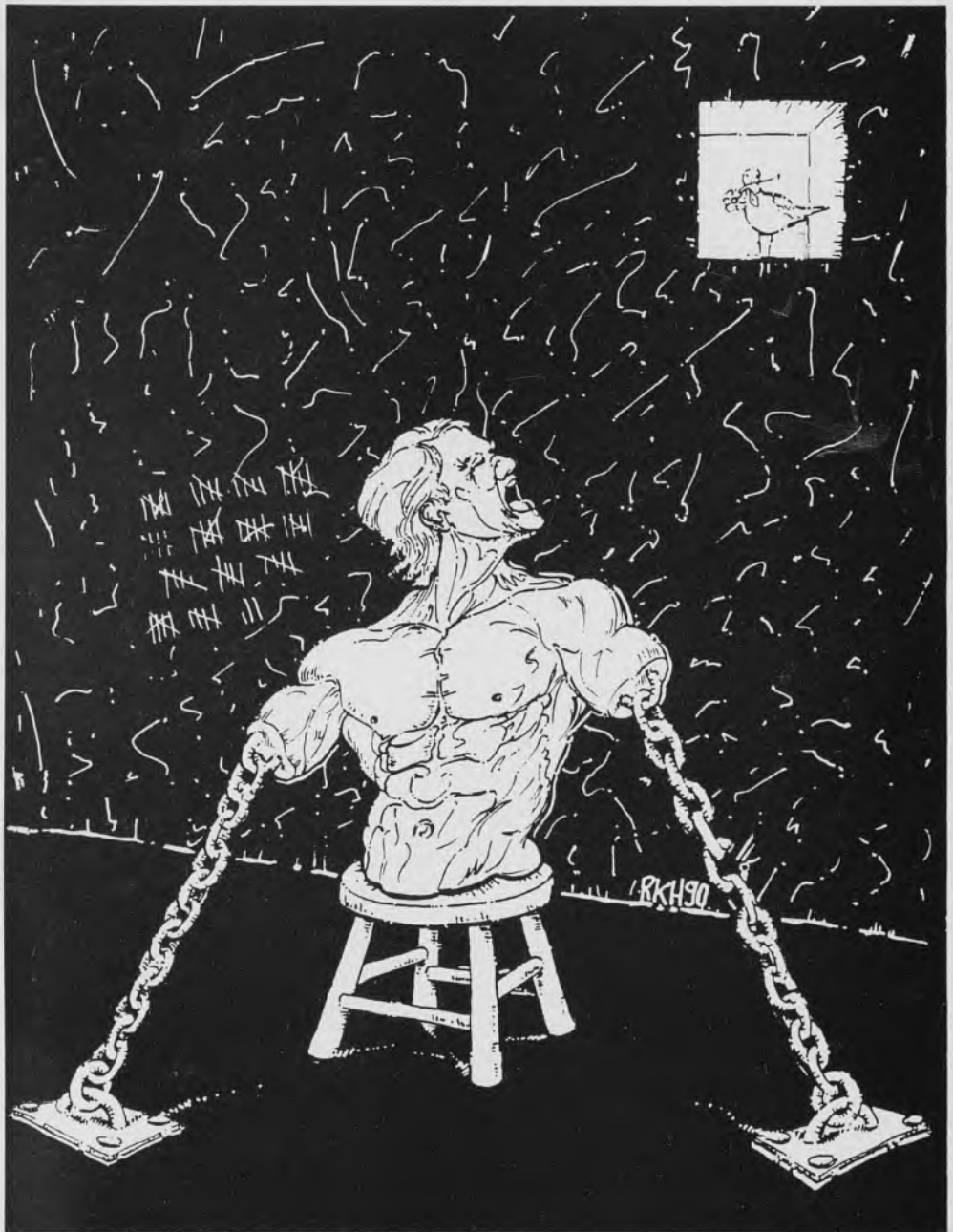


THE APOGEE

Spring, 1990

No. 28

High Point College



The Apogee
The Literary Magazine of High Point College
Spring, 1990
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Editor's Notes

Whew! I wasn't sure I could get through this and produce a quality magazine. I believe we have succeeded in making this a great Apogee; the only reason for this is three key people: Dr. John Moehlmann, Teresa Melton and Terry Collins. Dr. Moehlmann showed me patience and understanding when I know he was thinking, "Why me?" Teresa Melton listened and tried to understand when I tried to explain something I wasn't sure I understood myself. Terry Collins saved my life by helping me with the printing end of the magazine, which was a great mystery to me. He spent many hours of his own time for no reason except friendship. I love and respect all of these people for their help and patience.

I would also like to thank Dr. Lee Baker for his help. I really needed and appreciated it. Finally, I would like to thank my mother, Dr. Martha Gleaton for having faith in me and for helping me to have faith in myself. Thanks, Mom.

I have learned a lot from all these people and couldn't have done it without any of them or the contributors. The contributors gave me the talent to work with. Thanks to all. They deserve it.

Marti Brown

Marti Brown

Untitled — Karen Scott



America Always Grants Asylum

Kristie J. Huneycutt

Claudia settled onto a bench near the back of the island ferry. She had been in Greece for less than 24 hours but she already knew the story she would hear from the young Athenian male who had followed her onto the boat and was now contemplating whether to occupy the bench just opposite her or plop down by her side. Walking over to her bench, he stopped and asked the time. She wasn't surprised. That was always the easiest way for them to begin a conversation. She would have to remember to start keeping her watch in her pocket from now on.

"Hi, my name is Costos."

"Hi."

"What's your name? You are American, yeah?"

"Yeah." Claudia hated being rude, hated being so easily identified as an American. Maybe she should lie and say Canadian next time.

"What part America you from?"

The thick Greek accent always sounded the same, infatuated with America, Americans.

"Midwest."

"New York? uh, California?"

"Nebraska."

"This near New York?"

"Sorta." What difference did it make? She leafed through her copy of Vogue International. Although she hated the silly magazine, it was the only English magazine she could find in Piraeus. If she pretended to read it long enough maybe he would go away. Yet, Claudia knew they still had to get through the part about her beautiful eyes and his dream of going to America, land of the free, home of the rich.

"You have very beautiful eyes."

America. . . (continued)

She wondered what bad movie that line came from, Greek males seemed to regard it as a highly effective wooing compliment.

"You know, I have always wanted to go to America. I try very hard now to learn English. Is very hard, but is very important." Costos paused and watched Claudia's face. She was hoping his English was too limited to know she was reading "10 Sexual Strategies to Drive Your Man Wild."

"I have book. Every night I study little bit more English."

The first time Claudia had heard this she had wanted to cry, imagining wanting something so badly, even if it was a lie.

"You know in America is so perfect. Just like in films. Nice job, big house, big car, nice American girl, big family. Good money in America if I only learn English."

All they see are films, Claudia thought. Happy, money-making American films! She fought the urge to scream at him, "The only freedom in America is green and has the faces of different presidents printed in the middle." She wanted to ask, "What about the thousands of homeless people starving on America's streets? What about the drug crisis and the prison overpopulation? What about the deficit and defense spending? What about welfare recipients and the hopelessly unemployed for whom English is a first language?"

Instead, she followed the article to page 292. She had acted this part before. What right had she not to? It was his dream. He would never make it to America. He was safe.

Saturday Night with Castaneda
John Moehlmann

I

I have eaten six peyote buttons,
I wash the fiber out with tequila.

II

A woman bends over a water trough,
each flank emblazoned with a neon "POW."

III

Burros in sombreros burp and circle up
when Derrida deconstructs coconuts.

