

# The York Review

A Literary Magazine of Poems, Short Stories and Essays

VOL. 1 NO. 1

FALL 1993

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*Taking Care of Estelle*

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*Late March*

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*Postdated*

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*Kindergarten*

by W. GRANT HORNER, II

*Cursed*

by JACQUELINE M. BARNETT

*The Days of Scotch and Hobos*

by KATHRYN "KITSI" WATTERSON

Published by the York College of Pennsylvania Department of English & Humanities

# THE YORK REVIEW

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# The York Review

Volume 1, Number 1 / Fall 1993

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## Editor's Notes

As editor, I am proud to present an issue devoted to quality poetry, and essays written by York College undergraduates, except for a story by Anthony D. Fredericks, a faculty member, and an essay by Kathryn "Kitsi" Waterson, a visiting writer who gave a reading at York during Fall 1992.

## Taking Care of Estelle

JOANNE MATHIAS EMIG

## Light Years

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## Murder in Produce

TIMOTHY M. RESH

## Once Upon a Time. . . .

ANTHONY D. FREDERICKS

## FICTION

Our acceptance rate for this issue was about 30%, offering some good odds for writers when one considers that most literary publications accept fewer than 1% of their submissions. So if you submitted work this year and received no response, do not get discouraged. You are invited to submit your best work next year by submitting your best work next year.

There are many reasons why a manuscript does not make it into our pages. Some of them are: the piece is not ready for publication. However, many of the pieces we returned exhibited potential, but were not quite ready for publication. Some pieces were not ready at all.

For now, the York Review will be published annually. As we develop more support and receive more submissions, we may begin publishing twice a year. But as my good friend and colleague Inez Long, who founded and developed *Burning Glass*, literary magazine at McCaskey High School in Lancaster County, says, "Just take one small step at a time." And so we will.

I want to thank the following people for their support and suggestions: Edward T. Miller, William "Chip" Miller, Colin Falk, Inez Long, Billie Walker, and Billie Walker. The York Review is a project of the York College Writing Center, which has encouraged more college writers to submit their work and hope to see more submissions for next issue.

## POETRY

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# THE YORK REVIEW

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### *Special Acknowledgment:*

The English and Humanities Department of York College acknowledges with gratitude the financial and moral support provided by the late John Terpak and Bob Hoffman of York Barbell for their long-term sponsorship of the annual Bob Hoffman Writing Awards Contest which has encouraged a generation or more of college writers at this institution.

EDWARD T. JONES, *Chair*

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## Editor's Notes

Welcome to the premiere issue of *The York Review*. As editor, I am proud to present to you an issue devoted to quality fiction, poetry, and essays written by York College undergraduates, except for a story by Anthony D. Fredericks, a faculty member, and an essay by Kathryn "Kitsi" Watterson, a visiting writer who gave a reading at York during Fall 1992.

I have always felt that our community has, within its ranks, the talent and ability to sustain a literary magazine of quality. In my six years as Writing Center instructor, I have worked with hundreds of students, many of whom--with varying degrees of effort--have developed into fine writers. And, many times, I would say to myself: if only others in our community could share in this exciting work.

Then, during Fall 1992, when I taught Interdisciplinary Writing, I discovered a wealth of talent in my 10 students. Through a "re-vision" (hyphen intentional) process, they were able to come up with an impressive body of work. (Two of those students, Joanne Mathias Emig and Mark D. Pisco, have pieces published in this issue.) Therefore, I sensed that the time was right for a York College literary magazine and volunteered to help get this project started. Dr. Edward T. Jones, Chairperson of the English and Humanities Department, agreed and has been extremely supportive in helping me to fulfill this vision.

*The York Review* is a juried magazine, which means that not every submission will be accepted for publication.

Our acceptance rate for this issue was about 30%, offering some good odds for writers when one considers that most national publications accept fewer than 1% of their submissions. So if you submitted work this year and received your manuscript back, do not get discouraged: try again for next issue by submitting your *best* work (see page 51 for submission guidelines).

There are many reasons why a manuscript did not make it into our pages this time: in some cases, good work, because of space limitations, simply did not make the final cut. However, many of the pieces that we returned exhibited potential, but were not quite ready for publication. Some pieces were not ready at all.

For now, *The York Review* will be published annually. As we develop more support staff and receive more manuscripts, we may begin publishing twice a year. But as my good friend and colleague Inez Long, who founded and developed *Burning Glass*, literary magazine at McCaskey High School in Lancaster County, says, "Just take one small step at a time." And so we will.

I want to thank the following people for their support and suggestions: Edward T. Jones, William "Chip" Miller, Colin Falck, Sandra Coy, Linda Ardison, Inez Long, Jill Miller, Joanne Mathias Emig, Billie Walker, and Jerry Siegel.

Finally, I wish to thank everyone, faculty and students alike, who submitted stories, poems, and essays to the magazine. I enjoyed reading your work and hope to see more submissions for next issue.

## Taking Care of Estelle

by

JOANNE MATHIAS EMIG

"Mom, Sheila and I have been talking. It's not right for you to be here alone all day while we're at work. . ." He stopped and filled his mouth with meat loaf.

*Please, God, not a home, I'm only 70, I'm alert, I'm healthy.* Estelle's pleasant expression did not change as she waited for her son to continue.

Sheila covered Estelle's hand with her own and spoke slowly and clearly. "What Don means is that there was something in the paper yesterday that we thought might be right for you--wait, I'll get it." She left the table and Estelle sat up eagerly. She'd seen the article, too, but she hadn't dreamed that Donald and Sheila would make the connection, that they would realize she wanted to--

"Here it is!" Sheila announced, returning with a section of the paper.

The wrong section.

"Listen, Mother: 'The Community Center, in conjunction with Golden Acres Retirement Lodge, now offers an Elder Care program, Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The seniors are served nutritious meals and snacks, and participate in bingo, crafts, and sing-alongs. There are

rest periods with facilities for napping, and trained medical personnel are on hand at all times.' What do you think?"

*I think you should stop treating me like one of your second-grade students.* "It sounds--nice. Is it expensive?"

Thirty-five dollars a week," Don replied. "That isn't bad; only \$7.00 a day."

*I'm a real bargain, aren't I?* Estelle pushed some peas into her mashed potatoes and smashed them with the flat of her fork. "When would I start?"

"Tomorrow morning. I'll drop you off on my way to the store, around seven, and Sheila will pick you up after school."

*So everything's already been decided.* "It sounds lovely, children. Thank you for thinking of me."

Sheila smiled her story-time smile and patted Estelle's hand again. Don grinned and dug into his meal with the gusto of a man who's disposed of a difficult problem.

Later in her bedroom, Estelle smoothed out the Living Today section she'd rescued from the recycling bin. There was the story on the first page--how could the

## JOANNE MATHIAS EMIG

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children have missed it? That was an easy one. Even if they did see it, they wouldn't think it had anything to do with *her*.

She shook her head, wondering how she had managed to raise a son like Donald. Well, that was easy, too: Donald was his father's son. Certainly Nicholas had loved her, but she'd learned early not to expect nonsense gifts on small occasions, or surprise hugs while she washed the dishes. In Nicholas's mind, the secure home he'd provided with his 18-hour days at the plumbing-supply store should have been proof enough of his love. And it was--oh, it was, but . . .

With shaking hands, she tore out the article and folded it neatly. Somehow, she would have to make Donald understand--

"Mom?" Don's voice came through the door. "Want to come down and watch a video with us? Sheila's making popcorn."

*Popcorn! With these dentures?* "In a minute, dear." As she was putting the article into her purse, she noticed the word-for-the-day on the back. "Sub•or•di•nate: subject to the authority or control of another." She dropped the article inside and snapped the purse shut. "Subordinate," she repeated softly. "First to my parents, then to my husband, and now to my son. I'm 70! When do I get a turn?"

The movie had started when Estelle joined Don and Sheila in the living room. She didn't bother asking what she'd missed; their movies never made much sense anyway. This one seemed to be about a secretary trying to get her boss's job. "Who is that woman?" Estelle asked. "Wasn't she in that gorilla movie you rented last week?"

"Her name's Sigourney Weaver," Don answered, not taking his eyes from the screen.

"I think Sigourney's a beautiful name--much nicer than Sheila," Sheila said.

*How would you like to go through life as 'Estelle'?* "Isn't the other one married to that *Miami Vice* actor?"

Sheila beamed at her. "Very good, Mother. How alert of you to notice and remember."

Don shushed them, and Estelle sank back in her chair, chewing at her lip until it bled.

Mentally, she rehearsed ways to bring up the Elder Care topic so she could offer her own suggestion in its place. She turned to Donald, and caught his rapt expression as he stared at the screen. She'd known not to interrupt Nicholas either when he had that look. *I never thought I'd miss commercials, but at least they allowed for a few minutes of conversation every hour!*

Estelle sighed, then tried to pick up the thread of the plot. The secretary was now on her knees helping the boss with her ski boots, while the boss urged her not to sit back and wish for what she wanted, but to go out and make it happen.

*Go out and--make it happen?*

Estelle sat quietly a while longer, then said, "If I'm riding in with Donald in the morning, I'd better just go off to bed after all."

"But don't you want to see how this ends?" Sheila asked.

Estelle started up the stairs. "The secretary gets the job and the boyfriend, and everybody but the mean boss lives happily



ever after. They haven't changed that formula since the thirties."

In her room, Estelle opened her purse and read again the article she'd saved. *Go out and make it happen*--it sounded simple enough. But did she dare?

Don pulled up outside the Community Center and snapped on the four-way flashers, but didn't shut off the engine. "Listen, Mom, I know we kind of sprung this on you--"

"I understand, Donald. You're stuck late at the store sometimes, and when Sheila has parents' conferences, she's late, too. You worry, and this will ease your minds."

"But this is for you, Mom," he insisted. He came around to her side of the car, but she was already out. "Give it a few weeks--you'll be surprised how much fun you'll have."

"Look, Donald, there's a bus stop right in front. I could go home early and have dinner ready when--"

"Absolutely not!" he thundered, ushering her into the lobby. "I want to know that you're being looked after. I won't have you wandering around town, God knows where, on your own."

*Oh, you won't, won't you?* "I guess you're right, dear."

A stout young woman with fiery curls and a face full of freckles approached them. She wore a blue polyester pants suit with a plastic name tag that read "Tori Faras, RN." "Good morning," she said, smiling at Don. "Are you looking for Elder Care?"

"Yes. I'm Donald Raymond, and I called yesterday about my mother--"

She consulted a clipboard. "Oh, yes, Estelle Raymond; her registration sheet is right here. I need a bit more information from you, though. Is she on a special diet?"

"No, she isn't," Don answered.

Estelle chewed the sore spot on her lip.

"Is she taking any medications?"

"No, she isn't," Estelle mimicked before Don could open his mouth. "Is there anything else you need to know about *her*?"

The woman blinked at Estelle in surprise, then broke into warm laughter. "I am sorry, Mrs. Raymond. I worked late duty in the critical care ward, and it's hard to shift gears." She turned to Don. "I'll just get the rest of what I need from your mother."

"If you're sure--" He kissed Estelle's cheek and headed for the door. "Sheila will pick you up--"

"After school; I remember."

He waved and left without a backward glance.

"Okay, Mrs. Raymond. I'm Tori. Now let's get you settled."

Estelle followed her into what appeared to be a converted storage area. Brilliant fluorescent lighting showed beige walls, with visible patches where bolts had once held shelving; there were no windows. Assorted cast-off furniture was scattered about. Card tables along the far wall apparently doubled as dining room and crafts center. Estelle saw half a dozen grizzled heads bent over breakfast trays; a volunteer was spooning something into one man's mouth.

"A little bleak, I know," Tori said.

## JOANNE MATHIAS EMIG

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"We hope to have a better place soon, but for now this was all we could get. But we do have a kitchen, and volunteers to help with meals."

"And facilities for napping, I've been told."

"Yes, there are cots across the hall--" Tori's deep brown eyes held Estelle's sharp blue ones for a moment. "But you don't really care about that, do you?"

"My son means well," Estelle said. "He wants what he thinks is best for me."

Tori started to speak, but voices in the lobby caught her attention. "Someone just came in. Have your breakfast, and I'll get back to you later, okay?"

