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## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author/Artist</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Untitled (Art)</td>
<td>Cathleen Benberg</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Come Tomorrow</td>
<td>Jennifer Watson</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Thought I Heard the Geese Go By</td>
<td>Susan Brinkhuis</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untitled (Art)</td>
<td>Dave Huizenga</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boredom Abroad</td>
<td>Tony Wise</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 14, 1980</td>
<td>R. Joy Tuinstra</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untitled (Art)</td>
<td>Steve Point</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Deepest Wound</td>
<td>Ruth E. Shicks</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By the River</td>
<td>Jay Wielenga</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gift</td>
<td>Doris Dickenson</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tears in My Eyes</td>
<td>Maria Khoury</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touch of Foreign Culture</td>
<td>Kris Van Etten</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Farm</td>
<td>Jodi Bosma</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>Carol Pauley</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Another Dream (Art)</td>
<td>Mark Westenberg</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My First Date</td>
<td>Twila De Vries</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFL (Art)</td>
<td>Ann Hudson</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silent Answer</td>
<td>Tammy Knutson</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untitled</td>
<td>Tony Wise</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something about this issue's writers</td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something about this issue's artists</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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SPECTRUM  
Northwestern College  
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Meg strolled along the beach, the cool, damp sand yielding under each step. Her gray eyes searched the boundless vista before her. How unadulterated the Gulf appeared compared to the burgeoning air force base just thirty miles away. There, thundering aircraft, glassed control towers, endless run ways, and starched saluting inhabitants. Here, the rhythmic thrashing of water against the boulders, white sand and solitude.

Meg barely noticed the inquisitive gulls with their prying eyes, screaming and skimming the water. A lone vessel crept off in the distance and her gaze followed. She wondered whether it would safely harbor again. Then her thoughts shifted.

Some friends from back home had loaned her their beach home for the week. They told her it was more restful than a hotel, and sunbathing could be done privately. The children were back home in Indiana with her parents, so they wouldn't miss school. This was a disruption for her too, but she needed these few precious days to go through her thoughts before the big day. Tomorrow she'd drive to the air force base in Corpus Christi to welcome Stuart back into her life.

As she waded, the briny gulf wind whipped her hair and the waning sunlight illuminated her face. Lines of worry, and weariness. Fervent longing for the slightest hope for an unbroken family and a peaceful world once more.

She noticed beads of cool sweat chilling her slender frame. She grasped the cool, smooth wedding band on her finger as her mind raced on. She imagined him reaching the door of the plane. Would he recognize her? Would his body or mind be noticeably warped? Would he smile his special smile for her? Would he question her faithfulness? Would he run to her and kiss her with feelings of what? How would it feel to hold him, to share her bed with him again? Would he know the children?

Josh was just four months old then, five and a half now. The rest of the children had missed him at first, but the years were a life-time for them. And Vietnam was worlds
away. But they kept him alive in their conversations. Life had fled on routinely. Everyone had his own niche: school, work, Little League, ballet—the things that fill one's life and keep the mind from racing into the unknown. At first friends and family helped give moral support, but after five years, what was there to say?

Thank God she'd been able to play the role of both parents fairly effectively. The kids were so helpful and comforting. She recalled the many pep talks and prayers they'd shared over the years. And when or if their father came back, she knew they'd allow her some time with him alone. The thought of getting re-acquainted reminded her of their wedding night. Her mind reeled with girlish anticipation, but with womanish worry as well.

She knew she'd stand apart from the other M.I.A. wives tomorrow. She had to know how she'd feel without being influenced by all the emotions surrounding those who also waited for their loved ones.

After that call from Washington, her mind had exploded with joy, ecstasy, anticipation and assumptions all intertwined into one massive bundle. She'd had only one month to make the many preparations and attend those long, draining meetings. The brass had counseled, "Don't ask him this, don't ask about that." What does one talk about?

