

The Red Jacket

Spring 2001



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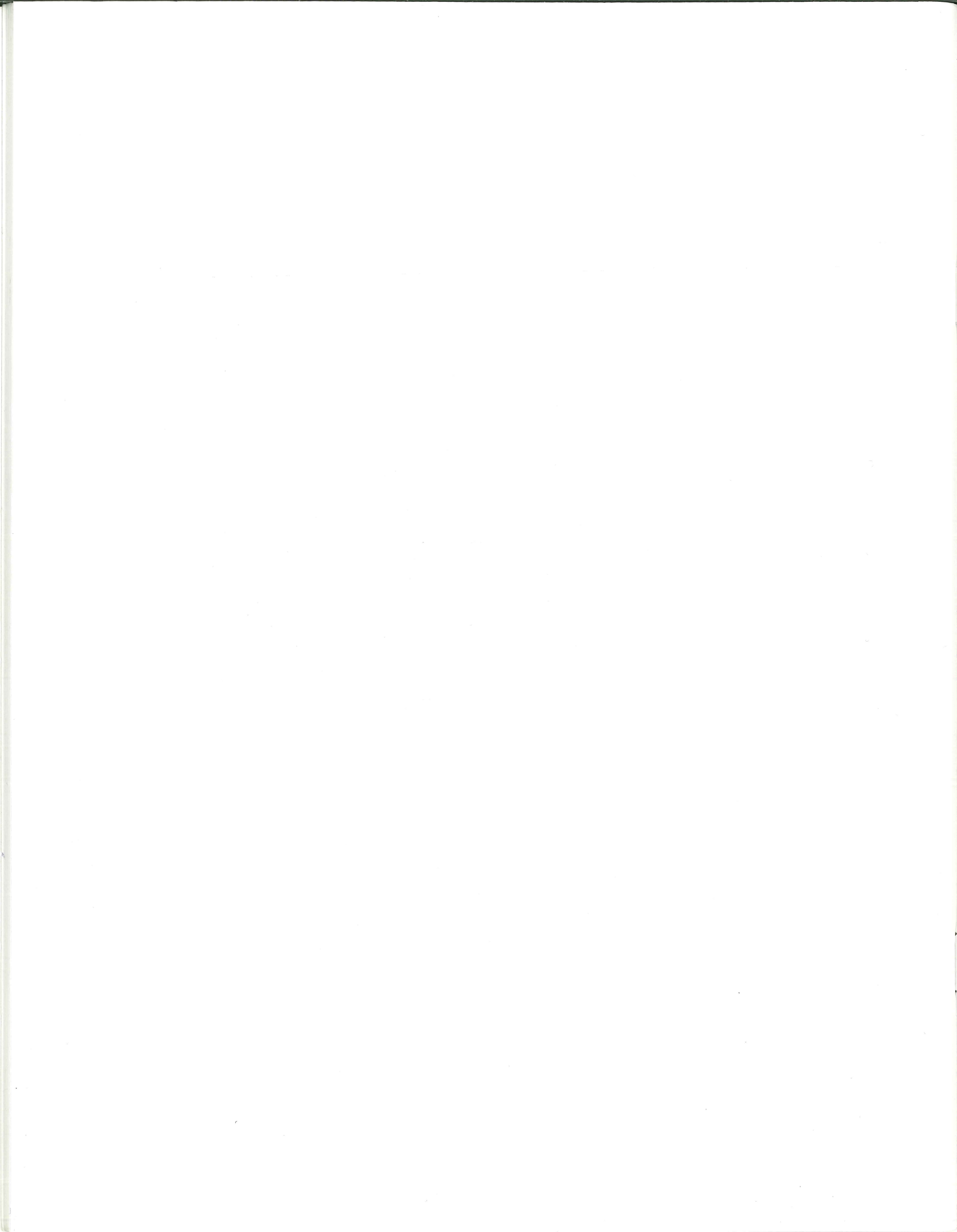


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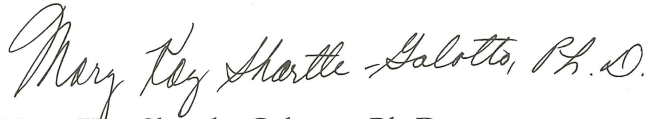
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Welcome to *The Red Jacket*!

Greetings! I am delighted about the return of *The Red Jacket* to our Rockville Campus community. Our student writers and editors have worked very hard to publish this exciting edition of Rockville's student-run literary and arts journal. It is wonderful that we will return to our Campus tradition of having not one, but two creative publications produced by students: *The Red Jacket*, and another outstanding student publication, the awarding-winning newspaper, The Montgomery Advocate. Montgomery College is fortunate to have a student body and cadre of faculty and staff with an abundance of creative skills and talents. As you explore this superb publication, I think that you will be impressed and even charmed by the poetry, stories, essays, and art within *The Red Jacket*.

Congratulations to *The Red Jacket* staff, and best wishes for success with future volumes!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Kay Shartle Galotto, Ph.D.".

Mary Kay Shartle-Galotto, Ph.D.
Vice President and Provost
Rockville Campus



Robert Ciapetta

Refuge

At this moment
My world is still.
The sounds of the interstate have finally slipped my mind
As if such busyness were an illusion.
And I am safe once more at school.

The students before me
Have so many different pasts and presents.
The Eastern faces are the most intriguing,
Seductive in their mute expressions of inscrutable desires.

And I am drawn away from my many abysses
To some safer summit
Where fearless angels dare to tread
And fools forget to pace themselves in the general rush of things.

Sally Scheibel

Wisdom of Age

The struggle for identity is such a human condition
Our desire to achieve and have recognition
To dare and dream as we struggle in our mission
To have what we want, from a safe position.

Take the challenge to return
To the deepest part that always burns
Pleasure and pain spawn at times together
What each becomes, is a matter of measure.

Come to know the texture of your soul
Reveal each chasm and replenish every hole
With all that you need, desire and quest
Learn who you are, then offer your best.

Know yourself through the eyes of others
Live and grow among our fathers and mothers
Those here and now and those passed away
Their ancient wisdom is made yours each day.

Live enlightened with clarity, ease and vision
May you live at peace with every decision.

Standing Idly in the Sun

“Standing idly in the sun one becomes wise.”
Wise to yellow glow and warm penetration.
Knowledgeable of bird-song and wind rustle.
A sage of quenched eyes viewing prisms of flickering
Light--blue, gold, and green.