IV

Beyond the near wood, boys rehearse dark songs
for my daughter's pinksteam calliope.

V

A black dog comes toward me in a yellow fog,
stops, sniffs, and urinates against my leg.

VI

In the graveyard Mother awaits the time
the stones will invoke the great god in me.

America Tomorrow — Lynn Nicole Heasley



Designer Aliens

Jack C. Cho

Mothers raped by fathers
Children selling crack
A system out to lunch
Gorging a mac attack.

A kinder generation
Just waiting to ignite
A teflon bomber sprays
A thousand points of light.

Families living in streets
Souls in the final niche
In a promised land sold out
To help finance the rich.

The mergers and the buyouts
And all those that do without
Laws that let the pusher go
And tell the kids "just say no."

A Wall Street Journal
Covers the homeless
Created equal
By God, but penniless.

We pray and look away
Not wanting to see
our faith is only
A hypocrisy.

Untitled

Kristie J. Huneycutt

"How horrible!"

"What?" Justin looked up lazily from the sports section.

"This article about the uprising in Azerbaijan. It's talking about how the Muslim Azerbaijanis are trying to run out all of the Christian Armenians. This 70 year old woman and 7 year old little girl were trying to get away and you know what they did?"

Justin was still absently glancing through the sports articles.

"Well, after beating them both, they put them into these black bags, poured gas on them and set them on fire!" Kathy turned to see Justin's reaction. He had forsaken the sports pages and was sorting through the rest of the paper.

"Didn't you hear me?"

"Yeah."

"So? Isn't that horrible?!"

"Yeah."

"I mean, can you imagine dying like that, or even worse, can you imagine doing that to someone, hating someone so much to be able to do something so cruel to them. They were killed because of differing ideologies. Imagine believing in some idea so much that you could directly take another's life. I mean, it was an old woman and a young girl, they were only trying to get away. Justin! You aren't even listening!"

"Yes, I am. I just want to check my stocks."

Kathy was quiet.

"Musee des Beaux Arts," she muttered.

"What?"

"Nothing." Justin didn't like poetry. "How did Arsenal do against Liverpool last week?"

Untitled
Anonymous

at home in time and space

but not in one place

...smiling face moving on...

"...in the mind of a woman for whom no place is home
the thought of an end to all flight
is unbearable...

for some

more than less
and
now and again

Life is a series of concentration camps

from which the order of the day

is the plan

to escape.

....breaking in to break out...

"Es muss sein!" rings clear

down the long line of human bones

Life between the parenthetical

birth and death...

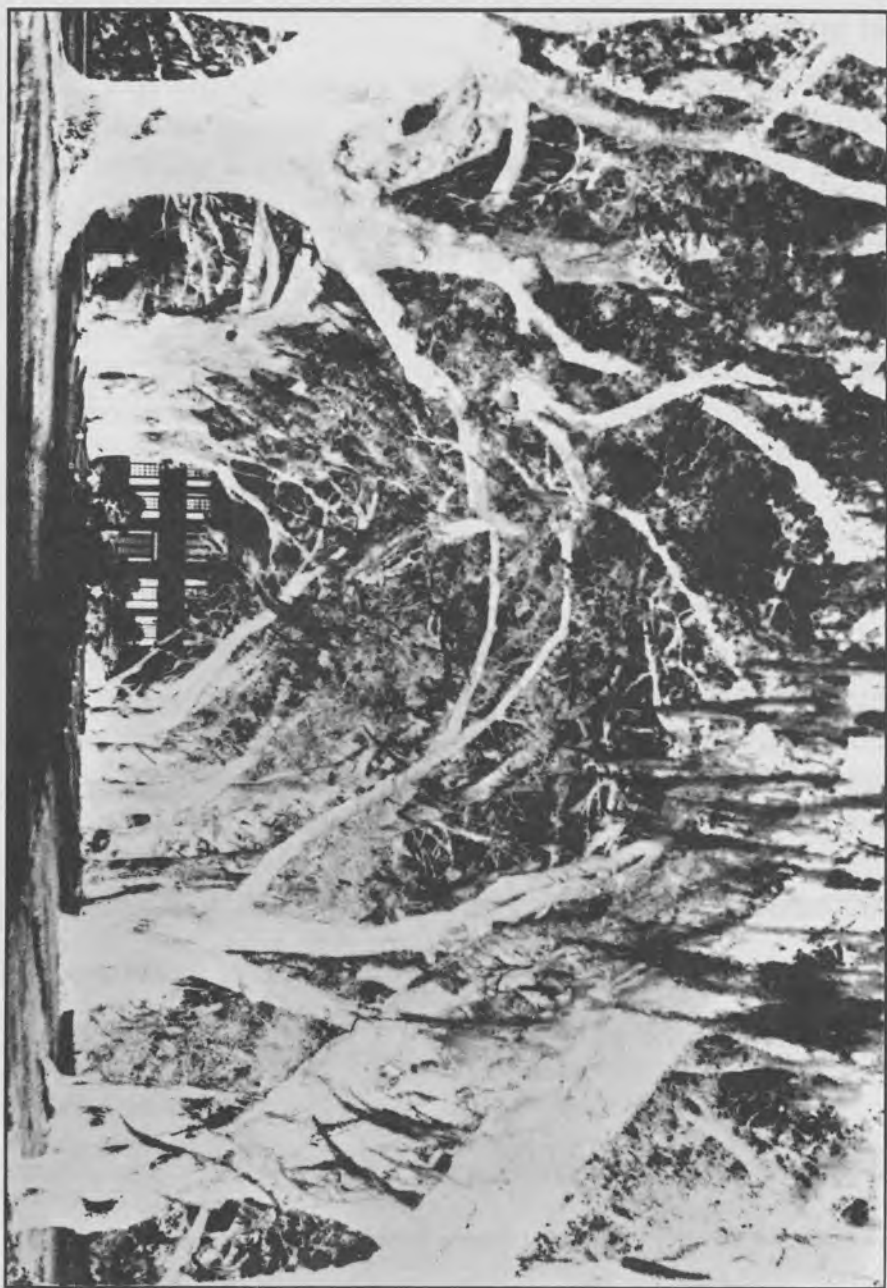
Yet the call, "Es konnte auch anders sein" rings clearer

quotations from Kundera's **Unbearable Lightness of Being**

Es muss sein = It must be!

Es konnte auch anders sein = It could just as well be otherwise!

