

Talking Leaves

SPRING 2005



Talking Leaves Staff



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Statement of policy and purpose

The *Talking Leaves* Editorial Board accepts original works of fiction, poetry, photography, and line drawings from students at IUPU Columbus and IUPU Indianapolis. Each anonymous submission is reviewed by at least three members of the Editorial Board and is judged solely on artistic merit.

Cover Art

The Pines, Nancy Fay-Lesley

From the Faculty Co-Sponsors' Desk

This year brings improvements to the IUPUColumbus literary magazine. Starting in 2005, the magazine (formerly *Literelines*) will be titled ***Talking Leaves*** in order to highlight the literary and imaginative aspects of IUPUC student work.

The term “talking leaves” has its origins rooted in Native American lore and metaphor. The story goes like this: Native Americans noticed new settlers carrying papers that had writing on them (literally contracts, maps, and letters). These papers rustled like leaves and “talked” to people. The Native Americans realized the power of being able to send thoughts to another by way of *talking leaves*. We at ***Talking Leaves*** ask that you celebrate the importance of the written word by reading this issue.

Also new this year is the addition of faculty staff highlights. Students have commented that they are often inspired by the creative achievements of the IUPUC faculty and staff. Each issue will highlight the creative work of one faculty or staff person. This section will encourage students to see their creative work as part of a life-long commitment to creative thought and creative living.

Thank you, everyone,

Katherine Wills
Judy Spector

Faculty Co-Sponsors



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Mowers
Elisabeth Hegmann

The lawnmowers march steadily forward
Over neighboring countries of grass
The push mowers advance from the west
Over the fields razed so many times
They're cracked and yellow
While the red riding mowers
Sweep around our left flank to distract us
They are loud, proclaiming
Their racial supremacy dogma
The superiority of one plant over another
We sit in our garden in the late afternoon
But we can't hear the voice of the ghost
The ghost of our old gum tree
Gone all these years

Here is our appeasement:
We are growing native prairie land
We are peaceful here

But all over the neighborhood
The blood from the grass spills
The purges go on
And the voice of the ghost is drowned



An Apology to Garrett for the Poems

Elizabeth Hegmann

All those thee's and thou's,
Your dark eyes and your soul,
My breath and my inspiration -
What the hell was I thinking?

You only liked it when I called you a beautiful bastard,
A sewage Romeo,
The Casanova of the mop sink room.
I know because you laughed.

You wanted limericks, not sonnets,
And we were in New York City in 1998,
Not 19th century England for God's sake.
You didn't want to be
The melody that lights my dreaming mind,
Or the music I would still remember.
You didn't want autumn's west wind in your eyes,
And who could blame you? It would probably sting.

I was convinced I had the soul of a poet
But that soul was a damned traitor.
She will never be trusted with anything important again.
I think you and I can both be glad about that.

July 30th, 1998,
I listened furtively to your music
Ballade No. 1, Opus 23 in G minor
Staring down the front of my filthy overalls
When you caught me in the act
And with one word,

Chopin

Acknowledged everything I'd felt for months.

That was the real poetry, wasn't it?
In that moment all that happened
Is you looked at me and knew I loved you.
As the years go by,

The things I want to say to you
Slip into the same between the lines place
As the word *Chopin*.
It's a place that's gone mute.

I don't understand hearing your voice on the phone now.
You want to recommend some CD's to me.
It's a strange, late offering from you,
But I'm trying to accept it as though it were divinely ordained.
It would make you laugh to see me.

Now your music plays in my car.
One CD ends, and I grope to replace it with another.
You have provided the soundtrack for my life after all.
That was the only thing I was right about,
Saying I'd remember the music.

I Saw Johnny Depp in *Secret Window*
Elisabeth Hegmann

I go to the movies alone on Monday nights
Weariness makes me taut like the screen
Blank and white
I guess for some it's the looks
But for me it's the subtle Chaplin humor

After my ticket is torn I head to a stall
So I'm not pulled out of the best scenes
By those tired demands
As I come out I see the urinals
And realize in a B movie twist I'm in another dimension
The realm of the wrong sex
I plan a daring escape before the aliens return to the ship
Peeking my head out just enough to see
The father and son with popcorn staring at posters
The manager adding up figures on a screen
Then like characters I've seen in movies
I walk out slow and deliberate
So as not to attract the wrong kind of attention

I sit in the theater with couples
Their popcorn a loud crunch at the wrong moment
Their candy a rustling that muffles dialogue

The urinals hadn't seen me
They wouldn't tell the joke behind my back
To the next guy who stepped up
But I needed someone to laugh
And I was ashamed to be alone again in that theater
With the couples slurping through their straws
Whispering things not meant for me
In the hollow moments between trailers

After the credits I hurried through a side door
Afraid the manager had seen me after all
Lousy film, great performance and all that
Nowadays everybody goes to see Johnny Depp
They like his brand of comedy
But I am invisible at the movies
The unseen men's room comedienne
The star that no one is watching



Broken Image
Kim Fay

The Touch Elisabeth Hegmann

The beautician with the love handles broke into a dry, crispy cackle that startled Karen out of her book. It was surprising how loud the lady could laugh with part of a doughnut in her mouth.

“It’s true,” Patty was saying in the general direction of the cackling as she put an old woman with flabby jowls under a dryer. “My cousin can’t orgasm, and she went to the doctor for it.”

“I bet it’s not medical at all,” the doughnut lady said as she tore the cooled wax off a girl’s eyebrow. “It’s her husband’s fault.”

Karen returned to the page. She was reading about spas and the benefits of massage. Just a gentle touch could lower blood pressure, said the book; in fact, touch was a biological necessity. Karen had read that before, though she couldn’t remember where. She wondered if touch could do anything about the breakouts she was experiencing, which were all stress-related. Maybe touch was the cure for adult acne.

Or maybe not, to look at the fat girls who worked at Burger King and Pizza Hut and who all – of course – had boyfriends and presumably got touched.

Karen hadn't been touched in years. The occasional handshake, sure. A stranger brushing against her shoulder in a crowd. And there was sometimes a brusque and fatherly hug from her friend Mal when he came by the coffee shop to chat. Since she was out of practice she always tensed up and he didn't give her enough time to relax into it. She didn't caress or pat. She just clutched, wondering the whole time if she should be caressing or patting.

"Ready for you, Karen," said Patty, and Karen made her way to the chair and sat down.

"Does my hair look brittle today?" the doughnut lady asked as she prepared to highlight the hair of a mother waiting with her three-year-old daughter. The toddler ran in circles and then hid under a table filled with dozens of shades of nail polish.

"A little frazzled around the edges maybe," Patty said as she spritzed water on Karen's hair. "Try rubbing conditioner into the ends."

Something smelled like it was burning. Karen wondered if it was the old lady under the dryer and if she should say something about it to Patty.

"What'll it be today, Karen?" Patty asked. The toddler came out from under the manicure table, poked Karen in the leg with her finger, and ran off again. Karen missed being in Chicago where you could get a haircut with discretion. It was impossible around here.

"Just a trim, I guess. It's hanging limp, looks a bit dead." She tried to sound cheerful, but was conscious that she sounded like she was describing a lynching. She hated haircuts. She'd be going along in life, thinking she was doing okay, and then she encountered these strongholds of women with their perfect manicures and lilting tones. In contrast, the flat, cynical tone in her own voice made her cringe.

"So, Karen, are you driving to Logansville for the premiere?" Patty asked as she pulled out her scissors.

"Maybe," Karen said. She *was* going, but she felt secretive about it. Even though there would be thousands of people there, she felt that if she could escape talking about it with other people it would be her own private experience. There was also Mal's challenge to worry about. But she didn't want to think about that too much yet.

"I heard a big group of girls from here are going in a bus," Patty said, "I bet the crowds will be so big they won't even get to see Horatio Rose and Jake Morgan."

"It'll be well organized," Karen said. "They'll line people up along the roads so everyone gets a chance to see."

"Oh my God, that Horatio Rose!" said the doughnut lady as she put foil between layers of the mother's hair. "Me and my daughter both love him."

Karen nodded, and snippets of hair fell on her face and tickled it. Actually, she didn't find Horatio Rose interesting at all and couldn't understand what women saw in him. There was no spark of spirit or intelligence in his eyes. Only Jake Morgan was worth bothering about.

As Karen got near the coffee shop, she saw that a banner had been hung in the middle of Main Street proclaiming the world premiere of *Lancelot* in nearby Logansville. Logansville had proved it was the home of the world's biggest Horatio Rose fans. The mayor had hired someone to make a documentary that showed hundreds of teenage girls' bedrooms wallpapered with Horatio's image. The prize was that the town got to host the world premiere of the movie. Horatio Rose would be there along with his girlfriend, Kate Banesworth. So would Jake Morgan, though it wasn't known yet whether he'd be accompanied by his French common law wife, who was a big celebrity in Europe.

Karen grabbed her heap of mail and hugged it to her body as she unlocked the door of the shop. As always, she felt like she was doing a dirty deed and that it was pornography that had arrived in her mailbox instead of movie magazines. Once inside she ducked furtively behind the counter to look through them.

If there was anything that annoyed Karen, it was France and small children, and this month on the cover of every magazine she subscribed to was the Francophile father of two, Jake Morgan. Karen was mad at France because of its romantic reputation, and small children worried her because she didn't have any of her own. But Morgan couldn't get

through a single interview without talking about France and how adorable his two kids were. Sure enough, in the article she was flipping through, there was a Morgan quote in large print: *People are always saying that I defected and became French, but it's not true – I'm an American. I just keep a house in France because my kids are half-French.*

Karen wanted to explain to him that since he spent fifty weeks a year in France and two weeks a year in the United States, people were probably justified in believing he had moved to France. Not that he would listen to her.

