Ka Nani

A Collection of Literature & Artwork

1987 Spring

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Kapiolani Community College
Cast of Characters

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Introduction

"White.

"A blank page or canvas. The object? Bring order to the whole; through design, composition, balance, light, and harmony."

In his play "Sunday in the Park with George," Stephen Sondheim has painter George Seraut repeat these words continually.

In his time, the real Seraut was a relatively unknown artist, in 19th century France. His work was scorned by both the public and critics alike. In spite of this, he continued to work at a fever pitch, and died in his mid-thirties. His works are now hailed as masterpieces and hang in the most prestigious galleries in the world. Seraut never sold a painting in his lifetime.

What does Ka Nani have in common with Seraut? His visions, and the ones in this collection, started at the same base: the blank page. It is what every writer and artist faces before he or she begins his or her work. Through the ages, all artists have had their own methods of facing this forbidding starting point. Michelangelo believed that his art lay within the page or canvas, already completed, before he began to set it free. He would simply erase the lines, or chip away the marble that held the art captive within it. If you approached any one of the artists or writers whose work is in this book, he or she would each in turn tell you what that blank page means. Their visions lie within these pages. As you turn each page, and explore new worlds and ideas, consider this: each work began in one place, in the mind of the artist. The artists allow you to visit their minds and their worlds. You need not agree with what they are saying; any reaction you have is enough to validate their goals: to be seen and heard. That is all we ask of you: to see and to hear.

So, the next time you find yourself looking at a blank page, think not in terms of solely filling up space. What you can think of falls back to what Seraut says in Sondheim's play: that the objective of any artist is to bring order to the whole; through design, composition, balance, light, and harmony.

And we hope you will be entertained by these offerings.

The Editors

Kevin Wilson
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**Artwork & Photography**

Robert Warner, Toni Stanich, Evelyn Wong, Kevin Wilson, Laura Billings, Suzanne Lobenberg, Kim Marchment, June Kawaguchi, Brian Lee, Ted Baldado, Michael Van Sant, Darin Sodetani, Aka Grimm, Laurie Siegfried, Walter Dower, & Rose Perry
She's using the little girl voice again. I hate it when she uses the little girl voice. Because if I give in (and I always do) then she'll do it again. Use the voice, I mean. Why encourage her?

This time it's the little-girl-needs-a-pretty-new-thing voice. I'm riding in the back of my limo, talking to her on the phone. I want to get back to watching Barney Miller. Can't she ever call during a commercial? Traffic is a bitch. I've had a rotten day and I don't need this shit. I really don't.

"Buy whatever you like," I say. "Buy the last of the leopard skin coats, for all I care."

"Leopard skin!" She sounds truly shocked. "Tigr, that's bad taste, even for you. The poor leopards are almost extinct and they're not even fashionable now."

"OK, Bambino, what is it you want—and why bother calling me? All you have to do is go get it—whatever you want."

"But this is expensive, Tigr."

Expensive? Did she learn a new word? Probably from another paramour like that bastard gigolo in Paris. This could be awkward.

"How expensive?" I ask cautiously. We are treading on unfamiliar ground.

A burst of static interrupts our conversation. For a moment, very clearly, I hear part of a message on someone's two-way radio, or maybe somebody's voice pager. "Go to Foxtrot Blue, number 8."

More static, then silence.

"Bambi?" I say.

"Well, aren't you going to ask me what I need it for?" she says.

"I didn't hear what you said. There was some kind of interference on the line." I wonder what "Foxtrot Blue" is. A plan? A destination? A destination, I decide.

"I need two million dollars, Tigr."

I suddenly forget about Barney Miller and "Foxtrot Blue."

"What for?" I say.

"I need a helicopter."

Coincidentally, I had been considering buying a helicopter. Earlier this month, I had one of my staff check out the story on helicopters—prices, and what not. Bambi had done her homework. Two million is about right. There's a heliport on top of the building where I keep my main office. Our yard is sure big enough to land on.

For two million dollars, you can get a pretty comfortable
helicopter. A party helicopter—which is just what I want. For some reason I don't want to say "yes" to her just yet, though.

"What do you want a helicopter for?" I say.

"It's for both of us, babe. There's a place on top of your building where you could touch down every morning and get picked up every night unless, you'd rather take the limo." I look past the glass partition and through the windshield. The line of cars ahead is endless. She knows I hate traffic.

"And Tigr, we could party in it!"

She's trying to manipulate me. I slowly realize that we always have variations of this same conversation.

"But you asked me what I need it for," she says.

Didn't I just ask her what she wanted it for?

"It's for transportation, Tigr. I need to get to my meetings, I have to visit friends, I have to get my hair done—"

"What is this 'need' shit?" I shout into the phone. "What is this 'have to' shit? Bitch, I remember when you washed your hair in a cold shower and styled it with the blow dryer we ripped off from Woolworth's. As for transportation, you took the bus to cash our food stamps. And listen—you can't take a helicopter to and from the hairdresser, 'cause the rotor wash will mess up your hair every time."

"Are you through?" she says coldly.

Oh, bummer. It's her you're-not-going-to-get-any-tonight voice. I want some, so why argue? Especially since I want a helicopter too.

"Look, Bambi, I'll get us a helicopter." The guy on my staff had recommended Hughes. "A Hughes helicopter."

"Oh, that's the kind Lyle--I've heard they're good," she finishes lamely.

"Who the hell is Lyle?" My ears are hot. She can't be at it again, damn it. She promised not to fuck around any more. I take enough risks with bimbos I meet at parties; I shouldn't have to worry about my goddamn wife.

"He's just some guy I met at a party, Tigr. Honestly, you get so—"

"Just some guy,' huh? I've heard that one before. 'Just some guy' that you discussed your two million dollar plan with before big daddy was consulted, is that what you're telling me?" I slam the phone down; I don't want to listen to the slut's excuses.

I take some Valium from the mahogany medicine cabinet, shake a few from the bottle, and wash them down with a Carlsburg lager from the 'fridge in the bar. Through the sunroof, the smoggy grey sky commiserates with me. The TV is distracting; I switch it off. I wonder again about "Foxtrot Blue." I wish I was there.
The Derelict

Here he lies, in clover and weeds,
Black stains on his lapels. You don't know him.
He is his own shadow. The hat he wore is crushed
Now under a sleeping crooked elbow. His shoelaces untied
And his fly open, he is a victim of sleep's undoing.
The ants survey his ragged clothes for food.
Sunlight sparkles in a nearby whiskey bottle.
A dog an old woman is walking sniffs at his pants,
Picks up the scent of the aftermath of a fight he lost.
(How some tragedy humbles a guy.) The woman has to pull the dog away.
Left on the grass, sprawled out in the new morning, his eyelids
Shut out the dream of vague awakenings in unfamiliar places.

J. Robert Murayama
A Plague of Lesters

By Shel Hershinow

All my life I've been plagued by Lesters. Even when I ran away to beautiful Hawaii, paradise of the Pacific, geographically the most isolated place on Earth, there were Lesters -- unexpected, mocking reminders of a world I thought I had left behind, like Safeway and Saga Foods. Yet it was only last year, on August 9, 1985, that I began to understand the real dimensions of the plague.

"Comes now Plaintiff LESTER D. K. LEE, former Jehovah's witness, to complain of wrongful acts, torts, false accusations, slander, harassment, deprivation of civil rights (of education, pertaining to religion, and individual rights, etc.), psychological manipulation and brain damage, psychological pranks, attempted murder and concealment, criminal coverup, criminal conspiracy, criminal coercion, conspiracy to deprive civil rights, and to request of this Court a money settlement to repair the name and person of Plaintiff LESTER D. K. LEE."

Unbelievably it was real, a legal document filed in District Court, naming me as defendant along with Hawaii Pacific College, the United States of America, Honolulu Police Department, City and County of Honolulu, and four of my colleagues at Kapiolani Community College. The amount of damages asked? $10,000,000.

It was comforting to know that I was not alone in this absurdist joke, which I enjoyed immensely all through August as amended complaints kept arriving, more and more detailed, all painstakingly written in Lester's version of legal language and inexpertly typed by him, too obsessed to clean the keys that left little blobs of black where there should have been "a"s and "o"s and "s"s. At my Department's beginning of the year picnic, the Drama teacher gave a reading of the most recent amended complaint, and everyone laughingly vowed to dismiss the class if necessary to come to the hearing. But when I received a hand delivered, three page letter from the Deputy Attorney General of Hawaii explaining how my defense would be handled and any possible judgment paid, followed by a request from my Union representative to apply for NEA Educator's Employment Liability insurance (one million dollars coverage per occurrence), the joke turned Kafkaesque.

