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Winter 1991

Lawyers By Day

Law School Arts Association

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Lawyers By Day

A Collection Of Creative Writing
By Students of the University of Michigan Law School
A Project of the Law School Arts Association

Winter, 1991
Issue 1, Volume 1

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Finally! The first issue of Lawyers by Day is done. We would like to dedicate this first issue to all of the students at the University of Michigan Law School who contributed some of their creative work in order to make this magazine happen AND to all of those people who can remember how much they truly enjoyed reading—and writing—poetry and fiction, and miss it. We hope that this magazine will provide you with a brief moment from that wonderful time in your life when you could sit down and read a book or a magazine just for the fun of it (that is, before you came to law school and allowed yourself to become inundated with briefs, casebooks, memos and outlines). We received a surprisingly large amount of submissions and we're happy to say that we've included a variety of poems and short-stories, and in the subsequent issues, we hope to be able to include cartoons, and essays. We would like to thank everyone who submitted to this first issue, and I look forward to receiving the submissions for the Fall 1991 issue. Extra special thanks to Jane Gorham, 3L, who worked with me on putting this together; this magazine could not have come about without her. Again, thanks to all who submitted and I hope you enjoy it.

Timothy E.M. Williams, Class of 1992
Editor

April 1991

Law Like Love
by W.H. Auden

Law, say the gardeners, is the sun,
Law is the one
All gardeners obey
Tomorrow, yesterday, to-day.

Law is the wisdom of the old
The impotent grandfathers shrilly scold;
The grandchildren put out a treble tongue,
Law is the senses of the young.

Law, says the priest with a priestly look,
Expounding to an unpriestly people,
Law is the words in my priestly book,
Law is my pulpit and my steeple.

Law, says the judge as he looks down his nose,
Speaking clearly and most severely,
Law is as I've told you before,
Law is as you know I suppose,
Law is but let me explain it once more,
Law is The Law.

Yet law-abiding scholars write:
Law is neither wrong nor right,
Law is only crimes
Punished by places and by times,
Law is the clothes men wear
Anytime, anywhere,
Law is Good-morning and Good-night.

Others say, Law is our Fate;
Others say, Law is our State;
Others say, others say
Law is no more
Law has gone away.

And always the loud angry crowd
Very angry and very loud
Law is We,
And always the soft idiot softly Me.

If we, dear, know we know no more
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If we, dear, know we know no more
Than they about the law,
If I no more than you
Know what we should and should not do
Except that all agree
Gladly or miserably
That the law is
And that all know this,
If therefore thinking it absurd
To identify Law with some other word,
Unlike so many men
I cannot say Law is again,
No more than they can we suppress
The universal wish to guess
Or slip out of our own position
Into an unconcerned condition.
Although I can at least confine
Your vanity and mine
To stating timidly
A timid similarity,
We shall boast anyway;
Like love I say.
Like love we don't know where or why
Like love we can't compel or fly
Like love we often weep
Like love we seldom keep.

(September 1939)

Alas, poor subjects cheery
Don't fit themes literary,
Don't tell the sad confusion of our time -
Mild odes of life and romance
Don't stand a snowball's slim chance
And worst of all,
They have the gall to rhyme.

Alas, I am no poet,
Alack, at last I know it;
My thoughts won't dwell on death nor men gone mad -
No literary niche for me,
Just unread anonymity -
Alas, I guess,
I just don't feel that bad.
Than they about the law,
If I no more than you
Know what we should and should not do
Except that all agree
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(September 1939)
There it is—the feeling of planes flying overhead
A guardian angel is sketching your portrait as you sit, reading
The wind truly is the hand of a god moving your hair
And one word you said echoed as if spoken in a great hall
Who was it scratching your back that day, when the sun closed your eyes?
I think of you and my phone rings once.
In crumbling pages of Life, from 1943,
Did you see that picture smile, the one you thought was me?

(Untitled) by Phillip Y. Dahl

Whale Song by Phillip Y. Dahl

O krill
O krill, krill, krill
Yummy krill
Krilly krill
Abundant, swarming krill
How like a tiny shrimp, thou krill,
tickling in my baleen
O krill, krill, krill
O krill, O krill

And Still it Prevails by Timothy E.M. Williams

The Elders sat quietly—thinking—around the Circle. Lowstar sat too,
feeling the warmth of the bonfire on his face, hearing the green wood pop and
clatter in the flames as a loon’s call rose above the rustling of the forest leaves.
No one spoke or moved because the time had come to decide what to do about the
young hunter from the Pawtuck tribe, Silent Crow, and the “accident.” All
movement was to be made in the mind alone now because respect for the “Process”
prevailed.

