


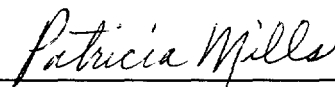
Magic, Mayhem, and other Ramblings: A Compilation

A Senior Honors Thesis
by Shannon Davis
HONRS 499

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Abstract

This thesis is a compilation of my writing. My majors are Preprofessional English and Journalism-Magazine; in other words, I am studying the art of writing. Even though I am a writer, I continue to study writing in its many aspects, including process and publication. Since I am studying the art of writing, I concluded that a thesis consisting of my writing was the prime example of my education at Ball State University.

The thesis consists of the following three sections: fiction, poetry, and non-fiction journalist prose. There are titles for each of the three sections, with introductions for each of the fiction and non-fiction pieces and an introduction for the poetry section.

Note to archivist: This thesis contains 75 pages.

Dedication

There are many people to thank. First I thank Margaret Dimoplon, Thomas Koontz, and Patricia Mills for encouraging and helping me complete this project. They helped show me I could write and that I was actually good at it.

Also I thank Cheryl Genovese, Linda McAshlin, and Susan Richey, three of my teachers from high school. Mrs. G gave me the confidence to write poetry and made me prove to myself that I could write. Mrs. McAshlin furthered that confidence by forcing me to do a poetry project senior year. She also gave me the chance to learn and experience layout design by way of working on Phantasm. I am hoping that experience will help me get a job. Mrs. Richey, Susan, my friend and mentor, taught me that I could do anything I set my mind to. Without her encouragement, I may never have completed the Honors Program, much less this thesis.

I also thank my family. They have seen me through very rough waters and taught me many great ideals: work hard, do my best, eat right, be nice to people, but don't let them walk all over me, be myself, and believe in myself.

Finally, and most especially, I thank my mother, who had to perform many jobs: mother, teacher, coach, biggest fan, even father. She cheered me on and believed in me even when I didn't believe in myself.

*Plans,
Paintings
and Plants*

Rusty

The drafting of "Rusty" (the tentative title) began in the summer of 1993 as a story I hoped to include in this thesis. Mrs. Dimoplou and I have agreed that there is a story here; I feel I may not have found it yet. Thus, "Rusty" is still undergoing revision.

My roommate read it and dubbed me "The Queen of Dialogue." I am seriously considering her comment and hope to turn this story into a play.

Rusty

The world glowed a bright green from the new spring grass. The small New York suburb sparkled with light. A breeze tickled the baby leaves on the trees and the newly blossomed flowers. A child's laughter rang through the April air.

"Jack, please be careful!" Peg called as her son ran down the path of the small park.

"I will, Mom!" he called back, laughing as he chased the wind.

"He's so rambunctious," Peg said as she, Matt, and Rusty walked down the path. "But he is a little boy."

"He's a child, Peg," Rusty said, smiling after him. "All children have the rambunctious spirit. At least, that's what I've noticed."

"True," Matt said. "Jack is like a little sprite sometimes. Just like his mother." He smiled at Peg, who shook her head at him.

"Well, he might act like me, but he looks like you." She smiled. "I'm glad you two decided to come out and visit. Jack was starting to miss you, Matt."

"Well," Matt said, "I needed to take a little time away from the band. Besides, I wanted to see Jack."

"When can he visit you in California?"

"Anytime," Matt said, sitting down on a bench. "The band's in the process of writing now. We probably won't go into the studio for a while."

"Thankfully," Rusty said, sitting down and taking Matt's hand. He smiled at her as their fingers laced.

"True," Pam said, her green eyes sparkling mischievously. "And since you now love Matt, Rusty, you have to put up with him."

"Oh, hush!" Rusty said, gently giving Pam a playful kick as Matt stuck his tongue out at his ex-wife.

"It still amazes me that I can sit here and watch my ex-husband and my friend be in love and not be angry about it," Peg said, sitting down on the path and pulling her knees to her chest.

"You were angry at one time, remember?" Rusty said, giving Peg a level look.

Peg shrugged her shoulders. "Yes, but I've gotten over that. Besides, you two didn't fall for each other until after the divorce. And, like you said, Rusty, I relinquished any right to be jealous of him when I signed that divorce decree."

"I'm just glad we can still be friends, Peg," Matt said, his blue eyes smiling. "It's better for both us and Jack."

"Yeah," Rusty said. "His parents might not love each other, but they can still stand to be around each other. At least both of you still actively love Jack." Both parents nodded their heads.

The adults turned to watch the child play. He seemed to love rolling in the grass and examining sticks and leaves. Jack laughed at the ants that crawled on the dirt and chuckled at the worms that wiggled along. He chased the flying bugs and butterflies with absolute glee.

“Yep, he’s definitely like a faerie,” Rusty said softly, laughing. “A childlike thinness with all that blond hair and those big, bright blue eyes. If he didn’t look so much like you, Matt, I’d swear the boy was a changeling.”

“Sometimes I wonder about the father, as well,” Peg muttered to herself, running a thin hand through her light brown hair.

“Me, too,” Rusty said, smiling at her lover’s chagrin. “What’s wrong, dear? Don’t you like being called fey?”

“Why do you guys always try to connect me to the faerie world?” he asked. “I’m just as human as anyone.”

The women smiled knowingly and turned back to watch Jack. After a few minutes of silence, Rusty turned back to Peg.

“Peg, I’m glad you accept Matt’s and my relationship, because we’re taking it a step further,” Rusty watched Peg turn to look at her with expectation. “We’ve decided to get married.”

Peg smiled and said, “I’m not surprised. I figured it would happen.” She frowned with concern. “When are you going to tell Jack?”

“We thought about telling him after dinner,” Matt said, looking toward Jack. “We hope he’ll take it as good news.”

“I want to warn you two,” Peg said. “Jack asked me about three months ago if I would ever marry again. He just asked one day; I was completely surprised. I told him I didn’t know.

“‘Well,’ he said, ‘whoever you marry will not be my daddy. My daddy lives in California!’

“He was vehement about this,” Peg leveled her gaze on Rusty. “Russena, I’m afraid he’ll have the same attitude toward you.”

“But I don’t want to take your place as his mother,” Rusty said, shocked at Peg’s words. “I don’t have that right.”

“Let him know that,” Peg said, then turned to watch her son.

Matt and Rusty looked at each other with worry. Their joy was dampened somewhat by the news of Jack’s deep loyalty to his parents.

I want him to love me, Rusty thought, staring glumly at the ground. He might get used to the idea, but I would rather have him be happy about it at first.

Matt shrugged his shoulders and looked at his watch. “Oops, it’s later than we thought,” he said, standing up. “If we want to be ready for dinner in time, we need to head out.”

“Jack, sweetie,” Peg called, “let’s go. We have to go get ready for dinner.”

“I’m comin’, Mama,” he called back, dropping his handful of sticks and running toward them.

“Here, Rusty,” he said, handing her a stone, “I found a glass rock.”

“It’s a crystal,” she said, examining it. “You found this on the ground?”

He nodded. “You can keep it.”

“I’ll tell you what,” she said, smiling at him. “I’ll make it into a charm for a necklace, and you can wear it. How does that sound?”

“You’d make me a necklace?” Jack asked, looking at her in surprise and wonder.

“Of course,” she said as he hugged her. She picked him up. “I like to make things for children.” She hugged him.

“Would you like to make him bath water?” Peg asked, laughing and tickling her dirt-covered son. His boyish laughter tickled the April air.

“So tell me, oh wise woman,” Matt said, flipping over his long, dark blond hair to brush it, “how are you going to tell my son you’re becoming his step-mother?”

“Why do I have to tell him?” Rusty asked. “He’s your son.”

“True,” Matt said, flipping his hair back. “Maybe we should count to three and say it together.” He smiled at her.

“I don’t think so,” she said, tying the lacing on her white peasant blouse. She looked up from her blouse and smiled back at him, her brown eyes laughing.

“Will you dress lace up like that?” he asked, watching her pull the crisscrossing laces straight.

“You mean my wedding dress?” she asked.

He nodded.

“No,—well, yeah, but it will lace up the back.”

“Oh, you’re going to make this difficult for me. I see,” he said.

“No,” she said. “When you want me out of the dress, I’ll simply turn around and you can unlace it.”

“Wouldn’t a zipper be easier?” he asked, standing up.

She thought for a moment. “Yes,” she said, then smiled playfully.

“You ornery witch,” he said, taking her in his arms.

“Yes,” she said, smiling at him. “Your point?”

“If we had time,” he said, “I’d—”

A knock sounded at the bedroom door.

“Pop! Rusty!” Jack’s voice could be heard through the door. “Hurry up!”

“We’re coming, son!” Rob called back, then looked at Rusty.

“You wish,” she said, a playful laugh escaping her soft red lips.

He smiled and kissed her, then led her to the door. They walked out of the room into the large square living room of Pam and Jack's brownstone apartment. Paintings hung on the wall, and plants gave the room a greenhouse quality.

"How are the plants doing?" Rusty asked as she stopped to examine a full ivy plant.

"Well, the ivy is blooming constantly," Peg said, coming out of the kitchen with glasses of juice, "but the violets aren't very happy."

"They look like they need a little less light," Matt said, eyeing one of the fuzzy-leafed varieties carefully.

"I know, but it's tough blocking out the sun when a skylight stretches across your ceiling," Peg said, pursing her lips and looking to the sky.

"Try putting them on a second shelf, where they'll get less light," Rusty suggested, taking a glass of juice and sitting down on the couch.

Peg thought for a minute. "That's a good idea," she said, handing Matt a glass. "I'll have to try it." She sat down in the chair next to Rusty and placed Jack's glass on the table.

Jack picked up a small, potted cactus and carried it to Rusty. "See my plant?" he asked.

"Why, he's cute," Rusty cooed, taking the plant from him and examining it. The cactus was small and round with short, spiky thorns. "It looks almost fuzzy. I like it." She smiled at the boy, who brightened.

"I call him Carl," he said. "Carl the Cactus. He's my buddy."

Matt smiled as Rusty laughed.

"He comes home from kindergarten every day and yells, 'Carl, bud, I'm home. How ya doin'?" Peg laughed heartily. "Some of the neighbors still haven't figured out who Carl is."

"Well," Jack said defensively, "you're supposed to talk to plants."

"Of course," Peg said, smiling at her son. "Plants respond to language and how people treat them." She looked at Rusty. "I'm teaching him how to raise plants."

"It's a good thing to learn," Rusty said. "It'll teach him responsibility. And Jack," she said, looking at the boy, "I think this plant really likes you."

"You think so?" his eyes held hope and wonder.

"Absolutely," Rusty answered, as Jack beamed and put the plant back in its place.

Matt smiled at Rusty as he sat down next to her and set his glass on the table. The little boy ran over and crawled into his father's lap. Matt hugged him.

"So you like your plant?" he asked.

"Yeah," Jack said, cuddling up to his father. "I got no brothers and sisters, so I got to have something other than Mommie to talk to."

"True," Matt hugged his son, then looked at him. "Would you like to have brothers and sisters?"

"Sure."

“Well, you just might some day,” Matt said, smiling at Rusty. “Jack, Rusty and I are getting married.”

The boy looked shocked. “You are?” He looked at his mother, then at Rusty. “Are you going to be my mommy?”

“Honey, Peg is your mommy,” Rusty said, smiling at him. “You can call me your step-mother, but only if you want to.”

“No!” the child screamed, squirming away from his father and running to the door. “I don’t want two mommies! I have one!!” He ran out the door and slammed it behind him. The adults heard his feet pattering down the stairs.

“Jack!” Matt yelled, running out the door.

“Matt, don’t bother,” Peg said, following him. She stopped him at the top of the stairwell. “Jack usually runs down to talk to the shopkeeper, Mr. Schloimowitz, when he’s angry. He’ll be back soon.”

“How can I not bother?” Matt said, staring at his ex-wife in shock. “I don’t want him to get hurt. Remember, I don’t know this neighborhood.”

“He won’t get hurt. Schloimie’s shop is the next door over.”

“Are you sure?”

“Matt, he’s done that for a year now,” Peg said, leading him back into the apartment. “Jack met Schloimie two days after we moved here. He visits the old man all the time. They’re great friends.”

“All right, then,” Matt said, sitting down and crossing his arms, “we’ll wait until Jack returns.”

“Of course, Matt,” Rusty said. “It’s not like we’re going to leave without him.”

He glared at her.

“Sorry,” she said, then looked at Peg. “Damn, Pam, when you said Jack might not be happy about this union, you weren’t kidding. I didn’t think he’d react like this.”

“I told you he was vehemently opposed to having a new father,” Peg said. “Should it surprise you that he would want a new mother any less?”

“Well, no,” Rusty said, then fixed her gaze on Peg. “But, Peg, I don’t want to take your place. You gave birth to him; you are the one he lives with legally. Matt, and possibly even me, might help you out, but you are the one who is raising him. You have the right to be his mother, not me.”

“I know that, Russena,” Peg said, her green eyes sad, “but he doesn’t.”

“Well, when he comes back,” Rusty said, “I’ll tell him.”

“Hopefully he’ll be back soon,” Matt said, looking mournful as he picked up his glass.

Two hours later, Peg hung up the phone. She sat down on a chair and looked at Rusty and Matt.

