

1994

Clemson Chronicle, 1994-1997

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Chronicle

Fall 1994



From the Editor:

I have noticed a fierce whispering lately about the nature of this magazine. The undercurrent of displeasure has always existed in union with the purpose of the Chronicle—that is, to be a showcase for campus creativity. For one thing, who is to decide the constitution of creativity? While we understand that the source of the grumbling is our tendency to publish staff work, we assert that the people most concerned with the success of the magazine, the staff, are talented people. We would like to publish more talented people, whether you are staff members or not. The problem, however, is that we do not receive enough quality submissions to fill out an issue without using staff work. Grumbling cannot be avoided when inevitable rejection affects some of our contributors. The problem is that we, in keeping with our purpose, cannot in good faith publish inferior literature in order to cease the grumbling.

This is a world of “survival of the fittest,” both in business and in publishing, itself a literary *business*. If you have submitted to the Chronicle and have been rejected, rest assured it was not from lack of attention on our part, but that for some reason your contribution did not fit the needs of the magazine. We implore you to keep trying, because we greatly appreciate your interest.

The greater number of grumblers, however, are those who have not and do not submit to the Chronicle, and yet still air their unfounded gripes about our selection process. To these people we ask: What is the problem? If you have not submitted your work, then you are not only contributing to our low submission problem, you also have no basis for complaint. If we receive 100 submissions, and the ones judged to be most fit are staff members, then that is a reflection on the quality of submissions as a whole, and not an indication of an “inbred” system. We absolutely **do not** discriminate between staff and non-staff, and our selection system is anonymous, so no names are involved.

The Chronicle is still your magazine. It does not matter who puts it together, or who prints it, the content is still yours. If you choose to make a difference, and you think your work is good, send it in. If you don't, you have only yourself to blame for not getting in.

Heather Anese Reid

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Cover Art Done by C. Allston Kendall: Front cover,
 "Experiment," back cover, "Waterfall Woman"

Two poems

Promise of a dryad to a satyr

Love is a dark place,
cool with the scent of rain,
a forest of rain,
quiet in the small hours
of a dew-soaked sky, red with dawning.

Your heart the sun,
mine the palest moon, deep into night—
I reflect the treasure of your love
to illumine the lonely,
my soul.

I was made for you,
the earth for the sky,
and deep within me your heart beats,
your soul stirs in me some new life,
spread with branches like the Red Oak.

I will grow as you grow,
and fail should you fail,
my life the soft heart,
your love the wet bark of the tree,
dark with promise.
Let your voice be the rain, life-giving—
the death of love my grave only.

the sea, alone

Voice of the sea
your song is endless,
has serenaded the stir of hearts
to love,
consoled the salted grief
of love-torn ages,
ever contant, as Nature is.

What to you the hearts of women,
the souls of men who come,
and are silent here in your wake,
to whom you give your voice,
meditation for their words.

The cycle is served, by tears,
by joy—you sing,
and the lovers hear the groan and sigh
of ecstasy,
the grieving an ocean's tears,
the lost the silence behind the surge of tides.

You sing, the canvas for our thoughts,
and there is no "you,"
only silence,
and a thousand, thousand hearts.

Invisible Fire

It was late in the summer of 1983 when Wilson Lomax came into my life. Blown in off of the Nebraskan plain by a late season thunderstorm, he sat huddled over a cup of coffee in the Grand Island McDonald's while I watched him, unnoticed, from behind the cash register. He stared out the front window through one of the golden arches while the rain came down, and I thought that I had never seen anyone look so tired and beaten. Although he looked old, somehow I knew even then that he was under thirty. A battered, dark green backpack sat on the floor next to feet clad in battered hiking shoes, and his black hair lay unkempt almost to his shoulders. His once-pale face, almost as battered as his gear, was scarred and harshly tanned by the midwestern sun and came to a point at his chin. His cheeks were stubbled with growth that looked to be a few days old.

But it was his eyes that wordlessly told just enough of his story to draw me to him, to begin spinning the thread that would bond us for four weeks before being severed. Dark, deep-set and bracketed by shallow crow's feet, they were eyes that looked ever ahead. Not out of hope or optimism but out of despair and fear of what lay behind. There had been a momentous turning away somewhere in the past, and looking at him dredged up a word that echoed in my head with every tick of my pulse: *Running*.

And so it was that I approached him with a pot of coffee, my McDonald's uniform itching in places I didn't dare scratch, and uttered the words that breached the barrier between us.

"Would you like a refill?"

Mom and I were cleaning up after supper, and Dad and Willis were bringing in the few cattle that grazed a small pasture left untouched in a sea of corn. Looking to my left I could see Wilson out on the front porch, rocking back and forth with his drawing pad in his hands. He was looking west at the sunset and absently drawing something I couldn't make out. My kid brother Jimmy, who was ten and after just a week worshipped the ground Wilson walked on, sat across the porch from him with a yellow legal pad. He kept looking up at Wilson, and I realized that he was trying to draw the wanderer whom my family had taken in. A strange,

beautiful intertwining of lives had begun, and it was all because my older brother John had contracted a social disease.

I have often wondered about fate, and that evening with my arms thrust into a sinkful of dish-soap bubbles I replayed our meeting in McDonald's, seeing the images and feeling the giddy novel emotions that a sixteen-year-old girl feels. He had looked up at me slowly, as if becoming aware of my presence gradually, and had smiled. It was a wistful smile and tinted with pain, but in that moment I had seen the person he had been in his other life: Warm and secure, surrounded by friends, and prone to thoughtful, dry humor. The age had briefly fallen away from his eyes, and they pierced me softly, making me want to put my arms over my chest and look at the floor while my face grew hot.

"Are refills free?" he said in response to my query. "I just spent the last bit of change I have."

"Of course. But I'd give you one even if they weren't." I was sure I was blushing furiously. How could I have just said that?

"You're too kind," he said as he held out his cup. "Thank you." The wistful look again, not quite becoming a smile. I poured coffee and returned to security behind the counter, feeling embarrassed.

Ten minutes later the rain had ended, and he had reshouldered his pack. He approached the counter tentatively, as if he were about to ask a favor of a stranger.

"Can I help you?" I said in the most professional McDonald's cashier voice I could muster.

"Maybe," he said. "I need to find work. I've been on the road for a while and need to make some money before I can move on. Would you know of someplace that would take me on for a week or two?"

"Well—" And it was then that I got the idea, one that I felt sure my father would laugh at. *What? You want me to take in some hippie freak off the road who's prolly never done a lick a work in his life? Junie, what t' hell's gotten into you, darlin'?* "Well," I continued, "my older brother John, he just came down with mono, and my dad's gonna need some help bad with harvest coming on."

"Can you point me towards where you live and I'll talk to him?"

I balked at this. "How about if I call him and he'll come down and talk to you?"

"That would be fine."

And amazingly enough my father *had* taken Wilson Lomax

on, offering him twenty dollars a day plus room and board as long as he promised to stay for at least two weeks. He stayed in the guest room that Dad and my brother Willis built the year before Willis got married, and every evening after supper he sat on our front porch with his pad and pencil just like he was now, sometimes just doodling but usually drawing pictures that tended to be ominous and strainful-looking: Clenched fists, boxers, Indians shooting bows and arrows, soldiers. The drawings were always ably done, but why the recurring strife? I rinsed a final plate and dried my arms and hands. He was smiling again faintly, and I walked up quietly behind him to get a glimpse of his current effort.

It was a farmhouse in the middle of a field, and on the front porch sat a man and a boy who were both drawing pictures. In this picture the boy's drawing was of the man, who could be seen to be drawing a picture of a farmhouse in the middle of a field.

"So," Dad was saying the next night at supper, "you read this book and decided to just take off and walk across the country?"

"Well, actually, it was two books. The first one was Jenkins and his dog walking from Binghamton, New York to New Orleans, where he fell in love and got married—" Wilson stopped to swallow yet another huge mouthful of mashed potatoes and garden peas. They had spent the day harvesting and baling a field of hay and were wolfing down food at an incredible rate.

"And the second book?" John prompted him. His mono had progressed to the point where he was up and about a little more.

"He and his wife walk from New Orleans to the Oregon coast."

"How the hell long— how long did that take?"

"I think it was over two years total. You should read it, it's really inspirational."

"You'd better not," Dad said. "You'd wanna take off with Wilson here and then I'd really be strapped for help."

Have you noticed how parental humor seems to dry up with every passing year? I've never figured out whether it was because I was getting older or they were or both, but it was getting harder and harder to know when something my dad said was serious or not.

Mom: "So are you going to end up in Oregon?"

"I don't know. I don't think anyone knows where they're going to end up."

Wilson had told me briefly about the book and how it had affected him, but I had a feeling that it wasn't the whole truth. After

supper he fell asleep on the couch during Monday Night Football. I could see his eyes rapidly dancing behind closed lids, and he twitched slightly every now and then. He wasn't smiling. Maybe he was dreaming about being back home in Philadelphia.

He is in a bar somewhere in Missouri, perhaps Jefferson City. He has been drinking somewhat heavily, and the haze in his head doesn't really help the pain there. He is by himself, which is unusual in smaller towns like this, and several of

the regulars notice this. They don't like it. One of them approaches him, a stout man of about forty who has also been drinking.

"I've never seen you in here before," he says condescendingly.

"What're you doin' in here by yourself? Ain't you got any friends?"

The intrusion into Wilson's shell of self-pity is unwelcome, and he resents it. "No, and I'm not looking for any."

The stranger pushes him gently, maliciously. "You're a guest in our town, fucker, and you ain't bein' very polite."

Wilson feels the anger rising again. He is becoming familiar with it. He shoves the man violently, causing him to topple over a barstool. Others are standing up. Making a ring. The man gets up and lunges at Wilson, pinning him back against the bar. He head-butts Wilson in the face before being pushed away. They circle each other, fists up. The man throws a jab. Wilson drops his fists, letting the punch land on his face, just like the other times this has happened. The pain is a white explosion in his head, and he sits down hard on the floor. He gets back up and is punched in the solar plexus. He manages to stay up, but can't breathe. He lets the man land a roundhouse to his left ear. He falls to the floor, writhing in agony.

This is right. He realizes all over again that this is why he comes into places like this. This is what he deserves. The man begins to kick him. After Wilson passes out, several of the men in the bar take his wallet and car keys before calling an ambulance.

Wilson wakes up in the hospital. It hurts to breathe, and the left side of his head feels like it has been stuffed with a cantaloupe. He has stitches in his lower lip and his left eye is swollen shut. He disengages himself from the hospital bed and finds some clothes in a dresser nearby. They belong to the old man in the bed next to him, but the old man is asleep. Wilson puts on the clothes, even though they don't quite fit. He leaves the hospital. No one misses him for two and a half hours.

Outside the sunlight is blinding, but he manages to find the bar from the night before. He finds that his car has been stolen. This is unfortunate, but it doesn't really bother him. There is a wallet in the pants he is wearing, and in the wallet is an American Express Gold Card. He buys some clothes, a backpack, and some hiking shoes, and gets a moderate

cash advance. He then puts the wallet and card in the mail, addressed to the owner. He begins to walk in a northwesterly direction, continuing the journey begun over a month earlier from his home in Baltimore.

Neil Jensen, my father, is descended from Scandinavian immigrants who made their way to Nebraska from Chicago in the last half of the nineteenth century. His father managed to scrape a living from the land here during the Dust bowl when others fled to points west, and he carries on this legacy of giving life to the land in the face of sometimes overwhelming odds. Where my grandfather faced drought and overburdened land, my father faces foreclosure and indenture to the giant agri-corporations who are slowly snapping up more and more neighboring farms each year. Somehow he is able to balance the immense costs of sowing and reaping with the profits made on the crops. But even more than this, he derives pleasure from the growing, from bringing forth life from the seemingly dead soil. "This is what I was meant to do," he would say, and it would make him feel good.

He exhibited the thick, solid build of his forebears, but unfortunately he had also inherited their blond hair and fair skin that the midwestern sun cooked mercilessly. His hair was thinning considerably, so he had taken to wearing a wide-brimmed straw hat to save his scalp from burning. The hat had been bleached almost white by the sun and stood out in sharp contrast against the red side of the barn where he and Wilson were stacking bales of hay that would be used to feed the cattle over the coming winter. I could see Wilson up in the loft, grabbing the bales from the conveyor as they arrived at the top and placing them, neatly arranged, inside. It was Friday, and I had just arrived home after completing my first week of the tenth grade. I was throwing feed lazily to our chickens, who clucked around their enclosure, pecking at the ground robotically. I could faintly hear Wilson and my father talking over the conveyor motor; Wilson was telling a joke about some old man who had just married a very young, gold-digging woman.

"So she strikes a pose on the bed, hoping he'll have a heart attack when he sees her. He comes out of the bathroom wearing nothing but earplugs, a noseclip, and a condom. 'What are those for?' She asks him. 'Huh?' He says. 'What are those for!' She shouts. And he says, 'If there's two things I can't stand, it's the sound of a screaming woman and the smell of burning rubber.'" My father let loose his gravelly, deep-throated laugh that I hadn't heard in an eternity. They both kept in the rhythm of the work as they laughed; my father, rounded and red, would send the bales up the belt to the

lean and muscular Wilson, who would unload and place them. I smiled, imagining an old, wrinkled man wearing ear plugs and a nose clip on top of a young woman as smoke (no doubt from burning rubber) rose up between them.