Estelle sat down next to the man being fed. He smiled with half a face as the volunteer urged, "Come on, Mr. Markle, just a few more bites."

Another volunteer set a tray before her: a bowl of oatmeal, half a banana, two prunes in a dish, and a cup for tea or coffee. Estelle picked up her spoon and sighed, remembering the cheese omelette and English muffin with boysenberry jam she'd made for herself the day before.

She was weaving yarn loops over a plastic form, making a green and purple potholder for Sheila (*it will serve her right!*) when Tori dropped into the seat beside her.

"Mrs. Raymond, I've checked your chart. Your son told the admitting clerk that--"

"Admitting clerk! Have I been committed?"

"You didn't let me finish. Your son told the clerk who registered you for Elder

Care"--Tori smiled--"that he was afraid you'd hurt yourself or wander off if you were left alone. But I've been watching you all morning, and I don't see any signs of incompetency. Want to talk about it?"

Estelle glanced around the room, and Tori followed her gaze. Six women were weaving potholders; four men were making wallets with packaged kits. A volunteer was helping someone to the nap room across the hall.

"Come on," Tori said. "I'm on break; let's take a walk."

Estelle followed her down the hall and out the back door to a small lawn with two benches facing each other across a round rose bed.

"How lovely," Estelle said, bending to sniff a fading blossom. "Why don't you bring the people out here for some fresh air and sunshine?"

Tori smiled wryly. "We'd like to. But the board of the retirement center doesn't think it's a good idea. The cool air might aggravate someone's arthritis, or someone might fall down, or get stung, or--" She shrugged. "Now, what's going on with you? There's no way you belong here with Mr. Markle and the others."

Estelle drew her sweater tighter around her shoulders. "My son--Donald--likes to know things are in order. If I'm here, he can concentrate on running the store without having to wonder whether I've eaten lunch or electrocuted myself with the coffeepot."

"You remind me of my grandmother," Tori said. "She was 90, and as feisty as they come, until. . ."

Estelle waited, but Tori just stared at the roses and didn't finish her thought.

"Tori, you said you looked at my chart. Did Donald pay far in advance?"

"Yes," she answered absently. "He charged three months' fees to his credit card--" Tori stopped, then looked at Estelle in exasperation.

"I promise I won't tell anyone you told me. I need an ally here, and you're the most likely one."

Tori's eyes narrowed. "What are you plotting?"

"Nothing illegal, I assure you." She pulled the article from her sweater pocket. "This is what I want to do with my time, not weave potholders and sing 'Home on the Range!'"

"THESE FRESHMEN ARE REALLY 'SENIORS,'" Tori read. "When was this in the paper? I missed it."

"Day before yesterday. The point of the article is that eight members of the freshman class at Cavalier College are over 60; the oldest is 84!"

"You want to go to *college*? I think that's great! Why don't you do it? It would be more stimulating for you than sitting around here all day."

"You don't understand. Sheila--Donald's wife--thinks I'm seven years old, and Donald--well, he takes after his father. In 47 years of marriage, it never crossed Nicholas's mind that I might have wanted something more than being a wife and mother--" Her voice broke. "But maybe I've interfered with the children's plans, too. When Nicholas died three years ago, they moved me into the room that would have

been their nursery."

"Well, I don't think what you want to do is so terrible," Tori said as they walked back inside. "I'm not sure how much help I can be, though. I can't leave here--I'm part of the 'trained medical personnel,' you know."

"Can you get me a bus schedule? I'm sure there must be a connection from here to the college."

"I can do that," Tori said. "On one condition: let the doctor give you a complete physical. If he says you're okay, I'll bring the schedule."

"Agreed," Estelle said, and clasped Tori's hand firmly.

"How did it go?" Sheila asked as she opened the car door for Estelle.

"Just fine." She held out the potholder as Sheila got behind the wheel. "I made this for you."

"How--colorful," Sheila said, pulling away from the curb. "The classes are going to be fun, aren't they?"

"Yes, I believe they are." *I can't wait to start.*

Estelle stepped off the bus and looked around the campus in dismay. A leaf-strewn lawn stretched a full block in front of her; two- and three-story brick buildings loomed along three sides. It hadn't seemed so large when she'd driven by in the past. Where on earth was the administration building?

She'd taken only a few steps when she became aware of the denim-clad young people of assorted gender who'd come off

## JOANNE MATHIAS EMIG

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the bus with her. Instinctively she clutched her purse tighter.

"Need help, Grandma?" asked a young man with a head shaved bare on either side of a long ponytail.

"I'm looking for the registrar--and the next time you see your *real* grandmother, give her my sympathy!"

"Ouch!" he said, and looked at her with grudging respect. "Another senior-freshman, huh? Well, you want Scheduling; it's the second building on the left." As he ran to catch up with his friends, he turned and grinned impudently. "Good luck, Granny--see you in class!"

*Wish I knew what he's taking--I'd choose something else!*

Finding the Scheduling counter at least, Estelle tapped the bell to gain someone's attention. "Hello," she said to the woman who appeared. "I'd like to register for some courses. Or is it too late?"

The woman smiled. "Not at all. Some classes have begun, but most start over the next few days. What did you have in mind? Full-time? Part-time?"

"Actually, I never thought I'd get this far. Part-time, I suppose--maybe two classes? That meet between 9:00 and 2:00?"

The woman turned to a computer terminal and punched some keys. "Of the classes that aren't filled, Ancient History, Physics, Latin, Creative Writing, and Anthropology all fall within that time frame."

"May I have an application, please?" Estelle asked, groping for her wallet. "You do take Visa, don't you?"

"This Elder Care program is working wonders with you," Don commented several weeks later. "I don't know when I've seen you so bright and peppy. We should have started something like this ages ago."

"I agree, dear, I agree," Estelle murmured as she left the car.

Don reached into the back seat. "Don't forget your crafts tote. Damn, this is heavy. What's in here, anyway?"

"Just yarn, pattern books--" *Latin workbook, anthropology text*--quilt patches, a sewing kit. . . "

"Those sewing supplies you donated are a big help," Tori said, placing a cup of tea by Estelle's notebook. "How are the classes going?"

"Latin is easier than I expected--the vocabulary is based on the same root words, prefixes, and suffixes I learned as a child. Anthropology is more difficult, but the time frame makes me feel young--that is, until the professor starts talking about how helpful some bit of knowledge will be 'in the future.'"

"Are they giving you a hard time about your age?"

"No. But no one's asked me what career I've chosen either."

Tori gave Estelle's shoulder a squeeze, then went to help Mr. Markle into the nap room.

Estelle sipped the tea and reviewed her scheme. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays she said goodbye to Donald, had breakfast at the Center, then caught the 8:15 bus to the college. Latin at 9:00, Anthropology at 10:30, then back to the

Center for lunch and study time until Sheila picked her up. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, she helped the volunteers with the meals and activities. Once a week, the doctor checked her blood pressure and heart rate to make sure she wasn't overtaxing herself.

The Center staff were supportive, the other Elder Care residents were envious, her professors admired her, most of the other students accepted her, and she felt better than she had in years. She was making it happen.

*Nicholas, if you could see me now--*

When Estelle stepped off the bus the following Wednesday afternoon, she was shocked to see Donald's car parked in the handicapped space outside the Center. Tori was hovering near the door, waiting for her.

"What's happened? Was there an accident? Sheila--?"

"No, no, nothing like that. He's looking for you--"

Don appeared from the Elder Care room, the doctor on his heels. "Where the hell have you been? business was dead, so I closed up early--thought I'd pick you up to save Sheila the trip. You weren't even here! I'll sue this place, I swear to God I will!"

"Shut up, Donald," his mother said. "You aren't suing anyone, and you know it."

Don closed his eyes and took a deep breath. "I was worried, Mom. Where were you? Why did they let you wander away like that?"

"Come along, Donald, and sit down. This will take a while, and I haven't had my lunch yet."

Over tuna sandwiches and tomato

soup, Estelle explained what she'd been doing. "And I love it," she ended fervently. "My Latin professor says I'm one of his best students--the kids joke that I'm doing so well because I learned it as a child! They're teasing me, Donald. They like me--*I'm one of them*, can you understand that?"

"Teasing you? Or laughing at you? Mom, you're 70!"

"I know perfectly well how old I am. And maybe they are laughing at me. I don't care. This is something I've wanted all my life. Yes, Donald, *all my life!* When I asked my father if I could go to college, he told me I was lucky he'd let me graduate high school. A lot of girls back then didn't, you know. I married your father when I was 19. He started that plumbing supply shop, and that was enough for him. I never even told him my dream--he wouldn't have understood. He'd have thought I didn't love him, that the life he'd provided for me was inadequate. Well, in that sense, it *was*. Who do you think subscribed to *The Atlantic* and *The New York Times Book Review*? Did you ever see your father reading them? For that matter, did *you* ever read them?"

Don shook his head. "Why didn't you mention this before?"

She carefully placed the salt and pepper shakers next to the sugar bowl. "I don't know."

"I never thought--What's so funny, Mom? I'm trying to tell you that--I think I understand, but, well, sneaking across town, and that schedule--is it wise, at your age?"

"Dr. Alexander examines me every week, and he says my blood pressure has improved since I started these classes. I

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might even live long enough to graduate. Because I am going to continue, Donald, whether you agree or not. I'll move into one of the dorms if I have to."

Donald looked at the doctor, who nodded his approval. "Does that mean you don't want to come here any more?"

"Heavens, no! This schedule works fine for me, and I'll still be under medical supervision for your peace of mind."

Besides, I help the volunteers on the days I don't have class."

"I give up, Mom. What can I say?"

"Say you won't get angry when your Visa bill comes--I borrowed your card a few weeks ago to pay my tuition."

*(Hoffman Award Winner 1993)*

## An Uncertain Future

by

MARK D. PISCO

Riding down the block in my red convertible,  
I look in the glove compartment and see the black polished gun.  
Then glancing down the road  
near the 7/Eleven I see my girlfriend,  
and once again she talks about the future  
wondering where we would be if we had finished school.

Brownsville High is where we both went to school.  
I'd always arrive late and screech into the parking lot in my red  
convertible,

Caring for the present and certainly not the future.  
That was a big mistake, you see, because one day I used my gun  
on another guy that was looking at my girlfriend,  
and I dropped his carcass off on the side of the road.

My girl yells at me, and I look once more at the road,  
thinking about the yellow lines and how they coincide with  
school. The lines are straight just like the structure of school,  
nothing is extraordinary. That's something that I and my girlfriend  
could never understand. I would drive my convertible  
off the side of the road, rocks shooting off like my gun,  
killing that bastard. That meant my future

was clouded like an impending storm. What about the future?  
I think to myself as I look down this black road,  
*could it be different if I hadn't used that gun*  
*like some madman?* I could have gone to a trade school  
to become an auto mechanic to fix a Chevy or perhaps a convertible  
or maybe a Rolls Royce. But instead my girlfriend

## MARK D. PISCO

---

waited 10 years while I rotted away like some stinking corpse. I  
often wonder why my girlfriend  
would do something like that because she had a future,  
she could have been a model and posed in *Playboy* wearing a scanty outfit  
while leaning on a convertible.  
But instead she stuck it out. It's twilight now and we pull off the  
side of the road,  
and glance at a campus where the school  
students are having the best time of their lives. I look at this  
and pull out my gun,

it looks so nice in the twilight shining like some lighthouse beacon.  
I take the gun  
and look at it invitingly like my girlfriend  
is doing now at me. I know what to do now, so I pull up to the  
school  
thinking to myself, *if I can't have a future,*  
*neither can they.* But before I do anything, I look down at the  
road  
as if it's trying to tell me something. . . and it is because I notice  
that my convertible

is outside the lines, and on the dirt path of the school. I know  
now that my future  
isn't so bad after all. I throw out my gun and look at my  
girlfriend.  
We step out on this road and walk towards the students, leaving  
behind the convertible  
in search of a new beginning. . . .

(Hoffman Award Winner 1993)



## *They Say It Happens Everywhere*

by

LAUREL

Cathy was my best friend all through high school, maid-of-honor at my wedding three years after we graduated. We were always together, resembled each other, and people always asked if we were sisters.