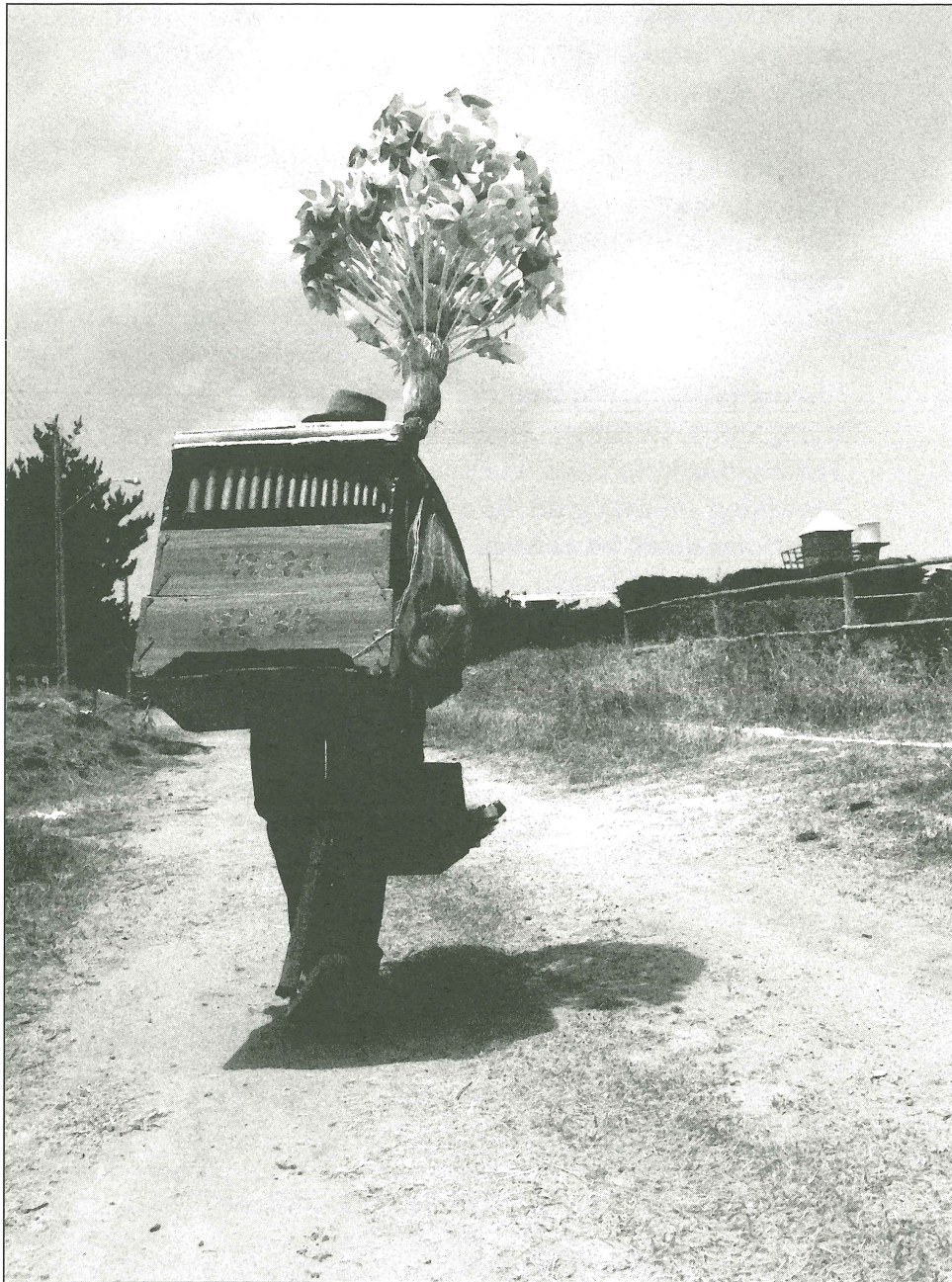
“Sitting motionless in the sun one travels.”
Walking beams to contemplate worlds.
Clutching rays to swing through planets.
Endlessly moving through eons of existences all in an hour.
Running, stroking the mellow.

“Lying prone in the sun one makes love.”
Lying open, flowing through all extremities.
Yield to blade caresses, warm air explorations.
Mouthing yellow/gold light into balls of sweet fire.
Breathing quick glow flash.

“Being in the sun one mirrors himself.”
The light casting the illusion of existing through form
Thick yet penetrable.
Through form whose very property is the plaything
Of the dancing rays.
Of earth/tree/stream/air/mercy.

Anonymous

Untitled



The Day My Dad Turned Purple

It all started on a regular Tuesday morning. I was having breakfast. My brother Tommy was eating with me. I am 8 and he is 6. I was having Cornpops and he was having a bagel. It was almost time to catch the school bus.

We heard my Father coming down the stairs in a hurry to go to work. He was always in a hurry. He works at the Post Office and figures out what goes where.

When Dad came into the room, we didn't know what to do. We stopped chewing and just stared at him. Tommy dropped his bagel on the floor. "Thomas! Look what you're doing!", Dad said. "You've gotten grape jelly all over the floor! Debbie, what is going on here? Why are you two acting so strange?"

We didn't know what to say. We were so amazed at how Daddy had changed overnight. His whole face had turned purple! Then Tommy and I both started laughing. We had never, ever, never seen anyone so funny looking before. Fiddlesticks the clown didn't even look this good! Finally, I was able to say, "Dad you're purple! Your whole head is purple!" Tommy added, "You look like you're made out of grape jelly!"

Dad hurried to the living room and looked into Great Grandma Walton's old mirror. His mouth fell open and he stared at himself. Then he said, "I will try to wash my face," and hurried to the bathroom. We followed him down the hall and he kept saying "I feel fine, I feel just fine." He washed with soap, and that didn't do anything. Then he tried dish detergent and even laundry stain remover, but it didn't come off a bit.

"Well, no time for breakfast or anything else now," he said, "purple or not, nothing stops a postman. I should tell Gloria—kids, you'll have to tell your mother about this, I simply must go." He rushed out the door and just left us standing there.

Tommy and I ran upstairs to tell Mom, but she was sure we were just teasing and being foolish. We tried to get her to believe us, but she told us to run along and catch the bus. We tried to tell some of our friends on the bus, but no one else would believe us either. We were glad when the day was over so we could hurry home and wait for Dad.

When my Father finally came home, Mom found out we weren't joking. Dad said that when he got to work all the other workers laughed at him and asked him where he got his beauty treatment. They also sent him to a doctor who said he could find nothing at all wrong with him. Mom said, "I still love you anyway, Charlie," and we all felt good. So she made eggplant for dinner and we had plum pudding for dessert. It was a fun night.

The next morning when I woke up I went into the bathroom. When I started to brush my teeth I saw myself in the mirror... and I was all RED. Red as a ripe tomato. Redder than an apple. I ran into the kitchen and shouted, "Mommy, Daddy, Tommy, come here quick!" They all came running, and we stared at each

other. Tommy was bright blue, Mom was sort of peach colored, our dog had turned orange, and Dad was still purple. But everyone felt just fine, so we had a fun breakfast together.

When I went to school, the other children began to laugh at me. Someone called me Tomato Face, and some others called me Candy Apple. I didn't mind so much because I knew I did look odd. Also, I had an idea...

When Dad got to work, he found another surprise. Half of the other people had turned colors also: green and blue and orange. And my idea was right. When I went to school the next day, many of the students had changed color; you could find all the colors of a Crayola crayon box. They called in doctors and shut down the school, but everyone seemed just fine, so we went home.

Our next door neighbors, the McCraes, were pink, yellow, red, gray, and green. Their cats both turned sky blue. Both our families joined together for a picnic, and had a lovely time.

On the school bus the next day, all the purple kids sat together and talked about what it was like to be purple. The green kids talked about being green. The yellow kids sat in the front. Two of the bigger boys were yellow and they made fun of everyone else. Only Ellie McCrae and I were red, so we shared a seat in the middle and didn't say much.

The TV news that night said it was spreading fast and could not be stopped, and that it didn't seem to be harming anyone. They showed a green people party and said it had all started in our town. What they didn't know was that it had all started in my own house, with my own Father, then me, and then kept going. Dad wanted to keep it quiet.

Tommy had a great idea: "Let's find two people of every color and have a parade, like Noah's Ark!" We liked the idea right away, and so did Ellie's family. They talked to Mayor Mitchell and he liked the idea too.

Mayor Mitchell called the Town Council and they had a big talk at the Town Hall. "Since our town was the first town in the world to turn colors," said the Mayor, "we should have the first official Color Parade, and the pink persons shall lead the procession." Of course, the Mayor was pink.

There must have been a million people there with a million cameras. Nearly all the out-of-town folks were regular-colored people who just wanted to see. Some were hoping they would "catch it" and change too. But some other people came and yelled at the parade and the council members—from a distance. "This must not spread any further," they shouted, and they said we should all be guillotined, or quarantined, or something like that. "Stay away from the Rainbow Freaks," they yelled. The television people had nicknamed us Rainbow Town. The parade was stopped and we went home sad. Dad said, "Why can't we all just enjoy this? No one is sick and we're all having fun."

Every day, more and more people woke up changed. Some even tried not to sleep, but they changed color anyway. Some tried to pick their color by hanging around certain people, but it didn't seem to matter. No one knew what color they might turn. It was such fun!

One group of lime-green people moved away to the desert by themselves.

They started a new religion called Limelife. (Some people called it Slimelife.) The Limelife people said they had the only TRUE COLOR. They said all things were Lime-green in the beginning, and only pure people could turn lime.

