

psychological teaching being done, for, after all, the only flesh being roasted was the flesh of swine.

Ah yes missus, I've been the gravedigger here for - well now, to be truthful, I don't really want to say how long. Long enough, ah me yes, time enough. Seen them all come here, let me tell you. Yes, they all end up here - quiet as you please and laid away from their cares.

There's an art in it you know, I mean, in the putting of them away, easing them on that final journey to wherever they believed they were going. Poor stiff, causing trouble right to the end. Now you take a look around you missus, yes, take a good look in all directions. Far as you can see is rolling fields growing up with gravestones and flowers and the other ornaments of death. A shrine or two stuck up by some proud or guilt-ridden family. Or maybe they're just so happy to get rid of the old cuss that they spend all their money out of sheer joy. For between you and me, the only good in those towering monuments is to give the pigeons a comfy place to shit. No disrespect meant, missus.

Ah yes - the art, the art in digging these cozy niches of

eternal slumber. As I said, look around you, and you see nothing but graveyard. You'd think that it goes on forever - and I suppose, for the ones that got to stay here, it does. But looks can be deceiving - I should know, I've seen the undertakers' work often enough. The truth is, there just isn't enough land. Yes I know, I know there looks like there's so much. But you see, there are just too many people dying. You can't expect anything different I suppose, what with people living so much longer and the population explosion and all. I've wondered what it would be like working in India or China or someplace like that. I mean, they must work triple shifts there and still not catch up. Oh, I know about cremation and such, but as old Adolf found out, you can only have so many ovens. Must be terrible, don't you think?

Well missus, as I was saying, it's bad enough getting things to work here. You know, most of the coffins are of uniform length; oh sure, I know you've got to deal with long people sometimes, but you know, people shrink in death. And even then they've got ways to stuff you in a casket. Worked in a mortuary once, they can really be ingenious. Anyway, except for special cases, I know what I got to work with, the slot

got to be so long, so wide, and so deep. Well, I cut corners where I can [excuse the joke missus], and by and large I get them all planted. But they're tightly packed down there. I've got them rubbing shoulders forever with ones they'd cross the street to avoid. And many of them are stacked one on top the other.

Oh yes, it just can't be helped. If I didn't do that there wouldn't be any room at all. It's an old graveyard, and sometimes I don't even know who or what I'm going to find. We've got some plans you know, telling who's put where. By the time I come to dig them up again, there's not much left. The caskets [for all that they cost] don't last more than a decade or so, [unless some ornery bugger's got himself a lead-lined one]. And the bones only a few decades after that. Moisture takes care of most of them. And what is there, [often the skull, always some teeth, occasionally other parts of the skeleton] well, I just put a few inches of dirt over them. No one's the wiser. Why just this morning - over there near that tree - I thought I was digging a new place, came across some remains that weren't even supposed to be there.

You'll find strange things with bodies sometimes, but what I found there was most peculiar.

There was a little of the skull, and some of one foot, but right in the middle [maybe he was clutching it in his hands] was a toy horse. It was the worse for wear, but still holding up. Made out of real good leather, stitched with leather, that's why it was still together. No, skull was too big to be a kid, must have been a childhood toy. Probably wanted to be buried with it. Got it home on my mantle if you want to look.

Seen enough missus. It's peaceful here, you couldn't pick a better place. No, we'll take this shortcut, it'll get us back to the gate quicker. Oh yes, it even looks nice in winter, you can ... damn, there's another one. Excuse me will you, while I rub it off. Teen-agers these days, and the older ones too. Never used to have this trouble but with those spray cans of paint they can write on anything. It's hard to get rid of too, especially on these older head stones. It's not that I mind the work too much. I'm not even offended by the sentiment expressed - too old for that sort of thing I suppose. But you know missus, I am bothered by one thing. If they're going to write it, why can't they use proper grammar. Don't they realize that the proper preposition with the reproductive act is 'in'; not 'off'.

OUTSIDE

Last night I stood cold before my door to hear the river growl and grind her icy jaws beneath the stars. I might have stood beside her, but it carried well through crystal air.

One car went by, then she spoke again -- It seemed perhaps a message, a hint of unthought forces, not human but other. No, not unhuman, just other. More. From another dimension, a different reality. Irritation of the system the signal of our presence. Action begets reaction -- a dog scratches his fleas.

Aldebaran to Polaris, Betelgeuse to Antares, by random routes we wove ourselves a universe and think ourselves within it. They say we a part, we have a place here. Those stars have not seen us, would not know us.

L. McIntosh



LAMENT [for the sweetest girl at UNB]

What power decreed
that I be so strange
and made me unique
on this ordered range?
All he's, furred or feathered,
court she's who might care
but I chase a bunny
instead of a bear.

ANON.

Worn and washed by the sea,
The tired swimmer reaches for shore;
Fragile and broken she sinks beneath the waves,
Settles to the floor, time's sands caressing.

Rising from her bath, her body oiled and clean,
Pink-bodied and rose-nippled, she moves,
Lean and white and long, drifting.
Stretched on white, soft satin, the nap strokes her skin,
Soft hands knead and ply her nakedness into soft forgetfulness.

Once on a high meadow, naked in the sun,
She lay on the earth and birds circled overhead.
Verdant meadows warm with the year's first sun,
Along, just two, time left at the last pasture gate,
A rumpled pile of clothing, mixed, unsexed.
Openness in the valley below, openness here above.
Naked in the sun, her skin warmed by Spring.

The memory sways downward, undulating currents move it down.
Feeling slowly across the sand, feeling across the sand,
The memory reaches out, grasping the sunken swimmer.
Hands kneading, plying over and within,
The fragile pink-bodied over rose-nippled nude.
The memory carresses her body awake.

Gregory Lutz