

LAKE SIDE LIT

2010

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**edited by Martha Moody
with respect and affection for this
summer's writers, whose stories all
convey a sense of history**

TIME TO MOVE

by Diana Craig

I knew this day would come. I just didn't know when. It's hard to believe we're old enough. But we are. The moving van will arrive on Monday to move us to Carolyn Square, a nearby retirement community. It's not too far away from this place we've called home for thirty-five years, but it feels like it is. I wonder if I will cry on Monday.

Maybe I should tell you a little something about myself so you can better understand the turmoil I/we've been through. My name is Myra and I've been married to Harold for those same thirty-five years. I'm sort of short (actually I've been losing some inches over the past ten years) and sort of round (I love my sweets) and I have curly gray hair. I'm in my early seventies (you don't need to know the exact age, do you?) but Harold is a number of years older than me. So you see we really are old enough. I won't bore you with everything that has happened over the past thirty-five years, but I will tell you about the last few.

Harold and I live in a large house in which we raised five children. They have all been grown and out of the house for a number of years. Several years ago we began thinking about down-sizing – moving to a smaller place. We even looked at

Carolyn Square back then but Harold didn't like it. Do you want to know why? First the villas had a single car garage and there would be no place for his F150 Ford pick-up truck, his pride and joy. Second, Harold had an extensive – and I mean *extensive* – workshop in the basement which spilled over into parts of the garage. He didn't want to part with it. Besides, we felt too young! So we dropped that idea.

A couple of years later we saw a sign advertising brand new cluster homes being built in a nearby community. We visited the site several times, chose a floor plan, arranged for an extra wide double garage and put money down on a lot. We were so excited! Next we put our home on the market. Guess what? No takers – nothing – nada – not even a low offer. So we scrapped that idea and settled back into our home.

But here's the problem. Harold has gotten older and is on a lot of medication for various health problems. He is getting forgetful and having some problems walking. He is a big man and when he falls, he can't get up and I can't get him up. I began to fret about the possibility that I could be left alone to clear out this big house including the workshop. And I can tell you I didn't want that to happen!

One day, much to my amazement, he suggested we go and see Carolyn Square again. And so we did. And here we are – ready to move.

Emotionally, for all sorts of reasons, Harold has had a tougher time than me getting ready for this move, although I did get pretty choked up one afternoon talking to my sister about leaving our home

We are leaving behind so many memories: like the Christmas Harold built a grandfather clock in the basement as a gift for my Dad; and the many times we sat around the dinner table reliving our California trip; and the evening our youngest entered the room and asked “Dad, is there supposed to be water pouring from the hallway ceiling?”

Another thing we will miss are our wonderful neighbors, church friends and bridge friends and all the children running around the neighborhood and the annual block potlucks and Christmas parties. Maybe we’ll get invited back.

I wonder if I will cry on Monday.

COMING OUT IN SOMERSET

by **Bill Morse**

Coach Schultz first noticed Jimmy at a junior high pick-up game. He was scrawny but quick and got to all the loose balls before anyone else. By the time he reached high school he had grown to 5'10" with promise of several more inches to come.

Schultz cornered him in the hallway the first week of school.

"Hey, you're going to try out for the freshman squad, aren't you?"

"Uh, I don't know, coach."

"Whaddaya mean, ya don't know?"

Neither Jimmy nor anyone in his family had been part of an organized team, and none of the other Pikes showed any interest in playing sports. He had seen other kids playing ball and found he enjoyed it.

"Coach Rogers needs players, and if you're as good as I remember, you'll be playing for me on varsity next year. Try-outs start in two months. Be there!" bellowed Schultz.

Having coached for eighteen years, Lou Schultz was a fixture in the small town of Somerset. He had only had three losing seasons, and had won the county league championship four times. His best team was the one from five years before, one that finished with a 23-3 record and came within one game of playing for the state

title. Four of last year's starters were seniors. Therefore, he faced a rebuilding season this year, but was excited by the talent at the junior high level in recent years.

Coach Schultz was also a social studies teacher, and keenly influenced by American history. He lived with his wife in a small house on the edge of town. Both children had married within the last three years. He lived thriftily, and believed the government should do the same. "We cannot spend money we do not have. The more we spend, the more China owns us!" he'd tell his students. He often addressed meetings of the Midwest Traditional Values Association (MTVA).

Schultz's ancestors had settled on a farm near Somerset in 1910. During World War I they were viewed with suspicion since they spoke German. Lou thought that was unfair, yet still considered America the land of opportunity. Whatever was an enemy of his vision of idyllic America, was an enemy to him. He was occasionally scolded by the school principal for his bellicose tone on certain issues discussed in his classes. He didn't fret since several influential people in town held the same beliefs, and as long as he kept winning, he would have a job.

Jimmy's family had moved to Somerset the summer before he started seventh grade. His father was assigned as plant manager at his company's new electronics facility in Collingwood. That city

was twenty miles away and twice the size of Somerset. His mother had been president of the League of women Voters in the Chicago suburb where they previously lived. She wanted to move to Collingwood. Housing there was at a premium so they settled for the first suitable home they found that was not too far from the plant.

Neither Jimmy nor his older sister was happy with the move. "There is like nothing to do here", Susan complained. "And nobody here has been to a hip hop concert!"

"Well then, you can be the person who brings hip hop to Somerset", their mother retorted. She and her husband had had several discussions about where they now lived.

"Martha, we have to be careful to let the kids get adjusted to life here", Frank cautioned. "The way people do things and think about things is different. We have to respect that." But Martha was determined that her children would be persons of influence, regardless of their location.

Looking for something to do, Jimmy started playing basketball his first week in town on an outdoor court near the school. It was the same court where Schultz would spot him two months later. The other kids respected Jimmy because despite his inexperience, he was good. Martha was concerned about the amount of time he spent playing hoops, but was happy to see that he was making

friends.

Playing ball dominated most of Jimmy's free time both years in junior high, along with chess. Martha had started a chess club for his age group, so he had no choice but to participate. His teachers found him polite and respectful, though quiet. He was a straight-A student.

Schultz was not the only teacher happy that Jimmy was now in high school. Other teachers were impressed with Susan. She had been surly her first month in school, but quickly became popular with other students, and was now junior class treasurer. The biology teacher, Ms. Daniels, was grateful to Martha for how she had defended the teacher at the Board of Education meeting, when she was attacked for teaching about evolution.

Susan encouraged Jimmy when he seemed apprehensive about high school. "It's not that bad. And you're so smart that you'll whiz through the classes!" But it was not the academics that frightened him.

"Congratulations, you have made the team. Now I will tell you what I expect." Tom Rogers had played for Lou Schultz twelve years ago. He had moved to the west coast, but both he and his wife were homesick so they returned to Somerset. He worried each year whether his job as industrial arts teacher would be cut, but

was pleased to be coaching the game he loved. "Discipline. Determination. Dedication. I expect that from you every practice, every game. We are a team. I don't care what your name is or what street you live on or what your parents do for a living. None of that matters on the court. Remember that. And keep your grades up." The 'three Ds' and the importance of team work were virtues that Schultz had taught from his very first year.

Jimmy had often heard his mother complain about how the country was too infatuated with sports, but she and Frank were supportive of his decision to try out for the junior varsity team. He was the eighth of nine players to be picked. His skill level was lacking but Rogers liked his intelligence, athleticism and desire.

Jimmy Pike barely got off the bench the first four games of the season, playing a total of three minutes. However, in practice he was learning for the first time to set picks, box out opponents and grab rebounds. He was more than holding his own against his teammates who had previously played organized ball. He was a natural.

The team won two of its first four games. In the fifth game, they were trailing 14-6 a minute into the second quarter. "Pike, you're in for Hester." Jimmy looked disbelievingly at Rogers. "Hurry up, get in there!"

Jimmy was to guard Crimmins, the opponent's top scorer. Within seconds Crimmins had the ball in his hands and was

driving towards the hoop. The shot left his hands. Jimmy soared high and knocked the ball backwards. He outraced Crimmins to the ball, grabbed it and streaked downcourt for a layup.

"AWESOME!" screamed the Somerset fans watching from the visiting team's section. By half time the score was tied. Pike had scored eight points and pulled down four rebounds. He and his energized teammates poured it on in the second half, cruising to an easy win. Jimmy started the next four games, leading the team in scoring and to victory each time.

The quiet, academic kid was gaining renown among his peers. "I thought you were a geek but you're okay," Tony Hester told him as they chatted in the locker room one day after practice.

"Um, thanks," Jimmy replied, genuinely happy to hear his teammate's affirmation.

"But there is something else, Jimbo."

"What?"

"Carolyn O'Connor."

"Who's she?"

"Who is Carolyn? Are you kidding? Dude, she's our hottest cheerleader! You know, the brunette?"

"I haven't noticed her."

Tony Hester came to a dead stop. "You have the best court

vision of anyone I've ever played with! You are allowed to look around during time outs. It's impossible to miss her!" He paused, then continued: "She thinks you're a nice guy."

"That's nice."

"That's nice? That's all you can say?" Hester laughed. "All the senior guys like her but she likes you. Ask her out!"

"Oh...I don't know."

"What's the problem? You're getting to be a big man around here! Go for her."

"I'm... I'm just not ready."

"OK, I know exactly what the issue is." Jimmy grew tense. "You're way too shy. So get over it!"

"Yeah....sure."

"Some guys I just don't get! Are you ready to leave?"

"I have to go back to one of the classrooms to pick up some books I left behind. See you tomorrow."

