

1st Place—Essay Division

English 090

by **Ross Kopperud**

On a paper that was recently returned to me, the remarks read, “You had some good high school English teachers.” These remarks were both appreciated and encouraging. It has been fifteen years since I sported the cap and gown that told me I was ready for the real world, and even though memories fade and relationships weaken, I remember learning little from my school’s attempts to teach me the official language of the upper Midwest.

I always had the misfortune of taking English from Mr. Kutz. He was the boys’ basketball coach who taught English for some extra money. Mr. Kutz was a short, pear-shaped man who didn’t like kids. He had dark hair and a comb-over that crawled over his shiny scalp. His fleshy cheeks supported a pair of horn-rimmed reading glasses he probably stole from an elderly lady at his church.

Mr. Kutz used to sit at his desk and read the newspaper—all through class. At some point he would peer out over his paper and announce, “Memorize the list of prepositions in your textbook.”

“What page is it on?” we wondered. “What’s a preposition for?”

“I’ll show you where it’s at,” he’d grumble, “but you’ll have to read about what a preposition is.

I have some correcting I need to get to.” He’d lift his paper, and we’d sit and wonder if home schooling might be worth looking into.

The yearbook picture of Mr. Kutz showed him forcing a smile over a copy of *The Grapes of Wrath*. It was one of those “you act like you’re busy and I’ll snap the picture” types of photographs. I figured he had to go to the library to find a copy of the book, but only after asking the librarian who wrote it.

Under the black-and-white picture was Mr. Kutz’s favorite quote, “I can’t believe it.” He’d say that all the time. Our class would be busy with an assignment and he’d slam the newspaper to his desk under his palms, look toward the heavens and exclaim, “I can’t believe it.” He usually relieved our curiosity, telling us of a huge upset in football or that Blondie wasn’t going to let Dagwood take a nap that day. Every time Mr. Kutz said, “I can’t believe it,” I wanted to raise my hand and ask, “Can I go to the bathroom?” just to hear what his response might be.

Half way through my senior year of high school we got a new English teacher. She was a beautiful, slender blonde who had just finished college. She tried to teach us about foreign words like gerunds and appositives, but it was too late. We were too busy studying how our young, new teacher’s modifiers didn’t dangle.

2nd Place—Essay
Division

**Analytical Essay
on “Dead Men’s
Path” by Chinua
Achebe**

by *Sheila Anderson*

In “Dead Men’s Path” by Chinua Achebe, a school headmaster driven by idealistic, albeit selfish motivations, and his superficial wife faced conflict from the traditional villagers, in their attempt to impose a self-serving modernity upon those whom they considered to be “older and often less-educated” (367). He and his wife began efforts to modernize a school with little regard for the wishes of the villagers or their traditions. Michael and Nancy Obi instead felt they had found the perfect opportunity to impose their ideals on the villagers.

Achebe’s story allows its readers to explore some of the effects of colonialism. With the imposition of political systems came cultural imperialism as well. Western methods and ideas were prevalently seen as superior to the native culture. It is important to note as well, that in some cases the colonialists favored certain tribes over others, which many times created an atmosphere of hostility. This short story offers an ironic view of colonialism, because the

headmaster himself was a native African who had perhaps succumbed to the belief that the colonialist’s modern views were preferable to those of the African villagers.

Michael Obi’s intentions were quite clear. He believed that the villagers lacked modernity and furthermore felt the school was being directed in a backward manner. He stated, “I was thinking what a grand opportunity we’ve got at last to show these people how a school should be run” (368). His motivations were empty of any desire to learn from the villagers or value their culture. In his view, the modern methods and ideas he promoted were the only ones worthy of acceptance. He was blind to the wishes of the villagers, as well as having no consideration for the value of their heritage.

Michael Obi’s wife’s ignorance mirrored his own. Her motivations were not intentionally harmful, perhaps. However, by their very nature, they were self-serving. She had no desire to learn from the villagers or listen to their wishes. She supported her husband’s efforts to cleanse the village of its culture and implement a new, westernized culture, with no regard for the importance of the culture already in place.

“We shall have such beautiful gardens and everything will be just modern and delightful...” stated Nancy Obi. She supported her husband’s ideals and his scornful view of the teachers in the village: “These old and super-

annuated people in the teaching field who would be better employed as traders in the Onitsha market” (367). She basked in the notion of a glamorous role in the envious position as the headmaster’s wife, with no consideration for cultural responsibility (368).

In the Obis’ efforts to modernize the school, he and his wife wished to not only change the teaching methodology, but to beautify the school grounds as well. A spiritual footpath, which appeared unused, was the object of his efforts. He felt the footpath was a detriment to the beauty of the new hedges and flowerbeds. The footpath was blocked so villagers could not pass through the school grounds.

The village priest visited the headmaster in an effort to avoid conflict over the blocking of the footpath. He described the importance of the footpath in the following statement. “Look here, my son,’ said the priest bringing down his walking-stick, ‘this path was here before you were born and before your father was born. The whole life of the village depends on it. Our dead relatives depart by it and our ancestors visit us by it. But most important, it is the path of children coming in to be born” (369).

Michael arrogantly dismissed the village priest’s words in his statement: “The whole purpose of our school is to eradicate just such beliefs as that. Dead men do not require footpaths. The whole idea is just fantastic. Our duty is to teach your children to

laugh at such ideas” (369). His mockery and denigration of the village’s sacred path is further shown in the next statement. “I would suggest your constructing another path, skirting our premises. We can even get our boys to help in building it. I don’t suppose the ancestors will find the little detour too burdensome” (370). His blatant disregard for the sacredness of the footpath is met with few words from the priest.

After a woman died during childbirth, villagers destroyed the fence and hedges around the school and tore down one of the buildings. In the report concerning the destruction, the supervisor considered the incident to have been caused by the misguided zeal of the new headmaster (370), a native man who was simply following the colonial method of destroying tradition in the name of Western modernity. The irony in this is quite significant. Even though Obi preferred eliminating the traditions of his country, the white supervisor, as an outsider, recognized the headmaster’s actions as imprudent. The self-serving notions of colonialism were never hidden or unknown, however the inter-tribal problems it created have not always been recognized. The rampant colonialism in Africa upset the native cultures and created an atmosphere open to tribal warfare and instability.

Achebe, Chinua. “Dead Men’s Path.” Literature: A Pocket Anthology. Ed. R.S.

Gwynn. New York: Penguin Academics, 2002. 367-370.

Faith

by ***Rajil Risal***

Dream Works record manages to come out with the best animated movies. The Lion King, Anastasia and Prince of Egypt shook up the box office. Among these three, the Prince of Egypt had a special story line to it: the story of Moses. To Christians, Moses should not be a hard name to recognize. The movie is well developed and the animations are just fantastic. The Prince of Egypt has all the ingredients to capture the audience's attention but it fails to conform to the true scriptures from the Bible. In order to attract attention, the scenes in the movies are elaborated, bringing in more emotion and making the film dramatic. However, in the process of dramatizing the actions, the wrong message and an off-beam version of the scripture is projected which creates confusion among the people already familiar with the Bible, and misconceptions about the pain and suffering of the Hebrews and Moses for the unfamiliar.

When I saw the movie for the compulsory Religious Education class at my Christian School, I was already well acquainted with the Bible. To tell the truth, the movie failed to impress me because even though the outline proved to be similar, it misinterpreted the facts. From

the very start, when Pharaoh commands, "Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let the daughter live," the movie raises the story of Moses. In the Bible, when the Princess finds the child she names Moses in a basket, she calls for a Hebrew woman to nurse him, but in the movie version, the Princess raises Moses herself. While the mistake with this scene is minor, the way the movie sets the Egyptians as both good and bad constitutes a worse confusion.

Another prominent part where the Bible and the movie differ is when Moses grows up and one fine day kills an Egyptian soldier for beating a Hebrew slave. The Biblical version of the story states, "He looked this way and that, and seeing no one killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand." In the movie, Moses accidentally pushes the Egyptian soldier from one of the towers in front of thousands of Hebrew slaves. Now the director shows his audience how strong Moses is. The character of Moses is given some much needed strength and is shown taking the right path. The alteration creates a different perception of the character, and of the truth of what Moses really did.

Winding down, the movie reaches its climax. Now the Pharaoh is mad at Moses and tries to kill him after finding out about the killing of the Egyptian soldier, whereas in the movie the Pharaoh is angry but does not run after Moses with a sword.

Moses leaves the palace after he himself finds out about the slaying of the Hebrews in the Nile. The movie finally ends, and the Hebrews get rid of slavery from the hands of the Egyptians. If not for the cool animations and a hot girl sitting next to me, I would not have survived through the movie. Entering my physics class I still wondered about the incidents in the movie, which were so badly twisted and turned they did not make any sense.

I would not be wrong to state that in this age of multi-media the percentage of people watching the movie would be higher than those reading the Bible. They would not know what Moses and the Hebrews had to go through to gain their freedom. To me the movie proved to be a complete confusion. I felt this might be a mockery of the Bible or of the whole Christian faith. In my initial reaction, I feel a wrong picture is rendered of the Egyptians not reprimanding the Hebrews as perceived in the Bible. I pondered throughout physics class, reviving my brain cells to think differently and indeed they did. This might just be a children's movie where no one is really bad, and everyone has a good and a bad side to them, I thought, and so did the Egyptians. No matter how hard I tried, these proved to be my only two conclusions.

At this stage of my life, the transition from teenage to adulthood in itself is a hard phase to pass through. When watching movies such as these, I

begin to wonder what is right and what is wrong. It gives me more "imagination space" and new thoughts pop up in my head, some of which I don't want to think about. As the Lord says, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (John 20:29). My faith is strong, and I believe in the Lord. Recently I received chain mail protesting about a new movie entitled Jesus Was Gay. I had a Bible put in front of me at an age when "they" taught me what was right and what was wrong. I have grown up with reading the Bible. Maybe after watching Jesus Was Gay, I will agree with thousands of human beings just like me.

The Vision of Life Through Pottery

by Angela Ressler

As a freshman entering high school, one of the course requirements included art. This class provided an opportunity to throw a piece of pottery. Before starting the project, I needed to learn the techniques of throwing pottery and the names of the tools. To create pottery, several ingredients are used in preparation in order to create the final masterpiece.

The first step to form the clay was to mix several clay powders together with water, then stir them with a clay machine. Once

the clay had been completely mixed, I extracted two to three pounds of clay to throw a piece of pottery. With the clay in hand, I centered the bulky clump on the wheel. After plugging the cord from the wheel into an outlet, the wheel started to spin rapidly and I immediately began to wedge the clay to force out unwanted air bubbles. Next, I began to “throw” the clay. With the wheel continually spinning, I began patting the clay to form a cone shape. Using both hands covered with sticky clay, I pressed the previous cone shape into the form of a closed cylinder. With the project well underway, the formation of the cone by means of both hands needed to pat down the peak, structuring yet another closed cylinder. With the last cylinder intact, I created a doughnut shape, leaving about one inch of clay on the bottom for a sturdy base.

I inserted my right thumb into the doughnut shape to craft a hole. I gently inserted my fingers inside the newly created hole and slowly pulled the clay upward until it rose to the right height, and thickness of the pottery was correct. At the top of the pottery, a small lip bent over the sides of the recently formed vase. I had created my own masterpiece. It was beautiful! However, to keep you in perspective, this was the first time I had attempted to throw a piece of pottery. Because of my lack of experience, my hands did not always remain sturdy and moved more than necessary.

Because of these minor hand motions, the vase stood unbalanced, ending up with a slight lean to the right. Nevertheless, it was perfect in my eyes.

With the desired figure finally shaped, I grabbed a spare needle tool and cut off the unnecessary material from the bottom of the vase. At this time, the wheel stood motionless. Next, I picked up the wire tool and made a clean cut underneath the vase. While the vase was set aside for a couple of days to dry, I had time to contemplate the colors to finish my masterpiece.

After returning to the dried vase, I trimmed extra clay off the bottom and created a foot so that the vase could sit properly. Once the vase was bone dry, I fired it. This stage is commonly referred to as bisque, which is followed by yet another stage called glazing. I decided to incorporate many vibrant colors to produce a more attractive appeal to the vase. Because I chose several different colors, I was required to paint the colors one by one, which requires more effort and time. Once complete, the vase was set out on display. I chose to fill it with two daisies, bringing my masterpiece to life.

Throwing pottery is a metaphor of my life. The simple, yet complex, vase demonstrates how my vase, life, has been shaped over time. Until I began college, I have acted as the bulky clay. The potters who acted upon me were my family, friends and the environment. These potters have

shaped me, a chunk of clay, into what I am today. Entering college, I have turned into another potter who will add to the shape of my vase, my life.

