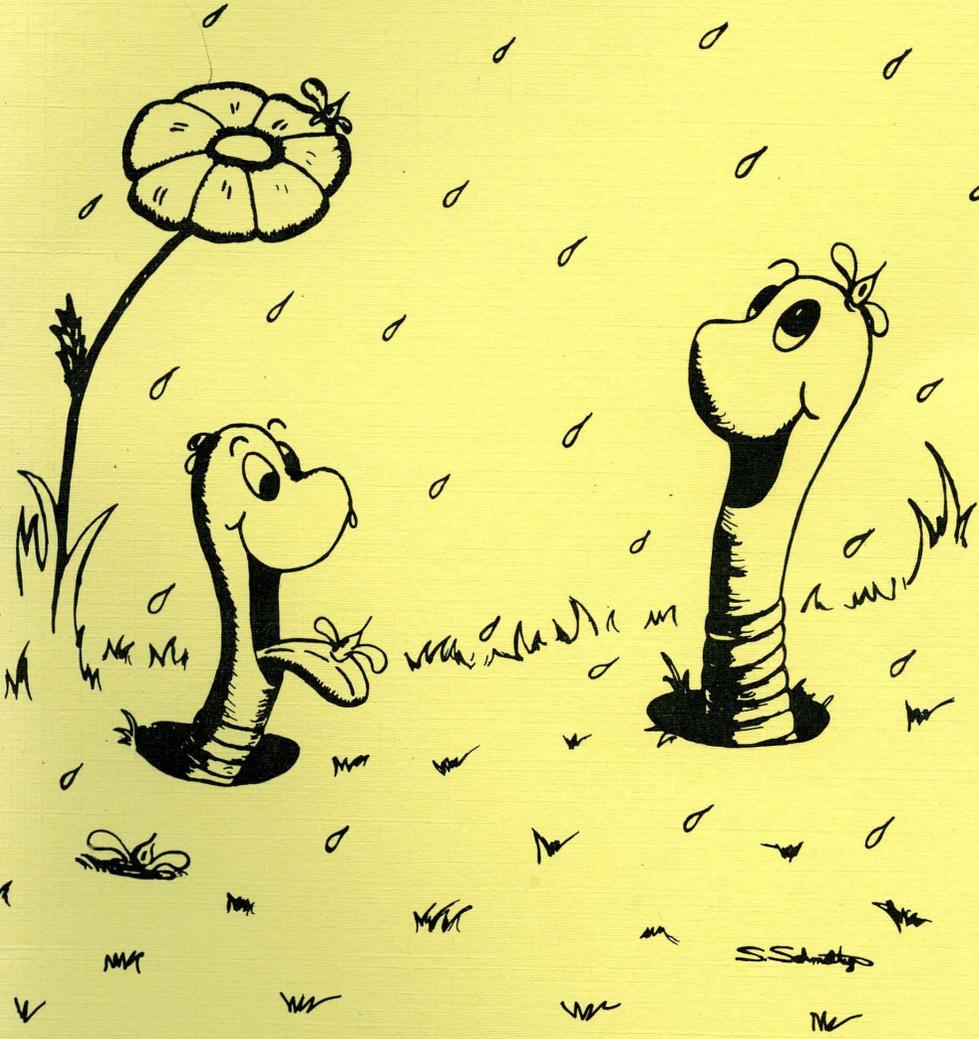


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A Literary Anthology

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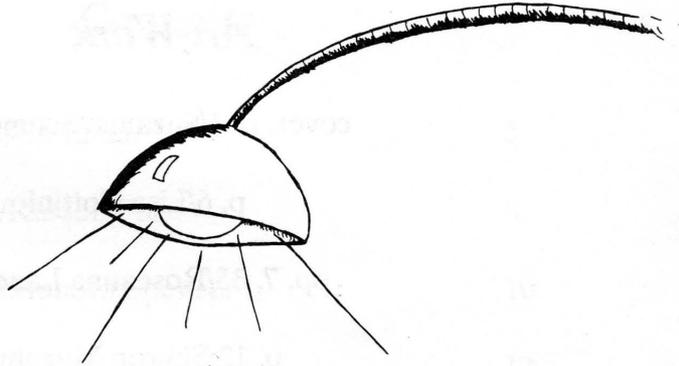
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S. Schmetgen

MICROCOSM

Ed Ertel

The doctors circled around me in amazement. It seemed that I was somewhat of a rarity in the medical world. Don't get me wrong! I was perfectly fine as far as health was measured. The thing that separated me from the doctors' other patients was my size. I wasn't exactly sure how tall I was, but by comparison, I was about as tall as one of the doctor's pens. Doctor Dugan, my family doctor, stood in front of me along with several specialists. I heard them talking among themselves but couldn't understand what they were saying. Finally, one of the specialists stepped forward.

"Hello, I am Doctor O'Brien," he said. "I need to ask you a few questions to try to find the cause of your shrinking."

Meanwhile, the rest of the doctors began taking measurements and blood samples, and performing tests to come up with a solution to my dilemma. It seemed that I had shrunk to about one-twelfth of my normal size. As I looked around the room, I noticed that the white mice in the laboratory seemed more like dogs as compared to my size. Doctor O'Brien then began his questioning.