The customers would be arriving soon, so Karen hid the magazines behind a stack of plates. The Delivery Entrance coffee shop was only a few blocks away from the community college. Karen had lost some business when they built the big bookstore café in the McDonalized section of town at the top of the hill, but the college crowd still came to the Delivery Entrance. And there were always the old regulars, like Mal. Well, other than the students, Mal was really her *only* old regular.

Back when Mal had first started coming into the shop, it had been impossible not to notice that he was wearing clown make-up. He did his act between showings at the failing old movie house downtown and had offered her free passes. Never trust a clown, she had thought at first, especially one in charge of the entertainment in that empty place. But she had been wrong. Mal had freely shared his collection of vintage movie magazines with her, and they were interested in the same current stuff about the celebs – not the gossip, which was all made up anyway, but the stuff like what kind of video games the stars played and what they were thinking about when they went to Lakers' games.

As the afternoon customers began wandering into the shop, Karen stood at the counter and scrutinized them. She always looked for just one person who wasn't with someone else, and it seemed she always looked in vain. An impossibly skinny girl walked in with a green-eyed, dark-skinned baby balanced on her hip. Karen tried not to notice how beautiful the baby was while she made the iced coffee the girl ordered. The girl dug two dollars out of her purse, then gave it to the baby. The baby leaned forward proffering the money, and Karen took it from the tiny hand, trying to smile as though she had been able to find this cute.

The rest of the afternoon was typical – a slow but steady stream of people that diminished to a trickle as evening approached. The shop became almost empty near five o'clock following a giant exodus of customers. These exoduses were a frequent phenomenon at the shop, and they were puzzling. As Mal entered the shop Karen said "Listen to this Horatio Rose bullshit about Kate Banesworth," reading from one of the magazines:

Horatio Rose can't hide how he feels. He sighs, 'I'm in love with her. It's heavenly when you're falling for someone and you can't stop thinking about her.'

She rolled her eyes and Mal shook his head.

On the bulletin board at the college there were so many announcements for the premiere at Logansville that Karen couldn't find a bare spot for a Delivery Entrance flyer. There was another board nearby with plenty of room on it, but it belonged to the Communications Department. Karen looked at it more closely. "Pyramid of Basic Survival" it said in big letters at the top. She suddenly recalled that this was where she had seen the information about touch before she had read about it in her book. At the base of the pyramid were air, sleep, food and sex. Sex was touch. But was the pyramid trying to say that sex was necessary to procreate further human creatures, or that the *contact* of sex was necessary for survival? Probably it meant both. After all, lacking any of those basic things on the bottom of the pyramid involved personal pain. Hunger and suffocation were severe internal pains. Weariness was a pain that pulled down on you. But lack of touch was a sensation of painful *push*, a feeling of desperate hope that something would pull you toward it. Something you couldn't see. There was always an element of time involved with these things, too. It didn't take long to starve or suffocate or die of thirst. What happened with touch? How much time did she have left?

Teenagers and early twenty-somethings milled all around her in the hall. A class must have just let out. A number of the students walked together in couples, arms and hands resting on each other. Karen thought enviously about how they didn't even need to try. Mates just gravitated toward one another at that age in an automatic process.

Over the past few years Karen had realized that natural mating season was over past a certain age. And once the season was over, the night problems started. You'd be lying in bed, filling up with sleep and dreaming, and then in an instant the panic would fill you instead and you'd be wide awake. You saw images from years past and the years ahead. You couldn't see a lover in any of them, or any children. There was death in these thoughts, and it was approaching faster than you might expect. You hardened yourself against it by thinking about the gourmet coffee blends to be ordered from the supplier the next day, the rejection slip to be collected from the editors of a poetry magazine. Then you turned over and tried again to sleep. The next morning, you woke up knowing that getting through the day was, as Mal had said, about the gimmicks. All the evidence indicated that something major had ended in your life, or perhaps had failed to ever start. But life itself went on, like frames of a movie that all the characters had fallen out of.

Karen recalled her task and walked away from the survival pyramid. As she took a Logansville flyer off the board to replace it with her coffee shop ad, a man walked by and she heard him say hi. She was flustered for a moment, and made a sound halfway between a grunt and a "hi," unintelligible and ineffective. She was not quite sure he had been talking to her, but once he was gone she realized there had been no one else around. Stupid of her.

Done putting up the flyer, she walked back to her car and shut the door. It was completely dark now and the cloud cover made it even darker, though pleasant weather had been forecast for the premiere this weekend. Before driving away she thought of a few things she could do at the shop so she didn't have to go home yet. Then her failure to say hello to the man in the school came back into her mind. She slapped herself in the face, a quick, hard slap. It surprised her, and she looked around to make sure no one had seen.

"So, are you nervous about tomorrow?" Mal asked as he got himself an ashtray from behind the counter. It was evening, the crowd had dissipated, and Mal sat down to read his incendiary underground political journals while Karen did the clean up. There had been very few customers all day, so there wasn't much to do.

“Not really,” Karen said. “What are the chances they’ll even let me have an autograph. Everyone must have been at home drawing plans for the premiere the next day, figuring out what group of friends to go with,ph? I’ll just get jostled around by the crowd, get pissed off and drive home without even seeing Morgan or Rose. So no, I guess you could say I’m not that nervous, because what’s to be nervous about?”

That wasn’t the whole truth, though. It was true she didn’t feel nervous, but she wasn’t calm either.

Karen picked up a magazine, sat down with Mal, and flipped through the pages

“Why do I punish myself with this stuff, Mal?” she said.

He shrugged. “Pandora’s box.”

“I’m the punch line of a million jokes an hour,” she said, dropping the magazine back onto the table. “Women like me are always made into villains in movies.”

“Or they become stalkers,” Mal said.

“It’s sort of like I’m imploding in on myself – like those dense stars – what are those called? Are those white dwarfs or something?”

“I don’t remember my junior high science.” He blew smoke out of his mouth in that impatient way that meant he wanted her to be quiet so that he could continue reading. She gave up on conversation and found an article she hadn’t read yet on Jake Morgan. The title of the article was *Jake Morgan Attributes His Success*, and on the page was a photo of Morgan and his French girl, Valentina, with their two children. Valentina was so thin that Karen could see the majority of her skeletal structure, and she had no breasts. She was carrying their daughter, but you could only see the back of the little girl’s head, which was covered with blonde ringlets. She wore a little sundress. Their infant son was tucked into a stroller with a pacifier in his mouth and Morgan was pushing it. The caption under the photo said that they were going on a picnic in a London park. Further down the page, Morgan talked about the filming of *Lancelot*: “*It’s probably the most centered and content I’ve ever been, because everything comes from home and emotion and what you’re living in. When we started making this movie my girl was 3½, a great relationship. My little boy was just in the throes of the caveman period and hilarious.*”

Karen wondered what it would be like to have a little boy in the throes of the caveman period. Awful. And wonderful. She thought about her apartment, which was the smallest she could find but still seemed too big for her. She thought about the stained carpet, the broken TV, the night panics. It was true. Everything came from home and emotion and what you were living in.

Maybe tomorrow she would see Jake Morgan and Valentina together. Their kids might even be with them. She might either learn something transcendent by witnessing their brilliant happiness, or it might rip her apart, like these magazines did. Even if she did get Jake to touch her, what was it that she hoped would happen? Nothing would change.

Mal was laughing and she looked at him to find out what was funny. He handed her the journal he'd been reading. On the last page only two disembodied words had been printed, apparently the end of a sentence that wouldn't fit on the previous page: "impending disaster."

"Ready for tomorrow?" Mal asked her with a mischievous grin. She nodded and stood up to turn out some of the lights. Life was a series of gimmicks and jokes, and tomorrow was one of the gimmicks. Later might come a joke.

The sponsor of the Horatio Rose contest had paid to renovate a historic Logansville theater called the Biltmore. Karen remembered just a few months ago coming to downtown Logansville to shop, and the theater had still been boarded up. She had peeked between the boards and there had been the glimpse of gilt surfaces in the foyer and a musty smell that was a reminder of past entertainment. She had seen a single floodlight shining in the auditorium, a tentative suggestion that what was dead could somehow be brought back. Now, as she walked toward the center of town, the smells were new and perfumed, and the atmosphere was festival-like. All along the side streets were vendors selling T-shirts and hot dogs.

A crowd made up mostly of women had gathered behind what appeared to be miles of rope along the street that passed in front of the Biltmore. Police and security personnel were milling around in front of the lines. Since the crowd was so spread out along the street, it wasn't as thick and impenetrable as Karen had feared it would be. It seemed she might be able to make her way to the front of the ropes.

As she walked closer to investigate, at first all she could hear were excited murmurs from the crowd, but then she began to detect an angry tone underneath the surface buzz. There were two women on the edge of the crowd talking loudly, and Karen eavesdropped while pretending to dig in her purse for money to buy a T-shirt.

“And they didn’t even bother to say that Morgan wasn’t coming until an hour ago?” one woman said with her hands on her hips.

“Nope. Guess our town just isn’t good enough for him,” said the other one, shaking her head. “Well, at least Rose is enough of a man to honor his commitments.”

