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Legacy 1995

The Future's Past

This collection is our legacy—what the past taught us, what the present is to us, what the future will understand us to have been.

Tanya Cochran
Legacy Editor

Special thanks to the *Legacy* Contest judges:

Angie Green, Lee College Professor
Dr. Ruth Kantzer, Bryan College Professor
Dr. Jan Haluska, Southern College Professor
Debbie Higgins, Southern College Professor
Jeff Lemon, WSMC Development Director
Steve Gensolin, Writer's Club President


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Prose

Farewell to the Bay of Islands

by

Laura Dukeshire

I get out of my car and walk across the pavement to the chain link fence. Carefully bending the metal edges, I squeeze through the small opening that has been here ever since I can remember. Free of the rusty netting, I climb up and over the flat rocks until I stand near the edge of the mountain watching the dawn break over the bay. A breeze rustles the stunted trees. I can feel the sting of sulfur from the paper mill on my

face and taste the ocean salt on my lips.

The sunbeams gently finger ripples on the water and squint through



evergreen needles on the surrounding mountains. Seagulls scream as they swoop over my head. Instead of heading for the bay, they land on the rooftop of the Mary Brown's Chicken outlet. They're a little early. The place doesn't open until noon. The tide is rolling in. I can tell by the rhythmic sounds of the pulpwood logs knocking together.

I gaze further down the coastline and see the boarded up fish plant. It looks like somebody spray-painted it last night. There was a letter from an angry woman in the paper this morning. She's upset because the fish plant is not going to open this year. It's not going to open for many years. The fish plant has been her living for over 30 years now, and she wants to know why it's shut down—there's lots of fish in the bay, there always has been. She's ashamed to go on welfare, but the government's closing all the plant down—she knows there's fish.

I gaze back down at the bay. For over four hundred years, Newfoundlanders have gathered their livings out of the water. I take a deep breath, drawing in the choking stench of sulfur. Something is missing. I kneel and lean over the flat rock and look down at the beach, just to make sure. There is only seaweed and an occasional piece of driftwood. No fish. It used to be that when the tide came in and went out, hundreds of fish would be abandoned in the grooves of the wharves and behind the rock fence on the beach. Today there are none. It has been several years since I have smelled that pungent odor of rotting fish that declares the surplus of the bountiful bay. Spending freely, expelling the living, the sea assured us that all was well. But now the nets are coming up empty. We took her generosity at her word, but now she withholds her wealth like a miser. Or maybe she does not have anymore to give.

I watch an old man on one of the wharfs cast his rod expertly into the water. He, like the angry woman, does not believe the government when it says that the water is empty. For me, one glance at the empty fish-drying racks on the beach and another at the boarded up fish plant is enough. But even if this wasn't enough, the recent store and school closings would convince me that



Donna Garza

something was wrong.

I gaze for one last time into the empty, crystalline eyes of the bay and then turn around and go back to my car. I have to help Mom pack some more today. Since the fishery has been closed down, prices have gone up—a lot. Another new announcement this morning said that prices will rise again sharply in the fall. Dad's teacher's salary just doesn't cut it. I fasten my seatbelt, and with one last glance, wave goodbye to the Bay of Islands.

Lucky Day

by

Scott Walker

It was one of those little greasy-spoon diners you see along every highway in America, a brick building with a sign painted on the window that read "Joe's Cafe" in worn and chipped letters.

Outside, in the gravel-covered parking lot, sat a lone, dusty blue pick-up, its body eaten with rust. A rag was stuffed in place of the long lost gas cap, and a long crack ran across the rear window.

Inside, the walls were painted white, yellowed by time. Faded prints of western scenes, sun, hung all around. A pair of steer horns, mounted on a plaque, graced the space above the



cash register. The ceiling was stained from years of grease and smoke.

Over the grill bent a large man. His arms, covered with tattoos, looked like painted hams. A roll of fat hung over his belt. He was dressed in a grungy white t-shirt. He chewed on the butt of a cigar. Near the chef stood his waitresses, decked out in faded pink uniforms, waiting for the next heavy-tipping tycoon to arrive.

