

The Poet's Haven Digest



ISSUE

O

E-BOOK
EDITION

Featuring work by:

*Elisha Porat, Jen Pezzo, Alex Cupa,
Warren Gillespie, Elizabeth Hendricks,
Kim Davis, Greg Campbell, and more...*



Contains strong emotional content. Recommended for mature readers.

Vertigo Xi'an Xavier, publisher

Cover Art: "Surprising a Lorelei" by Noel Bebee ©

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Issue Zero
E-Book Edition

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THE POET'S HAVEN DIGEST ISSUE ZERO - (E-BOOK EDITION)

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Introduction - October 2007

Thanks for downloading the E-Book Edition of The Poet's Haven Digest Issue Zero! This release marks the Tenth Anniversary of PoetsHaven.com!

For anyone not yet familiar with The Poet's Haven, this all started out as a little webpage on America Online called *The Haven* back in late 1995. After a slow start, the site grew large enough that in October 1997 it was renamed and relaunched at www.PoetsHaven.com. From there, the site grew at a phenomenal rate, expanding from just a little e-zine into an online literary community. Today, PoetsHaven.com features over 5,100 pages of poetry, stories, and artwork, and has published work from more than 1,900 creators!

A heartfelt "THANK YOU!" to those of you who own the printed edition of this magazine. To those who have supported the website since the beginning and stayed through every server move, system crash, and the relaunch that took way too long to complete: Know that without you, we couldn't be here at all.

Plans are still underway to return to the world of paper and ink someday, but the focus is once again on offering content in new ways. When The Poet's Haven got started, the World Wide Web was still in its infancy. We were on the frontline, bringing poetry and art to a new medium. Poetry magazines have been around as long as the printed word. Our goal is to reach new audiences, taking poetry, stories, and artwork into new terrains. The next step in this direction will be The Poet's Haven Podcast, with more to come.

Watch the website or subscribe to the publisher's blog for up-to-date information on what's new and on-the-way from The Poet's Haven. Poetry, story, artwork, and essay submissions are always welcome in the website's galleries. Submission guidelines can be found online as well.

Well, that's enough from me. Now it is time for you to begin your journey through the hearts and minds that occupy... The Poet's Haven.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vertigo Xi'an Xavier". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Vertigo Xi'an Xavier
publisher, The Poet's Haven

The Poet's Haven Digest

Issue Zero - E-Book Edition

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*I search for the answers
Only to find confusion
I search for love
Only to find I don't know what it is*

*I search for understanding
Only to find nobody cares
I search for you
Only to find him*

*I search for the truth
Only to find lies
I search for the words, "I love you"
Only to find hatred*

*I search for closeness
Only to find myself being pushed away
I search for what we used to share
Only to find nothing*

*Of all the things you're good at
You're the best at letting me down
And I can feel the hurt deep in my heart
Whenever you're not around
You make me such sweet promises
That you know you will never live up to
And it's times like these when I'm alone
When I wonder how I can manage to still love you
Sometimes I think you like
To bring me up and lead me on
And maybe it doesn't matter anymore
All the good times are gone
You're good at saying you'll be "there"
And then you show up late and don't call
And no matter how much I try to talk it out with you
I know that not one word sinks in at all
You're even better at the lies
Or the stuff you write down to say
But my happiness isn't real at all
And love isn't supposed to hurt me this way
You know I could never leave you
And you know I'll always be there
But just because of that
Doesn't mean "you" don't have to care*

*You say the most evil things to me
Then you expect forgiveness
I have tried so hard to show I care
But you don't care in return*

*I thought you were someone else
But your true colors have shown
For once you have been honest
You are nothing like how you act*

*You are cold, angry, stubborn
Not warm-hearted, kind, accepting
Why does this always happen to me?
I see what is behind the mask
Only after I let my shield drop*

*So stay away from me
and don't try to talk
I could care less about your lies
your problems, your life
Or at least that is what I tell myself
To keep my heart out of pain*

*And you still lust for her
like as if without me, you are still the same
But I know I'm not
I know something inside of me has changed*

*You say you are the hurt one
And that you'll never forgive me
Fuck you...
You liar*

Ludicrous laughter echoes through my brain,
Why do you plague me? Why remain?

Contagious laughter, what's going on?
Why should I laugh when my friend is gone?

Convulsions of pain as I roll on the floor,
And I laugh harder still when you walk through the door.

What's so funny?... you wouldn't understand.
I'm dead by your actions, I'm dead by your hand!

I'm making no sense? I'm raving mad?!
We both know the truth. Why should I be sad?

You killed me when you turned to stone.
You left me here, cold and alone.

