

CRESCENT MOON JOURNAL

Fall Edition 2003



Journal of the Desert Moon Review
Tracy Estes, Guest Editor

A Message from the Editor of Desert Moon Review

Dear Readers,

Our thanks to Tracy Estes for his engaging theme and editorship of a fine contest and edition. Tracy is the fourth volunteer editor, along with Paul Henry, Tamar Silverman, and Jeff Taylor, all of who have won a place of distinction on Desert Moon Review.

I extend my congratulations to the prizewinners and placers in the contest. All the winning poems carry unusual power and evocation. We are also pleased to present the poetry of the Desert Moon staff.

It is our hope that you will find as much enjoyment in reading the poetry as we have in judging and presenting the results of the contest and this Fall 2003 edition of the Crescent Moon Journal.

My best to all,

Jim Corner,
Editor.

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THE DESERT MOON CELLARS

Almost simultaneously, two guests step outside, gathering their thoughts and some fresh air. The Fall Ball at the Desert Moon Castle is the party of the year and it's in full swing inside. Classical strains drift out of the open French doors toward them, as they stand shoulder to shoulder on the balcony.



Inadvertently, their eyes keep straying to the gibbous moon rising over the desert. Their conversation turns away from the beauty of their surroundings toward the wine and their mysterious host.

“This wine is marvelous. I’ve heard he has an extensive collection of wine. But why do you think he supplied his best for this party? It must have cost him a fortune.”

“He does have exquisite taste. This is the best wine I’ve ever had. I would give anything to see that cellar.”

“Excuse me, I couldn’t help but eavesdrop on your conversation,” a stranger says, standing slightly behind them. He is a silver-haired gentleman, elegantly dressed in a white tuxedo, with an impish quality escaping from blue eyes.

“But, as I am your host, I want to thank you for the compliments you’ve just paid me. It is true that I collect the very best. I have for years. If I heard you correctly, you both would like to visit my cellar, no?”

Both guests quickly affirm that they would.

“Then, won’t you follow me?” he asks, sweeping his arm toward the French doors. He starts away and adds over his shoulder, “My guests, yet again.” This, with a small grin, flashing perfect teeth.

He leads them along the side of the huge room, avoiding the throngs of party-goers. He continues down ornate hallways until they stand in front of a massive oak door, strapped and braced in iron.

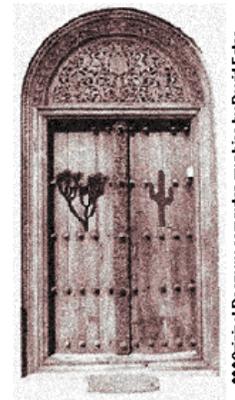
The door has three symbols carved deeply into its surface. A Joshua tree and a saguaro cactus are carved on the right and left sides of the oaken door. In the center, engraved above these carvings, is a sphere.

The host takes a skeleton key from a small pocket in his cummerbund. Turning it the well-oiled lock, he shoulders open the door.

“This is the Desert Moon cellar. I store many valuable items here.”

The guests follow their host down a flight of stairs carved from rock. At the landing, they sense a vastness that is confirmed when the wine cellar’s owner flips a switch. Intermittently spaced light bulbs, hanging down from wires, attempt to beat back the darkness from what is, essentially, a cave with forests of wine racks. The racks bristle with bottles of differing shapes and hues. The light gives iridescence to the bottles; they are jewels glistening from a treasure chest.

Dazzled, the guests follow the impeccably dressed man to the center of the room. A round table and four chairs are waiting for



Original Dourney computer graphics by David Estes

them. They appear to be carved from the same tree as the door at the head of the stairs.

“Let us sample some of my collection so that you might compare it to the wine that impressed you upstairs,” he gestures toward the chairs. “I’ll go and retrieve some of my best vintages. You will find glasses in the wooden boxes under your chairs.”



When he finally appears out of the gloom and into the concentration of light around the table, he is carrying several bottles. “These have been judged as the best of my collection by connoisseurs, whose wisdom I trust. Once sipped, the taste will be yours to enjoy forever,” he proclaims, setting the bottles on the table.

With eager grins, the guests wait as he goes about the solemn ritual of opening and decanting samples of each bottle.

