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We sat in the firelit room as we had done so many evenings before. The warmth of the fire and the crackling of the flames were the same as they had been on all the other nights. Yet, tonight seemed different. For one thing, I was alone with our house guest. She was from the Bahamas, but had decided to launch out on her own and come to America to school. Her name was Elsa, and she was staying with us over a school break. Elsa and my sister had become acquainted, and my sister had offered our hospitality to her. I was very glad for her company this evening. I was glad, because the night was Halloween. The house was empty except for Elsa and me. And, the house was unusually quiet. An occasional crackle from the fire was heard along with the ticking of a clock. For as long as I could remember, Halloween had planted an eerie, scary feeling in me. And this night was no exception. I expected any minute that a ghostly appearance would float past the window, or that a scream would ring from the trees outside. There had not been much conversation, and we were both staring into the fire. I glanced out the window and saw our shining jack-o-lantern. A bright glow shone out from the slanted eyes and the evil grin of the pumpkin. At that moment, an old owl hooted a shrill sound and I gasped and jumped! Elsa looked at me with a startled expression, then smiled her bright white smile.

"Halloween frightens you?"

Hating to admit my fear, I just shook my head slowly. Elsa looked into the fire as if her thoughts drifted away to some far off place. She grinned and said, "May I tell you a story?"

Looking for any excuse to ease my mind, I consented and gave her my full attention.

"It was that time of the year again. A time of year that I dreaded. It was called Junkanoo, that is, a celebration in the Bahamas when people dress up in colorful costumes. They use bright
paper and cloth for their clothes and they wear evil looking masks. It was much like Halloween is here. The celebration took place in the town, and the costumed monsters, as I called them, paraded up and down the streets. Ever since I had been a child, this yearly event frightened me more than I could say. It sounds much like the fear you are experiencing right now."

"My parents and friends had tried to prove to me how needless my fear of the Junkanoo was. They repeatedly told me that it was just a celebration, and that I was being childish. I had always been overcome by the fear of ghosts and witches and the dark unknown. And my fears of these things were at a climax on this particular night. I had no intention of going to the celebration, and yet the thought of staying home by myself was worse yet. I was very surprised, and should have been suspicious when my brother offered to walk me to a nearby village that evening, instead of going to the celebration. To this, I heartily agreed. As evening drew near, excitement and activity began to fill the air. The children running down the streets screaming with anticipation, and the absence of the older boys who had gone to prepare for the evening's parade added to this feeling. I shut my eyes, hoping that the night would soon be over."

"Later that evening, my brother and I set out. We didn't say much as we walked along the path. I tried to set my mind on shopping in the village, and to push out the thoughts of Junkanoo. We came to a fork in the road and I proceeded to take the path we had always taken. However my brother halted and said, 'Wait, since we're in no hurry, let's go a different way.' Then he started down the other path. I mechanically followed his lead, not knowing what was lying ahead. Now, I told you of my fears of ghosts and witches, but one I haven't mentioned yet was my fear of the graveyard. The many stories I had heard caused this terror. As my brother and I proceeded, I looked ahead and
saw a fenced-in patch of land. It had begun to get dark, and I couldn't see ahead very well. However, my eye did catch one thing, a gravestone, and then another. I stopped in the middle of the path and stared straight ahead. My brother didn't say a word, but grabbed my hand and kept walking. As we walked, I started to envision graves opening and ghostly images coming out of them. I began to walk faster to get by that horrid place. And then with my heart beating loudly, a rustle was heard in the bushes. I saw a flash of color and the most frightening creature I had ever seen jumped out at me. I let out a deadly scream and began to run."

"The next thing I heard was the laughter of my brother. I looked back, and guess what I saw. That horrible, terrifying creature was only a local boy from the community dressed in his Junkanoo costume. I felt anger and relief at the same time, as I sat down in the path. Now, this story may not seem like much to you, but ever since that experience I can see how foolish my fears were. So don't be afraid, your biggest enemy is your imagination."

I had been sitting on the edge of my chair during this story. Now, sitting back, I thought about how my fears paralleled Elsa's. Imagination was my biggest enemy. Could it be that all those fears weren't really there? The next Halloween, I joined in the festivities of Halloween, without fear.

