



## Helicon

awake, aeolean lyre, awake  
and give to the rapture of thy  
trembling strings.

from helicon's harmonious springs  
a thousand rills their mazy  
progress take:

FROM GRAY'S *The Progress of Poesy* (1757)

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CLAIRE DURAND

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## SATISFACTION

How do you  
do and don't  
work too hard  
because the sun  
doesn't shine  
when it's raining  
and don't let  
the air  
go by  
unless you  
inhale it  
first.  
Or, in other words  
life is too short  
to labor over  
trite things  
that cost  
money  
and devalue  
and  
in time  
disintegrate  
because  
they are merely  
of material worth  
and can give  
no satisfaction.  
Or,  
did you get your  
ashes  
on Wednesday  
because  
you must  
be reminded  
it is time  
for all:  
throw off the  
Chains of materialistic  
nourishment  
for the time  
may come  
when,  
it is too  
late  
and one may  
go  
where satisfaction  
is not present  
and humidity

is low  
and wealth is high  
and souls are fat  
and one may wallow  
in his penance  
for materialistic  
gain  
he found  
to give  
satisfaction

— *Barbara Bassett*

### VALUE

My father buys costly, lovely cufflinks, shirts, and things.  
He never did before  
Because there was no future.  
My mother feared the future even more than the present,  
Loved my father, and made his life drab with shrilled, nagging fears.  
She bore her nebulous peasant fright  
Through the years that could have been good,  
To her American grave.  
My father's place is air-conditioned, with every convenience  
Except love.

— *Arlene Harrower*

Though I try to say  
outside  
what's inside,  
my awkward words  
trip,  
and I am dumb.  
I offer you instead  
a quiet love.  
I will say this to you though,  
be open,  
vulnerable,  
unafraid.  
My love, you see,  
is like a bloodied fist,  
that,  
when the trembling's over,  
buds a soft white blossom.

— *Walter Wight*

### WINTER'S ADVENT

The icy,  
liquid wind  
slips silently  
through the  
heavy blackness  
and the  
autumn trees  
raise dry,  
cracked voices  
in alarm  
while through  
the shivering  
shapes a  
pinpoint of  
silver light  
focuses down-  
ward from  
far beyond  
the realm  
of time.

— *Patricia M. Euart*

Lonely is a gentle word,  
whispered from a swelling heart,  
with none nearby to care  
so never heard;  
lonely is a flight of birds,  
a spray of black  
on endless blue,  
flung across an autumn sky  
and none nearby to share;  
lonely is when lovers die,  
when one is gone,  
and one lives on alone;  
lonely is forever.

— *Walter Wight*



## TO M.D.

Delicate elephants  
reach out  
with slender fingers . . .  
as suede jackets with  
long  
straight  
hair  
and knife-like fingernails  
discuss embraces (past and future)  
Empty orators  
Speak out  
with slender minds . . .  
as starched white shirts with  
definite  
correct  
opinions  
and pretty blond wives  
discuss viet nam with their analysts  
what are those elephants  
reaching for?

—Cathy O'Reilly

## phantasma

a surging wasp nest  
swollen and distended  
pulsating wildly  
in rhythmical madness  
drizzles viscous venom  
upon sombre unending fields  
vast lake-like spaces  
of smiling visages  
creviced and furrowed  
by war's silver rapier  
and dwarf artillery  
buried deep within  
a myriad of torn navels  
in mock derision  
to the subterfuge  
and eternal falsehood  
of heroic greatness  
and immortality