POETRY CONTEST WINNERS

1st **Remembering the Grapes** by Margaret Griffiths

2nd **Now and Then** by Deirdre Hendrie

3rd **Your Search** by Russell Bittner

Honorable Mention:

K.R. Copeland with **Should I Marry a Cannibal**



REMEMBERING THE GRAPES

He sucks his finger thoughtfully,
running his tongue over fresh ridges
where briars snagged his flesh.
A strong, handsome lad, arms and shoulders
shaped by working the Umbrian soil,
now he thinks of the vineyards, and curses
the day he took up the sword and the standard.
Not that it's any disgrace to uphold
the Pax Romana, but sometimes he misses
the smell of rich damp soil in this parched land,
feels weary of an alien place full of dark religion:
fermenting like grain under the sun, Zealots
and priests all gabbling beardily,
eyes bulging like barrel-bungs.

Tomorrow he will offer a pair of pure white dove
to Jupiter and ask to be posted back
to his green hills. Who can feel at home
in a land where the sky grows dark in the eye
of a bright afternoon? He never wanted
the bloody execution detail; daily splinters
were bad enough, but the thorns crowned his discontent.
Leave them to it, he thinks, and dreams
a burst of red grapes in his mouth,
first draught of the new vintage.

Margaret Griffiths was born in London, but now lives in Dorset (Thomas Hardy's Wessex.) Her father was Welsh, and she values her Celtic roots. Her favourite poets include Donne, Marvell, Yeats and Larkin, and she enjoys participating in online poetry groups. At present Margaret edits a poetry e-zine called WORM, which includes a mix of formal and free verse.

viewimages



NOW AND THEN

I bend to pick up a shiny chestnut.
Its smooth lustrous covering
brings me back to a time
when the green velvet cloth
draped over the dining room table
formed a dark mysterious cave.
I would stare transfixed at my face
distorted in my father's silver golfing cups.

On misty morning windows, I would write
"Hello" with my forefinger.
In the bath on Saturday night, I would die
in boiling oil to defend my religion.
With wooden bricks bought to build castles,
I would rough out the ground floor of a school.
Then I would marshal all of my chestnut pupils
and start explaining multiplication.

I tuck the chestnut in the pocket of my anorack,
a talisman to see me through the day.



Deirdre Hendrie is editor at Desert Moon Review for members' publications, which go on the "Showcase" and for noted poems of Desert Moon contained in "The Gallery". She teaches developmental education at Selkirk College in British Columbia, Canada. Deirdre's hobbies are people-watching, walking, reading, travelling, and Desert Moon Review. She has two adult children, a husband, Gordon, and a dog, Finn.

YOUR SEARCH

The tides rise up and clamor for your coastline.
Your fortune's lost its clear liquidity.
The lovers you have crippled all have specters,
and ghosts possess uncanny memory.

You held too long an image ill-begotten,
of hard-earned and repentant piety.
But now one loud-mouthed sun, one moon too precious,
announce, through smirks, your pilfered pedigree.

Your field is still a place of friendly fire.
It's time to stir the weeds for enemy
for who's read the rules of the Convention,
and knows to cut your heart out mercifully.

For all your noise and claims to high ambition,
it's not your name we see on that marquee;
so take you time now strutting down the boardwalk,
the salt air's good for wounded vanity.

What's left then is to find a real companion,
someone who knows from Skid Row-by-the-Sea,
who'll lend to you his rounded bones as cushion,
and share with you the last of his good tea.

To find just one who knows life's simple pleasures:
a wider bed; a mate of fair esprit;
a jug of wine that sometimes wants refilling;
and, yes at the end of day, fidelity.

Russell Bittner, a poet from New York, has a personal motto: a sheaf of paper, a good pen, and a loving Muse. Nothing more. I work. I sleep. I dream. I write. And live life at the cutting-edge essential. A less cluttered intake means (I hope) a less trashy output. Publications to date include, "Turning Point in the Affairs of a Nation" (in the American Dissident), "Not Enough" (in the Barbaric Yawp) and "Uneasy Traders" (in The Lyric.)



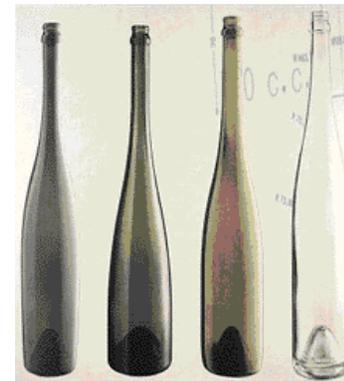
SHOULD I MARRY A CANNIBAL

Things would be alright for a while,
provided I kept him well-fed.
Bodies dredged in seasoned breadcrumbs,
deviled shells of persons past,
lifted from the city morgue or local cemetery

then chopped and carried home in zip-lock bags.
All the filets and John Doe casseroles, but what,
I ask you, what of all those bones?
And should I tire of the shenanigans, the schlep
and preparation of such flesh,

would he be forced to then divorce himself
from vows? Sow-tie me up and slit my gut
to stuff with peanuts, spit
and roast me like a golden locust, lovely
thought, imagining that crunch.