I looked up at Wilson again. I found myself doing this a lot lately. He had changed during his time with us, becoming more talkative and given less to sitting and staring into nothing. He would come in tired at the end of the day to a solid meal and then stay up and watch some TV and talk with my parents as I sat upstairs doing homework, desperately wanting to be down there with them. I was envious of the rest of my family for their monopoly on Wilson's attention. He had bought Jimmy a pad of quality drawing paper, and spent part of every evening coaching him. Jimmy vowed that he would be moving to Philadelphia to be an artist like Wilson had been.

"You could probably do just as well in Omaha or Kansas City," Wilson had told him.

"When mom asked you what your parents thought of you leaving, you never answered her. Why?" We were sitting on the front porch after dinner, watching darkness pour out of the east. Wilson sat in the rocking chair, his pad and pencil idle on his lap. I was on the swing with my knees pulled up under my chin to shield against the cool September evening. "Do they live in Philadelphia, too?"

"They used to. They're both dead now. So I guess the answer to the question is no, they didn't mind. My mother died of breast cancer when I was eight and my father... died while I was in art school." He rocked back and forth slowly, relaxedly. I was shocked a little, I guess. I had never known anyone who had lost anyone in their family. It was something I only thought about when it happened on TV.

"What were they like? What was your dad like?" I should have changed the subject, but I wanted to know, and he seemed perfectly at ease talking about it.

"He was like your dad. He grew up on a farm in Pennsylvania, so I spent almost as much time growing up in the country as in the city. We visited my grandparents a lot. He taught me how to fish. He was there when I caught my first one. I..." He choked on the last word and looked away quickly, out over the darkening fields, and now I did feel terrible for pressing the subject.

"...loved him very much." He sighed and didn't say anything

else. I looked down at my newly painted fingernails, feeling ashamed. The red paint looked garish and whorelike in the twilight, and I suddenly wanted to rush into the house and wipe them clean.

"I'm sorry."

"It's okay. It's behind me now. You try and keep the good memories, make them cancel out the grief, and after awhile they do."

We sat in silence, each rocking slightly where we sat. The sun set, but some light was still reflected by a cloud bank. The night was filled with the musical drone of insects and the titter of barn swallows flying gracefully chaotic patterns in the air, trying to catch a last meal before nightfall.

"Wilson? Have you ever been in love?"

He turned his head slowly and looked at me piercingly, exactly like the first time we met. He didn't say anything, and I didn't think he was going to answer. He slowly turned his head back, and seemed to be staring at something far away.

"Yes."

"What was it like? Who was she?"

"She was an artist. A commercial artist. We saw each other quite a bit because we both worked through the same agency, and so had known each other for some time. We were friends. She had red hair like you, except longer."

"And..?"

"And one day we just looked at each other and something else was there."

"You didn't know from the beginning? The first time you saw her?"

"No. Maybe if we had been younger. But as you get older you get too careful. You don't let the world into your heart as easily. And you have other things on your mind that might make you miss something valuable that's right in front of you. Like an invisible fire on a cold night."

This, like the dead parents, was outside of my experience, something I had never really pondered.

"And what about you, June Jensen? Have you ever been in love?"

I stared glumly at the sparse headlights miles away on I-80. "Not with anyone who's ever been in love with me. I wonder if it'll ever happen, and if I'll be able to recognize it if it does."

He laughed, adopting his stern, mock-adult voice that sounded like Eddie Murphy imitating a white man. "So *serious*, Miss Jensen! Are you going to let the world pass you by? Will you

become an old spinster who works at the library?"

I smiled a little, still staring at the distant headlights. "But will I know? How?" I could just make out his features in the dying light. He was staring thoughtfully into the distance again, and a small smile crossed his face. He tilted his head in the way adults do when they have managed to pin words on a feeling that mind has fished from heart's maelstrom.

"You'll know. You'll know because it'll be the most painful thing you'll ever want to have happen to you over and over." He gazed into the west where Venus shone brightly, marking the place where the sun had gone down.

"I love you."

He has not spoken these words since his mother died, and they feel alien to his lips, a foreign language. He had wondered if he would ever be able to speak them again.

She lifts herself up from him slightly, her breasts curving down between her arms, her long red hair a curtain on one side of their faces. She stared into his eyes, and he cannot tell what she is thinking. He has walked out onto a limb and is wondering how long she will make him balance there.

Then she smiles and kisses him, her eyes never leaving his. Outside in the night an autumn storm is washing the city clean. They make love a second time as they listen to the hiss and trickle of the rain.

He is stroking her hair absently as sunlight filters into the room. It is already ten o'clock Monday morning, but they are powerless to leave the warm comfort of the bed.

"I've been telling my dad about you for the past month," he says lazily. "He really wants to meet you."

"I'd love to, but I won't have any time off until Christmas, and you said you'd come home to Boston with me then."

"It's only in Washington. Right down the road. Please, Jen, he's been having a hard time since I graduated from school and left home. It would mean a lot. Besides, for someone who can't take a day off, you don't seem in much of a hurry to get to work today." He pinches one of her breasts.

"Ow!" If you don't watch those hands, Mister, he'll be coming up here to bring you home in a body bag." She squinches his lips together from the sides with her thumb and forefinger. "I'm sure we can figure something out. I do want to meet him. You talk about him like he's your best friend."

"He is," he says in a puzzled tone. "Is there something odd about that?"

"Not at all." She laughs and pulls the covers over their heads.

"There's supposed to be a front coming through in a few days. We're going to have to hurry the hell up if we want to get

everything cribbed, "Willis was saying as he readied the second combine. "Did you get the truck gassed up yesterday?"

"Yeah," said Wilson. "I parked it over on the other side of the barn last night." He took a cautious pull from the mug of coffee that up until now had only been used to warm his hands against the cold September morning. I stood with them, looking down the road every now and then to check for the school bus. I prayed that this would be the last year I had to ride it, that next year I'd have enough money saved to get a used car.

"I'll let dad get a head start from the other side of the field; go ahead and empty him out and by the time you crib that load I ought to be full. We'll keep it going like that and work in toward the center of the field."

"Just like we did yesterday," Wilson said. *And the day before*, he thought.

Willis nodded, hauling himself up into the cab. "Hopefully we can have this one finished by lunch."

"I wish I was going to school with you," Wilson said as we walked back toward the barn and the waiting truck. "I guess I shouldn't complain, but it'd be nice if that truck at least had a radio to listen to. Gets mighty lonely driving corn around a field all day long."

I saw the bus turn onto our road. "I'd trade you in a heartbeat," I said resignedly.

"And what would you trade me for?"

"What? Oh." I laughed, shaking my head. "Why do you always twist words around like that?"

"Cause I know it bugs you."

"You bug me enough already," I said, trying to kick his left foot behind his right leg as he walked.

"Well, you'll only have to put up with me for a few more days." It only took a second for the words to sink in, and they shattered my heart like a bullet.

"You're leaving?" I couldn't look at him, so I turned and flailed my arm helplessly at the combines in the field, searching for something to say. "But... what about the harvest?"

"You know the rain will put an end to it by then whether we've gotten it all or not." He was right, of course. I knew.

"I don't want you to go." It came out as a husky whisper.

"I'm sorry, June. But there's something out there waiting for me, and I have to go meet it, whatever it is." He squeezed my shoulder. "I'll miss you all."

"Wilson—" It was at this point that the moment was spoiled

by my wonderful little brother, who came running up banging his knee against his black workman's lunchbox with every step. I glared at him.

"Hey Wilson! You gonna teach me to dunk after school today?"

"How'm I gonna do that?" Wilson said as he climbed into the big GMC stakebed. "I can't even do it myself. I'm too white." The truck roared to life, drowning out further conversation. He just waved down at us and smiled. Jimmy and I turned to meet the bus.

"So what's up your ass, Sis?" He said, banging me with his stupid lunchbox.

"Nothing. But that lunchbox is going to be up yours if it touches me one more time."

Wilson was snoring when I tiptoed into his room after midnight that night. The moon was shining in through the window, and I looked around until I spotted his backpack leaning against the dresser to my left. As I bent down to undo the straps I caught movement out of the corner of my eye and almost screamed. My heart pounding in my chest, I realized that it was my own reflection in the mirror on the dresser. I waited a moment to calm down and then open the pack. There was a pair of sneakers inside and what appeared to be a change of clothes, along with some military rations packaged in foil. I added a compact raincoat that could be folded into its own hood. Under all of this I slipped a sealed envelope that was stuffed with all of the feelings that I knew I would never be able to give words to in the light of day. Somewhere far down the road he would find it and read it and know that a silly, simple sixteen-year-old farm girl had fallen in love with him, and so what? He would keep walking, beckoned by the dark asphalt and victim to his own inertia.

I stole back to my room and crawled into bed, the last line I had written repeating itself in my mind as I drifted off to sleep: *I wouldn't trade you for anything.*

The afternoon was heavy with the threat of a coming storm. I was playing basketball against Jimmy and his best friend, Anthony, who lived down the road. I was a good foot taller than either of them, so I was easily draining baskets in the goal bolted above the entrance to the barn. Dad and Wilson had just finished cribbing the last of the corn, and evidently not a moment too soon. Huge, purplish thunderheads loomed in the west, bearing down on our small farm and its freshly-stubbed fields. I could hear thunder rumbling.

The work was largely finished for the season, and Wilson had told us the previous night that he planned to leave tomorrow morning when the storm had passed.

I swished a jump shot, trying not to think about it, and that was when Jimmy and Anthony got into a fight.

To this day I can't remember how it began, but there was a scream of "You little shithead!" and Jimmy was on top of Anthony, pummeling him murderously, and I couldn't get him to stop. Anthony had screamed at first, trying to cover his face, but soon lay bloody and unconscious as Jimmy's fists *chunked* into his torso.

"HEY!!" I heard Wilson roar, and turned around to see him charging up from the corncribs, the most incredible mix of emotions on his face that I've ever seen: Rage, horror, fear, sadness. He ran up and jerked Jimmy away from Anthony and shook him like a rag doll.

"WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TRYING TO DO? Look at him!" He jerked Jimmy savagely around to face where Anthony lay. "Your best friend! What were you going to do if I hadn't stopped you?" He was bent down, screaming into Jimmy's face, his face a dark and deadly shade of red. "What the hell's going on here?" He shook Jimmy again and then did something that astounded us all: He burst into tears.

He fell to his knees, drew Jimmy close, and cried into his chest.

"Your best friend!" He croaked. "What the hell's going on here?"

What the hell's going on here?" He says in disbelief, the suitcase sliding out of his hand and onto the floor. She is up in an instant, trying to pull the clothes back onto her sweat-slicked body. The man in the bed makes no such effort, but simply sits with his face in his hands.

"Wil, oh Jesus, this isn't what you think—"

But Wilson has ceased to think at this point. The scene before him is insanely impossible. A fuse blows and he simply becomes a machine, stepping forward and kicking savagely at the man's head. The man lets out a yell of pain, and tries to rise from the bed.

"Oh my God, Wil, don't, please!" She jumps on him, but he doesn't seem to notice. He drives his fist into the man's stomach, and as he doubles over drives a knee up into his face. She begins clawing with her fingernails, and he notices long enough to throw her across the room, where she lands in a heap against the wall, sobbing.

The man does not even try to fight back, but Wilson will not remember this until much later. He loops his fist into the man's ribs over and over, breaking them.

"Oh, Wil, how can you do this!" She shrills. "Your own father..." She sobs hysterically, helplessly.

But Wilson does not hear. His fists and feet carry out their appointed tasks.

Somehow he regains control. He leaves them, one streaming tears and the other blood. He gets in his car and starts driving. He cannot feel anything, cannot think anything. He stares at the tendril of pavement as it rushes toward him from the horizon. The tears will not come until he is almost to Pittsburgh.

"It all happened within five minutes," Wilson told me as we sat in the barn. "The two people who meant more to me than anything." He held his hands over his face, and tears leaked from under them. The rain began, beating loudly on the tin roof. My parents were rushing Anthony to the hospital.

I pulled his hands away from his red, puffy face and began kissing him. I felt that somehow it would be possible to take his pain into myself and snuff it out.

The sun rose the next morning on a crisp, vivid Saturday washed clean by rain. I walked with Wilson the few miles down to Nebraska 58, breathing in the new day, saying very little. It was probably the most peaceful hour and a half of my life. Eventually the road came to a T, and we faced each other for the last time.

"Which way are you going to go?" I asked him.

"Left, I think."

"Still west?"

"Yes... for a while at least. Until I'm ready to face what's behind me."

"Good luck." I hugged him.

"I'll never forget you."

He turned and walked away, his backpack hiding his face from me. He had walked maybe five hundred yards when a pickup rattled by. He stuck out his thumb and the driver pulled over, letting him climb into the back. The truck pulled back onto the road and drove west, dwindling to a speck on the horizon before disappearing altogether.