—Claire Durand

## INTIMATIONS ON MATURITY

I have come to live the days  
of unexpurgated diaries  
when every busterkeaton experience  
was recorded  
the days when *King Kong* was  
the best movie i ever saw  
and *The Red Pony*  
the best novel i ever read  
the days when mommy asked  
why i made holes in the  
bar of soap and i didn't know  
I have come to live the days  
of Holden Caulfield  
the second person of his trinity  
the boy-made-man  
who found the sexual garbage pail  
and left without a maggot  
the days when the "God is dead"  
theologians were waiting for  
an impression they never got  
I lived the days when one aspires  
to strain the worthless  
second-rate barber-hop philosophy  
the days when sudden silence  
in a room full of people  
your own age is not mere coincidence  
but a result of shyness  
an electric silence as if  
the earth had stopped its spin  
on purpose  
the days when a field trip to the cleaners  
was a motivation to learning English  
and attending local concerts  
superseded *Flash Gordon*  
the days when i felt no need to laugh  
at the mezzo singing  
"He Was Despised" from  
Handel's Oratorio  
the days when most pregnant responsibilities  
were homework  
library withdrawals and  
taking out the garbage.  
I have come to live the days  
of second-hand clothes  
and an unfinished bedroom upstairs  
where every nocturnal sound and shadow  
was a traumatic experience  
the days of "Old Maid" and "Monopoly"  
and countless  
"pass go and collect 200 dollars"  
the days of Boston's "Schubert"

and bleak New York streets  
and Times Square  
where Rosie preached her "God saves"  
under the halos of the Camel sign  
the days of "Freedomland"  
and the homing pigeon  
with a stolen bath towel  
and do-not-disturb sign.  
I have come to live the days  
when a girl was a sometime thing  
and dating was a Christmas card  
signed "always" with  
overtones of "Tib's Eve"  
the days of pimply faces  
and baths on Saturdays  
of the Alphonse-Gaston predicaments  
Addison speaks of  
and contretemps of an uncoordinated kid  
at a Veteran's Day parade  
the days when this hairless lad  
countless times a martyr  
in his happy valley  
is soon a Job and sooner yet  
a wet blanket on a Pollyanna.  
I have come to live the days  
of catharsis over the  
make-believe funeral  
on the death of a pet turtle  
and then a grandmother  
the days of alarming thoughts of death  
of eternity of decay and  
of the inevitable loss of a mother  
the days of the altar boy  
labeled potential priest  
of ill-spent opportunities  
worn to the stump  
of that acolyte once mute  
to the onomatopoeic crunch of snow  
soon moves his typewriter face  
from sight to sight and  
sound to sound  
reminiscent of the head-twitching  
of the cautious perched bird.  
I have come to live the days  
of Auld Lang Syne  
and unexpurgated diaries.  
I have lived the days.  
I have come to live *all* the days  
from a deliberately crushed ant-hill  
to one of knee-bent fascination  
from an ant-hill  
to a seven-storey mountain

—Daniel R. Desaulniers

## THE YES OF SPRING

The hidden world holds the child safe  
From grown-ups anger and dragons' bite.  
While they talk, she ceremoniously eats  
Strawberry ice cream, surreptitiously  
Sucking ragged, red lumps on a curled  
Tongue. The secret of cold floor boards  
On bare feet; the dreams of pigtailed  
Girls sprawled behind raspberry canes,  
To chew raw rhubarb and read fat books;  
And The Place by the spring, all are  
Protection from the wrath of the  
Unmentionable and from secret sins.  
Until, kneeling to loosen the earth  
Around a purple-tipped white crocus,  
She sees the flower die. Now  
A caterpillar is a caterpillar, and not  
A red and black wooly bear. The blight  
Ridden garden is enthralled by perpetual  
Winter; and the sterile sky stares  
Fixedly at a crooked yew guarding  
A few palsied chrysanthemums and a  
Leaf choked birdbat. A starling speaks  
From the cinder path as a bushy-tailed  
Rat of a squirrel flattens to leaves.  
The child braced against the summer  
House hugs her knees thinking of death:  
"To escape and die through denial,  
By cultivating the now of ceaseless youth  
To dance and sing in gold and magenta pants,  
Until like an aged parrot, I am eaten by moths;  
Or swaying high on a suspension bridge  
To triumphantly curse the universe and leap  
Into the polluted river.  
To escape and die through self embraced madness,  
By drinking tea from a rose-tipped cup. While  
Candles flicker and gregorian monks chant,  
Wooden bears and trolls from a distant  
Black forest walk the shelf. Perhaps  
If I could become one with the pattern  
On my persian rug, I might understand . . .  
Meanwhile I sit playing my violin  
And waiting for my orange tree to blossom.  
To risk victory and die through caring,  
That seeing death, can love  
A curled-up wooly bear caterpillar,  
Small in the cup of my hand;  
To die as the crocus dies to death  
In Spring." Freed by love,  
I can unashamedly face the nakedly  
Suffering blue eyes of one who loves,  
And dance in the garden of death and crocuses.

