

Legacy 1993



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Reflections of our world



Legacy

1993

It's not often we are allowed a glimpse of what others see when they look in the mirror. This *Legacy* provides that rare glimpse. In these pages, real people have laid bare their real selves with revealing and sometimes brutal honesty. They look into the "mirror" of their writing and uncover their identity--their view of themselves and others.

My hope is that you will read with an open heart. Let others share their most powerful emotions about God, love, death, politics, growing up, and the world around us. May this *Legacy* inspire you to search your own "mirror."

Brenda Keller, editor

The Writers Club held a poetry and prose contest in December. Prizes were given for each category: First prize--\$50.00; Second prize--\$35.00; Third prize--\$15.00. Many of the entries, including the winners, are distributed throughout this Legacy.

Special thanks to John Durichek for the use of the computer-aided publishing lab, to our contest judges, and to the following people who helped in special ways:

Beverly Camp	David Smith
Carol Pettibone	Donald Sahly
Patricia Keller	William Wohlers
Elaine Janzen	Debbie Suarez
Floyd Greenleaf	Tanya Cochran

Contest Judges

Pamela Harris, professor,
SC Communication Dept.
Melissa Hefferlin, artist
David Smith, chairman,
SC English Dept.
Mark Kennedy, columnist,
Chattanooga Times;
UTC writing instructor
Sheila Draper, secretary,
SC Testing and Counseling

Writers Club officers

Greg Camp, president
Lori Pettibone, public relations
Brenda Keller, *Legacy* editor
Calvin Simmons, fundraising
Acela Baglaj, fundraising
Helen Pyke, sponsor

Love is. . .

Something in the wind that blows,
Something in the heart that knows,
Something in the mind that goes
Boink.

--James Dittes



*--John
Ringhofer*

Only three words

Touch me once more to secure my dreams,
To keep me from receding into darkness.
Whisper sweetness in my ear to dry the tears,
As a mother reassures her lost-but-found child.

Let me hear my name pour over your lips,
Like a newborn mountain spring.
Allow these moments to asphyxiate your soul,
As deadly poison attacks vitality.

Release the strength to make us real,
And breathe that which unlocks forever.
I dare not see honesty in your face
Until you honor me with enduring words.

Say you love me.

--Tanya Cochran

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She Sat, He Sat

She sat
On the cool, concrete bench
Anxiously buttoning and unbuttoning her buttons
To make sure the buttons were buttoned
And
Watched the brilliant leaves
F
 a
 l
 l
Scattering and littering
The heavily congested sidewalk
And waited for him
To rush by
But
Notice her new Fall dress.

He sat
On the icy, concrete bench
Nervously snapping and unsnapping his snaps
To make sure the snaps were snapped
And
Watched the intricate flakes
F
 a
 l
 l
Sprinkling and decorating
The heavily congested sidewalk
And waited for her
To hurry by
But
Notice his new Winter jacket.

He came and went.
She came and went.

And now they only wonder.

—Tanya Cochran

Answers in Snow

Night falls, oh wanderer.

Whither are you bound?

Snow falls in patient light;

Clouds drift lazily in and through one another.

Light dims as the sun nears his rest,

Filling the air with violets and roses--

Light oils crushing the azure spirits of day,

And opening the brilliant light of night.

Families of otter wrap and curl themselves

In the knot of warmest family love.

Foxes entwine deep in their dens--

Warmth of family staving off winter's touch.

Deer yard in the midst of forest glades,

Does, fawns and stags together.

Lonely wolves call out to one another

And the high places and valleys echo with their song.

Mighty oaks standing naked in the forest night

Are cloaked in warmth by coats of ice.

Maples proudly lift their arms to the sky

And embrace the snow that falls to greet them.

The cottonwood flashes her prismatic coat;

Delicate fringes of ice decorate her limbs

Through the lonesome whispers of the wind

They tell each other of those who dwell in their shelter.

Spruce perfumes the quiet air

His spices are sweet and gladly mingle with
The essence of cedar, clinging to each zephyr.

They spread their promise of spring to
Pine that lets no load overburden him;

He lets his problems fall away and leaps for the sky again.
In silent majesty, noble hemlocks nod at the peace;

Their approval is felt by all who breathe the light of day.

I am he who dwells herein.

My life is caught up in this peace.
Though intruder I surely am, I am loved.