The air was filled with the smell of greasy burgers and Pinesol. The sounds of an old Hank Williams tune drifted across the room from the battered jukebox in the corner.

Bob sat on the hard, red seat of the restaurant's booth, nursing a bottomless cup of coffee. He stared out at the road. He followed the black ribbon with his eyes until it disappeared into nothing within the rolling, jade foliage of the mountains, raising like some sort of impenetrable barrier. A car

flashed by and broke the spell the road had on him. His gaze returned to the stained mug and the brown puddle inside. With one gulp, he drained the remaining contents of the mug and began to fish around for the pack of Camels in the breast pocket of his worn, washed-out work shirt.

“Would you like some more coffee, Hon?” asked the waitress, chewing her gum like cud.

Slightly startled, he glanced up at the waitress and looked into the powder-white face splashed with blotches of crimson. Her eyes were painted like those of an Egyptian princess, lips decorated in a shade of just-too-bright red. He gave her a vacant, half-hearted smile.

“Sure,” he mumbled and placed the cigarette in his lips. She once again filled his cup, then retreated across the dining room.

He lit the cigarette, took a long drag, and

opened his newspaper. He began to shift hopelessly through the want-ads.

“Hey, Bob, you still looking for work?”

A grizzled man slid into the seat opposite him. He was slightly bald on top, and his face was wrinkled from years of outdoor labor. He grinned, and the light caught the gold teeth that punctuated his smile. Bob did not even glance up.

“Yep, same as always. Not much work for a drop-out cripple.”

The newcomer’s eyes fell to the



pair of shabby aluminum crutches laying at Bob's side and then to the emptiness that at one time had been his left leg.

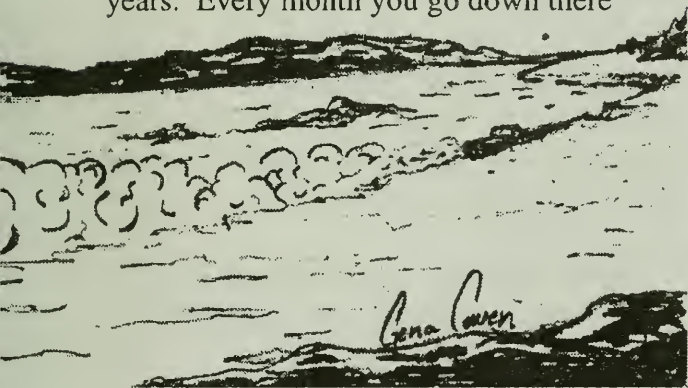
"Well, how's the wife and young-uns?"

"Left with the kids pretty near a couple weeks back. Said she'd come back when I could support 'em."

"Gee, I'm sorry, Bob. I didn't know."

"It's all right. I'm going to the track today. This time I gotta feeling my horse'll come in."

"Yeah, Bob. You been saying that for years. Every month you go down there



and blow your whole check. Why don't you just put it in a bank or somethin'? No wonder your wife took off."

"This time it's different. I got this feeling, see? I'll be a rich man. Then she'll come back."

"Whatever, Bob. I gotta go. See you later."

"See ya."

The old man paid his bill, then was on his way. Bob mounted his crutches and headed for the door.

"Hey Bob, what about the check?"

"Can you put it on my tab?"

"Bob, you haven't paid in months."

"I know. But today's my lucky day. I'm going to pick up my check, then going to the track. I'm gonna win. You'll see. I can pay you tomorrow."

"Okay, but this is the last time. Got it?"

"Thanks, I got it. See you tomorrow."

"Yeah, Bob. Tomorrow."

Bob waved, then headed falteringly out to his truck. He started the vehicle, then headed into town. He made his way towards the post office to get his disability check, and then to the track, just like always. Today was different, like always. Just another lucky day.

The Loud House

by

Cherie Priest

Back in the woods all the trees wore thick snow wigs, and not even the tallest blade of grass poked through the cold, white carpet. My boots left deep, hollow footprints winding between the trees. I trudged along, grimly thinking there was nothing for a frigid white mile; it wasn't the first time I'd been wrong. A wall materialized ahead.

