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The Lord took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

Genesis 2:15-17

Is there a tension between knowledge and faith? At the very beginning of the Bible, Jews and Christians faced with this question. What sense are we to make of God’s command to Adam in our own day? In our pursuit of a Christian life are we to strive for a return of pre-fall conditions, and to what extent does our Christian faith require a disavowal of knowledge?

The theme of safe, uniformed Christianity is not new. We can find examples of it in the writing of some of the very first reformed thinkers. Milton, for example, speaks rhapsodically in his Paradise Lost “Of knowledge within bounds,” and Milton’s archangel Rafael says to Adam, “If else thou seek’st/Aught, not surpassing human measure, say.” Milton and many of the Christians that have followed him put Christianity in a position where it serves to dampen man’s exploratory instincts. Such people often declare that a Christian would not examine certain things about the world, and certainly would never hold certain opinions or beliefs about reality. The resultant fear such proclamations produce can be deadly. Often the honest thoughts of sincere Christians are condemned out of hand in this way, and the only possible responses are rebellion or a deliberate numbing of the mind, while if both cases these solutions are accompanied by fear.

But if the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, the reverse is hardly true. We should not feel inclined to thank the Lord for our appropriate portion of ignorance. Nor in trying to follow Christ should we think of our faith as something separated from the rest of our life, added on to our thought processes and actions as they approach complete. In terms of our search for knowledge, John Calvin in no way approves of habits of suppression. In his Institutes he declares in no uncertain terms that all truth is God’s truth, and any Christian who thinks otherwise wounds himself.

The issue of man’s first sin is not easily untangled, but reflection will tell us some clear things about the forbidden fruit. It is clear that Adam and Eve sinned in trusting the knowledge they ate, acting on their knowledge of nakedness rather than on their knowledge of God. It is also clear that man traded down in his attempt to find shortcut to knowledge—man traded the wisdom available from God for the knowledge of a tree, and the mer information supplied by a serpent. And of course, the knowledge and the information were distorted by Adam’s act.

Adam’s shortcut cut his supply of knowledge short. It is not even suggested in Genesis that God was not in the process of teaching Adam and Eve about the realities of good and evil, but Adam halted the couples’ education by bringing death into the world.

Not until the coming of Christ was wisdom brought back to a literal-minded and frightened human race, and the struggle to free human knowledge through divine wisdom goes on still.

—DL
Errata

1. Nice though it is, *I Went Home* ... is not Mike Rubingh’s poem. It is Kramer’s and was not meant to be part of Mike’s Words and Works.

2. M. Inoue pointed out for us that *Thirst* (Tanikawa Shuntaro) is not complete. This is the poem in its entirety:

   I'm not only thirsty for water;
   I'm thirsty for ideology.

   I'm not only thirsty for ideology;
   I'm thirsty for love.

   I'm not only thirsty for love;
   I'm thirsty for God.

   I'm not only thirsty for God;
   In fact, I don't know what I'm thirsty for.

   “Water... Give me water...”
   Ever since that day I've been thirsty.
Portfolio

Amy Van Meulen

6 Dialogue
John Bekker

The low pressure center had lingered over Oklahoma for most of the afternoon. Backed by a cold, Canadian air mass and fueled with Gulf moisture, the low pressure center spawned thunderstorms over Texas and heavy snow in the Plains. By evening, even the major highways were smothered in snow as road crews struggled with the blizzard. Carl Landman was also fighting the snow. An independent truck driver, he had managed to push his Peterbilt 369 conventional tractor and a forty ton load of machine tools over the Rocky Mountains and into the worst of the storm. Now, traveling east on 180 through Nebraska, Carl was wishing he'd pulled off at the last Union 76 sign. His arms and back ached from fighting the wheel, and after hours of trying to see through the blowing snow, his eyes felt like sandpaper. Merle Haggard wasn't helping him to concentrate on the ninety feet of road that he could see, so he turned off the stereo. The roar of the Peterbilt's 380 horsepower engine filled the cab. Above that, Carl could hear the whine of the turbochargers. The tires, however, were silent on the road, their song muffled by the snow that lay thick on the concrete. The absence of road noise worried Carl; riding on snow, eighteen-wheelers had the habit of jacknifing. The wind also concerned him. The jerking wheel told Carl to slow down before the gusting winds caught the broad side of the trailer and flipped the truck like a leaf.

Carl glanced at the speedometer—sixty kilometers per hour. He pushed the clutch in and, with a little persuasion, dropped the gearshift into sixth gear. He let out the clutch, and the engine screamed briefly as it absorbed some of the truck's speed. But Carl felt the wheels slip as he down-shifted. He wanted to slow down further, but the payments on the truck depended on getting his load to Chicago on time.

"Bank or no bank," thought Carl, "my life's more important than the payments on the Big Rig." Besides himself, Carl's truck, which he affectionately called the Big Rig, was the most important thing in his life. But since the Big Rig would fare no better than he in a crash, Carl decided to drop another gear. Once again, he pushed in the clutch. He pressed the range selector knob on the gearshift into low range, and moved the gearshift into fifth gear.

As he let out the clutch, Carl checked the tachometer to make sure the engine didn't drop below 1900 RPM. Turning his burning eyes back to the road, Carl was shocked by the sudden intrusion of a pair of taillights into the swirling tunnel of snow defined by his headlight. Instantly Carl realized the taillights represented a compact car that was moving much slower than the Big Rig. He pumped the brakes, but felt the truck beginning to slide. He wrenched the wheel in an attempt to pass the car. Now the fat tires creaked against the rear of the tractor locked up. The tractor started to slow toward the car. Carl gently released the pressure on the brake pedal and repeatedly tugged the air knob that controlled the trailer brakes. The tractor tires began to dig into the snow and the truck roared past the car in a cloud of snow. Carl caught a glimpse of a tiny, pale figure pressed against a window; then he was past.

His heart threatening to pound through his ears, Carl took a thankful breath. Despite the cold, he found himself damp with sweat. Thinking his troubles were over, Carl wiped his brow with an old flannel shirt. Suddenly, an incessant buzzing of a klaxon filled his ears. Before he had a chance to remember that there weren't any klaxons on the Big Rig, he awoke.

The dream seemed to be occurring more frequently these days. Carl wondered if it was age. While he had been twenty-two when he narrowly avoided death during that blizzard, he was now in his mid-eighties. Exactly how old he was, Carl wasn't sure, and he didn't really care. What did concern him, though, was his slow reflexes. He knew he wouldn't be able to control a truck anymore, but then, he didn't have Torka was doing the driving.

"Better see how she's doing," said Carl, as he swung his legs out of the bunk where he had been napping. Despite his white hair and wrinkled skin, Carl moved with surprising agility; the effects of arthritis had long been eliminated through medical technology. He looked around the small cabin or "sleeper," as he called it. The room was rectangular with brown plywood walls. Numerous shelves held Carl's knickknacks and souvenirs of his travels. His bunk lay along the wall underneath a huge collection of muller wafers. Carl paused, thinking of the years the wafers encompassed.

Stepping into a narrow corridor, Carl made...
It silently slid open at approach. Carl stepped onto the bridge, or "as he called it, to the Big Rig, a forty-two ton bulk cargo carrier. When the move of the human population to the colonies changed transportation technology, it had killed the eighteen-wheelers and created a for people willing to fly the cargo ships through the black emptiness of interstellar space to hostile worlds of the colonies. Carl had saved enough to buy the Big Rig five years and appease his wandering spirit. This was second trip; the first had taken nearly three.

"ow's it rollin' Terka?" asked Carl, studying a of video monitors.

ine," said a pleasant female voice, "We are hour and twenty-three minutes from final Four."

my problem with docking permits? Are we a pproach vector?" Carl was nervous. This only his second landing in five years.

elax," said the voice, laughing, "You worry much. I landed the ship correctly last time, not?"

ell, I guess you did," sighed Carl. He wasn't if he was comfortable with a computer the Big Rig, let alone talking to him.

K; so I worry too much," said Carl, "Is there thing that needs doing?"

o thank you," said Terka, "I will inform you event of an emergency.

on't bother," laughed Carl, "I can't drive hing any better than you can." Nonetheless, carefully scanned the columns of numbers on vidscreens, looking for any number that of trouble.

ou know, Terka, in the old days I could feel ear when something wasn't right," Carl said 28th time in the past month.

es," said Terka patiently, "But in the old you fell asleep at the wheel."

ue," said Carl, remembering the dream.

here's Herbert?" he asked.

e is repairing the condensor coils on the ion ange unit," reported Terka.

e'll him we're landing soon, will you," said gingerly settling his thin body into one of the bucket seats facing the bank of vidscreens. the triumphs of modern medicine, it had ailed to cure Carl's hemorrhoids.

* * *

ie Big Rig settled onto the broad concrete nse of a Terminal Four loading area with a

From the outside, the Big Rig was indeed Its black bulk stretched nearly half a kilo- along the shimmering white concrete. It looked something like a black caterpillar, with a small head-like appendage at one end, a long tail section at the other, and many segmented pods composing the rest of its length. A spine-like column ran along the top of the pods from the head of the Big Rig to the tail. As the engines cycled down, a long, thin cylinder extended from the bottom of the head, with Carl standing on a crossbar at its bottom. As the cylinder's end touched the ground, Carl stepped off onto the cement.

"Thanks for the lift!" he shouted into the ship.

"My pleasure," Terka replied, "When will you return?"

"I don't know," said Carl, "I'll be dealing with bureaucracy." He didn't shout this time, remembering that Terka could hear him through the communication band he wore on his arm.

"I'll be back before nightfall," he said, walking toward a group of low buildings scattered along the perimeter of the landing field. "Whenever nightfall is on this chunk of rock," he thought, shielding his eyes from the burning white orb that hung in the sky.

