



OAKWOOD

1985

OAKWOOD

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This issue of **OAKWOOD** is dedicated to Dean Allen Barnes,
Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, who has done so much
to keep this magazine alive.

Writing
is my illegitimate child.

When people ask me what I do
I say
I'm busy with my kids.

With the mountain shoreline
and its striped glaciers
pouring slowly,
the warm breeze pushing
gulls and puffins
over rolls in the sea,
a lone fishing boat with a
small square entrance that
led down from the deck
into the holding
tank
and a fisherman
chest high among
pale bloated cod
armed with a steel hook
for sorting— then
a Wolf eel
with black eyes
sneering and slopping from
a hidden corner over the
backs of those stiff bodies
and bulging eyes was met
with that hook crunching into
its rubber and bone head and,
with a deflated mute grunt was
flung to the side with the rest
of the stunned-faced
Wolf eels.



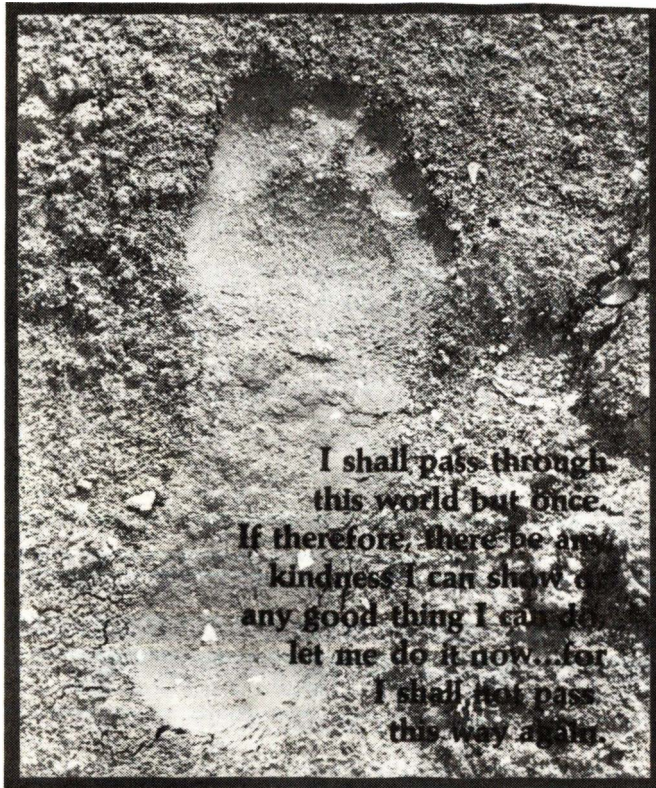
We were compelled, by the law
of the playground to continue the game
since the rules stated that
no one was allowed to quit.

Our game was school, and Peggy was the teacher
(She was older than the rest of us).
We did exactly as we were told,
not questioning her
authority.

She asked difficult questions—our “schoolwork”—
and required us to answer them.
She mother duck marched us
to and from our “classroom”,
in a slender file.

We played the game until the recess bell rang,
not questioning her
authority.

