



Deborah ByrdEditor
Chris Russell Assistant Editor

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Cover designed by
Chris Russell

A Day in the Life of a Child

by Deborah N. Byrd, 1988

THE JOURNEY

The mountain; a tall, mammoth piece of earth.
The home of millions of animals, and the attraction
of the artist's eye.

Right now an obstruction; a barrier.

The road; a twisting, turning path.
Not too worn, but people have passed this way before.
This path is the only way to achieve the goal.

The goal; an indefinite destination.
For certain there is something good, but just what?
This the traveller wants to discover.

The traveller; a faceless, formless body.
Just who he is will never be known.
His experiences, though, are the story.

The story; a lifetime of decisions.
Each turnoff, another choice.
The end of the trail is truly the end.

The end; the tale is complete, the road deserted.
The traveller has reached his destination,
And the path is made ready for another weary
traveller going home.

Amy J. Brunzman
June 1982

A Day in the Life of a Child

by Deborah N. Byrd, 1983

The dark full clouds hovered above like a blanket of mushrooms, but still the children played on. Not until the deafening roar of thunder pierced their consciousness, did they look around in fear and uncertainty. Their world, so ordered and secure a moment before, suddenly fell about them as the wind tore whole branches from trees, and urgently—as an old woman shooing flies from a cooling pie—scurried the children homeward.

The eldest, scarcely more than six years old, reached for the hands of her two siblings, seeking a firm grasp, though remnants of now forgotten mud pies caused little fingers to easily slip away from one another. With shirt-tails and long blond hair lashing at the gusts, the three scampered up the grassy creekbank, afraid, but unsure of why. More than once the eldest looked over her shoulder, terrified at what she might encounter, yet bound by the perverse force within herself which commanded that she look. After each hesitant though definite search, the girl would oh, so carefully exhale, allowing her pounding heart to subside somewhat within its tiny cavity.

Reaching the top of the bank, the children broke into a full race toward the large white house across the pasture. Dodging holes and bushes, they ran with power supplied only by terror, and still they knew not why they were afraid. Great drops of water periodically escaped from the ominous sky above, one finding its way to the face of the smallest child, leaving a tear-like path through the dirt smudged across her little cheek.

To the three fugitives, the pasture—once so familiar—stretched infinitely across the horizon, ending where the white house, now looking small and unprotected, touched the lower edge of the black sky. Suddenly and swiftly, a megabolt of lightning was thrown from the clouds, piercing the house, then vanishing—swallowed by the black god of thunder who now warmed his hands over the blaze he had created. The children fell to the ground, shivering as the cool wind pelted their bodies. The youngest, weeping hysterically for what she did not comprehend, clung maniacally to the eldest, who, too young to attempt platitudes, gazed spellbound at the scene before her. The middle child, with arms outstretched, cried silently into the wind. The three remained in the pasture for hours, watching as their only refuge heated the heavens; the clouds teasingly withholding their bounty until long after the departure of the exhausted, defeated firemen.

Summer, Any-year

"Let's go for a walk,"
Said he softly to me.
So we talked as we walked in serenity.

Whatever came up,
Many topics to choose:
From pups, to ducks, to old comfortable shoes.

But never a word
Flew from my lips crying
Of swords and of wards and of young men dying,

Of love stretching far
Over a tear-filled sea,
Of a war I deplored, taking him from me.

No. Why dwell on fate,
For what will be, will be.
Kings hate. Lovers wait. 'Tis an age-honored creed.

Deborah N. Byrd, 1983

Notes for Maggie

Spring comes to me in February now;
I sit in scrub below the hill.

Chimes reach me
through sun that soaks my back.
Sticktights cling to socks. A jersey,
jeans, and canvas shoes complete
my observation suit today.

Cows pick their way across the hill.
One, resting, chews the cud;
her jaws set the field's rhythm.
The jays return. A single plane
divides the blue.

Somehow it seems
that if I'd speak aloud
you'd hear; yet human voice
can't reach you. Only look:
thinner, perhaps.
curls cropped to stifle pride,
I am the barefaced child you knew:
ink on the fingers,
wings on the heart.

The ground is warm.
The black cow moves from sight,
his shadow lost in trees.
Green revives between fenceposts.

