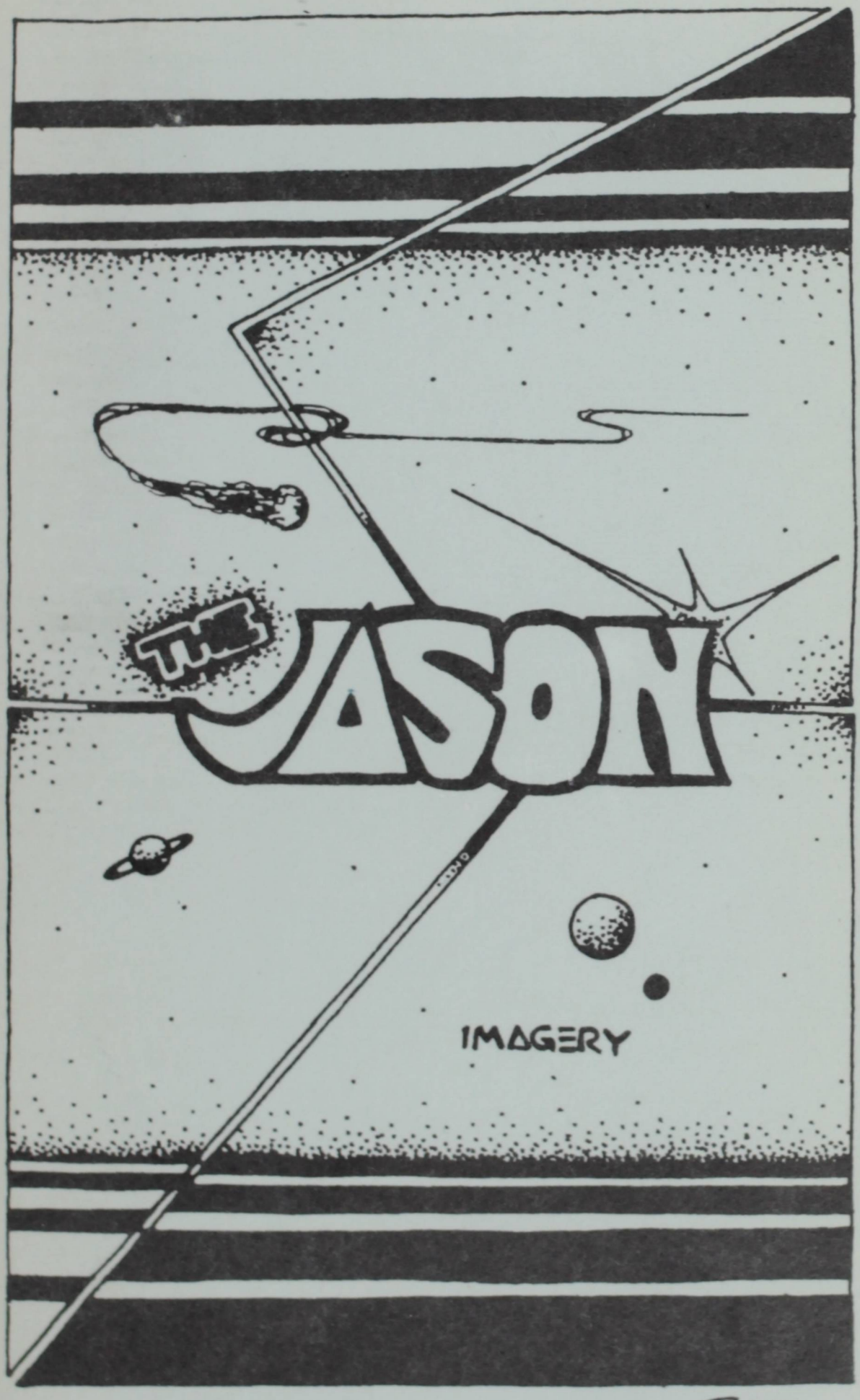

THE
JASON
IMAGERY
81

The Literary Magazine
of
Willamette University

EDITOR: Cindy R. Okumoto

STAFF: Pamela Rost
Richard Vireday

MANY THANKS TO: Scott Winter, for his undying support

John Partigan, for his help with the layouts

and Bruce Burnett, for doing us a fantastic cover design

Contents

Words are born in the brain, reveal
the animals lurking among the gray tendrils.
Concrete lies or fictitious facts.
The sun lures them out to play.
The mind's endurance outlives dusk,
when the vocal beast takes one last trip to the oasis.
One last burst of song lays down to sleep.
But, alas, the waves continue alone,
flowing to the sea and sky and beyond.
Passing frenzy along the way-
deprived of a lover
there is no peace but that of despair.
It is a cycle omnipotent
that leaves the mute one with the lust
the need
the dream
the hope only:
insanity

Sharon Stocker

Blue Ribbons and Other Momentos

Driving home in the dark
green Apache truck - vintage '48
we were laughing at Mim's
hoping the love of a good
woman would show the way.

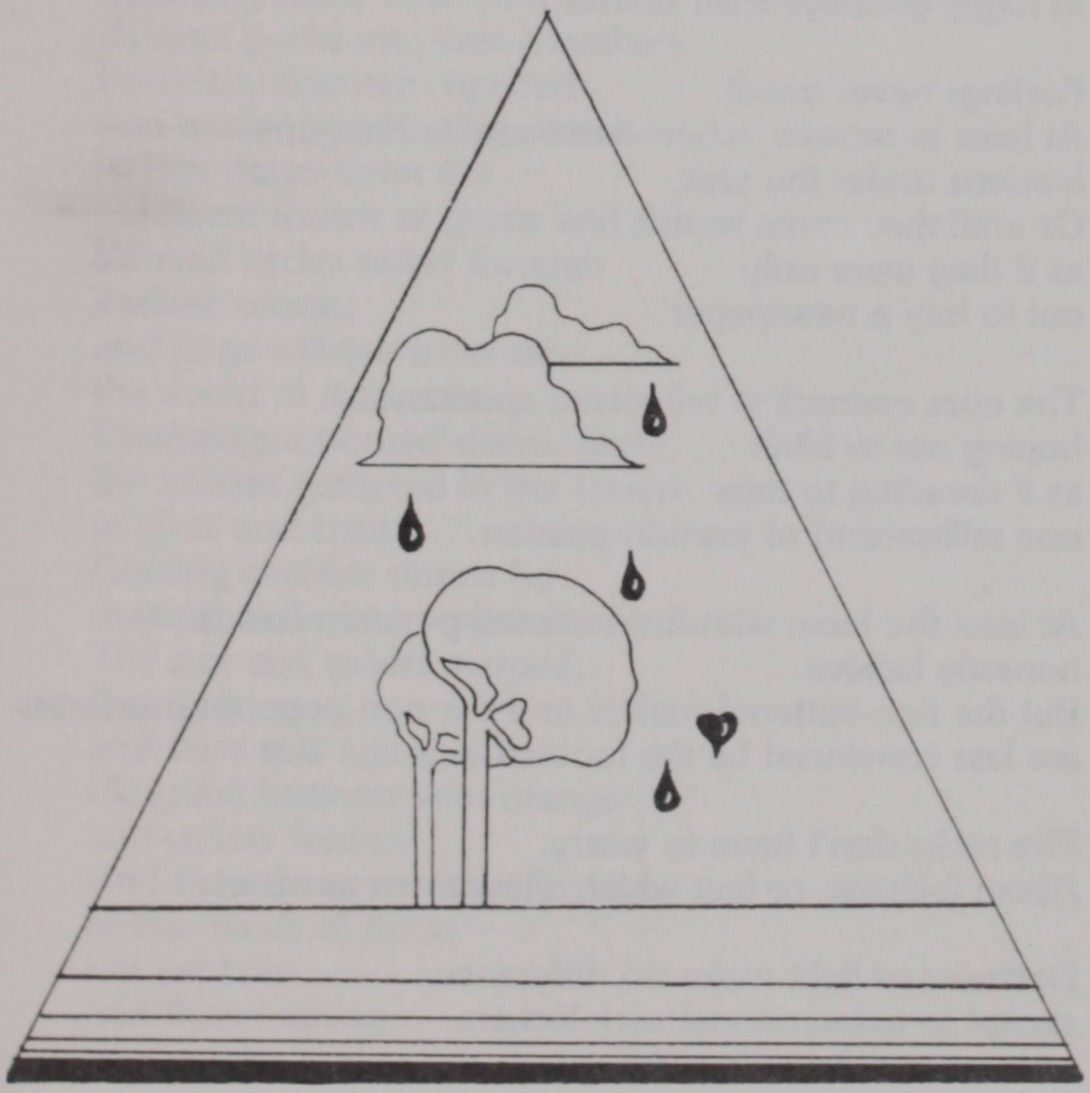
Today I am laughing again
at that sentiment; so sweet.
I gave you that love and
watched you gracefully speak your thanks
as you placed it in your office
next to the bowling trophy.