"What have you eaten in the last twenty-four hours?" he asked.

"Nothing out of the ordinary. I had eggs and mini-wheats for breakfast, chicken nuggets and tator-tots for lunch, and bite-size shrimp and a baked potato sprinkled with bacon bits for supper," I said.

"Have you been feeling sick lately?" he asked.

"Well, I had a case of acute bronchitis a couple of months ago, but I've been over that for quite a while," I answered.

After about forty-five minutes of questioning and tests, the doctors left the room to confer about the results. To pass the time, I climbed up to the mice cages and taught them how to fetch Q-tips. I thought I may as well make the best of the situation.

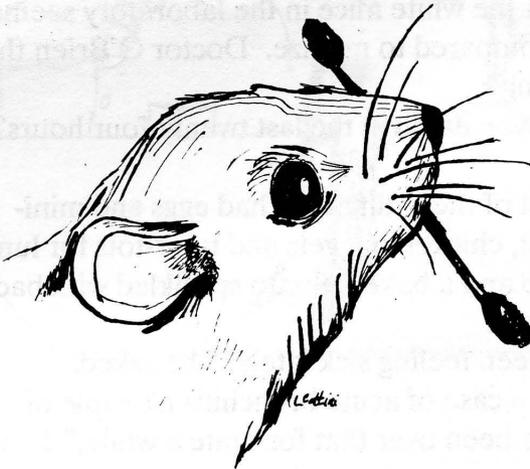
Fifteen minutes later the team of doctors returned.

“We want to perform an emergency operation to correct your condition,” said Doctor Dugan with a serious look on his face. A feeling of panic overcame me. I was going into surgery.

Suddenly, the anesthesia began to wear off, and I eventually came to consciousness. Doctor Dugan was standing over me. I looked around the room and found everything to be normal. I wasn’t six inches tall, nor was I ever six inches tall.

“The operation went well. Your tonsils came out with no trouble at all,” Doctor Dugan said.

I told him about my dream, and we both got a good laugh out of it. I continued laughing as Doctor Dugan left the room. At that moment, I looked down at the floor. I saw a little white mouse scamper across the floor, and I’m sure it had a Q-tip in its mouth.





RAINSTORM

*Breathe a rainstorm.
Take a drag of damp delicious.
Let an air of anesthesia send
Your soul to silent sleep.*

*See a rainstorm,
The waterfall that bleeds black
To silver white. The overbearing, overdone,
Overdriven overcast.
The sunrise of poets and strange, sad
Suburban children.*

*Hear a rainstorm,
Thunder splicing somber summer sky
Into mean and savage lifeorce.
The tender music of tears of joy,
Diving against your open window,
Breezing through your hair and in your spirit.*

*Feel a rainstorm. The rage of beauty.
The touch of cold, melted satin.
The cool warmth of a sensuous stream
That makes love to the trees.
A long, wet kiss from God.*

*Find a rainstorm. Define the form of
An angry cloud, penetrate that long, lost horizon
And look for me there.
Burn the wind. Taste the sky.
Spill the wine into the water
And reach your hands into the
Rainstorm.*

Russell Fox

LABOR DAY

Sandra Spencer

With sweaty palms and beads of sweat across my brow, I threw the bulging suitcase into the back seat of the car. My anxiety level was at an all time high. Thoughts of the upcoming event raced through my mind causing a nearly hysterical, child-like giddiness. My sister, Terry, two years my junior, sat next to me in the car with her hands folded, resting on her rotund belly. I looked over at her nervously; she had no visual signs of anxiety. "How far apart are the labor pains now?" I asked.

"Oh, they are about one and a half minutes apart."

"Well, how long are the contractions lasting," I asked, my voice cracking.

"About a minute," she replied nonchalantly.

I thought to myself: damn, why did I buy that stopwatch anyway?

Our journey began. As we cruised the highway, all landmarks were a blur. We had made this trip to the hospital many times as test runs in preparation for the "big event." Somehow everything around me seemed unfamiliar as though I was on a road I had never travelled.

Many times I looked up into the rearview mirror anticipating the appearance of flashing red lights. Surely we were travelling faster than the speed of light, but yet somehow it felt as though all the world outside stood still.

All of the birthing classes we had taken failed to prepare me for the emotions I was experiencing. Questions raced through my mind. Will "it" be healthy? Will "it" be a boy or a girl? What if "it" is born in the car...my car? When my attention was once again focused on the road, suddenly the exit was just ahead on the right, less than one-quarter of a mile away.

Over in the right lane was a semi truck, blocking the exit lane. When I accelerated, so did the truck. As I slowed, the truck slowed, too. I had to drive to the next exit, which put us five miles beyond the hospital.

“Are you okay?” I asked, my voice quivering with anxiety.

“Yes, I’m fine,” she said calmly, too calmly.

“How far are the contractions?”

“They’re a little less than one minute apart and I’m not getting much rest between them. They’re almost constant. They’re really strong. I feel the urge to push.”

By now we were only one block from the hospital. Pulling up to the emergency entrance, Terry hesitantly got out of the car, only after I insisted that she didn’t have time to walk from the parking lot.