Pamela Gurley, 1984

Morning Meditation

Rain-soaked spring settles in the valleys.
The Lord spreads his light
across the gray; birds and cattle
waken us to brightness.

Sure that He has fixed us here,
somehow we preserve
that sense of travel, morning movement
toward His latest plan. We rise
in certain strength; we know
He guides us for His ends.
Beyond dim dawning He has set high noon.

Pamela Gurley, 1984

The Green

Out of a hard gray flat landscape
there emerges a newness, a greenness.
It struggles to escape the bonds of gray.
It seeks an existence within and
without this harsh monochromatic world.
Once it has gained its stronghold
there is no release, until death
in its mercy, leads a peaceful end.
The Green is a rejoicing, a happiness
manifested in intertwining lives.

Sylvia R. Read, 1984

Teacher

by Rosemarie Shields

Blanche B. Ottoman and I first met when she was in her sixties and I was five years old. She taught second grade, and I was visiting her classroom with my friend Margaret. For some reason I had a handful of pennies which I accidentally dropped on the floor. I was ashamed of the noise and also worried that Miss Ottoman might not think I was ready to start school the next fall. She, however, reacted very kindly and saved my five-year-old dignity. That day and many other times in the following years she taught me lessons that aren't listed in the elementary curriculum.

Although I couldn't analyze it then, I know that she treated everyone with the same kindness she had shown me. Her kindness was based on the worth of the individual, and she saw something worthy in each of us. Fred was the dirtiest boy in our second grade, and he often came to school with a white circle on his face that showed where he had washed, and grayish ears and neck that showed where he hadn't. His arms had white stripes where the water ran down. One winter day Fred came back to school after an absence of a day or two. He explained that the water pipes at home had frozen so that he couldn't wash, so of course he couldn't come to school. Miss Ottoman listened to him with all the seriousness she gave to President Roosevelt on the radio and was properly sympathetic. None of us laughed at Fred.

A popular song went "accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative," and that's just what Miss Ottoman did. I didn't have much positive to accentuate, so she gave me some. She taught me penmanship, a skill that has boosted my self-esteem time and again. There have been times in my life when I thought my hair needed fixing or my clothes weren't quite right, but I have never doubted the beauty of my penmanship. I guess she knew that even young children need something of their own to be proud of.

As a freshman in college I heard that my much-loved teacher was living in an old people's home not far from the campus. One Sunday afternoon I rode the streetcar to visit her and we had a lively talk. She told me she had read that it might be possible for people who live long enough to grow a third set of teeth. She showed me how well she could use her left hand now that her right one was useless. She asked lots of questions about my work and my plans for the future. Our conversation had no self-pity although she was facing old age and death and I was doing all kinds of jobs to put myself through college. When I got back on the street car I knew I would never see her again but that I would remember her often.

Miss Ottoman taught me kindness and self-respect and she set a high example for me to follow. Yes, I'm a teacher myself now. Can't you tell it from my penmanship?

My Mind Is Still Good

My mind is still good,
I don't speak too well, though.
I'm not too easy to understand,
But if someone would just take time . . .
I really don't have a lot of time to spare.

People smile at me, ask me how I am,
Do they really care?

My children do.

They visited me last Christmas.

They also sent me a birthday card.

Oh, I love to hear how they are doing!

I get so lonely in this big, empty house.

I remember when my children would ask me for advice.

They don't do that anymore.

I don't understand why . . . I haven't changed!

. . . Yes, I have changed,

My back is crooked, I walk with a cane.

My skin is wrinkled.

My hands are spotted with age.

My hair is grey, and I don't see as well.

Sometimes I have trouble hearing, but . . .

My mind is still good!

Amy J. Brunzman

May 1980

On Death

We die too slowly when we die—

Let Death come quickly,

And find me still alive.

Before my eyes grow dull to beauty,

My ears deaf to laughter and song,

My lips too timid to speak the truth,

My heart too cold to love.

Let me live while I may—

And Death take me before my Soul.

Frank Drew, 1984

Vicissitude

His journey has been long,
Trying to develop in himself no wrong.
Through those crucial years,
Now down on the ground streams his tears.

Sirocco beats his face,
The rhythm of his heart loses its place.
Arctic withers his hands,
Now down on the ground tumble his plans.