Lorrie Dukart

On Being Alone

I had always thought the
tender drops of Oregon rain
more comforting than anything else.
But now, I find the wetness
against my thighs only
a memory of our warm nights
together in a bed stained
with traces of your love.

Lorrie Dukart



Reflections On An Old Movie

Lifting the monstrosity of darkness
I kick at the misty dew-grass
occasionally hitting rocks,
which never have dreams
or nightmares.

The momentary pain fades as consciousness shifts
to foggy goodbye-train scenes.

Feelings never travel.
At least in movies, where front-row bubblegum
hardens under the seat.
Or until they come home,
as if they were only
out to buy a newspaper.

The eyes connect in rehearsed spontaneity
hoping not to blink
as if dreading to miss
one millisecond of pseudo-passion.

At least the faces with hot-buttered popcorn-hands
honestly believe...
But the non-buttered realists and the non-popcorn pessimists
are less convinced by the focused lens.

The rocks don't have to worry.
About feelings, or feet which allow them to travel.

Darkness or light make no difference,
except to unintentional rock-kickers
who try to relieve themselves,
for a moment,
of the heavy, upward blackness.

Mark Simmer

And as the drug took effect,
the world changed.
Sparkling water flew from
chrome peaks into vast chambers.
Porcelain doormen opened
non-existent vaults of rainbows-
to rain down upon the
iridescent forests of green and red.
Winged cycles sailed through
endless ozone,
and dogs without faces ran
the tracks of starbursts.
Champagne poured down upon
the masses gathered in the towers
of glass and crystal.
Flaming chariots drawn by
majestic polar bears passed over head.
The sun and moon merged,
then split,
and then split again,
filling the heavens with orange
and yellow flashes.
And then there was opaqueness,
in the minds of those
not yet born,
and then nothing.

Bruce Burnett

to make love, he must kick himself

Only in a one-armed society is there need for heroes.
And I don't mean New York City sandwiches.
Heroism feeds on the acne and gripe of the inarticulate.
When the dragon is slain, Achilleus can not tend sheep
like the rest, or plant seed.
He must again prop up the beast and chop at it,
or die alone.

It's not just TV and movies and Homer.
There is a need, a warm-waiting place in the breast
for one who stands above the rest to lead.
And they stand,
the little Trojans.

Remember the aspect of your dreams.
To be like Spiderman, in the school book, on a marble frieze,
historical marker, or cast in bronze to turn green in the park
with the pigeon shit,
you need the unconquered beast
and the coughing, tubercular many with cold feet.

John Partigan

I was wondering --
have you
ever been awake
in a dormitory at two o'clock
in the morning
on a weekday?
When silence becomes
sporadic
giggles and constant yawns
typing becomes
a test
and even the tritest
subjects
become philosophical?

Katherine D. Parish

To Be Blind In Dreamland

Glorious! There were great Viking ships, teeming with towering Nordic sailors, and from somewhere he could hear a symphony playing Wagner. The little boat cast off from the largest ship, and he sat quietly watching the oarsmen, all intense precision, their strong muscles straining. Next to him, someone mentioned how beautifully the symphony was playing. She had very startling blue eyes.

Strangely, it was night. There were no stars in the black expanse of sky, no moon. From somewhere came a soft light. He could see the faces in the brightness, and most of all noticed how very far away the shore seemed. The music captured his attention. It annoyed him, its beauty distracting him from the excitement of the surroundings; he felt its familiar strains pulling deep inside his memory.

The boat drew closer and closer to shore. He strained his eyes searching in the distance for the welcoming bonfire which would warm his damp skin. There would be a celebration, and a grand feast. Shadowy figures moved about in the dimness, but he saw no bright fires kindled there.

The same deep voice next to him mentioned the absence of fires. There were to be none this night, a sacred holiday he had forgotten. There would be dancing and celebration, but no elaborate feast.

She had a warm musical voice, but she would not look into his eyes. He felt the night wind breathe on his damp clothes, and shivered at the thought of the cold shore.

But the land ahead was more beautiful than he remembered. It was a long broad shore, all glowing white sand, and the trees were mighty shadows against the blackness of the sky.

Still the symphony played Wagner. His mind filled with Valkyries. He drew one soft breath and closed his eyes to enjoy the final measures.

He opened his eyes, startled that he was no longer skimming over the deep ocean. He could see nothing, there was no sound. The icy breeze was still. He reached to his left, to find the hand of the blue-eyed woman. She was not there.

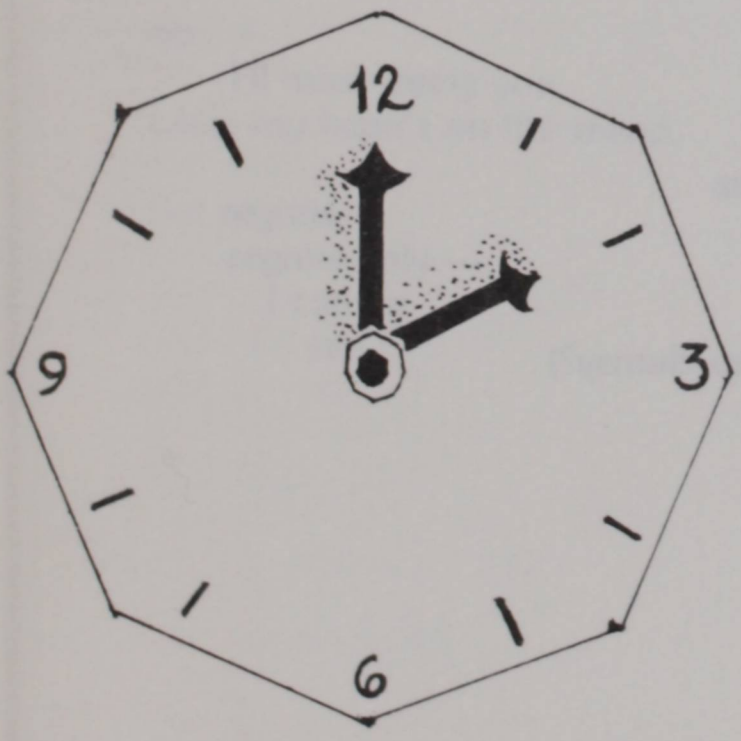
He put his hand out to the right, to find the side of the boat and the water beyond. There was a length of smooth, polished wood and then nothing. He felt no movement so, knowing they must have landed, he stood.

