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fioretti



1986-87



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Literary Anthology

Marian College

Indianapolis, Indiana

Vol. 45

No. 1

1986-87

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*This edition of **fioretti** is lovingly dedicated to our classmate and friend Jennice Chaney, who died of leukemia on Oct. 23, 1986. We keep her in our hearts ~*

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pp. 1, 4, 11, 27, 39/ Sister Stella Gampfer, OSF

p. 25/ Danny Galvin

LETTERING/ Sister Stella Gampfer, OSF

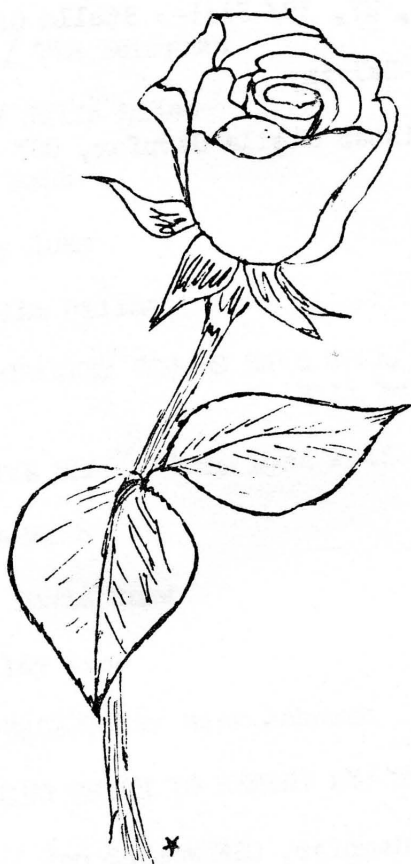
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Julia Hilcz

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Blossom Everlasting

dedicated to Jennice Chaney

The sun has set and the twilight begun;  
'Tis the time for a new journey to begin.  
Those left behind will mourn and cry,  
But those above sing in joyous expectation.

On this earth gardens go bare,  
Grapes over-ripe fall from the vine.  
Yet a new flower has blossomed  
in the realm of heaven;  
A strong, clear voice joins the  
choirs of angels.

Let us not weep for our sorrowed  
loss

But shed tears of joy for life  
everlasting,

Keeping faith in the power of  
God.

Jim Berryman

## MIRACLE

Nancy Hoeing

As the youngsters enthusiastically piled onto the buses, Sue Ann Guthrie noticed that Tyler had stuck something in the back pockets of his blue jean cut-offs. While watching the anxious little boy climb onto the bus, she remembered the first time she had seen him.

Tyler's mother and grandfather had brought him to the Prime Learning Center about one and a half years ago. Tyler was an adorable little boy with sun-bleached hair, dark brown eyes and a rather frightened look on his face. His mother was short and plump with sandy blonde, stringy hair that needed washing badly. Mrs. McDaniels looked extremely weary that day. In fact, that's how she looked everytime Sue Ann had met with her. Papa Joe was a bit taller but still on the stocky side. He had the "typical laid-back grandfatherly look." In fact, he was quite the contrast to his droopy-eyed, unalert daughter."

"Good morning," Miss Guthrie said, trying to be as cheerful as possible. Papa Joe was the more cooperative of the two adults.

"Hello," he answered, introducing his daughter and grandson, who offered no more than a slight grin.

"How are you, Tyler?" she asked, trying to put the obviously timid young child's anxieties and fears to rest. No answer. "We are glad to have you here!" Still no response. "Tyler, this is Mrs. Jackson. How

about going with her to find some games to play, and I'll come join you in a minute." Tyler followed timidly while Miss Guthrie went back to talk to Papa Joe and Mrs. McDaniels. Much to her surprise, Papa Joe was standing alone.

"Francine had an awful headache," commented the old man. "Went back to the car. Said for me to iron things out here for the boy."

"Well, could you tell me a little about Tyler's background?" she remembered asking the man.

He proceeded to give Tyler and his family's life history. Tyler was about five and had various learning disabilities and problems with speech and language development. He rarely said anything, although there was an occasional comment or two. On top of this, Tyler's father had just died a month earlier. He had been an alcoholic. After that, Tyler and Francine had moved in with Papa Joe. Tyler's mother also drank quite a bit, the after-effects of which had probably caused her to return to the car earlier that morning.

The bus came to a halt, and the children rolled out onto the grassy area, surrounding Blue Lake. They were fully equipped with tackle boxes, poles and all. As she watched Tyler cast his line, Sue Ann remembered his first few months at the center.