Forceful wind blow him on his back;
Skin on his arms tear, like an old paper sack.
Exposing dried blood and hard bone,
Even his mouth hangs loose, oozing bile and yellow foam.

Wind subside, a job well done,
Sun-scorched now, no place to run.
Intense rays, burn his staring retinas in his head,
As flies lay eggs in his nostrils, he'll soon be dead.

Circling vultures, circling come,
Devour what is left, Devour what is undone.
Hear the bell, hear it, it has rung,
Today is the feast, tomorrow the leftover dung.

Rejoice, the task is at last finished,
Rejoice, his hopes at last, have diminished.
His spirit has been broken,
All in life 'twas but a token.

Break the wind, landing near, salivating vultures;
Cautious steps, shadow on him, reveal your ugly sculptures.
Position, strike quick, tear out a piece of meat,
Pull it out, vein attached, take another from his cheek.

Eyes twitch in a skull half exposed,
Abruptly shift, unilaterally composed.
In his sight, eclipse the sun,
A vulture shocked, air rushes into its lung.

Silent gaze meets silent gaze,
And the man's hand begins to raise.
Piercing hate meets piercing hate,
The birds fly off, but for one it's too late.

Feel their gaze, feel their fear,
Why before a battle do they seem so near.
Hear the rumble of the earth, the vibrations in the air,
Who is really who in the midst of this snare?

Standing still, blood on its beak,
This is the last round, the apex, the peak.
Lying alone, life in one arm and two eyes,
Suddenly clasps the bird's neck, it screeches, it cries.

Life soaks, life drains,
He's been beaten yet remains.
Half a smile he wills,
For the bird he strangles, he kills.

Sun sets on the cracked plain,
Relief in sight, removal from the insane.
Shadow of a dead vulture far to his side,
Take it away, into oblivion, into the twilight tide.

Full moon, in indigo sky, radiance of peace,
Give this man comfort, hope, or send him sweet release.
Full moon, alone in space,
Looks upon earth, never turning its face.

His journey has been long,
Give this soul a home, a companion and a new song.
Through those crucial years,
Before the end comes, before it nears.

Memories begin to echo past,
The future is here thank God at last.
Regenerate, breathe deep;
Battle scars gone, but the memories he must keep.

A divine hand has brought him back to the living,
Beauty is his, now and for the giving.
Set sail to the winds in time;
God works, God mends, a soul gives He chime.

Renewed arms, legs and a revived spirit,
Happiness not seen, is it true? almost fear it.
A new face, tinted in light, inner strength to see,
A new man, different man, all he can be.

His journey will be long,
Yet on his feet he has his new song.
Through those crucial years,
He will shield away many oncoming spears.

Walk in strength, walk take your staff;
You are the essence, God's wheat, not worthless chaff . . .
Walk with enlightened eyes to the goal ahead,
Do not be frightened when the sky threatens red.

A man can receive nothing, unless it is given from heaven.
So make your requests known, even if seven times seven.
Remember your right hand has the rod, the power;
Lift it to the sky and feel yourself tower.

Shipwrecks

Sunken in the stormy Sea
Of Yes and No
And May Be,
May Be . . .
Lie broken dreams
And broken hearts,
Plans and schemes,
All torn apart,
Faded verse
And wilted flowers,
Treasured minutes,
Lonely hours,
Remembered days,
Forgotten years,
Sad farewell smiles,
And tears,
And tears . . .
Lie sunken in the stormy Sea
Of Yes and No
And May Be,
May Be.

Frank Drew, 1984

I Wish

I wish I could tell you when you're walking down a wrong path,
But then you'd be afraid to walk down the right one.
I wish I could hurt for you when you stumble,
But then you'd be afraid to walk alone.
I wish I could bear the pain of losing someone dear, for you.
But then you'd be afraid to make new friends.
I wish I could give you the knowledge of all my experiences,
But then you'd be afraid to learn.
I wish I could take all your mistakes away for me to bear,
But then you'd be afraid to try.
I wish I could run your life perfectly for you,
But then you'd be afraid to live.

Amy J. Brunzman
December 1982

The Wedding Day

by Deborah N. Byrd, 1982

She stood at the bedroom window gazing out at the glorious June morning. A perfect day for a wedding, she thought, and almost smiled.