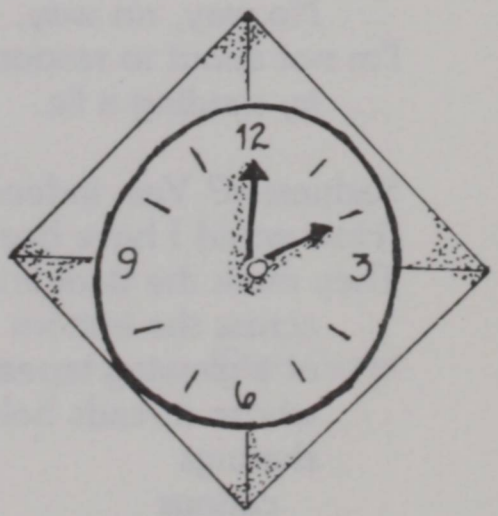
The earth beneath him was deeply carpeted. He gasped in surprise, not yet awake, turning to feel that his seat in the boat was a wooden chair. Then he reached out, farther into the darkness, seeking the top of his desk. He picked up the special clock that rested there. His fingers found the clasp, and he lifted the plastic guard and lightly touched its face.

He could hear no music, see no dancing light from nowhere in the world of his waking. There were only hours crawling blindly across the face of a special clock in a small soft room. He sighed, who had never heard a sigh, and sat.

Two in the afternoon.

Cheryl Gunselman





Regrets Only

No, I'll not be there
The scar where we tore apart
    is still too tender,
And things might get awkward
    in the receiving line.

But "only regrets"?
    No way, no way,
I'm not about to respondez
    by sending a lie.

Sadnesses? Yes, indeed.
(How could I have been so clumsy?)
They mark the dark line
    across the bottom
    of a glowing tapestry
    whose threads hold
    sharings
        carings
            darings
all woven together

by Creation's hand
with laughter
and tears
and hopes
and fears
in such a glorious array
that I would not now unlay
a single strand.

So,
I'll miss seeing you
while my heart's on the mend,

But regrets----
regrets only----.
I cannot
send.

Don Grant

People don't like to show
their tears,
their fears,
their cares.
Vulnerability, for most, is
an impossibility.
Mysterious ways people show their
true feelings,
They tease, they smile, they laugh,
but never expose
their guts,
their cares,
their centers.
Why do they lie?
no one knows
Fear of exposure, fear of doubt
especially their fear of rejection
So they play games,
But cry underneath
for understanding,
for relief,
mostly for LOVE.

Jeff J. Dangermond

When I was little
And naive
Blanketed with security
And ready-made decisions
It was easy.
I can't grow up
I can't be alone.
I need someone else
To provide security.
I'm so confused
And knotted up inside.
And though I tied
The knots,
I forgot how to untie them.

Katherine D. Parish

Shamil *

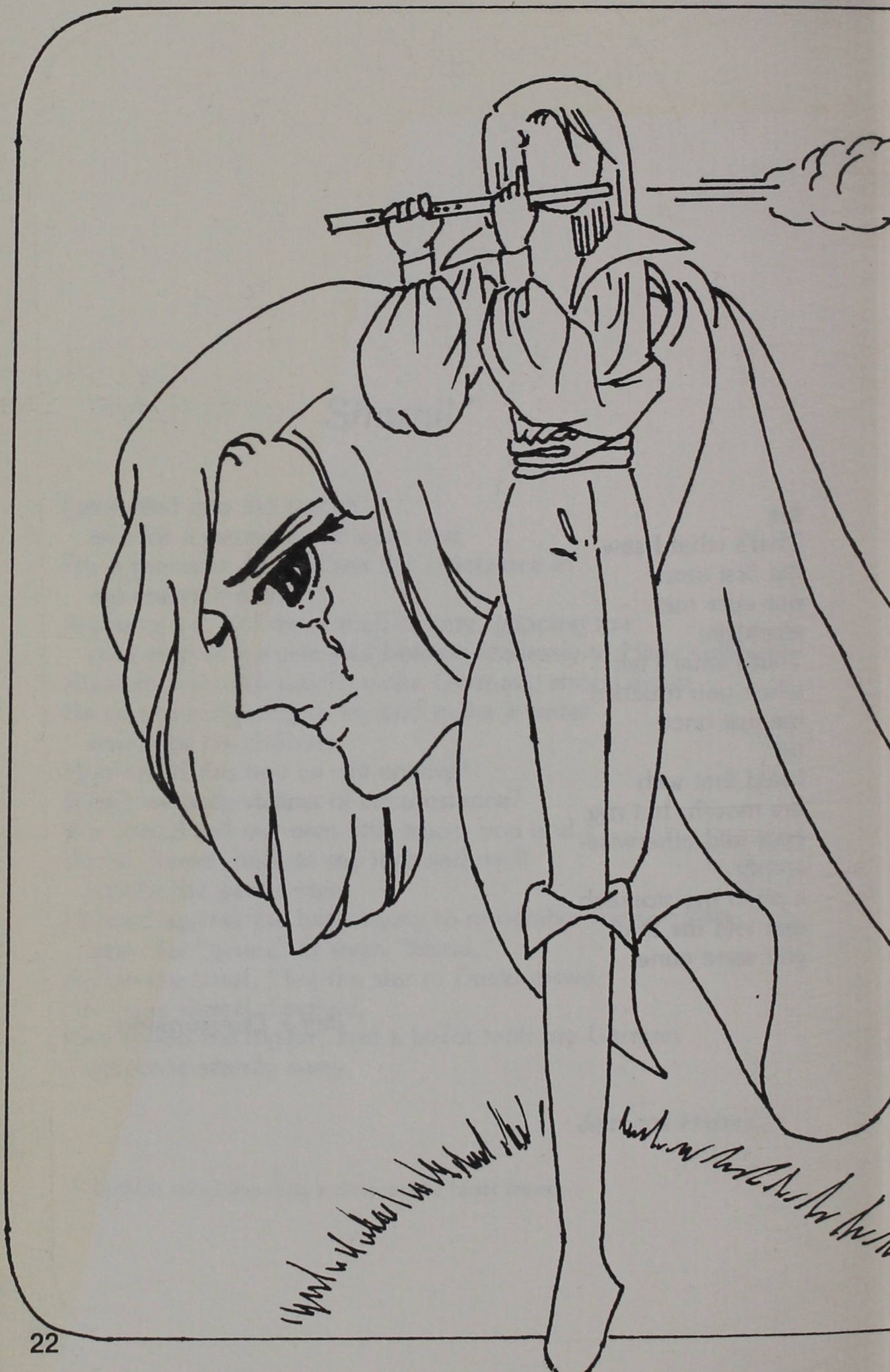
I stumbled into the trench
and for a moment our eyes met.
For a moment, I could see the innocence in
my enemy's eyes.
A young lad, not more than twenty, gripping the
cold steel of his gun and holding fearlessly to Hitler's dream.
His only real wish was to make Germany strong again.
He was only fighting to try and make a better
world for his children.
How could this boy be my enemy?
Aren't we both victims of circumstance?
We should call our own little truce, you and I.
Come, friend, back to my tent and we'll
smoke the peace pipe.
I leaned against the bank trying to remember the German
word for "peace" or even "friend."
Across my chest, I felt the star of David move.
Ah -- my shamil, I sighed,
then pulled the trigger, and a bullet took my German
comrade silently away.