The harmony of nature is the song in my heart.
I am not a wanderer, noble moon and sibling stars,
I turn the pages of this book.

And reading these ever-flowing lines of beauty
Find the thing which it is my life to seek.

In this song of nature, I find myself;
For here I see my Master's face.

--Ralph Waddell



--Brenda Keller

The Actor

Sometimes I'm glad I'm an actor
So I can hide the way I feel.
Sometimes I'm glad I can fake it
So I never have to be real.

You'll never know how I'm feeling
You'll never see me cry.
You'll never be able to detect it,
When I'm telling you a lie.

You'll never have to share my hurt
You'll never really know me.
You'll never reach deep down inside,
and set my feelings free.

Yes, sometimes I'm glad I'm an actor
So I can hide the way I feel.
Yet, sometimes when I'm really hurting
I wish I could be real.

--Lori Pettibone

Waves

Waves crashed against the shore.
Lightning flashed across the sky.
Wind blew strong
through the trees
as we sat by the lake's shore.
We talked of joy and love,
pain and loss.
We dropped our masks.
Unafraid, our true selves to show.
But too soon
came time for leaving.
We replaced our masks,
so others would not see
and went home.
But I still hear the waves
and feel the wind on my face.

--John Lamb



—Peggy Burrows

Masks

All around me I see masks.
Automations
Who know me less than I know them.
Where am I?
I feel as a watcher
An alien
Inside I am empty.
A husk
Empty and barren of life.
Where are you?
I see, I hear, I smell, I taste
But I feel no life.
Don't do this to me!
Where are you?
Where are you who knows me
Better than I know myself.

--Ralph Waddell

A Quiet Moment With A Perfect Lover

Deep in contemplation,
We stood for a timeless while.
Your arms might as well
Have been tight around me
For the nearness of You,
Which, until now
Has been an enduring secret.

Mothers with children,
Mothers without,
And some that should have been,
All passed us by.
Some may have wondered
Why I smiled so long.
The most contented,
with the least reason to be.

We strolled or didn't stroll,
As we felt or didn't feel,
So inclined.
The wind as Your fingers
Through my hair,
The sun Your smile,
Oh how warm it was!

You were everything that could satisfy.
And all nature seemed pleased,
That we were--
YOU and I.

--Donna Denton



--John Ringhofer

I am not the creator
of the music
artfully performed
Nor am I the conductor
who keeps rhythm
and flat pitch in tune.
They call me the performer--
how wrong they are.
They may never know. . .
I only read the notes.
God makes the sound
move in your soul.
He is the Creator,
Conductor,
Performer;
Call me an instrument
and I might agree.

--Wendy Carter



--Sabine Vatel

Childhood is...

Childhood is getting excited because Daddy wants to talk to me and then having him tell me he's leaving me. It's trying to please everyone when there's an extra woman in the family your mother hates.

Childhood is loving your mother and loving your father and feeling guilty about it. It's being terrified when your mother falls and cuts her knee--afraid you are going to lose her, too.

Childhood is living out of a suitcase every-other-weekend. It's missing your friend's party because you have to visit your dad.

Childhood is crying yourself to sleep but not knowing why. It's waiting for Daddy to pick you up to go swimming and him not showing up.

Childhood is seeing your mother cry night after night and trying to comfort her. It's not knowing what love is and being scared you don't love your father.

Childhood is wearing sunglasses to hide the tears when your parents are in the same room.

Childhood is thinking this is normal.

--Shelly Neff

Yesterday You Rushed Through Me

Yesterday you rushed through me
shaking and roaring
crashing and splintering
raging, deafening, overthrowing
overpowering and pounding;
You changed me.

More slowly now,
you gently

roll

and tum

ble

tingling

freshly

cas

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ding,

rippling;

You soothe me.

Tomorrow

will

you

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ble,

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in

g

quietly to

my heart?

I will

listen--

for you

Are the voice

of many

wa

ters.

--Jennifer Schmidt



Our Emotions Collide

I love to
hold you close
Where our emotions
collide
And the birds
sing
And the daffodils
bloom.

--Thomas Duerksen

One Happy Day

The sun is shining brightly
and you are here beside me.
Birds are singing;
children screaming,
and bees are buzzing loudly.

I watch the water speed
through iridescent leaves.
Colors changing,
Rainbows forming,
and shining through the trees.