But Jimmy never made it to a classroom. After Tony Hester left Jimmy walked into a lavatory and closed the door behind him. And he wept.

"What do you think, Tom? Is he ready to move up?" A month still remained in the season, but a knee injury and failing grades had deprived the varsity team of two starters. Schultz had only had

two freshmen on varsity during his tenure. Freshmen were not seasoned enough to compete with upperclassmen, he thought. But he could tell that Pike was now the JV's best player and the most likely to help his squad.

"He's not ready to start but can give you some good minutes, Coach," Rogers replied.

"How's his attitude?"

"Great. He does whatever I tell him to do."

"How does he fit in on the team?"

"He didn't say a word the first week. Seemed scared. But now that he's playing, he looks and acts more comfortable. He's talking more. The other guys respect him for how he plays."

"He probably doesn't get a chance to talk at home. His mother talks non-stop from what I hear. I'm glad I don't have to coach her", Schultz smirked. "Tell him that on Wednesday he's playing for the varsity."

Jimmy had come to accept that he was homosexual but had not revealed it to anyone else. He was aware of Matthew Sheppard's murder and other cruelties, but physical violence was not what he feared most. He wanted to be accepted by his peers and being openly gay would not win approval in a Midwestern small town. And how would his parents react? They would say they loved him

and would mean it sincerely. Still, he felt that there would be disappointment on their part. He had heard Martha telling her friends about Susan's various boyfriends, and that it was just a matter of time before Jimmy started going out with girls.

On the basketball court he had found a place where he could excel and be popular. He was talking to team mates and making friends. But he feared that it would end if his true identity was known. He would be just another outcast fag.

"So you're a big shot now, huh, Pike? Tearing up the JVs. It's a lot different at this level. Don't forget what Coach Rogers has been teaching you. I'll have you subbing for Haskins and Lowell at various times tonight. Be ready at any time."

Thank you for such a lovely welcome, Coach Schultz, Jimmy thought sarcastically to himself.

He played six minutes in his first game. Everyone seemed so much bigger and faster than anyone on the junior varsity team. He felt outclassed again in the next game. The third game was much better, as he scored his first four points on the varsity. His fellow hoopsters, buoyed by snapping their three-game losing streak, were praising Jimmy's performance afterward. "You got game, freshman!" Haskins chortled. For the first time Jimmy was feeling the camaraderie he had enjoyed with the JV team.

The next game was on the road and as expected, a physical, nip-and-tuck struggle. Lowell fouled out with six minutes to go in the fourth quarter. Jimmy Pike replaced him, scored two baskets and had a steal. With eleven seconds to go the score was tied. The other team's point guard juked past one defender. Only Jimmy stood between him and the basket. The point guard jumped. Jimmy jumped and blocked the shot. The whistle blew. "Foul!"

"WHAT?" Jimmy yelled in disbelief at the referee who was pointing his finger at him. "I got all ball!" Furious, Jimmy grabbed the ball and threw it down, causing it to bounce high off the floor. The whistle blew again.

"Technical foul, Somerset", the referee exclaimed as the crowd roared its approval. Seconds later the home team fans were savoring their four-point victory.

"DISCIPLINE! How many times do I have to tell you guys that?" a scarlet-faced Schultz was yelling in the locker room. "They make the free throws, it's a two point game, and we still got a chance. But we act crazy and get a technical and the game's over." He paused. "Pike, see me tomorrow before school."

Barely able to eat his breakfast, Jimmy arrived at school early and walked into the coach's office. "So what happened last night?"

"It was a bad call, Coach. I got upset."

Schultz stared at his player. "Bad call. Yes, it was. I'm calling the league later today and I'm going to let them know what I think. But," he calmly proceeded, "you're going to see more bad calls. As a player, you just can't do stuff that takes us out of the game. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"I'm gonna let you sit on the bench for our next game. You won't be playing. I hope you realize why I'm doing that."

Pike had no response.

"You like playing this game, don't you?"

Surprised by the near-friendly tone of Schultz's voice, Pike stammered, "Yes, I do."

"I thought you might be good. Some guys I think will be good, but they get in the gym and can't cut it. It coulda been the same with you. You haven't been with us long but I'm seeing great progress. You'll do all right, Jim. And I like a guy who cares about the game."

Pike was in disbelief that he'd been called by his first name.

"Now listen to me. After the Rockwood game tomorrow, we have two games remaining. We're not going to the playoffs this year and I'm going to give you younger guys lots of playing time in them. But if you sulk about missing Rockwood, you won't play a minute. Got it?"

Pike nodded and headed to class.

January was six months away but already announcements were posted about the rally at the college in Collingwood. A student group would use the convention center on campus to host a Gay Pride rally. Several guest speakers were scheduled. It would be the first such event to be held in that part of the state.

Jim had seen it on an Internet site. He spent at least one evening a week during the summer with his friends from school. Some were teammates and others were academically gifted. He was comfortable talking about most topics but inwardly squirmed when the topic of girlfriends came up, and it often did. He would just smile or laugh when asked who interested him. But this had to stop. He was tired of being dishonest about who he was. Maybe going to this rally would help him.

But first he had to be honest with those in his household. Finally, a week before school started, he asked his parents and Susan to stick around after dinner that evening. There was something he wanted to tell them.

"Don't believe anything you read in the paper about how good we're going to be!" Schultz bellowed at the team at the first practice in November. "Right now we have won nothing. Every

team will be motivated to beat us, and if we don't show up to play, we'll get our asses kicked."

Almost everyone in town followed the team, and it was common knowledge that this year's squad would be good. Last year's sophomores and juniors were now juniors and seniors. And last year's freshman phenom, Jim Pike, now 6'2" and twelve pounds heavier than a year ago, would be a force.

Schultz had expected that Pike would stay on the team for the final two games of the previous season, but there was a chance Jimmy would not. Schultz had benched other players before and some guys had turned in their uniforms. Jim played hard in both games, and was on the floor the whole second half of the final game, scoring 12 points. "You showed me something by being here and playing your heart out," Schultz told him afterward. "Work hard in the off-season and be ready for next year."

After weeks of sprints and drills and Schultz's criticism of everyone, the team was relieved when the season finally started. The first six games resulted in six victories, most by lopsided margins. The opponents they faced just after the holiday break were tougher, but they still won two of the next three games. Pike was starting every game and was the team's second leading scorer.

"Of course we love you!" Hugs and tears had punctuated the family's gathering as Jim poured out his heart. Martha later admitted to friends that she felt conflicting emotions. She favored equality for all, but it had always been other families whose kids were gay. Frank believed that a person's sexual orientation was how they were meant to be, and not a matter for others to judge. For both parents, Jim was their son, and they accepted him as he was.

Who would they reveal this to? The parents discussed this among themselves and with their son. Martha insisted that Jim be free to tell others. It was nothing shameful. Frank recommended caution. Jim insisted that he be allowed to tell it to others in his own time. He mentioned the upcoming rally. It would be a chance to meet others who shared the same struggles. They agreed that this would be good.

Someone mentioned the rally during a current events discussion in Susan's social studies class. A few students chuckled. Some saw nothing wrong with it. One boy commented that he was sick and tired of perverts wanting special rights. The teacher, Mr. Schultz, seemed to affirm that opinion. Susan, who usually joined in on such discussions, remained silent.

Martha dropped Jim off in downtown Collingwood the

Saturday of the rally. He was sore from the previous night's game and said he wanted to walk the last mile to the convention center to exercise it off. Really, he worried about who might see him getting out of the car if she drove him there. The old feelings of apprehension about revealing who he was were recurring. He was going to walk to the center and look for a place where he could enter without being noticed.

There was only one entrance, and taking a deep breath, Jim walked up the stairs and through the doors. Although it was a cold winter day, hundreds of people had come. The organizers had asked supporters from around the state to be there, so that there would be more attendees to support each other. Jim met others who were also in high school. He talked about his struggles. He attended workshops. At the end of the day a charismatic speaker had the crowd chanting "Gay and proud! Gay and proud! Gay and proud!" Locking his arms with others, Jim joined in.

Two days later Charles Wilmon, the head of the MTVA, was watching a public TV presentation of the rally. He felt pity and disgust. His anger rose as he saw younger people participating. He noticed a boy who looked familiar, chanting with the crowd. Could it be? No, it could not be...please God, don't let it be...but it is. Shaking, he grabbed his phone. "Lou, we have to talk.

Now."

Schultz was the first but not the only person who Wilmon called. By the next day the coach had an ultimatum from two sets of parents: Take the Pike boy off the team or my boy is off. Other MTVA members had left messages. "Coach, we support you. You know what is right and what is wrong. We need to stand for the values that this country was founded on."

Lou left a message on the Pikes' voicemail that he needed to see Jim the next morning. He had never expected to deal with this situation. He wasn't sure what he would say but he knew what he had to do. He thought about how this would impact the team. He'd have to get more scoring from someone else.

And then he thought about his ancestors.

"Good morning Jim. Have a seat." Jim could detect a tense tone in Schultz's voice.

"You have shown up for every practice on time. Correct?"

"Yes."

"You were benched last season but came back and played your butt off. Right?"

"Yes, I tried to play hard."

"And you've shown the most improvement within a short time of any player I've ever coached. Right?"

Pike was mute.

"OK, I'll answer that one. Yes." Schultz paused. "I hear you were at some sort of rally last Saturday. Is that right?"

"Who told you? Who cares?" Jim angrily shot back.

"Some people who are aware of what's happening and care about our town. They are very well-meaning people." He continued. "Jim, you are different from most other people. Is gay the right term?"