* * *

Two hours later, Carl emerged from the administration buildings, clutching a sheaf of papers. It seemed to Carl that, the more machines were used to process information, the more paper they generated. The papers rustled in the hot breeze sweeping across the concrete. As he neared the Big Rig, he could hear its black skin creaking and popping from the heat.

Carl stopped about twenty meters from ship. Someone was standing in the shade of the nose gear.

"And who might you be?" asked Carl, as he approached the figure. On closer inspection, the figure appeared to be a young, slightly oriental man wearing a leather flight jacket and a self-confident smile. Self-confidence in someone so young vaguely disturbed Carl.

"I might be anyone," said the man, grinning, "but I happen to be AllenNihara. Are you leaving this excuse for a planet?"

"I am, said Carl, pointedly, "I suppose you want to leave too. Before you go wasting your breath, I should tell you that I'm not supposed to carry passengers."

"How about crew?" asked Allen. "Besides, I'm willing to pay you."

"I've got all the crew I need," said Carl, "But how much money are you talking about, kid?"

"Twenty-five thousand credits to start with; maybe more, depending on where you're going."

Carl thought for a moment about the payments on the Big Rig. Someone who could
afford leather could probably buy such a ship with cash. He also considered the prospects of sharing his ship with someone else before replying.

“Okay; get aboard before Terminal security sees you out here.” After showing Allen how to ride the cylinder into the ship, Carl himself entered the ship.

“Terka, this is Allen,” said Carl.

“Greetings, Allen,” said Terka.

“Who was that?” exclaimed Allen, looking around the bridge.

“That’s Terka,” replied Carl, amused by Allen’s confusion. “She’s my crew. She basically runs the ship and lets me know if anything needs attention.”

“Is she human?” asked Allen. “She talks.”

“Of course she talks,” said Carl, looking at Allen curiously. “Haven’t you ever heard voice synthesis units?”

“Well, of course I’ve heard of voice synthesis units. But how can a computer talk?”

Carl thought about laughing, but decided against it. He had found that people who couldn’t admit their ignorance tended to be hurt by such laughter. Instead, he said, “I guess you haven’t spent much time around computers.”

“Well, no,” confessed Allen. “My parents isolated me from most technology. They despised most machinery and computers. It had something to do with my grandfather being a chairman of a Japanese conglomerate. He disappeared or something. But I’ve tried to keep up with the rest of the world. I know quite a bit about computers.”

Carl wasn’t sure if he believed Allen’s claim, but the boy seemed inquisitive. Perhaps he would enjoy learning as much as Carl would enjoy teaching him.

“If you’re really serious about going for an interstellar run, maybe you can find out some more about the machines.”

“Sure; sounds all right to me,” said Allen, with the first real smile Carl had seen on his face.

“Okay; have a seat,” said Carl, grandly. He waved a wrinkled hand at the seats facing the vidscreens. “I’ll let Terka describe herself, since you can’t see her. Oh yeah; in case you’re wondering where her voice is coming from, the answer is everywhere; all the interior panels of the ship can hear and speak. Terka, give him the spiel!”

“My primary function is to monitor and control the functions of the ship,” said Terka. “I do this with several processors and over four thousand data acquisition sensors. The ship’s condition is converted into numeric form by the sensors and fed into the silicon-based processors. These processors then make simple control decisions display most of the data on the vidscreens front of you, and pass any remaining decisions my main processor. This processor is a three-dimensional protein-based cellular matrix similar in some ways to your brain. This exoconstruction is necessary to provide me with speed, memory, and interactive process required to make complex decisions. It allows me to perform my secondary function, namely, entertaining Carl.”


“No,” Terka continued. “Carl does not play video games. I converse with him. We discuss great many things. Sometimes we argue. Of course we joke; Carl has an odd sense of humor.”

“But you understand his jokes?”

“Of course; my entire personality is patterned after his. My software allowed me to acquire most of his knowledge, study his decision-making processes, and learn what he finds humorous. The initial learning period took three years.”

“Yup,” said Carl. “She spent three years with me on the ground. She was a little green then, and stupid. Couldn’t talk too good, and kept asking me millions of questions, just like a little kid.”

“I wasn’t stupid,” said Terka, “I just couldn’t communicate with you.”

“Incredible,” said an awed Allen, “But how do you talk?”

“My voice is synthesized from alphanumeric output that includes human inflections and emphasis. The vocal form itself is a female variation on Carl’s voice; the frequency of individual waveforms is increased, but the overall pattern frequencies remain much the same.”

“I don’t think you and Carl sound anything alike,” said Allen doubtfully. “I mean; you sound like a woman.”

“Well,” said Terka, laughing, “on the universal frequency spectrum most human speech sounds the same. As for sounding like a woman, may Carl had sexual motives in choosing my voice.”

“You let a computer talk to you like that, Allen asked Carl.

“Sure,” said Carl. “She’s only joking. Besides she’ll always do what I tell her to.”

“So?”

“Because, for all her fancy talk, she’s still a machine. I was real careful picking out her software package.”

“If Terka’s just a machine, why do you call her ‘she’, shouldn’t you call her ‘it’?”

“Seems kind of cold, doesn’t it,” said Carl.
utside, huge, automated cranes straddled the ship, grasping the cargo pods and carrying them off like giant spiders scurrying home with their cargo. As fast as the pods were removed, the replacement pods were placed under the ship’s spine and locked into place with a jarring crash.

Jen jumped as the first crash rocked the ship. “What’s that?” he cried.

“Just the new load,” said Carl, calmly. “Want to see what’s going on?”

“All right,” replied a still frightened Allen. “Follow me.”

Jen followed Carl through the bridge door down the corridor.

“These are the sleepers,” said Carl, as they reached his cabin. There were eight identical pods.

“How many people are you carrying?” asked Allen as he counted doors.

“Just you and me. Well, there’s Herbert, but he’s not a person.”

“Who is he?”

“You’ll find out soon enough,” said Carl mischievously.

Another door opened silently before them, slid closed just as quietly. The sound of the cranes and cargo pods was louder here; the corridor seemed to quiver.

“We’re in that backbone thing you saw from the ground,” Carl shouted over the din. “The engine room, and this support module are the Big Rig. Those round things you were looking at are just cargo containers. The Terminal crews are pulling off one pod I was carrying and putting new ones in.”

“What are you carrying besides me?” asked Allen, also shouting.

“Supplies for the colonies,” said Carl studied the list he had pulled from his pocket. “Food, water, polysheets.” He paused. “Here’s an interesting one, clones.”

“Human clones?” asked Allen.

“Yeah; they use them for things robots can do but don’t survive.”

Jen didn’t say anything. He was beginning to wonder if this was something that drove his friends away from the world of machines. Automated computers were strange enough, but robots used as humans was strangely disconcerting.

“Come on; I’ll show you,” said Carl, misinterpreting Allen’s silence. He moved along the corridor, his eyes on the numbered floor panels. Lly, Carl reached down, grasped a recessed handle, and lifted one of the panels aside, revealing a round hatch. Carl spun the handwheel and opened the hatch cover.

“What’s down there?” asked Allen.

“It should be the clone pod,” said Carl, as he disappeared down a ladder.

“What if it hasn’t been loaded yet?” Allen remembered the height of the ship’s spinal column. He had no intention of dropping through the hatch and onto the pavement below.

“Terka wouldn’t have let me open the hatch,” Carl shouted. His voice echoed slightly as he entered the cargo pod.

“And you trust a computer?” Allen knelt at the open hatch and peered down the ladder shaft.

“Come on down,” shouted Carl.

When Allen entered the pod, Carl said to him, “Look, son, I don’t trust a computer, I don’t trust you or anyone else, and I don’t trust myself. What I do is hope. I hope Terka keeps me from falling out of the Big Rig, I hope you aren’t going to kill me and steal the ship, and I hope the good Lord is going to keep me from doing something stupid.”

“Makes sense to me,” said Allen, thinking Carl’s philosophy sounded macho enough to add to his repertoire. “Where are the clones?” he asked, looking around him at several rows of stainless steel panels.

“In there,” said Carl, as he pointed to the gleaming panels. The whole pod somehow reminded him of a morgue he had visited as a child. He shuddered involuntarily and bent closer to inspect a small digital readout on one of the panels. “The clones’ conditions are displayed on these readouts,” Carl explained.

“Are the clones sleeping?” inquired Allen.

“Incubating, I think. They’re all grown at an accelerated rate from a limited number of parent cells. The colonies don’t want to wait around for human labor, so they grow ‘em to reach physical maturity in less than four years. That means they don’t have enough time, or space either, to educate them. So somebody came up with the idea of placing memories and intelligence into their brains during transit.”

“You mean they’re being programmed?”

“Yeah.” Carl was pleased that Allen was catching on so quickly. “The clones undergo surgery to implant electrodes and electrobio interfaces in their brains. Then, while we’re traveling, a special imprinting computer in this pod feeds them memories. They’ve got to have memories, otherwise they have no idea who they are. Some of the early experiments went crazy, I heard.”

“Memories of what?” asked Allen, slightly confused.
“Well; they tried feeding them computer-generated memories, but that didn’t work. The computer memories were missing something; those clones had emotional problems. What they do now is copy someone else’s memories and personality, supplement and alter them, add required skills, and feed them into the clones. When the clones arrive at the colonies and wake up, it takes them a while to become functional; some parts of the brain can’t be copied, I guess, and have to be developed individually.”

“Doesn’t that bother you to be carrying people who are being programmed to work as slaves?” Allen asked. This clone scheme only reinforced his feeling that his parents were somehow right about the evil machines.

“Not really,” said Carl. “They’re not people; they’re grown, like corn. And they’re not really slaves, they’re more like organic robots. And besides, it pays the bills.” Carl realized he sounded defensive, but he too felt some of Allen’s uneasiness.

“Oh, well,” he said, shrugging, “it’s time to hit the bricks. Let’s get back to the bridge and float this boat.”

Carl scrambled up the ladder and into the corridor. Allen fled the pod with a quick look at the blinking readouts.