Something struck the building beside my face, and I swerved around. Naked, bony trees were throwing snowballs with thin, twiggy fingers. One of them cleverly aimed a crusty wad of ice and smacked me in the eyes. I cursed them all and blindly dragged one hand along the paneling until I found the porch.

The boards creaked heartily beneath my feet. Frozen wind whipped at my wounded eyes, and I struggled to see. My groping

fingers found the brass doorknob and promptly froze to it. The cold sphere swiveled freely, but the wooden door was swollen, and it took the last of my strength and a layer of skin to shove it open.

I fell inside, the wind complaining behind me. Somewhere between the sudden quiet and the raging noise, my thickly bundled body thudded to the floor.

The door slammed itself shut. My face and ears ached; there was no more brittle wind to keep them pleasantly numb. I rolled onto my back to dizzily sleep and casually watch the room spin.

A song tiptoed around in the silence of my head. It played soft and metallic, not so far away. My ears sought the source, and my blurry eyes followed. By the time I'd crawled to my feet the song had ended, and only the rhythmic tick of the clock in the hall pecked at my ears. It sounded strange to me: too low and hollow. Maybe the

room was simply too empty. Perhaps I was too alone.

The thought had no sooner evaporated then I saw suspiciously slitted eyes scowling from the corner's shadow. Their owner meowed. I smiled at the cat and called to it, but with a quick darting lurch it was gone. Where it disappeared to I couldn't have imagined. That enormous house was nearly empty.

My head wanted to spin some more, so with weary eyes and legs, I searched for a seat. Crouched against the wall was an old piano with a plush, dusty bench that would work nicely. I collapsed and stared blankly. A stack of yellowed papers stared back with hundreds of little black eyes. I blinked, and the eyes became notes.

Under the cover, the keys were intact. They studied me with wide, curious pupils, silently daring. "I'm not very good at this," I warned. With two uncoordinated fingers, I

tapped an unusual tune. The words were written between the musical bars.

'This Loud House,' the title read.

'Once were four who kept this land,
This house, and all within,
Their lives were full, they all were rich,
But here's what happened then:

'The first to go was Mary Anne,
Her beauty was renowned,
She courted men of every sort,
She died without a sound.

'One lover gave her pretty clothes,
And fancy, shiny things,
Like the silver music box
Whose ballerina sings.

'When she rejected that young man,
He didn't take it well,
Her body's gone and buried now,
But where, he'll never tell.

'The next in line was Peter Dean,
A quiet, gentle man,
Who never said a single word
That we could understand.

'His only words were to the clocks
He tended night and day.
We think he spoke in ticks and chimes,
Or had no words to say.

'We found him in the hall one day,
All bloody, mangled, dead;
The big Grandfather struck thirteen
And fell upon his head.

'And now to tell of Esther Sue,
Who catered to the cats,
Who slept all day and prowled at night
For unsuspecting rats.

'She cuddled kittens constantly
And listened to them purr,
She gave them toys and cream and milk,
And watched them lick their fur.



'They curled up all together
In a sunny, lazy place,
Till one great heavy, furry brute
Slept soundly on her face.

'My name is not important,
But I was the last one here.
I watched them come and go in turn,
Without a single tear.

'I write their songs and play their tunes,
And now I add my verse—
To all the dismal noises here,
I add another curse!

'I command my own sweet sounds,
Within my own sweet way,
I doom you now, my ivory friends,
Forever more to play!'

I stopped.

The note died beneath my fingertips. I
stood up and pushed the seat back. I stepped

away, staring at the keys. Something breathed on my neck, and I whirled around. The murderous Grandfather Clock smiled wickedly. My eyes locked, stupidly searching the clock's round face. It ticked loudly and maliciously.

“Some Enchanted Evening . . .” no words, but tinny faint chords. It tinkled through the hall and bounded off the walls in my head. The clock, the box, the cat hissing in the corner . . . only the piano was left. The keys trembled ominously.

