

Jarius A. Stonewall

John Ragle

Jarius A. Stonewall was dead.

He was loved though unlovely and the blood began to flow in his veins. He was unreal, then touched by reality and transformed into a human being.

Jarius worked at his social status; it was his life—it meant more to him than anything else in the world.

And the milk and the honey blended and all was sweet and jovial.

But who am I?

No, no, I must not ask such questions.

And the milk soured and the honey grew moldy and they formed a foul mixture and there was nothingness.

Jarius loved his money; it gave him power and courage; it was his life—it meant more to him than anything else in the world.

And the roses bloomed and were fragrant and all was sweet and jovial.

But what am I doing here?

No, no, I must keep myself in check.

And the roses wilted and decayed and there was nothingness.

Jarius was a patriot's dream; he waved a flag everywhere he went and all was for his country; it was his life—it meant more to him than anything else in the world.

And the birds sang and melodic strains filled the air and all was sweet and jovial.

But am I alive?

I must control myself.

And the birds fell from the trees and the air was foul with discord and there was nothingness.

Jarius was a church member. He went every Sunday, but it never meant anything. He contributed all he could afford and worked dilligently in it; it was his life—it meant more to him than anything else in the world.

And the wine flowed and was pure and mellow and all was sweet and jovail.

But there must be more than just eating and breathing and sleeping and then dying.

And the wine soured and grew stagnant and there was nothingness.

Jarius was loved though unlovely; unreal, then touched by reality. His questions came forth and were answered.

And a heart's emptiness was filled with the joy of loving. Jarius A Stonewall was alive.

Anger

Susan Harwell

Heat-burning, smoldering fire
Invades and ignites the poison
Flowing through the Heart.
Fury waves splash the walls of the Brain,
And reasoning is left to drown.
Let free, a sharp impulse
Runs its course to Hands,
And burning, listening Ears hear
The startled Cry.

Ad Militem

*R.W.

I watch a careless sparrow scan the snow:
 A fluid, placid blot against grey sky;
 So still the resting earth, so safe the flakes
 That drop unhurried on well-tended lawns—
 While you roam somewhere under jungle suns
 Where things that fly and fall are enemies,
 Where crash and rumble shock the morning air,
 Seeking to keep our snowflakes undisturbed.

Amico

*R.W.

I'm sorry that I disappoint you so;
 I know it makes you angry when you turn
 While lecturing me on life's unending pain
 And find me deaf, enchanted by a rose.

But you must know that I can never be
 Much more than half an adult; that my eyes
 Will grow ecstatic o're each lovely sight;
 That puppies, Christmas wreaths, and greening trees

Will always make me stop and stare delight;
 That merry words will drown my deepest sigh
 From time to time, and though life wound me, lost
 Will be the ache when next Earth tempts me with
 Some shining bauble from her myriad store—
 Accept a half-child that can be no more.

—*Miss Rose Williams

April First

Judy Homer

The ocean's tide
 is green and pink.
 Nightmares ride
 across the brink.
 The snow in the jungle
 is three feet deep
 The morning sun
 is fast asleep
 It's April, you know
 the first day really.
 You're my first fool;
 Don't you feel silly?

Black

Cheryl McCoy

I have no eyes, I have no tears.
 My canvas is black, my paints, the same.
 Sight is a memory, color, a fantasy.
 I am awake, my world is asleep in the darkness.
 But who can see a voice or touch a kitten with his eyes,
 And who can close his quick enough to shut out a glance of lies?
 My mind has no windows, but its doors are never closed.
 A child's laughter has no color but it is no less splendid.
 And God is right to make it so.
 I touched and "crushed" a rose, you say
 No, I saw it with my hand . . .

A Fantasy

Kirby Lewis

As Steve Wilkins was walking down the hall to his next class, that strange and unearthly feeling started to come over him once again. The feeling mounted in intensity, and Steve wondered where he would go this time. The surroundings of hallway and students, slamming lockers and bundled books began to disappear into the mist. A new world began to take shape.

Steve Wilkins was subject to periodical deportations through time and space to events in history. No one really took his claim seriously; and when he was asked to make such a trip so that people could see it happen, he had to admit that he had no control over his wanderings. The phenomenon came and went as it pleased. Steve was powerless to cause or shape these awesome visitations. Psychiatric treatment over the past six months had failed to move him from his "fantasies," as the unbelieving doctors called the trips.