As I said before, you wouldn't understand.
Your heart is dry like desert sand.

Ludicrous laughter echoes through the void...
I've lost **nothing** I ever enjoyed.

*You don't understand.
You will never understand me...
or my thoughts
or hopes
or feelings...*

*You say I'm a user.
You say I'm evil.
Well, I guess
if that's what you see in me
then you haven't looked
at all, right?
I mean, I can't really be
those things...
Can I?
Am I?*

*I tried being perfect.
I tried ignoring me,
killing myself inside just to
be pleasing to everyone else.*

*And it almost totally erased me...
came so close...*

*I won't go back.
I may not be
who you want me to be
but at least
I don't try to pretend
that I am.*

You don't even know me...

You see me for who you want to see me as...

But you don't even know I'm in so much pain...

or know about the nightmares...

my past...

or why I hurt myself

or even how alone,

how completely alone I feel.

You have no idea

what's it's like

*to have your past blackening every
thought.*

every relationship.

to have no hopes,

*because every dream you've ever had
has been crushed by someone else.*

Or how it feels

to have nobody to trust

or even, how it is

not to be able to trust

*because everyone you've ever loved
has left...*

*to scratch the surface of me,
if you even cared that much,
you'd realize that
you don't even know me...*

I am me...

And I know that's not enough

But

I can't be anything else...

I'm sorry...

*"Crying In Silence"
by Bleeding Angel ©*

SILENCE please!
I cannot bear
another sound.

*what light through
yonder window breaks?*
What bullshit what crap!

Its You I hate!
betray my love
and I will die.

*wither forever
forgotten petals of
forsaken adoration*

Life Empty yet
silence will make
my sorrow whole.

Splintered Glass
voices rise and
hearts are torn.

In heat of
UTTER ANGER
grip of fear

Of being Alone
and starting over
and being alone...

way to close to you i've grown
to far dependent on you alone
how did i let these things condone
oh what a sad story

i thought she was gone at last
but now she's come back, from your past
now on her, your eyes are cast
oh what a sad story

people reach for stars too high
they could be happy yet they choose to cry
this is true for both you and i
oh what a sad story

"Dependent" by Elizabeth Hendricks ©

*Oh, death may say of dreams in youth...
You never knew my private truth
So much you weren't prepared for
Hearts should be nurtured and cared for*

*I chose to take this chance with you
I stepped into this dance with you*

*Both eyes open, I knew the dangers
For when the dancing ends
Though many remain friends
Some
Become
Strangers*

"Risk" by Todd Michael St. Pierre ©

*Just another day goes by,
I wake up and reach my hand over,
but she's not there...
she never will be again.
Alas! My mind has betrayed my trust again!
Making me think that my loved one is still beside me...
Making me wonder if she really cared.*

*I don't.
She left me to scrounge up my courage to look again.
To find someone new...
someone who wasn't her.
Her games are devious,
I am but a puppet,
and she's pulling my strings.*

*The cruel puppeteer,
who causes me pain,
who left me,
who never even bothered to say good-bye...
sent me a letter.
She kept saying how she missed me...
and begged for money for her habit,
so SHE wouldn't be in pain...*

*I don't have the money,
I don't have the time,
I don't have HER.*

*Our pain is mutual.
Her pain for my pain;
her loss, for my loss.
Damned either way.*

*I think it's time to burn the strings;
the problem is,
If I burn them,
I burn myself.
Back to square one,
back to wondering who would be next to control me.*

*Can't cut them;
she would only seek to retie them.
She would come back and chide me for "leaving" her.
I would have no choice but to apologize...
ANYTHING to stop her tears;
then it'd be back to square one...
Back to wondering when she'd leave again.*

*Yes, I'm a puppet;
controlled by the traps of my heart.
To NOT love, would be the end of me;
A broken puppet without strings...
No joy,
no hope,
just sitting,
useless, in the corner of a crowded room
full of other broken-hearted puppets...*

You gave me apathy and an overwhelming sense of insecurity.
I was left with the feeling that I was a failure,
that my love wasn't dynamic enough,
abundant enough,
or big enough.

There were no angels in my presence
and I spoke no hymns of prayer.

In you I saw no savior, no Jesus Christ,
and you wore no crown of thorns.

But oh how we kissed... how our bodies moved and
joined becoming one, one creation of divinity.

Our wings spread and light beamed off of us and we shined.
I knew of no other man such as you, no star as bright.

You decorated my eyes with colors,
but colors my eyes had never seen.

Before you, I was unsure I had eyes.

You heightened my senses, filled my empty corridors,
and made me believe in forever.

But there was no forever was there?

And never came sooner than you had anticipated.