As he joined Carl, Allen asked, “What if something goes wrong with the clones? What if they get sick, or something? You said Terka tells you if there’s a problem anywhere on the ship.”

Carl closed the hatch. “True; but in this case the imprinting computer in the clone pod keeps track of them and handles most of the routine problems. If something worse happens, it lets Terka know and she’ll tell me.”

“Don’t worry, kid,” said Carl, “they’re only clones. If one of them has a problem the computer can’t fix, I can always throw it out.”

“What do you mean, ‘throw it out’?” cried Allen, a horrified look on his face.

“Don’t worry, kid,” said Carl, “they’re only clones. If one of them has a problem the computer can’t fix, I can always throw it out.”

“What do you mean, ‘throw it out’?” cried Allen, a horrified look on his face.

“The colonies can’t use a bad clone,” said Carl, soothingly. “On the last trip, three of them went bad, and I had to jettison them. My cargo contract says that’s what I have to do.”

“I don’t know,” said Allen. He still sounded doubtful.

“Well, kid; if you don’t like it, now is the time to leave. The Big Rig rolls in ten minutes.”

Despite his doubts, Allen was still determined to escape his desolate world and dominating parents. “The Big Rig’s taking me with it,” said Allen, grinning.

Carl awoke the next morning with the vague feeling that something was different. After a moment’s contemplation, he remembered he had a passenger on this trip.

“Good morning, Terka. How is Allen doing?”

“He’s fine,” said Terka. “He is still sleeping.”

“Wake him up, will you? It’s time for breakfast.”

Carl pulled on an old tee-shirt and a pair of faded blue jeans and stepped into the corridor to see a very surprised Allen fall from cabin into the hallway.

When he regained his composure, Allen said, “I’d forgotten that Terka was everywhere. I didn’t say a word until she woke me up just now.”

“Usually, she won’t talk until spoken to, but she does respect human sleep.”

“We all have methods of maintaining our standards,” laughed Terka.

Carl’s mind was on his stomach, which threatened mutiny. “Come on, kid, let’s rustle up some grub.”

Allen had no idea what grub was or how to make it rustle, but he obediently followed Carl into a small kitchen.

“Ah; you mean food,” he said, surveying a collection of utensils and appliances. “I thought Terka would have done the cooking.”

“Oh, no,” Carl said vehemently, “cooking is art. Something best left to human hands. Besides, it gives me something to do. Sit down and prepare for a feast.”

“What is this?” asked Allen, when Carl set a plate in front of him.

“Those are scrambled eggs,” Carl said, pointing to the source of Allen’s curiosity.

“Those are scrambled eggs,” Carl said, pointing to the source of Allen’s curiosity.

Allen tasted them. “Weird, but good. What’s this?”

“It’s meat. I call it bacon. Speaking of which, where’s Herbert?”

“Right here,” said a gravelly voice from the doorway.

“Right here,” said a gravelly voice from the doorway.

Allen whirled around to find himself looking at a very large hog.

“I’m Herbert,” said the hog, sniffing at Allen. Herbert was black, with a few white spots, his front feet had been replaced with mechnical hand-like appendages. He noticed Allen look at his mechanical limbs. “My natural probably ended up as someone’s dinner.”

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s of scrambled eggs and hash browns onto a plate lying in the corner of the room. Allen waddled over to his breakfast and began devouring it at an incredible speed. Allen chowed in amazement.

Herbert looked up, "Hey kid, don't you know it's not polite to watch another person eating?" Allen jerked his eyes back to his own plate. "I looked amused. "Herbert is my mechanic. He's the result of some of the more bizarre bionic experiments. Those front legs allow him to use tools, and he has a voice synthesis unit like to Terka's. You'd be surprised how intelligent pigs are."

* * *

y the third week of the journey Carl, Allen, and Herbert were more comfortable with each other. Allen spent most of his working hours er the tuition of Carl and his Poland China mechanic. He found himself less surprised by the complexity of the machines on the Big Rig, and more interested to explore their workings. Carl and Herbert were equally delighted to have another ear to absorb their teaching, an extra pair of eyes to share in the work of maintaining the 1, and a different viewpoint to argue with.

One morning, as Allen and Herbert were alling some electrical conduit in the engine room, Allen asked, "Do you think Terka enjoys being on board?"

Herbert drove a screw into the wall with one of his hexagonal digits. "I don't think Terka is able to enjoy it. She's a machine. She probably sees your addition to her knowledge base as a good thing, but she doesn't feel emotion as I do; she's not a person."

What about you?" asked Allen, "aren't you an adult?"

Herbert's face assumed the most pained expression he could muster. "Of course I'm an adult. So are you. Just because I'm not hominoid doesn't mean that I have no feelings."

"Sorry," said Allen. It was becoming increasingly difficult to see Herbert as a pig rather than a man, fat, bristly little man.

Suddenly Terka's voice broke the silence. "Herbert, Allen, please come to the bridge."

Realizing Terka must have heard their conversation, Allen blushed. "Are you angry, Terka?"

"Certainly not," replied Terka. "Carl wants to ask with you."

A smug Herbert picked up his tools and slung Allen's leg. "You see; a computer doesn't get angry."

But I could pretend to be angry," said Terka, petly.

* * *

On the bridge, Carl explained to Allen and Herbert that something had gone wrong in the clone cargo pod. "Terka informed me that the imprinting computer is reporting a problem with one of the clones. I thought we'd go down and take a look. You'd better bring your tools, Herbert."

They followed Carl to the clone pod. Entering the pod, Carl saw one of its readouts flashing. He scanned the numbers and said, "As near as I can tell, this one has a health problem of some sort. According to the imprinting computer, it is unable to continue feeding this clone memories."

"What are you going to do?" asked Allen.

"Well, like I told you before, the contract for this type of cargo specifies that I remove the clone and dispose of it."

"Can't you fix it?" asked Allen.

"If the imprinting computer can't fix it, I doubt I can. Anyway, it's expected that about three of them won't survive the trip. It still pays the same. Herbert, see if you can pull the clone out."

Herbert went to work on the stainless steel panel. When the pig had removed the last retaining clip, Carl set the panel aside and pulled a long plexiglass tube from the opening. The tube was about sixty centimeters in diameter and moved on two sides.

Allen looked inside. "It's a girl," he cried. It was indeed a girl. She had short brown hair and a vaguely familiar face. Carl thought she looked about as young as Allen.

"What did you expect? A gerbil?" said Carl acidly. The boy's reluctance to jettison the clone was beginning to bother him. The fact that it happened to be a clone of an attractive woman wasn't going to help matters.

As if to confirm his fears, Allen again asked, "Can't you fix it?"

Carl placed his hand on Allen's shoulder in what he hoped was a reassuring gesture. "Look, Allen, that clone is not a girl, it's not human. They wouldn't use a human for manual labor. And don't worry about jettisoning it; as long as I leave it in this tube, it won't even wake up. Okay? Now you wait here while I get a portable winch to haul this tube out of here."

Carl left Allen and Herbert contemplating the tube and its contents. Allen wasn't ready to believe that the clone wasn't human. In the past four weeks he'd met a computer with a sense of humor and a talking pig. It seemed to him that something so physically human as this clone must be human.

Carl returned dragging a winch cable. He could see Allen studying the digital readout on the tube with a wild look on his face. Carl couldn't

Dialogue 15
understand why they didn't put clothes on those clones. Seeing a naked woman obviously had strange effects on young boys like Allen.

Before Carl could say anything, Allen punched two buttons on the side of the tube, there was a sudden hiss of compressed air, and the top of the tube flew open.

“There!” said Allen triumphantly, “now she’ll wake up. I’d like to see you dump her overboard then.”

Carl sighed. It was difficult being the only rational being on board. He looked in at the girl. She seemed to be breathing faster; maybe she would wake up.

Then Carl knew that Allen was right. He could not bring himself to consciously jettison the tube. Admitting defeat, he said, “Fine, let’s get her out of here and try to find out what’s wrong with her.”

Between the three of them, they managed to carry the girl to one of the cabins. Carl took a syringe from a cabinet on the wall and, gingerly inserting it into the girl’s arm, withdrew nearly twenty milliliters of blood. Herbert plugged some electrodes into a computer outlet and fixed them to her arms and temples. When Herbert had finished positioning the sensors, Carl asked him to take the blood sample to the lab.

“You have a lab?” asked Allen, timidly. He wasn’t sure if Carl was angry with him for opening the tube.

Apparently he wasn’t, for Carl answered, “We’ve got Terka. She’ll analyze the sensor readings and blood sample and try to figure out what’s ailing our patient.”

Heartened, Allen said, “Shouldn’t we put something on her?”

“Yeah, I’ll get some clothes,” Carl paused at the door, “Why don’t you think of a name for her. We ought to call her something.”

When Carl returned a few minutes later with an odd assortment of garments, Allen said, “Her tube had the number nine on it, so let’s call her Nina.”

Carl agreed that Nina would be a fine name. Suddenly, Terka interrupted with her medical report. “It would appear,” she said, “that your Nina has a cold.”

“A cold?” Allen could not believe his ears. “You mean the clone computer couldn’t handle a common cold?”

“No,” explained Terka, “the clones are supposed to be shipped free of viruses. The imprinting system is simply not programmed to handle infection.”

The clone was still sleeping as night approached. “Four bells, kid,” said Carl, “I’m going to bed.”

Although he was tired, Allen volunteered to stay in the “sick bay” during the night. Carl, who was already concerned about Allen’s emotional state, told him, “Terka is perfectly capable of keeping tabs on Nina. Why don’t you get some sleep.”

“You said yourself that you don’t trust things; well, I don’t trust a computer to take care of Nina. The cloning computer wanted you to throw her overboard.”

“Terka’s different,” said Carl. “Keep your eyes open, Terka.”

“I’ll watch over them both,” said Terka, reading Carl’s fears.