The engagement ring on her left hand caught the brilliant sunlight as she closed the window and moved toward the dainty vanity near the bed. Her dress made a crisp, rustling sound as she walked, and she was careful not to catch the hem on the furniture scattered in her path.

She closely examined her face in the vanity mirror, at first not recognizing the person gazing back at her.

"More rouge," she said aloud, then jumped at the unexpected sound of her own voice.

"I can't believe it's almost time," she told the image as she reached for the tiny hat box on the vanity. Opening it, she again had thoughts as to whether the veil was of adequate length. It just barely covered her nose, but her mother had assured her it was more than adequate for the simple ceremony.

As she pinned the hat securely and adjusted her veil, the engagement ring again flickered in the sunlight.

"I'd better take it off before I forget," she said, and lovingly slipped the ring into the small inner pocket of her purse.

She glanced around her large neat room, taking in many of the things that had helped to shape her life thus far. If she ever returned to this room, it would be as a different person than she was today. The plane was leaving right after the service and tonight she would be three thousand miles away.

But right now her parents were waiting downstairs to take her to the church. All of this had been quite a strain for them, but she felt they were handling it as well as could be expected under the circumstances. In fact, everyone involved was trying so hard to take her feelings into consideration on almost every detail.

Last night Dave's parents had even called to ask whether she would mind if they placed a recent portrait of him on the casket. The lid, of course, would have to remain closed. The car had exploded upon impact.

"Traveling too fast for conditions," the sheriff had said. But he hadn't known that Dave was hurrying home on a four-day pass in order to be married.

A tear slipped down her cheek but she roughly brushed it away. There would be plenty of time for that later. The funeral would start in thirty minutes, ironically the same time as the wedding was to have been.

In the 1830's, American painter George Catlin visited various Indian tribes and recorded their vanishing way of life in a collection of portraits. Among these is a beautiful painting of a young Mandan woman called Mint, known for her luxuriant silver hair. Shortly afterwards, in 1837, both Mandan villages fell victim to smallpox. Virtually everyone died. In the short space of five days, an entire culture was destroyed forever.

The Song of Mint

Ai, Ai, I wail, and there is no voice
To answer mine—I sit among the dead.
You do not move, my husband—
With the best fur robes I have covered you;
The fire is dead and you do not reprove me.
The Spirit will send us no more days.

I went down to the river, when I was young,
With the other girls: we went to wash our hair,
And the young men guarded us with spears.
I stood naked on the bank

To dry my hair, knowing that you watched.
Your flute I heard from my fishing boat;
I sang a song of you as I worked.
My mother was Hidatsa. You came to our lodge
Bringing many ponies and asked for me.
With my hands I made good fur robes.
Your lodge was round and warm;
Over our bed-pole your weapons hung.
We had strong sons, we had fine daughters.
Who now will appease their spirits?
Who will make the medicine, who will
Raise my husband toward the sun?

At dawn Island Man came forth from his lodge;
He threw down the sacred pole;
By the river he broke his pipe upon a stone
And cast it into the water.

He says we shall be no more.
I stood by as his spirit fled—
North it went, and its face was black.
We shall be no more—why do I yet live?
You are silent, my husband . . .
I have broken my finest pots in grief.
But my spirit longs to flee—
I will go to the river, I will seek its waters.

Chris Russell, 1984

Osage Blood

It is the Osage blood, the darker stuff
That meshes all my shadowed corners round;
My pales are close, my net is woven fine—
And twined of fear that cries in moveless sound.
But still the shadow slips and stains the light—
Deceiver's light, of nothing and of glass,
Slave to any. The weapon cheats my hand.
Only a flame, only the flame will last.
That coiled remembering, serpent-sleek and lithe,
Which haunted ancient lodges, lairs in mine:
The feathers and the smoke drift, cold as age.
The better blood is armed upon the line.
And never will the whiter flame arise
To mingle mine, if I have turned my eyes.

Chris Russell, 1984

Sigh

. . . then comes the bending shadow, strong and tall,
A tender touch, and turn between the lines;
A formless, yearning thought—no word at all—
And gone again—
And gone again—
Only the dead man's sonnet left behind.
This cruel art of poetry and prose
Is all of love a maiden lady knows.