The colors were merely rays of light
and I always had eyes, ears,
and the ability to touch.

I saw, I felt, I heard, you leave.

And as for how you shined?

That was simply the sun in my eyes.

vulnerability, the salt of the earth
you can see it's face if you look into mine.
Invited by tears, confusion in time.

for i have sinned, so carnal you see
that it must be sin to see the same sun,
and breathe the air he breathed.

i'm connected, by sight, feel and touch,
it started out so full of life,
yet now i grieve the death of such

vulnerability, now here he comes
but who's this a new face i see?
i cannot care for you, please let me be.

This man of the moon,
but me, i am fire...
Life never takes without giving...

Here he comes again, healing my pain,
we could never be,
the world is not sane.

an albatross upon my neck
a caress on my arm
lord, please keep me from harm.

i am a woman,
full of foolish thoughts

by Elizabeth Hendricks ©

These unfathomable, unreachable desires--
seem to procreate inside my head
They take over my dreams--
and they always remain after I wake
Are these unattainable fantasies
a proclamation of the future
Or are they merely a cruel reminder
of what can never be mine
Its always the same face
that comes to me in my sleep
Every turn that my mind makes--
the same sapphire blue eyes
Even if I wanted to try--
I doubt I could escape them
They seem to follow me
every place I go
But I don't pretend to think
that this fantasy could ever be real
The two separate worlds we live in
are too different to ever cross
So I close my eyes
and let my mind picture things
And the images created
could be called perfect
Yet since perfection does not exist--
then neither can my little fantasy
I'll just keep it locked up in my head--
and only visit him in my sleep
With the hope that, one day,
my dream will come true

"In My Dreams" by Singed Angel ©

*Sitting here wondering, a thought popped into my head,
It then became a feeling that I liked then started to dread.
Starting slowly from my eyes, headed for my heart,
I knew that a special love would start.
As it reached its destination,
There was more than one complication,
I started to have feelings of joy and damnation.
My heart controlled my action now,
I felt like a mess and how!
With an empty shell for a brain,
I could probably be called insane.
My focus broken, concentration shattered,
Body hurt and mind battered,
I continued on with each day,
Because that is just my way,
Of dealing with this pain called "love,"
Deserved for the divine up above,
It hurts me to just speak out,
Because of what may come about,
Mainly because of this reality,
With so many rules for that other and me.
I'm so uncertain of what to do,
Each day I'm quiet and feel blue.
Was it what I didn't say,
That makes me feel love in this way?
I've had feelings of regret,
Because I love, though we never met.
Forget love, the impossible dream,
For as humans we make it seem,
Our emotions are put away with a shove,
There can't be any more room for true love.*

standing back | access the damage,
you've inflicted on my heart,

| understand the why's and reasons,
| forgive your thoughtless words.

*If I stretched out my hand
Would you take it?*

| am better from my sickness,
and I'm over you at last,

*If I opened my heart
Would you break it?*

now I'm living for the present...

*If I challenged your mind
Would you resent me?*

Though I still think about the past.

*If I gave in and surrendered
Would you try and attack me?*

"Living for the Present" by Kim Davis ©

*You see I have these walls of armor
that I fear you will tear down
And then where would that leave me?*

*I could be trusting, go out on a limb
but you see I kind of like it as it is*

Surrounded in my solitude and the paranoia that protects it

"Paranoias That Lead to Solitude" by Artful Pose ©

dead and burned, just ashes, me
but also of the cloudburst -
half way through eternity
i'll run to kill your heart-thirst.

and on your face i'll fall
to soothe your living pain,
as the wind, your name i'll call
and i will fall as winter rain.

i will hate the summer's day,
wanting of the cooling cloud,
and in a river shall i stay,
asleep in deathly shroud.

and season after season,
i shall rise to fall again,
for as you are breathless reason -
i'll fall on you as winter rain.

and i will seek the tears
that drown your screaming sky,
to ease your endless dangling fears,
to be you as you cry.

so howl beneath a cloudburst,
grieve for me, but not in vain.
i'll drench you as i'm ever cursed
to fall on you as winter rain.