After a few months, Tyler had made a little progress. Mrs. McDaniels was rarely seen or heard from, so it was primarily Papa Joe who took care of Tyler and took an interest in his well-being. Tyler was finally relating to the other children and teachers. With the help of his speech therapists, he



had even begun to speak a little more.

Now there was Tyler, excitedly reeling in another fish. If he jumped around much more, she was sure that the bulging pockets of his cut-off shorts would soon overflow. If only he could always be the happy little boy she was watching now. Why couldn't they have just skipped those months in between?

Unfortunately, the trauma seemed inevitable. Just when life seemed to be going well, something terrible happened. Tyler's whole world took a turn for the worse, dragging the teachers and everyone else at Prime Center right along with it. Papa Joe, who had a heart condition, had had a fatal heart attack. Death can have a devastating effect on anyone, but to a five-year-old disabled child, the disruption was unspeakable. Tyler's mother, who couldn't deal with all of his problems, resorted to heavier use of drugs and alcohol. Poor Tyler, unable to cope with the traumatic events in his life, gave up all his efforts with his teachers and therapists and regressed into his own little world of silence and isolation.

Back at home, Mrs. McDaniels continued to use drugs and alcohol; she soon found herself in a state hospital for rehabilitation. The question at hand was what to do with the child. After numerous meetings, courtroom appearances, phone calls and visits from social workers, they decided that the best place for Tyler was with Sue Ann. Foster homes had been discussed; however, it was decided that they would force him to make too much of a drastic adjustment. In the end, Miss Guthrie was appointed

Tyler's temporary guardian.

An entire year passed, and Tyler had been to several therapists and numerous specialists and child psychologists, but he still chose to remain in his own little world, refusing to talk. It had been that way, since Papa Joe had died. No one could figure out what to do with Tyler. Sometimes when people tried to talk to him or encourage him to do something, he would let out a shrieking howl, and they thought it was best to leave him alone.

Luckily, spring had arrived and as she watched Tyler fish with the other boys, Sue Ann realized that she had worried needlessly about how he would act today. Mrs. Jackson, who was also watching Tyler, interrupted Sue Ann's thoughts. "What is it about fishing that intrigues him so much?" she asked.

"I'm not sure," Sue Ann replied, "but it's something we'll have to investigate."

At the end of the day, prizes were awarded. Tyler watched excitedly as the announcer called, "Second place, Tyler McDaniels."

Tyler walked proudly to the front and carried his trophy back. Sue Ann watched closely as he pulled the bulk from his back pocket. Quite astonished, she looked on as Tyler held a crumpled picture of Papa Joe holding a huge fish in one hand and a little boy in the other. Tyler looked up at her and smiled, "Fish," he said proudly, "I won!"

~

## The Challengers

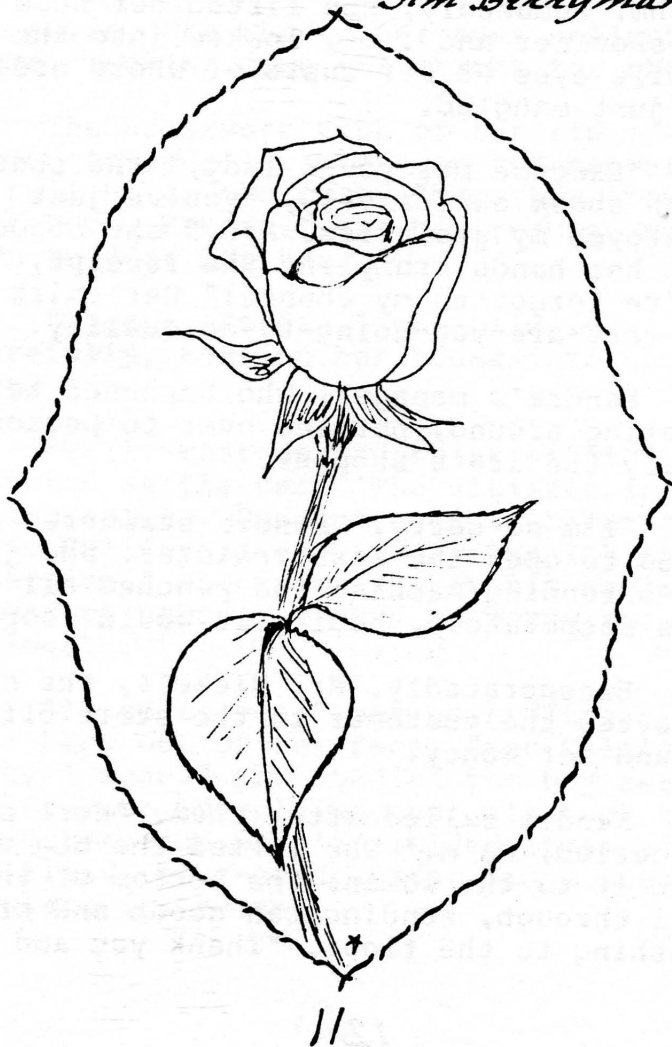
Oh, the brightened minds that climb  
To reach the lofty peaks,  
Scaling cliffs that are so sheer,  
Far beyond the tufted mists.