* * *

In the morning Carl asked Terka for a dam report on his growing number of passengers. “Everyone is fine,” she reported. “Herbert, of course, is still sleeping. Allen fell asleep at 2:00 but both he and Nina are awake now.”

“What?” cried Carl. “And you didn’t wake up?”

“No; Nina’s health is improving. She and Allen have been talking for the past thirty minutes; saw no reason to disturb you.”

Allen and Nina were still talking when Carl peeked around the door of the sickbay. Nina saw him first, her body tensing slightly. Allen turned to follow her gaze and smiled. “Come in, Carl.” He gestured like a proud parent towards Nina. “See; Nina lives.”

“Thats Carl," said Nina. “You didn’t tell me she was so old.”

“Have some respect for your elders, you lady,” said Carl, wagging his finger in mock disapproval. He was surprised and pleased to see Nina was already speaking so well.

Turning back to Nina, Allen explained, “Nina doesn’t act very old.”

Carl decided to change the subject. “Do you feel like getting up?” he inquired. “You look like you could use one of my famous breakfasts.”

Nina, who after two years of incubation definitely felt like getting up, carefully slid out of bed and hesitantly walked to the door. Stepping into the corridor, she struck a shoulder on the doorframe. “Sorry,” she said. “This isn’t my body.”

* * *

By the end of the week, Nina had become accustomed to her body and was moving about the ship with ease. She was having a more difficult time reconciling her implanted memories and personality to the emotional structure native to her cloned body. Often, the two were in conflict.
t, and Nina found that her huge implanted know­ledge base could not tell her who she was. Allen, who seemed to be more impressed by Nina's physical and mental attributes, had taken spending a great deal of time with her, showing ti around the Big Rig as if he had built the ship himself. Although Herbert was saddened by the loss of his able assistant, Carl was glad to use Allen's presence to sort out his own conflicting feelings.

In the busy month that Allen had been with her, Carl had seen several of his most solid loyalties either worn down like a riverbed or shattered like a Kentucky hill in the face of a highway. He thought about his relationship with Terka. After five years with Terka, he had come to think of her as a person, while Allen saw her as the machine she was. Carl remembered lining his trucks "old girl"; perhaps he had a tendency to personify machinery.

But if he was willing to lend machines human traits, Carl realized that he had been just as un­willing to attribute those same traits to someone so increasingly human as Nina. He could not believe that a few days ago he would have gladly blown her tube into the void of deep ice. Of course, how could he have known that she was so human.

Yet that he didn't have his doubts about Nina. After the afternoon, Carl had watched Herbert silently trundle over Nina's foot. Her eyes istered pain but nothing else. There was no voluntary flash of anger, no indignation of being pissed on. When Herbert had apologized profly, Nina assured him that she would recover, said nothing about forgiving his behavior. Now he believed she honestly did not feel wronged. While Herbert was relieved by her nonchalance, Carl was troubled.

Carl suspected her odd behavior might be caused by the selectivity of her imprinting pro­gram. To confirm his suspicions, however, he would have to gain access to the cloning com­puter.

Carl plugged a keyboard into the imprinting computer and asked for Nina's program. The computer responded with, "ACCESS PROHIBITED. INFORMATION IS CLASSIFIED." It responded similarly to his questions about the type of work the clones were to do, and where they were made. Frustrated, Carl made his way back to the bridge in time to receive a commu­nication from Terminal Four.

"What does it say?" he asked Terka.

"Your employers request that you cease your attempt to access the imprinting system. They say that if you continue, they will terminate your contract and make sure that you never drive again."

Carl was shaken, but he'd heard worse. In fact, he took the message as a challenge rather than a warning. "All right," he said grimly, "They want a fight, they've got a fight. Terka, can you talk to that clone system and find out what I want to know?"

"I'll try," said Terka, sounding equally prepared for battle.

A few moments later, Carl asked impatiently, "Well, are you getting anywhere?"

"It is difficult. I am trying to mimic a similar computer, but I have not yet gained entry." Terka was silent for a few more minutes then said brightly, "The fish is blue."

"Shit!" cried Carl, "This isn't supposed to happen." Speaking, slowly, he said, "Terka, you have an error condition. Please correct and report."

"One moment," replied Terka, her voice sounding oddly mechanical.

"Sounds like she's got a worm, if you ask me," Herbert explained.

For the first time, Carl looked openly worried. "Is it succeeding?" he asked.

"Herbert is correct," said Terka's voice, "The error has been eliminated."

Still concerned, Carl asked, "Did you disconnect the clone system?" He didn't want the clone computer to wreak any further havoc.

"No; I'm still connected. I have obtained the information that you requested."

Dialogue 17
For all their faults, Carl thought, machines certainly could be dedicated. “Put it on my videscreen, please.” Carl turned to watch the words and numbers rippling across the screen, his curiosity turning to horror.

He stood up and ran for the door, nearly tripping over the slower moving Herbert. “I’ve got to rescue Allen!” Carl shouted and disappeared down the corridor.

After a frantic search, Carl found Allen with Nina in one of the cabins. Carl was afraid he was too late, for it appeared that Nina had pinned Allen to the floor and was preparing to do him in. Moving quickly, Carl grabbed Allen and pulled him to safety.

Instead of looking grateful for his salvation, Allen glared at Carl. “We didn’t think you would mind.”

Carl turned to Allen in surprise. “You didn’t think I would mind you getting killed?”

Now it was Allen’s turn to look surprised. “Killed? We weren’t fighting. We were—Well; you know...” He grinned sheepishly at Nina, who was making a valiant attempt to understand the workings of male relationships. Turning to Carl, he could almost picture a light bulb illuminating Carl’s confusion.

Carl laughed, nervously, and said, “This is embarrassing. If I’d known what you two were up to, I’d have never come barging in here like this. It’s just that...” His voice trailed off as he remembered Terka’s findings.

“You mean she’s programmed to kill?” Allen could hardly believe his ears. “Do you think she knows that?”

“I don’t know,” said Carl. “You can probably answer that one better than I can. All I know is that half of the clones are being programmed with construction skills and the other half with soldiers. Terka tells me that someone is planning a war with the native inhabitants of the colony. Apparently, they want to use clones because robots are too expensive and not as sneaky as a person.”

“They were going to send Nina into battle...” Carl suddenly looked tired. “There’s an awful lot of nasty people out there, Allen. Although must admit that Nina wasn’t my first concern was thinking of our safety. I mean, if she’s programmed to kill—”

“She wouldn’t do it,” cried Allen. “Sure, she acts a little strange, but that’s because she’s sure who or what she is.”

“Well, before she decides, I think we ought to talk to her.”

Nina was surprised as Allen at the news. “Believe me, I couldn’t kill someone just because I was told to. I’m not a machine.”

“I believe you,” said Carl, “but maybe you weren’t meant to know you could kill like that.”

“Maybe you’re paranoid,” countered Nina. “Why can’t you accept me as one of you?” It was hard enough finding her identity without Carl refusal to see her as a person.

“Maybe I am paranoid,” said Carl, “but I kept me alive for a lot of years.”

Allen recognized this as another macho line that would look good in his collection. He said to Nina, “Carl gives us rare gems like that now and then.”

Nina failed to see any humor in his remarks. “He means well, Nina. It’s just that he hasn’t been around people for ages. Not only is he somewhat frightened of them, but he’s forgotten how to talk to them without offending someone.”

Nina looked at Carl as if seeing him for the first time. “What he said,” agreed Carl.

“Maybe,” continued Allen, “we interrupt your program before you learned to kill.”

Seeing a way out of his dilemma, Carl asked Terka whether she could confirm Allen’s hypothesis. “Yes,” she reported. “Nina contracted a cold before the hostility portion of her program was implemented. It seems logical that she would have difficulty dealing with anger, both her and that of others, and she would lack the ability to act as a killing machine.”

After one of Carl’s meals had calmed everyone’s nerves, he called a general meeting to discuss, as he ominously called it, the future. Wi
had all gathered on the bridge, Carl said, need to talk about several matters. First, is the question of me and the ship. By ng Terka break into the clone system, I made very big people very upset. I doubt I'll be ved to land at the colonies, let alone be al­ ed to keep the Big Rig."


the mention of Carl's employer, Allen sped into one of the seats. "Tanishaki ted was my grandfather's company before disappered. They are very bad people. You ld do well to escape their blanket of power, if possible."

arl nodded. "I was thinking of turning off this icular highway and setting a course for the opulated systems. If I did that, though, there o guarantee that we'll see the civilized word n. Now, I'm old and Herbert doesn't need ple, but you and Nina are young. I want your it."

llen thought about exploring the uninhabited ems of the galaxy. "I left home because I ted adventure, so it sounds like fun to me; it really depends on what Nina wants to do."

don't think we have a choice," said Nina. ese Tanishaki people will hunt us until they us; their honor is at stake. As for me, I've er known any people besides you, so I feel no at leaving civilization."

Aait a minute," interrupted Herbert. "Do we e enough food for all this touring the country-?"

erk answered his question. "May I remind that we have enough food on board to feed a ny of 5,700 people for five years. Even you dn't consume it all."

ood," said Carl. He grew serious once e. "The second order of business is to decide future of the clones. Terka tells me that most hem have not reached the part of their pro­ mming that turns them into robot-like ies."

ina shuddered, thinking of her intended fate. e've got to rescue them!" she cried.

agree, but there are two problems. First, do we do with the ones that have reached hostility parts of their programs. And second, t of them are going to look alike, and maybe alike. Of course, a number of them will look ctly like Nina."

llen considered this development before asking. "I don't think they'll act alike. Nina is i; she's developed as an individual. Maybe : God you're always talking about gave her identity. In any case, I can't see them all turning out the same—similar, maybe—but not the same."

"And who cares if they look the same," said Herbert, "all you people look the same to me."

Carl laughed. "Well, we can always number them." He paused. "What about the ones that have been programmed? Terka found that theclone system implants memories, and then wipes out the ability to feel most emotions. I can't see them developing as Nina did. And even if they could, I don't want to risk being killed."

