

HELICON  
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**On Poetry**

This is what is written  
This is what we do  
Such and such and so and so  
Nothing's ever new.

Motherland in motion  
Nature put to pen  
Visions lead the way to go  
Journeys found again

Equally perplexing  
Someone else's dreams  
Scenes from mind to mind through pen  
Poor semantic schemes

Soulful effervescence  
Rising to the air  
Marking down where one has been  
Phrases on a stair

This is what is written  
This is what we say  
Words unto another plane  
Saved until today

Brian West

Rain

Droplets

Falling Down

Splashing over

Leaf and twig and rock

Trickling down in tiny streams

Gath'ring momentum, flowing into

Brook and stream and river, swelling

Wider, deeper, roaring, foaming, crashing.

Rain

Trickles

That soon grow

Into great floods

Tearing soil and tree

Wrenching, grinding, gouging

Leaving sodden masses of debris

And carpets oozing slipp'ry, slimy mud. . .

—A doll, swept out a window, gone forever.

Rain

A drop

That mingles

Quenching my thirst,

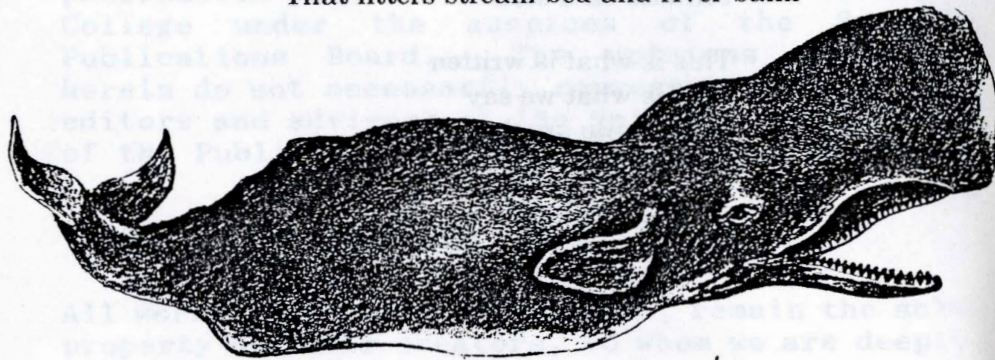
Yet might take my life—

Or in mere minutes can

Reduce the things I call mine

Into a soggy, fetid mass

That litters stream bed and river bank



*Aimee E. Faries*

Rain

Soft drops

That give life

Or hasten death—

I see a cloud there

On horizon, coming

To grace the soil with moisture

Or perhaps to wrest life away

With vast, unmeasured power in its grasp—

“Rain—

Rain go

Away, come

Again some other . . .”

—Jim Knowles

## God's Magnificent Dawn

At the first light of Day,

A new type of magical splendor

Begins to splay its blissful rays,

So as unto us He renders

A new and sparkling day.

The host of night begins its retreat

As a glorious rainbow mist

Creeps across the sky.

He displays His marvelous feats

From unknown love on high.

The birds sing their love songs

As the sky begins to fill with a blissful glory.

Splendid colors intermixed on the horizon long,

Tell of His rapturous love story.

As the dazzling fireball begins to peek over the horizon,

Shedding its gleaming radiance over the countryside,

The blissful warmth of dawn

Calmly and peacefully says, “In me abide!”

—Bob Boutell

As in olden  
days of yore,  
sunlight golden

flooding door  
and wall and walk  
with warmth and more  
bright yellow stalk—  
like beams that play  
on brooks that talk

and boughs that sway,  
the sun is old  
from ancient day,  
but sunrise gold  
continues on,  
(the story's told),

according to God's sovereign will,  
from distance source that shineth still.

—Jim Knowles

## Sight

In this world, why  
do people not allow  
Themselves to understand  
the reasons why  
things happen?

This world is a  
lost ball of souls, floating  
Aimlessly through the stars  
with no direction, and  
blind to the truth.

People depend  
too much on the wisdom  
Of those who base their own  
wisdom on pure chance  
and guesses.

Why can't people  
ever learn that all things  
Happen for a reason?  
Good and Bad have all been  
had by all.

Yet people say  
that they cannot see good  
In any of their own  
experiences. These are  
truly blind.

As long as they  
keep their eyes closed, they'll  
Never know that every  
experience has a  
real meaning.

When we put our  
trust in what we see in  
The world, we are then blind  
to the real reason why  
things happen.

We (those with our  
eyes open) must reach these  
People. We are given  
the task so that this world  
might live on.

If this world dies,  
we are to blame, because  
We neglected our simple  
command; therefore, we aren't  
worthy slaves.

We see the good, they see  
the bad; we are the strong  
they are the weak; we can  
See, they are blind. We have  
the chance to help them, but  
won't.

We can all help give them sight,  
but there are those of us who  
Will never allow themselves  
to use their own sight, for  
It will only show them what  
they neglect to do.

If only more  
would see what Your love could  
do with them. Help them to  
understand that only You  
can give them sight, so to  
see what they can do with  
Thee.

November 25, 1987  
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—Mark Kintigh

My mind reels with ideas and Ideas;  
 facts and creativity,  
 physical and spiritual,  
 mental and emotional,  
 why must they conflict?  
 Did they not all come from God?  
 From the LORD, who made all things  
 and said  
 that they were good?  
 Are they not all, then,  
 no matter how insignificant in appearance,  
 reflections of God?  
 Yes, even man . . .  
 especially man.  
 All come from God.  
 Is everything, then, not related. . .  
 somehow?  
 Can no one see. . .  
 that all parts are needed  
 to create  
 the whole?  
 They aren't mutually  
 exclusive,  
 but, instead, dependently  
 Inclusive.



Man spends his life trying to grasp all  
 that God put into him,  
 but his focus is too narrow;  
 he is blind to God's desire  
 for man's own unity  
 in companionship with Him.

Yet, men have a choice—  
 given to them by God,  
 but still, still they can choose to remain  
 incomplete . . .  
 . . . and ignorant . . .  
 if they so wish.  
 God, however, wants us to be  
 undiminished  
 in ourselves  
 through  
 our relationship with Him.  
 We are complete only in God,  
 who has given us all things,  
 not to own,  
 but to keep  
 in trust.  
 Thus should we strive to improve  
 all that is in our charge,  
 including . . . .  
 ourselves.