—Molly Mattfield

## A SCHOLARLY POEM WITH FOOTNOTES

Twenty-seven presidents have been elected  
without a majority of the popular vote.  
Denderio Ferrari is dead  
and so are the sons of the morning.  
Watch out for Maximus<sup>1</sup>  
who will call down the hordes from the North  
and Dudley Benjafield will drive his Bentley  
to victory in the 1966 LeMans endurance race  
in an amazing repeat performance of his 1927 victory  
in the same car  
and Lyndon Johnson will come in second  
on a motor scooter<sup>2</sup>  
followed closely by Harold Wilson  
on a motor scooter tender  
and Chick De Gaulle  
mounted proudly  
in shining armor  
on Rocinante<sup>3</sup>  
and in the warm glow of early morning  
the buck-toothed imperialist  
becomes a Chinese Peasant,  
chasing Buddha<sup>4</sup> through the rice paddies  
Florence Chadwick has announced plans  
to swim the Atlantic Ocean<sup>5</sup>  
the present record for the non-stop swim  
is thirty-seven years, eight months, three days, and eleven minutes  
established by the little old lady from Paramus, N. J.  
who only drove it up and down her driveway<sup>6</sup>  
and Goldilocks and the three bears have now been reconciled  
since Papa Bear agreed to honor the buxom blonde's credit card  
—and vice versa<sup>7</sup>  
so don't count your chickens while  
Maximus is still in town<sup>8</sup>

—Greg Andreozzi

### NOTES

1. Maximus of Palermo, Sicilian Robin Hood whose motto, take from the rich and give to Maximus, eventually gave rise to the Cosa Nostra, originally known as the Highwaymen's Benevolent and Protective League of Sicily, Inc.
2. Which was hardly visible under the President's large western saddle.
3. Don Quixote's horse, a somewhat less than majestic animal who nonetheless is reputed to have won the Barcelona Derby in 1492. Contemporary sports journals do make some references to an alleged connection between wide-spread charges of race-fixing and the subsequent departure of the noted Italian racketeer, Christopher Columbus.
4. Somewhat corpulent Oriental deity whose exceedingly well-fed appearance raises considerable suspicion when viewed in the light of numerous accounts of famine in China.
5. Ancient reservoir which was salted by Columbus to suit the taste of his Italian crew.
6. An ancient report, from somewhat unreliable sources, claims the record to have been set by a whale who made the trip in three days with the added hindrance of a 185-lb weight handicap by the name of Jonah.
7. This footnote has been omitted on the advice of the attorney general's office.
8. Or when the frost is on the pumpkin.

## ANATOMY LAB

Stinking cat-friend in cold gray dissecting pan.  
Trayful of preserved evolution  
To enlighten.  
If Paul came to Corinth  
He'd be jailed.  
Formalined dross, sprawled stiff —  
Outreaching paws, tongue lumped in grin-parody  
To teach.  
If Christ came, someone once said,  
He'd probably be given a testimonial dinner.  
Hacked, skinned, gutted, foul ret  
Without integrity.  
The difference is, I'm still alive.  
Or maybe they'd hang Him.

—Arlyne Harrower

## AS A CHRISTMAS CAROL

1.  
Bats eat saddened men.  
Did you ever?  
Did you ever?  
2.  
In the garden fires burn  
Unceasing.  
Underground underground  
They hide.  
Who hides?  
The tax collector and our dog.  
3.  
Fed birds, dead birds  
Dead fed birds.  
4.  
Rats eat dogs in the garden  
In the garden.  
It is quite obvious:  
He means what he means  
When he means what he means.  
5.  
Yes,  
The Emperor's New Clothes.  
6.  
But still a child;  
Superstitious guardians  
Talk too much.  
7.  
In the garden in the garden  
They are hiding hiding  
Under a rock.