The Haunted Mansion — Lynn Nicole Heasley



Overcast
Libby Clarke

Heavy clouds,

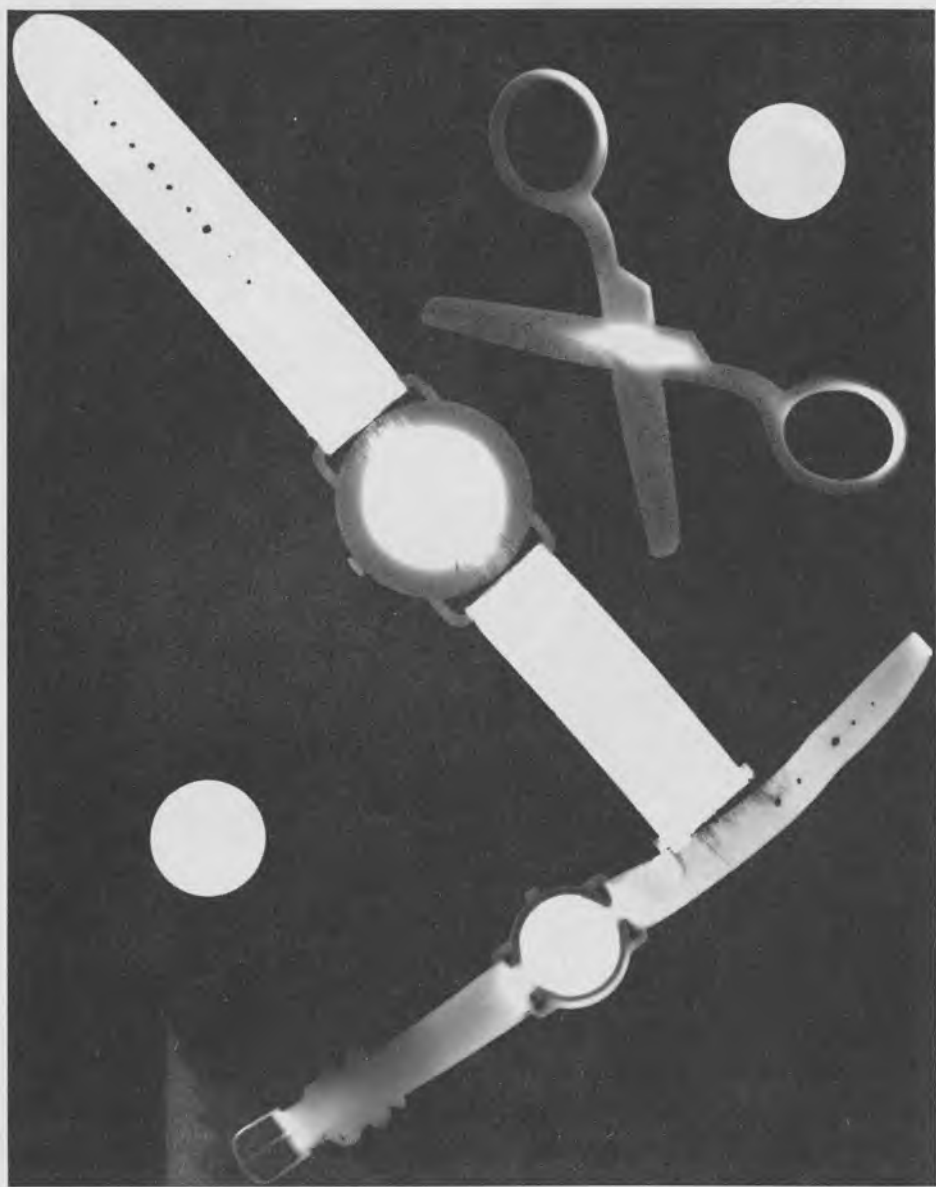
 mottled like the mapped legs of old women,
hang overhead.

Sounds

 coagulate in the thickened air.

Houses and treetops hold up the nebulous awning;
if even one support gives 'way, we will be absorbed.
We will be encased in milky suffocation
 like so many insects in amber.

Untitled — Andy Brown



Souvenirs
Kristie Huneycutt

You were the last thing I packed
away this morning,
Tucking you safely
between worn socks and sweaters.
How easily you slipped into
the empty spaces.

Unpacking tonight,
I find only
 pint glasses,
 rumpled sheets,
 coffee cups
 and photographs.

Untitled — Kristie Huneycutt



The Girl Who Broke My Heart In High School

Wendy Freeman

Sometimes you run into the darndest people when you least expect it. Just the other night I was at the corner laundrymat trying to figure out which colors could be washed with which, when I happened to look across the rows of washing machines and there she was. Cheryl Wilson, the girl who broke my heart in high school. How long had it been? Six years at least. She'd been a junior and I was a senior. I'd asked her out a couple times and it had seemed to be going pretty well when for some reason unknown to me she'd started giving me the cold shoulder. Later she'd started dating a guy from out of town. After graduation I hadn't seen her again. But there she was in the same laundrymat as me, not looking much different either.

I guess she sensed my staring at her because she looked up with those big brown eyes. The first time I talked to her in high school I used a line about her eyes. Told her she should be a model with those eyes of hers. Anyway, I guess for a second she didn't recognize me because she looked back down but just as quickly looked up at me again. I didn't really know what to do, so I just stood there. Then she started walking towards me. What do you say to the girl who broke your heart in high school? I didn't know.

She stopped next to my washing machine. "Hi," she said, "remember me?"

"Of course, I remember you. Cheryl Wilson." The girl who broke my heart in high school. Then I noticed the little boy behind her, hugging her knees and hiding his face. She looked down at him and smiled.

"This is Casey, my little boy. He's kind of shy." The kid peeked around her knees but quickly hid his face again.

"He's cute," was all I could think of to say. "So, you're married now?"

The Girl (continued)

She shrugged her shoulders. "Separated. I just moved back to town."

I still couldn't think of anything profound to say. There was silence.

"Well," she finally said, "I'd better get back to my clothes. It was nice running into you." She smiled and took the kid by the hand. She turned away and started to walk off but must have changed her mind because she turned around.

"I'm living with my parents, same house if you want to maybe get in touch or something."

I nodded dumbly and started putting my clothes back into my duffle bag. I hadn't even washed them. Who knew, maybe I would get in touch with the girl who broke my heart in high school.

"No One"
Brenda Morris

No one knows. . .

No one knows. . .

What to say. . .

What to do. . .

Where do we go from here?

Who will cook breakfast?

Who will cook the turkey?

Where will dinner be?

Now, that mama is gone. . .

My family wants me at mama's. . .

I want to sleep. . .

Friends invite me out. . .

Knowing,

I don't even want to go. . .

I am sitting up. . .

Cooking my turkey. . .

Only,

There is no turkey. . .

Outliving Her

Kristie Huneycutt

"I really think someone should call her and let her know Grandpa is in the hospital."

"Kerrie, I called her office and told them to tell her at the end of the day."

"But it's 8:30, she's only been at work an hour and she doesn't get off until 5:00. Mother will be upset if we don't tell her. What if something happens. He is in Intensive Care."

"Kerrie, I told you I took care of that. There's nothing she can do here. Now, are you going to talk back to your Grandmother on the phone all day or come to the hospital to see your dying Grandfather?"

"I'm getting dressed. I'll be there soon." I hung up my bedroom extension phone and rummaged through my clothes. What would Grandmother find appropriate for a granddaughter whose grandfather lay dying?

Donning a simple mauve sweater and a pair of black trousers, I paid careful attention to applying simple make-up and jewelry. Grandmother hated it when you looked "dressed up."

It was a long 20 minutes that took me to the small county hospital too many relatives had died in. After checking in at the desk I had to trudge up the three flights of stairs to the 4th floor because the elevator wasn't operating. When I reached the ICU waiting room, two of my uncles were sitting with my grandmother.

"Hello," I greeted them breathlessly.

"Those stairs got you too, huh?" my uncle Roger laughed.

"Yeah, what a mess. Have you heard anything yet?"

"Nah, they haven't told us anything."

"But he's been in ICU for over two hours now. Shouldn't they know something?"

"Well, Kerrie, it just takes a long time for things like this. Why don't you get Gary some coffee?" Grandmother suggested.

"Uncle Gary, would you like some coffee?"

"Maybe in a little while. I'm fine right now. Thank you, though."

"Are you sure? She doesn't mind. Her legs are younger than ours," Grandmother went on.

"Look, I'm going to find out what's going on with Grandpa," I announced and walked back to Intensive Care. There were no nurses so I went straight into the patient area. Grandpa was the only patient I saw. His eyes were open and he recognized me before one of the nurses managed to nab me.

Outliving Her. . . (continued)

"Hi, I'm with the Nettle family and I was wondering what you've found out about Mr. Nettle."