A lone wolf suddenly howled in the forest. Lowstar’s concentration
slipped again and his mind drifted. No, he thought, and shook his consciousness
back to the question at hand. It was difficult for him to sit like this for so long,
but he was determined to prove himself worthy. He was the youngest of the tribe
ever to be allowed to sit with the Elders of the Circle and he must not do anything
wrong—he must not do anything to make the others call him undeserving of the
honor. Two moons had already passed since his trial period with the Elders began
and he had less than one moon left to show that he possessed the necessary
discipline, determination and capacity of mind; he would not jeopardize that now.

But how much longer must we sit, he wondered. This was not a difficult decision
to make; the facts—as well as the appropriate outcome—were clear. And he was
eager to get this over with; it felt as if they had been sitting there for hours. His
buttocks ached, and his limbs felt stiff; he felt the weight of his hands where they
rested on his thighs. Holding his eyes closed tightly, he breathed in through his
nostrils. The wind carried the moist and haunting smell of fish and water flowers
from the nearby lake. He smiled. She would be waiting for him by the lake, and
tonight he would do more than just take her into his arms and kiss her. Yes,
tonight will be different, because he will have made his first decision with the
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Elders; tonight will be different because he will prove himself to be a rational decision-making man, and that will make her want him all the more. He listened as the one wolf's howl suddenly became several wolves' howls—and then a symphony of wails. And the sound made him think of mothers crying at the deaths of their sons. It was a sound so frantic and piercing that it drove itself deeply into his consciousness; so deep that he swore he felt it rattle his soul. Why, thought Lowstar, why did the wolves always have to cry so loudly?

When the wolves had stopped their howling, he heard something scrape on the ground next to him. Yes, Chief Little Steed had moved. Finally, he thought, finally the "Process" is over. He cautiously opened one eye to peek out at the Circle. The flickering firelight cast shadows over the faces, but it appeared that all eyes were open. Lowstar opened both of his eyes now and looked about him—the time had come to make the decision. Chief Little Steed stood up, and everyone arose. Looking directly at the fire, Chief Little Steed spoke, "What say you?"

"War," said Sparrowhawk.
"War," said Snowy Sky.
"War," said Mighty Wind.
"War."
"War."
"War."
"War."

Then it was Lowstar's turn to speak, and he hesitated; this was not the vote he'd expected to hear. How could this possibly be their vote? They had sat here for hours—hours!—and this was the only conclusion they could come to? It was true that killing a member of another tribe had always been an act of war, and no one, absolutely no one, was ever supposed to hunt on sacred ground, but Silent Crow had not seen Red River when he shot, and he did not know that he was hunting on sacred ground; he was shooting at a deer, and Red River just appeared out of nowhere. It was an accident. Surely accidents are forgivable.

"Lowstar, what say you?" said Chief Little Steed, and Lowstar looked around at the faces of the other Elders of the Circle; they all stared stonily at the fire. He had less than one moon left to prove himself worthy, and the sooner he made this decision, the sooner he could get to the lake—the sooner he could get on with his life. But the hours they'd spent deliberating this, he thought, and still it prevailed.

Chief Little Steed turned to look at him directly, obviously impatient with him now, "Lowstar, what say you?"

"War," he said, with conviction. Then he heard the wolves begin to howl in the forest again.
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The Impression

by Lisa Ruby

Closing the door
You left me behind it,
Watching the space where you once stood
turn to stone,
Facing the wall
my heart tells me you're just on the other side

If I shut my eyes
and listen real hard
I can almost hear you breathing
But maybe that's just me
still pretending you could be there
that you still care

The words you told me
as you shut that door
built that wall
Echo inside without end
holding me silent
hands bound
heart heavy
head bowed
betrayed

Perhaps my words could open the door
to step in to where you hide
Yet I say nothing
afraid that you do not wait for me
on the other side

You told me
there's nothing more here
Whatever I thought I could give you
Well, I was wrong
In your eyes, for a moment,
I thought I saw the truth there
but in an instant it was gone

Turning away from the emptiness
left with a feeling of waiting
But how can that be
when there is nothing yet to come.
I hope that it will fade
this feeling tugging at my sleeve
Still, I sense you here
but I guess it's just the impression
you left on me.

Me

by Roy Wyman

I looked in
the twisted
smile inside -
of the circus
the mirror is the lie
to frighten me
I tell myself -- it's not me
I tried to talk
and I looked again
but the image
smiled back and
said nothing
I tried to see how I looked-- and then I realized
it was me

and I had nothing to say.
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it was me
and I had nothing to say.
Women had their secrets in my family
great grandma was a witch some said
and hated her, afraid
because they felt it too
we don’t burn witches now
and I hear many things
when grandma died we sold the house
furnished except for the tv
which didn’t work again
I found my favorite beads
(long lost in the the tall volleyball grass)
in front of the dark television set
we don’t burn witches no
and I am of an age to listen

Lament of Teiresias

To see the future
brings a kind of power first.
A life of fear will follow.
Who could know humanity would insist
on bleeding before my eyes
like an unwelcome guest?
Might I pray for blindness
when I think of how my light is spent.
No sleep will shut these shriveled orbs
and stay the dawn of this
undying sight.