Just who was this Lester who was more genuinely my adversary than any of the other Lesters in my life? I remember when he first appeared in my evening American Literature class, in 1977, a small,
still youthful man with short black hair and an array of facial tics and psychological quirks, not yet crazy but driven, trying desperately to succeed in college, insisting on dominating the class with misunderstood and misapplied theories from his Psychology and Economics classes. I tried my best to help, meeting with him after class and patiently going over his work, trying to gain his confidence and whittle down the chip on his shoulder. But before the end of the semester he disappeared, only to return again the next Fall, this time in my Novel and Short Story class, probably dumbfounded that "Staff" could mean "Hershinow." He was more openly antagonistic now, a disruptive presence who raised his hand for every question and often answered even when I didn't call on him. I felt sorry for him, a Chinese son with successful brothers and friends, a disappointment to his parents, trying to be something he wasn't, prevented by his emotional state from doing even passing work. This time, before disappearing he tried to bribe me with lychee nuts left in my mail tray along with his revised first assignment, worked and reworked over and over, time standing still for him while the rest of the class moved on to new challenges.

Two years later he was back again, this time in my evening World Literature class, looking the same but seemingly able to accept that he was not an exceptional student. After leaving KCC for what he mistakenly thought would be greener pastures at Hawaii Pacific College, he had written a letter to my Provost, the only student ever to complain about me to my superior. Now he apologized and said he was pleased to be back, ready to accept my guidance and do his best. And he did, finishing the semester with a "C".

When at last Judge Crocker's order came dismissing the case without prejudice, my relief was mixed with sadness. How much easier it would be to hate him.

In a strange sort of way Lester Lee, a son driven mad by his inability to become something he wasn't, makes me think of the smothered son in countless Jewish jokes, a story I know well from my breeding and my experience, calling up memories of my cousin, Lester Lawrence, named for my grandfather and living just a block away all through my childhood. Though six days my senior, he was a year behind me in school, left back in kindergarten when we had to be separated, a destructive duo who tyrannized the other kids by knocking down their block buildings. Like brothers, we played and fought together every day after school. We were together, too, at camp every summer, one time becoming lost on a canoe trip in Canada, on an un-named, winding stream we dubbed "Shit Creek." In our first year
at camp, eight-year-olds away from home for the first time, Les was comforted by my presence and said I saved his life when I grabbed for him and kept his head from hitting the corner of a footlocker as he fell out of an upper bunk while roughhousing. He could be as tough and as stubborn as I was, as on the day we became mad at each other and bent back each other's thumbs, waiting for the other to say "Uncle," each determined not to be the first to give in.

But he was also 'Baby Les' who hero worshipped me and wanted to be best friends but always told his mother everything, forcing me to withhold and deceive, opening a crack in our friendship that was to widen through the years. Not even the most sacred secrets of school boys were safe with him around. He once helped us stock our secret clubhouse with shoplifted contraband and then went home to confess. Years later he followed me to Oberlin, independent now, with his own circle of friends, helping me by letting me use his motor scooter for moonlight rendezvous on the athletic fields, safe from the eyes of censorious housemothers and curious roommates, but unwittingly loading me with new guilt as I squirmed inwardly each time I asked him for a favor.

It was Lester Lee who helped me realize what a burden "Baby Les" had to bear, Les who had the same name as my grandfather, the original Lester, a man I never knew, immigrating from Russia by way of England and starting the family business, Lester Lawrence and Son, Inc., by selling peanuts on a Chicago street corner. Unlike his Chinese namesake, my cousin grew into the role his family self-consciously tried not to force onto him, successfully taking over the expanding family business -- playing only the price of premature balding and the loss of our childhood closeness.

The first Lester in my life was my older brother, Lester Lawrence Hershinow, named for the same grandfather, who's been my adversary for over forty yours. Combative, rebellious, anti-intellectual -- a downwardly mobile, unfilial Jewish son who once told the census taker that our family was Catholic. He was "Big Les" who used to call me Shelly Belly and taught me what child abuse -- or at least sibling abuse -- was. How many times did I lock myself in the house while he fumed outside, raving about his stupid little brother? I even remember trying to escape one time, out the back door, racing as fast as I could, my heart pumping harder than my legs, to the beauty parlor two blocks away, arriving in the safe haven of my mother's startled aggravation as Les came storming in right behind me, shouting now-futile threats. Les, who made my high school years a misery by creating a reputation for delinquency I had to live down and
who stole all my father's attention with passionate all-night arguments, unwittingly forcing me into the role of the responsible son. He even actively contributed to my mother's good opinion of me by taking the blame when I accidentally burned up her favorite frying pan, figuring, I guess, that he was used to being punished -- and usually for far worse things. There were times when I would gladly have traded my relative freedom from parental watchfulness for one of those knock-down, drag-out fights with my father. And when Dad died, after we were fully grown, it was Les who was in tears and I who calmly, almost dispassionately, comforted my mother.

It's sad to think of Lester Lee driven mad by his inability to become something he wasn't, but without him I might never have found the key to liberate the other Lesters in my life. I think the plague is over now, cured by time and introspection.
Laura Billings

Ka Nani 8 Spring 1987
There Was a Boy

So long ago, there was a boy
now gone
Who chased the moon and kissed the stars
now looking down
Who splashed beloved playfully with tears of joy
now tears of sorrow
Who sang life's melodies joyously loud
now grievously quiet
Who ran and embraced the winds of summer warm
now winter cold
Who embraced love
now clutching doubt
Who knew he was a boy
now knowing not he is a man
Who ran and laughed, and jumped and sang
now sitting quietly
Who knew he was and ever will
now knowing just there was

John Hirano
The Death in the Life of Frankie Stein

By Ross Levy

Humph! Mom was right. I should have been a doctor. Fine time to be funny you say? I can't help it. I'm one to laugh in the face of danger. That's what gave me away, I'm told. Last night, they asked me what I wanted for my last meal. Shit, what a decision. I asked for elephant steak, medium rare. The guard hit me! I thought it was funny. Then again, what do I know? They gave me chicken and peas. I complained to them. You see, I hate peas. So I asked for carrots instead. The guard hit me again. That time I wasn't joking.

They asked me if I was sorry I did it. That's a laugh. There I was, sitting in front of Dan Rather and he says to me, "Mr. Stein, are you sorry you killed those two store clerks, and if you had another chance, would you do it again?" Well, I looked him right in the eyes and said "Mr. Rather, if I had another chance, I'd rather kill you." That time the guard didn't hit me.

No, I'm not sorry I did it. Why the hell should I be? Listen man, that motherfucker pulled a gun on me, and it was a race to see who could kill who first. I won, of course, and blew his ambiguous thoughts all over aisle three. The other guy tried to run and I blew him clear out of his shoes with one shot. Stupid fuck ... he was a stupid fuck.

Now they try to figure out why I did it. They say "He had a bad childhood." They're half right. I loved my mother. I loved my father. I loved my brother and my sister and my aunt and everyone I've ever met in my fucked-up life. The only bad part was that I never had a pet as a child. I so wanted a doggie or a kittie! Hell, even a fucking parakeet would have been sufficient. But nothing. That was the bad part. But if the papers had read, "Killer lays motive on having no pet as a child," well, they don't think the public would have reacted real well.

The truth? The truth is that I have an innate desire to kill. Plain and simple, no Freudian complex--just an innate desire. Look, some people have an innate desire to fuck till the sun comes up. Me? I like to put holes in people, and watch their lives drain out into pools of crimson. I can be God. I can control their destiny with a flick of my finger.

After I shoot them, I quickly pick them up and look into their eyes
as they die. I'm looking for something, and one day I know I'll find it.

Well, I hate to be rude, but I have to be going. You know, they said this was going to be the longest mile, from my cell to the chair. My feet are tired, and some priest is trying to persuade the Lord to forgive me of my sins. As if He's listening.

This looks like it. Goodbye. So long. Adios. Ciao. Thanks for the memories! Oh, by the way. They gave me a last request. I asked for a small mirror. I want to watch myself. And when they pull that switch, sending three thousand volts through my body, I'll look into my own eyes, and I think I may finally find what I've been looking for . . .

Kevin Wilson
Like hundreds of gnarled fingers
the branches of the banyan
grasp the earth,
as if roots were not enough
to secure it to the ground.

I look at this big old tree
and think of guys with huge muscles
walking around flexing.
"I lift, can you tell?"
All that size, that strength,
and still grasping for security...

Lisa Baird
Clouds empty of rain
Slugs on their earthly canvas
Brushing silver paint

Moriso Teraoka

Sand Dollar
Comforting white
A gentle invitation
Humble leaf
Symbol of life
Simple star
A ragged signature
Shoreline surprise
Intended discovery
Simple little seashell
A letter of love

Dean Michaels

Laurie Siegfried
A Letter from Waianae

By Kalama K. Akamine

I received a letter from my brother in Waianae.

January 17, 1986

Dear Kalama,

It is at these times that I feel death. Death comes like an unbroken wave, building in the distance, until it passes, and we are once again left floating in a sea of our own existence. At other times, death comes as a surprise, like a silent wave that pins a careless fisherman to the sharp and barren face at land's end.