K.R. Copeland is a prolific poet residing in Chicago, Illinois, who admits to having an inordinate fondness for the well-written word. Her poetry has appeared in numerous venues including, The Absinthe Review, MiPo, Snakeskin, Miller's Pond, Niederngasse, Paper Tiger, Snow Monkey, The American Muse, and Unlikely Stories. K.R. is also one of two judges for Beginnings' Magazine poetry competitions 2004.



POEMS BY THE CONTEST JUDGES

To Go Miles In by Charles Cornner

My Clothes by Matthew Rouge



TO GO MILES IN

There is fortunate air tonight. Not a hint
of choking gas; canaries sing
that truth. Earth rumbles the vein,
creaks the locust poles that stand

between us and the world.
We cough black dust and prophesy.
Helmet lamps round our sight
and narrow our view. At dark day's end,

the squeaking elevator lifts us to the night,
to dump our pickax and shovel in a box,
and walk to the company town to close
our eyes to still more black.



Charles Cornner is Associate Editor at Desert Moon Review. He performs the roles of Editor of Moon notes, our monthly newsletter, and of Registrar. His poems have been published in *can we have our ball back?*, *Pierian Springs*, *Miller's Pond*, and *WORM*. Charles is a full-time church musician in Scottsdale, Arizona and lives in nearby Cave Creek, with his wife, Hope. The poem we publish here, "To Go Miles In" won second place in the Inter-board Poetry Competition for November 2003.

MY CLOTHES

You say, "Take off your clothes,"
but I don't know what you mean by that.
They could be clothes I merely found
or a gift from a vagabond.
What makes them really mine?

I might have made them myself
had I had the time.
I might have bought them myself
had I had the funds.
So when your hand moves to unbutton me,
there's not a stitch of mine to touch.

Now you make a shirt-over-the-head motion.
You signal 'togetherness' and 'love,'
but I'm worried about the harmony.
You might telephone later and say,
'So long, my beautiful man';
you might abruptly move to the street and whisper,
"Goodbye, brave being, you'll fare well without me."

So when you say, "Take off your clothes,"
I'm not sure what you mean.
With so much of everything else in the world,
what makes them really mine?

Matthew Rouge is a writer living in Japan. His favorite poets are Lord Byron, Oliver W. Holmes, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and James Carroll.

DESERT MOON STAFF

A Long Season of Disconnect by Jim Corner, Editor

The Kingfisher by Christopher T. George, Associate Editor

Today by Jeff Taylor, Monitor

Three Simple Words by Scott Smithson, Monitor

Sunset at Bardem by Mustansir Dalvi, Monitor

The Door Left Open by Les Wolf, Monitor

Waiting by Tracy Estes, Guest Editor and Monitor



TODAY

I left her crying,
with little kids dancing in halls
and TV's that'll only play the wrong station.

Today I left her
to smoke cigarettes alone, on a cold porch,
because I couldn't stand not loving her tomorrow.

Today she cried for me.
All she wanted was me
to stay and hold her,
but I left her, crying,
in the arms of lepers,
bucolic walls
and lights that don't make any sense.

Jeff Taylor is a poet/performance artist from Malden, Massachusetts. He's the founding member of the avante-rock performance group TheValoureProject. He has poems published in eyeshot.net, unlikelystories.org, wordriot.org, Side Reality, and The Poet Tree. Jeff is a past Editor of Crescent Moon Journal. He has performed at Tribes Gallery-NYC (Peoples Poetry Gathering), AS220-Providence, Bergen County Community College - New Jersey, MassArt, The Middle East, T.T. the bears place, O'Brien's Pub, Roxbury Community College, and Jimmy Tingle's Off Broadway Theatre.