Her parents were alcoholics, slovenly, unkempt, unable to keep or keep after anything. . . jobs, house, kids, themselves. Coming from that background, Cathy probably never even had a chance. Her mother hated me, said I talked Cathy into doing bad shit, got her into trouble. Cathy always told me I kept her out of trouble and kept her away from the really bad kids. I took no prizes for common sense or good behavior in those days, but I could tell dangerous from just "fast," and tried to keep out of the worst of it.

Cathy often was grounded for going away with me, wasn't even allowed to talk about me around her mother. I think her dad liked me, he always schemed with Cathy to help her go away with me. My parents, however, always liked Cathy, and often invited her to supper or to stay over at our house if we went to a concert that ran late.

Even my grandmother invited Cathy to eat and visit with her. Cathy one time said she'd move in quick if my parents ever offered to take her in.

She wrote poetry, not neatly cadenced, rhyming stuff, but stark, emotion-laden lines that could sink long nails in your guts and twist them around. Some of it was just bitching about her parents, but, when Cathy was on the extremely dark end of a mood swing, she could cut deeply. Self-inflicted wounds, gouged with a green pen. I still don't know that I'd even now understand them, but I recognized the pain and anger caught on those pages. I wonder if they were good. Her sister has them now.

She always gravitated towards the abusive boys in school. She'd tell me they beat her and made her do things she didn't want to do, took her money and told her what to do and who to see. I'd talk, then yell, then rage at her, telling her she didn't have to accept that kind of treatment from anyone. "But I love him!" "Bullshit, we're in high school, you don't love him, you want to get in his pants! It's all hormones."

There was one in particular: she'd break up with him, go back, then dump him again. He'd always treat her bad. I harassed her for months to just stay away from him, and I finally persuaded her she really didn't have to put up with what he did. When she told him, "Later--for good," and he found out I'd play a part in ruining his fun, he swore he'd get me. "Go for it," I said, "I'll hit back." I carried a knife for a while after that, but beyond dirty looks when he saw me, but nothing ever happened. He later married another dumb girl and liked to put cigarettes out on his pregnant wife and turn her out for all his drunken friends. He was tied in with at least three murders or alleged suicides, but there was always a fall-guy, and he never did time for any of those, although he was in York County prison for theft and robbery.

Cathy mocked men who treated her good, called them pussies when she pushed them hard and they didn't lose their tempers. She couldn't accept a man who loved her and did things for her, and always told me about going out with other guys on the side. I couldn't understand the mind-set, why cruelty was necessary in her relationships.

She met this junkie at work, moved into an apartment off of Richland Avenue with him shortly after. When she told me he did heroin and cocaine, I tried to convince her that this wasn't the place for her, but she didn't want to hear it. I'd visit her; she'd try to hide the needle marks because she knew I'd bitch her out for using, but I saw. She'd always been drawn to needles, and the

concept of being stupid from drugs seemed to have a fascination for her. It was the late seventies, and even in a rural place like York, nearly everyone did drugs, so I wasn't shocked about that, but I did not like it. I was recently married, caught up in renovating our old farmhouse, and, gradually, visits became phone calls, phone calls became more infrequent, and we weren't as close anymore. I'd become frustrated with what I knew was happening to her and her apparent desire for self-destruction. I regret every day that I didn't fight harder. They were her choices, but I'd been influential enough before to pull her away from what I knew would harm her. I should have kept trying.

The last Christmas card I sent her had, tucked inside, snowflakes I'd made for her. I cut delicate, intricate designs, and the snowflakes catch everyone's attention. She was so delighted with hers, she taped them up on her kitchen window. More than a year later, she still had them there when that useless junkie blew her away as she slept. She was 24, and when we last spoke, she was trying to save enough money to buy a car and move away from him.

They'd had a fight. She was tired of him stealing her money she saved for the rent or for buying a car. She'd hide it, he'd hunt for and find it, then beat her for hiding it from him. He sold drugs from their apartment, and the neighbors told police there were always strange men coming around at all hours, implying that Cathy was whoring. She was weary of his being who

and what he was, and told him she wanted to move out. She lay down on a cot in the living room to sleep, her big Manx cat beside her. He claims he was cleaning his gun in the kitchen and it just went off.

On a dreary, rainy morning, late in March, she was cremated in the gown she wore in my wedding. The mortician had to arrange her just so in the casket: one side of her head wasn't there anymore. Although the funeral was here in York, no one from our graduating class showed up at her funeral, none of our old friends and hell-raising buddies could be bothered.

Her murderer weaseled out of the charges on technicalities, with his alcoholic mother swearing that her boy was not responsible for Cathy's death. He spent some time in prison, until he got out on appeal. I expect that one day I will see him on the street.

On April 1, I went to the apartment to pick up a few things. Cathy had hung several of my drawings and paintings up wherever she'd lived, and I wanted those. She had some of my books and jewelry. Her Manx came to live with me and my husband. The cat died last May, 13 years old, and he'd never gotten over his fear of guns. When my husband took his hunting things out, the cat would sniff and inspect everything, but when the gun came out of the case, the cat would flatten himself close to the floor and scurry, wide-eyed with fear, under the nearest bed. I wish he could have testified at the trial, I think he could have been most persuasive.

I left the snowflakes taped to the window.

*(Hoffman Award Winner 1993)*

## *Light Years*

by

LESLIE KILHEFNER

She stepped out of the store and into the rain, forgetting to keep her eyes focused downward. Meryl had trained herself long ago not to look around on rainy days, especially in parking lots, because chances were good that at least one car would have its lights on. But today there was something else on her mind: had she just touched the cashier's hand with the same hand she used to scratch her nose; what if she gave the cashier germs and made her sick? Retracing her movements at the cash register in her mind, Meryl walked out into the parking lot and almost immediately spotted a car with its lights on.

Oh crap. She felt that familiar pang in her stomach again. O.K. She'd be O.K. If she just took a breath and made it to her car, everything would work out. Heading toward her car, Meryl averted her eyes to the wet macadam of the parking lot to avoid the glare of any more car lights. Then it occurred to her. What if that other car wasn't empty? What if its engine was still running? She stopped walking and quickly glanced in the direction of the car. But no one could be seen inside, and no exhaust puffed out of it. It was just another abandoned car with its lights on. How many of these had she encountered in her 25 years

of living? Meryl told herself to keep on going, not to attract attention by standing in the middle of a parking lot, staring at a car. If she could only make it to her car, she would be able to think.

Reaching out a nervous hand, Meryl managed to unlock her car door and plop into the front seat. She immediately covered her face with tensed fingers and began to concentrate. She could go try the doors of the other car, and if they were unlocked, simply reach in and turn off the lights. But what if there was a car alarm? Or a dog? And suppose the doors were locked--what then?

She would have to memorize the make of the car and license plate and then walk all the way back to the store, find the office, and report it. People would surely notice that she had left the store and gotten into her car only to turn around and go back inside again. She knew they would whisper about her and stare at her, suspecting her of being some sort of loon when really she was only doing the right thing. They were the ones who had ignored the car in the lot, not caring at all if the battery went dead.

She, on the other hand, felt somehow responsible for the car. Her dad always taught her to turn off lights at home.

"We're not made of money," he always would scold. "I half believe you purposely leave lights on just to waste my money. The electric bill isn't the only one I have to pay, young lady. If you don't shape up, I'm going to start making you pay." Meryl wasn't quite sure how he meant she would pay, but she had a feeling he wasn't just talking finances. When she looked at the car, she thought of her dad. Wasn't ignoring the car the same as purposely turning its lights on so the battery would die? She didn't know anymore. Just to be safe, she should report the car.

Then another idea came to her. Perhaps the car's owner had just run into the store for one or two items and would return in no time. The battery couldn't go dead that quickly, and everything would be fine. She started to relax, slouching a bit in her seat, but sat up rigidly as another thought began to disturb her. What if it was an employee's car? The battery was sure to be dead by the time the store closed. She really should go try the doors or report it to the store's office. How long could it take her simply to walk back in the store and tell someone that a car in the parking lot had its lights on? But people would laugh at her. If she'd report the car to the store's office, the people working there would snicker behind her back as she walked away. They'd probably ignore what she told them and not even bother making an announcement over the loudspeaker.

Looking again at the car with its lights on, to see if the owner had returned in the meantime, Meryl was surprised to see another car pull up and park next to it. Two

women got out, and as they walked past the abandoned car, they noticed its lights were on. The older woman of the two examined the car, but didn't try the doors. Then they headed into the store, and Meryl thought surely they would report the car to the office. Why else would the one woman have studied it so? Not giving herself time to change her mind, Meryl started up her car and pulled out of her parking space. She took one more glance at the yellow headlights of the other car before driving out of the lot.

As she waited at a red light outside of the shopping center, Meryl began to think about the car in the parking lot again. Maybe those women wouldn't report it after all. What then? Her stomach ached. No, everything would be O.K. The car was in a public place. The owner of it would always be able to call someone for help from a pay phone in the shopping center. The traffic light turned green, and Meryl forced herself to start on her way home.

As she continued driving, though, she couldn't keep from thinking that she should have done something. She could have followed those women into the store and pretended to shop while listening for the announcement that there was a car in the lot with its lights on. If the announcement never came, then she could have reported the car to the office. Now it was too late to know if the women reported the car; the announcement would have been broadcast already. But she could always turn around and drive around the parking lot to see if the car lights were turned off. If they were off, she would know that the announcement had

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been made. Then everything would be O.K., and she wouldn't be responsible for the car anymore.

Meryl decided to turn around at the next side street and go back. She was disappointed in herself for driving away in the first place and not reporting the car right away. Now she would waste gas in going back, and her dad hated when people wasted resources. According to him, "It's just plain irresponsible to waste things. People should think more and waste less."

As Meryl turned into a side street to make a U-turn, she noticed a car parked along the street with its lights on. A sharp pain shot through her stomach. Should she stop and check its door or should she return to the other car in the shopping center first? But what if she goes back, reports the car to the office, and as she's leaving, sees another car with its lights on? She pulled her car over to the side curb and turned off the engine. She needed to think. Putting her hands to her face and pressing her palms against her cheeks, she tried to concentrate.

Why did she always have to spot abandoned cars with their lights on? Was this her payment for being irresponsible at home? Is this what her dad meant?

Meryl's head began to ache, and clutching her hands around the back of her neck, elbows bent on either side of her head, she began to softly whimper. She knew she should go back to the shopping center and report the car. But she didn't know what car to take care of first--the one on this side street or the one in the parking lot. She had to concentrate. The shopping center wasn't far away. She should go back there first and then take care of the car on this street. Sighing and wiping her face with rigid fingers, she decided to head back to the parking lot. Yes, it would be O.K. now; she had turned around before it was too late. Everything could be fixed. She hadn't gone too far.

*(Hoffman Award Winner 1993)*

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## Cursed

by

JACQUELINE M. BARNETT

Scattered rows of huts  
form dots along the barren plain.  
Children no longer shout and play among the mud-fixed homes.  
Oh, a child can be spotted at the water's edge,  
fishing out paper, cans, and waste.  
But this could not be called "playing."  
Silence replaces laughter.

A few women who are left sit together by the river.  
One cries for the baby she held only yesterday,  
the infant whose only hope had clung  
to the milk its mother could not give.

A handful of men sit around the earthen pit  
that was once used to cook food.  
One holds the hunting spear  
he will never give to his son.  
Even though they sit in a group,  
each man is alone with his shame.

The land is cold  
although it burns with heat from the sun.  
Slowly, the birds gather and await the feast tonight.  
And as the sun crosses over into the next world,  
its beams grow brighter and more vibrant  
while it leaves the survivors behind in darkness.

*(Hoffman Award Winner 1993)*

## Fear of Trampolining

by

JANE CACCIOLA

The arrival of children, at least within cases I am most intimately connected, is not positively correlated to auxiliary cash reserves with worldwide travel. I state this sadly, because if there is one time you could profit from a change of scenery, this surely would be it. I suppose those unfettered by hearth and home and the innumerable restraints thereof have an obligation to take full advantage of their freedom, leaving those shackled hacking in the dust. Could it be, however, those shackled are not really hacking, but instead happy as clams? Seventy-five-step swing set assembly and prospects of lofty tree-house construction can easily transport even the most stagnant immobile parent into unexplored realms. Although my own travel has been thus curbed to such invaluable journeys, I can only hope to impart to my children both the wonder of travel and the courage to venture beyond one's own confines to discover life's exciting possibilities as well as oneself along the way. The vulnerability inherent in striking out on one's own for distant shores is the risk worth taking. No one ever told me that. As I reminisce and ponder on that first strange solo flight nearly 20 years ago,

I can only figure that once the fears of flying, living, and loving are past, one can enjoy the ride.