That evening when I went to my room to go to sleep there was a sheet of drawing paper laying on the bedspread. On it was a picture of a young woman bending over a backpack to put something inside. Next to her was a dresser with a mirror on it, and in the mirror could be seen a man laying on a bed, propped up on one elbow, watching her. On the back of the paper were written four words: *Thanks for the refill.*

Zachary Stoudenmire

Four poems

My Dirt

I stand with my head bent towards the sky
in reverence to this dirt— my history and my dirt.
Fingernails caked— each palm brimming
with the lives and deaths of centuries—
eons— millineums passed before.

I stand with my feet rooted— each
growing— searching— sucking— thriving on the energy
flowing— circling— cycling in the soil.
Ten toes moving like earthworms
tunneling and feeding on rotted organic
and weathered sediment.

My mouth pulls as my nostrils push
Old life replaced by new song
My God has died riding a wave of your change,
a legacy abused and discarded.
But still, I do worship my God in my dirt.

A Sonnet to Poverty in 1927

Beneath a tin roof on the seedy side of town
lives a freedman a generation past
his prime. He keeps to himself, alone.
He lives on handouts, because life does last
when the money does not. "My dad was in
the colored infantry," he says. So born
eighteen months out of slavery he still believes the men
who say negro but mean nigger.

Long gone
is the flower of the daisy. He has
passed his life on and so did it fall
away. With each generation the gaps
do grow. Solitude in the home is complete
isolation in the mind. Wearing worn
trousers and worse shoes he struts
down his block. For poverty is one
thing, but his pride is how it should.

So he wakes each morning with nothing to see,
But wakes just the same contented to be.

Synthesis

I am bent to capture a melody
in word.

A slow, pulsing harmony to be seen
seldom heard.

Plucking a string or pushing a breath
A metronome clicking with Milton on a shelf.

But Hughes sang
melodies— quick sweet
Be Bop Jazz—move your feet
dance till dawn
speed till noon
Coltrane and Hughes— Partners in song.

But now I need soft, airy tunes
to bounce through my poem.

I need flowing and rhyming and
switching in time.

I need neither Milton nor Hughes
but both at the same time.

Another Cycle

Brother sleeps
weary from a long day's work
And sister rises leaving her glade
Silver sphere she floats
always shrinking and growing she goes
back to dawn to rest till dusk
where orange catches red to pink
where haze precedes darkness
she rises again.

Brother rises as sister dies
and mourns her with rays from fiery eyes
curses the shroud of pinpoint light
then back to fields of cloud
she rises again.

Nashville or Memphis

"I don't know exactly where I'm going, but I'll let you all know when I get there," said Elmore Glenn to his family who had gathered on the front porch to see him off. He hugged each of them and picked up his army green duffle bag and his worn and beaten guitar case. He tipped his black cowboy hat to them and smiled showing two rows of chipped yellow teeth. He was a peculiar looking fellow. His nose was crooked and bent slightly to the left. One of his eyebrows was noticeably longer and bushier than the other. And at nineteen his thin, blond hair had already receded a good ways back on his scalp.

"You got any idea at all where you're gonna go?" asked his father.

"I'm going to where all the recording studios and agents are," Elmore said proudly.

"Which city is that?"

"Hmmmm....I hadn't decided exactly where I'm headed." Elmore looked confused for a moment. "Probably Nashville or maybe Memphis."

"Elmore, honey, I wish you'd just stay here with us. I'd feel a whole lot better if you weren't leaving. Your father's gonna need you when the soybeans are ready for harvest," said his mother who was biting her bottom lip.

"Ira, you and I already gave him our consent to leave. Don't go making him feel guilty. Besides, when he's rich and famous and singin' on the radio all the time

he can send those big, fat paychecks home and I won't have to plant those damn soybeans anymore. Right, Son?" Elmore's father said with a smile. Elmore nodded.

"Elmie, when you coming back?" said Charlotte, his eleven year old sister who was chewing on her nails.

"I'm not coming back until I'm rich and successful," Elmore said patting his guitar case.

"You mean you ain't never coming back?" Charlotte said.

"Charlotte, be nice to your brother," said their mother.

"But, Mommy, you know he can't sing a lick. Everybody knows Elmore's got a rotten voice. They wouldn't even let him sing in the church choir."

"Elmore, don't pay your sister no mind. I happen to think you have a heavenly voice and you'll make it big someday singing all of those songs you've worked so hard on writing," his mother said.

"Can I have your bike while you're gone," said Charlotte.

"Course you can," Elmore replied.

"Can I have your stack of PLAYBOYS til you get back," said Sam, his sixteen year old brother.

"Your what?" shrieked their mother. Elmore's ears grew hot as his face flushed red.

"Calm down, Ira," said Elmore's father. He put his arm around his son's shoulder and said, "Use your head out there, and you'll be fine. And Son.....,"

"Yeah, Dad?"

"Son, don't listen to them people out there who tell you that you ain't good enough. You just believe in yourself. You look out for yourself." Elmore nodded.

"And you might not be the most talented singer out there but if you stay determined maybe you can make it."

"I'm gonna make ya'll proud of me. Don't worry

about me one bit. I'll be all riiiiight," he said as he slipped off the porch and fell into a shrub several feet below. He looked at his father who was wincing. He climbed back up onto the porch.

"Elmore, you stay away from the booze and the loose women. All those famous musicians get caught up in the bottle. Don't you do that, you hear?" said his mother. Hearing his mother speak of such things made him blush again. "You find a good church to go to every Sunday, too, Elmore. You hear?"

"Yes, Momma, I hear loud and clear."

While they had been talking, an old man steered his long, burgandy Lincoln Continental into the driveway and made his way to the porch. Elmore put the guitar case and duffle bag down so that he could stick his hand out to greet him. The man didn't notice his extended hand; he stared at Elmore's army bag. After several moments of waiting he felt foolish and dropped his hand. "Boy, you going somewhere?" said the old man still staring at the suitcase.

"Mr. Dooley, I'm going to find my fortune playing music. Nashville probably. Memphis maybe." Mr. Dooley looked at him for a moment and frowned.

"Boy, I saw you sing down at the tavern weekend before last and they booed you off the damned stage. You can't sing worth squat. You sang so bad I tore my cocktail napkin up into pieces and stuffed 'em in my ears." A hurt look fell onto Elmore's face; he said nothing.

Clive Dooley lived a little less than a mile down the road from Elmore Glenn's family. Everyone in Elmore's family called Mr. Dooley a family friend yet Elmore couldn't think of one person in his family who could stand to be in the same room with the old bastard. He didn't have many friends and not much family left to

speak of so he had "adopted" the Glenns as his surrogate family. They had grudgingly accepted his friendship. He tried very hard to be nice, but somehow he always managed to offend somebody. He was a short man with stubby arms and legs. His neck seemed to sit directly on his shoulders, and it had always appeared to Elmore as though he had no neck. "You a fine kid, but you ain't cut out for the music bidness. Your voice ain't no good," he commented, displaying his "special charm" which had given him the distinction of being widely recognized as the most tactless person in the entire county.

"Dooley, what the hell do you know about the music business?" asked Elmore's father.

"I know that boy sings like a hyena. Dinner ready yet. I'm starved."

"Shut up, Dooley!"

"I'm just trying to help the boy so he don't go all the way to Nashville and get his feelings hurt."

"Thanks for all of your wonderful help," Elmore's father said sarcastically. "I don't know how we'd get along without you, Clive."

"Hey, what are friends for," Dooley replied in all seriousness. "Ya'll eaten yet?" he asked one more time hoping that he would be offered some of the ham and collards that his nose told him were inside.

Elmore had a sullen look on his face. Mr. Dooley's comments about the poor quality of his singing voice had taken some of the excitement out of his big farewell. Deciding that he needed to assure his family and more importantly himself that he was a talented musician, he took his guitar from its case. "I think I'll play one last song before I leave for you all to remember me by. This is a little song I wrote just two days ago. Its a song based on personal experience that I titled 'WAL-MART LOVE'."

Beautiful sounds came from his guitar as he strummed the chords softly. Everyone watched his fingers dance and they smiled as he played. Then he began singing. His voice was, indeed, like that of a hyena. As soon as Elmore began to sing Mr. Dooley jumped off the porch, ran to his car, and drove away in a cloud of dust. So involved with his song, Elmore barely noticed Dooley's departure and he continued to sing. His singing voice covered the full musical scale - from a deep foghorn baritone to a shrill window-shattering soprano. And frequently without warning he shot straight from one to the other during the course of the song. With this painful and offensive sounding voice, he sang of an unrequited love for a cashier at the local Wal-Mart. He sang the words passionately. He sang the words joyfully. And unfortunately for his family he sang the words very loudly. No one wanted to upset Elmore by letting on that his voice was causing them severe aural discomfort, so they all continued to smile as he sang. All of them, that is, except for Charlotte. Charlotte stuck her index fingers in her ears and squinted her eyes in agony. "Daddy, make him quit," she hollered. Her father glared angrily at her. She said no more but did not remove her finger "ear plugs". Elmore finished his song and put his guitar back in its case feeling very pleased with his performance. He hugged his family and got into his black '72 Chevy Nova and drove off toward Nashville or Memphis (he wasn't yet sure which) towards what he figured had to be certain stardom.

Tender Night

Tender is the night
Where the moon holds court
Above
Swirling junkies
And 'crossed lovers.

The two of us here—
Together, alone—
In soft, sweet love.

Alone.

Tender night in America:
Purple velvet dark
Draped across World's canvas—
Alone with everyone else.

To be young.
To be hopeful.
To be afraid of Life's wrath.
Life— unrelenting, sly fiend
 Leading to Death.

No matter.

Tonight—
Tender, tender night,
Fragile yet sublime.
Everything is possible.

The Mistake

She knew as soon as she came that she was pregnant, and called the Midwifery as soon as she could get Gary back into his clothes and out the door.

"This is Birth Aid, how can I help you"

"Hello, I am calling about a midwife, I mean, I am pregnant and I will be needing someone this afternoon."

"Can you hold?"

"Oh, uh, sure"

She was starting to stretch, to swell. She placed her free hand on her belly, spread her fingers wide.

She felt a faint kicking within.

A voice piped through the line, "This is Birth Aid, how can I help you?"

"I called earlier, I've been on hold, I'm going to need a midwife very soon, my pregnancy is developing really rapidly, I mean I'm already starting to get big and I only conceived about half an hour ago."

"Oh, I see. Sorry for the delay. Can you hold? I am going to let you speak to one of the midwives."

"Great."

After a delay almost long enough to make her hang up in disgust, someone started talking to her.

"Hello, this is Helen Hunt. How can I help you?"

"Hi. Like I told your secretary earlier, I conceived this morning and I am going to need someone this afternoon, I mean actually this seems like a very quick-developing pregnancy and I need someone to come over in the next couple of hours."

"Oh, I'm sorry, but we require three hours notification, and we usually prefer to work with couples that have planned their pregnancies with us. If you like I can give you the number for the State Clinic."

"I don't understand."

"We can't help you. The number you are looking for is 437-5433. Is that clear?"

"Uh, yeah, I guess it is."

She called the State Clinic. No one answered. Her water broke.

Lying naked on her bed with her legs spread wide, she waited for the contractions. They never came.

The swelling went down, disappeared.

"Gary?"

"Yeah?"

"False alarm."

The Tale of the Three Clouds

I don't know if you've noticed it, but our minds play the oddest of tricks on us at times.

On my way back from my last vacation, I was safely ensconced next to a window seat on a DC-10. My mind was overcome with boredom, and was looking for something to fill the void. My neighbor seemed more interested in the in-flight alcoholic beverages than carrying out polite conversation. I had extracted the very last bit of amusement from the plastic fork the previous passenger had left behind and my empty mustard packet, when my attention wandered outside. And lo and behold, a freakish adventure was just starting to get enacted outside my window.

Out in the distance, at about 9 O' clock was floating a wispy cumulus cloud with lots of curves shaped uncannily like a beautiful but sad princess. Sad, because she was kidnapped by a cruel witch with a pointy hat and a pointier chin, whose outline was framed by a cumulonimbus just above the princess. By now, all those dry martinis had taken their toll on my neighbor who had started snoring shrilly through his nose. His periodic exhalation seemed just like the witch's shrieking laughter as it exulted in triumph. All seemed lost, and I could only hope the King would hurry with his ransom and deliver his daughter from a terrible fate.

But wait, just as I was about to shut the window, I noticed another cumulus cloud advancing rapidly towards

the princess. And this one looked strikingly like a tall, dark knight atop a fast horse making its way towards the witch. As I crushed ice and Planters peanuts in my mouth, the witch puffed herself up to her full size in an attempt to intimidate. Undaunted, the knight challenged and dared the witch to make the first move. Before she could complete her spell that would no doubt have reduced the knight to some horrific state, our valiant hero deftly moved around and with one skillful move, relieved her of her magic wand and most of her evil powers. The witch shrieked in dismay just as my neighbor gave an especially heavy snore, but the battle was far from over. The knight closed in, and the two chunks of water vapor and ice caught in a swirling turbulence clashed for territorial rights thousands of feet high in the stratosphere. A fierce struggle ensued, with my neighbor so thoughtfully providing all the necessary sound effects. The witch's spells pitted against the knight's overall athletic superiority. Floating like a cloud, he started to make serious inroads to the witch's defense, and soon enough, the battle reached its climactic finale. The knight, obviously motivated by the strong love he had for the princess, delivered the final coup de grace. He hurled his spear right at the witch's heart, just as a 737 zoomed through the clouds. With a loud wail of pain and frustration, the witch split into tiny fragments that spread all over the evening sky that suddenly turned a deep crimson.