"We don't know anything yet."

"Okay, but you have done tests?"

"Yeah."

"Well, tests for what? What does the doctor think is wrong?"

"Im not sure. You'll have to talk to the doctor."

"And when will he be around?"

"I don't know."

"I see. And when will he have the test results?"

"They should be back this afternoon."

"Okay, thank you." But I don't know for what, I thought. I found my way back to the Intensive Care waiting room where Grandmother and Uncle Roger were talking quietly.

"Leeann doesn't want to live at home and commute."

"But Roger, wouldn't that save you an awful lot of money if she stayed at home?"

"Yes, but she says she'd rather live on campus, get away from home."

"Well, I never knew Leeann was such a spoiled child."

If she's really smart she will go out of state, I think.

"Kerrie, that sweater just looks so dull on you."

Thank you, Grandmother. I kept quiet.

Three game shows and three cups of coffee later, the doctor finally came. As he talked he bounced off the ICU waiting room door with his butt. "I don't know anything really."

"But what about the tests?" I asked.

"Well, we don't have all of the results yet."

"And so far you've found nothing?"

"No, we don't really know anything so far."

"Well, when will you be back to check him?" No one else seemed to ask any questions.

"Oh, I'll be back around 6 or 7 or so."

"And you'll know more then?" I prodded.

"No, probably not."

I began to wonder if I was missing something. "Well, what —"

"Oh, Dr. Ignam," Grandmother burst in. "I've been having more trouble with that kidney and I think my rupture is getting worse."

"Why don't you just call my office and set up an appointment then?"

"I had intended to, but I had to go back to that heart specialist and he gave me some new medicine. I've also been intending to ask you

Outliving Her. . . (continued)

about that medicine he put me on."

"All right, you just make an appointment and I'll look over that for you."

"Doctor, the nurse said you would get test results this afternoon. Won't you know more then?" I tried again.

"Probably not."

"Dr. Ignam, could I just make an appointment for sometime next week?" Grandmother interrupted.

"That'll be fine, see you then."

"Okay, bye Dr. Ignam. Thanks a lot." Then she had turned to us, saying, "It's time one of us can go back, I'll go now."

While she was gone I confided to my uncles, "Don't you think we should have him transferred to Whitburg?" Since Whitburg was a much larger city, I felt the staff at a hospital there would be more competent.

"I don't know," Uncle Gary said seriously, "I really like Dr. Ignam.

"But he didn't —"

My cousin Amy appeared in the doorway. "How's Grandpa?"

"He's doing okay for the time being," answered Uncle Gary.

"As we let him lay here and die," I muttered.

"Oh, hi, Kerrie. I thought you had gone back to college already."

"No, I leave next Sunday."

"You really like it up at Michigan State, don't you?"

"I sure do. I even miss it."

"I bet you do."

Sometimes I felt guilty, having gone to college and liked it.

"His color looks better," said Grandmother, returning from ICU.

"Good, good," muttered Uncle Roger, focusing his eyes back to the TV in the corner where some game show contestant stood crying in front of a bright red convertible.

"Grandmother, why don't we get him moved to Whitburg Memorial?"

"Oh, Kerrie, that's so far away. It's easier for me to get here."

"But these people don't seem to know a lot."

"It just takes time."

Six months ago she had been taken to Whitburg with kidney stones after having been diagnosed with emphysema at the county hospital. The move, had in fact, saved her life and she declared later, I ain't never going back there, them doctors will kill ya.

"But they aren't helping him here. Why don't we take him to Whitburg Memorial where the doctors are better."

Outliving Her. . . (continued)

"Let's just wait and see." Then she turned to Uncle Roger. "Roger, I do wish that son of yours would get a haircut. I promised him a hundred dollars for his birthday if he'll get that hair cut."

"Mother, he doesn't need that much money. He thinks his hair is the style. He's at that age, ya know."

"Well, damn it, tell him it looks bad. There ain't no sense in a boy his age having hair that long."

Uncle Roger just laughed. It must have been a coping mechanism he learned long ago.

"Well, you may think I'm kidding, but he'll not get a present from me unless he gets that hair cut. And I mean it, too!" Suddenly she turned to me. "Oh, Kerrie, where is Michael? Didn't you call him this morning?"

"No, he had already left for work when I found out. Besides, I don't think I really want him here."

"Girl, that boy's been after you for five years now. When are you going to figure out the best thing to do is settle down and marry him?" Uncle Gary quizzed.

"Well, he just—"

"I'll tell you one thing, Gary," Grandmother jumped in, "Kerrie just doesn't know a good thing when she sees it. Now that boy is a catch. He's got a real good job and a car and is building a house. He'll make somebody a good husband one day. Even drives a Ford. Remember Kerrie, marry a man who doesn't drive a Ford and there'll be trouble. I fully believe, though, that one day she'll stop running back and forth to Michigan and they'll get married."

"Well, he sure does seem like a nice young man," Uncle Roger tossed in.

"Yeah, I think I could be happy with a guy like that," Amy added.

Poor Michael, if only I loved him as much as Grandmother. She had been trying to marry us for years. I hadn't even told her about Nick. That was my life in Michigan. His philosophy major wouldn't impress her.

The phone rang.

"Amy, will you get that?" Grandmother asked.

"Sure." She reached for the phone. "Hello, ICU waiting room. "Oh, hi, Michael. Sure, she's right here."

With a broad grin Amy handed me the phone and whispered, "Mom figured you hadn't called him."

Great. "Hi Michael."

Outliving Her. . . (continued)

"Hello. Are you okay?"

I'm fine, but we don't know about Grandpa. None of the doctors or nurses seem to know anything. I'm worried."

"Do you want me to come to the hospital?"

"No, I don't think that's necessary."

"You know I don't mind. Have you eaten?"

"I'm not hungry."

"Look, you need to eat. Why don't you let me come get you, take you to dinner and drive you home."

"Michael, I told you I'm not really hungry and I have my own car here. Thanks anyway."

Grandmother reached for the phone, "Kerrie let me speak to Michael."

"Michael, Grandmother wants to talk to you."

"Okay."

"Hello Michael?" "It's so nice of you to call. Are you coming up? Yeah, that would be nice if you went out to dinner. Okay, I'll see you in a little while. Bye Michael, here's Kerrie." She thrust the phone towards me. "He's taking you out to eat at 5:30."

"Hi."

"Hello again. You grandmother is such a sweet lady."

"Yeah."

"Kerrie, you should try to get along with her. You're lucky to still have her around. I never knew any of my grandparents."

"I know you're right. It's just difficult here sometimes. You know, coming home.

Coming home. It had been six months since I had last been home; five years since I had stood in the hospital room hating her. Grandfather had finally been transferred to Whitburg Memorial, where the doctors learned that he had a series of mild heart attacks. After open heart surgery and a few months of rest, he was once again strong and active. He had to be to take care of Grandmother.

"She was always sure he would outlive her, and she was right. She made the family promise that when she died first, we wouldn't let him pick out the coffin. Granny was such a strange one!" I tried to laugh. "And she hated it when anyone called her anything but Grandmother. She said it was disrespectful. I was the only one who could call her Granny. I was special, I was her only brown-eyed granddaughter."

"Come on, you need to get out of here and get some rest. It's been a long day for everyone." Michael had called me the minute I came home

Outliving Her. . . (continued)

from Michigan for Grandmother's funeral. He had stayed by my side since then.

He was right, I was tired, but I wasn't ready to leave her gravesite yet.

"Michael did I ever tell you about Granny giving me cigarettes?"

"What?"