When I walked through the emergency doors, she was being wheeled on a stretcher to the labor and delivery area. I felt as though I was in a trance while being led by a team of nurses, doctors and medical students to the birthing room.

The room was cool, almost cold, with bright fluorescent lighting and the pungent odor of hospital cleanliness. I stood at my sister’s side, holding her hand while we performed the breathing exercises we had rehearsed so many times before. My heart pounded and I became lightheaded as the grand finale grew near. Throughout the labor, we performed the breathing exercises in textbook style.

Now, the baby’s head presented. I saw a glimpse of a head full of light colored hair. I watched as the nurse connected two electrodes into the baby’s scalp, explaining that this was a fetal heart monitor. I returned to the head of the bed to resume the breathing exercises.

Terry’s face was now flush and the tiny capillaries in her eyes had burst. She too was placed on a heart monitor and they began to administer oxygen to her. Suddenly, the bustling crew

around me became a blur. I felt unsteady and my vision was distorted. I felt distant, somehow removed from my surroundings and the events taking place. I was about to faint. I was rescued from injury by a medical student standing nearby.

I awakened and was assured that mother and “baby girl” were doing fine. I was anything but fine. I had discovered the physical and emotional exhaustion of childbirth “second-hand.”

REAL METTLE



*Real
Scooters and wagons
are sturdy
constructions--
created to carry
a child
of any age
to Adventure.*

*No plastic parts
allowed!
Mettle's the thing--
wheels rounding
to whirl you
anywhere
you want to go.
"Circle the block,"
you say?
Why, that is
Clear
around the world--
if you Truly Look
into the eyes
of those you meet.*

*A Real
scooter or wagon
is a careful
Creation--
not guaranteed
to get you there,
but a trusted companion
along the way.
No plastic parts
to crack
in the cold
or buckle
in the heat;
Mettle's the thing--
wheels rounding
to whirl you
anywhere
you want to go!...*

Sharon Murphy

THE ROSE

Don Vogt

“I thought it was just yesterday that we brought him home from the hospital all wrapped up in that gaudy, knitted blanket Mom made for him,” I remarked as my hovercraft floated steadily down the concrete thoroughfare. I stole a quick glance at the beautiful woman who occupied not only the passenger’s seat of the craft but also a huge piece of my heart for the past twenty years.

“It’s true,” she replied as her delicate hand touched my fingers which nervously clutched the handle of the craft’s gear selector that separated our seats. “You know, sweetheart,” she continued in her soft voice, “I rummaged through Ryan’s old things the other day and found the same blanket. It has a few holes in it, but I thought your mom would love to see it when she comes to the Open House this afternoon. Who knows, maybe Ryan could use it for his own kids someday!”

“Whoa now!” I chuckled as visions of grandchildren raced through my mind. Let’s just take one stage of life at a time, O.K.? After eighteen years, I’m still getting used to being a father. Let’s not rush ‘grandpahood’ just yet!” She looked at me with her clear green eyes as the corners of her mouth formed a smile that I had grown to appreciate over the years.

As I signaled my turn into the lot of accumulating parked vehicles, I gazed at the modern school building that held so many fond memories for my son and me. It had to be rough having a father teaching at the same school you attended. It surely was not a cakewalk for me either because I had to be both a teacher and a parent all at the same time. There were moments when I knew about excellent papers, bad grades, and detentions before he ever had a chance to tell me.

“Remember the time Mrs. Shumacher caught Ryan and Tina kissing in the hallway?” I blurted, breaking the silence that had settled over the silver interior of the hovercraft. As I felt the climate control spread cold air throughout the craft, I heard my wife give a girlish giggle.

“I sure do,” she replied. “You know, I think you were harder on Ryan than the principal was.”

“I did ground him, didn’t I? Ryan said I was so old-fashioned. Who would have thought that at the ripe old age of forty I would be tagged as old-fashioned?”

“You’re right,” she smiled, “who would have thought.”

After searching for a parking space close to the gymnasium, I stepped out of our vehicle and immediately felt the heat of the June sun beat upon the back of my gray tailored suit. As I opened the door for my wife, she again grabbed my hand as we strolled toward the school. While we walked together in perfect rhythm, I stared at the benches that laced the outer walls of the locker room area. I could picture Ryan sitting there as he did so many times after practices, waiting for me to take him home. “Look, hon,” my wife said as she pointed with her free hand to an inscribed signature in the wood of the paint-chipped benches. “Ryan must have been bored waiting for you one afternoon.” Sure enough, he had added his name to the collection of graffiti that covered the benches.

As we took our seats in the section on the floor reserved for parents, I was astonished at the metamorphosis of the gymnasium. Polyurethane streamers lined the walls that had echoed the roars of the crowds that came to watch my teams play. A gray tartan canvas covered the newly waxed hardwood, and flowers decorated a stage area where, in a matter of minutes, my only son would receive his high school diploma. My throat tightened as my face beamed with pride. I’m sure he was not aware of it, but I was always proud of him. As I turned to my companion, I could tell she knew my thoughts.

“What’s on your mind?” she asked knowing full well what I was thinking.

“The Jackson Central game,” I replied. “Do you remember?”