--Dawn Lenehan
At last, the day I'd been waiting for had finally arrived. I arose early in the morning, showered, had a bagel with cream-cheese, (which is my customary breakfast) and packed a few remaining things. Today was the day my father and I were to travel to Wiesbaden, West Germany. Thinking of seeing my sister after two years was incomprehensible, but excitement filled the air. We said goodbye and made our exit to the airport. I hadn't been in many airports, much less on an airplane, but my dad knew where to go and we soon were off to Chicago where we would switch flights.

Upon arrival at the Chicago airport my father mentioned he had some phone calls to make and motioned for me to go and find a seat in the waiting area for the layover would be long. It was very crowded but I managed to find a place to sit amongst a crowd of people, all traveling as I was. I set my bags down and looked around at my surroundings, especially the people. It was interesting to see the variety. I was sitting next to a rather shady-looking man who had been drinking. On the other side of me sat an old Japanese man. He hunched forward slightly, holding onto a cane, but his eyes were alert and filled with expression. He smiled slightly when our eyes met, and I asked him about himself and his homeland. He told me politely about his home, but then his eyes brightened as he began to tell me an ancient Japanese story. I turned my head slightly only to notice that the man on the other side was listening too. The Japanese man noticed this and with a sense of pride turned to the two of us to disclose a part of himself. This is what he said to us:

"Many years ago in the eastern Japanese mountains there lived a young woodcutter by the name of Ping. Now Ping lived in the valley, but every morning in the early dawn he would make his
way up to the mountain and chop trees. One morning, as Ping approached his work area, he saw a beautiful Japanese mansion; it had not been there the day before. He was amazed at the sight as he saw beautiful flowers surrounding the walkway, and a pathway made of pearls. Although confused and perhaps a little apprehensive of the whole affair, he was lured by the mansion's beauty to go to the door and inquire about its origin. A beautiful young woman answered the door and invited Ping inside. She looked at Ping and decided he was an honest man and she could trust him to do a favor for her. She wanted to go shopping for a short time and have Ping watch the mansion for her. He agreed, knowing it would be a pleasure. The beautiful woman was grateful and thanked him, but before leaving she told him how the mansion had seven rooms, and that he was not to open the seventh. He agreed and she left him alone in the mansion. Ping entered the first room where he saw three cleaning ladies who fled when they saw him. He continued on into the second and third rooms where he saw the second all set up for a Japanese tea ceremony, and the third filled with many beautiful arrows. Everything was so wonderful to look at, and he noticed that in every room the contents became more valuable; somehow more precious to the beautiful woman. He went into the fourth room, where he encountered a magnificent statue of a blue horse, and in the fifth room something even more precious—delicate Japanese china in the finest patterns. At last he came to the sixth room, and he knew he could go no further. This bothered him not for in this room there was a splendid golden drum which was filled with rich wine. A pure silver ladle lay by its side and invited Ping to sample the drink. Ping drank the wine over and over again until he was not in control of himself. Sadly to say, Ping entered the seventh room."

After this statement the old Japanese man was filled with a sense of grief, and paused slightly.
I looked at the man sitting near me and we exchanged glances. I smelled the alcohol on his breath as he said to me, "This old man is senile, I bet he can't even finish his story." I didn't respond. I could feel an inner cry in the old man's heart, and I wondered why he was telling us this tale. How I wished my dad were here, maybe he could tell me. The old man raised his head and began to speak again.

"As Ping opened the doors to the forbidden room and entered he saw a basket filled with three eggs. He picked up one egg, dropped it, and when it broke a bird flew out. Likewise, he did the same to the second and third eggs and all three birds flew away. At this time the woman returned home from shopping and when she saw what Ping had done she started to cry. She said that those birds had been her children. Ping in his drunken state just stood there, not knowing how to react. Out of shame he put his head down for a moment and when he lifted it up all had disappeared."

With this statement the old man stopped his tale. Up to this point I had been so involved in the story that I forgot where I was and who was around me. I soon realized, though, that the man on my other side had gotten up and left. I was confused as to why he left and I think the old Japanese man saw that in my eyes. He began to speak to me.

"You see young one, this story in Japan is told to instruct and warn people of the dangers that can be involved in using alcohol. Someday all those who are under its curse will wake up to discover that their life has vanished before their eyes. By living their lives that way, they are not only hurting themselves but others as well."

I began to understand the actions of the young man who had mocked his elder and left quickly. Perhaps this tale spoke to his heart. I jerked when I heard my father call my name. He smiled and said, "It's time to board the next plane Laura, are you ready?" I paused for a moment as my eyes met
When I first entered the shop the only thing I saw was the morning sun, streaming through the wall of windows. A second or two later, I became aware of a large, dark figure, like a cardboard cut-out, blocking a swatch of sunlight.