She noticed suddenly that the waves had ceased their slapping against the rocks. The moon and stars resembled sequins sewn to black velvet. She couldn't distinguish the time on her watch, but she knew she should head back down the teach. For a moment she stood and examined the stars. One, she noticed shone brighter than the rest. It reminded her of an essay she'd written in high school once. It went something like: He spread his wings and flew freely through time, and nothing deflected his upward soar. He reached the star that bade his flight and thanked it for its kindness. He looked down on Earth. She had been cruel to him. His task was now completed. He'd reached his star.

Her star—tonight—her last chance to look back and ahead. She'd prepared herself now. She would be ready for whatever tomorrow brought. She'd practiced control of her face, voice and emotions, but now there was more. There
would be no disappointment if he was less than she remembered, or she would be able to work it through. She had become worn out with wondering, practicing and re-enacting everything as it might be. But the star had winked and Meg's excitement surged.

-Jennifer Watson

I THOUGHT I HEARD THE GEESE GO BY

I look and look, I strain my eye
While looking past the sun;
I thought I heard the geese go by.

Quickly moving through the sky,
Flapping their wings as one;
I look and look, I strain my eye.

A V of tiny specks that fly
Their victory's end, soon won;
I thought I heard the geese go by.

I wait for answer to my why
and where their journey's done;
I look and look, I strain my eye.

Days, too, are passing by,
The flight of life, time's pun;
I thought I heard the geese go by.

Too late now, they've all gone by,
A life flown once, not seeking fun;
I look and look, I strain my eye,
I thought I heard the geese go by.

-Susan Brinkhuis
God, I felt bad. Even in clean sheets tucked comfortably away at a hotel in Athens, I couldn't escape the grime on the walls that was crawling into my skin and worse, my hair. To me, there's nothing quite as disgusting as greasy hair, especially when it's my own.

I need a beer, I thought. Next to my back-pack laid a couple cans of Heinekien. They were hot, but what the hell? I guzzled them, and the effect was better than any aspirin I'd ever tried. Now, I could face the real problem. What was I going to do in my spare time?

Nothing sounded exciting, so I forced myself out of bed, and jumped in the shower. The water was cold, but I wasn't complaining. After all, I thought, over two-thirds of the world is going to bed without eating, so who am I to get upset about a cold shower. Worse than that, over two-thirds of the world is going to bed with greasy hair. God save me from that!

Once in the warm air and noisy lighted streets, I looked at all the greek faces and half-expected to see curly-haired, blue-eyed statues. I was a little disappointed because they all looked like Mexicans. This isn't Athens, I thought. This is Tijuanna.

Soon I approached the ruins area and the crowd began to thin out. As the noise diminished, I retreated further and further inside the back of my head. In my struggle against boredom, I imagined myself holding a conversation with Socrates. We were at this bar in Athens and I think he was drinking a Scotch Whiskey. His flowing white beard kept brushing against the beer-soaked bar top, but I don't think he noticed. I wished he would have because it was starting to make me sick.

Anyway I remember asking, "What's there to do in this boring dump?"

"How do you define boring?"

"You know," I said staring at my beer glass, "It's like I feel right now. There's nothing to do and I don't feel like doing anything."

Socrates stuck his elbow in the spilled beer and
demanded, "That's not a definition. That's an example."

"Well, how do you define definition?"

"What do you mean by define?"

"Oh, bite it you loser." I'd had enough of him. Thank God he was only in my head and I could make him disappear as fast as I had created him.

Unfortunately, as he faded out, I spotted someone who wouldn't disappear. It was myself, sitting at a table in the very same bar. I had a cigarette in my mouth, and at first I wasn't sure if it was really me because I was wearing sunglasses. I wanted to approach myself, but then changed my mind and decided to slip out the back door.

"You know what I think?" I heard me say, "I think you're running away from me."

After a moment I overcame my confusion and stammered, "Well . . . why shouldn't I? You don't know anything."

"Of course I do. I know that I don't know anything. You think that you know everything and you're wrong. Everything you know is wrong."