“Are you kidding?” she grinned. “There were two seconds left when Ryan fired from the baseline corner. Lucky for him he made it and won the game, or his old man would have probably grounded him for life, right?” she questioned jokingly, nudging me in the side.

“All I remember was the smile on his face as his teammates hoisted him above their heads, and the FACT machine’s headline the next day: ‘Vogt wins big one for the Kougars!’”

“You were never more proud of him, were you?” she asked.

“Not until now,” I replied.

As the modern synthesizer played the old, traditional Pomp and Circumstance, I turned to catch a glimpse of my son’s familiar face in the sea of long, red robes and black mortar boards. He smiled as he began the long march to the stage. The benediction, speeches, and announcements flew by quickly as fond memories of the past eighteen years filled my mind. At last, he stood before the platform stairs where he nervously fidgeted with the red rose that he had received just minutes earlier. As I stared at him from the distance, I could almost picture myself twenty-four years prior to this day in that exact place. I clearly recalled the shaky knees, jittery hands, and the fear of tripping just as I reached for the diploma, but they were all his feelings now.

“Michael Ryan Vogt,” the superintendent announced as I awoke from my trance. The moment was here. It was one we would always share.

* * * *

“This receiving line is incredible,” my wife remarked in disbelief as we made our way through the confusion of the mob

of well-wishers. Ryan was in sight, and as soon as his mother saw him, she ran to him with outstretched arms. "I'm so proud of you," she said in a crackling voice as she tried to hold back the rush of inevitable tears. "I knew you could do it, Honey!"

"Thanks, Mom; you're the best!" he replied in his calm, deep voice.

As my wife left their embrace, I realized it was my turn. I moved in front of him as he extended the red rose to me. "I want you to have it, Pop," he said. As I looked into his big, green eyes, I could see the tears that began to form. "I just want you to know, Pop, that I realize we haven't always seen things eye to eye, but... Well, thanks... Thanks for everything." Upon the last word, he stretched out his long arms and wrapped them around me as he whispered, "I love you" in my ear.

HAIKU

*Spring storms into view
Crashing and blowing about
Rousing earth from sleep.*

Deadra Webb

A WHITE GIRL

(written after hearing poet Gwendolyn Brooks)

*I have tried, really tried.
I have watched you struggle
But I cannot comprehend.*

*I am not all bad.
You are not all good.
But we are both alive.*

And by existing we deserve dignity.

I cannot change the world.

*But I can change me
And watch
And hope
And pray
That one day*

*You won't have to struggle
And I won't have to try.*

Beverly Ward

ON THE HEELS OF COLLEGE

Pat McKenzie

It was a cold Friday night in February and I was assigned to cover a high school basketball game at St. Anthony's High School for the *Detroit Free-Press*. I was looking forward to this assignment because it would give me an opportunity to watch David Lakes play basketball. David was probably the best basketball player in the state of Michigan, and he was being heavily recruited by nearly every major college across the United States.

Watching this young man play basketball was a pure joy as far as his ability was concerned, but on this particular night, he lost his temper near the end of the game and was ejected for fighting. He had been the main focus of verbal abuse by the visiting fans and it finally got to him. I had heard that David was very cocky and had a bad attitude, so needless to say this incident did nothing to improve his image in my eyes. On the bright side, however, David was truly a great basketball player for his age. He scored thirty-two points in leading his team to victory on this night, but his tenacious defense and all-out hustle were the things which impressed me the most about him. I had never seen such a well-rounded basketball player in all of my years of covering high school basketball.

Following the game, I decided to go to St. Anthony's locker-room to get a few comments about the game from David and his coach, Ron Day. Even though I did not like the way he acted on the basketball court, I thought I owed it to the general public to get a few words from the brilliant young player. I introduced myself to him as he came from the shower, wrapping a towel around his waist, and his six-foot-six-inch body towering above me.

I then asked him, "David, how do you feel about to-night's game?"

With his head down and his dark brown eyes looking toward the wet floor, he replied, "It was a good game."

I continued my attempt to interview him, but he was a young man who had very little to say. To be completely honest, I didn't like him very well and I joined the group of many people who believed that he had an attitude problem.

I proceeded to Coach Day's office to ask him a few questions. At first, I asked him about the game but then asked him to share a few thoughts on David. Coach Day paused for a moment and then replied, "David is an outstanding player and his talent speaks for itself on the court, but he is very misunderstood off the court. People label him as being cocky simply because he does not talk to them very much. In reality, though, he is a very shy young man who is under a great deal of pressure because recruiters are knocking on his door every night when he goes home from practice. He has a big decision to make concerning where to attend college and it is really taking a toll on him. If people would just give David a chance, they would find that he is really a good person."

As I walked out of Coach Day's office, I noticed many of the players standing around their lockers enjoying themselves, but David was sitting on the other side of the locker-room alone. I must say that, in a way, I felt sorry for him. Most basketball stars such as David were normally the leader and the center of attention of an entire school, but David was not even the leader of his team. Perhaps I had jumped too quickly to the conclusion about his having an attitude problem. Maybe he really was just shy. I badly wanted to go over and give him some company, but I decided to leave him alone since I did not know him very well.