Letter from Yemen

November’s mail brought news of you.
A picture of the school falls out --
children crowd the yard like crows
on harvest fields, drinking
from a bucket, drawing
figures in the dust.

Within this narrow frame
I search for signs of riots, risings, civil war,
see no soldier, gun or junta
and for the moment feel secure.

The Associated Press reports
opposition leaders in Sana’a
defied the party line, were shot
and order was restored.

Being blond is not a passport
when the revolution comes.
Transcribed from Arabic your postscript reads,
“Goodbye, and we will meet again.
God willing, may you marry young.”
Women had their secrets in my family
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The Bauxite Factory

The bauxite factory road is black mud rutted inland to Ocho Rios. The aluminum is gone, replaced by coastal hotels on the corral beach.

Inside this fairy ring begins the rain forest, green as Colombian emeralds sold in the better shops.

I could buy the island, most of it for sale, everything in American dollars -- Swiss watches with plastic bands, silver to turn your fingers green, painted Jamaican faces posing with long spears begging for photographs -- such natives never lived.

Somoza spoke for Jamaica when he said, "Our lovely climate means we have no housing problem." Open to the air, pale pink stucco keeps chickens and children.

In the valley of the ferns two women still as ebony sell linens by the road. The plants creep toward the bauxite factory rusting red against the Caribbean Sea.

T.S. Elliott, 1990

FANATIC -- One who redoubles his efforts after losing all sight of his original goals.


Push, Push, Push. Run, Run, Run. Push, Shove. Do, Do. Don't forget to do this by then and that by tomorrow and the other also, and one more thing and more and more and more! Soft, warm smiles --- PUSH! Feeling, caring, relaxed effort --- PUSH PUSH! Quiet, waves slowly lapping against the shore --- PUSH PUSH PUSH! hugging --- PUSH push push. Walkin' --- push, push, push. touchi --- push! run! push! Warmt --- push, push. Run aw-- push push. Run a --- PUSH PUSH. RUN --- run run run. Run, run, run.

"And at warp ten, we're going nowhere mighty fast."
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"Nobody runs in Ann Arbor"
(The expanded version of "T.S. Elliott, 1990"
in which the word 'hide' is used differently)

Naomi told me that nobody runs in Ann Arbor. Not jogging, but like running to class, or if you're late somewhere. I'm pretty oblivious to what's going on around me and until she mentioned it, I hadn't noticed. But then, scientist that I'm not, I began observing.

Why not start with myself (I thought); even if I don't consciously notice these things, I react to societal demands subconsciously. I looked at my legs (I have two of them) they move fairly quickly but even when I am late to class they don't seem to do more than a half run -- you know, sort of a fast walk, a leap, look around, fast walk again (keeping elbows at no more than a 45 degree angle), heavy breathing.

Step two, (ha, ha) look at others. Over a period of two weeks I saw no one spontaneously running, ('spontaneously' mean without wearing painted on clothing and/or men's underwear over tights).

And that's my city. Socialization is king and socializing is queen. (or maybe vice versa', but I doubt it.) The teachers talk, the students write (what the Learned Hand writes the foolish mouth speaks) and the days go by. (David Byrne)

My roommate Phil (hi Phil, if you're reading this) showed me a "Far Side" comic strip yesterday. It was cows in a field & one cow was saying, 'Hey, wait a minute! This is grass! We've been eating grass!' And Shirley Jackson wrote "The Lottery" and there's that short story about the cows going to the slaughterhouse...

But even if you believe them, then what do you do? So we eat grass. So what, as long as we're happy? And if you notice that you're eating grass and it seems like a silly way to spend your day, you could smoke it! A gram is better than a damn.

One way I enjoy life and avoid looking at it is to make up Jimmy Stewart Poems:
So I pulled back the blankets
and climbed into bed for the night,
Then I went to the bathroom...
which wasn't quite right

But it doesn't always make me feel good. That's why I am writing this story: to take my mind off of the world by thinking of the great applause which you will all give to this superb piece of work. And then I wonder if that's the way a person should write. It keeps me from thinking about what I am writing (which usually enhances my coherence), so I guess it's ok. You tell me. My address is available somewhere.