"So what do you want to do, jettison them like you were going to do to Nina?" asked Allen, plainly upset.

Nina spoke for the first time. "Allen, I think Carl is right. It's not easy for me, with what I've got. If that computer has erased even more of their human characteristics, they would be nothing more than the machine they were designed to be."

Late that night, Herbert moved all the panels in the clone pod. Carl converted one of the other cargo pods into a makeshift living area. Then, Allen and Nina carried most of the sleeping clones to their new home and laid them on crude bunks. When the last of the unprogrammed clones had been removed, Carl closed the hatch and pulled the clone pod's power cables from their sockets. Terka fired the coupling pins, and, with a jolt that shook the ship, the clone pod dropped away. It fell, spinning into the void, its computer frantically transmitting distress signals to Tanishaki Limited.

"Well," said Carl, grinning with excitement, "let's see what the backroads look like."
I knew that Sunday mornings at the Wooden Shoe Pancake Parlor were always busier than appliance stores after bonus checks have been handed out at Steelcase Corporation. But I was late as usual and was fretting about having to stand in a corner with my paper pancake number with other late-comers. And I was sure that I'd end up having to make small talk about the weather. When what to my surprise, Hattie, the just slightly plump sandy-blond hostess directed me toward a table occupied by only two gentlemen. I smiled my most "thank you" kind of smile all the while knowing that her concern was not for me but in filling all the tables in each section before a new one was opened. This seemed to be a matter of Wooden Shoe policy ("seating capacity stewardship," they called it). I happily accepted her offer while hoping that the other two gentlemen would be more interested in eating than in talking about the weather.

As I approached the table, however, I could see that they seemed to be more consumed with food for thought than in consuming food. Upon reaching the table I realized that I knew both of these gentlemen. One was Willem dePewsitter and the other was Professor Egelloc J. Nivlac from Kingdom Vision College (the former Our Man of Revered Tradition Academy) whose book was causing such a stir among his friends.

"Good morning Mr. James," they both said in unison.
James: It is probably what he meant to but I don't think you answered it that way. I believe you have said in the past that “The expanding universe declares the glory of God, and cosmic evolution proclaims his handiwork.”

Willem: Yes, that’s precisely what he said to me just a few moments ago.

James: Well, how do you define God? I know that the pastor of the liberal pantheistic church here in town would have no problem with Nivlac’s cosmic evolution statement and by no stretch of the imagination would this man acknowledge that the God of the Bible even exists.

Nivlac: What's that got to do with the subject before us?

James: Everything. As Christians we believe in the physical resurrection of the body of Christ. And I think that most Christians have no problem with accepting the miracles of Christ such as changing the water to wine, feeding the five thousand, and bringing Lazarus back to life. None of these events can be explained by natural processes. But yet they happened. They are direct interventions by God of His personality and will into history.

Willem: Are you saying then that natural laws cannot explain all of history?

James: Precisely! And where do we draw the line at accepting God’s direct intervention into history—at the beginning of the New Testament, the middle of the Old Testament, or at the beginning of the Old Testament? The pantheist denies God’s intervention at any time. But both the Old and New Testaments deliberately refer back to the early chapters of Genesis insisting that they are an accurate record of historical events. Jesus actually quotes from Genesis concerning Creation and the formation of Eve from Adam. His words validate these accounts as being just as historical as the records of David and Solomon and just as much so as even His own resurrection.

If we accept Jesus and His resurrection, on what grounds do we reject His words about the first eleven chapters of Genesis? Surely not on the basis of historical reconstructions of history based upon natural laws. On that basis we would have to reject Jesus himself.

And what about the problem of sin? If evolution happened, then a tremendous amount of death occurred before man evolved. But if death preceded man and was not a result of Adam’s sin, then sin is a fiction. If sin is a fiction, then we have no need for a Savior.

Willem: This is great! I’m so delighted I think I’ll pick up the check for all three of us.

(Say, maybe this was better than talking about the weather.)

Nivlac: Thank you Willem, but don’t think that you will not be hearing from me on this issue. I do not accept Mr. James’ simplistic logic. This is just another example of all the careless talk I always hear on this subject.

Willem: Good food for thought though—eh Nivlac?
Some Minute Advice

I still remember the night I realized the value of “minute poetry.” It was past midnight and I had just spent several hours staring at an empty page pondering the futility of my relationship with the Muse. She is a coy and ruthless mistress. She likes to flirt, always just out of reach. Irresistible but untouchable. You know what I’m talking about. Think of all the times you’ve sat down at your desk waiting to be inspired, waiting for the Muse to come to you. Well, I found out that night that you don’t wait for her to come to you, you have to go to her. So for a minute or two I just wrote whatever came to my mind, without waiting for inspiration or worrying about form. I guess it’s what they call stream of consciousness. The results were frightening but vaguely satisfying. I actually got something down on the page after all those hours. So I did it again. And again. Some of the results are published here.

Heraclitus observed that you can never step into the same stream twice. I guess the same thing is true of the stream of consciousness. Or to put it positively, there is always something new in your imagination. Your creativity never stagnates or dries up. To make the metaphor a little absurd, minute poems are a net stretched across the stream of consciousness. Sure, lots of worthless water goes through the net. But eventually you’re bound to catch a fish. And in the long run you’ll catch more fish than you would fishing from the bank. Or to switch metaphors again, creativity needs to be exercised. “Inspiration” does not come before you write. It comes as you write. So whether your minute poetry is embarrassing or psycho or just plain garbage, you’re doing something worthwhile—exercising your imagination.

Heraclitus had a disciple named Cratylius who took his thought a step further. He said that you can’t even step into the same stream once. He was so unnerved by the perpetual flux of the cosmos and by the slipperiness of language that he stopped talking altogether. Don’t be like him. Don’t be afraid of the stream of consciousness. Jump right in.

SHUSH, DOVE.
ANSWER THE DOOR

Shush, bird, weak and puking.
Show your courage.
Trees creak and sing.
The evening whispers,
hoping for a bright welcome
which never comes.

Dove shakes and flaps,
daring to rise.
What is this stunted branch?
A withered leaf?
Too silent to know anything,
where do you come from?

Answers are too ordinary.
Questions are the fabric of the soul.
Speak, bird,
climb the stairs of your blue passion.

The door mutters.
The wind is hungry.
Come in.
The table’s set.
But the food is stale and moldy.
Eat. Eat.
But do not vomit.
GANDHI SENDING LIMA BEANS

Picnic strolls,
the heavy sunset sighs,
waiting,
thinks,
never above a silent whisper tree.
Breaking,
cracked,
the night lights dawn.

Sensual things tangle under brass bedposts,
shining, beating,
screams untie—disengage!
How the strange murders our stinking wisdom.

The bedpost sings on Indian shores.
Sighing caterpillars haunt the temple of our sweet humidity.
The luscious tongues of babes slither,
seeking safety in a battered when.

Resounding waves the hand of Allah
under toads of wet humility,
under frogs of blackened pith.

Alone the brown man burns.

BEAUTIFUL CHILDREN FOR PRETZELS

Music is the space heart,
tramping, living.
Cracked windows.
Why, the crouching couches sing.
The moon drops flying wellfires,
callow, white, and crashing
across a band of silver wenches
hallowed in the creeping creeps of necktie romance.

Intellect dies dying,
singing up and down the frosty cracklings.
When I kissed a winter over treetops,
hovered crying,
salivating strands of wishing waters,
tightened, creeping,
sighed the willow heathen stones
upon the neverwinds.
THE BIRDS KILL ANOTHER TWENTY

Pale, bending wisps of liquid fire
sparking into nights of unfed fear.
There are things that claw at unwise children,
things that drip from cavern walls.
Upsidedown things,
things in vats,
in ovens,
baking, caked with frying blood.
They feast on us
and burp the noxious gas of innocence.

Running into midnight’s throat,
there’s no place to hide,
there’s no place like home,
tap your heels,
your feet are bleeding,
shackles scraping meat from bones,
that’s the way to kill someone.
Sweet paradox breath on me.
Your ways are gentle
and oh so harsh.
Break me,
crush me on the altar of that thing, absurdity.

A carcass lies upon a crackling lakebed,
both are newly dead.
Shoot a buzzard for me,
my carrion soul is very sensitive these days.
And when the coyotes start to sing,
put in a request for me.
Anything.
I’m bored.
Calvin & Christian Community

One evening, not too long ago, a group of Calvin students gathered to discuss their opinions on the nature of Calvin’s mission and the extent of that mission’s success. The students were, in speaking order, Dan Lieuwen, Phil Block, Pam Van Halsema, Jeroen Rikkers, Bill Cornell, Matt Walhout, and Ingrid Gemmen.

Dialogue: What we’d like to discuss this evening is how deep Calvin’s Christian orientation goes. This is a broad question so I suppose we should start with something more specific. In the courses you’ve taken at Calvin, have you felt that an actively Christian approach was taken?

Lieuwen: I think it varies an awful lot from class to class. I’ve had a few where the professors have tried very hard and some where they’ve tried almost not at all. In a number of them it’s fifteen minutes at the end of the last period of the last day right before you fill out your evaluation forms—or at least I can think of one class like that.

Block: Once again it varies from professor to professor. I think that it is quite evident that they incorporate a Christian perspective in a cognitive sense, in an intellectual sense, but I wish sometimes that the professors would display more of their own personal, inner, spiritual dealings with kingdom matters. So you’ll get a Christian subject matter, but sometimes it’d be nice to see more of the actual Christian kingdom person part of the professor.

Dialogue: Phil said that it varies from class to class. Do you think that it’s possible for such an active Christian approach to be taken in all kinds of classes? Mathematics or physics for instance, seem to me to be somewhat difficult classes in which to do so.

