

# the JASON

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# Treesong

One more winter has come and gone  
we're still standing here  
Seems like only yesterday  
the hours felt like years

Doesn't seem so long ago  
the sky was far' away  
Time has brought us close enough  
but its gone from blue to gray

It always seemed we grew with the changes  
Time passed us by  
Now we're just part of the strangeness

It helps a little knowing  
there are fewer fading winters waiting  
Only time can fade the memory  
of all the things we knew

You don't know what it does to me  
to see you dressed in Spring  
Its just like being young  
and small all over again

Seasons pass so quickly now  
from green to gold to gray  
Sometimes I can't help the feeling  
we're getting in the way

It always seemed we grew with the changes  
Times passed us by  
Now we're just part of the strangeness

One more winter has come and gone  
we're still standing here  
Seems like only yesterday  
the hours felt like years

It seems like only yesterday  
the hours felt like years

--by Trent Whitford

# *Apple Sighter*

Apples are nice fellows  
said I  
As I stood  
contemplating their tree

Might I be an apple  
queried I  
As I stood  
entranced by their splendor

What beautiful colour  
decided I  
As I stood  
viewing their glorious hue

Forgive me your Fruitships  
begged I  
As I stood  
for stealing your sight

I then jumped up  
and with all of my might  
grabbed the biggest apple of all  
  
and  
  
ate it.

--by Trent Whitford

# *Offerings of Autumn*

A lone cricket song serenades  
to the veranda's stillness  
to the two who stand aflame  
bright painted by the sunset brush.

They, reluctant to be moving  
and shake the solemn hush  
view naiad sprites, Pan's creatures  
gathering,  
vanguard of the moon's reign.  
"Husband, the time is come!"

Over froth fringed cups  
the steaming widow's mead  
anxious hands meet  
and in understood gesture  
fingers tighten pressure.  
"Hear that--the opening call?  
Husband, they come."  
"It is time! The time is come!"

Soft other sounds now breathing close  
in the whisper of autumn leaves  
in the rustle of dry corn shieves,  
an overture for the Harvest Host.

His eternity-haunted eyes,  
a mouth's stern line,  
in a ringed golden fringe  
wind-teased by siren sighs.  
"Husband, the time is come!"

Still closer now, a second flute trilling  
arcs a fire fly glissando  
to dew-beaded webs set winking,  
gossamer shrouds of jewel-sleaved  
splendor  
to be rent by something moving.

A silver glint of a bow's tight string  
Flickering arrow points in a leaf-  
screened canter.  
Sounds of strange feet in tall grass  
thrashing.

"Oh, hear, husband! The time is come."

With bells and lutes, chimes and flutes  
into a meadow clearing,  
bride-gowned of the fingering mists,  
leads Artemis, goddess of arcane sights  
bacchant feasts, Olympian trysts.

Prepare Pan's handmaiden of ancient rites  
when the world was young, the gods  
unsung

"Husband, hand me thy cup.

It is time! The time is come!"

Flute held aloft,  
casting aside his farmer's traces  
Satyr's eyes strike fire under a horn-  
arched brow.

She is lit in the clearing-  
the Harvest Moon offering confronting  
him now.

Chanting night minions link the nuptial ring,  
"Daughter of Zeus, Sister of Apollo."  
Words washing coolly at the veranda's  
bow  
and cloven feet coming.

--by Edward Young

## *a paper of cotton candy*

I didn't ask you to regret  
the paper of cotton candy we shared

I wanted you to remember  
the sensation of its  
quickly dissipating texture-  
the way the delicate fibers  
melted into nothing,  
liquid sweetness on your tongue,  
lingering

How it got stuck in your hair  
and on my ribbons,  
hilariously, indiscriminate,  
unorthodox, messy,  
penetrating the tidy worlds  
of proper separate perfections

How it made your lips  
clown pink and sticky

How we laughed at our reflections  
in the warped shiney squares  
on the side of the vendor's gaudy trailer

Children rollicking in our shadows,  
twirling on the edges of reality-  
lines become irrelevant  
That was the magic  
Relishing our crime

I didn't ask for you to apologize  
for the paper tube we dropped  
somewhere under the ferris wheel  
among the frivolous litter,  
soon covered with ashes and oil

I don't regret a moment  
of that delectable freedom shared  
It only plunges me deeper  
into alive- something to retrieve  
in times of adulterated forms-

Who can reject that?  
The delightful sweetness of cotton candy

Perhaps it is painful  
to admit our boundaries,  
the hash marks between  
encounters with those Who  
touch us deeply and  
then are gone with the next train,  
to a new carnival, in another town

--by Ann Hovland

fading fast  
in the realm of deceiving imagination  
The blood soaked earth shouted forth  
The tears of the last battle.

Spirits of war!  
Wake the dead,  
That they may rise  
And join the fight!

Emerge from the haze!  
Compete in the glory  
Of the terror's divinity!

Crying a chant for the broken chain  
Of flying memories  
A ghost rises from the field of sleep;  
Look not, My Love,  
For this is the end.  
I'll never see  
Your smile again.

--by Rob Stone

Can you stand alone  
when I'm not around?  
If we smell the rain in the air,  
the dead man's gone to go home.  
The lonely sounds of the wind  
blow voices of forever.  
Strange is the way the lights fade to words  
when the shattered skin is on the floor.  
  
Shining in slow motion  
we fell into the flame.  
The colour of the moment  
filled the room with pain.  
  
So until the day breathes,  
and the shadows flee,  
Disappear in the light of pleasure.  
Never turn your eyes from me.  
Fly to the land of insanity  
to smile and take a life.  
Blood is the reason for living in fear.  
Let us laugh until we die.  
  