*You are my water when I need a drink
You are what picks me up when I fall
You are my air when I need to breathe
You are the one who know it all*

*You are my light when it is dark
You are the true definition of love
You are my other half, a part of me
You are an angel sent to me from above*

*You are my key to life
You are laughter when I'm feeling down
You are my shelter when I need to get away and be safe
You are a smile when I begin to frown*

*You are my fire when I need warmth
You are a hero when I need to be saved
You are my wind when things get too still
You are a knight when things need to be braved*

*You are my rose when I need beauty
You are a star when I need some hope
You are my wall when I need something to lean on
You are what helps me cope*

*You are my journal when I have a secret
You are a teddy bear when I need something to hold
You are my sugar when I need something sweet
You are a paper that will never fold*

*You are the voice
that runs loudly through my mind
You're the treasure
my heart has to find
I see your face amidst the midnight glow
You're the vision that lifts me up
on days when I'm feeling low
You're the kiss
My lips have yet to touch
You're the warmth
That my body misses so much
You're the hands
that mine long to hold
You're the passion
that feels me when my heart is gone cold
In a land of deception
you are the truth
wild and free
You are my youth
You're my sunshine
On a cloudy day
You are my enchantress
and with you I lay
Your love is gift
My heart will always hold
More valuable than silver
Worth far more than gold.*

Today I fell in love with you
By just looking at your face
Today I opened my heart to yours
And hoped that it would find its place
Today I looked into your eyes
As you left my mind spinning
I tried to resist your sensual touch
But I knew that you were winning
Today I felt your softness
Your hand is so nice to hold
Today I tasted your sweetness
and made secrets yet to be told
Today I felt your warmth
Lying next to mine
Today I explored your body
and lay in wonderment as you explored mine
Today I vowed to love you
with a passion that will never end
And to hold, listen to, and honor you
as we throw caution to the wind.

*Your eyes, beam like that of an owl in the dark-night
And my soul succumbs to you, only by sight
To any other, this all might sound trite
But no other can see your face in the moonlight*

*I can hear your voice reverberate in the nucleus of the calm waves of the sea
A small angel on the beach scrawls in the sand, "This was meant to be."
I have no use for money, for what I yearn for is free
Just for you, to be the only one for me.*

*When I leave you now, it is without ease
For without you, I live life on my knees
To be whole, I need you, my missing piece.
And to silence my cries, which never cease.*

by Alex Lupa ©

**See how the dance of her delight plays
Over the Pantheon of blunted stars -
See her beauty in the faery rays
That light our cold Earth from palace afar.
Sweet, silken girl of the Starry Globe:
Bring me your kisses and tresses tonight!
Take me within your raging abode;
That I may be one with your eerie light.
Silver Moon! Harsh rival of the Sun
Whose gold flames send auriferous fury
Through the crested heavens with hot tongue;
Seething with cruel, eternal jealousy!**

"To the Moon" by Gary Brooks ©

I saw her on the way, this petite pretty
She caught my eye, she was a flower
I wanted to be close to her
I waited for the hour
A face with a smile that blazed like the sun
A shape of womanhood, a seat of desire
To stroke her hair, to touch that face
To light that powerful fire
Fair of skin, slight of build, a princess in my eyes
A stirring in me like none before
Thunderstruck! Enveloped in light
Her beauty blinded my eyes
She robbed me of my sight

I walked to her, that warm summer day
My words were fumbled, yet I had much to say
She looked in my eyes, she touched my hand
The words then flowed, I made my stand
I told her of my feelings
My deepest desires
To hold her, to hold her, to hold her near
She whispered, in hushed voice she told
Of her home far away, miles from my sight
For she was a dream, born on the light
Miles away, across the land
How then could I light that fire
Miles away, my heart sank
The summer brought us together
On a lone private beach
Her hair danced on the breeze
just beyond my reach
Just then she beckoned me
I made my approach
I stood there, by her side
Bathed in her light
I took her in my arms. Warmth!
Oh the rush of the need! Warmth!
In her eyes I saw the days
Passing through our love
We kissed. Deeply!

The breeze caused the pines to wave
Her perfume filled me, her warmth filled me
Oh the explosion! Oh the fire!
Her skin pressed to mine, we fell on the sand
We lived for a thousand years there on the sand
Though it was a fleeting moment, a summer
We lived each day, cherished each
On that beach

When summer ended we said our good byes
To this day tears fill my eyes, my princess gone
No more to be seen by these mortal eyes
But in my dreams