Give me a warrior's death. Gun in hand. My spear hardened heart, naked except for the scars of suppression, facing the enemy, the cry of Kamehameha's war god ringing in my ears, and the image of our peoples' suffering rising from within, until I can no longer contain the explosion of my frustration.

In death, cover me not in the white shroud of salvation. Leave my bones in the womb of our islands, and embellish my soul with all that is Hawaiian. Immerse me in all those things that we, exclusively, hold dear to our being. Let Laka's pahu toll my name chant against the black clouds that will witness my death.

My death will be green. The color of life. Leaving the cross, flag, and the other symbols of our oppression behind, I will seek a death where the reward is a life in unity with our land and our gods. The shark and the giant mo'o will carry me away from this land where the children of Papa and Wakea rot in America's mythical melting pot of freedom. I will embrace our ancestors in a true Hawaiian heaven.

Aloha A Hui Hou,

Your Brother

My brother's body was found off Kaena Point two days after I received his letter.

Brother, you and I will once again embrace in the Hawaii of our dreams, I promise.
Denied

brown finch
egg-heavy
peers from her low branch

round nest
almost built
lies on the cold asphalt

Laura Corbett

Tonight

A young tree -- limber in the breeze
reaches for a star
Far away an animal screams
in a lonely canyon
I remember the old songs
the smell of mesquite
the laughter melodious
The old knowledge is passed on
in a summer's final dream.

Janet Chen
Making Sure

By Stewart Anderson

Chuck's hands were wrapped around the steering wheel as if he were holding a bear trap open. He jerked the car through the bends and swerves of the country road. Frank, his brother, sat sprawled in the back and I sat in front. Frank and I watched the road tightly as it whipped and swayed before us under Chuck's control. We were silent. The thick country dark pulsed with the swish of radials on asphalt. The white lines slipped rhythmically under us. Frank and I missed not one.

I looked at Chuck in the three-quarter moonlight; he drew long slow drags of his cigarette and held them deep in his lungs. Stiff-backed, he whisked the wheel deliberately, then allowed the exhausted smoke to tumble down his nostrils. His body was rigid.

I turned back to study the white lines.

Rhythm broke, moon struck the eyes and fur of a rabbit bouncing onto the road. It turned to the headlights and stiffened.

"Swerve the goddamn car Chuck," Frank said. Chuck tore the wheel from its course and the car limped for a second. Chuck straightened it back up and drove on.

"Stop right now," Frank said, "you hit it." Chuck punched the brakes with his boot. Frank threw the door open and scrambled the fifty or so yards back to the rabbit. I followed. It was screaming high, demented screams. Frank knelt beside it and laid his large hand along the length of its torso. Chuck reversed the car.

"We've got to get this animal to a vet," Frank said. "It's in unbearable fuckin' agony. You ran over its back legs." Chuck strode around to the back of the car. He did not respond.

"If there's a chance that it might live, we've got to take it," Frank said above the infernal squeals. I looked at the mangled beast; its back legs were mush. It was trying to pry them from the black-top by hobbling on its front two. Its screams had deepened to growls; growls deeper than I thought a rabbit could make.

"Let's get him in the back, I'll phone a vet from the next house," Frank said. He peeled the sopping thing from the road and held it in his hands. Blood emptied from the mess down his arms. Chuck threw a strip of plastic sheeting down in the back seat, and Frank placed the rabbit on it, sat in the back and watched over it.

"Drive Chuck, it's got little time," Frank said. Chuck yanked the car from the grass verge and gripped the wheel as he had before the
"I don't think it's got any time left," I said, turning to Frank. "Look Russell, I can't let it die while it's still alive. I have to make sure it gets every chance," he said. I nearly said "It's only a rabbit," but I let it go.

The beast started a low, continuous scraping in its throat. Frank winced and tried to ease its position on the plastic. It only made the chronic seething worse.

"Put your foot down Chuck. It's dying," Frank said. His face was wracked with panic and helplessness over the dying rabbit. Chuck squeezed the pedal and the car surged. I turned back to study the white lines. We were silent for a few hundred of them. The rabbit had evidently dozed into a deep post-trauma sleep. I could hear only Frank's jagged breathing.

The silence burst, the beast screamed one more scream. The raw stench of wild shit and wild blood pumped into the air-tight cabin. Then quiet; no growls, no scraping, stillness. Chuck's foot did not waver on the pedal, his grip remained taut.

"Stop the car Chuck," Frank said. Chuck kicked the brakes and we all doubled with the impact.

"It's dead," Frank said from the back of his throat, opening the door. He eased the rabbit from the plastic and laid it on the road. Chuck and I climbed out and stood over him.

"Chuck, we have to make sure it's dead," Frank cleared his throat and stared into the trees.

"I'm pretty sure it's dead," I said.

"We have to make sure Russell, it might be suffering now too deep for cries," he said.

"Okay," Chuck said. Frank looked at him. Chuck avoided his eyes. Frank went into the car and closed the doors. Chuck opened the trunk and wrestled a wheel brace from the tool box. He hefted it in his hands, two feet of shining steel with a bulbous socket on the end. Chuck looked at the jelly-eyed broken beast. He booted it onto the grass verge and drew the brace above his head. He brought it down in a swift arc on the skull, bursting it and lodging the brace in the muddy grass. He yanked it out and I turned to go to the car. I looked back at Chuck; he had poised the tool above his head again. He smashed it down on the torso. The flesh flapped around the shaft. It was no longer recognizable as a rabbit. "It's dead Chuck," I said, "Let's go." He raised the brace and thrashed the mush again.

"We have to make sure," he grunted into his chest.

"Chuck, that's enough," I said. "The rabbit is dead." He was already on another downswing. He didn't answer. He stared into the stuff,
breathing snarls. He pounded the brace into the torn, warm organs again and again, whipping the steel faster and faster.

"We have to make sure it's dead," he spat at the ground. His eyes were wild flint in the moonlight, a primal sneer was slashed across his face.

I opened the car door and sat. Frank had his face and ears buried deep in his hands. The bowel-deep sound of Chuck's slugging beat the air. Frank had tightened into a ball.

Chuck ceased, panting. He wiped his face on his sleeve, slung the weapon into the open trunk and slammed it. He shambled to the car, pulled the door open and slumped into the driver's seat, heaving. He sat, shoulders hunched and leaning to one side, and took the wheel in limp hands. He eased the car off of the verge and drove slowly. He breathed softly and easily. Frank wept. I stopped watching the white lines.
You always gave me appetizers;  
a taste of this,  
sample of that;  
teased me  
with  
a tidbit of yourself,  
slowing down  
just in time to pour the wine

Slow the main course down some . . .  
tell me all about desert; why don't you  
describe to me its sticky  
sweetness,  
or should we just have a cup of coffee?

You always gave me appetizers.  
Everything with you was  
  a la carte.

Boy, did I pay  
when the check finally came.

Lisa Baird
Seared

red coal smokes
black
small flame flickers
blue
I am drawn to
the smoke
the flame
the heat
is intense
my skin
is seared
I cannot
stop

Laura Corbett

Under waterfall
My flesh fragments and becomes
Still, soft shards of bone

Stewart Anderson

Rose Perry
Brian Lee

Ka Nani 26 Spring 1987
It would be a different summer. Not that any job with this line was easy. Let's just say most guys who've sailed before avoid the old Quonset when Buster's aboard as mate.

I knew about Buster from all the waterfront stories; however, I had never sailed with him.

Walking up the steep gangway, the old wood planks creaking, I set foot on my summer job and home. As I dropped my bags on the deck, a familiar face walked over.

"Hey Chris! Didn't think you'd be sailing down the point this summer with us. Thought you never left the Cape?"

I was glad to see a former shipmate; "Good to see ya, Eric. Anyone else I know onboard?"

"Naw, all new guys. It'll be rough the first couple of weeks breaking 'em in. You sailed with Buster before, didn't ya?"

"Nope. Never even seen him."

"Well, you'll do that soon, he's already moaning about breaking in all the new guys--and he's always mouthing down the Yankee and greenhorn crew. You would think he would soften a little, now with Captain Smith over there the year. . . ."

Eric showed me down below to the fo'c'sle and the available bunks. I knew from seagoing experience to claim a bunk fast; the last guys get stuck with lowers that everyone will bump into or step on to climb up and over. It's a good thing Eric was onboard. Never having sailed Quonset before, I didn't want to look like a greenhorn. He'd show me the ropes fast and give me the straight scoop.

Quonset's fo'c'sle was not nearly as comfortable as Yankee's, and a bit smaller. Not the Ritz, for sure, but still a good paying summer job with room and board.

Stepping up the creaking ladder, back on the main deck, one more difference in the fo'c'sle hit me. "That gross moldy stink!"

"You'll get used to it fast," Eric advised.