Summits beckon from on high  
Calls only few will hear.  
They walk the fixed edge of steel,  
A blade that cuts so sure.

The challengers ignore the blade  
And charge into the sky.  
They pay the price of progress,  
A glory held so dear.

*Without the gift of sacrifice,  
Which makes the measure of man,  
Dark ages would not recede  
Nor renaissance begin.*

*Jim Berryman*



## CHAIN REACTION

Julia Hilcz

"Excuse me," the high nasal voice intruded.

But the music continued to slow dance the couples in circles around the room. Kendra's heart beat in sync with the 1-2-3 rhythm. Bemusedly, she lifted her head from his shoulder and . . . looked into the hostile eyes of her customer whose bread she had just mangled.

"Excuse me, young lady," the stout woman shook explosively, "you've just destroyed my groceries. And," she stood there with her hands crumpling the receipt, "and you've forgotten my change!" Her smirk had a now-what-are-you-going-to-do quality.

Kendra's manager, who happened to be hovering around, hurried over to personally pacify the irate shopper.

"I'm so sorry," Kendra stammered as she tried to open the cash register. She jarred the offending machine and punched all of its keys desperately, hoping it would reopen.

Exasperatedly, Mr. Nickels, the manager, escorted the customer to the store office to refund her money.

Kendra called after them. "Here's your groceries, ma'm." She lifted the bag up to hand it to the woman; the bottom of the bag fell through, sending can goods and produce crashing to the floor. "Thank you and come

again," Kendra's generic refrain to departing customers interrupted the manager's apologies.

"Kendra, why don't you go ahead and clock out for today? It'll probably be the best thing for the both of us." Mr. Nickels rolled up his sleeves and barricaded himself inside his office.

Stepping outside into the golden aureole of early evening-late afternoon sunlight, Kendra pulled a crumpled bus schedule from her purse. She shaded her eyes against the glare, looking down the street for the bus.

The afterwork push of traffic begrudgingly allowed a neon red convertible to pull up to the curb. "Hey, how 'bout a lift home, Kendra?" The boy reached over to open to door for her.

"Thanks, Jordan," she slid in gratefully, tossing her books into the back seat.

"Well, what do you think of it?" Jordan gestured at the car. "The ultimate in cruisemobiles. Dad just got a shipment of these California exports at the lot this afternoon." Jordan worked at his dad's car lot after school to save up money for college.

"It suits you," she pushed her blowing hair back out of her face, "the Californian look, I mean." She studied the boy seated next to her. Deeply tanned, although the Midwestern sun hadn't yielded its rays yet, his blond, blue-eyed surfer image seemed out of place in Indiana.

He popped a cassette into the car stereo. "Wanna stop at Crazy Horse for some nutritionally worthless junk food?" he asked during the lull at a stoplight.

"Sure," Kendra agreed. She tried to forget that she had 36 algebra problems and an oral report for government due in the morning.

The street lights were just coming on when Jordan finally pulled into Kendra's driveway.

"Thanks again," she said, reaching into the back to gather her forgotten books. She was puzzled to find Jordan fidgeting with the stereo. He seemed to have left his lightheartedness back in the sunset and was struggling with some inner dilemma.

"Would you . . ." he paused as his hands played with the keys in the ignition. "Do you think that . . ." he looked straight ahead. "Would you like to go to the prom with me?"

Kendra felt a tremor of excitement. "Yes," it was her turn to look shyly away, "I really would."

"Great," he said obviously relieved, "we can talk about it later. I think your Dad wants to talk to you. Bye."

"Bye," she called then turned to face her father, who was standing in the doorway of their house. Oh God, she thought, please don't let him be mad. Her excitement fizzled away like a dud firecracker.

"Where have you been, Kendra? We were

beginning to worry." He moved aside to let her into the house.