Several weeks passed and the basketball season was nearing its end. St. Anthony's lost their first game in the state

tournament over three weeks ago, but David was in the spotlight again after being named Mr. Basketball in the state of Michigan. I was somewhat surprised he received this prestigious award, not because he did not possess enough ability, but because he was not well-liked among the coaches throughout the state who voted for it. The thought of David Lakes lingered in my mind for weeks after that Friday night in February, but I could not really pinpoint why. Perhaps it was his extraordinary talent, or maybe it was his peculiar personality.

Ironically, the sports editor approached me one afternoon and asked me to do a feature story on David. At first, I was rather skeptical about this assignment because it would require me to spend a great deal of time with the young basketball star and, after all, he was only a senior in high school. I would have to be around him for nearly a month, and I did not think that his parents would be in favor of a situation such as this. I was right, but I talked to his mother and she finally agreed to let me be around her son as long as it was outside of school.

I first arrived at David's house on the west side of Detroit on a Wednesday afternoon following school. I was somewhat nervous as I walked into the old, run-down house which desperately needed a new coat of paint on the outside, while the interior was dusty and cluttered with clothes lying on the faded furniture.

I introduced myself to David once again and we sat and talked for about an hour. He was somewhat reluctant to talk in the beginning, but he loosened up after he became more familiar with me. He worked at a local grocery store bagging groceries from six o'clock to nine o'clock every night after school when basketball was out of season. He enjoyed working because it gave him a chance to relax and get away from the pressures of recruiting. David said that he did not like school very well, though, because he believed that it was boring. He admitted that if he worked harder at his grades, he could have been a

much better student and he would not be having trouble getting into colleges as he was then.

Since neither of his parents was around during my first visit, I was curious as to what type of careers they had. David explained that his mother worked as a waitress at a small restaurant while his father was a truck driver, which did not allow him to be home very often. I noticed that he opened up when talking about his father, and it sounded as if he admired him a great deal.

“Yeah, Pops taught me everything he knew about basketball. Man, he could really play good when he was my age,” smiled David. “Some folks say that he could’ve played in the N.B.A. if he’d been given the chance. Yeah, I owe most of my success to Pops.”

It was getting close to six o’clock, so I dropped David off at work on my way home. Even though I still felt he was somewhat of a mystery, I believed that my first visit was very worthwhile because he opened up as time went by and helped me in getting to know him better. My attitude about this young man was also beginning to change. He was not a bad person. As Coach Day had told me in his office over two months ago, he was just shy.

As the next two weeks went by, I felt as if I was beginning to know David much better. Unlike most teenagers who were more interested in having a good time rather than looking at the serious side of life, David was the type who preferred to take care of himself and stay away from crowds of people. He was a very independent young man. He cooked his own meals every evening and washed his own clothes, since his parents never seemed to be around home. In fact, I had met his mother only once and still had not met Mr. Lakes.

I could not tell if he really enjoyed doing things on his own or if he was being rejected by his parents. He never talked a great deal about his mother unless I asked him about her, but

when he did, he usually had good things to say about her. His father, on the other hand, was a favorite topic of conversation. He often told me stories of how he used to help him work around the house, and how they used to spend every Sunday at Memorial Park shooting baskets. It sounded as if Mr. Lakes was a great person, and I was looking forward to meeting him for the first time. David spoke so highly of him, I was beginning to like him even though I had not met him yet.

I was very curious about David's relationship with other students at school because he never talked about any friends that he had. One day, I decided to ask him if he had a girlfriend, and his open response shocked me.

"I ain't got many friends, just Barry and Chuck who work down at the store with me. They're good guys and don't cause no trouble. Mom and Pop don't let me hang around many other people because they want me to stay away from drugs. They don't want me to ruin my future, so I do what they say and keep my nose out of trouble."

This statement opened my eyes as to who David Lakes really was. It was as if the fog had lifted and the sun was shining brightly, allowing me to see the inside of this young man more clearly. There was really nothing wrong with David. He had over-protective parents who had scared him into thinking that the entire world was evil. He would not open himself up to others out of fear that his parents would disapprove of anyone new that he met. His isolation had left him with many doubts about his ability to communicate with and be accepted by others.

David's openness was also important because I felt that he was starting to trust me. I no longer felt as if I was just a reporter out to get a story for the newspaper. Instead, I felt as if I had made a new friend who was in need of some assistance in life.

It was a normal Thursday afternoon one week later, and I was ready to leave David's house because I figured he had to

be on his way to work. Tonight was different, though. He said that he was not going to work because a recruiter from the University of North Carolina was supposed to visit him. He was extremely excited because he badly wanted to go to North Carolina to play basketball. I was somewhat surprised that David wanted to leave the Midwest to go to college since he seemed to be very close to his father, but North Carolina did have a good basketball program and would be a great place for him to receive an education.

David invited me to stay at his house for a while to be with him when the coach came from North Carolina. He also asked Coach Day to come over because he was a good friend of the coach who was interested in David. I had never been around a big-time recruiting session, so I decided to simply sit and listen to what was going to be said.

The coach from North Carolina arrived and told David all about the beautiful campus, the basketball program, and the school's requirements which, incidentally, David had not yet met. I was very impressed with the coach because he was a very nice person and very honest with the young star. He told David that he would love to see him come to North Carolina (U.N.C.), but his results from the S.A.T. would have to be above 800 or he would not be accepted into school. David had re-taken the test and was eagerly awaiting the results which were supposed to be arriving in the next week or two.