My parents mixed a large amount of love and affection, which ultimately brought me into this world. All six pounds and seven ounces was the center of attention, until the "baby fever" resided. The profound influences my family and friends have had upon me are similar to forming the foundation, height and thickness, of the vase. Growing up on a farm, I have acquired many real life values. For example, responsibility and a hard work ethic were formed into my "base." I have learned to understand many perspectives and to gain insight from my siblings. I realize that these morals and values were emphasized to lessen the possibility of behavioral problems. As I transitioned from a child to a young adult, I was set free to make difficult decisions, many times leading to wrong choices because of a lack of experience. Nonetheless, these mistakes are similar to the potter who uses her hands to slowly pull the clay upward.

As time passes, I acquire knowledge from my immediate family members. This knowledge prevents me from making the same mistakes as they did. For example, my dad would say, "You think you're pretty smart until it comes time to do something." This is quite typical of young children. Many kids believe they can do anything they choose with

no consequences. For example, in my early teenage years, I remember going out with a bunch of friends and not coming in until midnight. The curfew was set at 10:30 p.m., but as I stumbled in the house I met my father face to face. At the time, I thought I didn't need to be reprimanded for my actions; I was young and having a great time. However, my father let me contemplate my actions the next morning at 5:00 a.m. when I began a series of unpleasant jobs. Later that day when I was tired and yearning for a nap, I decided that following the rules was not such a bad idea after all. Sandra Carey once said, "Never mistake knowledge for wisdom. One helps you make a living; the other helps you make a life."

Having a father like mine has had a profound effect upon my ideals. His wisdom and patience continually teach me lessons. He is not overbearing in his instruction. He understands the importance of mistakes and the place for advice. When I was bombarded with college applications, I needed to choose what were important attributes in a university. What environment and education would help me accomplish my goals? My parents allowed me to contemplate this, offering advice and guidance where needed. Before I finish my life, I have and will encounter a variety of mishaps and bliss. I foresee happiness prevailing in my life because of being shaped by the "potters" in my life. As the circle

of my life continues to rotate, I imagine myself shaped as a teapot and not a vase. I find gratitude within myself when I pour out my love to others by simply lending an ear or a helping hand.

On the other hand, the various colors of glaze within the teapot bring the artwork to life, signifying variety of life. The diversity of my experiences has allowed me to become a well-rounded individual. These experiences are similar to a potter who adds clay to the base of the vase. Like a piece of artwork, the influences in my life have a profound affect upon my foundation, my shape, and me, because there is an end in mind. They see in their minds' eye what the finished product will look like. When the potters see that my shape has become a little bent, they make changes to make me stand straight once again. Ultimately, from this process, the potters in my life will fabricate the final masterpiece.

My Special Angel

by Sarah Anderson

We were best friends from the start; hand in hand we went everywhere together. If Jenny came to see me in Devils Lake, or if I, Sarah, went to see her in Valley City, we never parted. If Jenny had a nap, got into trouble, or got a treat from her mother, so did I. So as you can

see, we were best friends from the start until one day we would part for good.

Jenny came into our lives on April 4th, 1982. She had very little hair, fine features and weighed a little over six pounds. She was also two weeks younger than I, but was supposed to be born before me.

When Jenny came home from the hospital, she and her mother, Keely, came to live with us on the farm located two miles north of Dazey, North Dakota. Keely is one of my older sisters. She was still in high school when she had Jenny.

Keely would go off to school each day on the bus. Mom would then take care of Jenny, Michael and me. At one time she had three kids in bottles and diapers.

When Keely got home from school, she would take care of us, while Mom made supper. There were many other older siblings to help out as well. Keely would bathe us after supper and help us settle down for the night.

Jenny was a very active little girl, the same as me. Only I was about twice the size of Jenny. On our baptismal pictures, we looked like Mutt and Jeff or Laurel and Hardy in our white gowns. One Christmas, Mom put the Christmas tree in the playpen so we could admire it and not get into it. Could you imagine two one-year olds and a two-year old picking the ornaments off the tree, much like my cat does now?

After high school, Keely and Jenny moved into their own apartment in Valley City. Jenny was about two years old at the time. Boy, did I miss her, although we'd visit back and forth often.

Shortly thereafter, we moved to Devils Lake so Mom could go to college to become a medical secretary. Dad went off to school in East Grand Forks to become a truck driver. We still visited back and forth, but not as much as I would have liked. I missed my best friend a lot.

In the last six months together, Jenny, Keely, Mom and I were getting ready for Keely's wedding to Randy McGough. Plans and decorations were made. We even went to Fergus Falls to pick out flower-girl dresses. The ones we picked out were powder blue, had lots of ruffles and seemed to fit our personalities to perfection.

Now about two weeks before the wedding, Randy felt one more of his brothers should be in the wedding so we needed one more bridesmaid dress, and when we couldn't get one, we switched dresses, but kept the ones for the flower-girls and bought material to make the new dresses, and the remainder of those weeks was spent making our dresses. The colors had been replaced from blue to pink.

During the rehearsal everything went smoothly. Jenny and I wore the two powder blue dresses we had even though they were not to be used in the actual wedding. Jenny was cutting up

as usual, not taking anything seriously and crawling over and under the pews with her panties showing every once in a while. Trying to get her settled down and ready for the big day was a real chore.

The morning of the wedding was no real hassle for us girls. Jenny and I both slept in. Mom and Grandma went to the Lodge to finish preparing food for the reception and Keely was getting her hair done by Randy's brother Johnny. It wasn't until Keely came back that we had to get ready for the wedding and have our hair done as well.

Like the rehearsal, the wedding was like a fairy tale with us two flower-girls and a very beautiful bride wearing a long gown with fine sequins and a hat that sparkled in the sun. The only problem we had was when Jenny didn't want to walk down the aisle with Nathan and me, so she walked with Keely. When the vows were said and the priest told Randy to kiss the bride, Jenny felt the need for a hug and kept tugging on Randy's tuxedo until she got one.

After the wedding, the wedding party went out to Pat McGough's farm to have pictures taken on horseback. Mom, my aunt Cindy and my grandparents took us children out to the Sheyenne Lodge to put the finishing touches on the reception preparations. We children went outside to play with the kittens that lived at the Lodge and romp in the grass.

People started arriving at 4:30 p.m. for the reception. The reception was scheduled for 5:00 p.m. Jenny was the “Hostess With the Mostess,” greeting guests and stopping at their tables to fill their punch glasses. She was quite the sight for only being four years of age. I was just her able-bodied assistant.

Word came that the wedding party was coming down the lane. Most of the guests went outside to await their arrival. About that time nature called and I rushed back into the Lodge.

The wedding party was approaching by now. They were about 20 feet from the front door when a most horrible accident happened. Heather, one of Jenny’s friends, and Jenny, hand-in-hand, were chasing the kittens out past my uncle’s van, right in front of the oncoming car. Heather made it past, but Jenny got hit by the grill of the car.

Everyone jumped out of the wedding car to see what had happened. Keely immediately recognized the shoe that was sticking out from under the car. She scooped Jenny up, got back into the car, sped off to the hospital, not losing precious time by waiting for an ambulance to arrive. Randy was behind the wheel.

Jenny died two hours later from a ruptured pancreas. Needless to say, there was no reception or dance. The food was used to cater the funeral two days later.

Now as I look back on that dreadful day, I realize two things. Number one, but for the grace of God, I could have been killed also, for like I said in the beginning, “We went hand-in-hand together everywhere.” The second thing is, I realize that I must let go of my special angel.

From the beginning to the end,
There was nothing more important
Than my best friend.
I’ll always love and miss you, Jenny!

Sarah Anderson
(Jenny’s Aunt)

Notation: Jenny was buried in that pretty blue dress, with all the ruffles, that she so dearly loved. She was wrapped in the quilt that Mom had made for her. She slept with it every night. She was hugging her favorite toy, the cabbage patch doll her Grandma Dorothy had purchased for her many months before.

To the Stars

by Benjamin Ford

For decades, science fiction movies have enthralled us. From War of the Worlds to Independence Day, they have taken us from the outer limits of space to the depths of the human soul. In all that time, two franchises have risen to become giants, universes all their own. The debate continues to this day, which is better, Star Trek or Star Wars?

My first point is realism. If a person makes something up, then it has to be believable. In Star Wars, George Lucas tells us right at the beginning, "A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away." I've always had a question after that. If it's so long ago, and so far away, then how on earth did all those humans get there? Is it really believable to have another race of humans somewhere, who look like us, talk like us, and think like us, only with technology centuries ahead of our own. A more realistic answer is maybe they're not humans. Lucas never tells us specifically who these people are, which is another flaw in itself. Star Trek, on the other hand, happens in our galaxy, to our race, just in the future. Many people would probably say, "but it's science-fiction. It's not supposed to be believable." If science fiction teaches us anything, however, it's that there are always possibilities. Imagine someone had a time machine and went back to the year 1700, 300 years into the past. They could talk about airplanes, cars, computers, TVs, phones, even light bulbs, but of course it's all science fiction, right? Now, imagine that another person traveled back 300 years, from the year 2300. This person could talk about the worlds that have been colonized and discovered, faster-than-light travel, new energy sources, and huge space-ships that fit an entire city population--again science fiction, right? I'm not saying that the

Enterprise is a blueprint from which we can begin construction immediately. I'm saying that in the real world, like the sci-fi world, anything is possible in time.

Now, on to my second point, meaning: What do these movies tell me about life? In my opinion, the greatest line in Star Wars is also its greatest failure. The second Lucas says, "In a galaxy far, far away," he immediately turns me away. I don't want to hear about the possibilities of a race that I'll never meet, whether they're human or not. I want to hear about the possibilities of this race, our race. That's where Star Trek comes in; it happens here. It tells us that these are the possibilities that exist, to us. It stands as a reminder to us all of what we can achieve when we try. Imagine it, no more poor, no more homeless, and no more starvation. The world united by peace. The humans in Star Trek explore the unknown, so they can work for the good of all mankind.

In both Star Wars and Star Trek, lessons are taught to us. In Star Wars, Lucas turns to Yoda to do all the teaching. Let me see if I get this right, "*fear makes you angry, and anger makes you evil,*" right? It is true that calmness makes a person a better warrior and prevents mistakes; whereas, wrath and hate can cloud judgment. Yet, in Return of the Jedi, Lucas perverts this basic wisdom saying, "*If you get angry, you will become evil.*" Can anyone tell me a single

example of that happening, ever? Star Trek teaches a different lesson every show. One of my personal favorites is one that says, "*Fear is the true enemy, the only enemy.*" Wars are not fought with people, but with the fear those people have of each other.

The basis of any sci-fi story is the heroes. In Star Wars, the heroes are an elite. They are born to greatness, destined to rule. The common people of the Star Wars universe can only choose sides in a civil war between two wings of the same genetically superior royal family. The commoners are only minions, mere extras, without families or hopes to worry about shattering. In Star Trek, however, the heroes are the common people. They achieve greatness because of themselves, through cooperation and wit, rather than through some inherited godlike greatness. Star Trek is the American dream, with notions of human involvement and progress that lifts all. Gene Roddenberry's vision breaks away from the tradition of elitist heroes who rule by divine right. Where would you rather live, assuming you're a common person and not an elite? In Roddenberry's Federation? Or Lucas's Empire?

All films, whether they are science fiction or not, must have audience appeal. *Star Wars* appeals to our nature, as humans. It draws something from our past. For two hours, we can indulge in a universe where good and evil are vividly drawn, a

universe of myth and prophecy. We can indulge in special effects that were decades ahead of their time. We can indulge in the mystical Jedi teachings, which overwhelm us all. In Star Trek, we can treat ourselves to a universe of possibilities. We can go into the universe of our future, where anyone can make a difference. Star Trek appeals to anyone who realizes the American dream.

It is my conclusion that Star Wars is a dinosaur. It belongs to a past of wizards, princes, and others who rule by divine right. It belongs to the common people who have no hopes or dreams to live for. It belongs to another universe, and to a race that I'll never meet. And yet, Star Wars is the considered to be the greatest science fiction film of all time. It engulfs us with special effects, and takes us to the mystical universe of the Jedi knights. Star Trek, on the other hand, takes us to a universe of possibilities, where anyone can make a difference. It takes us to a universe of peace and hope, rather than one of chaos and destruction. It is a reminder of the possibilities that we have, if we work together. Roddenberry's vision has lasted for over thirty years, and I am positive that Star Trek's future has only just begun. I know I will not win this argument anytime soon. Star Trek is Star Trek, and Star Wars is Star Wars; they each have highs and lows. It is up to the individual to decide which he/she likes better. So, the

debate will continue until another franchise comes to challenge them both. Until that time, they both stand atop the sci-fi world.