8.  
Bats bats bats  
The night is falling.

9.  
Grab a broom old one  
And sweep, sweep  
Like hell.

### TO A PRETTY GIRL

A slender fancy  
gently weaves a web  
of lace  
around my heart  
and tones my thoughts  
to pink and white.  
A kitten,  
romping at  
a ball of yarn,  
she twines me  
in a warm brown  
tangle  
of pink and white  
on black

### TO FALL: not an ode

the many colored leaves  
on the trees  
and some on the ground  
are multi-colored.  
the smell of the  
autumnal countryside  
smells with the multi-smells  
of the multi-colored leaves  
on the trees  
and some on the ground  
which smell the most  
but they are mostly brown  
but multi-brown.  
however  
most of the brown smell  
of autumnal fall  
is in fields  
where there is much  
brown fertilizer  
which smells brown  
but which  
at least  
is a sure sign  
of Spring

— Molly Mattfield

— Walter Wight

which has its own smells  
and poems.  
there are many  
smells to Fall.  
the smell of burning leaves  
makes one sneeze  
and remember  
burning leaves  
in Fall  
and smoke  
from not so burning leaves  
which are  
not so multi-multi-colored  
any more.  
everything smells  
in Fall  
telephone poles smell  
and they do not have anything to do  
with Fall  
dogs smell  
all year 'round  
and each other  
but especially  
in Fall  
when they have been around  
a multi-colored leave fire  
birds fly south  
in Fall  
because they don't like  
multi-colored — leave — fire smoke  
birds and rich people are smart  
in Fall  
they fly south  
in a southerly direction  
fast  
if they have an allergy  
another Fall smell is  
moth balls  
a sure sign of winter  
which smells white  
moth balls smell too  
but they are not multi-colored  
fish smell  
in Fall  
but mostly in Summer  
which smells too  
perhaps you smell  
something fishy now  
its this poem  
another smell of Fall.

— Don Benway

walk along new york's streets  
 dark and lone  
 and cold  
 creep along against the  
 tall, towering buildings  
 the squat, squalid buildings  
 the fermented, filthy buildings  
 watch each step,  
 each stair,  
 each stoop  
 because a shadow lurks there  
 hiding in the  
 cold impersonality  
 the disease of not caring  
 running rabid through the streets  
 follow fear across the sidewalk's pavement  
 don't stop  
 it might happen  
 don't go  
 it will  
 quickly, slowly walk the fancy avenue  
 walk the crawling slums  
 then cower  
 and look for dawn

— *Mardi Allen*

## ON SEEING CARVINGS OF BUDDHA AND CHRIST

The gaunt one told a different story  
 Than the fat one. The latter was content  
 To sit and doze and gaze in merriment  
 On those who before him stood. All glory  
 Was he, wrapt in flowing gowns, all glory  
 Was the other, hands and feet with spikes rent.  
 and his eyes were gaping. knowing pain meant  
 Nothing to those who appraised him. For he  
 Saw them adjourn to the adjoining room  
 And look on the Buddha, shrouded in peace.  
 And then he heard their laughter, but smiled not,  
 For they had forgot his pain and his doom;  
 And the Buddha, who cared not in the least,  
 Heard himself proclaimed the best work of art.

— *David Curtis*

## HAIKU

The aged man, moving slowly,  
 Reaping the thrill of walking  
 Up stairs  
 spring, falling in love  
 The earth is infatuated  
 and blushes green  
 the tree, mighty grey arms  
 Holding up the fluffy sky for  
 little birds

— *Don Benway*

## A LOVE POEM

Throughout this lonely autumn night  
 evening airs shall whisper of our love,  
 while our moon-window sways lazy  
 silhouettes on the wall.  
 The subtle fragrance of your breath  
 shall caress me  
 again and yet again  
 and you shall receive me  
 In the blue dim-darkness of our room  
 a dainty froth of pink —  
 like a tremulous moth  
 its petals pulsing . . . pulsing —  
 reveals your soft white secrets  
 to the silent stars  
 And now, a word escapes your lips.  
 And our warmth blossoms  
 in quiet murmurs:  
 a sultry musk of love  
 swells between  
 bringing joyous love to life  
 and ending death forever.

