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Cover Photograph by Anthony D. De Christofaro



HELL

at Holy Cross

V. STRETT

None of this would have happened if Liz Campell didn't have such a big mouth. She said it wouldn't have happened if I didn't think I was such a big shot. Sister Barbara Theresa said none of it would have happened if we had both been in study hall where we belonged. So now I'm sitting in the office (which looks more like death row, if you want to know the truth) waiting to see the principal, mean Mother Michael. This little caper may get me kicked out of school, but that's the chance you have to take in this business. Maybe I should clarify that, I mean, I don't want you getting the wrong idea about me...

Actually, if we're going to point fingers, the whole thing never would have happened if my parents hadn't insisted that I attend an all-girl high school (run by nuns, no less) when they knew damn well that I wanted to go to public school (I thought "Welcome Back Kotter" was wild). But, they thought that at a private school I would receive some special attention and discipline (as if I needed either). The parents of most of the other girls had basically the same reasons

for sending their daughters to private school, and as a result, we all ended up captives at Holy Cross.

Being cooped up with 400 other girls and an army of nuns is enough to drive anybody off the deep end. We lost most of our inhibitions and all of our manners by the end of our freshman year. Instead of ladies, we turned out more like lady-wrestlers. Take "Bulldog" Kowalski, for example. (Her real name is Marcella-Louise, but believe me, she looks like a "Bulldog.") When we went on retreats, no one ever wanted Bulldog for a partner in the "trust game" (you know, where somebody leads around a blindfolded person so they can learn to trust one another. Fun, right?) because everybody knows that Bulldog heads straight for the rose bushes and bee hives. And then there was the time that she put goldfish in the holy water and nearly gave Sister Catherine a coronary.

Jean Dimeo is another one. She used to wear her uniform everyday, but it was a uniform from St. Mary's, not Holy Cross. She said she didn't know what the big deal was, they all looked alike to her, anyhow. I remember the time she didn't want to go to the gym (that's when we were having modern dance and she hated wearing those leotards) so before class, she dialed the local radio station from one of the pay phones and told them that she was the principal from Holy Cross calling because our water heater had broken down and classes were cancelled for the rest of the day. The man at the station agreed to relay the message to the rest of the radio stations around town, and an hour later, the parking lot was filled with mothers coming to pick their daughters up from school.

So we got in a little trouble every now and then. We realize now that it wasn't such a good idea to report Sister Rachel's car to the police as a stolen vehicle, (she was picked up with four other nuns and a case of wine. Said it was for mass... sure!) or to dump a whole box of laundry detergent into the swimming pool at the Y.M.C.A. or to steal a fifteen pound box of chocolates from the Candy Corral. Now that I think about it, though, that was our worst offence, but Betsy Kean should never have dared Jennifer Davies to take it because not only won't Jennifer refuse a dare, she's part klepto.

A bunch of us had cut school and were hanging around the mall. We were fooling around by the Candy Corral when we saw this gigantic box of chocolates sitting on display in the front window. There was a great big red rose on the box (I think it was their anniversary special or something) and Jean said that she'd like to have it (the rose, I mean) to give to Sister "Adolf" Adrian to get on her good side. While the rest of us were talking about whether or not she even had a good side, Jenny grabbed the box and took off with it partially concealed under her uniform blazer. We ran after her and followed her to her car, but by the time we reached her she was already sitting in the front

seat picking out the coconut crunchies.

"Jenny!" we yelled, "Why'd you take the whole box instead of just the rose?"

"I was hungry." she said.

We ate as much of the candy as we could (and believe me, we had complexion problems for the next two years) and then began throwing what was left (especially the jelly ones) out of the windows as we drove around town. We were aiming mostly at other cars, businessmen in suits and an occasional old lady or two. We were pretty good shots, too, because of all the practice we got in over the summer when we used to go "egging" down at the beach. Our main targets then were rich-looking kids on ten speeds. Once, we beamed this kid really good on the back of his head, but some of the egg splashed back on our car. We yelled at him (as if it was his fault!) and took off. A few minutes and a half a dozen eggs later, we heard the call of the Ocean City Police not far behind us. They overtook us and told us to pull over and asked if we had been throwing eggs at anybody lately. All of a sudden, the kid we smacked with the egg rode up on his bike and yelled, "That's them, Officer! They're the ones who hit me!" Jean pointed to the egg on our car and yelled back, "Well, he got us first!"