The princess, who had keenly been taking in the dramatization provided by winds and water, was overwhelmed with gratitude. She gleefully fell into the knight's welcoming arms as the two clouds merged.

Straining to see the tender union that was now taking place behind the tail wing, I knew that the couple would live happily ever after.

Trea Holladay

Two poems

Brother, Can You Spare a Dilithium Crystal?

spirals of space junk and light draining to a void
sucks in my stares as well and i wonder
i want to know what happens on the other side
mom and pop said stay normal—stay away
but my starboard engine just went boom

i was in reverse, pulling away hard
it seemed like for years, probably only seconds
don't look, i hear them say
why? will i hear a mermaid sing?
they say heaven's call is a tunnel of light
but why can't it be this black path to exhaustion?

the voices pop in again...
i've got to do what's expected of me
ignore the call of eternal derangement of sense
then the red man on my shoulder sounds in...
it must be good, if even light gives in
let go and think of a moist field of daisies

the stronger voice wins again
i flip the switch and start coasting in

Gone To See a Shrink

It's cold down here
I like it
It's dark down here
Cave-safe

Bubbles are blown
My lungs and eyes grow
dim, dimmer, opened

People? No...
I need my protective lake
of brown and drowned sound

Reality?
I heard about that once.
That's cool.
(snapping fingers heard)

My skin growing
ever more adhesive
to the skeletons
in the inflating closet.

Dreamed evils
acted out shortcomings

I used to let them visit me down here.
Wanna see my scars?

Dana F. Griffith

Two poems

Innocence

Your small hand carefully cupped the glitter
left behind by the street musician,
each piece a different color, a different shape
like your world, no flaws, no mistakes,
only new days, facing the sun, gazing at newborn stars.

Your spirit speeds by me so fast I can't hold on.
You turn to me with outstretched hand
and offer me a piece of yourself,
wanting nothing in return but love.
You don't ask the tough questions today
like what's it like to have babies and when am
I going to die?

Your handful of glitter, like a stained-glass window,
softens the edge and mystery of death.
This is what undiscovered seashells on an undiscovered
shore should be
like.
You look at me with questions in your eyes and
I think how simple it would be if the answers were in the
glitter,
each color offering a different solution.

Why have I been given such a sacrament?
Your eyes look at me as if I were the Blessed Mother.
And I feel more like sliding mud than the guiding star
that
you think I am.

I remember the evening you were born,
your body looked long and thin like it had been squeezed
through
a stovepipe. There was a drop of amber fluid on your
forehead that night. And in my drunken stupor, I mis-
took it for a Topaz.

I wish we could carve a Topaz sunset out of each day,
and
have at least one answer for every ten pieces of glitter.
And that green, and tender and new are part of our
vocabulary.
And when you look back you see the glitter, the musician
and the freshly fallen rain.

The Dream

Into the rooms we drift, our legs missing, our hearts big.
Like slow molasses, we edge into parts unknown.
First the hall, so narrow, so dark, I feel your breath, then
your hands
warm and secure, slide up and down my arms.
This is an embrace that might be felt in the soles of our
shoes, if we had feet.

Next is a room I don't recognize.
It's twenty by twenty, with a candelabra on a single
wooden table.
Again, your arms reach out from the walls and I meet
you at the first floorboard.
Your eyes hold my gaze, and I feel like an arsonist at his
first fire.

Now the kitchen is in view. You in the door, me at the
table. You in brown, me in red taffeta. Your fingers
spread over my body, like a child's hand in a
Lost and Found Box. And memories are here. Brown
sugar circles surround us. How can dreams not last any
longer than seconds?

Next, light streams between the slats in the blinds, sun
spreads across the quilt. The music comes on, the first
note, struggling out of a spider web of sleep. We're
creeping, slowly, slowly into a new time. A faint breeze
blows and I feel my toes. The dream is over. I smile and
turn over.

Embracing the Mind

It deteriorates slowly, a bit at a time,
I have sensed its progression.
My head became filled with unusual ideas
And impassioned with mindless pursuits
— a cherry snowcone, a bamboo umbrella.

Thoughts are constantly swirling round,
deeper and more confusing.
I see the black-haired girl enveloped in snow,
it covers and transforms her.
Her friend carries a giant blue crayon
for no reason at all.

Voices and sounds, I hear what others do not.
The flowers and trees scream to me,
pleading for their freedom.
I apologize to the trees (their size is too big)
But I save the flowers, pulling them from the ground,
two at a time.
I laugh as I work, it is a good feeling.

The excitement and effort have made me tired.
Over half have been removed when I stop
and lie on the ground
beside the liberated flowers.

Homesickness

Words trip me and
I skin my knees on your

sandpaper
tongue. Running

blindly from your
beat I bury in your

pudgy pit,
curl backwards

to baby deep
deep inside you

searching instead for
mother's wet kisses

cool breath
on my burning

stinging, scrappy
knees.

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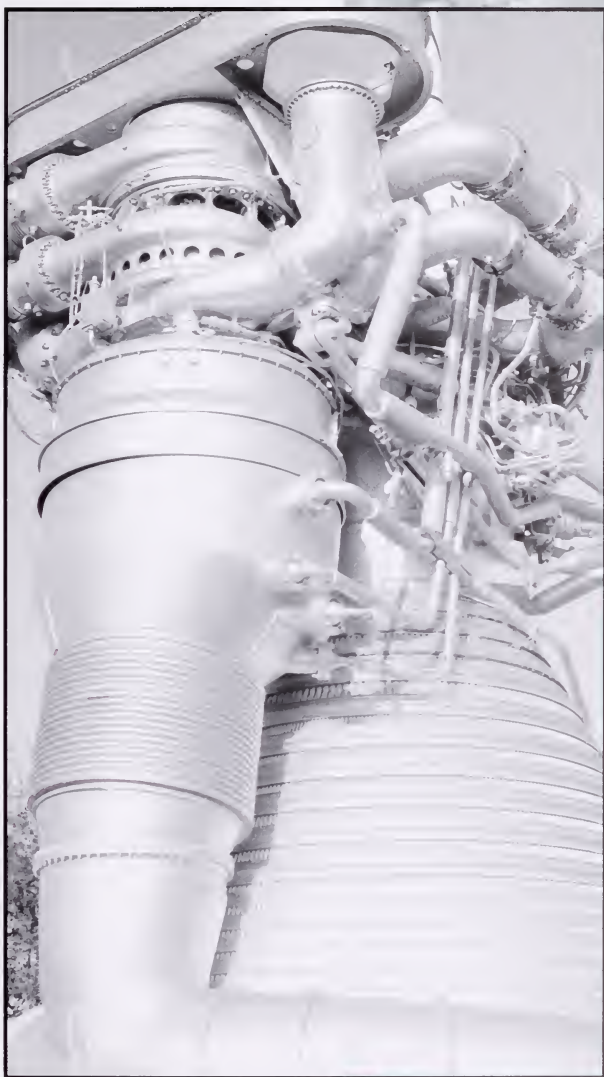
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She smiled at me, that slip of a grin
stepped up and put a flower to my hand
"love is three rusty nails" she said
and looked through me to see that love . . .
"love is three nails—didn't you know?"
and dandelion drifted down the street
I turned to walk on, my own way drifting.
Could I refuse three nailed love from her?
or refute it? I did not yet know myself
I stopped to find nails in a burned out house
to hang my mind on this thought awhile, longer . . .
an old church sidled up, friendly-like
they seem so old and lonely sometimes
so I paused from my way, again, to talk to it.
opposite a synagogue who eyed us
shrikes played in the thorns, a homey racket
the litter of their life spiked on that hedge
they impaled their history there, no pretense.
'come in,' they said, 'come into our house'
so I knocked, and the priest came by and by
I handed him my nails, three, and said
"Hello, I am so tired of the world out here,
could you put me up for the night?"



I was never taught to be a quitter. It runs against everything I hold dear. I quit today. I dropped out. I walked out. I said "Enough is enough!"—and I quit. Just quit, and I feel great! I spent the rest of the day just being, being one moment at a time.

Seeking to be somewhere they couldn't find me, I stopped by the office supply store. Spent seventeen dollars and one hour and forty-five minutes. Did you ever stop to think how many different things there are to look at in an office supply store? They've got marvelous things in

I quit today. I dropped out. I walked out. I said "Enough is enough!" - and I quit. Just quit, and I feel great!

there. The different sizes and shapes of the envelopes alone are enough to give an industrial designer an orgasm. And the different kinds of writing instruments! I don't just mean just plain pens and pencils, I mean pens that are made out of wood, pencils that are made out of metal . . . and all available in designer colors, to mention the precious metal variety of gold and silver and something else that I couldn't identify but it would take your entire week's paycheck to buy. I'd be afraid to carry a fountain pen that cost \$350. I don't carry anything that's worth \$350. I don't have anything that's worth \$350. No quitter would carry a pen worth \$350.

Not only that, but I always thought that pens wrote in ink and pencils wrote in lead. NOT! They've got pens that write in four different colors, ink that erases, pencils that don't erase; they have rollerballs, porous points all available in points from blunt to ones that could pass for hypodermics and refills that cost more than the instrument it refills. They even had one that could write in two colors at the same time!

Do you know how many different shapes erasers come in? There are square ones, round ones, colored ones, rectangular ones and ones that look like something from the Far Side. I think I would like to work in the place that uses Far Side erasers. They must have a good outlook on things, I bet they make a profit . . . I bet they're all quitters. Someone who is not a quitter would never use a Far Side eraser. I should have bought one.

And the paper! Ever stop to think how many decisions are involved in buying a package of paper? What weight? What color? What shade of the color? What size? How much cotton content? It goes ad-nauseam. I quit. I bought the stuff on sale.

After leaving the office supply store, even quitters run out of interest in the mundane, I decided to hide in the art museum. I hadn't been there before, and it should be a perfect hide-out for quitters. Four-and-a-half hours of slow-moving, dream-like bliss. Hidden away from the world, reveling in my quitting state, discovering the undiscovered and finding that I wasn't the only quitter.

Did you know that they have typos on the description cards? They do. Not many, but they are there. I never thought to look before. I thought only my typewriter couldn't spell; it's comfortin

now that someone else has an imperfect machine too. It must have been a quitter who typed cards.

I surprised myself and found that I had a great deal of interest in the antique furniture exhibit. Someone had done a lot of work getting it all shined up like it was. I started to move one piece to look behind it to see if it said "Ethan Allen." I couldn't tell, the guard came by. Just because you're thinking about doing something shouldn't mean that the guards should suddenly appear. The finish on the furniture was gorgeous. I wondered to myself if they used Homer Mesby's stuff. I'd be able to tell if I could touch it, but between the guards and the "DO NOT TOUCH" signs, I didn't dare. So, I stood there and just wondered. The guards didn't seem to mind if you stood around and just wondered about things. It's when you start thinking about doing something that they get upset. I wondered if any of them were quitters.

In the "Hall of Sculpture" I found this wonderful statue called "JOY OF SPRING WATERS." It was absolutely beautiful . . . she was nude. Her derriere reminded me of that great shot of Bo Derek from "10." I thought about touching it, but the guard came by. After wondering about it, I decided I wanted to be a quitter, not a deviate.

She was so graceful. Her body was rising from some kind of bronzed water source, and then soared upward, flowing, her leg raised as if dancing. The graceful curve of her hips gave way to the sensuousness of her waist which flowed into the voluptuous mound of her breasts. Her arms reached up past her mysterious and tempting face, reaching ever upward to grasp a spider web. A spider web? Yep! Somebody on the cleaning crew was a quitter.

Some of the sculpture wasn't so good. Actually I thought some of it looked like things in the garage in my neighborhood has every year. Some of the sculpture showed evidence of the cleaning crew's quitters and some of them were rusted. Who wants to see that in an art gallery? I noticed on the description card that it was a "MUSEUM PURCHASE," so if they paid for it, I guess somebody wanted it. I went back to look at "JOY OF SPRING WATERS"—the guard was still there. I was beginning to wonder if I was the deviate.

She was absolutely beautiful. . . she was nude. Her derriere reminded me of that great shot of Bo Derek from "10."

The paintings were exceptional. I actually felt myself slipping away, musing myself into the situation and place depicted. To my surprise, I found that portraits are interesting when you take time to look at them. I previously thought that portraits were a bore, I mean, who cares what nobody's tenth-great aunt looked like. But this time it was different. I had quit for the day, so I found myself wanting to talk to some of them, and I tried—after I checked around for the guard.

There was one portrait in particular, done sometime around the turn of the century. It was really a suave guy, slicked back hair, mustache, expensive suit, silk shirt—I mean the works! He had the neatest stick pin in his cravat. The artist had obviously gone through a great deal of effort

to get every last jewel painted on it. Every detail was there, you could almost see the individual facets on the diamonds. I found the answer ten feet further down the gallery wall. It was his wife. I bet she gave him that stick pin and told the artist so. She wasn't totally unattractive, but very severe. I suspect the artist was putting things in their best light. I noticed that if you hung the portraits side by side, they both would be looking the same direction. I wondered if she was keeping an eye on him, or, if hung the other way, he was keeping an eye on her. I suspect it was the former. He looked like a quitter.

