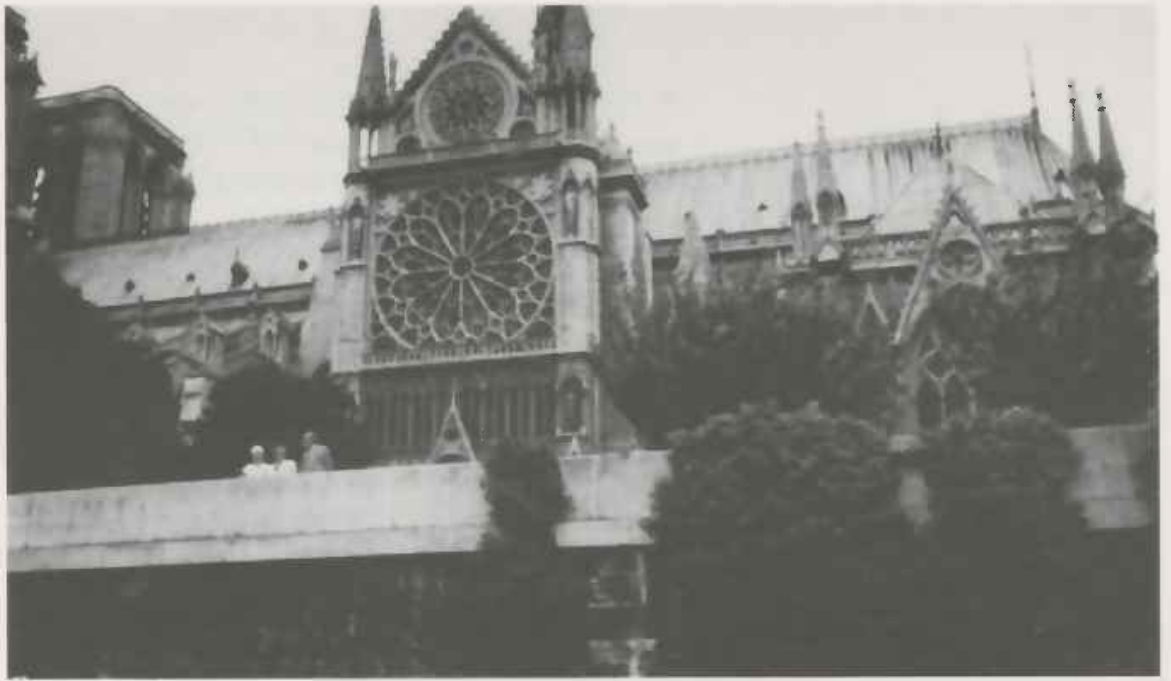
Fantastic spirits float and flow
by "Air on the G String" filled with woe.
The ruler of that realm's possession
is this insufferable procession.

A slow wind moved the spirit's black veils
and lurid grins of sorrow entailed
the soundless cries for help detained
and souls forever and ever stained.

Here the time remained the same
and here no emphasis on blame.
On earth good or evil, esthetic lies
here one laughs as others cry.
Melody they never heard, and never, never could sing.



SDaw 3/92 SPC



A CHORD OF BELLS

by Eilene S. Wenner

A chord of bells hangs in my doorway
Eight shining gold bell
 reflecting the different colors of the yarn
 woven into a chord

The sound of the bells
 each with its own tone
 ringing together
 creating a chord

Reminiscent thoughts
 of my grandmother
 attaching the bells to the chord

Striking a chord within my being
 reflecting the love shared
 ringing with sounds of laughter
 that binds us with an unbroken chord.

THE NURSERY WINDOW

by Peggy Charnick

Characters:

Emily, a new mother
Tom, a new father
Marian, Emily's mother
Jack, Tom's father
Nurse

Scene: A hospital nursery. The set contains a glass wall which is perpendicular to the audience and set off to the far right side. The wall divides a small nursery from a larger visitors' area. There are doors to the far left and far right leading into each area. The walls of the visitors' side are lined with benches. The nursery contains a single bassinet. A young couple enters and stands looking through the glass into the nursery. The young woman is wearing a bathrobe.

Emily: I can't believe how perfect and tiny she is.

Tom: (With awe) Yeah . . . she's beautiful. I always thought new babies looked like Alfred Hitchcock, but she looks like her own person. (Enthusiastically) It was really something watching her be born. She looked right at me, like she knew I was her old man. (He taps on the glass) Look, she sees me!

Emily: It was really something. Nothing you read about or hear about comes close to it. We're parents now. Isn't that weird?

(They put their arms around each other)

Tom: (He kisses her on the forehead) I think we did pretty good in there. (Kidding) You only told me off once, toward the end when things got really bad. If we can handle that, we can handle anything.

Emily: When they put her in my arms I was terrified, I was afraid I'd hold her wrong. But when they came to take her away, I didn't want to let her go. Then I realized that when it comes to taking care of a baby, neither one of us really knows what we're doing. (She looks up at him) Did you know the first six weeks of a baby's life are critical to the formation of a healthy personality? What if we screw up?