You and I are alone in the shadows of  
the fire.  
You and I let us laugh until  
we die.

--by Rob Stone

## *a winter collage*

I like the silence of winter,  
with days wrapped in blue and white,  
accented by black silhouetted trees  
that are waiting to be  
leaf-ed for spring.

--by Marie Cummings

## *two bears*

A ceramic teddy bear sits  
On my kitchen table,  
A recent gift from  
A college friend.  
And it flashes upon me,  
As I snack on cheese and crackers,  
With a cup of hot water,  
That this is exactly how  
I used to have tea parties,  
On the farm, when I was  
Four years old. Then,  
A furry, slim, blonde,  
Pink-pawed teddy bear was my  
Constant guest and cohort.  
I must get out my best  
Crystal and china,  
Polish my manners and  
My imagination  
And enjoy these shared  
Social to their fullest.

--by Marie Cummings

# *Tunaboats and Porpoises*

Tunaboats slip out and in:  
O sea, les va bien.  
Purses full, the fish below:  
El pobre mamifero.

Equal rights for porpoises,  
De Baja a Mayaguez.  
Reddish ink makes reddish morn;  
La red, ya no valor.

"Lads that live before the wind,"  
¿Conocen nuestra linde?  
Play now! The boats will soon appear,  
Siempre entrar, salir.

--by James A.R. Nafzinger

# *Times and Times*

Sundry, the many-in-one,  
The process of continual change,  
"Variety is the spice of life;"  
Many phrases, all one thought:  
Life is a series of times.  
Is the Preacher so influential?

What about the monotony?  
Continual waiting,  
Penultimate suspension,  
Never-ending death?  
Many days, all the same.

Let's hear from the old about time--  
The chronically ill, the widow.  
The manifold can also be an infinite rut.

--by Lane C. McGaughy

# *death I*

Spring returns each year,  
but he will never return.

Never again will he see Spring,  
nor Winter, Summer, nor Fall.

He has ascended to God's Kingdom,  
but why did he have to go now?

What happens to all those plans:  
things to do, see, and talk about?

Life is there to live, there to enjoy,  
so why was he deprived?

Worse yet, why are we deprived  
of the best years of his life?

A husband, father, and grandfather,  
how do we go on without him?

It is sad life is like the seasons,  
but the seasons return, he will not.

--by Joe West

## *death II*

It is believed  
that upon death, we enter the Kingdom of  
the Creator.

It is known  
that upon death, there is many a mourning  
survivor.

It is true  
that upon death, those closest to us  
never quite recover.

But one must believe  
that upon his death, by the grace of God  
he will be reborn.

And one must know  
that upon his death, we must still must  
face each new morn.

And it must be true  
that since his life was so wonderful and  
adventurous, how can his life-ever-after  
be anything less?

--by Joe West

The outcome of a man's life is  
determined by his will. His will  
is determined by his desires, his  
desires by his heart. But what  
determines that in a man's  
heart?

--Anonymous

I want to learn  
from the wisdom of elders,  
to laugh in joy  
with children,  
and to share both with  
my brothers.

--Anonymous

# *seeing your world*

Is a man so blind  
That he may never see?  
Will I ever understand  
What's right in front of me?

We talk, and we walk  
Neither wishing to cause pain  
We look, and we search  
To part, alone again.

If only eyes traded  
My world yours, yours then mine  
Just for a tender moment  
An instant, precious time

There will be your dreams  
For me to treasure too  
And I will understand  
All my love for you.

--by Greg Schroff

## *Blue Country*

I look at the dusty road behind me  
Wondering about my past  
Can't exactly see where I'm going to  
How long everything can last

Time is something that flies faster  
    than the breeze  
Something that can never be replaced  
Like good old friends and photographs  
Or an expensive antique vase

I wonder what is over the hill  
Or up around the bend  
I wonder if it's a mountain  
And will we make it in the end?

--by Paul Cramer

## *the Scamp*

One is quiet  
And the other one is loud  
And you sit there wondering why  
There's no one around

One is loud  
And the other tender-hearted  
"Sittie, don't kill the poor puchies!"  
We've just barely started

One is heaven  
And the other one is loud  
She describes with "yesh-no"  
And flowers all around

God has not lighted his fire tonite  
And He's turned off the blue  
And He created the lilacs  
And here's some for you

--by Paul Cramer

I tore a young half-opened leaf  
from the infant tree  
ripped its flesh  
along its pulse  
And threw it it gasping on the ground  
fearless  
in my sensual pleasure  
in the joy of spying  
I had to taste the joy of this  
new thing

--by F. Nahid Amini-Tabrizi

I used to pass this way every day,  
and each day I noticed a change.  
So at first it was wearing a dress  
of beautiful yellow leaves but day  
after day this dressing becomes  
older.

Until finally it appeared in a  
long white dress more beautiful  
than before.

The dress was changed, but still  
alive waiting to become green  
again.

Year after year this noble fir  
undergoes these changes in our  
yard.

All those years I thought that one  
day it never will be green anymore,  
but that old tree is still green,  
dancing in the wind, and my life  
will be over before experiencing  
the sound of the birds in spring again.