And it's our happy day,
but all I feel is pain.
Memories changing,
Doubts are forming,
My love--just words I say.

I bittersweet, old poem,
and a painful, fleeting home
remind me you
are fleeting, too.
One happy day on loan.

--Thomas Duerksen

*Photo by
Sean Pitman*

A Psalm to God the Father

I had an embarrassing moment today.
My trousers split apart at the seams
And introduced to the world
A flaming red pair of boxer shorts--
My red boxer shorts.

I stumbled through a gauntlet of laughing peers
I hurried home and slammed the front door shut,
But my embarrassment and my shame snuck in anyway.
I broke into tears and I called to my God:

"Holy Father, sovereign Lord,
You know all things and see all things.
Surely you see my embarrassment,
Surely you know my shame.
Surely you heard my so-called 'friends'
When they saw my red boxer shorts
And sneered and chuckled out loud."

And as I cried I felt His arms draw around me.
As I fell silent I heard Him speak in a colossal whisper:
"My dear son, I am with you always.
For where you run, I am in the wind that follows;
When you shout, I am the resounding echo;
And when your pants split apart
I was there. I saw your red boxer shorts
And I chuckled too.

For I am a part of life--not apart from it.
I run and sing and shout and laugh too.
My precious son, my tender loved one,
Let me live with you--I gave my life for such a privilege.
And I will.
I will soar with you up on my wings;
I will swoop down and lift you up
When your whole life splits apart.
And I will nestle you on a high place forever. . .
FOREVER.

When I had heard this, I thanked the Lord.
I got up from my knees;
I wiped the tears from my eyes
And I put on a new pair of pants.

--James Dittes

A cuteandcuddly
an adorable
and lovable
bunny All
these words
that have
been dumped
onyour head Youare
vivaciousrambunctious
playfullyignorantflipping
incirclesenergeticallyand
leapingfuriouslyhopping
runningrunningscreecho
ahaltsniffingtheairthe
grasstheearthmyhandthen
offagainhoppingandhopping
runningrunningspringoffallfours
asiftoclickyoursealsandthenfreeze--still
nomovementearscockednosestillnomovementnone
listeningtonothingwaryofsomethingandthenenergy
takesoverastreakofbrownflashesbyrunningbecause
youarefreeandyouwillcontinuehoppinghoppinghopping
hoppinghoppinghoppinghoppinghoppinghoppinghopping
hoppinghoppinghoppinghoppinghoppinghoppinghopping
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hoppinghoppinghoppinghoppinghoppinghoppinghopptothe
inhoppinghoppinghoppinghoppinghoppinghoppingvery
hopping hopping hoppinghoppinghoppingend
hopping hopping hoppinghoppinghopping
hopping hopping hoppinghoppinghopping

--Deana Abdel-Malek



Jean
&
Hodges

Simile

I rush out and see
the dark, black sky
Flowing across the universe
like your long, black skirt
when it is hugged by the wind.
I run back inside
but your eyes shine
like the delicate blue carpet
laughing up at me.
Outside, the silhouetted trees
beckon me,
and taunt me,
like your long, slender fingers.
And all the smells
smell like your perfume. . .
And all the sounds
sound like your voice. . .
And every footstep
is you beside me. . .

You have permeated my senses,
and have conquered my soul.

—Thomas Duerksen

First prize winner, poetry

Don't Pass Me By

Don't pass me by
in your red Ford truck—

Didn't you notice my
new suede cowboy hat?
Don't you hear my
radio tuned to the
guitar station?
I'm seventeen and all
decked out
in my natural look—

Can't you just slow down,
take a glance
one is all I
need.

Don't pass me by!
Don't pass me. . . bye.

—Jennifer Schmidt

*Drawing by Andrea Saldana
and Sean Pitman*

A Flower Will Grow

I mount the burden of sorrow upon my shoulders,
And say good-bye.
My hands are clasped tightly around our friendship--
It's so hard to let go.
I must bury our friendship as one buries a seed
In the earth.
Our memories I will nourish, and a flower will grow
In place of my pain.

I remember on our first date you wore satin and flowers,
As you do now.
You were so calm compared to my awkwardness.
We are still acting out our roles.
No tears fall, no smile breaks as I gently brush
Your cheek with my hand.
Yet my own face is ravaged
with pain.