I sat down by me and sighed, "You're right."

"I'm tired of hearing how bored you are."

"You got any suggestions," I asked.

I watched myself inhale a cigarette and take off those ridiculous sunglasses before saying, "First of all, what are you doing talking to me? We're not supposed to meet."

"I didn't invite you."

"Well, someone's got to straighten you out."

"Okay, Freud," I snapped, "I'm listening."

"Christ, pull yourself together. Now look, we've both admitted that we don't know anything. Right? Okay, that will have to do for now."

"Alright," I agreed, "I'm with you."

-Tony Wise
Sixty years ago today
they wed
and since their shaking promise
time fled.

Three daughters now have grown
to wed
and have some children of their own,
time fled.

Today all come to celebrate
their happy nest
with bounty feast and flowers;
God has blessed.

Grandma gives a teary kiss,
warm caress
while Grandpa winks with quick grey eye;
God has blessed.

Bald men and smiling women
watch young faces
and longtime neighbors, forgotten beaus
remember places.

The two still cling to vows
and wrinkled traces
of how they took a chance and now
remember places.

-R. Joy Tuinstra
Through the many months of pain, medications and treatments, she silently hoped for just one thing. Evelyn deserved to die peacefully, and assured she was deeply loved. She often thought that her secret desire was not too much to request, assuming that the love of her children would not have to be begged for. But like all human beings, childish insecurities cloud mature rationale, and as did with Evelyn—these doubts did find their way into her aged mind.

November. The months which brought with it the news of Evelyn's cancer. Her discomfort was minimal since the disease was only beginning to intrude into her body. Evelyn was truly grateful and each day thanked God for her ability to live each week. She did not suffer a great deal, for the disease had not hindered her in doing what she loved the most. Evelyn busied herself with baking pies. How she so thoroughly enjoyed creating these fruit-filled shells and giving them to neighbors. She also spent some of her time working with the ladies in the missionary society. They continued to call her, asking if she could help make table decorations and of course, bake pies for the meetings. Evelyn knew that these women who were especially close to her, were trying to keep her involved, and why not? She had strength physically, and Evelyn's mind was as sharp as ever.

She thought that maybe it was for this reason that her middle-aged children were seldom found to be at her house. If she could get around, and care for herself, then why did they need to bother with visiting her? Evelyn while sitting in her well used rocker would make up imaginary conversations with her children and grandchildren. These inventive dreams seemed to fill her void—her longing to be with each of them. Occasionally, these reveries would overwhelm her thoughts and would twist into ugly encounters with her family members. Dwelling on her loneliness caused Evelyn to become resentful. She fought with herself, hating her own bitterness, yet distressed in her loneliness. It was during these moments she would cease to rock in her chair and would bow her head in silent prayer to God. Evelyn asked forgiveness for her attitudes and also prayed that her children would show some
remote sign of genuine love and concern. Upon raising her head, she would then wipe her tears and begin to rock again. Evelyn truly feared becoming spiteful, but how difficult it was to continue keeping the smile in her voice.

Conversations with her children were awkward and strained. "Oh yes, just fine. I'd love to see you! I understand, it's ok. Well, maybe soon? Good-bye." Once again her phone call was meant merely to suffice for the inability to come and visit. Lack of time and effort appeared to be the only reasons for receiving telephone calls and not visits, she thought.

Merciless winds and incessant white introduced December. Evelyn had noticed the coldness of the air, even in her tightly secured home. This contributed to her rather dismal outlook on the weeks to come. She knew that the days before Christmas would be hectic and her children would have no time to drop by and see her.

During these long winter days the cancer was circulating throughout her body. The first sign of this was her inability to stand for any length of time. Evelyn was troubled at this, for she had hoped to bake several pies for Christmas. Sitting in the living room all day was upsetting. Evelyn just did not want to accept the fact that her body was failing. Now more than ever she needed her children to come and encourage her. To be held and loved was her greatest desire—yet each day passed exactly as the day before. Still no visit from any of her children. Why didn't they want to take time to drop by? Was she that unimportant? she thought.