Terror whipped my feet into motion, and I ran mindlessly out the door into the snow. Five feet of the dense white stuff couldn't have kept me there, and all four winds could not have dragged me back.

Two men found me lying in the snow. They wrapped me in blankets to carry me away. One of them lifted his head and smiled. “Funny, isn't it?” he asked, shaking his head and climbing into the truck.

“What do you mean?”

“You know,” he said, “the noise the wind makes when it drags through the trees, like someone’s playing an old piano.”

Something mad and dark crawled along my spine. I craned my neck, straining to see the forest as the truck pulled away. The trees swayed back and forth, waltzing along the side of the road. I leaned against the warm vinyl and sighed desperately, wishing that I’d thought to shut the door.

The Duet of the Swallow and Bat

by

Jonathan Hickok

At dusk the worlds of day and night are mixed in the twilight, for here the bat and the swallow meet to perform their duet. Each is a master dancer—the swallow gracefully climbing and diving, catching and eating as the sun rules the day, the bat executing its fluid maneuvers in the dim lights of stars, sweeping low, cutting close. They dance, not to delight a chance observer, but to live.

They must earn their supper, their life. Each must catch two or three times its own weight in food so that it can live to dance again. From early morning until evening, the small, sparrow-sized swallow darts to and fro. Come the red shades of dusk, the swallow bows, skimming a lake for water, leaving a v-shaped wake. The first act of the ballet is closing, and as the sunset turns the

midnight blue of the swallow's back and the cinnamon and rust of its belly to black and brown, the swallow finishes its dance. But the bat is just beginning.

For a brief moment, they dance together. The swallow, moving low, executes its final maneuvers, drinking and finishing its meal for the day. The bat spinning high, starting its movements, eating and breaking the fast of day. So as the light fades, they dance together—their twilight duet.

The tiny bat, with its brown-furred body and hairless wings, and the small swallow, with its forked tail and swept feathers—like ballerinas, they are costumed for the scene. The swallow with dark, piercing eyes and short beak is dressed to dance through the lighted sky, spotting and snatching up the flying insects on which it lives. When darkness comes, the swallow must exit to the barn for the night to rest and wait for the dance to start again. The small-eyed bat,

with its large ears and sharp teeth, is in costume for the night act. Dancing on as the swallow leaves the scene, the bat twirls, fainting left then right, quick then slow.

Now is the time for which he lives. The world has been darkened for the scene, and the bat will play its villainous role in the ballet. Tracking, hunting, killing—these are the twists and jumps of its dance. The bat beguiles and is hated, dancing the part of evil, of night. It dances on until dawn.

The light brings the swallow, the hero back into the act. It feeds on the day, soaking in the rays of light. From sunrise until sunset, the swallow will glide and bank, turn and dive, dancing through the daylight, performing the part of good, of sunshine.

As the sun crawls slowly over the horizon in the pre-dawn dimness, the bat and the swallow meet. Soon the bat will flutter off to the safety of some dark barn or belfry. But now in the middle world of half-light,

the bat and the swallow come together, the bat going low, nipping at the surface of a lake, the swallow soaring high to catch the first golden drops of sunlight.

And so it is that the bat and the swallow, just before they part, come together again in the dim light of a mixing of worlds, artists playing their contrasting parts, to dance their duet.



Poetry



Why
by
Brian Arner

Little girl,
Sprawled across the Sarajevo sidewalk,
Who are you calling for?

Your dog,
Faithfully lying by your side?
He cannot hear you,
Nor will he lick your wounds,
The life has drained from his eyes,
And his head will perk up no more,
No matter how long you call him.

Little girl,
Who are you pleading for?

The neighbors within their cellars?
They cannot help you as you struggle to rise.
Fear has paralyzed their nerves,
And preservation deafened their ears to your pleas.
They dare not venture into Sniper's Alley.

