To call or bring to mind.
To evoke.
To imagine.
To picture.

Conjurings

Literary Magazine
of Saint Louis College of Pharmacy
1995
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Saint Louis College of Pharmacy
Spring 1995

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Falling Leaves

High school sweethearts, inseparable through it all.
Laughter, tears sometimes.
Defying our parents just to be together.
You were the most important thing to me,
Textbooks, homework, my first job,
Nothing else even compared.
As we cuddled at football games, my school
Against yours, the cool autumn breezes
Sent the falling leaves into little spirals
Around our feet, red, orange, yellow leaves
Became a beautiful, snow covered valley,
We criss-crossed on sleds, our noses as red as
The apples that spring brought.
Eating them on the back porch, we talked,
Shared everything under the warming sun,
We walked in the warming air, knowing
We'd swim in the pool all summer long.
At first, I was so afraid, distrustful
Of the water you loved with such faith.

Confident that we'd always be together, we hid
From the dusty, scorching air in the cool comfort
Of our parent's homes; it was so simple
It was so easy to love you, and it was
Love, indeed.
We talked of the moon, the stars, all the vast mysteries
Of life; children, diaper changes,
Marriage, someday.
You'd even asked.
And now, as the leaves change once more, and fall
From the trees, our talking begins to subside.
College looms on my horizon; a far away place,
With changing seasons of it's own.
Arguments, despair, as the withering leaves fall.
I can feel the chill in the air, the promise
Of a long, cold season of change ahead.
A fading sunset quickens the greying dead of winter
Does it mean our love will die,
Too?

--Paula J. Barton

The Assignment

When we get it
We say we'll do it later
But, at the end of the semester
We still have to do the paper

When it comes due
We wish we were thru
We know the inevitable will come
THE DATE IT IS DUE!

It gets turned in late
We hope we did good
And the Professor will give it
The grade that she should.

--Chris Brown
“Sir? Sir? Would you like a drink?” asks the young flight attendant impatiently for the third time.

“No!” mutters the young businessman, but as he looks up from his paperwork, “Uh..uh..wait...wait...yes. I would like a Martini, please.”

“Coming right up,” she replies as she walks to the front of the airplane.

Slowly, Jason removes his wire-rimmed Polo glasses and deeply inhales. Never in his life has he met anyone so exotic and incredibly beautiful. Her jet black hair flows smoothly down her back. Her flawless face is dusted with a hint of blush. To finish off her dramatic effect are her eyes, a dramatic dark blue with grey lining the rim of her pupil. Her long eyelashes seem to never end. But it is her smile that got his heart racing—a graceful and feminine smile with perfect white teeth.

“Here's your Martini, sir,” she says as she hands him the drink.

“Jason, Jason Taylor,” he says with a smile.

“Are you going to New York for business or pleasure?” she quickly inquires.

“Unfortunately business.”

“May I ask what you do for a living?”

“Sure, I am the Vice-President of a large stock and commodity firm.”

“So you are an expert on stocks and junk bonds?”

“You can say so. Actually, my real title is ‘stock and bond financial analyst.’ I am trying to organize these bonds’, stocks’, and money market certificates’ figures as we speak.”

“Yes, I have noticed that you have been deeply engrossed in your paperwork since you stepped on the plane. That is very impressive, Mr. Taylor.”

“Please call me Jason.”

“Jason, it is a shame that you are in town for business only. There is so much to do and see in New York.”

“Is that right? Well, maybe one day you can be my personal tour guide.”

“Sure. Excuse me. I'll be right back.”

Wait a minute! I am a happily married man. A very happily married man, Jason thinks to himself. Then why am I taking off my wedding band? Why was I covering up my hand when I was talking to her? A woman like her has to have a man. I didn't notice an engagement ring. And I know she was not wearing a wedding band. But she was flirting with me. It wasn't just a friendly conversation.

“Jason, here is my number. I'll talk to you later. The plane is getting ready to land.” she interrupts his thoughts.

“Miss, I never got your name,” he immediately asks.

“Claudine, Claudine Andersen,” she replies with a smile.

“This is your captain. The time is 7:03. The weather is a chilly 33 degrees. Please remain seated until the seatbelt sign has gone off. Again, thank you for flying TWA. We know you have many airlines to choose from, and we appreciate you choosing us. Have a safe and pleasant evening,” he finishes.

As he approaches the front of the airplane, Jason's heart and eyes are focused on Claudine. What a beautiful name. Just look at her! She is waving good-byes to her passengers with a genuine smile.

“Have a safe evening, Mr. Taylor. Don't work too hard,” she says as she shakes his hand.

He smiles back and approaches the entrance. Then his conscience gets the best of him. “I could never cheat on my wife. What about my wedding vows? Sure, Claudine is amazingly beautiful, but I don't know anything about her. What is her background? What about her family? Does she have
kids? But back to the main point. I am married, and I do love my wife. Don’t I?"