Trampolining never was my sport, but in 1971, after I enrolled in a college gymnastics class, I envisioned either a sudden painful death or spinal injuries with a lifetime of paralysis, neck braces, wheel chairs, and round-the-clock physical therapists. Out of sheer fright, I dropped the course after one hour, taking French 107 instead, hoping that at some future date foreign travel would lead me to places where fluency in the language would come in handy. Two semesters later, my extensive repertoire consisted of numerous valuable conversational French phrases like, *Garçon, un petit déjeuner, s'il vous plaît*, ("Waiter, one breakfast, please."), *Imbécile, vous avez perdu ma valise!* ("Fool, you have lost my suitcase!") or the ever popular *Et oui! Les cowboys sont beaux et ils sont braves*, ("Yes indeed! The cowboys are handsome and brave."). Furthermore, I could boast a spinal column which had remained intact right through the final exam.



Having been reared in one of those paranoid familial environments where every normal event caused great anxiety and panic attacks, and every possible rotten outcome was assumed likely to happen, the insanity was harder to shake than I thought. Upon breaking the grips of those loving yet paranoid perennial house dwellers, I fought this "do not live or you might die" philosophy and tried to find a more positive outlook on life. Escaping the past was easier said than done, e.g., the trampoline episode, which, coincidentally, resulted in my falling for that first great love, an actor who sat behind me in the infamous French class. Men--a whole new anxiety was unleashed and lasted two years until he improvised his way out of my life and into a short redhead's. I guessed the first cut really was the deepest, and I stayed aching and bitter for months, avoiding men altogether, always an easy task when one sneers enough. Soon my paralysis was beginning to worry even me. Back home, my parents were probably relieved I was paralyzed for a change since there was less chance of something dreadful happening.

My savior came by way of a small island in the French West Indies, St. Barthélemy. I came across a newspaper article describing this obscure place which seemed strangely enticing, and I decided I needed a change, to change, an escape. I checked into finding the airline that could locate this island which, according to the article, had its airport "in the middle of a sheep pasture" (Peck). In other words, as I soon found out, we would be landing on a

runway, the size of a doormat, that was strategically located between a gigantic cliff and the Caribbean Sea. I had never been anywhere near an airplane. Immediately, I made reservations to fly there, not knowing exactly to or from what I was escaping.

In 1974, several small hotels peppered the rugged landscape of the tiny island as well as a village of cottages which were scattered about the hills above the Bay of St. Jean. In response to my two inquiries, the owner of one of the hotels, the Eden Rock, wrote back to offer a half-rate deal to fly me to St. Barts from Puerto Rico in his private plane. My motto was--and remains--never accept plane rides from strangers. I pictured either getting attacked in his Cessna 310 or else plummeting in flames into the ocean after five short minutes in the air. Playing it safe, I made reservations for one of the cottages and opted for a more legitimate airline with a pilot whose major occupation and goal were to fly and land the plane. I did, however, break down just long enough in San Juan to meet Remy de Haenen who, oddly enough, turned out to be the mayor of St. Barts who had built the first guest house on the island in the mid-fifties. His story was quite an extraordinary one; however, having been unimpressed at the time, I graciously declined the lift. We had a delightful chat, but he had interrupted my quest for the perfect piña colada. Besides, there was a vague "trouble in paradise" narrative, and I tuned him and his heartbreak out; I had enough of my own to quell. I escaped for dinner with Viola and Eleanor, a nun and her sister, whom I had befriended

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along the way. It was all in God's hands now. Caught up in the white Spanish haze of the restaurant in El Convento Hotel, I found myself suddenly surrounded by three flamenco dancers cruising around the floor as if on wheels. Maybe this was some kind of sign. . . .

The following day, despite my protests, the pious duo, who were staying at the local Holiday Inn, insisted I tag along on their tourist trap island tour. The mere mention of standard tours and Holiday Inns was irritating, with their ranking right up there in the top 10 on my list of stuff to avoid at all costs. I had wisely chosen accommodations at a small Spanish inn, Cecelia's Place, where I at least had a clue that I was in San Juan and not Des Moines. Sensing God had no doubt willed this next escapade, I joined them for the excursions to the Bacardi rum plant and El Yunque rain forest. Except for almost passing out from the fumes at the distillery, I was holding up fairly well. However, by our last stop, Luquillo Beach, the sleazy tour guide was getting overly friendly, the situation demanding immediate intervention. Where was that damn nun when you really needed her? Fortunately, or so it seemed, I was rescued by two accountant cousins from New Jersey. They had plans to check out some of the clubs that evening and invited me along. I'm not sure how this happened, but they appeared rather safe, and I had no other exciting dates lined up for my last night in Puerto Rico. Unfortunately, however, I had somehow trapped myself into spending a rousing night of casino hopping,

thenceforth added to the above list of annoyances, with two of the dullest guys ever to set foot out of the Garden State. My head was splitting. After the din of the clapping and stamping flamencos and the clicking and whirling roulette wheels had faded, the mayor's airplane ride was beginning to look slightly more attractive. Rest assured, it was only a passing thought; once my head had cleared, I did not falter. I could not lose sight of my mission. I was on piña colada number 11 and counting as I dialed Windward Island Airways to confirm a connecting flight.

In retrospect, this was an amazing journey for someone so recently paralyzed to make. I imagined my luggage permanently lost, the flight insurance insufficient to support my cat should the plane crash, or some new savage strain of gigantic mosquito badgering me unmercifully in the event we should actually land. The luggage faithfully followed me through Puerto Rico and St. Maarten. I had survived the two previous flights and, after all, had remembered to pack several No-Pest Strips (strange bug repellent devices that apparently did not survive test marketing) to thwart hungry insects. Yes, things were definitely looking up; I had only one short flight to go. Three of us boarded a 19-seater bound for St. Barts. One fellow passenger, a ballet dancer from New York, not only had lost her luggage, but also had reservations at the aforementioned flying mayor's hotel. She appeared to be distraught, and I tried my best to convince her she really wasn't going to be needing all of those designer clothes

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anyway. My attempts at consoling were particularly futile as I tried to persuade her the small aircraft was really not going to plunge into the sea. In fact, she was so neurotic that I was starting to feel like a seasoned traveler.

As we circled the tan hillsides, palms reached out to bring us down. Low-strung feathery white clouds hung above the horizon. The dizzying effect brought volcanic mounds dotted with green shrubs and pale red-topped boxes from a blur into sharp focus. Our ear-popping descent found us barely missing a Jeep on a nearby knoll, then teetering and bouncing down that ridiculous landing strip, complete with a mutton welcoming committee. Surely, this was everything anyone could possibly hope for in air travel. Although I had experienced an appropriate beginning to a bizarre adventure, I had no idea this trip would end up being a strange cross between an Ernest Hemingway novel and a film by Peter Sellers.

St. Barts was a small bucolic French Leeward Island with an area of eight and one-half square miles (your basic three by six island) with a single thread-like road--obviously designed by the same team of crack engineers who were responsible for the airport layout--weaving perilously straight up, then down, twisting about its extremely hilly terrain. The one, and probably only, flat stretch of land in front of the airport (and I use the term loosely) was much more arid than the tropical lush green I had expected. Had I anticipated Paradise? What

made Paradise paradise anyway--the land, the weather, the people, no people--what exactly was it? A beach nearby lay at the base of the unbelievably steep hill, just down from my cottage. I dug my bronze toes into the hot white sand and walked along the Bay of St. Jean, its water the clearest crystal turquoise on earth. Here I was, sinking into a bronze façade, the island mystique. It was late afternoon, no one else in sight, and I was seized by the hackneyed notion of the immensity of the world compared to this tiny speck of sand where I stood. The beauty of this secluded island was the solitude, and although I brought my camera, I could not capture it on film. As a warm wind slid across my shoulders, my thoughts drifted inland. I had no plans, no future, only this moment; I had traveled nearly 2,000 miles to find it.

Back up at the cottage and breathless from the climb, I sat on the terrace and traced the huge showy magenta bougainvillea as it entwined and covered the edge of the balcony. Its roots dug thirstily into the sandy island. Sage-colored torch cacti poked sturdily between sparse grass and scrubs. The sun, red and full, retreated back into the ocean as I turned away.

At dusk, the port town of Gustavia was quiet and inviting. La Taverna, an almost medieval-looking restaurant filled with heavy dark-wooden furnishings, provided food, drink, and interesting company, apparently the main entertainment on the island. Everything was so peaceful

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here. It was off-season, but perhaps I had overlooked something--like hurricane season! The French were no fools; hurricane season was no time for travel. This was a rather profound thought coming from someone who only moments before had washed the sand from her feet in a bidet. (Bathroom fixtures were apparently not included on vocabulary lists until French 202.)

After calming my nerves with nearly an entire bottle of silky Cabernet--its complex flavor and fruity bouquet all but lost at this point--I took the advice of a French doctor, who worked at the local hospital, to relax because there were no hurricanes forecast for at least the next few days. He spoke only slightly better English than I French, and invited me to go with him to a party in Saline on the southern coast. Quite frankly, I was leery of this young bearded doctor who appeared to be in some great hurry, and besides, I had made arrangements for the (probably *the* one and only) taxi driver to pick me up. I told the doctor that I would meet him there. I polished off the rest of the wine, befriended a Spanish-speaking sailor, and dragged him and the cabbie (who at first refused to even drive there) through one of the most harrowing drives in my 22 years--the road to Saline. The most harrowing was to come--the drive back. The party was interesting, and I tried to converse and relate to the French island Pernod-drinking types, but it was as if I were standing outside of myself, an observer of insanity, watching this unworldly young American not fit in. However, before I knew it, and obviously

throwing caution to the trade winds, I was off with the doc, zooming around treacherous hair pin curves and down hazardous slopes of cow paths no one in his right mind would travel had there been a choice of roads or if one had been completely sober. We hit another party, the beach, his apartment, a bar, and my cottage--and somehow had only two flat tires along the way. I felt as if I had been trapped in a silent movie where the action was speeded up and I was reduced to relying on subtitles for perception of the story line--only there were no subtitles. Although dazed from the whirl of activity, I was just along for the ride. Despite my naïveté, e.g., the bidet episode, I knew all too well my sojourn here would end, leaving him behind as I headed back to the States with a satchel full of duty-free trinkets. We made plans for the following day as we parted company; yet, I was well aware not only of the futility in the best-laid plans but also of how hard it was to find a true connection. This was not it, but right now I really was not looking for one. As my throbbing head hit the pillow, I could not help but wonder if this was in any way a typical island night. I was sick of games no matter what the terrain or climatic conditions.

The sun rose to the crowing of roosters. The intense heat at 9:00 a.m. was stifling, and I longed for the cool water. The previous night was hazy yet oddly crystalline. I stared into the bay and marveled at being able to see my feet so clearly. I swam out as far as I knew I could go safely and returned to the sand.

The afternoon of spear fishing in the waters near huge rugged cliffs jutting straight out of the silver sand at Gouverneur Beach was akin to being lost in Paradise or should have been. The sun such a hot white, I was frozen in body and time. The sea-grape trees, bent against the swift sea breeze, nodded to me as we stood upon the scalloped shore of the secluded cove, no doubt an ancient pirate's secret lair. I wondered what treasures lay buried here--hidden and wasted. My doctor friend appeared confused, not realizing I was merely taking in the view from a distance. Sweet jasmine veiled the sea mist spraying upwind, but yet its fragrance was not impervious to a phoniness which cut through even the severest language barrier. Tomorrow, there would be another.