Walking aft, we passed the major points of interest; crew's toilet, shower, various lockers, the small mess area and galley. Eric provided valuable information regarding the hours to use the head for fear of holding up Buster, who disliked waiting.
Turning to the exit, a harsh voice bellowed in my direction, "What shipwreck brought you down here? Another refugee from the other boat. Bad enough playing training camp now, the 90-day instant seaman school. You've had it easy up on the Providence boat." Giving me an amused look, he proclaimed, "Now welcome to the real world of steamboating, Shipwrecked!"

I attempted to introduce myself, "Yes sir, I'm Chr...." Changing his tone and posture, the old mate's voice rang out coldly, "I don't give shit what your name is, or who you are. You just take care of business and work hard. Get a rack below yet?"

Nodding with approval, I quickly squeezed in a "Yeah". "And listen, that crapper is for business, ya hear. Use it fast and get out. We don't have any newspaper reading on the crapper like a passenger on the Queen Mary," Buster bellowed and pointed at the door. "This is not a pleasure cruise, so don't waste my time if you're not here for work. We turn to at 6 a.m. that means alive and on deck in uniform." Mellowing his voice, he added, "Better jump out of your cradles at first call, boys. I ain't got no time for sleeping beauties this summer. Plans are to beat our own best records for cargo loading, This ain't the Cape crowd on here, I want deckhands who are mule to horse aboard the freight." Suddenly he demanded, "Hey, Shipwrecked, don't you talk English?"

With a look of concentration, I replied, "Yes sir, I don't think we will have any pr ..."

Cutting off again, the mate began to walk off, adding, "Never mind that crap. Get up and sign on with the old man."

Pleased to escape, I jumped up on the stairwell to the next deck and left Eric behind. Walking forward past the still passenger areas, I found the ladder to the wheelhouse. Climbing in, the wheelhouse seemed so peaceful after the barking mate below.

Captain Andersen signed me on as deckhand number four and informed me of my fire and lifeboat station duties. "Checked in with the mate yet?" Andersen asked softly.

"Sure... I just met Buster."

Smiling at me, the Captain said, "Some character alright, but he runs the deck like clockwork, smooth and on time." Adding a "welcome aboard," the Captain waved me off.

From experience I knew to get away ashore and enjoy the day, enjoy every last hour of freedom. Once we pulled away the following day, the fast pace of life aboard would take all of my daylight hours.

Let's go fellas, hit the deck. Now out of those racks!" piped down the mate, laughing.
My first thought was "Who the hell is waking me up at 5:45 a.m.?

Quickly, however, I remembered that I was part of the wonderful world of steamboating again. Buster was turning on all the overhead lights and began to pull the blankets off the guys still in bed. Jumping down out of my bunk before he reached me, my feet felt the cold and damp deck. The morning air was cold. Quickly, I pulled on my dungarees and old uniform t-shirt from the previous summer.

"Hey, Shipwrecked, we don't wear those seaweed rags from the 'Yankee' on here!" Looking offended, the mate promulgated. "I've got the proper blue shirts up in the locker. Get rid of that rag fast and I'll get ya one." Climbing the ladder out of the fo'c'sle, Buster looked back with another command, "Come on sleeping beauties! This ain't no hotel."

Walking zombie-like, I stepped into the early morning light on deck. Sporting my proper blue shirt, I headed aft to the galley. Fresh coffee aroma wafted down the deck; I trailed it into the warm room, already crowded with awakening crewmembers. Hungry young men stood in line with plates in hand, awaiting the various eggs and bacon frying before the cook.

"Chef Boy-R-D, feed these chumps a good breakfast--I've got a full day's work for 'em." Buster always made his presence known, even at 6 a.m. He bellowed over the table of seated crewmembers as they ate, "You fucking jockstrap, get out of that chair. You've been stuffin' your cake hole for 20 minutes. Let someone else sit down."

So began my first full day on Quonset, uneventful by Buster's standards. We arrived at Point Judith early evening, with no fanfare. It was a successful day: I avoided Buster almost all trip. With all the new guys not knowing how to steer yet, I hid out in the wheelhouse. With pleasure, Eric, the A.B., and I took all the wheel watches. Like an oasis, the wheelhouse remained peaceful, only the clock ticking and the low hum of engines in our ears.

After arrival at the point, Buster engaged himself in a conversation with the dock people, who voiced their surprise at seeing him back again.

"Thought you retired?" they greeted him.

"They hired some chumper from the Maritime Academy, but he couldn't handle it. Called me in on a past favor, ya know. I tried to hold out," he stated like a diplomat.

Every Labor Day, Buster proclaimed his retirement. ("This year really is my last on this stinking canoe!") and each spring, some nameless unknown mate from the Maritime Academy couldn't take
the job, and pleading always brought Buster back for just one more summer... so it seemed from Buster's tales.

In the galley, dinner was ready. Leaving the stories of fond summers past out on the pier, Buster walked back aboard. Roast pork; the cook must have been attempting peaceful terms with the mate through his stomach.

While consuming our meal, an uninvited guest strolled lightly in: A light gray cat stepped right up to Buster and rubbed its fur against him. Looking red mad, Buster shouted, "Who brought this hairy hay burner in here? Probably loaded with fleas. Seaweed, get this fleabag out of here before I toss it overboard. Throw it out on the dock."

Eric got up and carried the uninvited guest out fast. Buster lectured the crew on company rules against dogs and cats. No one doubted he would chuck the animals overboard as he claimed with pleasure.

After the meal, Buster dutifully reminded everyone, "6 a.m. comes real early boys. Go ahead out and hit the gin mills, but remember, I'll be waking you on time no matter how much you have to drink."

Most of the guys walked along the wharf to a bar portside. However, the sobering knowledge of the early start to the next long day advised me to head back to my bunk early. The others could not resist 'just one more'.

Alone, quietly I walked up the gangway and stepped onto the still main deck. Needing a pee, I moved toward the head. At any moment Buster's famous cry of "Who's in that shithouse?" might have rung out. The deck was silent however, and only a dim light was left on back aft. I noticed that someone must have forgotten to lock up the galley. "Better go back and close up," I thought.

Upon closer view, walking aft quietly, I observed someone with their back to me, bending over. It was Buster, leaning over that cat with a bowl of milk. Lightly stroking the animal, he was saying, "We'll make a sailor out of you yet. The boys don't like pets around, but you can come and see me after they've gone out." No one could see him, he thought, so he could speak softly.
No Human Voices

This is no terrible place;
the grass grows as green and bright here
as it does on an old-fashioned baseball diamond,
as green and bright as the grass
in public parks
or the well-tended gardens
of those who can afford
to have well-tended gardens;

the stone of the stones has been reshaped
by human hands,
but it is still only stone, dry rock,
with no life save that which is impressed upon it;

and the trees
are just trees,
leaves green in spring and summer,
brown in autumn,
gone in winter,
roots drilled deep into this fertile ground,
branches reaching only for the sun --
they do not move,
no clawed arms reach out to grab,
no sinister faces grimace or leer from their trunks --
and they are only wood;

and the wind passes over this place,
over the grass, the stones, the trees,
speaking, perhaps, to the imaginative ear, names
which once had faces,

and no human voices speak or call
as the wind passes over

Jean Chanson
A lively crackling fire burned brightly in the dark living room, casting an illuminating glow onto the old man sitting in his favorite chair reading Soseki's *I Am A Cat*. It was winter, and from his window he could see the white snowflakes falling from the black sky. A few hit the windowsill, big, fluffy star shapes that turned instantly into gray teardrops. He ran his hand through his wiry-gray hair thoughtfully.

The phone ringing in the hallway broke into his mood. He got up out of his chair vigorously and picked up the phone.

"Hello dad," said the voice on the phone. "I'm calling to wish you a happy birthday tomorrow."

He looked into the hall mirror at himself as he spoke. "Thank you dear."

He was a massive looking man, with a poised and open expression wrinkled with years of kindness and good humor around his eyes. His eyes gave off a frothy light that emanated from their warm brown center.

"Another birthday," he muttered softly, then added, "I remember a friend of mine, who came from China, said that every time we westerners have another birthday we build another fence around our minds."

"Okay, sure dad. I've had a hard day at work and I do not need to get into philosophy with you right now, but take care and have a good one, okay?"

"I will. Thanks for calling." As he hung up the phone he was looking at his stereoscope. Picking it up carefully he slowly placed it to his eyes and looked at the photograph.

"It is strange how each of us perceives the world differently," he said to himself. "The perception of individuals is just like this stereoscope. It holds two separate photos in its frame; but when you look at it through the lenses, it transforms the two photos into one that is three dimensional. The world in our heads and the world out there are fused into one also, so that we cannot really see what is what."

"My daughter thinks that I'm just a timeworn antique, but I feel like I'm only 20. Tomorrow I will spend the day in the city." He walked back to his chair by the fire. He glanced at the grandfather...
clock in the hall, and few minutes later he fell asleep to its rhythmic
ticking.