"There on the Beach" by Ted Aronis ©
for a girl I'll never forget

The Silent Lieutenant

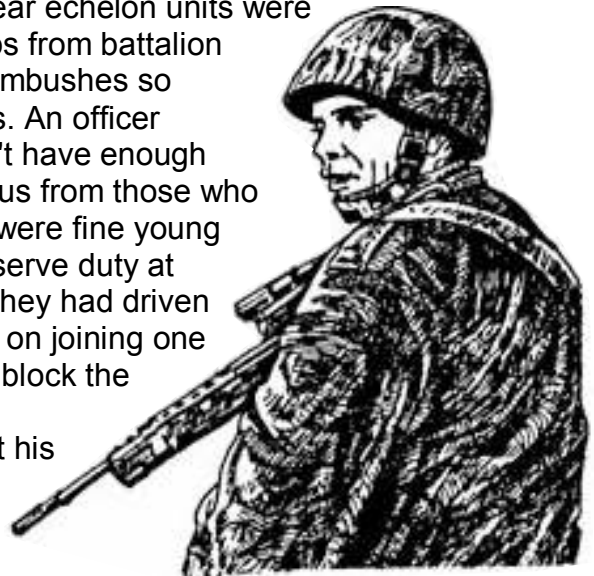
a story by Elisha Porat

translated by Alan Sacks

As the Yom Kippur war entered its third week, our platoon deployed along the old border through which the Syrian divisions had burst in their surprise attack. Our mission was to block the Syrian armored groups which, despite losing their tanks, were continuing their attempts to slip into Syrian-controlled territory. We set out towards evening. It was already late October and shadows were falling early. The days were warm and clear, the winds dry and the nights chilly. The fleeing Syrians were making their way all across the sector held by our battalion. Although well-armed and supplied, they were utterly exhausted from the long days of keeping out of sight. Yet hungry and thirsty as they were, for some reason they wouldn't lay down their arms. In disarray, they broke all the rules of moving safely at night and maintaining battle order.

Our orders from battalion headquarters were particularly strict: to cut off every avenue of retreat and prevent any of them from getting back across the breached border. We understood that we were to wipe them out and avoid capturing them. Now that the front had widened, we had no use for their information. We'd also heard reports that the rear echelon units were swamped with prisoners. Reinforced with troops from battalion headquarters, our platoon wove a network of ambushes so dense that it posed a threat even to its creators. An officer commanded each trap, and since our unit didn't have enough officers, several young ones were assigned to us from those who had joined the battalion early in the war. They were fine young fellows, excellent officers who had escaped reserve duty at some rear-line training base. In their own car, they had driven to Ein Gev, then headed for the highway intent on joining one of the battalions climbing the Golan Heights to block the surprise Syrian offensive.

For Nir, our commanding officer (I forget his last name), this was his first real war. he was younger than our veterans by at least a



decade, and I was troubled by the thought that generation after generation of such splendid boys had been compelled to undergo fire as though all our previous battles had served no purpose, as though all our earlier wars and all our long months of reserve duty had been for naught.

He said a few words to us to introduce himself, inspected the unit and arranged an ambush site facing west, towards the blasted, smoking Golan settlements that had begun rebuilding from their ruins. In all the years in which I had lain in ambush, the position had always faced east. East - towards the Jordan River and its dark surrounding thickets. East - towards deep Nahal Rukad and sheer cliffs beyond. Always east - towards the small towns hidden among the scattered mounds of basalt; towards the army camps and frightful enemy formations beyond our forward outposts.

Adding a few words to the firm orders from battalion headquarters, Nir called out the guard shifts. But his comments made little impression on the weary, jaded men. "It'll be all right, Lieutenant. Don't worry. And if you're tired or edgy, you can lie down and rest." Their voices trailed off and now the waiting, that maddening period of anticipation that fills most of your time in ambush, began. We lay slightly west of the army road plowed up by the tanks. Behind us lay the defense fence, shattered and crushed during the fighting by rampaging tanks. The Syrian army behind us was beaten, licking its wounds and digging into its bunkers. Its troops were denied all movement. We'd never had this strange feeling before, a feeling of safety behind us, from the Syrian border, while gazing in fearful expectation towards our own towns.

In the distance, Israeli cities gaily glowed again after nights of blackout. Safad shone far off in the hills while the upper neighborhoods of Tiberias twinkled in the translucent night. None of us had been on leave in the three weeks since that ill-fated Yom Kippur. Some men in units nearby had received their first, brief passes, and although on returning they had warned others to stay at the front, so oppressive was the gloom in Israel. Still every heart trembled for our families back home. We sank into that slumber of waiting, a necessary skill for passing endless nights of ambush. Reality and imagination together paraded before our tired eyes and eerie sounds pierced our straining ears.

And then, suddenly, we heard heavy steps close by. Someone stumbled, basalt stones tumbled out of the ditch and guns rattled on belts. Nir opened fire first, followed by all the men in the ambush and then those farther back. For several long minutes, nothing could be seen or heard but the ceaseless roar of gunfire on every side and the streaks of the tracer rounds. In the starting silence following the shooting, Nir sent out a scouting party. His hoarse voice quivered with excitement.