“Well, that was the police,” she said, crossing her legs. “They said they’ll keep their eyes open for a boy matching my description of Jack, but they can’t file any reports for 24 hours, and it has only been two hours since he left.”

“They never can do anything for 24 hours,” Matt grumbled.

“I know you’re worried, Matt,” Peg said, staring angrily at him, “but stop growling. Being a grouch isn’t going to find the boy any faster.”

“She’s right, you know,” Rusty said, standing up.

Matt nodded, staring glumly at the floor.

“Well, folks,” she said, stretching in place, “I don’t think I can sit here much longer, listening to my stomach growl. We’ve waited here long enough. I say we go look for him.”

“Sounds like a good idea to me,” Matt said. “But what if he comes back?”

“He’ll let himself in,” Peg answered, waving away his question and walking to the coat closet. “He wears a key around his neck.”

“A six-year-old boy has his own copy of the house key?” Matt asked, raising his eyebrows.

“He hasn’t lost it yet,” Peg said, putting her hands on her hips. “Jack understands the importance and responsibility of carrying a house key. He’s very proud of the fact that I trust him, and he tries very hard to keep my trust.”

“It’s so nice to see you’re teaching him responsibility at such a young age,” Matt said, crossing his arms and staring at his ex-wife.

“Folks,” Rusty said, stepping between them, “now is not the time to be arguing. Fighting about this isn’t going to find Jack any faster. So stop it, and let’s go find him.”

“Okay,” they said, glaring at each other one last time before heading out the door behind Rusty.

“Where do we start?” Matt asked Peg as they ran down the stairs.

“Let’s check with Schloimie first,” Peg said. “He may still be there.”

They left the renovated brownstone building and entered the store next to them. An older man looked up from the counter.

“Peggy, my dear, how goes it?” he asked, flashing a big, white, toothy smile.

“Well, Schloimie, not good.”

“Oh, my,” he said, rubbing his hand on his coat. “Den de boy didn’t go home, did he?” Schloimie looked at Matt and Rusty. He smiled in confusion. “Who are your friends?”

Peg moved her head in their direction, saying, “My ex-husband, Matthew, and his fiancée, Rusty.”

“Ex-husband? Fiancée?” Schloimie looked confused and surprised. Suddenly he smiled at the couple. “Oh, yah. De boy said something about his fater remarrying. He was none too happy about dat.”

“We know,” Rusty said. “Sir—”

“Please, call me Schloimie,” he said, smiling kindly. “Everyone does.”

“Schloimie,” Rusty continued, smiling, “we need to find Jack. Do you know where he went?”

“He not go home?”

“No,” Matt said. “We’ve been waiting for him for two hours.”

“Oh, my,” Schloimie said, rubbing his chin worriedly. He raised his finger. “Wait, he always like de park. Maybe he go dere. Have you checked?”

“The park, of course,” Peg said to the others. “Let’s check there. Thank you so much, Schloimie.”

“No problem,” he said, smiling. “I tell you what, if he come back here, I keep him wid me until you return. If you no find him, stop in here.”

“Schloimie, you’re the greatest,” Peg grinned and hugged him.

The three adults left the shop and hurried to the nearby park.

“Look in the playground area, Matt,” Peg said. “I’ll check the sports areas. Rusty, you have the best night vision, so you check the trails.”

“Good idea,” Rusty said.

“Let’s meet each other back here in an hour. We should have found him by then, if he’s here,” Matt said, reading the street sign. They all nodded, checked their watches, and headed in different directions.

Rusty entered the wooded trails, and let her eyes adjust to the dim light. With the skill of a trained hunter, she checked the ground for tracks. Finding many on the well-worn trail, she searched harder for the tread marks of Jack’s dress shoes. Finding some she recognized, Rusty walked quickly and quietly in the direction of the marks.

After a few minutes, Rusty saw the bench where she had sat that afternoon with Jack’s parents. Lying on the ground was Jack’s tie, where he had apparently taken it off to free his neck. She stopped at the bench and followed, with her eyes, the tracks that led into the woods.

“So you wanted to be found, didn’t you?” She asked softly to herself. “Otherwise you wouldn’t have gone someplace where you knew I would find you. Well, child, here I come.”

She followed the tracks for a few minutes. As she drew closer to a small clearing, Rusty heard voices. One she recognized as Jack’s, but the others were unfamiliar.

“Jack?” she called quietly, hearing the patter of feet disappearing into the woods. Rusty hurried to the clearing, finding Jack sitting alone, his body slumped and looking unhappy, but otherwise unharmed. “There you are. Your parents and I were getting worried.”

The boy shrugged his shoulders. Rusty sat down beside him and looked at the ground. An eight-spoked wheel had been drawn in the dirt. She looked at Jack.

“Did you draw this?” She asked. He shook his head. “Was it your friend?”

Jack looked at her in surprise.

“Who were you talking to, Jack?” She asked the boy, looking at him tenderly but intently.

“Nobody you’d know,” he said, frowning and lowering his eyes. “Besides, you wouldn’t believe me if I told you”

“I might,” she said, smiling gently. “Who disappeared into the woods?”

“Faeries,” came the soft reply.

“Really?” Rusty’s eyes lit up as she looked to the woods. She saw nothing but trees and brush. *They hide themselves well*, she thought to herself.

“I knew you wouldn’t believe me,” the child beside her growled.

“I believe in faeries, Jack,” Rusty said, laying a hand on his arm. He looked at her with doubt, and she continued, “Fey, or faerie, people do exist, or so I think. The Irish say they visit us often; they even live among us.”

“How?” the boy asked, interested in spite of himself.

“As changelings,” she said. “Changelings are faerie children who are exchanged with human children. Sometimes changelings mate with humans, and more ‘changeling,’ or half-faerie, children are born.”

“You think so?” he said.

“Yes, child, I do,” she said. “But many people don’t believe. They think that faeries are fantasy, that faeries couldn’t possibly exist in the ‘real’ world.”

“What is the real world?” Jack asked. “Do you know, Russy?”

“To be honest, Jack, I really don’t know,” she said, then smiled. “Russy, eh? I like that. Would you like to call me that from now on?”

“I won’t call you Mother,” he said, his eyes glowing darkly.

“I wouldn’t expect you to,” Rusty said earnestly. “Jack, you have a mother, one who loves you so much. I have no right to take that place. Peg has that right to motherhood. And I gladly let her have it.”

“Then what are you?”

Rusty looked up. “Oh, I don’t know. People will call me your step-mother.” She looked at him. “Maybe you could just consider me a special friend.”

“Special?”

“One who can explain the ‘rocks’ you find,” she said, smiling. “One who loves plants.”

“One who believes in faeries!” Jack cried out, laughing.

“Yes, one who believes in faeries, Jack,” she laughed with him.

“Why do you want to marry Daddy, Russy?”

“Because I love him,” Rusty said, smiling at him, “and I love you, Jack. I might not be your mother, but I still love you.”

“Oh,” Jack said, looking down at the ground. He drew figures in the dirt. “You won’t take

Daddy away from me, will you?" He looked worried.

"No, Jack, of course not," Rusty said, staring intently at the boy. "I honestly don't think I could. Your father loves you so much. In fact, he came out here specifically to see you."

"He did."

She nodded.

"What about you?" Jack eyed her suspiciously.

"I came to see both you and your mother," she said. "I like both of you, and I enjoy spending time with you." Looking at her watch, she stood up. "Well, I'm supposed to meet your father and mother at the corner in ten minutes." She smiled and held out her hand to him. "Want to come with me and get some dinner?"

"I guess so. I am hungry," Jack said, standing up and taking her hand.

"C'mon, then," she said, leading him to the edge of the clearing. "Let's go eat."

"Hold on," Jack said, turning to face the clearing. "I'll be back soon, friends!" He yelled into the forest across from the clearing.

"They'll be waiting," Rusty mumbled, smiling at the boy. They turned and left the clearing.

The Plan

"The Plan," which is ready for submission to publication, is a manuscript I have edited more than any other story in my life. It has been worth it, though.

The story brings together 2 very different worlds, as seen through the characters of Sean and Brigid. Sean is a rock 'n' roll musician from the States, while Brigid is an English cunning woman who was raised by elves. Together the two discover their worlds are not really what they seem to be.

The Plan

by Shannon Davis

The young man wandered up the hill, wondering where he was. *I have to find a town soon*, he thought. *I need to make a phone call. My band is not going to be happy about the fact that I can't meet them in London.*

He stared at his torn steel blue silk shirt and ripped designer jeans: the results of the wreck he'd just experienced. He'd left the rented car where it had stopped, hoping the damned thing would rot.

Why that other car had appeared out of nowhere and headed straight at him, causing him to run off the road, was a thought the blond man pondered as he wandered down the road, guitar case in hand. Luckily his instrument was still in one piece; he wished he could say the same for his cut, scratched, bruised, and sore body. Though nothing was broken, he had tied a cotton T-shirt around a huge gash in his arm to stop the bleeding. His make-shift bandage, however, was already turning red from the blood that would not stop flowing.

"Where's a hospital or town?" he asked the clear blue sky, the road, and the forest around him. *I need to find a doctor*, he thought, wondering where a town would be out in the middle of nowhere. *England sure is different from the U. S. I could at least find a damned phone if I were back home in the States. Why was that person driving on the wrong side of the road? He even seemed to swerve onto my side when he saw me. I don't understand.* He wandered for another half hour, becoming weaker from the shock and loss of blood. He thought he heard music coming through the trees and vaguely remembered the stories the innkeeper was telling the night before; the stories of faeries that lived and sang in the forest. *Folk tales, that's all they were*, he tried to convince himself.

This is one time I am really glad to be short and thin, he thought, remembering lying down in the seat of the small car as a tree limb had ripped off the hood and top of the automobile. *I wouldn't have lived to see my next birthday.*

The man stopped then and listened carefully; he thought he heard the sound of a recorder. The sound floated to him from the trees to his left. *That doesn't sound like faeries to me. Maybe I can find out where a town is.* He staggered wearily toward the sound. He looked around the woods and saw eyes in the trees. A small face looked down at him from a particularly high limb. The young man thought it was a child, but closer inspection showed the face belonged to a woman. The figure was small, and she spoke to him in a musical sounding language he could not understand. The man shook his head and dismissed the figure as a figment of his imagination.

Coming to a clearing near a stream, he watched a second figure, this time a redheaded woman sitting on a rock playing a soft, lilting tune. He cleared his throat when she finished playing. She whirled around to face him.

She was young, looking to be in her early to mid twenties, which was close to his age. Her face was soft and had a gentle look, though she stared at him in surprise. He could tell she was a person of nature, for she wore simple leather and cotton clothing and no makeup. What amazed him most, though, was her gray eyes,

which glowed with a knowledge and wisdom he had never seen in one so young.

“You are hurt,” she said, getting up and going to him.

“Please help me,” he said quietly. The earth began to spin around him before he collapsed.

He awoke to the smell of meat cooking in a soup. A figure was leaning over him. Once his eyes focused, the young man could see the woman who had been sitting on the rock.

“Where am I?” he asked.

“You are in my home,” the woman answered. “I brought you here to treat your wounds. I take it you were in an automobile accident.”

Her soft English accent let him know she was a native to the land, but the young man noticed a strange quality to her voice; it had a musical flow.

He nodded and tried to sit up. Pain rushed through his body in a tremendous momentum that made him fall back onto the bed. He groaned and nearly passed out again.

“You may not want to move,” she suggested softly, smiling at his small nod of agreement. “You have been hurt badly.”

“Why am I here?” he asked after the wave of pain finally stopped.

“So that I could treat you,” she said. “Your injuries could have cost you your life. You are lucky you found me in time.”

“You were playing a recorder,” he said.

She nodded. “They told me you would find me, so I played my instrument to lead your way.”

“Who told you?”

She smiled and went to check the broth. “The people that live near by.”

“Would these people, by chance, happen to have a phone?” He asked, watching her move about the room. “I need to call the guys in my band and tell them it’s going to take me a while to get to London.”

“No,” she said with a secretive smile. “These people do not have a phone. They, like I, live off the land.”

“Who are these people?” he asked warily as she came to him with a bowl.

“Hush now,” she said. “You need to eat and rest. Your wounds will take some time to heal. Do not worry about your friends in London; they will learn of your condition.”

“How?”

“Don’t worry about it,” she said, smiling as she began feeding him the broth. When he was finished, the woman gave the man something to drink.

“What is that?” he asked warily.

“Something to relieve the pain,” she answered. “I’ve steeped willow bark and lavender. The tea will

“I don’t think he’s skipping out,” Jim said, looking intently at Marco. “Look, I know you and Sean had a falling out a few weeks ago. What was the deal?”

Marco shrugged his shoulders. “We just don’t see eye to eye on a few things.”

“Oh, really,” Jim said.

Jeremy walked up to the table. “Well, the hotel said no one with Sean’s name has signed in yet, but they’ll keep their eyes open,” he said, sitting down to finish his breakfast.

“Well, guys,” Jim said, sitting back, trying to think clearly in spite of the voices that wouldn’t go away, “what should we do until he returns?”

“We could go ahead and do some rehearsing and recording. Sean can just fill in his parts when he gets here.”