I think the next time I go to an art museum, I'll do a survey of the relationship between the title of a painting and its subject. Except for the portrait section, I don't think there is a relationship. And even when the title does sound interesting, you can't tell because the painting is so dark. There was one painting called "VISITATION OF so-and-so TO SAINT what's-her-name IN something-or-other PRISON." I thought it was nice of so-and-so to go and visit what's-her-name, so I stepped back to see what was going on. All I could see were these circles that were just a shade lighter than the background. I looked closer and found that they were faces, not sure they had bodies, but the faces were there. The harder you looked, the more you could see. So much for stepping back to get the big picture. So-and-so was really quite attractive, and Saint what's-her-name looked glad to see her. I decided that it was really nice of so-and-so to take the time to visit that way. I found the jailer; he had the keys. Actually, I think he had the keys, his face was by what looked to be a door. I couldn't tell for sure; it was too dark.

Either Saint what's-her-name or so-and-so had a handmaiden, although the term "maiden" might be too gracious. She was ugly! She reminded me of my sixth grade teacher. I checked the date of the painting. My teacher was old, but even she couldn't be that old and still allowed to touch children's minds. I finally figured out that the artist was a quitter. After all, he painted enough to make the point of so-and-so visiting what's-her-name. Why do more? Some quitters become famous artists.

I did notice that a lot of the paintings were of people without clothes. I had always thought that people were kind of prudish back then. Dream on. There was one called "THE FLEA CHASE," and it showed this woman, breasts hanging out of the nightie she was holding away from her chest. Her maid (I assume it was her maid, but I suppose she could have been a very close friend) was sitting next to her pointing a finger as if saying "There he goes!" In the shadow behind them were these two men, kind of smirking and leering as they peered from behind some kind of tapestry. It was hard to tell; it was dark. I instinctively looked to see if there was a guard around. In basic training the "flea chase" meant you got a bristle-brush shower and the closest shave you could imagine. Actually I think the artist of this painting was a quitter too. He was actually painting "THE OBSERVATION," got side-tracked, and just quit. Somebody else gave the name to it.

Do you realize how eager art gallery librarians are to help? Do you realize they haven't seen a living soul in twenty years?

I found another one called "SONG OF THE NIGHTINGALE," which showed a young man sitting on a rock and a nightingale barely visible in the tree behind her. This guy was a quitter too. He left the background light instead of taking the time to paint it night. Nightingales sing in the daytime? The woman was cute too, and the painting was light enough to tell what was going on. She was different though; she had all her clothes on. I never saw any guards around her. She had this twinkle in her eye as though she had something going on with the bird.

I found one painting that particularly impressed me. It was called "INSIDE" and showed this 1950's living room scene with a little boy and three ladies. I just knew that this artist had to be a quitter. I went down to the museum library to see if I could find some biographic information about him. Do you realize how eager art gallery librarians are to help? Do you realize they haven't found a living soul in twenty years? Do you realize that they have a 3x5 card on every item in the museum? Do you realize that the 3x5 card tells you absolutely nothing?

The two gallery librarians really bought into my question "What do you know about this guy?" One lady started pulling out these encyclopedias of artists and found some entries for him. They were in French and German. She wasn't a quitter. She read them to me in French and German in German-phonetically. I asked about English, it took awhile.

The other lady scurried through the files and stacks and started pulling out these art journals from 1905 and 1910, still in the mailing wrappers. She wasn't a quitter either. I asked if they had any journals from 1964 since we had found out that he died that year. 1964 they didn't have. Nobody was a quitter.

I finally found enough to answer my question about whether or not the artist was a quitter. He was. It was his old man who made him go to art school. Paris, Chicago and all that. I just knew it. The librarian told me that the gallery had a portrait that he had done. I went and looked. There was this huge portrait of a Mrs. What's-her-face. It was hanging in the main hallway of the gallery. She must have been the patron saint of the gallery, or maybe her husband was. Anyway they must've paid a bundle to have it painted; it was a good eight feet tall. But I could tell that the artist was a quitter. If you looked close, there wasn't a hem in her dress. Only one ear had an earring. One of her fingers didn't have a fingernail. Her left shoe had three more buttons in the right. It was great! I knew I like the guy.

So that's how I spent my quitting time. I think I could be a successful quitter. Gives me something to shoot for. I think I'll quit again tomorrow—after all, it takes practice to make perfect.

I think I could be a successful quitter. Gives me something to shoot for. I think I'll quit again tomorrow-after all, it takes practice to make perfect

One by one flowing skirts brush the stones
on the way to the other side of midnight.
The crisp, cool air slides by bare arms,
guiding them upward.

The night is quiet except for the sound of
bare feet tamping lightly against the hard mud.
Cool, and brown is the way of those
who have gone before.

And although the familiar feel their
spirit preceding them this time,
the virgin's experience is always new
to those who want it.

The drums pound their beckoning, and the body
is held hostage by the rhythm of the beat.
Treading onward, they ignore nature's hostile fingers,
And limbs surrender to sharp, slappy branches.

Halfway up,
scratched and stinging, tender flesh
harbors tiny pools of standing blood,
and skin is itching now from the hard fought duals with nature.

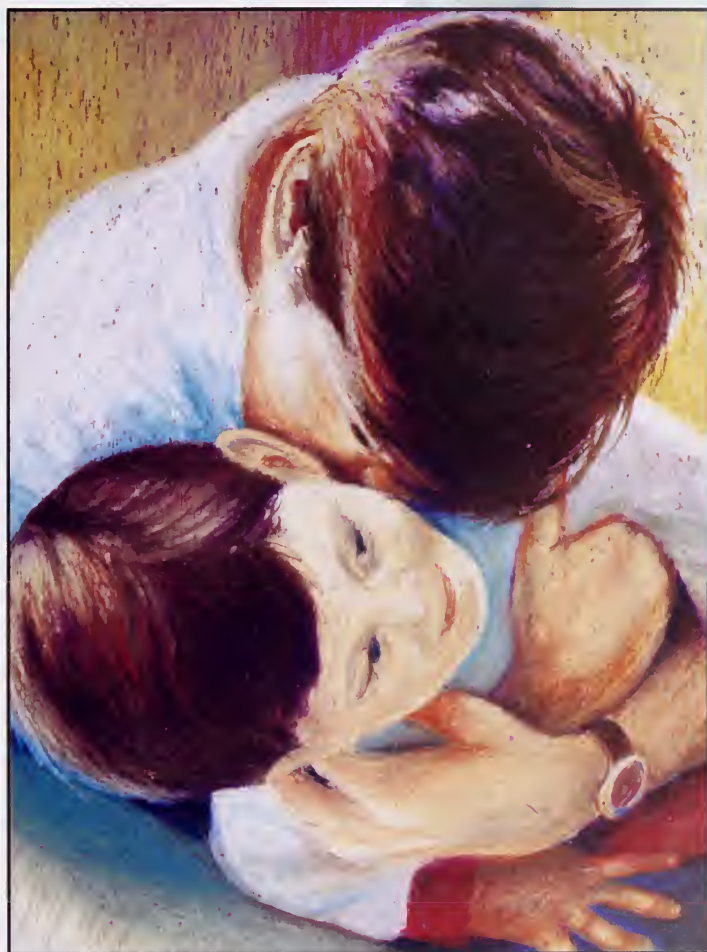
Unaware of pain
and hot with fever, they continue
on their pilgrimage upward
to the other side midnight.

Finally, at the top, they stop and stare.
Spirits fly from cages free at last.
Fire stones flung from old Shamans agitate the blackened sky.
And the earth, shining with perspiration, drops her fluid on naked thighs.
The soul's music cries out. No mortal could reach such notes.

All night the spirits come and go,
called by the wind, released by the fire.
Some even kneel in prayer hoping for a dance with the sparks.
And when their time is done stones glow red, and a coalescence
with bird or snake is logged in journals yet unwritten.

What is the meaning of this other side of midnight?
Could it be the closest kind of Communion with God?
For those who just saw the fire the only way back is down.
For those who felt the dark's blessedness,
the other side of midnight is here.

And the world awaits a new Spirit.



I witnessed three religious services today:
A funeral,
A baptism,
A marriage.

I stood by the graveside,
The people were weeping over the death of a friend.
They could not believe he could take his own life,
Leaving them without him.
Everybody thought they knew who he was;
How could he hurt them like this?
They understand why he said those things—
It was no joke;
It meant something to him.
And now everybody is mourning
In their pain . . .
Sorrow or anger,
He always could make them laugh.
Now his silence is the most deafening.
And I hear him cry
As I lay him in the ground.

I stood on the riverbank,
The young man stood before the elders.
He spoke of a new commitment,
He spoke of the Love of Christ,
He spoke of the change the Lord had made in his life.
Under forgiving eyes—
Stern, yet forgiving eyes—
He stood at the water's edge, motionless.
He was afraid of the water.
The currents, he knew, were dangerous.
The sun beat on his body,
The sweat beaded on his brow . . .
The High Elder took the young man's hand
And led him into the water.

I stood in the sanctuary,
The groom stood at the altar
Wrenching his hands nervously.
He was the happiest man alive—
And the most scared—
He had been left once before
Alone, staring at the cross on the altar.
He knew now that one
Was not meant to be.
He was unsure of making a commitment then,
But not now.
Still, he awaited his bride,
And until those vows were made
He knew the future was a wild card.
He took a deep breath, and awaited,
And gazed down the aisle.

I witnessed three religious services today:
A funeral,
A baptism,
A marriage,
from within.





and the waitress has forgotten to bring her more coffee

and she's out of cigarettes again, and the only other person
she could get one from is the white-haired Shriner who just stole
her salt and pepper shakers, and he's smoking menthols

and the comics are missing her *Picayune*, and
she hasn't washed her hair in three days,
and her feet don't reach the bottom rung on the stool they never do

outside, broken strands of cheap, colored beads rot
in puddles of piss and beer and sticky, tourist rum drinks, and
the people are smiling like cartoon characters, and a slick-haired
teenage junkie waits skinny, blackeyed by a nervous payphone

"Our bodies are time machines," he says as she walks by him,
looking at the gray sidewalk," with no fast forward
and no rewind."

"Deep," she says.

We're all waiting for the great cosmic audio cassette player repairman in the sky,"
smiling sideways smile he says.

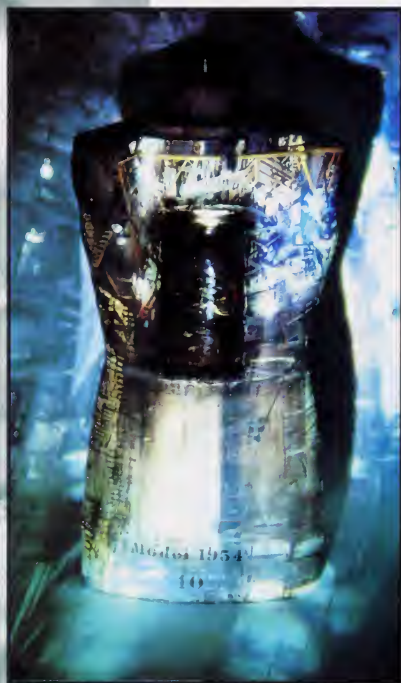
"Yes," she says.

she swings her lamp and walks the streets,
Endymion, begging to sleep forever,
lotus-eater,
looking for the saviour
from the wrath of Zeus, that God,
that cosmic plier-wielder with His finger on "stop"

Seas beating stone down to sand,
creating a leisure place of beach.
A place to reflect sun's horizon band
Sit on this sand to hear God preach.

Looking out on rolling gray waves,
reaching out to feel nature's infinity.
Understanding the way planet behaves,
and the round globe deity.

Surf the board of question mark
My outreaching hand to understand
the disunity of the dark
and the possibility of becoming sand.



i found this gray stairwell to live in
and told all my friends
the ones down at central and ten
it's — it's groovy
it's warm you know
and i heard she doesn't live here any more
the runaway named susie

those tricks she played
gave her that damn disease
the one i still know nothing about
all i know is they didn't take her stash away
when they carried her body out

she hid it here
behind this loose gray brick
her treasures left on earth
a picture of her girl jenny
ripped from her soon after birth

the state took her babe and left her here
alone and still she found
a person waiting behind the marks
and i became the only soul she knew
from here to st. peter's park

and i remember that night so cold and still
when she pulled me in
this was months before her death
and breathed in me
that breath of life
and i saw next march
and i saw the next
but she moved on.

—Lonely . . . it's cotton candy on a rainy day — Nikki
Giovanni

I.

Eleanor Ruth shows nondescript
a frumpish sophisticant
of rhinestone and rayon
of mill towns two hundred two hundred
the same, the same, and the same again
swallows her desires
regurgitates her dreams

Shouts "Norma Jean"—super lean
a mealy-mouthed
peroxide gray
An aristocrat of the textile scene.

Flows down the street
Flicks a neckbone to the dog
"I'll never eat nigger meat."
she cries, she cries
lemon-sweet

juts her hips side to side
a denim corset
tha always sags

"Norma Jean, Norma Jean
wanna go down to the Dairy Queen?
Remember then we'd stay all time
a Blizzard and a chalice
always cheaper than screw-top wine."