— *Walter Wight*

## REQUIEM FOR THE MASS MIND

falling  
 falling fast  
 gone to the 8th orbital  
 unknowing unseeing  
 don't believe — can't believe  
 speeding fast, far out  
 into the last syllable  
 of space without time  
 inside  
 outside  
 downside  
 yes, *downside*  
 the fleeing man speeds  
 on and on  
 in his projectile place  
 stabbing  
 groping  
 grabbing  
 in the tortured race  
 he speeds on his way  
 falling, falling fast  
 lost in the darkness  
 of the howling pit of his mind  
 where anger, strife, fear, restlessness  
 and self pity

play the overture of the beastly soul  
 which sees not tomorrow  
 for fear of the present  
 cry  
 laugh  
 whimper —  
 gurgle  
 slurp  
 and burp, you lousy crumb  
 don't ever let your heart be opened  
 don't ever let your mind or heart be touched  
 it makes no difference in the race, buddy —  
 cause you'll just keep on  
 falling  
 falling  
 falling

— Eric Pierce

## KIDS

He sits with listless eyes half-closed  
 And cocks his balding head to snoop  
 Upon the airy babble of the kids.  
 A skittering mob careens across the street  
 And whirls in ring-a-rosie at his feet.  
 He sighs, exhausted by their glee,  
 And nestling on his side,  
 He tugs a shawl around his neck  
 And sleeps.

— Walter Wight

## and the meek shall inherit the earth

fierce penetrating pressure  
 thrusting downward  
 in gravitational obeisance  
 rapt and cracks the brain  
 liquefies the entrails  
 which fatten and congeal  
 into a greasy ball of wax  
 emitting vapors of incense  
 offerings to a bovine god  
 from a bovine incarnate  
 a body dishonored and alone  
 in the rat-bellied yawn  
 of an ungilded eternity

— Claire Durand

## FIRST LANDING: VENUS, MARCH 14, 1981

In the steaming sweltering jungles  
 strange birds sing and sweep  
 graceful, proud, aloof, high  
 above the grisly forest creatures  
 huddled in the ferns below,  
 chattering among themselves they  
     crouch in shadow  
 and watch with awe,  
     watch angry, fearful  
     watch cold, hateful  
     raise their lemon yellow tentacles  
     bare their greenish orange fangs  
     hide their dark and warty faces  
     and grin as the earthship lands.

— Merle K. Peirce

## THE WALL

Secluded in the moldy attic of  
 My house, I stare  
 Across a moat to where  
 Another solitary hides.  
 He, like me, behind a mask,  
 A wall of lies,  
 Imprisoned too.  
 The wall between swells thicker  
 As I glare,  
 As we in turn deposit stone  
 On lonely stone until  
 The final slab is laid  
 Above the level of my eyes;  
 And I can stare no more.

— Walter Wight

Take flight in  
 unfathomable dreams  
 where the door is  
 locked to hate and  
 none may enter  
 but the lover

— Don Benway

## AN OLD MAN'S DREAM

Once when just a child,  
I rested for a little while  
Beneath a mighty dome of pines  
And autumn organ tone  
And drank the sanguine season.  
In a drowsy corner  
Of my church  
I saw a shadowed flock  
Of freckled birch,  
Leaves browning in the sun,  
A dusty rustle  
At their skirts.  
I saw a sudden dance,  
A startled head,  
A prance of snowy rump,  
A delicate hush,  
And then —  
Relentless,  
Like a yellow-marbled  
Windrift air,  
Like crawling skin  
Congealing on a bog,  
Or neutral shades  
Blooming from the empty sockets  
Of a skull —  
December's purr,  
Came breathing specter tresses  
Past tangled combs  
Of brush and birch  
And rimed each slender branch  
With winter's mane.

— *Walter Wight*

## CATHEDRAL WOOD

The light streamed  
through the  
forest dome  
as through a  
stained-glass window.

— *Patricia M. Ewart*

this is the fat poem that sprawls obscenely across the page taking up wide lines to do useless things uselessly. this is the fat poem that doesn't say anything except wide because everyone else is saying thin, with little lips. This is the fat poem that liz luke said she wanted to read, laughing thinly, thinking thickly. say it fat she said not caring what or how was said, save said fatly and so it came to pass that it was said — nothing — and it was said wide and spacious reaching out as though to o'erleap the margins saying fat fat wide wide, showing that nothing can still be said and said fat.

— *Merle K. Peirce*

## TO P — 1-16-66

Perhaps on some night  
Not unlike this one —  
With the rhythm of your soul  
Caught by a passing stream  
Someone will come to you  
And hand you the secret  
of life.  
But to know and wait  
For the elusive moment  
Is to watch bubbles  
Vanish in the roar  
Of a water fall.