For some reason, there seemed to be more red people than anything else. They started a new political party called the Red Majority. They said they could prove they were the smartest people in the world. And with statistics too! They said they could solve the problems of the world. Many people joined them. Ellie and I wanted to join, but our parents said no. Dad said "There are always people who think they're better than everyone else, but it's not true, girls. It's best to stay away from groups like that." We did, as much as we could, cause they seemed to be everywhere.

About ten of my friends and me had a great time one Saturday, finding things of every color we could, and making a huge art project. Fruit, leaves, paintings, dishes, flowers, jars, cans, all kinds of things. When we stood around the pile holding hands and singing, our folks took pictures and someone said it was the most beautiful sight they'd ever seen. And it was.

One man turned bright orange-orange as, well, an orange. He even looked kind of juicy. Then he began to get in the newspapers and on television saying "Orange is great, orange is the best, only the greatest and the best people can be in my orange club. If you are truly Orange, you can join my club for only \$19.95! Just call 1-800-IM-ORANGE." I guess many people joined because they started having weekend rallies they called Orange-Juicers.

When I turned on the television they were always talking about the color changes. If I picked up a newspaper or a magazine or anything—it was always about the spreading colors. It was happening all over the world. Many enjoyed it, like us, but others were upset and scared. My Dad kept saying, "This might be the best thing that could happen to us. We should all just relax and enjoy it while it lasts."

One of the things I liked best was the new clothes styles that people were starting to wear. There were all kinds of fun mixes of all kinds of colors like you'd never seen before. Like Mr. McCrae said, "No sense wearing a gray suit if you got a yellow head!" Every time you saw any size group of people together it looked like a huge bouquet of flowers. The whole world looked so lovely to me; I even liked going to school to see how everyone would look. And no one looked funnier than Mrs. Bodet, the art teacher. No one ever knew what sort of costume she might come up with next.

Another fun thing was the way people started painting their houses and cars all different colors. The McCraes even painted their tree trunks. Mayor Mitchell painted his front lawn red, white, and blue. His driveway and sidewalks were pink.

It was sort of like everyone was becoming an artist. There was so much jolliness and brightness. We children were having such happy times. But sometimes I caught Mom and Dad looking very sad and serious. I came in from school one day and as soon as Mom saw me she said, "Debbie, please go ahead upstairs right away and don't look at the television." She was so serious looking I just obeyed right away. But at school some of the other kids said that in some countries people

were fighting over which color should be the leaders. Some of the fights were getting very big and scary, even for the adults.

One morning Dad came downstairs as usual but this time he was completely golden, like a shiny wedding ring. It was a beautiful color. Mom said "You look like a million bucks dear, but I think I like you better in purple." We wondered if we would all start to change colors. Sure enough, the next day I looked like brown cardboard. And the next day Tommy and Mom were pink and green. I was a little sad when Ellie and I were no longer the same color; she went silver.

Then the color changes began to happen faster and faster. Remember the Limelife people who said they had the Only True Color? You guessed it—they all turned dull gray and had to close their temple!

Remember the Orange Juicers? They turned yellow and were nicknamed the SOUR LEMON CLUB.

The Red Majority people turned extremely white. They were so white it hurt to look at them without sunglasses. They tried to say the Bright Whites had the answer but not many people listened anymore.

Scientists had no idea what was happening, but they never stopped talking about it as if they did. Some people said it was the end of the world; others said it was "the beginning of a brave, new world." My Dad said, "It's all just talk Deb. Talk, talk, talk. Why can't people just relax and enjoy it while it lasts?" I didn't know why. I was. Adults are hard to understand some times.

Then one day my Dad came downstairs, and he was regular Dad again. Then me and Tommy and Ellie's family changed back. But then the next day we changed a different color again. Then after a while we changed back to regular again. This was happening to everyone. Some people stayed regular for a long time, then would change color again. Whenever people tried to start groups because they were the same color, the colors would change and the group would break up. Some people are really bothered with the whole thing, but—believe it or not—lots of us have gotten used to it.

Triozzi, Hearn, and Professor MBD

Too many blows to the head,
to the right side of my brain.
No mas! No mas!, I think,
but do not say.
I give! You win!
No, not today, not yet,
no way.

Fat little Triozzi sat on my chest
And pounded my boyhood face.
“You give?” he asked.
“No way!” I screamed,
so the beating went on,
till the spectators were bored.
In a week my face regained its shape.

Professor M., she slapped my face
on the very first day, and laughed.
“You give?” asked the old hen.
“No way” I shot back,
and raised my hand again.

Professor B., he was sly,
a dirty fighter too.
With his weapons of intellect and wit
wielded with charming smile.
I changed my strategy,
and replied so carefully.

Professor D., he struck out,
itching for a fight.
But he waited too long,
and the clock ran out.
I won by forfeit.

Too many blows to the head,
to the right side of my brain.
No mas! No mas!, I think,
but do not say,
I give! You win!
No, not today, not yet,
no way.

Summer Love

I.

Sizzling toy/ I love to burn, to burn with boys/
to make the noise of fire/
hoist my skirt, drop my hose/
who loves me?/ who cares?/
who knows!/ who cares!/
I'm seventeen/ I'm free/ I'm me/ Baby.

Hear my heart beat/ in the backseat/ sweet
on the street/ in a field/ on the stairs/
who cares where?
look for me/ behind trees/
rely on me/ lie on me/ I'll yield/
in the dark/ in the park/ on a blanket/
you will like it/
you will like me/ you'll see/ guaranteed.

If it feels good, do it/
if it feels, good, do it/ if it feels/
it feels/ I feel/ I reel
from your summer smell/
and , man, your wet wet hands.

II.

come cat-curl clear star
feet crumpled sheet white seafoam
air still cricket-heart.

Y'know

Y'know?
Y'know it's bad to cut yourself
Y'know it's bad to dis yourself
Y'know it's bad not to let words
Flow
Y'know it's bad when you like to
hurt yourself
Y'know it's bad when the synapses
in your brain are firing too fast, but
your hand is just too

S L O W

Y'know
Just plain Y'know
Y'know your true love is out there
ready to be found
Y'know you want to find her
Y'know since yo a bit shy, it's a
bit hard to find your one true love
Y'know life can be deadly
Death can be lively

Y'know
Y'know best friends are worth a
thousand dreams
Y'know a friend is a special thing
S O S P E C I A L
Y'know

Anonymous

Untitled



Troubled Waters

Walking home in the dark was a peaceful blessing. I belonged to myself now, with no one to tell me what to do and how to do it. Shucks, if I was lucky, the moon came along as well to enjoy the peace. I saw that no lights were on at the cabin as I approached. Where was that boy at? Probably visiting with his young lady over to the next field. I was tired after my sun up start of working at the house, but happy 'cause I knew that ol' Mr. Lee would not be bothering me tonight. He'd be too busy with his brandy and foul cigars that the man from Nawlins brought with him on his visit to Atlanta. I would have the time now to work on the new marker. Miss Missy had given me some scraps from her bolt of material she was using for her new curtains. The old hangings she had made last year, were to be cut up to dress the light-skinned darkies of the house. They were the only ones of us who had to look good when they toted Miss Missy's things around. The rest of us were to stay in the barn, tend to the horses and grow the fields. No matter to me none. I now had new colors to add to my marker. I fetched my sewing basket from beside the fireplace and settled in for a night of weaving a new way to freedom.

No one from the big house minded that I hung my markers on the line for airin' and still didn't mind that they aired out for days at a time. I still smile from remembering the time when Miss Missy begged me to give her one of them.

"Beth, it's so pretty! I simply must have it. Do you mind?" She said sickly sweet.

Yes I mind! This marker had to be hung out fresh in the morning. There was a band of people that needed to be shown the way. Po' thing didn't know that this was our direction to the promise land and not just a bone warmer, I'm sure she'd have whipped me for sure or worse yet, sold me to the unknown. If I didn't give it to her though, she'd just have taken it.