The morning was a cold and sunny one. He felt chills as he left
the warmth of his house. He did not have to walk very far to the bus
stop. While waiting for the bus, his toes began to freeze into brittle
icicles. Like a child, he blew his hot breath into the air to watch the
small clouds form in front of him, encircling the dull little suburban
houses across the street in his line of vision. The bus pulled up
slowly, slipping on the ice, and he got on and noticed that it was
empty. He leaned against the window and watched the scenery go by
like an overcranked film.

He got off the bus at a busy corner of the business section, eager to
take in the sights. He could feel the frantic vibrations from the city.
The noises rushed to his ears. The people moved in large units
bobbing up and down the street. He watched the rapidly shifting scene
with pure enjoyment. The people looked to him like colorful plastic
pieces in a kaleidoscope, forming beautiful abstract designs. He took
a deep breath and adjusted the collar of his coat while determining
which direction to go.

A couple of boys sporting Top-siders and a huge ghetto-blaster
passed by him, emitting complex distorted sounds that harmonized
with the honking traffic noise from the street. A little man with a
paintbrush mustache walked by, seriously puffing away on a big
black cigar that smelled of sweet wine that filled the senses with
memories.

A little way away from him he noticed a young girl sitting on the
steps of an old apartment building, crying. Her hair was in tall black
spikes, like a wrought iron fence. She had on a black jacket over
some green and black stockings or pants, he couldn't be sure. She
looked like a prehistoric amphibian to him. He walked over and
gently sat down on the step next to her. He calmly handed her a
handkerchief.

"What's the matter here?" he said.
His tone was warm and sincere, and she decided to trust him.

"My friends, that is my so-called friends, and I were planning for a
really long time to see the Bangles together and so what happens is
that it turned out we could only get three tickets and there are four of
us, right? So, they just decided to vote me out." She rubbed her eye
then turned away from him. She turned her head back toward him
again to get a good look.

"Besides which--if anybody's interested--it's my birthday today." As
the people passed by they stared at them only seeing surfaces. He
remembered how it felt to be young and wish that people would care about such things as birthdays. But the years had taught him not to expect too much from other people, especially the closest ones. He reached into his pocket and pulled out the old stereoscope and handed it to her.

"What is this?" she asked earnestly.

"It is like a viewmaster but it's an antique one." He smiled. "It's a birthday present for you. How old are you now?" he asked.

"I'm eighteen today. But I feel like eighty, sometimes."

"Well just remember, it's mostly the way you look at things that counts." Then, he got up and left.
Waved warm blowing sound
Bright blinding agate ocean,
Rice paper sunlight

_Kellie Komoto_

North-East Coast, Molokai

I've yet only read of you.
Only dreamt.
Could I ever come to you?
   How and when?

Now approaching,
   your northern point is far and hazy.
Closer, the vision grows.
Clearer, the moist veil thins,
   revealing your scattered islets,
Inseperable from images of you,
   Your children.
Then, spilling over with rain,
   Emerald cliffs.
Eager, splashing white fingers at your feet
   selfishly retrieve the diving wetness.
Nothing short of splendor witnessed
   flying east alongside you.
No thoughts now.
Only feelings matching every color,
   Every shape
   Of you.

_Toni Stanich_
Omission

Words lying
Crumpled, piled,
Corner-bunched
Tattered grey think-rug
Mind-worn
Over which
We stumble

*Sandra Perez*

Out of Touch ("I Left My . . .")

Where's Heart?
Heart? oh, you mean Heart
Heart's not here
Heart's not home
Heart doesn't live here anymore
Heart moved out
Heart took a slow boat to San Francisco years ago
and never writes.

*Jean Chanson*
White-blond hair that appeared almost translucent fell to her waist as she eyed the yellowing lace on her "party dress" with a sigh. It would have to do.

There was a knock on the door. Dejectedly, her hand slowly moved to the pillow on the worn mattress. Under the pillow was $72. With trembling fingers she counted out $65 in dog-eared, fading one dollar bills. The knock became frantic, and a growling voice slurred, "Kai, I know you're in there. Open up. I want my money."

Moving as if someone were behind her pushing her toward the door, Kai stepped over her younger brother, who lay in the remnants of last week's newspaper. "Wika, get up."

She stooped down to touch the boy's warm face. He tossed once, and didn't move again. Kai opened the door a crack to see the manager swaying in the dirty hall. There had been an orange carpet once; now what remained was shreds of material the same color as the alleyway behind their building.

"Girl, you been late before. I don't wanna wait no more." A beefy hand, streaked with what appeared to be axle grease, was thrust at her. She recoiled at the foul stench of his breath, and almost heaved.

"C'mon, Bart. I know I'm late, but I don't have all of it now. Can I pay you some later? I got a letter in the mail last week from our dad, and he promised he'd send me some money this week soon."

Bart ran his hand through his already greasy hair. He sucked in his gut. Every time he saw her, he was conscious of the excess gut rolling over his too tight, grimy work-pants. He liked these kids, they were okay. Kai needed to put on about 20 pounds, and God, her little brother, the kid was always sick. . . . He had asked her to come up to his room before, to eat dinner, yet she always declined. Too much pride. Bart couldn't remember the last time he smelled food cooking from their room. He would have liked to take care of her, and the kid too. But she would tremble like a rabbit every time he even stood near her. She was 17; that was old enough. Bart looked at her thin, bare arms. How he would love to have those arms around his neck.

"Well, you know, girl, that I have a job I's got to attend to. But just give me what you got. Where you goin', in that pretty dress?"

Kai's smile flashed. "You think it's pretty? I got me a date. I met
this man over at the park yesterday. He said he was gonna take me out to dinner and we were going to talk about a job. I hope he doesn't think it's too ratty looking.

She handed the well-thumbed bills over to Bart.

He grabbed her hand.

"Kai, you know, I'll take care of you. Wika can stay with us too. I need a woman around the house."

As he moved closer to her, Kai could smell the whiskey on his breath. It took every ounce of her strength to keep from tearing her hand away from that leering, slimy pig. Instead, she coyly ducked her head and winked at him.

"Bart, I know you'd please me. Just is, I'd like to try to make it on my own."

Bart nodded. He licked his lips and thought about what it would be like to have her under him. He shuffled away into the dingy, musty hall, the flab on his back jiggling as he walked.

Kai shut the door with a smile. She sat down at the window to watch for the man's car. He had told her he had a red Porsche.

Wika moaned, and she moved over to where he was lying. She put his head in her lap and stroked his baby-blond hair. Another two hours passed, and she got up with a sigh. Wika asked her what there was to eat. With tears in her eyes, she kissed the top of his head.

"Wika," she said in her most sing-song voice, "I love you . . .

"I hope you understand that when there comes a time when things just aren't going to get any better, you do what you gotta.

"Kai'll be back in a while."

She combed her hair, straightened her dress, and walked out the door. At the door to Bart's apartment, she paused just long enough to wipe her eyes and take a deep breath. Then she knocked.

"Bart, it's Kai. I've been thinking . . ."
Crap, I think to myself, I always end up waiting an hour or more for the bus. No wonder I hate riding the damn thing, and I always seem to get stuck right in the middle of the day when it’s hot as hell out, and at a stop with no shade.

After what seems like an eternity, I catch sight of the lumbering white and yellow shape a block away, taking its sweet time in picking up a passenger. The bus moves slowly towards me, making its stop, and at last I am able to get on board, paying my sixty cents and letting out a sigh as the cool air inside the bus hits me, sending me some relief from the Honolulu sun. I move to the rear of the swaying bus and sit down, wishing I had a car so I wouldn’t have to put up with the sweaty smell of other people.

The bus makes another stop several blocks down the road, and a large party of Japanese tourists quickly fill it up leaving only one seat empty, next to me.

As we continue our trip towards Honolulu, we quickly make another stop, and an old lady gets on the bus. She looks like she is dressed in rags, shows what is most likely her free bus pass to the driver, and hobbles to the rear, sitting down next to me.

I shift myself slightly, trying not to make contact with her or the other person on my left, greatly frustrated at the invasion of my personal space, wishing the old lady would go stand and get away from me. I breathe through my mouth trying not to smell, fearing that the old lady stinks.

I feel a tap on my right shoulder, and I turn slightly to see the old lady looking up at me with a weird smile. I try to ignore her, thinking, Great! I have to end up sitting next to a senile old bag lady. I turn my head, hoping she will go away. She again taps my shoulder, saying, in a grating, rustic voice, "You’re really something else--in fact you look very much like my husband".

"How’s that?" I humor her.

"Because he was inconsiderate, conceited, selfish and rude".

"So what does that have to do with me or the price of tea in China," I shot back, at the same time thinking, Just who does this old lady think she is anyway? and wishing a plague would come and claim her.

"See, you need to relax more. Already your gander is up, and I’m only getting started."
"Look lady," I reply, "just leave me alone. Who in the hell do you think you are anyway, some kind of a therapist?"

"Oh shut up and listen for just a minute," she says.