Mornings were often spent hiking into Gustavia. Faded red rooftops covered a village of white villas which were nestled against the hills and around the picturesque harbor. St. Barts' French and Swedish history had resulted in a mainly white population, although three small black children and a blue-eyed Scandinavian one posed for a humorous snapshot of camaraderie. Local proprietors spoke little English but pleasantly tried to communicate and help me feel welcome as I strolled about alone. My special purchase, several yards of a wonderful apple green and saffron yellow hand-blocked fabric, was destined to become a new sarong. A few aged women, wearing frilly white cotton bonnets, emerged from their homes as if from the eighteenth century. They kept a watchful eye on the

few tourists who wandered by. These caps, by the way, apparently called *quichenottes* ("kiss-me-not"), were so named for the obvious reason that chances were slim and none that a guy could get past the first ruffle. I thought perhaps I should borrow one. On the other hand, except for the occasional lapse, I was doing pretty well on my own without the aid of a hat. On a hill above the harbor was a large white cross, inscribed with *Aimez-vous*. ("Love one another.") This seemed quite the paradox, considering the hats and all. I was sure; however, there were other obstacles which so often prevented its wisdom. Getting a lift from the resident architect's wife, I headed back in time towards the Corossol fishing village. Large straw hats, made from palm fronds, were being woven by women on the doorsteps, and I received an in-depth demonstration of the art. The deeply-tanned gaunt faces of their men were hidden, protected by wide brims, although once or twice I sensed their eyes. I felt like an intruder. . . now the observing intruder. I slipped my camera, unused, deep inside of my bag.

I returned to the beach and stuck my feet in the bay as a gentle tide washed up to my neck. On a whim, I traveled to find a spot untouched by time and man, and I lay wrecked upon the shoreline, immersed in the surf which softly crested and subsided, its foam a lacy trim upon an endless blue ribbon. What it all meant, I had not a clue. Did I really want to be alone, or was it just easier than dealing with all of the hassles? Why couldn't man be an island? I could not

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shake this anger which had raged for months inside of me. How many miles did I have to travel? Then the obvious gradually occurred to me. It wasn't a matter of distance; I just had to let it go. It was all about forgiveness and moving on--such a simple yet formidable task.

The warm evening twilight consoled me in my trek down the hill to the Beach Club Restaurant, which basically was a thatched-roofed deck opening out onto the bay. I settled back into a lounge chair by the deck's edge to take in the vast beauty that stretched far into the horizon. It seemed I was the only customer, and so I peacefully sipped a glass of Chablis while concluding this must surely be paradise. However, plans for a solitary *langouste* dinner were interrupted by someone, who turned out to be a French deep-sea treasure diver, bearing an uncanny resemblance to Steve McQueen. And I didn't even like Steve McQueen. Was this some sort of test, or what? I contemplated hurling myself into the sea, taking the poor clawless lobster with me. He had to notice I was smirking. Marcel spoke English fairly well, and as I sat listening, anticipating some novel song and dance, I found none came. There was something different, a calm about him. I could not tell his age--maybe 30, probably 40. Talking with him came easily, and yet I knew he was 20,000 leagues under the sea. . . out of my league. As I look back now, however, through him I had begun to grasp the purpose of my trip.

This was August 24, the Festival of

St. Barthélemy. I had heard there would be a dance down at the wharf, but had no idea it was this special celebration. After joining me for dinner, Marcel invited me to come along to a birthday party at a friend's house and then afterwards to the festival. The restaurant owners gave us a ride up the perpendicular village hill and dropped us off in the dark in the middle of a scrubby field which we were expected to hike a half mile across to get to the house. One of my few outstanding talents had been reading people, but for a moment, perhaps one of my more lucid moments, I gestured to the restaurant lady, who spoke no English, my need to know that it was safe, that this diver was not a serial killer or rapist. Oddly enough, she apparently understood, for she nodded that it was all right to go with him. Grabbing my hand, he led me through the brush to what turned out to be the architect and his wife's home. I lived through yet another posh affair, filled with champagne, rich chocolate cake, and a host of French expatriates. Marcel was charming and funny but yet reserved. He had learned much of his English from an old British girlfriend (in that excellent technique for second language acquisition) whom he blamed for his excessive swearing when speaking English. Lighting a *Gauloises*, he drank one glass and watched me watching everyone. We sat off in a corner to talk of monotonous jobs, meaningful work, and optimistic dreams. He seemed content with his life and tried to help me sort out mine, a challenge for even the most skillful of counselors. This had all of the makings of that connection I was not searching for. I told him of my run-ins with

the island mayor and doctor, and he seemed oddly concerned and relieved that I had escaped unscathed, as if he knew something I did not. I may not have known the details, but I had grasped the big picture which, I suppose, explained why I was here rather than there.

"Sometimes you must be careful," he warned, obviously unaware of the high level of caution I usually exhibited. What else could he have thought, considering the fact I had just traipsed across a deserted field with someone I had only met an hour before.

"It's all in the eyes," I replied, smiling and looking closely into his. My descent into their unexpected depth, the swimming pool blue, caught me totally off guard. My heart began to pound as my stomach twisted into a large knot, for I knew what I saw there. As I thought of the emptiness and insincerity that swirled around us all, a strange sadness crept across my vulnerable soul. I hadn't counted on this happening. Here was someone genuine in a sea of scum, and I was paralyzed. It was easy to be detached when trust was at a minimum and there was good reason to be, but this would be much more challenging. I nervously stood up in some vain attempt to break the spell. This was a precarious situation--and not a single nun in sight.

Everyone was in high spirits, anticipating the dance. After a time, the party moved down to the wharf. The festival had begun hours before. Tourists and locals assembled in vivid cliques, some

dancing under the golden lights, whirling and distorting their true vibrant colors. A carnival atmosphere invaded the sleepy town as a steel band from Trinidad beat out a tune. Marcel danced the first few slow ones with me, and I almost wished I were numb again. No amount of rum and Coke could save me. I pictured Eleanor and Viola back at the Bacardi plant in Puerto Rico and nearly laughed out loud, wondering if maybe there was something to this nun stuff. I excused myself, in yet another evasive move, catching sight of the grumpy ballet dancer who looked completely miserable. Here I was, operating in the nun mode, comforting those in need while maintaining a self-imposed vow of chastity. As she droned on about her boring vacation, I watched Marcel dance with several of the ladies in our troupe. He was with them. Wasn't that what I really wanted? Anyway, by this time, he probably thought I was gay. The dancer was getting much too depressing to deal with, so I turned away to start a conversation with a young Californian who had brought his parents to the island for their 25th wedding anniversary. Perhaps there was hope after all. Just how *did* love survive? He asked me if I was on an archaeological expedition and if that was really Steve McQueen. I hated to disappoint him, but that it was "no" on both counts. I could not possibly have looked that scholarly, and I was almost certain Marcel, although bearing more than a passing resemblance to one, had never been an actor. First, I explained that what he probably had seen me writing on the beach the other day had been a travel diary. Next, I admitted

## JANE CACCIOLA

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that considering the strangeness of my trip, *nothing* could be ruled out; however, I had already concluded that Steve would have been slightly older and would have had definite trouble faking the French. I stopped drinking and hung around, wondering if perhaps this was all a big joke and I just didn't get it. Throughout the night, an intermittent array of fireworks illuminated the sky; beneath, the entire cast of island characters appeared, as if I were watching the last few days pass before me in a dream.

At sunrise, the festival was over. I stepped out on the terrace at noon to survey the island before I had to go to the airport. A Jeep and moped raced down the road at the bottom of the hill and sped toward Gustavia. People in a villa above mine were playing cards and shouting *merde* ("shit") every two minutes. I removed the two worthless No-Pest Strips, which I had no doubt hung as a humorous symbolic gesture, from either side of the bed. One last time, I walked slowly down to the bay where a half dozen guests were having coffee at the Beach Club. The previous night was like some strange fantasy in the glare of the day's sun. I sat in a hard white plastic chair and ate breakfast alone beneath the blue and white umbrella plugging a French liqueur. Parisians a few feet away were waving their tanned hands animatedly about and talking fast. I finally took one last dip in the bay and emerged refreshed and ready for the trip home.

On the flight out of St. Barts, I got a close-up view of the cockpit as I sat down

next to the pilot. I had to cross the ocean to discover that one's whole life was a risk, with some parts just a bit more calculated than others. I had always been calculating everything to the point of distraction. Growing involved trusting my own instincts and finding a delicate balance of vigilance and repose. After coming to terms with myself, my possibilities and limitations, perhaps I could begin to recognize that although death, pain, and heartache were all part of life, I did have some control over my anxieties. As the engine started grinding, the dials and gauges loomed before me. Was I rehearsing? I mean, this was *it*. I had to make the most of life without dwelling on the past or tormenting myself into a state of paranoia. There were so many places to travel--this was only a beginning, not an end. And anyway, all the answers were not to be found on St. Barts, but rather would be discovered gradually through the wide accumulation of experiences and emotions all thorough life. And the people. . .well, certainly the quality ones were tough to come by, which made them all the more special, but worth searching for. No one ever said it would be easy.

I leaned into the coolness of the plane's side window and closed my eyes. Suddenly, I was back at the festival. Marcel found me hiding in the shadows, taking in all of the gaiety from a different angle as well as trying to avoid him. I guess I thought explaining would be pointless. He wondered if I was having fun.



I looked out at the dancers and said, "I never dreamed it would be like this." I was unsure what I meant exactly, but to clarify added, "The island."

I felt like a child standing there, stupid and unworldly. He grinned, looking down at me, knowing how much longer it might take. Had I ever looked sophisticated? I never pretended to be. A dozen thoughts raced through my head; finally, I started to speak, but his fingers lightly touched my lips.

"Tu as toute ta vie pour apprendre et aimer--profites-en." Confused, I searched the darkness for his eyes to get a translation. "You have your whole life to learn and to love--use it."

\* \* \* \* \*

He vanished into the dark shadows beyond the wharf. Above the harbor, fireworks exploded into the hot night, showering a shimmering brilliance across the still inlet water. Inside of my head, the steel band hammered on, its rhythm transformed into an engine's roar as the plane took off. The soft white beaches and steep hillsides grew distant as we rose above the island. The winding road disappeared.

Peck, William A. "An Unspoiled Island in the Caribbean." *The Sunday Sun* {Baltimore} 23 June 1974: R2.

(Hoffman Award Winner 1993)

## Murder in Produce

by

TIMOTHY RESH

The name's Detective Hontil, Don Hontil. (Cool and innovative way to begin a murder mystery, huh?) It was May 13, 1982. Fred Wangert sat--holding the ice pack against the back of his swollen cranium--in my office with the wooden door with the glass panel with my name on it. It's so cool. They just installed it. . . . Oh, sorry. Anyway, the ceiling fan was on and casting an odd pattern over the room; even though it wasn't that warm outside, I thought it was a nice effect. Wangert was singing out a story that was difficult to believe:

*(Intriguing, foreshadowing music here)*

"Look, ya guys. I'll pay ya overtime. That shipment of high-quality bananas is on its way from El Salvador, an' I had to pay those Contras three bucks an hour to pick 'em. Please stay,' he begs. 'O.K.,' I says. 'If you'll pay us for our lay time, sure.' So we was standin' around fa about an hour, rinsin' down the kiwis an' makin' sure there was fresh plastic bags next to all the displays. We hears a ring on the delivery doorbell. So I says to Chuck, 'Gee, Chuck. It must be the bananas.' Chuck

laughs his stupid soundin' laugh. 'Hih, hih, hih,' spittin' up some real thick mucus on the floor. He's got this condition, picked it up from his cat. . . ."

"Can you stick to more pertinent details, Mr. Wangert?" I asked him. From the looks of it, I was going to eat a lot of doughnuts on this one.