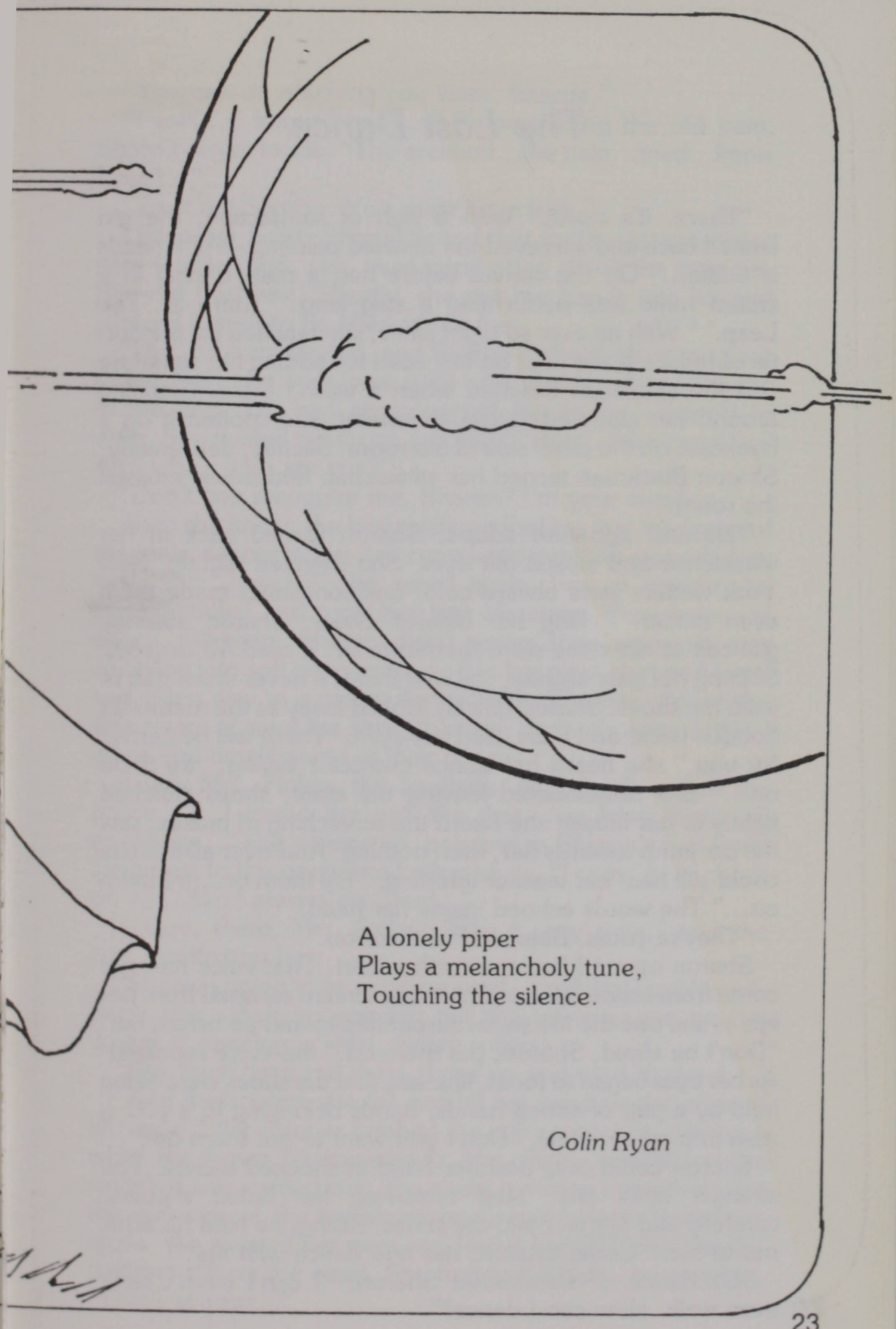
Jeanette Halsey

*A Yiddish word meaning a close to the heart friend.

fire
That's what I saw
the first time
our eyes met-
electricity
That's what I felt
when you touched
me just once-
no
I said that with
my mouth, but my
eyes told otherwise-
empty
a pit in my stomach
that told me that
you were gone.

Jeff J. Dangermond





A lonely piper
Plays a melancholy tune,
Touching the silence.

Colin Ryan

The Last Dance

"There, it's done." With a sigh of satisfaction, the girl leaned back and surveyed the finished painting. "All it needs is a title..." On the canvas before her, a male dancer in a cream tunic was performing a stag leap. "That's it, 'The Leap.' " With an ever so slight smile, she reached for the bottle of India ink she kept on her easel for adding her signature and the title, then frowned when it wasn't there. Glancing around her cluttered studio apartment, she spotted it on a bookcase on the other side of the room. Silently, deliberately, Sharon Blackman turned her wheelchair and slowly crossed the room.

Title and signature added, Sharon leaned back in her wheelchair and closed her eyes. She shivered slightly; New York winters were always cold, and loneliness made them even colder. Pulling her blanket closer, Sharon absently glanced at her dime-store thermometer. It read 40 degrees. Shifting her gaze slightly, she saw them; a never-worn pair of satin toe shoes. Sharon quickly looked away as the memories flooded back, and tears filled her eyes. "These will be perfect for you," she heard her dance instructor saying, "try them on..." She remembered leaving the store, shoes clutched tightly to her breast; she heard the screeching of brakes, saw the car jump towards her, then nothing. And over all this she could still hear her teacher intoning, "Try them on...try them on..." The words echoed inside her head.

"They're yours, Sharon. Put them on."

Sharon opened her eyes with a start. That voice had not come from inside her head. A small scream escaped from her lips as she saw the toe shoes suspended in mid-air before her. "Don't be afraid, Sharon, put them on," the voice repeated. As her eyes began to focus, she saw that the shoes were being held by a pair of strong hands, hands belonging to a young man in a cream tunic. "Don't you want to put them on?"

Sharon could only nod her head in shocked silence. The stranger knelt and, after removing her faded slippers, carefully tied her feet into the shoes. Rising, he held his arms out to her. "Come Sharon, rise and dance with me."

"D...dance..." stammered Sharon, "I can't even...can't even walk. How can I dance?"

"You can do anything you want, Sharon."

"I can't...I know I can't..." Remembering the old pain, Sharon began to sob. "The accident...the pain...tried...know I can't..."

"Trust me Sharon. You must have faith."

Lifting her head, Sharon found that there was something very familiar and, yes, even comforting about the stranger. She did trust him. Silently, she put her hands into his and allowed herself to be lifted to her feet.

"Up!" he commanded, and Sharon instinctively sprang onto her toes. Her eyes were wide with wonder. She felt none of the pain that had accompanied her earlier attempts to walk. She twirled lightly on her toes. "How...how can it be? And who...who are you?"

"Don't you recognize me, Sharon? I'm your creation."

Then she knew; she knew without looking that the figure of the male dancer in her just completed painting stood before her. "But...how...?" she asked again. For an answer, he merely smiled and took her into his arms. They began to dance. Whirling, Sharon didn't notice that her room was disolving into soft green mist, or that her plain shirt and jeans had given way to a cream dance outfit. The only things she was aware of were the strength of her partner's arms and the grace and timelessness of their dance.

It was Mrs. Finley, the landlady, who finally called the police. "I...I found her just like that...just lying there, all curled up..." she whispered, pointing to Sharon's frail body lying next to the overturned wheelchair. "I came in to check on her...like I always do...and..."

"There, there, Mrs. Finley. Take it easy now," said the cop, comforting her.

"She was going to be a dancer until...until that terrible accident. She...took up painting but she never...gave up her dream of dancing..." Mrs. Finley sobbed.