Looking around, I notice other people looking on, and a couple of them are starting to snicker. *My God, what an embarrassing situation,* I figure. *I'd better really humor her or this is going to get out of hand.* "Okay, I'll listen, just hurry up and say what you're going to say, and please say it quietly".

My husband was a self-centered jerk, and no matter what anyone did he never changed," (now raising her voice again and pointing a crooked finger at my face) , "and if you don't want the same thing to happen to you that happened to him, you had better change. And now I will leave you alone!"

I glance around the bus, embarrassed, and see people looking at me. I feel like I've been on trial and the other people in the bus are the jury. I've just been convicted.

As the bus comes to a stop, the old lady stands up, turns and says, "Good-bye" and begins to get off. On some stupid impulse I quickly stand and catch up to her. "Whatever happened to your husband?" I ask.

She turns, smiles and says, "I shot the old bastard years ago," and steps off.
Oh, you might "hurt" me... was that what you said? Am I so fragile that I could break at the first sign of your leaving? Yes, I tried to run from you, for sandcastles built of dreams do crumble. ...I've rebuilt my life enough times to know not to shape them quite so carefully anymore. After a while one learns how to avoid hitting bottom always keep the head above water... Yes, I "dove into your ocean" but I knew all along that it was only two feet deep.

Lisa Baird
Behind the Veil of the Day (for T.S.)

Through your eyes, Love, I see you,
behind the veil of the day,
bathed in the blessed light,
if but for a moment I meet you there.

We flounder in the gateway
between the new and the known,
discontent with this burden of the self
that we've carried through the centuries.

If but for a moment I meet you there,
I have loved and seen the splendor
of the innocent forest and heard the music
of eternity through the boughs of your hair.

Though your lips are still and poised in a land
of the gods, they speak to me of the richness
of creation itself: here, the budding of pure
blossoms, the impregnated grey clouds, the vital
rushing rivers,

as though your lips contained them all
so neatly, ingested with such a passionate
kiss, that not a crumb is left carelessly aside.
Since I don't know you, I can see the beauty
of your nature and in a glance I can worship
that which is sacred,
if but for a moment, I meet you there.

Robert Warner
"After LDV"

Robert Warner
The Hack

By John Gesang

The huge dragon leered lustfully down at Princess Trilla's naked, supine form. The beautiful princess whimpered meekly as its scorching hot breath wafted over her delicate rosey cheeks. The dragon's long, blood-red tongue lolled from its gaping maw and --

* * *

-- the doorbell rang.

Philip Howard slammed his fist down on his desk, making his old underwood typewriter jump. How was he supposed to rescue this stupid princess from her stupid dragon and meet his deadline if he was constantly interrupted? First that idiot agent Mellman calls and babbles at him for a solid hour, and now someone else . . .

He got up to answer the door, opening it on a short, chubby, balding man wearing a dark grey business suit and carrying an expensive-looking exotic leather briefcase.

"Mr. Philip Howard?" asked the little man, smiling jovially up at him.

"Yeah," Howard said. "that's me."

"May I come in?"

"What do you want?" Howard demanded, growing more aggravated by the second. "If you're selling something, you can forget it."

The little man laughed. "Oh no, Mr. Howard," he said, a slight smile touching his ruddy, cherubic face, as if he were about to chuckle. "I've not come to sell you anything. By no means."

"Then what do you want?"

"Please forgive me for my impudence," he said, reaching into his coat pocket and pulling out a black business card with the words "Z. Beel, Financial Representative, Crowley International Institute for Writers of the Supernatural," embossed in gold leaf on one side.

"You may call me Beel, Mr. Howard," the little man said politely.

Howard wasn't listening. The word "financial" had caught his eye.

"Well," Howard said hesitantly. "I guess you can come in for a couple of minutes . . . if you're not selling anything." And I can always throw you out on your little ass, he thought.

He took the card from the little man, let him pass through the doorway, shut the door, studying the card carefully, and followed him into the room.
Beel stopped before Howard's desk and stood there politely, waiting to be seated. After about a minute more of scrutinizing Beel's card, Howard realized the man was still standing, a congenial smile fixed on his face.

"Oh, yeah," Howard said, quickly stuffing the business card into his shirt pocket. "Go ahead and have a seat."

Beel obligingly crossed the room to the sofa opposite the desk and sat, propping the exotic leather briefcase on his knees.

Howard sat down in the chair at his desk.

"So," Howard said, "what do you want with me, Mr. Beel? And what in God's name is the 'Crowley Institute'?"

"In God's -- oh," Beel said. "Please allow me to explain -- you are an especially fortunate man, Mr. Howard."

"So explain."

"You, Mr. Howard, have been chosen the winner of the grand prize in our most recent writing competition, for your series of articles published recently in *Doom* magazine."

"I didn't enter any contest," Howard said, puzzled.

"Oh, you didn't need to," Beel explained. "Our judges select prize-winners after surveying the current supernatural literature."

"And what's the 'Crowley Institute'?"

"The Institute," said Beel, "you might say, is an organization dedicated to rewarding the efforts of talented journalists of the supernatural. We support any effort aimed at winning the respect of -- and bringing enlightenment to -- the general populace."

*Christ,* Howard thought to himself, *this guy's for real; if he had any way of knowing that those articles were complete bullshit...* He suppressed an urge to start laughing in his face.

"So what did I win?" he said instead.

"$10,000," Beel said. "The institute is always strong in its support for people like you."

*The Institute,* Howard thought, *must have a lot of strong supporters.*

Beel opened the briefcase on his lap and drew out a business-size white envelope. He leaned forward, handing it to Howard.

After staring at it for a minute, Howard reached out and took it. He opened it carefully, as if he were peeling an egg. Inside was what looked like a ream of hundred dollar bills. Howard took one out and peered at it closely; it looked genuine, for all he could tell.

"It's yours to keep, Mr. Howard," said Beel. "Tax free."

*It's probably stolen money that's marked or something,* Howard thought. *If it's real in the first place.*

*But why would anybody want to give me stolen money? Some*
kind of frame-up or something? Then he caught himself. Too fucking much Micky Spillane.

"Mine to keep, huh?"

"Yes," Beel said, "along with this unique trophy."

"Trophy?"

Howard looked up from the wad of bills in his hands. Beel held out a crystalline, slightly lopsided brick shaped object, its interior flecked with milky white and grey, like snowflakes mixed with ashes.

"A solid brick of quartz crystal, taken from the wall of an ancient Aztec temple of human sacrifice," Beel explained.

"Temple of human sacrifice?" A lump began building in Howard's throat.

"Yes. From Mexico. It was stolen from the temple four centuries ago by one of Cortez's soldiers and taken to Spain. The Institute only recently acquired it, after a long search. A genuine supernatural artifact of historical significance. Your name is on it here."

"Oh . . ." Howard stared at his name carved into the brick's side in heavy gothic letters. It made him uneasy. His hands tightened around the money and the envelope.

There was a momentary pause of silence.

"Well," Beel said, "I shall leave you to celebrate your good fortune as you choose." Beel closed his briefcase with his free hand and stood up, holding the "genuine supernatural artifact of historical significance" out to Howard.

"Oh," Howard said nervously, pulling away. "Just leave my, urn, trophy, on my desk there."

"Certainly, Mr. Howard," Beel said, beaming widely. He set it down next to the typewriter.

Howard's eyes followed it, half-mesmerized.

"I shall be on my way," Beel said, turning to go. "Keep writing those excellent articles."

"Yeah, sure," Howard said; he wasn't really listening and continued to gaze into the depths of the crystal. He didn't hear the door to his apartment open and close behind him.

The crystal brick was fascinating for some reason, compelling. The story the little man told made him want to pick it up and toss it out the window, but he was afraid to touch it. He wanted to look away, just look at the wall or something, but he couldn't seem to move his neck.

He lost sense of time passing. His whole body was becoming heavy, numb. Gradually, the light in the room seemed to fade around him, until finally he could focus only upon the crystal brick and the vague outline of his typewriter behind it.
Just before he lost consciousness, he was able to summon just enough panic to say "Oh shit . . ." and then --

-- he was someplace else. Not his apartment, for certain. His body -- or what he sensed as his body -- felt odd, heavy, misshapen. He had a searing sore throat, and his breath smelled awful.

He looked down at himself. His chest, arms and legs were huge -- and covered with green scales. Then he saw the lovely Princess Trilla, lying naked at his feet, which were now hideously gnarled claws. Not far from the Princess was a large pile of loot -- a hoard of gold, jewels, pearls -- and atop it there rested a white, business-size envelope.

There was a sound behind him, and he craned his neck around to look. A hugely muscled man carrying a gleaming broadsword approached with a confident stride and a smile.

Philip Howard knew where he was. He knew the conclusion, too.

Beel stood in Howard's apartment, looking down at the lifeless body that now slumped over the desk. He reached out a hand to touch the back of its neck, small, delicate fingers caressing the skin. Then he looked down at the exotic leather briefcase by his side. "Yes," he said to himself. "This will do just fine. One of the fringe benefits of this kind of job . . ."

