

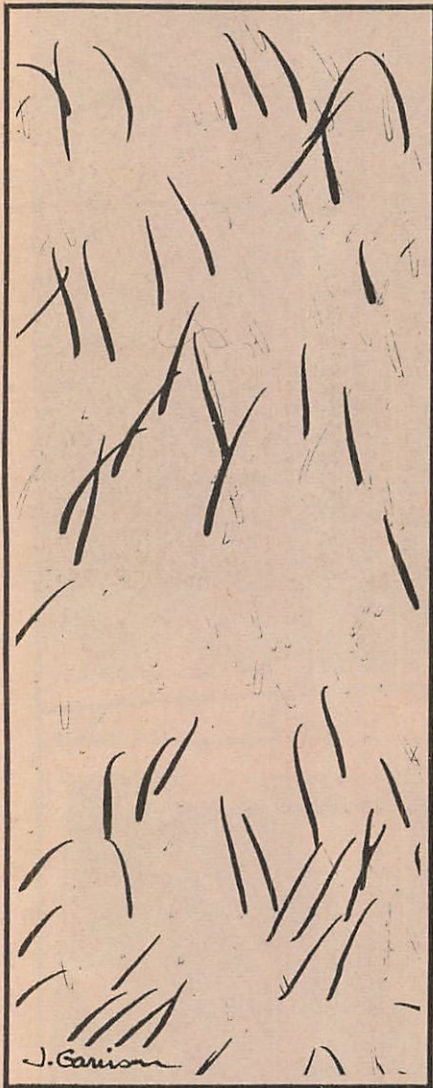
DENALI

WINTER 85



A LITERARY ARTS PUBLICATION

Photo by John Jordan



Poets Talk To Themselves

In whispers on white paper
they say the same thing
over and over
until it feels right

like married folk
they share the same
white sheet
and the same old vow

but sometimes they grow
apart, relating
in the same old way

and then they can choose
separate pleasures
until the pain of being
apart starts them
to whisper

Toby Tobiason

DENALI

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Denali is a student-managed publication of Lane Community College.

Denali accepts short fiction, poetry, graphics, and black and white photography submissions. Mail or bring submissions to Denali, 479 F, Center Building, 4000 E. 30th Ave., Eugene, OR 97405. Phone 747-4501, ext. 2830.