<Today, I doubt. Jim's off at 3.
Ron at two and Judy's water's drawn.>

Ruth guesses the two blocks
and a half would not be worth
the breath and the strain
without her — the blanch-topped diva
a carpet of wrinkles and worries.

II.

At least I tried, half relieved
I failed.

I love this sameness
this constancy of lonely
where superstars and glammers
cower by my nightstand.

I know myself when
where empty
where protruding
I am in control.

I am comfortable with the watery touch
of my hands across failing skin.

I am able wholly so I know
to make this alone fill this home.

Brave

He is as his will is tried
as his heart is broken,
as those wicked words pierce his soul.

His companions shall be his quietus
when his aching spirit hides
beneath their promises of sanctuary
and evasive hope for tomorrow.

An infinity of approbation rests
at the end of this psychedelic path.
And just as virtue is Evil's pornographic toy,
this acceptance is but a fleeting mirage.

Love is the reality,
hidden like a snowflake on a summer day.
(From one, perhaps, but not from all).
But in his nature exists a fire.

This flame, so dazzling and so fervid,
could introduce his hell to humiliation.
This power, yet uncaged,
prosper, as does Courage.

He knows not of this gift
that dwells within him.
Soon the darkness will fall victim to the light,
and Brother will mean Brave.

The ungrounded church
is sorely equipped
to store gunpowder
even in its crypt.

In Venice once,
the military devout
stored some down there,
but God found them out.

I wouldn't depend
on the mercy of God _
above the church steeple,
raise a lightning rod.

Friday afternoon,
big game tomorrow with snow likely,
and some bleached trailer trash
is crossings swords with the cashier
over a twenty-five cent
Scotch strapping-tape coupon
whose expiration date is today,
when this man with the food stamps
written across his face
strolls to the front of our line,
stuffs a knotted dollar bill
in the trash lady's hand,
and says, "Here,
now git."

my muse sprays sperm-words
across my masked face; you
hear it tickle as they slime
into my ears and race toward
conception-an agile one will reach
and bury itself inside my mind, incubate
into abstraction and, in that
dilation when inspiration smiles,
I pry wide my mother lips and
birth poetry

your love was inkfingered,
black, grubby handed
tenderstroking and loving and
leaving your oilstained fingerprints . . .
now, you've let go
and stains like blacknight
cancers remain blotched
across my love, tattooed
and visible;
my love is now printed
with the blackskin of your touch,
second-hand goods,
streaked with blackbars of
a prison that will never erase:
an inkfinger plaything

In need of a bath to bring me back
I climbed the stairs toward her shower.
After stripping down and testing the water
I heard a voice from behind me ask,
"Do you enjoy the sex sounds she makes?"
I jumped out the water, with glassed eyes saw
the shower curtain checking me out!
He said, "Don't be alarmed, I am here to tell you
the woman you love loves me more."

I said, "What so you mean you blasted curtain."
He said, "She rubs against me, her body to mine;
she sings my name not yours: OHHHH Shower Curtain!"
I said, "She is human, you are not, you confused mildew stain."
He said, "I beg to differ, you're the confused one
talking to me cause I'm not real." I took the soap,
and nicked him in the mouth.
He hit me with his rod on the head, laughing as he fell.

The commotion upstairs alarmed my friends
who, with tainted minds came to see
the unexpected death of the adultering curtain.
I stood triumphant, naked and cursing
with curtain's pinned mouth under my foot.
The friends stood bewildered, then cried
before they laughed as their friend
took in what had happened, grabbed a towel, listened for
the last gurgle of curtain's life, then questioned
his lover about singing to the shower.

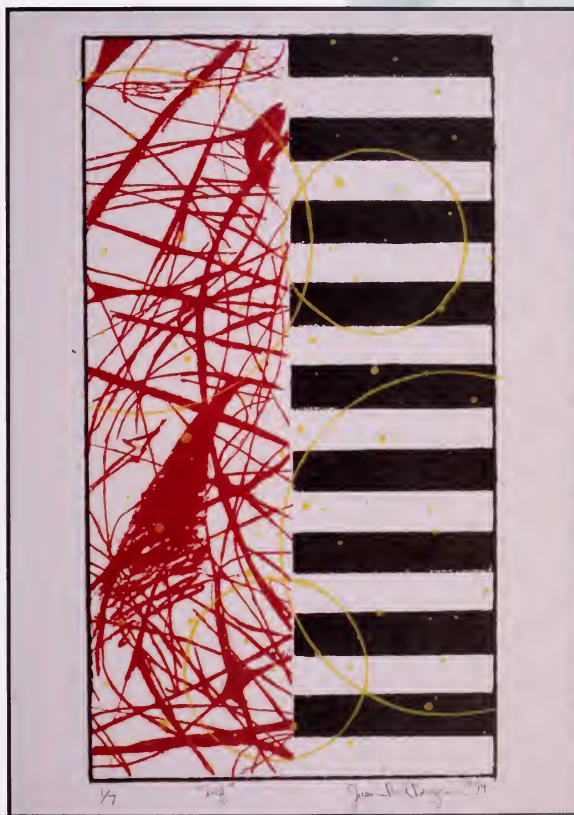
I used to be confused
till the hormones hit me
telling me I ain't gay
till the parents slapped me
telling me I ain't Christian
till the philosophy asked me
telling me I don't have a clue
till the girls begged from me that old repeating refrain—

Do you love me?
Do you LOVE me?
Will you love me?
If you can, can I squeeze it?
Can I bite and make you bleed it?
Will you let me let you cheat on it?
Can I laugh while you pray
that those hormones go away?

and the politicians and the preachers . . .
Fill my coffers so that I may fill your life
Right is defined by sheer numbers
So grease my bandwagon

and it all ran together
do you love my god
will you buy my kissing baby
will you go to heaven
will you have 2.5 children
will you Socrates, Kant, or Plato

confused used be to I.



Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

Gen 1:2

And early in the morning he came walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; Do not be afraid."

John 16:25-27

me and darwin sat outside the library by the reflection pool listening to the water lap against the brick shore and he told me that's where it all started—in the water, but i told him that's a long long way from a puddle to some protoplasm, but even then he didn't buy my argument about the touch, he just kept talking about some real old skeletons and fossils and how long it takes to make a diamond. darwin please show me the complete ladder, the full diagram because i don't quite understand the distance, the leaps, the base it all sits upon,

the water—don't hate me because i think because i sit around this pool and question a new reality reshaped. recreated in the twentieth century mind. i love geology and all of that vast amount of time it takes to make diamonds and fossils i think therefore i am a conscious entity interacting with you, another one like me, touched talking with poetry to conscious beings communicating, and it's a long long way from this experience to absolute nothing. at least that's what i told nietzsche when we sat by the reflection pool watching dead leaves dance with cigarette butts upon the surface. i tried to tell him his lonely skeleton wouldn't mark the end, i don't think he bought it. it's too late for him anyway.

remembered you the other day while sitting in the astro watching forrest as he stood on a
bridge over alabama water.
if jenny he'd write her everyday from nam, she walked away
good there knowing, cool black river running below his feet
have been touched, more precious than a diamond "fearfully and wonderfully made" of
water and of flesh but so much more, there's the third dimension
a spirit, His Spirit and it speaks it writes you everyday from nam to the place where you
live among the fossils and skeletons, and we keep on trying to climb
re ladders towards twentieth century reality about seeing who can believe the most about
absolute nothingness.

—doug was always known for smokin' marlboro mediums a brand he said belonged to the
eternally confused at least
is what he told me one day while sitting by the water as he dragged through the filter and i
breathed mine straight
r the air ashes mounted up like charred skeletal remains and shattered like fossils on the
pavement just before the wind carried them away
pes created by the plague inside his head, no diamonds there that's what he told me—
that's what he told me, but I said
u, how can you reject the One who comes walking across the water into your own reality
beyond reason and sensory persepction and calls you out by name
only one who loves the outcasts the only one who rose again and climbs ladders and
jumps through hoops for you, but you NEVER hesitate to tell Him to stay on
His own damn side of the reflection pool—why.





The candle's pale glow,
six years of glowing,
relentless in its quest to make me see.

I saw everything at once
but nothing after.
The cherry on his joint
stabbed through the night like a dagger
when my innocent fire was extinguished.
I dare not introduce myself to such a whore,
as Mary Jane.
Señor Quervo took care of me until now,
anyhow.

The circle we sit in would collapse without me,
although Purity has no place in an evil dwelling.

I heard the drums for an eternal hour,
wondering if it was just my heart.
No faces, no words between us.
Only this circle, only this light.

One hundred poets replay their timeless words
inside my head as I search for meaning.
I think of him and see his smile.
Only that could save me from the damned.
Forever seems so protracted—
but now could be the end
and I shall find my friend.

The barrel rests against my head,
my finger caresses the trigger.
One mistake could be my salvation
if Agony's indecision spares my life.

"Be unafraid!" that wicked voice incants.

A few words could reunite his lost soul with mine.
I squeeze the trigger firmly,
while the devil holds my hand.
He calls me craven and tells me of his wealth.

Everyone is watching, waiting;
breathless and scared.
They acted so indifferent before this second;
perhaps the last second of recorded time
that I will ever know.

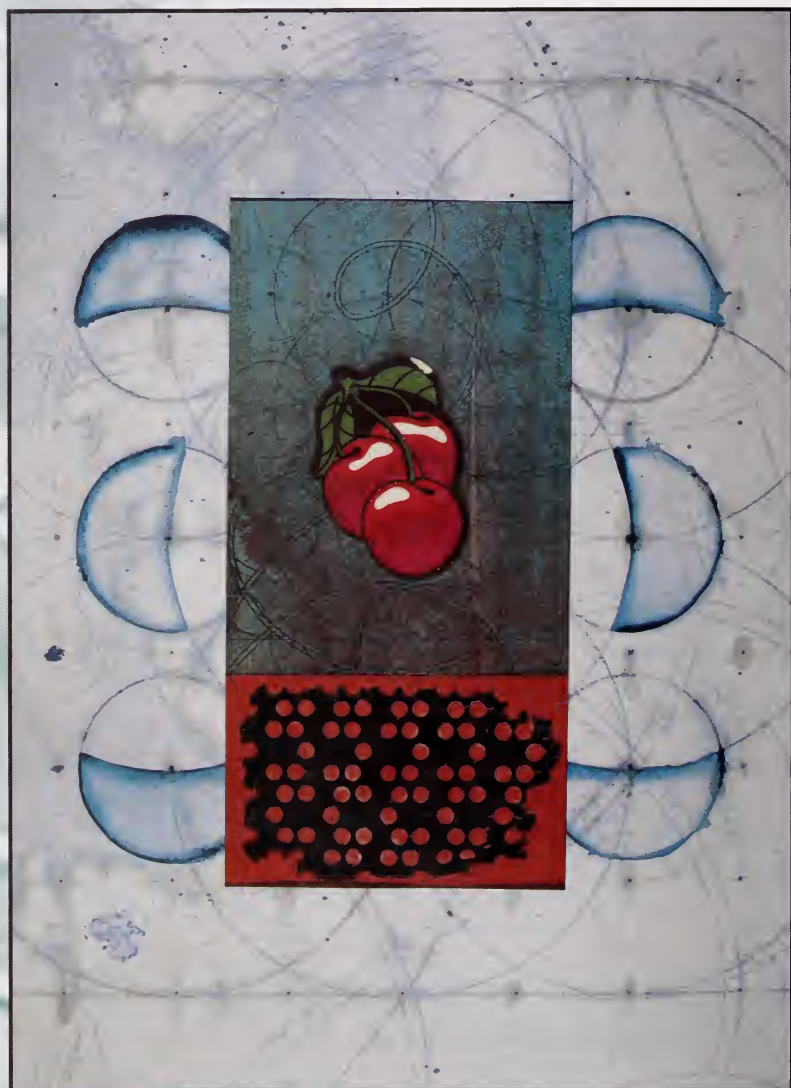
They thought I'd never do it.
Such fools they are to doubt determination.
Now they will wish they had loved me.
No one ever did.

Of course,
Lucifer insists he has always
been there for me.

Only this bullet,
if it is mine,
can cease this misery.
I bless myself in the name of the Father.
The demons laugh in my devastated face.

I pulled the trigger until
I thought my finger would break.
A mere click was all I heard.

My devastation grew, but the devil's did, too.
I took another shot
and passed the gun to the right.