"Sorry, Dad. After work, Jordan and I went out for a hamburger." She looked uneasily at his unrelenting face. "I'm sorry," she repeated.

He waved her aside. "Go and change your clothes. We're having guests to dinner."

She was about to argue back when her mother, a silent, slight figure in a dark green sari, shook her head. So Kendra went up to her room to change into the ceremonial sari that was de rigor when the family was expecting guests of Indian nationality. Her father's conversation with her mother -- more like a monologue -- invaded her room.

"Ashia, we should have never moved here. I can't even control my own daughter. She's lost all respect for her heritage." Kendra flinched as she heard him slam a door. "Since when does she eat beef? And that boy," he choked off.

Kendra closed the door, trying to block out the accusations. After putting on a sari in pomegranate red, she gave a half turn in front of the full-length mirror. The ceremonial costume only heightened her sense of apartness. She lifted a kohl pencil to rim her eyes. The doorbell rang; the point of her pencil broke. She heard her father welcoming their guests.

"Kendra," her mother slipped inside and sat down on the bed beside her daughter.

"Oh, Mom. He asked me to the prom!" Kendra hugged her mother. "And I saw the



perfect dress at the mall. It's pink taffeta with lace." Her mother's silence cut short Kendra's joy. "What's the matter? Jordan's a really nice guy. You'd like him," she looked anxiously at her mother's downcast head.

"It's not that," her mother spoke the Bengali dialect. Kendra wished she would learn to speak English.

"Don't worry, it'll be all right," Kendra tried to reassure her mother. "Look," she pulled an official-looking letter out of her history book. "It's from Michigan State. I got an academic scholarship!" Still, her mother looked away, twisting the bangle bracelets around her wrist.

"Your father invited the Pashas to dinner tonight so you could meet their son."

Kendra looked at the letter she held clenched in her fist. She felt her lungs constricting like they did when she rode a roller coaster.

"Your father wants to discuss your dowry with Hamid's family." She stood up and opened the door. "It's our way, Kendra. Don't worry, it's all for the best. You'll see."

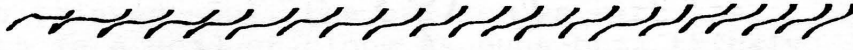
"How can you say that?" Kendra wondered if she was being selfish. She felt her cheeks becoming wet. Angrily, she brushed the tears away. Her mother left to rejoin their guests. "It's my life," she reminded herself. She had lived under her father's control for all of her seventeen years. Now, she was expected to docilely marry someone she barely knew, because it was tradition. She sat debating a long time, reaching out to the phone once or twice, but finally deciding there was no one who could make the decision for her. She

reread the acceptance letter once more before putting it away.


Hoping for a diversion -- anything so she wouldn't have to think about it -- she turned on her radio.

". . . and this concludes our exclusive interview with Madame President Aquino. A true twentieth century woman -- Corazon Aquino -- has liberated her people from tradition into the mainstream of life . . ."

That decided it. She took off the sari, wadding its silken lengths into a ball that she threw into her closet. Putting on jeans and a college sweatshirt, she went downstairs where the lions were hungrily awaiting the Christians.



Haiku



*A deluge of rain  
Quenching the dry, gasping earth  
Life renewed again.*

*Deandra Webb*

JOURNEY

My Will

My Will

My Will

My Will

My Will

My Will

My Will

God's Will

God's Will

God's Will

f COMMENCEMENT

Jim Hillman

A coal black darkness envelopes every fiber of my being, embracing mind with spirit. As I gasp for breath, each burning attempt releases the agony of my screaming chest. My only allies exist in memories . . . and even they haunt me as a cesspool of anguish. Like strangers in a large crowd of people, peace and tranquility elude me. Still, I search.

Climbing the steep incline, I venture a worn pathway. I find relief from my extreme discomfort in knowing that others have made the same pilgrimage. The path mocks me with her strangling ivy of past lies and thorns of failure. Overcast with the troubled shadows of a tainted soul, the sky merges with the earth in a void of gloom as bugs buzz thickly around my skull, annoying my tired flesh. Still, I must continue.

Visions flood my consciousness, drowning me in a turbulent river of self-pity -- water which I must tread in the name of survival. As if by some poetic insight, my nightmares transform into dreams of promise. I finally envision the termination of my lifelong struggle as I reach level land. Discovering both friend and foe, the reality, which granted me darkness, now offers me choice. Standing with clutched fists and awkward balance, I am facing reality. I meet tranquility and peace in a scattered crowd and laugh at my past imprisonments. Still, I remember.