As he stands by the ticket counter, he ponders the thought of waiting for her. “Maybe we can have a drink and talk a little bit. Yes, that would be nice. It would be a platonic situation. What could it hurt? Yes, I’ll just sit here and wait for her.”

After a short while, he feels a gentle tap. He turns around, sees her, and smiles at Claudine.

“Are you hungry? I know a little Italian restaurant not too far from here that has the best wine list and linguini in town,” she asks.

“Sure! I would love to join you,” he quickly answers. “Good. That would give us a chance to talk and relax. And then maybe I could ask you about junk bonds and money market certificates,” she replies, as he follows her to the front of the airport.

“Bonds?”

“Yes, I do know a little about bonds and stocks but not very much. And you obviously know so much more.”

“Taxi! Taxi!”

“To Armani’s, please.”

---

**Insomnia**

Silence. Is that all it is?
Or is it just your mind wandering, racing at 100 miles an hour?
Are you really awake or is it nothing more but a dream of your being awake?

Silence. You lay in bed hearing the almost thundering sound of your alarm clock.
Tick, Tock. You want nothing from the night, nothing but comfort, like your blanket that always leaves at least one part of your body uncovered and cold.

Silence. You realize you’re awake with nothing to protect you, comfort you. You break out in a sweat and feel intense heat, oh no, here it comes again, you hear nothing but Silence.

You can’t help but think,

Does the clock say that time, has stopped for me???

--Alex Zamudio
\begin{quote}
\textbf{Man's Creation}

\textit{--Renee Copithorne}

Paintings hang on a cold stone wall.
Dark grays and blacks churn together in storms of anger.
Blues streak the canvas with sadness.

Colors spill over into the world,
Releasing cries of famine and poverty,
Roars of prejudice,
Cackles of greed,
And the deadly silence of pollution.

The picture grows as time passes on.....

Someday the sun will fade these colors,
The rain will crack the paint.
The wind will tear at the canvas until
The painting finally falls and
Lies in the filth it has unleashed.

Beauty will grow through the cold stone wall,
And delicate flowers will bloom.
The trees will reach the sky
Until the rock has finally disappeared.

But for now, the grays and blacks will churn,
And the blues will streak the skies.
The cold stone wall casts a long, dark shadow,
Across a troubled earth.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textbf{My Muse}

I sit alone in my drafty cabin
Trying to make words dance
music sing,
Like a lost child I have no guidance
Rain, cold, damp leaves
Down by the lake's edge I see it,
Small movement at first,
Then he appears, my Muse
Lithe, strong, beautiful, but unnatural
Someone's finest work of art.
At my door, by my fireplace,
But his flesh is always cold.
As I watch him there, the words
Pour forth, the music dances,
His mind whispers to me seductively,
So loud in my ears (or is that
The rush of my mortal blood?)
He gives to me what I need,

My art, I shouldn't
Repay him this way.
He never speaks, there is
no need.
Tranced, my fingers frantically spell beautiful
Words on a page. Then, slowly,
it trickles down, my writing stops.
How much time has passed?
I don't care anymore-
My mind draws him like a moth
To a dancing flame.
I have no choice
I feel the small, sharp pain,
and then nothing.
I awaken, groggy, alone
My masterpiece almost complete
His masterpiece dangerously close.

\textit{--Paula J. Barton}
\end{quote}
The Coffeehouse

Tonight I looked at him
from across a crowded room.
The scent of cappuccino and smoke
filled the air.
His head turned toward mine,
and our eyes locked.
They were frozen there
for what seemed like forever.
I felt myself step out-
out into his world.
I had no idea what
my friends were saying.
I was out of touch with
them, yet somehow,
I was one with him.
But only for a moment.
Then he looked away.
I slowly snapped back
into reality, and the familiar
coffeehouse smell overcame
my senses once again.

--Jennifer A. Swearingian

Study Group

We've been through a lot,
much more than you know
We've shared all of our memories,
let's please never let go.
The girl who is most unfortunate,
I'm sorry for everything you have to go through.
The couple that joins us,
with a greeting of "hello you."
Now here's another girl, the leader of them all,
ever a procrastinator, always on the ball.
We still need another, yes he's quite a character.
He binds us together with his jokes and laughter.
There is still another, a girl who is very proud
both of her heritage and her determination.
There is one left of this study group,
just sitting there eyes wide with excitement.
The books are open, notes scattered all around.
Everyone studying, working, trying
to get the information down.
You know who you are and
I have just one more task to do
and that is to give you the biggest
Thank You.

--Alex Zamudio
"But I wanted him to have blonde hair!" she said. Her husband shot her a bewildered glance. "You decided on brown last Wednesday, so why are you changing your mind now?" The decision had been transmitted to the Center yesterday and the child had already been Created, so it was a little late to change the blueprints. The Formatting Agent just smiled and asked them to follow her into the Meeting room to see their new child.