Her grandson Mark, a college student, realized that it was not too long before Christmas, and he had not seen her in almost a month. So he ventured out into the biting cold, driving about ten miles to her house. What a surprise! Her face radiated at the sight of him, as she stretched her frail arms out to greet Mark. He tenderly embraced her and said, "Boy is it good to see you! I'm sorry it has been so long, but you know with school and all—sure keeps me busy." "Now dear, that's ok, you are quite busy I am sure."

Her voice—there was something in her voice. He courteously smiled at her, all the while sensing a deep ache within her. As they chatted, he became increasingly aware
of her bruised feelings. It was nothing she blatantly stated, but she had a definite change of attitude. Her responses were different than ever before. His grandmother did not seem to be as jovial, instead she communicated hurting and aching.

Mark did not know what to talk about except classes. After that topic had been exhausted, he excused himself. As he grasped her hand in his, he had a strange premonition that his grandma was growing quite weak and her body was failing due to the cancer. She gazed upon his young face as they clasped each other's hand. "How good it was to see you and have the company. We'll see you at Christmas Mark. Drive safely. Good-bye." "It was good to see you too grandma. Bye-bye." Slowly their fingers parted. He leaned over and kissed her on the cheek.

After he left her living room, she tried to recall all the details of the time together. What did he have on? Did he say he had a girlfriend? How are his grades? All of these things seemed important to Evelyn, probably because she felt it would be a while again before she would see him, or have any other company at all.

However, Evelyn was wrong. It was only seven days until Christmas. Her days since Mark's visit had gone by unnoticed. Each day began and ended the same way the last 24-hour span had. But, this day was different. Sitting in her favorite rocker, Evelyn was startled with a "Hello. Mom, are you home?" "Why yes. Who is there? Is that you Annette?" Her eldest daughter had arrived unexpectedly one morning. The news which she brought was even more unsuspected than the visit itself. Annette told her mother that she was now on a waiting list to be put into a home. Apparently the other children had discussed it at great length, Evelyn's condition, and decided it best if she sold her home and live in a retirement center.

Evelyn's mind blurred with many thoughts. Move out? Why? I have no reason to leave. "Annette, you are expecting me to leave my house? The very house I raised you children in? I don't understand!" "Mom we are worried about you being here alone, and feel it would be better all around to have you cared for in a home."

Folding her hands in her lap, Evelyn tried to collect
her thoughts. "Annette I want to stay here. If I feel the need to leave, I'll tell you. I only need to see more of you. I get lonely. Can you try to come and see me more often?" "It would be best to have you in the home, safe and sound. Ok mom? Hey we'll talk later. I've got to run. Call you tonight." Patting her mother's leg, Annette smiled and then left.

Leave? Why wasn't I considered in the decision? I do not need to leave. Sure, I am a bit thinner, and a little weaker, but I hardly feel I have to be put away, she said to herself.

How odd it was that the three days following her daughter's visit, Evelyn grew worse. Her energy was low, and her body ached. She was rapidly losing weight, for she had no appetite for food. It's as if the news from Annette had caused her to give up fighting the cancer!

Christmas day did not seem the same. Polite conversation filled the afternoon and obviously, there was an uneasiness in the air. Evelyn continued to smile and tried to laugh, but inside her heart was burdened. The family members also detected the unsettled aura in the house. All still participated in the traditional gift-giving, the singing of carols, and telling stories of Christmases past.

Deep within Evelyn, she agonized, not only over her cancer-infested body, but more than that. It was her sense of being unloved and pushed aside that dug inside of her, cutting the deepest wound.

Finally the day was over. The superficial smiles and insincere concern was ended. Quietly in her mind, she thought of and looked forward to dying. United with God was the only thing which held for Evelyn any hope. It was in these days of feeling alone and forgotten along with the rampaging disease that she prayed for deliverance. Deliverance and peace is what Evelyn received, for it was four days after Christmas that Evelyn died.