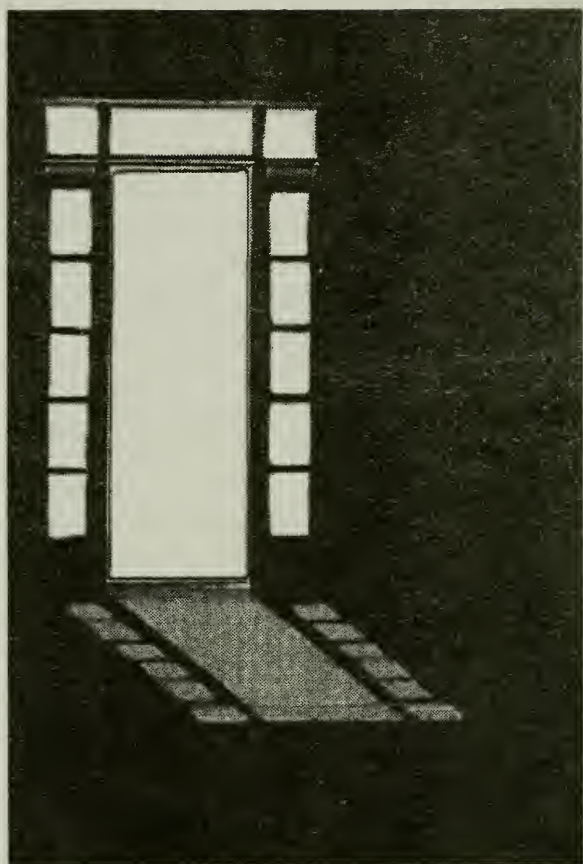
Little girl,
Who are you reaching your bloodied arm for?

Your father,
Peacefully resting nearby?
Do not disturb him.
He will not clasp your hand
And tell you it will be all right.
He has abandoned your hell,
Cut down by your city's deadly hail.

Little girl,
Who are you looking for?

The West,
The heart of civilization?
They do not see you.
Their focus lies elsewhere.
You are not a national interest
And were forgotten by public opinion polls
Long ago.
They have no time for you.

Little girl,
Why do you cry?



Wrong Number
by
Cherian Godfrey

Excuse me . . .
pardon me.
I didn't mean to intrude.
I must have been mistaken.
For a moment I thought you cared for me.
For just an instant your touch convinced.
But the light in your eyes has faded,
and your smile doesn't seem as strong.
I'll leave your pretty words here by the door—
they're surely meant for someone else.
You invited me in, though I'm clearly not
welcome.
Please excuse me for not staying long.
I'll just slip out quietly—
you'll never know I was here.
Excuse me . . .
pardon me.
Goodbye.

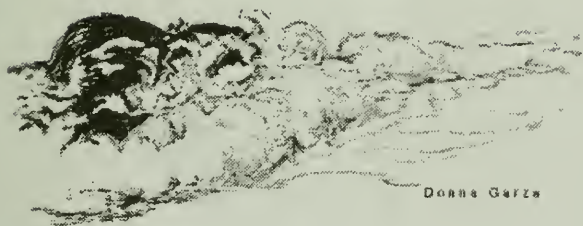
Seasick
by
Brian Arner

What is a dream?

It's your heart cresting on a swell of hope—

Just before it smashes

into the cold, jagged walls of reality.



Donna Garza



Kitty Lucky

by

Lorie Evins

I found a tiny kitten
In the middle of the road—
Nape wet from Mother's grasp,
Cars whizzing over, but not crushing
Lucky.

An eyedropper and formula fed
A special mixture from the vet;
His purr became stronger,
And he grew into a cat.

At night he instigated fights
That left scars and lost fur.
I put salve and bandages on his wounds,
But they rarely remained there.

Coming home from school one day
I saw an animal in the middle of the road.
It reminded me of . . .
In fact, it was
Lucky.