Chris Russell, 1984

Two Songs to be Sung at Midnight (Without Accompaniment)

by Chris Russell, 1984

Still Life With Waitress

Cross-eyed lowbeams on the pavement, pavement
Broken lines are flashing white, white—
Dashing eyes of silver, eyes of red, red,
Stars that stream hypnotic through the night, the night,
the night—out on highway ninety-five.

Martha minds the Do-nut Hut,
Tending coffee graveyard, twelve to eight:
I got kids, she tells them—I got kids.
She wears her dresses longer now.
But there's a paper crown upon her head
And she stares into the icy light
With her tragic princess eyes;
The price of dreams goes higher every day.
I got kids, ya know—I got kids.
Quarter a cup—that to go?

Lowbeams chasing on the pavement, pavement
Quick a flash of icy light, light—
There's a princess with a crown of paper, save her—
From the glassy casket in the night, the night,
the night—out on highway ninety-five.

FM

They only play the sad songs
on the late night radio,
When the cold is in your shoulders
and your knees—
And you're clinging to the hollow sound
to drown the silent roar
Of the heavy empty darkness at your door.

They only play the lonely songs
on late night radio:
The old moon drains a tune
of blood and wine;
And from the black and bitter caves
beneath the waveless empty seas
Breathes the breath that mourns like death
on nights like these.

The Mountain of Pearl

by Lois Loban

The old woman fell suddenly against the chair's padded back as if she had been jolted into reality. The eager young faces before her were begging to be appeased. Avoiding their gaze, she shifted her eyes first to the glowing fire of the hearth, then to the great picture window through which a lamb appeared among the towering pines. Mumbling a prayer for mercy and guidance, she returned her attention to the children. She gulped, her eyes filled with tears, and inside she wanted to run and hide for fear that her most valuable pearl would be trampled with mockery and made into a petty game for children to laugh at. But, again, the voice, that still, small voice with which she was so familiar poured into her heart. "Tell them, tell them, that your knowledge will not be in vain," it urged her.

She sat up straight. Her wrinkled face with its sparkling blue eyes full of tears seemed to radiate, emitting long draughts of comfort. And this time, when she parted her lips, the words tumbled out almost without effort.

"My children, what you desire to know is very important. This mountain was bought with a very dear price, so listen carefully that every word you hear you lock away in the deepest chamber of your heart."

Her heed to pay attention, however, was quite unnecessary, for the children had noticed a change in mood that had begun within the old woman and seemed to spread even to the fire. On this day, their grandmother had been remarkably quiet and more meditative than usual. The children had never known for sure how long their grandmother's hair was and it had always been a subject much discussed among them, but tonight her white crown was loose and laying limp against her navy robe, almost to her hips. The flames in the fireplace that once were jumping and dancing frivolously seemed to settle into a more serious, steady light. The children already perceived not "Listen to what I am saying," but more "Listen to what I am not saying," and they opened their hearts to understand.

"The winter was most cruel when your grandfather and I started our journey. Ice plated everything outside; the streets, the houses, the cars, even—my nose. I protested a trip of any kind, but he insisted that a long walk would do us good.

"He looked so haggard and worn and I remember thinking, 'For so many years he has given himself, and look at him now—so thin, so tired.' But his mind was convinced that we needed a walk, so while I was thinking, he was doing. He had already wrapped a coat and scarf around me and was attempting to put mittens on my clasped hands when I awoke from my reverie.

"Don't forget your coat," I told him. Coats, coats, he was always losing coats. At least that's what he told me, but I only played dumb. I knew what he did with those coats. He gave them away, every last one of them. My heart still smiles when I think of it. All those poor people, once cold, now warm in my husband's coats.

"By this time, he was already out the door calling for me to hurry. I rushed out the door and, using the crunched snow for my guide, soon caught up to him—quite out of breath. He was walking away from town in a very determined manner as if something were calling him out.

"Where are we going?" I asked him. His laughing eyes turned to me as he smiled. 'We have work to do,' was all he said. I chuckled at the joviality with which he spoke, for it was so different from the manner of his walk. In response, he put his arm around my shoulder and said 'I love you, Old Woman.' "

At this, the grandmother blushed, for she forgot for a moment that the children even existed. When she noticed their intense faces waiting patiently for her next words, she gathered herself together and resumed with her answer.