Why? Why can't you show me
Your emotions?
How is it that you hide your fear
Of the unknown before you?
You always said that I was strong--I am weak
In comparison to you.
So set is your jaw. So stiff
Are your shoulders.
Is that determination?

You once said that you could never leave
Someone you love.
Yet it seems so easy for you
To go now.
I implore you not to desert me.
But your ears hear me
No more.

You say not a word
As I pour out my heart--
Just stare with those vacant eyes.
Tell me you'll stay.
Just let me embrace you,
Once more.
I won't make the same mistakes.
I promise.

Is that a flicker of second thought?
Did your chest just heave
With a sigh
Of regret?

Show some emotion.
Cry! Scream! Laugh.
Do anything
But look at me with those empty eyes.
I know you still love me--
Please. . . PLEASE. . .
Don't leave me.

A tear rolls down my cheek.
I catch a last glimpse
Of your unseeing eyes,
As the casket
Closes
On your cold
Heart.

--Deana Abdel-Malek

Mixed Metaphor

I can't escape the
 sound of your smile
 the sight of your voice the
 smell of your embrace
 the taste of the way
 you laughed at death.
Now it laughs at you
but I feel no humor.

--Brenda Keller

Please Don't Leave

by Eric Aakko

It's a cold, misty summer Minnesota morning. Last night's rain left beads of water droplets on the car, making it look cleaner than it is. The arrangements of the northern excursion have been completed: pay for the marriage license, reserve the church, and a dozen other things a couple will need for a wedding. The car's trunk is crammed with luggage, the Mr. and Mrs.-to-be are anxious to leave, for it's a long drive back to Tennessee.

The young woman knocks on her parent's bedroom door to say a final good-bye to her sleeping father. He coughs, sneezes, and then the bed creaks loudly as he gets up. A metallic sound of a belt buckle being hastily fastened is heard from behind the door. The bedroom door pipes a tiny mouse squeak as it opens.

Her father looks the Norwegian that he is: pale blue eyes, ruffled gray hair pushed back over his head, white t-shirt, baggy faded blue pants and the thick gray wool socks which are poking out from underneath his trousers. He shuffles out of the bedroom and hugs his daughter.

The father gently strokes his daughter's hair while looking deeply into her big, blue eyes. He kisses her on the cheek. His large weathered hands show a life of hard work and discipline. They contrast with his daughter's soft, smooth, flowing red hair. Those pale blue eyes search her own eyes and seem to ask, "Are you sure? Do you really want to do this?" In that moment he sees their entire father-daughter relationship. He remembers the first time she could walk and say "Daddy." Oh, how that had made him feel so proud. He recalls the birthday parties, picnics, and summer vacations—all of the good times. She gently touches his face, which momentarily disturbs his reflections. He wishes time could stand still. "Don't leave," he thinks. "You can't. . . at least not now, not with him, not with this guy who's going to take you, my baby, away. Why do you have to get married? There are still so many things I want to share with you, my princess." His pale blue eyes blink and then he realizes that time cannot stand still—she is leaving.

He hugs her, and kisses her, again and again. The sight of his beautiful daughter is etched forever into his memory. He will never forget this moment: the smile on her lips, her kind blue eyes, the softness of her hair, her gentle touch, and her sweet feminine scent. The daughter returns a kiss and hugs him, "I love you Dad." He slowly recognizes that she is no longer his little girl, but rather a mature young woman, soon to be married. A different kind of proudness swells in his heart, causing him to smile.



--Peggy Burrows

Changes

Changes
hurdling me
against a wall,
Knocking the breath
out of me,
Making me fall into a confused
slump
in a corner,
groping in the
dark
for answers to
the questions
that keep haunting me.
Smashing my easy,
little girl
fantasies and dreams,
forcing me out of
my now safe
corner,
to make
life-long decisions.

--Heather Tydings

The Mirror

by Lisa Clark

It's a silver picture frame in which all the world at one time or another is seen. An image appears and is gone. Yet these few clips of events, of emotions, of life, are what the world is made of.

The picture now is motionless. Chairs are arranged in an orderly fashion, the mauve flowers in one coordinate with the blue stripes in the other. The couch squats between them, stretching its arms, beckoning. A tall plant stands to the right of an end table. Its shiny silk leaves, brushing against the side of the blue stripped chair, give the appearance of reality. Neatly stacked magazines, their covers dulled by thumb prints, the corners curling back from the pages, add color to the dark end table.

