

## Ugly

By Mike Berger

When I speak of a model, most men  
think of a beautiful woman.

But my model is a hag from the streets.  
We talked as I sketched. I said that  
she must have had an interesting life.

She smiled a contorted grin, missing  
two front teeth. She corrected me saying  
that life wasn't interesting, it was more  
like hell.

I asked about the deep scar on her cheek.  
"It came from a jealous boyfriend," she  
answered. Opening her mouth and  
pointed to the hole where teeth should be  
"Same guy, still I love him," she said.

It all started when she was fifteen. She  
was gang raped behind the high school  
bleachers. She was too embarrassed and  
afraid to tell anyone.

Each line on her face marked a drunken stupor  
where she tried to drown her pain. Her left  
shoulder was droopy, arthritic from sleeping on  
the ground

Her face was gray; she had matted brown hair  
that clung to her dirty face. She was more than  
happy with the 20 bucks I paid her for posing.  
She said that for \$20 she would dance on the  
table or most anything else.

When we were finished, she wanted to see my  
work. She stared deeply into the canvas. Tears  
welled up in her eyes and splashed down her  
cheeks. She choked out, "Do I look like that?"

## Melinda

By Mike Berger

As a child Melinda was bright eyed,  
happy, and always up beat.

At 17 she fell in love with a  
pot smoking loser who treated her  
like dirt.

He told her she was fat and ugly  
saying that he needed to put a sack  
over her head when they made love.  
He manipulated her for sex.

How thoughts get distorted, no one  
knows, but Melinda began to diet.  
She felt if she lost 25 pounds, that would  
magically flip a switch on her lover and  
he would lighten up.

She became obsessed. She starved herself  
every day, refusing to eat or drink. She weighed  
herself 20 times a day and became bereft  
if she gained an ounce. She began to look  
gaunt and gray.

When she dropped below 100 pounds, they put  
her in the hospital. Her organs failed and she  
passed away. Her death certificate read that  
the cause of death was anorexia. That may be  
true in a technical sense, but she was killed  
by her worthless lover.

## Run Away

By Mike Berger

My father was a harsh man.  
He wanted to run my life.  
At sixteen I ran away to fly  
like a wild bird. I hit the streets  
and soon discovered it was  
an ugly mean place. There  
were no flitting and pleasant  
melodies. The only birds were  
vultures waiting to pounce

I fell into an ugly world. It was  
called "A bed for a bang."  
Occasionally one of the vultures  
would share a dobbie and for  
several hours my tears would be  
gone. I hated being mauled  
drooled upon and screwed just  
for a place to sleep.

I stayed with Brad for three weeks;  
things were looking up. Then came  
the time I couldn't perform and he  
threw me out. I don't know what I'll do  
when winter comes. I don't have a coat.  
I guess I'll have to find a pimp. At least I'll  
get paid for what I'm doing.

## A Fairy Tale

(updated)

By Mike Berger

Prince charming with the fairy princess  
rode off on his white steed. As the ending  
goes, they lived happily ever after.

NOT!

Two weeks after the wedding reality set in.  
Prince Charming was a Peter Pan, a  
perpetual little boy. He primped in front of  
the mirror for hours.

He pouted and whined when he didn't get his  
way. Once when the princess burned his  
supper he threw a flailing tantrum. Worst  
of all, his Xbox became the perfect form of  
birth control.

Desperate for love she turned to the ogre  
from the neighboring kingdom. He was  
ugly as hell, but what's a girl to do?

## Cookie Lady

By Mike Berger

Traffic was fierce. I was running late; the Bell hop gave me a wink as I took the elevator. I had the usual room, paid by the company.

The john was a squatty aerospace engineer. The service had checked him out. He was a negotiator on a multimillion dollar contract.

He was shy even embarrassed. He was unconscious of his wedding ring. He twisted it a dozen times. I must admit he wasn't much of a lover. Out of the room I put on my wedding band.

This was my Thursday ritual; leaving the kids with my husband and heading out to my "art class". For an hour's work the pay was great.

I stopped in the bar for a drink. I needed to unwind. Then I was hit on by a good looking guy. What is this world coming to; he could easily see I was wearing a wedding ring.

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