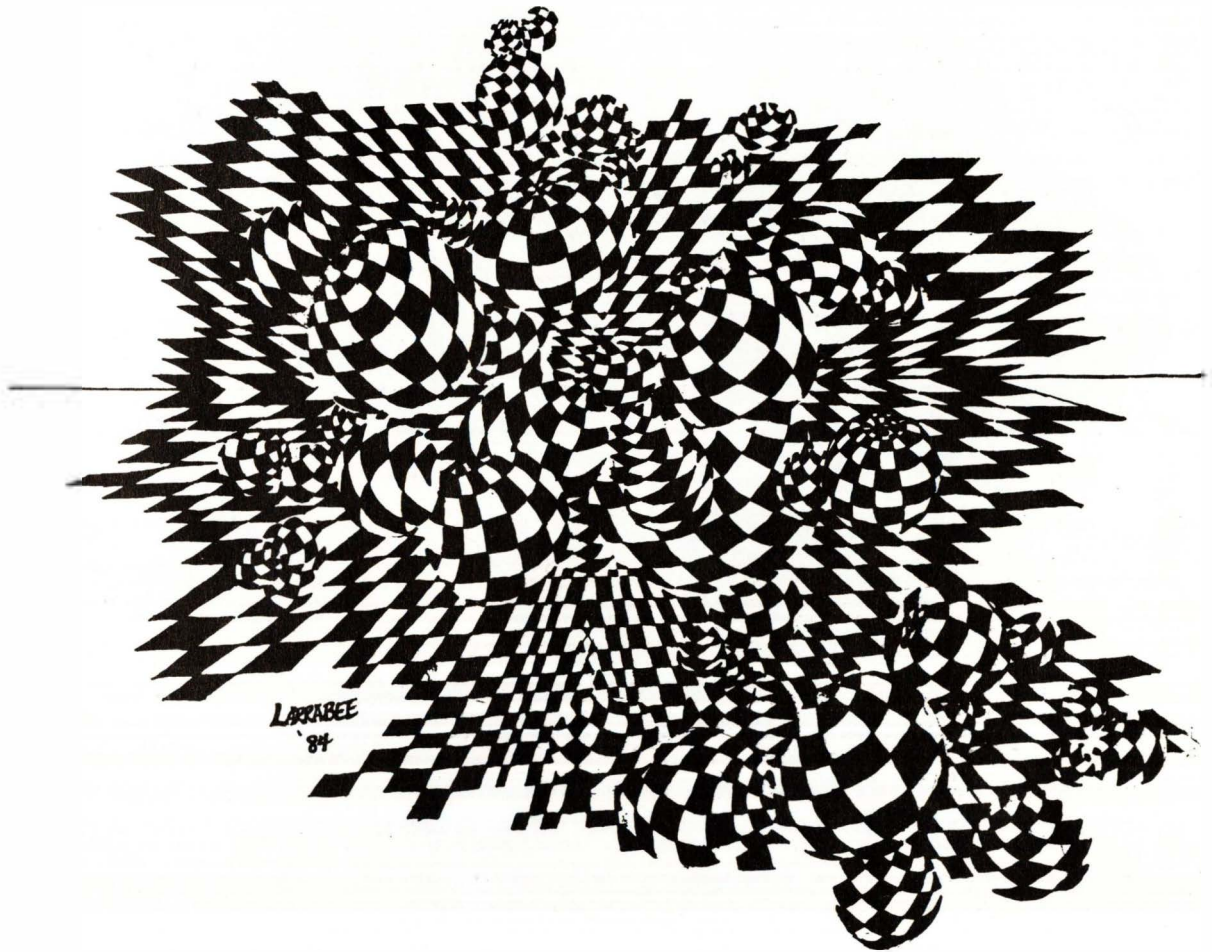


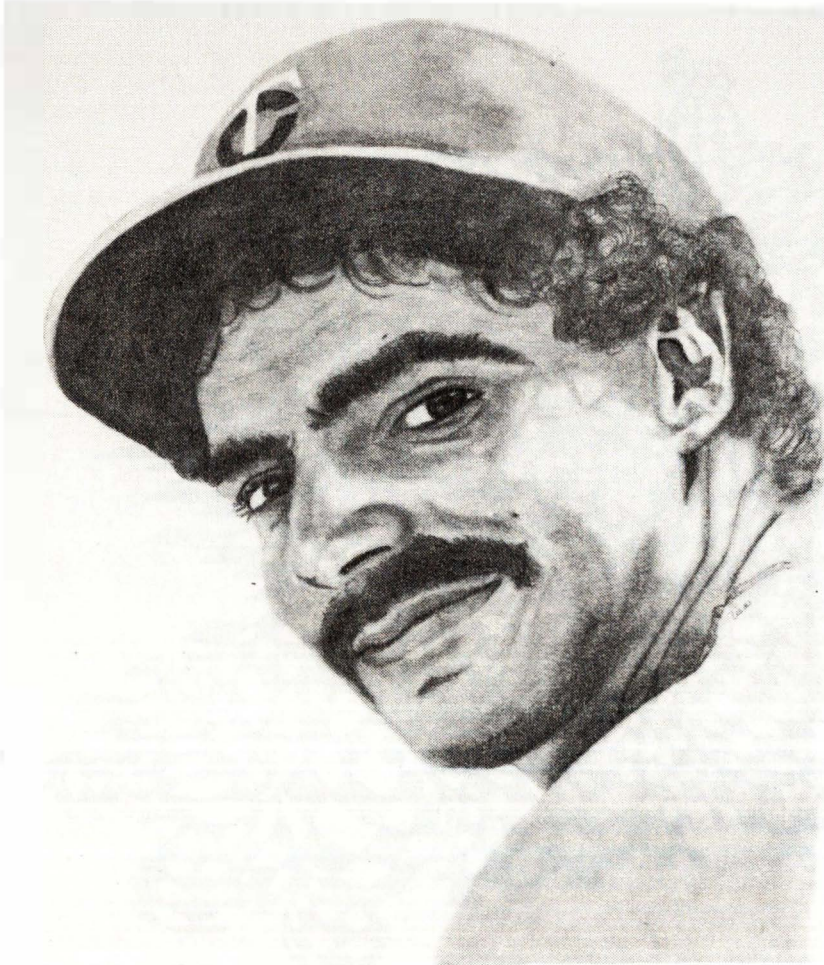


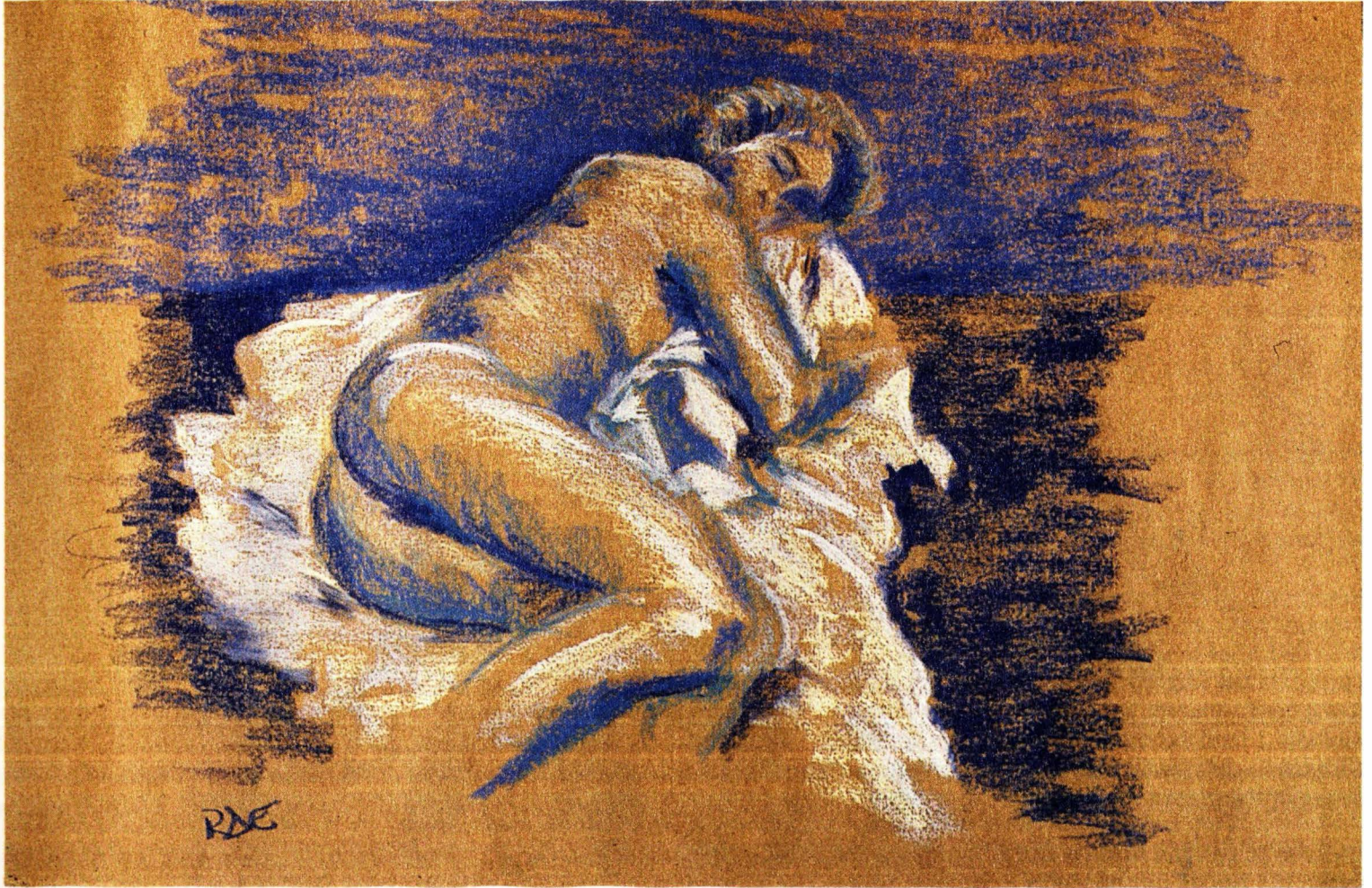


Untitled Julie Larrabee
<https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/oakwood/vol1/iss11/1>

spiral stairs of snow,
first imprints, valued, firm tracks,
fixed, double helix.







Untitled Rae Brecht

<https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/oakwood/vol1/iss11/1>

I looked out the screen door,
and saw the monkey sitting
alone on the porch step, shelling
peanuts, unaware of the street
noise near my house. Its tiny,
furry hands were moving nervously
over shells like an old woman
fiddling with big beads around
her neck. The monkey chewed and
spat, as pitchers do, as ants
raced like gophers for the slobbered
peanut by its toes.

the monkey vanished. All that
remained were a few ants scrambling
on the step for a speck of brown peanut.

Evidently the monkey heard me.
Its curious eyes caught mine, and
there through the screen door
we stared at each other, surprised.