—Tim Figgins

Prophets shall prophesy; dreamers shall dream;  
 And small-headed pigeons coo their consent.  
 Even as men go to war over cream  
 Spilled, dabbed on the wood doorframe of the tent

Does anyone know where that white lamb went?  
 Did it bother to say when it might be  
 Back? Certainly it was Abel's way sent,  
 So I wouldn't return if I were he.

Saul, David, Solomon, orient three,  
 Does no one remember the least of these?  
 Amos you're surely not talking to me.  
 Look there! I didn't think sheep could climb trees.

Lately now men go to war over cheese,  
 And a lion's roar drowns out YHWH's dream.

—B.J. Harding

## At The Cross

I came to the cross standing proud and tall  
I was very active in church, after all.  
So I came to give my talents to Him  
While trying to hide my small corner of sin.

I stood in front of the cross on that hill  
Promising Him I would do His will,  
But, of course, it would come after work and play  
For I wanted to do things in my own way.

I went to that cross with this all in my mind.  
Refusing to leave all my plans behind  
But then He reached out and grabbed my heart  
And began to shake my world apart.

While in front of the cross, He let me know  
That giving my life was more than just show.  
My talents weren't all He wanted from me  
He wanted my sins so I could be set free.

On that cross, He said, He gave His life  
To save me from this world full of strife  
He said He bled and died just for me  
And, finally, then I fell to my knees.

I had come to the cross standing proud and tall,  
But now I was kneeling, feeling humble and small,  
And His love picked me up and showed me His way  
So I could find peace and serve Him everyday.

—Carol Clark

## Call Me When You Find the Truth

What's wrong with this picture? Let me hit you where you live  
You give an eye for eye, but it's Godly to forgive  
My god, he wants me wealthy, while I'm giving to the poor  
It's quite a simple process, passing through the narrow door

The tourniquet is tighter, but the bleeding still persists  
The meaning's very simple, but it's got a nasty twist  
The kingdom's getting closer, nearer to us all the time  
(But it) might be past our lifetimes till the trumpet in the sky

Falling's no big deal, you can always get back up  
Salvation is eternal with a fair amount of luck  
Levels of perfection dance around within my head  
Intentions all are worthless if tomorrow I am dead

Jesus is the summit to which we should attain  
But don't you bother too much, God's people don't need pain  
All my Christian brothers are there to help me out  
The way we treat each other can sometimes make me doubt

The scholars, they can't help me if they never can agree  
Frustration drives me crazy till my spirit wants to leave  
I can't trust my preacher, 'cause he might be a fraud  
The only thing to follow is the Holy Word of God

Truth is never obvious unless it isn't true  
Confusion never helps until it tells you what to do  
Conclusions can be worthless if your facts are never straight  
Searching isn't helping so I guess I'll sit and wait

Brian West

## Allegory in Color

Bartimaeus—

(you remember)

Ragged

Noisome old beggar  
clad in the dust and the filth  
of the busy street.

Then:

came the Man.  
came the Light!

A Piercing Scream of Color

And Motion—

I can see!

I jumped  
and shouted  
and bounced  
through the crowded  
street,  
whooping your name— — —

Oh, the power of those first hours—

the vivid green  
and splendid violet  
and heart-wrenching grey

and grinning yellow

Bold red

and thirty shades of blue

Regal browns and youthful, playful pink.

Oh, the joy of those first days—

I lived to watch You  
couldn't get too near

sleeplessly waited just to hear You stop

beside my blanket

I'd hear You breathing

hold my breath until Your silhouette whispered

"Peace, my child."

## I Wish You Were Here

These eyes,

those new-born eyes

Drank in Your every move—I saw You everywhere

The comfort of Your touch,  
the ecstasy of Your smile,

My eyes were fixed on You.

I spoke of nothing else;

Only Your eruption of color in my life.

Bright, brilliant my new Love—

You—with me!

Only. . .

Why? O master—no. . .

the darkness comes.

i squint and strain

for just one hint of You

You—clothed in splendor (eye remember)

—Now, cloaked in silence

concealed in shadows.

O My master. . .

can't You hear my weeping???

The reply is breathed in silence:

"Don't cry in the dark, Dear One;

My love dwells there, still.

Be quiet

and know

That eyes are not needed

to walk

By faith."

—J. Smith



## Allegory in Color

Engaged, in battle—the promise and mandate  
Locked, in combat, plighted in me  
God-given, both: the flame of passion  
the God-breathed fire of purity.

Oh the yearning of the ember  
to become a blazing fire  
Oh the burning fire remembered—  
devastation from desire.

My soul's memory I shortened—  
death's forgotten—what's the cost?  
The desire's door is darkened  
by the cross; self-will is lost.

Oh that my lips had never tasted  
such a sweet and spicy wine  
Oh that my thoughts would not be wasted  
upon what is not and can not be mine.

Can this battle be a blessing?  
Will this torment never end?  
Will it cease—this push, this pressing  
my brother, my lover, my tempter, my friend?

'Tis love that does drive us  
and love that constrains us:  
A God-bound suspension above the abyss. . .  
Through doubt and defiance,  
one thread does sustain us:  
It is He who made us,  
and we are His.

## I Wish You Were Here

I wish you were here.  
The raindrops fall in their quiet rhythm  
Pitt-Pitter-Pitt-Pitt-Donk-Pitt-Pitt  
It washes me clean to hear it  
I can see outside the window  
The lights surround the chapel as its  
    steeple points  
Heavenwards  
And all is quiet,  
Peace . . .  
I know you've had a rough life  
I'm sorry.  
I'd given everything I have  
If you could be here, to  
Let your worries drift away  
Like storm clouds  
I can't count how many times I've  
    been mean to you  
Thoughtlessly having to have my own way  
You accepted my cruelty without a sound  
    though I know now you were hurting  
I wish I could love like you.  
Thank you for loving me, no matter what,  
You don't know what it means  
Let me do something for you now, Daddy  
Let me say,  
I love you, no matter what.  
I wish you were here.  
    —Lori Shoemaker

## GREAT EXPECTATION

I got me a watermelon today  
My watermelon was free  
I got me a watermelon today  
I'm so happy too.  
It's gonna keep me warm at night  
Keep growing and squirming too  
It's gonna keep me warm at night  
You and me both too  
I love my my watermelon so  
Given to me in love  
I love my my watermelon so  
I can't wait 'til it explodes.

—Laura Walton

## WALLS

### WALLS

I hate them . . .  
they keep me from people,  
from opening up.  
From opening up to you,  
the one I most want to  
open up to,  
And yet . . . the one I fear.  
My friend . . . but a stranger.