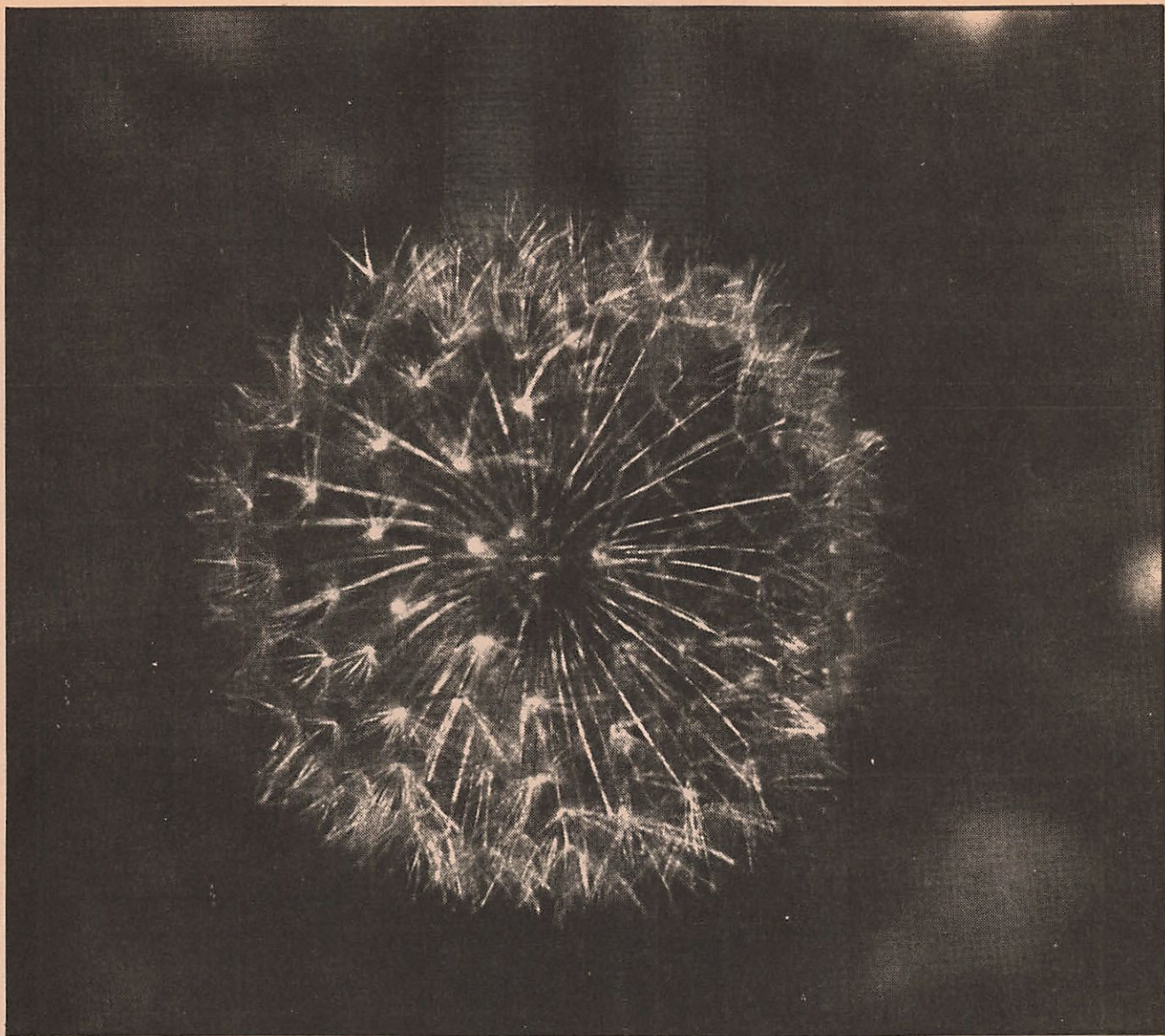


Photo by Gary Breedlove

One's Work

A rich man gave some
cloth to his poor tailor.
The tailor remarked
to his wife
what fine dark cloth
it was, and she replied,
"Can it give us heat
when we are cold?
Or food when our children
cry themselves to sleep?"

The tailor listened
but could find no reply.
That night, while she slept
his sissors cut
the dark cloth in half
and from the wound
poured light.

Toby Tobiason

Mother

Did you know that I
have begun to let my hair
fall as it may,
softly,
around my face,
despite all your
admonitions to keep
it set, in place
curled nicely?

It feels so good and
soft this way:
so natural.

And did you know that
the horrible elastic
garment you bought
when I was fifteen,
and made me wear
so that I wouldn't
bounce, and so that
none of my natural
angles, lines and
creases would show,
was the last one I wore?

And sometimes I don't
even wear a bra,
but usually I do
because I want to.

And could you guess
that I wander into a lounge
by myself occasionally?
Sometimes while shopping,
or after work
or anytime I just want to;
I walk in alone, sit down
in the dim coolness, and
order a drink in my own
voice,
of my own choice.
And nothing has
happened to me yet.

And sometimes I choose
a gentle lover,
someone that I have
not known long,
certainly not the
proper amount of time,
because it seems right.

But there are other times,
when I am off my guard,
or half asleep,
that I catch
your image
on a gentle shift
of memory.
Your voice comes
strongly to me
over the years.

And now when I look
in the mirror,
and catch my own eye,
I recognize someone
I know, and it's me,
not you.

Sharen Hulegaard

Winter Thoughts

I like to look out the window
on winter mornings
and watch the world thaw.