Untitled
by
Jamie Rochester

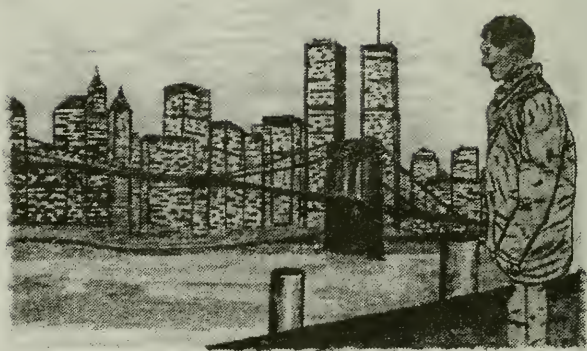
Quietness.
Dark friendly
warm-coolness.
Stillness.

Alone,
Listening to yourself.

Then
a hot, slow burning
that you slowly become aware of,
like out of the corner of your eye.

It's still
silent.
But now
there's heat.

Like love.



One Night
by
Cherie Priest

Feel the sidewalk black old boots
silent with fog that cuddles the city.
Jacket is tight around worn shoulders
clasped about cold hearts
(and other lonely places).
Eyes raise, gaze at the
grey-gloved hands who fondle the moon
and cry:

“Where is your voice in the darkness?
Are you not the midnight’s child,
seeing our own hearts suspended
on black paper wings?”

Fog curls, fog dodges
avoiding the pointed iron of scrapers and bridges.
Old boots tap a solitary retreat.

Light on the pavement.
The Gods of Twilight approach
and he is gone—
lost where he always goes,
out the back door of one imagination.

When She Walks By

by

Jim Lounsbury

When she walks by, I'm sure she sees a tree.

My limbs turn to wood
My mind leaves my head
Sap drips from my pores
My mouth barks dull words
My feet grow new roots
My hands become cold

And my heart is a knot that is throbbing
within my throat.

Lights
by
Brain Arner

We were young,
And without another
As we merged
On the thick
That ended in a

The designated
The anticipated commands.
“Green light!”
Energy, Excitement, Enthusiasm—
Filled that
“Red light!”
Recoil, Tension, Lament—
Filled that

Seasons
The laughter
Now we only



Homeless
by
Nicole Plantier

Just one night
in their closet,
in the safety
and warmth . . .
an unlikely reviver.
I shiver,
pull the thin jacket closer,
walk on;
slopping through the filth
of a million people
wiping their feet
on me.
A forgotten dredge
tossed out
with the garbage—
wilted, cold,
purple, broken,
forgotten.



If
by
Brian Arner

If the walls came down between us
and we saw one another clearly—

If we acted as ourselves,
boldly venturing from our protective shells,
our iron fences—

If we stopped playing games
of power, control, independence—
and examined each other unmasked,
abandoning assumptions—

If we spoke truthfully,
not voicing common platitudes,
mere pleasantries,
but with out heart's conviction—

If we shared one moment openly,
honestly,
courageously,
and the facade fell—

Could we look each other in the eye?

Insomnia

by

Nicole Plantier

Sleep—it won't come.

I'm so weary—

tossing, twisting,

tied by fetters of

taut, sweat-drenched

thought.

I throw off the sheet,

rearrange, again

again . . . again.

Time does not wait

for the search.

The night grows

weary with me,

alongside a twisted,

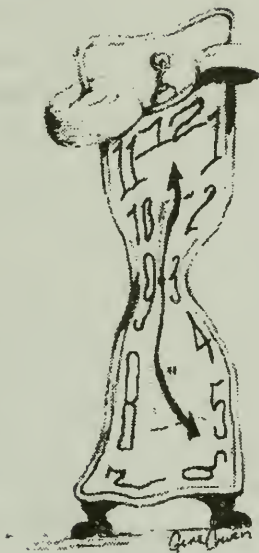
distorted clock.

Always forward, forward

never stopping, no looking back—

impossible machine.

Running my life
forward, forward . . .
cluttered sleep for moments
then morning.
Again, I awake.
You are still there
staring at me
from a distance.



Survival

by
Eve Parker

The eerie sound
with ending bite
sounds mournfully
across the night.

The answer comes,
it sounds so near
and brings with it
the voice of fear.

Now one calls,
and then another
gray one, black one,
sister, brother.

They come in sight
like ghostly shadows
and stalk their prey
out in the meadow.