Dimes and Nickels

by Heather Schmit

As he walked slowly toward the door, with a pass to leave early in his hand, I jumped out of my desk and ran to him. I stood in his way and pleaded with him not to go. I told him how much I loved him, how much we all loved him. Then I took his hand and led him back to his seat. Together, with the rest of the class, we talked about all of the things that were going on in his mind and smoothed over every doubt that he had about staying. And we all lived happily ever after.

That is the story I'd like to tell. Of course, it's not the story of what really happened. In real life, Norm kept walking and no one stopped him. What reason did we have? He was sick and his pale face showed it. He needed to go home and get a good night's rest. So he left our freshman English class at about a quarter past two on that warm May day. The rest of us tossed 'get well' wishes over our shoulders like salt and went on reading poetry as if our lives weren't going to fall apart in a couple of hours.

When the call came that night, I couldn't stop crying. I went from hysterics, to sobbing, to weeping, to shaking, and then back again. I didn't know who to trust or what to believe. Surely, they had the wrong person. It just wasn't true that my classmate, my friend, had shot himself. Shortly after my mother told me, it began to sprinkle. I prayed for the rain to wash away the situation at hand. Of course, there isn't a rain powerful enough to bring my friend back from the dead. And there weren't words comforting enough to make me stop crying.

The rest of that week is a blur. I remember bits and pieces. I remember places, but not times; words, but not who said them; smells, but not faces; moments, but not days.

The faculty thought it was necessary to invite a dozen strangers into our school to help us deal with our feelings. They invaded a place that I thought was safe and made me crawl deeper into myself. I don't know what made them think that I could put my feelings into words. That's kind of like shaking hands and introducing yourself to the monster in your closet when all you are really capable of doing is hiding under your bed.

Four days after my friend Norm died, the remaining nine members of my class dressed in our Sunday best, even though it was a Friday, and sat in the front row as 'honorary casket bearers' at his funeral. We buried him in a small graveyard a couple of

miles South of town and tried to leave our pain there as well. As you probably know, pain rarely stays where you put it, and this instance was no different.

That was more than five years ago and we are still trying to run from the pain that Norm left with us. I thought that we were so grown up at the time, but I look at kids who are that age now and wonder what would make one of them decide that his or her life wasn't worth living anymore.

“Why do people commit suicide?” I wish I had a dime for every time I've heard that question being asked. But I'd give up all the dimes in the world if someone would just tell me the answer.

1st Place—Poetry Division

Resting in Peace

Resting in peace
on this soft carpet.
The scent of green life
intermingles with the perfume
of myriad flowers.
Vibrant reds,
yellows,
purples
and whites,
like delicate living tissue paper
rooted against backdrops
of rough, gray, weathered stone.
Birds in the brown boughs above
chirp a cheerful requiem
for those residing here.
The world's eternal light bulb,
blindingly brilliant
in the blue sky above,
beams down upon my back,
warming me
like a friendly smile
warms the soul to the bones.
A slight breeze
energizes the trees
to moving their arms about,
trying to cover even more ground
with welcomed shade,
and the leaves whisper their orisons,
quiet, so as not to wake the dead,
resting in peace.

by Scarlet E. Gray

2nd Place—Poetry Division

(as usual)

My mother told me
(several times)
not to look into
the sun as it set.

She denied herself
(many things)
but I could not resist
its hopeful beauty.

by Heather Schmit

The Me I See

Pushing myself past limitations
I still feel like I'm looking up
While they're looking down
From a higher ground

How many accomplishments
Do I have to achieve
So I can look in the mirror
Without looking away

When will I cross a finish line
Not two steps behind
But instead many steps in advance
Of all my competition

How long will it be
Before I find the only person
I need to exceed
Is me

by Jodie Gilbertson

Our Garden

If I had a flower for every loving embrace we have
Every kiss we share, every loving moment
Our garden would have an endless supply of flowers
If every thing we do for each other, with each other
For each other, is a different flower
We would have every flower imaginable on earth.
Every brush of our skin, a carnation was born
Every look into each other's eyes, a lily
Every kiss we share, a rose
Our garden would be full of flowers of love
That we could give one flower to every person on earth
And still have millions left over.
Our garden will last forever.

by Bill Schlosser

Devil's eyes

The moment of darkness befalls me,
How could I have done this?
Broken the heart that once was mine,
The very one that beat within my chest,
Turns to dust like paper being licked by flames,
The devil's evil smirk lurking in the red glare.
In the shadows his eyes peep at me,
Knowing within his dreadful grasp,
He maintains all that I know and love.

by Jodie Gilbertson

The Frustrated Poet

I cannot think of what to write
My mind just will not flow
I started on a little poem
That does not seem to go
The work is right inside my brain
I try to write it down
But on paper it loses heart
All I can do is frown
I make the endings rhyme a lot
It sings just like a song
But syllables are something else
I always get them wrong
I try to fix the beating flow
And still make it sound well
But now I lost the rhyming scheme
I feel like I'm in hell
I groan and moan and make it fit
I think my work is done
But now the poem will make no sense
I start back at square one
I just decide to give it up
And start on something new
Short stories might be my forte
Think I'll try one or two

by Phillip Godel

The True Meaning of Love

Love is not just saying that you love someone,
It is far more. It is showing that the love you have
For someone is so special, so deep and captivating,
That it is impossible to express it in words, only in actions.
It is more than just a feeling, an emotion; it's pure heaven.

A swift brush of her hand, a loving gaze into her deep, curious eyes,
The gentle touch of her skin, the caressing kiss of her lips,
The feeling of emptiness when she is away,
And the indescribable hug when she returns.
It is a yearning for someone that is greater than the love of God Himself.
That is the love I have for you.

by Bill Schlosser

Baby

She moves slowly as though in a dream
Picking up teddy bears and dolls along the way.
Not realizing she has waited for this baby
Her whole life.
She looks deeply into those navy blue eyes
Holding all of the secrets from years past.
They return back a longing, searching
A comfort.
Who taught her in the womb?
Like the old wise soul she carries the
Knowledge of all the family women gone before.
She is the future and she knows all.

by Teri Smith

We Shall Survive

You have damaged our country but not our spirit
We shall obliterate you and your spirit
No other nation would work together as hard as we have
No other nation would put aside their differences to make a difference
There is no other nation with so many allies
There is no other nation able to topple you in moments
You have destroyed some of our landmarks
Yet you have not destroyed our souls
You could take the world away from us
But we will still fight together against you
You have attacked us and now we shall abolish you

by Courtney Maureen King

Sonnet

I see it there within the perfect green,
Blood red, the rose with petals moist and warm
Perfection as a sculptor may have seen,
With light of life and color rare in form.
I reach to pick the bloom, then feel the sharp
Of thorn pierce through my flesh. It hurts, and I
Let blood fall dripping to the jeweled bark.
In pain, I taste my blood and wonder why
So carelessly I thrust in past the vine
To grasp this beauty in a fragrant bloom –
Yet for real love, true art and what's divine,
A price is paid, and blood is spilled anew.
Perfection only once appeared on earth
And with His blood gave all a perfect birth.

by Martin L. Kelly

Surround Sound

I hate the buzz of electric lights,
the incessant hum of appliances,
the periodic roar of the furnace,
and the constant whirr of refrigerators.

I hate the tumbling
of dishwashers,
clothes washers,
dryers.

I hate
blaring televisions,
crackling radios,
ticking clocks,
beeping alarms,
and ringing telephones.

I hate the rumbling of automobiles
rattling the windows as they pass.

In the sanctuary of my home,
I turn off the overhead light,
silencing its high-pitched *ding*.

Sitting in the dark,
surrounded by all the modern "comforts"
I wonder...

What *is* the sound of silence?

by Scarlet E. Gray

Welcome Fragrance

Tulips in the spring
As the earth begins to thaw
Bless the springtime air

by Adam DeHaan

Roses

From seed to a beautiful
blossom, it grew to beauty.
Little water was needed
But look what developed.
Friendship grew, outstretching
the boundaries, pushing limits.
Rose created stronger hold,
never letting go.
Waiting for a time,
to let the feeling go.

by *Shelly Witt*

Hollow Day

Outside it's cold, a gray
day, as quiet as a Christmas
postcard, but only
Thanksgiving Eve. My folks

called; we talked--all
distance and tinny
phrases hung out
to fight the pall.

Our words bore the idle
weight of a season turning,
late, into its metaphor:
a heavy door waving

us into a familiar room--
cold and stone hearth, still
rocker, slippers by the oval
rug on dull wood,

Grandpa's clock, centered
but stopped, on the matchless mantle--
waiting to take on our story
once we got it right.

by *Lee Kruger*

Circling the West in Haiku

I see Nebraska
Across the flowing river,
Muddy Missouri

A sea of yellow
Fields of golden Sunflowers
In North Dakota.

Bale up the prairie!
Don't those big round bales look like
Herds of buffalo?

The lone cottonwood
Seems to reach for the sky with
Its dry bleached-white bones

Black oil wells pumping
Over the brittle desert
Like huge birds pecking.

Green living circles,
Perfectly formed discs of life;
The aquifer sinks.

The Snake River flows
Through the thirsty Idaho
desert. It still flows.

Arches in read stone
And many more; brown yellow:
Utah, we love thee!

The dry earth crumbles
The sand and dust blow and drift
"Water!" pleads Texas.

by *Martin L. Kelly*

Breath of Angels

Feathery white flakes flutter down,
From the great endless sky.
Breath of angels my friend calls them,
Blessings from above I think.
They drop softly and slowly
Making everywhere pretty and picture perfect.
I can stare out my window for ages
Just watching them fall.
Watching. Just watching...
The white rooftops and snow-covered ground,
The leafless trees and white sky.
It all seems so beautiful to me.
Whenever I take a walk, I feel
The breath of angels on my face,
And God's blessings all around me.

by *Nadeen Matthews*

The Overthrow of Winter

Cold bitter bite,
harsh wind strikes like a knife.
Battered beaten days,
creep slowly with no end.
Winter rules the land.

Newly fallen pallid snow,
beautiful and light.
Turned to black blades of ice,
invisible to conscious creatures,
another cruel joke of nature.

Barren brown trees bend awkwardly,
with the angry whip
of traveling wind.
It strips the once strong exterior
off these russet giants.

Gray, brown, and white with every step.
The appearance tediously appealing.
As my eyes scan the destruction,
they fall upon a single tree.
It remains untouched
by winter's wandering hands.

Small, barren, and thinned by the cold,
the lack of sun brings its branches to the ground.
Instead of the usual dank colors,
a brilliant scarlet it shouts,
displacing it from the others.

Shy it must be,
it cowers behind the older trees.
Its message is unmistakable,
spring is near.
As the skies begin to clear,
Winter's been overthrown for a new king.

The birds return to a familiar place,
the trees shed their hallow appearance,
the warm temperature greets its messenger.
A reward you shall receive,
as emerald newborn buds break its worn exterior.

The once pale colorless scenery
altered into a palpable parade of color.
Radiant jade and luminous crimsons
fashion the backdrop of spring.
Winter is gone for another year.

by Chantal Molina



1st Place--Fiction/Drama

Twelfth Date

by *Phillip Godel*

Kris
Nick
Gene
Sam

Scene: In an empty theatre with 5 chairs. Enter Kris.

Kris: This is going to be great! Finally I can get even with that pig and come out on top. (Turn back and notice that nobody followed her in) Nick? Are you done yet?

Nick: (off stage) I hate you.

Kris: What are you waiting for? Come out here.

Nick: NO!

Kris: Oh, come on. It can't be that bad.

Nick: That's what you think.

Kris: Come on. You said you'd do it and it's too late for me to find somebody else.

Nick: All right! Just let me build up my courage.

Kris: Okay. (stands with arms crossed waiting.) Well? (Nick enters wearing girl's clothes and a wig in his hands) (Snickering) See, Nick, you don't look so bad.

Nick: That's it, I'm outta here.

Kris: NO! I'm sorry; I know I shouldn't laugh, especially since you're doing this for me. You look...beautiful. (Breaks out laughing again)

Nick: That's right, Kris, laugh it up.

Kris: All right, all right, I'm sorry. I won't laugh anymore.

Nick: I can't believe you talked me into this. I don't even think Gene deserves this. He wasn't that bad to you.

Kris: Oh, you know he deserves it.

Nick: When you two were dating, you only said good things about him. How he would always open the door for you, take you out to lunch, call you at night and talk for hours. You would go on and on about all the things he did for you. How could he turn from such a gentle sweetheart to Mr. Horrible overnight? Besides, he dumped you how long ago?

Kris: About a year.

Nick: Twelve months should have given you plenty of healing time. Especially since you only dated for about two weeks.

Kris: Twelve days.