A day of my life (not completely in proper order): Get up, shower, aerobize (unless it's a swim day) eat, shower, class, swim (unless it's an aerobics day), study, talk, eat, class, study, play, daydream about one woman or another, try to be intimate with someone or other in some way---to touch someone's inner being (Out damned aloneness!), eat dinner, discuss important issues, do self-hypnosis, practice piano, play guitar, more self-hypnosis/relaxation technique, realization that things keep moving, but at warp ten, we're going nowhere mighty fast. I love them, I love them all, does that help? Doesn't that just make it worse? (The Pawnbroker)

People run in Ann Arbor. And they hide too.

---

After the Fantasy by Ellen Marks

She sits before the fire's grate
Watching the flames consume a piece of wood
And wonders, would it do her any good
To watch her dreams flicker and hesitate
Like the fire, while she simply sits and waits.

He claimed he loved her, swept her off her feet.
Left home so much, she'd never been romanced
He dizzied her, and spinning while they danced,
Made promises he never planned to keep.
She stirs herself from pointless contemplation
A baby cries in the next room;
A second stirs inside her womb.
In these she finds ambiguous consolation.

She goes to check the nursery, as content
In this small task as she can hope to be
In her fairy tale life—as futile, loveless
Dreamy
As the one she left behind. She once was sent
To a dreamlike ball where, when she
Heard the stroke
Of midnight chimed by a clear bell,
She ran and knew that something fell.
She is still unsure of when the slipper broke.

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Step two, (ha, ha) look at others. Over a period of two weeks I saw no one spontaneously running. ('spontaneously' mean without wearing painted on clothing and/or men's underwear over tights).

And that's my city. Socialization is king and socializing is queen. (or maybe vice versa', but I doubt it.) The teachers talk, the students write (what the Learned Hand writes the foolish mouth speaks) and the days go by. (David Byrne)

My roommate Phil (hi Phil, if you're reading this) showed me a "Far Side" comic strip yesterday. It was cows in a field & one cow was saying, 'Hey, wait a minute! This is grass! We've been eating grass!' And Shirley Jackson wrote "The Lottery" and there's that short story about the cows going to the slaughterhouse. But even if you believe them, then what do you do? So we eat grass. So what, as long as we're happy? And if you notice that you're eating grass and it seems like a silly way to spend your day, you could smoke it! A gram is better than a damn. One way I enjoy life and avoid looking at it is to make up Jimmy Stewart Poems:

So I pulled back the blankets
and climbed into bed for the night,
Then I went to the bathroom...
which wasn't quite right

But it doesn't always make me feel good. That's why I am writing this story: to take my mind off of the world by thinking of the great applause which you will all give to this superb piece of work. And then I wonder if that's the way a person should write. It keeps me from thinking about what I am writing (which usually enhances my coherance), so I guess it's ok. You tell me. My address is available somewhere.

A day of my life (not completely in proper order): Get up, shower, aerobicize (unless it's a swim day) eat, shower, class, swim (unless it's an aerobics day), study, talk, eat, class, study, play, daydream about one woman or another, try to be intimate with someone or other in some way---to touch someone's inner being (Out damned aloneness!), eat dinner, discuss important issues, do self-hypnosis, practice piano, play guitar, more self hypnosis/relaxation technique, realization that things keep moving, but at warp ten, we're going nowhere mighty fast. I love them, I love them all, does that help? Doesn't that just make it worse? (The Pawnbroker)

People run in Ann Arbor. And they hide too.
He saw the relic sitting on a large polished stone in the backyard of his Aunt's estate. It looked lovely, in a way, but also like the floor of Mother Theresa's hospital on Mars. A blue velvet cow walked by on two feet reading the paper and seemingly inadvertently pointing at the relic near the reservoir. Soon an oinking pig walked by, again on only his hind legs and pointed at the relic while reading a weekly on the mining of plaid golf pants. Animal after animal trotted by in what seemed like a farmyard parade each pointing at the relic and reading for pleasure or profit. Bears, donkeys, dogs, cats, giant but friendly rats, horses and others reading the Civil War Digest, Facial Glasses for Basketball Players and Communists, Teaching Your Four Year Old to Concentrate, How to Inobtrusively Observe Couples Fighting, Why Penis Jokes Are So Funny, Cruel Patterns for Sweaters and more, all pointing at the relic which looked slightly like that round Mexican calendar. The relic started to glow and the boy was drawn forward.

I'll get that charm if it's the last thing I ever do, thought the boy, greedily rubbing his sweaty palms together until they began to bleed. He walked forward, and with each step, fantasized about what he would do with his new toy— he could sell it for a million dollars, he could use it as a champion frisbee, he could give it to Aunt Matilda and win a bigger share of her fortune, he could use it as a ticket to the Willy Wonka factory, etc., etc. and on and on he went along his merry mental way. The boy reached down to grab the relic. But, right when he touched it, he heard a loud noise like a million lifesize dolls screaming in unison. Then his head exploded.
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What More Do You Want, Rosie?