The evening turned out to be fine, but I found it strange that neither of his parents was home when the coach came from U.N.C.. It was such an important evening for David; I felt sure that one of his parents would be home to help him ask some questions and gain some information about the university. Most parents would not have allowed a recruiter into their house unless at least one of them was home. Finally, I got up the courage to ask David if his parents were ever home when recruiters came.

“No, she’s never...I mean...They’re never home,” David stumbled.

His response was followed by a long pause, and then I spoke what was on my mind. “David, I don’t want to get too personal, but is there something you’re not telling me? I have been following you around for the past several weeks, and I find it strange that I have not met your father at all, and only talked to your mother once.” I paused for a moment and then asked him, “Are you living here by yourself?”

“No, I live with my mother, but she works during the afternoons and evenings,” David quietly replied.

“What about your father?”

David looked down at the floor and said nothing; then Coach Day told him, “You might as well tell him, David. There is no use in hiding the situation any longer because people are eventually going to find out anyway. You can trust him, and it would be good to get it off your chest.”

David’s eyes began to swell with tears as he began telling the story. “They got along so good for so many years, and then, all of the sudden it was over. They fought constantly for about a month straight. One day they would yell at each other; the next day they wouldn’t talk to each other. Finally, Pops got tired of it and got a divorce about three months ago. Right now he’s living in Raleigh, North Carolina, looking for a job.”

I was speechless after he told me this story. I felt very sorry for him and wanted to say something to comfort him, but I did not know what to say. On one hand, I felt bad about inquiring into a matter which was really none of my business, but on the other hand, I was glad that David was able to release some stress from his mind.

I thought I had come to know David very well over the past few weeks, but until this night I did not know him very well at all. I came to the conclusion that David frequently talked with great affection about his father because he missed him so

much. After seventeen years of being very close members of a family, it was difficult for this young man to deal with his parents' divorce. It was especially tough for him because of his father's decision to move a great distance from Detroit.

This also explained the real reason why David wanted to attend college in North Carolina. He wanted to attend U.N.C. so he could be close to where his father was living. The U.N.C. campus in Chapel Hill was only a few minutes by car to Raleigh, where he could visit his father on a regular basis.

Almost a week later, I sat on the couch in David's living room as I watched David pick up some articles of clothing which were cluttered about the house. He was usually very relaxed and easy to talk with, but on this particular day, I could tell that he was nervous about something. As the mail arrived, David quickly ran to the mailbox, sorted through some "junk" mail, and threw it down in disgust.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"No scores," he sighed.

He was searching for the results from the S.A.T. which he had taken nearly six weeks ago. He was worried because the national signing day for college recruits was only three days away, and he needed these scores before he could make a final decision. He had no doubts about his top choice, for he had decided many weeks before that he wanted to attend North Carolina, but he was not sure if he was going to have high enough scores to be accepted there. He could not cross other schools off his list because if his scores were not high enough for U.N.C., he would have to look elsewhere.

"If I had only worked harder in high school, I wouldn't have to worry about those stupid scores," David told me.

It was easy to understand his frustration because the last few days had been very tough on him. Recruiters had been constantly visiting him and alumni kept the phone ringing off the hook at all hours of the day and night, wanting the promis-

ing young basketball player to attend their respective schools. David was exhausted and wanted to put an end to the entire ordeal, but he could not do anything until his test scores arrived.

It was a glorious Saturday afternoon as I traveled to David's house, two days later, for a special lunch that his mother had planned for the three of us. Evidently, her son had talked about me quite a lot, and she wanted to become more familiar with me.

David's mother was a tall, slender woman who spoke with a slight southern accent, left from her days of growing up in Macon, Georgia. It was the first time I had the chance to talk with her for a long period of time, and I was impressed. She was an extremely nice lady who worked hard to make enough money to support David and herself. She felt guilty about leaving David on his own so often, but she had no other choice.

We had just begun eating fried chicken, baked potatoes, and salad, when the mailman arrived. David asked to be excused to get the mail and see if he had received his scores. Mrs. Lakes, understanding how important the scores were to him, said, "OK, please hurry."

The young man rushed through the house toward the front door, and the next thing I knew, David was yelling, "They're here! They're here!"

"Well, bring them in here, and let's see how you did," responded his mother.

David entered the kitchen quickly, dropped the rest of the mail, and began nervously to unseal the envelope that he had waited for for so long. He pulled the paper from the envelope and then a smile overcame the worried look on his face. There was no need for him to say anything because his expression told the story, but he did anyway.

"890! This is great! Now I can go to North Carolina! I've got to go call Pops."

As David went to phone his father, his mother's smile increased to a quiet laugh. "I'm so proud of him," she stated.

Fioretti

“He’s waited a long time for this day, and I hope he enjoys it. His father will be exstastic when he hears about it. I hate to see David leave Detroit because I know I’ll miss him, but I want to see him happy.”

After David talked with his father, he called Coach Smith, the head coach from North Carolina, and told him that he wanted to sign a letter of intent as soon as possible.