"Anyway, we had a most pleasant conversation along the way. We talked about the day we met, how there was so much to say and how we tried to put it almost into one word. And how life is so similar. There are many 'words' of action that are strung together to form an individual sentence—an individual life. Each word must be carefully thought out and enunciated because the quality of one's sentence will determine its placement in the Lamb's book of life.

"The sky was turning from the bright blue of a sharp winter day to a glowing purple, as if to mark a royal ending. I could see now the outline of the mountain to which we were heading, the ice on it shone with the lustre of an exquisite jewel. But we had to go and we had to walk every word, every thought, every step of the way.

"Our conversation soon ended and we walked on in the quiet of each other's presence. When the stars began to shimmer on the horizon, we stopped at a small cafe along the side of the road. The place was nearly empty, so we had our choice from the various booths. Your grandfather guided me to one next to a window that gave a clear view of the mountain.

"Order what you like; I'll have some hot tea. I'll be back in a moment," he said quietly as I slid into the booth. When I looked to see where he was headed, I noticed a man hunched over a cup of coffee in a corner booth. He was puffing on a cigarette and mumbling to himself. His eyes were sad and somber. Although his face showed signs of age, it conveyed the look of a frightened, lost child. And your grandfather was going straight to him. It was not unusual. Many times, he left me alone in order to help someone else, but to ask him to stay—or worse, demand him to—would be to make his sentence incoherent.

"I couldn't understand the words your grandfather was giving to the man, but the sound of his voice was comforting. After a few minutes, I heard the lonely man sobbing and stole a glance in that direction long enough to see his head on my husband's shoulder and his body practically curled up in my husband's arms. I said a prayer and sent the hot tea to the other table.

"About an hour later, your grandfather approached our table, laid a hand on my shoulder, and said, 'Are you ready?' I looked from him to the man in the corner, who now bore a peaceful countenance, and said, 'Yes, of course.' He reached for my hand as we walked out the door and into the bitter cold once more.

"I didn't ask about the man, it wasn't important that I knew. He wasn't there to add to our lives; my husband was there to bring life to him. The sky was now pitch black and a sharp wind was whipping us about. Your grandfather and I walked as close as we could to protect ourselves from the harsh wind. I'm sure we looked like one black mass moving slowly and stiffly through the snow.

"The mountain was rocky and slippery with ice. Your grandfather cautioned me to place each foot carefully, put gradual pressure upon it to see if the rock was well-lodged and then lift myself onto it. He was right behind me, guiding me with words and supporting me when I slipped. I never did figure out how he knew the path so well; there was very little starlight and only a sliver of the moon.

"Eventually, we came to a clearing covered with a blanket of untouched snow. And he began to run. He was old; he was cold; and, he ran as though the snow and the years did not exist."

The old woman's face became disfigured with emotion and tears streamed from her eyes.

"When he stopped, a light came from within him as if the sun found its home in his flesh. The rays flowed out and filled up the air. They wrapped around me like a blanket. There was so much peace and warmth in the light. He turned around and looked at me—no, in me. His heart was draining straight into mine. He fell to his knees, closed his eyes and cried, 'Worthy is the Lamb! It was this last word of his sentence that he wrapped snugly around my heart. But, I couldn't cry. Now, my husband was finally receiving instead of giving and I found comfort in that knowledge. Somewhere, in that still body, my husband was partaking of the most peaceful, golden sleep. And I can't . . ."

Her voice broke.

"And I can't even . . ."

She was now sobbing uncontrollably.

"I can't even remember his name! But, to forget his sentence, his life . . . him . . . is impossible—for he is part of too many people. And he shines, he shines."

With her last words, the old woman looked up to see the lamb beckoning to her through the window. She closed her eyes and began to follow it up the mountain. The children remained silent and awestruck; for her pearl, also, was mounted and it was shining vibrantly.

Pain

The rain trickles down the window pane
like a trail of tears but leaves no stain
upon the window.
Tips finger the shiny slimy glass below
the bamboo shades.
The fingers clench into a fist in
anger at the rain beating on the tin
roof above a head full of thoughts
weighted with lead heavy with despair.
Questions pound dully away
without a sound upon the soft wall of
the skull.
The skull pounds back in perfect repetition
but offers not a fact
to relieve the plaguing inquiries.

Sylvia R. Read, 1983

Coping

Small, round, red
Smokeless fire.
Sweet, sweet pain.
Melting pyre.