Karen felt stunned. She retreated to the side streets and sat on a curb. What had she been thinking? Of course Jake Morgan hadn’t come. He was the master of coy celebrity evasion. He would never have left France and Valentina and their kids. He never attended anything that wasn’t absolutely necessary, though he always had a gracious excuse. Who could blame him? No one who had a home in the south of France would want to come to some lousy premiere in Logansville.

Karen wondered if she should just turn around and drive home. But she didn’t want to face Mal, and she didn’t want to sit in her apartment for the rest of the day wishing she had stayed at the premiere. A female security guard walked by.

“Are you all right?” the guard asked. She looked worried.

“Yes, fine,” Karen said, and tried to smile. The guard smiled back and moved on.

This was ridiculous. She must have looked so stricken that the guard thought she was going through some kind of serious crisis. This whole thing wasn’t *that* big a deal. She would just have to try to get Horatio Rose to sign her hand instead of Jake Morgan. In a way, it might be easier. Faced with Morgan standing in front of her, she’d be over-awed, but she didn’t care one way or the other about Horatio’s signature. And it wouldn’t be so disappointing when she failed to get the autograph.

She made her way back to the crowd and started carving a path toward the front. She excused herself politely at times, and at other times gave little shoves. Women glared at her and cursed her rudeness, but she didn’t care. Throughout her life she had rarely been rude, and she felt she had a right to it today. Her aim was to get near the main entrance of the theater, though there were women there who had

camped outside all night. Karen was afraid they might punch her in the face if she tried to dislodge any of them from their positions, but after careful maneuvering she managed to find a tiny spot in front of the ropes by wedging herself sideways. She sucked in her breath to make herself as small as possible.

Having secured her position, she took the sharpie out of her purse. But as she looked around, she saw that every woman in the crowd – especially the ones near the front – were also clutching pens and sharpies and photos. And right in front of Karen were two security guards. Just as she had thought, it was going to be impossible for her to get an autograph. All at once she felt relieved. She would just watch the stars go into the theater, and then she would go home. She could tell Mal she had tried. Having made this decision, she relaxed and watched the activity on the red carpet.

All kinds of people were now walking down the carpet and entering the theater. Many of them must have been crewmembers from the film. The crowd ignored them. After several minutes, the director and producer appeared, but the crowd only cheered half-heartedly. Horatio Rose was who they were really waiting for. Gazing down the line, Karen realized that the crowd could easily have overwhelmed the few security personnel. It wasn't force that held them all behind the line. It was just acceptance that Horatio and Kate had reached the dream and the rest of them hadn't.

Far down the street, the crowd began making a monstrous noise. No one near the theater could see that far, but they realized that this must be the signal that the stars had arrived, so they began to yell, too. As Horatio and Kate came into sight – only tiny dots in the distance at first – the screaming around Karen increased, and then continued to increase in volume as they drew closer. They were beaming and waving as they walked, and thousands of cameras flashed. When they got in front of the theater, they stopped and posed. They were young, happy and terribly beautiful.

Karen felt intoxicated by the sheer volume of noise coming from the crowd, and the cameras continued to flash at a fevered pace. Without knowing she had changed her mind, and without any concept of what she meant to do, she summoned a burst of energy, ducked under the rope and took a few steps forward. One of the guards grabbed her arm and started to pull her back behind the line. But a woman in an expensive looking pantsuit – she must have been a handler or publicist for Horatio – walked over and motioned for the guard to let go of Karen.

“That’s okay,” she said, flashing white teeth, “I wanted to bring someone out to get Horatio’s autograph, anyway. Let her come on out.”

Now that she had detached herself from the crowd, Karen was even more conscious of the amount of noise it was making. It was so loud she felt paralyzed. She felt as she had when she was plucked out of the audience at grade school events to be picked on by a magician or forced to recite a few lines. She wanted to explain that she had only lost her head for a moment and didn’t really want this attention after all. Her first burst of energy had left her and she looked stupidly at Horatio, unable to move. He and Kate were still standing outside the theater, waving. Horatio had an aloof expression on his face and stared off at a distant point. He might have been thinking about what furniture to buy for the new love nest in L.A. that he shared with Kate.

Karen continued to stand by the ropes, aware that she was clutching her sharpie the way a three-year-old walks around with a fat crayon in its hand.

“Go on,” the publicist said, clenching her teeth. “He’s going to sign some autographs now!”

Karen took a few stumbling steps forward. She noticed how clumsy her make-up was compared to Kate’s. Kate didn’t even look real. She was smiling, but it looked a little like a sneer, and she was covered with something shiny so that she seemed to actually be glowing. Karen was frozen again and now Kate was shaking her head and whispering something to Horatio. The crowd was starting to laugh and yell. The publicist walked toward Karen and took her by the arm. At first Karen thought that she was being escorted back to the crowd for her ineptitude, but then she saw that the publicist was pushing her toward Horatio. She realized that she was creating a public relations problem. The publicist wanted her to hurry up and get Horatio’s signature for the benefit of the crowd to show how charitable he was with his fans. By putting one fan in the spotlight, it would be a tribute to the many. Within a few hours, the fan websites would have photos up of the whole incident.

Karen was now inches away from Horatio, and the publicist let go of her arm. Horatio smiled, but he was still looking off in the distance somewhere. He took the sharpie from Karen. She put out her arm limply, thinking about the small, scaly patch of rash on her hand. She didn’t look up at Horatio. She felt her face burning

with shame and embarrassment. Horatio signed her arm, still smiling, one part of his hand brushing part of her arm. Then he leaned in close to her ear.

“Don’t worry about it,” he whispered, and patted her on the shoulder.

The lady behind the counter at Marcia Towers Spas Inc. told Karen that her Visa would be automatically charged each month. Karen couldn’t easily afford these monthly spa visits, but by cutting a few more corners she could manage. As she returned to the immaculate waiting area and sat down, women milled all around her – a smothering, pulsating womb of gender sameness. Several of them talked on their cell phones, connected to whomever it was they touched at night.

Karen looked at her watch, put the magazine she had been reading in her purse, and walked back to her usual room. The masseuse was a homely woman in her forties. She told Karen to lie down and placed hot rocks between her toes and fingers. Then she picked up a larger rock to press along Karen’s back. She started the massage, and her form became indistinct through the steam. Karen tried to relax. “Don’t worry about it,” Horatio had said. For a little while during these massages nothing worried her, but it was like a tiny sip of water when you were lying parched in the desert. New Age music was playing softly in the background, and on a big screen dreamy images of France faded in and out – ocean panoramas, provincial gardens and intimate cottages on the Mediterranean coast.



Stone Beast
Emily Dill

The Ball Game

Josh Meredith

As he dreamed of being a baseball player, he thought of the homeruns, the diving catches and the game-winning saves. His dad watched baseball every day and followed it until the season came to an end. Eventually he thought that he wanted to be just like his dad and decided that he too would watch the game. Then he got the great idea of going to the games and seeing the players not on television, but sitting so close that he could see the whites of their eyes. Yes, he dreamed of his first real game.

His dad promised to take him to a real game someday, and it finally came. The anticipation was killing him, and he couldn't take it any more. So finally, with his ball glove on, and his favorite player's jersey wrapping his body, he and his father took off for his first game.

When they arrived, the smell of hotdogs, popcorn, candy and soda filled the air. They ran around trying to find their seats, and all the while he tried so hard just to get a glimpse of the field. Finally they found the aisle and went to the seats; all he could see was green. He gazed at the magnificent sight with his eyes bulging out of his head. All he could think was how wonderful it was, just to see that this is where it really happens.

When the game started, all the players came out and he screamed for his team. As the innings passed, he dreamed even more of just playing one inning in the big leagues. As the seventh inning stretch came that wonderful jingle came over the loudspeaker. "Take me out to the ball game," he screamed, man how he loved that song. As the ninth inning came to a close his team went into the locker room and victory was on his mind. It was then that he asked his dad when the next time was that he would get to come to this very place again.



Green Card

Tommy Linville

I strive to find redemption,
within a distant land.
A dream that I've envisioned
across the Rio Grande.

The danger is colossal
but with bright Freedom's call
it crumbles into powder.
I'll run, I'll walk, I'll crawl.

My life may be the wages
of this recurring dream
but if I reach the summit
it changes everything.

Hunger, squalor, sickness
I'll cast them all aside.
The Land of Milk and Honey
attained with every stride.

I'll muster all my courage
to climb this prison wall.
Returning to this wasteland,
I fear that most of all.



Exodus

Tommy Linville

The early morning sun slowly began to invade the darkness in the tattered Greyhound bus depot. A warm southern breeze rustled the hair on the back of John Bradley's neck as he ascended the rickety staircase that led to the tiny ticket counter. He paused at the top of the stairs and took a deep breath. He closed his eyes and the faintest hint of a smile lightened his dark features. The New Year had brought a reprieve from the heavy snow and blistering cold that had blanketed the Mississippi River valley for the last two months. If this were any indication, 1947 would be a good year.

He gathered himself and made his way to the ticket window. He cringed as he handed the clerk the thirty-seven dollars needed to procure his voyage to Chicago, a full quarter of the total of his year-long savings plan. Somehow he read the ticket and smiled, casting off any thought for his future welfare. In a little over sixteen hours he would be caressing the streets of the Windy City, a million miles away from the cotton field and a mere second away from the classroom and the rest of his life. He collapsed in a chair and popped the cover of his sterling silver pocket watch: seven-thirty a.m., it was early, but John's day had already been long and physically taxing. He had worked in the field until an hour after sunset. True, it was January, but work on Mr. Johnson's farm was never done. He would invent things to do in order to keep a flock of 'idle Negroes' off his hands.