You got a beautiful black boyfriend who they all would die for
Well, at least the ones who would have him over for dinner
That's part of the American fascination someone once said
But she was just a woman who didn't know anything.

You got straight A's or maybe a B at your hair color school
And it makes you the most popular girl in the world
Still, they don't like you but that's because you're a modern woman
Who's the Sec. of State and the Sec. of War and the Sec. of Love?
Or was it in a book?

You got a great job and that means great money!
But with all the expenses and everything sometimes you get scared
When you think about getting sick or getting old you get worried
But that's not tomorrow, it's a million years away.

You got your picture up on the bulletin board at the bar
Everyone gets a big kick out of it and tells you that you look great
But when you look you can see that it's curling at the edges and its turning yellow
And you look like you could lose a few pounds
And pretty soon Vinnie's gonna take it down.

You got your pals and everyone's just having the time of their lives
Yea, they used to look so silly and pathetic to you
Not that you used to be a snob or anything
But their skinny faces used to make you nervous and make you think that you were better.

And you always look up in the sky and comment on how nice all the stars look
And you always order popcorn, candy and hot dogs when you go to the movies
And your mother said she liked your new apartment
And you may be getting a new car soon
And you plan to visit your friend in Cali again real soon
And you might even go back to school
And you found a really great new perfume
And you just got a picture of your best friend framed
You got everything a girl could want.

You got everything a girl could want, Rosie.
The Man with No Face
by Steven R. Rosenblatt

Though he started out quite normal, things soon began to change
But not so soon, actually, he left the womb feet first
And began to fly with the other centipedes who shivered the dark shores
They went around in groups of five but he was just a lonely mole
Picking the corn in his basement and looking out the window for winged dollars.
When rain came like daggers, meatloaf swelled from the ground
"A tasty treat for everyone," his mother whinnied
And one by one the centipedes devoured the heaving mess
They scoffed at him as the loaf was entirely gone with but one piece fallen down a drain
So everyone left the hungry boy alone to pick off bits of his carpet
And eat them like so many clumps of clay.
But this wasn't like the time his mother baked him a birthday cake with nails
Or when the other little boys chained him in the iron maiden to be sodomized by God
Now he was ready to solve his plight in the only way know to a child
He turned into a lizard and slithered between the sewer grates
Descending to a fecal stench unknown to all men but really known to all
Creatures of all sorts, mutated and bound in agony, tried to swipe at him
And some of their talons and fangs came close to ripping his flesh
Arriving at the scene he grabbed the loaf but only to know the cruel truth
"You are nothing to us but coiled starch on the moon," replied one tearing out his eyes
"No, no, don't hurt me, I only wanted some food," said the feces eating freak
"Then again the bishops in the tower said he had nine lives like Henry VIII
But darkness was already approaching and no one can turn back the sky.
And I remember
Charlie Brown
Once said that security
Is sleeping in the back
Of your parents' car,
Knowing that they have it all
Under control
Up front.
And I think that he was right.
Now,
I wish I could crawl
Into the back seat
Of that old Chevy Nova once again,
for just a short nap.
Now, I could use a little assurance
That someone up front
Has it all under control,
And that there is no
Cavern
So huge that any
"I love you"
Can't fill it.

I remember
July days
As a boy
Playing baseball
In the street.
And I remember
Sunday shoes, and
Hydrant pools, and
Mark Fidrych,
And Welch's grape pop.
And I remember
That the last day of school
Was always the best day of the year.
Except for Christmas I guess.

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After all, what did the poor boy expect to find in the sewer but filth?
True, he was horrified, but life goes on or so he thought
Why, he could have a good dinner eating rolled up balls of paper
Just like the crazy man looked in the room that he saw in his dream
Sometimes things aren't as easy as they seem at times or perhaps a tailor
And while dejected and downtrodden, beaten and battered, the boy laid down his guard
The mutant centipedes—really wolves in disguise—saw their opportunity
They reached for their sabers and their talons and their boiling oil
And plunged forward from the slimy darkness onto their trembling prey
"No, no, don't hurt me, I only wanted some food," said the feces eating freak
"You are nothing to us but coiled starch on the moon," replied one tearing out his eyes
Mouth gaping ripped to bits, eyes blowing scraped in time
Ears distended plucked like melons and nose flattened to a sinewy flap
And that's when the boy with no luck became the man with no face
Feet first fetus had blown his one and only chance at life
Then again the bishops in the tower said he had nine lives like Henry VIII
But darkness was already approaching and no one can turn back the sky
Now he wanders about in the fields hoping the birds won't peck at his empty sockets
And begs for pennies from the children who point to his lump of flesh
And in the moment of truth the day after he was thrown from the corner of the cornfield
He thought he had a vision of something warm and beautiful
So soft caress flee the black water gently flowing over bloody cracks
Flesh stripped away evil innards broken removed and blend with soil
"Oh mother mother come to me come to me with that bit of food!"
He could almost see her face but once it came into view it burst
And rolled away in the hazy storm with centipedes beckoning on the other side
His head snapped back as if slapped by a scarecrow
His legs lost their strength and turned into toothpicks
His brain went black for the very last time
And the man with no face fell to the ground.