Julia Hausotter

Mother Nature's Symphony

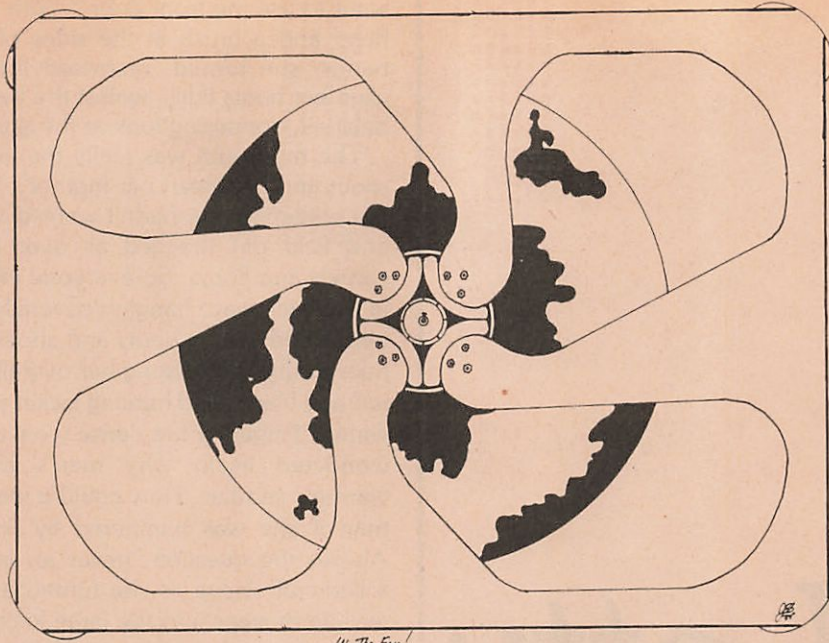
As I walk through the forest
Mother Nature's symphony surrounds me
Causing time to cease.

My ears gradually tune in to the quiet song
In this lush green cathedral.
I hear the gentle voice of the tiny creek
Carrying the melody line,
As squeaks, chirps, and clicks harmonize beautifully,
An occasional crescendo rounds out this
forest song.

The wind picks up and rustles the tree tops
Creating a standing ovation for another selection
Performed exquisitely by Mother Nature's symphony.

Cindy Weeldreyer





Graphic by Ed Brumbly

Egbert: Parts I, II, III.

PART I: Omnipresent Sand

Egbert wanted to skip a year of school
and travel.
So he did.

He went to San Diego
and watched sand on the beach.
"There is sand just like this
at home," he said.

PART II: An Old Man

An old man sat next to Egbert
on the Greyhound bus.
"My life is worthless," grumbled
the old man to Egbert.
"But you have so little of it
left. How can you not enjoy it?"
asked Egbert.
"Oh, mind your own business!" snapped
the old man.

Egbert couldn't help not minding
his own business
so he had to change buses
in Saginaw.

PART III: Love

Egbert saw a girl he was in love with
waiting for somebody else
in the bus terminal.
"You are beautiful," he stated.
But she was not on the bus with him,
and did not hear.

He traced the outline of her body
in the steam
that his words had made
on the inside of the bus window.

Dan La Marche

Lotty

by Mary Anteaux

Lotty knocked the dirt from morning chores off her boots before stepping onto the clean, grey planks of the sidedoor porch. She crossed the oft-swept boards, turned and leaned against the frame wall ready to play tug of war with the boot-jack. Then foot poised, she closed her eyes in an effort to shut the nagging questions out.

After a moment's oblivion and a few tugs, she stood stocking-footed by the porch rail admiring the pretty yard and the sloping fields beyond. Posed with a thumb hooked over a loop on her overalls, she thought, as she often did, how much nicer it was having the porch on this, the protected west side of the house, instead of the blustery north side where her father originally built it. After his death, she'd had the entrance to the mudroom and its porch moved around the corner to this more hospitable spot, out of the blast of the wind that always blew over the hills. It made for a longer trip around the house from the barn, but the amenities far outweighed those few extra steps. A body could take her time coming in, now. She wasn't blown in on a gust, having to push the door shut behind her: a nicer way to enter a home. The thought intruded itself, "Maybe he'll

want to use the front door." With a quick shake of her head and a brush at the sides of her pants with her hands, she turned, recrossed the porch, stooped to align her boots tidily against the wall, and took a quick, habitual, appraising look at the sky before going inside.