After work he had helped his mother, Miss Mattie Joe Bradley, finish supper, spent a little time with his eight younger brothers and sisters,, then settled in for a game of spades with George Jr., Sam, and Joe, his oldest friends, before finally finding his way to bed around eleven-thirty. That probably would not have been so bad if he did not have to wake up by four-thirty in order to walk the twelve miles into Dyersburg to catch the Freedom Express, the only north bound bus for miles with a colored section.

Seven-thirty. That meant that he still had two hours before the bus even arrived. He sighed and leaned his head back against the wall, but he promised that he would not go to sleep no matter what. This bus was much too important to miss.

John opened his eyes only to have them inundated with a torrent of solar brilliance. He slammed them shut and allowed twenty seconds for his pupils to fully dilate before reopening them. He blinked back the haze of sleep that still invaded from every side, yawned, and then glanced at his watch. It was nine twenty-seven, three minutes before the bus pulled away from the station. He sprang to his feet, stumbling in a circle as he groped for his meager belongings, his suitcase, his wide-brimmed, black hat, and most importantly, his bus ticket. He shoved the ticket into the breast pocket of his tattered tweed jacket and sprinted for the northbound bus.

He bounded the steps, proudly presented the driver with his ticket and turned to find a seat. Much to his dismay, all the seats in the colored section were full with the exception of one. The only seat was at the very back of the bus next to a haggard-looking light-skinned man with his face shrouded by a dark green army jacket. The only means John had to surmise his color was from the color of the lanky fingers on the scabbed and blistered hand that held the jacket to the man's head. John gingerly moved toward the back of the bus while being careful not to brush against any of the passengers in the white section. He reached his destination, stowed his suitcase and hat in the overhead compartment, and eased into the seat.

As if the bus had been held just for him, as soon as John took his seat the door swung shut, the engine roared to life, and the bus headed toward Highway 104, the first leg of its northern route.

Ten minutes into the voyage, John settled into the seat and prepared to take a nap when a deep earthy voice cascaded from under the army jacket.

"Are we out of Dyersburg yet?"

John snapped to attention. He had almost forgotten that anyone else was even on the bus, he was in his own little world, daydreaming about the future.

"We just crossed the city limits," John replied groggily. "In just over an hour we'll be out of Tennessee."

"Good," the mysterious stranger muttered, as he removed the jacket to reveal a hard, handsome profile.

John extended his hand to his neighbor and said, "Pardon me for not speaking sooner. I thought you were asleep. My name's John Bradley. My friends call me J.B."

“Pleased to meet ya’, Jonathon Lee Black. Most folks call me Jon L. And for your information,” Jon lowered his voice to a whisper, “I wasn’t asleep, I was hidin’.”

J.B. smiled. “I guess we’re pretty much on this bus to escape our former lives then.”

Jon nodded. “I’m really just tryin’ to get somewhere where I can be a man, and not just some dirty nigger. These Tennessee Peckerwoods ain’t gonna let me do it so I figure I better get myself up north before I wind up as a life-sized Christmas tree ornament. Spent four years in the service so them bastards could keep this country goin’ and all I got out of it was this.” Jon turned his face to reveal a fresh shiner under his left eye.

J.B. shuddered. “I’m sorry to hear that brother. You mind if I ask what happened?” Jon waved him off. “It was nothin’. I’ve talked on myself long enough. Why you tryin’ to get outta here?”

A broad smile flashed across John’s face as he said, “I’m headed to Chicago to go to college. I plan on being a certified schoolteacher in a little over a year. Then I’ll come back down here and try to educate some of the poor kids around here, you know, give them a chance to make something of themselves. I don’t think we’ll ever get a piece of the American pie until we stop chopping cotton and start reading books.”

Jon cut his eyes at J.B. with a look of restrained indignation. “You need to go on with that Booker T. Washington bull. He may not have been too wrong with the whole, ‘Be a good little nigger and do what you’re told and maybe, just maybe, in about one hundred and fifty years, your kids can have all the rights that should have been yours at birth.’ But let me tell ya’, I’ve tried that already. I registered for the service, voluntarily, when I was twenty years old, thinkin’ that if I was a good soldier and fought with honor, the black folks back home might get a fairer shake at things. I was wrong and so were the millions of other boys just like me that thought the same thing...”

“But it is getting better,” J.B. interjected. “It’s not good right now, but because of what you guys did overseas it is better now than it was in the thirties. Even you have to admit that.”

Jon shifted his whole body in the seat so that he could fully face J.B. He pounded his fist on his knee and after quickly glancing around to see if he had brought attention to himself he spat in a hushed shout, “I will not admit it’s getting better, not down here! I waded through blood and guts in Iwo Jima. I dodged bullets and fought toe-to-toe with the Japs in Guadalcanal. In all the battles I fought I never turned my

back and ran from the enemy. You know where it got me... I'll tell ya. I had to watch a man that I carried on my back to safety receive the Medal of Honor after he had froze up and got half our company killed. Even after that I still believed in the good of the white man; so I went back and fought some more. That time I almost got my leg blown off three months before the war ended. I've been in the hospital trying to regain my strength until last Tuesday.

They sent me home to Ridgeley. I got off the bus and walked into Wilkins' General Store to get some food for my mama. I guess I thought my uniform would make me invincible 'cause I told a white woman her dress was pretty and she got pissed off and told her husband I made a pass at her. Don't get me wrong, she was a looker, and I would've bent her over in a minute if I didn't have a wife at home, but that's beside the point.

I went home and Mama had just started supper when the Night Riders came up sayin' they was gonna string me up for insultin' that bitch at the store. I had never turned tail and ran in a fight before, but I had to that night. The lives of my entire family were at stake.

I ran all night long, through swamps and bottoms and fields. The pepper in my shoes barely kept the bloodhounds off me. Finally, I was tired, plum wore out, and I stopped at the Richards' house. Luckily, Mrs. Richards, the widow of my old straw boss, who was the only good-hearted white man I ever met, let me in and hid me in her basement until this morning. She even bought my ticket and drove me into town under the hay in the bottom of her wagon. I have to leave or else if I wait for the whites to accept me as a human being, I'll be dead before sundown tonight."

J.B. felt like a fool. It seemed that the world had not been so kind to Jon after all. "I'm sorry," J.B. muttered after a long pause. "I didn't realize you had been through so much. But as far as I'm concerned it's too early to give up yet. I plan to live my life according to the famous quote from Booker T.'s famous 'Atlanta Compromise Address.' I plan to "go out and be a center, to a whole community, when the opportunity comes, when I may give life where there is no life, hope where there is no hope, power where there is no power." And the only way I can see to do that without rivers of blood being shed is to, "begin in a humble way, and work to build up institutions that will put our people on their feet."

I have very little faith in the white community, nor in a great deal of the black community as well, but I know for an absolute fact that an educated black man is a mighty force to be reckoned with; stronger than any fist and more lethal than any bullet.” “Amen to that.” I can tell you’re a smart brother so I’ll counter your quote with one of my own.

Before I joined the army, I was a Pullman porter for the Dixie Railroad Company from the time I was fifteen years old. I was at the BSCP, you know, the porter’s union convention in ’39 when ol’ Philip Randolph spoke, and these words will eternally be burned in my head. They have guided my every step for the last eight years. ‘Salvation for a race, nation, or class must come from within. Freedom is never granted; it is won. Justice is never given; it is exacted. Freedom and justice must be struggled for by the oppressed of all lands and races, and the struggle must be continuous.’”

J.B. sat silently for a moment, turning A. Philip Randolph’s timeless words over in his mind. “Wow,” he said.

“Exactly!” Jon playfully slapped J.B.’s arm, “See,” he said, “I’m not just some dumb jiggaboo, I made good use of every opportunity I’ve had to learn. I just don’t talk proper ‘cause like the owner of my mama’s farm used to say, ‘A nigger is a nigger, even if you whitewash him.’”

J.B. could not hold his laughter, he bellowed out in a torrent of laughter that filled the entire passenger compartment. He composed himself and whispered to Jon, “That reminds me of what my old boss always said, “Kill a mule I’ll buy another. Kill a nigger I’ll hire another.”

The smile faded from J.B.’s face as sorrow crept in. “He sure didn’t mind killing us either. He killed one of my favorite cousins last summer because he got heat stroke from working too hard in the field. He put him down like a worthless animal.”

Jon tentatively placed his hand on J.B.’s shoulder. “Hopefully all that’s behind ya,” he said with an empathetic smile. “Don’t look to the past, keep your eyes focused on the future. That’s the only way you’ll ever survive.”

The bus slowed to a stop in Madisonville, Kentucky. The last four hours had simply flown by. The driver announced that there would be a four-hour delay in

Madisonville to refuel and pick up new passengers before the journey continued. The next stop would be in Evansville, Indiana. In a little under six hours they would have reached the north at last.

J.B. grabbed a quick bite to eat and took a short nap while he waited for the layover to come to an end. Jon, on the other hand, paced and smoked, then sat briefly before resuming his walking and smoking routine. When the boarding call was finally sounded, he was the first one on the bus.

Jon finally slept once the wheels of the bus began turning again. J.B. watched Jon sleep and quietly thanked the Lord that he was not as disheartened as Jon was before turning to the pages of W.E.B. DuBois' *The Souls of Black Folks*. It was the third time that he had read it, but it got better every time.