-Ruth E. Shicks
BY THE RIVER

Quiet and calm is the river tonight,
Its ripples and waves are few;
Harvest moon shines on the waters so bright
Crystal fresh as a new morning dew.

The crickets play their lonely old songs
For throngs that don't even hear,
They play their tune from dusk to dawn
So long and even and clear.

A beaver glides through a silent marsh,
Alert for a fallen tree;
With a slap of his tail he quickly departs,
For danger he saw in me.

As the moon slowly climbs in the quiet sky,
The wind blows up a slight shiver
And whistles about as the trees give a sign
Tonight, beside the lazy, still river.

-Jay Wielenga
THE GIFT

It caught my eye immediately upon entering the store. A beautiful Persian feline graced the front of the card, and the inside greeting was simple and sweet. I knew Emily would love it. I grabbed the matching envelope and headed for the check-out counter. As I waited in an incredibly slow-moving line, I became increasingly annoyed with the woman ahead of me. Her incessant chattering tried my patience and it was all I could do to refrain from silencing her. My head pounded as I listened to the shrillness of her voice, and I felt my anger mount as I caught sight of her overflowing cart. She barely noticed that I had only one item to purchase. If she was the least bit considerate, she would allow me to go first. I was forced to wait, however, and I left the store with feelings of extreme irritation.

I sat down on an inviting bench in the center of the mall to reflect upon the causes of my hostility. I knew that inconsiderate shoppers were not totally to blame for my ill feelings and I concluded that my annoyance had actually been caused by the disappointment of the day. For weeks I had anxiously awaited this time to complete my shopping and once again "get into" the Christmas spirit. Final exams had allowed little time to think about Christmas and now that they had been completed, I had two days to catch up on what I was missing. For some strange reason, however, I could not grasp the warmth of the season that I had felt in years past. I had attempted everything. The Christmas cookies were baked, the tree was decorated, and the last of the gifts and cards had been purchased and delivered.

All of the cards except Emily's, that is. I slipped it from the bag. I would have completely forgotten about Emily if it hadn't been for the phone call. I hadn't heard her voice for months and I barely recognized it at first. She had called to invite me for tea, and I would have gone if I had not already made plans. Eighty-three-year-old Emily was a dear friend, but school and various activities had prevented me from visiting her. I would love to see her again if there was only more time. I decided to assure
her of this by writing a note under my signature. I opened the card and stared at the message inside. "Wishing you a warm and blessed Christmas." The words lacked meaning and I could not dismiss the fact that this disturbed me. I looked up to examine the individual faces in the mobs of people, hoping to find someone who appeared to share my frustration.

My attention was diverted to a man on my far right, who was holding a screaming toddler. For nearly fifteen minutes I watched as he attempted to silence the child, but none of his tactics seemed to work. Just when I was beginning to think that his efforts were in vain, something beautiful happened. A little girl was approaching the man, accompanied by her parents. Her tiny hands clutched a coloring book as if it were her most prized possession, and her face glowed with the excitement of Christmas. She stopped directly in front of the crying child when she noticed his tears, and her parent's gentle urging to continue walking was ignored. Momentarily she observed the sad face, and then, without hesitation, she offered her treasure. The crying softened to a whimper as the toddler gratefully accepted the book, and the little girl simply smiled and hurried to catch up with her parents.

I sat, engrossed in the beauty of the moment and silently thanked the tiny angel as she walked out of sight. I could not explain the sensation which had suddenly enveloped me. It was unlike anything I had ever experienced. I smiled as I touched the card in my lap, for I knew that what I was feeling had been given to be shared.

-Doris Dickenson
TEARS IN MY EYES

(Dedicated to Uncle Fawzy)

For long we have moved along separate paths.
I have always heard about you but never saw you, then one day I did and we quickly became friends we shared our joys we shared our sorrows.

For you minutes tick to no end, Years pass moving fast. You never stopped to look at what time has past. Your day was a new start - love, live, laugh or die.