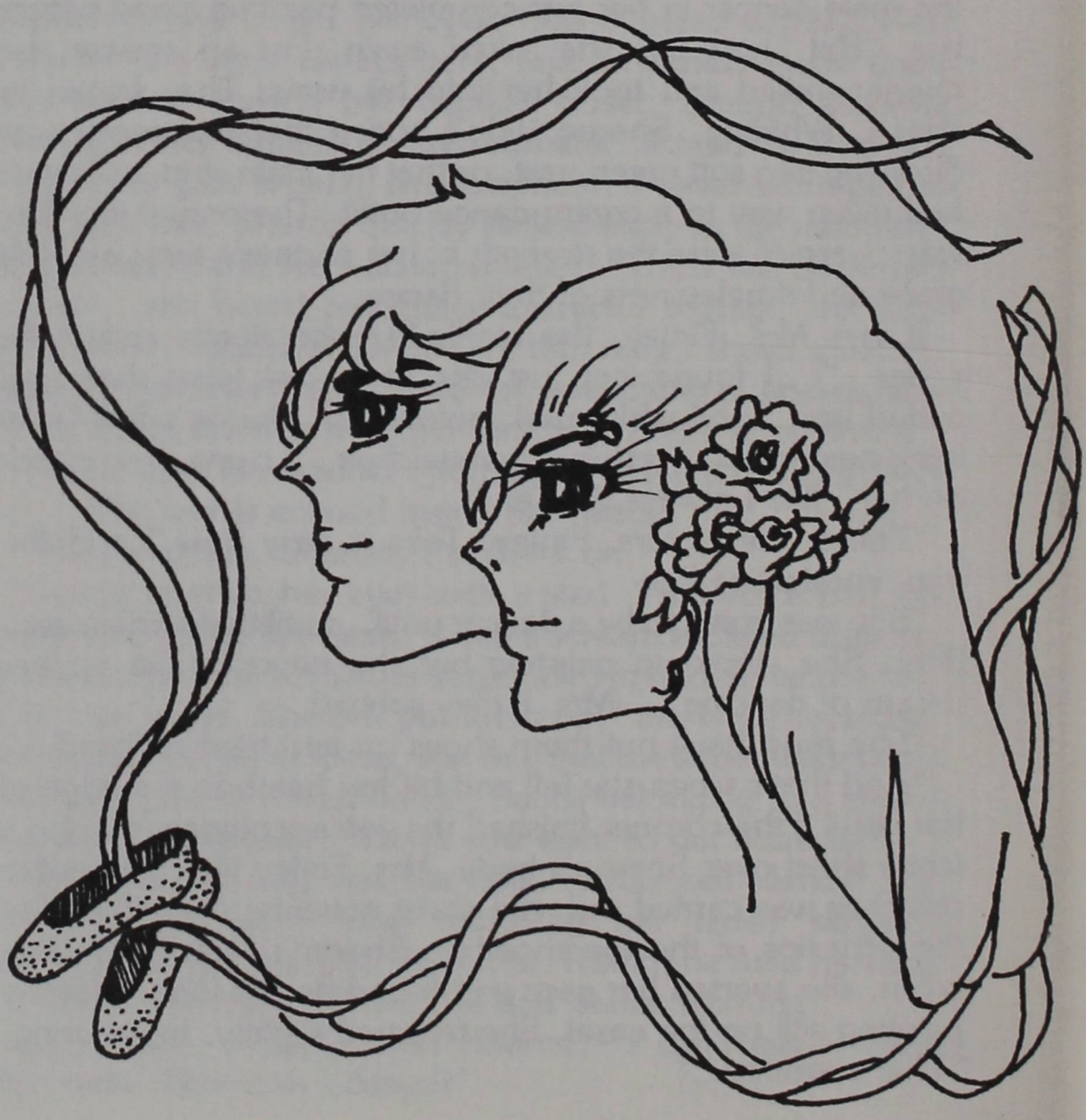
"She must have put them shoes on and tried to stand..."

"And that's when she fell and hit her head on the edge of her easel," the coroner finished the cop's sentence, placing a white sheet over Sharon's body. Mrs. Finley watched as the stretcher was carried out, the sheet covering everything but the very tips of the toe shoes on Sharon's feet. Near tears again, she averted her gaze and found herself looking at the painting still on the easel. She frowned slightly, murmuring, "That's strange..."

"Something wrong, Mrs. Finley?" the cop asked.

"No...not really...well, just look at this," she said softly, pointing to the painting. "It's just...funny that she would have called this one 'The Leap.' " The cop followed Mrs. Finley's gaze, and nodded his understanding. For a while the two of them just stood there, staring at the canvas upon which a couple in cream costumes danced for all eternity amidst a soft green mist.

Colin Ryan



He doesn't know why he sits there, but he does.
The sun comes and goes, and still he sits.
He thinks of waiting - but it does not appeal.
He contemplates insanity - but it becomes pseudo.
Asking questions, while deciding not to, he does nothing.
Filling the void, he plays dominoes and Monopoly.
They bore him.
He sleeps sometimes, or does he eat?
The remnants of a green tomato sit on a plate.
He hates the blue butterflies, but doesn't notice.
As he raises his head, he picks a piece of the tomato out of his hair and sets it on the plate.
It is dirty and he wonders what day it is?
Thursday? Sunday? When will the dish be washed?
He thinks of standing, but who would help?
A bird flaps around his head and he wonders how she entered, for the window is shut.
She hits the wall and the thud scares him.
He watches her fall to the linoleum floor.
He looks at her glazed eyes and thinks she is pretty.
The sun comes and goes, and still he sits.
The bird begins to cry until there is a puddle at his feet.
He can stand it no longer,
so he calls the bird's name and she smiles.
They sit there, knowing why.
The sun comes and goes, and still they sit.
One day, he spreads his wings and flaps around her head.
Tears fall, as he smiles at an open window.

Sharon Stocker

A CRANE'S JOURNEY

Naminoue Shrine stood on a high cliff overlooking the Pacific. Immediately to the east of the shrine lay the red-light district of Naha city. I occasionally walked through this area, but always in the company of a grownup who was in a hurry to pass through it, so I never really had a chance to take a closer look, and my memories of it are impressionistic.

I recall that there were rows of small houses, built so close to one another that their roofs almost touched. I remember that these houses were similar in construction, each with its concrete front porch and wide wooden steps which led up into the house itself. One could hear running water somewhere beyond the wooden stairs, and I used to imagine that this sound came either from a large kitchen or from a bathhouse. The running water must be hot, I thought, for the alley between the houses always had a hot wet smell. The whole red-light district, in fact, was steamy, and one invariably heard running water. One heard voices, too -- busy hurried voices which probably belonged to kitchen workers or bath attendants who had been rough-mannered country folk before coming to the city to find work.

Sometimes, as my grownup escort tugged me along through the district, I wondered where the *juri* lady entertainers were. Behind the ugly, monotonous front porches, beyond the sound of rough voices and running water, something exciting and beautiful must be going on. But I never witnessed it, and we children were discouraged from asking questions about this part of town.

One often saw *juri* outside the red-light district. They had little makeup, but their black eyebrows were carefully shaped, and their thick hair was done up in Okinawan style -- coiled on top of the head and held in place by a thick silver pin, five inches long. When they appeared on festive occasions, these women wore orange-yellow kimonos embellished with bold patterns of blue or black. Most ot the time, however, they wore a simple kimono of black, blue and white. They always wore their silk sashes high above the waist, instead of lower down on the hips as ordinary women did; wearing the sash high made them look taller, more slender, and more youthful. They kept their feet in white socks with a slit between the big toe and the rest, and walked in padded straw

slippers or lacquered clogs. People would make way for them and stare at them as they passed, for, whatever one thought of the *juri* way of life, these women were imposing creatures to behold.

Some classmates and I were returning from the Naminoue beach one afternoon when we saw a *juri*. She had come, alone, to the Naminoue Shrine and had bought a millet cake from one of the vendors on the shrine grounds. Crouching gracefully, her torso turned sideways, she was stretching forth her hand to feed bits of broken cake to the shrine's pigeons. The gray birds came up to her with their jerky, deliberate gait. Whenever one accepted her offerings, the *juri* would smile, revealing fine, white teeth. My friends and I were not yet teenagers, but we all realized that we were in the presence of an exceptionally beautiful woman. Some of the grownups around us had also paused to get a good look at her.

"Just see how white she is!" I whispered to my friend Haruko, who prided herself on her light complexion. "Why, she's even whiter than you are!"