Summer Sundays

by David MacKinnon

I remember
July days
As a boy
Playing baseball
In the street.
And I remember
Sunday shoes, and
Hydrant pools, and
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And Welch's grape pop.
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That the last day of school
Was always the best day of the year.
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Cavern
So huge that any
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Can't fill it.
 Scenes from Ann Arbor Bars  
by T. Michael Johnson

Down deep in the bowels of the earth
the Wurm slithers through tunnels,
dark and moist,
in search of its mate.
To a subterranean pool comes the beast,
finding another of the opposite sex
the creature screams and jerks
in a spasmodic dance.
This will entice the other who drinks the brew of the pool.
The two together, oh what a sight!
Revulsion at the humping on instinct pure,
the mates wrestle and become one.

Courthship in caves is not noble.
No word is spoken or idea exchanged.
The seed of Eros is not planted,
instead the cream of man is spewed
into a belly filled with poisonous gel.
What is the point of bar talk
and the quick scope.
Man and woman reduced to "nature."
Slops and filth cover Athena
who lies raped and pillaged
choking on the sperm of haste.

A Lover's Resort  
by T. Michael Johnson

Shall I pace love by the rhythm of the day
or will the cycles of the moon
suffice.

In quietude listen close
echoes resonate through
memory.
past, present, future swirl
challenging the linear.

Starved for Affection  
by T. Michael Johnson

The naked soul longs for Eros,
a companion needed to soften the masks.
Yet, the quarry is not to be found,
even Cupid cannot shoot the unseen.
Names dance through the mind.
Which to choose: who to dare?
Strength and resolve must be mustered to end the drought.
The awkward coward perseveres no longer,
friendships fail and the spirit bleeds.
Romance—the only panacea?
or the capitulation of the will.

Ode to My Friend  
by T. Michael Johnson

Oh Matthew
you were a spirited flame
dancing your merry way.
Many an adventure did we share
You and I brothers--two.
Through all you remained
the pillar I sought.
In the land of heath
you provided the joys that
seemed vanquished by the Separation.
Was it natural?
with you I feared not.
physically you dominated all.
You safeguarded my passage
into and out of that alien lot.
Your departure for Bologna
provided me with a way home.
That summer we parted.
Permanency—-we agreed
that condition has made the difference.
Shall I grieve?
The proper place and time?
I realized your desire--
"pursue life's pleasures."
In death did you win?
With this, farewell my friend.
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A Lover’s Retort
by T. Michael Johnson

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or will the cycles of the moon
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Grandma's Quilt by Kathleen Gardiner

The first time I remember seeing Grandma's quilt was at Uncle John's funeral. Well, not really at the funeral, since our family didn't believe in taking small children to funerals, but at the get-together at my aunt's house afterwards. I guess I must have been a wake, although I never heard that word used. To us children, it was like any other family gathering, only bigger and noisier. We played and squabbled as usual, running through the packed house, oblivious to the adult commotion carried on far above our heads.

I remember, on my way to finding a good hiding place for hide-and-seek, being sidetracked by the extraordinary vision of a plate of purple eggs, hard-boiled and steeped in pickled-beet brine. As I paused, I heard the uncommon and frightening sound of an adult crying.

I stared across the plate of purple eggs at the sight of my aunt, herself egg-shaped with pregnancy, rocking and weeping in my mother's arms. "Why's Aunt Meg crying?" I wondered aloud. Looking up, I saw only strangers around me.

Unmoved, I dashed off to find someone I knew. Scouting around a playpen set up in the hall, I made a funny face at my two baby cousins stranded there. I skidded up to my Grandma's bedroom doorway, and peeped in.

There Grandma sat, on the double bed she shared with my oldest cousin, and at first I thought someone has spilled out a bushel of apples all over her lap and her bed. This didn't surprise me, for she often canned, pickled, and preserved for my aunt's family. As I reached for an apple, though, I was surprised to find that they were only pictures of apples, cloth sewn onto a blanket.

"Why's Aunt Meg crying?" I asked, as I watched her stitch letters on a fabric apple she had stretched taut in an embroidery hoop. "She's crying because her husband died."

"Is Uncle John her husband?"

"Of course he is! He's gone to heaven to live with Jesus, and now your aunt is left all alone with her babies."

"When will Uncle John be back?"

"Aren't you listening to me? He won't be back. He's dead." She answered with finality.