Quiet now, they
creep around,

the prey unknowing,
they surround.
The head goes up,
the nostrils flare.
But alarm is late,
the neck is bare.
The chance is seen,
in leaps the pack
on throat, the legs,
the head and back.
All swift and sure,
the pack is done.
The she-wolf leaves
to feed her sons.

Ending
by
Tricia Read

—Silence
Throbs sharply.
She watches as he turns to go.
Moments and movements are
Hollow—
Suspended
In the triangular light
Tilting through the window.
She holds her head erect, but
Her arms droop at her sides.
She wants to scream at him,
Swearing she never loved him.
In her mind
She is rushing to block the door and begging him
to stay.
To try again.
But she remains
Motionless.

There are no such dramatics.
As he grips the knob, he glances back,
Searching her face for a sign,
But her eyes reveal
No emotion.
The door shuts behind him;
Her lips quiver.
The doorway's whiteness looks strangely
Blank.
She doesn't know that
As he rapidly walks away, he
Almost decides to go back.

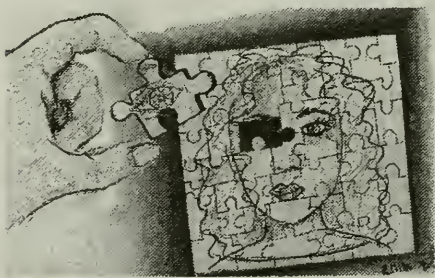


Puzzle Piece

by

Tricia Read

You try to fit me into
your picture.
I don't belong in this scene,
but you force me
into place—
bending and cramping my uniqueness.
I am not quite the right shape.
My coloring is slightly off.
Yet as long as I don't break, you are
satisfied.
If I did, in disgust you would
toss me aside.



Home of the Brave
by
Tanya Renee Cochran

They did not see
the rockets' red glare,
hear
the bombs in air
on earth
bursting,
had no proof
no proof—
our flag
(I pledge allegiance. . .
with liberty and justice
for all),
our forces,
our faces
(filled with agony—
eyes of tears,
mouths of prayers)—
we were still there . . .
here.

While mothers clung to their screaming babies,
 husbands and wives were torn from embracing
 (sliced like meat),
 fathers chanted prayers
and
a mournful plea rose unison above their shaven heads

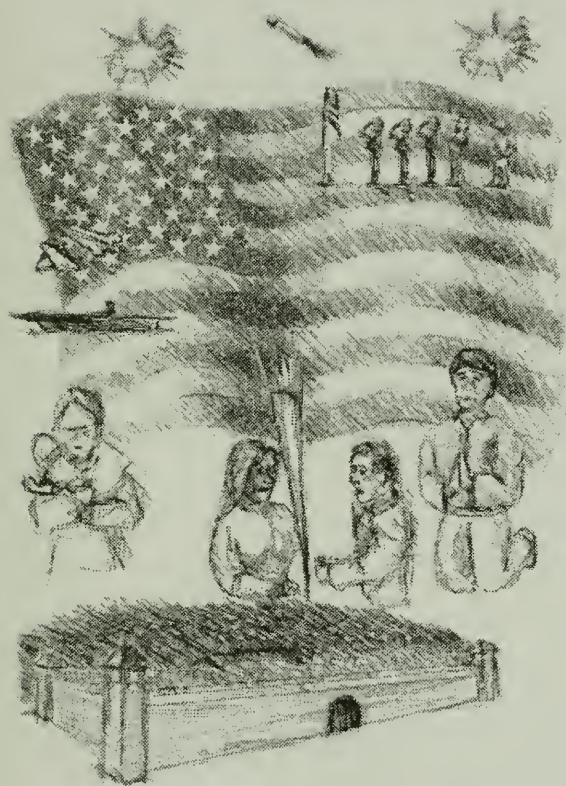
the silent sky swallowed.

The stars over Auschwitz broke

 and the striped, numbered uni-
 forms
 lay limp,
 oversized
 on skin-covered skeletons. . .

over Washington faded

 and Old Glory
 lay limp,
 overstated
 on her pole.



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