Did death defeat me? My eyes are sunk in deep tears. Your love memories are with me, You are on a long trip and I am in deep sleep.

My simple mind is disturbed, my heart aches. Time seems to be a standstill in a storm. Will it ever pass?

Time has passed and we went in different directions. Sadness in my eyes, I miss our time together. I really miss you I wish I was with you. Maybe I will be soon.
I love you.
Come back to life.
Come to the roses and thorns.
Come back to us all.
We'll give you our all.
but if you decide not to,
prepare a room for us all.

-Maria Khoury

TOUCH OF FOREIGN CULTURE

Threadlike rays of the afternoon sun filtered through the cracks in the graying walls of the dilapidated school house. Sitting behind a rickety school desk as I handed out worm medicine in this make-shift clinic, the pungent odor of alcohol and the stench of unwashed bodies burned in my nostrils. Through the dirt-crusted pane of glass in the window beside me, I could just catch a glimpse of a small boy, clad in a pair of tattered breeches, herding a group of emaciated cattle down the road. At his heels ran the skeleton of a dog, its brown flesh draping a protruding ribcage. In the doorway, attracted by the noise, a beggar leaned heavily upon a makeshift crutch which was swathed in filthy rags. The thread-bare remains of an overcoat hung in shreds across his hunched shoulders and his extended right arm. His left arm hung useless at his side, its fingers shriveled with deformity. Sharp cheekbones jutted from the hollows of his face accentuating the pleading eyes, sunken in their sockets, as spasms of coughing wracked his body with pain. In front of the desks, lines of mothers filed, holding their ailing, diseased children. Stopping to get her worm medicine, one mother held a small girl, her glazed eyes staring blankly. The infant's head lay listless against the mother's arm, her small stomach bloated by malnutrition. As I turned my head away and glanced down, a rat scurried across the corner of the room.

-Kris Van Etten
THE FARM

A small acre plot,
buildings in a cluster,
rows of crops framing
man and beast.

Winds travel an unanswered question,
the cat sneaking for its prey,
lungs expand with sweet air,
my eyes wander for miles.

The farm is its own city,
a road coming and a road going,
work opens the book,
crops tell the story.

-Jodi Bosma

POETRY

Profound symbolism
perfect rhythm
beautiful meanings
inspired thoughts
time's dedication,
heavenly transcriptions
brought to earth
by God's grace
a poet's masterpiece.

-Carol Pauley
I woke up unreasonably early on that fateful morning. I sat up with a start. This was it. Tonight my whole life would change. This was the evening that I would have my first date. All sorts of thoughts began to run through my head. "What would I wear?" "Will my hair turn out?" "What if he's late?" Worse yet, "What if he doesn't show?" "What if . . . ." Quickly I dismissed all those thoughts from my mind.

I had to begin to do something that would take my mind off my worries. I crawled out of my warm bed and put my feet on the bare cold surface of the wooden floor. It seemed unseasonably cold for a day late in September. As I opened the curtains of my bedroom window, I felt a feeling of relief wash over me as I saw the bright sun glaring down from the huge blue sky. It must be a good omen, I thought to myself. Tonight will be terrific, I thought. Everything will fall into place and turn out for the best.

I quickly changed from my p.j.'s to a sweatshirt and a pair of jeans. As my last shoe was tied, I headed downstairs to the warmth of our tiny kitchen. My mother and two brothers were already up and ready to start the new day. As I ate my breakfast, I was aware of the strange looks my mom was giving me. It was rare that I was up before noon on a Saturday morning. My two little brothers were already giving me grief. Being the only girl in the family, I was subject to quite a bit of ridicule. Now that I was about to go out for the first time in my life, I got a double dose. I heard comments such as; "I bet that he's really ugly and is just looking for somebody to take out. That's why he asked you out. He knew that you were desperate too." After a few more wise cracks, my mother sent them out to the yard to attend to their chores. Then I was subject to the third-degree from her. She asked, "What is this young man like? Do I know his family? Would I approve or disapprove of him?" I calmed my mother's concerns by reassuring her that she had nothing to worry about. I told that as far as I knew, he had not been in jail for at least a couple of weeks. She responded by saying if I didn't stop having such a smart
mouth, I would be staying home tonight. I gave in and told her how much I knew about him. I added that he must not be all that bad, after all he was my best friend's cousin.