"Yes."

"When did you decide to be gay?"

"What? Choose to be gay? I never chose it. It's just how I am." Schultz was looking intently at him. "It means people will shun me and think I'm bad. Coach, I think you feel that way. It's not right. Why do people hate me for being the way I am?"

"Do you know why I asked to see you?"

"You don't want me to be on the team."

"No. I want you to stay on the team."

Pike was dumbfounded.

"Jim, if anyone says anything to you about this, let me know, okay? Oh yeah, I need to talk to you about Woolin, that six-eight guy we face tomorrow. You and the center gotta double team at all times, don't give him an inch. Got that?"

Schultz expected to get a call on Friday morning and he was right. "Hi, Charles."

"Lou, I went to the game last night. I saw the Pike boy played for you."

"He sure did. Scored 24 points and had six rebounds!"

"Remember our conversation the other night? I thought you were going to do something."

"Charles, I was up almost all night after you called, thinking about it. I've done what I'm going to do."

"You're going to let him stay on the team?"

"Yes. I am."

"I don't believe it! He lives an immoral life."

"Look Charles, I don't especially like that lifestyle. I don't understand it. But I know the character of Jim Pike. To me, he's done nothing wrong."

"What about the values we believe in? Or don't you believe them any more?"

"They haven't changed at all. Treating people fairly will always be a core value for me. Kicking him off the team would have been unfair. In my family we know about that."

And so Jim Pike remained on the team. Two of his team mates were removed by their parents as promised. Tony Hester was

called up from the JV team to fill in. The varsity team's second loss that year was in the state championship game. In the next two years the duo of Pike and Hester would lead Somerset to two more league championships.

News spread quickly through Somerset about what happened. Some were dismayed that a gay player was on the team. A few were happy about it. The prevailing thought was that if Coach Schultz was okay with it, it must be all right.

Jim talked to his classmates and teammates about his lifestyle if they wanted to hear about it. If not, he said nothing. He went on to an Ivy League school and played ball, leading the league in scoring two years. Sometimes he came back to present the James Pike Outstanding Athlete Award. That went to Somerset High's senior athlete who best displayed athletic excellence and academic achievement. Coach Schultz came up with the idea for that award.

Lou Schultz continued to coach winning teams. To every squad he stressed the importance of discipline, determination, dedication and teamwork. That never changed. But he was never again invited back to speak to the MTVA.

And he didn't seem to care.

BEGINNING OF THE PERILOUS TRIP

by Sarah Seever

James and Delia with their two children, toddler Ida and baby Mary--along with their dog Joe--had traveled many miles in their covered wagon. It had been very rough with the weather, bumpy dirt roads, and motion sickness.

They met kind strangers along the way; some were also traveling in covered wagons. James had assisted some with their broken wheels, and with canvases that had blown loose. As they entered settlements many of the church folks would generously offer a place to sleep, eat regular meals, and to wash their clothes and themselves. Sometimes this was only a barn with clean hay but still it gave them a time for rest. James would work with the stable masters, helping stock the general stores, or other work. Since Delia had worked back home with the sewing guild, she was a great seamstress. So she worked with mending curtains, rugs, and other linens.

They enjoyed the time that they spent at each settlement, listening to the stories of other travelers that had passed through, and hearing of news from other areas. Delia was homesick at times, missing her family, but she put on a good front for James.

The children, Ida and Mary, were doted on by the ladies who gave them goodies and hand-me-down clothes. Joe the dog enjoyed the settlements. He roamed around getting food scraps from kind strangers.

They had been back on the road for about two weeks when they entered into the settlement of Williamston; they had heard that this village offered especially charitable people. It was situated on a canal and was more prosperous than some other settlements. Also, travelers passing through ahead of James and Delia had alerted people that they would be coming.

As they pulled into Williamston, it was a rainy night and quite cool. The children had been fussy all day, and Delia was really tense. A small group of people greeted them, unharnessed their horse, and assisted all of them to a place where beds had been warmed with bricks, a table laid out with food, and a place to wash prepared. After a good night's rest, James and Delia helped the people of Williamston however they could. They attended church services at Miller Methodist Church in the center of the settlement. Delia sang with joy in her heart. Ida, with her big blue laughing eyes, played games with the other children and Mary began to look healthier, her rosy cheeks and blond bouncing curls stealing everyone's heart.

In Williamston, their beloved dog Joe died from snakebite.

In Williamston, James was told about the best place to cross the Muskingum River, downstream near a settlement called Marietta. He could pay a ferryman there to transport his wagon and family by flat boat. James worked long enough in Williamston to earn enough money for the passage. James and Delia were sad when they left the Williamston settlement, for they had stayed there for at least two weeks. They waved to all of the town's folks as they pulled away. Their wagon was replenished and their horse very rested. Not too far down the banks they made their passage on the flat boat. The other side of the river was Ohio--the land of promise, opportunity, and their vision.

Marietta was a small settlement located in Ohio, on the west bank of the river. This settlement wasn't like the ones in Pennsylvania: this town was a place of frontiersman, with only a few settlers.

Four days of travel beyond Marietta and James and Delia were still alone and bone-weary. The trails had been full of rocks, ruts, and creeks swollen with rain, bugs and snakes. Exhausted, James stopped the wagon to rest, pulling into a secluded clearing.

In the still of the night, as James tied up the horse and climbed into the wagon, quietly and swiftly the Shawnee war

party descended upon the wagon, shooting arrows tipped with poisonous weeds. A startled James called out just as he was hit. Delia and Ida, alarmed by James's frantic screaming, hurried to the wagon opening. They were both hit as they looked out. The Indians set the wagon on fire. Baby Mary was asleep inside, but the fire didn't burn long enough to reach where she lay sleeping.

Will Freeman lived in Scioto County; he was a wagon-maker by trade and a circuit rider preacher. He had heard that widow Burr was ailing and needed his prayers, so he left his warm cabin to go sit with her. The sight of smoke rising in the distance made him sick to his stomach. He feared the Indians had hit again. Setting his horse in an eastward direction he cautiously headed toward the area. As he approached the wagon, he saw that most of the flames had died out, leaving behind burnt and gruesome bodies. Will had no tools to bury these poor victims. He approached the wagon to check for any digging tools and found a broken shovel that would work. He dug three graves and filled them with the burnt remains, saying a short prayer and lamenting these souls who didn't get to live their lives. As he cast the last shovel of dirt over the graves, he thought he heard a cry, could be a cat or yet could be a baby. He looked closer into the wagon. At the far back,

looking rather like a dirt pile, was a baby. Since he was a preacher, he looked up into the heavens and gave a prayer of thanksgiving. He hadn't ever heard of this happening.

That day Will witnessed not only the evil that man could do but a miracle. By the grace of God this little one had been spared. Carefully, Will moved towards her. She lifted up her hands and he took her in his arms, singing and comforting her as they mounted his horse. To himself Will said *Widow Burr will have to wait for another day*. He turned his horse to home.

INEVITABLE

By Lisa Redett

“Do you love her?”

“I...”

I let out a breath I don't know I am holding. I don't need to hear the yes, the hesitation and his refusal to look me in the eye say enough. Suddenly I can hear only the ticking of our antique clock. Almost as old as our marriage I thought, ironically. I couldn't help but remember that sunny day when we had found that clock at a flea market in Millersburg. It was a beautiful day, a beautiful life.

As Jay gets up out of his chair, my survival instincts kick in. I take a deep breath and stand myself, grab his arm and force his eyes on mine. There is a lifetime I want him to see, but also a silent pleading for a second chance, a promise of a new tomorrow. Because I know that that is all that she has to offer him. A future that is not reminiscent of broken promises, sleepless nights and all-out wars. Jay and I have seen the best in each other and we have invoked the worst.

“Jay. It can't end like this. After 40 years, I know I've asked a lot of you.” He pulls away from me and I know that he is slipping

out of our life and into her arms. I feel the loneliness of the next phase of my life and it brings me to my knees. “I can’t lose you Jay. I mean....“

“Jen, don’t. It really is too late. “ His gaze finally falls on mine as he pulls me gently to my feet. “I was going to wait until Caitlin went off to college. I wanted her to enjoy her last summer at home without the heartache.” I know what this would do to our only daughter is killing him inside, what it might do to the closeness they have always shared. His love for her is palpable and without a doubt the only reason he has stayed with me for these last ten years.

“I wasn’t even sure if you knew about her.” His eyes cast away again, out the bay window of the only home we have ever shared. The snow outside has been falling for hours; you can barely see our long winding driveway that leads to the road, to his freedom. I am hoping that this snow is a sign. Maybe he won’t be able to leave. Maybe this intervention by Mother Nature will lead to a new beginning like the fresh snow that had yet to be trampled by animal or man.

“A woman always knows if she is sharing her husband’s heart. Even a woman like me.” I can barely speak past a whisper at this point. I know I deserve for him to walk out that door and never look back. I know I deserved to be alone for the rest of my life. And

more importantly, he deserves her. He deserves the way she looks at him and hangs on his every word. Yes, I've seen them together. At a crowded café on a Friday night, I followed him. Confirming what I already knew was happening, I saw them in the corner, her hand lovingly resting on his arm in that possessive way with which I used to touch him when we first fell in love. She had a beautiful smile and an endearing way of tucking her hair behind her ear whenever he started talking, as if to be able to listen to him more, to soak up what he was saying so she would never forget it. And while my heart had ached and silent tears rolled down my face, I couldn't help but smile for him. Yes, he deserved every bit of happiness this woman could give him.