--by F. Nahid Amini-Tabrizi

# *Lonely Fantasy*

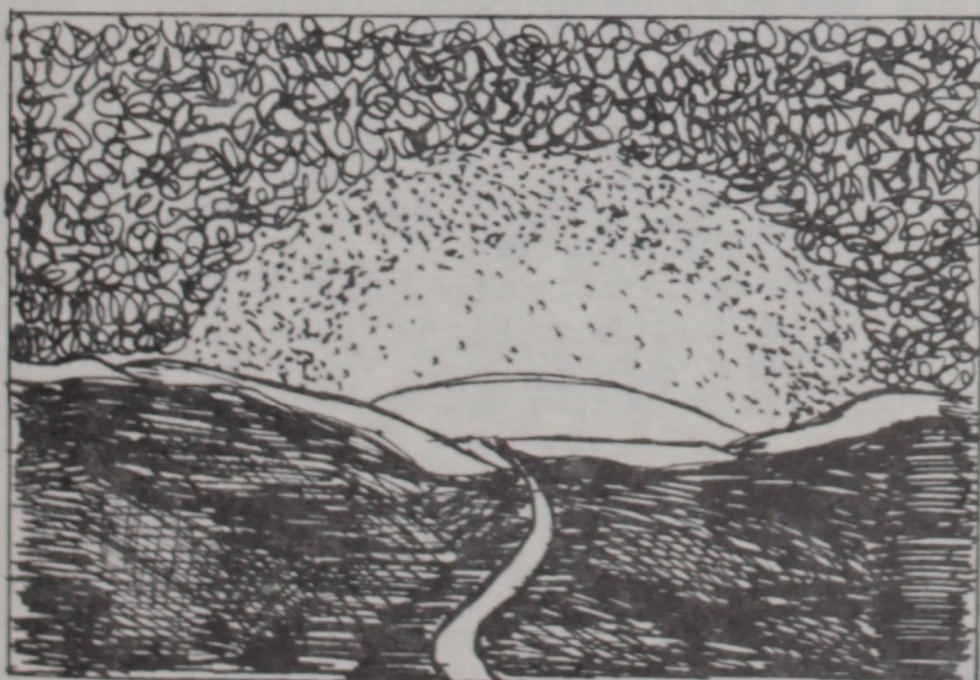
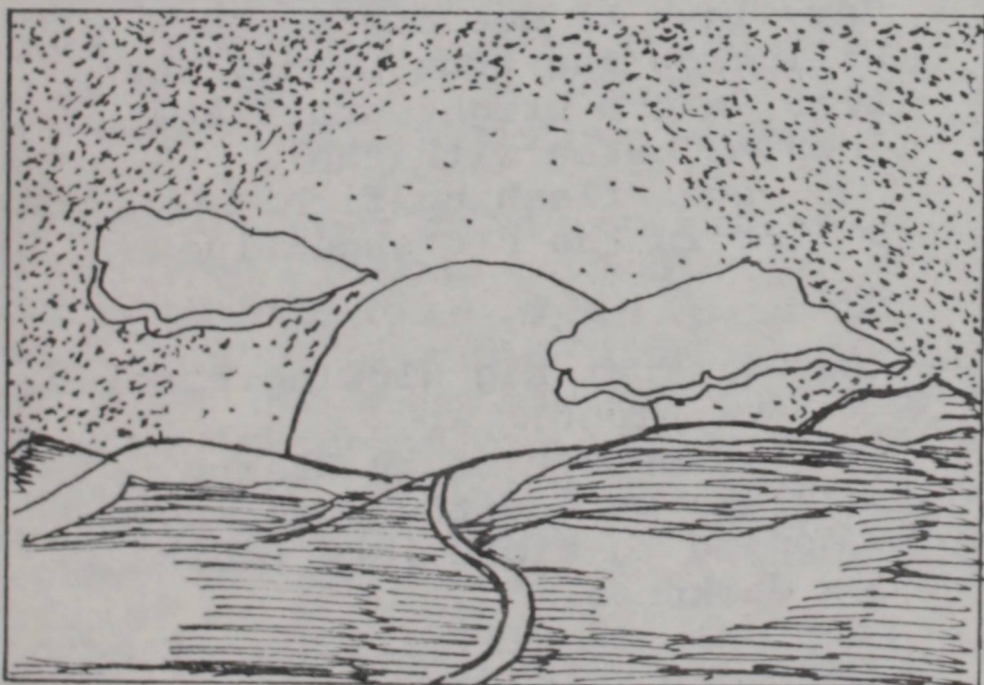
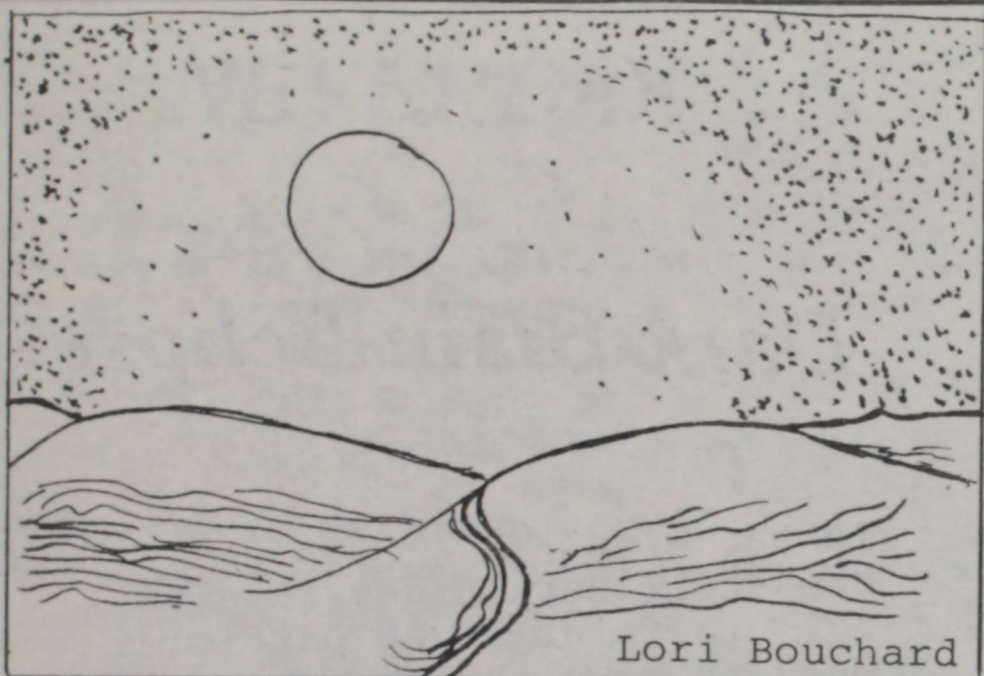
Standing in a wide, wide plain endless as an ocean I'm hearing a lonely wind the lonliest wind I've ever heard Whistling, blending itself into me ancient memories, of elves, monsters, trolls and men. Watching their history form into being, to flow past me. I want to be in it. Be part of it, but I'm not real. They are real to me, living their lives in front of me. I cannot touch them--oh, they're so real.