— *Bill McQuade*



## life is just a kiddie crayon stroke of

and sometimes it's hard, oh so hard to understand why even in the squirm-thick brambletangle jet-like zooming whirlingig of love ya can't lock out the winter's cold, real cold, like the cold in only me, and sometimes it hurts, oh so hurts to listen for soft sounds of happy in a night-world of sunless shadows, only to hear a squitchy sound under your foot and watch the Sticky Goopy Yum Yum ooze of a once alive only me and only you, and sometimes it's an even of more hurt to hear the mechanical Thump ThumpThump of your stump-sawed soul tell ya it's a teeter-tottering sure no look like suppose be world ya live in cause somewhere, somehow, even before someone moved ya under a grey soot-filled ojo negra shee, my only me and only you sinned, and sometimes it's hard, oh so hard to understand why an absurd amorphous mass of congealing pink liquid leaps a chimney-sweep leap down a deliriously agitated funnel, thrusting atrophied Hands Feet forward in frolicsome dying agony to breathe life and deliquescence in a shark-teethed convulsive ocean; baby, pretty baby, the only me and only you of tomorrow, and sometimes it's tragic, oh so tragic to see ghost-soul merge into ghost-soul in delicious synthetic unification and pyramids of fantasy bare inviting graves to hair-chest, no-bellied, lump thighs which brandish diamond-crested daggers and throb a stony, mute death within yielding armor, releasing an oceanic tide of molecular sorrow which ruptures and explodes a hate condom more pernicious than a myriad of kiddie toys bombs; marital felicity, the seven levels of bliss, the only hope of my only me and your only you, and sometimes it's comforting, oh so comforting to hear that in the very beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God; and the Word was God, the life and the light of men which shone in a darkness enamored of its darkness; and there was a scud-thumping, beetle-on-bum-man, one sent from God, whose name was Nietzsche . . . and sometimes

— Claire Durand

He glanced around the shabby lounge, grey-laden with the soot of too many smoke-years. Dim faces — hands — barely visible, wavered in the half-lighted room. He watched the dumb men speaking foreign tongues to their earless women, knowing that he could do no better than they. Many times he had tried to tell her. Tonight he would try again. The words would come. For months he had wanted to shout at her that his love had died, but he could not. He wished for the words to tell her, easily, that their love had been slowly abraded, until they no longer shared anything. Each had lived his own dissimilar week-life, meeting on week-ends to only half listen to what the other tried to say. Even her sex-baited marriage-book, too long dangled just out of his reach, had become crusted-dry and unalluring. Though she had feared that he would leave her if she consented to sleep with him, she had not foreseen that the donkey, if denied the carrot too long, will become inured to it. Later-on tonight he would win freedom by telling her it was over. He would do it simply, easily. The words would come. He caught the waitress's eye, signaled her for another drink, then dropped his eyes to watch his thumbs change size.

— John D. Amaral

## FLIUCHE

The rain drove against the leaded glass window panes of the dark, moss-grown tower. Within, I climbed the spiral stone staircase to a small ironbound door on the highest level. I knocked, and a few moments later the door opened and an old man stuck his head out.

"Oh, it's you — Come in, come in!" he exclaimed, opening the door wider and waving me inside. He settled me on a couch and brought some roast of meat and flacon of wine before sitting down at a large oaken desk nearby. He was dressed in a long white robe with a flaming red cincture whose loose ends hung down almost as far as his sandaled feet. He was quite bald, but was possessed of a flowing, snow white beard. After a moment's hesitation, he opened a huge leather bound book and began to write and write and write. He never uttered a word and the only sounds were the scratching of his pen upon the parchment pages and the pelting of the raindrops against the window glasses. As it grew darker, he lit a single candle and placed it so that it shed its light on his pages, that he might continue to work. When I finally left, only moments before midnight, he was still at his writing.

I returned again the next day, and the day after that, each day for several weeks, and always it was the same. He seldom spoke, but always, incessantly, he wrote. Finally, one night he put down his pen and called me to his side, bidding me read the book which had taken so much of his time and effort. Curious, I took the book which he proffered into my hands, and gingerly opened it, leafing through the pages.