Steve gradually became aware of a vast, muddy field. A din and roar filled his ears. He heard the moans of wounded and dying men, too. His notebook had become a Springfield rifle, and a steel helmet rested on his formerly bare head. Steve decided that such hardware meant danger, and he flopped down on to the ground to survey the situation. He heard artillery fire all around him. To the left and the right men were running through the mud. Steve saw that their destination was a line of trenches and barbed wire twenty yards ahead.

A voice behind him yelled, "Get up and charge, man! You'll never

reach the Boche line on your stomach!" Steve now knew that he was a doughboy in France, and he might as well play the part while he was there. He lunged forward at the fire-spitting German positions. He had covered about ten yards when a Spandau machine gun opened up a little to the left. He hit the ground again. A few men to the left of him hit the ground in death spasms as the enemy gunners knocked out a gap in the ranks of attackers.

Steve felt around his muddy uniform. Just as he located a grenade, an artillery shell burst overhead. For an instant Steve felt searing pain in his left arm, but the chattering machine gun demanded his full attention. He started to wriggle forward, noting that he was out of the gunner's line of sight. Steve wanted to get very close to be certain of a hit. He squirmed closer and closer through the mud. Finally he pulled the pin on the grenade and hurled the deadly missile forward.

The machine gun nest was enveloped in smoke, but Steve heard laughter instead of an explosion. The mud became a tile floor. Steve looked around, and it dawned on him that he had crawled halfway down the hall.

That afternoon Steve was in a hospital bed under sedation. The teachers were explaining to their students that the boy had lapsed into delusions brought about by mental illness and that he should not be laughed at. Meanwhile, the psychiatrist was trying to explain the piece of shrapnel in Steve's arm.

Brief Candle

Lynn Decker

The candle
Is a single element.
Alone and singular.
Yet in four parts:
The wick, the wax, the flame, and the whole.

The wick-
The center.
The backbone
For all.

The wax-
Changed ever so easily
By the heat
By the pressures of everyday life.

The flame-
In its path all forces
Give way. At times and eventually
In its wantonness it may even destroy
itself.

The whole
Is there because of the wick,
Because of the wax.
Destroyed by the flame.

Hidden Skies

Debra Waddill

In spring I lived in a darkened world,
Never stopping to take a look.
The earth was but a hiding place—
Protection from life's realities.
Summer charged by with the hidden sun
And I was mute, striving for future kingdoms.
The warmth of existence was left unwanted
While I stood back and only pretended.
Autumn appeared and new fears arose—
I stood still.
Fantasy, passing me by,
Left its victim to shiver in the dark,
Nothing but winter, too late for dreams.

Questions

Jane Hall

I used to think that each man's purpose in life was to make at least one other person happy.

But now I see that men are too wrapped up in their own miseries to see the misery of others.

And if we don't see, how can we help?

So I'm asking—What can we do, World?

Is the answer always Nothing

Or World, are you even listening?

Or God, do You even listen any more?

I am finished

I am through.

It is morning now, and the world puts on a new face.

I close my liquid eyes, and I try for just one moment to escape.

But I can't escape.

I can't escape because the world is a prison,

And maybe even death isn't the way out.

I'll weep for you again tonight, World,

I'll weep for you—and me.

I'll weep because I feel great pain.

Because the world is full of dying men and crying children.

And my body shakes with pain.

Maybe today I'll try to make the pain go away.

For just one person—for just one moment.

But the world will always be sad.

And I will always weep.

I'll pass the shriveled man selling pencils in the street today.

I'll give him a quarter for his pencils,

And I'll go home to my two-story house.

I've got this shiny new pencil now.

What do I do?

For I must do something.

Maybe I'll push the pencil's soft lead deep into my weeping hand.

Or maybe I'll write a poem with this new pencil,

A poem that will change the world and make men learn to care.

Or maybe I'll just throw this stupid pencil away.

It doesn't mean that much to me, anyway.

Because I'm tired, World,

I'm tired, and I'm sick of caring when nobody else does.

The tears are dry on my cheeks now.

So maybe I'll just push this pencil and the suffering it represents back into the darkest corner of my intellect.

But that won't work, either.

Because I'll be crying again tonight.

Because I can't stop crying.

I am doomed to tears because I see the tears around me.

So I'm asking you this, World:

Because I feel, because I weep, because I care—

Because I want everyone to care—

Am I blessed?

Or am I cursed?

Reflections of a Maniac

Michelle Poag

I am sick of this world.

I am sick of this life.

I am sick of all its people—

Wondering people who stare

At you with wondering faces.

I shall rise above them.

I shall rise where no man

Has gone before me.

I shall set myself on a pedestal,

And I shall look on all the

Wondering people who stare

At you with wondering faces.

And I shall laugh.