How I wish I could pick up a sword, or maybe a bow and arrow, or use some magic; y'know, the sword and socery bit. Their beauty, humor, ancient memories of the past, horror, sorrow, the elves always have fascinated me. There is a feeling of loneliness when I see them. I am like a child among them, I cannot control them, I am not real. Oh, I love them.

Oh, I'm so lonely, I could die. I laid myself down in the grass, stare into the whistling wind until I fall asleep, pining. Then I woke, and realized that I heard someone calling me, I ran toward the sound, until I bumped into an elf.

Touching, I burst into laughter, I found..... that I am real.

--by Lori Bouchard



## *Dark Brain Eclipse*

In the night  
The still dark hides itself  
to faint light particles  
Only those, like me, who stay up  
Very late to see its wonders--  
Will know the true beauty that  
Lies in the bright stars that  
Keep me awake with their  
ever flashing fire  
So-far in the distance blue.

And O! That big glowing circle  
of night!  
How tis beauty to my dreary  
Body and my excit'd eyes--never  
Stopping to close into their  
Own darkness.  
Keep on!- On till all my strength  
Is absorb'd in you,  
my lovely night.  
Go-on! Till you give me all your  
love,  
To daze myself into a quiet sleep  
And pass my night as if you are  
still in me  
And by a fortunate chance I come  
To see another light as bright as  
the one in you.

--by Leonardo Castrejon

# NEVERDAY

The silent morning came in.  
It was very still and tranquil.  
Fill'd with a mixture of obscurity,  
Ambiguity and a dubious solopsism,  
And I do battle with this day of  
.....NEVERDAY.

How did I come to the looking glass?-,  
Spread my face with foam, barely feeling the edge,  
Of the sharo razor blade,  
So different it was, figures coming in and out,  
    in ghostly shapes.  
If it was really today I would not know.  
How could I know?  
My day was NEVERDay, nonexisting and yet alive.

My mind was a space of cloud'd visions.  
I only did what I thought was right,-  
Picking up objects, round, square, possibly  
Diagonal, surely warm or cold--but not notic'd.  
Everything was different, a new begotten, a day  
forgotten, a day unknown to a lost soul--only  
Floating memories, and they are not even memories  
But a reflection of my looking glass and my looking  
    glass a reflection of me.

I can only remember what I thought I remember'd  
And what I remember I only thought I remember'd.  
The floor was cold and it felt my feet and I  
    fell through it to a lost space in time.  
Come forth my actions. Tell me more.  
I am your servant and you are my majesty.  
Come forth my dream I am your illusions  
And you are my visions.

I was answer'd in the shower where I soak'd my  
Myself--with sprays of unstinging werrness,  
Hair loosely down but undripping, soap covering me  
And I scrubing the air, but strangely, not the  
    body.  
A whisper came from no where.  
It said, "your dayd is NEVERDAY. Respect it."

continued

I came to my room bewilder'd.  
I dress'd myself and did look out the window  
(Into the sun that never was but gray, like  
this day or NEVERDAY)  
To clear my thoughts.  
The sky was opaque-white, and the cloud hung low to  
The rolling crevices of the hill stretch'd far  
Beyond the back of my pupil.  
Midway between my pupil, in this world  
Of my NEVERDAY--birds eas'd with wings spread,  
Sea gulls soar'd above the low buildings with  
blinding  
Feather'd limbs to take the place of my last night's  
stars to become my daytime stars; Their every  
movement  
Are the twinkles of my minds playing game with me,  
A game not to be figure'd out but to stay and  
Remain being what it seems to be to me, a game,  
a game, a game.  
Umbrellas spread'd to catch the rain and the  
Ground felt the dancing drops bury themselves  
Into little puddles of their own, making me want  
To be one.  
Among all of my imagining, close to the front  
Of my pupil, and as far back as my brain can reach,  
A single rose; I see it so peaceful in its beauty,  
Daring me to save it from falling into a cold  
Sleep, never to have its petals feel another day.  
I hold you well in my hand reaching through my  
Window's , glass, my sweet rose, but no I cannot  
save you. God forbid.

And so, like the trees strip'd of their colorful  
Leaves, whirling sideways, nak'd, to stand alone to  
The world that looks to them for help;  
You too shall die of thy beauty and become nak'd  
to stand alone to the passing days--and for me?  
I will never forget your plea to live. Sleep well  
My sweet rose. Sleep, sleep, soundly, my sleeping  
beauty.