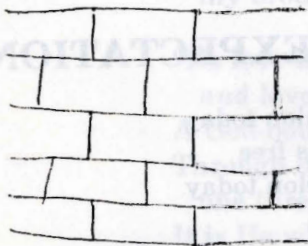
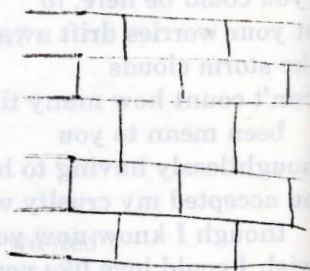
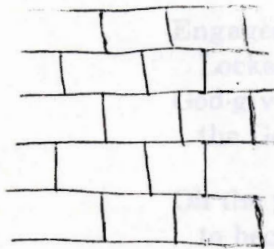
They s-t-r-e-t-c-h out,  
they raise up.  
Where I am,  
there they are . . .  
Why?

### WALLS

I build them,  
brick by brick,  
that's why.  
They have to be  
where I am—  
I make them . . .  
Why?

### FEAR

that's why.  
I close myself in  
. . . . because . . .  
I'm scared!  
I want love . . .  
I anticipate rejection.  
My philosophy  
at these times is  
An ounce of  
prevention  
is worth a pound  
of pain.  
But then . . .  
I remember . . .  
t r u s t.



### TRUST

It's the door,  
or the wrecking ball;  
As it builds up momentum,  
it knocks holes in

### WALLS

But . . .  
it can hurt . . .  
I've been hurt.

I need to rebuild

### TRUST

not WALLS.

"No pain, no gain,"  
Fears must be overcome . . .  
How?

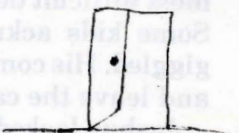
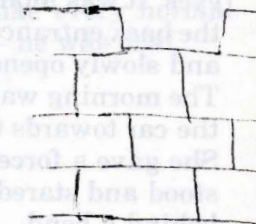
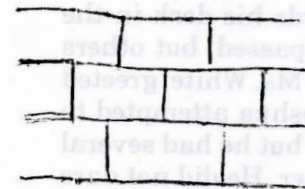
### LOVE

that's how.  
It breaks down all walls,  
shatters them;  
destroys them;  
it leaves me open . . .  
. . . and vulnerable;  
defenses down.  
It sees me as I am,  
as I really, truly am,  
without walls . . . .  
and cares for me anyway,  
stronger because it does.

It's patient, . . .  
and I need patience—  
given and received.

. . . I need love,  
given . . .  
and received.

—Tim Figgins



## JOSHUA

His name was Joshua Stevens, and it was his third week at his new high school. Joshua stood 5'2", with brown curly hair and blue eyes. It was Monday and his mom traditionally dropped him off at the back entrance of the school. He quietly said goodbye to his mom and slowly opened the door of the station wagon and climbed out. The morning was cool, misty, and damp. Joshua walked in front of the car towards the door entrance and waved goodbye to his mom. She gave a forced smile and waved to him as she drove away. He stood and stared at the car as it disappeared down the empty road behind a bend.

Joshua proceeded to open the back door of the school, but he found it locked. He knocked on the door so someone on the inside would let him in. Ms. Smith let Joshua in and told him with loud and carefully enunciated words to hurry to class because he was late. He entered the dingy classroom and quickly moved towards his desk in the front row. Some of the kids said hello as he passed, but others giggled and laughed to themselves. The teacher, Ms. White, greeted Joshua with a happy hello and began class. Joshua attempted to listen attentively to the teaching on geography, but he had several questions which he did not disclose to the teacher. He did not dare ask a question in class. He just sat silently until class ended.

During breaks between classes he kept to himself and went directly to each assigned class. He seldom spoke to anyone unless directly spoken to. If he spoke it would not be much.

Lunch break was the toughest period of the day for Joshua. The most difficult decision for Joshua was where to sit and with whom. Some kids acknowledged his presence while others stared and giggled. His common plan was to sit by himself, eat his food quickly, and leave the cafeteria. He did this again today.

Joshua looked forward to his last class of the day because he could go home after it was over. The bell finally rang, after what seemed an eternity. He walked quickly out of the classroom and down the dark corridor to his locker. He mechanically turned the combination lock of his locker and retrieved the books he needed. He then passed several other students who formed their own groups. He left the building out the back door by himself. Joshua looked around for his mom's station wagon but did not see it. He quietly waited for her and did not attempt to engage in conversation with the students that flowed out the back door of the school. His attention was focused on the bend of the road where his mom's station wagon would hopefully soon appear.

After a few minutes he saw it. It sped around the bend and drove up to where he stood. Joshua walked quickly to the passenger's door and got in and was about to close the door when a student yelled goodbye to him. Joshua closed the door, not knowing that someone had yelled. Joshua did not hear him, but his mom did and she let Joshua know. Joshua looked back over the backseat at the schoolmate and waved back to him. Joshua is not like every normal student at his school for he wore hearing aids — he was deaf.

—Trey Lieberman

You sit quietly  
Gazing off into the distance  
And I watched you

Slowly a tear slid  
Down your cheek  
I followed its descent  
To your underlip  
Which trembled slightly

"I'm sorry"  
Two silly words  
of course I am  
But what can I do?

NOTHING, NOTHING!  
He's gone now  
And I can't  
bring him back to you

So I took you into my arms  
And held on tightly  
Trying desperately to draw  
Your pain into me

But try as I could  
I was as helpless  
as ever

—Angie Hickman

## Never Understand

I sit alone  
And stand alone  
And think alone.  
I despair alone where  
No one can cross, not matter how hard  
They try  
Or give.  
So I guess it's for the best  
You're no longer here  
Light, hope,  
Does not mix with this dark gulf  
So endlessly deep  
And forever far  
I cry, then you cry  
But don't and can't and  
Never will understand.  
Be glad for your freedom  
You now have a chance for the  
    happiness you deserve, and  
You've helped me as much  
As anyone can.  
Goodbye.

## MISTAKES

The friendship is at stake  
I've hurt my friend  
by stupid MISTAKES  
Hurt was not my intention,  
when I try to talk to her  
it causes her grief and tension.  
She once felt close to me  
thru misunderstandings we grew apart  
my mistakes caused her to flee.