"I'm sorry, Jen. I never meant to hurt you. I hope you know that. "

And I do. If there is anything I know for sure it is that this affair is wearing more on his conscience than it is my heart. He is looking at me and still holding my hand from pulling me up. The sincerity in his eyes is almost unbearable. I have to look away. But as my eyes drift over the bookcase and the pictures of our life together, of holidays and simpler days, I see the one picture that could either tear us apart forever or possibly be the start of a new future. He sees my gaze land on Toby's picture and he pulls his hands from mine as if they are on fire.

“No.”

It's a *no* like a scream or pleading, but an almost primal *no* from the darkest place in his soul, soft and black. “We are not going to talk about it,” he says. “You lost that right.” He turns towards the kitchen and without another word leaves me to stand contemplating what I should do now. My every fiber wants to follow him but common sense tells me to stay. I know he isn't leaving for good. I know he just needs to breathe and put a distance between us.

I walk over to the dusty bookshelf and pick up the picture. I know if I push it too far with Joe tonight I will never be given another chance. I blow lightly on the glass inside the frame, removing the thin layer of dust collected on Toby's shiny happy face. And I can't help myself from smiling, too. Although the pain of his loss will haunt me forever, Toby had a way of walking into a room and making the air lighter, the sun brighter, even at four years old. It's hard to believe that a light so bright could burn out in four years. It's still hard to believe that I will never hear that giggle again, even after ten years of living with that truth. I put the picture back on the shelf because it is too heavy for me to hold anymore. Because to feel the truth of that trusting smile and know that I betrayed it... This is more than I can bear.

I must find a way to salvage the thin threads that hold Jay and me together. But as I walk into the kitchen and see his expression of confusion and pain, I stop. It is no easy feat as every fiber of my being wants to take Jay in my arms and love him like I should have, love him like he needed, when he needed me the most. But I don't even know if my touch will feel like love to him anymore.

And just as I am trying to come up with something to say, something to do, he looks at me and smiles. "Do you remember the day Toby was born?"

I smile thinking of that fall Friday the 13th, how windy it had been and how quickly Toby had come, and nod. "Sometimes it all feels like a dream, having Toby. Like he was just in my head, my imagination and that it all never happened."

I throw caution to the wind enough to bridge the distance between us and put my hand on his. The granite feels cold to my touch but his hand is familiar and warm. "But it wasn't a dream. And he was real. We just didn't have enough time." I beg him to look at me with these words.

"Jen, I don't want to do this with you anymore." His words are soft, but firm. I'm not sure if he means this conversation that we have avoided for 10 years or our life together. But I have to find out – if there is anything left at all for us to build on – even if it is just a seedling.

“Jay, we have been burying it for too long. We have beaten each other with it and tried to act like it didn’t matter, that he didn’t exist. But he did. And we did. And...” It is this last thing that I can’t say. It is this last truth that has torn us apart from the inside out for the last decade.

“Why, Jennifer? Why do you want to do this now?” His back is to me and his using my full name is never a good sign, but it feels more like pleading to me. Not so much that he really wants to know why, but that he is trying not to let go of his last reason not to.

“Because I need you to forgive me. Even if you walk out that door and move on with her, I need to know that even though I killed our son, our precious boy, that if I could do it all over again I would! Only instead of him lying on that pavement it would be me!” I can’t hold it inside any longer. My silent tears turn into sobs that have been locked inside of me for a decade—until I have fallen on my knees again yelling, at whom I’m not sure: Jay, God, the darkness. “I would have never gotten in that car. I would have never taken him with me! You have to believe me.”

My heart is pounding so loudly in my ears I don’t hear him move to my side and sit on the floor next to me. But I feel his hand touch mine and I look up into his eyes, my soul searching his for a glimpse of the forgiveness I so desperately want to see. A

look that would tell me that everything would really be okay one day. That he could let me be free of these chains of guilt and self-hatred that have devoured me.

But I can't tell what it is through my tears that he was looking at me with. Pity? Empathy? Love? Loathing? He looks away again before I can really see, so I lay my head on his chest, taking a chance at finding an answer there, a place that used to be home to me, but in recent years has become more and more became just another place I don't belong.

"Jen." His voice startles me back to this place, this time.

"Yes?" I can't help but notice that his arms have remained at his side. That although his head was lowered to mine, it was more like a gesture my brother would use when I cried on his shoulder--protective and caring, but not overly sentimental.

"I forgive you."

I can't help but pull myself back and look up at him to see if this is really true. Could I be so lucky? Have I finally been given the one gift that I begged God for through the darkest nights? My eyes are so swollen and it is so dark here on the floor. But as I see the moonlight stream in through the window and create a silhouette across his face, I know what I am really seeing was goodbye.

"Jen, I have lived that day over and over again every day since it happened. I have gone over it in my mind and tried to

understand how you could have done it until my soul was raw.”
He rubbed his eyes like he was trying to rub the memory away for good.

“Okay, Jay.”

I stand up, trying to be strong, trying to give him what he needs. Because if there is one thing I can do for him, it is to make this easy for him. I only falter when he stands up next to me, close enough to touch. Putting both hands on the sides of his face, I feel the five o’clock shadow that used to scratch my face when his lips trailed mine, as well as the scar from the sledding accident that happened when he hit a tree to save Caitlin from doing the same. So many touches, so many years. I can only kiss him one last time, lingering for only a moment to savor its sweetness and the saltiness from our tears. This will be the taste I will remember for years to come, what our life together has tasted like from beginning to end. .

“I love you.”

VALE OF HUMAN TEARS NEVER FORGOTTEN

(A Letter Home)

by Judith Marlowe

This is the story of Horace R. Burr, born in the year of 1833. He was sandy haired, five foot 7inches tall with dark brown eyes. On May 2, 1854, he married Delia R. Freeman, a lovely girl with long brown hair and blue eyes. She was a truly wonderful companion. They began their life in Rome, Adams County, Ohio. They set up housekeeping and started a family, their first daughter, Lydia F. Burr, being born on May 31, 1855.

In a few years other children joined the family: James H. Burr on August 27, 1857; William E. Burr on March 29, 1859; and Ida M. Burr on August 30, 1860. Horace and Delia were busy farming and raising a family when the country was hit by a national tragedy that affected their lives. The South seceded from the Union; the War Between the States or the “Civil War” began in 1861.

There was a call to join the army to protect the Union and our great American Flag. Horace joined the 70th Ohio Regiment at

Locust Grove in Company “B” of Ohio Volunteers on October 16, 1861; he went to the Adams County Fairgrounds, then renamed “Camp Hamer”. The regiment was mustered into service on December 15, 1861. The regiment would face many trials and tribulations, for Horace had just joined and would participate in General Sherman’s many battles--the march to the sea; to Columbia, South Carolina; Raleigh, North Carolina; a victory march in Washington City; to Louisville, Kentucky; to Little Rock in the State of Arkansas; then finally home.

The 70th regiment consisted of the best and finest young men. There were one thousand of them. They were under the command Colonel Cockerill and daily performed Company drills and dress parades. They moved to Camp Ripley, Ohio on a cold day, December 25, 1861. On February, 20, 1862, they traveled down the Ohio River by boat to Paducah, Kentucky, and stayed there until March, 10, 1862. Continuing on the river, they disembarked at Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee, on March 15, 1862. As they left the boat each soldier was given one blanket, twenty days worth of rations, and a long stick whittled out of pine with an old bayonet fastened on one end.

On March 16, Horace's group had advanced four miles; they made camp and slept on the banks of the Tennessee River. It had been a muddy spring and it was a rough march. Now they received their arms and accouterments of Austrian rifles, Belgian muskets, and Ensign rifles. On March 17, the regiment reached their destination, Shiloh Church beside Owl Creek. Within days, the ground became nothing but mud, the men's clothes and shoes caked from the bottom up. Many of the men became sick and died in a day's time.

There were many regiments camped in and around the area, all under Sherman's command. Horace's group was given picket and patrol duty. Corinth was about twenty miles in the distance. Scouts returned daily, reporting sightings of rebels. On the evening of April 5, 1862, Horace's team was on picket duty until morning. The rebels were so close Horace and his fellow soldiers could hear them. They kept reporting this to the Commanders.

As the sun rose in the East, shortly after 6:00 a.m., the rebels began attacking Union lines. This was truly a surprise. The Union troops were not ready, yet the bloody battle had to be fought. Twelve hours winning, but then they lost ground. Stopping for the night, the men huddled next to one another as a familiar sound erupted, a terrible storm filled with lightning and thunder that drowned out the cries of the wounded.

At daybreak on Monday April 7, again the enemy was in front of the Union troops. The Union soldiers blasted deadly fire in a attempt to regain their old camp and drive the rebels further back down the road. After about 5 hours the enemy began to weaken. After another three hours, at about four in the afternoon, the enemy began retreating, breaking ranks and finally running. As the soldiers followed them they arrived back at prior camp beside the Shiloh church. The camp was completely destroyed and ransacked, and the soldiers were ordered to chase the enemy another five miles down the road and to make sure that they wouldn't return.

Horace and the 70th regiment had shown bravery in their previous skirmishes and battles. Now, they stood their ground at Shiloh when others deserted. They had trembled yet pushed on when they saw the elephant at Shiloh. For this, they were personally recognized for their bravery by General William T. Sherman ("Uncle Billy").