"He is beautiful," whispered Andrea. Her husband sat motionless as Brad, their new son, played with the small laptop computer the agency had supplied with him on the floor at their feet. The Center for Developing Children (CDC) did just that; developed kids of any age to meet prospective parents' requirements. The recombinant DNA studies that began in force around 1990 A.D. had resulted in the ability to choose one's offspring at any stage of intelligence, development, or growth. The Center specialized in creating older children, for couples such as Andrea and Gene, who did not want the hassle of raising a newborn. Creating Brad at age six, Andrea and Gene bypassed bottles, diapers, two a.m. feedings and Pro-Parents completely. No longer was one parent required to stay home and raise the baby, since they could be bought at school age, or any age, for that matter. By accelerating the growth process using an enzyme that speeds up cell maturation, parents could purchase their child at any age through in vitro growth. Of course, all other personality traits were chosen as well, such as appearance, talents, intelligence, and physical build, but those capabilities have been around since 2043 A.D. By now, the children that were genetically programmed in the mid-2000's were old enough to be buying children of their own, as Andrea and Gene are now doing. The superior hand-created race was in full control, and the Dominator of the Union of Countries, Randolf Hatelir, expressed his intense pleasure during the last Statement he made to the Aware Ones. Soon, all the Befores, ones who were born instead of Created, would be quarantined in camps in the Outland. Hatelir only approved of Createds like Andrea and Brad. Andrea's mate, Gene, a Before, was also intended to reside in a camp, but he had acquired an Identity Card from an illegal source which permitted him to live in the Created world with his mate. He knew buying a child would change his life and place him at risk of being discovered, but Andrea always had the upper hand and got what she wanted, for Gene would never defy her. He feared her knowledge of his past and the consequent power she had over him because of that knowledge mostly; but because he was a Before, he could still feel a love for Andrea, something the Createds were incapable of feeling. Unhealthy, they said.

"You'll find all the data is in order, and we've transferred the final installment." Gene spoke softly, still in awe of the creation before him.

"Oh, believe me, you're not through with us. We'll be seeing more of you, I'm sure," replied the Formatter. Gene's fascination snapped. He asked her what she was referring to, but she just smiled and closed the door behind them.

"Hon... uh, Andrea (Createds did not use nor understand words like 'honey'; Gene had slipped again. Had he in front of the Formatter? He didn't know...?) Do you know what she meant by that comment? Andrea?"
Andrea just ignored him, as she often did. Fear, another emotion Createds were immune to, raced Gene's heart. He couldn't even look at his new son as concern for his own safety swelled in him.

They arrived at their complex and Gene buzzed them in. Andrea disappeared with Brad into their assigned sector of the building (Had he slipped and said home? There were so many words, phrases, thoughts that Createds did not use. The possibilities for slipping and being discovered were endless), and Gene went into his compartment to think. Since all Createds had their own resting quarters, he needed not worry about being disturbed. He knew this. He also knew that this life was for the birds, although birds also no longer existed, either. Further, Gene was aware that all of his family and friends were dead, and he firmly believed they were the lucky ones. He finished his journal entry (this would have made such a good book thirty years ago... but no one would have believed it would, could, actually happen) and lay down. He did not sleep, did not even try, for he knew the massive dose of metastineta would take him soon enough. His last conscious thought was of Brad, and how he would never know the way life was intended by the Creator to be lived.

Gene never woke up, and the Formatter never even suspected that he was a Before.

---

In Memory of Dr. Seuss
I wonder, wonder, wonder why.

Duck-billed platypi can't fly.
They all have bills.
They all lay eggs.
They have webbed feet on four short legs.

But the furry, funny platypi
Cannot, shall not, will not fly.

Oh, but if you look-
Yes! Please. Look and see!
Then you will see
Why this can be, shall be.
Yes! Why this must be!

They may have bills.
They may lay eggs.
And have webbed feet on four short legs.

---S. Amelia Goodwin

But,
They have no feathers.
They have no wings,
And other special birdy things.

So never, ever,

Duck-billed platypi can't fly!
The strangest thing happened to me and a close friend of mine. Three weeks ago, we went to Forest Park to enjoy the nice weather. Once we got there, I noticed this old lady sitting under a tree reading a book to a small child, probably her grandchild. It was nothing startling or different to keep my attention for more than a second or two. So I went along my merry way and enjoyed the day.

Last week, I went to the cleaners to pick up my clothes. As I was writing a check, I could feel somebody standing behind me. Casually, I turned around, and there was that old lady! I was surprised, but I didn’t think anything of it.

A couple of days later, I was at a mall in Fairview Heights, Illinois. As I was “window shopping” with my friend, someone on the escalator caught my eyes. It was the old lady! This was the third time I had seen her in such a short period. She got off the escalator and walked the opposite way from me. I wasn’t afraid, but I thought it was kind of strange.