Just then a fly landed on the
monkey's wet nose. The monkey
twitched, then it scratched, and
curled its tail like a yoyo on a
string, and I smiled. For a brief
moment I thought it smiled too,
with pieces of peanut stuck
between the cracks of its teeth.

I turned to call my brother from
inside the house, but suddenly



Jester of the Ram Laurie K. Ramhorst

<https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/oakwood/vol1/iss11/1>

I am reminded
when it rains
this constant rain,
of simple days warmly lived
in mother's kitchen
yeast-heavy and cinnamon-fine,
her floured hands
pulling and pressing the dough
back into itself,
patting and shaping it
in rhythm to the rain
pouring down the window.
I would look from the raindrops
to the dough
and back again
and marvel at the creation,
feeling myself to be
the dough in her hands.

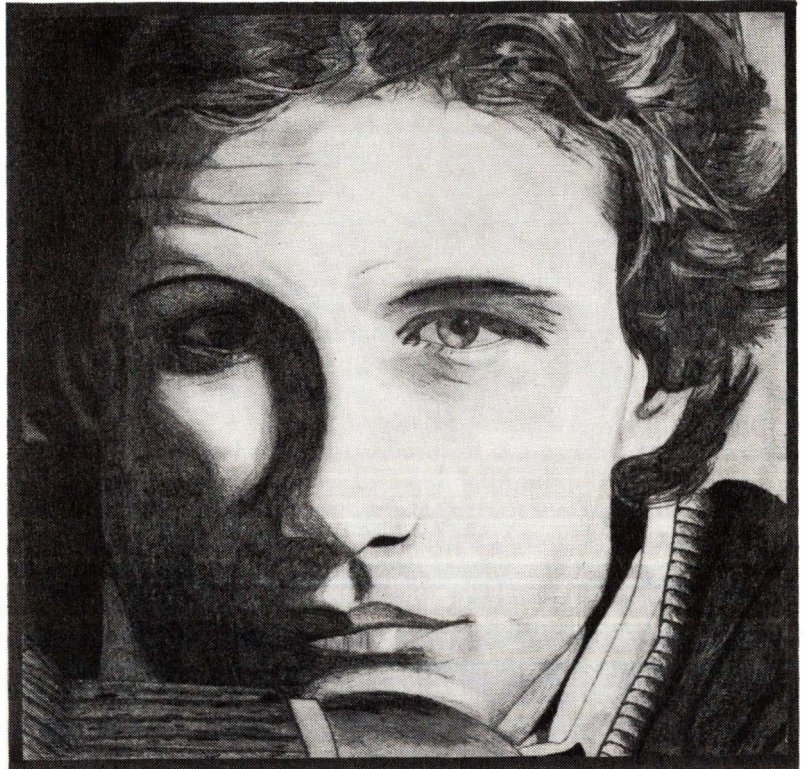


Standing in a roomful of
legs
legs with soft skirts
legs with creased pants and shiny shoes.

Hearing a voice from above all the legs;
“Say ‘Hello’ to Uncle Pete.”

Seeing beyond that forest to a clearing
not so high as my father’s voice,
to a smile like breeze in cottonwoods,
a crinkled pink face, polished blue eyes,
oatmeal sweater. . .
and there
under his shiny chair
with the big black wheels
and the little black wheels
there—where his
legs
should have
been
was space.

“Why doesn’t Uncle Pete have any legs?”
Gasps.
Seeing the crinkles curve and deepen:
“Come over here and I’ll tell you.”



Untitled Marty Morgan
<https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/oakwood/vol1/iss11/1>



Merlin Steele watched out of his writing room, his workroom, he called it. It was winter, late afternoon, and the whole town was white from a recent blizzard, white with blue shadows. The sun was going down and the moon was coming up over the roofs of houses.

Merlin had been sitting at his typewriter, the keys silent, for some time. His head felt like someone had put a leather strap around it—tightly—trying to get his attention. His neck and shoulders were stiff and one hip ached. He shifted his weight to the other hip, sighed, and reached up to rub his head. He could feel a weight now on the crown of his head, a weight in two small spots. Something rustled. He shook his head. “Whaaa. . .?” He brushed at the air and touched something satiny that moved. He leaped from his chair and whirled around. He caught sight of a large black bird, not a crow—it had a longer, lighter body, and the feathers were not blue-black like a crow’s, but a filthy brown-black. The bird lit on his right shoulder and he tried to shake it off, but it sank its claws into his cardigan and held on. He turned his head and shouted at the bird on his shoulder, inches away, but the bird didn’t stir a wing. Merlin dragged himself into the bathroom to look in the mirror. The bird looked back at him, yellow eyes glittering, and tightened its grip on Merlin’s shoulder.

How to get rid of the bird occupied the rest of the afternoon. He was unable to write any more that day, and he was afraid to leave the house with the bird on his head. When the telephone rang at 4:30 he waited six or seven rings before he answered it. His wife Violet, a science teacher at the high school, was calling.

“I’ll be home later than I thought today. We had a little problem today in the lab and it’s in shambles.”

“What happened? Was anybody hurt?”

“One of the boys is burned a little, not badly at all. He was horsing around and spilled some acid—he dropped a flask of it and some splashed on his arms. Most of the others were still getting things out, so he was the only one at his bench. I had to take him over to the clinic—I just got back—so I still have the lab to clean up and then I’ll be home.”

“I’ll start supper, then,” Merlin offered. When he hung up the telephone the bird was gone.

The next day was Friday. Merlin had promised to take a neighbor to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, a drive of about six hours east. Merlin’s old pumpkin-colored Volkswagen van had become the unofficial ambulance of Forsythe County—it was a good way for the sick and dying to get to the hospital or clinic in some kind of comfort. Most people in that town of about fifteen hundred people owned four-door sedans, Chevies or Fords, not well suited for ambulance duty.

The first time that Merlin had served as ambulance driver had been when the storekeeper had a painful tumor on his spine. The man had been planning to take the bus to Rochester, a fourteen-hour trip with all the stops at little towns along the way. When Merlin heard about it, he insisted on taking him there in the van. After that, when serious illness struck, people found it natural to tell Merlin, who always volunteered to be the driver. He refused money for the gas, but he usually found that his bill at Butch’s poolhall was paid up ahead. He could rarely get a cup of coffee or a beer downtown without someone slipping the money to the bartender first.

On that Friday, Merlin woke thinking first of the long

drive. It's a long way to listen to Carl whine, he thought, and Carl whined for thirty years before he ever got arthritis. Still, maybe there would be a basketball game on the radio on the way home. Then Merlin thought of the bird—it was like being reminded of a jail sentence. He wondered whether it would appear again. He fought off the covers and hauled himself out of bed.

Later, on the highway, after Carl had drifted off to sleep in the back of the van, Merlin let himself think about the bird. He decided not to mention it to Violet.