I stand on the edge,
Lean over the side,
Close my eyes,
And glide
Heavenly upward.
Softly spinning solanaceous sojourn of dreamlessness;
Blissful colors of happiness.
Sweet nothingness.

Oblivion.

Deborah N. Byrd, 1983

What's it like to be like me?

What's it like to be like me?
to know what you want
and still not obtain your goal.
I try . . .

Oh, how I try . . . But.
Well, maybe it's unobtainable
this thing I want.
But. No, I've found it before.
Not for long

But . . .
For a while, it was there;
here,

Then gone. Before I knew
What to do, It had slipped
away too far . . . Away.

WANT IT BACK?
MORE THAN YOU CAN KNOW! But
I . . . I have no control.

I dream and I wish, but all,
All to no avail.

Oh, But Life goes on, and on
Not my choice

Oh, not my choice
But Fate

Good ol' Fate.
In time I'll forget?

Maybe . . .

But . . . this
pain, this
agony.

It will be here. here
in my heart

Forever
Because I know . . .

what I want
But . . .

Can't Get It Back.

WHAT IS IT YOU SAY?

Only what ALL WANT

AND SOME, yes some

Lucky Few CAN Find,
and hold.

Maybe I'm Lucky
To have had what some
never find.
But . . .
Now I know
What It's Like . . .
What I'm missing.
Those who NEVER FIND
are happy through
their ignorance. But
I KNOW . . .
one of the lucky
Few who know
Lucky me!
To Have Found Love,
And let it get away.
Lucky ME!?!?

Gayle Tabor

God of the Left-Brain

Inspiration comes sometimes, if patient,
diligent, ardent lovers of poetry
wait, and work, and strive to create. It's meant
to build character and the stamina
needed for a life full of feelings sent
from some unnamed, unknown creative god.
The god of the left-brain reigns still
over those whose desire is subjection
to the powers of the creative will.
His domain is select and somewhat small
and those who inhabit it would not kill
anything laudable in their fair verse.
So no one put them down for their stillness.
They are still for a reason they unfold
through their eloquent words which come to bless
the pages of tiny hard bound volumes
which are cherished when given in kindness
and out of love for imagination.

Sylvia R. Read, 1983

Sakhalin Island

—for an unknown woman
on Korean Air Lines
flight 007

The harsh
slap
of sea in storm
tossed back
a tattered photo:
yours.

Foreign hands
scraped you from the net
cast to catch your face;
bits of metal,
bits of you
and others
labeled on a desk.

Landlocked,
I watch the scribbled sky
shift and clot
around the ice-ringed moon.
Murky sunset fades,
dissolves to darkness
over voiceless water.

Pamela Gurley, 1983

The Prisoner of Flossenbert
(In Memory of Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

From the guarded cell he comes,
Crowned with a hood and
Honored with a necklace of rope.
Quietly, patiently, faithfully he steps
Onto the altar of death.
There he stands—a paradox:
Innocence meets guilt;
Faith meets incredulity;
Saint meets sinner.
On the gallows he is sacrificed
As an offering to appease
A god now fallen.
A paradox even in death; He
Hangs between heaven and earth.

Walter L. Taylor, 1984

Already Understood

The Wordiness of nations
Leaves much to be desired.
The Talk of Negotiation,
Compromise,
Peace
At any cost, the phrases, so
Empty and Meaningless need
Not be stated, for their Meaninglessness
Is already
Understood.

john hall, 1983

Silence

Silence, but for the world
A man in a chair would be,
Could be in the quietude of
Yes, yes, of the sandaled feet
Of our Master.

john hall, 1983

The Curtain Falls

The curtain falls — on
This time of mine. Four
Years, of this and that,
Of desires awakened in
Far off lands, of frustrations
In administrations, of dishes
Washed, of friends come and
Gone, of boats and balloons, of
Enlightenment beyond expectation.
From the first days of annoyance
And dismay to the last of amused
Reflection and restless anticipation,
I took in all.

The curtain rises — on a life
Uncertain, on a journey insecure
And unknown, but soon to be
Discovered, uncovered and walked.
My eyes look forward, and backward
Too. For I must take from these
Last four years what I've been
Given, and give to what will
Come.

john hall, 1983

Notes

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