Anyway, when we got tired of throwing the chocolates, (you have to admit, that is kind of childish) we'd pull up to cars stopped at red lights and ask the drivers if they knew how to get to the Civic Centre. If they said no, we'd tell them, "Go down this street and make a left at the light. You can't miss it!" or else we'd pretend that we were foreigners and ask the drivers, "Sotta motta quatta?" while pointing to our wrists like we wanted to know the time. Most people were pretty nice and would tell us what time it was, then we'd yell, "Thanks, buddy!" and take off. We really knew how to have a good time.

The next day, Jean brought the rose to school and gave it to Sister Adrian. She was so sweet and innocent-looking (we were all watching her) as she went up to her and said, "Sister, I have a present for you."

Sister took the rose and said, "Why, thank you, Jean. Where did you ever get such a beautiful rose?"

"Oh," answered Jean modestly, "I just found it."

"Really," Sister smiled, "Like off a fifteen pound box of Candy Corral chocolates?"

We knew it was all over.

It turned out that a saleslady called school and reported that four girls wearing Holy Cross uniforms, and one in a St. Mary's uniform, had taken their Anniversary Special out of the display window, (I knew

it was their anniversary special) and demanded that the matter be taken care of. How they ever traced it back to us, I'll never know, but we were put on detention every Thursday for the rest of the year, and forced to do manual labor around school. No wonder the Catholic Church is so damn rich.

Well, after that incident, we knew we had to be on our best behavior. Even Bulldog was good, that is, until she got caught photostatting her face on the school's xerox machine, (she was going to sell them) but outside that, she was being unusually tolerable. Yes, now that I look back on it, we were all doing pretty well . . .

Until it happened.

I was sitting in study-hall, bored out of my gourd. I wanted to cut out of there and go to McDonald's to get a burger, but I didn't want to go by myself. I couldn't find any of my good friends so I had to ask Liz Campell to come with me. She and I aren't really close, but I knew she'd do anything if it meant she could chow down. We asked to be excused to the ladies room, (our favorite excuse, I mean, where else is there to go in a girl's school?) and were made to sign out and told to sign back in when we returned. Those nuns had such a system of keeping track of our every move they'd put Sing Sing to shame.

Anyway, Liz and I were fooling around in the hall on our way out, when we noticed the door to the incinerator room wide open. For as long as I have been at Holy Cross, the incinerator has never worked, and I really wanted to see what it looked like. The room was small and dark and there was a small chute leading to the incinerator, but we couldn't get it opened, so I figured it was still broken. While we were carrying on inside the room, I heard someone come up from behind us. I peered out just in time for Sister Barbara Theresa to see me.

"Just what do you think you're doing in there?" she demanded.

"Nothing, Sister," I answered.

"Well, get out of there and do it somewhere else!"

I came out of the room, and she yelled, "And this door is supposed to be shut!" and slammed it closed.

As soon as the coast was clear, I went up to the door and called Liz. The door was a big thick one made of heavy steel, so I kicked it a few times and called her again. Finally, she answered me, and asked if it was safe for her to come out. I told her yes, but when I tried to open the door, I couldn't. I pulled on it, but it was stuck. I told Liz to push as I pulled, but it was no use. It just wouldn't open. It must have locked when Sister slammed it, and was impossible for us to open without a key. This must have occurred to us both at the same time because all of a sudden Liz started yelling her head off.

"Liz," I whispered as loudly as I could, "Be quiet! You're going to get us both in trouble!"

"I don't care! Let me out of here!" she yelled. "This is all your fault!" and pounded on the door with her fists. I tried to calm her down, but the girl was beyond reason. So, I did the only thing I could under such circumstances. I ran like hell.

Once I got back to study-hall, though, I could still hear her yelling. At first I thought it was my imagination (or conscience) but everybody heard her. Muffled cries for help and my name taken in vain seemed to be coming from the walls. That's when I noticed air vents lining the walls of the classroom, and it struck me that you could hear Liz's big mouth all over school. I felt sick.

Liz went on screaming like some kind of maniac, and one of the old nuns heard her yell that she was going to have me "burned at the stake," and thought there was a fire somewhere in the school. She doddered up to the nearest fire alarm and pulled it. All of a sudden, bells started ringing and people started piling out of classrooms while nuns were yelling, "Single file, girls, single file!" (who's got time to remember "single file" when the whole building is engulfed with flames!) I got really worried about Liz (we could still hear her yelling) and tried to tell Sister Barbara Theresa what happened, (after all, she was the one who slammed the door shut in the first place) but she kept repeating, "Head for high ground!" The poor woman must have thought it was a flood instead of a fire and the place was chaotic with everyone running around like mechanical dolls wound up too tightly.