"Lawdy Miss, you can have it." I cooed back, "But I can't give it to you all full of pins and threads and such. Let me air it out for a few days and then I'll have my boy fetch it to you proper. Sides', I want the folks to see the good work you gonna git."

Anything to make Miss Missy feel special usually worked and so she agreed. Three slaves found their way closer to freedom that day.

I looked at the new pieces of material in my hand and matched it with the pattern in my head. The next route was meant to follow the river. Moving the old rickety rocking chair closer to the window, I peered out into the darkness wondering what was keeping Joshua. He knew what time to be back at the cabin and he knew that Mr. Lee didn't take kindly to having roamin' privileges without his say so. Last time he was caught comin' in late, the overseer whuped him so bad that I had to use up all my lard in the cabin to stop the pus from oozin'. I told him to

ask massa proper to marry that girl he was takin' up with so that he wouldn't have to roam no more. Told me that they wouldn't sell her just yet, she was too young and hadn't made no babies for sellin'. I was afraid for my boy, he wouldn't last through any more whuppins after being half dead once already. That child was all I had left in this world and he saw to that. I labored for two days to have him. Came into this world backwards he did and turned my insides inside out when he birthed. I could only pray that the Lord would provide for my boy and bring him safely to me.

Just as I was about to blow out the window candle, I heard the footsteps weighing down on the front porch. There was no shuffling to try to pry the red dirt from the bottom of their shoes, so I knew this visit was not a welcomed one. There wasn't even a knock at the door, just an insult of cold night air as it brushed past Mr. Lee to dance through my cotton nightgown. The smell of brandy, stale cigar smoke and white skin filled the cabin quickly but my only thought was to hide from sight the new marker. I quickly moved between the disgust and the salvation with one long stride but Mr. was quicker, pulling me tight around the waist, forcing me to smell his vapors.

My voice was only a whisper. There was no use in yelling. Not when he was gonna take what he wanted anyways. "Please Mr. Lee... not tonight. My boy ain't. . ." The words stuck dead in their tracks. If I had told that Joshua wasn't home yet, there was sure to be trouble for everyone. I blinked back the kept tears and allowed my master to force his pleasures on me. Another creak from the porch reached my ears but stopped just short of the door. Was that my boy or the visitor coming to join in on massa's pleasures? No amount of creaking could stop this drunken man. He was tearing into my woman folds, huffin' and puffin', all red in the face and evil smellin', claiming what he knew to be his. He didn't even hear the footsteps stamp off into the darkness, and he didn't care as my hot tears fell upon his chest.

I was finally alone again just as the moon started its fall to earth. Joshua burst into the cabin looking madder than the devil himself with his spit boiling out from between his clenched teeth as he spoke.

"I'm gonna kill dat man one day mamma. Kill 'im dead! I saw him upon you and I saw you was cryin'. I was shamed that I couldn't help you none, 'fraid of being caught out after dark, just 'fraid I'm not man enough to fight for you. I just should have been here."

It wasn't the words which he spoke that scared me, it was his tone. Joshua had found his big man's voice two years ago and it was as deep and powerful as his father's. I missed that man so.

"Hush boy. Don't you go and fret over that white man none. He can take my body but not my soul. Now go and get to sleep, tomorrow Miss Missy is 'specting folks over to the house."

Before the cock crowed twice, I had the big water pot boiling and gave the house slaves their breakfast of fat rinds, potatoes and apples. They were dressed in their new visiting clothes made from the banished crushed blue velvet, completed to perfection with a set of ruffled white lace collars and cuffs. Some tried to put on

airs as they smoothed out their dresses and pulled back their mixed fine hair, but they still looked like walking curtains to me. Everyone ate in a hurry, as there were still chores to be done before the expected guests arrived at noon.

Big Hank, the blacksmith appeared at the kitchen door, blocking the morning sun with his mass. With his huge knarled hands, he took off his cap and looked about the room for spies.

“They say God’s gonna trouble the waters tonight.” It was only a whisper but I’d heard him loud and clear. I thanked him for the message by adding a fresh honeycomb to his eating dish. He had left the warmth of the kitchen just as the cold blast entered.

“I declare Beth, I need to have those chickens plucked clean now. I can’t have hungry folks waiting for their barbecue now can I?”

Miss Missy looked troubled. She’d never questioned if her food would be ready on time before.

“Don’t you worry none Miss, these birds are as good as done.”

“Alright then, oh and after Mr. Lee and his guests have finished their lunch plate, make sure the children are quiet. He needs to talk business about-”

She had said too much. Talk about what?

“Yes Miss, I’ll see to it.”

I’d pluck those birds and added them to the pot as fast as I could. I needed to find Joshua. He’d know what the men folk were up to. Most times they wouldn’t stop talking business until after they left their horses with the boy. With skirt hem in hand, I ran towards the barn.

Joshua was calmly brushing and watering the gray mare of the first guest. Damn if that boy didn’t look like his father too.

“You hear anything for me?”

I had to be careful and I had to be quick. “Come on now Josh, Mr. is having a meeting today, what have you heard?”

He talked in a whisper into the mare’s neck. “Three slaves were caught and hung the other day. They’s gonna set up new road blocks around these parts and there’s talk about whuppins for anyone caught roamin’ after the sun goes down.”

I didn’t bother about gathering my skirt hem on the walk back the house. I just let the red dirt rise and settle where it lay. God’s gonna trouble the waters.

Miss Missy was waiting for me in the kitchen, pacing back and forth.

“For goodness sake Beth, you look a fright. Go on now and get fixed up. Quick, you hear. Miss Mary saw the quilt you made for me and she’s as green as mint with envy. Fetch her your new one, I don’t want her to have one that already been soiled and don’t worry ‘bout airin it out none either, just go and get it. Shoo now and for pete’s sake, don’t dawdle.”

How could I? The new marker to freedom was already fixed to be seen on the line. I couldn’t think fast enough so I just stood there, stuck to the floor.

“Did you hear me Beth? Go on now, git!”

“Yessam.”

The appearance of the marker in the house had put everyone in a trance. Each dark face had a question mark on it but it was Matthew, the head butler who spoke up first.

“You did what you had to do. The rest will understand in time.”

The party had lasted well into the evening hours and just when I thought they could not stand to stuff their pale mouths anymore, came a ruckus from outside that I hadn't heard since my man was last caught and hung. Running to the kitchen door, I had to strain into the starless night to see who the dark figure was that was being dragged through the dirt. My heart pounded in my head as I recognized the soiled pants and worn shoes that past by right in front of me. I stumbled hard whilst scrambling my way through the crowd. Callused hands reached out trying to comfort me but I couldn't feel them. I only saw my boy, my man. His hands were tied tight behind his back and black blood crusted his face. His shirt had been torn clean off from his body and pale pus oozed from his whips. His lips were gone, replaced by red dirt, rocks and fist prints. Kneeling quickly at his side, I cradled his swollen head in my lap and cried out unashamedly to The Almighty. It didn't help.

Whispering to his ear I told him, “You go and find your Pa. He's waiting for you at the rivers edge. Tell him you are a brave man and you be there for me when I come to join you.”

Big Hank knelt down beside me and told me to be proud. He saw from the barn when they chased Joshua from the woods. He heard the dogs howling through the surrounding trees, biting at his heels. Said it took three men to stop him. “He was running Beth, running home.”

Mr. Lee heard. His eyes burned a hole right through me that reached into the center my hell and he marched off to his house without saying one word. I buried my boy deep in the woods that very next day with only a rock to mark the spot. No one from the house came near me, not even Miss Missy, who I was sure, was getting my selling papers ready. I was ready to go. I had to go. This was not my home; it was not even a tobacco farm. It was a man farm but I was fresh out of seeds for the planting.

The markers I had used for guidance to heaven now lead me into hell. I put all the rest of my markers on the line that day and said that they were there for the taking. If I was meant to start over, I didn't want any reminders to take with me, or had I just given up? Maybe someone could now show me the way. I was ready to swim in those waters.