“We could,” Jim said. “It would give us the chance to get some work done and take some of the pressure off of Sean when he finally arrives.” *He won’t be arriving*, Jim heard the voices say.

“Whatever,” Marco said, frowning.

“Why do you have such a problem with Sean, anyway?” Jeremy asked Marco, staring at him intently.

“I don’t have a problem with him,” Marco said, a defensive look in his eyes.

“Yes, you do,” Jeremy said.

“Guys, don’t argue,” Jim said, taking a drink of water and trying to ignore the voices in his head.

“I must apologize for Grandgor,” Brigid said, coming into the hut. “He has a strange sense of humor.”

“I agree,” Sean said, watching her place hides by the fire. “Your mother really abandoned you?” She nodded.

“And is Grandgor really an elf? Or am I dreaming all of this?”

“No,” she said, sitting down beside him, “you are not dreaming. Believe it or not, this is real.”

“But people don’t normally see elves,” he said, frowning. “I thought Grandgor was a figment of my imagination or the product of illusion; I thought the pain was causing me to see things. How can elves exist?”

“Not everything in this world can be seen,” she said, smiling at his disbelief. “But your opinion is a common one. I have always been exposed to people who swore elves don’t exist, but I was weaned and raised by one; how could I say that my forest parents weren’t real? I used to get angry as a child, but eventually I learned to smile and let people’s remarks pass.”

“What was it like, being a human among elves?”

“These people are very good people. They are kind and loving,” Brigid said, her eyes saddening. “But I never felt like I belonged. The elven children noticed my differences as we were growing up. I was taller and ganglier than them; they were kind and tried to include me, but they never really accepted me. When we all grew old enough to mate, everyone else joined with someone else, but no one wanted me.”

“You must have been very lonely,” Sean said, empathy filling his large blue eyes.

She lowered her head. “Yes, I was lonely, from childhood—” she looked up at him “—until you came.”

The three men returned to the hotel room and found no sign that Sean had arrived.

“He’s been gone more than 24 hours,” Jeremy said. “Perhaps we should file a missing person’s report.”

“Screw the police,” Jim said, packing up his stuff. “Let’s go find him ourselves. We can ask at the desk how to get to Canterbury and drive toward it. If he’s been in a wreck, we should at least find a wrecked car. Maybe we could find a nearby town and get information on him.”

“What do you say, Marco?” Jeremy asked.

“Why go looking for him? He’s bound to show up in a day or two. We could just start working without him. He can throw in input when he gets here.”

“What if he doesn’t come back?” Jim asked, crossing his arms.

“I don’t know.”

“Marco, I know you don’t like Sean, though I fail to see why,” Jim said, glaring at the dark-haired man. “I personally consider Sean a friend, and I want to make sure my friend is all right. Why do you want to be so cruel to him?”

“I’m not fond of men who flirt with my wife, ok?” Marco said, glaring at Jim.

“So that’s it,” Jeremy said. “Maybe she flirted with him, and he refused her.”

“That’s not true!”

“If he’s dead, what am I supposed to do about it?” Marco snarled.

“Sit up carefully,” Brigid said to Sean a few days later. He sat up gingerly, grimacing. Minor waves of pain announced his not-quite-healed wound.

“At least I can move now,” he smiled at the woman, “but it still hurts some.”

“It is to be expected,” she said, smiling back at him. “Do you want to try walking? You could.”

“OK,” he said, letting her help him up. They walked slowly to the door and out of the hut. Brigid sat him down on a smooth tree stump and went to work. He watched her clean a hide.

“Brigid,” he said after a while, “what did Grandgor mean when he told you to take care of me and that I was led here for more than your healing skills?”

Brigid sat quietly with her head lowered. “You were sent here for me,” she said softly.

“Excuse me.”

She turned to him and repeated herself. At his surprised look, she smiled. “None of the elven men will

take me for a wife. You appeared in Gradgor's meditation."

"He caused that person to swerve out onto my side of the road?"

"That person didn't exist. It was an illusion to make you swerve off the road."

"That was one hell of an illusion!" he exclaimed. "Why? Why have my car crash? I could have been killed. That would have spoiled his 'plan.'"

"Grandgor would have made sure you did not die," she answered, coming over and sitting near him. "How else would he have gotten you to come here?"

"That's insane!" Sean looked at her. "So, now that I am supposed to be your mate, when can we leave and head to London?"

"We can't," she said, looking down at the ground. "We must stay here with the elves forever." She looked up into his eyes with earnest. "Please understand, I did not agree to this. I did not like this idea at all. You are a well-known person, you have a life outside of here. You should not be trapped here for the rest of your life. It's not fair."

"What about you?" he asked, looking intently into her eyes. "Do you want to be trapped here for the rest of your life?"

Her eyes widened, and she looked away quickly. Then she stood up and prepared to help him stand. "It is time to go in. You must not exert yourself on your first day out. I'll help you into the hut."

He stood and leaned against her for support. They walked into the hut and she helped him lie back down on the bed. As she started to move away, he kissed her gently. She stared at him for a minute, then muttered something about the unfinished hide and left the hut.

Jim and Jeremy walked into the village and looked around. People were going about their daily lives with little notice of the two strangers.

"Well, we found the wrecked car down the road. I wonder if any of them knows where Sean is," Jeremy mused.

"Let's ask," Jim answered, walking up to an older woman carrying bread. "Excuse me, ma'am, but I'm looking for my friend. Have you seen him? He's short with long blond hair and blue eyes. His name is Sean Peterson."

"I haven't seen your friend," she answered him, starting to walk away. "I'm sorry."

"Are you sure. We have reason to believe he's been in a car accident."

"Was he hurt?" the woman asked, turning around and facing the men.

"We think so."

"Then check with Miss Brigid."

"Who's she?" Jeremy asked.

“She’s the local healer. Some say she’s a witch. You’ll find her in the forest about five miles down the road.” The woman pointed toward the forest to the right of where the men entered the town. They thanked her and headed back to their car.

Brigid sat down next to Sean. She leaned close to him and spoke quietly.

“I can tell you,” she said, looking behind her. The darkness outside the hut revealed no one. “I don’t want to stay here. I love the forest and the animals and this little hut, but I feel lonely, like something out there in the world is calling to me. I want out.”

“Then leave,” he answered, looking into her sad eyes. “You have the freedom. Don’t let them stop you. If you love the forest, I can solve the problem of you leaving it behind. My home in the States is on wooded land. You could come live with me and have all the nature you want.”

“I can’t go to the States with you,” she said, lowering her eyes.

“Sure you can,” he answered, smiling at her. “Citizenship is not extremely difficult to obtain.”

“No, Sean,” she said, staring intently into his eyes. “I can’t leave here. Neither can you.”

“What?”

“We must stay. Grandgor has told me I must stay with the elves forever, because I was raised by them. Their people don’t leave each other.”

“But you’re not one of their people,” he said, his eyes flashing with anger, “you’re one of my people. You belong with humans. I am not one of their people, either. They can’t force me to stay here. They can’t force you, either.”

“Yes they can.”

“No!” he said loudly. She shushed him, watching the door in fear.

“Let him come,” Sean said in quiet anger. “Let Grandgor and his people come and hear me speak. I’ll tell them what they can do with their plan.”

“It’s not all the people, Sean, just Grandgor,” Brigid answered him. “He wants to keep me near him. He’s doing this out of love.”

“No,” Sean said, “he’s doing this for control.”

“No, Child,” a voice said from the doorway, “I’m not doing this for control; I have been testing you.”

The humans turned to see Grandgor and his wife standing in the doorway. Sean glared at the elf, while Brigid stared sad-eyed at the man who had been her father and protector.

“I wanted to see just how much my little adopted daughter would want to be with her own kind. So, I had one of her kind—a stranger—brought to her hut,” Grandgor told the two, walking in and sitting down near the couple. His wife sat down beside him. “I had seen from Brigid’s reactions to the townspeople her desire to be with the humans, but she always expressed an intent to stay with her elven family.”

“You always told me I could never leave,” she said.

“I did, but you knew in your heart, child, that you could. We allowed you full contact with humans. Your mother—Kreena—and I did not mind your interaction with the people of the nearby village.”

“We love you, dear,” Kreena said, smiling at her adopted daughter, “but we always allowed you the freedom to leave. All you had to do was want it. Do you?”

“I would like to live with my own kind,” Brigid said, looking with hope at Sean, “and someday find my own mate.”

“Then you are free to go,” Grandgor said, standing and smiling at them, “both of you.”

“We can leave?” Sean said, surprised at the turn of events.

“Of course,” Grandgor said, grinning mischievously at the man. “Tell me, Sean, what can I do with my plan?”

Sean smiled. “Never mind.”

The hide across the doorway moved and two men walked into the hut.

“Sean, I thought that was your voice,” Jeremy started to move toward his band-mate, then stopped when he saw the elves. “What the hell?”

“I know the quality of that voice,” Jim said, looking at Grandgor and Kreena in surprise. “They’re elves.”

“Very good, my child.”

The Tree

I am notorious for writing ten to thirty page stories, so I mark 'The Tree' as quite an accomplishment.

This sudden fiction, sometimes called a short-short, story is based on a tree that grew in the apartment complex where I lived as a child. I really loved that tree, which probably was not a maple, but appears as a maple in the piece.

Yes, maples are my friends. I hug them as often as possible.

The Tree

by Shannon Davis

I loved that tree.

When I was a child growing up in New York City, there was this beautiful maple tree that grew in my neighborhood. The tree grew out of a huge crack in the sidewalk and stood a good twelve feet tall with long, strong branches and hundreds of leaves. Please understand that I grew up on the Lower East Side in the Jewish ghetto, so this tree was the only tree in the neighborhood.

We children loved that tree; we played in it, decorated in it, read books in it, and adored it beyond belief. We practically worshipped that tree. (Imagine a bunch of little children, mostly of Jewish background, worshipping a tree in New York's Lower East Side.) As a matter of fact, I used to pray by the tree; I even held many a good conversation with my friend.

Then one dark day, we children learned the awful truth about our darling maple playmate. The city was going to cut it down! They needed the land on which the tree stood for a housing project.

We were devastated. Not knowing what to do, we children mourned over our beloved tree. Finally, the our rabbi, Rabbi Steiner, suggested that we try to save the tree.

"Perhaps the mayor will listen, if you try," he said.

So go to the mayor we did. Getting in was difficult, but after many a mishap and much begging and crying, we finally got an audience with him. He heard our story and sat back in his chair. He contemplated the situation for a while, then smiled sadly.

"Children," he said softly, "your story is one of love and devotion to this tree. I understand your feelings. I loved many creatures when I was a boy. But I am sorry, but I cannot grant you your wish. You see, this tree stands in the way of progress. We must remove the tree for the betterment of the community. I am sorry, children, but one day you will understand."

We left feeling dejected and disappointed. When we went outside the next day, the work crew was there to "remove" our tree. We children watched in silent horror as we saw the men prepare to destroy our dear friend. As the chain saw roared to life, the neighborhood children (myself included) burst into angry, unhappy tears.

"Children," called our rabbi friend, "come into my home. Let us sit and calm ourselves. Perhaps in a while we can talk."

The rabbi took us all into his house. His wife served us cookies and tea; after a while, Rabbi Steiner spoke kindly to us.

"Children," he said, "there are some things in life that must be sacrificed so that other things can live. This tree might have to be cut down, but that building will offer housing for many people. It is good that that tree gives itself up for all those people."

Some of us bought it. Not me. I failed then, and I still fail, to see why the world of nature must be destroyed "in the name of progress." As I grew older, I joined groups and worked to save the Earth and all her creatures.

Years later, I met with a group of environmentalists at my old college in the state of Washington. We had decided that bantering and picketing were getting us nowhere.

“Friends, the lumber companies are cutting down the forest in this region and not replacing that which they take. We officers of this organization have bought the seeds and baby trees. I say we gather together, go to the forest, and plant some trees.”

A week later we met at a nearby forest. It was near dusk, and the lumberjacks and bosses had gone home for the day. We stormed into the forest and started planting seedlings and placing baby trees.

As I helped a friend set a maple sapling into the ground, I remembered my old friend from the East Side. I saw the beautiful creature waving its beautiful leaves in the dirty New York summer air.

“To my friend, the Maple,” I whispered as I patted the dirt around the sapling. May you, too, grow as big and strong, my friend.”

The Painting

In "The Painting," a young couple, Emma and Roland, receive a strange gift. This gift, an old painting, appears to be an heirloom from Roland's family. Along with this painting, however, comes a curse that could destroy the couple's life together forever.

This story is still undergoing major revision.

The Painting

“Roland, come here and look at this, please,” Emma called from the front porch one day not long after their marriage.

“What’s wrong, Em?” Roland, a black-haired man of medium height, asked his wife as he came out onto the porch. He stopped when he saw the large brown package. “What is that?” he asked her.

“I was hoping you would know,” she answered. “I came out here to get the morning paper, and I saw this package just sitting here. I had no idea where it had come from, and I called you out here hoping you would know. Did you order anything lately from anywhere?”

“No, I haven’t,” Roland answered, smiling at his young and pretty red-headed wife. “Perhaps it is a late wedding gift from one of our relatives.”

“Maybe,” Emma answered doubtfully.

“Well, there is one way to find out,” he said, going to the package. “Let’s open it up and see what it is.”