Soft blonde hair fills the picture and a girl moves through in slow motion. Two large blue books lie flatly in her arms--a pencil is grasped in one hand. Balanced on top of her load is an open notebook. As she passes through the frame, her lips move silently, repeating the same movements over and over.

An older woman rushes through. The lined forehead is topped by graying hair. She pauses and looks around. Shaking her head slightly, she absently straightens an arm cover on the couch and hurries on.

A tan, leathery face appears in the frame. He slowly sinks onto the couch and places his left foot on his right knee. The dark brown shoe moves slowly back and forth. A hand passes over the short-cropped sandy hair. His eyes dart frequently over to the right of the frame, down to the watch on his wrist, and back again. Suddenly a blur of long red hair and denim goes by and the room is empty again.

A loud noise breaks the stillness. It moves steadily toward the frame. At first, only a long silver handle can be seen, moving back and forth. Lint and dirt particles disappear under the bar at the end of the handle. Then a hand appears, then a hunched-over girl, pushing the handle back and forth. The noise stops and the girl tugs at a chair, rearranging the spotless room, wiping invisible dust particles from the end table and restacking the perfectly-stacked magazines. The roaring begins again and the bent-over girl and silver machine are gone.

Laughter spills onto the picture. White teeth, red lips, heads tipped back so the gales of merriment can spill more easily from them. Tennis rackets in blue covers swing from bare arms. Brown legs show under short skirts. Ponytails blow by the silver frame.

The couch and chairs remain motionless, shedding the emotions that have rippled over them. The silver frame continues to reflect blankly everything it sees.

Mirror World

In the mirror world
we see ourselves
as images of stars
and actors.

In the mirror world
all flaw is hidden
and what we see
is what we think
we are.

--Lori Pettibone

True Image

I am nothing without you,
yet you curse me
for your problems.

I never lie to you,
but you shatter me anyway.

Why do you blame me,
when all I am is a
reflection of you?

--Brenda Keller



--Sean Pitman

First prize winner, prose.

On Lake Melissa

by Andy Nash

Like Garrison Keillor, I grew up in a small town in Minnesota. Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. Population 7,106. Actually, my town used to be called Detroit, Minnesota, but due to postal complications with Detroit, Michigan--people would write "Detroit, MN" on envelopes they thought were bound for the motor state, and our postman had fits trying to find 176th Street--the city council added the word "Lakes." A wise decision, for each summer since, thousands of tourists, most of them from Fargo, flock to the town where they are sure to find lakes. "What are you doing this weekend, bud?" "Hey, we're going up to Detroit Lakes!" "Detroit Lakes? Sounds good, I'll come too." And like a caravan in search of the nearest watering hole, in they come. "Gonna go to D.L. They got lakes there." And they invade our lakes and splash around for the weekend and go home to Fargo.

They find most of our lakes, but not all of them. Not the best one. A good thing, I suppose, or our summer home on Lake Melissa may not have been my favorite place in the world, after all. But the way things worked out, it is just that. . . .

My mom gives directions the best. "Yeah, it's six miles south of town, down 59, not on the golf course turnoff, but the next one. Take South Melissa Drive one and eight-tenths miles and look for Riverside Place Resort on the right. Our place is just after the resort office. It's a cedar A-frame with an orange door. Either the Jeep or the yellow Corvair will be parked out front. We'll probably be down by the lake, so just walk right in, get changed--the bathroom's the second door on the left--and meet us at the dock, okay? See ya then. Bye."

And so, as you pull into the driveway of my favorite place in the world, you see three things: a yard, a lake, and a cottage.

Our yard is a proud yard, not one of those neglected yards you find in town with the humiliating plastic flamingos that peek out over the uncut grass. Our yard begins boldly inches from the concrete basketball court near the street and wraps itself around the cottage, careful not to run onto the small, white rocks beneath the porch, down to the sandy beach where the whitefish lie dead. Here, the yard reverses its path and aims for Orlo Gilbert's yard, but, as it senses Orlo's fertilized grass, it feels inferior and decides to stick to the original plan and wraps on back to the concrete slab. Out of love for our yard, I unlock the shed door each Thursday morning and bring out the big International lawn mower. I mow in circles. (Orlo mows back and

forth.) The yard cordially accepts the free haircut because it loves the compliments on Thursday evening when we drive the croquet hoops into it. . . . Smack! My dad's black croquet ball careens into my blue ball, knocking it clear across the yard and down into the gentle ripples of Lake Melissa.