After that she became concerned with what attire I was going to wear that night. So I told her I was wearing a pair of jeans and a nice top. Then she hit the ceiling, there was no way I was going to get out of the house in a pair of jeans. My mother is one for dressing up when you bring the dog in to see the vet. After discussing the pros and cons of dressing up, we compromised. I would wear a pair of my very best corduroy pants.

The rest of that day was spent cleaning house and helping my dad with the chores. Finally it was 5 o'clock. I could start to worry seriously about the upcoming date. As my family sat around the dinner table that night, I heard advice from everybody. My mother told me to mind my manners, to say "please" and "thank you." My two younger brothers told me to chew gum at the movie. Then he wouldn't try to kiss me. (I didn't need that kind of advice.) Then my older brother added his two cents worth by telling me that if my date tried anything on me, I could tell him. He would take care of "that creep." Only my dad saved me from the torment of offering his advice. He just sat there and ate in silence. At least someone was on my side.

At a quarter to seven, I found myself sitting in our front hallway. I was sitting there, waiting, listening for a car to pull into the drive. At ten to seven, I made sure that our clock was still working. The time was passing so slowly. Finally at two minutes to seven, the doorbell rang. A sigh of relief escaped from my lips. I wasn't going to be stood up on my first date. As I approached the door I felt five pairs of eyeballs watching me.

As I opened the door, there he was. I felt my heart do a flip-flop. I couldn't believe that I was actually going out with the captain of the football team. It was like a dream come true. I was the envy of every girl at school. I was only a mere freshman and I was lucky enough to be going out with a senior "super-star."

Finally my mind returned to where I was and I introduced him to my family. My two little brothers sat and laughed at him, while my older brother tried to act tough
and ignore us. My mother was her usual polite self. My dad was by far the most comfortable of all of us. As we turned to go I saw my dad give me a thumbs-up sign and then he winked. Everything was falling into place. This was going to be a terrific evening.

The rest of the night was perfect, except for a few minor mishaps. I was not attacked at the movie theater, so I didn't need the advice from my brothers. After the movie, I nervously walked back to the car, tripping over a rock as I reached for the car door. After that swift move, I thought I wouldn't be such a klutz. But I was mistaken. At the restaurant, I spilt my coke all over the table, while trying to express my viewpoint. (Mother told me to talk with my mouth and not with my hands.) The pickle from my hamburger slipped out from between the bun and landed in my lap. I thought that tragedy only came in threes. Then all my goof-ups would be over. But I was wrong, again. When he walked me to our front door, all my brothers were staring out the window at us. Oh no, I thought, this is going to be it. He'll never ask me out again. But he just laughed and said that I shouldn't be embarrassed. It was just a sign that my brothers cared for me and that was their way of expressing it. When he told me that, I felt as relaxed as I had been all evening. After we said good-night (with six eyes looking on), I went inside to beat on my brothers for spying on me. Then maybe I would thank them for taking time to care for me.

-Twila De Vries
Is there any hope for one such as I?
Continually wavering in my intentions,
and not really sure how much I want
to follow You.

The truth stings my pride.
I don't like unpleasantries
which disrupt the normal course of things.
I don't like to break out of the mold
in which I have cast myself.
To follow You means breaking that mold.
Which do I want more?
Oh, God, my heart cries for answers;
yet the one that comes is silence.
I cannot read the silence
but I know that the answer is contained there.
Somehow, God, I know You're behind it all,
although I can't see You now.
Please help me to hold on through this darkness
until the silence becomes an echoing song of triumph.