"Okay, so we walks back to the door, an' there's this big, ugly lookin' dude, looks like Manuel Noriega, an' he says in a Mexican accent, 'Tus bananas, señor.' He an' his other buddy who had dark hair, green eyes, and a long scar on his right ring finger, but who I didn't see too good, went out to the big refrigerated truck. They came back carryin' a crate with some stuff in Mexican written on it. The dude that looked like Noriega says to me, 'Like, we're so sorry, señor. But, like, the bananas, they froze.' 'Yo, chico,' says Chuck. 'We didn't send for no frozen bananas. Dumb spics, can't ya even deliver a truckload of produce without royally screwin' it up?' So I says, 'Chuck, take it easy. Yeah, they're dumb spics, but it probably wasn't *all* their fault.' Then the guy with the green eyes, dark hair, and the long scar on his right ring finger, but who I

didn't see too good, grabs the crate from his friend an' smashes it on the floor. 'What the hell are you doin', chico?' yells Chuck. 'Chuck,' I says. 'Don'tcha think ya pissed him off enough already?' Then I feels a thump on the back of my head, an' I falls to the floor. When I wakes up, I finds myself under the artichoke heart display that I knocked over when I fell, so I moves it. Then I thinks, 'Gee, where's Chuck?' I runs back to the meat department where I hears a noise, an' here's the two spics dat hit me over the head startin' to run Chuck through the meat grinder. So I picks up a coconut an' yells at him to get the hell outta the store. They laughs and says sumpthin' in Mexican to each other. I throws the coconut at 'em. It hits the Manuel dude, and he swears sumpthin' in Mexican at me an' runs out the door. The one with the green eyes, dark hair, an' the long scar on his right ring finger, that I didn't see too good, comes at me with a knife. I picks up another coconut an' throws it at him. It hits him in the head, an' he falls back into the scales, an' his knife falls out of his hand. So I charge him with my pricing gun an' stamp him in the groin an' face with 2/\$1 signs until he pushes me off an' runs out screamin'."

"Did you recover the knife, Mr. Wangert?"

"No, dammit, I didn't. The spic had quite an arm span, an' he grabbed it on his way out."

"Spic and span," I mumbled, writing down what was said.

"But I want to get the bastards who killed him. Dat was a really lousy way to die. Dyin' in a gang fight, gettin' trampled

on a fire escape, gettin' sucked into the engine of a 747, dat's the way to die. Not the condition they left Chuck in."

"Yeah, it was nasty. Frozen banana through the heart, then tryin' to put him through that meat grinder."

"How much of him did they shred?"

"Oh, they had most of his left leg and part of his right done. Yup. Eight pounds of ground Chuck."

"Oh, God. Why'd this have to happen to Chuck?"

"Well, Mr. Wangert. Look at the bright side. They could have put him through headfirst. Oooh. Sounds like a closed casket on that one. Our staff psychologist is on hand anytime you need to talk to someone. Here's his card."

"Dat's alright, detective. I think I'll sweat this one out on my own. You boys, do ya work. Find the guys who killed Chuck, an' hang 'em high."

*(Music builds suspense here)*

Fred Wangert went home at this point. I sat at my desk, thinking. I had an idea. I went to see Fred's mom, who I found out, lived with him. Or he lived with her, if you're one of those Optimist Club people.

"Mrs. Wangert? I'm Detective Hontil, police. Is Fred available that I could speak to him?"

"No, Fred ain't home right now," said Mrs. Wangert.

"I need to speak to you about Fred, Mrs. Wangert."

"Now, look. If he didn't pay off Mr.

Bill again this month, you'd better not be here to try an' collect from me again, or I'll thrash your ass like I did the last two goons he sent here to try an' take advantage of me."

"Mrs. Wangert, you don't understand. I'm a policeman."

"Oh, I forgot."

"O.K., Mrs. Wangert. Do you remember a friend of Fred's named Chuck Wagoner?"

"Chuck. . . Oh, yes. They'd been friends since they were little kids. They usedta go out an' give the Good Humor man flats an' then rip off all his Scooter Crunch. An' they'd break open the fire hydrant on those hot days."

"That is a misdemeanor, ma'am. Opening the valves on fire hydrants wastes water and costs the city money."

"Oh, they didn't open the valves. They'd run the Good Humor truck over it--they thought it was cute."

"Boys will be boys."

"In fact, after Chuck's mom died, he was livin' with us for a few months until he could find an apartment. Bastard still owes us room an' board."

"I'm afraid he won't be able to pay you back, Mrs. Wangert."

"Why, is the little punk in jail?"

"No, he's dead."

*(Shocking E flat diminished 6th chord)*

"And I'm going to find out who killed him. Can you tell me how much money he owed you?"

"About two grand."

"Room and board?"

"An' food. The kid ate like a damn vacuum cleaner."

"Wow. Well, Mrs. Wangert, thank you. Oh, one more thing. Who is this Mr. Bill you alluded to?"

"I really don't know, but Mr. Bill keeps sendin' these ugly guys with long hair an' leather jock straps over here to try an' get back some money Fred owes him."

"I see. Mr. Bill. . ."

I proceeded to phone Mr. Williamson, owner of the establishment at which there had been a murder: Williamson's Quality and Yet Discount Food Store. "Mr. Williamson?"

"Yes, Detective."

"Could you tell me something?"

"Maybe."

"What was the brand name on the crate of bananas that was smashed here?"

"Oh, it was the El Dogface Banana Company out of El Salvador."

"O.K., thank you, Mr. Williamson."

At this point, I visited the closest American office of the El Dogface Banana Company. After a brisk city drive in which the muscles in my middle finger became exhausted, I arrived at the distribution center for the El Dogface Banana company. I stepped into the main office. Hundreds of fruit flies stormed into the greasy room via large holes in the screen. A small, balding white male stepped up to the counter.

"Hello, there. I'm Detective Hontil," I said, flashing my badge. I stopped. I waited. I then yelled for my theme music.

*(Hontil theme music)*

"I'm investigating the murder of a produce worker at the 2480 82nd Street location of Williamson's Quality and Yet Discount Food Store. Could I see your shipping records for there?"

"Detective, I hate to rain on your parade, but we do not deliver to Williamson's Quality and Yet Discount Food Store.

"But a banana from a case of bananas with your firm's name on it was used as the murder weapon."

"You're kidding."

"Nope. It was found at the scene of the crime embedded into some poor man's superior vena cava. His family's taking it pretty hard, even though he has no living relatives."

"We deliver exclusively to Vinnie's Food Vendors, Sechrist's Edible Delights, and Harry's Eats. You can look through our records, but you aren't going to find any record of any deliveries there."

I searched through their files, and sure enough, there were no deliveries to Williamson's Quality and Yet Discount Food Store. But there was a delivery to Vinnie's Food Vendors and a December 1980 issue of *Penthouse*. I felt that it would be worthy to do some light reading and then talk to Mr. Williamson again.

"What?"

"I said, 'I knew I didn't order any bananas from El dogface.' *(I like cops.)*"

"Why didn't you tell me that?"

"I thought you police types were supposed to be smart, not a bunch of toilet

brains."

"We are, but we have to have something to go on."

"I thought you had already figured out that I never ordered from El Dogface. *(You know, I like cops.)*"

"Well, I didn't, and you sure would've saved me a lotta legwork if you would've told me."

"Aw, hell, yeah, I'm sorry. Wait a minute. Save you a lot of legwork. *(I like cops.)* You big tease, you have a car. You drove. *(I like cops.)* I never ordered El Dogface bananas 'cause that's what Vinnie's carries, and *(I like cops)* here at Williamson's we *(I REALLY like cops)* pride ourselves on being fresher than all the rest."

"Well, I'll keep that in mind next time I'm looking for a good piece of fruit."

*(D flat minor 7th chord here)*

I then proceeded to Vinnie's Food Vendors where I spoke with the manager.

"Are you Vinnie?"

"Noo, I'm Vinnie's son, 'oo wants ta knooow."

"Tell him that I'm detective Hontil, working on a case that could really make Williamson's look bad."

"Oooh, O.K. I'll get him fa ya."

I waited for a few moments, and a large man in a pinstriped suit came down the stairs.

"Ya Hontil?" he asked.

"Last time I renewed my driver's license," I replied.

"Look, um. Whaddaya want ta tell me about Williamson's dat I don't already

## TIMOTHY M. RESH

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know?"

"I want to tell you that there was a murder there last night."

"Ya came 'ere ta tell me dat? Hell, dat was all ova da papers dis mornin'."

"Yes, but our only witness is blaming it on some Hispanics working for the El Dogface Banana Company making a delivery there. However, the El Dogface Banana company only delivers here."

"So, ya tryin' to pin me down fa sumpthin'?"

"No, I'm saying that I think you may be able to tell me something that would lead to an arrest of an employee or employees at Williamson's."

"O.K., whaddaya need ta know?"

"Who is Mr. Bill?"

"Ooh, Mr. Bill. Wasn't he dat shoort guy wit da funny voice dat usedta be on *Saturday Night Live*?"

"No, not him. I mean like a crime boss in town named Mr. Bill or something. You know, the big mean guy that sits in his office with sexy women and plays full-contact, strip Monopoly while his dirty henchmen go out and murder people and break their kneecaps."

"Hey! I gotta patent on that kneecap stuff."

"So sorry. But back to the original question. . ."

"Boy, ya cops are dummer dan I taut."

Ya expect to rid dis city of crime an' ya don't know 'oo Mr. Bill is?"

"No, I don't."

"Tink about it. Billllll. . ."

"Bill, charge, debit, IRS. . ."

Vinnie began to make hand motions.

"Oh, O.K. Sounds like. . .Bill. Fill, kill, thrill, spill, trill, nill, Jill, pill, dill, till, mill, sill, quill, shrill, will. . ."

"Yeah, dat's it."

"Will?"

"Williamson, ya moron. Jeez." Vinnie turned and walked up the stairs.

I went walking, trying to reconstruct the crime. I walked and walked, but I didn't seem to be getting anywhere. Then I got off the treadmill, and sat down.

I went back to Williamson's the next day.

"Oh, hi, detective. (*I like cops.*)"

"Mr. Williamson," I said. "Who did you hire?"

"Pardon me? (*I like cops.*)"

"I said, 'Who did you hire to kill Chuck Wagoner?'"

"Me? (*I like cops.*)"

"Yeah you. (*I HATE food market owners.*) Now knock off that subliminal crap, okay?"

"Just trying to live up to my pledge of freshness."

"Shut up. Who did you hire? I know you know. My mother knows you know. The girl in the coffee shop knows you know. My dog knows you know. You know how they know?"

"How?"

"I told them. I know you set up Chuck and framed Fred. I also know you're Mr. Bill."

"You can't prove it, cop."

"Oh, jeez. Why don't you get a new line? All the criminals say that just before the cop or lawyer busts them with evidence

that can prove beyond a shadow of a doubt they're guilty."

"I didn't know you felt so strongly about it. I like that in a man."

Just then, I saw the guy with the green eyes, dark hair, and the long scar down his right ring finger, that Fred didn't see too good, remove a handgun from his trench coat and aim at Williamson.

"Oh, no, Mr. Bill!" I yelled and shoved him behind an avocado display, just as the guy opened fire.

"Oh, hell, they're back," he said, as I cuffed him to the avocados.

"Who's back?"

"The guys I hired to chuck Wagoner into the meat grinder and kill Wangert."

"But why?"

"They were the last two alphabetically on my payroll, which was too large, and I didn't want to have to give them severance pay." A bullet shattered several avocados.

"No, I mean, why are these dudes back?"

"I didn't pay them what they wanted. I sort of just gave them double coupons."

"Well, looks like I have to get it out now."

"I like when cops do that."

"My gun, you pervert. I know, freshness. Oh, look, guacamole! Save some for me." With that thought, I stood up and fired. I missed the guy, but hit a jar of pistachio nuts which spilled out onto the floor. He slipped on them. (How else was I supposed to valiantly get him without incurring any personal injury?)

I ran for him, almost slipping on

them myself and aimed the gun at him. "Don't move," I said, my finger tightening on the trigger.

"No, don't *you* move, señor," said a voice, stepping out and putting a gun to my temple. It was Mr. Craterface.

"Okay, son. Game's over. Hand it over and spread 'em on the oranges. Your weapon, that is."

"Never! I am a member of the new order of Quagamagi guerilla warriors! We shall take over the earth!"

"Gorillas, huh? Well, judging from the smell and the choice of a murder weapon used to kill Mr. Wagoner, I'd say you fit right in."

"I knew Jane Goodall," Williamson piped up.

"Shut up. You have the right to remain silent. If you refuse that right, anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. Spread 'em!"

"Aw, do I have to?" he responded despondently.

"Yes, you do. And take the knife out of your shoe and throw it on the floor over there."

"Hey, how do you know about that?"

"Oh, come on, I'm telling this story, I can make you do incredulous and stupid things whenever I want to. It's called artistic license, and it's in your character contract. Do it!"

"Oh, alright."

"From now on you will address me as 'sir.'"

"Do I have to?"