Van Halsema: I don’t know if it’s necessary that it be taken more than it already is. We’re in an atmosphere with other Christians and that is definitely different from, say, at a state university where you don’t know where any of the other people are coming from. Together you are responsibly studying all different facets of what the world is made up of. It doesn’t always necessarily have to be backed by a Bible verse; it’s just the atmosphere that’s created.

Rikkers: It seems to me that talking about what an active Christian approach is in the classroom might be a false way to approach the situation. If the professor is a Christian, no matter what he does as a teacher, that’s going to come through: that’s his worldview, that’s his philosophical background. I get irritated when people talk about Christian art because it seems to me that if you’re a Christian and you’re an artist, you don’t have to put crosses in your art to be a Christian artist. You are a Christian artist. That’s who you are. If you are a woman you teach like a woman. There’s no way to get around it.

Cornell: At times I’ve felt science class has made a greater Christian impact than a religion class. So it’s a matter of the specific professor and, to a degree, how much it carries into the material, but as Pam said, it’s not a matter of quoting Bible verses; it’s a matter of how active that individual seems to be.

Rikkers: I’ve had philosophy professors who have never actually done a whole lot of talking about what we as Christians should think of so-and-so’s philosophy. I think that’s a really bogus approach to studying philosophy. We as Christians do what we do while we study it, without necessarily having a discussion at the end of that class period right before evaluations. There are certain things that automatically come up. You think “What is this guy saying about human beings? Should I take this philosopher seriously?” And then somebody is bound to say, “As Paul said in Romans…” Which is fine if it’s appropriate; it’s not fine if it’s inappropriate.

Dialogue: A broader question: Has Calvin led you to see an explicit Christian goal to your studies? This is, do you see studying as being an integral part of being a Christian? Not in the sense that non-Christians can’t really study, but that it is God’s work.

Walhout: For me, I know that I’ve grown in the past three years in my ability to study as a Christian, kingdom work, but I can’t really say that I can attribute that to Calvin. I don’t know if I would have matured in a different way at another school or not.

Block: I can definitely say that my experience with the history department has sharpened me up and has planted a seed or a goal for study. I think that’s a really amazing experience for me. I think about the men and women in the history department who have sacrificed a lot of time at energy and won’t get that big-tin payoff that modern society gives other disciplines. Humanities just...
sn't give you the prestige that iness or science-related fields; yet these men have put just as much time and energy into their lies and have sort of climbed up the crown's nest of the ship, the kingdom of God. They are making vant observations about where we're heading and where we're supposed to go to college. I think about the Christian perspective and what could be dangerous what could be beneficial for all the kingdom endeavors. I think I've really helped, in a prophetic sense, understand why we've got to ask first the kingdom of God. There's a lot of stupid stuff out there we really do need to discern. That's where humanities, particularly the history department, set me on fire.

Dialogue: How about you, Pam? You feel that you've been led to a Christian approach to art? Or isn't it even a valid question?

Halsema: I guess I have a few exceptions to that. I have trouble distinguishing if it's really Calvin that has such an impact on me. There are a lot of students at Calvin that have come from the same sort of background that I did. I went to Reformed church. And I didn't always want to go to college. I think about where I want to go to graduate school, but I had to go to Calvin because I didn't know about the arts. I don't think we need to discern where Calvin is doing the Christian thing or whatever. Maybe it's too big for that.

Dialogue: Now an even broader question: Does Calvin support a Christian approach not just to study but to life in general? Does it live up to Reformed doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and the dedication of all of life to God? Or do you get the feeling sometimes that certain activities or occupations are thought of as more worthy than others? For instance, that mission work or becoming a pastor is better than becoming a physicist or historian.

Lieuwen: It depends a lot on the kind of people you hang around with. I mean there are a lot of people around here that are just out for the yuppie dream, like anywhere else, and being a pastor is not looked on as a higher paying job. There are other people who definitely seem to have a perspective in which the job of being a minister or missionary is on a higher plain. But this place is so big, with so many crosscurrents, that you can't make any generalizations on what people think about various occupations.

Rikkers: Some of the departments in the humanities are frustrated by the fact that there are so many business majors here. It doesn't have anything to do with their feelings about their colleagues in the business department, but it has to do with how they perceive the attitudes of the students who are not interested in a broad liberal arts education.

Walhout: I think we can attest to the fact that the problem is in the students and not the staff.

Cornell: You said that the departments respect each other. I've had a couple of experiences that contradict that. There's a lot of negative reaction to acting as a career. It's looked upon as not being really worth the time. If you start to poke into it and look around at what you can make of your life as an actor, everywhere you turn you have people say, "Don't go into that because there's no way you'll be able to maintain your Christianity as an actor." It seems to me that we should be working toward producing Christian actors and actresses who can go out and transform the field. I'm sure there are other areas as well in which you get a similar reaction.

VanHalsema: I think that is true of the arts in general.

Gemmen: There's a danger there though. We grow up with the idea that you can be a Christian garbage man, you can be a Christian CEO, Dialogue 27
You can be a Christian anything you want. We get the idea that you can go to Calvin College and major in business, you can major in chemistry, you can go to law school, you can do anything you want, and because you are a Christian, that’s okay. Professors will stress that you have to go and do something first as a Christian, and second as an occupation. I think that years and years of hearing that you can be a Christian and do anything you want to tends to complement the vocational mode which is part of our decade. Like Bill said, you can go into the acting field as a Christian, or you can be a Christian actor, and there’s a difference. You have to be willing to buck a system that exists as a Christian worker, and that’s easier said than done. With a peer group that’s very homogenous and consistent, we’re not given the truth here. We’re going to face opposition and ridicule in the world at large. You don’t undergo a lot the persecution here that we’re going to face everywhere else. So, sure you can be a Christian and be anything you want, but the reality hits after college.

**Block:** That’s where the rubber meets the road, when you get out there and you really have to live out your holistic, integrated faith in the world.

**Rikkers:** When I came here I had more nasty comments made to me about what I believe and things said like “Oh, so that’s what you think.” When I was working at McDonalds with a bunch of people who did nothing but party 24 hours a day, at least they respected that I had some point of view; a lot of people here just told me that I was nuts and that I wasn’t a Christian and I was going to hell and all these sorts of things. Not professors and not adults, but students in the dorms. Now I have my peer group and my friends and I don’t feel that so much anymore, but when I was living in the dorms I was afraid to open my mouth.

**Lieuwen:** You expect that in the dorms. In the dorms they work on intimidating anybody who says anything that breaks the status quo.

**Rikkers:** What does that say about the Christian community?

**Lieuwen:** What that says is that if you don’t want these nice Christian folks swearing at you on the phone or out windows, you’d better not buck the line, you’d better write things that they approve of, you’d better say things that they approve of or you’ll get very nasty responses. Now professors, as a general rule, are fairly supportive, although I’ve had some make sort of sly remarks, but most of them have been very supportive of what I’ve said.

**Block:** Once again you’ve got to clarify, you’ve got to make a distinction between the dorm and the college itself. I mean sure, a part of what happens to you is your experience as a freshman coming into the dorms...

**Rikkers:** But that can warp your life.

**Block:** True, but you have to keep in mind the college too. The administration and the staff, the professors.

**Gemmen:** Many students come here with a narrow definition of what a Christian is. I don’t meet people here who became Christians at age twenty. They’ve grown up with it, and have evolved into being Christians. I don’t meet people that used to be Catholic and are now Protestant; and to meet someone who might have a faith slightly outside of mainline Reformed Protestantism is outside of the experience of many students here. We deal with a slice of the church, and that has an effect on Dan and anyone who has an opinion outside of what we nurtured on.

**Lieuwen:** I don’t want to give ar body the wrong idea. It’s a ve small minority of people that ma things nasty. And this place is a more tolerant than the high school went to. At my high school th would’ve crucified me upside do if I’d said some of the things I s here.

**Cornell:** Phil has a point contrasting the dorm experience which consists primarily of freshmen and sophomores, and the college as a whole, which enco passes a great many more poe than that. It’s really unfair to jud the college based on the first ye and-a-half of people here.

**Block:** Maybe that touches on weakness of the college. The fact that the dorms or other communities that are satell around the college are not being fected by some of the benefic aspects of the college. There is problem of the sheltered-provinc community spoiled brat who con to Calvin and wants to have sences tickled and wants to st climbing the corporate ladder to the status that mommy or dac has. That’s an area where growth needed. The community must more truly loving and open and imm immature.

**Rikkers:** Whose responsibility that? I’ve talked to so me professors who say, “I can’t through to my students. They j sit there and look at me, and matter what I say they just write down and write it back on the exa I don’t know what they do on weekends. I don’t know what they do in the evenings. They’re going to the library.” I think that has to do with the people who running the dorms. T
At a very strange at a Christian because I was afraid neone was going to jump all over me. And that’s really negative.

VanHalsema: I think it’s a sign of maturity and intelligence when you can question things and maybe come back to the answer that you had in the beginning, but to be able to go through that process of questioning and thinking: “Why do I believe this?” or, “Why is this the way it is?” That’s what we’re here for. That’s why you go to the library and read different perspectives and see films by people from other countries.

Cornell: Yeah, and you run into brick walls when you try to stop it. In Thespians, a year ago we did Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead by Tom Stoppard, which is admittedly not your standard play. It’s a little hard to comprehend, and you certainly can’t sit through it and not think. Unfortunately, while some people utterly loved it (there are thinkers out there), others were appalled because they didn’t understand what was going on, and we heard again and again, “I want a show where I can just sit back and watch the story.” So you try to make them think and you end up running into brick walls. I guess Pam has her own walls that she’s been hitting too. But how are you going to solve that?

Gemmen: I wonder if that’s just a limited experience problem. I always think of learning as a Lego process: you attach new knowledge onto old knowledge. A lot of students come, I think, with basic building blocks missing on which to attach people that are strange and concepts that are strange. The lack of Christian response is little bits and pieces of culture shock. I sometimes think that going to Calvin was not the best idea for me simply be-
cause it’s been very redundant of my high school experience. I’m very reluctant to discuss religion with students, because I either hear an affirmation of what I think or else it dissolves into some sort of bickering session over issues I find useless and petty. I often wish I had gone to a secular university where it would’ve become much more apparent to me what I stood for and what I had to live out, rather than being able to live passively in an environment that molds my behavior the first two years, and then surrounds me with people that think or act similarly, sincerely or not. I feel I’ve become a much more passive student in my four years here than I wish I had been.