Tom: (Joking) So the kid becomes an axe murderer. Look, you just have to relax. We'll learn as we go along. The baby doesn't know we don't know what we're doing, she'll think we're perfect.

(They move away from the window, and sit on the bench facing the audience. Emily leans against Tom's shoulder.)

Emily: It's scary. I mean, I'm glad we decided it was time to start a family, but everything is going to be different now. It was nice just being us.

Tom: Yeah. I was thinking last night, what if I lose my job? What if something happens and we can't make the mortgage payment or car payment? All that could have happened before, but if it happens now it will be different. What if we lose our medical insurance? It could take us three years to pay for this kid.

Emily: I was thinking the same thing. What if we really need my salary? Or what if I'd rather go to work than stay home with her? (Pause) I want to be good at this, but there's so much to it, and it's all so new. I never asked my mom if she was happy being home with me. She was just always there, and I never really thought much about it. It seemed right to me, but now I wonder if she thought it was right for her.

Tom: (Turning to look at her) Hey, calm down. We'll be okay. We'll get through it together. I know I've never been a father before, but I've been a kid all my life, so I figure I've got an insider's perspective. I'll just try to remember the things that my father did that worked, and I'll improvise the rest. Besides, I figure I won't find out if I was any good at it for at least eighteen or twenty years, and by then the kid will blame me for everything no matter what kind of job I did.

(He gets up and looks through the window again, he taps on the glass. Emily comes to stand next to him. She puts her arm around his waist.)

Emily: She looks so lonely in there.

(A nurse enters the waiting area)

Nurse: If you're interested, there's a class on diapering, feeding, and bathing starting in few minutes.

Tom: I guess we'd better go. In a few days they'll hand her to us at the front door and we'll be on our own.

(All three exit.)

(An older woman enters and looks through the nursery window.)

Marian: Hey there little girl, I'm your grandma. Your mom did a great job.

(As she's speaking, an older man enters and stands in back of her)

Jack: Now Marian, let's not forget my son had something to do with this too.

Marian: (Turning at the sound of his voice) Hello Jack! You're right, she does look like Tom.

Jack: (laughing) He looked like Winston Churchill too.

(They both laugh and turn to look through the glass)

Marian: I was shocked the first time they brought Emily to me. I thought there was some horrible mistake. That red, wrinkled squalling thing couldn't possibly have come from me. And while I was looking at her, I thought, if I don't love her, who else will? All of a sudden I feel old.

Jack: I know what you mean. The whole office is calling me gramps. I just got used to being a father, and now my son's a father. I don't know how a grandfather is supposed to act these days.

Marian: Well, my grandmother had white hair that she tied back into a bun. She wore a hat and gloves to church on Sunday, and she always wore flowered dresses in the summer. I never remember her yelling at anyone. (Pause) I can't see myself doing any of that.

Jack: My grandfather was a crusty old bastard. He smoked a pipe, told bad jokes from vaudeville, and mumbled to himself. Hey, maybe I'm not so far from the mark.

(They both laugh)

Marian: (Wistfully) When I was a new mother, I never believed I would ever stop changing diapers or washing bottles or getting up in the middle of the night. All the work seemed so important. My mother told me to enjoy it because the years would fly by, but when I was in the middle of it, I didn't believe her. (She places both hands against the glass.) Now Emily won't believe me either. But it's true. All of a sudden they're grown and gone and you wonder about the things you did or didn't do, and wonder if you know that you did your best to love them.

Jack: Yes, when kids are little sometimes its hard to enjoy them. (Pause) Sometimes I think about my own dad. He was never much for telling anyone how he felt. He went to work every day in a job that he hated. He never said a thing about it, but it ground him down over the years. I always thought he was a failure. But when Tom was born, and I was looking through a nursery window at him, I realized that my Dad did it because taking care of his family was the only way he could say I love you.

(Emily and Tom enter the nursery from the door on the right. They are wearing hospital gowns over their clothing. They see their parents through the glass and smile and wave, but neither side can hear what the other says. Tom goes to the bassinet and proudly picks up the baby to show them.)

Marian: (slowly so they can read her lips) She's beautiful.

(Jack taps on the glass and makes baby noises through the window. Emily and Marian place their hands on the window as though to touch each other.)

Marian: (Wonderingly) I'm a grandmother.

Jack: We did a good job Marian. Look at them. They think they're the only man and woman who ever brought a child into the world. They're starting out, and we're finishing up. But this time around we can just sit back and enjoy the experience. Come on Grandma, I'll buy you a cup of coffee.

Lights Fade

In a blue spear of autumn light
A single yellow leaf
Startling in its vividness
Pinned itself against
The brittle blue.
Suspended in time
While all around
The colorful rain of death
continued.
It defied the bitter facts
of cycle and season
For a moment only
Before resuming its
silent
slide
toward
earth.