## WHERE ALL THE CRACKER CRUMBS HAVE GONE

Bill Gulde

What was it about today? Was it the rain? The humidity? Why did he feel unhappy? Things were going ok, weren't they? He had no problem getting out of bed. His breakfast had been adequate. None of his friends had angered him. He had received a "E" on his economics test. What was wrong? He looked impatiently at the cafeteria clock. 12:07. Everything was fine. Just two more classes and he could relax. Maybe that's what he needed--rest. No, he had gone to bed early. "Christ," he said under his breath. What would it take to make him happy? A better lunch? A phone call home? A note from the president of the college saying that he did not need to take any more classes today? Or maybe a signal from Emily? Emily. Why had he thought of her? Wasn't he over her yet? No. Emily. He tried to push her out of his thoughts and concentrated on eating his chili. Crackers. That's what this bland chili needed--crackers. Of course, crackers would solve everything. Perhaps, they would even salt up his already dry discontent. Yes, the chili definitely needed crackers. Reaching over to the bench behind him, he grabbed two packages of crackers that were left behind. "How could anyone leave this behind?" he thought. "Geez, you are so weird." Crunching them in his hands, he watched the crumbs fall gently into his bowl of meat, tomato sauce and beans. Suddenly, he began to trace a rather banal and futile topic. Where did all the cracker crumbs go that did not land in his chili? Did some cling desperately to his

pants after he wiped his hands on them? Did some fall to the floor? Where did the crumbs go from there? A dust pan? A trash bag? The Inferno? Obscurity? "God, you really are weird." Who really cared where all the cracker crumbs have gone?

He felt better. Was that all it took? A strange and meaningless thought? He would remember that. With his chili nearly gone and his cup empty, he decided to opt for more water. On his way to the fountain, he bumped into someone.

"Oh, sorry," he said.

"That's ok, John," she said as she reached out to touch his arm.

His head rushed as he noticed it was Emily. Why? Why had she bumped into him? Even worse--why had she touched his arm? Why did she have to touch him? Why? His mind became jumbled, and he searched madly for an audible, intelligible word. She looked at him kindly and told him to have a good day. He took a deep breath and tried in vain to form a sentence, but it was of no use. The only word that came out clearly was "crackers." She smiled pleasantly at him and joined her group of friends at a nearby table.

"Damn," he said, "I blew it." His head was whirling and his thoughts were speeding around the track in his brain as he returned very disillusioned to his seat.

He was fine. Really. All he had to do was forget her. Forget it had happened. Forget that she had touched him. Forget. He put his head between his arms and glanced

almost deliriously at the clock. 12:27. There would be no more classes for him today. How could there be? He had tried to forget her. He had at least tried. His day was ruined.

---

His arms moved mechanically; his left leg swayed violently out of tempo; his hips were gyrating, and his neck snapped in convulsive strikes from the left to the right. What on earth was he doing out on the dance floor? Who had managed to maneuver this feat? He had always been afraid to dance. "Let yourself go," she had told him. "Drop your inhibitions and be yourself." He had listened and would never have been out on this dance floor if she had not coaxed him. Of course, he would have done just about anything for Emily. His friends had brought him with them to this campus night spot. He had not really wanted to go, but his friends told him that he needed to have some fun . . . to loosen up . . . Well, he was here and so was she . . . Emily.

He had seen her the second he walked through the door. She was holding a beer and talking to some friends, but where was her boyfriend? He didn't see him. Maybe, they were finished. He tried not to make it obvious that he was staring at her, but even his friends had noticed it. "Hey, man," his friend Jesse commented, "why don't you ask her to dance?"

"Geez," he mumbled, "am I really that obvious?" She, too, had glanced at him occasionally, and it had been she who asked him to dance. He tried to tell her that he couldn't dance, but she grabbed his arm and pulled him onto the dance floor. Any other

time panic would have seized him. Any other time it would have been difficult for him to instantaneously start dancing. Any other time he would have said no, but not for Emily. No, he would not say "no" this time. He had started dancing by merely snapping his fingers and moving his lower legs to the beat, but she danced far more lively and made him feel stupid by dancing so uninterestingly. Gradually, he began to mimic her and the others around him, adding an assortment of complex steps. She had laughed at some of his movements, and he would sillily add another clownish move just to see her smile. It was her smile that he liked best. It was so . . . so honest. Yes, he would have danced even more madly for Emily if the song had been longer, but it wasn't.

"That was fun!" she smiled. "You know, you are really very good."