“Okay,” she answered as she helped him tear off the brown wrapping.

Before them stood a painting like none they had ever seen before. It was about four feet tall and three feet wide. The painting portrayed a man who looked just like Roland, except for a scar on the face of the man in the painting. The man was dressed completely in black and sat in front of a blood-red background. His black hair framed his well-chisled face, and his eyes glowed with an evil wisdom that seemed ancient. Emma looked fearfully at the painting, then at her husband to see if he had that same look in his eyes; thankfully, she saw only shock and confusion.

“I don’t get it,” he said softly to himself but loud enough for his wife to hear. “This had to come from Dad’s side, because no one on Mom’s side would look like that.”

“That’s because everyone on your Mom’s side is Native American,” Emma commented. “The man in this painting is obviously a man of European descent, like you father’s people.”

“Exactly,” Roland continued, “but I thought I had been given everything my father would have given me. I also thought I had seen everything that was connected with my father and his family.”

“Well, obviously not,” Emma answered his confusion. “However, I don’t like the looks of that painting. I don’t think we should keep it, Roland.”

“What do you mean?” he asked her incredulously.

“Look at that man, Ro,” Emma said despairingly. He looks positively evil. See how his eyes glow with almost demonic light. He reminds me of the Navajo Wolves you and your mom told me about. No, Roland, I don’t like this painting at all. I think we should get rid of it. I have a strange feeling about it.”

“My psychic woman,” Roland said in mock frustration. He smiled at her. “I tell you

what. Let's keep the painting for a couple of days, and if you still don't want it around, then we'll get rid of it. Okay?"

"All right," she smiled, smiling in spite of her defeat. "We'll give it a couple of days."

"I still don't like this painting," Emma said next morning as she and Roland came in from enjoying the beautiful sunrise.

"Cynic," he commented. "Remember, you have one more day to put up with 'that painting' before we do anything about it. Besides, I think I'm starting to tolerate it."

"Roland, you have to be kidding!"

"No, actually I'm not," he smiled at the shock on her face. "Anyway, I have work to do, so I am not going to worry about any silly painting."

"Song to finish?" Emma asked as she followed him into their conservatory.

"As a matter of fact, yes," Roland answered, picking up his guitar. "Here, let me sing you a little of it. I wrote this last night, but I have no title for it yet."

However, as he started to strum the first chord of the song, all six strings snapped and flew in all directions. One string cut a deep line into his right hand, while another cut a deep line into his face. Roland yelped in shock, and the guitar neck split before the guitar hit the ground and broke.

Emma rushed to her husband, crying, "Are you all right? What happened?"

Roland's smile turned to a grimace of pain as he looked at her. "I don't know why, but all the strings snapped, and two of them hit me."

"Well, come with me," Emma said, trying to calm herself. "You're damned lucky you have a wife who is an herbalist and healer. I'll take care of your wounds in the kitchen."

"Will you kiss them and make them feel better?" Roland said ruefully as he followed her into the kitchen.

"Maybe," she answered, looking over his face-wound as he sat down in a chair.

"Hmmm, it looks like that string cut you pretty deep, sweetie. You may have a scar on your face."

"You always said you found men with facial scars to be attractive," he teased her.

"That was not me and you know it," she growled playfully. "That was a friend of mine from college."

"Sure it was," Roland said, trying not to smile and trying to take the pain as stoically as possible. "Well, now I look that much more like that man in that painting."

"Don't remind me," Emma grumbled as she inspected his hand. "I don't want you to look too much like that man, because I think he is eerie." She looked at him with eyes full of sorrow. "I hate to tell you this, love, but your hand is badly wounded. I'm afraid you won't be able to play for a while. Sorry."

"It is to be expected," he said with true pain and sorrow in his eyes. Ever since he was a

boy, Roland had always had a first love, music. He was always seen either with a traditional tribal instrument in his hand or singing or playing a guitar. He even met his wife, a writer and recording technician, through the music business, which was the only job he could find when he left the reservation.

"Do you need anything for the pain," Emma asked him, "or can you handle it?"

"I'll be all right. Let me help you with the article you were working on yesterday."

"All right," she consented, "but if you feel the need, babe, then go lay down and rest. Okay?"

"Okay."

They walked toward the library/study where she worked on her articles and stories. As they neared the door, the newlyweds heard a thud from the desk area of the room. They hurried into the room to find a broken bottle of ink spilling out onto the carpet they had bought for themselves as a wedding present. Emma hurried over and started gingerly picking up pieces of glass. Roland rushed back to the kitchen to find a wash-rag to clean up the mess. On his way back to the study, he looked into their bedroom to find the cat sleeping peacefully on the bed.

"Well, for once it wasn't the cat's fault," Roland said as he handed Emma the rag, which she took and immediately began scrubbing, "Theadocia is asleep on our bed."

"Dammit," she cursed as she scrubbed, "I put that bottle in the middle of the desk last night like I always do. How on earth could it have fallen?"

"I don't know," Roland answered ruefully.

"I do, but you wouldn't like my idea," Emma said, looking up at him without missing a beat of her scrubbing tempo. At his "Go ahead and tell me" look, she continued. "I think it was done by that painting."

"How in God's name could that painting do anything? It didn't just walk in here and knock that bottle off the desk."

"Energy is stored in everything, Roland. Including paintings. And that painting has a lot of evil energy wrapped up in it! Roland, let's get rid of the painting! Please!!"

Roland didn't answer. He just turned and walked out of the room as his wife continued to scrub, tears rolling down her face. He walked out onto the porch and looked at the painting; a look of shock, then disbelief, crossed his face. The painting was grinning at him! Not the half-smile of the original Roland had just seen, but an evil sort of "Ha ha. I got you" type of grin.

Growling angrily, Roland picked up the painting and carried it to the trash pick-up area at the far end of the back yard. Once there, Roland broke the portrait over the fence, cracking the wood frame and ripping the canvas, and threw it into the trash. Having completed the task, Roland stalked angrily back into the house. Entering at the back door, which led to the kitchen, Roland found Emma preparing a mixture to take into the study.

"Where did you go?" she asked, sounding nasally stuffed up from her crying.

"I got rid of that goddamned painting," he growled in answer. "I went out onto the

porch, and that stupid painting was smiling at me with this triumphant look. I got so mad that I broke it against the fence and pitched in the garbage where it belongs."

"Oh," she answered softly. "Well, I'm going to go try to see if this will get that stain out of the carpet." She held up the bowl. "Roland, honey, why don't you get some rest?"

"I think I will," he answered, looking haggard and suddenly very exhausted. "If you need me, I'll be with the cat on the bed." He kissed Emma and went to the bedroom, where he snuggled up near the cat on the bed.

"Got the stain out, yet?" Roland asked Emma two days later.

"No," she replied disdainfully, "and I've tried everything! I tried chemicals. That didn't work. I tried herbs; that didn't work. I have tried everything short of magic, and nothing will work!!"

"Well," Roland said soothingly, going to his wife and hugging her gently, "we could just cut out the stained area and replace it with some of the carpet scraps that are in the attic. That would be better than having a big stain in the study."

"I suppose we could try," Emma said helplessly. "First, let's go get the morning paper. I've been so distraught about the carpet that I forgot to get the paper this morning."

"Okay," he answered, "let's go."

They walked out onto the front porch to find a large brown package sitting on the porch.

"I'll bet it's that damned painting again," Emma said as she picked up the paper just outside the door.

Roland ripped off the brown wrapping to reveal the painting. It looked the same except for a scowl on the man's face. Roland looked at his wife and said grimly, "You're right; it's that damned painting."

"Well, as far as I am concerned, that thing can stay on the porch, because it is not coming into the house," Emma said with a "Don't argue with me on this" tone in her voice.

"You won't get any argument from me. Let's go take care of the carpet."

"Okay," Emma answered, "let me get a flashlight."

They headed upstairs to the attic where the carpet scraps were kept. On their way up, Roland and Emma became increasingly aware of a terrible smell coming from the attic. It smelled like . . .

"Fire!!" Emma screamed as she bolted up the stairs and through the door. In the corner of the attic was a little area that looked like a camp fire. Roland burst into the room just in time to help his wife pick up a heavy blanket and throw it on the fire, smothering it.

When the fire was extinguished, they inspected the damage. Of all the things in the area, only the scraps that matched the carpet in the study were burned!

"They're ruined," Emma cried, tenderly picking up the strangely cold, blackened scraps. "Now what do we do?"

"I don't know," Roland said helplessly. "I guess we just rearrange the furniture in the study to cover the stain until we can get new carpet."

Emma growled under her breath. She looked at Roland and grumbled, "Where did that painting come from? And why did it return? How did it return? You said you broke it the other day."

"I did break it and pitched it the other day," Roland said, sitting down and putting an arm around his angry wife. "Em, doesn't it seem strange that the painting returned in excellent repair? I looked very carefully, and I didn't see any signs of repair. I broke that painting up pretty good, even to the point of it being unrepairable. But it came back."

"Yes, that is strange," Emma answered, slowly starting to calm down. "Also, Roland, did you notice that the facial expression on the painting had changed? It was scowling at us, like it was angry or something."

Roland furrowed his brow in concentration. "Yes, it did seem to be scowling. I wonder why."

"Because you broke it and threw it away, I'll bet."

"Maybe," Roland said, getting up and offering Emma his left hand to help her up. She stood up and gave him a kiss. "Let's go downstairs," he said softly, "After all, the bed hasn't been made yet."

"Are you trying to find me a way to work off my frustration?" Emma asked him as they headed downstairs.

"Would you like me to find a way?"

"Sure," Emma said as they entered the bedroom.

Later in the day, Roland sat down in the living room and picked up a book. Emma walked into the room and smiled at him.

"If it isn't a guitar or another musical instrument, it's a book," she said, teasing him about one of his other loves, reading. Emma often thought Roland couldn't get enough books. Roland often thought the same thing.

"Why not grab one and join me in delving into other worlds," Roland said smilingly, knowing she loved to read about as much as he did.

"I might," she answered, giving him a kiss, "but I must finish cleaning up the kitchen first." She looked closely at her husband. "Roland, you look pale. Are you feeling okay?"

"I feel a little tired, but not sickly. What do you mean by pale?"

"Well, I noticed earlier when we were outside that you look like your skin tone is lighter. It's not the usual dark reddish-brown color that you inherited from your mom. You're actually starting to look more your dad's color."

"Hmmm," Roland pondered for a moment, "I don't see why my skin tone would change. Maybe I need to get more sun."

"Do you need me to arrange a sing for him?"

"That might be a very good idea," Emma said. "However, I need some information about his father's history."

"Why?"

"Anna, a painting came to our house a few days ago. We didn't like the looks of it, but we decided to wait a few days and see what we would do with it. The day after it came, some strange things started happening."

"What did this painting look like?" Anna said slowly.

"It was a painting of a man that looked just like Roland, but the man in the picture had a lighter skin tone and a scar on his face."

"I was afraid you were going to tell me that," Anna said ominously. "Child, let me tell you something about Roland's father. His people came from a place in Europe where they were once leaders. An ancestor of his once worshiped a white-man's demon. The demon offered this man great powers and glory. However, the man could not have his picture painted. Now, this was a very vain man, and he defied the demon and had the portrait painted. The demon became very angry and killed the man. But instead of destroying the portrait, the demon cursed it."

"You mean the portrait that is in my house right now?"

"Where is it in your house?"

"It's on the porch," Emma answered her mother-in-law's strictly spoken question. "Roland and I never wanted to bring it into the house."

"That's why it's taking so long," Anna said mysteriously. "The curse on the painting was that whoever in the family got the painting would die as soon as he brought it into the house. By not bringing the portrait completely into the house, you are slowing down the painting's rate of killing Roland. Look, get a shaman. I know there is one in your area. Have a sing done for Roland. If the shaman can think of any way to get rid of the painting, then by all means do it!"

"Okay, Mother," Emma said gratefully. "I will do as you say."

"You do that," Anna said. "And, Emma, when the curing is finished, call me and let me know."

"I will."

"I am so glad you came," Emma said as the shaman entered her house. "I've tried using my herbs to help Roland, but nothing seems to be working."

"Let us hope that I have not arrived too late," the shaman said as Emma led him into the bedroom. Roland lay on the bed, looking like death warmed over. "I will have to put Roland in a suspended state before anything else." The shaman started to chant in Navajo. When he was finished, he turned to Emma. "Mrs. Wolfsinger, you must tell me everything

about what has happened.”

Thus, Emma unfolded the story of the painting’s history and the events that had recently occurred in the house. She finished by telling him, “I even tried to burn the picture a few days ago, but it returned in perfect condition. That time the face in the painting had a look of rage. So I called Roland’s mother, Anna Wolfsinger, and then I called you.”

“Anna once told me about the curse on her son’s father’s family. She also hoped that the curse would never fall on her son. Now the curse has done just that, and we must find a way to break it. I will go Listen to what the earth tells me to do about this. I will return shortly.” With that, the old man took his belongings and went out to the back yard.

Emma walked over to the bed and sat down next to Roland, who lay there in suspended animation. She watched him for a few minutes, then looked to the ceiling.

