

BELMONT ABBEY COLLEGE LIBRARY  
BELMONT, NORTH CAROLINA 28012

AGORA  
BELMONT ABBEY COLLEGE  
1979-80  
VOL. 16

THE PIER

Bold finger pointing seaward  
in the dusk . . .  
Man-ridden with a thousand pole-bearing,  
line-entangling fishers  
Crawling your back  
Paddle off like a millipede east  
into the night  
Disappear with your human cargo  
never to come back.  
Fight off the surge of the sea!  
Turn back the waves and the  
Rising tide!  
And give protection to the dwellers  
of the sea  
Who seek to hide  
Beneath thee . . .

—J.H.

ODE TO ST. LEO'S HALL

If ever there were ages  
That great monuments  
Stood  
Proud and staunch and  
Ever-mindful of the  
Memorial duty,  
Though the sands of far away  
Shores ne'er see them,  
Nor the tree-crushed hills  
Pay them mind,  
And if it is that man, who,  
In bursts of passion  
And bellicose pride,  
Knowing not the even flow  
of days into years  
Into eternity,  
Create of his own hand  
These marks  
And then pass away,  
Leaving crumbling corner  
Stone and statuary  
And arch  
To attest to the greatness  
He saw,  
So too it is with you.  
What secrets have seeped into  
Your very mortar and  
Live in the vines that  
Shroud your walls?  
What enchantment  
Have you alone  
Remembered?  
What calls me to your portal  
To enter into your  
Innermost and private  
Chambers?  
What man's aspirations  
Do you  
Document?

—Judas P.

In times gone by, the western ones  
were fed at dusk the setting sun  
while white ones claimed though knowing none  
that all were fit for the rope and gun  
thus the river ran red.

The hawk then spoke from a distant bluff  
of deep disdain for the weaker dove  
for the western ones had had enough  
so in warring points they mounted up  
arrows against white lead.

I saw in a vision once I dreamt  
the ground with blood and tears was wet  
the chaos passed but all was spent  
where the white and western ones had met  
and the birds of the rotting dead.

—Roger Dills

The Minute Waltz

From the moon I pull  
a stick. Silver my  
lids, plate my lips.  
Into stars I tip a  
cloud. Dust my nose,  
powder my brow.

My fawn-long hair,  
out the window,  
I trail;  
you ladder up.

Wool, I macrame  
to your brow,  
bang it over  
the eye sockets,  
block your view.

My prisoner now,  
I hang hands about  
your neck,  
pale palms dangling,  
as the pads of  
my fingers tattoo  
the sound of nothing  
across your flesh.

—Grace DiSanto

Woman of the Chrysanthemums  
(In the Florentine Market)

Night. Beneath a  
saffron moon  
they box their wares,  
deflesh the bones  
of stalls. Leave.

From the shadows  
she unsticks herself.  
Hobbling, her body  
warps; the reflection  
of a wand in water.

Squatting the gutter  
she gathers discarded  
chrysanthemums.

Home. In a bleak loft,  
she presses her  
age-damaged face into  
day-damaged petals.

One by one she  
strokes them,  
says the rosary  
blooming her room.

Grace DiSanto

## A SHORT STORY

by Paul Heretick

### PRESSURIZED CANS DISPENSES AIR

an living in a trailer park in the upper class section of a prominent Massachusetts city  
d to his humble surroundings since his youth, he decided he would start a quiet demon-  
u have a demonstration. Reminds me of that brand of cigarettes. Kents.  
him Squeaky, donated some of his lifelong accumulated savings to the governor's  
ure enough, the guy won the election and, in appreciation of old Squeaky's generous  
pointed Squeaks to the position of mayor of that city. How one gets appointed to mayor  
eaky loved that! He didn't even have to demonstrate now. He could make a law. And  
but lawyers, because they just got drunk and passed out at the bar. That's all those people  
school  
that required all homes to meet stringent energy efficiency standards. Of course, no  
possibly meet such rigid standards, and would be condemned. With no one to cut the  
that it would surround those houses and choke the bricks into dust. But there was a  
d grass died. "Ha! Ha! Good for your ass you wicked grass!" That's what he said. He  
was the MAYOR! GO SQUEAKO!  
ppened is pretty typical, but anyway  
getting a little perturbed with the new mayor. After all, they were there before that old  
understood him, but comprehending a madman is a rather difficult task, if you know  
got together and threw darts at that old man's trailer and put a bunch of holes in it.  
old man Winter, rolled along. Squeaky left because he hated all of his family. He never  
as scared that if he had a family, he would hate them also. I bet his family would hate him.  
He might have you shot!  
they were liberated but, just like a fly, Squeako came back when it got warm, but some-  
d eventually that old Squeako got swept under a carpet.