The fire department arrived just as the last of us were congregated on the front lawn. I thought for sure Liz was going to be fried, and ran up to Mother Michael and told her the whole story as she directed fireman into the building. When she realized what I said, she grasped her rosary beads shouting, "Good Lord!" and ran back into the school, her habit flying out in back of her and six firemen close behind.

When she reached the incinerator room, she unlocked the door and swung it open just in time to see Liz, who had heard all of the commotion and really believed it was a fire, kneeling on the floor, dressed only in her slip, (she took off her uniform because she imagined it was getting hotter) and looking like she was ready to be offered up in sacrifice. When she saw Mother Michael and six firemen staring down at her, she held up her fists and yelled, "I'm going to kill her!"

So that's why I'm here now. Can you believe it? I'll be lucky if I don't get thrown out of school. And they weren't even grateful about there not really being a fire, or a flood, for that matter. But it wasn't my fault. You know, none of this would have happened if Liz Campell wasn't such a big mouth.

The Poem



"Young men of fairest promise who begin life upon our shores."

Ralph Waldo Emerson "The American Scholar"

"We fathom you not...we love you...there is
perfection in you also/You furnish your parts
toward eternity/Great and small you furnish
your parts toward the soul..."

Walt Whitman

ABBAY SCHOLARS: SPRING RIVER SINGERS

When the funwheel spun
in the healing sun
of cut classes
college was cured
to a scholarly few
gypsy souls schooled
in beer enrolled
on the other
Abbey's pier
Yankee boys & rebel boys
"tight" together steeped
in the deep Spring
brew of each other
shirtless sun and
river spirits currently
bent on earning April's
brief uncertain degree
clearly conferred out
of the blue-ribbon dreams
drafted in the open space
of Who's Who between
the water and the sky
where nobody fails
in speaking to sing
the song of an inland sea

Chuck Sullivan

GRANDDADDY

You have always haunted me
With your hard gentleness
And your soft stiff manner
I have always wondered
Were you afraid Granddaddy?
Were you afraid when you came
With your clean hand-chiseled face,
Motionless with cleft intact,
In your scratchy starched pinstripe suit
To offer me a ribboned-box,
But avoid my eager embrace?

I've broken the china kitten you gave me.
The stiff full skirt
On the pretty blue dress you gave
Me has fallen limp.

I didn't want another gift,

Granddaddy don't leave me like this
With a marble glare, a stiff upper lip
And a brittle gift.

Julia E. Brustares

THE GIFT: FOR MY GRANDFATHER

Later in bed
I closed my eyes
and put out my hand
and found myself
given again by
the extra innings
of your love

to wearing the birthday
fit surprise of my
favorite Giant's glove

And there fielding
in the deep light
of my child's night game

I handled even
the toughest chances
with the spell-cast
brilliance of an all-star

cutting a perfect figure
on that perfect diamond

all the corners
of my sleeping skills

rounded in the dreaming
pocket of my
newly gifted hand

Chuck Sullivan

ADVENT

In a ghost of snow
on pebble lawns
of the Paradise
Moblle Home Park
the cold eye of
winter is painted
by brittle strokes
of children cutting
barely clothed figures
in all the colors
of December's pale
lost causes struck
in shivering poses
of pointed stares
poised to strike
true and child-like
into the heart
of the coming Christ

Chuck Sullivan

MANDATE: FOR FUEHRERS OF ALL AGES

In the now
exposed color
of their quick,
epic lives
Eva had
the film rights
to Der Fuehrer's
reel heart
framing in her
negative spectacle
the dark Adolph's
lighter side
humor in a
black uniform
immaculately tailored
in hilarious terror
with the tyrant
posing as the comic
cracking jokes
at the Wolf's Lair
simply tearing up
the smiling servants
whose blonde and
blue-eyed
Aryan bellies
obediently boomed
at each lethal
punch-line
with all the
drilled precision
of impeccable
Prussian laughter
and as far as
the great man could tell
all the help thought
he was as funny as hell

Chuck Sullivan

FEELING FOR THE PHOENIX

"Everything is water; if you look long enough."
- - Robert Creeley

Working hard
At avoiding each other these days
Taking great pains
Not to be burned again
We fool ourselves
Feeling for the Phoenix.
Nothing lasts forever.
(Self-consumption gives rise
Only to infinite deaths)
Were we really lovers?
Or partners
In a falling fire sale.