—Dawn Turton

I'm feeling very nothing today;  
Sort of not here feeling,  
If you know what I mean.  
My head hurts a little,  
Kind of, in a short circuit type way.

## Do You Race By?

Can't they hear me  
Silently screaming?  
Can't they hear me  
Softly cry?

Can't they see my  
Sore soul heaving?  
Can't they see me  
Slowly die?

People rushing past me  
Something shiny's caught their eye.  
Each and every person  
Racing carelessly by.

No time to stop and listen,  
Nor reason enough to try.  
No one seems to notice

No one seems to notice  
My pensive joyless sign.

Can't you hear me  
Silently screaming?  
Can't you hear me  
Softly cry?

Can't you see me  
Slowly dying?  
Or do you, as they,  
Race by?

## The Actress

The curtain raised upon the stage  
Into the lights you went  
The crowd was waiting, hushed and still  
The dialogues began

The lines, they were amazing  
Believed by one and all  
But when you left the limelight  
Nobody saw you fall

The time was intermission  
The place was far backstage  
You wept until your makeup ran  
But then they called you name

I walked into the theatre  
I wasn't there on time  
But from my back row vantage point  
I saw right through your lines

You walked onstage with bloodshot eyes  
And tearstains on your face  
But you are quite the actress  
No one could take your place

The audience was blinded  
The critics simply raved  
The few who saw you crying  
Ignored the lines you gave

I was one among them  
Who saw your inner pain  
But since I could not reach the stage  
My knowledge was in vain

Soon the acts were over  
The crowd began to leave  
I tried to find the truth within  
The worldly webs you weave

I stayed in my position  
Along the final row  
In hopes that I could talk to you  
When finished was the show

Patiently I waited  
Until the crowd dispersed  
I worked my way backstage to where  
You oftentimes rehearsed

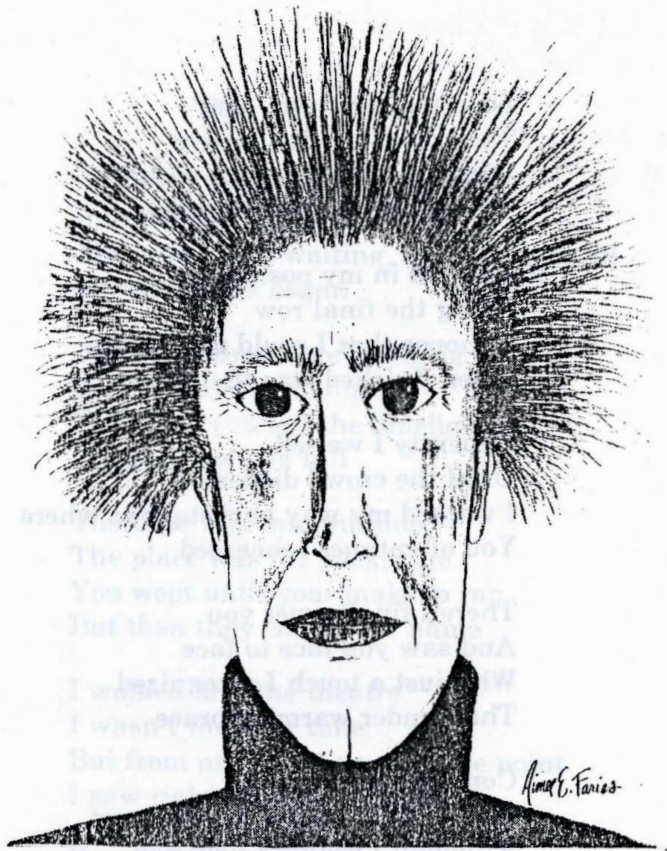
There I finally met you  
And saw you face to face  
With just a touch I recognized  
That tender warm embrace

Conversation led you  
To say what plagued your heart  
Although I couldn't help you  
I listened from the start

Our meeting soon was ended  
But you would not give up  
Emotional performances  
You won't release to love

The footlights hold your fancy  
You feel you must disguise  
Your love that is inherent  
The caring in your eyes

Brian West



## THE SHOWMAN

The old man leaned back in his chair and crossed one leg over the other. He rested his arm on the table and faced the girl across the room. As he spoke, he made circular gestures with his hand. Smoke from his cigarette floated up to the ceiling, winding around the light fixture.

"I talked to my sister on the phone last night. She's such a doll. She broke her leg about a month ago and it's still giving her some pain. But she's doing alright. Boy, she was a beauty in her day. I remember when we were kids I would protect her from all the boys I didn't want her to date. She always tells me that I spoiled all her fun. But she really knows otherwise. I've always adored her. But my brother—I never got along with him. I just don't understand him. One time he came to visit Vera and me when we lived over on Monroe Street. I thought the time went fine, but when he left, I found that all my shoestrings were tied in knots. My wife told me that she never wanted that man in her house again. I didn't blame her. My sister says that's his idea of a joke, but I didn't think it was funny. I think he's crazy."

He reached over to put out his cigarette. "I don't know why I feel like I have to have these things. I don't inhale them. I just like to have something to do with my hands; otherwise I get nervous. But if I don't have one, I start to climb the walls."

"I don't really care for any of my relatives now, except my sister. They're all a bunch of alcoholics. Whenever I go to visit them they ask me to drink with them. When I say no they leave me out. I never really fit in with them anyway. I was kind of the black sheep of the family. Just like my daddy. Ever since I was six years old I wanted to be a showman. And I made it too. Started traveling around the country when I was eighteen years old with my show. I did everything; played the piano, sang, danced, magic, anything they wanted me to do. You've got to remember that philosophy honey, no matter what you decide to do. If they ask you if you can do it, you say yes. Learn everything you can. Don't be shy. Learn all your talents and use them fully. Never say 'I can't'! If you say you can't, you really won't be able to do it."

He smiled at the girl. She shifted in her seat and dropped her eyes.

"I've been everywhere. I even made it on Broadway. Then the war came along. Just when I was the most successful, I got the draft card. But I didn't complain. Many of the guys did. It sure didn't help them in the army though. I was put in charge of entertaining the troops, and they loved me. And when the war was over, I married my darling Vera. I remember the first time I saw her. I saw this skinny little girl playing bass in a jazz band. And boy was she good. We really had something, Vera and I did. Oh, I don't think I'll ever get over her."

The old man covered his face with his hands.