By Saturday, he had cleared his mind of the bird. When he woke at six, his usual hour, he jumped right up, thinking of getting back to writing. Violet was sleeping late, as she usually did Saturdays, so Merlin made coffee and toast and consumed them on his way to his room. He perched on the table in there, watching the darkness dissipate in the east. By then, he was usually alert, even restless, and could hardly make himself sit down to write. But he did. He had hacked out a few paragraphs on the old black Remington, a rebuilt manual that had belonged to his father, when he sensed something. It was that damned bird. This time it perched on the top of the typewriter, in front of the carriage. It stalked from side to side, preening, and then it stopped and looked right at Merlin, right into his eyes, his soul, really, he thought. He slid his chair back from the desk and pulled himself up, perspiring. He felt that he couldn't get his breath and he tried to breathe more deeply. His head felt light, like a helium balloon straining to float away. He staggered, caught the back of his chair—it swiveled wildly out of his grasp and careened into the bookcase. Merlin fell to his knees. Still the bird gazed at him. He found that he could no longer bear to look at the bird, and he closed his eyes.

When he awoke, the sun was pelting in through the windows of his workroom. He thought that the sun was waking him, but it was Violet, calling his name, patting his shoulder.

"Merlin, are you all right?"

"What?"

"Merlin, what are you doing on the floor?"

"I don't know, sick, I guess." He shoved his body up to a sitting position, and dragged himself upward against the desk. "I was dizzy and sat down, I guess." He stole a glance at the typewriter, but the bird was not there. "Let's go out for breakfast," he said. He tried to smile.

"Are you sure you're well enough for that?"

He could hear worry in Violet's voice, but he ignored it. He smiled and grabbed her arm, propelled her through the house. They got their coats and walked the six blocks to Arne's Cafe.

On Monday, he was slow to go back to work. He drank another cup of coffee, watched more of the news than usual, and cleared away the dishes after Violet had gone off to school. Finally, at 8:30, he cleared his throat, ran his hands through his hair, and drew himself up to his full height. He sauntered into his workroom. There was that blasted bird, sitting on his desk chair, pecking at the typewriter space bar. His throat constricted. He grabbed a copy of The New Yorker from the top of a pile of books and magazines by his easy chair and rolled it up. He swung it at the bird like a baseball player trying for a homerun, but the bird took flight leisurely, sailed across the room, and put in at the windowsill. He ran at the bird, waving his arms, scowling and making guttural noises. The bird flew right at him. It landed on his left shoulder. He tried to brush it off, but it settled itself as if for good. He sank into the easy

chair in the corner. When he heard Violet coming in late that afternoon, he roused himself and tried to think what to tell her about the bird. Then he noticed that the bird was gone.

The next day when it was time to write, Merlin took the typewriter into the kitchen. He closed the door to his workroom and went to work at the kitchen table. He could think of nothing, not a word. He poised his fingers to type something, anything, just to get started, but something in him had its brakes on. Maybe it was because he was trying to write in the kitchen—he had been writing in the same workroom for over eleven years, since he had quit teaching. He carried the typewriter back to his room, put a stack of old Glen Miller recordings on the stereo, and sat down to write. The bird materialized on his head just as he was finishing the second paragraph. He could feel its ugly claws gripping his hair. He could almost see its eyes boring into his head, divining his very thoughts. He tore the paper from the typewriter, rolled it up, and batted at the bird. It spread its wings, teetered from one foot to the other, and pecked at the paper. If the stupid thing would just get off my head, he thought, maybe I could work a little. The bird flew over to Merlin's easy chair, where it pranced along one of the arms. Merlin crumpled his paper and threw it at the bird. The bird hopped down to the seat, tucked its head under a wing, and seemed to sleep.

He sat down, then, and was able to write the end of one chapter and the beginning of the next. When Violet came home he was ready to tell her about the bird. "Come to my workroom, I have something to show you," he said. But when they got into his room, the bird was gone. He looked about.

"Well, what is it?" Violet asked.

What could he say? That he wanted to show her a bird that existed only when he was home alone? He turned and handed her the day's pile of typed pages. "It's more than I've been doing for awhile," he said.

For a month, Merlin wrote nearly every day. The bird sat on his head or on his shoulder part of the day and spent the rest of the day on the seat of Merlin's chair. It seemed to sleep about half of the time. He began to watch for the bird in the mornings and hunt for it when it disappeared each evening. If he went out during the day, the bird waited in his room while he was gone.

One day, though, something different happened. He had gone out to buy some paper late in the afternoon and stopped in at Butch's poolhall for a beer and a little penny ante. Afterward, he walked home in the dusk—suddenly, the bird was just there. It was sitting on his head. He was two blocks from home with that ridiculous bird on his head. He was afraid someone would see him with it. He walked more quickly, trying not to be seen, and at the same time, trying to give an impression of nonchalance.

After that incident, he hesitated to go out at all, but his friends were having a little celebration one day at Butch's, in honor of someone's retirement from the bank. He couldn't stay away—the man had been his closest friend for thirty years and more. So, at three o'clock, he stopped writing. Stay there, he thought at the bird in the chair, and shut the door to his room on the way out.

Later, after the party, he was rounding the corner to walk the last three blocks home when he felt the weight of the bird on his shoulder, felt the warmth of its feathers next to his face. He shuddered. Oh, God. He quickened his pace until he was nearly running.

When he got home Violet's car was already in the garage.

He thought of what he could tell her about the bird on his shoulder—that it looked like such a nice pet, he decided to bring it home? She's not that dumb, he thought. He wondered what the bird would do if Violet were to see it when he entered the house. It remained on his shoulder as he trudged into the kitchen where Violet was cooking. He stood in the doorway, watching her work. "What kind of day did you have?" he asked.

"It was just an O.K. day," she said, looking at him. She gave no sign of having seen the bird. "How was the retirement party?"

But Merlin was already turning away, toward his room. He hid out with the bird until Violet called him to supper. Then he tried to pick the bird off his shoulder, but it clutched the collar of his shirt and held on. Why me? he thought. He lugged himself in to join Violet at the table.

"What's the matter with you tonight? You seem so unhappy," Violet said.

Should he tell her? How could she miss seeing the bird? he was thinking. He sighed and said, "Oh, I've got this damn black bird hanging around me all the time, and I can't even remember my own name."

"Oh, that's too bad. It seemed like you had that licked. Why don't you go back and get some more Elavil? I don't think you've been as careful about what you eat, and I know you haven't been sleeping very much."

Merlin leaned back in his chair. She doesn't see the filthy thing, he thought. She thinks I'm depressed. Well, I am—who wouldn't be? He looked into his plate, thinking of ways to curse the bird. You malevolent miscreant, you odious churl, you meager-minded nag. . . He was grinning. Violet was looking at him. Had he said any of that out loud?

He hoped to hell he hadn't. He knew she wondered about his state of mind some of the time anyway. Merlin left the table. He hadn't eaten anything. If Violet hadn't seen the bird, maybe it wasn't there. He went toward his workroom—then he noticed that he couldn't feel the bird on his shoulder anymore. The bird was gone. He walked quickly into his workroom, but when he reached his desk, the bird was not there either. He prowled the room, thinking. Maybe going back to Dr. Schuller would be the thing to do . . .