"Yeah, when I was twelve or so she took up smoking. She used to pick me up from school and we would go home and sneak cigarettes. She even tried to teach me how to blow smoke rings."

"You're kidding!"

"No, really. I used to love those afternoons because afterwards we would always bake to cover up the smell of the smoke."

"And you never told anyone?"

"No, it was our little secret. Just between Granny and her brown-eyed granddaughter."

"You were very close weren't you?"

"We were then. She always wanted me to marry you."

"Yeah, remember the Homecoming dance our senior year?"

"Yeah, we had that awful fight and I left the dance."

"I went to your Grandmother's trying to find you and I'll never forget what she said. She told me, 'Michael, don't you worry about Kerrie. She's a stubborn hussy and right now her head is full of ideas about Michigan, but I know as sure as I know that I'm breathing that one day the two of you will get married.'"

"I remember. I was so angry I wouldn't speak to her for two weeks."

"She loved you, Kerrie."

"I know, but it was always in her way. She hated the idea of Michigan. She wanted me to take secretarial courses at the community college." I pulled away from him and knelt down near the tombstone.

"And marry you."

Michael was quiet. We both knew I was expected back in Michigan in a few days. I had only been able to leave work for a week.

"I still love you, you know. You could easily transfer to Whitburg, Kerrie."

And Nick? Would Michael mind him moving in, too? God, Grandmother would hate him — a Yankee who lobbies for Greenpeace!

Michael slid down beside of me and took my hand. "Kerrie, come home and marry me."

Marry Michael? Grandmother would love it. "Michael, have you ever thought about selling the Ford?"

The Century Plant

Alice E. Sink

After turning into a rutted driveway, Sarah stopped before a dilapidated army barracks resembling a giant apple dumpling floating in a bowl of overgrown weeds. "Ah, come on," Sarah urged when Margaret balked. "It's pretty rough, I admit, but we won't be paying for overhead."

Inside the antique shop, Margaret moved quickly among milk jugs and pie safes. "What will you take for this old metal refrigerator?" she abruptly quizzed the owner.

"Well, now. I donno," the red-faced man offered, a wad of chewing tobacco lodged in one jaw.

"I'm looking for something to paint and use on my back porch," Margaret stated. "For storage, mainly."

"You don't want that old metal one. They ain't valuable. Why," he said sucking mucus and swallowing hard, "I 'ort to pay you just to haul it off."

"Then I suppose you'd come down a little on the price," Margaret bargained.

"Nope. Ten bucks. Exactly what I paid for it myself. Ain't making one penny on the deal." He studied his boots. "No sir-ee, selling it for what it costs me." He ambled to the opened doorway and spit on the ground, a stream of brown tobacco juice landing near a plump aproned woman hand-sanding an oak chair. Turning again to Margaret, he asked, "Now, how 'bout that refrigerator? Ten bucks. Sell it to you right." Margaret told him she would let him know, but she had already decided she didn't want it. "When you make up your mind, come on back," he said as the two women left the shop.

Walking through a grassy field, back to the car, Sarah pointed out a rectangle of plowed black dirt. An exotic border of robust plants grew in pronged cactus spikes, and in the center of each sprout, a lightly furled closed blossom slept. "Wonder what those plants are?" she asked Margaret.

"I have no idea," Margaret quickly admitted, then added emphatically, "but I want one."

The Century Plant. . . (continued)

Pointing to the garden, Sarah shouted up the incline to the woman sanding the chair. "What kind of plants are these?"

"You mean them on the edge?" the woman shouted back. "Why, they're them kind that blooms oncest every hundred years." She left her work to come closer. "But to tell you the truth," she continued, "I ain't seen nary one in bloom." She nodded, "You want one a'piece to take home?"

"Yes," Margaret responded, answering for both of them.

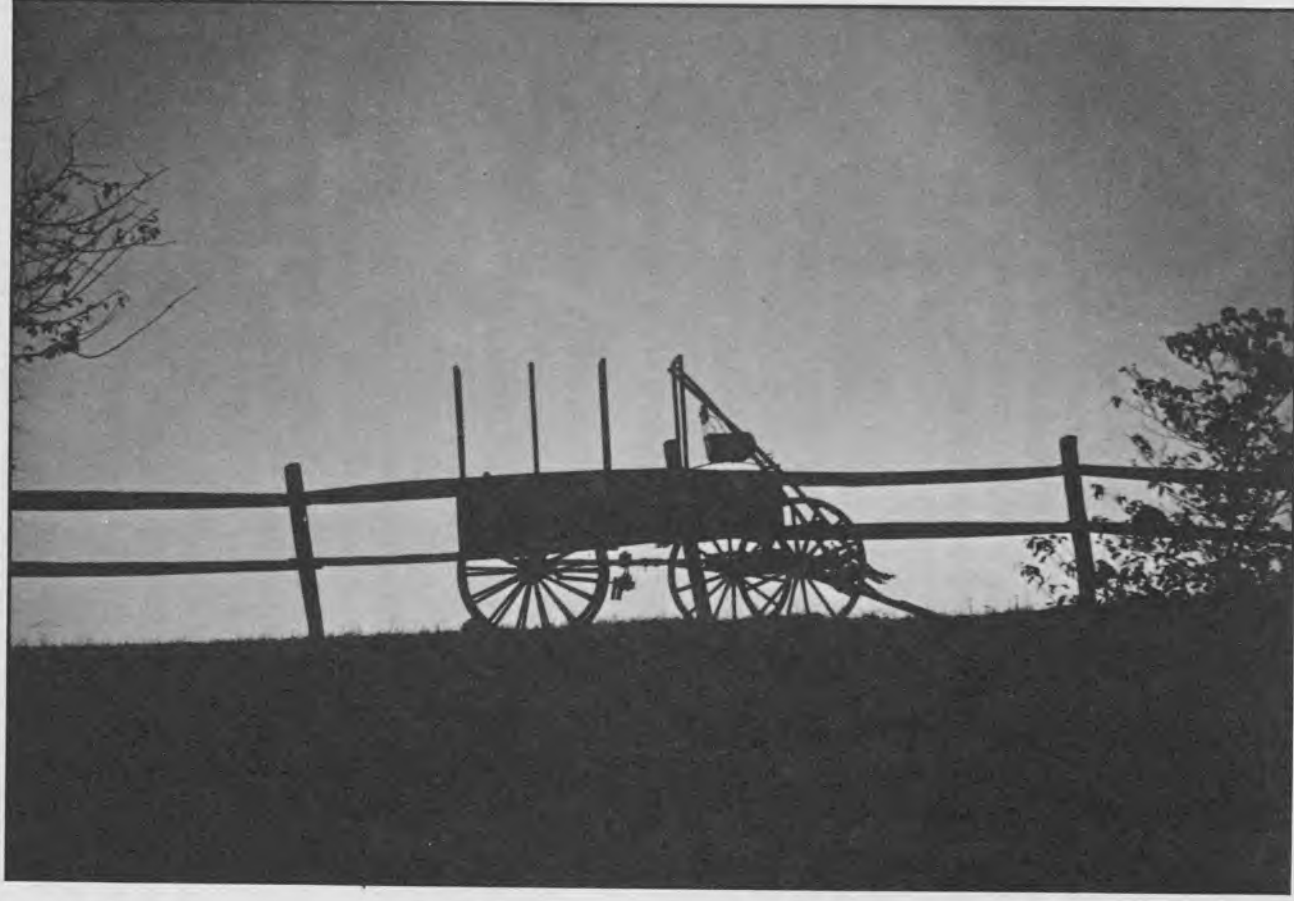
"I'll go get something to dig with," the woman volunteered. "Just you wait here."