Nick: How the bejeebers could you be hung up over a guy you only dated for twelve days? You never did tell me the whole story, and since I'm getting

pulled into this, I think I'm entitled to a little clarification on the details of your breakup.

Kris: Well, it's a little embarrassing.

Nick: Like you should talk (fondles his fake breasts). God, how can women stand wearing pantyhose (digs out a wedgie)? Ah, that's better. So, go on.

Kris: He caught me with my b.....(mumbles).

Nick: He caught you with your banquet? What, were you snarfing down food or something?

Kris: My blanket. He came over one day at noon, just walked straight in without even knocking, and saw me sleeping on my couch curled up with it. He dumped me later that night.

Nick: He dumped you because you were sleeping with a blanket? Boy, that is pretty shallow. I myself prefer afghans but I wouldn't dump someone because they'd rather sleep with a blanket.

Kris: Well, that's what he dumped me for.

Nick: Wait, there's got to be more to this than just sleeping with a blanket. You're talking about your baby blanket aren't you?

Kris: I said it was embarrassing.

Nick: Boy, I'd say. Especially if you're talking about that holey old pink baby blanket.

Kris: It's not old, it's well loved.

Nick: Last time I saw that thing you could barely read the words on it. What did it say again?

Kris: That's none of your business! Besides, I never let you see it long enough for you to read it.

Nick: Ok, fine. Man, dumping you because of a blanket? That is pretty low.

Kris: Well, today he's going to get it good.

Nick: You don't think that this is going to make rehearsals for you and him unbearable?

Kris: He shouldn't have come to auditions in the first place. I was there before him and he should have left when he saw me there.

Nick: How was he supposed to know that you'd be cast opposite each other? You being Viola, him being Orsino. This is going to be one messed up production of Twelfth Night. Shakespeare be warned!

Kris: If the director knew we hated each other, I doubt she would have cast us as a couple.

Nick: You realize, though, that if Gene hadn't auditioned and got the role of Orsino, you probably wouldn't have met his cousin.

Kris: Sam's only flaw...being related to Gene.

Nick: So, what is it about Sam that you had to go through all this trouble to have a date with him?

Kris: He's cute.

Nick: That's it?

Kris: Well, that's the thing. I really haven't met him yet. But Gene wouldn't have allowed this rendezvous if I didn't set him up with someone also, and that's where you come in. I get a cute new boyfriend while he gets a dud.

Nick: Hey! I'm a quality individual! I'm sweet, sensitive, caring...

Kris: And a guy.

Nick: Oh God, I think these clothes are getting to me.

Kris: Don't worry, this is going to be fun. (The sound of a door closing in the background) Oh no, that's them. Quick get your wig on!

Nick: (Puts on the wig) How's this.

Kris: (Preening him some) Lookin' good girl.

Nick: Call me a girl again and I'll bitch slap you.

Kris: Be quiet...here they come. (Gene and Sam enter, Sam wearing baggy clothes and a baseball cap, Gene wearing nice clothing)

Gene: Hello, Hello! How have you been doing Kris?

Kris: (Seemingly polite and interested in him) Hi Gene! I've been great! How are you doing on your lines?

Gene: (Reciting from memory) "Then let thy love be younger than thyself, or thy affection cannot hold the bent; for women are as roses, whose fair flower being once display'd, doth fall that very hour."

Kris: (Also reciting from memory) "And so they are: alas, that they are so,—to die, even when they to perfection grow."

Gene: Ah, not doing bad yourself, I see. This is going to be one great production of Twelfth Night.

Kris: I know. I heard that almost everybody is memorized already...and this is only the second week of rehearsals!

Gene: Well, it helps that we have such a good cast. You make a perfect Viola.

Kris: And you're a great Orsino.

Nick: Ahem

Kris: Oh, I'm sorry. Gene, this is Nick...cole. Ah, Nicole.

Nick: (In believable falsetto) How do you do.

Gene: (Reciting) "Give me thy hand; and let me see thee in thy woman's weeds." (Takes Nick's hand and kisses it)

Nick: What the bejeepers does that mean?

Kris: Oh, that's what Orsino says to Viola when he finds out she's a woman. He tells her that he wants to see her in women's clothing.

Nick: Oh, well, already done.

Gene: Indeed! This is my cousin, Sam.

Sam: Yo!

Kris: (Semi-seductive) Hi. I'm Kristin, but you can call me Kris.

Sam: I'm Sam. (Aggressively shakes her hand) Pleased ta meetcha.

Kris: Ouch!

Sam: Oops, I guess I don't know my own strength.

Gene: That happens when you're such a manly fellow.

Kris: Well, that's okay. I didn't need this arm anyway. (Laughs while Sam is straight faced) You know, that was a joke, and you are allowed to laugh in here.

Sam: Sorry.

Kris: Don't be sorry, be yourself. You don't have to be nervous around me.

Sam: Well, I got a good reason to be.

Kris: Why's that?

Gene: (rushing) Because he hasn't...uh...had a date in a long time.

Kris: Really? A cute guy like you?

Sam: Actually you're the first girl I've been on a date with.

Gene: (rushing again) He doesn't have a lot of free time between sports, work, and college. But I tell you, he's a good catch. (To Nick) So, where should we go?

Kris: Yeah, (to Sam) what are you in the mood for?

Nick: Actually, I'd rather just stay here.

Sam: Yeah, me too.

Gene: (at same time as Kris) Here? Come on, there's got to be something you'd like to do, somewhere you'd like to go.

Kris: (at same time as Gene) Here? Why do you want to stay here? It's just an empty theatre.

Nick: I've got a headache and don't really want to go out.

Sam: And I'm pretty tired. Why don't we just stay here and talk?

Nick: Yeah, we could get to know each other.

Kris: That's okay I guess, but I was hoping for some alone time.

Gene: I wasn't really planning on a double date.

Sam: Well, why don't we go to this side (right side) of the stage and you two the other side.

Nick: That way we can stay here and still be alone some.

Kris: Well, it's not what I had in mind for tonight, but okay.

Gene: If that's what my darling wants, than that's what she will get. Here, I'll grab your chair for you. (Gene takes both chairs and he and Nick move to stage left, Sam and Kris take their own chairs and move to stage right and sit quietly throughout the following dialogue...Kris waiting for Sam to make the first move, but Sam stays quiet and withdrawn, looking away) How's this, Nicole?

Nick: Ahh, call me Nick.

Gene: Nick?

Nick: Yeah...ahh my mom is the only one who calls me (gulp and a subtle shudder) Nicole.

Gene: Okay, Nick. (Nick and Gene sit) So tell me about yourself.

Nick: No, no, I insist that you go first.

Gene: All right. What do you want to know?

Nick: Umm, everything. Start from the beginning. I'd like to know every very little detail of your life.

Gene: Everything? (Nick nods) Well, okay...Let's see. I was born in Slater, Illinois on August 20th 1977 at 10:33pm in Cahill Hospital. We lived in Slater where I attended grade school at Jenkins Elementary until I was seven years old. Then we moved to... (Gene goes on and on silently during the dialogue between Sam and Kris)

Kris: Soooooo.

Sam: Hm? (looks at Kris)

Kris: Hello there.

Sam: Oh, ah (cough, cough [as if clearing throat]) Hi. (Looks away again)

Kris: Soooooo.

Sam: So what?

Kris: What do you want to talk about? You're the one who wanted to come over here and talk. It looks like Nick...er...Nicole and Gene are talking up a storm.

Sam: Looks like hurricane Gene to me.

Kris: (Giggles a little bit) You've got a good sense of humor.

Sam: It wasn't that funny.

Kris: Well, it wasn't so much the what, it was the who.

Sam: What? Gene? You got something against him or something?

Kris: Well, he's...he's...well, you know.

Sam: Obviously I don't.

Kris: Well, he's...kind of an ass hole.

Sam: He is? (looks at Gene) Gene? (not angrily but genuinely puzzled) You think he's an ass hole? Why?

Kris: It's kind of an embarrassing story.

Sam: Do tell.

Kris: Oh you don't want to hear it.

Sam: Sure I do. Any kind of dirt on Gene is good dirt.

Kris: You really think so?

Sam: Hey, just because he's my cousin doesn't mean that I like him all the time. Look at him. Conceited and in love with himself. Suffers from a big ego. A slight case of machoism. Too bad there isn't medication to reduce a big head. He would probably claim himself to be God's gift to women if it ever came up. He can play the gentleman quite well, but if you get to know him he's just a typical guy...it's almost disgusting.

Kris: I never thought I'd hear a man bash other men, but it's very reassuring and proves that you are a real man and not some pathetic lowlife like most guys are.

Sam: Yeah, well, real manly men know how to treat women. Kind and gentle.

Kris: You are just perfect. And cute too. (Reaches to take Sam's hand)

Sam: (Avoids her hand and recomposes) Yeah, uh, so then tell me about this embarrassing story.

Kris: You really don't want to know it.

Sam: Why are you so afraid to tell me.

Kris: Well, it's about how Gene and I broke up.

Sam: Oooo, now I'm really interested. Tell me what he did.

Kris: Well...okay, but you have to promise never to tell another living soul. Ever!

Sam: I'll even pinky swear on it. (holds out pinky finger and waits for Kris to take it)

Kris: All right. (Grabs her pinky finger with Sam's) Just give me a minute to see how I want to tell this.

Sam: Take your time.

Gene: (still chattering on) Then I dated Kris, but it only lasted twelve days.

Nick: Only twelve days? Why?

Gene: Yeah right, as if you didn't already know.

Nick: Why should I know?

Gene: Oh, come on. Us guys realize that when it comes to ex's, girls will tell all. Not that I hold it against you or anything, but gossip is a well-known girl hobby. Everything from who's quarreling with whom to the size of a guy's glory hose. And Kris is gossip monger number one.

Nick: Well, I do know a little bit, but I don't know your side of the story. Come on, do tell.

Gene: I'd better not; she'd be pissed if I told anybody.

Nick: I won't tell if you don't.

Gene: You promise?

Nick: Scouts honor. Ah...girl scouts that is.

Kris: I can't believe I'm telling you this, but.

Gene: (Gene glances over to make sure Kris wasn't listening in) Well. (Kris glances over to make sure Gene wasn't listening in)

Kris and Gene: Okay. (Throughout the following dialogue both Kris and Gene are talking, but the audience only hears the person with the lines)

Gene: It all started with my ex-girlfriend, Olivia.

Kris: She and my brother, Sebastian, had been dating for some time.

Gene: Anyway, one day out of the blue, I ran into Olivia and Sebastian and we started chatting. Somehow I mentioned that I was working at the Renaissance Festival in the dunk the duke, drench the wench stand.

Kris: You know the place where the guy or girl drops into a vat of water if the customer can hit a target with a softball. So, anyway, Bastian told Gene that I'd been interested in working there and asked him if he could somehow help me get a job there.

Gene: Being the gentleman that I am, I, of course, said yes and got her an interview.

Kris: I was oh so very excited because I'd wanted to get a good summer job and I loved the Ren Fest. So I went to the interview and, sure enough, I got the job.

Gene: Now remember, I still hadn't even met Kris yet. I only spoke to her on the phone to help her get the interview and everything.

Kris: But I was very eager to meet him since he was so nice and even sounded handsome.

Nick: Do you think she's prettier than me?

Gene: No way, babe. You are the cream of the crop.

Sam: I never thought of him as very handsome, but then again he is my cousin, so I do have a good excuse.

Kris: Well, he's not nearly as handsome as you are.

Kris and Gene: Anyway.

Gene: As it just happened to turn out we were in need of a wench to drench.

Kris: And as luck would have it, I became the wench, and I got to work directly with Gene

Gene: After a couple days of work she asked me out to lunch.

Kris: I figured that I owed him for getting me a job, so we went to *Toby's Bar and Grill* and got to know each other better.

Gene: We chatted for what seemed like hours. Just good, old fashioned face to face.

Kris: We spent the rest of the day together, going from one place to another and finally ending at a dance hall.

Gene: At that point I'd come to really like Kris and decided to make my move. So

Kris: On the stroke of midnight he kissed me. Just kind of out of the blue. It was so romantic.

Gene: Anyway, we went our separate ways shortly after that, but as soon as I got home, I gave her a call and told her that I'd like to go out again the next night.

Kris: I, of course, said yes. So we chatted on the phone for a while, and eventually we both just fell asleep.

Gene: I woke up hearing her snore over the phone. It was quite funny, but I couldn't really get mad at her because I fell asleep also.

Kris: Finally we hung up and went to sleep. We met at work the next day and had a lot of fun getting wet and insulting the customers who would miss.

Gene: That night was just as exciting as the first. So we kept on going.

Kris: Night after night we went out and did something different. We spent so much time together that we barely saw anybody else.

Gene: Even those days that I worked and she didn't, or vice versa, we would usually show up with a friend and visited.