The Syrian squad had been wiped out. All four men lay on the rocks poised for battle. Even before battalion headquarters was notified, the results of the ambush were clear enough. The men congratulated Nir as they collected the dead Syrian's guns, as did the officers who arrived in jeep from battalion headquarters. While Nir huddled with

the battalion officers, a radio message directed the unit to clean up the ambush. Then the ambush troops boarded a vehicle and drove to the hill nearby where the battalion had made camp. Amidst the sleeping bags strewn near a small bunker, a small campfire blazed in our platoon's parking zone. A kettle of soup simmered, the drowsy platoon troops gathered around the fire. Perhaps now, the men hoped, they would receive the first round of passes. The hungry sipped soup while the weary yawned. There was a sense that we were invincible. Then the men crawled into their sleeping bags.

Nir seemed all worn out when he returned from battalion headquarters. Someone offered him a mug of soup but he refused it. He pulled off his harness, threw down his gun, and opened his sleeping bag, but he was much too wound up to close his eyes that night.

An officer approached him. "How did the debriefing go?"

"Fine," answered Nir. "Just fine."

"Complete success, eh?" the officer continued. "You wiped them all out."

Nir lay uncovered on his sleeping bag, having neither changed his clothes nor yanked off his boots. Moments later, he turned aside and threw up on the basalt gravel. The officer beside him got up, opened his canteen and silently offered him the water.

"This'll pass," Nir gasped between retches. "Soon."

"First time you killed someone?" the officer inquired.

"Yeah," said Nir, and went to vomiting for a few minutes.

"It's always like this the first time," said the officer.

"Sure," replied Nir. "But not everyone throws up." Then he laid down again. He didn't even bother to unzip the sleeping bag.

A courier from battalion headquarters arrived at dawn. He picked his way through the sleeping men. "Which one of you is Nir, the officer?" he shouted.

"Over here," Nir called back. "What is it?"

The runner sat down beside him. Even though he lowered his voice, I could hear every word. "We've just received a telegram from your soldier's welfare officer," he announced. "You need get home this morning. It's urgent."

"What's happened?" asked Nir, as though he hadn't heard what the courier was saying.

"I don't know, the telegram doesn't exactly say," said the messenger. "But we have orders to release you and send you home right away. You can leave right after the morning patrol. And you can bring along anyone from your platoon who's going on leave."

"But you need confirmation and replacement for me," protested Nir.

"You're leaving," the runner replied. "That's an order from battalion headquarters." He stood up. "It's crazy," he said. "I couldn't sleep a wink last night."

Your ambush made a racket all across the sector. They're proud of you at battalion headquarters. How can you keep going without sleep?"

I drove with Nir on the first issued leave. I'd been fantastically lucky in drawing the pass. It was sweet revenge for the thousands of times I'd been the last to go. We went down with the morning patrol as far as the gate to kibbutz Ein Gev.

"Have fun, guys. For us, too. And don't forget to come back." The war was still on and the patrol half-tracks were moving back and forth along the dusty basalt road. Nir's car awaited us at Ein Gev's parking lot, just as he had left it the night he went up to the Golan. All four tires had been punctured and it now sagged on its wheels. Several shells, one of which had exploded not far from the parking lot, had landed on Ein Gev. It was pure luck that the car hadn't been hit. I helped Nir change the tires. Workmen from Ein Gev's garage lent a hand and brought out new tires when they saw us. Everything was fixed in jiffy.

"Come on, tell us, what's going on up there?" they badgered us. "Is the war really over? Is it true, the Syrians have been pushed back?"

"Not yet," Nir told them. "We're still laying ambushes at night and shooting it out. People are still being killed there during the nights."

We headed south in Nir's car. The harvest had already begun in the grapefruit orchards along the road. Shapely girls who had volunteered to help out on the kibbutz settlements mounted short ladders. For a moment, their bare legs flashed before us. "Nothing's changed here," said Nir, his hands gripping the steering wheel. "You'd think we weren't fighting that damned war up there." At the junction for Dovrat, we stopped at the road stand and went up to the counter to order sandwiches and coffee. Nir hadn't eaten anything since throwing up. The food stand was jammed with soldiers and tourists who come off luxury buses parked outside. Nir told me he needed to make a quick call home. Meanwhile, I'd make sure the noisy tourists didn't push ahead of us in line.

I was both tired and thrilled to be on my first leave since the fighting began. Some of the tourists who noticed me tried be friendly and start a conversation. But I wouldn't have any of that. I scowled at them and ignored their questions. Although their concern for me was genuine and they meant well in trying to befriend me, I had come down only that morning from another world, from a place in which no one would understand me unless he'd been there. And I just didn't have the strength that morning to try to explain to them what it really was like up there.