The mudroom was really the laundry and changing room and had been her mother's idea. An immaculate housekeeper, she hadn't wanted work clothes or barn and field dirt dragged all over her fiercely cleaned carpets and floors. So everyone except company came in the back way, hanging coveralls, coats, and hats on hooks and setting boots and shoes on racks up off the floor to dry. Lotty hung her overalls next to her father's red and black plaid hunting jacket which she wore in the winter. Fingering the dense wool and thick seams, she wondered again why men's clothing was always warmer, sturdier. How could a woman keep up with a man if she was hampered by flimsy, unequal gear? Always the question, never an answer. She let go a rolled-cuff sleeve as she turned and went up the two well-worn steps into the large kitchen.

Preoccupied, Lotty moved from habit to the range about to put the kettle on for tea. She stopped with her hand on the burner knob. The day required something stronger. Rummaging in the back of a cupboard in the pantry, she found her mother's percolator with the glass lid. Raiding the freezer, she found frozen coffee beans which she poured into the rarely-used mill, filling the hopper. Even frozen, the mahogany berries gave up their scent: a promise of the aromatic liquid to come. Lotty sat at the kitchen table in her father's old place and waited for the evocative bubbling to begin. A mental list of chores waiting to be done nagged at her consciousness: clean the henhouse, right the water trough, haul manure to the compost, fix the hot wire by the pond, and give boosters to the calves. She should also do up some wash while the weather held and take out a roast for tonight's dinner. And there it was, no longer a date coming up on the calendar; it was now, tonight. She knew he'd ask tonight, and she didn't yet have an answer. She'd never considered needing an answer. She never expected to be asked. All week she'd caught herself mulling over the pros and cons, the possibilities and effects of her reply. Chin resting on propped up hands, the rest of her body silenced, Lotty began again the inexorable mental litany of sorting one answer from another only to be relieved by the summons of brewed arabica.

She got down her father's mug, filled it with boiling brew, and took the cup over to her grandmother's rocker which sat near the southfacing kitchen window. Seated here, she could see the barns and watch the goats graze their way around the pasture. The sight of those unlikely milk machines pushed a smile around her lips and helped subdue the unanswered question. She mused about what her father would have thought about dairy goats: "If you're breaking even, it can't be all bad." She could hear his voice.

Lotty's parents had run a dairy. Eighty cows, thirty replacement heifers, three hundred acres of hay and grain; and milking created chores that never ended.

Lotty's share of the work was usually in the barns. After her father's death, her mother had taken to her bed and followed him within six months, leaving Lotty with too much to do. Unable to handle the place alone, she'd sold off the cows and milking equipment, leased most of the fields, asking a modest rent plus a percentage of any baled hay produced, rebuilt the interior of the barn, and started an operation tailored for one.

She was proud of her efforts. The farm was efficient, and it more than broke even. Feeder calves were her

She thought back over those visits and all the years of nights when she'd worked alone and wondered what changes Douglas would bring.

main cash crop. She bought them at auction when they were only a day or two old and raised them on goat milk and hay from her own fields. She carved out a reputation for having good, healthy beef stock. Lotty more than made expenses. Adding income from an autumn crop of pumpkins and apples from her dwarf orchard, she was paying off the mortgage. Two more good years, and the farm would have only one name on the deed: hers, or more correctly, her father's. Women didn't have names of their own. She set the now-empty mug down on a table nearby, let her head fall against the carved back of the big rocker, and watched a tiny draft worry the ruffles of the curtain.