But no, there had been a bird. Hadn't he seen it, felt its stinking feathers, felt its nasty grip on him? He spent the rest of the evening in his room, reading a novel by Herman Wouk. When he went to bed, he avoided Violet's eyes.

From then on, the bird was his constant companion while he wrote, but sometimes it left him alone while he was with Violet, their grown children, or his friends. He couldn't go a whole day, though, in those years without noticing the bird on his head or in his workroom. When he was alone, it began to suggest things to him, and it always seemed to be critical of him, even ridiculing.

For the next five or six years, Merlin managed to ignore the bird in the same way that a sick person can ignore a certain amount of pain when in the company of good friends. But about the tenth year after Merlin had first seen the bird, it started to bother him at public gatherings. He would watch the faces of his friends, surreptitiously examining their expressions for signs that they had seen something out of the ordinary. There was never so much as an exchange of glances over his head, an ironic grin, or a curious remark. His friends and neighbors treated him as they always had. Still, he wondered. Surely someone had

seen the bird, or at least the shadow it cast over his face.

When the bird began to scold him in public it was all he could do to carry on conversation with his companions. He still went to the poolhall a couple of evenings a week, but he gradually stopped swapping stories and jokes. Eventually, he hardly spoke at all, and this was something his friends did notice.

In his sixtieth year, he was unable to finish the novel he had been working on. He could not see what would happen next. Everything he wrote became a dead end. He tried to start something else, but found that he could not. He spent less and less time trying to write—he began to read all day while Violet was gone, and sometimes he read most the night, too. Late that year, he stopped sitting in the livingroom with Violet in the evening. He withdrew to his workroom to read, sometimes not even waiting until she was finished with her supper. He now found that only as long as he was reading, the bird was silent. But if he tried to visit with anyone, the bird chattered incessantly so that he could hardly follow the conversation.

When Merlin was sixty-one, he was required by his insurance company to have a routine physical examination. He had no reason that he knew of to dread the exam, but he found himself postponing it until he had reached the deadline. Finally, though, he went in to see Dr. Schuller.

When the physical exam and all the lab work had been completed, Merlin dressed and waited for the doctor to return and tell him that he was in excellent shape.

But as Dr. Schuller entered the exam room, Merlin could see that something was wrong. Schuller was holding a sheaf of papers, lab reports, and he was not smiling.

Merlin felt the bird's wing brush his ear, and he heard it

whispering profanities.

"Mr. Steele, your chest film doesn't look good," said Dr. Schuller. "We need to do some more tests, look into your lungs and take some tissue samples."

Cancer, cancer, cancer, Merlin's got cancer, chanted the bird. Merlin didn't hear the rest of what the doctor said to him. When Dr. Schuller left, Merlin picked himself up, put on his coat, and drove toward home in the van.

On the way home the bird whistled and screamed loudly, Merlin's going to die, Merlin's going to die. It sounded like schoolyard taunts by first-graders. Merlin forced himself to watch the road. The bird was quiet for a moment. Then it sang out, how to do it, how to do it? Pills in the parlor, won't that do? Guns in the garage, that'll work too. The van was going faster now, seventy-five miles per hour and faster still. The bird shrieked so loudly that Merlin could barely stay on the road.

"No, no, no," Merlin shouted. He took his foot off the accelerator. Over a hill he saw a lane leading into someone's pasture, and he pulled off the highway into the lane and stopped. He leaned back and looked out the window, trying to slow his breathing. Snow was melting, leaving rich coffee-colored patches of bare earth. The sun was high in the sky and it came flooding into the van, warming him. He could hear sheep bleating in the barnyard across the road.

A few minutes later, Merlin started up the van and headed for home. When he got there, he went right into his workroom and sat down to write.

He took out the unfinished manuscript for the novel he had given up on the previous year. He found that he was able to get into the story in a fresh way, and he made

some major changes in it. The bird was only a minor annoyance then—it stalked back and forth on the arm of the easy chair, clicking and clacking all day. He could ignore it as long as it stayed off his head and shoulders.

After several days of steady but moderate work on the novel, Merlin began to stay up later and later at night to write. He would go to bed at one or two o'clock in the morning and get up at six or seven, sometimes not even drinking any coffee before he started to write. He had never told Violet about the doctor's suspicions, nor had he returned for the follow-up tests. He lost weight. Dark shadows appeared under his eyes and he looked gray all over. Violet asked about this, but he brushed aside her concern. "Not enough sleep, I guess," he said, "but I'm going ahead on this piece and I don't feel like resting now."

In a month he had finished the novel. He sent it off to his editor, and then he took a day off to drive someone to Rochester.

Riding along in the van, he noticed that it was spring. The creeks and rivers were full and running, the sky was the soft blue-green of April, and he was glad to be driving in the beat-up old van, glad to be out and moving around. Not even the bird destroyed his pleasure in that day.

At home, the next day he woke up early and started a short story, a break from the hard push of finishing the novel. The bird rustled about his shoulders until he shouted, "Go away." For the rest of the day it sat on the edge of the window sill watching him. At four he quit writing and walked over to Butch's to have a cup of coffee and see who was there.

In the next few weeks he continued to write each day. The bird ignored him—it slept in the easy chair or stared

out the window. Late one afternoon when he returned from a good time playing cards at Butch's, the telephone rang at the Steele's. It was the editor.

After he hung up the phone Merlin said to Violet, "They like the novel. Ralph said he and Jack both think it's the best thing I've done yet. They have only a few suggestions, probably no big changes. God, I'm happy."



The virgin sun, pale as a moon, slipped in and out the haze.
Her light, through moving fog, cast pools upon the melting fields
And ran the furrows of an uncertain day.

Liquid and elusive, glimpsed only at times, her face reflected quicksilver streams;
Pallid comfort to a black and sodden earth.

Soaked beasts pulled hooves from out the chilled and sucking mud.
To pass like shadows into misty ghost town barns of possibly imagined homesteads.

Vapors prowled the land and stalked the subtle sunrise;
Undraped trees posed like glorious nudes against the leaking light.

Through smoke, through watery fields, through pools of incense-
breathing steam
It wasn't winter, not yet spring; it was . . . something else.



And the angel answered and said unto the women, "Fear not, for I know that ye seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen."

Matthew 28:5 & 6





A carriage of fine bone rattled down the forest road. Inside were a King and Queen, newly pressured. They were young wed and now had a son and a war. The Queen was a stranger from a frosty kingdom in the mountains. Her manner was all pauses. Now she looked vacantly at passing trees.

It was she who first saw the guardsmen fall under an attack of smoke and thunder. The horses danced in their harnesses, jolting the carriage to a halt. The Queen tumbled out of the carriage, seeing every guardsman in blood about the carriage. Seeing a young footman, a boy, staring wide eyed at the carnage. Seeing a solitary horseman carrying the king's small treasury chest under one arm. Seeing the horseman wheel about and gallop back down the road. In her land of hard packed snow, a thief meant hunger and death. With a snarl, the Queen grabbed a horse's reins and mounted in long skirts and followed. The Queen used all her anger and gained rapidly on the horseman.