The *juri* must have overheard me, for she glanced up at us. Then she lowered her eyes again and went on feeding the pigeons. How did she feel, I wondered, with all these shrine visitors staring at her? Why did the timid smile never leave her face? Was it embarrassment which brought the flush to her cheeks and kept her from looking around? The *juri*'s eyes had a faraway look about them. Her lips smiled, but her eyes did not. She seemed not even to see the pigeons at which she gazed.

.....

I once was told of a very special *juri*. Her name was Chiru, an Okinawan word which means "crane."

Chiru was born in a mountain village in northern Okinawa. She was the oldest of five children. Her father, a charcoal-maker,had to struggle to keep his family fed and clothed. Chiru's mother kept busy, too -- spending much of her time at work in a potato field a half mile from their house. The family owned two pigs, and Chiru was responsible for their care. By the time she was eight, Chiru was her mother's full-fledged helper in many other household chores as well. She had to rise early in the morning, before the rest of the family was up, to start the fire under the potato pot and to walk a half mile to the village well for water. She enjoyed the fire-making chore, for it helped her keep warm on cold mornings, but she dreaded going for water, especially the trip back from the well,

when she had to carry a large bucket of water on each end of her shoulder pole, and when her frost-bitten feet would crack and sometimes bleed.

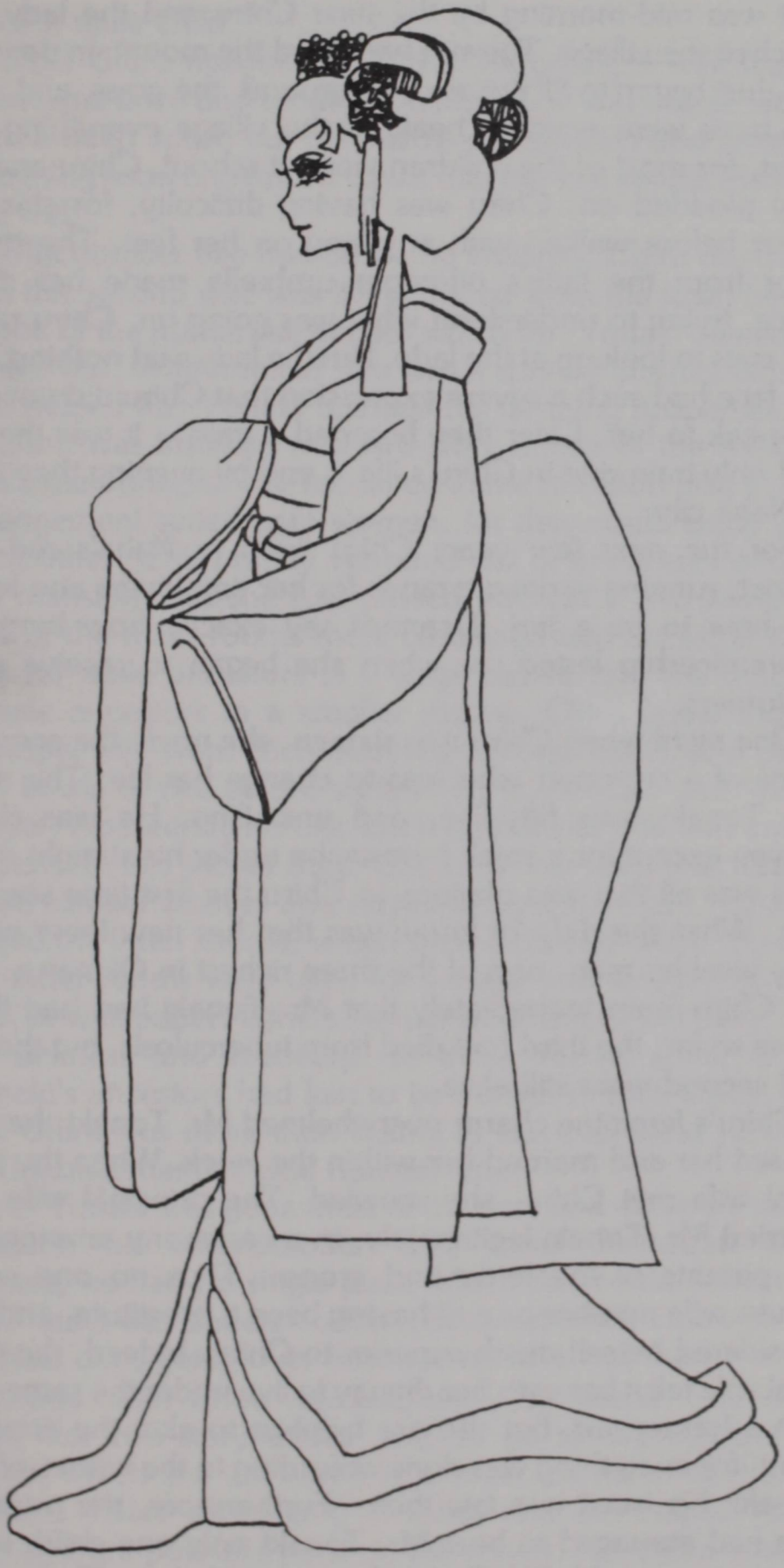
One day when Chiru was eight, her father injured his ankle on his way to the charcoal oven. The ankle refused to mend, and to make the matter worse he developed serious respiratory problems. Finally, he became bed-ridden. With the father unable to work, the family's financial plight became desperate. One of the two pigs was sold right after the father's accident, and before long it became necessary either to sell the second pig or to find some other solution to the crisis. The idea of selling the last pig was almost unbearable; in Okinawan rural families pigs are both an economic asset and a status symbol. A man would rather sell his daughter than sell his pig.

So it was that Chiru's family had a visitor from Naha city one summer afternoon. She was a stout, middle-aged lady with a *furoshiki* bundle and an oil-paper umbrella. The lady was invited into the house to talk with Chiru's parents while Chiru stayed in the yard with her younger brothers and sisters. After a while Chiru's mother called her into the house and presented her to the stout lady from Naha. The lady took one look at Chiru and smiled with satisfaction. "I'll be back tomorrow morning," she said, and left.

The next morning Chiru's parents kept her home from school. The stout lady reappeared and began to talk with Chiru's father, who sat up from the floor on the flat cotton quilt which served as his bed. While they talked, Chiru's mother took her into the next room and dressed her in a yellow kimono with a purple sash and a pair of padded straw slippers. Chiru was puzzled, but, out of habit, asked no questions. The outfit had come from the bundle which the stout lady had been carrying. Chiru's mother had never seen such splendid clothes in all her life, and was a bit nervous even touching them.

"Chiru," she said, while tying the purple sash around her daughter's waist, "You'll get to eat rice."

Soon the stout lady came in and took Chiru out of the house with her. Chiru's father had to stay indoors on his bed, but her mother came along as far as the dilapidated wicker gate. There she stopped, and stood silently watching until her daughter disappeared behind the *akabana* groves where the road led to the village.



It was mid-morning by the time Chiru and the lady had reached the village. The sun had dried the mountain dew and red dust began to fill the air. The ground, the grass, and even the trees were emitting heat. In the village everything was quiet, for most of the children were at school. Chiru and the lady plodded on. Chiru was having difficulty, for she had never before walked with anything on her feet. The strong odor from the lady's oil-paper umbrella made her dizzy. Once, trying to understand what was going on, Chiru raised her eyes to look up at the lady. But the lady said nothing, and her face had such a severe expression that Chiru did not dare to speak to her. Later they boarded a train -- it was the first and only train ride in Chiru's life -- and by evening they were in Naha city.

For the next few years Chiru lived in Naha's red-light district, running various errands for her employers and learning how to be a *juri*. I cannot say exactly how long her apprenticeship lasted, or when she began to receive male customers.