"Joan, I want you to meet Joe the Tailor," my friend Jeanette announced.

I extended my hand and pumped it generously. In fact, all of Joe's dark brown body suggested generosity. Though well over six feet tall, the roundness of Joe's head and cheeks diminished his height. His eyes, too, were large and round--wide open to the world. His wiry, over-grown mustache reminded me of a horsehair brush. Joe's body, like his mustache, was overgrown. Though not fat, his ample paunch testified to a love of rich food. I liked him immediately, but I was surprised at his bland attire: he wore a camel tunic and a shapeless paid of polyester double-knit slacks, dizzy with black checks. The boxy tunic hung from his burly shoulders; the neck, dashingly open at the throat, was the only hint in Joe's clothing of the flair and artistry of his craft and his life. As long as I knew him, I never saw him dressed any other way; he must have had a closet full of tunics and double-knit pants.

Like an old friend, he greeted me: "Well, hello Joan. I'm glad to know you."

Jeanette went into a make-shift dressing room constructed of unvarnished boards, and a scrappy, dingy-colored piece of fabric served as the curtain. As she tried on the slacks and jeans Joe had altered for her, he and I talked.

"Are you from Canada?" he asked.
"No, I'm from Iowa," I said.
"Oh, you dress like a Canadian," he said, referring to my overalls and heavy wool sweater. "Ever been to Canada?"

"Only once, to Vancouver, before I moved to Washington. I'd love to go again," I replied.
"Oh, you should, you should," he encouraged. "I go there all the time, I have lots of friends up in Vancouver. I keep telling Jeanette that she and her husband ought to go to Chinatown."

As he talked, I glanced around the shop. By now, my eyes had adjusted to that first plunge into the light-filled shop, and the objects around had assumed definite shape. Three large industrial-looking sewing machines sat in front of the windows and across the small room stood a long table heaped with fabric of all colors. It was hard to tell if these were clothes Joe was fixing or if they were scraps. Farther back from the windows, the shop opened up into a large space where the dressing room occupied one corner and a rotating clothes rack full of garments stood in the other. There was an ironing board, a tea kettle on a hot plate, a record player.

And everywhere, even above the windows, the walls were filled with pictures and posters--bright splashes of color. They were the kind of poster not found in dimestores; I wondered where Joe had gotten them. Some posters looked African, with wild shades of pink and blue. Dark, deep shadows lurked behind the color. I saw one poster that advertised a ballet in Vancouver and farther down, a photograph of a statuesque black dancer. Near the ironing board, stacked upright, were more art prints which echoed the African theme. There were no still lifes in this collection. I looked out from the second-story window of the shop and watched well-dressed ladies enter the dress shop below Joe's. I thought that none of them must have known of the world that existed a flight above them: a world of rich, inexpensive dreams, far removed from the ready-made dreams they were buying off of racks. I focused back to the wall as Joe pointed to certain prints, his arms sweeping slowly and widely. His voice wended slowly, like honey spinning off a spoon. I couldn't imagine him rushing around for a customer, trying to finish a last seam. Rather, he'd say, "Sit down. Can I
make you some tea while you wait? Tell me how it's going."

Then he turned toward the sewing machines and showed me a plastic sheath, bordered on three sides by a thin strip of black bias tape.

"Did Jeanette tell you about my art protectors?" he asked.

Yes, she had. Jeanette hollered from the back. "How's the business going, Joe?"

"Great," he hollered. "I just got a large order from Alabama." Joe sat down at a machine and took two sheets of clear plastic and joined them by sewing the tape over three sides. Easy. "Now," he said, holding up the finished product, "the next time you come back, bring along your pictures and prints and I'll make some of these just for you."

Jeanette had finished her fitting; the pants were perfect. As she paid him, she asked, "Have you found a new shop, yet?" She had told me that the community college wanted Joe's shop for downtown classrooms. He had two months to relocate.

"Not yet. Rent is too high everywhere. Sometimes I think of moving everything to Vancouver. Trouble is, everything there is higher."

I made some remark about how I loved his shop and the view of the street below.

"You talk like a poet," he said to me. "Are you a writer?"

"Not really," I demurred. "But sometimes I think about trying to be."

"Oh, I think you are," he said.