This week, I was at Happy Hour at Houlihan’s. And guess who came walking in? Yes, you’re right. The old lady with what I guessed were her husband and another couple about the same age. I decided that this was just a little too much to be coincidental, so I got up all the nerve I could muster, and I started walking over to the table where they were sitting. Suddenly, I had a better idea. I raced back to my table and bribed my friend and cousin Joe to steal the old lady’s purse for me. It cost me almost a week’s pay, and I had to agree to do his laundry, but by the time we paid our tab and left, he’d agreed. I went to the car and waited. Before too long, here came Joe racing across the lot. He threw the purse in my car and went to get in his own. We both took off, each in our own car.

I was too nervous to look through it in the car, so I waited until I got to my house. I went in and locked the door, not wanting to be disturbed. I was just about to open the purse when the doorbell rang. I thought to myself, should I answer it? I reluctantly walked to the door and looked out, and I saw Joe standing on my front porch along with a crisply dressed police officer. On my God, I thought, Joe squealed! I slowly opened the front door. As I did, I noticed a cut above Joe’s eye, and an old woman laying face down in my front yard.

“Do you know this young man?” the officer asked.

“Yes. He is my third cousin who was coming here tonight to visit.”

“Were you with him earlier this evening?”

“I ran into him at a bar, and I suggested he stop by later to catch up on old times.”

“What’s this lady doing in your front yard? When I arrived, this young man, your cousin was trying....”

“Oh my god, Joe, you didn’t!”

...was trying to give her CPR. I need for you to go inside and call an ambulance. I’ll deal with you two later. I’ll need a statement, that is.”

“Joe, get in here. What did you tell him? What about the purse? There will be questions and cops.”

Joe looked just as puzzled as I felt.

“I didn’t hit her,” Joe protested.

“Honest. When I came up to your house, there she was lying on the lawn. I thought maybe you kicked her out or something.”

“No. Let me make the call.”

I called and notified the policeman and went back in to Joe.

“Anything in the purse?” I called.

“A cigarette lighter, $3.72, some grocery store coupons. No cards, name, or other identifying material.”
We heard a siren, and the ambulance stopped and picked up the woman and drove off. After very few questions, the policeman left, too. I had someone's purse and an incredibly guilty conscience. I had absolutely no idea what to do. The next day I called the police department under the pretext of wondering what happened to the woman they found on my lawn. But it was no pretext. I did want to know. After a lot of Mickey Mouse, they finally told me she died. I asked who she was and whether or not they know why she was on my lawn. I was informed (later had it confirmed by the evening newspapers) that she was unidentified and had no identification with her. (Even if they had her purse, it wouldn't have helped, I thought. On the other hand, I was surprised. I remembered the three people she sat with in the bar and the small child she read to in Forest Park. Surely someone would identify eventually.) But weeks went by. No news. All I have is a new, old purse. I guess I'll donate it to the Salvation Army.

A Single Red Rose
--Renee Copithorne

Long black cars lined up outside
Engines as silent as the people entering them
The clouds roll in as she starts her final journey
To the stone garden which awaits her
The wind wails as they lower her deeper
The sky breaks loose and weeps for her
Now the crowd is gone
no one lingers
No one but a tear-stained little boy
He couldn't leave her by herself. All alone.

It's so sad to see everyone in black
Why are they? Her favorite color is red
I see it now--The red rose in her hair
But her hair isn't curled her skin is so pale
She is still beautiful despite all the flaws
Her parents are here everyone's crying
But why? She looks so happy, content
No more heartaches, no fights no more pain
As they shut her up into eternal darkness
Her brother lays a single red rose by her side
And a tear rolls slowly down his cheek
"Because I love you," he says.

Summers got shorter
winters got colder
The boy soon grew into a man
A man left only with a few memories
But always faithful to her, still sees her
And when he's gone--left standing in his place
a single red rose.
Trip with Grandpa
--Tim Andoe

Vacation time at last. I've been waiting all summer to be able to get away with my grandfather. We're leaving early tomorrow morning--probably 5:00 or 6:00 a.m. It's about a four to five hour drive. I don't see why we have to leave so early. We never do anything but open up the trailer on the first day anyway. However, Grandpa is driving and paying for expenses, so I usually never question his reasons.

"Grandpa, are you about ready?"
"Well, I need some help loading a few things."

Grandpa always has to take everything including the kitchen sink. I never could understand his actions. He owns a seventy-five foot long mobile home that is twice as nice as the house I rent. It is fully furnished, and everything he could possibly need down there he already has. But as I said before, I try not to question my grandfather.

"So, Grandpa, what is it I need to load up this time? A barbecue, table, chairs, perhaps that role of fence you were talking about putting up."

"No, I have twelve sheets of plywood we need to put in the back of the truck. I'm going to add on to the shed. You know how small it is and how the roof leaks on that one side."

"Yeah. I know. I just don't see why you can't buy this stuff when we get down there."

Whoops. I actually questioned my grandpa. To him it's a form of back-talking or lack of respect. He lit a cigarette and to my surprise said nothing. I thought for sure he was going to give me the lecture. However, he took a couple of puffs and said, "Grab that side of the stack."

So there I was feeling like crap, not knowing if he was angry or just in too big of a hurry to care at this point.

