

# 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

1<sup>st</sup> **Remembering the Grapes** by Margaret Griffiths

2<sup>nd</sup> **Now and Then** by Deirdre Hendrie

3<sup>rd</sup> **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



## A LONG SEASON OF DISCONNECT

I've long waited for more than wayward  
letters and Verizon chats.  
Flights of mail and cable conversations,  
like "B" Movies, portray little  
with minimal art.

What seems a lifetime spans two brief hours.  
When the show is over  
there are lasting rumbles, at the middle:  
a face off by sweating necks,  
at the ending of what is not expected,  
but most often life.

Take a risk, choose a movie,  
say how it will begin, live out the middle,  
the skate to the end.



**Jim Corner** has B.A. and M.A degrees from University of Tulsa with work at Phillips University. He also earned the Certified Financial Planner degree from College of Financial Planners in Denver, Colorado. He was ordained into the ministry in 1967. He has served churches in Oklahoma and Northern California. Jim has written poetry since his days at Tulsa University, his thesis is "Affirmation in Four Contemporary British Poets," and he began writing poetry full-time shortly after he retired in 1996.

He is currently published monthly in Disciples Today, an e-zine of the Christian Church (DOC) in America. His poems also have been published by Arizona Republic, Phoenix's premier newspaper, the Disciple (hard copy), Bethany Guide, and Crescent Moon Journal. Jim resides in Apache Junction, Arizona, with Kathy, his loving wife, and Trudy, the dobie-mix. He is also the benevolent father of Desert Moon Review.

## THE KINGFISHER

Put your hand in mine,  
your artist's hand that sculpts,  
the calluses on a hand that works.

Take my hand, my writer's hand.  
Sit with me on the porch swing  
as fall flows by. A kingfisher dives

from the silver birch,  
into the hidden river,  
dark river of trout,

emerges flashing a silver fish.  
A moment stolen between careers,  
juried shows and competitions.

The swing creaks in the silence,  
and we sit hand in hand.



**Christopher T. George**, born in Liverpool, England in 1948, immigrated to the United States in 1968. A resident of Baltimore, Maryland, as well as being a poet is also a historian and freelance writer. Chris's poems have been published in Poet Lore, Maryland Poetry Review, Pudding, Smoke and Bogg and on-line at Desert Moon Review and Melic Review. He is also a lyricist with a musical of Jack the Ripper – Jack, the Musical written with French composer Erik Sitbon.

## 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 avant-rock performance group TheValoureProject. He has poems published in [eyeshot.net](http://eyeshot.net), [unlikelystories.org](http://unlikelystories.org), [wordriot.org](http://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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.”

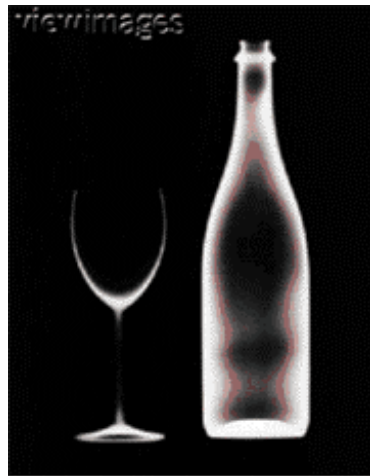
He has hunted heads himself  
lifted gored throats, avenged deaths,  
brought peace to the tortured souls.  
Tonight the jungle breathes  
its warm, narcotic breath nearby.

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.

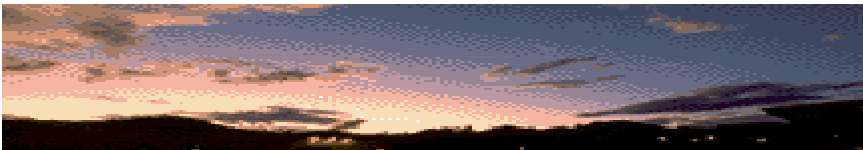
## Canto V

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.