"The Lord never gave us any children. We wanted them so badly, but Vera had two horrible miscarriages. But now I have you kids that come and help me out. You're my family now. You're one of my granddaughters. Honey, you don't realize how wonderful you are to me. I could never get anything done around here by myself. And there's so much to do. People always tell me that I should move out of this house. But I don't want to do that. They say I should move into a retirement home so I won't be lonely. But I'd rather be around you kids than sit and get old with those other old people. All my old friends are dead. I don't know why God chose to keep this old fossil around. Maybe it's because I spend my time with kids."

The girl looked at the clock.

"Let me play you a few songs on the piano before you have to go. Music just isn't what it used to be. The old songs have such better words and melodies than the songs today. Everything I hear today sounds the same."

The man shuffled over to the piano and played a few old songs. He sang in a voice that was still strong.

"I know it's time for you to go, honey. The days just fly by when I have company. You wouldn't believe how it is in the winter when no one ever comes around. I remember when I would go to a restaurant, and half the time I ate my dinner I was signing autographs. Now no one comes around anymore. Sometimes I think the walls are closing in on me. When that happens, I just get in the car and drive somewhere."

The man pushed himself off the piano bench and walked with the girl out to her car. "Well, thank you so much for all you do for me around here. I'll see you tomorrow."

The old man stood outside the garage and waved as the girl drove away.

—Suzi Greaser

I saw you standing in the moonlight  
on your cheek I saw a tear.  
someone had hurt you without a thought  
your name I spoke — you did not hear.

My selfish prayer was thus to God  
"Lord take my heart, 'fore it too breaks."  
but on my heart no man had trod  
Loss is sorrow, when high the stakes.

In my mind 'twas you I held  
for you sought comfort there  
my lips said not a single word  
my eyes would only stare.

So fragile in the lunar beams  
that night alone you stood  
that lonesome memory haunts my dreams  
but I would not change it if I could.

Without one word I trod away  
Seeking night's embrace  
Could bear to gaze no longer, at the anguish  
on your tear stained face.

—Christopher Capps

What awesome pressure!  
Will my heart be crushed?  
How can my mind not lapse into insanity?  
—Going through life terrified to hurt—  
—At all costs thinking others the better—  
—People on opposite sides with no wrong side—  
Now I, chosen as judge, face a decision  
Between their wills for me.

*I WILL NOT BE HURT!  
MUST I DECIDE?!?  
I JUST WON'T MAKE A DECISION.  
NO! I MUST!*

They are waiting on me.  
Each waiting to be some type of victor.  
Their eyes penetrate my soul.  
How can I choose?  
Why am I to judge?

*I CAN'T SURVIVE!*

How long till my death?  
They control my fate between,  
But none of them know it.

Painting layers  
to hide memories  
that would've been—  
cherished.  
Painful feelings  
of rejection  
beside my wall.  
No more knocks  
No more talk  
No more old paint  
Now it's new layers  
new beginnings  
to forget  
the person  
behind the wall.  
So I can  
scrape the past  
off the bottom  
of my shoe. . .

—Dawn Turton '89

# Harry the Hit Man

A Short Story

He was the kind of man you could look at for five seconds and five hours later could still remember every detail of his face. The curvature of his nose, the sloping of his forehead, all of these features contributed to the overall effect of the man's look on a memory... a look that could chill even the coldest, hardened murderer.

He was dressed in pointed, black leather shoes with thick rubber soles. His pants were baggy and black, and the tattered grey tweed jacket he wore covered a sweat-soiled Oxford missing two buttons. His appearance fell short of a rich man's, but it placed a few notches above a garage attendant's.

Finally, to top off the man's impression was an oversized head atop an undersized body. He looked sort of like a fat flag pole balancing a medicine ball. His face showed the scars of a rough, unwashed teen-age hood which spent far too few hours in front of the mirror. The greasy mat that passed for hair on his scalp was all but receded, save a hemispherical letter "w" that clung to the skin. And his eyes... THOSE eyes... they pierced the soul of any poor wretch that had the horror to gaze on them. Almost the effect of the Medusa—stone was the gaze from this man. Infinity was swallowed up in his pupils and then spit out again with a shuttering blink. Definitely, the most *enduring* features of the man were his eyes.

His name was Harry Sylvester Todd.

\* \* \*

Harry Todd stood on the street corner and let the cigarette butt fall quietly from his mouth. The warm glow extinguished in the dark of night as it slipped into a slowly sucking gutter at Harry's feet. He looked around at the car turning at his corner. Harry's eyes flickered with a hellish light as the carlights flashed past. He let his right leg swing around as he thrust his hands into his baggy pockets and began to walk along the lonely sidewalk.

The sight of Harry Sylvester Todd fit nicely into the atmosphere in which he was taking this evening stroll. The buildings that loomed above him appeared to be dressed in the same attire. Their dusty, grey exteriors sported chips and stains as evidence to the years they'd weathered. The street, not unlike Todd's hair, was a strip of greasy pavement slimed over with motor grease, fuel exhaust, and spilt garbage combed only with the tires of passing automobiles and moving vans. The streetlights were hung on the corners without care and encircled by rings and passing wisps of fog and factory smoke. The overall lighting of the place was not unlike a sleazy, backroom gin joint.

Harry mounted the steps of Phillip's Furniture and Antiques and grasped the doorhandle at the top firmly as he entered the store. He

whispered lowly to the man behind the counter and the latter pointed to a brown oak cabinet in the back. As Harry approached the structure, he noticed its size. The doors stood over six feet high and the entire cabinet was as large as a doorway. He opened one of the doors and stepped into the darkness.

After stumbling through a dimly lit passage, Harry emerged in a large...no, enormous room filled with people carousing and flaunting themselves at each other; shifting back and forth to the energetic sounds of the five-piece jazz band pumping out a loud Basie blues. To Harry Sylvester Todd they looked like a herd of cattle being shaken in a jar.

Harry made his way roughly around a group of jiggling heifers covered in beads, and went over to the bar where the fat man in the apron was handing out Mason jars like they were going out of style. Harry grabbed one before a buxom woman in an oversized peacock feather could get it and sipped the gin slowly. 'Cheap rotgut,' he said to himself and swallowed the mouthful all at once. The buxom peacock-feathered woman beside him now had her own drink and was eyeing Harry drunkenly in between gulps.

"Hey, sailor," she said at once, "Are you hiding a gun in those pants? Because if you are, Imma goin' to haf to search you all over until I find it." Harry Todd paid no attention to her advances, but kept scanning around the large room in search of someone. When he heard her say, "gun," he turned suddenly at her and fixed a cold stare when he caught her eyes. She didn't move after the last word she spoke, but blankly gazed at his eyes.