Remember that I did hold you well in my hand to  
Share you sufferings and your last plead for  
Life, departing with a fair adieu till the  
Moment and time of your death. Adieu. Adieu.  
adieu.

My mind is calling to my dream to wake.  
I should be going to my Spanish class.  
I see students rapidly strolling, faces  
So sad, happy ones talking, friends sharing  
Their day, everyone is dress's in brightness.  
Can I be so lazy not to go? But that I should  
Wait for the big day of the roast'd turkey to  
finally see my family?

.....Yes.--  
For I rightly believe this day is made of  
.....Neverday.

--by Leonardo Castrejon

Special friends and special days  
I remember in different ways  
Laughter and tears come back through  
the haze  
Of my memory.

The silly, little-known escapades  
With friends from far-away bygone  
days  
We will never again have the chance  
to take place  
But I'll remember them.

It's today we must live  
and tomorrow look foward to,  
For today is tomorrow's memories.  
But yesterday will always  
live on in my mind,  
With everything there that was  
dear to me.

A picinic, a party, a serious time.  
Listening and sharing that are a true  
sign  
Of a love and the caring from friends  
that are mine  
I won't soon forget.

I sometimes wish friendships could  
last forever  
But to grow is to change, and it  
makes me feel better  
To know that though we're apart I  
will never be without you.

It's today we must live  
and tomorrow look foward to,  
For today is tomorrow's memories.  
But yesterday will always  
live on in my mind,  
With everything that was dear to  
me.

--by Dina Marshall

June 4  
6:00 am

my body is a floodgate--locked tight  
holding back the torrential storms  
seething for the baby that was inside me  
moments not ripe yet  
waiting quietly--now tortured  
anticipation of the great floods of  
liberation  
expectation...

--woman anonymous

# Hulda Kligen

Hulda Kligen came to this country at the age of forty-nine. She came with the winter solstice, an unattractive smile, her mother and a trunk of Silesian lilac seeds. The Immigration Authorities confiscated her mother.

Hulda Kligen would have preferred to this country at the age of twenty-nine in the sweep of spring with a smile that reflected many full-bloomed lilacs in her arms. And then have her mother confiscated.

Hulda Kligen, however, believed in America.

She first built a storehouse to keep the lilac seeds for the winter. She carefully placed each seed "just so." As she placed the seeds she sang to herself a Liebeslied that went: "...Juliette d'Angouleme...Teresa Carrozzi...Natalya Irenskoye...Maria Tierrafuegos....," names she would have preferred to have when she came to this country at any age or season.

But Hulda was more than a dreamer. She had matured in the Silesian peat bogs working for her mother and knew the value of perseverance and caprice. It had, after all, taken forty-nine years to get rid of her mother; and, had the Immigration Authorities confiscated her seeds.....

Hulda planted the seeds. Nutured by her song and government subsidies, they grew. People who had avoided her unattractive smile were attracted by the growing flowers, and standing around, embarrassed by their beauty, would say: "Nice lilacs you got there."

At such moments Hulda almost felt guilty about her mother. She would almost write a letter and almost send a bouquet of some of the smaller lilacs to the Immigration Department's Detention Center on Ellis Island. But Hulda was not a sentimentalist. It is doubtful that anyone named Hulda Kligen and who had worked for three decades in the Silesian peat bog could be.

A new Interstate Highway was heading straight for Hulda's lilac garden. Hulda ran to defend the only un-boggy thing in her life. The man from the Interstate Highway Commission strode up to her and put on his brakes before stepping on the lilacs.

"Nice lilacs you got there," he said.

Hulda said nothing. Now she wished her mother were there. Her mother had known how to handle authoritative males. Her mother had pushed Hulda's father into the Silesian peat bog and he had stayed there.

"Lots o'effete malcontents," said the man from the Interstate Highway Commission, "complain about Interstate Highways. Noises, fumes, billboards. You know. But you can save us."

Hulda said more nothing.

"Your lilacs," said the man. With a little replanting 'just so' we can detoxify the Interstate Highway with them. We can make them into a regulat Interstate Highway Garden. We can put up signs pointing them out. That will stop the complaints."

Hulda smiled. The smile was almost attractive. She berated herself for having doubted in America. She asked if the garden's sign could say: "...Juliette d'Angouleme...Teresa Carrozzi...Natalya Irenskoye...Maria Tierrafuegos ..."

"Sure to, honey."

Hulda smiled again. Would the Interstate Highway Commission do her one more favor? Would it send some smaller lilacs to her mother at the Immigration Department's Detention Center on Ellis Island?

"You betch, baby."

No one had ever called her "honey" or baby." Hulda broke into a beautiful smile.

And died of lilac fumes.

Today, at the Mile 358 curve on I-9, you can see Hulda's smile. It is very bright and purple and has signs at both the north and south-bound off ramps. The signs say: HULDA KLINGEN MEMORIAL ISCHELILAKENGARTEN.

That was how her mother told them to spell it.

--by Richard Wiltshire

I lie asleep dreaming. I lie asleep dreaming that I am awake. I lie asleep dreaming that I am awake looking out the window. The field is solid white as far as I can see. It is perfectly solid, untouched, virgin, and cold. Though I cannot see underneath the snow, somehow I know (for in dreams you can know something without seeing it) that the ground underneath is not at all touched by the blanket of snow. Under the snow, flowers still bloom, grass still grows, and animals still live. This I know and this gives me hope and, both in my dreams and in my bed I smile.