The demon Beelzebub assumed its true form--unspeakably horrible, with thin, razor-sharp claws--and went about its unspeakably horrible business.
By Barb Coon

Chile, what yo doin' out hea' in de dark? Don' yo know dere be boogeymens an' ghosts an goblins?

Ah Momma, there ain't any such thing.

Hush now, an' yo listen.
Yo know what happens to those that stay in de dark too long?

No Momma.

A b-i-i-i-g han' reaches out from nowhere, je shen yo ain't lookin'.
It comes slow like, creepin' 'round real sof' so's yo can't hea it an' jes when yo ain't 'spectin' nuttin -- it comes.

What kinda hand, Momma?

A b-i-i-i-g, boney, white han' with long fingers an' no skin. It creeps spider like up yer spine an' crawls like a snake 'round yer neck. It holds on sumtin fierce, squeezin' de life right outta ya. Yer eyes, dey pop right otta yer head. Yer ears fall off an' de cats eat 'em. Den de hounds fight fer yer bones. Cuz yo's a gonner. Dead as last year's Christmas tree.

Oh Momma, yer makin' it all up.

No I'm not. Sure as I'm standin' hea.

Momma, Momma?
Where'd ya go?
What's that rattlin' noise?
Momma, sumthin's ticklin' up my back. It's a creepy-crawly Momma!
There's sumthin' round my neck. It's squeezin' Momma. It hurts!
Make it stop, MOMMA. MAM . . .
Here  (for L. L.)

Dry rusty wind blades
Scrape red, dirt dust here,
My throat cracks,
Eyes burn sunblind.
I am a frozen husk in this strange heat.
I squint to the mountains here;
Fresh tailored, new cast statues
They are empty of me.

My home is old,
I can see the thick air,
Breathe the musty earth
I bow to the mountains;
Ancient grey Lords
I am new and throbbing veined

In this strange heat
At night
On a mountain track
For seconds
I smelled
Caprice
Once
Lining of woods, perfumed beams of homes,
Fuel even for fire;
In those seconds
This heat was chilled to aged dusky warmth.

Stewart Anderson
Sea-shell holding sand;
I picked you up to polish,
and now you're empty

Kellie Komoto

The Shoreline

Clouds lie in white
Almost still beyond the ocean,
At restless beginnings.

The ocean's tips gleam silver,
The waves rise
And sink into their beginnings.

And, at this very edge,
Waves thunder and beat upon
The shoreline.

Francis Zalman
A Modern
Metamorphosis

By Derek Ferrar

It's hard to say when it started; it came on slowly. I first noticed it in the spring of the year I turned 15, not long after I'd had my first wet dream. One morning I reached to scratch my face, and the skin felt tough, as though there was a callous on it. I looked in a mirror and saw no pimple or rash. In fact, try as I might, I couldn't find anything out of the ordinary.

When the callous wouldn't go away, I began to worry. I'd read in Reader's Digest that the first symptom of leprosy was a numb patch of skin. Troubled by a mental picture of myself as a wretched and suffering leper, I checked my body daily for signs of deterioration. After an extended period of such anxieties, however, it became clear that my limbs weren't going to drop off, and my fears faded.

Unfortunately, this didn't stop my condition from getting worse. A year or so later, I was in the back yard with Melissa, my first girlfriend. We were in a hammock, and she was touching me very tenderly, running her fingers through my hair and over my face. Suddenly I realized that I could barely feel what she was doing. I brought my hand to my face. It felt like leather. I again became frightened, but I kept this to myself.

Some months later, for reasons unknown, Melissa decided to break off our relationship. To make her point, one day in the school cafeteria she dumped her entire tray of food on me. Later that day, she walked up to me in front of the whole school and slapped my face. I'd loved Melissa very much, and her sudden cruelty hurt me terribly. I spent the night praying for a quick and merciful death. When I woke in the morning, I could have sworn my face had gotten harder overnight.

By the time I finished high school, I was convinced my face was turning into a mask. Surprisingly, no one ever mentioned this. In fact, no one seemed to notice. Once, in desperation, I revealed this fear to our family doctor. He chuckled and told me I was letting my imagination get the best of me.

"It's just growing pains," he assured me. His confidence made me feel better, for a while.
The next fall, I went off to college. Through a stroke of luck, I quickly became friends with the three coolest guys on campus. We met because of my truck. The guys, Eric, Chris, and Stephan, had thought up a prank to top anything that had happened on campus before. They intended to tow an old Phantom jet fighter from in front of the local VFW post onto the lawn of the University President's house. They had a fool-proof plan; all they needed was a heavy duty vehicle. When they saw my Chevy 4x4, it was love at first sight. Over a beer at the Student Union, they persuaded me to join their conspiracy.

The prank went off without a hitch, and we became underground celebrities. I'd never known better times. There were even days when I completely forgot about the mask forming on my face.

On Saturday night, February the 12th of my sophomore year, the guys got plastered playing drinking games at the apartment I shared with Stephan. I was working on some paper or other and hadn't joined in. Around eleven o'clock, Eric suggested that we all go over to his current girlfriend's sorority. Since I was the only sober one, they asked me to drive. I told them no, that I had to study, but the real reason was that ever since Melissa, women had scared the shit out of me. After a long, slurred debate, the they finally left without me in my truck.

On the way to the sorority house, they ran off a bridge and into a small creek. Chris and Stephan were killed instantly. Eric was in a coma for six weeks, and when he came out of it, he was paralyzed from the neck down. My truck was hardly damaged; it was on the road again in a couple of weeks.

For a long time after the accident, I didn't go anywhere or do anything. I stopped going to classes, stopped going to work, and I wouldn't answer my phone. All I did was sit in a chair and stare into space. There was so much to feel that I just went numb. One night I could sit no longer. I got up, kicked the chair over and ran full speed into the wall, face first. I was convinced that my friends would come back to life if only I could feel something in my face. There was a loud crash and a crack appeared in the wall, but I felt nothing. The mask was protecting me too well. I hit myself with an ashtray. Nothing. I clawed at my eyes and face, trying to get through, but it was like clawing at a block of ice which wouldn't melt. I couldn't even cry.

When I finally emerged from seclusion, two things were different: I had become completely cynical about life, and people were going out of their way to comfort me. Whenever I walked through campus, say
to class or the gym, four or five people would come up and embrace me, offer to buy me lunch, tell me how sorry they were about my friends. Most of these comforters were women. It didn't take long to figure out that they were attracted by the supposed vulnerability of my grief. Since I had nothing to gain from being honest, I played my misery like Olivier playing Hamlet and let nearly every one of them take me to bed.

Now I was glad I had a mask instead of a real face. It protected me from the world, and I made use of it. I noticed that it seemed to get harder and tighter every time I maneuvered a woman into sex, but I didn't care. I could hardly be hurt any more than I already was.

It was only natural that I should start spending my nights out. I became a regular at several local bars.

One night I went dancing at The C&B Scene, a neighborhood club. I ordered a beer and sat back to watch. The place was filled with night people, each with a different "look." At one point I dropped my napkin and bent down to pick it up.

When I straightened up, I was looking at a primitive ritual. The club was transformed. Everyone had a mask. There were ancient warrior masks and delicate theatrical masks, menacing masks and humorous masks. Some of the masks had a trendy five o'clock shadow, and others were decorated in eighties pastels. Drums were beating, and everyone was moving with a strange sexual rhythm. Every so often, two masks would circle one another, dancing. Sometimes these couples left together. I noticed that those with the most colorful masks were the most popular.

This was the turning point for me. I started to join in the mask rituals of the "night life" crowd. My mask was harder and more attractive than most, so before long I became King of the Dance. I had any woman I wanted, and men decorated their masks to emulate mine.

For several years I went out every night, reveling in my prowess. Meanwhile, my mask continued to grow harder and tighter with every conquest I made. Eventually, this started to become extremely uncomfortable. Every time I woke up with a stranger, my face and throat hurt as though I had been throttled.

One night, I took a famous model home from a party. We took some quaaludes, and she handcuffed me to the bedpost.

Growling like some kind of great cat, she started to lick the soles of my feet, slowly working her way up to the inside of my thigh. All of a sudden, my throat seized up, and I started to choke. I tried to scream, but all I could manage was a strangled croak. The girl was
still going at it, despite my gasped pleas for help. Then something exploded in my brain, and I panicked. My eyes rolled up, and I bit deep furrows in my lower lip. I thought to myself, "This is the end. You're going to die."

The next thing I knew, something cold and wet hit my face. I choked in a breath and started coughing. When I finally opened my eyes, I saw the girl standing over me with an empty pitcher in her hand. When I could talk, I got her calmed down and went home. I sat up the whole night smoking cigarettes and trying to figure out what the hell was happening to me.

The next time I tried to have sex, it happened again. I was terrified and confused. My tough confidence evaporated, and I kept to my room for a long time, sunk in an awful depression. Every now and again I would convince myself to go out. As soon as I would begin to move in on a girl, I would literally choke. Before long, I had to give up the idea of sex entirely.

