

"SPECIAL FORMS," THE LADY TELLS HIM

(To be chanted to the cadence of "Hiawatha")

By Dan Nessel

By the Input/Output window
Of an IBM computer,
sits and old man - bearded warrior.
Silent. Waiting for his program.

As a young man he submitted
90 cards - a FORTRAN program.
Walked away believing he would
In 2 hours receive his output.

Through the snow and wind returning,
Through the door; up to the window.
Calmly, with a pleasant smile, he
Asks the lady for his output.

"Turnaround," she tells him boldly,
"Turnaround is now 6 hours."
With her hand she indicates the
Blackboard on the wall behind her.

With a shrug he quits the window
Turns around and climbs the stairwell.
Sits and studies for 6 hours.
Then returns - presents his check stub.

"Special forms," the lady tells him.
"Special forms have now been mounted."
Even planets in their orbits
Halt when special forms are running.

"But," he questions, "I was promised
I'd receive my print out, if I'd
Wait 6 hours for its running."
"Special forms," the lady tells him.

Once again he shrugs his shoulders.
Buys himself a Dr. Pepper.
Buys a couple frozen Twinkies™.
Waits until the moon has risen.

Education comes not only
In the classroom; from a teacher.
Mephistopheles grins as they
tell him that his deck is missing.

Now an odd expression slowly
Spreads across his former calm face.
He sits down next to the window.
Sets his jaw. His eyes become glazed.

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