It didn't take long for my prophecy to come true. I was ordered to bring the remains of my life to the house to be inspected. They wanted to make sure I didn't take anything with me that I had been privileged to have. Miss Missy didn't even say good-bye. She stood at the front of the house with a kerchief around her nose as if the air had gone bad.

I settled in the back of the wagon, accompanied by fresh bales of tobacco that were also being sold and as we slowly rolled down the sweet smelling magnolia drive to the Market Square, I tried not to think at all about what was going to happen to me. The tobacco would probably fetch the best price anyways and I'd sell to whom ever had a few coins left over. My heart bled again as I passed by my cabin. The waving markers beckoned to me, their patterns pointed the way north, but I was going in the opposite direction, away from my men, and deeper into the

hands of those who thought they were better.

God please, trouble these waters.

I watched the red dirt from Mr. Lee's plantation slowly turn to brown as we traveled further down the road towards the Market Square. Every now and then, a rock would fly up from the wagon wheels to remind me that I still remained in the land of the living. The sound bouncing from the bottom of the wagon was as loud as the pain rising in my head, thumpin' and bangin', showing me no mercy.

The sun was particularly hot on this day, but somehow it was comfortable. I figured that as long as I was in hell, I might as well feel the heat. I held my small bundle of belongings closely to my chest with one hand and steadied myself besides the bales of tobacco with the other, just as I used to hold my boy Joshua and cook with the other. Oh Joshua, why did you have to be so much like your father? My dream was for freedom and to belong to each other, not for my men to be planted together without me, nor was it to be somewhere that their spirits couldn't find now that I was going into the unknown.

The last time I was at the Market, I was too young to remember. I certainly must have been afraid of all the angry people yellin' as they were being cheated out of their price of cotton and complainin' 'cause they had to buy some no-good nig-gas for breeding. Some folks were pricing barn chickens, which had been separated into groups of egg layers and fighters, but the stupid birds didn't seem to have the sense to know that they were all gonna end up in the pot anyway. At the far end of the Square, fancy buyers with fat cigars dangling from their mouths and gold coins jingling in their pockets, looked over the purebred and working class horses. I saw the nervous look in their eyes and the sweat gleaming on their coats as they flared their wide nostrils and stamped their hooves at the ground in fear, but the man with the whip kept making them run around in circles just the same. We rounded the corner, past the bullpen, and were ordered to stay put whilst my selling papers were looked over and signed.

"Good riddance!"

That was the last word I heard anyone from the Lee plantation say. I watched as Luther, the overseer, loaded the wagon with chickens, rice and bolts upon bolts of material and drove off in the direction of which we had come.

"Dammit girl! Stand up tall. In fact, just go on over to where the other women are and get ready to meet your maker. No talking either or else you'll be sold with a knot upside your head."

My eyelids were heavy as I hadn't closed them in what seemed like days, but I managed to look up from my chest without moving my head to see the small band of women gathered closely around each other, comforting the children in the middle with their presence. In the center of them all was a small girl with a dirty rag wrapped around her left hand. I whispered to the one woman who looked amazingly like her and asked what had happened. She gently touched the bandage and said, "She was found playing with Ol'massa's young miss, making funny marks in the dirt. They beat her hand with a rock so she won't do it again. I had another boy, but he got hung for trying to run, so massa wanted me gone. Said, I "breed

bad." I guess he can't make no money from killing me. Said I can still make babies for selling though. He just wanted to make sure it weren't for him." I hugged my new found sister as we gathered more closely around the children, giving support to all.

"Oh Daddy look, the nigga sale is about to start, can we get a new one pleeease?"

The little boy kept tugging on his father's cuffs annoyingly. "We just bought you a new one last month, I came here to buy a new bull, not a nigga. We got too many worthless cows as it is." They kept walking towards the bullpen with only the boy looking back disappointed. Best slaves in the county right here!" yelled the man standing atop a wooden crate.

"All bred right in America, so you don't have to teach 'em how to talk or nuthin. Step right up! Have yourself a look over, free of charge. Step right up!" As the hungry group of buyers gathered, waving their auction notice newspapers through the air, I had the urge to run but no path opened for me. I felt myself being pulled out from the circle of women and placed above the crowd. I held my breath as I opened my mouth for my teeth to be checked and released it as I was turned around to have the back of my dress opened and my skin touched.

"This here paper say: Best prices in town. How much is this one?"

"Excellent choice my good Sir, she doesn't come with any youngin's to slow her down either and you can use her for anything you like. I can let her go for 300 dollars." With eyes squinting with disgust, he turned to me and said, "Come on girl and let this man have a real close look at you. Take off your dress and let him."

"That won't be necessary my good man, I only need someone to work the house and not myself. 300 dollars is a bit too steep for me though, what do you say to two hundred and a note on my next crop of cotton?"

The seller scratched his head for a while in thought and listened to the gathered crowd for more bidders, but none came for me, only for the children.

"Sold to mister..., what's your name sir?"

"Turner."

Sold, to Mister Turner for two hundred dollars! Next, we have a bargain for you fine folks, a young lad, primed to work the fields and tote for you. His foot has already been broke, so don't worry about him tryin' to up an' run. Selling for 300 dollars! Step right up!

"What's your name girl?" asked the buyer.

"Beth sir."

"Well Beth, come on. We still have a long ways to go."

"Yessir Massa."

Well out of hearing range, Mr. Turner bent down, looked me square in the eyes and told me, "My orders are to deliver you onto Moses. She needs you now. God is still gonna trouble the waters."

I peed on myself right there on the spot.

Tiger of Azania

In my entire life allow me to honor,
Jaftha Khalabi Masemola
Known as the Tiger of Azania (South Africa)
With your uncompromising spirit ever...
You became the only longest prisoner of our land.
Tiger served 29 years in Robben Island barely,
Yet this icon of heroic African struggles is uncrowned.
Is it the dogma that buries the precision or flattery?
Let me fortify our unsung protagonist,
Champion of African nationalism you're.

I'm compelled to honor Masemola,
A gifted teacher of creative excellence!
Africa has been consecrated...
By unbending leaders who are unsung
Allow me to edify this philanthropist,
His life was taken few days ahead the trip,
Historic trip to the world body, United Nations
Because of intentions of those that dislike him,
The only message about his reality is unknown.

Focused scholars knew the truth, and so chose
To mock the truth with flattery
Because of the nature of information,
People are easily misled and get misplaced.
It is against this background I honor Tiger.
Despite our choice to bury good names,
Human spirit cannot be contaminated,
Truth shall come out, Long Live the Tiger!

Robert Ciapetta

Another Supper

Chairs have been circled
And the tea water started when I arrive
A few minutes late from dinner with my mother.
Just ten minutes west, I enter another world.

The men already there are strangers,
And I am glad I know the host. Like me
A big man full of parental expectations.
He hugs me fiercely.
I become the prodigal returned to renew his kinship.

As I join the circle, I sense a warier welcome from the others there.
The room is silent, as if a sacred spell were cast
And we were disciples awaiting the master's reappearance.

Chosen to begin the introductions
I include my age
Which slips out suddenly in a spirit of revelation
Rather than curiosity about those who follow,
yet each man successively reveals his years.

As a leprechaun of a man begins our artist's odyssey
With a barroom ballad,
I wonder will we rip the bag of winds apart or together find fair Ithica.

In answer a Merlin of a man appears.
Small in stature, a gray fedora tight about his skull
Like a pioneer women's bonnet.
His face, at first the Mad Hatter's, relaxes
As he settles, sans chapeau, into the master's perch left vacant on the couch.
From there he sings his songs
about the beast in every man.

Robert Ciapetta, Another Supper, continued

Soon another enters;
A friend I've barely spoken with
Since my son was born ten months ago.
It's good to see you, I convey.
His response warms me more than tea.
His political script, fearful about the future
and set in a distant election year, chills my spirit.

Later, after I have shared a poem,
I am moved by the entrance of a youthful Tarzan
Who fills our softening circle with broad shouldered beauty.
Tall, square-jawed
His dark, curly mane frames
An ancient fierceness and desire:
 Lancelot before Guinevere,
 Abelard before Heloise,
 Samson before Delilah,
 Adonis before Aphrodite.
In his short story,
A boy dreams of struggles well beyond his years.

