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Mudlands

Sprung Issue



Big Two-Hearted Mountain

by Molly Bloomers

EDITOR'S NOTE: It has consistently been the policy of *Mudlands* to seek out the new and original in student writing. This earnestly written story is especially commendable in line with this policy.

Jock was climbing the mountain. It was a hard mountain to climb but he knew that if he climbed it truly and fairly it would be fine. He had wanted to climb the mountain for a long time. Frank asked him, "Why do you want to climb this great mother-like mountain, Jock?"

"It would be a fine thing if I could climb the mountain," Jock said. "Climb it truly."

"Truly?"

"And with honor."

"Yes," Frank said.

"Yes," Jock said. "One must climb one's mountains with honor, but it is hard."

"You have reason."

"It is hard, and one must climb it fairly, truly and sincerely."

"Why do you want to climb this great mother-like mountain?" Frank said.

"You are repeating yourself," Jock said.

"I must do this thing," Frank said.

"You are right."

"It is part of the code."

"Yes. One must live by the code."

"The code is a fine thing."

"Yes."

“Why do you want to climb this great mother-like mountain?” Frank said.

Jock did not answer. He did not hear Frank. He did not hear Frank’s question. He did not answer because he was thinking and could not hear Frank’s question. That was the way it was. When you are thinking, thinking hard and fine and truly and sincerely, that is the way it is. You cannot hear the questions that people ask you.

He was thinking of the way the snow fell on the Zambesi that odd year and the way the impalas died in the snow, bleeding and vomiting from frostbite. It was odd, and it had always bothered him that it was odd. He had intended to write about it, but he never had. There were a hell of a lot of odd things, and odd, fine and true things that he had never written about. There were a hell of a lot of things he had never done.

And that year in Paris, when they had lived over the slaughterhouse and next door to the brothel. The smell came up through the floor and he heard the squeals and he did not eat meat for a while then. He did not like to talk about it during the day and he did not often think about it then, but at night things are different, and he sometimes lay in bed crying for the pigs and their squeals and the bad smell that came up through the floor.

That was bad but it was not as bad as the War, when they got you in the end and you lost any way you took it and any way that they gave it to you. He remembered the Dutch boy holding his finger in the dike and after awhile you could not tell if it was water or blood that was trickling through the hole in the dike and the boy had said, “How did I do, Jock?” and he had said, “You did fine. You did damned fine.”

That was the way it was and that was the way it had made him the way he was. He spat into the abyss.

“Why do you want to climb this great mother-like mountain, Jock?” Frank was saying.

Jock pushed Frank off the edge of the ledge and Frank fell and splattered far below.

“You go to hell,” Jock said.

The Stinkies

by Stephen Jameson

Note: For the first time, Mudlands is presenting a short story by a promising young author along with an analysis of the story by one of the University's outstanding critics. This splendid idea struck us when we discovered that other publications do it all the time. It is a very literary thing to do, really.

John was lonely. John was lonely because he had no friends. He had had friends once, but since then he had become a complete bastard.

John had not always been a complete bastard. Once he had been young and happy and in love and the sky was blue and everything wasn't upside down and backwards and he wore grey gabardine pants with a zipper. Then the zipper broke.

It wasn't so much that the zipper broke as that it broke in public at the spring formal and he was wearing his red, orange and chartreuse shorts and people laughed and he decided to hell with you all, I hate every one of you, you're no damned good. He looked at them and said, "To hell with you all, I hate every one of you, you're no damned good." Then he went home and started making a bomb.

"I'm going to make the biggest bomb in the world and destroy everybody because I figure to hell with them all, I hate every one of them, they're no damned good," John always said. He said it before he went to sleep and on the bus going to work in the morning and at work and at the coffee shop at lunch time and on the way home from work and at supper. He always said it.

When he got fired and began to spend all his time on the bombs his sister used to say "What do you do all day out there in the garage John" and he would answer, "To hell with them all, I hate every one of them, they're no damned good." This made his sister happy. She felt the same way.

Then one day John set off his first bomb in a crowded railroad station and it got in the papers and everybody talked about it and John went home and made more bombs.

Soon John was famous. People everywhere were calling him "The Bad Bomber" and talking about him without ever having seen him and this made John happy so he went home and made more bombs.

But as luck would have it the police officer investigating the bombings said to the chief one day, "Chief I've been thinking and out of the forty-five bombs that have been set off forty-two of them have been at spring formals. I figure the guy has something against spring formals."

"Brilliant!" the chief replied. "Come to think of it why would a guy want to go around setting off stink bombs at spring formals? Say, I knew a guy once name of John Matesky whose zipper broke at a spring formal and people laughed at him and he got mad and said "To hell with you all, I hate every one of you, you're no damned good' and ever since that John has been a complete bastard and he used to be a pretty nice guy."

"You don't say," the police officer said and he shrugged. "Well I guess we better get on with the investigation."

That was ten years ago and since then John has stunk up six hundred and fifty-three spring formals. He's out in the garage now making more bombs.

Love Poem

by J. Alfred Elliot

Ripe beyond her years
My Melanctha goes.
Wet behind her ears
My sweet Melanctha goes.

Her ears are wet
With sweat,
And, oh, that sweat is sweet.
I taste it in the morning air
And everything I eat.

But ripe-plum girls do die
And fall from the trees below.
My Melanctha will.
Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!