The following day, Coach Smith came to David’s house and signed the talented player. The long ordeal was over with, and David could finally take a few months to recover. There would be no more recruiters or alumni phone calls bothering him at all hours. He could go back to his normal life of school and work without having to worry about making a major decision. He was finally allowed to return to the lifestyle that he enjoyed most--a life of peace and quiet.



SOUTH

*South of where I am -- far below these midwest trees
Sunspots rain on cotton fields -- and glaze the gallant
greenery.*

*And with the wisdom of a woman -- and the water
from the well*

*We can warm and soothe our minds and bodies--
Heavenize this Hell.*

*The cypress shines a sullen shade -- the clouds are
white with hot*

*Forever rivers running like Kentucky stallions trot
The dusted haze that stands with every rise and set of
sun --*

The weary streets that wait in vain for anyone

So let us play in cheap, exotic wines --

Find a county courthouse --

Laugh and cry at those who pass us by.

Let us find a piece of peace -- make a perfect place --

*Celebrate the life we live -- harmonize the gifts we
give*

And sing a song of water, wind, and wildwoods.

Fall into and through this sanctuary

Sacred, sweet and south of where we've seen.

Russell Fox

THE VISIT

MaryAnn MacRae

“This shouldn’t hurt a bit,” Dr. Barnes says as the two inch needle, dripping with Novocaine, enters my mouth. As the pressure builds in my gums, the last few drops are ejected and the needle is removed. Numbness begins to overwhelm me and I wonder whether or not I’m drooling. As I sit, reclined and fairly comfortable, I hear the doctor firing up his ominous drilling machine. My heart races and I begin to tremble. Just then I hear his voice echoing in my ears. He asks if I would like a little gas before he starts. But fearing that my innermost secrets will surface under its influence, I pass. Once again, fear overcomes me as the shiny, silver drill inches toward me. The smell of something burning and the vibrating and shrieking of his power tool cause me to wonder if flossing would help.

Half an hour later, the dentist’s assistant removes the paper bib and lowers my chair. For the first time in nearly an hour my legs feel strong enough to walk. The easy-listening music on the radio soothes me as I near the waiting room. The room is filled with children and their mothers, who are occupied with the latest magazines. Thoughts race through my mind as I open the door to leave. I wonder if these children realize the deep, dark, evils that lurk behind that door, and if I am too young for dentures. I saunter to my car, inhaling the fresh morning air, thankful I have survived another visit.

**“I BELIEVE, TINKERBELLE,
AND CLAP-YOU-ALIVE AGAIN!”**

*Only
Peter Pan people
Can! get
their shadows
stuck
in-a-drawer
momentarily,
for having
Danced
so swiftly...
so Lightly...
they out-paced
any stationary power
which would
seek to
parade them...
pull them...
down.*

*Eternal Mother
of Moon glow
and Star dusting
resews
their shadows
with Gossamer
so swiftly...
so Lightly...
The Dance
is scarcely slowed,
and no evil intent
may tear apart
Her tiny stitches
of Everlastingly
Bright Pattern.*

Sharon Murphy

116355

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A TINGE OF VICTORY

Kerry Dearth

“Steeeeeeriiiiike waaaaaaan!” the umpire bellowed. A broad-shouldered young man sprang up the dugout steps and onto the dirt path which led to the on-deck circle. Lazily, he swung his Louisville Slugger and looked into the grandstand. The crowd’s eyes focused on the man at the plate. A few eyes strayed.

“Twooooooo!” A murmur of anguish filled the stands. The man stepped into the reddish-brown circle of dirt and bent down to pick up the pine-tar rag. As he stretched out his arm, he felt the familiar stiffness in his back that comes from sitting so long on the bench. Patiently, he had sat through twelve and one-half innings watching his teammates field and hit and pitch, playing baseball with boyish enthusiasm. His thumb twitched as he yearned to share their feelings. He routinely wiped the rag across the handle of the bat and tossed it down. He picked up the heavy warm-up bat and swung it along with his own, lackadaisically through the air. Once again he looked at the crowd. Many of them remained, battling the extra-inning duldrums. Some slumped silently in their seats, wary of the stalemate, but the majority recognized the importance of the situation. Sitting on chair’s edge, they voiced their biased support. Although their team was one run behind, hope still filled their hearts. He envied them.

“Heeeeyiiiiike threeeee!” He dropped the warm-up bat and walked toward the plate. On the way, he passed his teammate, who looked to the ground in defeat. With the jeers of the crowd jostling his mind, he grumbled under his breath. The young man stopped at the plate, kicked the dirt three times with his left foot then made a cross with his right. He ran one hand

halfway up the bat once, slowly, then glanced in the direction of the pitcher's mound. The pitcher stared back. For an instant that lasted an eternity, the two stared. The pitcher's confidence and determination showed in his eyes. His nostrils flared as he prepared for the confrontation. The batter looked toward the pitcher's mound but through the pitcher. He noticed the centerfield grass was much greener than the day before. The battle of eyes was broken as the batter looked down to check his stance. Then he looked up at the pitcher. The pitcher began his windup and delivered a fastball.