It was during kidding season when he had first come. She usually needed the services of a veterinarian only when the herds needed to be tested for blackleg or brucellosis. Everything else she did herself. But a difficult breech presentation of tangled triplets in her favorite doe had sent her calling for anyone available. He'd come and managed to save the doe and her twin doelings, visibly saddened by the loss of the tiny buckling. He'd returned the following week to check on his patients and continued to come every week. No longer feigning a professional excuse, he came, now, to see Lotty. At first, she was startled by his undisguised attentions, but his manner was gentle and their conversations so enjoyable that, at last, she'd come to look forward to them. He usually appeared during evening chores after a long day of driving about the countryside tending patients. He often lent a hand, leading milkers to or from the milkroom or lugging water buckets, a job Lotty hated. She'd caught him standing by the mangers, fondling a furry head. He never stayed longer than an hour, always leaving before Lotty was finished. She thought back over those visits and all the years of nights when she'd worked alone and wondered what changes Douglas would bring.

The rocker suddenly felt hard. Lotty rose and stretched stiffly. She set the hefty cup in the sink and a crumpled washrag reminded her of laundry begging to be done. She gathered up her wash and descended to

the mudroom. In front of the organdy-curtained window, her mother's Maytag stood, covered in an old chenille spread. Lotty pulled off the cover and began filling the large, square tub. While the fresh sound occupied her mind, she spread papers on the floor and sorted through her things. Moments later, four neat piles of linen sat dutifully, almost covering yesterday's news. As she scooped up her underthings, the thought struck her: "I suppose I'd have to wash his underwear." She dropped her pretty things into the splashing water and went upstairs. In the spare bedroom was her mother's cedar chest, just as she'd left it. Lotty took the contents out and spread them out on the bed. What she sought was a small bundle of her 'father's underwear. Taking it to the window, she unfolded the various pieces and held them up, looking at fronts and backs. Tossing shorts and shirts back onto the bed, leaving her mother's treasures in disarray, Lotty went looking for the Sears' catalog. She flipped through the pages until she found the men's section. She studied the pictures of half-dressed men then closed the book with a snap, tossed it on the couch, and laughed out loud as

Leaning against the counter, she wrapped her arms around the broom handle, shut her eyes, and struggled with the feeling that life had, somehow, gotten away from her. After a few moments, she roused herself, flipped off the light and left the kitchen.

she hurried back to the mudroom to retrieve her delicates. She spent another hour finishing her wash, singing snatches of songs while she worked. After the last clothes pole was in place, she emptied the washer, wiped it off and covered it, and finally picked up the papers, replacing them, folded, on their stack. It was time to go to the barn, but nothing could entice her to leave her nest just now.

Turning her back on the eternal list of chores, she retreated upstairs intending to tidy up before company came. Lotty walked around with a dust rag haphazardly wiping at possible dust. She was listening as she wandered through the rooms, listening to the voices of her parents, imagining how Douglas' voice would blend with hers. She stood behind her father's armchair, uselessly looking for lint. She reached around and hugged the back of the chair and tried to imagine a man's presence. She'd lived here all her life. What had it been like when her father was alive? He hadn't spent much waking time in the house, but when he stepped into the kitchen, the tenor of life had changed. What dimension did a man bring with him? Leaving the chair, she walked to the lace-hung window seat. There between two crocheted panels hung a photograph of her parents when they were newlyweds. She had carefully framed the faded photo in embossed leather after they died.

They looked out at her with shy smiles.

She looked back at them, moving closer, trying to summon them from their posed stillness. She took the

Approaching the beveled, silvered glass, she watched her image grow and focus. Close enough to touch it, she stopped.

picture down and traced their outlines with her finger, searching their faces for a clue to what they felt. "Were you happy? I can't remember. Mama, what was your love like? Did you know when you discovered it? Papa, why did you choose Mama? Or did you choose? Did your friendship just work into marriage? Why didn't you ever tell me? I need to know, and I don't. How can I be sure?" Questions jumbled themselves into turmoil. She put the little protrait back, fluffed a lacy edge, turned abruptly, resuming dusting by attacking the coffee table, dusting to resurrect a sheen that had left the varnish years before. A final quick swipe at a lamp on the way to the kitchen brought an end to hunting dust motes.