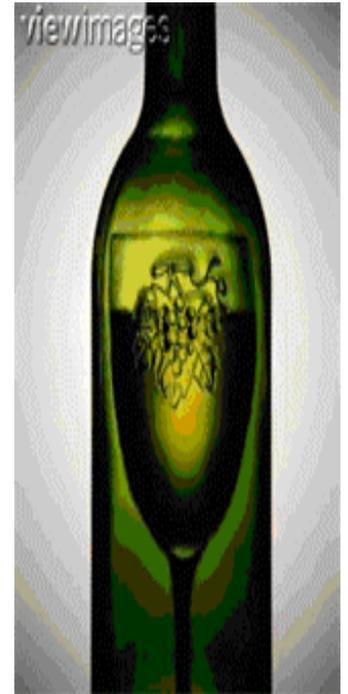
THREE SIMPLE WORDS

To be your Mayakovsky
a bedbug to make you itch
I'd write a longer sentence
and throw it into Yeats,
who'd take it in his gyre
and free this falcon from
the talons of the Captain's Verse
where I will drown my song.

To be your Mister Thomas
a summer boy in ruin,
I'd climb a single Coleridge
and play upon his harp
where Kubla Khan himself could spear
my doubt to call your name
and deliver to this Waste Land
a lesser cruel angst.

But I am not your butler,
and no sonnet fills my ears
I wish my silence into harbors
where Neruda whispers words.
So be it thus, I resign,
I'll write three separate strokes
on this piece of paper
and will them out to speak.

Scott Smithson is a disgruntled generation X corporate hack with a serious passion for bicycling, Russian literature, and AIDS activism, sometimes all at once. He can be found riding around Seattle when he's not living out of a suitcase in hotels across North America.



SUNSET AT BARDEM

Jesus the fisherman walks half a mile
west in open water, works nets
at day's end, appraises a catch
much reduced. Nipponese trawlers
now carpet fish the high seas outside Goa.
He doubts even his Father will arrange
for the meagre sardines and mandeli
to be divided amongst the congregation.
Southwards, the apprehension of an incoming
grey line that might make him lose even this.

Two hundred feet above the shallows,
Christ ascends the high altar of St. Diego's.
His Plaster of Paris finger follows
the storm beyond his iterative flock
kicking a football outside the narthex.
Fra. Aubreau keeps goal as assiduously
as he tends to his laity. He pushes the hair
from his face, spies the moving finger
and rubs his eyes as it points to the sky.

This vindication of his faith fleetingly
overcomes his skill as a keeper:
he misses the penalty and takes the ball
full frontally on his crotch, belief
systems are compelled ephemerally
onto an entirely different focus. Aubreau
suffers the extreme barbs of piety,
as he rolls in the dust like a supplicant.

Above the belfry, the squall slows.
The sun brings absolution, lighting
at the last instant palm fronds
that line the beach all the way
to Siquerim, revealing a gleam
of His heavenly kingdom.



Christ postpones resurrection
to keep the rain at bay, enough
to convey the fishermen and footballers
of Bardem to vespers. A Bodhisatva,
the messiah has a job to do
and pits compassion over destiny every time.

Mustansir Dalvi is a Professor of Architecture in Bombay, India. He is currently Poetry Monitor at Desert Moon review. His poem, "Peabody" was awarded 1st Place in the December 2002 InterBoard Poetry Competition (IBPC). Mustansir Dalvi's poems are published in the ezines Snakeskin, Octavo: Poetry Quarterly of the Alsop Review, MiPo Digital, Writer's Hood, can we have our ball back, Pierian Springs, Crescent Moon Journal, and Bakery of the Poets and in print in The Brown Critique, Poetry India: voices of silence, Poiesis: A Journal of the Poetry Circle Bombay, and Poetry India: emerging voices.

THE DOOR LEFT OPEN

he squats
with the black leopard;
his urine running beneath
the chonta palm.

he knows this is the moment
when raiding parties strike
having named a tribe
through the visions of a wishinu
“bearers of death, bringers of misfortune.”

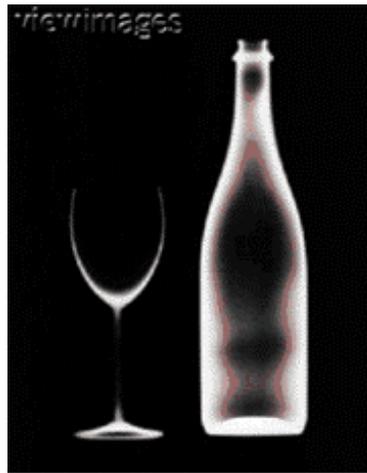
He has hunted heads himself
lifted gored throats, avenged deaths,
brought peace to the tortured souls.
Tonight the jungle breathes
its warm, narcotic breath nearby.