“Dear Lord,” she said quietly, “I feel that you work in conjunction with my husband’s gods, and I feel that you don’t disapprove of me agreeing with Roland’s ways and accepting them for their own value. But, Lord, the demon who controls Roland now is from the white man’s beliefs, and my husband needs your help along with the help of his gods. Please, God, help the gods of my husband and his people. Please help them cure him and drive away this evil creature that is slowly killing the man I love. Please.”

The shaman re-entered shortly after her prayer ended. He looked at her with some hope in his eyes. “I believe there is a way to save your husband. But, I will have to stay here for a few days. I am going to paint a picture that replicates the one on your porch.”

“Why?” Emma asked, confused.

“The new painting will be altered to bring life back to your husband. I will need your help. The demon’s spell has been suspended, so it is safe to bring the painting into the room. I need you to go out onto the porch and bring that painting in the bedroom. I also need to use the floor of this room to create the sand painting.”

“Okay,” Emma said, reluctantly going to the porch and bringing back the picture. “Now what do I do?”

“Prepare me a place to sleep somewhere in a corner of this room. I need the open area to make the painting. Also, be sure to go on with some of your daily life. Cook, clean, write, read, do what you normally do on a day-to-day basis. The more normal things seem around here, the more likely it will be that things will go back to being normal.”

“All right,” Emma said, preparing a place for the old man to rest. Afterwards, she “continued her daily life” by preparing a meal for herself and the shaman.

For the next two days, the shaman continued to sing and work in the bedroom as Emma tried to live as normally as possible. She found that difficult to do, however, because she discovered how much Roland fit into her “normal” life. It was difficult to call her present lifestyle “normal” in any way.

After the two days, the shaman had finished the sand painting. With Emma’s help, he placed Roland’s body on top of the “new” painting and began to chant. Emma realized that

the sand painting was done in blue, green, and yellow; Emma had learned that those were the colors of life when she had studied herbalism from a white witch in college. "Of course," she thought. "By using the colors of life, the shaman will reverse the effects of the original painting and end the curse."

The shaman began to chant and sprinkle corn dust mixed with blue and green sand on Roland's body. The air in the room began to feel clean and fresh as the evil was driven away. Roland's skin color, which had almost reached the point of European color, returned to its natural reddish-brown. The scar on his face began to disappear, and his hand began to heal.

Emma looked at the painting to see the expression change from a look of triumph to one of enraged defeat. The painting began to bounce and jump, then it fell face-up onto the floor. The shaman, still calmly singing, "painted" over the painting with the mixture he had just sprinkled on Roland. The painting of the evil man began to smoke and melt until it disappeared.

"The painting has gone to its rightful owner in the world of evil," the shaman said, calmly brushing the mixture from Roland's body. He and Emma placed Roland back onto the bed, then the shaman wiped away the sand painting. "Your husband should wake up soon. He must rest for a while, but he will be okay."

"Thank you, Shaman," Emma said reverently. Paying him, she went onto the kitchen to call Roland's mother. The shaman spoke to Anna and then called himself a cab.

After the shaman left, Emma went back to the bedroom to find her husband awake.

"How do you feel?" Emma asked as she sat down next to him.

"Tired," Roland said, smiling. "What happened? All I remember is hearing this voice and then passing out. The next thing I knew, I woke up here. Emma, what happened? Where is that painting?"

"In Hell, where it belongs," she answered, putting her arms around him and telling him about what had happened after he had passed out.

"Well, I'm glad that's over," Roland said.

"Yes," Emma replied. "Now we can get on with our lives in a relatively normal fashion. Unless there are any more curses in your family that I know nothing about."

He gave her a teasingly knowing look. "You never know."

"Don't look at me like that," she growled at him, then cackled the witch cackle for which she was well known.

Never

Say

Never

The poetry section is very diverse in topics. In some poems, I discuss nature; in others, social issues. The other poems tend to deal with my relationships with other people and with myself.

All are either written this semester or earlier works that I revised during the semester. Some, such as the "Valentine's Day Poems," were written in fits of passion and inspiration. "Lights and Stars" was written in contemplation. "Never" was a reaction to the opinions and attitudes of other people.

I once believed I couldn't write poetry. There were even a few people who told me I wasn't able to write poetry. Then two people showed me I could.

And I did.

Never

Lazy. Worthless. Stupid. How come a smart girl like you can't do math? You can't write, can't teach, can't play music, can't act, can't do anything the way people want, can't do anything right.

Fat. Ugly. No one will want you. You're not pretty, you dress funny, why won't you do something with your hair? You're so big. No fat chicks allowed.

Dreamer. Foolish. Fool. You'll never be anything. You'll never, never. Never, you'll never get anywhere. Never, never, you'll never get married. Who'd want you anyway?

Stop your nevers, damn it!

NEVER SAY NEVER!!

Faeries sing to me.
Elves lead me
Where I could not go;
The path is lovely.

That world is beautiful.
Trees smile and offer me love.
The grass and flowers sing
Sweet songs to me.

The trees and flowers wither,
The world fades.
The elves and faeries
Dance away from me.

Returning to this world,
I am saddened.
My soul begins to yearn.
I do not want this world to end.

I want to dance
With the faeries and elves.
Come back, good friends.
Come back to me.

It's a time to celebrate
Life and her death-mate.
The dead are walking,
As the night is talking
On this night of nights.
Everyone delights
In taking life's breath
In this season of death.

The Valentine's Day Poems

My World

I feel my world
Falling apart,
Crashing and Burning
All around me
And I can't stop it.

I am so scared!!

I have to write;
It's the only therapy I have.
Crying does me no Good;
It only makes the Flames
Leap higher
And the walls crumble faster.

I need someone!
Help me!!!

I wish I could love.
I want to,
But my love is not returned.
Not ever.

Fears

My fears burn and rage
Then murmur softly
Like a gentle breeze
Or a dying campfire
Then rage again!

This confusion wounds me
Like a knife
Cutting deep into flesh,
Ripping the smooth white skin.
I fear that knife, too!

Fears of loneliness,
Heartfelt pain, unacceptance
By all, life-long
Searching for that
Which I cannot have!

The fire is low;
The murmuring continues
I hope, wish, pray. . .
Whatever. . .
That the murmuring will stay,
That the fire will continue
To burn low.

I heard him say
Today
That poetry is usually written
In fits of passion or extreme emotion.

As I smell the fresh, clean air
and feel the sunlight on my face,
I feel myself relax
and my soul release the beauty of Nature.

Nature,
Mother of all
of earth and sky
of bird and fish and mammal.
Sweet Mother, bless us with your happiness!

Summer draws near.
Sun, warmth, fun, life.
The beauty of everything flows freely
in the warm happiness of living.

Whirling like a devil down the long dusty road
Feeling confused and alone.
Bright shining lights dance as my soul dances
To the beat of a broken heart.

Dark world, light world.
Strange creatures singing in the night.
A world dances in the smoky days and bright nights.

I walk through the world and find
Bright colored rainbows and flowers,
Unusual insects searching for life—
Killing in search of life—
A baby crying the shrill squall quieted
By a bottle or a mother's breast.

I hear the crying of babies born and unborn,
Loved and unloved.
Fearing the world or eagerly anticipating life.
Their crying calls to me
And I feel
Their pain and love and fear and excitement.

They, like us, live in this dark world, this light world,
Dealing with the whirling tornados
And dancing beats and flowers
And insects and moon and stars.
They are our fears, our loves, our pains and excitements.

Paintbrushes and Beasts

The time has returned,
When God takes his paintbrush
And colors the world,
Orange, red, brown, yellow.

The leaves fall
With a natural tendency.
Gently,
On soft autumn breezes.

But now
A great metal beast rises,
Rises up to destroy
The beauty of God's World.
Why?

Why has it risen?
Why must man create
Big metallic beasts that
Bellow black smoggy smoke?
Why do we try to rip
The canvas of beauty created
By God's paintbrush.

We have only ourselves to blame.
But we try,
Oh, we try
To enjoy the beauties of this world.
But to enjoy them,
We cannot destroy them.

Lights and Stars

*Lights blink.
Cashiers ring as
People rush for the
Glitter and gifts.*

*The stars shine.
People crowd into the inn,
Obeying the given commands,
As a couple settle in a barn.*

*Lights blink.
People rip the paper.
Gifts are scrutinized for
Size and material worth.*

*The stars shine.
Silence sweeps the desert and barn.
Animals low softly,
As a child lays sleeping in a food trough.*

*Traditions change.
They come and go,
Twist and turn and blend.
Time, they say, changes all.*

*The day comes.
As always, paper rips.
Holiday carols and tunes fill the air.
But the baby no longer sleeps in the inn.*

Winter

*The earth still sleeps.
She is tired from her labor.
The baby has exhausted her,
Though he is growing into a boy.*

*I hear comments from people.
"There's been no snow for a while."
"I wish it would be warm or cold,
but make up its mind."
"Looks like spring's almost here."*

*Old man winter has yet to release his grasp.
His icy frigid fingers gripping—
His freezing breath blowing—
His frosty face grinning—
As if to say,
"Who says spring is here?
Why should I leave now?
I've just begun to enjoy myself!"*

*His days are numbered.
The earth gains strength every day.
She'll break his back and force him to retreat
To his land in the north.*

*Her son will grow and warm the earth
With his yellow hair and skin—
With his warm loving touch—
With his burning gaze—
He will help her bring forth life again.*

A Headband and Guitar

We met as autumn leaves coloured the ground.
The world was dying as our friendship began.
You smiled happily to see me,
My eyes would light up at the sight of you.

Death shrouded the world as our friendship grew.
We spent long hours enjoying each other's company.
We would talk for hours about everything,
Yet we would never remember a single word.

I offered you an ear for your ideas.
You taught me there's more to life than we realize.
We sang songs together,
And opened new worlds of thought to each other.

The bright green leaves sprouted.
Our friendship watched us separate.
We talked over the miles
And visited each other when we could.

Now I wait to hear from you, as the world dies again.
I miss the sound of your voice,
That leather tunic,
The headband you always wear.

I feel our friendship has died.
I wait for it to be reborn.
Please, pick up the phone or pen.
Dammit, Chris, I miss you!

Lonely Tree

I am a lonely tree
Sitting where a forest once was.
There should be a family
Of trees here,
But they are mostly gone;
Those who live will
Be gone soon too.

There should be friends here
As well,
But they too have gone—
Off to other places
And other trees—
Other lives.

It seems no one
Wants to stay with me,
This lonely
Little tree.

STARES

People see my
long hair, wierd clothes

What's that "thing" around your neck?

And then I see the understanding; they
try to be nice, they
try to hide their cruel ways, they
try to act like
nothing's wrong.

But I see
the stares. Evil
Bad Wierd.
Why? The eyes
don't lie.

The stares penetrate my
heart, my
mind, my
soul.

They don't see the good
hands that help and love.

The stares won't stop.

Testimony

They want me
to call you father—
I cannot call you
what you have never been.
You never
loved me.
You were never
there for me.

They'll want to know
if I love you.
I can tell them I do
(unfortunately).
I want them to know
that I don't want
to love you.
You hurt me.

You know some
things about me:
Honors student, hard worker,
socially active, club member,
writer, speaker.
They told you these things.

But you don't know
the loneliness.
You don't see
the pain and tears.
You are safely distanced.
You don't see
the aspects of me
that those who
love me do know.

They want me
to call you father—
I can't call you
what you've never been.
I don't want to call you
anything.

Native American Dance Theater

*I see the colors
Whirling in bright circles
I see the beads,
The quills,
The feathers and leathers.
I feel the driving beat of the drums.*

My people.

*They leap and whirl around
On a stage.
The gray walls of the building close in.
Where is the grass?
Where is the wind?
Where are the sun and moon?*

They are not gone.

*The world still lives
In these people.
They see the beauty in the colors.
They remember the Mother
And honor her
In dance and song.*

That is good.

And You Were There

*I was born in the night time.
The world was cold from autumn's death.
The leaves were coloring the world.
The feel of winter was hitting the world into which I was
born.
And you were there.*

*As I grew into a child,
You walked with me,
Taught me to talk,
To write, to love;
You gave me the knowledge of living in a cold world.*

*I entered adolescence,
With its fears and hopes,
With its dreams and aspirations,
With its excitements and disappointments.
And you were there.*

*I walked into a college dorm,
Full of wonder,
Full of hopes and dreams,
Full of fear and uncertainty.
And you were there.*

*I'm about to enter life again.
I must go out on my own.
I have changed in many ways,
I see the world in new ways.
I see you standing there.*

*Your happiness at my progress encourages me.
I can go on,
I can survive.
I can face anything that life decided to throw at me.
Because you are there.*

*The world is changing,
And so are we.
Our lives may not follow the same path,
But I hope you will still be there.
You have always been there.*

I love you, Mother!