"Thanks, I'll audition for the Solid Gold Dancers tomorrow," he laughed. She had laughed with him. Soon, a slow song began to play, and he asked her if she would like to dance. He noticed her hesitation and tried to brace himself for her answer. Was she still tied to her boyfriend? Why did she pause? God, he felt so uncomfortable. Did he really ask that much? What was the difference whether it was a fast or slow dance? He wasn't going to ask her to marry him or anything. He hated this brief silence.

"Sure," she said, "I would like that."

A victory. Yes, this would be a battle in his favor. She had said yes. She had definitely said yes. Trying to regain his composure, he smiled falsely at her, attempting to hide his enthusiasm at his



victory. He grasped her lower back as she grasped his shoulders, pulling the two of them together. Their arms seemed to be twisted and tangled around each other as they swayed slowly to the music. Then, thoughts of security and permanence crept into his mind. Put them out; this is just one dance. How silly to think this could last forever. That only happened in bad novels that his grandmother read, but, oh, if it were true . . .

Soon he began to realize that he had acquired a large lock of her hair in his mouth. He really wasn't enjoying it much, but he was afraid to move his head. He wanted this moment to last for as long as he could make it do so. He would just have to sacrifice, that's all. After all, who knew when he would be slow dancing with Emily again? Her hair wasn't that untasty. Really, it wasn't. He continued to sway slowly with Emily, revolving around an imaginary pivot that controlled their movements. For now, if only for now, everything was absolutely all right.



## Distances of the Hearts

Once so near,  
And now so far.  
How much time has lapsed  
Since the partings of the hearts?

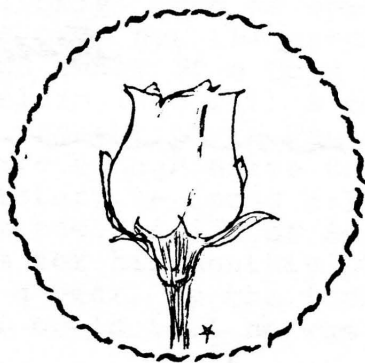
Sometimes icy-cold,  
Sometimes fiery-hot.  
Is this what our love  
Is all about?

Truth and lies...  
How do you tell the difference  
When no one will open up?  
Why does fear do this to us?

Hot and cold,  
Neat and far,  
Honesty and games,  
Is there any compromise?

You are the one that holds  
The answer.

Kari Lynn Wolf



Haiku

Frisps of rushing clouds

Flaxing and waning the moon

Lonely autumn night.

Deirdra Webb

## f GETTING EVEN

David Shaw

He had done it again. Late Monday night, for the fifth time in two weeks, the pizza delivery man knocked at my door.

"Hey, dude, here's that twenty inch Glutton Special with extra cheese ya ordered. That comes to fifteen bucks. Enjoy!"

The pizza was delicious, but these childish pranks had to stop. Whoever was sending me those greasy things would soon pay the price. Using my detective skills and asking a lot of questions, I discovered the secret identity of my adversary. I immediately began plotting my sweet revenge.

Not surprisingly, six weeks later, a package arrived at his house. C.O.D. At first, before he was familiar with the cash on delivery system, he enjoyed the idea of getting a large package. Not knowing what he had received, he paid the delivery man and smiled mindlessly. When he opened the package, his chin hit the ground. Yes, he was now the proud owner of a Chia Pet, that famous porcelain lamb with a coat of alfalfa sprouts. He thought there was a mistake, but he didn't have enough nerve to send it back. A few days later, he found a letter in his mailbox from the Mission of South Africa, thanking him for his monthly pledge of ten dollars for a year. By the look on his face at school, I could tell he was worried.

Over the course of the next few months, he received letters from the Mission. They wanted their pledge money and constantly

reminded him of the starving children. He also received a genuine, official Rambo Survival knife and an electric Silverstone Chinese wok.

You are probably wondering if I felt the least bit guilty about my diabolical deeds. Well, not at all, at least not until he received the infamous Ginsu knife collection. I never understood why he didn't like it. That knife can cut through a tin can and remain razor sharp. I even contemplated ordering one myself.

The next day in class I began to laugh out loud. The person next to me said, "What are you laughing about?" A reasonable question, because no one else seemed to be laughing at the time.

I said, "Do you see that guy in the first row? The one shaking? The one who looks like he's about to have a nervous breakdown? For the last few months, he has been receiving things in the mail. He now has a Chia Pet, a wok, and a survival knife. I think he sent back the Ginsu knife collection. The Mission of South Africa keeps sending him letters -- seems he's not living up to his pledge."