"Steeeeeeeriiiiike waaaaaan!" The young man stepped out of the batter's box and quickly looked at his aging coach at third base, who seemed exhausted with the game. Then he stole a look at his teammates, one on third base, the other on second. One had his fingers crossed; the other spat. They both shared a deep concern, expressed in their tense faces and fearful eyes. The pitcher fired another fastball down the middle.

"Twooooooo!" A chorus of "boo's" filled the stadium. He, like everyone else, knew the consequences. A basehit here and his team would win the game, and he would be a hero. An out and his team would lose. Again he will have let his team and their fans down. Their gloomy heads would be hung with grief, and tomorrow he would console himself with his best friend, the bench. But isn't this just a game, he thought. The pitcher looked for the sign and gave a quick nod. An evil smirk crept upon his face. He began to rotate in his windup, and he grunted as he hurled the baseball like a fireball down the center of the plate. The ball seemed to grow as it left the pitcher's hand. As it steamed toward the plate, belt-high, it appeared the size of a softball to the young man. This time it would be different, he thought. All eyes focused on the man at the plate. His thumb twitched as he swung, and, for a moment, everyone was silent. . . .

THE BEAR

*The bear on my bed,
the one with no mouth
and the raggedy ear
that has stuffing coming out.*

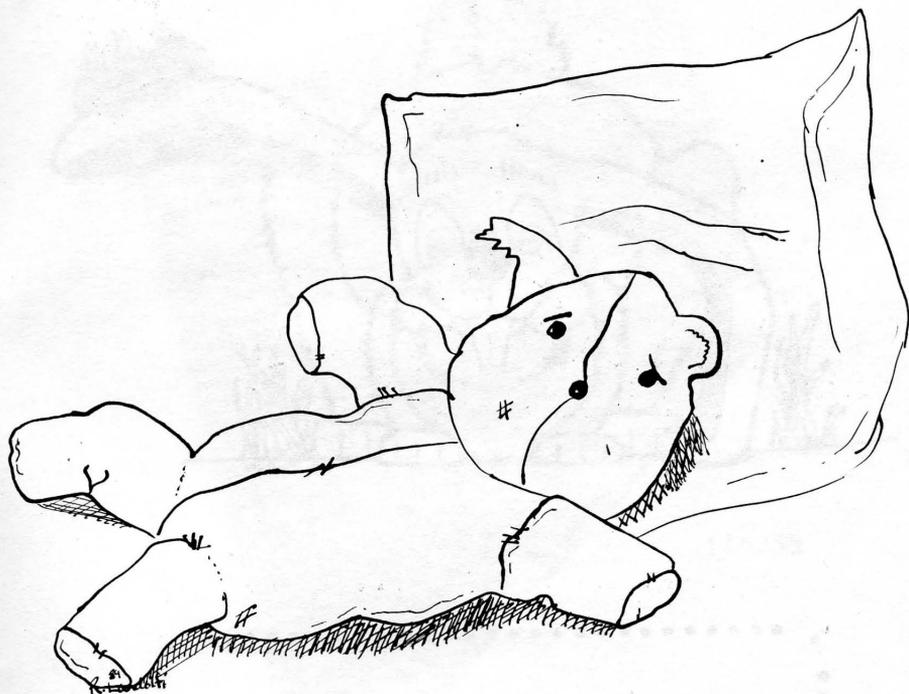
*The bear on my bed,
who will always be there,
while the seasons pass
with never a care.*

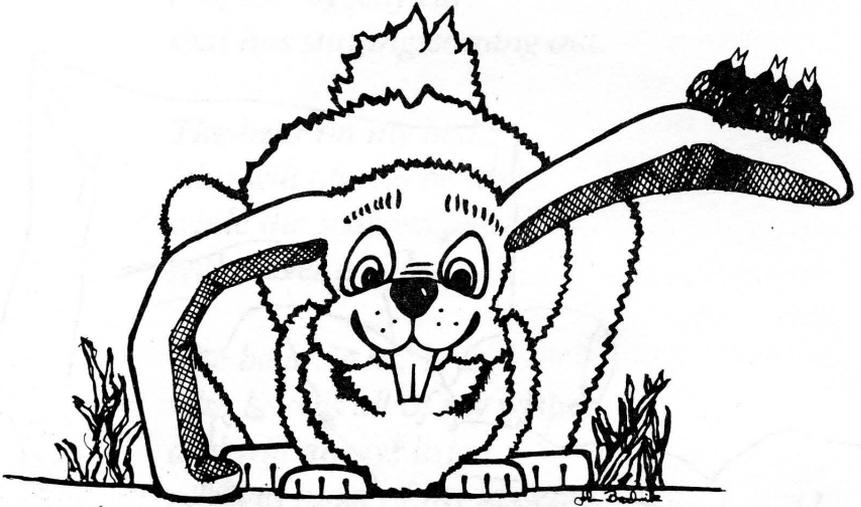
*The bear on my bed,
who knows all of my wishes,
and will always listen,
receives most of my kisses.*

*The bear on my bed,
who is friend never foe
whom I hold tight
when the winds fiercely blow.*

*The bear on my bed,
whom I'll never outgrow,
is the truest of friends
that I'll ever know.*

Dallice Hesselgrave





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*Special thanks to
Mrs. Spallina for her
many years of service!*