A spirit
regards its own head, another
piked and danced around,
menaced with tongue and lance.
A host of spirits roam

turning leaves in a storm,
smashing clay pots
into petals,
following feathers
out of place.

he has tended the pits today,
tipped their points with fresh poison,
covered them with care.

He takes the safest routes back
weaving among the tall trees,
hurdlng the rope-like lianas
tied to bent saplings,



quietly converging the distance to the clearing.

Nothing stirs.
Even the river seems to have stopped flowing.

A lance shatters a rib.
A stone axe cracks a clavicle.
He reaches toward the door.

Les Wolf is married, with three children, and lives in Southern Michigan. After a four-year stint in the U.S. Navy, he worked in the home improvement industry. He worked at a book factory for a while, and he currently does maintenance work at a private college where he recently remodeled the library. both establishments hemorrhage books in prodigious quantities. His basement is full. his interest in poetry ranges from Ai to Zaranka, and he likes to fish. Oh, and he used to work out.

WAITING

Canto I

In this twilight, my eyes gape upward.
Darkness seeps around the edges
of my vision. The texture of everything
is beyond my grasp.

My cessation on this plane
liberates me. I am weightless, unyoked.
Awareness and imagination
are still fellow passengers,
slowly releasing their grip,
paling toward nothingness.

A blur of color bends over my vacancy,
I remember that, earlier,
those pastels belonged to
faces that loved me.

Harmonious silence and inner questions
on the matter of souls
flood my failing ken
with snapshots, memories.
I imagine what comes next.
I await.



Canto II

When I first looked upward
I saw tethered figures
cavorting to tinny music,

surrounded by a multitude of colors
impossible for me to comprehend.

The pale, blurred blobs of color,
the only important ones,
brought sustenance,
eased my discomfort.
When my understanding grew,
those blobs resolved into smiling faces
full of love and somehow,
I knew those faces belonged to me.

Settled comfortably in my barred crib,
I imagined what it would be like
to be one of the tethered figures;
one of the incomprehensible colors
or one of the smiling faces.

And I waited to become...

Canto III

Nine years old, laying
atop the old wooden picnic table,
gazing at the stars, full of imagination.

Stationary on the right bench; my younger brother, the left;
Dad on top. A pyramidal family observatory.
Described as precocious, and since I didn't need
to look up the word, I half-believed them.
Not usually communicative or expressive,
Dad pointed to the constellations, doused for satellites
and expounded on theories of space-time,
all suddenly important to him that night.

To share that imaginative evening,
alternately filled with spirited discussions
and harmonious silences, to experience my father
animated, inquisitive, youthful; was a semi-truck
passing within inches,
concussion tearing the wind out of me,
leaving me numb.

I imagined travel among those stars,
writing novels, what it would be to be a father,
whether I'd make a good one,
and what my Dad was thinking
when he looked at the stars.



Canto IV

Staring upward at twenty-two
the glowing dot of a cigarette
dangled between fingers.
I pulled it to lips and dragged.

The cherry would stoke
a hellish aura of red
that exposed the girl next to me,
snoring in post-coital slumber.
I concentrated on the ember
and a face it occasionally revealed.
I picked at the scab of memory,
wondering at her last name.
My only real concern:
not wanting it to end up being mine.

Threadbare in parts, rusted in others,
my armoured suit of sex, drugs, and alcohol
needed alteration.

I imagined what a forever girl would look like,
signing autographs of the great American novel,
how my new armor would fit,
what I'd be like as a family man,
and what to do if there really were
such a thing as an unredeemable soul.

Canto V

Reclined in a favorite chair,
fingers wrapped around an imaginary beer
I hadn't drunk in ten years,
my fifty-year-old eyes tried to unravel
the amorphous swirls in the textured ceiling.

The living room echoed all my dreams:
children escaping every time I let my guard down,
a wife's interests, that didn't include me
and an unfair sobriety that never sank in.

Middle age was the dream-hallway;
the end, my goal, always just there in front.
I'd rush headlong, noticing side doors but
never adverting my eyes. When I reached the end,
I could see those doors, but didn't remember where they led.

I imagined myself as a grandfather,
living in retirement heaven with the wife,
finding time to finally write,
the oily cool of a gin and tonic
and the ability to live forever.



Tracy Estes, a working-class poet, began his love affair with the written word at the age of four. That love affair has continued for many decades. He is the father of two, Zack and Chelsea, and a husband to Sandy. He serves as a monitor at Desert Moon Review and as editor of this magazine.