She returned with a shovel and dug two plants, laboriously covering the holes with her foot. As she finished patting the top soil, a thunderous crash torpedoed the trees. A bang followed, and still another crash. The man ran from the shop. Waving his arms, he shouted, "Darr-ling, whar's the truck keys? There's been a terrible wreck on up the road. Whar's the keys. . ."

"The keys. . . the keys is on the nail. . . hanging on the nail," the woman called. "Wait!" she added. "I'm a'goin', too." She ran towards the truck, shouting over her shoulder to Margaret and Sarah, "We got to go. There's been a terrible wreck up the highway. He might have to get the firetruck." While Margaret and Sarah stood in the grass, holding their century plants, the couple spun down the dirt road, slowing only for two dogs sleeping in the sun.

That afternoon Margaret potted her century plant and displayed it in a long-legged latticed oak stand near the kitchen window. At first, she thought the tough green fibers had loosened. But nothing else happened. She lost interest, and after a while she even forgot to water the plant. The next spring, while preparing to repaint the kitchen, she tossed the whole thing, pot and all, in the old gully running through the kudzu vines behind the house. She did not have a hundred years to wait.

Rolling Thunder — Amy Leatherman



The Separation of Two Peas in A Pod

Estie Bennington

We are playing in the sand pile under the shade of a huge oak tree at Grandma's house. Beside the sand pile is a blooming crape myrtle, my favorite tree. It has soft bark, which I can peel off easily and make juice run out, and see and smell the shiny white wood. Most of all, it's my favorite tree because it has low hanging branches, making it a breeze to climb. I am short for an eight-year-old, and I can't climb big trees. The first branch is always too high for me to reach. However, I have conquered the crape myrtle.

My sister Martha is seven, and my brother James is four-and-a-half. They are both every inch as tall as me. But I feel especially big and grown up, if not taller, when I am brave and climb to the top branches of my crape myrtle, which is something neither of them can do. It's a pretty sight to look down and see pink flowers shaped like puffs of cotton candy sprinkled throughout the green leaves. And it's a rough-tough feeling to be at such a height and see Martha's and James' blond heads looking up at me with envious wide eyes.

Martha and I have eyes the color of our Mama's, and James' the same as Daddy's. It has been so long since we've seen either of our parents, I don't hardly remember how they look, except for the eyes. Mama's large eyes are brown and Daddy's sky blue. Grandma's eyes are blue also, and they used to just twinkle when she laughed. She has snow white hair, which she pins in a tight knot on top of her head. I love it when she takes it down at night and lets me brush it. She is short like me. She always reassures me that big surprises come in small packages, and that it doesn't matter how small you are on the outside. It is how tall you stand on the inside that matters. She's pretty for a grandma and we do neat things together. She always lets me ride the bus with her when she goes shopping at the A & P. I help her snap green beans, shell peas, and shuck corn. I hand her the clothespins when she hangs clothes out to dry. She lets all three of us lick the bowl, spoon, and eggbeater when she bakes a cake. Grandma and I are the best of friends.

I sometimes get so bored playing with Martha and James in the sand. I am to watch them, because there are a lot of cars and transfer trucks that speed by Grandma's house. James likes to stand at the edge of the busy road, pumping his arm up and down over his head, trying to get the truck drivers to blow their air horns at him. It's a

The Separation. . . . (continued)

trick I wish I had never taught him. Now he wants to do it all the time. Grandma is too old and sick to play with us outside. She used to be so much fun, but lately she has been getting sicker and sicker. She doesn't laugh as much anymore. Since we have been staying at Grandma's, several times she has been so sick that she had to call my aunts to come and get Martha and James. She was unable to take care of them, but I never had to leave, because she claims I am her helper.

When boredom strikes, I usually climb my tree and perch on the highest branch to sit and think. I wonder if my Grandma is going to die. I sleep in a twin bed in her room, and at night she snores. If she is not snoring, I get out of bed and check to make sure she is still breathing. I wonder if my parents are dead. I close my eyes real tight and with all my might, I try to remember them. I think, as long as I can visualize them in my mind, they are still there somewhere, and they will come back; but, if I lose the memory of them, they will never return.

Daddy has been gone away the longest, not that I ever remember him being around too often. He just came and went. Mostly he went. Just about the time that I got used to the idea of no Daddy, Mamma told us she was taking us to see Grandma and we were going to spend the night with her. Now we've been here for lots of nights. With Grandma getting so sick, Mama has to come back to get us. It's getting late in the summer and soon school will start. I don't know what we will do then. I know my Grandma will keep me, but what will happen to James and Martha. I really am something special to Grandma, because of her thirty-six grandchildren, I am Estie, her name-sake. Since she has so many grandchildren and so little money, she can't do very much at Christmases and birthdays for all of us, but she always does for me. She always makes me a new dress for my birthday, and she doesn't for the others. I have had eight new dresses and that is eight more than Martha has ever had. But I always share with her since we can wear the same size. Once, but only once, I let her wear my new birthday dress even before I had worn it.

I am sitting in the top of my tree, bored and worrying, when Martha yells, "Come on down, big britches, Grandma wants to talk

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to us." Thinking Grandma must be sicker, I all but jump out of the tree. I pick up James from the sand, grab Martha's hand and start running to the porch. I stop, run back to the tree, pick a flower for Grandma, hoping to make her feel better. I place the flower in Martha's hand and off we go again, my heart racing too fast and my legs not fast enough.

Grandma is sitting in her rocker on the front porch, not looking any sicker, but looking very sad. I think she's been crying. I have never seen her cry. Oh no, now I am the one who is sick. My hands are shaking and my heart is still racing. She takes James and puts him on her lap, never taking her eyes off me, as she sniffs and says, "You three will always be together," and then very softly, "but not with me. I am too old and we can't live together any longer. In a little while, around ten o'clock, Miss Riggs, a social worker, is coming to get you and take you to your new home. It's a Children's Home, and it's not too far away. I will visit you when I can, and you can still come see me." Grandma talks on, but I stop hearing. There are words about horses. . .swimming pool. . .friends. . .love. . .fun. . . I don't know how long she talks, but I notice Martha and James are not with us. Grandma is holding me on her lap and we are crying.

"Grandma, where are Martha and James?" I ask.

She continues to rock, "They've gone in to pack their things and you are going to have to go do the same thing."

"Grandma, you don't mean me, too. I am your little Estie, and I won't leave you now or ever." I reach down and pick up the flower Martha has dropped. "Please Grandma, let me stay," I beg, as I hand her the crape myrtle blossom.

Grandma looks straight in my eyes, and I am sure she sees deep within me. She has difficulty speaking, but she says in a low husky tone, "Oh, Estie, this may not be right. It may not be for the best. But, it must be. Please be brave for Martha and James, and please be brave for me. You know, we have always been two peas in a pod, you and me. You know I love you, James, and Martha. I want this to be for your good, and all I can do is pray that it will be. Please, Estie make the best of it for me. Always remember, I am Estie, too, so where you go, you take me with you."

Before I can plead with her anymore, I hear a car door shut, and

The Separation. . . . (continued)

a pretty lady with black hair walks to the porch. She has on red lipstick and a big smile. I just want to slap her! There is absolutely nothing to smile about. There is stirring around the house as our things are quickly placed in brown A & P grocery bags. There is hugging and kissing, and we are ushered to the pretty lady's fancy black car. Neither Martha, James, nor I will sit in the front with the smiling lady. We get into the back seat, where Martha and James plant themselves closely on either side of me. We are backing out of the driveway. I turn on my knees to look out of the rear window. I wave good-bye to Grandma, while she holds the remains of the pink crape myrtle blossom, as she gets smaller and smaller in the distance. I don't like being closed in the car. As my Grandma is disappearing from my sight, I wonder: Who will buy me peaches, just because I like them? Who will take me to the Guilford Dairy Bar for ice-cream? Who will help take care of Grandma with me gone? Who will give me a dress on my birthday? Who will be the pea in the pod? Then she is out of sight.