A few weeks later, Jeanette and I returned to Joe's shop. I had brought two 8x10 photos and lots of prints that I had clipped out of magazines and ripped off of old calendars. Joe admired the black-and-white photo of Iowa winter--home. "Did you take this?" he asked. "Are you a photographer, too?"

"I did take it, but I'm not a photographer," I insisted, surprised by his remark. It was a lucky shot, my only one.
Joe insisted that it be matted. He took the other photo, saying he had a friend who did excellent work. Then he sewed print protectors for the other junk art and gave them to me as samples. That day Joe played records of African spirituals, and while he made tea, he explained the songs. They were nothing like Negro spirituals, nor jazz, which I often associated with black people. They were nothing like the tepid "Kum-bah-ya" I had sung in Sunday school. These songs were mostly studied in rhythm—jubilant, yet urgent. Joe said, "Hey, it's my niece's birthday. I'm going to call her." Jeanette and I offered to sing "Happy Birthday" over the phone. We sang, though not well, our wishes to Joe's niece in Alabama as he held up her picture. We had sung to someone we didn't know, but liked already. I never would have done that for anyone else and I've never done it since.

The next time I visited Joe, he presented my photos, beautifully matted. When I wanted to pay him, he refused, saying his friend had owed him a favor. "But this was for me," I rebutted. "He must be paid for his work."

"No, no," Joe said. "I fix his pants; he does these things for me. It's o.k. You can treat me to lunch sometime, how's that?"

While he helped a customer, I stared at the prints on the wall, fixing on the strong grace of the black dancer. Joe walked over and took down the picture. "To my dear friend, Joe" it read. He told me she had been the principal dancer in the ballet whose poster hung on his wall. Joe knew this woman; he probably took her out to dinner after her performance. As he talked about her, I realized how much I envied him. I wanted to go to Vancouver, not as a tourist, but as Joe went, as someone who knew where the city's heart beat, to be part of that rhythm. I only know places through car windows and magazine articles—cerebrally. But Joe lived those places; he made those places live.

After that visit, I didn't see Joe for a long time. Jeanette told me that the community college
decided to take only the back part of Joe's shop. He could keep his tailoring business in his sunny corner, but he was transferring his print protector work to his home.

When I found out I was going to move back to Iowa, I tried to call Joe, but it was Sunday and his shop was closed. Since I didn't know his last name, I couldn't phone his home. Though I called during the week, I never got an answer. He was moving his equipment into his house that week, Jeanette said. So I left without saying goodbye.

As I remember Joe, now, I realize that I hardly knew any of the background details of his life. But I had known him, maybe better because I hadn't asked all those surface questions. I remember the expensive Canadian tea he had bought me for no reason other than, "All poets drink tea, don't they?" I can still feel the sun through the windows, see the traffic bustling a world away. I will always think of Joe as I first met him--large and black, soaking up the sun, the sound, and the color of life.

--Joan Curbow

Upon introspection
The only tangible thing we have in common is the night sky.
The rest of our lives are stubborn and selfish and separate.
That is why my heart is sad.
That is why I hate myself.

--Diane Calkins
CHRISTIANS ON THE CORNER

Standing on the corner,
"God bless you and keep you safe."
And they smile.

Alone. Frightened.
The tears fall.
"God bless you and keep you safe."
And they smile.

A fight breaks out.
Blood, Cursing.
"God bless you and keep you safe."
And they smile.

Hunger. Pain.
Hundreds die.
"God bless you and keep you safe."
And they smile.

The dead are buried.
Mourning. Loss.
"God bless you and keep you safe."
And they smile.

Still they stand on the corner.

--Diane Calkins
Pulling into a parking space, our family of five eagerly clamored out of the car. After traveling for several hours we were restless, hot, jabbering aimlessly to rid ourselves of pent-up energy. A carved arrow-shaped sign caught our eyes. It pointed northward, deep into the hills of Arkansas, bearing the simple message, "To Wilderness Church." My sisters and I groaned for we didn't care to visit some old church when more exciting adventures awaited. But, carrying out Mom and Dad's orders as good girls should, we followed the arrow and stepped through the narrow slit of trees into the densely wooded yonder.