Toward the end,
An Iranian pilgrim joins our brotherhood, now thirteen.
Come from working late, he's brought his myth,
And though he is the last to read,
We linger at this feast of spoken and unspoken dreams
As general discourse softly dissolves into smaller interminglings.

Finally, about ten,
I tear myself apart from this communion
To rejoin the traditional mold
 Of separate, solitary wonderings.

swimming lesson

my mother's arms/ cranes
soft about my dolphin belly
drop away
& I drop like an errant piano
the whole of my life's short
tune
playing
in my water-
logged chest, flooding my conch ears
refraining with each toothy wave
and my mother's voice:
kick kick kick
rushes into a liquid chorus
and dissolves. Crushed
the crescendo runs dry,
a metronome at
my temple hushes.
I am thrust ashore, a jellyfish
on white sands. My mother waves,
her hands clap
gulls against the sky.
but it's too late:
salt water rims my eyes
and the stingy cadence of the sea
rises in my blood.

Jodi Robertson

“Towers”



Cold War at NIH

The Molecular Carcinogenesis Laboratory in Building 53 at NIH contains three working bays crammed into a space adequate for one. Shelves sagging with lab supplies stack up over the five lab benches and around the walls to the ceiling. A refrigerator, two incubators, a centrifuge, a tissue culture hood, a chemical hood and the door to an adjoining office claim the remaining free wall space. The incubators are six feet tall and look like stainless steel double ovens in a sophisticated kitchen, while the centrifuge might at first glance be mistaken for a top-loading washing machine. The glass-fronted hoods hang off the lab wall resembling the waist high display cages found in zoo snake houses. They jut out a good three feet into the lab. The unoccupied maneuvering space in this lab is so tight it would send a claustrophobic into a full blown panic attack.

June, the chief technician for the lab director, Dr. Armand, arrives for work at 8 o'clock Monday morning ready to start another week of "organized, efficient and productive research" as the director describes her performance on all her appraisals. She stops just outside the lab and hangs her navy blue winter coat on the coat rack. She opens up a cabinet next to the coat rack and rummages through the folded lab coats on the cabinet shelves until she finds one in her size, P for petite. She examines the coat, finds it clean and free of stains and puts it on over her brown turtle-neck with matching slacks outfit. She unlocks the door to the deserted lab and goes in. She shakes her head, her bobbed blond hair swaying slightly around her ears, and turns down her lips in disgust as she walks past the chaos on the lab bench belonging to the Russian post-doc, Dimitri.

She turns the corner into her bay. She stares in disbelief at her work area left in perfect order on Friday afternoon. The formerly pristine bench is now covered with the detritus of frenzied lab activity. Open reagent bottles vie for space with dirty beakers and a multitude of used plastic pipettes. The formerly liquid, now congealed, contents of an overturned Erlenmeyer flask pool on the bench top, decorate the door of the cabinet below and pool again on the floor. Pipetman tips have breached the edge of the waste beaker and cluster around it on the bench. Large polypropylene conical test tubes and tiny Eppendorf microtubes float half-submerged in the water of June's bench-top shaking water bath, contaminating the water with their contents. The water bath is still on, the inner chamber containing water and tubes is moving back and forth, back and forth and the water is shushing rhythmically with each stroke. June turns it off. Dimitri, she thinks, as the first flicker of rage registers behind her eyes.

June stands in front of her ravaged lab bench working to regain her composure by breathing deeply and repeating her mantra, "Don't get mad, get even." June's co-workers and Dr. Armand would be surprised to discover that she is capable of such a thought. Despite the fact that she is thirty-four, the June they see is

a wholesome and bright ingenue, a pretty little thing who could be a sister or a pal or, in the case of Dr. Armand, the daughter he dotes on. June is always careful to behave in ways that support this illusion.

After a moment, she walks around to Dimitri's lab bench, looking for his lab notebook. She finds it, after a thorough search of Dimitri's bench, on the bench belonging to another post-doc behind her in the lab bay. June flips to the last entries in the notebook. These confirm that Dimitri had been in the lab over the weekend. She looks at the notations and gleans that Dimitri performed a huge transfection experiment in search of the oncogenes responsible for causing Branson's carcinoma of the pancreas. Dr. Armand had set his heart on being the first to discover and characterize the genes responsible for this rare but extremely deadly cancer. He believed that despite its rarity, it would bring good press because it is a cancer that strikes down children and young adults. As an example of this he points out that it is hard to resist the appeal of the current Branson's poster-child poster showing a bravely smiling ten year old girl bald from chemo with an inset of her pre-cancer days as a ballerina in *The Nutcracker* in the upper right-hand corner.

Because the tumor is so rare, it had been hard for Dr. Armand to obtain tumor tissue for their research. June was more than a little annoyed that Dr. Armand had turned over the few tumor samples they had to Dimitri for his research project. Branson's carcinoma had been her project before he arrived.

From Dimitri's lab notebook, June learns that he extracted DNA from the five human Branson tumors and then transfected the DNA into mammalian host cells. She walks to the incubator, opens the outer stainless steel door and peers through the glass of the inner door. The incubator is full of plastic Petri dishes. She opens the inner door and pulls out one tray of Petri dishes and looks at the labels on the lids of the dishes. Yes, Dimitri's initials are on them.

June sighs and reflects on the events of the last four months since the arrival of Dimitri. From the first moment he entered the lab, the atmosphere of the lab became charged with tension. Dimitri projects an aura of urgency devoid of any humor. He is a large man, too large for the lab. He has masses of black hair sprouting from his head, hanging off his face, peaking out from his shirt collar, even curving over the backs of his fingers. June thought of him at first as their Russian bear, then later as their Russian boor.

She remembers their first confrontation a week after he had arrived. Dimitri interrupted her making notations in her lab notebook with a list of reagent and buffer solutions he expected her to prepare. June listened to his request with her head bent over the lab notebook. Then, she pulled herself up to her full five feet and two inches and turned to face Dimitri. He was standing too close. She was pinned between his bulk and the lab bench and she had to tilt her head back awkwardly to look him in the eyes. He stared down at her, his eyes under unruly thick black eyebrows piercing her with their intensity. She scooted sideways to gain distance from him and then replied with a polite smile, "Dimitri, I'd love to help you but I don't have time. Actually, it's not part of my job to prepare solutions for the other people in the lab."

"But you are lab technician. In Russia, lab technician prepares reagent solutions for doctors in lab," Dimitri protested, his brow contorting in deep wrinkles.

"Well, that's not the way it's done here, at least in this lab. You see, I am Dr. Armand's research assistant and I perform research only for him," June replied, speaking slowly and distinctly as if to a child.

"I do not understand. I will speak with Dr. Armand about this," Dimitri said, glowering.

Later that day, Dimitri stopped Dr. Armand on his way through the lab to his office behind June's lab bench. June glanced at them as she continued to work at her bench. Dr. Armand smiled at Dimitri and waited for Dimitri to speak. He was as tall as Dimitri but his perennially stooped shoulders made him seem shorter. He was only fifty-one, but the white fringe of a once full head of hair and the horn-rimmed glasses he wore made him look much older, almost grandfatherly. Dimitri asked to speak with Dr. Armand in his office. Dr. Armand ushered him into the office and shut the door. June continued to look busy at her bench. Apparently, Dr. Armand had never realized that this position allowed her to eavesdrop on conversations in his office, even when the door was shut. June heard Dr. Armand explaining to Dimitri that she was not to assist him in that way with his research. Dr. Armand told Dimitri that he could ask June for advice on protocols and techniques but she was not to do any physical work for him.

"Dimitri, you need to understand that a person's worth to my lab is primarily related to how productive that person is. I don't care whether the person has a PhD, an MD, an MS, a BS or no degree at all. If they are productive, then they are treated as an equal in my lab. So, I advise you to think of June as a research colleague from now on," Dr. Armand said in a tone intended to put an end to the matter. Dimitri stalked out of the office, his head down. He did not speak to June for the rest of that day.