That day, the day of separating two peas in a pod, left a tremendous scar on top of many little scars. My Grandmother died shortly after we were separated. Grandma, in all her wisdom, knew what was right and she did it. Her prayers were answered. She did many things for Martha, James, and me, but the one thing she did that was for our utmost good, was arranging our lives so we could grow up at Mills Home, a Baptist Children's Home in Thomasville, North Carolina. There we grew up, not only physically, but also intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. It is where we learned to love and be loved, where we developed friends who some twenty years later are still family. It is where we call home.

Would I trade those Mills Home days? Not for all the moms and dads in the world. Would I trade it for Grandma? That's a tougher question. Admitting it, I feel unfaithful to her memory, but I wouldn't trade Mills Home, not even for my wonderful loving Grandma.

“Tripping”
Brenda Morris

Bra

Tripping over matchsticks

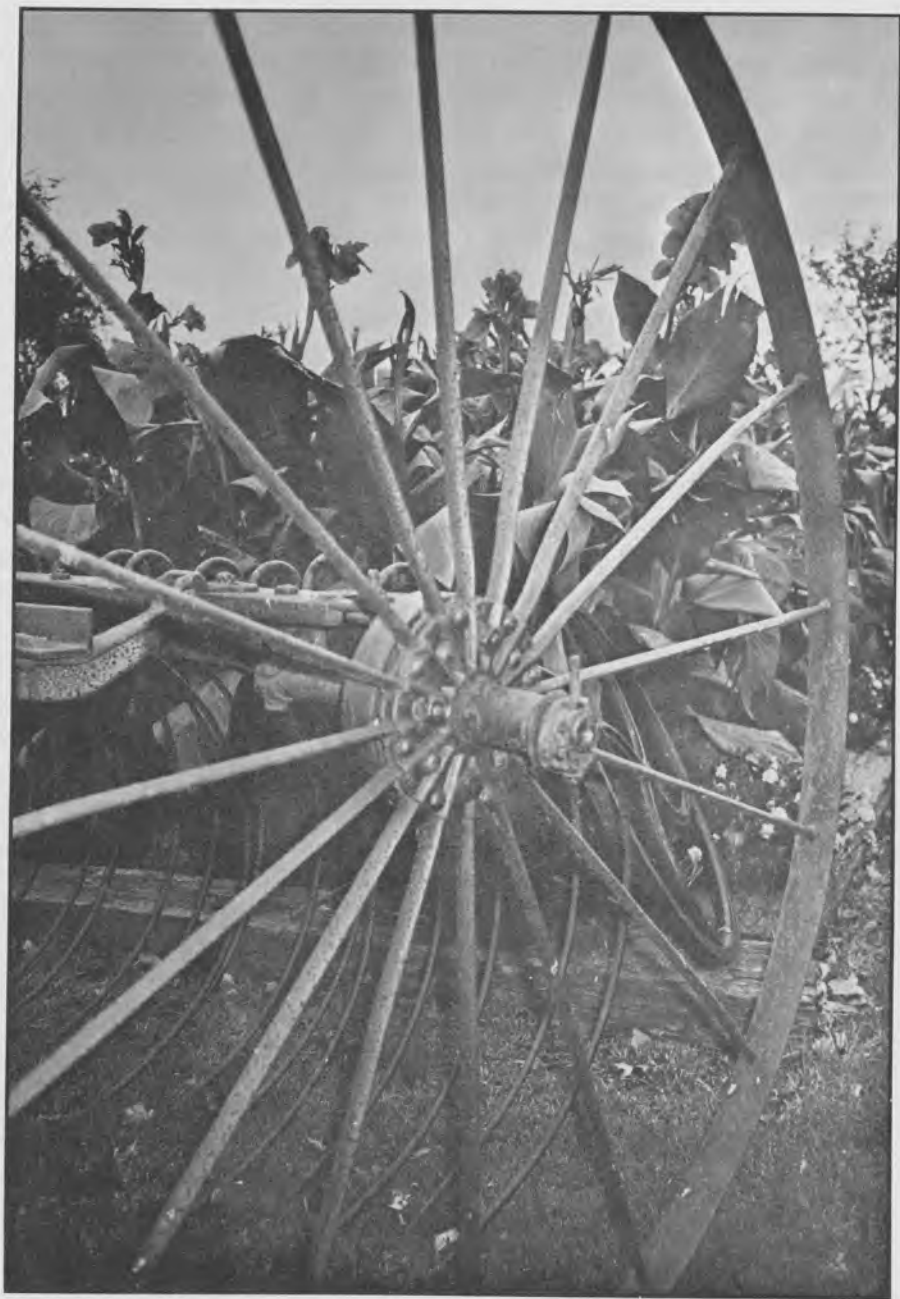
Piece of cake

It takes the strength of Atlas

To bake

Even the best dreams are moist at best

Untitled — Sandra Selander



A Secret Visit

Joyce B. Kivett

It was a cool, cloudy evening. The wind rustled the leaves along the street — setting off little whirlwinds. I was walking down Duke of Gloucester Street in Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia. Walking past the houses and shops, I felt myself traveling back in time to the 1700's. I longed for a green dress, a very fashionable color of the times, with a long, full skirt, layers of gauzy petticoats, a pretty shawl, and a bonnet to match my dress.

I had just arrived by coach from my hometown in the Carolinas. Never had I been in a busy city like Williamsburg before. Uncle John, my mother's sister's husband, was to meet me. I had come to visit my Aunt Jessica and all the cousins. There were eight of them. I was so excited, imagining all the fun I would have. Aunt Jessica's letters often told of gay balls with dancing, quilting bees, and the many fine men of Williamsburg. Being seventeen, I could not help wondering if I would meet a handsome fellow. I shivered as the excitement rippled through me.

My uncle failed to meet me at the coach. I could not blame him — I was a day earlier than expected. A kind old gentleman with greying hair, tricorn hat, fine clothes, and shoes with bright brass buckles had directed me to ask for my uncle at the Raleigh Tavern.

No one was on the porch as I approached the Raleigh Tavern, a huge house. It must be three floors high. I pictured it to be like our hotels at home. I was unaware that ladies were not allowed, but once inside, an inner feeling told me I should not be here. Later, I learned it was thought to be a grand place for gentlemen to stay while in town on business. I was standing in an entry hall. A large staircase was immediately in front of me. The walls were covered with all sorts of written notices — one telling of a man who had a fine bay mare to sell, another telling of a tract of land to be sold, and still another advertising a fine jeweler's shop on Prince George Street. I

A Secret Visit. . . (continued)

realized voices were coming from a room to the right. The hall was dim with only the candle light from sconces to show the way. I peeked through the doorway, men were all around a huge table — bigger than any I had ever seen — bigger than the ones set up for the harvest feasts at home. It was green on top, and the men were hitting little balls, with long polished sticks. One ball dropped in a little crocheted pouch on the side and a cheer went up. I later learned that this was a game called billiards. I stepped back so they could not see me. I could hear them moving around, their boots scraping against the planks of the floor. I smelled the tobacco smoke from their pipes, and heard their ale mugs clank as they set them on the mantle. Someone was coming in the door, so I quickly moved over by the staircase hoping no one could see me.