A path, laid in widely spaced stones of different shades and shapes, silently guided us. No one wanted to speak as sharing the quiet stillness of the forest was conversation enough. The only audible evidence of human existence was the occasional snap of a twig, though the birds seemed not to notice. They continued with their light chirps, communicating in their own musical language. The wind's gentle rustle was telling us, "Shhh, shhh," and we obeyed. Sporadically the leaves and branches would part enough to allow a glimmer of the sun's rays to peep through, only to quickly shut out the sky again soon after. The sun constantly strove to shine through the towering thickness of the forest so that we could discover nature's intricate weave of greens, browns, golds and greys in our surroundings.

Then the path began to widen; the trees dispersed as if in anticipation of our approach, and suddenly before us stood the Wilderness Church. It appeared as though some architect had built a masterpiece for God in the midst of a forest full of God's masterpieces for man. Unlike the traditional stained glass of most churches back home, each wall of this church was made of crystal clear glass cut in angles. What a beautiful way to
express that God cannot be confined within four stone walls.

This attractive structure had a triangular prism-like shape. In sharp contrast to the skyward growth of the trees, the shiny black iron rods of the frame holding the tall, narrow sections of glass stood in a criss-cross fashion. Both creations reached for the Heavens...just at a different angle. The front doors, resembling two right triangles standing back to back, aided in accenting the church's A-frame shape.

Upon entering, we found that the peace of the forest had also penetrated the sanctuary. Taking one of the twenty plush pews padded in a blending rich rust color, we sat in silence, drinking in the tranquility. A dove, the biblical symbol of peace, was etched on the front of the darkly stained pulpit centered at the north end. Six glass light fixtures, fashioned with the same prism design, hung from the criss-crossed iron rods in the ceiling. These were unnecessary in that late afternoon as the sun shed a sufficient blanket of warmth and light through the transparent roof.

Several other travelers also stopped that day and took a similar moment to rest from their hectic schedule of tours. There was no nursery for children (though I do not recall any needing a reprimand), no added rooms for Sunday school classes and no fellowship hall; it was merely a place to worship, to sit in awe of the hills, trees and sky that God alone had made. Time slipped by; we rose to leave. The gentle breeze and the damp from the leaves met us at the door cooling our bodies as the atmosphere of the tiny church had calmed our restless spirits. Once again we squeezed back into the luggage-laden car and headed for "the more exciting adventures" that awaited us.

--Sarah Jiskoot
After the dust settled from the abrupt stop we made, I craned my neck to see what was at the end of the dusty, weather-beaten Mississippi road we had just traveled. The hopeless-looking shack in front of me barely resembled the house I had pictures when, earlier in the day, I had been informed that I would be helping repair the house of an elderly woman named Katie. The shack's hollow windows and leaning hole-torn roof, combined with the cloudy, grey backdrop, painted a dreary picture of neglect and desolation. The greyish-black, tar-covered roof drooped to one side as if it carried an invisible weight on its back. The jagged wood above the doorway and the window sills responded to the roof by slanting in the same direction. Though faded and washed-out, remnant specks of red from a painting years ago gave the predominantly grey building a muted red tint. The shack, perched precariously on four columns of concrete blocks from three to eight feet high, looked so unstable I was sure one kick to the them would send the whole structure toppling into the chicken yard which bordered it on the right. On the dirt beneath the shack, a skinny, black dog nursed five whimpering pups. She rested her head on a dented, rusty hubcap, while all around her filthy rags, torn and soiled beyond recognition, formed a nest for her young. A couple of steps in front of the shack led to a porch whose jagged, broken boards miraculously held the weight of an old refrigerator. Leftover straw and lint from a chicken nest built inside cascaded out of the rusty refrigerator. Cobwebs laced back and forth between the refrigerator and the window, ensnaring several old candy wrappers, and dozens of dry, brown leaves. At the other end of the porch, pieces of a dirty green bottle lay broken on top of a stack of faded yellow magazines. Ten filthy mason jars rested against the wall next to an open paper milk carton that contained a half-eaten tin of chewing
tobacco. While I contemplated the purpose of a bucket hung from a peg on the wall, the door cracked open. From inside I could hear the voice of an elderly woman with the heaviest southern accent I had ever heard—"Y'all heah to hep wi ma house?" she drawled. Although her compelling voice made me want to help her, I knew that the supplies we brought were only going to be band-aids for the gaping wounds of Katie's house.

—Pam Hemmingsen

WHY?

My God, my God, why did you do what you did for me? You gave me eternal life. I hung your son on a tree. In this world I exist in of selfishness, greed, and sin,

Someone as meek and holy as you doesn't quite fit in. Jesus, you came and showed this fool the true meaning of love.