Kris: In fact, I even introduced Gene to Nick.

Nick: Yeah, Kris introduced us.

Gene and Sam: Really.

Nick: Well, I had shorter hair then.

Gene: That's probably why I recognize you. You look good with long hair. (strokes Nick's hair, but Nick smacks his hand away)

Nick: Oh, you could just flatter the bejeeppers out of me.

Kris: I doubt he'd recognize him...ps.

Sam: Himps?

Kris: Hips. It's one of Nick's nicknames. We call her that because she doesn't have any hips.

Sam: Oh, ok. So go on.

Kris and Gene: Well, everything went sour on our twelfth date.

Nick and Sam: Why?

Gene: Well, it was the twelfth day of us being together and it turned out to be

Kris: My birthday that day, but I never told Gene. I never care much about birthdays, so I just decided that it wasn't important enough to mention.

Gene: We planned on doing something that night because I had to work that day. But I found out that it was her birthday and since she had the day off, I switched shifts with a friend so that I could have the whole day off too.

Kris: The night before was pretty late for the both of us and once again we nearly fell asleep on the phone. After we hung up I was too tired to crawl into bed so I just crashed on my couch.

Gene: As a surprise to her, I decided to show up at her place and take her out to lunch.

Kris: I must have forgotten to lock the door the night before because the phone rang right as I walked in.

Gene: After a couple of knocks, I walked in.

Kris: Just walked in without even knocking.

Gene: And then I saw her asleep on the couch

Kris: Curled up

Gene: Sucking her thumb

Kris: With my

Gene: Baby blanket

Sam: Your banquet? You were sleeping with food?

Kris: My blanket.

Sam: Oh.

Gene and Kris: Later that night when we went out, he/she dumped me.

Nick and Sam: Wait a minute, he/she dumped you?

Gene: She couldn't date someone who's seen her like that.

Kris: I was too babyish for his taste.

Sam: Babyish? Were you sleeping with your baby blanket?

Kris: I told you it was embarrassing.

Sam: Well, still. Dumping you because you slept with a blanket? That's pretty low.

Nick: So, what was so embarrassing about the blanket?

Gene: Besides the fact that it was practically in shreds?

Kris: Well, my grandma gave me the blanket when I was twelve weeks old and

Gene: There was a message sewn into it.

Sam: What did it say?

Kris: That's something I won't tell anybody.

Gene: I'd better not say. (Looks back toward Kris) She'd kill me if I told anybody.

Sam and Nick: Come on. Please.

Kris: No.

Gene: All right, come closer and I'll tell you.

Nick: What did it say? (Gene leans forward, puts his hand on Nick's thigh and tries to kiss him. Gene nearly reaches his lips when Nick pulls away so fast that he falls out of his chair and screams without his falsetto) NO! (This gets the attention of Sam and Kris)

Gene: What's wrong? Are you okay? Let me help you up.

Nick: (Still without falsetto) Keep your grubby paws off of me man. That is just gross.

Kris: Nick what are you doing?

Nick: Sorry Kris, but the last thing I'm gonna do is lock lips with him.

Gene: What the hell is going on?

Nick: (pulls off the wig) I'm one package you don't want to fumble with, buddy.

Gene: You're a guy? (to Kris) You set me up with a guy? I nearly kissed a guy!

Nick: The feeling's mutual pal, except that you don't have a pantyhose wedgie. (digs out a wedgie)

Gene: (to Kris) That is cruel and low.

Nick: (still digging out wedgie) It definitely is cruel, but this one is up high not low. (gets the wedgie) Ah relief!

Gene: How could you do something like this?

Kris: It's what you deserve!

Gene: For what? For seeing your blanket?

Kris: Yes!

Gene: Who cares? It's just a blanket! You are the only one paranoid about it! Paranoid that somebody will see what it says! Well, you know what? Nobody will care what it says! I don't care that you sleep with your baby blanket!

Sam: (to Nick) That's because he sleeps with his baby blanket too.

Gene: SAM!!

Sam: Well, you do. (to Kris) And what yours says probably isn't nearly as embarrassing as what his says.

Gene: This has nothing to do with baby blankets. This is about Kris setting me up with a guy.

Sam: Like you should talk Romeo. (Sam pulls off baseball cap revealing long, beautiful hair) You did the same thing.

Nick: Holy bejeeppers! He's a she.

Kris: You bastard!

Nick: Oh, settle down Kris. So he played the same trick as you did. Get over it.

Sam: I'm just relieved that you didn't try to plant one on me like Gene did for Nick.

Nick: Well, I am irresistible.

Kris: How can you be a girl? I've seen you at rehearsal before and you've never been a girl before.

Sam: I was probably wearing my cap at the time.

Gene: Okay, I think this has just been a great misunderstanding, so lets move on in our lives and forget this ever happened.

Nick: Especially the part when you tried to plant one on me.

Sam: Ah, he just wants you to forget that I mentioned his baby blanket.

Gene: Samantha!

Kris: What's written on his blanket? I deserve to know since he saw what mine says.

Gene: Don't even think about it Sam!

Sam: Well, I'll tell you if you tell me what yours says first.

Nick: This ought to be interesting.

Gene: Sam if you tell her, I'll...

Sam: You'll what Gene? I've been able to beat you up since we were five. How are you going to stop me?

Gene: Sam, please don't.

Nick: Kris does have a point though. You've seen what her blanket says. It would only be fair.

Sam: But like I said, I want to know what yours says first.

Kris: How do I know you'll tell me what his says if I tell you first.

Sam: I'll pinky swear on it. (holds out pinky finger and waits for Kris to take it, Kris hesitatingly takes it)

Kris: Alright, I'll tell you, but you'd better tell me what his says.

Gene: You'd better not Sam.

Kris, Sam, and Nick: Shut up Gene.

Kris: Well, it says "T....."

Nick: Tomato rag will paste some gummy?

Kris: "To my dear little pooh face from Grammy." (Sam and Gene look incredibly shocked with mouths open for a second)

Sam and Gene: You're kidding.

Kris: No, now what does Gene's blanket say. (Gene and Sam look at each other and then to Kris)

Sam: His says, "To my sweet little pooh face from Grandma."

Kris: Yeah right.

Sam: Kris, I'm serious. His blanket says nearly the same thing as yours.

Kris: He knew what mine said and told you to say that didn't he.

Gene: I never saw what you're said, Kris.

Kris: Bull.

Gene: No, seriously. I knew something was written on it, but I so distracted by your thumb sucking that I didn't catch what it said.

Kris: Than you dumped me because I was sucking my thumb and not because of what my blanket said?

Gene: I never dumped you. You dumped me.

Kris: How do you figure that?

Gene: Well, I waited for you for three hours and called a dozen times, but you never showed up or answered the phone. Then the next time we worked you barely said two words to me, so I figured that you dumped me.

Kris: That's a lie. I waited at *Illyria's* for four hours and you were the one who never showed up.

Gene: *Illyria's*? You were at *Illyria's Italian Dining*?

Kris: Yeah.

Gene: We were supposed to meet at *Maria's Coffee House*.

Kris: No we weren't.

Gene: Sure we were. Why would we go to *Illyria's*? I can't stand Italian food remember?

Kris: Well I know I didn't agree to a coffee house. Coffee is disgusting.

Gene: So you didn't just stand me up that night?

Kris: I guess that means that you didn't stand me up either.

Nick: So, if neither of you dumped each other, technically doesn't that mean that you're still dating?

Sam: Good point Nick. It also means that you both cheated on each other.

Nick: How would that work?

Sam: Gene cheated on Kris by dating you, and Kris cheated on Gene by dating me.

Nick: How could you! (slaps Gene)

Gene: Ow!

Kris: Would you people be quiet. I need a second to think.

Sam: Actually I think the two of you need to talk about a couple things.

Gene: She's right. Smart thinking Sam.

Sam: Just proves that intelligence isn't genetic.

Gene: What do you say Kris? Want to go somewhere to talk things over?

Kris: Yeah, we have a lot of things to straighten out.

Gene: Where should we go?

Kris: How about *Toby's Bar and Grill*?

Gene: Sounds good to me.

Kris: Oh, shoot. Nick, do you need a ride home first?

Sam: Don't worry, I brought my car. I'll take him home.

Nick: You sure?

Sam: Positive.

Gene: See ya later, Sam.

Kris: Later, Nick. (Gene and Kris exit)

Sam and Nick: Bye.

Nick: So...interesting evening isn't it?

Sam: Boy, I'll say. So, are you up for doing something tonight?

Nick: Actually, I'm kind of hungry.

Sam: Do you like seafood? I know a great place.

Nick: I love seafood. What's the place called?

Sam: *Antonio's Catch*.

Nick: I've been there before. They have the best calamari in town.

Sam: Shall we go?

Nick: As soon as I pull out this butt floss. (Digs out a wedgie)

Sam: That's why I never wear pantyhose.

Nick: You wouldn't mind stopping at my place first so I can change, would you?

Sam: That does look pretty good on you.

Nick: You really think so? (swishing around as if he were modeling)

Sam: You sexy thing, you.

Nick: Oh hush. (Sam offers Nick her arm, Nick takes it and Sam escorts Nick out).

End



Photo
by **Edgar Garcia**

2nd Prize—Fiction/Drama

The Littlest Goat

by **Ross Kopperud**

The tourist season was nearing its end, and the Red Barn Zoo would only be open for a couple of more weeks. On this day the zoo's parking lot was a lake of asphalt, interrupted by only a few vehicles. Mahkali was tending to the petting zoo—he was the caretaker. He was a small man with a narrow face that showed some age. His greasy gunmetal hair was slicked back over his scalp and hung down to his bony shoulders. He wore overalls that covered a dingy sou-

venir t-shirt that read, “Red Barn Zoo—Family Fun at its Finest.”

“Mahkali, you need to feed the other animals. How many times do I need to tell you that these damn goats get fed enough from the visitors?” The manager was a college student, young and arrogant, who stayed in town over the summer on an internship.

“But sir—,” Mahkali started.

“Just do it, Mahkali.” The manager strode back to the building that held the exotic reptiles and spiders. Mahkali dropped his pitchfork and went off to the feed house.

The Red Barn Zoo was shaped like an oval. Visitors entered through the reptile building, and exited the other side into the

main zoo's entrance and exit. The petting zoo was off to the right, under a roof held up by large round poles. Positioned around the petting zoo were several vending machines that spit out pellets for the visitors to use to fatten up the animals.

Some of the petting zoo's animals, like the llamas and exotic roosters, were in cages with signs that warned, "This one bites! Watch your fingers!" The animals in the main ring (those that people could actually pet) consisted of little goats, a pot-bellied pig, and a chubby horse that stood about three feet tall. Tourists couldn't get enough of these filthy barnyard creatures.

Mahkali was feeding the animals in the main zoo and he couldn't help but smile; the season was almost over. In the winter, all of the exotic animals and tourists and cocky college students telling him what to do would be gone. Mahkali, however, would stay. He lived in a little shack directly behind the feed house. It was painted bright red, just like the other buildings at the zoo. Behind this shack was a fenced-in pen. When winter came, the monkeys and parrots and otters would be shipped to a zoo in a warmer climate; Mahkali's little goats would stay with him. They were his children. In the winter, Mahkali and the goats would play together, eat together, and sleep together. Mahkali rarely put the goats in the pen; they just stayed in the shack.

Mahkali noticed that the petting zoo had a couple of people in it, and he started to get nervous. He hated when people were in the petting zoo. The grain for the Chinese pheasants flew errantly into a little pond as Mahkali tried to keep an eye on his helpless family. Soon the people exited the petting zoo, and he was able to relax some.

After what seemed forever, Mahkali finished feeding the animals in the main zoo and he was able to return to his lookout. A woman and her daughter walked hand-in-hand into the petting zoo. Mahkali watched them under his furrowed brow as he pitched hay from one pile into another. The woman was wearing a gardening hat and a pair of round black sunglasses that hid half of her face. Her heavy bottom tested the seams of a pair of cotton candy Capri pants, and her pudgy feet tried to break free from white designer sandals. The little girl was about six or seven and wore a neatly pressed sundress. Her long golden hair had perfect curls with a ribbon tied into a bow at the top.

The woman and her daughter each filled a plastic cup with alfalfa pellets from one of the coin-operated machines. They moved slowly around the outer cages, trying to name each animal without having to look at its nameplate.

"Look mommy, a giraffe." The little beauty queen pointed at one of the llamas.

"Yes dear," came her mother's conditioned response as she

sniffed the pellets with curiosity. "Let's feed the little goats, shall we honey?"

The two moved to the center of the ring and the little girl filled her tiny palm with goat food. Knowing the routine, the hairy livestock closed in quickly and nuzzled the girl's hands.