The gentleman entered the room, "Hello Mr. Jefferson," someone called out: "This is the young law student from Virginia, I have been telling you about. How are you this crisp evening?" "Fine thank you Mr. Henry," Mr. Jefferson replied. He stood in the doorway brushing himself off, "Those roads are sure dusty." Looking, down at my own dress, I also began to try to relieve it of some of its dust and travel wrinkles.

Someone called very loudly, "Gentlemen, the meal is served." They proceeded through a door at the back of the room to what — from a quick glance — appeared to be a dining room.

I didn't know what to do. Should I go in search of the woman of the house? No, she would be serving now. No, I would wait until they finished their dinner. Surely, I would catch a glimpse of my uncle soon.

I sat on the lowest step of the staircase and leaned against the rail. I must have dozed off. Suddenly, I was aware that the men had returned to the room with the fireplace and huge table.

As the evening grew late, I had become too frightened to approach any of them. I had returned to my station near the back of the staircase. A few of the men had said goodnight and gone upstairs. I had no idea what time it was, but I knew it was getting late.

I quietly crept up the staircase, hoping to see the lady of the house or maybe Uncle John. I was sure that if found at this

A Secret Visit. . . (continued)

late hour with only men around, my reputation would be ruined. It was too cold to go outside. Earlier, I had heard the rain hitting the windows and the wind whistling through the trees.

At the top of the stairs were three doors. Now where do I go? I listened. From the door on the left, I heard the sound of snoring. No, I would not go that way. The door on the right was cracked. As quietly as I could, I tried to peek around the door facing without being seen. I was glad now for the darkness. In the room, was a grand canopy bed with a trundle pulled out beside it. It looked heavenly. I sure would like to jump in that, I thought. The thought fled quickly as I realized a gentleman stood beside the bed removing his shirt. I couldn't move. There were three doorways off this bedchamber. One gentleman was standing at a water basin, washing his face before retiring. I felt myself blushing from the top of my head to the tip of my toes. He was young and must have been six feet tall. He had dark hair. I imagined that his eyes were blue. He was so handsome, my breath caught in my throat.

Oh! dear, what am I to do? I will never find the lady of the house tonight, if there was one. Slowly I descended the staircase. I prayed at each step — and halfway down, started repeating the 23rd Psalm. Lord please don't let me be discovered, I prayed. The angels must have been with me: I reached my station again at the back of the staircase.

When I was sure all the gentlemen had retired and all was quiet for a long time, I sneaked into the room with the huge table. I tiptoed over to the fireplace hearth. As the dying fire warmed me, I moved toward the corner and curled up on the floor and dozed. As light began to filter through the blinds, I went back to my place by the staircase.

My mind was a whirlwind of thoughts. Smelling the aroma of coffee, the sweet smell of baking pastries, and the hearty smell of fried ham, I realized I was very hungry. I had not eaten since noon yesterday. Thinking very fast, I decided I would sneak outside and go sit by the church I had passed yesterday. It had a garden beside it, and I could wait there until a reasonable hour to approach the tavern again. Then I would return to the tavern, and ask for my uncle.

A Secret Visit. . . (continued)

As the front door closed behind me I hurried, praying again no one would see me. Again the angels must have been with me. The morning brought the sunshine. Even though the air was crisp, I felt warm at the thought I had not been detected. I chose a bench in the garden at the side of the church, where I could see the street, believing no one could see me.

The city was beginning to wake up. Wagons and carriages were passing. A carriage made its way, pulled by a strong team of horses. One was a dappled gray. The other was a huge chestnut-colored horse. Their hooves made a clip clop sound causing a rhythm that a child might call music.

I decided it was time to reapproach the Raleigh Tavern. As I climbed the steps, my mind was twirling with memories of the night before, wondering if my uncle would be there. I had not seen him. If he was not there, where would I ever find him? How would I get to Aunt Jessica? I am sure she was worried by this time. I did not even realize my hand had reached up and my fist was now knocking at the door.

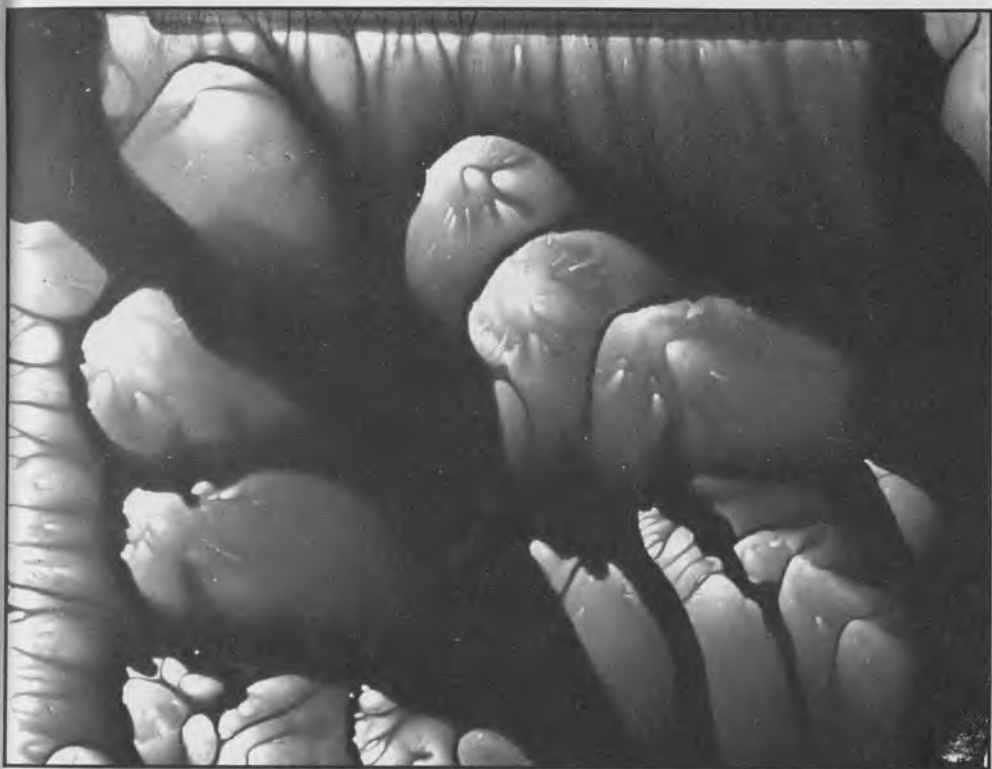
The door opened and a gentleman said, "Yes?" I stuttered "I. . .am." then I cleared my throat, held my head high, and started again. "I am looking for my uncle, Mr. John Tanner, and I was told I might find him here." Another gentleman had come up behind him, the tall handsome young stranger I had seen last night in his bedchamber. "You must be Julie McLeod." "Yes," I managed to say. "Let me introduce myself," he began, "I am Matthew Stanford, and I am your Uncle John and Aunt Jessica's neighbor. They have asked me to bring you to their home as they were not sure when you would arrive."

My heart was racing so fast I couldn't speak. I am sure I was blushing, and I must have looked a mess. He stepped outside. "Miss McLeod if you will have a rest here on the porch for just a few minutes, I will get my things and we will be off."

Unaware of my movements, I sat down as he directed. Again the angels must be in control, for I felt I was sitting on a cloud in heaven.

As I sat waiting for him to return, someone shook my arm: "Julie, the tour is over." Joan, my best friend who had come to Williamsburg with me, had brought me back to 1988.

Freud Toy — Lynn Terry



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