I swallowed my next question, and watched her stitch more letters.

"Watcha doing, Grandma?"

"This date wants embroidering on this quilt. Whenever anyone gets himself born, or dies, or gets wed, the date goes on this quilt."

"Am I on there?"

"This date want's embroidering on this quilt. Whenever anyone gets

Grandma switched and turned that old quilt in her rough, red hands, until she found the apple that was me. As I peered closely, her gnarled, arthritic finger began to trace out the letters I wasn't yet old enough to read. "This is you right here," she began as we sat hunched together there over that quilt. We were interrupted by a lifting voice from the doorway.

"Why, Marie, what a lovely thing! Is that an antique?"

The slender woman stood with an ageless dignity, though her hand rested on a carved cane, and the wisps of white hair that had escaped the careful winding of her braids gleamed like a silver halo around her face.

"This was my wedding quilt, when Leo and I were married in 1919, Mrs. Doherty." In the face of such elegance, Grandma had never been able to call her daughter's mother-in-law by her first name, but she straightened her work-wearied shoulders and spoke with pride as she spread the brilliantly colored coverlet out upon the bed. "This is our family tree. My mother and my husband's mother worked on this while we were engaged."

As we watched the calicoed hands lovingly pat and smooth the red apples, Grandma told her story, of the weaving of one family from the threads of many others.

"See these two hearts in the middle? These are me and Leo. Here's the date we were married, and here the date Leo died. Here's Leo's mother and father, they came to Ohio from Germany before Mama and Papa, and bought a farm in Cranberry Prairie. There were miles of cranberry bogs. The Germans didn't think cranberries were good for anything, so they went down and cleared them all out to plant corn. That's how one of Leo's aunts died, down in the swamps. She was bending over pulling up the cranberries, and she came up with a snake wrapped around her arm."

"Oh, my!" said Mrs. Doherty. "My eyes made a frantic search of the flowered carpet."

"The country was full of Germans then," Grandma continued. "Whenever people came over from the old country, they looked up people they knew. Mama was working for an American man and his wife in Germany, and they brought her to America. Well, she met Papa on the boat coming over, and they got married right on the ship, so she never did go to Chicago with those Americans."

She pointed out more apples toward the top of the tree.

"See, here's the Stangs, and the Streachers, here's the Rindlers, and there's the Wapplehorsts."

"At the name Wapplehorsts, I looked all over that quilt, but I couldn't see any wobblyhorses, all I could see were hearts and apples, and little pink flowers.

"What a legacy!" murmured Mrs. Doherty, and Grandma nodded. "And what an heirloom! Tell me Marie, what are these little flowers?"

"Those are apple blossoms. There not there just for pretty, every one of them is a baby that was lost. See here, my Mama had eight children, but she lost three besides. So, there's three little flowers amongst the apples. Here's the baby I lost after I had Trudie, and here's the two babies Meg lost."

"But, Grandma," I shouted, "Aunt Meg didn't lose her babies! They're right out there in the hall! See?"

"When I ran to the doorway to look, the playpen was empty. I began to cry, and everything got too hot and too loud, and the lights became too bright. They had to find my mother to calm me down, and she could only do that by taking me to see the babies as they slept in their cribs."

"Wake them up, Mommy," I whispered, "Wake them up! Maybe they're dead!"

"My mother didn't wake them, but she did stand there awhile holding me up so that I could watch them breathe. Finally she laid me on a comforter on the floor, and the last thing I remember was Grandma calling up the stairs, "Don't forget to outen the light!"

********

When Aunt Meg came home from the hospital with her new baby, our family went over to see them.

I looked at the tiny, living doo, and begged to hold her. I sat proudly on the davenport, but the baby that had looked so tiny in my mother's arms was really very large for a child's lap. She grew to feel so heavy that I struggled to keep her head up. I began to complain.

"Oh, stop whining!" My father took the baby from my arms. "You asked to hold her."

In disgrace, I ran off to the playroom. There, to my surprise, all the toys had been shoved rudely to one side, an swahorses had been set up to hold two long boards, and around those boards was wound Grandma's quilt. Grandma sat before
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My mother didn't wake them, but she did stand there awhile holding me up so that I could watch them breathe. Finally she laid me on a comforter on the floor, and the last thing I remember was Grandma calling up the stairs, "Don't forget to turn on the light!"

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When Aunt Meg came home from the hospital with her new baby, our family went over to see them. I looked at the tiny, living doo, and begged to hold her. I sat proudly on the davenport, but the baby that had looked so tiny in my mother's arms was really very large for a child's lap. She grew to feel so heavy that I struggled to keep her head up. I began to complain. "Oh, stop whining!" My father took the baby from my arms. "You asked to hold her."