As I scamper down the sandy bank in pursuit of the runaway ball, my dad gazes out to the soft colors of the lake which are being sliced by a lunatic jet skier too close to shore. "Hey! Getoutahere!" yells my dad, who yells only when he is concerned about his family's safety. Angel, my little sister and her friend, Nicole, are playing "Marco Polo" out on the orange swimming raft. The jet skier motions that we are number one and flees. I see Angel pull herself up on the raft--the same raft that my dad and I take out every fall, except one time the lake froze early and we had to wait for the sun to melt off the ice before we could wade out together to get it, prompting the biggest argument we ever had--and we are glad she is okay.

The lake itself is deep in the middle, great for bass fishing, but shallow and mushy around the edges. (The church joins us for whiffleball Saturday night and, when we all get hot and jump in the water, everyone remarks how mushy and gooey the bottom of our lake is, and I wonder what they want us to do about it.) When it has not rained much and the lake is low, we push our boat out past the muck because we do not want to bend the stainless steel prop which cost a lot, you know. It already has a few nicks on it. Anytime there is glassy water on an evening my dad is home, I ski. Angel and Nicole tube. And the boat paces back and forth in front of our A-frame cabin on Lake Melissa until Mom comes out onto the cedar porch and rings the big brass bell, which means it is time to eat.

Back inside our cottage, we take turns pouring the white dressing on our salads while Casey, our West Highland White Terrier, and Gypsy, Angel's pet raccoon, chase each other around the bar stools. The evening is cool and quiet, and Orlo drops by "to see how you folks are doing" and to tell me to clean the beaches in front of cabins two and three in the morning because he will be in town. I decide how late I can get up and still be done by the time he gets back as I turn on the television. "Not that stupid show again," says Angel, referring to the "Great KX Hole-in-One Show," my favorite. And, as Casey scratches the door to go out and my parents talk about taking the Jeep over to the Flea Market Sunday with Burgesons, I am content with our life on the lake, never dreaming that a financial crisis will force an auction next summer where we will have to sell our favorite place in the world, piece by piece, at an opening bid of five dollars.



—Amy Scoggins

Unnoticed

Walking down the empty beach
toward the dying sun
Alone.

Dancing, playing, laughing behind,
friends watch me leave
Unnoticed.

—Thomas Duerksen

The Iron World

Gates of iron close with a resounding clang.
What was once vibrant
now lies cold and lifeless.

Memories of laughter echo through corridors
of a hollow heart while
gray replaces rainbows and
questions replace answers.
Life is no longer a playground,
but a prison.

The blackened night acknowledges only
the harsh realities
as gates of iron close with a
resounding clang.

--Michelle Codington

Through A Dark Glass

by Sabine Vatel

"Mama, what does nigger mean?"

Mama raised her head from the papers she was correcting. She shoved them aside slowly. Her face hadn't changed, but Marjorie could tell that her movements were now calculated and careful. Kiki must have sensed something because she stopped coloring her project and looked worriedly at Mama. Marjorie came near the table and leaned close to Mama.

"Where did you hear that, Marjorie?" Mama asked her.

It must be a very bad word, Marjorie figured. She had known it was bad. When Yannick had spat it out at them, his stare had been hateful, and he started to run fast away from Marjorie and her friends. When far enough he had turned and yelled it again, "Nigger black. Nigger." Erika, a first-grader and Kiki's new-found friend turned and kept asking, "What did he say? What did he say?"

Erika's eleven-year-old brother, D.J., stared away long after Yannick had disappeared around the corner. Suddenly he shrugged his shoulder and rubbed his nose with the back of his hand.

"Bah! Never mind that." He said while looking down.

"He said Nigger." Marjorie smiled at the way Erika's accent made the "r" roll. "What's that?" Erika insisted. She raised her chin toward her brother and almost tripped over the sidewalk cracks as she walked. She kept bumping against Kiki who was right behind her. Kiki rolled her eyes and moved in between Marjorie and D.J., where it was safe.

"He doesn't know," she told Erika. The little girl shook her head and made her orange ponytails dance around her head.