**Block:** What you are talking about, the Lego building block concept, is known among educational psychiatrists as schema theory.

A lot of the problems of apathy and the lack of formal critical, constructive thinking, deep thinking, is a result of the failure of Christian secondary school programs. I know that my high school experience was pretty much worthless, and that’s why my first two years of my experience here were nothing more than just trying to do my duty and get the stuff out of my way to get to the degree. It wasn’t until I took my History 356 class that I realized that WOW—learning does make a difference. I think that’s a good push for people who are considering education. We’ve got to have good educators out there who are preparing students for a liberal arts college education. You can’t just expect kids who have been put through a non-thinking elementary and secondary ed environment to just plop into Calvin and begin thinking at the flick of a switch. We’ve got to have good secondary ed. Calvin College back in the 1920s and ’30s used to be a place which put out teachers and preachers. We should start putting more thinking people into the education fields so we can start a revolution.

**VanHalsema:** I had a wonderful teacher in my public high school. She cared about me. People thought she was crabby a lot of the time, but when she got fed up, she’d do a little Irish jig in front of us because she was Irish and she’d say “There’s your entertainment. The rest of it isn’t fun but you’ve just got to learn it. I’m not here to entertain you.” I go back to her now when I go home to Connecticut, and I’m very grateful that I had her and that I went to a very good public school.

**Lieuwen:** That gets back to something we were talking about—perceptions about occupations. One of the problems in education is that education people around here don’t get very much respect. In society as a whole, they don’t get paid very well. You’re not going to attract a lot of the people who probably should be going into education just because of the yuppie syndrome, or whatever you want to call it. People are going to migrate to where the funds are, or at least where the respect is. We need to work a whole lot to improve the attitude toward educators.

**Walhout:** Anyone who would consider going into teaching may be held back from doing so because of what he sees in the attitudes of the children. Nobody would care to try to teach someone who doesn’t care to learn.

**Rikkers:** I don’t even feel like talking to students sometimes, because if they’re not interested in what I have to say, why should I go through the bother of saying it?

**Block:** I’ve seen a progression here. The buck has gone from the college—the administration and professors—to the dorm life, to secondary ed, to elementary ed. Now it’s going to families who raise children not to care about learning.

**Cornell:** Can we just blame it on TV? Is there anyone who disagrees with that?

**Rikkers:** TV and women.

**Dialogue:** Do you feel confined at Calvin? Do you feel that there are things you would like to do and you should be able to do that you can’t because of Calvin’s Christian or Christian Reformed approach?

**Gemmen:** The scariest thing for me is that I’m incapable of thinking clearly outside of certain bounds. We’re so rarely given things to disagree with. I’m so used to hearing things that I’m supposed to agree with. In the English department we’re never taught to respect an agnostic point of view; literature presented so much through a Christian filter that the origin of the author’s intent destroyed; and rather than studying something contrary to what person might believe, looking at it with integrity and learning to understand it fully, there is almost a patronizing tone. I find after many years of having things presented to me as they ought to be, I can no longer sit back and play the devil’s advocate with something. I can no longer sit down and read through a book and be able to put myself in the shoes of someone else. That really frightens me.

**Rikkers:** It’s absolutely impossible to hit bottom and be on the floor when reading a book for an English class here, because when you go class everyone talks about it very nicely. “Thank goodness we don’t think like this.” Yet I’m thinking wait a minute, this book almost destroyed me. It shook me to the foundation of my being. I’m only allowed to feel that way... I do know how to combat that, except have more professors who say, “Look there’s something here.” The human experience is going on here. There’s a reason why people in the
entith century are absolutely hout foundation and are frag­mented human beings.”

mmen: But are intellectually y together.

kers: Right.

mmen: And they’re human ngs.

kers: And they’re experiencing nething very real.

mmen: And it’s very well ought out. More thought out, in t, than some people’s Chris­hity. You can’t really learn topect others if you’re constantly hinking, “I can’t really deal with em, or they’re inferior to me be­use they disagree.” It’s frustrat-

ck: That confrontational sense I walking a mile in somebody e’s shoes is very important in mning, and obviously one of the st effective way to each is to play devil’s advocate. But I’ve also xperienced classes in which lssors led us out into the middle n existential or nihilist sea and t let us flounder. I’ve goneough classes where you really er resolve anything. I’m not ning that that’s all bad but. . .

mmen: It’s experiential. You’ve there in the mire going, “um…”

ck: But oftentimes I think the problem is not that they don’t give 1 a chance to flounder in what everybody else is floundering in, but t sometimes they just do not ilculate how we should relate to s and what kind of responses we t make.

kers: Why should they always re to do that?

ck: They shouldn’t always have do that, but I think that in many ses it needs to be done more.

kers: I have never yet at Calvin xperienced any prof leading me out into the existential mire, any more than I myself was experiencing by reading books and thinking. Some professors really would like to be able to lead students out into that mire, but then they feel a very strong respon­sibility as Christians to do some­thing about it. There’s always tension: “Do I throw them a lifeline or is it better for them to invent their own lifeline so that they really feel like something has happened?” That’s a very real problem for me in dealing with other individuals. Am I going to say something that’s just going to blow you away, and leave you totally shaken up? Do I then have to pursue an intimate rela­tionship with you to get you out of that mire, or is it better for me just to leave you lying there?

Cornell: I think what Phil is trying to say is you can’t take someone out in the middle of nowhere in their thinking and then leave them there and then not help them go somewhere with it. I don’t know if it’s really that beneficial to sit in the mire and not ever come out.

Rikkers: I think there is something to be said for just being dropped out in the middle of nowhere and having to find your way back.

Block: To sink or swim.

Rikkers: I think there is something beneficial in that even from a Christian perspective, or precisely be­cause I do have a Christian perspec­tive. Everything that happens to you is influenced by the society and the social situation that you’re in, but at night you go to sleep and you’re alone. My experience at this point in my life is that you have to learn how to be alone before you can ever go out there and say “This is what I think.” You really have to sit there for a long time wondering what it is that you think, even to the point where you want to slice your wrists. I mean, that’s okay.

My father calls a liberal arts edu­cation a really expensive way to find out all sorts of questions that you’re never going to have the answers to anyway. There’s something to that, because life isn’t full of answers, it’s full of a lot of questions. You go on to living, and the answers that come to you are not answers that are there because someone gave them to you or because you suddenly woke up with them, but you realize one day, “I’ve had the answer all along.”

Block: I think you’ve got a good developing definition of what an effective liberal arts education is. It doesn’t answer all the questions but it primes the pump for you to begin taking in a mass of learning and start dealing with it.

Rikkers: There are a lot of profs here who do as good a job as they can considering that a lot of stu­dents don’t want to have a whole lot to do with it to begin with.

VanHalsema: I’ve sat in an art history class, taught by a Socratic method—the whole thing is questions, and the students are expected to start discussions and work through critically, responding to art. I’ve approached that class saying, I’m not going to answer a question today because I always answer all the questions. It would be really quite frustrating; every time he’d ask a question, no one would say anything, and I’d answer them all again. People are so passive. They don’t want to answer the ques­tion, even if they know the answer.

Cornell: We’ve been talking a little bit about what the definition of what the liberal arts way of teaching is. I’m not going to go back to the mire illustration, but to a pretty standard one. If learning is a road and it branches off every so often, pros should be the one that’s saying, “There’s a branch off this way that you’ve seen, and I know you noticed the branch off this way, but there’s
also a path behind that bush, and there's a path over there, and you could just walk off into those trees if you wanted to. It's not so much teaching facts as teaching different ways of thinking; ultimately you should come out of each class with a new way of looking at thought processes and a new way of thinking about the world around you. Not so much wanting to be left out in the mire and able to scream "What is life all about?" as being shown these different ways to think.

Walhout: In terms of assignments, maybe there should be instead of a research paper, a concept paper or a thought paper; and not necessarily one paper at the end of the course, but an ongoing thing.

Lieuwen: Of course they can't force you to do anything like that or people will scream bloody murder. I had a professor who let me write a paper on the philosophy of math, my philosophy of math, as an alternative. Most people just read articles in math magazines and did a little book report. You can't really expect everyone to write up their philosophy of whatever the subject is because they'll resist it and they're not going to get what they need out of it.

Rikkers: Maybe the best thing is to get people to resist. Maybe they ask themselves, "Why can't I sit down and write what I think?" By the fact that people are resisting indicative of the difficulty of the kind of assignment.

Lieuwen: It works your tail off that's for sure.

Block: Right, learning and knowing isn't mere experimentation, there has to be a certain amount of revelation involved, but you have to have good solid balance between the two.
The funeral car arrived ten minutes early. The driver stepped out of the long black Cadillac and waited patiently for us to come out of the house. He was dressed in a grey suit and overcoat and looked to be no more than nineteen years old. My grandmother grabbed a box of tissue from the counter as she went out the front door and began putting the single pink sheets into the pockets of her grey skirt and blazer. She was crying.

The driver, without a word, opened a door on the right side of the strange vehicle and helped my grandmother in. He did the same for my sister, my mother, and Aunt Connie and her husband Ray, and myself. I was the last to get in. The driver opened the door and stood behind it as if at attention until I was safely inside. I smiled at him and almost thanked him, but I realized that my thanks were understood and accepted without words. He shut the door carefully and took his seat at the wheel. As we drove away from the curb, my mother put her hand on her mother's knee and said, “This is like a dream, isn't it Mom.” Grandma shook her head; “Yes, it is,” she said.