What could I have done to show less thanks than to kill the Dove?

Lord, it makes no sense to a poor wretched soul such as I.

You gave the most precious thing you had, life, for me, but why?

—Jodi Marshall
He couldn't wipe
a wet floor, grey tiled, heard
me renew an aged echo--
"are you done?"
   lowered heads,
   checked imaginations
both slept in his eyes
and yet the diaper
   was stripped clean
in this midnight hour,
   a gall?
"are you done?"

weaning a candle, he got up--
but he couldn't wipe.
I was used to stuff like that,
but think of it.
   he couldn't wipe,
after we had tried so hard.

but friends don't give up, usually.
so we tried again

and then
the slow fan trickled with
mama-get-me-out-of-here
laughter, rebellion of sorts,
fanatic adulfion
slapped upside down

--Glenn Bruxvoort
Slowly creeping along, the brushes of the street sweeper blended into the numbing noise of the early morning rush hour in downtown Manhattan. All seemed normal. The uncaring faces, determined to get to their nine-to-five jobs, did not allow their senses to explore. If only they could learn to enjoy the wondrous architecture along South Street, up into the cobble-stone square of the Bowling Green subway station, where exquisite gothic statues stood. Oh, people might occasionally life or cover their nose as a derelict shouts obscenities, cursing the world; but regardless of how pathetic these street dwellers look or seem, the people push on.

One day, feeling as though I were just another one pushing on, I stopped abruptly. Turning towards the station, I saw a man I had been ignoring for weeks—and began to realize where and what this old man had been. Wait. Was he truly what he appeared to be? An old man or a young boy torn by the cruelty of the homeless city life. Examining his face was a journey through an endless battle he must have been encountering for years. This face began to read as though it were a map of the city. What skirmishes had carved its way into his hard, yet tender face?

Hustling from the station, the people would be on their guard as Pop would move in front of the oncoming commuters, who sensed Pop's desire to have a confrontation with them. Like the lice in his matted, oily hair, his actions seemed to serve no purpose—annoyance and antagonism their only objective. The ole man became a nuisance, as dirt under one's fingernails. Constantly complaining, whining and demanding an explanation of us and why we had put him in such a state. It soon became apparent that it was impossible to rid oneself of this dirt. There were times when he plead for an explanation why he had such pain and grief. Pop would lash out at people and tell them he had the
answers, that he alone had discovered the secrets of life. Reeling off theories he felt would solve social crisis, the masses would ignore him and continue to press on.

Around his eyes were dark shadows, resembling two black eyes. Upon looking closer I found that his eyes had sunken deep into the sockets. Could this have been caused by starvation? No, this starvation was one from lack of human compassion, not of consumption. The eyes, glossy or sullen, expressed many a hope and extreme hatred. So much hope would fill his eyes it seemed he was about to burst into tears. During such times, though brief, he showed tremendous compassion to people around him through those eyes—but no one would return him with compassion. This brought on a hatred which turned in his eyes, like the sun burns in the sky. Blinding hate, which not only blinded Pop, but blinded the people subjected to it. People would regard the old man as a confused, poor ole fool, not realizing they ignored his earlier plea for compassion, thus releasing his vehement hate. Could the people learn from the old man? Had Pop discovered something from his emotional roulette?

Possibly Pop's hardships showed him what was lacking in our society; he might have uncovered a way for all to be compassionate towards one another. That wrinkled face, like that of a prune, might not be a result from his hardship alone. Pop may have acquired this delicate network from his observations. He began to look majestic and wise, not like a mangy ole man who slept on tattered oil rags and used a moldy milk carton for the coins he hoped would come his way. I felt I should no longer ignore his crying voice, nor could others.

Weeks later, strolling up South Street, towards the office, I anticipated what the old man's theory would be today. What poor slob would be his victim? Would it be me? But blocks from the station, I sensed a difference in the air. Beginning to feel no one would be a victim today, I noticed the commuting masses weren't weaving as
usual, trying to avoid Pop. They appeared serene, as though they were attending a funeral. He they finally stopped to listen to the old man's theories? Nearing Bowling Green I could see Pop's ole forum was vacant. It seemed everyone was at a loss as where to walk now that the distraction from the morning commute was gone. I soon noticed others examining people around themselves. For an instant we were all drawn together by an inquisitive look, which needed urgent fulfillment. Just where did Ole' Pop go? As suddenly as this inquisition began, it ended with many who turned and strode away, fearing their concern for the old fool might lead others to frown upon them.