Nir returned from the telephone looking pale. "What's up at home?" I asked.

"Shit," he said. "Dad seems to have had a heart attack. The welfare officer has brought our neighborhood too many reports of dead boys recently. He couldn't stand it and had an attack."

"Go back, he'll calm down, everything will be all right," I said.

But Nir wasn't listening. A pretty girl from Dovrat, in tight shorts revealing a great

pair of legs, stood across the counter. She poured coffee into cups and hurriedly made sandwiches while bantering with the tourists. Nir couldn't take his eyes off her. He leaned on the counter, his hands clenched into fists. "What's with you, Lieutenant?" the girl smiled brightly at Nir. "Haven't you seen a girl for three weeks?" She moved towards us. As I reminded her that we had ordered coffee, I told her that the lieutenant had fallen for her, head over heels. She looked at us, "What, can't he speak? Can't your handsome lieutenant speak for himself?"

Nir's face turned even paler. He thrust his palms through the counter's smooth wooden slats. His knuckles stiffened and I could see his fingertips digging into the hard wood.

Heedless of the pestering tourists, the girl moved even closer to Nir and looked straight into his eyes. As still as stone, he returned her gaze. "What's wrong, Lieutenant? Have you come back from the war? Was it so bad?" Smoothing her shorts and tugging at the edges, she put the damp rag she was holding on Nir's rigid fingers. Nir said nothing, unable to speak. He couldn't utter even a word. But his eyes spoke to her. The sudden attraction between them electrified me. I was riveted to the spot, my eyes drinking in the sight.

The tourists clamoring behind us were drinking coffee and gobbling sandwiches. Their drivers were already urging them back onto the buses. They couldn't see what I saw. Suddenly, everything was forgotten: the ambush, the first man he'd killed, the guilt-racked retching, his father's heart attack, everything. Only she stood before him, in tight shorts showing glorious legs, gently flicking the rag across his knuckles. The image was etched into my memory: the Dovrat café as the war wound down late in October, my first leave, the invigorating aroma of coffee and the young lieutenant mute before the girl's gaze.

"Get your silent lieutenant out of here," she suddenly laughed at me, "and bring him back when he's able to talk." Then she turned around, tore her eyes from Nir, and went back to serving the last of the tourists waiting for their orders. In utter silence, we drank our coffee and ate the sandwiches. Nir remained silent even when I helped him up from the chair and guided him to the car parked outside. He even drove silently. I was afraid for a moment that his mind wasn't on driving. But he kept control of the wheel and the car responded beautifully.

Passing through Afula, we saw a large crowd outside the hospital. We went on to Hadera, where we turned off for my kibbutz. Nir insisted on dropping me at the entrance. Unfortunately, he couldn't drive me back to the platoon parking lot on the Golan Heights. Unsure of the situation at home, he didn't want to make any promises. "That's okay," I assured him, "Just so long as your father is all right. You don't have to worry about me. I'm an old soldier. I'll survive this war, too." We shook hands. "Go on, Nir, get going," I yelled as I crossed the intersection. "They're waiting for you at home."

I never saw him again after he drove away. He didn't return to our platoon or the

battalion. I don't know what became of him after he visited his parents. The platoon office had information that his father suffered a severe heart attack but lived. Nir stayed with him at the hospital until he recovered. After that, he had no contact with the battalion. Anyway, he'd been a volunteer for the war, one of those young officers who had hopped onto the battalion half-tracks on their way up to the Golan. He wasn't assigned to the battalion and I doubt whether anyone in the personnel branch made a detailed record for his few days with us during those first three weeks.

I happened to be at the Dovrat food stand several times later on. I think the pretty girl in the enticing shorts still worked there. But I'm not sure. Winter eventually came and she must have put on warmer clothes. I even went up to the counter once or twice and stared at the thin wooden slats beneath the coffee cups, searing for Lieutenant Nir's fingerprints in the stained wood grain. But the wood hadn't preserved any marks, and when I looked into the girl's eyes, they evaded me like a stranger's. Nor did she ask me as she had then, "Where have you left the silent lieutenant?" She didn't even ask why we hadn't come back when my lieutenant regained his speech...

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The Poet's Haven



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About the Contributors

Bleeding Angel says: "I write poetry conveying my thoughts and feelings throughout some personal life experiences. I hope to someday publish a book of poems, as well as a biography."

Singed Angel says: "My work is my escape. I don't sit down and know what's going to come out of my pen. I just let it go. Whatever comes to mind is how I leave things. I never edit, I never rewrite. My first draft is how I leave it. I guess the main reason I write is because I don't know how to handle things. I put it on paper just to get it out of my head."