The bus finally reached Evansville. Jon and J.B. were both glad and surprised to see the "Colored Only" signs come down. Perhaps, out of a mixture of fear and familiarity, they decided to stay in the back of the bus anyway.

Jon took in a deep breath, then turned to J.B. and asked, "You smell that?"

"Smell what?" J.B. replied.

"That, my friend, is the sweet smell of freedom."

J.B. chuckled. "Yeah, it does smell pretty sweet, doesn't it? Where are you headed, again, Jon L.? I don't think you ever told me."

"I'll be leaving you when we get to Indianapolis," Jon replied as he removed a postcard and a newspaper clipping from his back pants pocket.

"This is where I plan to make a life for myself." He handed J.B. the postcard with the picture of a beautiful town square complete with a prominent white steeple at the far end reaching effortlessly toward the heavens.

"Martinsville, huh? I've never heard of it."

"One of the white guys in my platoon grew up there. He was always telling me how nice it was so I wrote to the Chamber of Commerce while I was in the hospital. They sent me this card and a copy of their newspaper."

"How many of us live there?"

"It's a pretty small town, a couple thousand people all together, at the most, so I'm guessin' not too many. It's close enough to Indianapolis, though, so it should be all right."

“Do you have work lined up?”

“Yeah, I found an ad in the paper so I wrote to a guy who owns a car shop and he said he would teach me to work on cars. He said he would do anything to help out a vet.”

J.B. was happy to hear that things may finally be working out for Jon.

Jon reached into his breast pocket and brought a faded picture. “This is my wife, Yvette,” he said, with the unmistakable ring of pride in his voice. “We’ve got a six-month-old little girl name Eliza. I’m gonna work and save my money until I can bring ‘em up here too.”

“That’s great, Jon L.,” J.B. exclaimed. “I can’t afford to bring my wife and son, Peter, to Chicago with me, but I will be sending them every dime I can spare. A year is a long time to be apart but I think we can make it.”

Jon smiled and said, “I’m counting on you too. The children of Dyer County need a strong brother like you.”

They laughed and Jon produced a small piece of paper. He wrote down his mother’s address on it and the phone number of the Wilkens’ General Store. “When you get settled in Chicago call my wife,” he said as he shoved the paper into J.B.’s open palm. “By then I should be settled too and we can write to each other and keep in touch. I wanna know first hand how the Booker T. philosophy is working for ya.”

J.B. nodded his approval. He never thought this interstate quest for enlightenment would provide a friend so soon. He tucked the paper into his pocket, and as if on cue, the bus glided to a stop at Union Station in Indianapolis.

Jon stood and put on his jacket, picked up the hand-made knapsack that held only two changes of clothes and a razor, and extended his hand to J.B. “I am very pleased to have met ya’, John Bradley, and if God is good enough to grant me one small wish, we will cross paths again.”

J.B. smiled as he firmly gripped Jon’s hand. “Amen to that.”

Jon returned J.B.’s smile, then stepped out into the snow-swept Indiana landscape.

J.B. continued on to Chicago and moved into the quaint dormitory of the Fulworth Educational Institute. His first order of business was to write to Mrs. Jonathan Lee Black to learn of his new friend’s success.

He found a letter in his mailbox three months later with a postmark that read, Ridgely, Tennessee. He hurried to his room and tore open the envelope.

Jon had made his way to Martinsville without delay, but it seemed that his correspondence to the Chamber of Commerce failed to inform him of the strong Ku Klux Klan presence in the Martinsville area at that time. The sight of his black face in the pristine town square was enough to produce a frenzy of hatred that would ultimately cost him his life.

Jon's body was found hanging from an oak tree in rural Morgan County the next morning, stripped, castrated, and burned. He was dead before J.B. even made it to Chicago.

J.B. was devastated. He vowed to do everything in his power to see that Jon's widow was taken care of, and he made good on that promise. After finishing school, he returned to Dyer County and moved Yvette and Eliza Black into his own home with his own family.

Who would have thought that nearly twenty years after those two men's bus ride that J.B.'s eldest son and Jon L.'s only daughter would fall in love and get married.

The lives of my two grandfathers, one militant, one academic, guided me through the rest of my days, through the civil rights struggle of the sixties to the hip-hop era of today.

It appears that they were the physical embodiment of the most famous excerpt from the writing of W.E.B. DuBois: "One ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."

I think I felt this two-ness more than the average brother. My paternal grandfather inspired me to become active in the Rainbow/Push Coalition during the time I was pursuing a double doctorate in Education and African-American Studies, while my maternal grandfather inspired me to join the Black Panther Party in the early seventies. All I can say is, "Power to the People," and "Keep hope alive."



Tuesday Night

Shayna Wolfe

And he says he loves me. Does he really mean it? How can he possibly know? John walks in. I can't stand this egocentric idiot, always clamoring for attention, buying his friends with his mother's bank account. I can't wait till he leaves. Kiss him again, and then go to class.

Check my messages. It's Kevin calling me shady for not answering my phone. Will his paranoia ever stop? Walk into the bar. He pours me the stiffest drink. It tastes like shit, but I pretend to be appreciative. He tells me I have to hang out with him tonight. He sips Crown and Sprite in the comer between taking drink orders and hitting on girls. He must be wasted. I sit down. This guy I have never seen before tries to spark conversation. I'm not interested, too stressed out. He gets the hint and leaves. Kevin is still being an ass, so I leave.

Walk in the door. Phone rings. It's Kevin. He wants me to come back to the bar. I smoke to calm my nerves and then drive back. Walk in. Some people are grinding on the dance floor, looking desperate for attention. He's even drunker now, more hostile with his words. After the second rude comment he makes, I head for the door...again. Why the hell did I come back here in the first place?

Walk in the door, turn on the news, and fall asleep. I wake up. There's someone at the door. It's 4:30 a.m. It's Kevin, still drunk, apologetic. We fall asleep.



Clouds

N. Fay-Lesley

Sittin and Reflectin Down At Zaharakos

April Lynne Wolfe-Scott

Sittin and reflectin
down at Zaharakos;
through the years
that's where we'd go.

Where patrons came to quench
a Green River sized-thirst
or for a grilled cheesebr-ger to go
in a white bag with chips.
In the dining room
dangled a secession of little feet
from the special kid-sized
parlor chairs' coveted seats.

The story goes that in 1900
three Greek brothers
shared a dream to cross the sea.
In Midwest America
they discovered Columbus,
an Athens, with many spires
rising between
Brown County hills
and Hoosier cornfields.

Lewie, James, and
Pete opened an ice cream parlor
which proudly bore their family name,
on a downtown street
named for their new country's
first president.

In the parlor they inserted
some European charm --
a Tiffany lamp, and a
marble and onyx soda counter
that had graced the St. Louis World's Fair.

Young men in long white aprons,
smiles and crisp paper hats
would quickly greet their
customers dressed in
turn-of-century finery.
The brothers' shoppe was a sure stop
following a play
round the corner
at the Crump Theater.

They sipped Coca-Cola
that shared the menu
with other calorie-filled delights.

Sittin and reflectin
down at Zaharakos;
through the years
that's where we'd go.

After school or after the game
The brothers' German pipe organ
would play a cheerful tune
and spinning stools
would fill with
blue and white fans seeking
the grilled cheesebr-gers
resembling no other.

My Dad, still carrying
shrapnel from the war,
settled down with Mom
in a log home on the county line
to care for Grandpa Marion.
Their trips to town to the A&P
in a turquoise Mercury with wings
were interspersed
with stops at *The Greeks*
for the brothers'
famous fountain drinks.

Then Dad pinned on a badge,
a policeman--like his Dad.
He moved our family
to a big white Queen Anne
within the city limits.

Dad and Mom
had four little ones now in tow
window shopping,
down Washington Street
they'd stop at Nagel's Store

for a newspaper in '63
that headlined John-John's brave salute
to a president he called Daddy
destined to be forever young.

We had quarters to drop in
the organ grinder's cup,
to eye his monkey jiggin'
at the end of a lease.
There were strange x-rays boxes
in which to insert our feet
at Tovey's Shoes
on a stop for
my black patent leather shoes.

My brother and I
would weigh in together
on the big scales at
Murphy's Five & Ten
where the best things like
Barbie, jingle jumps, and super balls
were kept in the basement.
Nice days we'd skip a lot
among the visitor's camera shots
of the bronzed creatures and flora
of the Irwins' Pompeii-inspired
Fifth Street gardens.
All this shopping and activity
called for a refreshment break,
at the little ice cream parlor.

Once inside the door,
were glossy postcards of City shots,
a Zaharako or two,
colorful candies in little bins,
chocolate malts, as sweet as sin.
ice cream, oreos and crackers,
a coney dog for brother Roger,
and a grilled cheesebr-ger,
please, for me.

Mom sat at the big-people table;
with Dad at work
her bags from Dianna's Dress Shop
occupied the other seat;
We sat in the little parlor chairs
until we grew so tall--
that when we tried to sit again
our knees now met our chin.

Sittin and reflectin
down at Zaharakos;
through the years
that's where we'd go.

In middle school
following ballgames
at Pearl Street gym
in pigtails and braces
with two straws
we'd share a malt
with our puppy love.
Holiday bound relatives
from up Kokomo way
would visit here each year
and beg to see the
festive décor
the brothers' shop bore.
We wave to our friend Dave,
he's four feet tall of rockin'
music ambition,
here with his family -regulars all.
They're chit-chatin' with
Ann Zaharako on our
Indiana weather.
And I passed down in succession
while babysittin' Rhonda
my freckled two-foot niece,
my little metal parlor seat.