My classmate laughed, "Does he have any idea why he's getting all this stuff?"

"No, but I can't wait to see the look on his face next week when he receives the 'Blue Star of India.' You know, that gaudy piece of jewelry with real diamonoids."

///

## Too Late

Place to place  
Face to face  
But just one heart.  
Wanting to give  
Wanting to fall  
To hearts that already have.  
Wanting to share  
But when I come close  
Impulsively, they back away.  
Choosing the ones  
Whose choosing's been done  
My heart's been given back  
to me.

Kelley Ross



## A TEN-STORY PERCENTAGE

Mark Johnson

Seven o'clock. God, what a night. I hope it's true that males stop growing after age 21. Because, if it's not true, I'm in serious trouble. I mean, living in a Trans-Am is bad enough as it is. If I grow any more, I won't have a place to sleep.

Derros is the name, Nick Derros. I love the way that sounds, you know, kind of like "Bond, James Bond." I'm not an agent, though; I'm a private detective. Actually, my last name isn't really Derros, it's Bartholomew. See, Derros is my mother's maiden name; Bartholomew is my dad's family name. But, I don't like the way it sounds. I mean, come on, "Bartholomew for Hire?" "Bartholomew P.I.?" It just doesn't have it. Derros sounds tough -- like a private eye. Besides, it's easier to remember. Anyway, what's in a name? I mean, any other rose would smell as good, right? Something like that. Who cares anyway?

When I woke up this morning, I started thinking of a case I was on about six months ago. I remember it so well, because it was my first case. I mean my first real case. Yeah, I had other cases before that one, but they were all a joke. Like the one where I had to find this lady's missing dog. How embarrassing! Knocking on people's doors and showing them a picture of a dog who answered to the name of "Pookie." Well, at least I found him, and she paid me well. Look, I wouldn't have even taken the case, but I had to make a car payment. I'll admit, choosing to live in my car hasn't been one of the smarter decisions of my life, but it does have its advantages: no mortgages, no yard

work, no utilities to pay. I even have a phone in here.

You know that reminds me of the time that I had to find a missing BMW. These two sisters, Sondra and Sabrina, hired me to find Sabrina's BMW. Why they didn't go to the police, I'll never know. Now that I think back, those two probably bought it hot, anyway. Well, I found the car in a ditch just outside of L.A. in some little town. Come to find out, it hadn't been stolen. Sondra's ex-boyfriend was mad at her, got drunk, stole the spare set of keys and took off with her car. By the time Sabrina explained all of this to me, Sondra and her ex-boyfriend had made up.

So, as it turned out, Sondra and her boyfriend got married, Sabrina got a brand new BMW, and I got fined fifty dollars for loitering in this little town. Sondra and her boyfriend sent me a wedding invitation. I wasn't going to go, until Sabrina informed me that the drinks were free. Heck, I'd go around the world for a free beer.

At any rate, I remembered my first real case this morning, because of the kind of morning it was: beautiful. It was supposed to be a big day for yours truly. Little did yours truly know that he was going to get more than he bargained for.

See, I was just about to close the lid on my first real case. I mean, I had actually solved a crime -- like a real detective would. Actually, to be honest, I hadn't really done it alone. I received help from Ariel Davenport, a reporter. The Ariel Davenport: pushy, aggressive and ambitious. Everything I've never wanted in a woman. And less.

Well, basically, this is what happened. This lady named Mrs. Alden hired me to find out the truth behind her husband's death. He had "fallen off" the top of a condemned building, apparently suicide. That's what the police report said anyway. But Mrs. Alden said that was impossible, because Mr. Alden was deathly afraid of heights. I could sympathize with the guy, because I have a dread fear of heights myself. What a way to go. Ten stories straight down!

Anyway, Ariel, being the nosy witch that she is, convinced me that we should work together, since neither of us believed that Alden's death was suicide. Against my better judgement, I agreed. So, we questioned everyone who had known Mr. Alden: friends, neighbors and co-workers. Bingo! That's where we hit pay-dirt, so to speak. Tony Foster, Mr. Alden's "friend" and co-worker. Everyone's alibi checked out -- except his.

When Ariel and I found this out, we made another agreement: If I gave her the exclusive inside story with her due share of the credit, she'd make me a hero with all the free publicity I could ever hope for. The plan she came up with was so stupid that I can't believe that I even went along with it. But I was desperate to pay off my car so I really had no other choice.