Kevin McKane

RON G.

So you know how blue
your eyes are
And wear the sky's color
as compliment —
Even with your hair
thinning at the temples,
You know your strengths
and chuckle with them,
Trading quips over coffee,
then a quick, caressing phrase,
A glance that casts aside
shoes, shelf, wife, office
And makes me wish I knew
the smell of your skin
In the morning.

Karen Haber

—This beast suits me well,
This body I sit in,
Does my bidding,
But retreats, monthly
To court the moon's whims,
Abandoning me
To writhe in a strange skin
Of tender thighs
and sacrificial blood

Karen Haber

ZIONSVILLE

We sail along
against a night scene;
stone houses,
dried fields, and
the first whisper of winter,
But the heater in the car works,
and headlights cast false daylight ahead;
Dispelling the magic of star songs
and wind.

Karen Haber

HUNGER

(FOR J. B.)

Pain of another's success
brings a toothier sorrow,
hard to nibble around;
Remaining between ribs and brain,
hard to exorcise
and bitter of taste,
A lonely bone to chew
or bury,
And hard to swallow.

Karen Haber

THE RECKONING

You are lost. You have come
to the densest part
of the forest or the city.
All around you see
animals cars
familiar in their shapes
and sizes. They circle you.
Then you are alone
in a clearing.
Perhaps a hotel lobby
in the hours after midnight.
There are high
pillars, trees
and paths to rooms
you have never seen.
When the lights go out
the eyes of a lion
peer from behind
the one velvet chair.
You suspect
the night will be long.
You remember
dawn in the village.

Susan Bartels Ludvigson

FIRST LOVE

Summers he'd ask me
how I was growing, what new
colors bloomed in my body,
when I'd begin to miss
the snow. My answers
were always the same.
I was becoming
my mother, drifting
to amber by late afternoon.
Seasons were endless
then, and in winter
I died without hope.
He was wrong
about only one thing--
I never longed
for anything white.

Susan Bartels Ludvigson

IF . . .

(FOR J. D.)

All that you saw in me
was my woman's face
with its accidental symmetry
and the contours of my form
your tracking eyes snared
beneath my dress

Hung up in eul de sacs of flesh
you merely traced my shadow
Just think! if you had gazed beyond
you might have grasped
the silhouette of my substance

Grace DiSanto

ADOLESCENCE

(FOR BERNADETTE)

Adolescence guns your engine
like an ignition key. Its
juices tank pure, unclogged gas
that rev your solo flight. On
life's freeway now, you power-
drive recklessly. O my dear,
once I was your kind
riding the fast lane
my gears matching your excessive
speed. But soon they locked,
chickened out; I learned survival
means driving slowly on the right.

Grace DiSanto

AT EIGHTY-SEVEN
(FOR UNCLE RALPH)

He totes the scrapbook everywhere.
To anyone who looks it rounds out
his life; a canvas bruised
& spattered by falls of boxers
he has trained. Fans enjoy his
braggadocio. But when they

stand to go, his chin hunches
a pout. Jabbing shut his book
he gloves his eyes & blocks out
the rocking scene. Now shadowed
on a stool cornering his mind
he hears the gong & crouches.

With footwork that would fret
a Sugar Ray he dances in the ring.
The roaring crowd dims. In round
ten he totters. Hanging in,
he forgets to duck the punch
knocking out his arteries. Hardening,

they puff & close. Legs slackening,
he falls back to wrinkle the ropes.
Slumping the mat he fades. When
the referee starts the long count,
he does not hear it nearing ten.

Grace DiSanto

the contributors

STUDENTS

JULIA E. BRUSTARES is a senior English major and previous contributor.

KEVIN McKANE is a freshman from Fayetteville, North Carolina.

VICTORIA STREETT is also a senior English major. Her short story is her first contribution to the *Agora*.

ALUMNI

GRACE DiSANTO has made another contribution of her poetry in this issue. We thank her for her undying interest in, and support of, the *Agora*.

CHUCK SULLIVAN is now South Carolina's Poet in Residence. His poetry has graced the pages of earlier issues of the *Agora* and we are grateful to him for much support and assistance in making this year's issue possible.

FRIENDS

KAREN HABER sent us her poetry from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and we are very pleased to have it included in this issue.

SUSAN BARTELS LUDVIGSON is an accomplished poetess, and a faculty member at Winthrop College in Rock Hill, South Carolina. She also participates in the annual Winthrop College Writer's Conference.

This issue is dedicated in fond memory
to
James Lehmann

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