He veered into the forest on an overgrown path. The Queen plunged after him. He pulled up short in a small clearing and dismounted. He turned around when he heard the Queen's horse and stared at the Queen, puzzled, as her horse galloped into the clearing. She jumped onto him, knocking him down on his back. Straddling him, she pinned his arms and choked him.

She stood up, panting, the sweat running channels down her face. She saw a movement at one side and whirled around. Standing at the edge of the clearing she saw a woman dressed in man's garb—brown pants and shirt.

"He is a thief," the woman said in a high voice. "He has stolen my heart."

The Queen watched the woman walk over to the man's body. "He is dead," said the Queen.

The woman looked at the body and then at the Queen. "He has stolen my heart."

The Queen stared at her, frowning. "The past cannot be regained," she said finally.

"He has stolen my pretty silver heart on a chain, on a chain." The woman bent down by the body and pulled from its shirt a heart on a slithery chain. "What will you ask me?" The heart swung in a circle from her hand.

"I have nothing to say," said the Queen.

"Maybe later," She nodded at the Queen and turned and walked with a swing out of the clearing.

The Queen walked back to the main path and found the King upon a horse, looking for her. As they rode back to the castle, she told him how she had killed the thief. The king laughed and called her his warrior queen.

At the castle, he had artisans make for her a breastplate of silver with designs of arrows and cupids. She wore the breastplate without much feeling to one banquet before the King returned to his border war.

The Queen was alone again and slightly afraid. Her son was at the walking age. He would howl for her as soon as he was awake and no other could placate him. He had round eyes and strong hands and clutched at the Queen as if he were about to fall a long distance. The Queen felt something move in her when she was with him, a strange thing. She was with him always during those long months of

war. They sat in a large, sunny room alone for hours. At times the Queen carried the boy out into the garden and walked about. He clutched the neckline of her dress and silently stared over her shoulder. None of the people of the court ever saw the Queen play with the child. For that matter, they never saw the child play at all.

The members of the court had been upset with the Queen during the early months of marriage to the King. She didn't invite confidences from anyone. She was never merry. After her son was born, though, these people began to see her as mysterious, a woman to emulate. Her devotion to her son was marvelled over, especially since the boy was slow to develop. Some even whispered that he was addled.

One day, months after she had last seen the King, the Queen picked up the boy and looked into his eyes. She saw his father. She felt strange. She put the boy down and went into her bedroom. Her son sat crying outside her door until the nurses took him away.

On the battle field he lay dying in her arms, his thick hair matted with blood. He tossed and muttered. The army was scattered around, fighting in isolated areas. Both sides were shocked at his wounds, inflicted by a boy soldier. The Queen held the King, feeling the strange thing inside her moving as the King thrashed in her arms, building like a fever. When he died, she took his sword and fought. The men gathered to her. Slowly the army congealed and moved across the land like a lumbering animal. The Queen returned home after three years with new lands and allegiances.

While she was at battle, her son found his laughter. He

played in the garden most days with the other children and was the first to see the Queen as she and her warriors rode up to the castle. The boy abandoned his play and ran up to his mother, screaming with laughter, begging to be taken upon her horse. She lifted him silently. He chattered and laughed, gripping her cape. He could not get a hold on her mail.

The men of the King's council had debated during the Queen's absence who would rule. The only living line from the crown was the boy. The Queen settled the debate upon her return by proclaiming she would rule in the boy's stead until he was old enough. The leader of the council had decided that he would become the boy's guardian and argued against the Queen. He had administered the kingdom during the war and felt he had accumulated power. The Queen banished him. When he refused to leave the council room, she drew her sword and severed his head from his body.

The kingdom was quiet for the following year. The Queen strode about the castle in boots and mail and trained her army. The boy tagged behind her, carrying a wooden sword. He no longer cried nor played with the other children in the garden. He fought mock battles with the soldiers, the prince giggling all the while. When they were too busy to entertain him, the boy played with his shadow or a vine upon the wall, lunging with his sword. His mother was never far from view and occasionally she sat down and drew him absentmindedly upon her lap, rocking him. The roiling she felt within her would subside into a strange quiet. Abruptly, she would thrust him from her lap

and stride away.

Soon came the time when another battle developed, and the Queen left to lead her army into new victories. And another war after that. And another. The kingdom expanded. The Queen's bravery was lauded. The bloodshed was not. Her army was now comprised of soldiers from conquered kingdoms. One of these soldiers, a tall, straight backed young man with a smooth face, stirred memories in her. Staring at him one day, the Queen was reminded of her son. The last time she had seen him was four years in the past. He had been a boy of twelve, already uncommonly tall and with the fair hair of his father. The boy had held her hand and spoke of the administration of the kingdom, of the people in the villages and farms that surrounded the castle. The Queen related stories of cunning in her army. She felt uneasy and so had left the following morning.

Seeing the young soldier made the Queen determined to see her son again. She made memories of the prince as she rode back to the castle, scanning all their times together, remembering his gusto with a sword. She decided he was old enough to fight with her for the kingdom. She knew vaguely that the kingdom must expand and push at the edges, as did things in her. It was never silent now, and she moved as it did.

When she rode up to the castle, she was not greeted by the prince for the first time. The people of the castle were agitated and excited, moving purposefully from place to place. The Queen stared at the activity and finally asked the courier what was being planned. He flushed and told her the prince was to be crowned. The Queen was amazed.

She felt the raw edges of a void nibbling at her.

The council was meeting in the tower room when the Queen strode in. They avoided her eyes as they told her that the boy had come of age. They told her they needed someone at the castle. They needed someone to look after the kingdom. The Queen's amazement grew. She peered at each face as if it were unfamiliar. They fell silent, the men at the table staring at their hands and the Queen in the middle of the room in her armour. Suddenly, she drew her sword. Councilors shifted in their chairs, two rising. Then the Prince walked in. The Queen vaguely heard what he said to her about their people, all the dead, all the turmoil, and suddenly she wanted to hold him. She reached out to touch him and found there was a sword between them in her hand. The Prince stepped back and looked at it. He walked out. The Queen's arm dropped. She stood for a moment and then walked out of the castle, brushing away people who tried to cluster about her. She ran awkwardly in her mail into the forest.

She stopped eventually, bracing herself against a tree and gasping. She was shaking. She concentrated on breathing and soon felt somewhat steady. She pushed away from the tree and looked around. Ahead of her was a clearing. The Queen walked into it, drawn by a memory. She saw a large boulder at one side. Sitting atop it was a woman dressed in brown with a silver heart upon her chest. The woman looked impassively at the Queen. The Queen stared back. Finally, the Queen spoke.

"What?"

The woman continued to stare at the Queen and said

nothing. The Queen watched the silver heart move slightly as the woman breathed. Suddenly, the woman jumped lightly from the boulder. She walked over to a tree and bent down by the roots. She walked back to the Queen. She lifted one of the Queen's hands and put a small brown mushroom in it, pressing the Queen's hand shut around it.