One night when Chiru was sixteen, she made the acquaintance of a customer who was to change her life. The man, Mr. Tonaki, was fifty-five, and unsmiling. He was clean-shaven except for a small moustache under his straight nose. This was all that was obvious to Chiru the first time she met him. What she did not know was that her new lover was a very wealthy man, one of the three richest in Okinawa. Nor did Chiru learn immediately that Mr. Tonaki had had three wives so far: the third had died from tuberculosis, but the first and second were still alive.

Chiru's feminine charm overwhelmed Mr. Tonaki; he purchased her and married her within the week. When the principal wife met Chiru, she scowled. The principal wife had married Mr. Tonaki legitimately, in a ceremony arranged by the parents of the bride and groom. Thus no one could accuse wife number one of having been a prostitute, and she considered herself much superior to Chiru. Indeed, the principal wife felt it beneath her dignity to live under the same roof with a former *juri*, but she was helpless to alter the arrangement, for everything was done according to the wishes of Mr. Tonaki; his word was law there. Furthermore, the principal wife had managed to bear Mr. Tonaki only one child, a girl now ten years old. Mr. Tonaki had no male heir. There were rumors that his main purpose in wedding Chiru was to pro-

duce a male child.

What Chiru noticed first about the principal wife was her masculine arms and broad shoulders. She was a large woman with a deep voice, but her sallow complexion and persistent coughing soon convinced Chiru that her first predecessor was not well.

Wife number two had borne no children. Chiru discovered that this second wife was living not far from the town temple, in one of the numerous houses which Mr. Tonaki owned and rented out. Wife number two was a shrewd businesswoman, and helped Mr. Tonaki manage his far-flung properties.

Chiru was installed in a two-story annex of the mansion, while the principal wife remained in the mansion proper. This arrangement suited both women, for they could easily avoid each other. Chiru rarely ventured out of her annex and into the mansion, but she had passed through it and knew that one of the main rooms there contained two ancestral alters, one for male ancestors in a large alcove and the other for female ancestors in a smaller alcove. Chiru knew that the principal wife went each morning to these alters, and placed two bowls of rice before each alter, lit incense, and knelt in prayer. Apparently no one but the principal wife was entitled to perform this sacred duty. Chiru, for her part, was afraid of those somber alcoves and stayed away from them,. She also feared the inner rooms, which were dark and stuffy. Some of the inner rooms were used for storage and smelled of moth balls or wax paper. Others, which were empty just then, were for sickness and recovery. In these rooms some of Mr. Tonaki's ancestors had lain to be nursed in their illness or to die. Chiru was more than willing to leave all these rooms to the management of wife number one.

Mr. Tonaki was gone most of the time and no one dared to question his whereabouts. Like most Okinawan estate owners, he had no single place which one could call an "office," but it was understood that he spent much time with wife number two, going over business matters with her.

In any case, Chiru was frequently by herself. She would leave her two-story annex only to go to the mansion for meals, which she ate alone in a small tea room next to the kitchen. There was plenty of food, and she helped herself directly from pots and pans on the stoves. Her china bowls all had the Tonaki emblem of three crescent moons painted on them.

Chiru's semi-isolated state made her grateful for any friendly human contacts which her new environment could afford her. Among Mr. Tonaki's household servants, for example, was an old woman whose tasks were to keep the fire going under a huge teakettle and to keep Mr. Tonaki's big square smoking-box filled with fine ash. Chiru would watch this old woman walking about, bent almost double, her straw slippers flapping noisily on the earthen kitchen floor. The old woman had a single tooth, which showed every time she smiled at her new mistress. And among the male servants was a huge handy man with angular features and closely cropped hair. His name was Matsu. He would look at Chiru with a sort of friendly respect which she appreciated. She had long grown accustomed to the admiring glances of males. Some she resented, but Matsu's gaze did not bother her. When Matsu was not running errands, he would tend the vegetable garden beside the annex. Chiru would go out into the garden and talk with him. Matsu taught her quite a few things about the Tonaki household.

"Master has a good heart," Matsu once told her of Mr. Tonaki. "Ten years ago Master finds me in the street with no money. He takes me into his house -- gives me a job when nobody else is going to." He then lowered his voice to confide in Chiru that he was a native of Aguni Island. Chiru already knew, because the old one-toothed woman had told her of Matsu's background. Most Okinawan main islanders had nothing to do with Aguni Islanders because they made their livings slaughtering animals. Matsu went on to describe the curse of the Tonaki household: tuberculosis. Mr. Tonaki's third wife had died of it, and the principal wife now was showing symptoms. Matsu was certain that the trouble came from the unhealthy air in the dark inner rooms of the mansion. "If I were you," he said, "I'd keep out of those dark rooms!"

Despite the curse of the dark rooms, and despite the vengeful eyes of the principal wife, Chiru enjoyed some happy moments when her husband was home. After supper Mr. Tonaki would bathe himself in a nearby public bath and would have a tea table set up for him and Chiru in the airy upstairs of the annex. They would enjoy some beer, then retire. In the late summer nights the flowering tree next to the annex was in full bloom. The heavy, sweet-sour fragrance of its blossoms was dizzying at times. When the air was clear, one could hear throbbing drum beats from the Ishijodori

theaters, across the Izumi river.

Some evenings Chiru would perform on the *shamisen* for her husband, or would play records on the newly-imported gramophone with its horn-shaped loudspeaker. Husband and wife generally had little to say to each other, but Mr. Tonaki seemed to appreciate everything about his youthful bride. For him her beauty was enhanced by her shyness, a quality none of his first three wives had displayed. All he needed now was a child, a male child.

When winter came and the night winds blew, Mr. Tonaki had the paper doors and wooden doors all tightly shut to keep out the chill. He and his young wife would wrap themselves in cotton-stuffed silk nightgowns and sit with a porcelain charcoal burner between them. As they sat, isolated from the world outside and warming their hands over the glowing charcoals, Mr. Tonaki and Chiru enjoyed some serene moments together. Sometimes their fingers touched. Chiru quickly discovered that Mr. Tonaki's short, plump fingers with their squarish fingernails were quite unlike her own long, slender fingers and pointed nails. While a *juri*, Chiru had learned a little palmistry from a customer. One night she offered to read Mr. Tonaki's palm.

"Give me your right hand," she said, taking his hand in hers. With her right index finger she traced the unbroken lifeline of Mr. Tonaki's palm. Several minutes passed in silence.

"You'll live to be eighty-nine," she finally announced.

"Eighty-nine? Why only eighty-nine? Why not ninety?" Mr. Tonaki chuckled.

"Eighty-nine is what I read in your palm," she answered with a smile.

"How about yours?" Mr. Tonaki took her right hand and pretended to study the maze of pink lines in her little palm.

"Oh, I'll live to be eighty-eight," she said quickly, laughing. She withdrew her hand.

"Eighty-eight? You mean to say my life will be a year longer than yours? Come now, is that fair?" Mr. Tonaki protested. "Why such modesty? Tell me the truth. You know perfectly well that women live longer than men."

Chiru only laughed again and shook her head. Mr. Tonaki suddenly grew serious.

"You're still young, Chiru," he said. "I'm old. You'll live a long time after I'm gone."

Chiru looked straight at him for an instant, then lowered her eyes. She had become serious, too.

"I don't care to live after you die," she said, her words barely audible.

Mr. Tonaki reached across the charcoal burner and took Chiru's face in his hands. To his surprise, there were tears in her eyes.

"Chiru, my darling," he said. "We'll be happy together for a long, long time."

In the two years since Chiru had joined the Tonaki household, the condition of the principal wife had steadily worsened. She coughed constantly and complained of fever in the afternoon. She became more and more irritable with the servants and made increasing demands on Mr. Tonaki himself. Now she had to have rare herbs and medicines, now she wanted to consult with fortune-tellers and quacks to cure her illness. Mr. Tonaki gave in to her whims but did his best to stay out of her way -- a tactic which only transformed her irritation into occasional fury. Once she caught him on his way to Chiru's annex. Her eyes flashed.