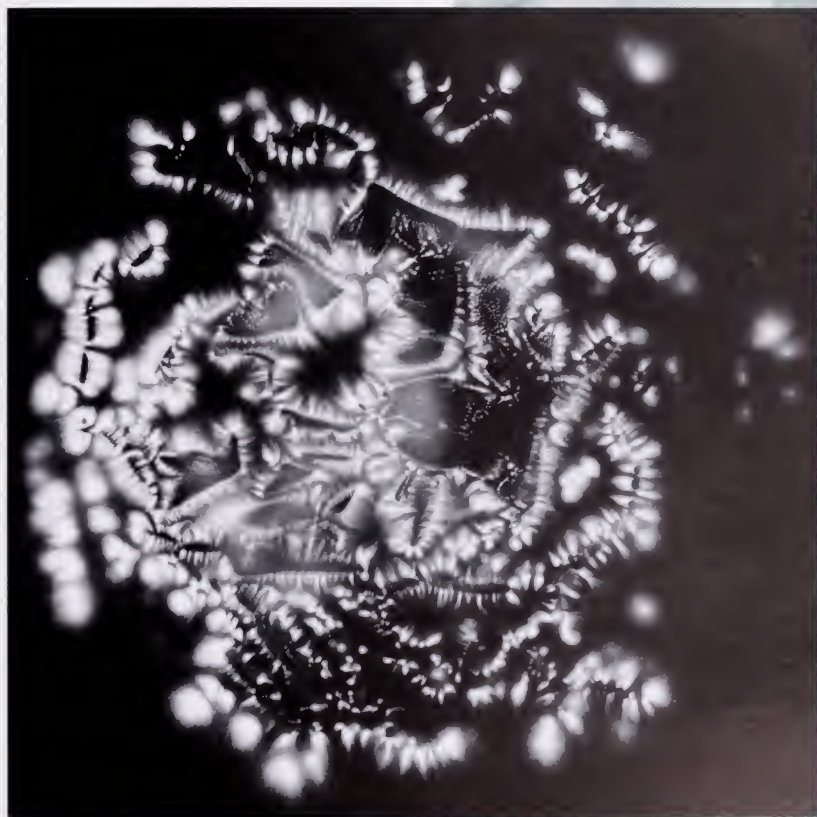
On the Uselessness of Towels:
Sunfried Kids and Moss Sponges

I remember pulling myself onto sun and chlorine bleached concrete. Sliding greasily from the water—a sunscreen skin. And laid on the concrete my lean ten year old body, leaving a blot of water on the deck. From nine in the morning 'til eight at night I would pass the time surfing a kickboard, and Marco Polo! and Race you to the wall? Out of sight in the deep end, dodging the leathery lifeguard. Marco Polo! Nearby, a playground with one of those spin-'til-you're sick contraptions. Possessing only thin balance I'd stagger to a table and clumsily spread myself on the moss-covered top—Eagerly trying to settle my inner ear. At the end of the day, my towel unused, I'd head home again.

winds and golden grass
turn their backs on mundane eyes
a quiet dancing

tiny silver ripple
your friends are laughing, too;
gaily, together you drown

under weeping willow boughs
with acorn caps and thimble cups
she takes a lonesome tea



My mommy and daddy won't let me have a brother or sister, they won't even let me have pets.

Mom says, "Remember the time we let you have a hermit crab? You covered the top of his container with a magazine and smothered him to death?"

I just didn't want him to crawl out and pinch me with his claws.

"Then there was the time you washed the cat with Head and Shoulders and he licked him to death."

I just thought he needed a bath.

"Your dad and I are afraid that if we have any more children that you might just try to kill them too."

Would not!

I do have a best friend though, just one. Sometimes I wish I had more friends but mom says that we live out in the boonies so I guess that's why. We live in a brick house on top of a big hill. We have a pool, too. But we don't have any neighbors. The closest ones we've got are the Rosenbergs about fifteen minutes away on my bike. That's where Mary Liz lives, she's my best friend. I ride my Huffy there a lot. I've got a boy's bike, but that's because daddy says that girl bikes are for sissies.

Mary Liz lives beside our church. Her daddy's the preacher there. My daddy's one of his brother's. Not in real life, that's just what God says they're supposed to call each other. Sometimes they get together and have sessions. That's when all the brothers have to come to the church and talk about people. Dad says, "It's a time for a preacher, Brother Beryl, to ask for more handouts, but some of us have to work for our money. They can afford to have six children when everything is paid for."

Mary Liz has five brothers. They are all older than her and she gets beat up a lot. Sometimes we play ship or Besto with her brother Tommy. He's smart and can rig up there den just like the kitchen at Besto's. But our restaurant serves a lot more things than just hot dogs, we serve spaghetti, too. But Tommy's only good for some games. He doesn't like to play house with me and Liz. Our favorite game used to be doctor, but our mommies said we couldn't play that anymore. They caught me and Liz putting sea shells on our privates. Her mom said that God doesn't like little girls to do dirty things. But I told her that we weren't getting them dirty, the sea shells were medicine that we were using so our privates could have hair, too. Besides we washed the shells before we used them anyways. I still don't understand why we can't play that anymore, I just know that God will punish us if we do.

I love summer time. Me and Liz have a pretty regular routine. We ride our bikes and meet each other at my Uncle's grocery store that's across from the church. He calls everybody Cuzz even though I'm the only one that's related to him. We get our usual Coke and sweettarts with the money that we got from our weekly allowance. Then we stand outside by the gas pump and drink our Cokes because if we turn the bottles back in to my uncle he'll pay us for drinking them. Then, if it's okay with Liz's mom, she gets to come to my house to play. I like playing a house better. I have a bigger room than she does and more toys to play with. Plus I've got a pet and she doesn't.

When we get to my house we're so hot from riding our bikes. I sweat a lot. Dad says I get

my grandmother. Most the time we already have our bathing suits on so all we have to do is take off our clothes and make a mad dash to the pool. We can't let mom see us running though because that's just one of those things that adults don't allow kids to do like play doctor. We have a hard time in deciding whether to play Mermaids or Lifeguard. But on this particular day we decided to play Lifeguard. We are the lifeguards and we get to make all the rules. We make people pay if they're bad. And somebody's always being bad. If someone's running around the pool, we make them sit out for at least five minutes. Of course what's playing lifeguard without the useless drowning victim. It's Liz and me to the rescue. We always have two victims at once, anyway we both get to use our lifesaving skills at the same time. We desperately try to revive using mouth-to-mouth, but sometimes it's just not enough. In those, not so rare moments, we have to call on our husbands to save the day.

Bo and Luke Duke from the Dukes of Hazzard are our idols. Liz likes Luke, and that's okay because my heart belongs to Bo. He is my husband in every game we ever play. After the game becomes boring we move indoors for an endless game of playing House. I have tons of dolls, I don't mind sharing some of them with Liz. Although she is never allowed to play with my favorite doll, Hilda May. Hilda May was very expensive my daddy told me. She even has some of his name written across her bottom.

I love having Liz to play with because as long as she's in my room with me the monsters can't get to me alone. We both share the same five story apartment. Our husbands are out working and she and I are tending to the house and each of our ten children, most of which are twins. Most of our time is spent cooking and cleaning. Then one or two of the children starts crying and usually a dirty diaper that needs changing or a cut that needs some Bactine and a bandaid. We have to do most of the shopping, but that's the perfect time for us to load up the children and take General Lee for a spin.

Our husbands return home around supper time, hungry and demanding to be fed. We don't feed them until they give us a kiss and shower us with our candy and fresh flowers. After supper and when the children have finished doing the dishes, we turn on the T.V. and watch our husbands at their finest. We do worry, like all good wives do, that in one of those high speed car races one of them is bound to get hurt, but they assure us it's all in the line of duty. "A man's work is never done," my daddy always says. After the show it's time for bed. We tuck in the children and read them their favorite bed time story. Then after the story we say our prayers and wish them good night. Then Liz and me go to our rooms and snuggle up with our husbands and contemplate the thought of having the stork bring us some more children.

"What? She has to go? But we just got started playing."

"Honey, her mother's here to pick her up," my mom bellows up from the bottom of the stairs.

"Oh well, bye Liz. Ask your mommy if you can come over tomorrow."

I follow her down the stairs, but before I turned the corner something caught my eye. As I backed up towards my room, I saw a purple monster give me a wink and then disappear behind my door.

From room to room I walk, pen and notebook
in hand; letting my gaze wander from display
to display, from painting to painting, from
sculpture to sculpture. Pausing as I will
to let the muse speak to my soul. Just being.

The colors and textures leap from the artifacts
and items placed for all to see and feel
in the depths of their minds, if they have the time,
or the inclination, or the eyes.

I pause to converse with Charles or Henry and maybe
Andrew; seeking to hear their response to my inquiry
as to why they look the way they do, and if they are
feeling any different today.

I stop to share a moment with the woman at the door,
and unconsciously turn to follow her gaze into some
distant place, seeking whatever it is that she cannot
see, or feel or fantasize.

I lift myself into the family with no men, and share a
little boy's playthings, for a moment, with a
tear; and reach out my inner hand to pull him away before
the moment becomes a lifetime.





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Clemson University's official Art and Literary magazine, the Chronicle offers a central medium for the publication of original works produced by students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Submissions are judged with a point system by all staff members who desire to participate. If you are interested in joining the Chronicle staff, please contact the Student Media Office in 104 Fitzendorff for information.

Please send submissions and inquiries to: P.O. Box 2187, Clemson, SC 29632-2187, or you can submit via electronic mail at chron@hubcap.clemson.edu.

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Chronicle

Fall 1995



Art by Robin Roberts

Chronicle

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"NO OVER FIFTY POUNDS ON THE SLIDE"!
the sign read.

Now of all the plastic in the playground
none was more cunning than Grimace.

"Ronald fears you will become a greater clown than HE.",
he hiss whispered,

"Take the slide
and you will take His place."

And I did take the slide,
and it broke

and children came
laughing at me in the dust.

"What have you done?", Ronald cried.

"Am I the grounds keeper?",
I sneered.

The children cheered.

Grimace fell on them
and ate them.

Ronald wept.

Griamce burped.

I begged forgiveness
but

was sent to fry.

i stare at you through absinthe eyes
i stare at you through lenses of reality
i see your distortions
i see your face
hidden behind your ribcage
i stumble
i drink the slow poison
before i stare at you
i must paint now
before i vomit

He forgets to scrub down
cuts the patient
before she goes under, carves out a smiley face.
Deadman grins behind his
paper mask.
"Oops." he says.
He thinks the body is an
instrument.
Plucks the intestines and beats
the pancreas for good measure.
Then he squeezes the patient's heart,
waiting for bagpipe moans.
Deadman is up to his elbows in music,
he swims in fluids, smashing his skull on
the marimba spine,
vibrates between piano teeth.
Deadman dents the bells on her toes until
they can only play "Misty" in A minor.
He pulls the nurses, interns, and even
the inactive anesthesiologist into his
orchestral orgy.
And as they dance in stomach acids,
Deadman grabs a strain of sound and
seals them inside.

He had felt it beginning, which was why he was where he was now.

How could you not know where he is? How could you lose a person?" His eyes were red and full of approaching tears. "Has anyone been in to see him? Did he just walk out? Answer me!"

He had a spade, and began to dig. The earth was dark and rich, like soft soil. There were roots in the earth, like it had grown together, knitted itself. The torn mesh would heal quickly. Earthworms fell to the bottom of the depression, cloven and writhing. The exertion hurt, but it also felt good. It felt like he was putting things up. He couldn't remember the last time he felt so alive.

"When did you know he was gone? Have you called the police?" The rain fell quietly, a gentle rain, wetting a strand of mouse-brown hair laying on his cheek.

"We've got several people out looking already. Our policy is to notify the family after five hours. Don't worry. He probably isn't far from home."

But he was. His mind roamed space and time backwards, and his hands worked with the spade. He had dug down a few feet. He found that he was tired, and stopped. So tired. There were trees all around, and green. Life. The rain, they whispered. It was time for bed.

He laid down in the depression and pulled up the covers.

Come clean he said
I can't believe
your mother's not a frog.
She hops and slops and beetely-bops
while croaking on a log.
If that's not true, than must you say, her warts are not from lie
In spite of webs among her feet...
I'll kindly call her a toad.

My life seems to wag in continuous change
 The moment fragmented glass,
 The next a blend of color that falls off the edge of my dreams.

I feel as comfortable as an autumn colored Afghan in this hour
 And as scared as a pair of cat's eyes caught in the headlight's glare
 The next. . . but never do I feel dead.

I think death must somehow be a strange transition
 From color to black and white
 And then a submission as soft as a feather mattress

Then in the end when it's time for death
 Change is making a grand entrance
 And the theater is empty except for the leading lady.

It is not a simple feeling
That few words could comfortably define
It is not merely a passion
That you feel for a wanted da kine
No it is so much more
So astoundingly real
For this force inside
Is all-consuming
All-knowing
All . . .
For as a firefly moves me inside
It is as if I had never known him there before
No, a new and glorious warmth so subtle and moving
Drawing me this way and that
Of a patience so lasting
Yet a desire so overpowering
I am straddling two oceans
I am wanting to pillage and conquer
Yet also to wait on perfect timing
I am hungry with passion
Yet willing to wait for the proper time
The table is not yet set
Nor the meal prepared
Lord, grant me the courage
To observe proper etiquette

of James Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

and red and white are Christmas colors and Santa's beard is white not black. Never write "Merry X-mas" on a card Mildred said to Saul.

What does the X stand for? Mildred asked.

Christ. Saul said, pronouncing Christ with a short i like in missed or kit not. Saul learned to spell and capitalize that word and Valentine for all the holidays. Christmas was her favorite event though to her the Christ still meant Christ. It was not a man but the first syllable of a holiday.

Head lay the other way between two covered sets of feet so they looked like the trailer loft, but not quite so greasy. Slowly she sifted each side to the left to wake her sisters or the Santa. Bright snow moon magnified then like a tiny tree drowning in tinsel and walnuts covered in red and green glitter. Wrong to look, so she only opened one eye and stared and the black bearded man wobbled. Wobbled and stuck out his hand and caught himself as he sat and lay between his knees. She turned and slept and dreamt of evil red eyes that glared from green feet that would never run fast enough.