This was a new response for him. Maybe he couldn't wait to get to the land either, so he didn't want to spoil it by an argument or in his words, "a lecture." Since he seemed happy, that made me feel a lot better.

"How much time do you have off from school?"
"I'm out of school, remember. Summer school finished last week, and I have two weeks before I go back. I only have this weekend through Wednesday off from work, however."

"So, this will give us Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday to fish."

Gee, Grandpa is feeling fairly bright today. I'm always thinking things like that to myself, but I don't actually mean them. Grandpa means well, and besides, I would never tell him anything like that aloud.

With that he said, "Grab the waders, tackle, and poles, and I think we're set."

"What about all the stuff in my car?"
"Oh yeah," he said, "just throw it up on the boards.

We'll sort it out when we get there."

Grandpa forgets things sometimes, and I just felt like "playing on it." All I actually had in my car was my clothes and sleeping bag. That was just another one of those things I sometimes pull over on Grandpa. He never realizes it, and like I said before, I don't really mean any harm.

Grandpa was off to the kitchen to start packing food in the coolers. He told me to go home and get a good night's sleep. "I can pack the rest of the food and gas up the truck before I go to bed."

The drive tomorrow was going to be a long and dreaded one. The game plan is for me to sleep all the way down there. However, I know this will be impossible.
Grandpa usually stops every sixty or seventy miles to buy coffee, get gas, use the restroom, and of course to walk the dog and let her go to the bathroom.

I know it sounds like I don’t get along with my Grandpa or that I dread the trip, but actually, once we get on our way, the annual trip turns out to be a blast for both of us, and I know this.

*********

It’s five a.m. and no sign of Grandpa. Could this be true? I’m here and awake before Grandpa was. This thought immediately livened up my morning. I unlocked his door, walked down the hall to his room and got him out of bed. This turn in events made the trip start great. I was able to ‘raz Grandpa, and he got a kick out of it. He’s the type of person who usually gets up at four every morning and is in bed by nine at night. I even offered to drive since he was so sleepy. He got another laugh out of that one. However, to my surprise, he accepted.

"What?" I said, "are you serious?"

"Of course. You had your fun this morning, and now it’s my turn," he said as he lit a cigarette and laughed.

We made our usual stops, and it didn’t seem to bother me this time. Grandpa offered to drive after only fifty miles. I was able to follow my original plan and fall fast asleep. This trip was different this time. It was going to be one neither of us would ever forget.

*********

I was sound asleep, sleeping quite well. The alarm clock rang. I rolled over to see what time it was. Five a.m. Not again I thought. Next thing I hear is my Grandpa saying, "Time to get up. It’s six o’clock, and you’ve already missed breakfast."

"Oh boy! I missed my cereal." Of course, I usually never eat breakfast and especially not at six in the morning. My Grandpa usually just has a cup of coffee and a cigarette for breakfast. We usually come back and eat around noon.

I stepped outside, and the sun was still on its way up.

"I love it here," I thought to myself. It’s always cool at night and early in the mornings. It usually gets unbearably hot in the late afternoons, but the ice cold water will be there to cool us down.

We picked up our gear and headed off to the stream. The leaves were in their splendid stages of brilliant vivid color. The maples were especially vibrant this morning. They were painted with a mist, as steam and fog left the leaves, and the sun began to absorb the water. The grass was also covered with a heavy layer of dew. Very few people are up this early in the morning. This is a sacred, special, quiet time for my grandfather and I. It was light enough to see and light enough for the leaves to glow from the upcoming sun, but it was still very chilly out. A rabbit ran across our path, and an owl swooped down for a last bite to eat before his daily slumber. Just as we got to the stream side, we looked down the bend, and the sun’s brilliant glow began to wipe the thick mist off the top of the icy cold water. More birds began chirping, and the morning flight ritual in search for food had begun. Grandpa and I sat down on the dew-laden grass to put on our waders. Grandpa smoked another cigarette, the pungent odor drifting towards me and sort of ruining the smell of the morning. However, we have done this so often, and Grandpa smokes so much that I’ve begun to associate the odor of cigarettes with the wonderful smell of the dew and freshly flowing water of the stream. He put out his smoke, and we headed into the water.

The fishing was good. I was one ahead of my Grandpa. The rainbow trout were biting lightly but consistently this morning. I was in the process of tying a fly for my Grandpa since he can’t see the small hooks as well anymore when we heard a loud scream. It was something like a shriek followed by a cry. We both looked at each other in surprise. My first thought, and I suspect my
Grandpa's too, was to keep fishing since we were having such good luck. We heard the scream again and decided it did deserve some attention.

"Grandpa," I said, "that scream seemed to be echoing from a cave."

"Well, I don't think there are any caves that I remember around here."
The cry sounded like that of a little girl or young lady. We couldn't really make it out for sure.
A man of quick action, like I've never seen him before, Grandpa ran to his backpack and called the state police on his cellular phone.
"On his cellular phone," I thought to myself. "Where did he get that?"
Oh well, a forest ranger finally showed up. He searched the area and assured us that everything was alright.
"Maybe it was just nearby kids playing games and screaming wildly," the ranger explained.
We didn't really believe him, but we tried to put it out of our minds and continue to fish and enjoy our time together.

