

The 2004 winning haiku from last spring's ACCUTE conference was contributed by Benjamin Lefebvre, who has been extravagantly lavished with prizes and accolades for his efforts. Only modesty prevents us from detailing them here. However, we happily share his poem with *ESC* readers:

## **Conference Weather**

Umbrella blows out Shiver between buildings, wind Morbid and acute.

The following unrelated poem appeared in the May/June 1990 issue of *Infocus* magazine and has since been floating around the net. The original authors are Fred Bremmer and Steve Kroese of Calvin College & Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

A poll of *Infocus* readers established "waka" as the proper pronunciation for the angle-bracket characters, < and >, and so the poem can be appreciated by reading it aloud as follows:

Waka waka bang splat tick tick hash, Caret quote back-tick dollar dollar dash, Bang splat equal at dollar under-score, Percent splat waka waka tilde number four, Ampersand bracket bracket dot dot slash, Pipe curly-bracket comma CRASH. Being a chamber maid in a hotel can be a horrible occupation. Being a chamber maid in a foreign country (Scotland) and taking the job to spite everyone (including oneself) is possibly worse! This is what I did while on vacation my first year away at school. I don't know if it was to show my family I could be independent, or whether I was having delusions of *Upstairs*, *Downstairs* grandeur, or perhaps I was trying to make up for decades of not cleaning my room, but I was completely unprepared for the things I would see in those oh-so-recently-occupied rooms. And I was completely oblivious to the fact that my co-workers and I had *not one* thing in common—except, possibly, for the fact that we were all human beings.

I didn't mind the work. Cleaning was mindless, and almost like meditation. But every once in a while, I found a surprise: be it in the suite the band had occupied; the room that had held the bachelor party; or, the one that lives in my mind, the day after the "adult personal items trade show," as the concierge so genteelly put it. At the age of 15, fresh and wide-eyed, I was torn between curiosity and fainting dead at some of the things casually left behind.

A few of the girls close to my age once took me out on a week night to their favourite place. It turned out to be the house of their favourite member of the pop band, *Rosetta Stone*. I hung out too—not at all interested, but only too happy to be out, away from my summer reading assignments and drab small room. The next day, as I came to start my shift, Mr Gordon, the day manager, took me aside and told me that as I was a "good girl", and that I should be warned not to go with the others on their wild escapades. If he only had known! The most excitement we had was when someone twitched a curtain in the front room! No dancing, drinking or fun had transpired. We were just a bunch of teenage girls standing on a residential street, waiting for the man of their dreams to come out and sign autographs.

Two weeks later, one of my school mates contacted me and offered me a place to stay with her and her family for the rest of vacation. I know my parents had put them up to it. I accepted with a speed that astounded everyone. I cleaned my last room, said goodbye to the girls and Mr Gordon, and went back to the life I knew. A few years later, by coincidence I stayed in the same hotel. It was still a 4-star establishment, with a dining room and a concierge. I did not see anyone that I knew, and I think that if I had, we all would have been embarrassed. To this day, I am scrupulously neat and make a point of leaving nothing behind in hotel rooms.