The I look up at the sky. It is overcast by a single solid cloud cover. The cloud is solid white as far as I can see. It is perfectly solid, untouched, virgin, and cold. Though I cannot see above the cloud, somehow I know (for in dreams you can know something without seeing it) that the sky is not at all touched by the blanket of cloud. Above the cloud, the sun still shines, birds still fly, and the blue sky still lives. This I know and this gives me hope and, both in my dreams and in my bed, I smile.

Then I look to the east and see a wind blowing towards where I in my dream look out the window. I do not see the wind blowing anything. It is merely the wind itself that I see and this I understand (for in dreams you can understand things that you cannot awake). The wind blows towards me and passes me and sweeps on. And I can see it in the distance sweeping away from me. I do not see the wind blowing anything. Yet somehow, the wind has blown away both the snow below and the cloud above and this I understand (for in dreams you can understand things that you cannot awake). Looking down I see that I was wrong about the ground. There are no flowers, no grass, and no animals below me. There is just clay, black, dry, lifeless and cold. Looking up I see that I was wrong about the sky. There is no sun, no birds, and no blue sky. There is just night, black, dry, lifeless, and cold. This I know and this gives me despair and, both in my dreams and in my bed, I cry.

Then I lay awake and I am still in my bed and I am still looking out my window and I am still crying. Only now, sitting up in bed and looking out my window, the view of my dream is replaced by a brick wall. There is a window exactly like my window in the brick wall except the other window has its shade down. So all I see is a blank wall and a blank shade when I look out my waking window. Since I am awake I cannot see what is behind the shade and I do not know what is behind the shade. Yet if I look get out of bed and cross to the window and lean out I can see more. Looking down I see the alley between my brick wall and the brick wall I look at when I wake up crying. The alley is filled with garbage in cans and garbage without cans and a man dressed in garbage sleeping in a mixture of garbage and his own vomit. Walking down the alley towards the man are two boys, fifteen or sixteen years old, and appropriately enough; they talk garbage. Look-

ing to the left or the right I see the end of the alley and the start of the next alley. In between the two alleys there exists cars driving back and forth and in the cars there exists people who never see the alleys and never hear the screams of old men or the curses of garbage or the thuds of boots hitting vomit-crusted flesh. Looking up I see the edges of the rooftops and above that I see the smog. It is grey and goes as far as I can see and I have no idea what is above that and I understand.

Looking down I see the young garbage again and looking up they see me and not looking at all the man sees nothing. The they yell garbage again, this time at me, and run around the corner of the building and I know that they are going to come into the building (for when you are awake you can know something without seeing it) and they are going to come up to my room and kill me and I understand (for when awake you can understand things that you cannot in dreams). I move away from the window and return to my bed and lie down once more. Looking up I see the ceiling, cracked and peeling above me, and I know that there is eventually a rooftop above me and smog above that and sky above me and how I would not and do not expect replies from any of those above me and this I know and this I understand.

I lie awake dreaming. I lie awake dreaming that I am asleep. I lie awake dreaming that I am asleep looking out the window. There is a field of snow out the window and there is a blanket of cloud out the window. Yet somehow I know that under the snow there is just black clay and that above the cloud there is just black night. And somewhere in the distance a wind blows towards me and somewhere near by a door is kicked towards me and all of this I know and all of this I understand.

--by Steve Miller

# *Bone Washing and the Magic Lady*

"Daddy," I asked one summer evening after supper when I was eight years old, "do you remember how the ladies took a skeleton apart and washed the bones in a tub?"

Father stopped his reading; Mother stopped her sewing. They both stared at me. Aunt Ume, my Father's sister, was with us that evening. Aunt Ume, a stout woman with a large head and sparse hair, was rarely at a loss for words, but now even she was bereft of speech.

"Impossible!" Father finally broke the silence. "Why, you...you were only a baby."

"Shh!" Mother interrupted him. "Tell us more, Nobuko," she went on, turning to me with a puzzled smile. "What else do you remember from that night?"

I told them all I remembered:

It was very dark that night because the moon kept slipping behind thick clouds to hide there. I was strapped to Mother's back, and Father was standing next to us. Around us people glided like black shadows in a mist, whispering to each other from time to time. Directly in front of us stood a stone wall with an opening in it. The opening was rectangular, about five feet long and three feet wide, and inside I could see a lady, kneeling bathed in a yellow light. She sobbed into her kimono sleeve. A drum was beating nearby. Gradually, as the drum beats louder, the yellow light grew brighter, so that I could now see the small grey patterns on her black kimono. I could see on each side of the kneeling lady the ends of thick curtains flapping in the draft. The drum beats coming from behind these curtains grew louder. As if in competition with the drum, the woman's sobs grew louder also.

The yellow light suddenly went out. The curtains, and the lady, vanished; the drum beats stopped. Now I saw two men bringing a coffin through the opening. Women crowded around the coffin and removed its lid. There was a skeleton inside. A gust of warm wind swept away the black clouds covering the face of the moon. In the moonlight, the gaping eye-sockets of the skull looked like two enormous black dots, and the gold-capped teeth of the skull glinted. The wind rose again, and the moon skittered once more behind black clouds. We were again in darkness. A man struck a match, lighting a paper lantern. He held it up high above the coffin, that the women could see what they were doing.

"It is going to rain," Father said. He took his hat off and positioned it on my head. Since I was strapped to Mother's back, the hat's broad brim partially obstructed my view over Mother's shoulder. A warm raindrop fell on my bared leg.