## BOAT BONES

Bleached bones of boat  
tossed in the  
moonlit marshes;  
Perch for bird;  
Shadow for crab  
and fiddler!  
Fight off the salt-grass  
and bask in  
the moonlight  
of a windy  
Autumn  
Night.

—J.H.

## THE BEACH AT NIGHT

The beach at night is the  
Littoral between  
Light and dark . . .  
The battleground between  
Dark-frightened man  
And dark-loving ocean.  
Glaring neon and  
Fluorescent light lights  
The darkside of the  
Beach,  
And attempts to do battle  
With the night  
Seamonsters  
Who gnaw away at the  
Beach with giant  
Shadow bites  
Until the pale light of  
Dawn brings peace . . .  
And discloses a battlefield  
Littered with the  
Scars and relics  
Of both man and sea . . .  
Which high tide erases  
Clean,  
Leaving fresh battleground  
For new desecration.

—J.H.



Elegy For Two Voices

ays Hail Mary	Where does the man go?
grace	Where does the man go?
ard is with thee	motherless child
ed art thou	son of the con man
ngst women	Mama says boys be brave
blessed is the fruit	breathel! says Joe
y womb	my lips to the cold
	body
Mary mother of God	Mama!
for us sinners now	sing Galway Bay
at the hour	a quivering voice wonders
r death	where the man goes

II

I saw my father's face	I dreamt my father's face
drawn in wood and hemp	drawn in water and net
blue in the boat's bottom	in Columba's boats bottom
still gasping	spitting his Catholic salt
at the poet	at the Irish Sea
I see his body	lies among the lobster traps
in Killybegs	in Donegal
tremble like a dance	his fathers danced
in Killybegs	in Donegal

III

ch lingered breath	stone upon stone
	stone upon stone
tered wall	word upon word
	song for song
rants	cry for cry
e	sigh to sigh
the hearts	breaking
knew	time into time
faces	my father's face

## RESURRECTION

Now that you have destroyed me  
Can you restore me again?  
Now that I am rubble  
Can you build me back again?  
Now that I am ash  
Can you breathe life into this dust  
And with your spittle mold from it  
A new man?

I think now.

Your powers are only human  
And demonstrated well;  
The power to destroy unconsciously;  
To hurt . . . not understanding;  
To betray with half-lies, like Judas;  
To turn deaf ear to call for aid;  
Always superciliously confident  
That you are right;  
When in fact dead wrong;  
You drown your conscience in the vine  
And walk unfeeling upon my sands of time,  
And spit and vomit on me;  
Grateful, I, even for the moisture  
In my desert.

Yet I rise . . . a tired phoenix from the ash  
Resurrected even for the nine hundred  
And ninety ninth time  
At the sound of your knock . . .

—J.H.

## There's No Going Back

in 1955 the first time I set eyes on Herb and his wife Nasha—Yeah, it must've been because Liza and I were in '54 and it had to have been at least a year after that. Nasha is Liza's sister so when Herb decided to leave their small farm in South Carolina to New York City in the hope of making more money, Liza insisted on going with us at least until they got a start. Eisenhower was at the height of popularity then. The economy was booming and everyone seemed to be flocking to the city like hungry animals seeking their last bit of food. It's hard to believe now but people say they're not hung up on money and yet they'd move clear across a continent for it, if they had the chance. Labor was gaining a lot more power—I guess large industries were afraid that strikes might upset the status quo. I think it was a month or two before Nasha and Herb arrived that I helped form a picket line outside the Ford Motor Company where I was employed. Finally we were guaranteed an annual wage increase. I was mad at me for joining the picket line and hated every minute of it, and I figured that was the least I deserved for my part in it. She was mad at me for joining the picket line—she just didn't think it was right. She was like that—if she thought something she would stick to it no matter what. I respected her for that but to me it didn't make any sense. I had to think about where the next meal would come from but that never even entered her mind. People are like that. They get some silly idea in their head and there's no getting around them. I used to tell Liza a lot then mostly because I got impatient with her stubborn ways—like when she suggested that Herb live with us for a while.

"I told her, 'The apartment is small enough already, never mind two more damn people! One would be enough but two! No way.'"