Believe it or not, the first part of the plan worked like a charm. I lured Foster to the old condemned building, supposedly to confront him and to get him to confess. Soon after, Ariel would arrive with the police, and I would have his confession on tape for evidence.

However, Lady Luck wasn't smiling on me that day. To start off with, I dropped the

tape recorder out of my jacket and broke it. When Tony saw that, he said that he was suspicious of why I had asked him there, and so he came prepared -- with a gun. When I reached for my gun, I remembered that in all the excitement I had left it on the dash in my car. Cool.

You never know just how fast you can run until there's somebody behind you with a gun. I wasn't letting too much grass grow under my feet, trying to get away from ol' Tony.

I never turned around to look behind me; I just kept running. All I could hear was Tony coming up fast behind me. Finally, I had to stop; I had reached the top of the building . . . the end of the line. And there was ol' Tony "Have Gun Will Travel."

I tried to convince him that Ariel was on her way with the police, but he thought that I was only bluffing. I did, too, considering that "Lois Lane" was sure as hell taking her sweet time getting there. Then, he told me to jump. He said that if I didn't, I was as good as dead anyway, so it would be in both our best interest if I did.

I begged and pleaded with him; I even said I'd keep my mouth shut and convince Ariel to do the same, or I'd kill her myself. At that point, I would've said anything to keep him from blowing me away. He wouldn't hear of it though; he just kept yelling at me to jump.

That word kept echoing in my head, and I kept getting dizzy. All of a sudden, it looked as though the sky was spinning, and I just couldn't take it. I started screaming and swinging my arms as hard as I could. I

don't know why, but I didn't know what else to do.

I could feel my clenched fist hitting against Tony Foster's face. Then, I heard the gun hit the roof. Right then, I think I fainted.

When I came to, Ariel was standing over me, crying for me to wake up. There were paramedics and police everywhere; two of them were leading Tony Foster away. Tony was holding his head back and screaming that his nose was broken. There was a little blood on his face and on the handkerchief that he was holding. I was just glad to be alive!

Ariel and I explained everything to the police, and they weren't all that happy about our little plan. Still, they went ahead with an investigation.

Later, it came out at the trial that Tony had been skimming profits off the top of this corporation where he and Mr. Alden had worked. Mr. Alden found out about it and threatened to blow the whistle unless Foster cut him in for a percentage. Foster cut him in all right -- for a ten-story percentage. Foster got rid of him the same way he tried to get rid of me.

Well, the case got my car paid off, but it wasn't the breakthrough that I'd hoped for. After all, I am still sleeping in my car. As for Ariel, the story that she wrote got her national recognition and a spot as a co-anchor on the local news. She was so happy with the way that things turned out that she asked me to marry her. I declined, of course, at least for now. I mean, this car is barely big enough for one person -- let alone two.

If Always Something There  
To Remind Me

"What's wrong?" my friend asks as I sit in the middle of my temporary bedroom floor with piles of clothes around me and an already overstuffed suitcase in front of me.

"I hate packing!" I complain.

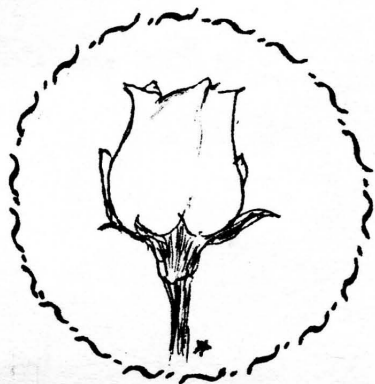
"I know, it's impossible to fit everything in," she says knowingly.

No, I think to myself, everything fits. I just know what packing means. I am leaving once again. I have left places before. I can always go back, but some-

thing is lost before I return.  
Time, maybe. I have my memories. The memories are only of the present. Once time passes the memories change. They become fuzzy and less frequently thought of. Some moments should be preserved forever. But they can never be recaptured — not exactly.

I keep scraps of my past to help me remember. Sometimes I forget how much the scraps were supposed to mean. I have a wishbone that I haven't wished upon yet. I have kept it to remind me to wish on something important. All the wishes I can think of are impossible. Like

to stop time, or to bring a moment back or even a person. I wish I could remember everything exactly. I don't want to leave anymore and lose those moments. Losing time means losing friends and memories. I don't want to lose anything, but I want to gain things too. There's always something there to remind me. My memories. Of good times and bad. People and places. And you, my friend.



J.D.



Understanding

Those who understand others  
Must understand themselves  
first.

For possessing understanding  
Is God's gift to those  
who use it.

Jon Satchwill