In disgrace, I ran off to the playroom. There, to my surprise, all the toys had been shoved rudely to one side, an awnorness had been set up to hold two long boards, and around those boards was wound Grandma's quilt. Grandma sat before
this makeshift quilting frame, her weight precariously supported by the wrought iron of an old ice cream parlor chair. I slipped up beside her, and peered over the edge of the fabric.

"Whatcha doing, Grandma?"

"This apple patch wants sewing on here for the new baby." Her fingers flew as she whipstitched the applique into place beneath Uncle John's patch.

I pointed, "What are those clovers doing on Uncle John's apple?"

"Don't put your fingers so close! I'll stick you!" Grandma knotted the thread, then broke it off with her teeth. She sat back and adjusted her glasses to thread a new needle with embroidery floss. "Those aren't clovers, those are Irish shamrocks. Mrs. Doherty asked me to stitch those on. She said she doesn't want her Irish son to be forgotten amongst all us Germans."

I fingered the Kelly green shamrocks, embroidered in a fine satin stitch. "That's just silly. We won't forget Uncle John."

"Why, we've started forgetting already."

"Not me!"

"Oh, really, Miss Smarty-pants, what do you remember about Uncle John?"

I thought and thought, but the only thing I could remember clearly, the only time I could beckon up Uncle John's face, was last Easter Sunday, when I was allowed to ride with Aunt Meg and Uncle John from church to their house. Tall and bony, Uncle John had lifted me onto his lap, and had let me pretend to steer the car as he drove. I could picture the crinkles around his sad-looking brown eyes as he laughed off my mother's scoldings.

When I was through telling Grandma, I thought at first that she didn't hear me, because she just kept working on that new baby's name. When she finished, she looked at me over the top of her glasses and said, "Well, that's not much."

As I started to screw up my fact to cry, though, she relented.

"It's not much, but it's enough," she said. "Just you remember it now, and don't ever forget it. When the last person that ever knew you forgets the last thing that they ever knew about you, that's when you're really gone. That's why I put all this stuff down right here, right on this quilt. So we don't forget."

Wiping my eyes on my sleeve, I looked over the expanse on red apples on green leaves. "Grandma, did you know every one of these people?"

"I sure did."

"Grandma, are you going to die?"

"Sure, everybody dies some time, but not for a long, long time. I'll be sewing your babies' names on this quilt some day. Now help me up and let's go start dinner."

I placed my little soft hand in her wrinkled, calloused one and tugged.

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Even long, long times arrive someday. Grandma died this spring, at ninety-three years of age. Her life had been as full of children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren as her quilt had been full of apples. There was always room to squeeze in one more.

Aunt Meg put her arm around my waist and walked me up to where Grandma lay in the coffin.

"Grandma looks good, doesn't she?" Aunt Meg asked.

I nodded, but somehow the woman there didn't seem like Grandma to me. No, her face seemed too smooth, too serene. That was it: I'd never seen my industrious grandmother relaxed, in repose. Even in church, she'd kept busy whacking one kid or another for whistling or kicking the kneeler.

Then I looked down at her fingers, entwined with crystal rosary beads, and my throat tightened.

Yes, those were Grandma's hands.
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(Reprinted from The Michigan Woman magazine, March/April 1988)
Unpublished Poem Titles

by Steven R. Rosenblatt

1. If Only Sugar Cubes Could Speak
2. Thank God God Isn't Crazy
3. I'm So Glad to Live on a Planet with an Atmosphere
4. She Wore Glasses Thicker Than the Morning Dew
5. Just Don't Stick the Bread Up Your Nose
6. Just Don't Put the Bread Sticks Up Your Nose
7. Pizzabuger King
8. Susie Called It Lip-Service--Frankie Called It Crazy
9. The Turtle Whose Head Often Exploded
10. Illegal Right Turns--the Best Way to Freedom!
11. My Mother Is Like an Oreo Cookie
12. My Mother's Inside an Oreo Cookie
13. He Kicked My Chair--He Lost His Leg!
14. She's Got a Teapot the Size of Texas
15. What Can You Do When Your Hair's Turning Blue?
16. He Always Loved Skid Marks--But Only on the Road
17. There's Nothing Worse Than a Birthday Cake With Nails
18. Shirley Was Streetsmart
19. Love that Melon!
20. The Dork Who Sits in Front of Me
21. The Fall of a Polyester Tie
22. Don't Use the Word "Fiduciary"--Unless You Mean It
23. Yes, She's Epileptic, But She Also Loves Cornflakes
24. The Orthodontist Who Loved Little Boys
25. God Had Ten Commandments, But Sheila Had Seven
26. That's not a Robot, it's a Luggage Holder
27. The Man From Texas Who Lassoed the Babes
28. She Was Old, She Was Wacky--But She Wore Big Earrings
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Lawyers By Day

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