At sweet sixteen
we girls rolled up
out front in my
tangerine GTO
with the car radio blaring,
Jim Croce's
"Time In A Bottle".
We put two nickels
in the parking meter
and ordered lunch
to celebrate our first
after-school jobs.
There were quick looks
in the giant mirror
for anything
remainin' in our teeth
and to refresh the
smeared *pot of gloss*
smellin' fruity
on our lips.

It seems like just a week
has passed when I pop in
and tell Lew of future plans
with one named Dan
who had engaged my heart.
Lew says with a grin,
"I know him,
he's been my--
coney hold the sauce,
since he was ten"

Sittin' and reflectin'
down at Zaharakos;
through the years
that's where we'd go.

Twenty-one years
of our lives
had reflected back at us
from the ice cream parlor's
mirrored walls;
by the end of
the one big fight
Dan and I ever had;
and over what--we had forgot.
After the fun of making up
we sat down for lunch
and told Lew to
hold the mustard on
our own little Jon-Jon's hotdog.

On our son's sixth birthday
it was here too,
that his chipmunk-cheeks filled
and turned abruptly pink
when they met their match -
a pack of green striped trick candles
a flamin' on his cake.
A Cabbage Patch astronaut
was in attendance at the party,
and smiled transfixedly at
the gift-wrapped he-man characters
as each emerged from their
foil and tissue paper cocoons.

Sittin' and reflectin'
down at Zaharakos;
through the years
that's where we'd go.

Downtown a week before
his high school graduation
Jon asked me, his Mom
to lend a hand
to find the perfect golden band
to slip upon Dee's ring finger.

The little parlor's glass front door
looked out on a new century of
futuristic technologies and ancient
greed.
Middle East woes were
altering Midwest dreams aplenty.

Our Jon informs us of his desire
to be among the country's finest.
We with Dee and our future Marine,
share hopes and worries,
over our thousandth
grilled cheesebr-ger.
Long days are followed
by longer anxious nights
but God doesn't blink and
our Jon returns home
all six-feet intact.
He takes a job
on the world-wide web
to support his Dee and
the next grilled cheesebr-ger
patron to be.

They choose to name
their red-haired son,
Audie Murphy
for there was sure to have
come down through family genes
a patriotic attitude
a pumpin' in his veins.
They would boast it
was Sam Simmemaker's
Holy Cow that gave
their kid that untamed
lick above his left temple.

One hundred years
have come and gone, and
a million feet or more
have entered the little
ice cream parlor
since three Greek brothers
shared their dream
and famous cheesebr-ger recipe.

Three-year old Audie checks out
his little parlor seat for size;
previously warmed by his genetic up line.
He relishes the coney dogs
and scoops of butter pecan ice cream.
His parents joined us after
shopping at the Commons Mall,
one quick cell call was all it took.
They laughed when Dan and I
uttered in unison,
"You'll find us
where we're always at!"

Sittin' and reflectin'
down at Zaharakos;
through the years
that's where we'd go.

Little Audie's Dad
had held a job out of state
just four short months;
when Dan, I and destiny
took a picturesque drive
out West State Road 46;
where a cooler breeze was blowing
that caused the autumn leaves
to wrinkle upon the ground;
and our aging joints to ache.
The state park's deer herd
was in search of food
now much scarcer in supply
and they wandered down
the road's white center line.
Dan and I sung offbeat
in our new SUV
to the song, "The Dance"
on radio station K-O-R-N.
We missed the scared look
frozen in our high beams
of the poor animal's eyes.
Witnesses a mile east of
Gnawbone Grocery
were said to hear
the screeching of our
new brakes.
The tragic scene was awash
in whirling emergency lights even
before Garth could finish his tune.

Sittin' and reflectin'
down at Zaharakos;
through the years
that's where we'd go.

The following spring
a robin pecks at a stuck twig
in the engraved sidewalk bricks
outside the front door
of the ice cream parlor.
A breeze ushers
our Jon and his family
back to the maroon chairs
in the mirrored dining hall
once again.

The pipe organ begins to play
a very happy tune, --it knows.
(Dan squeezes my hand),
when we see little Audie
sitting in his parlor chair,
with his Easter eggs and treats
from the annual Donner Park hunt
scattered round the table top.
He has a firm grip upon
his grilled cheesebr-ger
his tongue stuck out
to catch each drip
of the oozing cheese.
He pipes up and says,
"*When my sister is born in September
can we drive back to town,
I promise she can have first pick
of the little parlor chairs.*"
Dee wipes his little chin of
Butter Pecan drip
as well as a tear from her
Big Marine's cheek.

When it's time for them to leave
our Jon kneels down to help
his little guy with the zipper
of his bright yellow *Sponge Bob* jacket,
and spies him blow two kisses
toward the reflections
in the mirror.

*(Grandpa Dan and I
touch our cheek, smile
and blow one back.)*

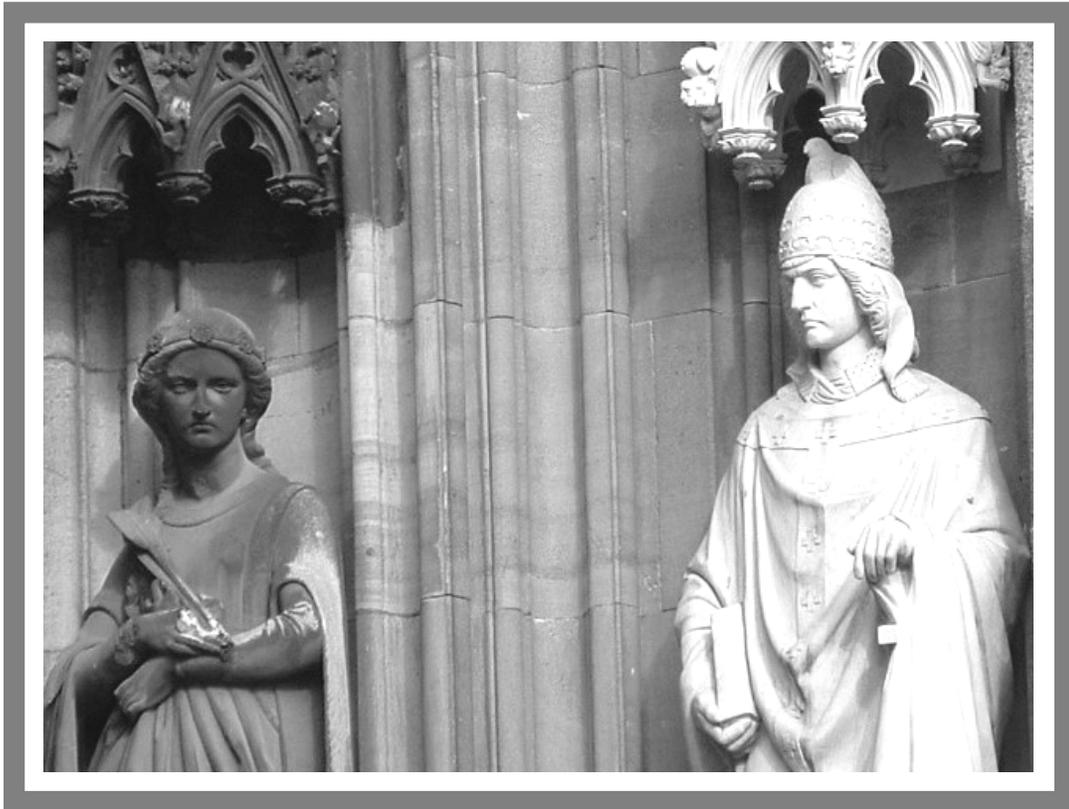
Jon said "Hey partner,
those kisses flew way past my cheek"
*"No, Dad,
my kisses hit their mark!"*

(We heard our Jon question)
"Well, for who then were they intended, sport?"
(We heard little Audie then set his Daddy straight)
"Grandma and Grandpa, you know
where they're always at!"

Dee overheard and
took little Audie's hand
leading him to the door
where he stopped to place
his last marshmallow bunny
in his big friend
Lew Zaharako's aging hand.

Audie's Dad stood up slowly
and turned toward
the large mirrored reflecting wall
revealing a tear-streaked cheek
and whispered under a quick wink,
"We'll be back soon
with the new baby,
and for so long
as there is a Zaharako
to open the front door
and share their special recipe.

Sittin' and reflectin'
down at Zaharakos



Dirty Woman
Emily Dill

GRANDMA ROSE

Sherry Traylor

Faded paper from the past
where frames once lined the walls.
Creaks escape the old wood floor
as I roam the halls.
I close my eyes and see your face
with memories held so dear.
And still I shed a tear for you
and wish that you were here.

THE HOMEMAKER

Sherry Traylor

The underwear lies by the bathroom door
Mud tracks on my clean kitchen floor
Dirty dishes lie around
Piles of clothes litter the ground
The battle of the left up toilet seat
Private trials a homemaker must defeat...

Runner of errands, and doer of deeds
Weathering storms and fulfilling all needs,
Paying of bills, finishing tasks,
Walking the dog, going to bed last.
Who is this superperson, this wonder of life?
By gender a woman,
by luck your mom,
by love your wife.