"Wait your turn," the little girl scolded as she raised her hands over her head. "I have enough for all of you." The goats were restless—free lunch wasn't as easy to come by during this time of the season. One of the littlest goats rammed the girl's backside, and she released a surprised yelp. The mother threw her cup at the beast and missed, so she wound up and kicked it in the belly.

Mahkali's eyes widened. He charged through the ring and lodged his pitchfork deep into the woman's fleshy right buttock. She shrieked, and blood immediately drenched her pink pants. The little girl started screaming as her mom collapsed onto the stinky carpet of hay. The manager ran out of his hiding spot.

"Mahkali, what the hell is going on?" He grabbed the woman's wrist and felt for a pulse, not knowing how badly she was hurt.

"Sir, she kicked my goat, so I kind of poked her with my pitchfork," Mahkali answered.

"You did what? It's not your damn goat. Where's my cell phone?" The student's face became pale. He finally pulled his phone from his belt and dialed 911. The little girl was still

screaming, and a female employee came to calm her.

A few minutes later, an ambulance and a squad car arrived. The medics went to tend to the woman while the officers questioned the zoo manager. The manager led the policemen into Mahkali's shack where Mahkali was crouching on a pile of hay. Cradled in his arms was the little goat that had head-butted the little girl. The goat struggled to free itself.

"Sir, we need you to come with us," one of the officers said.

"That woman kicked my goat," Mahkali answered. He worked hard to hold on to the little animal.

"It's not your goat!" The manager moved forward, but the officers held him back.

After some time, the group emerged from the shack. Mahkali's hands were in cuffs. His face was buried in his chest and his shiny hair fell over his face, covering his tears. The ambulance was driving off with the heavy woman. The officers positioned Mahkali in the back seat of their cruiser while the zoo manager looked on. The squad car drove away, and the little goats danced.

The Car Ride

by Melissa Hust

Almost home, the old woman thought as she leaned against the cool glass of the car window. It felt nice against her warm

weathered cheek. She closed her eyes briefly resting them; she felt like napping but was too excited to sleep. Soon, she thought, she would be home. She opened her eyes and watched as the countryside whizzing by her blurred into one endless sea of greens and blues of trees and grass. She could see butterflies in one moment fluttering like leaves in the breeze and the next see a bird swoop in search of prey. Summer was her favorite time, because everything seemed full of life, and the sunshine and warmth would last forever. As they passed a field of white daisies, she wondered if they compared themselves trying to determine who was the prèttiest, whitest daisy. When the daisies did decide, she wondered what happened to that one daisy who stood above all the rest, was it the first to be picked? She laughed at her musings--daisies being jealous! Ridiculous! She turned her head and looked at her son who was sitting in the driver's seat, he was talking on his phone occasionally stealing glances at her to make sure she was all right. Then looking in his rear view mirror to make sure his kids were all right. She glanced back at her grandchildren and smiled they slept peacefully, she wouldn't wake them to say good-bye, after all it was a long trip, and they had a long way to go, they needed their rest. Soon, they would be sitting where her son was sitting and he would be sitting where she was, aching to

go home. How many miles now she wondered? She looked at the white line on her side of the highway as it traveled with her; it seemed like ages ago when she started this trip.

"Not much further now," She heard her son say.

The old woman smiled and said softly, "No, not much further." She leaned her head against the car window again and watched the scenery speedily pass by. The sun slowly slid down the horizon turning the sky orange and purple.

She felt the car as it came to a stop, and she lifted her head; a fog had fallen—a white, iridescent fog. She smiled and turned to her son who seemed older than he had a little while ago; "Good-bye" she whispered. She paused briefly to look at her grandchildren; in them she could see the prettiest daisy. She stepped out of the car and felt the warmth of the fog as it surrounded her; she breathed in the smell of soft earth and cottonwood trees, soft breezes played with the iron gray tendrils that had escaped her bun. She walked away from the car as it instantly disappeared without a noise, and was enveloped by the fog. She saw the gates in the distance as they glistened in the iridescent fog; they opened with a soft whoosh. As she entered slowly she breathed a sigh and said, "Finally, I'm home."



3men1
Charcoal Drawing
by Tera Didier

Talk

by Cory Foth

Keenan – Jessie’s boyfriend
Eric – Keenan’s best friend
Jessie – Keenan’s girlfriend
Joan – Jessie’s best friend
Voice – Narrator; Keenan and
Jessie’s daughter/son

Voice: Love... it seems like a pretty simple word doesn’t it, but any of you that have even bothered with the emotion know better. It can twist your guts

easier than a spicy Cajun chili and have about the same effect. In fact, through most of my life, I’ve referred to love as a bad case of “mind gas.” If you haven’t figured it out yet, I’m not a romantic. I’ve had my share of broken hearts and lousy relationships and I actually find myself wondering, “Why do I even bother?” What keeps me trying? I don’t know, but I think it may have something to do with Keenan.

(Lights up SR. We see Keenan and Eric sitting on the couch in

Eric's apartment. Keenan is obviously upset, but Eric sits next to him in sweats and a t-shirt, casually tossing a football in the air. Keenan is dressed stylishly.)

Keenan: I don't know what I'm going to do.

(Lights down SR. Lights up SL. Jessie and Joan sit at a table at the local coffee house. Jessie is in casual wear, but Joan is obviously a waitress at the coffee house.)

Jessie: I'm so confused.

(Lights down SL. Lights up SR.)

Eric: What exactly happened?

Keenan: I don't know.

(Lights down SR. Lights up SL.)

Joan: You two had a fight?

Jessie: Yeah...

(Lights down SL. Lights up SR.)

Eric: This is the fourth time you've been over this week. Just dump her man!

Keenan: That's easy for you to say. Your longest relationship lasted three nights.

Eric: That's cold, dude.

Keenan: Jessie makes me feel so alive! You can't expect me to just up and throw it away.

(Lights down SR. Lights up SL.)

Jessie: I've never met anyone like him. He's so funny... kind... sexy...

Joan: Sexy?

Jessie: Well, not the Mel Gibson, killer smile and great eyes, kind of sexy, but yeah... sexy.

Joan: I don't think anyone else sees him as sexy.

(Lights down SL. Lights up SR.)

Keenan: Jessie makes me feel wanted.

Eric: I can't imagine any other woman wanting you.

Keenan: (sarcastic) Thanks so much.

(Keenan stands and begin to pace about the apartment.)

Keenan: You remember that jazz club we used to visit when we were back in college?

Eric: You mean *Smithy's*?

Keenan: Yeah, that's the place. Well, do you remember the night when I first met Jess? (Eric nods.) It was during that rendition of *Under My Skin*. I swear man, it was something straight out of the movies. It was as if the rest of the world just faded into the background and the only things that existed were she, the music, and I. I hadn't danced in years, but I pulled her onto the dance floor without even asking. It was only after the band had stopped that I realized she worked at the place. Jeeze... was her boss pissed.

(Lights down SR. Lights up SL.)

Jessie: I wasn't even mad when I was fired. Keenan was spontaneous, creative. I never knew what was going to happen from one moment to the next. That feeling was worth ten jobs. I was always so organized, so scheduled... afraid of what others might think of me if I did something out of the ordinary. Keenan changed that.

Joan: You have been happier since you two started going out. How long has it been now?

Jessie: Almost a year, a wonderful year. (Suddenly becomes very serious.) But he can be such a pain in the ass at times! I don't know how many times I've told him to pick up his

clothes. I mean, how hard is it to put a pair of socks in the hamper or a dirty dish in the dishwasher?

Joan: So... you're breaking up with him over a dirty dish?

Jessie: Whoa! Who said anything about breaking up?

Joan: Well, that's the natural question to ask isn't it? Jessie, you've been here four times this week. Every time with the same complaint... Keenan. Listen, I think he's a great guy, but it isn't fair to either of you if you keep stretching out the inevitable. That is, unless you can figure out some way to fix these little tiffs you've been having.

Jessie: Little tiffs?

Joan: Yeah... little tiffs. Let's face it, in the greater scheme of things, this isn't the end of the world.

Jessie: I don't have to take that from a woman who tries to fill the holes in her own empty life with a stupid cat!

(There is a tense silence. Both friends know there is a certain amount a friendship can take and thanks to her recent personal problems, Jessie realizes she just pushed the envelope.)

Jessie: I'm... I'm sorry. I just don't know what to try next. (Sighs, running her hand through her hair as she drains the last of her coffee.) It used to be so nice. We really seemed to have it together. In the beginning, he was kind, he was sweet, but now...

(Lights down SL. Lights up SR.)

Keenan: She's turned into a real bitch!

Eric: Harsh, man. Very harsh.

Keenan: I'm pissed here, so back off. (Obviously frustrated.) I'm sorry man. I'm... just on edge.

Eric: Don't worry about it.

Keenan: OK... maybe bitch is a bit strong, but she's constantly nagging me. (Imitating Jessie.) "Put the dishes in the dishwasher. How many pairs of socks have to pile up before you decide to shovel them into the hamper?" Jeeze. Loving her is one thing, but living with her is another.

Eric: So... you admit you love her.

Keenan: What?

Eric: You said you loved her. Do you?

Keenan: Well...
(Lights up SL.)

Joan: Well, do you?

Jessie: I... it isn't that simple!

Keenan: I *guess* I do.

Eric: Guess you do? What kind of answer is that?!

Keenan: The only answer I can give you!

Joan: What's not simple about it?

Jessie: It's complicated, OK!

Eric: If you don't love her, why have you stayed with her for a year?

Joan: If you're not in love, why do you still bother with him?

Keenan: Well...

Jessie: You see...

Keenan & Jessie: She's/He's really good in the sack.

Joan: Figures.

Eric: Really?

Keenan: (Obviously impressed by Jessie's sexual prowess.) Oh yeah...

Jessie: It isn't just the sex. It's everything that goes along with it. We're really connected when we make love.

Eric: So is she kinky or does she lie there like a cold fish?

Keenan: It isn't like that. The first time we did it, well...

Joan: He wept?

Jessie: Yeah. He's one of those sensitive artist types, so... (waves the end of the sentence away) He said it was beautiful.

Joan: That's kind of sweet. Unusual, but sweet.

Eric: (laughing) You are such a wuss!

Keenan: (regretting he told Eric) Sure... laugh it up...

Jessie: And it isn't just that. We talk at night, lying next to each other. We share everything.

Joan: (to herself) That must be nice.

(Keenan sits back on the sofa next to Eric, who is still laughing hysterically.)

Keenan: See if I ever tell you about my personal life again.

Jessie: I'm glad you can talk to me about this.

Joan: Yeah. Men have absolutely no clue when it comes to topics like this.

(Eric slowly comes down from his hysteria, wipes his eyes, before glancing over at Keenan and bursting into laughter again.)

Jessie: You're right.

Eric: (gasping for air) I'm sorry dude. But you have to admit, that's diary material if I ever heard it.

Keenan: (laughing at himself) Yeah... I guess your right, but

that still doesn't change the fact. She was also my first.

Eric: You're kidding.

Keenan: Nope.

Joan: (taking a drink of coffee) So, was he your first?

Jessie: Oh, hell no!

Eric: What about Samantha, Amy... Joan!

Keenan: All lies, just to shut the other guys up in the locker room.

Jessie: I think I was his first, though.

Joan: Not from what I hear.

Eric: Wow.

(There is a long pause as both sides of the stage think about what had just been said.)

Eric: So... what's your next move?

Keenan: I guess I should talk to her.

Eric: That doesn't sound pleasant.

Keenan: I never said it would be.

Eric: You don't even know where she is.

Keenan: More than likely she's down at the coffee shop talking with Joan.

Eric: (obviously interested) Joan?

Keenan: Yeah.

(Eric jumps up from the couch and exits SR into his "room".)

Eric: Hold on.

Joan: A penny for your thoughts.

Jessie: That's all they're worth right now, I'm afraid.

Joan: (laughing) Listen, we've been friends for how long now? Eight years? And I haven't seen you happier since Keenan came into your life. Like I said, he's a good guy. I would hate to think that you lost him over some minor infraction. There aren't

many nice guys left out there.
(draining her coffee cup) And I should know.

Jessie: Don't worry. The right guy for you is out there somewhere.

(Eric comes out dressed casually, but looking good.)

Eric: I'm coming with you.

Keenan: (smiling) I had a feeling you would.

Eric: (putting on his jacket) You never answered me. Do you love her?

Keenan: Well...

(Lights down SR.)

Joan: So what are you going to do now?

Jessie: What I have to. Talk to him.

(Sighing, she stands and prepares to leave.)

Jessie: I have no idea where he is, so I should probably start looking.

(Eric and Keenan enter from the shadows at SR.)

Joan: Looks like someone's saved you the trouble.

Jessie: (looking up) Keenan?