Possibly, for this short moment, Pop's yearning for compassion rose up from the cobblestone square of Bowling Green and filled all with a desire to share each other's thoughts and feelings. It was a tragedy that January morning, when Ole' Pop left us alone and longing for compassion.

--Scott Long
OLD AND FADED LOVE

I look at the doll thrown on the floor. She's thinking of times when I'd loved her more. Hair all knotted and not much to spare, Through her one-button eye she seems to stare. Her face is stained forever with food and dirt. The colors are now faded on her skirt, Where once they were as bright as the sky above; A symbolism of my old and faded love.

--Jodi Marshall

"HE'S YOUR GOD TOO!"

My life, my heart, fell hard upon the Rocks, I looked to the heavens, but they seemed to be locked. I swore and rebuilt a new life within myself, and the heavens were still far and look the same. I began to climb life's destiny alone, with no time to pray, but the paths wider and toils led me astray. I fell to my knees and cried out loud, "Lord, I need you," the heavens brought his love and a new life grew. I praised the father, of whose son died to save me, now knowing my sins are forgiven and I can die free. The Lord was my answers, my hopes and cries, now I feel the Lord in my heart and his mercy shines in my eyes. Now you as a shepherd, lead men, women, children and wives, and God will reward you with his love in eternal life.

--Fred Elsinga
ON BEING TWINS

I just spent the weekend with Sharon. She is not only my twin sister but also my friend. Growing up as a twin has been a unique experience. We were always together, doing the same things, dressing the same, having the same friends, excelling at mostly the same things, competing at the same things. (Although I did learn how to skip and ride a bike first, I still can't whistle.) When you are a twin, sharing is the norm. We had to share everything from blowdryers to bedrooms. I always longed for a room of my own. I would have even settled for a "twin" bed. Sharing a bed with your sister is really the pits. We learned how to sleep without touching each other, as if there were a board splitting the bed in half. If you dared cross over onto the other half of the bed, you'd be sure to get a good shove back. Sharon and I both enjoy reading before going to bed. The problem arose when we finished at the same time. Normally the last one done had to get up and shut off the light. But one night she shut her book when she saw I was done so that she wouldn't have to get up. I knew I was done first and I wasn't about to get up. We spent the whole night with the light on—both of us were too stubborn to give in.

College plans were made independently. We were encouraged to think of ourselves as individuals, even though we were often referred to as "the twins." We had different interests and goals and so we chose different colleges to attend. We both had some rough experiences our first year with roommates. After living with the same person for eighteen years (same bed, same room, same class, same age, same activities, same likes, same dislikes) it was hard to adjust to another person's lifestyle and habits. We wrote many letters that first year. No one ever admitted it, but we missed each other. When we saw each other on weekends, we giggled all the time about little insignificant things—our old neighbor lady especially. Her ways
seemed so much funnier when we were together. It was good to be together again.

When we were together at home, we didn't appreciate each other the way we should have. We weren't as considerate toward each other, we were more selfish, and little things upset us. Now that we have been separated for four years, we appreciate each other more and our time together is more valuable. I realize now that I'm lucky to be a twin. I not only have a great sister but I'll always have a best friend. Even though we're not together all the time and have gone our separate ways, there will always be that bond between us.

This past weekend we had to share a room again. She finished reading first, but luckily there was a lamp beside the bed. So I didn't have to get up, but instead I got a shove for hogging the blankets. We giggled a lot. Things are pretty much the same, but I think of her differently now. After we graduate in May we will probably lead separate lives. Maybe we could get jobs in the same town and share an apartment.

--Sharla Van Wettering
Are you there?
Can you hear me?
I need you.
I need your strong, sturdy arm.
I need your warm love shining upon me.
Your worthy blessing.
I need to be sure that you can
and will forgive all my sins.
When I ask all this from you,
I never know what to give in return.
All I have is me,
myself, my life.
If you will accept this
I'm yours forever.
Take me, guide me, mold me
into the man I long to be.
I'm tired of doing things my own way.
I'm tired of failing, please take
my life and guide it in your own special way.
Lord this is the only way I know
how to ask you into my life.
I hope that it's acceptable.
God, oh God, I need you
I love you, I want you
Do you hear me?
SOMETHING ABOUT THIS ISSUE'S WRITERS

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