In the next few weeks, June noticed that her reagents were disappearing faster than expected. In addition, small lab equipment, such as her test tube racks, ice buckets and Pipetmen, was developing an annoying habit of turning up on Dimitri's bench with regularity. She also began to find signs, a sprinkling of crystals around the Mettler balance or liquid in the wells of the bench top centrifuge, that less portable equipment on her bench had been used in her absence. She decided not to go to Dr. Armand about this because she couldn't prove that Dimitri was responsible, although this had never happened before his arrival. Besides, Dr. Armand prided himself that his lab ran smoothly and experience had taught June that he could resent the messenger challenging this belief almost as much as the perpetrator of lab dissension. So, June decided to take defensive action on her own. To protect herself, she put identifying marks on all equipment which could walk away. The small equipment she was most concerned about, she began to hide at night in odd places in her lab bench cabinets. She wanted to put locks on her cabinets but that would make it obvious that she suspected lab chicanery. As for the reagents, she developed an elaborate labeling system that only she understood, giving the reagents that Dimitri would steal labels that would not apply to any of his experiments. In the bottles with labels that would tempt him,

she at first replaced the correct solutions with water. Later, as she grew more adventurous, into those bottles she began to put reagents, such as surfactants or chelating agents, which would sabotage the experiments for which the labels indicated the solutions had been made. All the while, she maintained a friendly manner with Dimitri, as if she had not noticed his transgressions. He never responded in kind but he was talking to her, at least when he needed advice on the protocols they both used. As time went on, he came to her more often for advice as more and more of his experiments failed. She was always extremely sympathetic and suggested things he might try.

June returns from her memories to the present and decides it is time to go on the offensive. Dimitri has crossed the line this time. She looks at the clock and considers her options. It's 8:15 now. She doesn't expect anyone to show up until 9:30 and she really only has to worry about Dimitri and Dr. Armand. Dimitri normally didn't come in until around 3 in the afternoon. She looks in the notebook to see what time he finished the experiment. The last transfections were done at 4 am Monday morning, so it is very unlikely that he will show up before mid-afternoon.

Next, she goes into Dr. Armand's office. This office, in keeping with the spirit of the lab, is microscopic. There is room for a desk, itself dominated by a computer system, two chairs and a bookshelf. The bookshelf is overflowing with scientific texts and journals, lab notebooks, reprints of journal articles and loose sheets of paper. These items had continued their assault on free space by advancing across the floor of the office and up onto the desk. Their most recent attack is on the spare chair where a small pile of papers is quietly multiplying. June squeezes in and flips through papers on the desk looking for Dr. Armand's appointment book. She finds it under the nascent stack on the spare chair. She checks his schedule for that day. Perfect! He is meeting with the Institute director from 8 am until 10 am.

She goes back into the lab and rummages in the refrigerator until she finds a flask labeled Supernate Experiment H-1 11-1-99 JAB. This flask contains the liquid remains of one of her cell transfection experiments which had been destroyed by bacterial contamination. This was the only experiment that June had ever lost to contamination. Her tissue culture sterile technique is meticulous, one could even say anal. At the time, she had suspected that Dimitri, whose sterile technique is non-existent, was somehow to blame for the contamination. She imagined a chain of events in which Dimitri "borrowed" one of her reagents without her knowledge, contaminated it through careless handling and returned it to her bench whereupon she used it and inadvertently contaminated her own experiment. Dr. Armand was displeased but excused June "this one time" because she so rarely made mistakes in her lab work. June had decided at the time to save the contaminated tissue culture medium for a time in the future when it might come in handy. That time had arrived.

June pulls one tray holding twenty-five stacks of four Petri dishes each from the incubator and places it on her bench. Holding a ten milliliter disposable plastic pipette in her right hand, she extracts some of the liquid from the flask containing

the remnants of the contaminated experiment. With her left hand, she selects one stack of four Petri dishes and lifts the lid of each dish in turn, beginning with the bottom one in the stack, and lets one drop fall from the pipette in her other hand into the liquid tissue culture medium covering the cell monolayer attached to the bottom of the dish. She repeats this procedure with each stack of dishes on the tray. June is adept at this procedure and completes the first tray in under five minutes. She replaces that tray in the incubator and pulls out the second tray and contaminates all the dishes on that tray in another five minutes. At 9:25, she returns the tenth and last tray to the incubator. The dishes are scheduled to remain in the incubator for six weeks. During this time, the tumor DNA, which moved into the host cells soon after Dimitri introduced it into the system, will combine with the host DNA. It is expected that in a few cells, the site of integration of the oncogenes from the tumor DNA will allow these genes to express their cancerous nature. These cells will then be transformed into cancer cells, which will no longer respect the boundaries of adjacent cells. These rogue cells will pile up in microscopic mounds and become distinguishable from their normal siblings which line up one cell thick and form a pattern resembling a cobblestone pavement on the bottom of the dish. Dimitri would then be able to pull the prized oncogenes from clones of the transformed cells in the microscopic mounds and become the star of the lab.

June stands at her bench contemplating the exponential growth of the bacteria she has introduced into Dimitri's experiment. Each little microscopic unit will divide in thirty minutes. As she begins to clean up the mess on her bench that Dimitri left for her, she calculates the rate of destruction of his experiment. One bacterium becomes two in thirty minutes, two bacteria become four in one hour, four become eight in one and a half hours, eight become sixteen in two hours and on and on it goes. And, those numbers would apply if she had added only one bacterium per plate, when in fact she had added hundreds maybe thousands. Then, she visualizes the bacteria attacking the mammalian cells in the monolayer, devouring them and the precious tumor DNA they contain. She muses that Dimitri's experiment should be pretty well doomed by tomorrow, definitely by Wednesday when he is scheduled to change the tissue culture medium in the Petri dishes. The cleaning of her lab bench goes by quickly. She is even in a pretty good mood when she finishes and begins her work for the week.

Dimitri shows up that afternoon at 3:30. He says hello to June but offers no apology to her for the devastation of her lab bench. Instead, he goes to work on the other side of the shelves defining their individual work areas. She wonders if he thinks he got away with it, that she doesn't realize he was responsible.

"Hard weekend, Dimitri?" June asks.

"Yes, I worked up DNA from all five of tumors I mentioned at last lab meeting. I transfected all DNA into the host cells," Dimitri says with pride, catching her eye through an opening in the first shelf.

"All of the DNA? Good job, Dimitri!" June smiles back at him.

On Wednesday, Dimitri comes into the lab at 3:30 and sets up the tissue culture hood for the medium change on the transfection experiment. June watches and frowns at the thought of the probable bacterial contamination of the hood. Oh, well, she thinks, it's really a small price to pay. Dimitri goes to the incubator and removes one tray of Petri dishes. He places the tray inside the hood, sits down on the stool in front of the hood and picks up one of the Petri dishes. He gasps. June can see from her bench that the liquid in this Petri dish, which should be clear and pink, is murky and yellow. Dimitri takes the Petri dish to the microscope on his bench and discovers the cloudy swirls in the liquid signifying bacterial growth. On the bottom of the dish, where he should have seen oval structures organized in the characteristic cobblestone pavement pattern, he sees the shaggy remnants of the decimated cell monolayer. He goes back to the hood and looks at the other Petri dishes on that tray. He is mumbling something in Russian. He goes back to the incubator, and pulls out all the trays. He places the trays on his bench and examines the dishes on each. His mumbling grows into a shout, "Nyet! Nyet! Nyet!" This outburst is followed by other shouted Russian words that June does not understand.

"Dimitri, what is it?" June asks, concern in her voice, as she rushes around to his bench.

"June, is catastrophe!" Dimitri says with an expression of panic in his eyes. "Look! All ruined!"

June peers at the Petri dish under the scope. "My God, Dimitri, are they all like this?"

"Yes, all," he says, clutching his head in his hands and squeezing as if this will make the nightmare go away. "What can I do?"