Horace was standing in line for supper with the 500 soldiers in his Division. It was May 25, 1862 and they were still camped at Shiloh. Their dark blue uniforms were ripped and dirty and Horace's worn and stretched boots were caked with mud up to their tops. Yet Horace and the rest of the men wore their uniforms with pride and kept their rifles clean and polished...

Horace had the most recent letter from Dehlia in his shirt pocket. Even after four children, Dehlia was still slender, her long hair braided on top of her head, and when she smiled her blue eyes twinkled. He could visualize the children sitting at home: Lydia with long brown hair; James, a rowdy red head; William, a quiet towhead; Ida a baby jabberbox with blond curly hair. Oh, to be home tonight, talking and playing with his children. Dehlia had received his letter in which he told of drills, banjo music, and card playing. Of that side of the war. In return, she had relayed the most uplifting news of home and how the children were doing well in their studies.

Horace felt a nudge from behind. Looking up, he saw that he was standing frozen at the serving table, reaching for a meal of ham, beans, and warm coffee, soothing and warm food to take away the chill and dampness in his body. He took the tray and looked for an uncrowded table inside the large tent. A place where he could take a few minutes to write a letter to Dehlia. They would be returning to battle so soon. How could he write her? What would he say? Visions of battle crept in, as did the smell of gunpowder and burning flesh. His very best friend from home, William Green of Company H, had been killed at Shiloh. They were being bombarded by cannons, shooting grapeshot – spheres

the size of nine plums – and artillery was firing in all directions and they heard “Fall in, fall in, forward, forward.” In that last hour of battle grapeshot came out of nowhere and blew Will into bloody bits. When Horace turned for a final glance at him, William was simply gone.

Horace looked up from the table, tears streaming down his face, his body shaking. No one around him responded, for Horace’s emotion was a common thing. Everyone had lost friends, fathers, sons, uncles and other relatives. There was a collective agreement to ignore any visible signs of grief or despair. Calming himself, seeking solace and self-control, Horace watched the other men playing cards, singing old hymns, and just milling about. Setting aside his tray and getting a refill of hot coffee, he cleared the space directly in front of him.

Taking the letter from his pocket, he read again, line by line, sweet Dehlia’s letter, holding each word in his heart. The rain was cascading on the tent as he took his one pencil and single sheet of paper and envelope from his knapsack. “By golly,” he said to himself, “I am ready”. A smile came over his tear-streaked, weatherbeaten face as he began writing:

My dear beloved Dehlia: The sun has just shone through the clouds as I begin to write you ...

I WONDER...

by Bob McCarty

There it is, just as I had hoped! A sudden faint streak of light crosses the night sky in the northeast. Then, just as swiftly, it is gone. I have only been outdoors for a few minutes, and I have seen one already! Wrapped in a bathrobe, I'm sitting on an old bench on our deck in the early morning darkness when I see the fleeting line drawn in the star-studded sky. Given the ambient light around the city, I realize that had I been in a more remote area with less *'light pollution'* nearby, this would be an unusually bright display. The "shooting star" was one of the Perseid meteors from the Comet Swift-Tuttle. They appear to radiate in the night sky from the Constellation Perseus, and have done so in late July and August for 2000 years. A cloud of debris has formed, consisting of particles ejected by the comet as it travels in its 130-year orbit around the earth. When some of those particles strike the upper reaches of the earth's atmosphere, Perseid meteors result.

A grin steals across my face. I have seen this before. In 1970 I was an aeronautical engineering student in the Grumman School of Aerospace, part of the College of Engineering at Cornell University

in Ithaca, New York. I was studying under the chairman of the department, Dr. Bill Sears, who had been one of the first PhD students of Dr. Theodore Von Karman, Director of the Guggenheim Aeronautical Laboratory at the California Institute of Technology, founder of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and recipient of the first National Medal of Science from President John F. Kennedy. The NASA Apollo program was flying astronauts to the Moon, and the aerospace industry was booming in the U.S. My head was spinning with anticipation of finding my way through life as an "aero" engineer myself, in the shadow of giants--so many notable men and women who had gone before me. After reading about the Perseid shower, I had rolled out a sleeping bag on the abandoned Tompkins County airport by the southern tip of Cayuga Lake, one of the largest of the picturesque Finger Lakes in upstate New York. I don't remember how long I lay awake that night watching the breathtaking display of meteors burning up in the earth's atmosphere at speeds over 100,000 miles an hour, but I finally drifted off to sleep without waking until dawn.

Forty years have passed since then. I can look back with gratefulness on a 35-year career in the U.S. Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL), working side by side with dedicated and skillful aerospace experts around the globe. I have been blessed with many priceless gifts: parents who cared so much for me, two big sisters

who grew up to be my best friends, my wife of 37 years – so thoughtful and considerate of others--and two daughters grown and making their own way in the world with husbands and precious baby daughters. It seems that so much has happened when I look back at my life over that period of time.

But when I see a Perseid meteor again against the seemingly timeless backdrop of interplanetary space, I am struck by the brevity of a lifetime on earth. My life seems just a brief flicker, like the meteor I was lucky enough to have spotted from our deck early this morning. I begin musing about how one person among billions can have any impact in such a short time. Lincoln, Ghandi, and others like them come to mind. It's staggering to realize how the world as we know it today has been so strongly shaped by great men and women in philosophy, the arts, medicine, government, business, human rights, science, mathematics and other areas of endeavor.

I am reflecting too on how entire cultures have wrought the world as we see it today. Ancestors of the Kurds were in Anatolia 30 centuries ago, and the roots of Chinese civilization can be traced back almost 10,000 years. Now time is accelerating backward at a dizzying pace for me. I am thinking about the origins of the human race on earth. '*Lucy*' lived in the Afar Rift of Ethiopia 3 million years ago, and '*Ardi*' roamed the same region a million years before that. I am falling into an abyss of time and space. Science tells us today that

our solar system and the Earth we live on were likely formed more than 4 billion years ago. We believe the universe expanded from the Planck epoch during the '*Big Bang*' about 14 billion years ago. Now our solar system along with myriad others rotates slowly in the Milky Way Galaxy, itself swinging majestically through interstellar space among an estimated 170 billion other galaxies, that number accounting only for the '*observable*' universe. The latest word from our astronomers is that their current understanding of the almost limitless numbers of galaxies, colossal dust clouds spawning countless new stars and planets, and additional heavenly bodies account for only about 20% of the matter they believe is really '*out there*.' What is the, as yet unobservable, '*dark matter*' that apparently comprises 80% of our universe?

Abruptly I am back in 2010 again. I'm still on the bench on our deck, in the early morning darkness. Only a moment has passed since I saw the faint streak of light across the night sky. How could my thoughts have wandered so far in such a short time? Then I remember two other streaks of light in the night that have burned themselves into my psyche. Both have been recorded in spectacular photographs this year. One is the bright arc rising from the Kennedy Space Center on the night of 8 February 2010, and reflected in a quiet Florida marina 100 miles away. It traces the hot exhaust from the solid rocket boosters of the NASA Shuttle Orbiter generating

millions of pounds of thrust as it climbs up through the earth's atmosphere. The second image is a vaporous white trail, again left by the NASA Shuttle Orbiter, but this time after it has shed its solid rocket boosters. Exhaust from the still burning main engines condenses into an icy veil that reflects sunlight as the orbiter reaches nearly 20,000 mph for insertion into low earth orbit.

These arcs of light differ from the streak left by the Perseid meteor. These arcs mark the paths of machines built and flown by men and women from the good planet earth, climbing into the void that spawns Perseid meteors. They indicate a remarkable turn of events. These arcs of light drawn up from the surface of the earth are irrefutable evidence of a new realm of exploration for the human race. In this most recent infinitesimally tiny sliver of time, we have seen a literal explosion of advancement.

Just now, men and women have learned to fly through the air. On any given day, thousands are soaring in comfort 6 or 7 miles above the surface of the earth, travelling at 600 miles an hour or more. We have ventured to and actually walked on the surface of another planetary body. Through unprecedented collaboration among nations of the earth, a continuously manned space station larger than a football field and weighing a million pounds has been designed, built and constructed in orbit around the earth. Vehicles are being developed to enable a human outpost to be established on the surface

of the moon, and plans are afoot for the first manned flights to our neighboring planet Mars.

Millennia, or periods, or epochs from now, how far will we go? How will we travel there? Who will we become? What will we learn? Who will we meet? Will we end conflict among ourselves and with others?

I wonder...

VALE OF HUMAN TEARS NEVER FORGOTTEN

**(Skirmish for Corinth – Corinth Road, May
27, 1862)**

By Judith Marlowe

Horace Burr had a group of five men, all from the same regiment, under his command--Hamer, Henry, Paul, Sam and Ralph. Horace had just recently been promoted to the rank of Sergeant. The group had just finished digging their latest trench near Russell's place on the way to Corinth, Mississippi. Their mission was "to drive the rebels from our front". Fortunately for them the tools they used were ones they used at home for farming. Most of the time, they were one of the first groups to complete their job and thus be approved to be relieved and able to retire.

It was early dusk with the sky showing a preview of a full moon. The weather was spring-like, a welcome sign--finally, no thundering rainstorm. Heaving a sigh of relief, the group took their knapsacks and laid out their blankets upon the freshly dug dirt,

settling down for a few hours of needed rest. They reached for their canteens of fresh water and drank a couple swallows with a few bites of hard tack and strips of pork.

Horace complimented his group for their work of the day and then reached into his knapsack taking out his most prized possession. A letter from his beloved wife Dehlia, it had been delivered yesterday with the most recent payment of greenbacks (the second one since enlistment). The envelope was torn, dusty and dirty, with smudges in the address seemingly from water or drops of tears.