"Just wait!" she shrieked, dabbing her mouth with a handkerchief to muffle the coughs. "You'll see! Your *juri* will not escape the Tonaki curse! She, too, will die spitting blood!"

The same day Chiru told Mr. Tonaki she was pregnant. Mr. Tonaki held out a glass of beer across the tea table, inviting her to join him in toasting the future heir, but Chiru declined.

"I don't feel like it," she murmured.

"Of course, of course," Mr. Tonaki said understandingly. "It's natural, in your condition." Suddenly his first wife's prophecy rang in his ears and he looked at Chiru's pale face. He noticed an unhealthy pink glow in her cheeks. "Chiru," he told her with a sinking heart, "You must go out more often to the garden for fresh air and sunshine."

So the expectant mother went to the garden for fresh air, sunshine, and company. Matsu kept the garden in excellent condition. While working he would tell Chiru about the plants and vegetables he was raising, or about his army life in Japan some years back. Chiru wanted to tell him about her family in the mountain village, but soon realized that she had little to say. Since leaving home at the age of eight to become a *juri* in Naha, she had not seen her family or heard from them. The folks at home were ashamed of her, of course. She had left

them for good.

As Chiru's condition became generally known, the principal wife's hostility toward her increased. One day the principal wife discovered that the old one-toothed servant woman was going to the pantry to get some pickled radishes for Chiru. Enraged, the principal wife seized the nearest thing at hand, a foot-long dried fish, and brought it down with all her might on the old woman's back. Chiru fled upstairs to her retreat in the annex and stayed there until Mr. Tonaki returned home the next day. From then on she lived in dread of the first wife.

That same year, after a typhoon had swept the island, the entire Tonaki household gathered at the well to watch Matsu fish a *habu* snake out of the family well. How the *habu* had fallen into the well was anybody's guess; possibly it had been blown in during the typhoon. Matsu lowered a flat bamboo tray into the well and eventually managed to scoop up the wriggling snake. When the onlookers caught sight of the poisonous reptile they stepped back to a safe distance.

"This is a male *habu*, Madam," Matsu said to the principal wife as he held the snake's head to the earth with a long stick. "That means there is probably a female *habu* somewhere in the yard."

The onlookers shuddered at the thought of another poisonous snake lurking nearby. Chiru went pale. But the principal wife seemed to exult at Matsu's announcement.

"Fine," she declared. "Now, Matsu, you must catch the female and bring it to me -- alive!"

"I'll look for it, Madam, but I cannot promise to catch it alive," Matsu replied. "After all, these are no ordinary snakes."

The principal wife knew that one risked one's life just looking for these creatures. She screamed nonetheless. "Alive! Do you hear? I want it alive!" And she coughed in her kimono sleeve fitfully.

That night Chiru went into premature labor. Her moans alternated with coughing, and she had to be helped into a sitting position for easier breathing. The principal wife ordered Chiru transferred from the annex to the sick room in the mansion and summoned a midwife. Then she sent for a doctor, an obstetrician. Matsu went out looking for Mr. Tonaki, and found him with his second wife, going over monthly accounts.

Mr. Tonaki rushed home, stayed for awhile at Chiru's bedside, then ordered a breakfast for himself and the obstetrician in an alcove down the hall. Mr. Tonaki was hungry and looked forward to a good, solid meal of the type which had gained fame for the Tonaki kitchen.

"She's dying, isn't she?" Mr. Tonaki asked after breakfast. As though angry, he struck the brass head of his long pipe against the big smoking-box to empty the ash. The doctor nodded. "There is little hope for her recovery. If the labor doesn't kill her, the TB will, eventually. Pregnancy seems to have aggravated her TB. Women like her shouldn't try to have children."

Chiru's moans could be heard clearly from the sick room, two doors away. Mr. Tonaki filled his pipe.

"She's been a good little wife," he sighed. "But I wanted a son, too."

"Of course. But you're going to have to choose between mother and child now."

"The child could be a male, the heir to the family fortune," Mr. Tonaki mused aloud.

"You are going to have to decide soon," the doctor insisted. "It will be the mother or the child. With fast work we can save one of them, but not both."

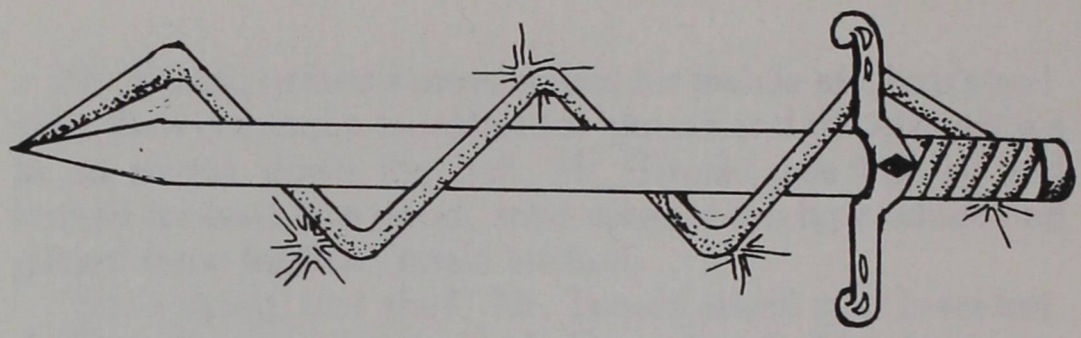
"Did you say she'll die from TB anyhow, sooner or later?"

"Yes."

"Then save the child," ordered Mr. Tonaki. "Male or not, it has a right to life. Let it live. Maybe it will accomplish something someday."

The doctor obeyed. Chiru died, but her baby survived. The child was a male -- the long-awaited heir. He was my father.

Jo N. Martin



Music flies from bright cathedrals of light,
as if sand in an hour glass,
as if an un-interrupted flow of sand,
smooth and symmetrical,
is sifting through the summer's morning air from near
and afar.
But though the music appears of light heart and cheer,
in true light,
they are the shining songs of the sword,
they are the songs of war.
And like the rose buds blooming,
the crystal dome emplacements,
upon the surrounding acropolis,
open their crystal petals exposing radiant lasers,
lasers already training upon the heavens.
And as I speak,
a flashing,
burning,
orange ball of flame,
hurtles earthwards....
now just a great white light....
now....

Bruce Burnett

Twin suns-blazing white hot over seas of sand dunes;
Beneath them, a staggering line of hunters and mounts
Moves single file, slowly.

Alone, the boy turns his binoculars from the riders
to a single soaring form.
The metallic Falcon cuts across the sky
In a graceful arc.
The boy waves, knowing his small gesture
Can't be seen;
But he continues,
Until the Falcon disappears into the setting suns.
And the boy must return to his work.
But his heart is not in it;
It is flying free, following the Falcon
On its journey into unknown worlds.

L.O.

The best of both worlds

We do not have crime, factories, pollution or city schools
we do not have cow pies, fences to mend, or pastoral isolation
this is the golden mean incarnate
with less precious building materials.
Galvanized horses guide us along roads without sidewalks or
wildflowers
life is comfortable
we have vegetable gardens
and from the top of a hill before midnight
the lights of the tract homes below can pass for a skyline.

John Partigan

JAZZ

He saunters down the alley;
  Eyes carefully casing ahead,
Flipping a quarter with his right hand,
  Fondling a switchblade with his left,
Wearing jeans handed down three times
  And too small.

While on the other side of town,
  A disco sways with the rhythm of
Dancing youths wearing
  Satin dresses and silk shirts of a rainbow,
Laughter wells from the couples
  As they whirl.

The band creates these images
  With their music,
Just as they are reflected in the players' eyes,
  Life goes on all around,
Stopping nowhere...
  Yet everywhere.

Katherine D. Parish