THINGS I COULD NOT DO

Sherry Traylor

When I was young.....
I could not touch the stove
I could not work machines
I could not walk alone
I could not talk in church
I could not say "no"
but heard it a lot

When I was older.....
I had to clean the stove
I had to run the machines
I had to walk the dog
I had to sing in church
I could say "no," but said "yes"
and was sorry.

When I got old.....
I left the stove on
I broke the machines
I could not walk alone
I could not hear in church
I heard no, pretended not to,
smiled, and did it anyway.



Frustration

Sarah Smith

You know what really gets under my skin, writing a story that you are looking forward to sharing and then having it shot down? I write and I write and nothing that I create is ever good enough! The reactions are always the same; "It sounds like something I've heard before. "Be more original". "Write about something that is humorous or overly dramatic." Aren't you supposed to write about what moves you, what comes from deep within?

When I was little, I carried an imagination so broad and full, it took a body low to the ground and fast feet to get where I wanted to go. I knew what true passion was, and I knew what I wanted to create and every detail that would make it sing. I knew life and the characteristics of the people who were to live it to the fullest. I had passion and I had desire. I could sit and write about anything I wanted, and it was the most intriguing story my teachers had ever read. I was excelling and it felt good to fly with the eagles! My English teacher asked me to be on the newspaper staff and create articles. I was on the yearbook staff and many other groups. I read to my heart's content and helplessly went where the Author dared me to go. I lived in my own world, and nothing could ever hurt me there or take me hostage.

On April the seventh my world started to die. Everywhere I looked there were small steady salted drops falling around me, flooding me in, and leaving me no room to escape. I started moving my legs, swimming through the pain-stricken stares, desperately trying to find reverence. I found a room. It was a silent and isolated room with familiar faces greeting me with mournful tears. There I saw her lying in the bed and I was so frightened to see my sister in so much pain that I ran out feeling nauseous. How could the world be so crude?

It took me awhile for me to fathom that she had been struck by a car. I was full of rage and I had gone home to write about it. The words stamped themselves on the paper without my consent, so bold and broken, endlessly seeking nowhere to reside. I had used these words to win over the satisfaction of my English teacher. She liked how I had written about true life, but thought it inappropriate for elementary class reading. I kept my story

and carried its words with me through high school, where my world seemed to crumble even more. My writing grew less frequent and my gold imagination started to turn and discolor.

I hated school and wanted nothing more to do with it. I cried and screamed in my parents' faces hoping it would tell them to not make me go! I hated my teachers and the assignments and everyone in my classes. My papers were no longer filled with imagination and passion. Instead they were written with hatred and deceit. I would sit with my teachers as if I could not create a single sentence and they would produce the outline of the material and I would simply make it into two pages. I had them all fooled.

Then there was someone, my God, who could see me past the salted drops and sorrowed faces and was helping to guide me to an island where I could take refuge. I started to remember the feeling of hope and I wanted more. I could see my world slowly healing and coming back to life, only for it to be broken and shattered once again.

My brother lost his little girl to a rare disease, my grandma Cora passed away, my father had his gift and passion stolen from his very heart, and then my brother grew sick with cancer. I came so close to gaining back what I had lost and knowing that feeling of joy and excitement for the life I had known and loved. I would sit down to write and would produce nothing in the end. Writing and writing, never to succeed. Pleading and pleading hopelessly falling indeed. Tightened fists and sorrow-filled eyes, and gave birth to long drawn-out painful cries. Will my world forever fall? Would I ever lose the pain of what I felt and what I saw? I was not sure that I would ever know. The pain was too great and the end was unclear. Misery seemed to follow there. I look back with heavy eyes and try to find the reason why, but there is no answer.

I finally gave up and allowed my weary body to float aimlessly with the current of never ending tears - until it took me to a place I never dreamed existed, a clearing with sunlight streaming through the leaves of the sycamore trees. The weeping willows have all faded and the birds now sing me a song. I am welcomed with open arms and feel the warmth flow

down through my toes. This is the feeling I have longed to be consumed by. Taking me wherever it can and making me whole once again. As I walk through the fields of daisies so pure, words fly through my mind without any control. I am swept up by a cloud and it carries me home.

Now I can see into the eyes of these little children, I see innocence and love so easily placed in their hearts. It makes every heartache seem to drive away wrath and leave me with the sweetest of songs. My sisters and brothers have given a gift bigger than any they have given before.

This journey I knew was a hard one to follow, I felt lonely and hurt and most of all, hollow. I wanted nothing more than to write my own story of the times in my life that have been humbling and filled with pain. As I wrote, the unpleasant feeling flew through my fingers and there I was left with the joy, hope and life that I had known all along resided inside me. Now when I write, the words just appear and the anger escapes along with my fear.

I can see my life so clearly and so true, and realize my family has held my hand through all of these trials. I can look back on things now and see what I have done, but I would not change a thing, because of all that I have learned and gained. I appreciate life and all that it offers. With each tribulation and trial brings excitement and smiles. I know what I have to write. It is the good and the bad side of truth. No one can ever take away my desire, and no one can ever make me write something which I do not believe to be me. Writing is from the heart and from the mind. No one can see into the soul of another, so how is it one tell another how to create those thoughts and feelings into a readable language or poem? They can not. So write what you believe and never let the language that is yours, die.

*"There should only be one author of a story for if another persists,
the true magic of the first dies with the second." Sarah Smith*



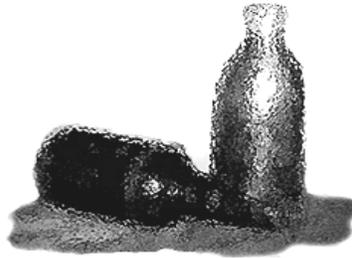
Flea Market at Mt. Sterling

Kristen Angel

People walking down a dead-end road,
Men with their short hair and long beards,
Women trying to push strollers in the gravel areas of the flea market,
Children begging parents for money to buy a Barbie doll or even a toy car,
They come from
Seymour, Indiana
Denver, Colorado
New York City, New York
Just to look for that one special treasure they call their own.

A bright, sunny day in Mt. Sterling,
The air outside is cold and you can see your breath,
People of all ages with long red coats and beautiful red scarves,
Just to look for that perfect Christmas gift.

You can smell
Italian sausages cooking from far away
The apple potpourri that people buy to take home,
The jambalayas that African Americans sell.
You can see
The coon dogs that people bring that roam around all over,
The loudness of the music playing in the bar behind us,
The alcoholics that roam the street when you're trying to sleep,
The Ale Eight drink that people can buy anywhere,
To take home as their souvenirs in a glass bottle.



Enterdancing

Lines of black and white
Always intertwined
Enterdancing
Always saying all is well with the world
Always singing
Always laughing
The origins of their happiness unknown
Of its depths no one knows
These ethereal beings of black and white
Spinning and twirling
Phasing in and out of each other
Always forming
Always changing
Saying can you guess what I'm going to be like
When we're done shape shifting
Guess. Guess, with all your might.
And you might see
All the wonders that the world might bring

Chris Johnson

Twenty Days

April Wolfe-Scott

An elegy to Adonniz April Scott
3/13/2004—4/2/2004

They said you wouldn't come; they said it couldn't be...
But they didn't know the faith of the prayer circle that believed.

They were surprised by the spirited heartbeat in your mama's womb...
But words of caution followed when your cradle of water broke too soon.

They said you weren't quite right; they said you weren't complete...
But you filled the void in your mama's arms where you were meant to be.

They said you'd likely never gaze upon the *Seven Wonders* of the world...
But you put the *twinkle little star* in your daddy's eyes of black pearl.

They said you wouldn't come; couldn't be, weren't quite right, or complete...
But you graced our lives for twenty days and made a grandma of me.

I thought I'd get to play with you "*this little piggy went to market*"...
But now you're with the one who designed the perfect ten of them.

I thought I'd get to braid your ebony waves as they grew out long...
But now you're with the one who knows best how to tend to little lambs.

I thought I'd get to point out to you the *man in the moon*...
But now you're with the one who chose to hang it there.



Stone Angel
Emily Dill

Forty and the Story Has Just Begun

Sherry G. Traylor

I spent the better part of my twenties and thirties looking for the all fulfilling “...happily-ever-after.” Instead, I found two divorces and life again as a single mother. Through my journal I learned to stop looking for others to fulfill my needs and to work on myself with God’s help.

My writing experiences began as a child. I was encouraged to read, write and draw for expression, modeled by my dad. He was artistic and talented in his strict Army Lt. Colonel sort of way. By the time I was eight, he was retired from thirty years in the Army, so we spent a lot of time together. We lived on the outskirts of town, and there were few friends to play with. My three siblings were older and had all moved away by this time. I began developing my imagination through make-believe. My parents were always finding me in the house talking to imaginary friends, whom I had to feed, or lay papers and pencils out for. By seven I was handing my parents short stories I had written, filled with monsters and travels to exotic places.

My father kept journals. I found it fascinating to read about my dad’s childhood. His thoughts, fears, and expectations of life and marriage made him more interesting to me as a person. In one of his stories, was the following passage:

“In 1930, a dinner bell at any time except noon was a signal of an emergency or trouble. By the tone of the bell and the number of rings, your neighbors knew which home needed help. Reading these stories encouraged me to start journals of my own.

School provided me with material for my imagination. Mrs. Shirley Bohall, my third grade teacher at Petersville Elementary, was there for encouragement. She asked me to read a favorite story of “Brer Rabbit” in front of the class in a Southern voice I had perfected.