Horace sat back against the hard ground, using the blanket as a buffer from the coldness. With the light of the moon now shining down upon them, he opened the letter. Squinting, the first words warmed his heart,

My dearest husband,

I received a letter from you soon after the battle of Shiloh, how terrible that you lost one of your closet friends, chills went to my bones, as you described the noise, absolute terror, and losses on both sides. Yet my spirit was lifted that you my beloved are still safe and well. Now, I must tell you some very sad news, take a deep breath, our baby Elle N. was delivered on April 17th, 1862 early in the morning, a midwife Nellie was here helping but alas,

nothing could be done, our lovely Elle with soft reddish hair just couldn't and wouldn't breathe, no sounds just quiet and still. You could not have helped, so don't feel guilty; just say a prayer as she is with God and under his care. We placed her in a small box and buried her by our large apple tree on the banks of the river. The preacher man said a blessing, and with just a few friends, and my sister Anna, she was buried. Anna is staying a few weeks until I'm stronger. We are all doing well, and the children Lydia, James, William and Ida are jumping up and down with excitement making sure "I tell you that they miss you and love you very much" As they leave for bed, I can let you know that they take turns bringing in the wood, carrying the water and sweeping out the front room. We are so proud that you are defending the Union.

Love and affection, Dehlia.

P.S. My love, the years have flown by since our wedding day exactly 8 years ago on May 11th, I can still visualize that sandy haired young man on that day with the winsome smile – Happy 8th Anniversary. Come home safe and sound.

Tears streaming down his cheeks, silently sobbing, sobbing for a child he would never see, Horace, wishing himself home, quietly said a prayer that God had Elle with him and hopefully this war would soon be over. He carefully folded the letter, placing it back

in the crumpled envelope and holding it close to his heart before putting it back in his knapsack. Knowing that he and his men would be meeting the enemy soon, he steeled himself to be in total control. His friend and fellow soldier Hamer touched his shoulder as a sign of friendship, patting him and saying words of encouragement, “Good job today, Horace, old buddy. Rest well”.

Horace took one more sip of water, closed the canteen, then slipped down into the trench, blankets under and over him. Dirt fell on him from time to time, but closing his eyes he was not here but at home under the apple tree on the bank of the river.

Almost daylight, trying to move, finding it difficult to stand up, Horace spoke, “Men up, pack your knapsacks.” As he was speaking, the sound of a horseman moved alongside the trench--a courier said, quietly but with an authoritative voice, “Important message from the Commander William T. Sherman – move out immediately and quietly, the drive to push the rebels on the road from Corinth begins.”

There were several hundred trenches. Noises became quiet murmuring. Horace and the others worked swiftly and soundlessly and within a few minutes fell in with the 70th Company B Regiment under the command of General Denver. Following them were the big guns, the cannons and, of course, the Calvary.

Wordlessly, Horace and the men crouched almost on their hands and knees as they moved through the forest. They had only gone about a mile when they saw the rebels were almost upon them; they listened and finally heard the signal, a lone shot from a rifle. The endless noise began from the many guns, hollering, deafening rumbling sounds from the cannons. The air was filled with smoke as they advanced, then retreated, then advanced, time after time.

Horace and the others were choking from the smoke, their eyes burning, the battle continuing for hours. Horace's throat was as dry as leather, his heart pounding. A few feet away he saw Henry—they had been all together, but Henry was in the lead. Horace yelled, “Henry, Henry, on your left, get down, get down, oh my God, Paul help him, help him”, but for Henry just as he turned it was too late. The rebel shot him in the head. Paul turned and shot the rebel dead. Henry fell to the ground, blood spurting and spilling from his mouth and ears. As they moved towards him, Henry didn't move, just lay quietly with a hole shot through his head.

Horace, Paul, Ralph, Sam and Hamer gathered for a moment, Horace checking Henry's pulse, closing his eyes, taking his knapsack. The group then forged quickly ahead, the cannons still

firing, confusion continuing for another two hours, until nine at night.

There was a rider coming toward the group--it had been very quiet for the last hour—and the courier said, “Don’t shoot, don’t shoot! The Commander reports the rebels have been driven from the road to Corinth.”

The taking of Corinth had been ferociously fought and many good men had been lost. Exhausted and weary, Horace and his men camped with the others by the side of the road in a grassy area. They had marched through swamps, dug seven entrenchments, and performing willingly whatever they were asked by their regiment, the proud 70th B. Before bedding down, Horace and the others had a quiet service of their own for Henry, who had died defending his country. Horace took care of the paperwork and turned in Henry’s knapsack to the Commanders’ tent. His heart was heavy and sad for a fallen soldier who had died bravely in a battle.

Finally, it was time to rest. Laying his head on his knapsack, looking up at the clear night and stars, Horace said, “Dehlia, my love, I made it through another battle,” and closed his eyes and went to sleep.

The following day, May 30, 1862, scouts returned and reported they had sighted no rebels on the road to Corinth and the city of Corinth was deserted. A cheer went up. Horace's group and others were given permission to set up camp in and around Corinth.

Since Corinth was a busy railway center, everyone had work to complete. Horace and the others repaired tracks, salvaging railcars and locomotives for the government. Horace was kept busy from early morning until dark, supervising and coordinating these jobs. Hamer made sure that Horace would eat and rest for he knew of Henry's sadness, not only for the loss of Henry but the personal loss of an infant back home. The battle had taken from Horace some of the remorse and sting from Dehlia's recent letter. Within his heart he had kept the remembrance of the love from his children and that brought him joy.

Horace was proud of his group. They would eat, sleep, talk, and play games of cards to keep spirits up. Sometimes in the morning when the groups were eating, the commander William T. Sherman would come over on his horse singing praises of Ohio's 70th Regiment as one of the finest, strongest fighting units in the army. Of course, this would booster the men's morale until the next battle.

On June 1862, the 70th Company B., including Horace and his group, left Corinth and continued to Grand Junction, LaGrange, Moscow, then on to Holly Springs. They hadn't seen too many rebels but while approaching Holly Springs, Horace, along with others from the 70th, were marching when they heard the sound of scouts ahead and an alarm, "Rebels on the road!" The rebels had expected to surprise and ambush the Union troops, but the troops were alerted and fighting began. The rebels were greatly outnumbered and soon they were pushed out and made their retreat.

After that battle, the men were hot and covered with dust. Water had been scarce. As they continued walking the commanders saw a large green shady lawn ahead, with a spring of water. They barked, "Fall out, and prepare to eat dinner." Horace, Hamer, Paul, Sam and Ralph almost stumbled as they stepped to the side of the road, dropped their knapsacks, took out their canteens and, after the water had been deemed pure, filled them with the cool clear liquid and washed their faces. They returned to the side of the road by their knapsacks, pulled out their blankets, drank a few sips from their canteens, their firearms laid by their sides, and received the small ration of food distributed to all of the men. Finally, Horace spoke, "Good job today, men, let's eat". The men, relaxing, ate their rations, each tiny morsel tasting good. The men knew and appreciated the fact that they were here beside

the road, resting and eating, while many others had not made it this far. These men knew they were lucky. It was decided to camp for the night, blankets spread out, and all of the men settled in for a restful and well-deserved sleep.

Horace, sitting on his blanket, reached inside his knapsack and pulled out a clear but crumpled piece of paper and a stub of pencil. It was a dark night but by the light of the stars and by squinting, he could see to write. His calloused hands were not comfortable with something as small as this pencil, yet his spirit and the love in his heart would make this letter possible. He began: *My dear beloved Dehlia, As I turn in for the night...*

ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER BOTHER

Prologue

By Christopher Seamans

It was close to midnight, yet a man walked down the empty street. He wore a heavy cloak to hide his face, but it did not hide the anger vibrating off him. Near the end of the corner, he turned and marched into an abandoned building. “Where are you, Sian!? I have a bone to pick with you!” His yell echoed through the building, and another man, wearing not only a cloak but a mask as well, approached him. The newcomer only smiled.

“Ah... I believe you are talking about your son, aren't you, Jack?” Sian replied with smug tone to his voice.

Jack marched up to Sian and brought his arm back to punch him. “You think!?” But his blow found only a raised hand to intercept his fist.

“Now, now... let's talk this over like men. You know that it is not in your best interest to get on my bad side.” Sian's smile grew larger. “Besides, I thought we were friends.”

Jack wrenched his fist out of Sian's hand. "Yeah, but that was until you stabbed me in the back! I trusted you, and now..." Jack shook his head, unable to express himself or his anger.

Sian merely continued to smile as he spoke, "You should be happy. You asked for one, and now you have the perfect test subject, and in your own home too!" Sian laughed, but this only caused Jack's agitation to grow.

"When I asked for a test subject, I wasn't talking about my own family! I wanted--"

Sian raised a hand to silence him. "I am like a genie: I love to twist what others want from me. You knew this, yet you still asked for my help? You deserve a freak for a son."

Sian turned to leave, but Jack said, "Maybe I do, but what about our deal? Do you really think I'll go through with it now?"

Sian turned back and said, "Not in the least, but that is why I have more friends than just you. And don't think about telling the police what you know; I have ways of silencing rats before they squeak."

With that, Sian walked out of the building.

Jake clenched his fists. "You'll pay for this Sian. You may have a noose around my neck to keep me in place, but I won't let you do the same to my son! I'll make it my life's work to keep him out of your hands... even if he has been made a freak."