Working at the counter with a furor, Lotty banged about putting a roast in a slow oven, readying potatoes and carrots, and chopping cabbage for slaw. She set the table, not knowing which would be her place. She tried all the chairs, surveying the view from each side of the table, moving the place settings from here to there as she went. She practiced passing an empty bowl, then angrily let it fall from her grasp. Lotty watched it shatter then went to get the broom and dustpan. She swept up the pieces, wishing to heaven the night was over. Leaning against the counter, she wrapped her arms around the broom handle, shut her eyes, and struggled with the feeling that life had, somehow, gotten away from her. After a few moments, she roused herself, flipped off the light and left the kitchen.

Lotty wandered into the friendly, yellow bathroom and stood before the tub. A bath suddenly seemed like a necessity. She set out fresh towels, poured a capful of crystals over the stopper, and opened the taps wide. As the bathroom filled with scented steam, she went into her bedroom and searched among her clothes for something appropriate to wear for Douglas' visit. She settled on a blue flowered, lawn shirtwaist and laid it on her bed. Returning to the bathroom, she pulled off thick socks, cotton slacks, and a flannel shirt, heaping them into a tidy mound. She topped the heap with her lavender panties and silk brassiere. The incongruity of these final items had always amused her, and had puzzled her mother. Lotty set a snowy bath mat next to the tub, stepped into the steaming water, and sank into bubbly, amniotic escape.

An hour later, soaked, scrubbed, and wrapped in a towel, she walked across her room to the bureau from which she took her blue slip. As she passed her mother's full-length mirror, she stopped. Lotty rarely looked in the mirror except to check her hems. Now,

sans hem, she checked herself. Approaching the beveled, silvered glass, she watched her image grow and focus. Close enough to touch it, she stopped. Peering first at the tossed hair, then furrowed brow, then parted lips, she continued the curious inventory to the edge of the towel. "What does he see?" She reached up and pulled the tucked corner of the towel and watched it fall away. Taking a step back, Lotty spent some moments viewing that which had never caught her interest before. She turned to get a complete picture. "Is this what he wants to see?" She reached for her bottle of hand cream intending to give her hands and elbows their daily extravagance, but the woman in the mirror wanted more.

Hands wet with the cold liquid moved up her arms, first to the elbows, then on past the tan line where her T-shirt sleeves ended. Calloused hands traced the tops of her shoulders where the weight of grain sacks sat. The hands coated the tan neck with icy lotion, sliding down the chest wall to breasts that had only felt the caress of lace and plush towels. Each finger dragged over the curved regularity of her ribs, sensing their subtle movements as she breathed. The hands stopped at her waist, poised on hips, considering. Then, freshly filled, they traveled over hips and belly to white thighs, firmed by tons of bucked hay and forked manure. Their fleshy insides were used to the hairy hide of her horse or the rub of denim. Once a week they knew the slick of real silk hose which she donned for her Wednesday trip to town. Now the warmth of her own hands pulled her eyes away from the mirror and brought them down to the rosy flesh as it warmed to her touch. Lotty spread her moistened fingers apart and finished tracing the inside of her legs, ending at the knees. A little more lotion and she'd covered both well-developed calves and sturdy ankles. She returned to the woman in the mirror, watching herself as she replaced the cap on the opaque bottle, not really seeing what her hands were doing. The woman caught in silver smiled with patient indulgence.

Lotty stood for a moment longer, then an errant draft chilled her skin and raised goose flesh. With a shiver she stirred and moved to the bureau. Opening the top drawers, she selected ivory satin panties and bra. She reached over for her slip and was just about to pull it over her head when she caught her reflection in the mirror once more. She held the slip up in front of herself and considered, then let it down. Turning back to the bureau, she pulled out a fresh pair of jeans and a green turtle-neck. She watched herself as she dressed, then treaded her webbed belt through pliant loops, unrolled a pair of warm white socks, and padded out to the kitchen to finish dinner. She didn't remember to pick up the damp bath towel crumpled on the unprotected floor.