"Uh-huh. D.J. knows all kinds of stuff." Erika said stubbornly.
"Don't you, D.J.?"

D.J. ran his fingers through his sandy blond hair. Marjorie thought he looked shy all of a sudden. Their eyes met, and he averted his quickly. Marjorie didn't understand the sinking feeling inside her.

"Nigger," Erika said pensively.

"And stop saying that." Her brother snapped. His eyes hurriedly went from Kiki to Marjorie. Marjorie almost stopped in the middle of the sidewalk. She was now terribly aware of D.J. and Erika's lightness. And Yannick's too. It never dawned on her as much before, and she stared down at her dark arms. Whatever Yannick had said had to do with her, her dark arms, and dark face. . . .

Marjorie felt terribly empty. Mama. Mama would know what Yannick meant. Someone was pulling her sleeve. She looked down.

"Byyyye!" Erika said as if she was trying to wake her up. D.J. was already walking away from them toward his street. He shifted his schoolbag over his other shoulder, and he stopped to tap his foot.

"Come on, Erika."

Erika hopped to him and almost tripped again. Kiki rolled her eyes and opened her mouth. Marjorie nudged her younger sister's side with her elbow before she had time to say anything. D.J. hardly looked at them when he said good-bye and turned to leave.

"Where did you hear that, Marjorie?" Mama asked again. Marjorie hesitated. She looked at Kiki. Mama followed her gaze.

As if she didn't want Mama to think it had come from her, Kiki blurted out, "Yannick said it."

"Who's this? A boy or girl at school?"

"A boy," Marjorie said. "He's one of the old ones. Older than D.J., even."

Kiki joined Mama and Marjorie at the table. "It's a bad word, isn't it, Mama?" She asked as she pulled the chair.

"It means ignorant," Mama said. "And it's used by ignorants."

She looked at each of them carefully as if trying to find the right words. "Some people don't like other people because of their color. They don't realize that we're all the same inside. There are people who don't like us."

"White people," Marjorie said.

"Some of them," Mama continued. "They think White is better than Black and think it would be better if we weren't around. . . ."

"But why?"

"Maybe because they're afraid of people different than them. That makes them do and say horrible things. Long ago Black people were made slaves and put into chains and were treated worse than animals. Some White people think it should still be that way."

"I hate them, then," Kiki said as she raised her chin defiantly. Mama leaned closer to her and watched her intently.

"You mustn't hate, child. Hate has suppressed our people for a long time. Hate killed thousands of Jews. . . ."
What are those?"

"Who. They are people someone wanted to destroy because they were different than he was. Hate and fear made Yannick call you a nigger. You are not niggers. You are people and God made you, too. You're not above them. They aren't better than you are. You have a history. You have a future, too. Don't let no one. . . ." Mama looked at Marjorie, too. Marjorie held her breath.

". . . No one keep you from succeeding because you are Black. Because you're girls. I push you to have good grades in school because you sometimes need to be better than the rest because you will have to fight to prove you're good. To force the world to see you beyond your color. That's just the kind of world we live in, children."

Marjorie stared at the lines in her hand. "Why does it have to be that way? Why do they want us to be ashamed to be Black?"

Mama looked away. Everyone was quiet. "I don't really understand it myself," Mama whispered after a while.

Marjorie bit her lip to keep it from trembling.

"People like that need glasses, Mama," she finally said. "Real dark ones so they can't see any color. Then they'll see that we feel the same and play the same."



--Sabine Vatel

"How can you write if you can't cry?"

--Ring Lardner

Work It Out

Don't wear me out
talking about your
soapbox stands and
your bandwagon plans.

You tire my ear
and to hear is a gift,
in fact this rift was created
because you've traded

ignorance to prove this world
is decaying. But there you
stand, preaching and praying
not reaching me or the

issues you care most
about. You scare me.
I don't want to
hear your shouts.

I wish you'd just go
work it out.

--Jennifer Schmidt

Inmate for Life

My body is a temple
No, a prison
for my convict self.
A straightjacket of
raw flesh
holds myself inside.
My body is a jail
LET ME OUT!
Threescore and ten
until parole.

--Laura Dukeshire

A Captive
A Prisoner
A Servant
A Slave

I was told I was born a free man
Under a sky of red, white, and blue
But the banner has turned cash green
And imprisoned me
In the bonds of time.