"Well, you can repeat the experiment," she says in a soothing voice. "I know it will slow you down but all is not lost."

"No, I can't. I told you I used all of DNA. I used all of tumor samples. Nothing left," Dimitri says plaintively and then falls to mumbling in Russian again.

"Oh, no! Oh, my God!" June pretends to suddenly realize the magnitude of the catastrophe. "Dr. Armand will not be happy."

Later that afternoon, Dimitri and Dr. Armand emerge from Dr. Armand's office following a closed-door discussion of the failed experiment. June, busy at her lab, appears oblivious to their entry into the lab. They stop by her bench. She glances at Dimitri. His skin is ashen, his face racked with despair.

"June," Dr. Armand begins, "it looks like we have a lab contamination problem. Dimitri's experiment with all the tumor material we had on hand just went down the tubes. He thinks it's bacteria."

"Yes, he showed me the dishes," June says. "I agree that it is bacteria. You remember I had a similar problem a month or so back and after that I decontaminated all the equipment. This makes me wonder if we've got a problem with a resistant spore-forming bacteria."

"Could be or this could just be a coincidence. I've told Dimitri not to worry. This happens to all of us from time to time," Dr. Armand says as he pats Dimitri on the shoulder. June nods in agreement outwardly while inwardly she visualizes an ice pick stuck between Dimitri's eyes, piercing his brain.

Dr. Armand called an emergency lab meeting for the next morning. On the way to the conference room, Angela, Peter and John, the other three post-docs, who had missed the scene in the lab the previous afternoon, corner June to ask what's going on. June explains that Dimitri's experiments on Branson's carcinoma have failed and that he has used up all the tumor tissue. The post-docs murmur appropriate comments like "Too bad!" and "What a set-back!" but June can hear in their tones of voice and see in their expressions that they, too, welcome Dimitri's downfall. These three had been assigned mundane projects. Dr. Armand called them the "bread and butter" projects because they were sure to yield results which he could use to show the lab's productivity at review time. But, they would not yield fame and glory. That had been reserved for Dimitri.

At the lab meeting, Dr. Armand begins by explaining the situation.

"I guess we'd better organize a thorough decontamination of the lab and make up all new reagents," June suggests.

"Good idea, June. But, I want everyone in the lab to pitch in. You shouldn't have to do this alone," he says as he looks pointedly at Dimitri. Hah, thinks June, one for me.

"I also have news from the Moeller lab," Dr. Armand continues, referring to their chief rival, their counterpart lab at the Deutsche Krebs Centrum in Mainz, Germany, headed by one Manfred Moeller. "I spoke with Bernie Goldstein at the Colorado Cancer Center last night. He recently visited the Moeller lab and says they are making progress on Branson's. So, we've got to pick up the pace on that front but we've also got to prepare for our next review here. We've only got nine months left. We're in pretty good shape already. I'm pleased with the progress being made on the aflatoxin carcinogenesis and cell proliferation mechanism projects. If we can maintain the current rate of progress, we'll have enough to demonstrate our worth and get reasonable funding for the next three years. So, Angela, Peter, John and June, I've decided it is prudent to have you all continue work on those two projects. They're our bread and butter!"

Next, Dr. Armand turns to Dimitri and, to June's amazement, says, "Dimitri, I've managed to get hold of more Branson's tumor samples and I want you to continue with that project. We're counting on you to keep us ahead of Moeller!"

June starts to protest, to point out that she should be put back on the Branson's project to ensure its success but she knows her protest would be pointless. Dr. Armand has made up his mind. She is comforted by the knowledge that there are other ways to deal with this problem.

After this, June becomes more and more adept at the sabotage of Dimitri's experiments. She moves beyond revenge for acts committed against her and into the morally suspect terrain of sabotage for its own sake. The ingenuity required to find different modes of sabotage exercises her creativity. She can't risk using the bacteria again but finds that an inactivated enzyme here or a bit of calf's liver substituted for tumor tissue there or a DNA digesting enzyme added to Dimitri's DNA extraction reagent works just as well. Each successful sabotage provides an

adrenaline rush and feeds her growing addiction to carry out just one more sabotage. She begins to call herself June Bond, cold warrior extraordinaire, protecting her free world lab from the Russian threat. She's just sad that she can't share this little joke with the others.

Five months later, Dimitri is again closeted in Dr. Armand's office. June listens intently.

"I'm terribly sorry to have to say this to you, Dimitri," Dr. Armand says, "but I'm not going to renew your contract. I can't afford to keep unproductive people on in the lab."

"But, it's not my fault. I was always excellent scientist in Russia. Only here I have problem. It must be something here," Dimitri protested.

"Yes, yes, Dimitri, I'm sure you are an excellent scientist. You came with impeccable references from your dissertation advisor and other colleagues in Russia. You've probably just had a spell of bad luck. But, I can't take a chance. I'm sorry. I can't renew your contract."

Dimitri continues to protest, his voice growing louder. Dr. Armand continues to refuse to renew the contract.

Suddenly, Dimitri bursts from the office, slams the door and rushes from the lab, yelling in Russian.

In a moment, Dr. Armand emerges from his office. She turns to him with a questioning look.

"I'm sorry about that, June," he says. "I had to give Dimitri his walking papers. He's accomplished nothing for nine months. I can't afford to keep him here on the chance that he might become productive."

"That's too bad," June commiserates. "He seemed to work really hard."

"Yes, but some just lack the touch," Dr. Armand says. He looks at her with a smile. "Now, if all my post-docs were as talented as you in the lab, we'd all have our Nobel prizes by now!"

June thanks him, a big smile lighting up her face.

A week later, Dr. Armand comes to June with news of the imminent arrival of the new post-doc, Slatko.

"This one is from Croatia and we're very lucky to get him because he has just finished a fellowship in Moeller's lab. What a coup for us! Moeller will be furious when he finds out!" Dr. Armand says with unusual glee in his voice.

June, who had just been reassigned to the Branson's project, waits for the bad news.

"So, of course, I want him to work on the Branson's project," Dr. Armand says and June experiences a sinking feeling. "But, I can't take any chances this time and I want you to continue on the project as well, working on an equal footing with Slatko, of course."

Yes! June thinks, as the glorious possibilities for the future open up before her, but she says, "Thank you so much, Dr. Armand. I'm grateful to be able to continue working on Branson's. This is such an exciting project! I just hope I do it justice!"

The Saga of the Earth Girl

Wait! Did I hear the soft wind tinkle of a bell?
Feel the cold shimmer chill sweet?
See the transparent form so young/old flint like silver glass
Through dark tree – sparkle?
Was it she?

Search! The soft, moist earth, round.
Did I forget feel her foot fall at all?
Brown toes sinking searching, clutching?
Swift foot shadow person...
A morsel of sand? Removed.

Feel, the scent of her earthly bed?
Green/yellow sun struck moss...
Gold jewels, gems, sparkle in rhythm – flickering moon-glow.
Face smooth hollow leaf pillow,
Hiding dreams from forever, ‘til...

I saw, rather felt, that girl/person/being.
Felt her shy hand stroke the shadow world,
Draw back with elbow pain,
Nails curled, tense, falling through gold leaves,
Saw the weeks like years pierce her searching palms.

What can she want?
This phantom...stranger from other/all places...
Who uses moonshine glow for shelter, star glaze sweep
For mirror,
Deep night forest shadow for lover,
Sun/hot for dream?

Wait! Is that part of her heart there?
Life wrapped ‘round in green ragged leaves, handled rough, lying
Open, twirling, glinting in the clear pond?
Part blue, of course, the color of ...
Sky and clouds, and sun and shade?

Why, she danced here! Feel her girl-sorrow.
Touch, if you will, the long long years between.
Arms, earth brown, earth soft, mist warm,
Melting into the eternity of centuries.
Guardian of such sweet, sweet sorrow.

Oh Evening Girl, morning bright woman...
Mother/child...lover in season,
Is the way yet still...born into forest shade,
Stream, dale, and lake...?

Anonymous

Untitled



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