Another Day, Another Bother

Bam, bam, bam! “Breakfast! Get it or lose it!” My mom’s shrill voice pulled me out of my dream, as it always does. It’s so effective that I don’t even bother with an alarm clock. Then again, it’s not like I have a need for one in the first place, because I’m homeschooled.

Yawning, I pulled myself out of bed and stood up. “It’s a new day, get up and face it,” I mumbled to myself as I glanced at the calendar hanging over my bed. Tuesday, September 18. Three days to my fifteenth birthday. I let out a weary sigh. “Maybe this year I’ll actually get a cake,” I mumbled as I turned to face my full-view mirror.

I know what you’re thinking: He must live with abusive parents who don’t even care about his birthday, or maybe they’re too poor to afford a cake. Sorry, but I am not Harry Potter. I’m not Charlie Bucket either. My name is Dane Vernan. My parents are good people, and our budget’s doing fine. It’s just that I’m... well... kinda disabled.

No, it’s not a mental disability (not officially, at any rate), and not exactly a physical one either, as I am perfectly fit and mobile. The thing is, I am Underborn. No, not a zombie or anything. My pre-birth development had gone horribly, horribly wrong.

The most noticeable flaw, so to speak, is my skin. It's a dull grey with a shine to it even when it's completely dry. The next thing you'd probably notice is my eyes. I have no irises, only pupils that are too large and dark to be mistaken as actual irises.

My hands and feet are webbed, but it's hard to notice at a glance as long as I keep my fingers closed. Surprisingly, the webbing does not hinder my digits' mobility at all. And finally, I don't have ears. Instead, I have small holes on the sides of my head like a seal.

Other than that, I'm a perfectly healthy 14-year-old boy, like the one looking back at me in the mirror. I have black hair that I keep long on the sides to hide my ear-holes. I'm tall for my age--about six foot four--and I'm on the lanky and thin side.

With another sigh, I turned away from the mirror and got dressed. I never really liked wearing anything fancy, so I just pulled on a plain t-shirt, blue jeans, and pair of socks. Once I was done, I turned and headed out the door.

My house isn't anything too fancy, but it's got two floors and an attic that is (surprise, surprise) my room. The door of said room is set at the end of the hall, so the ladder up is really more like a second staircase. As I headed down into the hallway, I saw my mother waiting for me.

“Hurry down and eat up! You have a long day ahead of you,” She said as I passed her.

“I know, I know,” I said back, trying to ignore the hurt tone in her voice. She always has that hurt tone when she looks at me.

As I made my way down the hall, I passed my baby brother Sam’s room. Glancing in, I saw him asleep in his crib. I always had a soft spot for him, not only for his innocence but because he’s always looked at me with a smile. Yeah, he’s a baby, but it still counts!

As I headed down the stairs into the kitchen, I saw my dad reading the newspaper (most likely the opinion section on politics) and my nineteen-year-old brother John listening to his iPod. I could tell at a glance that he was listening to heavy rock.

“Morning, Dad.” I greeted him as I took my seat, a plate of scrambled eggs already in front of me.

“Morning, Dane,” he said back, his voice deep and eager.

“Morning to you too, Danny,” My brother taunted me with a sneer. I knew better than to take his bait. I just tuned him out and ate my eggs.

My brother hated my guts. He didn’t even bother to hide it in front of our parents. He never did anything drastic (except that time with the backscratcher), but he never missed a chance to remind me of what I was. And before you shake your head, relax.

I'd never taken anything he said seriously, and neither did my parents. Which is why they never bothered to stop him.

My father on the other hand... I have no idea what he thinks of me. You see, he's a biological researcher, so he's been using me as his lab rat for years. Twice a week I go into his 'lab' and get tested on everything from my brainwaves to my blood type. It's kind of annoying, but I've never really had much of a problem with it.

My dad's very supportive about my 'condition' and respects that I'm still human. Yet... I can't shake the feeling that he's a little too interested in my biology. That, and the rigid 'fitness program' he set up for me is a little on the strange side. Seriously, who cares how many cartwheels I can do in a row?

After eating breakfast and putting my plate in the dishwasher, I went into the living room and plopped down on the sofa. "Been awhile since I worked on this," I mumbled as I grabbed my Sudoku book off the table and started working on it.

My life is rather linear: stay inside at all times, eat with the family, do the 'fitness program' every day, go to 'school', and report to the 'lab' when I'm due for an examination. Besides that, I'm free to do what I want, and, boy, do I love me some Sudoku. That has been my routine for the last 14 years, and it had no signs of changing.

Or so I thought.

I looked up from my puzzle as I heard my dad's footsteps entering the living room. "Son, can you put that down for a minute? We need to talk," he said.

I answered, "If it's about the soap ring in the bathtub it was John, not me."

"There's another soap ring?" he asked, frustration dripping off his voice.

"Yep." I answered.

He put a hand on his forehead and let out a sigh. "One of these days, I'm going to have to find out whose shampoo it is," he said, "but that's not what I'm here to talk about."

With a sigh, I put my book down. Whenever my dad wanted to talk about something other than the soap ring mystery (don't ask), it would mean trouble or more problems to add to the list.

"Okay then, what is it?" I asked, my tone clearly showing my enthusiasm.

"It's about your birthday." He answered.

I sighed again and mentally slapped myself for not realizing it sooner. This happened every year: the excuse about why I get nothing but a day off from studying on my birthday. Said excuses range from 'beyond cliché' to 'not even a 4 year old would buy it.' I'd given up hope for something good out of all this ages ago, and

it was only out of respect for my dad that I even let him bother telling his lame cover story.

“Well, the thing is...” He started, but then paused for a moment, as if wondering whether he should tell me or not, which was a little odd. For him, I mean. He’s a scientist, and if I were about to die from, say, webbing cancer this afternoon, he’d tell me right away. I made a mental note of this but didn’t say anything. Now I was curious.

Finally, he continued. “You see, for the last 14 years you’ve never really gotten anything special for your birthday. So, this year, I’ve decided...” He paused again, and glanced out the window really quickly, as if he was watching for something. Another weird action from him, another mental note for me.

Then he did something I was not expecting at all. He pulled a small package out of his pocket and slipped it into mine, too quickly for me to see what it was.

“... to give you a birthday cake this year! Cool, huh?” My dad finished his sentence as if nothing had happened. I did not know what to say.

What the heck was that? I thought. But when I saw my dad’s face, I didn’t dare press it further. On the outside, he was bright and excited. But his eyes, however, showed fear and looked at me

longingly. The message was clear: play along, or we're going to be in serious trouble.

“Really? It’s about time you did something like this!” I said in an amazed but skeptical tone. I had no idea what this was all about, but I decided to not rock the boat. Besides, I really was excited about the cake!

“Yeah, well, it’s not like we’re taking you to Disneyland,” he said, his eyes bright with relief. “But there’s just one problem...”

I raised an eyebrow. “What?”

“You have to make the cake. I got you the mix from the store, but I’m too busy to make it. Same goes for your mother.”

I let out an honest moan, and I felt my excitement dropping to the floor. I was hopeless in the kitchen, and he knew it. Anything I’d mix together would come out bad, even if it was just sugar and water. But he’d never let the plan go until I ran out of cake mix, which meant I was going to have to spend all my free time working until I did.

I’m never going to finish that Sudoku book, I thought to myself as I got up and headed back to the kitchen.

“Oh, and don’t forget you have an appointment tonight!” dad called over my shoulder.

“Not that you need to remind me.” I mumbled as I spotted the cake mixes on the counter. “Wait...” There were more than enough for three wedding cakes!

“Before you ask,” dad called, “I got so much because I know how much trouble you have cooking. You should be able to get at least one cake out of all that!”

I let out yet another groan. “Another day, another bother. What a surprise.”

I remembered the package still in my pocket. My curiosity got the better of me, and I held my pocket open at an angle I could look into it. Instead of the package, I saw a note that was lying on top of it: Not until you’re 15. I shook my head. *Whatever dad. Sigh... my life is so messed up...*

Get Over It

With a sigh of relief, I turned off the smoke detector for the billionth time. Finally, after two days worth of effort, I was out of cake mix. I didn't even bother taste-testing the last black lump, I just tossed it in the trash with the rest. I glanced at the kitchen clock.

"9:42 PM. Well, nothing kills time like burning cakes. It'll be my birthday in a matter of hours." I sighed again. I tossed the pans and trays into the sink and wiped down the table with a sponge. "Might as well take my shower now," I mumbled after I was done. I went up the stairs, only to run into my mom.

"Hey mom. I'm heading to the shower." I said.

She nodded silently, but as I passed her she turned and said, "Look Dane, about your birthday..."

I stopped and turned to face her. "It's okay, mom," I said, "I'm a little disappointed I couldn't make a cake, but I've never gotten one before anyway so it's no..."

She held up a hand to silence me. "No Dane," she said, "this isn't about that."

I just shrugged. "Okay, I give up. What is it about?"

"Tomorrow morning, your father and I are going on a trip."

I raised an eyebrow. "A business trip?"

“No, a vacation...” She paused and turned away from me.
“...with John and Sam.”

“Oh... that kind of trip.” I said, my spirits dropping again. She meant it was a family vacation. Without me, for obvious reasons.

“Oh, Dane...” She said as she gave me a hug. “I... I really wanted you to come with us this time. Because, you’ll be fifteen, and you’ve never set foot outside this house. You’re more than capable of keeping your... secret... but your father forbid it. Again.”

She meant what she said with all her heart. She cared greatly for me, and was able to see past my body at home. But whenever it came to going out in public, she could only see skin deep, and she always had a guilty look in her eyes whenever she looked at me. Still, I could not bring myself to blame her for anything. Besides, it was my dad, not her, who said that I should stay inside.