As soon as the ranger left, Grandpa lit another cigarette and threw another cast into the stream.
"Help! Help!" cried the voice again. This time I knew for sure that someone was in trouble. I tried to follow the sound. It still sounded as if it was being muffled by a cave or hollowness of some type. As I walked down the bank and through some fairly deep water, there was a cave sure enough. Wait, I thought. Is this the cave that those kids were trapped in a few years back? There were two kids that were trapped in the cave for two weeks. It supposedly really messed them up. One boy reported that there were all sorts of confusing but terrifying things that happened to them while they were down there. The description of their tragedy sounded to me like a scene from Alien. However, I put those thoughts aside and figured it was one of the boy's over-active imaginations. The scream came again, and from my vantage point, I could clearly hear it was coming from the cave. I hollered for my Grandpa, and we slowly made our way into the mouth of the cave. We couldn't tell how far or how near the sounds were because of the horrid acoustics of caves.

Grandpa McGuyver had his flashlight out in a flash, and we proceeded to go inside.

Grandpa McGuyver and his flashlight... What? Oh well, I followed his lead as we went deeper into the cave. The cave was narrow and steep, and it smelled of stale mud and mildew. As we went further, the cries for help got louder. Finally we reached her. She was about seven and her face was streaked with mud and tears. Her arms and legs were tied, and she could not move. A tattered bandanna was hanging around her neck which had made its way there from over her mouth.

"Don't move," Grandpa shouted. "We'll get you out!"
"Hurry," she cried, "before they come back for me."
Grandpa held my legs as I reached down and untied her arms. Then he pulled us both up as she grabbed my hands. We pulled her out of the cave and breathed a sigh of relief. Grandpa got on the phone again; the police came this time. It turned out that the little girl had been missing for nine days. She was the only witness for a murder trial, and a couple of guys kidnapped her. The police caught the two men when they returned to the cave. They were arrested, and we were heroes. I was just about to get my medal when the truck door slammed, and my Grandpa yelled for me to get up.

"We're here," he said. "We need to unload the truck. Maybe we can do something fun today instead of sleeping the whole afternoon." With that last thought, Grandpa asked if I would like to go cave hunting because he had heard of a couple of good ones in the area.
**Untitled**

The storm tonight is driving me mad.
The wind screams at my window,
bringing the rain with it,
to pelt furiously
against the pane.
Thunder claps with knowledge
of how the storm is
affecting me.
Lightning strikes sending waves
of brightness throughout
my darkened room.
I lie on my bed,
watching the spectacle,
listening to the symphony
nature displays.
I am both frightened and intrigued.
I want it to last forever,
and I want it to end now.
It continues on as I drift,
and I drift into sleep.....

--Jennifer A. Swearingian

**Peter and Paul**

Flannel cap fighting the cold,
Collar tucked up tight,
Praying for the big one to come
Listening quite intently, he heard a snap.
Turning to shoot, he stops.
Put the gun down preaches Paul
With a cross look, Peter just
Stares at his boots.
Paul climbs to the tree stand, consoling Peter
Grabbing Paul by the collar,
"I could be skinning a deer,
Maybe I shall skin you."
Now Peter, remember the
Teachings of the Bible.

--Tim Andoe

**Roaches**

Roaches and an adversary of mine share many common traits. An adversary that I had years ago kept showing up in my life at the most inopportune times. Roaches can be the same way. They show up at the most embarrassing moments, for instance, when someone comes to my house and notices them. Ignoring these two different types of pests does not deter them from coming back. I've spent hundreds of dollars trying to get rid of them both, and they are amazingly resilient. As insecticide is to a roach, as are ice cold words to an adversary. Both have been only temporary measures in solving the problem. The only cure that can be trusted is the test of time. It's been a number of years since I have seen my adversary, and I hope it's a number of years before I see another roach.

--Donnie Gillespie
Having Fun and Taking Chances

Playing cards has been a tradition in my family for many years. In fact, I have no idea when it did start. It has been going on ever since I could remember. It doesn’t matter what time of the year it is for my family to enjoy a good game of cards. We play Rook, Canasta, or one of the various games that we happen to like at the time we all get together. It doesn’t matter whether it’s Christmas, Aunt Frankie’s birthday, or just a boring night after a good day over at Kentucky Lake for us to play cards.

Life is like a game of cards. The game of life starts off with what we are dealt. A major part of life is how a person plans his life. Also, luck plays a small but significant portion of life. It is the part of the game that can change the outcome in just a couple of minutes. Overall, if a person plays his cards right, he can be a winner in life.