Keenan: Jessie.

(An awkward pause.)

Eric: Um... Joan, care to join me for a cup of coffee... inside?

Joan: Sure Eric. Here Keenan. You can take my seat.

(Eric and Joan exit Center. Keenan sits. There is a long pause before Keenan finally speaks.)

Keenan: Hi...

(Long pause.)

Jessie: Hi...

(Long pause.)

Keenan: (sighs) All the way over here I was building up my

courage and now that I really need it, it locks itself in the john.

Jessie: (snide) Well, I see you're as serious as always.

Keenan: I came down here to talk, not fight.

Jessie: There is a first time for everything.

(Keenan is obviously upset by this and remains silent. There is a long tense silence between them until Keenan suddenly starts laughing.)

Jessie: (confused) What's so funny?

Keenan: (still chuckling) Us.

Jessie: (cracking a smile) What?

Keenan: Look at us. We're a ripe pair of fools arguing about such piddly junk.

Jessie: (begins laughing to) Well... no... you're right. It is kind of stupid.

Keenan: Kind of?

Jessie: OK, it is.

Keenan: Come to think about it, that's all we ever fight about, isn't it? The little stuff I mean.

Jessie: Yeah. Joan was just saying the same thing.

Keenan: You know what? This coffeehouse suddenly seems a little too crowded. Do you want to go for a walk?

Jessie: (hesitant) OK...

(Jessie gathers her stuff and Keenan offers her his arm.)

Jessie: Since when did you get manners?

Keenan: (grinning) Maybe we could live without the smart-ass remarks?

Jessie: Maybe we could.

(They walk off SL and the lights go out.)

Voice: Amazing that they stayed together, right? At times, they made the people on the Jerry Springer Show look well adjusted. But as Eric said in one of his rare flashes of insight, "With youth comes confusion." Well, Keenan and Jessie worked past their differences and actually had enough guts to get married. Now, whether it was a good idea or a mistake I'll leave to you, but Joan still says she never saw Jessie happier.

(Lights come up SR. We now see Jessie and Keenan's living room. A sofa sits at SR with stands on both sides with lamps. Jessie enters from Center. She is in evening wear and is putting on her earrings.)

Jessie: (calling off stage) Are you almost ready?

Keenan: How about a little patience? Jeeze, who got your knickers in a twist?

(Jessie grumbles as she puts on her high heels. The doorbell rings.)

Jessie: Come in!

(Eric and Joan enter SR. Joan is on Eric's arm and both are dressed for a night out.)

Jessie: Hey you two. (walks to UC, calls to Keenan) Darling, Joan and Eric are here.

(Keenan enter, dressed for a night out and is pulling on his suit jacket.)

Keenan: (to Jessie) Darling? Who are you trying to impress?

Jessie: (smiling) Don't start with me. Oh damn, I forgot to touch up my make-up. It'll only take a second. (kisses Keenan before turning to Joan) Joan, why don't

you join me? We haven't talked in ages.

Joan: Alright.

(She takes off her coat and hands it to Eric. They exit Center.)

Keenan: (looking at where to women exited) Typical. You fight to make sure you're ready to go when they want to and you still end up waiting twenty minutes.

Eric: Why do you think we were late?

Keenan: (smiling) You too? (gestures for them to sit) So what have you been up to? It has been awhile since we all got together. Everything all right between you and Joan?

Eric: Better than OK...

Keenan: I've seen that look before. What do you have up your sleeve?

(Lights down SR. Lights up SL. The coffeehouse has been replaced by Keenan and Jessie's bedroom. A chest sits behind a small table where all of Jessie's make-up sits with a small mirror. The women enter from SL and Jessie pulls out the chair and starts putting on her make-up. Joan sits on the chest behind her.)

Jessie: (looking at Joan in the mirror) What's on your mind?

Joan: Nothing...

Jessie: Joan. I can hear the gears grinding from here, now what is it?

Joan: It's Eric.

Jessie: Is there something the matter?

Joan: That's the thing. I don't know.

Jessie: Typical with males.

Joan: I just don't know if our relationship is going anywhere. It feels stagnant. Eric seems comfortable where we are, but I'm uneasy.

Jessie: Of course Eric feels comfortable where you are. In his eyes he's already reeled you in and knocked you cold with the oar. He feels his work is done.

Joan: I hope you're joking with me.

Jessie: I wish I was, but you know Eric's reputation. Joan, you have to realize that Eric may not be one to "settle down."

Joan: (disappointed) I know... but I can hope, can't I? Out of all the guys I've dated, Eric is what I've been looking for, considerate without being a Boy Scout and after a little nagging, he cleans up pretty good. (sighs) I just wish I knew what he was thinking.

(Lights down SL. Lights up SR.)

Keenan: (standing) Marriage?

Eric: You don't have to look so surprised!

Keenan: Well I am. I never pictured you getting married, Mr. Eric "Love 'em and Leave 'em" DeForest.

Eric: People change... look at you.

Keenan: What do you mean, "look at me"? I am the same as I always been.

Eric: Oh really. (leans over and taps one of the fancy lamps that sits next to the sofa) When would you have ever owned something like this before marrying Jessie?

Keenan: Well, it goes with the decor.

Eric: Or use the word decor for that matter.

Keenan: (sitting next to him) OK, you've made your point, but that still doesn't change the subject. Listen, you're my friend, you know that, but you haven't exactly been known for making a commitment. I really don't want to see Joan hurt. Marriage is a big step.

Eric: (stands, begins to pace nervously) I know. That's why I wanted you two to be there when I pop the question.

Keenan: You're doing it tonight?!

Eric: Yeah... (reaches into his pocket and pulls out a small box with the ring) And I'd be lying if I said I wasn't scared stiff.

Keenan: (taking the box and opening) Wow. You didn't hold back did you? She'll have a hard time lifting her fork at the restaurant.

Eric: So you think she'll say yes?

Keenan: (handing him back the box) Yes, I think she will. The real question is, are you ready?

Eric: I was hoping you could help with that.

(Lights up on SL)

Keenan/Jessie: Me?

Eric: Come on, man. I need a pep talk. I'm afraid that I may wimp out at the moment of truth.

Joan: How do I tell him it's a commitment or nothing?

Keenan/Jessie: Are you sure you want me to help?

Eric/Joan: Yes.

Keenan: Well, OK... (pats the couch next to him, Eric sits) About marriage...

Jessie: When it comes to marriage...

Keenan: It's the man that holds it together.

Jessie: If it weren't for us women, it would fall apart.

Keenan: It isn't all fun and games either. Some days you wake up in the morning and think (admiration) "I'm going to wake up next to this woman everyday for the rest of my life" and others you think... (disgusted) "I'm going to wake up next to this woman everyday for the rest of my life."

Jessie: Men are mostly big babies. Unless you can prove to them that you'll always be there to take care of them, they'll fight the idea of marriage with tooth and nail. It's an up-hill battle to get that ring.

Keenan: Convincing a woman to marry you is one of the hardest things you'll ever have to do, but if she says yes... well, I can't really explain it. You'll have to discover it for yourself, but lets just say that the bad times don't seem as bad and the good times are all that much better.

Jessie: Even if you end up taking care of them most of the time, there's nothing quite like the feeling that comes from the knowledge that you have someone who will console you from time to time. Someone who will still make you feel that everything is going to be OK, even if it isn't completely realistic.

Eric: Wow... thanks man.

Joan: I do feel better, Jessie. Thanks.

Keenan: No problem. (looking at his watch) Damn... (walks UC and calls for the girls) Jessie!

Joan! If we don't leave now, we'll lose our reservations.

Jessie: (calling back) Alright... (Jessie puts away her make-up and they exit SL. Lights down SL. Keenan walks back, standing next to the couch.)

Keenan: OK... now when you propose to Joan, don't get cold feet. Just keep your mind on what you're doing and everything will go smoothly. Got it?

Eric: Got it.

(Jessie and Joan enter Center.)

Jessie: Ready.

Eric: (walking up to Joan) And looking fabulous I might add.

Joan: Boy, are you laying it on thick.

Eric: (smiling, gesturing off SR) Shall we?

(Eric and Joan exit SR and Jessie moves to follow them, but Keenan gently grabs her wrist, stopping her.)

Jessie: What is it?

(Keenan leans in and kisses her softly.)

Jessie: (smiling) What was that for?

Keenan: I know I said the words at the wedding and all, but I don't think I say it enough. (strokes her cheek) Jessie, I'm glad you're my wife. I... I love you.

(Jessie takes his hand smiling and leads him off SR. Lights dim on SR.)

Voice: Disgustingly sweet, isn't it? Well, that's not the half of it. Joan accepted Eric's proposal, if you call shrieking like a school-girl and wailing as acceptance. They were married just two months latter, a small wedding.

Then they bred like rabbits, only to be divorced six years later. They remain friends and their four kids love them. Some people get all the luck. Speaking of breeding, Keenan and Jessie conceived a little bundle of joy themselves. Their story however, did not have such a suburban ending.

(Lights remain dimmed as Jessie's voice is heard over the sound system. It sounds as if she has just woken up.)

Jessie: Keenan...

Keenan: (yawns) What? What is it?

Jessie: Could you...

Keenan: Ah jeeze... another craving?

Jessie: Yeah... could you maybe...

Keenan: Rocky road alright this time?

Jessie: (obviously delighted) Uh-huh...

(We hear a still night as Keenan gets into the car. The car pulls out of the driveway. All of a sudden, another car is heard. There is a squealing of tires and breaking of glass as the cars collide and then silence.)

Voice: So there you have it. On that night, some freak accident deprived Jessie of her husband and me of a father I would never meet. But do you know what, I'm not all that disappointed. I look at the people around me, the way Eric talks about his old friend and Joan and Mom's constant stories about him, and I realize that Dad wasn't taken away from me as much as I had to learn about him in a more round-about way. I guess the most important thing I learned from Mom and Dad's life together is that, you may get divorced, you may have someone close to you taken away, but love is still worth striving for. Mom never remarried. I don't think she had it in her to do so, or there was no one that captured her heart the way Dad could. That says more to me about love than a whole decade of poetry could. So Dad, if you can hear me, I've heard your story, I've learned your lessons through example. I may not be a romantic, but I still believe in love.

Curtain & Lights

The Tale of a Desolate Grave

by Jodie Gilbertson

I walk to the grave... it ominously stares in my direction. Collected around are signs of love and endearment. I hear the voices telling me stories: the tale of her death, a tale of a young soul, full of fun and joy. This young girl, was so full of life, a life yet to live; so young, young, and full. The poor child robbed of her only essence: youth. Emotions surround the engraved stone with vivid memories. A ragged bear, an unlit cigarette, and her recollection encircle the rugged granite like a pungent odor of burnt souls and crashing steel. The turbulence of peer pressure sat behind a wheel of death. The car ride to the edge of forever and soon off the cliff of eternity took her life. The posterior side of the gravestone contains the lyrics from her favorite song, a song that I have often enjoyed myself which now takes on a different meaning; a meaning of lasting consequence and punishment of irreversible judgment. The overwhelming presence is too strong to resist as tears start to stream down my reddened cheeks. The reason for this young girl's demise coincides with the death of my grandfather long since passed by. The ghosts of time float amidst the thoughts in my head, scrambling all reasons of why. If only the hand that I reach up to hold in my sobs could hold out the voices of doom. I feel compelled to walk away, but they hold me steadily with an omnipresent gaze. Finally, I build up enough motivation to turn toward the overgrown path. Each step is like hammer beating upon my treaded heart. Time transcends as though I am watching a baby taking its first step, almost as if I am calculating each second in a special time frame in my memory. Taking one glance back, I feel release. The grasp I felt on my heart now transforms into the reassuring hand on my back, leaving its imprint forever.

What Really Matters

by *Phillip Godel*

Cerius
Syla
Bruce
Clara
Abby

Scene: One chair in the middle of the stage.