Autumn

*The days are growing shorter.
The light is not so bright;
The sun is dying.*

*Great Father,
Though you leave us by your death,
You give us, by the Mother,
The hope and the knowledge
That you will be born again.*

*The wind is growing sharper;
I see the leaves changing colour
And falling from the trees.*

*My friends,
You make me happy
To see your grace and beauty.
Even when you are barren of greenery,
I still love you.*

*I look around me.
The sky is gray.
The world is dying.*

*But I know that with each death
There is rebirth.
So I can see the autumn come,
I can see and feel death near me,
And I feel no fear.*

The Fortune

*Throw arms
around the birch tree.
Tree of life, of light.
A young woman
smiling, vitality, a
mature woman
bringing well-being.*

*A roebuck offers
spiritual guidance. A
sword cuts the
darkness, enlightenment
enters the
world, the
soul. The
old woman, now
young, breaks out
of the cave. A
baby cries, the
cry of new things, and
the world begins again.*

*Dissillusion, old life crumbling as
steps lead to the
underground cave,
old woman waiting,
staring into her cauldron
of knowledge. She smiles,
and life changes. A
horned man leaps
into the sky. Fear
mounts, then subsides.*

*Life,
Death
and
Oklahoma*

The Taste of Success

"The Taste of Success" is a nostalgia article I wrote about the Indiana High School Forensic Association Regional Tournament of my senior year of high school. That competition was a turning point in my life. I proved to myself that I have what it takes to succeed.

The Taste of Success

How good it feels to put everything into winning

It was about 12 degrees outside as we students gathered together in front of Kokomo High School-South Campus on that freezing Saturday morning. It was my senior year, and the qualifiers were going to the Indiana High School Forensic Association Regional Tournament in Logansport, Ind.

I stood next to my mom, trying to go over my speech and stay awake at the same time. I had qualified in two events, Poetry Reading and Oratorical Interpretation. Poetry Reading involves gathering a selection of poems and reading them, usually using introductory and transitional speeches in between to explain and introduce the pieces. Oratorical Interpretation, or O.I. for short, involved taking a speech someone else had given, memorizing that speech and presenting it. There are several events in Forensics, also known as Speech and Debate. I participated in practically every event in my four years of high school, but my senior year marked the first time I ever went to Regional competition in any event. I was proud to be double entered.

We had a good turnout for Regional that year, since 13 or 14 people from our 30-person team went. Several of us were double entered, and we had been practicing faithfully and diligently all week. There were four or five seniors going, and we seniors realized this would be our last chance to qualify for the State meet.

The bus finally arrived, and several students started boarding, while my mother, who was judging, another judge named Mrs. Schloterbeck and I got into the car. I rode with Mom because I didn't feel very welcomed by my fellow team members. Besides, I would be able to concentrate better in the car. I intended to practice all 30 or so miles to Logansport.

"This is going to be a long day," Mrs. Schloterbeck said.

"But a good one," my mother commented, smiling at me. "I can feel it."

"You're lucky to have a parent who believes in you," Mrs. Schloterbeck said to me.

I nodded and added, "And one who is so committed to her kids."

My mother had followed the marching band everywhere when my sister, Tonia, was in high school. Mom wasn't very happy when I quit band to join the speech team, but she dealt with it. When I asked her to judge one meet my freshman year, she agreed. Mom got hooked. Parents were requested to judge only one meet per year to help the team, since each team had to bring so many judges to each meet. Mom judged practically every meet for four years. Mrs. Stepp, one of the coaches, often referred to Mom as the team's "guardian angel."

We got to the school with about 20 minutes to spare. Mom, Mrs. Schloterbeck and I met the other students, who told us the coaches, Mrs. Stepp and Mrs. Richey, had gone to get our numbers and assignments. At the Sectional, Regional and State meets, known as the tournament events, students are given numbers in each event in which they are participating.

These numbers are their identification. Judges also get a number for identification.

Also at the tournament meets, there are two preliminary rounds in which everyone participates. Approximately six students are in each room of each round. These students are ranked first, second, third, fourth, etc. in order of best to worst performance. Places first through third are called ups and positions fourth through sixth are called downs. In situations where the number of students is odd, there is one more down than up; for example, when five people are competing, the first two places are ups and the other three are downs. Now, people who get two downs or lower placings are out of the competition. People with one down are in the competition until they get their second down.

We students stood around and drank orange juice or cola and nervously waited for our coaches to return. Some people talked and joked,, while others tried desperately to get in a last few moments of practice. I stood between the students and the judges, who always seemed to separate, and observed the building.

We were in the cafeteria, which had dark brown walls, and red and black carpet covered areas of the floor. Square and round tables filled the room. There were these round pillars placed in certain areas (I assumed they supported the high ceiling), and tables wrapped around the pillars. I remember going to a meet at this school and falling asleep on one of the wrap-around tables. I had thrown my coat over myself. Not knowing I was there, the team piled all their coats on top of me, and I woke up under this three foot high pile of coats.

The coaches returned quickly and gave out the numbers. We students and judges figured out where we were going and started disappearing to go to our rooms.

“Shannon!” my mother called, walking over to me just as I was about to bolt out of the cafeteria.

“What?” I asked, stopping and turning around.

“Good luck,” she said, hugging me. As she held me tight, she whispered, “I love you.”

“I love you, too,” I mumbled back, then smiled at her. “Thanks.” I took off up the stairs.

I went to my poetry room first for first round. I walked into the room and could feel the tension radiating off the three people sitting there. Get used to it, I thought and smiled at the other contestants as I sat down. They smiled back somewhat nervously; no one was willing to talk. The judges, three of them, came in and got themselves prepared. First round began with me, since I was double entered and had to leave to get to my other event. Things went smoothly, and I left to go to my O.I. round.

I wandered down the hall and turned the corner. I walked about halfway down the hall to the door of my O.I. room and heard clapping from inside. That signaled that the speaker was finished, and I could walk into the room. We had it pounded into us from freshman year that you NEVER walk into a room while someone is speaking or performing. To this day, I still cannot walk in on a speaker.

I walked in , told the judges my number and that I was doubling and sat down.

One of the judges called someone else’s number, and I settled down to enjoy the speaker’s performance. I participated in speech not just for the love of the competition. I really did enjoy

watching other speakers perform. It could be boring at times, but often a person would be such a good speaker that he or she would keep the audience captivated from beginning to end.

I performed next, and things went smoothly again. I held the audience in the palm of my hand as I talked about the need for more attention to be paid to students in school. After me, two other people spoke, and the round was over. When I went to second round, I decided to do my O.I. first. Switching the order in which I did my two events usually helped kill some of the monotony that could easily build. I breezed through my O.I. and headed to my poetry round.

I waited by the door for a minute, then heard clapping and went into the room. Again, I told my judges I was double entered and had just come from my other event. They smiled, and I sat back to enjoy the next reader.

He was a young man in a gray jacket and a pair of dark blue pants. His blond hair looked hairsprayed, and his green eyes had an intelligent look in them. He positively glowed with confidence.

He immediately started reading “The Jabberwocky” from Alice in Wonderland. I was entranced. He went on to introduce his topic, which I don’t remember, and read a parable of the first poem. He ended with “Macavity” by T. S. Eliot. I was amazed. He was a great reader who made his selections jump off the page and dance before your eyes. I felt sorry for the person who had to follow that act.

I was shocked to to hear my number called and looked down at my sheet. I was listed to go after him. I suddenly became very nervous, but I couldn’t understand why. I had done well all year with my selections and was sure of myself, until now.

I stood up and walked to the front of the room. We always stood in front of everyone to perform. I paused for a moment to try to calm myself and manage to sooth my nerves a little, then I opened my book.

I’m Nobody—who are you?

Are you Nobody too?

Then there’s a pair of us—

Shh! Don’t tell!

They’d banish us, you know.

I moved through that poem, “Nobody” by Emily Dickinson, easily, then closed my book. It was a rule to close the book during introduction and transitions. I looked to the audience to give my introduction and froze. My mind went blank and I panicked. NO! my mind screamed. After what seemed like centuries, but was only a few seconds, I rattled off something for an introduction and continued.

I stumbled through my next poem, which made me feel even worse. After what felt like eternity, I finally finished and sat down. I blew it. I knew I had. I wouldn’t have felt nearly as bad if I had seen some of the other people perform in my last round; I had no idea what the competition was. I basically ignored the rest of the readers for the round; I was too busy wallowing in my own misery.

When the round was over, I went to check the postings. I looked at the poetry first. I got a down in first round. I closed my eyes and forced the lump of defeat down my throat. I knew I had a down for my second round in poetry; I was already out of the running.

"How's it going?" I heard Mrs. Richey ask me.

"I got a down in first round poetry," I mumbled, trying to control the lump in my throat.

"Well, it's only one," she said. "How about second round?"

Tears welled up in my eyes as I said, "I blew it, Susan. I froze, locked up. I couldn't remember my intro."

She put her arms around me and hugged me. "It's OK. It happens. You worked hard and did your best first round, right?" I nodded. "Well, then, you've done well. I mean, you got here, didn't you?"

"I guess."

"Have you checked your posting for O.I. yet?" she asked, walking me toward the area where my other event was posted.

"No," I said. "Let's see the bad news."

Only the news wasn't bad. I got an up for first round. Life and my day started looking better. I smiled at Mrs. Richey.

"You may have lost your chance in poetry," she said, "you may not have. The judge might not have noticed. We'll see. But if you don't go any farther in poetry, put all your energy into your O.I. Do that, and you'll make it to State."

"You think so?" I asked hopefully.

"I know it," she smiled, then became serious. "Shannon, I have worked with you for three years in both speech and theater. I know you. There is nothing you can't do. You have the ability, the talent. If you set your mind to it, you can do anything you want."

"You sound like my mom," I said, smiling brightly.

"She is a wise woman," Susan said, then looked behind. "And here she comes. Remember what I said. I have to go get scores now. Good luck. Keep going." She smiled and walked into the office.

Mom came up to me and smiled. "I saw the postings. You're doing well."

"I think I blew it in poetry," I said, telling her about second round. I smiled. "Susan says there is hope, though. I've decided to give it my all in O.I. I WILL go to State."

"That's my girl," Mom said, hugging me tight.

Well, I got a down for second round poetry, so I was out of the competition. I did, however, get an up in O.I. and managed to do well in the next round. Before the end of the day, I saw my number posted for the final round.

"How do you think you'll do?" Asked Lynn, one of my team members. Lynn was competing in O.I., as well, but she had gotten two downs after the third round and was finished competing.

"I don't know about you," said Kris, this girl from another team who was also competing in the final round of O.I., "but I think I have a spot at State."

"Final round isn't over, yet, Kris," I said, turning to face her. "Don't be so sure. The six

best in our region are competing for four spots at State.”

“Well, I don’t think all of the six are the best,” she said and sauntered off.

Kris and I had been competing fiercely against each other in O.I. all year. We were intense rivals who would give anything to win. We never did get along before my senior year, and competing against each other made us despise each other even more. I wanted desperately to go to State; it was my last chance. But I also wanted desperately to beat her.

“I’m going to get her,” I growled.

“What are you going to do, rip her vocal chords out?” Lynn asked as Amy walked up to us.

“Who?” Amy asked.

“Kris,” Lynn told her.

“Oh, no,” I said, smiling evilly, “I won’t hurt her physically. I am going to get her pride and rub it in the dirt.” I turned to them. “I’m going to beat her. Whatever it takes. If I have to go out and find a witch to cast a spell on me, I will beat her.”

Lynn and Amy looked at each other and cringed. They knew I was serious.

Final round came, and I had several people in to watch me. Mom, Lynn, Susan and a few of the freshmen sat in a group around me. I sat and breathed deep, calling on everything I had in me. I knew what Susan said about me was true; I could do anything I set my mind to do. I knew I had a strong soul and more than enough power to be the best I had ever been. I was determined to do two things: qualify for State and beat Kris.

The judges called the first number, and the round began. The tension was much higher than it had been all day, but I felt somewhat calm and confident. There was no doubting this time; I would speak better than I ever had. Kris spoke before me, and I watched her like a hawk as she performed. She did well, but something seemed to be missing. She was too sure of herself; her energy level was down because she wasn’t trying as hard as I thought she would.

Another speaker performed, and then my number was called, I stood up, smiled at everyone in the room and saw my mother cross her fingers. Lynn gave me a “Go get ‘em” look, and I smiled at her as I walked up to the front of the room. I closed my eyes and mustered every ounce of my being. I was going to pull out everything in me and give 210 percent. I began, and the world closed as I spoke. All eyes were on me, and I spoke with a passion and feeling that surprised even me. I never knew I had that much energy and feeling. The nine minutes that it took to give my speech flew by me. I felt I could go on forever.

I finished, and the room shook with the applause. I smiled and nodded my head as I walked back to my seat. Lynn looked at me with awe, while Susan’s eyes glowed. She had told me my junior year that I hid from the world an incredible charisma that I only showed to a lucky few. That day I called on that charisma to perform in that final round, and Susan knew I used it to the utmost intensity. I looked at Mom and almost cried; I had never seen her that proud and would not see that much pride again until my graduations from both high school and college.

We left that room after the last speaker, who was very talented and strong, performed. Going back to the cafeteria, Lynn told Mrs. Schloterbeck, who joined us in the hallway, about my performance.

“She was so strong and great, I thought she was going to glow,” Lynn said, squeezing my arm. “You beat Kris, I know you did. I would be surprised if you didn’t get first place.”

“I don’t know about first,” I said, smiling. “That last girl was great. She has been all year, and the fire in her glows about as bright as it did in me.”

“But not as bright,” Mom said, putting an arm around me as we walked down the stairs into the cafeteria.

Awards were in about 30 minutes, so I ate some food; I was hungry and tired. I had given a lot of myself and felt drained. The 30 minutes dragged and we finally congregated in the auditorium for the verdict.