--Scott Walker

Brick by Brick

Standing behind a wall,
It has been built brick,
by brick
by brick.

We laughed at the world's masons.
Our hands knew not that skill.
But now I turn to you,
And face a brick,
by brick,
by brick,
wall.

When were we apprenticed?
We are the image of those we mocked.
Our eyes blinded, as we stacked brick,
by brick,
by brick.

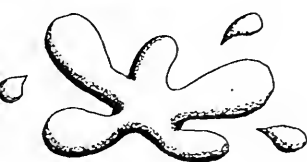
Stand up.
Turn around
And face your wall.

We are all bricklayers by trade.
Societies, towns, relationships
Have been built brick,
by brick,
by brick.

We have the power
To demolish our walls.
Yet we choose to live in the houses
We have built brick,
by brick,
by brick.

--Deana Abdel-Malek

*"We have a natural right to make use of our pens as our
tongues: at our peril, risk, and hazard." --Voltaire*



Andy Carter

words paint such beautiful pictures
in my head
i like the world in there
i pick the colors
and the shapes
things go where i want
i am the artist
i am the master
when the words escape my head
they're not ready
and they embarrass me
when the words are forced out
the colors run
and make a big, ugly splatter
i have to be patient
and wait until the paint dries.

--Sonya Nyrop

Imaginary Childhood

I used to be a child pretending
to be grown up.
I used my credit cards,
played with my bank account,
and paid my bills
as if it were all part
of some big game.
"Look at me," I would say
"I'm quite grown up now."
but inside
I was still a child.
Then overnight, it seems
I became a grown-up
pretending to be a child.
I had myself convinced that I
was still a child
and that
I would never grow up.
Then I came face-to-face
with someone the age I imagined
myself to be still.
And she looked up to me
as if I were old.
And I realized how different
we were.
She was young and free.
I was grown and
mature.
And my imaginary
childhood
ended.

--Lori Pettibone



--Sherrie Platt

Transposed

by Brenda Keller

The woman sits alone in the middle of the darkened room. The dusty piano in front of her provides her only company. (Or so she thinks. . . .) She touches the yellowing ivory keys of the old Steinway grand, placing her foot, clad in an aging slipper, onto the tarnished pedal.

Unnoticed, a man in the corner shadow watches with intense steel-blue eyes. He surveys the piano's dusty, chipped cabinet; its cracked, worn keys; and the bench's pale, velvet cushion, threadbare as his own balding crown. "There is nothing unusual about this instrument," he decides.

His focus shifts to the woman seated on the wobbly bench. Her white hair, a faint whisper of the past, is gathered and restrained at the back of her head by a faded yellow ribbon. She wears a yellow, flower-print housedress which spans her frail form from neck to shins. It appears glued to her skin, as to a doll in an attempt to prevent the fragile china bones from collapsing into a meaningless heap.

Dimmed by the weight of years, her gray eyes bulge slightly from thin sockets. Her paper-like hands, outlined by rounded veins, rest timidly on the keys, as a butterfly lights on a finger. "There is nothing unusual about this woman," he decides.

Now her hands begin to walk up and down the steps of the keyboard. First hesitantly, then gradually gaining confidence and accelerating. At last her fingers dance gingerly, daintily, into a Beethoven Sonata. Effortlessly, her fingers now translate the beautiful sounds, which seem to flow from the most secret and forgotten places inside her heart.

The melody reminds the man of days long past. He closes his eyes, imagining a young, pretty girl, standing barefoot on a whitewashed porch, long brown hair swirling in a soft breeze. . . .

As the music crescendoes, the man turns his attention again to the woman before him. She sits with eyes closed, body swaying with the music's intensity. Suddenly, the wrinkles in her face seem not so deep now, and her hands seem vibrant with youthful energy.

The man stands motionless, as if unable to tear his gaze from the scene. *What has changed?* he wonders. His focus shifts from the woman to the piano, then back to the woman, then back and forth until the distinction blurs.

His eyes stare intently, unblinking, seeing the woman and her instrument for the first time.



--Sherrie Platt

When I'm Blue

When I'm blue
*i sit on a bench
tickling keys
of ivory
and ebony;
i see your face
as my soul soars
through the clouds.*
I think of you.

--Thomas Duerksen

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"The original style is not the style which never borrows of anyone, but that which no other person is capable of reproducing."

--Francois Rene de Chateaubriand

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