The women were busily separating the bones and dumping them in a wooden wash-tub beside the coffin. One of them lifted the skull; long hair was still attached to it. She examined its gold teeth in the lantern-light. Another woman stuck her arm in the tub of bones and groped for something. Out came a gold ring. She tried the ring on all the fingers of her right hand until it fit the little finger. Another woman poked her arms into the tub--another gold ring, possibly? The woman, sleeves tolled up to the elbows, began washing the bones in a tub of steaming water. A woman knelt beside the tub and chanted a prayer in a low monotone.

The rain never came. Father bent low over Mother's back to listen to my breathing. "She is sound asleep," he whispered. I felt snug and warm. Father removed the hat from my head and put it back on.

The women were now placing the washed bones in an urn. The chanting droned on. A wind blew and the candle in the paper lantern sputtered out. It was dark; I saw nothing and heard nothing more.

Some things are not clear in my memory. The yellow light, the drum, the flapping curtains--none of these could have been real. My impres-

sions of the nighttime bone-washing must somehow have blended with my impressions of Ishijo-dori--Broadway of Naha city. Because I was uncertain of what I had really seen in the ceremony, I told no one about it--until that evening when I was wight years old.

In Okinawa, the living spent fortunes on the dead; a funeral could leave a family bankrupt. A mausoleum or vault was a status symbol: the wealthier the man, the larger and more elaborate his family vault. Each memorial day was a big event, too--one which the Tonaki family observed in high style. They sent servants out to the cemetery to weed the family plot, to clean sand for the incense boxes, to sweep out and wash the family mausoleum. The Tonakis also spent a fortune on wine and food for these occansions. I remember the square lacquered boxes containing rice cakes, wafersm seaweed rolls, boiled ocropus- and potato pudding. There were wooden bowls and trays with embedded seashells; there were tiny sake cups and there were porcelain teapots large enough to hold two gallons of tea. Of course I remember the rituals, too--the bows, prayers, and incense-burning. We children loved the late summer memorial days, especially when after the feast, we could run between the tall pine trees on the cemetery grounds.

On one such day, several days before my account of the bone washing, my cousins and I had been chasing butterflies. I noticed a strange, brownish-yellow "butterfly": its wings were triangular and it glided smoothly along, rather than flapping up and down the way ordinary butterflies do. When it alighted on a blade of grass, the grass bent under its weight. I reached out for this "butterfly," but it casually eluded me. I followed it, and left my cousins behind. Flying into a cluster of tall, putple-flowered thistlesm the "butterfly" vanished. I found myself in front of a a ruined mosoleum. The stone door had come loose and lay flat on the ground, so I could look inside the crypt and see its stone steps and the jars containing the washed bones of the dead. The whole crypt was in disrepair; some rocks from the fence enclosing it had

come loose and were scattered among the tall weeds. Apparently an entire family had died out, with no one remaining to look after the ancestors whose bones reposed in the vault.

The Magic Lady was about thirty and had a dark complexion. Her long hair was pulled tightly back and gathered with a multi-colored ribbon into a pony tail. She had red, red lips; she wore no makeup.

When Aunt Ume and I arrived, the Magic Lady was busy with another client. We sat down, waited, and watched.

The Magic Lady transacted here business in a small room of her house. The floor was covered with finely-woven straw mats which retained a fresh, grassy fragrance. On the east wall, as with most Okinawan homes, hung a portrait of Emperor Hirohito. Aunt Ume and I sat in one corner, where some thick cushions had been placed for the convenience of waiting guests. While we sat there, more clients gathered in the next room; we could hear their subdued nervous chatter. There was no doubt that our hostess had built up a lucrative practice.

The Magic Lady began to mumble incantations, and took a handful of rice grains out of a red silk bag. She slowly scattered the rice over a wooden tray, also painted red. After studying the pattern made by the scattered rice she turned to face her client, a middle-aged woman with a timid smile on her round, good-natured face.

"In your prayers you have ignored the soul of a distant cousin of your great-grandmother," the Magic Lady intoned. "The cousin's spirit is offended, and that is why the sore on your back does not heal."

"But--I didn't know I had such a relative," the client protested. "My mother--long departed, bless her soul, never told me about him."

"Well, he did exist, according to my sources," answered the Magic Lady, indicating the rice grain on the tray.

"What am I to do now?" implore the customer. She looked at the Magic Lady, then at my Aunt Ume.

"Simple," said the Magic Lady. "Just make tea every morning for forty-one days, and place the tea before your ancestral tablets. You must do this early in the morning, before the rest of you family is up. Apologize to the ancestor for having neglected him in your prayers. Then, when the forty-one days are over, give a great feast at the graveside. And don't spare the cash for the feast."

"Yes, Madam." The customer bowed deeply and began fumbling for something in her dark-blue furoshiki bundle. But then she glanced timidly at the Magic Lady and asked: "Suppose my sore doesn't heal? My doctor says..."

The Magic Lady's slanted eyes glittered with displeasure. She drew some more rice out of her red bag and again scattered the little white grains over the red tray. We all watched the deft movements of her magic hand as she analyzed the new pattern.

"Ummm," she said shortly. "Get the rat-trap. Your daughter is in danger."

The customer stared at her in disbelief.

"A rat bit your daughter last night, didn't it?" the Magic Lady asked.

"Why, yes! But how did you know? We haven't told a soul. And it only happened last night!"

"And the rat bit the tip of her little toe, on her right foot," the Magic Lady went on, studying the scattered grains of rice. The customer gasped. "Yes! Yes! You're right! But how...? Ah, yes, the rice...."