I didn’t think they would ever get to O.I. I cheered as two of our team members got alternate positions; if the qualifiers could not go to State, then the alternates went. One of our alternates did get to go, after all. I cheered Dawn on as she got third place in Original Oratory, a category where you perform a speech you wrote. Dawn was a sophomore, and I felt proud that she would be going to State.

“Will the finalists in Oratorical Interpretation please come to the stage,” the presenter said. The moment of truth had arrived. I smiled at my team and walked up to the stage.

Fifth and sixth places, the alternates, were named, and I still stood waiting for my name to be called. I glowed inside; I had accomplished one of my goals. I was going to State!

“Fourth place goes to Maconaquah’s Kris Van Zant,” the presenter called, and my team went crazy. I stood up taller and beamed. Goal number two had been accomplished.

I expected my name to be next and was surprised when I didn’t hear it. My eyes opened wide as I looked at my team, who started slapping each other on the back and yelling. Mom looked as if she was going to cry or pass out, but she couldn’t seem to decide which to do first.

“Second place goes to,” the presenter paused. Who? I wanted to scream. “Shannon Davis of Kokomo.”

I started laughing as I walked over to receive my ribbon and shake the man’s hand. My team was screaming so loud I would have been surprised if the entire town didn’t hear it. Mom and Susan were both crying, and Mrs. Schloterbeck and Mrs. Stepp were waving their fists in triumph in the air. I grinned broadly at them, then turned to go back to my place.

I looked at Kris, who smiled politely. I knew she would never let the people see her show anger. But a hatred burned deep inside her, and her eyes glowed with anger and a fierce hate. I smiled elfishly at her and walked back to my place in line. The presenter called the first place position; it was the girl who performed after me in the round. I felt she deserved first place.

It was over, Regional was over. And I was going to State. I walked back to my team members and was almost suffocated by the hugs and pats on the back. I held my mother, who was crying hysterically, and started crying myself. I did it! I had put my mind to fulfilling my dreams, and I did it.

A Wildcat from Kokomo: Portrait of an Average Man

"A Wildcat from Kokomo" is based on my respect for my grandfather, William Thomas Snow, who has lived an average, yet interesting, life. I plan to expand this story into a novel.

A Wildcat from Kokomo: Portrait of an Average Man

Average people live their average lives every day. But the average person can see many changes in the world. One average man is William T. Snow.

Born on November 1, 1921 to Clarence and Eva Snow in Kokomo, Ind., William, known as Bill when younger and as Tom when older, moved to Arkansas with his mother, father, and two sisters, Mary and Lova, when he was about four years old. Clarence, an itinerant preacher, built the church where he preached in Arkansas.

“Because we were preacher’s kids,” Tom said, “my sisters and I had to wear second-hand clothes. My dad only earned enough money preaching to get us food and keep a roof over our heads. We didn’t have luxuries like kids today do.”

His family helped earn extra money by picking cotton. In the fields, Tom met many people and made a few friends.

“I remember this little colored girl,” he said. “I can’t remember her name, but she used to take cotton out of her sack and put it in mine. She liked me because I was a little white boy from the North who sang gospel music.”

Tom’s singing often eased the workload of the other workers. He laughs often at the memories of working and singing.

“I’d be in the cotton field singing,” he said, “and the colored people would join in.” He laughed until tears rolled down his wrinkled face. “We’d have a hoe-down right there in the field.”

When his family moved back to Kokomo, Tom went to work at Baker’s Poultry on Union Street. He worked nights there through high school, and continued to work there while working days at A&P Grocery Store. Tom claimed he never really had time for leisure activities as a child.

“I was always working,” he said.

Tom also commented on the differences of courtship from his time and now. Unlike today, where people meet their spouses at shopping centers, school and bars, Tom met his wife, Lois, at church.

“My father told me to come down and see his new church in Kempton,” he remembers, “so I took the day off and went to my dad’s new church.”

At the church, the six-foot tall young man with high cheekbones and dark hair saw a group of five girls, the Coffman sisters, sitting in the front row. Among them was 15-year-old Lois; Tom said it was love at first sight. He went with his father a few days later to supper at the Coffman house.

“On the way home,” he said, “I told my dad, ‘I’ve seen the girl I’m gonna marry.’ And she was just 15. I was 19.”

He courted her for a year before his father married them on September 27, 1941. Tom specifically remembered one date during their courtship.

“I was chasing her around the house and she ran out the back door. I ran outside and ran into the clothesline,” he said, laughing. “It caught me right at the neck and knocked me cold.

“Now I had always told her I was a Snow. But I was the type that didn’t fall down,” he

continued, smiling. "When I fell, she came up to me, laughing. She stood over me and said, 'I thought you was the type of Snow that didn't fall down.' I knew right then that she was the kind of woman who would always have the right answers."

Shortly after their marriage, Tom went to war and joined the 11th Air Borne.

"I think my hair turned white during the war," he said, rubbing his crew-cut, shocking white hair. "I don't know how it happened, but it's been white since I was in my 20s."

He fought until the war was over and returned to his wife and son, Thomas Wayne. Tom had an almost dangerous experience with the racism that existed in this country.

"When I came home, things were still different than in recent wars," he said. "Racism was still big. I remember getting off the train in Indianapolis and meeting my son for the first time. He was a beautiful boy. But I barely knew him a few minutes when he got me in trouble. A colored man walked past us, and Tom, who was only about three years old, pointed at the man and said, 'Look, Daddy, that's little black Sambo.' I thought the man was going to beat me up. I had some fast talking to do to the man and a lot of explaining to do to my son."

Tom went to work at Delco for the next 34 years. He even has his picture in a museum as the first person to be put on a computer for crystal growing at Delco; some of those crystals went into the cars that run on the moon. During his time at Delco, Tom's two other children, Daniel William and Lois Marlene, were born and raised. He also saw the birth of his five grandchildren, William Daniel, Christopher Wayne, Tonia Marlene, Matthew Todd and Shannon Marie.

In the late 1940s, Tom, with the help of his cousin Johnny Norris, built the Super Motel. Tom got full claim to the motel, which he renamed Snow and Sons motel.

Tom retired from Delco and again pursued his talent in singing, which had been an important part of his life as a child, by singing in nursing homes. He enjoyed all five years of singing gospel music to the residents.

"I never liked that jazzy stuff," he said about music. "I always liked to sing gospel music. It was great to sing to those people in the homes and brighten their day. I had to stop after my mom died, though. I couldn't take it."

Tom went to work at Target for seven years before going to Village Pantry, where he worked until he had his stroke in 1989. He now lives with his wife of 52 years and dog Hershey in Kokomo. He said it was weird to not be working; he had worked all his life. But he saw four wars pass, several generations change, and the old ways begin to die.

"I look at my grandkids and see the changes of the times," he said. "They are strong, healthy. They have jobs and money, but they are more independent. At least they are happy."

To Those Left Behind

'To Those Left Behind' was written as therapy. I was very disturbed when my cousin killed himself this past summer. Expressing my reaction helped me work through the pain and sorrow I felt.

To Those Left Behind

Having a loved one die from suicide is painful, but no one is to blame

I never expected to receive that terrible message from my sister, Tonia, on that Thursday, especially when I was driving home from school. I commuted every day to Ball State University in Muncie from Kokomo, Ind. for summer school. That Thursday was warm and humid, but not as warm and humid as it had been all week. This made driving home in my non-air conditioned, black leather interior car much more bearable than it had been since the hot weather had begun about two weeks before.

I was looking forward to spending the evening at the public library or Highland Park writing my two articles that were due the next day. I was also looking forward to the weekend; I was going to a medieval event to camp, relax and enjoy myself. I was also going to try to get away so I could think of some topics on which to write a couple of articles. I couldn't wait.

I got home just in time to get to the Chamber of Commerce and pick up some information that they had prepared for me. I decided not to go to the library immediately; something told me to go home. So, I headed home to call my mother, who was working. She was going to meet me at the library, so I had to let her know I wouldn't be there.

I walked into the house and patted the cat's head. Callie, my long-haired calico cat, had met me at the door and was meowing a greeting.

"Hello, baby," I said to her as I set my stuff down and hit the answering machine button. There were two messages. "Let's see who called."

The first message was silent. I figured someone called and got confused by my brother-in-law's voice, which is on the machine of an all-female household. It happens all the time.

The machine beeped, and I heard my sister's voice saying, "Shannon, Grandma Davis called my machine and told me one of J. C.'s sons killed himself this morning. She sounded really upset. She wants you or Mom to call her as soon as possible. Bye."

I was confused. Grandma Davis called my sister? Why? Since my sister was about 15 years old, she hasn't spoken to anyone on the Davis side of the family. My parents are divorced, and my sister lived with my mother, while my father, Eddie Davis, went on to create a new life on the other side of town. I still live with Mom and communicate with a very few members of the Davis family. I thought, Oh, Grandmother must have called here and got confused by hearing Shaun's voice on the machine.

Having figured out that Grandmother must have been the first message on the machine, I went on to my next question, "Which one of J. C.'s sons?" I knew he had three. I shrugged my shoulders and picked up the phone to call Mom.

"Reliable Drugs South. This is Ron. How may I help you?" a male voice answered. It

was the store manager.

"Hi, Ron, is Marlene there?" I asked.

"Let me check," he asked someone in the store. "She just left, Shannon."

"Oops," I said, cringing. "I hope she isn't heading to the library to meet me. I'm not there."

"Are you at home?"

"Yeah."

"Well," he said, "I suggest you call the library."

"I'm gonna do that soon. Thanks, bye." I hung up the phone and decided to wait about 15 minutes before calling the library. I figured I'd give my mom time to get there.

Two minutes later Mom pulled up and came into the house. She had a shocked look on her face.

"You're not at the library," she said as she walked in the door.

"I decided to eat and go over there later," I answered. "Mom, there was a message from Tonia about Grandmother Davis."

Wait a minute," she held out her hand to silence me. "Let me tell you a story. I was at the cash register when this young man came up and wanted a bottle of booze. I checked his I. D.; he was 21. But he looked upset. I don't remember what he looked like, but he seemed very upset.

"Anyway, you know how I chat with the customers?" Yes, I did. Mom will talk to anyone who offers a willing ear. "Well," she continued, "I asked him if he was OK.

'No,' he said. 'My friend committed suicide today.'

'Oh, that's terrible. What was his name.' I asked.

'His last name was Davis.'

'No way,' I answered. 'What was his first name.'

'Matt.' the fellow told me."

I knew that name, Matt Davis. He was my cousin. He must have been the one who died. What a way for Mom to find out.

Mom continued. "'Did he have a brother named Greg?' I asked.

"'Yeah.'

'Did he have a brother named Brian?'

'Yeah.' His voice was really shaky. I took a deep breath and asked him, 'Was his mother's name Alberta?'

'Yeah,' he answered. 'Did you know him?'

'Well, yes, sort of,' I answered. 'I'm his aunt.'

'Oh, shit,' the young man said, and we both nearly passed out. I had trouble working the rest of the day." Mom stared at me. "That's how I found out."

"Oh, Mom," I said, hugging her. "That's what Grandmother called Tonia about."

"Why Tonia?"

"She probably got confused by Shaun's voice on the machine. Tonia said she

sounded upset.”

“Well, call her and see if she is home.”

I called, but no one answered. We figured my grandparents were outside and couldn't hear the phone, so Mom and I went to the north end of town to see them. Grandmother and Grandfather weren't home, so we left a note and went to get something to eat. When we got home there was a message from Grandmother on the machine. I called her back.

She sounded so sad when she answered the phone. It cut deep into my heart to hear her. I had been doing pretty well about the situation until I called Grandmother.

“Grandmother,” I said, “it's Shannon.” She has an incredible number of grandchildren, so I usually identify myself when I call.

“Did you get my message?”

“Yes, what happened?”

“Well,” she said, taking a deep breath, “they found Matt at work this morning. He and Greg both work at this vending company. He shot himself in the head.”

“Oh,” I said, somewhat disgusted, but sad. What a way to go. “Who found him?”

“Greg,” she answered. “Apparently Matt had broken up with this girl a few months before and was trying to get her to go back with him, but she wouldn't. He was on the phone with her when he did it.”

“Oh, man,” I said. “How is she? I'd imagine she was really upset.”

“Yeah, her friends are taking care of her right now,” Grandmother answered. “I guess he had been talking about it and threatening it for years. You know how some people do that. We thought he was just trying to get attention. But Greg would usually talk him out of it.”

My heart went out to Matt as my grandmother said those words. I suddenly realized how misunderstood that man was. People who threaten suicide for years are not looking for attention; they're crying out for help. Matt's own family couldn't even see that, but most people don't before it's too late. I started to get a lump in my throat as those thoughts raced through my head.

“Grandmother,” I said, trying desperately to control my voice, “how old was he?”

“I think he was about 22.”

He was only a few months older than me. “Do you have Alberta's number? Mom wants to talk to her,” I said.

“Honey,” she answered, “Alberta was at Greg's when we left his place. I don't know if she has gone home yet. Do you want both numbers?”

“Yes, please,” I said softly.

“Hold on, I'll get those numbers.” I heard her put down the phone. I let myself cry for a few moments to help gain control. Matt, I thought sadly, why didn't anyone hear your call for help? Why don't they understand? Why didn't I know you better?