Ted Aronis is the Director of Hardware Development at Octave Communications in Salem, New Hampshire. He is a graduate of the University of Lowell. Ted says: "I am not a writer, not of any caliber. I am an engineer. The inspiration for my writing comes from various moments in my life. I am encouraged greatly by a loving wife and family."

Noel Bebee began working as an artist in the early 1960's. After a twenty year absence from the art world, he returned in 1995/1996 when coaxed by his wife to take a computer art course. Since that time, all his new works have been created digitally (including *Surprising a Loreleii*, which graces this issue's cover).

Gary Brooks: No biography available.

Greg Campbell says: "I'm a man of truth. There's truth in most of my work, even if it must be searched greatly for. I'm not your typical anything. I believe in freedom and tolerance of all with truth. I also think many old traditions should be broken to let freedom reign."

Kim Davis: No biography available.

Warren Gillespie was born in 1949 in Perth, Australia, where he still resides. He works in commercial radio and politics. Warren's main loves in life are beer, writing, poetry, astronomy, dogs, languages, history and beer.

Terri A. Hateley (also known as **TeAnne**) was born in Walgett, New South Wales, but now resides in Perth, Australia. She has had her work exhibited in several galleries throughout western Australia, including The West Side Gallery Café. In 1996 she was awarded the Peoples Choice Award in the Geraldton Art Society's annual exhibition. Her artwork, prose, and poetry have been published in various newspapers and magazines throughout Australia and the USA.

Elizabeth Hendricks is an official Army brat, born at Madigan Army Medical Center in Tacoma, Washington. Currently living in North-East Ohio, she has been writing since the age of twelve and has been published by The Quill and on The Poet's Haven website.

Marianne J. is the youngest of 3, born in 1985. Living in northern California, she attends high school and is into science fiction, computers, and art. She has additional work published on The Poet's Haven website.

Karen Marie Kogler says: "I am a seeker longing for a brighter path. I embrace my strengths, weaknesses, ghosts, and demons, and they in turn make up some of who I am. Without loss we could not grow, but I do believe love will always prevail."

Alex Lupa, "All that we see or seem is but a dream within a dream." - Edgar Allan Poe "Lord grant that I might always aspire to more than I can accomplish." - Michelangelo

Todd Michael Phillips is a New Orleans native. He is a full time children's and Cajun cook book author. His books are available from online and traditional book sources internationally. He lives with his Siamese twin felines Sir I am Siam (Si) and Lady My Land Thailand (Thai).

Elisha Porat was the 1996 winner of Israel's Prime Minister's Prize for Literature. He has published more than a dozen volumes of Hebrew fiction and poetry since 1973, with his translated works appearing all over the world. "The Messiah of LaGuardia," a collection of his short stories, is available at most retail book stores.

Artful Pose has never previously been published. She says: "I came across The Poet's Haven and was curious as to what it would feel like to send in something that I knew someone else would see, so I did. And I loved the feeling it brought to me. It was such a release, and just the type of therapy I was looking for."

Jeffrey Reeves has been published on the Internet and had a poem included in an anthology titled "Touched by Grace." He says: "My reason for writing poetry is to creatively express my feelings and thoughts about love, life, and the world."

Kerowyn Rose: Poet's Haven editor, poet, wife, and all around weird girl. She writes the words that are knocking around in her nearly empty head so she can get some peace and quiet. She is now living in Stow, Ohio and works at Borders Books and Music in Solon. She has poetry and a Special Feature column published on The Poet's Haven website and also has work displayed on her own website, titled "Smatterings of Thought."

Jamie Snook was born in 1982 and lives in Washington state. She says: "Most of my poems are written when I'm either sad, depressed, or happy. It's a weird combination, but that's me! :-) Some of my poetry just pops into my head - It may seem like I've experienced what I've written about, but sometimes I haven't."

Triple Sweet says: "My poetry is a reflection of who I am. I've learned that what lies behind us, and what lies within us, are only tiny matters compared to what lies within us. So here's to cherishing hope, living my dreams, and dancing like no one's watching."

Vertigo Xi'an Xavier started a little website back when he was finishing up high school. That website grew and grew and soon he was powerful enough to take over the world. As ruler of the entire planet, Vertigo brought a state of peace like which the globe had never seen. That was, until one day when he decided to go skydiving without a parachute. Just as he was about to hit the ground, he woke up. Then he got to work on this magazine...

Xen0 (also known as **Charles Riordan**) was born in 1981 and resides in Austin, Texas. His other works include "Crossroads," "No Kiss for the Valentine," and "Why Do I Feel So Alone (The Everlasting Hole in My Heart)."