And it was like a dream. Three days before, on Monday, my mother called me in Oregon to tell me that her father had died that morning. He had had a heart attack while hunting pheasant. I boarded a plane in Medford on Wednesday and one day later I’m riding in the back of a black limousine in Pennsylvania. The big, black car and young driver were at one and the same time part of the dream and constant reminders that this was all real—my grandfather was dead.

My thoughts drifted back to happier days when my grandfather was alive. When we were younger, my brother and my cousin Dean and I would go on long walks with my grandfather in the woods behind my grandparents’ house. We would collect chestnuts and listen to stories about my grandfather’s younger years—“the good old days.” He showed us the place where he and his boyhood friends used to have a fort in a clearing of the thick woods next to the railroad tracks. I remembered the oval-shaped, flat piece of copper he always had in his pocket that interested the three of us and the time he gave each of us a shiny penny and had us put them on the railroad track at different places. We walked off into the woods and came back several hours later to find three, oval-shaped, flat pieces of copper just like his. My brother and cousin, who were both three years older than me, laughed when I remarked how hot the rails must have gotten in the summer sun.

My thoughts were interrupted by my grandmother’s voice. “You know girls,” she said to my mother and my Aunt Connie, “your father used to always say he would die before he was forty, but he lived long enough to hold Daniel and Matthew.” Daniel and Matthew are the great-grandsons of Connie’s daughters—my great-grandfather’s great-grandchildren. “Isn’t that something Grandma said. We all agreed that that was very nice. She then asked Connie if her son Dean might be able to wear any of Grand-dad’s shirts. “Maybe Mom. Let’s not worry about that now though,” Connie said gently. My eyes met those of the young driver in the rear-view mirror and wondered what he was thinking. Was this this kind of conversation that always went on in funeral cars, or was my family different? Did I understand that my grandmother loved her husband more than anything on this earth and was not passing off his death as an unimportant occurrence yielding hand-me-downs for her grandsons?

I looked out the windows of the car onto the streets of McCungie. Brittle, dull-colored leaves lay in piles against the curb as the branches they had fallen from swayed in the wind of the cold fall day. All around us people were going about their daily business. Didn’t they know what had happened? Didn’t they care that my grandfather was dead? I wanted everyone to stop, even if just for a moment, to acknowledge and share our grief. I felt they owed us, him, at least that. Those who even noticed the ominous black car probably thought it belonged to a rich businessman or politician from Philadelphia.
we drove on, we passed houses and shops I riven and walked by countless times with andfather. We passed Salvatore's Pizzeria ! Grandad always took my sister and er and me for steak sandwiches when we from New Mexico to visit. The men who ented the restaurant knew him well and cted him. He loved to show us off to his s. They would miss him.

finally arrived at Schapp's Funeral Home. I t remember how many times Grandad and I by Schapp’s on the way to the store to buy 3d peanuts and Pennsylvania Lotto s—one for each of us. On occasion, we saw eral car, perhaps the very one I was sitting rked outside the funeral home, waiting to a grieving family to the graveyard for burial of a loved one. Once or twice we saw pall-bearers carefully loading a heavy coffin into a hearse. We would keep going, ignoring the proceedings. Death is not a pleasant topic of conversation and we were occupied with other thoughts and activities. Now I was going inside to see my grandfather for the last time.

The driver stopped the car in front of the home and two young men in black suits helped us onto the sidewalk. As we walked toward the doors of the funeral home, I saw my reflection in a window and wondered if the purple oxford shirt and blue tweed jacket I was wearing were appropriate for the occasion. The next thing I saw was a brown casket in a sea of flowers. The funeral director greeted me with warm words and a sympathetic handshake—the day had just begun.
Tall trees encircle
a cusp in the forest;
tree frogs croak and mosquitos
swarm above the
saturated earth.
The air is twilight
dehilly. I bury my
hands in my pockets.
It is time to be home
and warm.
Birds call to their
mates in the trees.
Sweet melancholy
hits my gut and
spreads outward.
I cannot choose
between tears of
sorrow or joy.
It does not matter
because
none come at all.

—I Barbara Veltema

I learned to save time
in a bottle, and so I
stored you in a jar
on the windowsill.
It got lost among
Kitsch and clutter—but I found you
anyway (when I was looking
for something else).
I rolled a few drops
around on my tongue but
the sweetness was gone.
I dusted off the bottle
and put it back on the window ledge.
It catches the light nicely.

—Barbara Veltema
Sitting

Becky Tempest

Stranded at a Fina station outside of Socorro, I plop down in angry resignation, spread my legs and stretch my worn skirt into a hammock to rest the baby in. The wind whips dust and long hair into our moist faces, providing yet another reason to curse the temperamental radiator of our cold Capri that refuses to cool down enough to hold water. Unperturbed, you lean placidly against the porch post kneading an apparently unconscious dog with your toes. You're a true southwester, ungoverned by time—a patience I never seem to have developed.

I study the perspiration that pools in the fields of Ian's chubby neck. Adding a few drops of warm coke, I swirl sweat and soda with my fingertip and guide dirty rivers of it to his chest until no flesh stops its flow and it trickles into my lap. We mark the passing time shifting bare feet on the burning pavement.

A somber Indian, his coarse hair tied in a squaw knot, stops to gas up his old Ford truck. He gives us a moment's stare—two unkempt kids rocking their child to sweaty sleep—and then turns his eyes to the land lying lazily beneath waves of heat. I follow his gaze, knowing my face doesn't reflect the reverence I see in his.

We sit in sticky misery accented by Ian's fitful cries. The man pays his bill, hops in his creaking truck and disappears down the unpaved road, enveloped in a cloud of dust.

After he's gone, you hoist the baby from my skirt-pouch and take him into the desert. Wading through a sea of sand and sagebrush, you head to where the dirt laps at the base of a red, sandstone mesa, perch Ian on a waist-high rock and start gesturing to distant places. You always talk to him as if he could understand you and he opens his eyes wide to make you think he does. In reality, I think your movements mesmerize him. They do me and he is, after all, my son.

I plow up the earth with my heels, finding in cooler ground, and watch you stir up pile busy ants for Ian to look at. When you tick! feet with purple flowers that make him gurgle laugh, I have to smile, too.

The Indian man returns, calls us over to truck and hands us a jar through the window mumbles something about how the goats r be milked but there are no longer any children home to drink it. He leaves quickly, taking him our surprised thanks.

Later, sitting on the porch again, I scoot c to you despite the heat. In your lap Ian suck his bottle, eyes drooping, toes curled. The noon sun mellow s the lands' harshness sinking into a red sky, painting the mesa pl as it brushes past. We take in its beauty, hurriedly, before crawling back into our piti waiting car to go home.

Dialogue

—Marlene Sc
EINSAMKEIT

w between stark shoulder-blades
pine longs to be
ied.
arms that squeeze would hold the soul fast
breaking shell lost in the terror of the night
ows and silence of restive breathing
the gut-center spine hollow
meval keen wails,
ars the stomach with its silent utterance.
body shudders—holds back though the throat
gs to be ripped by sound
ness overcomes; shuddering stills.

e night is short:
ing tears the body from dead comfort
ed living, and
soul rises up, though hollowed by sleep demons
dance spiteful of life.

—Rose Cunningham

LUX AETERNA—FOR ROURKE

Gripping tightly clenched fists fail to contain,
holding fast to still the shuddering tearing with reassurance.
Find comfort in breath and warm hands entwined.

Empty spaces where once walked the dead, living, haunt the earth.
Sky, hard blue, will not answer
Why?

Lush green, full-blown, enfolds the hollowed, grants small comfort to those
Struggling in mire secon and fertile, knowing only shells
Without essence, this body is broken.
Body and Blood of Lamb—broken for thee (old pronoun personal)
This do in remembrance to them that believe—
Essence ascends into heart of light,
Has joy, bright-shining on uplifed face,
Receives grace in the
Light eternal, Lamb of God.

Weak-warming sun mocks, laughs at its hiding power, jealously
Guarding the greater light within, blinding eyes that gaze too long.
Too bright to see the joy, blazing, blinds mole eyes
and we carry without knowledge
Left to cry our feeble Gloria Patri.

—Rose Cunningham

Dialogue 41
Concrete Dale Hu

42 Dialogue
all the seasons in the church. I think I appreciate Lent the most. While I certainly relish celebrating Christmas and Easter, I find Friday services the most fulfilling. And though there are beautiful Christian hymns, I do sing best songs such as "I Survey the Wondrous Cross," "Ah, Dearest Jesus," "Man of Sorrows," "O Sacred Head, Now Dead," and "What Wondrous Love This."

I taps this attraction to Lent, Friday, and songs about suffering merely indicates there is something perverse in us. The darkness of Lent can only be appreciated in light of the joy of Easter. The season of Good Friday has to be followed by Easter. The former serves as a reminder of the latter.

Only when we see Christ's love can we respond with a life that tries to emulate that love. When I was in elementary school, I remember a sequence of catechism books that went 'Sin-Salvation-Service.' That's a very basic idea, but it is one that should be the pattern of the Christian life. We need to know the enormity of our mortal sins to appreciate the divine sacrifice and to respond with a life of gratitude.

We should not be Christians solely or primarily because it's a philosophy that gives meaning to an otherwise hopeless existence, because we'd rather end up in heaven than hell, or because God usually is good to those who follow Him. Those are all additional benefits, but the most basic reason for serving God is out of thanks for what He has done for us.

"Man of Sorrows," of course, must be succeeded by "Christ the Lord is Risen Today." Good Friday has to be followed by Easter. The darkness of Lent can only be appreciated in light of the joy of resurrection. It is during the season of ______ that what we have learned during Lent can be of use. Having realized how much we need forgiveness, we must respond to Christ's atonement with a life of gratitude. For it is in the resurrection that follows the crucifixion that we realize that there is purpose to life, a God to be served, a Christ to be praised, a Spirit to be followed, and a beautiful message to be spread.

—Patrick Jasperse