"Liza's my sister. I can't turn down my own sister." I didn't make a difference if she was her sister or not. But Liza was a very loyal kind of person—once she got herself into something she didn't turn her back on them. That's why I usually felt compelled to do things her own way, but that was when we were deciding things like what t.v. show to watch. I enjoyed watching her on her own way then—it was funny how she seemed to get some satisfaction out of this. She'd just put that silly chair in her face and give her hair a toss back with one hand and triumphantly plop down on the worn but soft chair. I got a real kick out of this—most of the time it didn't even matter to me what we watched but I never know this. I mean she just looked so cute when she thought she had one over me and I just couldn't enjoy it too much.

"Getting two people move in—two people who were complete strangers to me—was just too much for me to handle. It gave me a bad feeling and usually when I get these feelings they're right. It's because she's your sister doesn't mean you owe her your whole life." "Giving her my whole life Lenny, just a month that's all—one lousy month. Is that too much to ask?" "No. They shouldn't even be here for one week."

"I argued back and forth like this for about a week until we said a lot of things to each other that we really regretted and then Liza stopped talking to me. That's one thing I couldn't stand—when she wouldn't talk to me. I could take it—else I could take—I mean I would rather have her scream obscenities at me but when she wouldn't say one word to me, even a glance in my direction it gave me a really odd feeling inside and I didn't like it. She used to get mad at me before we were married and it used to kill me because I could never tell what she was thinking. For a long time I couldn't even tell where I stood with her—it used to drive me crazy. But after we got married we were able to talk to each other and Liza was anything but quiet. I remember she used to talk my ear off half the time. Well, anyhow, after the fight about her sister moving in, she didn't talk to me for quite a few days. This was unusual because most of the time she would break down against her will to ask me something stupid like how much I made with the comic section of The Daily News and then we'd end up talking and I'd tell her something funny that happened in work that day. She would laugh and then we'd go on as if nothing ever happened. But this time

was real  
once she  
growing  
but from  
pretty  
sister n

"One

"On

I gue

I was j

done

the tw

arrive

it w

me. I

throu

ourse

We

to the

Auth

"Li

"V

So

Liza

It g

al

ea

har

the

He

w

an

as really different. I honestly didn't think she would ever give in. Like I said, Liza's a pretty stubborn person and once she makes up her mind she sticks to it. She had told me a lot of stories about her and Nasha as children growing up on the farm in Pines, South Carolina. Usually I only half listened to these stories, sometimes not at all. From what I gathered Nasha and Liza were pretty tight. Liza's old man used to booze it up quite a bit and got pretty nasty at times so the two sisters stuck together. I didn't think that Liza was ready to turn her back on her sister now and I didn't know to what extremes she might take this, so I told her that they could stay for a month. "One month Liza and that's all—not a day more."

"On Lenny thank you. I knew you'd understand. I promise. One month and they'll be gone."

I guess I should've asked for it in writing right then and there but to tell you the truth I hadn't even thought of it. I was just kind of awed by this whole thing between me and Liza and I couldn't help wondering what she would've done if I didn't give in. It kind of bothered me—even then. I was just glad that things were back to normal between the two of us and I tried not to think about what would happen a week later when Nasha and Herb were due to arrive.

It wasn't that I didn't like them—like I told you before I didn't even know them. They were complete strangers to me. It was just that Liza and I had only been married for one year and there were still a lot of things we had to go through together before we could think of our marriage as being stable. We had had disagreements between ourselves and I was afraid that any other outside complications would put a strain on our relationship.

Well, I regretfully watched each day of that week pass by, savoring every last minute like a child trying to hold on to the last days of summer vacation. Before I knew it, it was Saturday morning and Liza and I were in the Port Authority Bus Terminal waiting for her sister's bus to arrive at 9:15.

"Liza, I told you we came here too early. The bus isn't due for a whole hour!"

"You never know, it might come in early. I just want to make sure we're here when they arrive."

So we waited an hour until Nasha and Herb finally arrived. I was surprised to see that Nasha looked a lot like Liza—I had seen pictures of her but they had been blurry and I was unable to recognize the striking resemblance. It gave me an almost eerie kind of feeling like how you feel when you visit a place for the first time and you could almost swear that you've been there before. It was like all this time that Liza was here with me she had simultaneously existed in another place and time. I remember Herb carried a cardboard box wrapped with twine. He wore a blue cotton looking sportcoat that looked real stiff. It hung off his shoulders and he looked like some of the mannequins I had seen in Macy's 34th Street window that are too small for the large bulky coats they're wearing. He had extremely broad hands and his knuckles were very large. I remember when he firmly shook my hand, it felt almost as if he was trying to make a point of telling me how big his damn hands were. He spoke with a drawl I could hardly understand what he was saying. Liza introduced us.