A person is given certain talents when he is born. Certain talents are more valued than others, but all can be used to the person’s advantage. When talents are dealt to a person, he can look at his options and see what his position in life might be. If a person is humorous, he could be a comedian. Or, if he has the physical characteristics of a manual worker, he might be an athlete or work in a factory. This is only what might happen if a person just goes along with what they are given.

If a person doesn’t like the talents that he is given or thinks that they can be polished, he can trade in his undesirable talents for something that is hopefully more desirable. Working on new talents can help a person develop a new self-image. If he discovers a talent which he believes is valuable, he will think that his life is more important than it was before. If a person is just working on polishing his talents, his hard work might pay off by being more pleasing to his audience. Sometimes the opposite affect is achieved, by the person becoming too sharp with his skills and this makes people ignore his ability.

One of the smallest, most important factors in life is luck. Luck can be seen in different forms. A person could be lucky to meet someone or win a game. A person can also have bad luck. Things such as mistakes that aren’t really anyone’s fault, a streak of bad poker playing due to the cards that he receives, or a natural disaster that strikes a town. The main thing about luck is how a person takes it and what he does about it after it happens. The person who is the recipient of good luck but does nothing to capitalize on it does not take advantage of the great opportunity at hand. The person who lets a little bit of bad luck get him down doesn’t take a look around himself and see what he can make out of a situation. The main point is to take advantage of the situation. One shouldn’t let anything just pass by and guess at what might have happened if he had done something different.

Life is a game of cards. The player looks at his hand, discards what he doesn’t like, and hopes for the best. Hopefully, he will make wise choices in what he chooses to keep. If the player runs into a little luck around the way, let him look around and take advantage of his situation. Most importantly, the game should be fun.

My family plays cards because it is a fun time for all of the family to get together. Several of my favorite memories are about my family sitting around a table while playing a game of cards and talking. Of course, there are bad hands sometimes, but we just do the best we can with the cards that are dealt to us.

--Ron Hall
Halloween

--The Pink Bunny, Red Cadillac, Trashed Pumpkin and Terrified Actor

On a foggy Halloween night, four teenagers thought it would be fun to go to the graveyard. Because it was not quite midnight, they decided to terrorize some young trick-or-treaters in order to get their candy. John, the oldest of the group, was just about to pull onto a side street and turn off the lights, when from out of nowhere, a girl in a pink bunny suit ran in front of the car. The fog delayed his reaction, and by the time he hit the breaks, it was too late. He hit the girl. The headlights caught the orange pumpkin as dozens of candy pieces fell from the sky. The little girl was lying on the ground, face down, candy all around her. She couldn’t have been more than six years old, yet no one was with her.

“Come on, John, let’s get out of here! It’s dark and foggy and no one even saw us.”

“No! One of us should get out and see if she is alright.” John said.

“No way! I’m getting out, but not to check on her. I’m getting outta here! I’m not getting nailed for this one.”

Flustered, John said, “Oh Eddie, what do you mean by ‘nailed’. I was the one who was driving. I’m the only one who would get into trouble, and I’m more concerned about the girl than getting ‘nailed’.” John turned off the motor, stepped outside of the car and ran up to the front fender. He saw nothing. He looked under the car. Nothing. He jumped up and looked around. Eddie and Tom were running down the block, and Jason was standing just behind the car obviously too befuddled to decide whether to run or stay. “Did you see her Jason? Where’d she go?” John asked.

“See her? Who?” Jason answered in a daze.

“The girl in the bunny suit!” John faced the running boys. “Eddie, Tom!” John shouted. “Do you see her? Are you chasing her?”

Obviously, those questions puzzled them. Tom tentatively stopped and turned around. “Chase who? What are you talking about? Are you okay? Did you hurt the girl?” Tom started to slowly walk back to the car as he asked those questions.

“The girl in the pink bunny suit. She isn’t here. All I hit was a small rabbit. But I don’t understand; you guys saw her too, didn’t you? I mean, there isn’t even any candy lying on the ground either.”

“No girl?” Eddie said as he returned to the group.

“She’s gone!” John shrieked.

“Look, we all have to calm down,” said Eddie as he paced back and forth. “We’ll call the police and tell them everything. Alright guys, we’re in this together.”

“Hell no!” Jason and Tom yelled in unison.

“Look, I’m walking home. I was never with you, and I didn’t see, hear, or know anything. Bye. See ya!” With that, Jason left.

“Hey wait up for me.” Tom added. “I’m going with you.”

As Tom and Jason walked home, a strange old man approached them. He was in an ugly, red, dirty Cadillac. “Can I give you two boys a ride? It’s not safe to be walking in this neighborhood at this time of night.”

The boys hesitated, but since it was getting chilly and they were tired of walking, they agreed to get into the car. Besides, there were two of them and one of him.

He turned on the radio and the news came on. “Alert! Alert!” said the broadcaster. “Beware of a 5’10”,

135 lb., 70-80 year old man in an old Cadillac. He has been reported to have harassed young boys and kidnapped them. Two young high schoolers barely escaped with their lives earlier this afternoon. He has been reported to still be in the area."