Harry whirled around and left the wench breathless. It was at that moment he caught a glimpse of a blondish mug in white crooning over a prostitute in the corner. Harry pushed his way through the dancing crowd, throwing aside several drunken businessmen, until he reached the couple engaged in a most passionate and aggressive lip-lock. Before either of the two lovers could react, Harry grabbed the slut and, throwing her aside, introduced the man in white to the Colt .45 he had been hiding in the back of his trousers. As the cornered man reached for his own piece, Harry plugged him three times in the belly, leaving him bleeding and motionless on the dirty floor.

Harry ducked into the shocked crowd and, in a few moments, emerged on the front steps of Phillip's Furniture & Antiques. Not risking a moment, Harry Todd bolted down a side alley in the direction of his apartment hideout on the southside.

Later, in the safety of his own apartment, Harry opened the envelope he found slipped underneath his door. Inside were several hundred bills and a note containing the name and address of his next job. With a smile, Harry lit up a cigar and eased back in his favorite chair by the window with a feeling of satisfaction. 'Another job well done,' he thought to himself as a knock sounded at the door.



"Who's there?" he said aloud, startled at the sound of his own voice. After no reply, Harry grabbed his gun and approached the door slowly. As he grabbed the doorknob to lock it, the sound of a tommy gun ripped out and bullets flew through the door. Harry, caught totally by surprise, caught everything the door couldn't hold back.

As he sank slowly to the floor, already covered in blood, the door kicked wide open, and two muscle-bound gorillas entered with a smoking machine gun. One kicked Harry's body just to make sure he was dead, but the lifeless victim didn't move.

"He should know better than to open the door for strangers," one monkey said with a coarse voice, followed by a loud guffaw by both.

\* \* \*

The blood was still slowly oozing from beneath the door when the landlord found the dead body of Harry Sylvester Todd, ex-hit man.

—Brian Clark



Bob  
Boutell  
/o

The wind started to blow lightly. Despite his heavy blue jacket, Jim was cold. The wind chilled him to the bone. A few minutes later it started to drizzle. The tiny droplets of rain fell off the brim of his blue ball cap and onto his pant legs.

It had been seven long hours since this incident had started. Jim's legs grew tired of being in the same position for that long of time. Carefully, he set his rifle down on the roof-top. He sat down heavily on the roof. He looked at the rifle that was with him. It wasn't the rifle that he had brought up on the roof; it seemed to have changed. This ordinary gun looked different. It had changed into a masterpiece of art. The rifle shown dully in the rain. He admired the bluish tint of the long, sleek barrel, and the dark color of the walnut stock. It was so sleek and smooth. Jim was moved at the beauty of his wet rifle. His smile soon faded when he thought of the only function of the rifle. It was so beautiful, yet, so deadly.

Jim turned away from his rifle and reached for his thermos bottle. He raised it toward his lips and let the warm, pleasing taste of the coffee run down his throat. He enjoyed the warm feeling he felt as he swallowed the rest of the coffee. This warmth suddenly left him when he heard the sound of shouting. He set the thermos bottle down and picked up his rifle. He took a white rag out of his coat pocket and wiped the water off the rifle's telescopic lens. After setting the rag down, he lifted the rifle to his shoulder and looked through the telescope toward the door of the house. It was open. Standing there, in the doorway, was a stocky man. He looked like he was in his forties, and was about 200 pounds. The man was wearing blue jeans and a yellow tee-shirt. In his right hand was a gun; in his left, a young child. The child was no older than ten, and she was crying. The man started to yell again. Jim couldn't understand him, but the uniformed men on the street could, and by their actions Jim knew what was going to happen.

Jim lowered his rifle to get it ready. He popped the clip out of the rifle and checked to see if it was full; it was. There were ten rounds in the clip, ten deadly rounds. Jim knew he could deliver each one directly on target, but one would be enough. He hoped that he wouldn't have to use that one round. He shoved the clip into its place, directly in front of the trigger guard, and locked it there. He slowly pulled back the bolt of the rifle. When it would go no further, he pushed it back into its original position, chambering one of the deadly rounds. Then he flipped off the safety and started to lift the gun to his shoulder. He stopped, lowered the rifle, and turned his ball cap around so that the rain ran off the bill of the cap and down his back. Jim didn't pay any attention to the rain. He carefully rose to

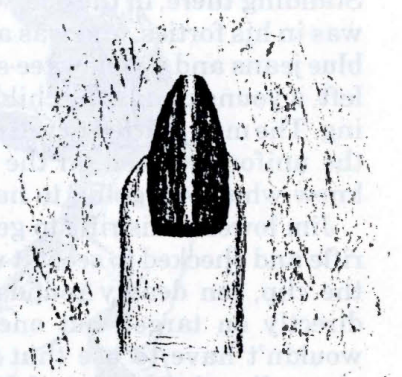
his knees. He couldn't let the man see him. Ever so slowly, he lifted the rifle to his shoulder. He pressed the gun snugly against his shoulder. It rested comfortably against him. He balanced it perfectly in his hands. Jim then leaned his head ever so slightly to the right and pressed his eye up against the telescope's eye guard. Through the scope he found the crosshairs and centered them on the chest of the man. If he had to, the man would never feel anything; he would never know what hit him, and that was probably the best thing for him, if it came to that. But Jim hoped it wouldn't. The man continued to yell. Jim concentrated on the crosshairs, the man's actions, but mostly the gun in the man's hand. It was a sinister looking weapon, small and black, not long, and as elegant as the rifle Jim held; but it wasn't made for looks, at least not now.

Minutes passed. It was getting dark, and Jim's arms were growing tired. The rifle was getting heavier and heavier, but it never wavered. Finally, the man stopped yelling. He looked down at the young child and raised the gun in his hand. Jim breathed in, held it, and fired.