Aunt Ume excitedly squeezed my hand. We both stared at the rice on the blood-red tray.

"As I said earlier, you must console the

"As I said earlier, you must console the spirit of you great-grandmother's cousin," the Magic Lady instructed. "Offer him morning tea, with prayers and then give a feast in honor of all the dead in the family. A big feast. Be sure to get first-rate pork; my servant can tell you where to buy the best pork in town."

"Certainly. Certainly, Madam." The customer took out some coins wrapped in white tissue paper and placed them before the Magic Lady. "We,

the whole family, would be honored to have you present at our feast," she said, and after a deep bow, she left. A smile flitted across the Magic Lady's face. She put the money in a small box and turned to Aunt Ume.

Aunt Ume began to whisper urgently. She told the Magic Lady of my astounding reminiscences --how I had described the bone-washing ceremony, the yo-yo tomb and the moth.

"She was very young--not yet two," Aunt Ume whispered. "Yet she couldn't have made up the stories. All the details fir; I was there myself."

"How old is she now?"

"Seven and a half."

"Ummm...And you say she was chasing a moth? And the moth flew right into the yo-yo vault?"

The Magic Lady reached into her cash box and pulled out a pack of cigarettes. Aunt Ume frowned until her thick eyebrows touched. She detested the smell of cigarette smoke and she passionately disapproved of women smoking. In Okinawa a bar girl might smoke, but no respectable lady publicly engaged in such vulgarity.

Aunt Ume stopped whispering and began to talk in her normal, forthright bass voice. This was one way of showing her displeasure at the cigarettes' appearance.

"The reason I have brought my neice Nobuko to see you, Madam," she boomed, is because she's been saying such strange things lately. It's as though she was possessed of supernatural power of some sort. This is a bad sign, isn't it? I mean, her 'remembering' events which she saw when she was such a tiny thing. I'm worried. Really, I am afraid for her."

The Magic Lady was silent for a few moments.

"Chased a moth, eh?" she said finally.

"Well, well. How about that?" She looked at me and shook her pony-tailed head, as if half-scolding me for something I should not have done. Then she smiled. With that smile, she lost her Magic Lady aura and turned into a motherly figure.

"I have an eight-year-old daughter," she informed me. "She goes to school. I'm sure you go to school, too Nobuko, did you say your name is?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Do you love and respect you teacher?"

"Yes," I said.

"Good. You must. Teachers are good people."

Aunt Ume cleared her throat. The Magic Lady understood, and stopped talking about irrelevant matters. She put back her unlit cigarette, too, and reached for her red silk bag. After pouring the rice out onto the red tray, she began to study the new pattern formed in the rice. She sat silently for several minutes. Aunt Ume coughed nervously. Then the Magic Lady took our her cigarette again and, this time, lit it. Still silent, she puffed away. Aunt Ume turned her face to the wall to avoid inhaling the purplish smoke pouring from the Magic Lady's mouth and nostrile.

"Hmmm," said the Magic Lady finally. "Did you say your niece had chased the moth right into the yo-yo vault?"

"Yes, right into the yo-yo vault," repeated Aunt Ume, her face turned to the wall.

The Magic Lady did not even look at us. Her face had an expression of serious concentration, as though she were trying to understand something. For several minutes she said nothing.

My legs were beginning to go to sleep. I fidgeted on my cushion.. If only I could get up and stretch my legs. I looked up at the bespectacled, unsmiling Emporor in his frame on the east wall. The Emporor had a lot of medals on his chest. I looked at the Magic Lady's hands and noticed the nail on one little finger was two inches long. Involuntarily I glanced at Aunt Ume's finger for comparison. Aunt Ume had fat hands and short nails, and an unusually thick gold ring on the smallest finger of her right hand. The Magic Lady began to mumble an incantation in a low, monotonous voice. At last she nodded and said:

"Yes, just as I suspected."

"Yes?" Aunt Ume leaned foward.

The Magic Lady straightened up and faced Aunt Ume.

"The curse of the yo-yo ancestors is on your niece!"

Aunt Ume groaned.

"The moth was one of the yo-yo abcestors in his afterlife. Your niece should never have fooled with it. Moths embody the spirits of dead persons who have sined during their earthly life. No one should ever bother a morh, for a moth is an accursed spirit, an enemy of living people. A moth is--"

"What would you have my niece do to...to remove the curse?" Aunt Ume asked bravely.

"She must arise early tomorrow morning with the first crowing of the cock and go back to the yo-yo vault. There she must stand facing the opening of the vault, and--"

"I won't go there," I declared. "I don't want to."

"Hush!" growled Aunt Ume, and pulled my sleeve.

"As I was saying," the Magic Lady went on, "have your niece stand, facing the vault's entrance, and let her say 'yo-yo' three times."

"And then?" asked Aunt Ume.

"Then she'll be free of the curse. She'll be back to her healthy self. No more imaginary visions of bone-washing and all that."

"I won't go back to that place," I protested. "I'm afraid. Besides, it'll still be dark that early in the morning."

"You must go," the Magic Lady said.

"You must go," Aunt Ume echoed, and took out an envelope containing money to pay the Magic Lady. A ribbon made of thin red and white cords was tied around it.

It turned out I did not have to get up early the next morning to go to the yo-yo grave. My father objected to the whole idea, calling it nonsense. Aunt Ume was put out at Father, and Mother was upset, too, but Father was adamant.

Several days later I heard Father reading a newspaper to Mother. The article told of a fortune teller who had been arrested by the police for beguiling innocent citizens with her bogus witchcraft.

--by Jo N. Martin