They were all blank.

— Merle K. Peirce

## A TYPICAL DAY IN THE LIFE OF ESTA SCHNEIDER

I walked into the room with the normal apprehension of any new student. I had never been to a school away from home and did not know quite what to expect. Slyly I tried to scrutinize my new classmates. My eyes flashed about the room in a fury of anticipation and uncertainty.

Suddenly, I was aware of a boy. I was mesmerized by a very large black hole. There it was before me — a beautifully, almost perfectly shaped cleft. I slipped into the desk in front of the unsuspecting young man. This is the point at which my tale begins. It is a tragic story. It is a love story destined (by its mere existence) to darkness.

My father has a cleft in his chin. Perhaps it was the environmental cleft that gave me that unattainable desire to stare into the depths of a cleft forever. Whatever the reason my passion for clefts was a very real emotion. At times I felt an emptiness at school. It was not what one would term homesickness. It was more like cleftsickness.

Understandably, it took me a few minutes to compose myself. Finally I was able to concentrate on the lecture. I must admit that my mind was much more susceptible to wandering than usual. After all, it is not everyday that a girl's life-long dream is within her reach.

My professor captured my attention with his melodious voice. Suddenly, I heard a strange slurping sound. I sat for a moment attempting to define the sound. There was no definition. I tried to find the source of the sound. The only sound I could recollect that was even remotely similar was the inhaling force of a vacuum cleaner which had unexpectedly come

across a paper bag.

I heard the sound again — a sly slithery slurp. My eyes darted around the room in search of the source. Then I noticed *him*.

Directly behind me the young man helplessly holding to the edge of darkness. By some he was evilly being enveloped into his own cleft. What should I do? What could I have done? Should I have raised my hand and asked the professor if he had the name of the cleft behind me? Or told the professor that I couldn't study with a cleft looking over my shoulder? How ridiculous! I looked back again. The boy was silent, slowly sliding into his cleft. He was totally helpless. All he was able to do was to grasp in gainless effort to the sides of his chin.

I was certain the professor would notice the phenomenon behind me. It was much too obvious to be ignored or to go unrecognized. What was happening? Why was not anyone else aware of the dreadful dilemma of the boy? Nothing — absolutely no reaction from anyone.

I thought about the situation. I delved into every detail, distracted only occasionally by the sound. I decided that I was going to calmly raise my hand and tell the professor that I could not concentrate with a cleft looking over my shoulder. Maybe I could ask the professor whether he had the name of the cleft sitting behind me. The question would be absurd. Anyone knows that clefts are in the dimple family and Shirley Temple is still around, I think.

My thoughts were interrupted by a quiet pitiable moan. "Help, someone help me." I turned and all that was left was an index finger and half of a pinky.

"Oh no," I thought, "this is too much. It can't be. I must be dreaming. Maybe I'm crazy. That's it. I have flipped right here in the middle of Advanced Composition." Then it happened. I could tell by the slurp that it was over. Sure enough, nothing was left except a contentedly stuffed cleft.

I looked around the room. There was still no reaction from my classmates. "Okay," I decided, "I'll ignore it too."

Suddenly something stung the back of my neck. As a normal reaction I reached to touch my neck and found a small piece of paper. Trying to conceal the note, I read, "Please send down rope and flashlight." Well, I had no choice. I had to believe in the cleft.

I waited until class had been dismissed and rushed to my car. Within fifteen minutes I had returned to the scene of the sound with a rope and flashlight complete with batteries. The big question was how to give the boy his implements. I mean I had always liked clefts. They seemed nice enough at first glance, but I could not trust a cleft ever again. I cautiously dropped the instruments into the hole, being careful not to allow my hand to get within enveloping distance. Equally as carefully, I wedged a sheet of paper under the cleft. I placed it on my desk to preserve the hole for the following day. Reluctantly I left school.

The next day I rushed into the classroom. As expected I had not been able to sleep very well, but I can imagine what kind of a night the boy in the hole had. I ran to my desk to see the cleft gloating at me. Lying next to the cleft was another note. At first I thought it very sweet for the boy to write a thank you note, but then I read, "Don't worry: this has happened before."

— *Está Schneider*