—Tom Miller

"One, two, three," said the henchman  
and down, down, down  
went the blade  
"Off with her head"  
It rolled away  
Like a bowling ball  
And all the townsfolk  
laughed and laughed and laughed  
and the electric chair  
looks like a "LAZY BOY"

—Angie Hickman



*Hina E. Jones*

## Abused

Piece by small piece  
She picks herself up  
and begins anew  
refusing to look back

It was this way  
for several years  
each time something  
like this happened

He continued to harm her  
in his own  
corrupt and savage way  
He was an animal

But she, she was as helpless  
as a small rabbit  
Except she couldn't run  
at least not fast enough

Poor woman, she clung  
to hopes that someday  
he would change  
And be the young man

The young man  
who held her softly  
and whispered her name  
in her ear

So she'll continue waiting  
'cause someday he'll change  
he'll touch her face  
with a gentle hand

At least in her dreams  
it happens that way  
until morning comes  
And he slaps her down

—Angie Hickman

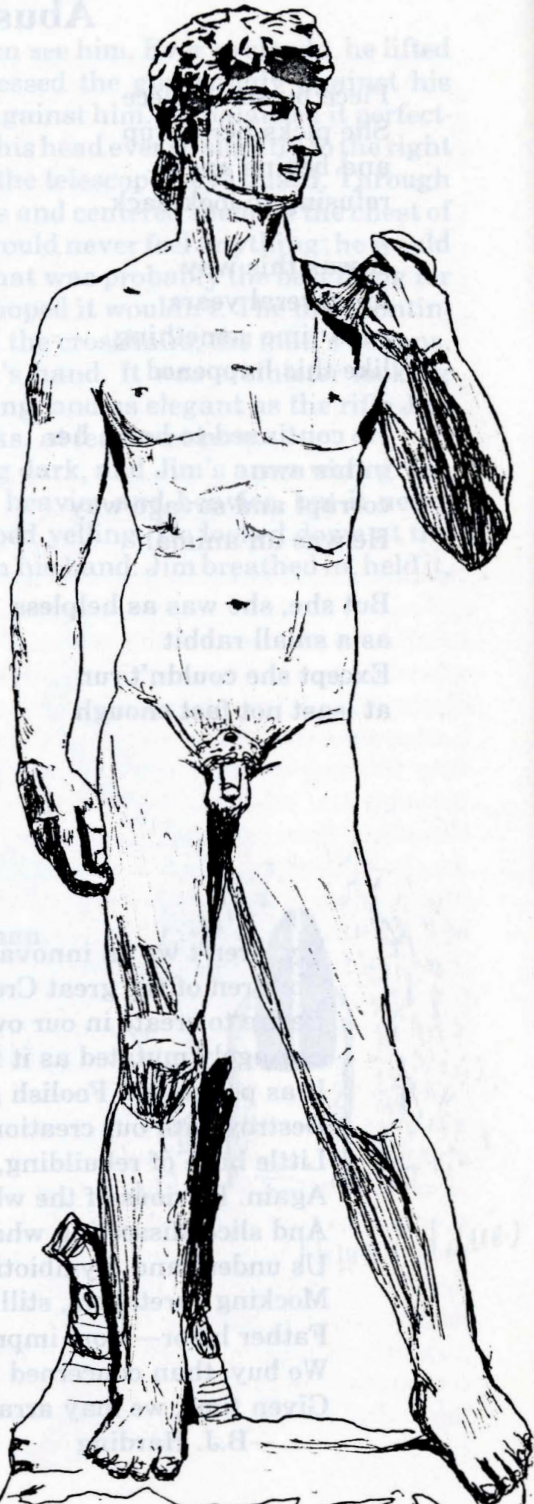
My, aren't we an innovative group!  
Children of the great Creator, we too  
Desire to create in our own image.  
Strangely mutated as it is, we view  
It as perfection. Foolish godlings, we  
Destroy with our creations what we have  
Little hope of rebuilding, of finding  
Again. Envious of the whole, we halve  
And slice, dissecting what our minds won't let  
Us understand. Symbiotic starlings,  
Mocking caretakers, still we may save our  
Father labor—More impressed with the things  
We buy, than concerned for the gifts we sell,  
Given time, we may arrange our own Hell.

—B.J. Harding

## CLUB 21

They laugh, scream, dance  
unaware of suffering  
another kind of life  
they nearly escaped  
money, fastcars, and condos  
their exclusive parties  
with expensive drugs  
and cheap women  
Then, smoke filled bars  
Young sophisticated alcoholics  
hiding from the day  
sheltered by the cold night  
Where a stranger is warm  
It really doesn't matter who it is  
It's only someone  
to hold until morning.

—Angie Hickman



If you could only read my mind today,  
you'd know the depth of anguish I've attained,  
for writing this assignment brings dismay,  
and my gray matter's definitely strained. . .

If only you'd assigned some simple prose  
or even — (Heaven help me!) — limericks:  
my rhyming words like nose, blows, hose, and rose  
won't solve my problem — and the clock just ticks

away, and with each passing moment flees  
all hope of writing anything of worth,  
so now the only chance I have to please  
is simply end this feeble try at mirth. . .

So please, please, pretty - please with sugar on it —  
don't make us write another stinkin' sonnet!