"Lenny, I'd like you to meet my sister Nasha and her husband Herb."

She then looked at Herb and Nasha. "Nasha, Herb—this is my husband Lenny."

"Pleased to meet you Lenny." Herb and Nasha replied simultaneously.

Somehow I managed to come out with some kind of respectable comment which made them think that I was glad to meet them too. We took a subway back to the apartment and by the time we got there, Herb strutted into our flat like he had lived in the city all his life and yet the Carolina dirt was still under his fingernails. He sat at our kitchen table and picked that red clay from underneath his nails with a point of a steak knife until it seemed that half the table was covered with what looked like tiny red ants. I had never seen dirt that color before.

"You been saved?" he asked me.

"Pardon?"—I just couldn't get used to his accent and couldn't understand a word he said.

"You been saved, I said."

I really had no idea what he was talking about and this time it wasn't his accent that bothered me. Then I remembered a few bumper stickers that I had seen before—"Jesus Saves."

"No," I answered. "And I don't intend on being saved either."

Nasha and Liza had glanced at each other aware of the conflict. Now that I think of it, that was the first time I saw Herb look at Liza with those searching eyes of his. Liza always said that it was my imagination but I knew

loyal, she couldn't conceive of Herb deceiving her sister. To this day I'm not really a  
when I used to see someone looking at my wife I would know it—and I didn't like it.  
It just that Herb used to look at Liza but it was the way he looked at her. But I let it all  
agreed with my assumptions and I didn't want to add to the tension that was already  
I think of it now, I should've had it out with Herb but he probably would've beat the  
hands of his. I don't know though—he seemed pretty sluggish. I'm not all that big but  
either and back then I was pretty fast. Anyhow, I never did hit him.  
As, I came to the realization that Herb had no intentions of getting a job. What  
that it didn't seem to bother Liza at all. When she wasn't waitressing part time at a  
was in Central Park with Nasha and Herb. Apparently they had met some lady who  
ling out by the carousel passing out literature. I think I had seen her there before but  
park that you kind of become immune to them all. I can't really say for sure if I saw  
someone else but I guess it doesn't make a difference whether I saw her or not. Liza  
Jesus business. She even carried a small black Bible with her all the time and was  
e off the top of her head. The thing was it wasn't just stuff like "Do unto others as you  
u." They were quotes I had never heard before and after each one she would say  
apter I, verses sixteen to twenty."  
anymore—it was as if Liza thought it was impure or something. She never came right  
but that's the impression she left me with and I wasn't about to push anything. I  
ion.  
the light" in South Carolina and Liza wanted me to see it too. I had been working  
eks and I really had no time for their superstitious games. I mean I believed in God  
n have a job! What does he think this is? A god damn free for all. That's what he  
e once in a while you wouldn't use the Lord's name in vain."  
en years old and my mother had just heard me say goddamn it for the first time  
ed me and it was the last straw.  
"God is speaking through him all the time. He preaches in the Park."  
erful. Herb's a preacher. That's just great."  
at month, there was no reaching her. She had devoted herself whole heartedly to  
she never turned her back on me—she sincerely wanted me to join them but I didn't  
f them for my whole life so I declined the offer. I moved out a week later and had  
nce then. Sometimes when I'm in Central Park near the carousel I'll see someone in  
But always when I'd get a little closer I'd realize that the lady didn't look a thing like  
er I could look her up. That's what I kept telling myself but I guess in the back of my  
ain. Then I did see her—it was about five years ago. I almost bumped right into her  
ello and talked a little—about the weather I think. Then she said she had to go—  
something like that.  
g happened that really flipped me out. I saw Nasha and Herb at Port Authority  
d a line that was forming at gate 19. They were headed for South Carolina. This;  
I had a feeling they were leaving the city for good. It's funny—wherever people go  
back in the same place. I thought about Liza and even about going back to her.  
er happened between her and Herb. But they were just thoughts. When something  
going back. It would bring back too many memories and would never be the  
ing even more depressing. I didn't care. It's funny how you care so much until all of  
anymore.

— Mary Catherine Martin