Tom and Jason looked at each other. They tried the door, but it was locked and wouldn’t open, and the old man laughed.

"Ok, I’ve had enough tonight. This has been too much," Jason thought to himself. "We should have stayed with Eddie and John. Tom, what is that under your feet?"

As Tom looked, his eyes focused on a badly crushed orange pumpkin that they had thought they had seen earlier. As Jason explored the backseat, he found a damp, furry cloth with a pinkish tinge to it. For Jason, two and two made four, and he whispered to Tom to break the window, jump out of the car and run. Fortunately for them, old men do not drive very fast, or they both would have had more than the scratches from the broken window glass. Even more fortunate, the driver apparently was not going to stop the car and try and get them.

"Where in Hell are we?" Tom whimpered holding a bruised arm.

"Look, there’s a phone booth!" Jason pulled out a quarter. He called John’s house and Eddie answered the phone. Eddie agreed to come get them.

When John pulled up with Eddie, they had some news of their own. After Jason and Tom left, John looked around some more and still found nothing. As he and Eddie got into his car to pick up Jason and Tom, John saw the two boys getting into the strange car. They accelerated to follow, but when they rounded the last corner, the car was gone. In the road was a pair of pink bunny ears covered in blood. They went racing home to get their parents, but as soon as they got to John’s house, the phone rang and it was Jason. The boys agreed it was all too strange, and as they piled into John’s car to be taken home, Jason screamed from the back seat. There, sitting on the dash, was a crushed orange pumpkin.

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Look Both Ways

Friendships you hold,
so dear to your heart.
Treasures and dreams never depart.
We’re given a gift
to unwrap over time,
A toy we will revel with
and then leave behind.

The flowers of life
rise into bloom.
We see each petal
grasp out to the world-
A fragile hand
we reach out to hold,
A friend’s gentle word
we listen to hear.

A tear, a frown.
A giggle, a smile.
The sunlight of day
highlights each expression
And twilight then
casts shadows to rest.

---Stephanie Norton
Reflections

It was a typical Saturday at the store. The usual cluster had formed at the cash register. The clearance items at the back of the store were the main attractions as always. A woman was modeling one of the new spring dresses for her friends near the fitting rooms. The phone was ringing off the hook. Little kids were pulling on the legs of their mothers or spinning the rounders as fast as they could. My boss was frowning at the sight of such activity. Harry Connick, Jr. was crooning on the PA.

On this typical Saturday, I was stationed at the front of the store mechanically folding shirts when a grandmother, her daughter, and her two young granddaughters timidly stepped into the store—actually, the mom zoomed in on the clearance stuff and the youngest child started spinning rounders, but the grandmother nudged her eldest granddaughter up to me.

"She needs an outfit for spring. Can you show us something?" smiled Grandma.

I could only stand there and look at the girl, hiding behind a mop of blonde hair, smiling shyly at me. She lifted her head and looked at me with huge brown eyes. That look is still with me as I write, and I know it is one I won’t soon forget. Her eyes told me that she hated the fact that she had come to the large sized women’s clothing store to find an outfit, while her classmates were still wearing clothes from the children’s section at Famous. They told me that she hid behind her hair so she wouldn’t have to look at those who stared and teased and taunted. Her arms were folded across her stomach as if she was trying to hide it. Looking at this little girl was like stepping into the past and looking at myself. My heart went out to her. I wanted to snatch her up and hug her and protect her from the cruelty of society. I wanted to tell her that she was beautiful and special and worth so much. I wanted to dress her up in a cute little girl outfit instead of women’s clothes that aged her too quickly.

"Tell her what you’d like, honey." Grandma nudged her 11-year-old granddaughter.

"I’d like a skirt." She spoke with the voice of a little bird, giving me another shy smile.

I wanted her to trust me, and to know that I knew just how she felt. At 19, I still felt like that scared little girl in big women’s clothing. I never wanted her to feel that way. I knew what was ahead of her in the critical years of junior high and high school, and even in college people still look at you "that way."

I set out to find her the most adorable skirt I could. When I asked her size, I found that this child of not even 5 feet wore a size larger than I do at 5'9". I put her in the dressing room with the skirt and a matching sweater, and two minutes later she emerged, as if from a cocoon.

"Sweetie, you look so pretty!" Grandma was all smiles and hugs. But the little girl was looking at me. She was smiling a real smile, and her eyes were asking for my approval.

"You look beautiful!" I gushed over her. I gave her the attention I had always starved for, and still do. I gave her positive attention instead of taunting or pity. I could tell by her eyes that she knew I meant it and was not just saying it.

Her smile widened when I showed her matching tights to go with her new outfit. She was positively beaming as I rang up her purchases and my co-workers commented on how cute the outfit looked on her.

I walked the family to the front of the store and invited them to return, and to my surprise and joy, my young customer, so much a reflection of myself, hugged me and said in her little voice, "thank you."

After they left I returned to folding the shirts as a tear ran down my cheek.

—Jennifer Casey