-Tammy Knutson
A pitcher of beer had disappeared between the two of us before the familiar feeling of regret began to settle in. I wasn't quite drunk enough to feel good about being at the bar on a school night, but I had put down enough to feel bloated and disgusted.

"I really have to go," I told him, "I've got first hour tomorrow."

"I won't hear it!" he insisted, "Let's get another pitcher and some steaks. On me."

I didn't even know this guy. Besides that, he was fat and smelled like bacon. But I reluctantly agreed because he was paying.

"You know what's wrong with this world?" he demanded, "No one gives a crap about anyone else."

"You really think so?"

"Damn right! Just watch the news!"

"What about the hostages?" I offered, "Lots of people are happy about their being back."

"It figures," he snorted, "I served for three years in Nam and when I came back I was lucky my old lady met me at the airport. Those hostages? They get Hawaii vacations and hero welcomes. What about me? I went through hell too."

"Yeah, I see your point."

"No you don't!" he slammed his open fist on the table. "You weren't there. You don't know what I went through. Jesus, piles of bodies getting bulldozed away. You've never seen nothing."

I could only nod my head.

"And then you come home and everybody hates your guts cause you went to Viet Nam."

"I don't hate your guts," I protested.

"Of course not! I just bought you some beer and steak. No, I know you mean well, but I'm . . . well, I'm not that drunk."

"If you don't believe me, you must think I'm a liar," I said trying to sound as convincing as possible.

"You're not a liar?" he laughed hilariously.

"Not all the time."
"All right, all right. I've got some questions for you."

"Fine."

"Are you a Christian?"

I hesitated, "I suppose."

"Then tell me how I can find Jesus as my Savior. You know, be reborn."

"Ask, I guess."

"Well by God, I've been asking every night for a month now and nothing happens. I don't feel no peaceful awe settle into me. I don't feel nothing. It doesn't work."

"Maybe you're not trying hard enough," I suggested.

"No, I spend all my time trying. What am I supposed to do? Fake it? I ain't going to pretend."

"That is a problem," I agreed.

"Just answer one question. Can you say that you've actually felt something?"

"What do you mean?"

"You know, a shiver down your spine, a tap on the shoulder. I don't know, but have you felt anything? Is it possible that you could be fooling yourself?"

"I don't know," I shrugged. "I don't have any answers."

Lying in bed that night, I thought about him, but for some reason I couldn't recall his face. He was fat and smelled like bacon. That's all that would come. Closing my eyes, I wished I could forget the man as easily as I forgot the face.

-Tony Wise
SOMETHING ABOUT THIS ISSUE'S WRITERS ...

JODI BOUMAN - a junior from Harris, Iowa, majoring in sociology.

SUSAN BRINKHUIS - a sophomore from Little Rock, Iowa, presently taking general studies.

TWILA DE VRIES - a freshman from Hartley, Iowa.

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TAMMY KNUTSON - a sophomore from Humboldt, Iowa. She is studying business economics with a career concentration in professional accounting.

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KRIS VAN ETten - a freshman from Rapid City, South Dakota, presently taking general studies.

JENNIFER WATSON - an English major from Persia, Iowa.

JAY WIELENGA - a junior from Rock Rapids, Iowa, with a business major.

TONY WISE - a literature and French major from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. His heroes are Vonnegut, Dostoevsky, and John Wayne.
SOMETHING ABOUT THIS ISSUE'S ARTISTS . . .

CATHLEEN BENBERG - a senior from Storm Lake, Iowa, with an art major.

STEVE BOINT - a freshman from Bismark, North Dakota. He has a preministerial career concentration.

ANN HUDSON - a junior from Elkhart, Iowa. She has a physical education major with a career concentration in coaching.

DAVE HUIZENGA - from Hospers, Iowa, enrolled in a special biology program with minors in chemistry and art.

MARK WESTENBERG - a junior from Rosendale, Wisconsin, majoring in art with a career concentration in pre-graphic design.