"If you want this story to have all participants except Chuck to live happily

TIMOTHY M. RESH

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ever after, you will."

"Yes, sir."

"O.K., little felons, let's go down town."

Did I mention the five pounds I put on from all the extra doughnuts?

*(Insert brassy, ominous theme music here)*

Thus, I, Detective Don Hontil solved the case of

*(Timpani roll here. Add echo reverb)*

**'MURDER IN PRODUCE'**

*(Hoffman Award Winner 1993)*

have found. I had to look very hard for anything to catch it. There is a sense of exhilaration, but I don't do it to get a thrill. Actually, the best times are when I am in a totally outrageous situation, and am in total, calm control. Climbing is intense. I started when I was 17 years old maybe 16. It really doesn't matter. I went on a day trip with the outing club at school and found myself at the bottom of the steepest, tallest, and smoothest rock I ever seen. I can remember the swelling of fear and of strange energy. What was I doing? The rock was so white quartz that seemed very out of place on the gray surface. A rope led from my waist to the top of the cliff. Was I supposed to pull myself up the line... or somehow support my... tennis shoes? The sweat on my hands seemed determined to lubricate me right off of the rock as I tenuously and awkwardly wormed my way up the vertical maze. The character of the rock changed with every move I made. What worked once failed on the next set of holds. I found that I had to

of my body, causing weight, shifting balance, turning, twisting, pushing, pulling. I filled with increasing fear as the ground dropped away below me and sensing greater and greater. I sensed rather the top of the cliff. The rope fit snugly at my waist. My mouth was dry. The person holding the other end was a stranger; did he know what he was doing? Did I? My calves began to burn but blood, gorged with food but I felt calm and relaxed and unable to relax. My whole body vibrated rapidly and my whole body was filled with tremors of fear and excitement. I was very alone on a huge cliff. I knew the climb could be ending, for all I knew. I looked up at the next part of the climb, the few remaining feet between me and safety, the rest of my life, the horizontal world that was the one I knew. I willed my crazed leg to be still, to be silent. I glanced down at my feet, perched on a ledge that a frog would find cramped. Between my feet, and miles away, several young faces stared up, waiting. I was alone. The face before was blank. Not a ripple, just as smooth as drywall; porcelain, mirror smooth. I found myself looking for



*Late March*

by

LORI R. RODGERS

Fat sassy horse,  
shaggy from the winter  
flirts with the new spring's breeze,  
his skin is all a-quiver.

Aged though he may be  
each year sparks him anew.  
Blue skies, sunshine,  
fresh grass,  
a good hard scratch,  
make life worth living.

*(Hoffman Award Winner 1993)*

## Kindergarten

by

W. GRANT HORNER, II

There is nothing like it, not that I have found. And I haven't felt the need to look very hard for anything to match it. There is a sense of exhilaration, but I don't do it to get a thrill. Actually, the best times are when I am in a totally outrageous situation, and am in total, calm control. Climbing is intense.

I started when I was 17 years old, or maybe 16. It really doesn't matter. I went on a day trip with the outing club at school and found myself at the bottom of the steepest, tallest, and smoothest cliff I had ever seen. I can remember sweat; I felt a swelling of fear and of strange energy. What was I doing? The rock was so steep, and the holds were just tiny, slick nubbins of white quartz that seemed very out of place on the gray surface. A rope led from my waist to the top of the cliff. Was I supposed to pull myself up the line. . . or somehow support my weight on the edges of my ratty tennis shoes? The sweat on my hands seemed determined to lubricate me right off of the rock as I tenuously and awkwardly wormed my way up the vertical maze. The character of the rock changed with every move I made. What worked once failed on the next set of holds. I found that I had to

continually monitor every part of my body, testing weight, shifting balance, turning, twisting, pushing, pulling; I filled with increasing fear as the ground dropped away below me and sensing greater and greater power as I neared the top. I sensed rather than saw the top of the cliff. The rope tightened slightly at my waist. My mouth was full of gravel. The person holding the other end was a stranger, did he know what he was doing? Did I? My calves began to fill with warm blood, gorged with food but now cramping and unable to relax. My left leg began to vibrate rapidly, and my whole being was seized with tremors of fear and isolation. I was very alone on a huge cliff. The world could be ending, for all I knew. I looked up at the next part of the climb, the few remaining feet between me and safety, the rest of my life, the horizontal world that was the one I knew. I willed my crazed leg to be still, to be silent. I glanced down at my feet, perched on a ledge that a frog would find cramped. Between my feet, and miles away, several young faces stared up, waiting. I was alone.

The face before was blank. Not a ripple, just as smooth as drywall: porcelain, mirror smooth. I found myself looking for

## THE YORK REVIEW

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a reflection. Would I have seen myself? What would I have seen?

I tried a half-hearted step up onto a slight indentation at waist height. I immediately flooded with doubt, and sunk back to my now palatial-appearing ledge. I looked up, then down, then back up again. I tried to step up with my other foot. No way. I stretched upward with my greasy fingers and found only sloping, soapy holds that wouldn't hold a dime. I spent several eternities there, contemplating the meaning of life, wondering why I thought I could do this crazy thing, cursing at myself.

"Put your right hand up on that edge there."

Was God up here with me?

"Then step up with your right foot into the dish with your heel real high, step up, and reach up and left with your left hand. There's a big knob there, see it?"

There was a short man with glasses there, a few feet to my right. He seemed to be moving around in absentminded circles on a face that was steeper and considerably smoother than the one on which I was trapped. He wasn't even really looking at what he was doing. He was as high up as I was, but he seemed to be more relaxed than most people are in their own bathroom.

"Huh?"

"Try it, it will work." And then he climbed up several feet to the top, his fingertips and tips of his boots seeming to stick on nothing at all. I then realized what was odd about this man. He didn't have a rope, and apparently lacked both a brain and fear.

I tried his suggestion. Suddenly, the

world dropped away and I felt my balance go for a loop. Then I realized what the matter was. I was still thinking vertical, but had reentered the world of the horizontal.

A soft, cool breeze gently rustled the leaves of a small tree in front of me, welcoming me home.

The humidity makes this a really hard problem. I rub the chalk into my sweaty pores, and don't look up. There is a bit of sap on my right boot, on the very tip, and I carefully wipe it off on the opposite sock. I feel, caress, the initial holds, which are quite good. Fingers sink in to the first knuckle, and I lift my right foot. I'm up.

Twenty-five feet higher, two fingers in the crack only to the fingernails, my feet plastered at waist height, and preparing for a long reach up and left to where the steep crack opens up, I am distracted.

Several feet to my left is a boy, blond and fearful, near tears of desperation, and ready to give up. It is his first time, obviously. He looks over at me. He looks up at the same face that another boy had looked up to nine years before, convinced he would never make it, but rather be forced to retreat in shame and shaking. He sees me make the reach. I've done it a thousand times before. A rope would only ruin it for me now.

I speak a few brief words, words that once were offered to me. I pull up over the top and see the river shining green in the shade. I walk away, confident that he will conquer.

*(Hoffman Award Winner 1993)*

## Once Upon a Time....

by

ANTHONY D. FREDERICKS

I just read where a school district in Florida banned *Snow White* from its elementary school libraries because some parents felt that there was too much violence in the story. I know how sensitive characters can get about these things and decided to visit Snow to get her version.

I approached the castle and knocked on the huge wooden door. I was let into a large hall by a very small man and greeted by Snow's husband, Prince.

"You must be very upset about this banning incident in Florida," I said.

"Yes, I would have thought that that whole affair about Snow and those seven little men she lived with would have blown over by now. After our lawsuit against *The National Enquirer* was settled, we thought the matter finally would be put to rest."

We walked to the library where Snow was standing in the corner gazing at her reflection in a large wall mirror.

"You don't think this banning was the result of anything done by your evil stepmother, do you?" I asked.

"We're not sure. We think it's a bunch of 'do-gooders' who believe there's too much murder and mayhem in the story.

It's ironic, but these are probably the same people who watch *Days of Our Lives* and *Monday Night Football*," she said.

"What kind of reaction have you gotten from kids?"

"We've been getting lots of phone calls from kids all over the country who want to know if they're allowed to read the real story at home, instead of in their schools. One kid from Texas called and wanted to know if we were going to be featured on *America's Most Wanted*."

"How's Prince taking all this?" I asked.

"Pretty hard. He hasn't really slept since the whole incident surfaced. He followed it pretty closely in the local paper and was hounded by a couple of reporters for a few weeks. Other than that he's kept pretty much to himself."

"How do you think this incident will affect the public's perception of you?"

"It can't do us any good. I mean, we've certainly been around for a long time, and to have something like this come up is certainly damaging our reputation. You probably can imagine how nervous the folks over at the Disney studios are right now."

"Have you discussed this with anyone else?" I asked.

"Yes. The other day I was over to see my neighbors--Rapunzel, Sleeping Beauty, and Cinderella--and they're afraid the same thing's going to happen to them."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, Rapunzel's afraid that she'll be named in a child abuse case because of all those times people used her hair to climb up the castle walls. Sleeping thinks she'll be blacklisted because she allowed a man she didn't know to kiss her. And Cindy's afraid she might be pulled off the shelves because of that time she left a piece of her clothing outside the palace door. I haven't talked to Alice Wonderland yet, but I know she's afraid that she'll be accused of consorting with talking animals."

"It sounds like there could be a wholesale banning of all of you. Have you considered any recourse?"

"We've thought about delivering

some specially prepared apples to the school board, but felt that was too drastic. Prince thought about getting the dwarfs back together again for an attack on the town. Cindy wanted her two ugly sisters to go to the next school board meeting and inflict some bodily harm on some of the members. In the end, we decided not to do anything."

"Sounds like you've got a real dilemma on your hands," I said.

"That's not the half of it. The townspeople now have a petition to declare our marriage null and void because Prince supposedly took advantage of me after I ate the poisoned apple and fell asleep."

It was evident that this incident was much larger than I had originally thought. I left the castle saddened by the whole experience. On my way down the path, I saw Red Riding Hood running up with a supermarket tabloid in her hands.

"Have you seen this story about me and the wolf?" she cried.

*The Days* **Postdated**

by

JOANNE MATHIAS EMIG

*In memory of Walter Mathias, Orangeburg, SC:*

*b. September 16, 1916*

*d. June 23, 1988*

I was the youngest child--  
only six when we left  
him, sitting alone at the kitchen table.  
I wanted to give him a letter,  
but I couldn't write; there hadn't been time  
to learn. Did he understand--my father?

Mom said he didn't want to be my father,  
and I shouldn't want to be his child.

I believed her at the time,  
especially after he left  
for the south, with never a letter--

I stopped checking the mail on the table.

Years later, suddenly, an envelope on the table.  
South Carolina postmark--my father?

Slowly, I opened the letter  
and became again a child.

So many years wasted; so few left--  
Can we meet, just once, while there's time?

## THE YORK REVIEW

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We drove down, my husband and I, one time.

We talked and laughed around his table  
for three days. Before we left,  
he promised to be a better father.

I vowed to be a better child.

"I'll call." "I'll send a letter."

I was late mailing that Father's Day letter.

(He'll get it Tuesday--there's time.)

The stroke came Monday. Thursday, he died a child.

It was there, unopened, on the table  
where we sat mourning him, our father--  
Bob holding my right hand; Jean, my left.

Stunned by the truth: no chances left.

No visit, no call, no unexpected letter  
from the stranger who was our father--

It was time.

The coffin gleamed like a polished table  
over the open grave. I cried, like a child.

And then he left for the last time.

I thought of my letter, unread on his table--

Goodbye, my father. Love, your child.

## *The Days of Scotch and Hobos*

by

KATHRYN "KITSI" WATTERSON

Even though it's been years since his death, I still find myself wishing I'd sent my dad a greeting that last Father's Day before he died. At the time, however, I was too critical, too angry, and too young.

I remember traveling by car with my father, pulling into a truck stop where he could rub elbows with other drivers and remind himself of the days when he wasn't a doctor, when he was still a boy, riding the trains with his brother. He'd slide into a booth, wink at the waitress, and lower his voice. "What'll it be, honey?" he'd ask me. "A draft? Whiskey on the rocks?" At the age of 11, I'd laugh and order my cherry Coke, watching him as he ordered his Scotch on the rocks.