—Jim Knowles

## Oh Beautiful America?

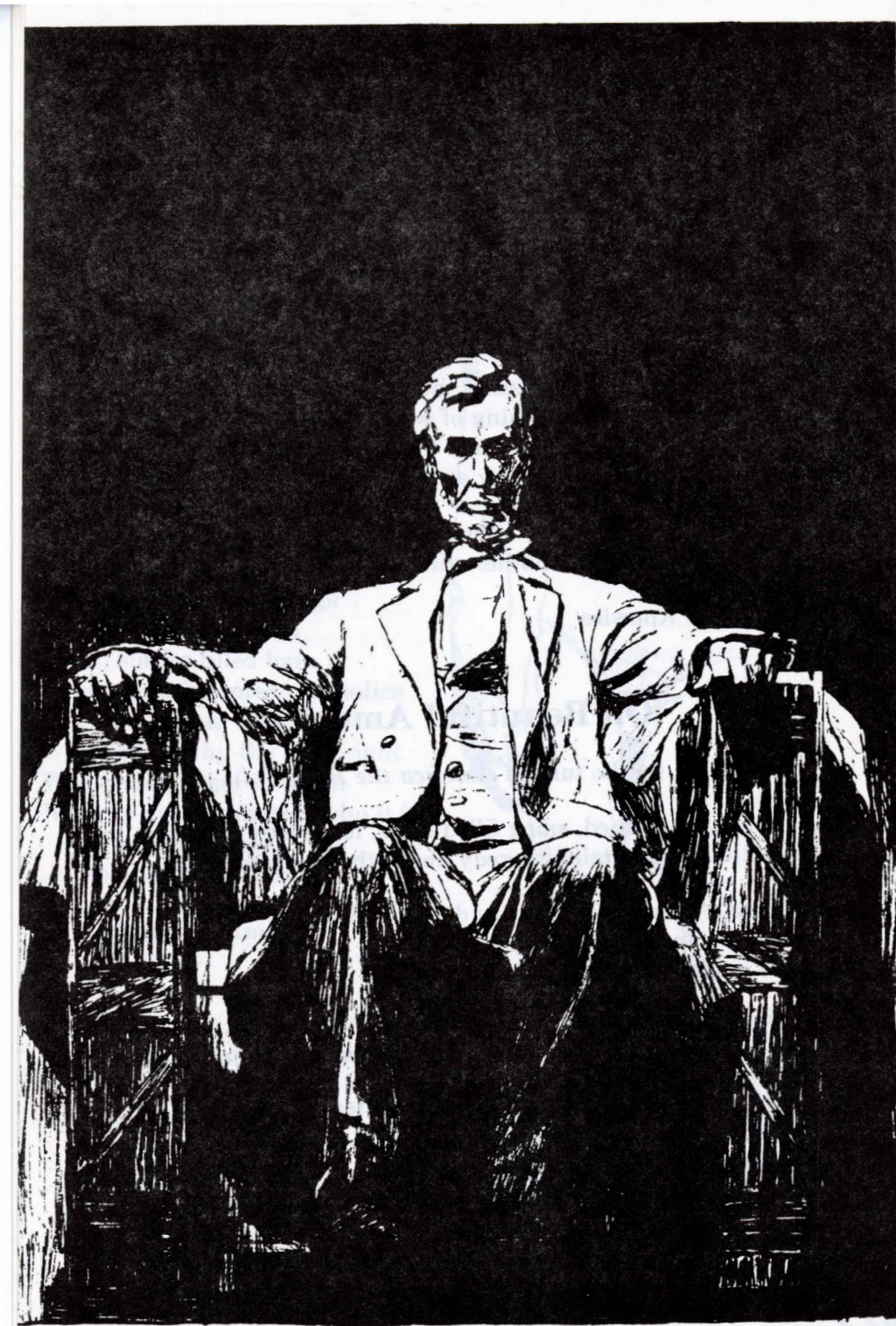
(to the tune of *America the Beautiful*)

Oh smoky blackened, smog filled skies, for deadly acid rain.  
For polluted mountains tragedy above the fruitless plains.

America, America our country did God bless.  
Now wars and crying, people dying.  
We've made a great big mess!

Oh listeners we warn you now: America did change.  
We worry over who shoots first; if our missiles are in range

America, America, away God wipes all tears.  
With all this stuff that needs cleaned up,  
it'll take God fifty years!



*Bob  
Bartell*

No, I never knew you, men,  
But you could have been my father,  
my teachers,  
my friends.

Thinking of you brings tears  
You fought, you wept, you died.

And I don't understand.

You didn't understand.

Taken from your families, friends  
While you were told, "Containment"  
"Win the War"  
"Kill the Gooks!"

Thinking of you brings tears  
You fought, you wept, you died.

And I don't understand.

You didn't understand.

I never knew you, men,  
I did not know your fear,  
your hate,  
your loss.

Thinking of you brings tears  
You fought, you wept, you died.

And I don't understand.

You didn't understand.

I never knew you, men,  
You should have been my father,  
my teachers,  
my friends.

—Anita Shumway

## Going Home

I went home this weekend expecting—  
I don't know what,  
But not what I found.  
My dog barked when I stepped up to  
open the door,  
Something he's never done before  
And even after I picked him up and  
held him  
He still didn't seem too sure it was me.  
When I walked in the door  
There were no dog toys on the carpet,  
and all the clothes were put away,  
Not a dish was dirty, even the  
living room was straightened  
from its familiar crooked angle.  
My brothers—Man! They must have  
been crazy! Letting me have my  
way, including me in their usually  
exclusive games . . .  
And Mom and Dad didn't hassle me about  
my grades, or my love life, or ask any  
nosy questions, and I asked them  
why. They looked surprised and said  
“You're grown now, you have to make  
your own decisions.”  
Now that I'm back at school,  
I look back and think of what  
I thought I always wanted. . .  
To go home, have things my way!  
To be adored for the bright, witty, loveable  
person that I am.  
I don't like what I got  
Because,  
I miss my family, and the way it was.  
I miss home.

—Lori Shoemaker

## The Five Fates

I

“Sunago - the Gatherer”

Flying through ebony skies  
unfettered  
save by a golden ring.

Gathering hearts  
Gathering spirits  
Gathering minds

The band  
on her hand  
glows as she handpicks the elements  
of each person's being

Bound only by her love  
for the Creation  
in her hands is the essence of  
life.

Raw pure intellect  
spirit  
emotion

among the stars she flies  
Purpose driving her onward.

II  
"Clotho - the Spinner"

Softly,

Gently,

Lovingly,

a band of pink gold glows.

It is the hand of the spinner.

She takes the minds

and hearts

and souls

gathered from the night.

She cards the essence

(The pain of birth)

Binds it to her spindle

(binds man to the earth)

The wheel spins

twisting together

and spins

into strands

and spins

the elements of a man

and spins

into yarns.

Tenderly, she hands this life to her sister.

III  
"Lachesis - the Measurer"

Measuring rod in hand,

She plays the threads

through her fingers. . .

the lives of men.

White gold binds her to her purpose.

She kinks the yarn where her canon directs her. . .

sometimes none too gently.

After each strand has had her attentions

she lays them one by one into the cloth of creation,

where they go freely

writhing through its weave madly,

winding around other strands for support.

She watches with mild distaste.

IV  
"Atropos - the Cutter"

Scissors of cold steel

wielded by still colder hands -

bound with lead.

withered by age.

With deliberate calculating spite she trims the cloth,

All threads gain her leering attention

She slashes at them

coldly announcing their demise.

V  
"Anastasia - the Raiser"

All the Fates have passed away. . .

and one is born.

The tapestry that their hands have maintained  
now decorates the Father's home.

The newborn Fate crawls along the cutting room floor. . .  
and achieves her womanhood in an eyeblink.

With compassion she gathers the thread ends  
of the ones who strove toward her in life.

Lovingly,  
she liberates the individuals within the threads  
and guides them into the tapestry room.

She shows them their lives  
and gives them new ones.

Ones not as threads  
but as humans  
victorious over the machinations of Fate.

—Robert Ian Sutherland



*Anastasia*

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