Cerius: (Cerius is sitting somberly in a chair hunched over with his hands folded in front of his mouth and eyes shut, almost as if he were praying. He is wearing dark clothes. He opens his eyes and looks at the audience in front of him, then to the right, then to the left, and back to the front. He sighs, looks at his watch, and says...) This won't take too long I promise. Some of you probably don't want to be here, some of you may be excited, and some of you may even be critiquing, but I'll tell you right now that this isn't very important. I won't give you a reason why I'm here, or why I'm even talking to you, but I am and that's all that matters. I suppose I could start with my date of birth, where I grew up, how school was, all of that junk, but you probably don't care and it really isn't that important anyway. In all actuality place and time doesn't really matter. Some people say, "You're wrong, Cerius. Place A is much better than place B." They'd go on about weather, shopping, it's

dinner not supper or vice versa. But if you really think about it, it doesn't matter. Places are places. Some may like it better elsewhere, but that's a matter of opinion, not fact. I suppose, some of you are thinking, "What's the point of this all this?" Well, I'm not too sure myself. It probably doesn't matter, but I guess the point is that sometimes everybody has to get something out. Everybody needs to talk, or a shoulder to cry on, or confess, or something like that I really don't know, but it probably doesn't matter either way. What does matter is that you are here and I am here and you came to see something that might be a tad bit entertaining. Well, I can't promise you anything except that this will be short. Why is it short? Maybe because I don't have that much to say, which is good because it's not that important. What do I have to say? What is my story? Why am I here? Like I said before, I think it's because sometimes things must be told. (Pause. Cerius looks at his watch) I really haven't had that good a life. Things weren't always bad, but those good times were few and far between. Maybe a Christmas when I actually got a present, or a moment in school when I accomplished something, a correct answer maybe or an A on a test. Anyway, times were tough for me. Life was tough. Happiness was like an excited fly that you would try to catch, but it would always see you coming and take off before you could get

it. I guess you could say that home was never quite home. You probably don't know what I mean, or care even, but it was never a home. Just a house I would live in at times. Poor? Not exactly. My parents both worked, so we had plenty of money to get by, but money isn't everything. Mom would work during the day and dad at night. It's not that they weren't there for my sister and me, it's that they just didn't really care. They were more concerned about themselves than for us. Cereal was a meal three times a day sometimes. (At this point Sylva walks on stage from the right. She is wearing bright clothes) Not very nutritious, but that's not important. My sister...

Sylva: Sylva

Cerius: Was actually more a mother to me than mom ever was, and she was only five years older than me. (Cerius walks back to face Sylva) Eggs again?

Sylva: (mime cooking eggs) Dad said to use them up before they get bad. You like them scrambled right?

Cerius: I don't like them at all, but scrambled is fine.

Sylva: (To the audience) I cooked for the both of us most of the time. Sometimes Cerius would cook, but the result was worse than what I made, so I just did it. If you put enough salt or sugar on anything, you can almost not taste what you are eating...I learned that early on. Cereal was the easiest. Just pour milk, if it's not spoiled, and scoop it up. Unfortunately, it was usually

only tasteless junk that mom or dad bought just because they knew we had to eat something. (goes back to cooking)

Cerius: (to the audience) Sylva was my hero for the longest time. She could cook, do the laundry, and would sometimes read to me at night. The story wasn't so important, just the fact that she would do it. (Sylva changes her action from cooking to gathering clothes on the floor and on to doing laundry)

Sylva: Are there anymore dirty clothes?

Cerius: Clothes were very important. The only thing my parents insisted on was clean clothes. If we wore anything dirty, especially to school, we would be punished. I learned how to use the washer and dryer at a young age, but Sylva did it most of the time.

Sylva: (Stops doing laundry and stands facing forward, Cerius facing the audience with back to Sylva) One day we'll get out of here Cerius. Leave it all behind. One day when we are old enough.

Cerius: I wish that were true Sylva. I wish that were true. (Pause as Sylva walks off the stage) The thing I remember most about her is her smile. Sometimes I dream about that smile. I'll be at work and suddenly stop what I'm doing and remember. Sometimes I even think I see her walking down the street. I call her name and run after her, but each time it's someone I don't know. (Pause) I miss her. At times I

wonder if I could have prevented it, but how was I to know. (Syla enters with Bruce who is also wearing bright clothes) It doesn't really matter, but sometimes I think that I could have prevented it.

Syla: I'll be back at ten, okay?

Cerius: (Almost in tears) Okay.

Bruce: Don't worry buddy. We're just going to the movie. Tell you what, I'll bring you back some popcorn. Would you like that?

Cerius: You promise?

Bruce: You betcha.

Syla: Ten o'clock. Now go back inside. (Bruce and Syla walk off)

Cerius: (to audience) I should have stopped her, but I thought she'd be all right. They were going to bring me some popcorn. I loved popcorn. The theater there would put a lot of butter on it. Sometimes so much it would leak through the bag. But instead of Bruce bringing me popcorn he brought me her blood soaked jacket. It's the only memento I have of her. If only I could have done something. Asked her not to go or even raised a fit. If I had done something that car wouldn't have hit her while she walked across the street. (pause) But I didn't. It probably wouldn't have mattered anyway. I tried to blame Bruce for it at first, but I couldn't. It really wasn't his fault. He felt guilty anyway and I guess that's why he took me under his wing. I lost a sister, but now I had an older brother. (Bruce walks on) I think he was

a little heartbroken when I left town.

Bruce: (still in bright colors) But you're only sixteen! You should stay in school. You are so smart...you have so much potential!

Cerius: I can't...can't stay here.

Bruce: Come live with me in the city then. It's not the cleanest or safest part of Chicago, but you could stay in school and I'll take care of you. You won't have to worry about your parents anymore.

Cerius: I never worry about them and they don't worry about me. They don't matter.

Bruce: But you do!

Cerius: That's why I have to leave. I want to see where I matter.

Bruce: Then come and stay with me. I'll help you.

Cerius: No. And there's nothing you can say to change my mind.

Bruce: Well, at least let me give you some money. (Bruce leaves)

Cerius: (to the audience) The thousand I took from mom's purse combined with the thousand Bruce gave me got me a bus ticket and an apartment. I knew that money wasn't going to last long, so I tried out several jobs. Fast food, stocking shelves, clerking, pumping gas, janitorial stuff. Nothing lasted more than two months though. I didn't want riches, I didn't want fame, I didn't even wanted to be liked. I'm not that important anyway. All I wanted to do was find out where I belonged. City after city, job after job, year after year, I still searched. I needed to find

something. Somewhere that I mattered. I guess I was important to Bruce, but I didn't want to burden him. He felt responsible for Sylva's death and wanted to make sure I was all right. That wasn't what I wanted. What I needed. I needed to find my place. (Clara walks on in light colored clothes) A place where I was supposed to be. (Cerius joins Clara)

Clara: This is it, home sweet home. Don't worry about your bags; you can bring them up later. The bathroom is down the hall, the first door to the right, and my bedroom is at the end. You can sleep on the couch (moving up to Cerius) or anywhere else you desire. (Clara kisses Cerius. He is hesitant at first but then kisses back) Do you need anything?

Cerius: Can I get your keys? I need to go get my bags.

Clara: I still need to go get my keys copied; I'll have them by tomorrow. Why don't you just sit down and maybe get something to eat. I can go get your bags.

Cerius: You don't have to do that for me.

Clara: I know I don't have to...I want to. Besides, you only have two bags. And they are pretty light too. I can get you some new clothes tomorrow also. You need to look presentable for your new job. I'll be back in a New York minute. (Clara leaves)

Cerius: (To the audience) I wasn't using Clara, even though it seemed that way. She just wouldn't take "no" for an answer. It was always "I'll do it for you,

just sit down and relax." I almost couldn't even go to the bathroom without her help. I think she did it mainly because she wanted to give me a reason to stay. I think she thought that I wanted to be waited on hand and foot, otherwise I'd leave. What she didn't understand is that I needed to do things for myself.

(Clara walks on in a white robe)

Clara: What are you doing up at this time of the morning?

Cerius: I couldn't sleep.

Clara: Couldn't sleep or was going to leave?

Cerius: Both.

Clara: Why do you do this to yourself? Can't you just stay in one place? I'm here. I want you to stay with me. What do I have to do to convince you?

Cerius: I'm not supposed to be here.

Clara: How do you know that? You don't give anything a chance. I've known you for a year and you've had six jobs that you quit because "it's not that important." Well, what is important than?

Cerius: Nevermind, it doesn't matter.

Clara: It does matter! Can't you figure that out? Everything matters. Everything is important.

Cerius: I just can't stay. (Cerius turns his back to Clara as she turns to the audience)

Clara: I don't understand. He wants something that he can't hold, that he can't see, that doesn't exist. I tried to give him everything that he wanted. I gave him my home to live in, I

found him three of the jobs he lost, I even gave him my love, but he won't give in. How do you crack an impenetrable stone? (Turns back to Cerius) If you can't stay, than go. I can't help you.

Cerius: Goodbye, Clara. (Cerius faces the audience with his back to Clara)

Clara: Sometimes I wonder what happened to him. Cerius has so much potential, but he refuses to use it. If he would only stay in one place. (Clara leaves)

Cerius: It probably doesn't matter, but I miss Clara sometimes. She believed in me. Bruce did too, but that was different. His belief was out of pity. Clara's was out of love. (Pause) Love. It's a strange thing. It will do strange things to people. Clara loved me and she wanted to help me, but that wasn't what I wanted. What I needed. I couldn't stay there any longer. It wasn't where I was supposed to be. (Pause) Others helped me sometimes, but none that lasted very long. They expected something, gratitude maybe, but they didn't know. They didn't know where I mattered. Where I belonged. How could they know? (Abby walks on wearing dark clothes [Abby is played by the same actress as Sylva]) They couldn't know because I didn't know. Where?

Abby: (Cerius faces the audience with back to Abby) Relax. Sit. (Cerius sits) We

Cerius: Sometimes I miss her. Sylva. Abby reminded me of her. She looked a lot like her.

Abby: Can't

Cerius: She had those same Sylva qualities.

Abby: Go

Cerius: She was important

Abby: On

Cerius: She mattered to me.

Abby: Like

Cerius: She was what I wanted.

Abby: This.

Cerius: She was a glimpse of the past. (Cerius stands up and faces Abby, they embrace and hold each other for a few lines)

Abby: Tell me about her.

Cerius: Sylva?

Abby: Yes.

Cerius: She's dead.

Abby: I know that, but what was she like when she was alive.

Cerius: Caring. She took care of me. She didn't have to, but she did. It was like...she knew exactly what I wanted when I wanted it. Not that she could always give it to me, but most of the time she could. Of course, I never asked for very much, but she was always there...trying. And it wasn't just waiting on me hand and foot either. She would talk to me and make me feel wanted. (Cerius turns toward the audience) Abby cared about me, I could tell. But before long something else started to show. (Turns toward Abby)

Abby: This isn't working.

Cerius: Why do you think that?

Abby: Because I don't have what you need.

Cerius: Yes you so.

Abby: No, I don't.

Cerius: Yes, you do, Abby.

Abby: I can't help you.

Cerius: You already have.

Abby: Help isn't what you need. I'm not what you need. What you need is to search. You're looking for something that isn't there. Why it's not there? I don't know. I don't think I'll ever know. The question is if you will ever know. You are searching for something that I can't give you. I may relieve some pain, or give you a break in your hunt, but I'm not the answer. I may matter to you now, but...

Cerius: I need you. Don't leave me.

Abby: I have to. I have no choice.

Cerius: Help me.

Abby: You have to help yourself first. (Abby faces the audience with back to Cerius) He loved me you know. I wasn't the first one he loved, but he loved me nonetheless. I wanted to help him. To help him find the way, but I can't change the people that need changing. I can't make that miracle happen. I love him, but I can't help him. (Abby leaves)

Cerius: I loved Abby, you know. But that's not very important. She still left. She made me feel something I hadn't felt before. I felt important. I felt as if I mattered. For the first time I felt real, but it didn't last. She was one of those times when I felt good, but happiness, like a fly, eluded my grasp. (Pause) I think she was right when she left me. I would have left her if she hadn't done it first. It was the wrong place. I know that now. Why? I

don't know. It was just a feeling I had. Have. Abby was important, but she wasn't where I belonged. It scared me at first. I thought I found my place and could see it turning away from me. I felt it slip through my fingers. Gone. But Abby was right. That wasn't the end. I moved. I worked. I lived, if that's what you want to call it. Most of all, I searched. I could feel that my place was out there, just elusive. I couldn't find it. (Bruce enters wearing a dark business suit) I searched until I was back where I started.

Bruce: They are gone.

Cerius: I know. When?

Bruce: Not long ago.

Cerius: How?

Bruce: Fire.

Cerius: Did you see them often?

Bruce: No. Well, sometimes I would see them out on the town, but I never talked to them. I didn't dare. I never knew what I would say to them. How they treated you. How they treated Syla.

Cerius: That doesn't matter.

Bruce: (Pause) I suppose it doesn't.

Cerius: How are you?

Bruce: Don't worry about me. How are you?

Cerius: (Turns to the audience) I'm all right I guess. (Bruce leaves) Things could be better, but it's not that important. I don't know what I'm going to do, but you probably don't care, and that's okay. I suppose I'll keep on searching. Eventually there will be an end. When? Well, when is not that important. It's the who that's important. That

much I can tell you. Places are places, but people are important. When it all comes down to it, people matter. (Sits down and

looks at watch) Well, I told you this wouldn't take too long. I have to go. Where? Well, that's not important. (lights out)