"Can the past be regained?" the woman whispered, looking into the face of the Queen. They stared at each other for a few moments.

"What is this?"

"In his food." The woman smiled and squeezed the Queen's hand. Then she turned and walked into the forest.

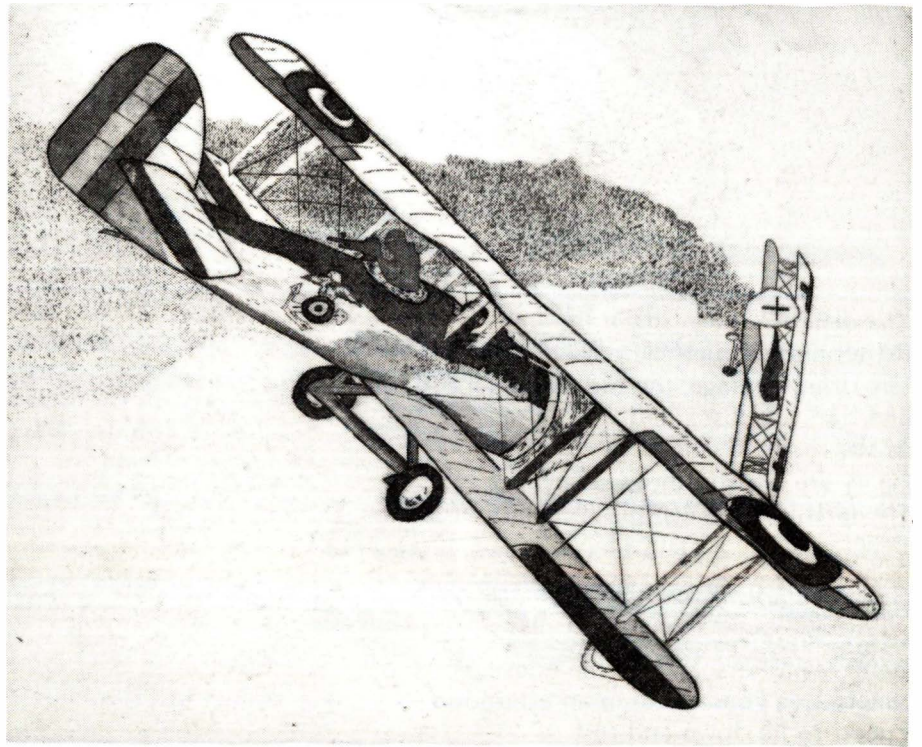
At the coronation banquet the new King proclaimed the end of the wars, the return of the land unfairly taken, and his desire to seek a wife. The Queen sat at the long table in a stiff dress next to her son. The court was very merry, as was the King. He proposed many toasts. His mother kept his wine cup full all evening.

In the early hours of the morning the doctors were summoned to the King's chambers, where he lay moaning with a high fever. At dawn the fever broke, leaving the King very pale and cold. His chest barely moved. The Queen was summoned. She watched as the doctors labored over him with their herbs and leeches all through the day. She never stirred from her chair in the corner. The priests were led in later to pray for the King. The Queen watched them, too. Eventually, the room was emptied, except for the Queen and her son.

She walked over to his bed and knelt beside it. She took his head into her arms and rocked him gently. She waited

for something to stir in her, anything, even the strange quiet. The King opened his eyes slowly. He stared at something the Queen couldn't see, looking as vacant and icy as the Queen felt.

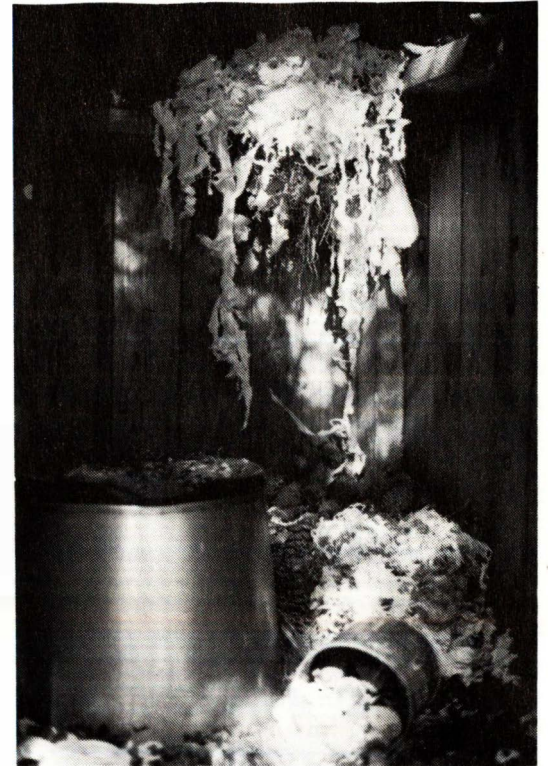
The next day the Queen took her son out for a walk in the garden, gripping his hand tightly. In his other hand he carried a wooden sword. The Queen reached up several times to wipe away a trail of spit dribbling from the side of her son's mouth. And there was silence all around.



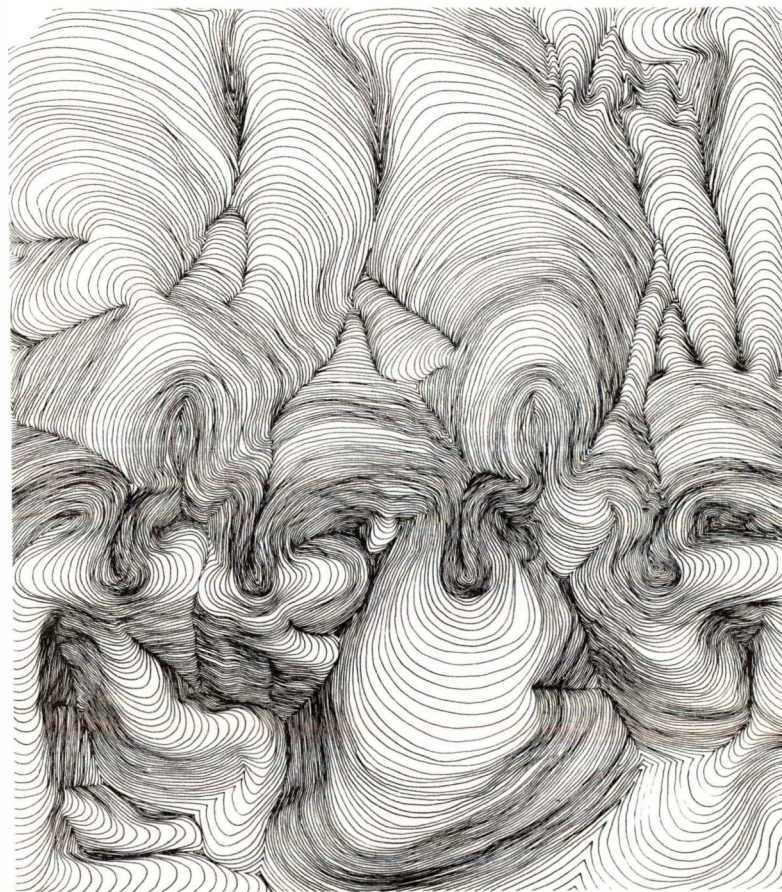
The attic has been sifted through
(to separate grain from chaff).
The dried corsage, the old dresses
and hats are discarded . . . dismissed
as souvenirs, changed to charity.
Faces are hard to throw away.
The girls will get scrapbooks and portraits.
Others can divide antique jewels
from my box.
Heirs will find their names
scratched in wood and in books.
Debris will be sold with the house.
Ninety-five years done in an afternoon -
I need to lie down and rest.