I returned her hug and said “It’s okay, mom.” With that, I walked past her and headed into the bathroom.

“Come to think of it... why does dad always insist that I don’t go outside?” I mumbled as I undressed. “I know I’ll catch a lot of stares, but so what? It’s not like I’m going to draw an angry mob!” With a shake of my head, I turned on the water, and got in. I smiled the moment the water hit my skin.

If there is one thing I truly enjoy about being Underborn, it's what happens when I take my shower. You see, my skin has a weird mutation: it loves to get wet. Like child with candy, it's just sheer pleasure. Also weird is the way my skin seems to get a little rubbery when it gets wet. It's not dolphin-skin rubbery, but it does make it seem less sickly. When I was younger, I used to pretend that I wasn't some disabled human, but a half-human half-dolphin creature.

I've always wondered why my skin reacted this way. The way I enjoy being wet has a possible explanation: something to do with the fact that embryos exist in a completely fluid environment. But where the heck does rubber skin fit into pre-birth? I mean everything else, even my webbing, is part of the development process!

"Oh well, it's not like I'm going to find out anytime soon..." I mumbled through my watery bliss.

Once I was old enough to take one, my dad quickly put a ten minute time limit on my showers. I'd probably spend all day in the shower if I could, but I have no desire to become a rule breaker. So after ten minutes in, I forced myself to turn off the water.

"If I even get out of here, I'm finding a local swimming pool that accepts mutants," I mumbled as I dried off, the rubbery feel fading away. I wrapped myself up in a towel, and made my way to

my room. As I was pulling on my pajamas, I heard a knock on my door.

“Son, can I come in?” My dad.

“Sure, I have my pants on.” With a grunt of approval, he came in, looking exhausted. I raised an eyebrow. “You ok, dad?” I asked.

“Yes... I just got back from a small jog.”

Doesn't look like it was all that small, I thought as he made his staggering way over to my bed and sat down.

“So... how did the cake come out?”

I gave a small smirk. “The ABC’s of cooking, dad.” I said.

He raised an eyebrow. “What does that mean?”

“Awful, Burnt, and Crispy.”

“What? You couldn’t even make one cake from all those mixes?” He looked awed.

“Yep, pretty much.”

He shook his head again. “Here I’d thought you’d have inherited a tad of mother’s kitchen skills.”

I shook my head back. “Sorry, dad. I’m still your son, and your genes still can’t cook squat.”

He let out another sigh, and then turned away. I gave him a moment to collect his thoughts.

Finally, he asked, “Son... did your mother tell you about the upcoming trip?”

I nodded. “Yeah,” I said, “I was going to ask you about that. Why...” He held up a hand to silence me. I heeded it, but I was a little less than keen to hear his explanation in place of my mother’s.

“I know, I know. You want to know why I’m forbidding you to come with us again.”

I nodded.

“The thing is...” He continued, his voice hesitant and reluctant, “I think I took too long to realize just how... truly human you are. And I... I am not sure you are ready to face the outside world. You... never meet anyone outside your family. You’ve never... felt the wind and humidity of the outdoors. And now, you are practically fifteen, but you don’t even know who the current President of the United States is.

“If I were to just take out to face the whole world at once, the experience would overwhelm you, and scare you away from all there is to see. I want you to grow to love what is out there, not be intimidated by how much there is.”

I felt resentment building up in me. “So there’s no hope for me?” I asked, “There’s no way I’m ever going to be able to accept what’s out there? The only reason I don’t know the President’s

name is because you never let me see what's happening in the world!" I was yelling. "You keep the newspaper out of my reach, we don't have a TV, and you never tell me what going on!"

He just sat there, waiting patiently for me to calm down. I let out a sigh, and tried to calm my nerves. I didn't have anger issues, but I did act have a tendency to act rashly at times.

Finally, he spoke up: "I understand, and I am sorry. Perhaps it was a bit much..." He paused and glanced out the window again. Now I was really concerned. "So... how about I make it up to you right now?" He continued.

"Yeah, sure," I said with an uneasy shrug. "What do you have in mind? Giving me this morning's opinion section?"

He just smiled. "Actually, I was thinking about having a bonfire and a sleepout tonight. With you, of course!"

That one caught me off guard. I had never stepped outside, let alone had a bonfire! "Are you serious?"

"Dead serious. Now pack a change of clothes, some hygiene utensils, and meet me out the back door!" He said, as he stood up and headed out the door.

I just stared after him. *What the heck...* I thought, *One minute he's all "it's too much for you to handle," and now he not just letting me outside, but having a bonfire?! This has to be some kind of sick joke...*

Yet, as I stood there, I saw no signs that he was coming back. After a while, it dawned on me that he was actually serious! “Oh man...” I mumbled, “this is... this is... awesome!” It was all I could do to not jump around in joy.

“I’m finally going to get some fresh air! Yes!” I threw a punch to the air. Without a second’s hesitation, I raced to my ‘closet.’ In actuality, it was another room in the attic next to mine that served as an actual attic. I didn’t go in there very often anymore, really just to get out the holiday stuff, but when I was young and bored out of mind I spent months digging through the stuff in there.

I knew exactly where to look for a dusty old camping backpack. You know: the ones with attachable sleeping bags. After dragging it out and patting off as much dust as I dared to breathe in, I shoved in a change of clothes, a book from my counter, and the flashlight I kept under my bed for power outages.

I was whistling as I heaved the light load onto my shoulder and headed for the door. I paused only to look back at my room, saying “I think you’ll survive without me for one night.” I’d slept in that room for the last 15 years, and I was eager for the change in scenery. Although without a doubt I was going to have trouble getting any sleep without the air conditioning starting up in the middle of the night. “Eh, small price to pay,” I mumbled as I closed the door.

I stopped on the second floor to grab some mouthwash, tiptoed past Sam's bedroom door, and headed down into the kitchen. I grabbed a few snacks out of the pantry, and filled a water bottle to the brim. Finally, I turned and headed to the back door. I spotted a pair of shoes I'd never seen before set beside the door.

"One step ahead of me again, dad?" I chuckled. I must have been giddy--I'm not one to go for bad puns. I slipped the shoes on, noting that they fit me perfectly, and thought how weird it was to wear them. I've never worn anything on my feet besides socks and a pair of slippers. They were lace-less, a good thing because I never learned how to tie them (if you don't mind, blame my dad's lackluster teaching skills, not my IQ).

At long last, the only thing standing between me and outside was the unlocked door and my own nerves. I think I just stood there, shoes and backpack on, for about 15 minutes, just staring at the door. I let out another sigh.

"Okay, Dane," I mumbled, "Get over it and get out there, or Dad will never let you see so much as the comic section!" And with that pleasant image in my mind pushing me along, I took a deep breath, pulled the door open, and took my first step into the world.

...to be continued...

DEPTH PERCEPTION

By Betsy Morse

I failed fourth grade gym. Actually, being well-behaved gave me a “pass” for the first two marking periods, but things changed when the final grading segment began. I held my own in track and field, which mostly involved running and jumping, although I only was able to climb up a couple of inches on the stationary rope. But then came the game I had been dreading all year: softball.

Despite practicing with my father, who tried to teach me to throw and hit, I was dreadful at softball. My swings never seemed to be timed correctly and if I had ever caught a ball, I would have had trouble sending it to the correct location to make a big play. While I was never the last person chosen on a team, I was always in the final group. In other segments of gym we girls were segregated by gender, but we played softball with the boys, who always seemed to develop a mean streak when it came to winning or losing games. I would pray for rain or for a substitute teacher who might opt for kickball, which I played badly but with at least some sense of the game. Still, my failing grade came as a shock. I certainly had tried. I just never succeeded. At 18, I declared that

the best thing about graduating from high school was the knowledge that I would never play softball again. It's a promise to myself that I have kept happily for decades.

Years later, I moved to a new state and applied for a driver's license. As part of the eye test, I was told to look at a series of bars and indicate which one stood out the farthest. I looked but couldn't see any difference in the bars. The technician explained again (a little louder) what I was to do, as though the problem was in my understanding rather than in my vision. I tried again, but the bars all looked flat. On the third failure, the technician said, "Good thing you live here rather than in another state. You don't have any depth perception. In some places, that might keep you from getting a license."

I nearly cheered out loud at this news. ***I had no depth perception!*** THAT's why I couldn't play softball. ***I had no depth perception!*** No wonder I never seemed to know where the ball was. Several years of tennis lessons had rendered me a permanent beginner – eager but lousy. Now I knew why I didn't improve. ***I had no depth perception!***

Years of shame over my lack of sports skills--always a half step behind in my approaches, always a little off in my timing—suddenly disappeared. ***I had no depth perception.***

Having no depth perception shows up in my driving. I have trouble at night on dark, unfamiliar roads, for without visual clues from alongside the streets, I can't gauge where I am. I've been known to stop far before red lights on lonely streets because I couldn't tell how close I was to the light. When driving through night-time construction work, with bright lights glaring around me, I strain to figure out where the road may be. Night-time snow storms are the worst, because snow falling through the headlight beams is so distracting that I have to grip the wheel and force myself to look beyond the snow to the road.

These shortcomings are a price I'm happy to pay, however, in exchange for the knowledge that there is a reason why I can't do certain physical things. Sure, natural-born klutziness runs on both sides of my family, but now I know that this has nothing to do with my failures. The problem, you see, is *I have no depth perception*.