I suffered in celibacy for a long time, frantically wondering how I could get rid of the mask. This thought occupied all my waking hours. I stopped shaving, stopped eating well, got evicted, and hardly even noticed. I was obsessed.

One night as I drifted fitfully into sleep, I felt my bed shift under some kind of weight. Startled, I bolted upright and opened my eyes. Sitting at the foot of my bed was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. She was as pale as moonlight, with coal black hair and hungry scarlet lips. Her eyes shone with a supernatural light. She was totally silent, and she was nude.

She was a living Venus de Milo, and I wanted her more than I had ever wanted anything in my life. My heart was beating wildly, and my palms perspired. I decided that, even if I strangled in the process, I was going to have her.

I turned on the sexual power I had used so often. Feeling the mask tighten, I leaned toward her. The moment I moved, she froze—literally. She turned into ice. Horrified, I leapt back. Sex, the mask, everything, was forgotten. Immediately, she changed back into flesh and blood.

I was having trouble swallowing, and my breath came in gasps. My mind jammed, unable to grasp what had happened. I tried again, and again she turned into ice. We repeated this scenario over and over, all night long. I would approach her, and she would freeze. Finally, as dawn broke, she rose and mysteriously faded out of the room.

This beautiful wraith appeared on my bed every night for the next
several months. Not once did she speak. Gradually, I learned that as long as I remained unaware of the mask and its sexual powers, she would be flesh. As soon as I desired to "have" her, however, she would freeze. With practice I learned to control myself and thus move closer without turning her into ice. This happened very gradually; I would get only so far before the mask would take over, and she would freeze.

I managed to get a little closer each time, until one night we sat right in front of each other. I bent my head toward hers. Desire took over, and she froze. I sat back and composed myself. All I wanted in the world was to merge with this magical woman. I leaned forward again, and she did not turn to ice. Our lips met. A bolt of lightning shot through me, and there was a loud crack. I felt as though I was being consumed by a loving fire. She withdrew her lips from mine, and I realized that I was crying. She smiled and looked down. I followed her gaze.

Covering the bed were the broken shards of my mask. I looked up, and the woman was beaming at me. Then, gently, she melted into the night.
Numbers

It's six o'clock.

There are one hundred billion galaxies
  in the universe,
one hundred billion stars
  in each galaxy;
there are five billion people
  on Earth,
dancing, laughing, running, crying;
there are millions of words
  in the Bible,
and millions of hearts and minds pray with them
  after the sun has gone;
there are a thousand and one nights
  in Arabia,
each one sleepless as the jets pass over;
there are two hundred and six bones
  in the human body,
and each one can be broken;
there are twelve days to Christmas,
  but they're not enough . . .
there are five continents on the globe,
tap-dancing to geologic time
as two minutes pause before midnight
on the clock counting down

It's six o'clock.

John Gesang
End for End

By Mike Tokito

I had always wondered what I would be doing, where I would be, who I would be with.

As fate would have it, I was in my studio apartment. The place was a mess -- clothes were all over the place and assorted pieces of half-eaten food lay on the floor. The place was small enough as it was, but all that clutter made me feel even more boxed in.

I had the radio on the all-news station; it was probably the first time I ever listened to it. The announcer was obviously shaken. His voice cracked as he repeated what he had said at least fifty times before: Full confirmation was in. "Fifteen minutes," he said.

I stared out my window for a while, not really sure what to do. I guess I was mad, but it seemed like a waste of time to be mad. And I was sad -- but that too seemed like a waste of time. I guess I was mostly numb, but being numb couldn't inspire me to act, and I wanted to do something. Anything.

I wasted two whole minutes just thinking. "Thirteen minutes," the radio announcer barely managed to squeak out.

I probably would’ve wasted the rest of the time thinking if there wasn’t a knock at my door. Three hard bangs snapped me out of my stupor, and I went over to open the door, not really thinking about how peculiar it was that anyone would be knocking at such a time. And speaking of peculiar, the person at the door turned out to be my friend Ralphie.

"Hey dude!" Ralphie greeted me. "Let’s party!"

I looked at him a moment, not knowing what to say to the guy. He was actually smiling, and was decked out in a full tuxedo, tails and all. And he had a couple of beers -- the green bottle kind -- one in each hand.

In my amazement, something occurred to me. "Hey Ralphie, don’t you know what’s going on?" I asked him, having remembered how little he kept up with current events.

"Of course I do, guy," he answered back. "But never mind that. I got us some choice brewskies here, man."

Just then, the radio announcer, his voice quaking by then, said twelve minutes.

"What the hell you listening to, dude?" Ralphie demanded. He walked over to the radio and started turning the station. He turned it to that all-rock station we always listened to. I was amazed that they
were even on the air, and even more surprised at what was playing: music, actual music. They were actually playing "Stairway to Heaven."

"Alright!" Ralphie yelled almost triumphantly. "Here we go, dude!"

With that, he walked over to me, stepping all over my clothes. I almost instinctively scolded him, but stopped myself as I remembered what was happening.

Ralphie uncapped one of the beers, handed it to me, then uncapped the other, and raised his bottle up toward me.

"To rock and roll, man," he toasted.

"Hey Ralphie," I said, stopping his momentum for a second. "Don't you think that maybe we should stay straight? I mean just in case."

"Forget that, man," he replied. Actually, that was the answer I was seeking, but for some reason I double-checked.

"I mean it's altogether possible that we'll . . ." but Ralphie quickly shot me a look that shut me up.

"To rock and roll, man," he repeated.

"To rock and roll," I answered as our bottles met with a clink.

We both put our bottles to our mouths. It was good beer, cold and real smooth, so I took an extra-long sip. I then looked over at Ralphie. He was still going at it, his head tilted back and the bottle standing straight up from his mouth. The beer went down at a rapid pace, like sand in an hour glass whose opening was too wide; big bubble would shoot to the top with each swallow. He managed to drink the whole beer without stopping once.

"Ahhhhhh!" he sighed when he finished. "Nectar of the gods."

Ralphie then walked over to the radio and turned the volume up --and I mean way up. I could feel the guitar solos going up and down my spine. Ralphie started to strum furiously an imaginary guitar, and as the song sped up, he started singing -- or I guess yelling would be a better word for it -- along with Robert Plant. "And as we wind on down the road!" Ralphie and Robert blared. I just sort of stayed back and watched him, as his body shook violently with each chord, and his head bobbed up and down with the drum beat.

When at last the song ended (by which time Ralphie was flat on his back, having strummed the last chords) the deejay, Marvelous Mark, came on. Marvelous Mark was probably the most popular deejay in town, mostly because he wasn't afraid to do anything on the air. If anybody would be playing rock and roll at such a time, Marvelous Mark was the guy.

"Alright, boys and girls," Marvelous said in a smooth, even voice that was a far cry from the guy on the all-news station, "that was Led
Zep with the number two song in our big countdown. Well, this is pretty much it. Just one more song to go."

"What's this countdown business?" I asked either Ralphie or the radio.

"See dude," Ralphie responded, "ol' Marvelous, he's been taking votes on what song everybody wanted to hear if this all happened. Me, I'm looking for 'Twist and Shout.' I must've voted at least twenty times."

"That's crazy!" I couldn't help but say.

"I know," Ralphie replied, "it's great."

"Well kids," Marvelous said, "it's just about time. I wanna time this just right. Let's see . . . okay, here we go. The number one song in our countdown . . ."

"'Twist and Shout!'" Ralphie yelled out, trying to get in a twenty-first vote.

"A well-covered song done here by four guys from Liverpool . . ."

"That's it! That's it!" Ralphie cried out.

"Boys and girls, we end with this all-time classic!"

A tight crisp guitar twanged, then a throaty voice growled:

"Well shake it up baby now!"

"Yeahhhhh!" Ralphie screamed. He started to twist in place, slowly at first, then faster and faster still, until he was almost a blur. All I could tell was that his tux tail was flying in the opposite direction of his butt with each twist. He had a big, hard smile on his face that looked almost painful.

I just watched him; I wasn't really moving to the music or anything. My beer kept me company, and I drank hearty gulps.

Somewhere near the end of the song, without saying a word, Ralphie stopped twisting. He took a moment to catch his breath, then walked over to the window and slid it open. He unhooked of his pants and slid them down to his knees. He turned around, flipped his tux tail up, slid his briefs down far enough to expose his cheeks, and stuck his bare ass out the window.

The radio was too loud for me to yell about the craziness of the act. Besides, by that time it was obvious that it wasn't Ralphie who was crazy.

I took the last gulp of my beer, then threw the bottle against the wall. I think it shattered, but the radio was too loud for me to hear the smash. I walked over to the window, pulled my pants down, slid down my briefs, and stuck my own ass out the window right next to Ralphie's.

I put my arm around him as we waited for the Fab Four to stop singing.