He'd light a cigarette and blow little smoke rings out into the air, laughing at my attempts to catch them and hold them in my hand. Then he'd offer me a smoke, sure I wouldn't take one, and drum the table top with the palms of his large, smooth hands.

Even before the glass of Scotch touched his lips, you could tell he felt liberated. Just the act of ordering it, and then lifting the rusty-colored liquid up to the light set him free. The drinking that

followed merely ensured his escape.

Usually, I preferred going out with him on my own. I didn't want my mother along, didn't want to feel her muscles tense when he ordered his first drink, or hear her sighs of complaint when he began his second. I didn't want to see his eyes change from laughter into flint when he stared her down and quieted her. Without her watchfulness, my father drank playfully.

Sometimes, the two of us would walk into a bar or a restaurant pretending we were deaf-mutes. Dad would nod at the waitress and write our drink order on a napkin, gesturing to her until she understood. After drinks, we would point to what we wanted on the menu and then carry on an animated discussion with one another in the sign language we had learned and perfected. We'd eat in silence, listening to comments about us ("Hey, look, the kid don't talk neither"), concealing our amusement until we had finished our last cups of coffee, drunk in silence. Then Dad would unfold his handsome body from the seat, clap his hands and say, "Well, Babe, let's hit the road!"

Later, when I was old enough to understand my mother's disapproval, and act



as an even harsher judge and jury, when I condemned him for being unreliable and unfaithful, for being late, for not caring about us, for giving away my bicycle and missing my wedding rehearsal, he drank without me.

He vowed he would live to be 104, but he never wanted to grow old. All of his life he was haunted by his childhood, by the lessons he had learned as the son of a circuit preacher who shouted from the pulpit every Sunday morning and every Wednesday night about the hell that awaited sinners who smoked or drank, who danced, who swore, lusted, went to movies, committed adultery, or even wore jewelry. At heart a renegade, my father was tormented with guilt, in perpetual conflict between these admonitions and his own natural impulses.

When he was 14 years old, he fled. He left home and rode the trains from Illinois to North Dakota and back again with his brother John. This was the time of his life he loved best. For nearly a year, he and John picked corn, heaved bales of hay, and helped farmers harvest crops along the route. Out of work, they slept in hobo camps, scavenged for food, and listened to old men tell tales, real and imagined, of their life's adventures.

Before my Uncle John died, he used to sit on his back porch drinking one can of beer after another from the full case that sat beside him and tell me how the hobos loved my father. Between swallows of beer and bites of Limburger cheese and garlic cloves, John would laugh until tears came to his eyes as he recalled how the tramps worried

about the scruffy daredevil kid who'd won their hearts, how they shared food with him, and how he in turn would entertain them around the campfire by twanging his mouth harp, singing songs and standing up to dance, his arms forming arcs, his smile illuminating the darkness of the night.

"Hey, Bob, tie yourself on up there," the old men would shout to my father, who always sat on top of the freight trains, singing into the wind. "You gonna get yourself killed!"

"Don't worry, Murphy!" he'd shout down. "You'll get my fortune. Nelson, you can keep my mouth harp."

Maybe it was those old bums who inspired his desire to make old people (particularly the poor and the helpless) live forever. Maybe it was seeing them sick that made him want to save lives, as his father had saved souls. Whatever sparked that ambition drove him in the years that followed, made him work his way through college and medical school until one day he found himself married, with children, and a medical degree. He wasn't interested in making money; he wanted only to cure cancer and polio and arthritis. A boy-child in a grown man's body, with a grown man's burdens, he would never break free again from his aspirations, or his failures, for more than a few days or a few hours at a time.

I can still see him bursting through the front door with that special light in his eyes and a new proposal: "How would you kids like to live in a ghost town?" or "You know, I think we ought to hop on down to Tulsa--I heard about this health clinic there

## KATHRYN "KITSI" WATTERSON

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that's looking for a doctor to run it . . ."

My mom, my brother, sister, and I were constantly piling into the car with him to go and "look over the situation." We'd drive hundreds of miles, stopping only for gas, or an hour's sleep by the side of the road, to look at boats or resorts or hot mineral springs or spas--each of which seemed to offer the promise of a place to live where Dad could do work and research that would *matter*.

As each plan fell through, he would renew his efforts to create the freedom of a hobo camp at home. He brought in strays--displaced persons, patients with gnarled hands and feet who couldn't walk or look after themselves, or who were dying with no family to tend to their needs.

If I close my eyes, I can still feel the tension in the house. Often, my grandparents lived there as well: my grandfather, with his booming voice and angry coal-black eyes, talking about temptation, while my grandmother sat and rocked, her head tilted forward and her hands furiously braiding strips of old coats into rugs. My mother stirred black-eyed beans and potato-filled stews in large pots on the stove, her gray-green eyes sad and tired, rarely amused, when she heard the question over and over, from people who hovered around her, leaning on their canes, "When will the doctor be home?"

And then I see him, carrying a 90-pound skeleton of a person in his arms, tears streaming down his face as he realized he'd lost him; he couldn't beat Death. Or sitting down in the living room with an 88-year-old

patient of his. She is wearing a silver gown, with lavender plumes around her neck, and he is sipping brandy she's poured for him, admiring her and making her feel as if she's the Queen of England.

Now that I'm grown, I think I finally understand how he felt when he ran his hand over the surface of the cool dark wood in a bar--any bar--where he put money in the jukebox and sat down for a drink. A truck stop was O.K., but darker was better. The shadows, the smoothness of the Scotch sliding down his throat, the laughter of strangers cradled him, eased his panic. No one there would ask him to look into their ears or to check their pulse, to cool their fevers or to clean out their wounds. No one would cling to him or rely on him or depend on him. With his glass in hand, he could also forget that he was a husband and a father--just as on the rails he had been able to forget he was a son. After a drink or two, he could even dance, pulling his partner close to him so that he could smell her warmth and feel her softness rather than his own pain.

Sometimes now, standing at a cocktail party or walking down a crowded city street, someone whose skin smells like whiskey leans close to me, and that sweet-sour scent repels and attracts me, conjuring up the presence of my father. If I could go back and do it again, I'd say, the last time I could have said it, Happy Father's Day, Dad. I think of you, I love you, and finally, I know who you are.

## Notes on Contributors

**JACQUELINE M. BARNETT**, a May 1993 graduate of YCP, received a B.A. in English. Her recent awards include the Nelie Phillips Brown Memorial for excellence in English literature and two Bob Hoffman poetry contest awards. She plans to attend graduate school.

**JANE CACCIOLA**, a senior at YCP, is an English Secondary Education major. She has attended Western Maryland College and is a graduate of Strayer Business College. Originally from York, she has also lived in Baltimore and New Orleans before returning to open "European Confections," a small bakery business. Married and the mother of two small boys, she readily admits that she has remained slightly neurotic.

**JOANNE MATHIAS EMIG**, a May 1993 graduate of YCP, received a B.A. in English. She graduated cum laude with departmental honors and received the Nelie Phillips Brown award for 1993. She is a freelance proofreader/copy editor and recently joined the staff of the Writing Center. Her avocation is researching and writing about ancient history, particularly the life and times of Alexander the Great. Her article on Richard Wright's *Native Son* will be forthcoming in the Fall issue of

*Pennsylvania English*. She is currently writing an article on I.C. Smith for *The Dictionary of Literary Biography: The British Short Story, 1945-1980*. After reading Kitsi Watterson's "Days of Scotch and Hobos," which appears in this issue, Joanne reflected on her own father's death; "Postdated" is the result of that process.

**ANTHONY D. FREDERICKS**, Associate Professor of Education at YCP, is the author of 25 books and over 300 articles. His most recent publication is *Frantic Frog and Other Frankly Fractured Folktales for Readers Theatre* (Teacher Ideas Press, 1993). He is a popular storyteller and educational consultant for schools throughout North America.

**W. GRANT HORNER, II**, a senior at YCP, is a Secondary Education major. He has been mountain climbing for the past 14 years and continues to enjoy the challenge of scaling the sides of cliffs. When he was 16 years old, he published *The Face of the Deep*, a collection of short stories, and sold copies to his friends and relatives. Grant plans to attend graduate school in the near future and will concentrate on literature and writing.

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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**LAUREL**, a pseudonym for an author who wishes to remain anonymous, is a life-long resident of York County and a part-time student at YCP. She wants "They Say It Happens Everywhere" to be "any woman's story" and hopes that anyone who finds herself in a similar dilemma as Laurel's protagonist will call ACCESS York (846-5400) or FIRST (755-1000) for help.

**LESLIE KILHEFNER**, a senior English major at YCP, hopes to travel to England in the near future.

**MARK D. PISCO**, a senior at YCP, is majoring in English with the writing option. For three years, he was involved with the *Horizon* Yearbook. During his junior year, he worked as a sports writer for *The York Dispatch*. A past winner of the Bob Hoffman Writing Award, he spends his spare time at WVYC as a radio disc jockey.

**TIMOTHY M. RESH**, currently a sophomore Communications major, attended Dover High School where he won numerous writing awards, including Honorable

Mention in Smith-Corona's national competition, where his essay placed in the top 25 in a field of 25,000 entries. Timothy prefers writing humorous parodies, however, and "Murder in Produce" is a personal favorite.

**LORI R. RODGERS**, a 35-year-old part-time student at YCP and employee of BMV, lives with two cats and a very rambunctious chocolate Lab. Her poem describes Joe, her sister's Belgian gelding who died last January. He was in his late thirties.

**KATHRYN "KITSI" WATTERSON**, an award-winning journalist and co-author of *You Must Be Dreaming*, was a visiting writer at York College during Fall 1992. Kiti has published several books, including *Women in Prison*, for which she interviewed women in prisons nationwide, including York County Prison. She teaches writing at Princeton and is currently at work on *The Cantor and the Klansman*, her fifth book. Her articles and essays have appeared in such publications as the *New York Times*, *The Philadelphia Enquirer*, and *New Woman*.

# THE YORK REVIEW

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## CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

(For Fall 1994 issue, Volume 2, Number 1)

**\*\*\* DEADLINE: April 1, 1994 \*\*\***

### MANUSCRIPTS

• High quality poems, short stories, plays, excerpts, and creative essays can be any length. Excerpts from novels, plays, etc. must stand on their own. If we accept your work, you will retain all copyrights for future publication.

### SUBMISSION FORMAT

• Submit two copies of your work. On each page of the manuscript, include title of work, your name, and page number.

• Include a cover letter/sheet with a short *biography* (about 50-100 words), name, local address, and phone number. Also include your summer address and phone number.

• Submissions must be typed (typewriter or word processor), double spaced, **not** handwritten. Print document out in letter-quality mode and use a fresh ribbon. If using computer fan-fold paper, separate all pages and staple or paper clip together. Good quality photocopies okay.

• We cannot be responsible for lost manuscripts and disks, so always retain copies.

### SUBMISSION PROCESS

• For return of your manuscript, include a SASE (self-addressed, stamped envelope), with summer address.

• Submit your manuscript to Jennifer Semple Siegel, English & Humanities Department, or Sandra Coy, Department Secretary, York College of Pennsylvania, York, PA 17405-7199.

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## CALL FOR ART WORK

(For Fall 1994 issue, Volume 2, Number 1)

\* \* \* \* DEADLINE: April 1, 1994 \* \* \* \*

### ART WORK

- Submit your best line drawings--or camera-ready art work--not to exceed 6" x 8"; *quality and good taste* are the only other criteria. If we accept your art work, you will retain all future reprinting rights.

- Small filler pieces are welcome, for example, 1" x 1", 1" x 2", 2" x 2", 2" x 3", 3" x 3"--our column width is 3 inches. Also, 5" to 6" wide by 2" to 3" deep drawings could be useful.

### SUBMISSION FORMAT

- Submit two copies of your work, one original and one copy. In lieu of original art work, you may submit two copies, provided that at least one copy is of excellent quality and can be reproduced. On the back of each drawing, include title of work, your name, address and phone number.

- Include a cover letter/sheet with a short *biography* (about 50-100 words), name, local address, and phone number. Also include your summer address and phone number.

- We cannot be responsible for lost or damaged drawings, so submit your work in a sturdy envelope and/or portfolio, and always retain copies of your work.

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# *The York Review*

*English & Humanities Department  
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