A Critical Analysis of the Stinkies

by Tom McFadden

Mr. Jameson's story, "The Stinkies," is deceptive upon first reading. It seems straightforward enough on the surface, yet it is tightly interwoven with allusion and symbolism that penetrates to the very depths of Modern Man's plight. Mr. Jameson is a young author to watch. He will go far.

There are several dominant themes interacting within the body of the story, and taken in their inter-relationships they form a splendid organic unity.

First there is the recurring motif of isolation. The first sentence in the story states this plainly. "John was lonely." Three small words, but with such stylistic force and implicit meaning! Man is essentially lonely. By this one sentence, the author of the story generalizes the plight of his hero to its fullest human extent: John is Everyman, because Everyman is lonely too.

Another motif in the story is that of rebellion. "To hell with you all," the hero repeats, each time gaining more emphasis. The author here joins rank with Milton, Camus, Shelley, and all the other great writers who have dealt with the subject of rebellion. Miltonic splendor and Camus-like penetration mark the rest of the story too.

It could be argued that John rebelled because of an act of uncontrollable Fate—the untimely breaking of his zipper (a symbol of all machine-made things, and hence all machinery, and hence the dehumanizing industrialization of Modern Man). But this event was not an arbitrary, deterministic, and hence not-self-based one. John was a rebel and a non-conformist before. He wore gray gabardine pants to the formal. This indicates not only that he was rebelling against social custom, but it is not too much to assert that he wore them with the plan fixed in mind of breaking the zipper himself and bringing more sharply into focus the rift between his existence and sensibilities and those of the people at the dance. It was a choice means of exhibiting his rebellion.

A dominant image in the story is that of the bomb. Mr. Jameson evidently alludes to the H-bomb, and to the threat of the destruction of Modern Man by nuclear devastation.

Connected with the image of the bomb is the motif of stinking, and related to this motif is the motif of the spring formal. The term spring formal is a choice poetic paradox, and can be generalized to allude to all the paradoxes that characterize man's existence. *Spring*, a term connoting a time of wild and uncontrolled growth and flow-

ering, a time of freshness, is juxtaposed and contrasted with the term *formal*, which involves control, society as opposed to nature, rigid form as opposed to wild flowering growth, dryness and decay as opposed to freshness. The hero's dramatic act is to repeatedly toss stink bombs into the midst of happy spring formals attended by carefree, insensitive, blind people. This act indicates that the hero is confronting the blind masses with the reality of the stench of the universe, the universal stench that the sensitive, artistic soul perceives. Yet they do not respond, and he must repeatedly toss the stinkbombs.

He does not lose hope, however. He keeps on. And here we have what is perhaps the central theme of the story, Mr. Jameson's message to Modern Man: if at first you don't succeed, try, try again.

No Goat, No Wrastle by Don Feltingham

Dionysus said —
What was it Dionysus
said? the nth square root
of beetle's claws is
essence of ephemerae.

Crack, urn, and wrack your pieces.
Goat's milk and turtle's faeces.

And in the springtime blear
of ratiocination,
Clearing sneering cups of wine:
Hieronymo's mad again.

Morte de Moi-an epic poem

by Bill Hightower

Hail, Heraclitus, who book-toned sayeth
Halting heresies of paradox and poesy . . .

(NOTE: 15 lines are omitted from the poem because
of offensive symbolism on the 3rd level.)

Ghost of goslings, jewels in the air . . .

(NOTE: 2185 lines are omitted because they do
not adequately skirt the controversial.)

Fearful first-born of mighty Jove,
Like a green pear or a kitchen stove . . .

(NOTE: Another 592 lines are omitted.)

And western sunsets gild the eastern skies.

The Earthy Birth

by Leopold Toomb

NOTE: To relieve the heavy contents of the rest of the magazine, the *Mudlands* editorial board has chosen the following light humorous story to elicit a humorous reaction from the humorous readers, humorously.

She wandered through the tombstones. Mud clung to her bare feet in thick cakes that pushed between her bone-thin toes. The air was cold and a light freezing rain seemed to come from nowhere in the dark, misty sky. She pulled her tattered shawl about her thin shoulders and over her abdomen, big with expectancy of new life, a new life of horror, helplessness, darkness, and loss.

“Why did the chicken cross the road?” The words of that transcendent yet concretely earthy question rang in her consciousness, like fantastic and daemonic shadows cast on the walls of a hospital room, or like bullets echoing down the path of a long tunnel of nameless destination and fearful ornament, a tunnel she did not want to pass through.

She did not know the answer to the fearful question. Why? Why? She heard herself whimpering and then she howled mournfully with the pain of the cold, the sense of her isolation, and awareness of her unfulfillment. She howled like a wounded coyote who is bleeding and scared, and the sound of her howling echoed among the tombstones and passed over the muddy ground to the river.

Suddenly she stopped howling. Lifting a bony finger she said, “Hark!” and listened to the dying echoes of her howling. “Hark” she said again. The word seemed pregnant with a dark meaning. The echoes seemed to be answered by howling from the graves. Maybe the dead people had heard her and sympathized. Or maybe the dead people were going to come from their coffins in the dark, earthy ground where worms and pale slugs crawled, and take her, bear her silently away to their terrible province.

She did not know, but she felt drawn to the river. It was flowing, sluggish and dank, at the edge of the graveyard. Standing, she began to walk slowly, as if she were in a nightmare, step by throbbing step to the great inevitable Unknown. At the edge of the wide dark river she stumbled and lay face down in the water. Pain gripped her, and the river was flowing through her, in one ear and out the other. She felt a mystical experience coming on, and then she knew.

The chicken had crossed the road to get to the other side.