Grandmother returned and gave me the numbers. I thanked her and hung up the phone. I told Mom the phone was free and went upstairs. I took my homework with me, but

I had the feeling I would not get any writing done.

I went upstairs and took a white candle into Mom's bedroom. I lit the candle and sat down in front of it to think. I tried to picture my cousin, but I had only met him a few times before and couldn't remember what he looked like. I couldn't even see his face.

I realized that I didn't know this man whose death caused me so much grief. It hurt me even more to realize that now I would never know him. I had lost the ties to yet another family member. Many people have died in my family, and I have barely known most of them. I cried for what I had lost, and for what I would never have. It hurt so badly.

"Mother of all," I prayed, staring at the candle. "This man hurt, and no one understood. He took his own life. I don't know how you feel about that, but I beg you, please love him. That's what he needed in this world, and that's what he felt he never got. Please love him. Just love him."

I kept repeating "Love him" over and over again until I was crying so hard that I couldn't say anything. Callie came into the room and crawled into my lap. I held her and cried into her coat.

I went ahead and tried to get on with my daily life. I went to school and to work the next day, but it was difficult. I got an extension on my articles; I just couldn't concentrate. I kept thinking over and over, he wanted love; he wanted someone to understand. If only I had known him. I might not have helped, but I could have been the one person who would have helped him see just how great life was. I felt some guilt, but mostly remorse.

I went to the event and ran into a couple of friends of mine. I discovered that they knew my cousin. I was surprised.

"He was always saying, 'Man, you got a gun?' to all of us," Sean told me when we went to town to run an errand. "We thought he was joking."

Not even his friends saw what was happening. People don't usually joke about killing themselves for long periods of time. Suicide is not funny. I know how it feels to think that life isn't worth living. I also know now how important life is, and that youth is the best thing around.

One of my friends at the event, James, went to the viewing; I was already there. The viewing and funeral were at Eller's Mortuary on Webster Street. It was the new location, and the building still had a feeling of newness to it. I walked into the funeral home thinking, Oh, please, don't let it be an open casket. It was, but he looked presentable.

As I looked down at his form, I memorized his features. He was not very tall, about 5'9" with longish, light brown hair and a mustache. I still don't know the color of his eyes. His features were sharp and chiseled; you could see he had his grandmother's Cherokee cheekbones. His chin was round, like most of the Davis family, and he was thin. Now I knew what he looked like. It took death for me to see my cousin again, and now I will have the last memory of him being in a white, satin-lined coffin.

I placed my hand on the satin and sent a silent plea to the Mother; it was an act of instinct that felt appropriate. I then turned to see an older man standing not far behind me.

I didn't recognize him, but I saw him trembling almost violently.

"Are you all right?" I asked him, walking to him.

"Yes," he answered, looking at his hands. "I shake really bad when I am nervous. I'm Alberta's new husband."

I shook his hand and asked him again if he was OK. He said yes, and I wandered off to find my grandmother. The walls of the home were stark white, and the furniture was of dark mulberry and country blue colors. I found my grandmother in the hallway, but I was intercepted by my father before I could get to her.

I talked to Ed for a few minutes, while looking in my grandmother's direction. Ed wandered off as I started talking to my Aunt Gishla and Uncle Dick. They asked me about school and Tonia and Mom, but I noticed they carefully avoided talking about Matt. This disturbed me. I have been to funerals since I was six years old, but those funerals have always been for older people. There, folks had talked about the deceased at length. They discussed the career, family, even the death of the person lying in the coffin. But nobody really talked about Matt, except his friends. In fact, I got the impression that his friends were the only ones who were grieving; the family just stood around and compared lives. Perhaps the family had already expressed their grief; I don't know. I wonder now if they weren't all still in shock.

The only time I really heard anyone talk about Matt was when James came into the room later and looked at Matt. James had never been to a funeral or viewing in his life, and he was taken aback by what he saw.

"He doesn't look dead," James said after he sat down and looked at me. His eyes brimmed with tears. "He just looks like he's sleeping."

"They usually do, James," I said, putting my arms around him. A woman came up to us and asked James if he was OK. He said he was.

I found out the woman was Sean's mother; she was also the ex-girlfriend Matt was talking to when he shot himself. I wasn't surprised that she kept breaking down.

As she, James and I left the building, I asked her if she was all right.

"Yes," she said, then looked at me as if for the first time. "I know you're a friend of James and Sean, but how did you know Matt?"

"I was his cousin."

"Oh," she whispered and edged away from me, as if my being family was a sign that I should blame her. I grabbed her and hugged her.

"I don't blame you," I said as she burst into tears. "Matt lived through his parents' divorce and had a family who didn't see his suffering. They didn't know how much he hurt. I don't know, maybe not all of them were blind. But Matt had everything going for him. He had a job, a life of his own, his youth, yet he couldn't see those things as blessings. He didn't realize how important life really is. He was hurting and suffering and lost and confused."

And he was only 22.

I've thought about Matt since the summer. I don't know if I blame anyone for his death, though I might have sounded like it in this article. Suicide is no one's fault; people have many reasons for taking their own lives. I didn't know Matt's reasons; I still don't know. I probably never will.

But I have tried to become more aware of my surroundings. I keep a close eye on my friends and family, and I keep my ears open to catch the signs of a suicidal person. Those signs aren't easy to see or hear, but I'm not going to ignore them anymore when I see them. I don't want to see another loved one die by his or her own hand.

Medieval clothing gains varied responses

Having to write a column for my feature writing class, I chose for inspiration the Society for Creative Anachronisms. Columns tend to have a touch of wit in them, and what better way to be witty than to write about dressing up in medieval clothing and wearing it into public?

This article was revised this semester. It will be published in the January/February 1993/94 issue of "The Revenge of the Occasional Debauch: The Newsletter of the Shire of Afonlyn."

Medieval clothing gains varied responses

I love walking into a public store wearing a Celtic tunic over a long T-shirt style chemise, or walking into a restaurant dressed in a low-cut chemise, a long, full skirt and a tight bodice.

No, I'm not some crazy psycho who has delusions of grandeur; OK, maybe I am. But I am a member of the Society for Creative Anachronisms (SCA), a non-profit organization that reenacts the Middle Ages and Renaissance for educational purposes. We dress up in medieval clothing and pretend we live in the Middle Ages. The SCA involves fighting (we use rattan sticks, not real swords), dancing, flirting, herbal gardening, storytelling, music, calligraphy and merchanting, just to name a few things.

Walking into a public place while dressed in garb (medieval clothing) usually causes one of four reactions. Some people will look at me and stare in wonder like a child. You'd think they had never seen Anglo-Saxon clothing before. Jeez! Other people will look at me and look away. I can almost hear them thinking, "I didn't see anything weird. I didn't see someone walk in here in funny clothing." Still other people will pretend that there is absolutely, positively NOTHING out of the ordinary about my clothing. But the people who really get me are the fourth group, the ones who ask the questions.

The questions tend to vary from sincerity to mockery, but I want to stress some more common and some interesting questions.

I was asked the most common question recently in a grocery store in Oxford, Ohio. Two of my friends and I went in to buy food for our evening meal, and we were stopped by a woman handing out samples of sausages.

"Are you gals in a play?" the woman asked, and my friends and I looked at each other with that "Oh, no, not THAT question again" look. We set the woman straight and went on our merry way.

Usually I just tell these people that I am not in a play, but I did say "Yes" once. When the person looked my full Celtic outfit, complete with two tunics, a leather belt and an empty blade sheath (live steel is not allowed in most public places) and asked which play, I told him "Oklahoma."

I was asked the other common question while standing by the elevators that led to my dormitory. A male friend dressed in full Scottish garb (yes, he was wearing a kilt) was saying good night to me (I was wearing a 14th century Italian court dress). A neighbor of mine came out of the elevator and looked at us weird. She greeted me and asked, "Are you going to a costume party?" In March? I don't think so. This question is more appropriately asked around Halloween.

One interesting question was asked of my cousin a couple of years ago. Well, the person actually asked my cousin's stepmother. Myra and Libby were coming home from Pennsic War, a big medieval event held every year in Pennsylvania. Myra had worked at the event up until the time they left, so she was still in garb. She wore a long black t-tunic and an open surcoat, which is a T-tunic-

style garment with no sleeves that fits over a T-tunic. She also wore a black veil in her hair.

They were standing there waiting to get food when this woman walked up to Libby and, pointing to Myra, asked, "Is she Indian?"

Now Libby thought this was a ridiculous question, so, mustering all the sarcasm her mind and mouth could hold, answered, "No, she's a Buddhist nun."

"Oh," the woman replied, smiling, "I've heard of those." There's always one in every crowd.

I like being questioned about my clothing when I'm in garb. People showing interest in my appearance makes me feel there is the hope of interest in the old ways. The questions sometimes make me laugh, especially when they are ridiculous. But the one question that took me by surprise happened when I went into a leather store. I wasn't dressed in garb, but I mentioned I belonged in the SCA and wanted to buy some leather for clothing and possibly some armor.

"SCA, eh?" the man said, then brightened. "Oh, you're in that group that dresses up in armor and beats each other with sticks, right?"

How'd he know?

The Paul Winter Articles

The articles on Paul Winter are two more of my published pieces. The third is "Paintbrushes and Beasts" in the poetry section.

No matter how hard editors and writers try, typos slip past them and end up on the printed page. Such is the case with these two articles. Neither the editor of the Ball State Daily News nor I realized saxophone is spelled with an "o" and not an "a." Luckily, Pat Mills caught it. Unfortunately, she didn't see the article before it was printed.

Saxaphonist gives music voice of earth

By SHANNON DAVIS
Staff Reporter

The jazzy sounds of a saxophone will blend with the sounds of wolves howling and whales singing in an environmental program this week.

Saxaphonist and founder of Living Music Records, Paul Winter, will be lecturing and playing Thursday as part of the Provost's lecture series. The series is based on increasing students' awareness of the environment, according to Jean Amman, assistant to the Provost.

CONCERT

"It's a combination of lecture and music," Amman said. "It's full of whole earth sounds. Paul includes folk, ethnic, and classical music along with the 'voices of the natural world.'"

In 1967, Winter formed the Paul Winter Consort to broaden his musical spectrum. Hearing a recording of humpbacked

whales, Winter said, showed him one aspect of the musical ecosystem in the consort. He used the recordings of nature sounds and added other forms of music to them.

"I want to awaken the awareness of beauty in people," Winter said. "I want them to see beauty in nature and life."

In 1971, astronauts on the Apollo XV mission took Winter's album 'Road' with them; they named two of the moon's craters 'Icarus' and 'Ghost Beads,' which were two of the songs from Winter's album.

Winter has won many awards from many organizations, including the United Nations and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, for his music and style.

"I'd like to offer people some kind of adventure and experiences that might be new for them," Winter said.

The lecture will be held at Emens Auditorium at 8 p.m. on Thursday, October 8. Admission is free, and T-shirts and tapes will be on sale before and after the lecture. A reception will be held downstairs afterwards.

October 7, 1982
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P. 5

Ball State Daily News P. 3 October 10, 1992

Winter harmonizes nature, music

By SHANNON DAVIS
Staff Reporter

Rain is not the greatest weather in which to attend a lecture. But, in spite of the storm night, people gathered at Emens auditorium to hear the sounds of the earth mixed with the jazzy strains of a lone soprano saxophone.

Paul Winter gave his lecture "Earth Talk, Earth Music" to students and faculty Thursday evening. He played the sax to the accompaniment of whale songs, wolf howls, bird calls and the Paul Winter Consort.

Winter admitted being in nature made him want to communicate with it musically. He did this in an interesting way during the song "River Run," where the music had the rolling feel of a river. Winter and his Consort accomplished their goal in musically recreating the feel of the Colorado River, where the song was recorded.

Winter also successfully mixed the animal sounds with his sax when he performed the songs "Sea Wolf" and

REVIEW

"Wolf Eyes." The first song incorporated the sounds of killer whales. Winter actually had the chance to record in the water beside the whales when he visited his friend Dr. Paul Swong at his research station 200 miles north of Vancouver, British Columbia.

"To be there is absolutely breathtaking," Winter said.

"Sea Wolf" was a sad, yet hopeful, song that beautifully combined the sax and the whale song. It was interesting how the saxophone replicated the whale song almost exactly.

In his introduction to the song "Wolf Eyes," Winter showed deep respect for the wolf in his explanation of both the song and how he came up with the idea of mixing nature sounds and music.

The first time Winter played his saxophone to animals was to a couple of captive timber wolves in 1967. Winter said

that when he looked into the eyes of one of the wolves, "it was as though I had been reconnected with the earth through these animals." He also admitted to wanting more of that feeling, so he formed the Consort and began travelling the earth in search of sounds.

Winter also talked about the instincts that are in all creatures of the earth, including humans. He spoke of how humans could learn from the animals about the instinct that "is still there in us, despite our technology and industry."

Winter talked of upcoming projects in Africa, Brazil and Siberia and how he felt about the effect of technology on music today. He said people are always looking toward new ideas and technology, but the basic instincts are still in everyone; his music blends these two ideas.

Believing that music performances "should begin and end with music," Winter played a final piece without technology; it was just him and the saxophone.