watch the wind of words,
biting, breaking frosted beard,
morning's aria.



a mess of
gray moss
half-buried
in the sand
left for
the tide

snags
snails and shells
and eyeless fish—all
shampooed and dried
like a hairnet
on driftwood



Client: Cheryl McFarland

Age: 25

Occupation: Book Illustrator

Marital Status: Single

Project: Apartment-Penthouse

Location: Top of high rise building; 1300 N. Summit #125, Kansas City, MO 89654

Lifestyle: Simplistic and Organized

Activities: Cheryl will be working at home and needs a studio with an area to speak to clients. She wants a desk for business matters and letters. Her specific request was a rolltop desk. Also, she would like an entertainment center in the living room.

Entertainment: Entertainment will be light with a maximum of five guests at a time other than family get togethers. She likes to have dinner parties mainly. Cheryl would like a hide-a-bed for overnight guests.

Hobbies: Cooking is one of her favorite hobbies so an adequate kitchen is necessary. She also enjoys handicrafts such as embroidery, cross stitch and crocheting afghans. Cheryl is a member of the Y.W.C.A. near her apartment.

Maintenance: My client likes her home tidy and organized. She does not mind cleaning; it is not an inconvenience for her.

Preferences:

Atmosphere: My client wants a soft, plush, comfortable atmosphere. It should include many windows with an airy, earthy look. She likes a look between casual and formal with some sophistication.

Styles: Cheryl does not prefer any particular style. Her tastes tend to be more traditional mixed with modern styles. She did request a few oriental pieces such as a screen and lamp bases.

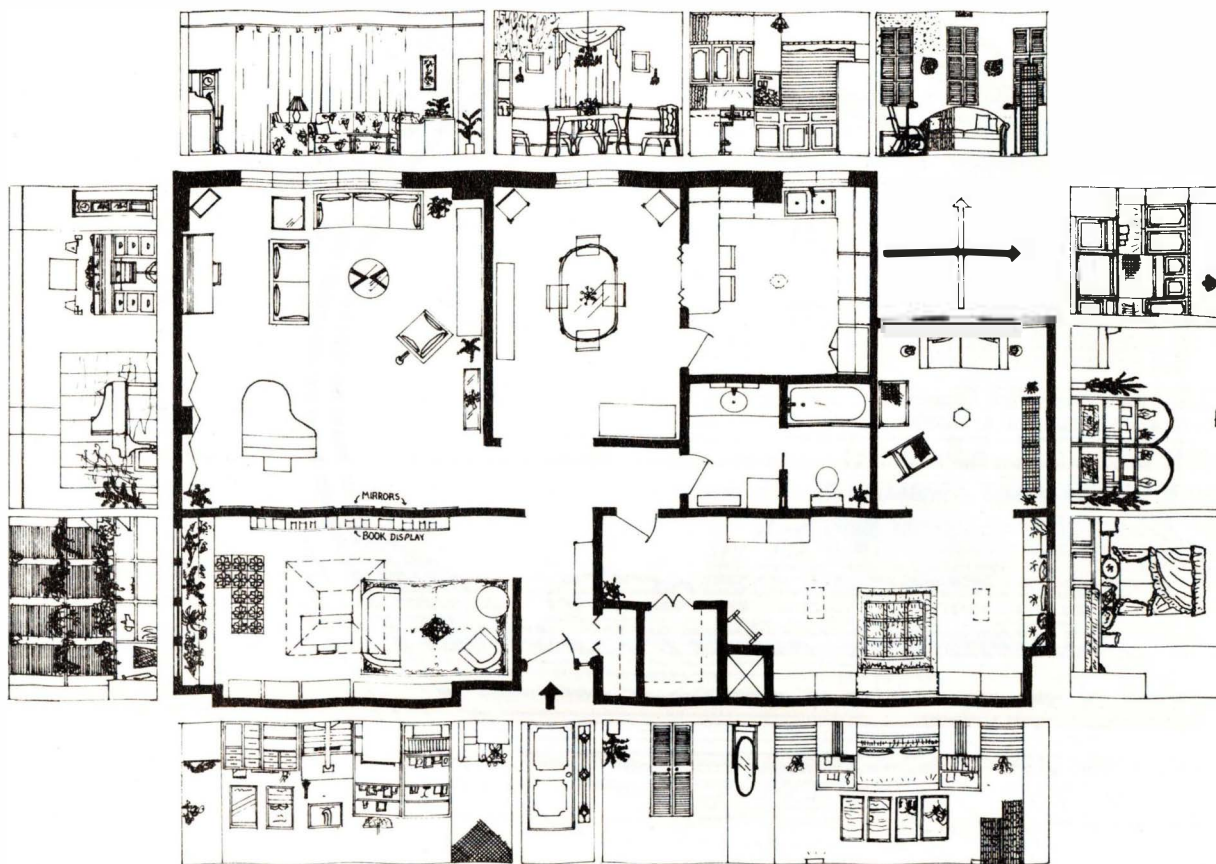
Colors: Blue and neutrals is her favorite color combination. Other colors are fine, too; she doesn't have a color that she absolutely dislikes.

Furnishings: She enjoys playing the piano so one will be needed. Cheryl prefers darker wood furniture. Her dining room furniture should be more formal because she plans on having dinner parties. Also, she would like a bent wood rocking chair and an oriental screen. For the bathroom shower, Cheryl prefers sliding glass doors. She wants the furniture to be comfortable.

Walls and flooring: My client dislikes hard flooring and would rather have carpeting. She likes wallpaper, paints and paneling for walls.

Windows: Cheryl likes the look of shutters and draperies.

Accessories: My client has samples of her work she would like to display. Also, she wants an area to grow plants.







NECROMANCER

Out in the night
Where the shadows hide
I'll be looking for you

Out in the light
Where the clouds subside
I'll find someone new

You'll never know
I'll never show
What I can do for you

Out in the dark
Where the ghosts run wild
What do you think you'll do?



dancing
on the grasstops
and the clouds
dancing to the sunset
little one
dancing
with the raindrops
and snow, now
sleeping
with the grassroots
and the earth
sleeping
in the sunset
little one
sleeping



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Carrie A. Chesnik- <i>English</i>	Redfield, SD
Kathleen A. Vrchota- <i>Graphic Design</i>	Jackson, MN
James R. Beck- <i>Mass. Comm. & Theater</i>	Eureka, SD
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