“The Wonderful Tar Baby by Joel Chandler Harris,” I read. I held the book up and showed the pictures, just as Mrs. Bohall had coached. “Brer Fox tried time and time again to catch Brer Rabbit and he came mighty near catching him, but time and time again Brer Rabbit got away.” I read the first sentence with a shaky Southern tone. With that, the kids laughed and my love for stories began. I still have that book. I decided I wanted to write stores like that, to make others feel connected to the characters. In the years of school that followed I enjoyed writing poetry and entered many contests but won

none. It did not matter to me, as I enjoyed sharing my thoughts with others, and the feedback was priceless.

Disappointment only dampened my writing one time. In high school, a professor I had in Shakespeare told me he would like to read a few of my short stories. He had been a college professor, but in his older years decided to teach high school Shakespeare as his only class. I respected his opinion immensely then but now can not recall his name.

“Your writing is immature and infantile and you should not pursue a career in writing, journalism, or poetry,” he said bluntly. With this said, he shoved my papers toward me, then turned his back to me and sat in his chair. I walked away in shock. Being fifteen years old I was devastated, tears rolled down my cheeks, and I threw my work in the first trash can as I walked away. I felt as though I had defiled some unknown laws of writing and felt ashamed. I did not write for some time after this. Instead, I consumed books of romance, science fiction, autobiography, anything really.

I began writing again with the knowledge that everyone holds the right to their own opinion; not everyone will like what I write. My first heartbreak spurred me to write poetry. In the form of a diary I began writing like most teenagers. I complained about my parents, friends, and the unfairness of life. Typically, lost love and dreams filled the pages. I started to treat others to the poems. Every year, I wrote a poem for my parents on their birthdays. I began this tradition shortly after my grandfather died. I wanted to give something to my parents that they did not already have. I wrote poetry for them about how important they were to me. They wanted poems every year and reminded me to write for them. My dad was my hardest critic, but he also enjoyed the poems and displayed them for everyone to see. One such poem I wrote for my mother follows:

The underwear lies by the bathroom door
Mud tracks on my clean kitchen floor
Dirty dishes lie around
Piles of clothes litter the ground
The battle of the left up toilet seat
These are things each homemaker must defeat...

This is only a portion of the total poem, as it is much longer. My father helped me even when I did not want him to by critiquing my writing. He was a perfectionist and became the voice in my head correcting me during writing. I believe everyone has a voice in their head guiding them to avoid mistakes. Some days my voice is more silent than others.

Then I refer to binders full of interviews with family, poetry, stories and outlines. I have never looked inside myself as deeply as when I sit down to write, no matter what the subject. My ideas come easy, but follow-through takes time and talent, things on which I am still working. Every time I write, I learn. Every time I read, I imagine. I wrote a new poem recently that reflects my year and the place I am at now.

Forty

I never thought I would be forty
As a child I distinctly felt I would be dead by thirty
I am however very much alive, and very happy to be so
My body has dropped south with gravity, but who's looking
My pains and aches have taken on personalities of their own
I started shrinking this year, or they measured me wrong last year
I can wear my mother's clothes and like them, and she is eighty
I have some humor about myself, as I have more to make fun of
Inside I am still young, beautiful and giggling childishly
I will write until I die, and love trying to make others smile
I will enjoy life, and maybe I will be dead by eighty!

Every person I have met has contributed to who I am as a writer. I started out in search of a "...happily-ever after." I was looking for someone to fulfill that need. Many have become characters in my stories. Now, with my journal as my confidant I can look back and see how my mind set has changed. Using my imagination, I escape regularly into stories and return with a refreshed outlook on my own life.



Stone Face
Emily Dill

Biographical Notes

Kristen Angel was born November 8th, 1983 and lives in Seymour with her parents and younger brother. She is a 2002 graduate of Brownstown Central High School. She is a sophomore and an Elementary Education major and plans to graduate in the spring of 2007. Kristen currently works at JayC Food Store in Brownstown. Her future plans are to become a kindergarten teacher and getting married in 2006.

Emily Dill got her BA in Psychology with minors in Women's Studies and German from Ball State University in 1999. After working for a while in a maximum security prison she decided a career in Psychology was not for her and returned to school. (She enjoys telling prison stories, as most people with prison stories do, so ask her sometime). In 1002 she earned a Master of Library Science degree from IUPUI. Emily came to IUPUC in the fall of 2003 and has enjoyed the friendly atmosphere of Columbus (nobody said "hi" to her in the bathroom when she worked at IUPUI). Emily says she is a novice photographer, but intends to hone her craft in the near future (as well as write the Great American Novel, learn to can her own garden produce, learn to knit, etc.). She is an enthusiastic fan of others' artistic work, and happy to be associated with the fine artists who make Talking leaves possible.

Kim Fay is a senior in the Photography program at Herron School of Art and will be graduating May 2005. She currently works at the Central Public Library in Indianapolis. After graduation Kimberly plans to take a year off from school in order to work and travel before pursuing a masters degree in Photography and possibly a masters in Library Science as well.

Nancy Fay is a life-long student aspiring to achieve the ranks of the degreed in this lifetime. She was born in Gary, Indiana and has been moving steadily south ever since. Her favorite pastimes are: two daughters, a grandson, menagerie of pets, yoga, art, music and words. She is proud to be a member of the Columbus Symphony Orchestra. Nancy has photos and poetry displayed in the Director's Office at African American Arts Institute at IU Bloomington, and is gratified to have this creative opportunity on the IUPUC campus.

Elisabeth Hegmann grew up in North Vernon, Indiana in a family of musicians and was active in theatre throughout her childhood. Elisabeth took a job in NYC in her early twenties, but she was unhappy being separated from the arts and returned to Indiana to earn her degree. In 1999 she wrote the libretto for a musical, *Tales That Are Told*, with her friend and collaborator, the composer Martin McClellan. The Jackson County Players workshopped and performed the show. In more recent year, she has been writing short stories and what she terms as “ill-advised starts to novels.” She is currently an English major at IUPUC.

Chris Johnson is 24 years old, was born in Michigan and has lived in Indiana for the majority of her life. She shares a residence with her white dog, Storm, and her black kitten, Noir. She enjoys video games, anime, drawing and writing prose and poetry. She would love to publish her stories, which include a trilogy, still to be revised. Last places sighted were two WebPages. One is an art forum, Deviantart the other is Runescape. She goes under the alias of CaliMica. She is known to draw anime, and is considering making her own manga.

Tommy Linville is twenty-six years old, a husband and father of a beautiful nine-month-old named Kaylynn Leigh. He is Chemistry major at IUPU Columbus. Writing has been a hobby for three years, and he decided to take a creative writing course in order to strengthen his writing in the hope of one day writing a successful novel. As Chemistry major, he has been the unfortunate victim of numerous lab reports that seem to fall into the area of boring technical nonsense no matter how hard he tries to liven them up. He felt that some training in the concepts of creative writing could help hold a reader's attention no matter how many formulas and reaction diagrams he or she had to wade through. With the help of Prof. Katherine Wills and the critical analysis of his classmates, he feels that his future as a writer has been bolstered if not solidified.

Josh Meredith is 20 years old and works for Advanced Micro-Electronics, a company which is currently contracted to Cummins. He has recently accepted a position as a sales associate for Radio Shack. In high school he took a composition class and learned how to write a persuading paper. Although he finds writing very difficult, over the course of a year or so, he has discovered that writing is very important to him ~ not only just to write, but to do it well. He is convinced that writing well is a very valuable asset.

Sarah Smith is 27 years old and soon to be married. She is going to school to be a vet technician, something she has wanted since childhood. Sarah's father was a minister for 25 years and with that came numerous moves and many trials. It was a family joke that if something strange or disastrous was to happen, it would happen to their family. Although they may not be considered lucky in the eyes of others, their strong faith and family ties have gotten them through the bad times. Her family is very close. They would do anything for each other, and anyone else in need.

Sherry Traylor has been writing since she was seven years old. Writing poetry and short stories has helped her deal with the normal changes of life. "Forty" is a poem about mid-life momentary misery. As a divorced mom of a teenage daughter she has used her experiences to write and has used writing to deal with these experiences. A licensed practical nurse by trade and a flashlight-writing poet by night, Sherry has been a nurse in Columbus, Indiana for seventeen years. She says that "Many of her poems and stories have been based on people she met or cared for during her nursing career and several have been published in the local newspaper." Sherry is going back to school to seek a degree in Health Administration. In the near future she intends to publish a book to share her poems and short stories.

Shayna Wolf spent her adolescence in a small town in Indiana. She is now a full-time college student majoring in English and works fulltime. After college she hopes to find a career in which she can exercise her writing abilities. She is interested in analytical writing as well as writing in the business and technical world. Shayna's pastimes include writing, reading, and attending various musical and theatrical events. She is close to her family and appreciates their support immensely.

April Lynne Wolfe-Scott is a lifetime resident of Columbus, Indiana and a Psychology major at IUPUC. Influenced by a 1960's childhood, she is a truth-seeking Christian, mother of an adult son, a history-a-holic, and a feminist. She is a voracious reader who enjoys reading between the lines and listening to what people don't say. An artist and writer, April wishes there were thirty hours in a day to be able to enjoy both. She was inspired early in life by her parents, Alvin and Florence Wolfe, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and great local educators, including the recently deceased Evelyn Bolinger. She loves to write short stories and poetry. April is currently writing a book of short stories, poems and character sketches of life in Columbus, Indiana in the 1960's, through the eyes of a child.



Talking Leaves

SPRING 2005