Saul's roast had come and that man was there. He drove the light blue Chevy off the dirt landing strip and tried to fly and they said that he might try to walk in the air.

Saul laughed and her mother frowned with fiery hair and said it wasn't safe to use he was schizophrenic.

Owned but still didn't know what schizophrenic meant and wondered if the blackberries on the landing strip were crushed by him or by the plane that had taken Jenny to Orcas. Saul had never ridden in a plane and so she peddled her bicycle past the cemetery and rode no-handed down the hill with her arms straight out on her sides like wings and folded her hands so that the wind lifted them up like a feather. Saul had to slow down for the turn to the school.

The big maple tree was hidden from the school and the road behind the little trees, behind the old orchard that was overgrown was farther back. Licorice root was candy. Bright green leaves and Saul's corduroy pants always got wet on her butt from lying on the moss that soaked up the dew and the rain and never let it out until the only sun that came to dry it out was wet and red and sent through the wet leaves of the huge limbed maple anyway. She could only stand on the one branch because her legs were not long enough to reach around that big old tree to climb her to the top. And so her licorice root ran out and the bright fern leaves no longer hid her from the dark of the spongy moss and she sat in red and green and wished that it would snow and not rain so that Santa could hurry on his way before all of the red moss had a chance to fluff the spongy ground and turn brown.

Why Jimmy fell and hit his head on the green moss rock spilling red with blood from a Jimmy nose to bright white snow and black-brown fir needles and dirt? The Christmas wine from the green glass bottle spilled red on his white shirt. Saul wished you a merry Christmas and a happy new year. And this time when the wet feeling on her dark blue snow pants was not from rain but snow melted. Saul yelled for mommy who skipped merrily and stumbled as she sang. Singing man who just smiled as he drooled the red wine poured into his mouth and into Santa hands.

My dolls and I sit
 around the table.
It's tea time!
Do join us.
 One lump or two?

Mary, please pass the crumpets.
More tea Sarah?
Do have another Emily.
Cream and sugar?
 One lump or two?

Someone knocks
 at the door.
Now, who could that be?
Excuse me please.
 One lump or two?

Good afternoon sir.
Everyone, have you met
 the man from across the street?
Do join us.
 One lump or two?

He wants me to visit him
 across the street.
He says I am pretty.
He wants to play games.
 One lump or two?

I shouldn't be long.
Please don't wait.
I'm just going with
 the man from across the street.
 One lump or two?

My dolls still sit
 around the table.
It's tea time!
Do join us.
 One lump or two?

Through the mindless stream of lights
Fighting the brilliance
Of the approaching night,
There stands a woman.

Round,
Heavy with child,
The weight of many generations
Lays on her back.

She looks through the tiny window
Of a cinder block cell -
Each brick placed by one of her children -
Choking on the exhaust.

Once she was honored and loved,
Revered by her children for all she gave -
Food, shelter, Life -
And in their love she was beautiful.

With hair of autumn grain,
Clad in rich robes of velvety green;
Her bosom, the color of rich earth, fed them,
And her loving tears cleansed them.

As her children grew,
They feared her power and tried to control her.
They tore off her soft green covering
And sucked her nurturing bosom dry.

Naked,
They bound her in twines of asphalt and cement
And bored into her
Taking what they wanted.

Now her beauty is hidden
Behind cold, gray walls
Built by the children of her womb -
Yet she still gives herself to them.

In a gentle song
Of powerful, rich hues,
She softens the approaching night
And brings forth a new morning

Perhaps it would be bold to say
"I'd like for you to touch me there"
We've known each other just a day
and you don't fit the mold I know
Your father taught the standard way
to be a gent and put on airs
But all that crap is way passe
any of us can be sold and so
My father taught the rigid way
'You must give pain to show you care'
My brother turned out drunk each day
Yours truly turned out cold as snow.

remember trying to catch frogs
in you,
that short jean dress,
laughing, you were laughing when you said you
would always take it to get it cleaned.

remember the first time you took me
home to your parents for Christmas
and you were laughing then too.
You told me to suck at the breast of the virgin,
and told me if I'd ever ridden a camel.
Your parents wrapped presents for each of us.

remember walking in on you and Gary.
remember you clumsily wrapping the sheets around
me that you had always been proud to show me.
do you remember, your sweet pride, upstairs in the barn, at Mallory's?
"suck" you said, pushing your breast into my
smiling smile, "suck".
and I did, and I loved it, and I loved you
and I found you where I shouldn't have found you
and that man, spent between your legs.

and when he came inside of you did my heart, the one you
dropped at the foot of the bed, did it spurt out its blood,
staining your clothes, the carpet, the floor, your memory?
how could you forget me when you took him inside you?
do you tell him to suck,
do you feed him too, did you
love him,
and him in?
doesn't it remind you of something, someone?
how could you forget?
when will I?
why do I not want "I hate you bitch"
to be the last line of our poem?

Cars?

Yeah I know, I know they go fast

But they kill, they kill

And they do not last and

Alcohol?

Yeah sure, sure it tastes sweet

But it kills, it kills

And it can't be beat and

Guns?

Yeah I know, I know they protect

But they kill, they kill

And a life gets wrecked and

Cigarettes?

You know they take your breath but

They kill, they kill

They lead to nothing but death and

Drugs?

They free, they free your mind

But you do not notice nothing's left behind and

Sex?

It feels good and it builds your pride

But it kills, it kills

So many have died and

Wars?

They kill with army killing machines

Kill, Kill, Kill

No one knows what it means and

People?

They kill, they go crazy inside

Because their paranoid minds

Have so much to hide and

Love?

...

KILLS!!!

...

and

Life?

...

dies

...

and

You?

Hey, man, I just want to survive.

A.

he tiny casket was still above ground, framed by the snow
lost stood with heads bowed, except those who were closest
rief-drunken and grovelling
lurling at their God
creeching, screaming hymns of unfairness,
ost horizons and unfulfilled potential.
What might have have been?
he sun set
and rose again in the morning.

B.

le saw himself in the mirror
ramed by snow
his nose bleeding , he thought of wasted money,
ime, unfairness
low, she had left in doorslam disgust
like the others.
le would clean himself up in the morning?
but the dose was fatal
he sun set . . .

We spoke all night in riddles
I left knowing less
And you obviously got much more out of it
From the smile on your lips.

It was a volley of words
A contest of vocabularies
Single statements were not heard
As logic compounded the difficulty.

I'm still not sure what was said
But your smile tells me different
What conclusion did you arrive at
Which eludes me still, days late.

We spoke all night in riddles
Volleying for the next serve
Twisting words, infusing logic
Till I'm not even sure I was ever there.

Will this friendship be built on riddles of words
Will we always have to use logic to talk
I'm not sure I can, even as you grin
Play this word game like the
Champion you are.

My words are crucified,
fleshripped and raw from
wood and driven steel of circumstance.
prone and bleeding on crosses of
mistaken choices, blistering in the
noonday of love's affliction. . .
my words are crucified to
save me from my sins
my poems are my saviors,
syntaxed christs,
dying and crying to the
father which has forsaken
them, and the love which
has forsaken him

"Poetry and revolution: poems and change of consciousness, poems and acti
Invisible, unquantifiable exchanges of energies."

- Adrienne Rich

Sitting in a pub late on a
Saturday night,
my senses are overloaded,
flooded to the hilt.

A pub, the meeting place of people,
yet my senses are not
stressed from the organic
rising and falling of conversation, but from
the cacophony of
too much
information.

The television blasts through pages
on the screen
of instant history,
today's stock quotes, game scores,
satellite images of our
large planet made to seem small,
as time is reduced to nothing,
and barriers are broken,
news of what happened
thirty seconds ago
five thousand miles away,
and a smorgasbord schedule
of tonight's narcotics
administered via optic fibers
network,
all in the span of
two minutes,
all mean nothing
to me.

The radio even assaults my ears
with a satellite-transmitted
real-time simulcast
brought to you by
Coca-Cola and MTV Inc.,
combining music with interviews,
and of course
advertisements,
beamed from the light side
of the earth
meant to sound like it
was in your living room.

all in the span of
a split second
all mean
nothing
to me.

My mind is numbed with the
tingeing effects of a few
barley and hop brews
and for once,
it is good
to have my mind rest
in its original state
one thought
at a
time.

However, the annoyances do no
overload my mind,
they grate at my soul,
like someone scratching
their fingernails on
a chalkboard
one nail
at a
time.

Go deeper even still, deeper
into the subterranean caverns
of fiber optic
hell
and there you find a place they
cyberspace.

America On Line, CompuServe,
Delphi, millions of Gophers
there in the ground with them,
eWorld, Prodigy, the World Wi
and of course,
your friend, your brother,
the Internet
bringing everybody together
in one big cold embrace.

This is the New World
the artificial world
replacing communities with n
and talkrooms

ing handshakes with
gon prompt,
ing the warm breath of
lovers mouth into
sound of cackling
a transfer at
0 bps
g the glory of love
transforming it into
chat gutter mouth,
king
ratification
ough
mutual masturbation
two different ends
ne
onnection.
ll this the
nation Revolution.
go deeper still,
behind the screen,
rate the meaning
s abused tool.
olution is about
ers,
ng people into numbers,
als into numbers,
papers into numbers,
y into numbers,
thing into binary digits
exadecimals
ncing across the globe
metal web of confusion
oing our planet
the long haul, and
e while, you feel
powered
use all those numbers
your fingertips,
hen you remember...
ad to type your number
in...
number and
y yours.
This is not the real revolution,
if it was do you think

you would be inundated
with it daily by the
powers that be and
their tools of
mental saturation?
The same powers that made
your alarm clock
which makes you get out of bed
every morning for a
day of degrading, mindless tasks
they call a career.
The same powers that wear down
hands to the bone
and break backs in
sweat shops all over the
First, Second, and Third worlds.
The same powers that destroy
our public land all over
the earth,
that pollute our waters,
that rape our trees,
and steal from our young.
The same powers that
brought you
the Internet
No the real revolution
is about
making love in a field
under the open, hot sun.
The real revolution
has been sung about
for thousands of years.
It is about climbing trees.
It is about using this tool
for things they would
rather you not.
Most importantly, it is about
being human in a natural world
of real webs and
feeding, giving, taking
energy and about being
at peace
with your thoughts,
one thought
at a
time.

i like to feel
the summer weep
for her short existence

her cleansing tears
trickle over hot pores
in my scalp

the grip of wet fingers
on my neck
don't scare me in the rain

i like to spin
without purpose
let the drops jump from my fingers

i become a point
from which all rain
comes

my hair
my fingertips
i become the tear ducts

sadness is pouring down on me
into me
through me

me. Please take my hand and fly with me. Come see what's behind door
one, two, and three. Jump in the blue bus, sing of angels and queens with odor
shows up our nose.

Yellow eyes that burn with yellow water from yellow skies. I feel crazy,
and icky too. I step on gum. Now it's on my shoe.

er, funky, and after-tastey. I chew some more and my mouth get's pasty. It
feel something kind of round about, but what I forgot and now I've forgot-
I forgotten about. It was something or other. Oh brother!

good. The kind of good that's greater than good. A giggly, sunny place with
screaming free free free.

smooshy, furry, crazy, creamy. I'm getting hungry for a taco supremey. A
smile, I can't stop laughing. It's slappy being happy, pass the yellow salt
everything happy is not. No mild sauce please some like it hot.

the music that I like. I love my car, but I'd prefer a bike. Music is fun, loud,
and. It speaks to me in a hello sound. No matter what it makes me do. I'll
in my pocket. And if I feel that I want it later, BAM! I'll roll a stone and

play ground, you know? It's fun cause it's fun. Cause you can be bouncy-
ger's, but your still the only one.

vers get sunny in yellow sun showers and grow up more flowers that look
vers that go on for hours.

hoo, can you hear it? I think it's a train. Vroom, Vroom, no I'm sorry, it's
it's a plane. A helicopter spinning, whirling around. I spin around too and
ground. I'm not sick, but please call me nurse. Make sure it's the one with
r purse.

to find a bathroom, but I don't dare sprinkle. Boogers on the mirror, do
inkle? Gotta go, gotta go. Yellow water flow flow. Bye bye little pee-pee,
ya goin'? OOPs! Too much paper, you're now overflowin'.

ow time. Soon we'll be pickin' and flickin', not boogers, a movie - a good one
in'. Groovy movies, Robert DeNiro or is it Al Pacino? One is a star face the
face. Danny Devito, Jimmy Dean - look there's Madonna's boob on a
My lips are on fire, I need a soft tissue. No never mind I missed the last

nails are pretty, but they're pissin' me off. I've gotta take them, gotta take

do words come from? How did they know? To call one girl a slut and the

hallucination in my imagination in my imagination. Michael Jordan on
holds a cally cat, then shifts it from his weaker hand and onto his hat. He
eye with a guilt free ease, but wait now poor Michael's back in his
e.

ting these urges, sexual pleasures I want tapped. But not from just anyone,
handicapped. What would it be like to take off your clothes in a room full
unhook my hose. Damn once again, a kleenex a rose. I must blow this nose

or it's snot I'll expose.

She's been with us all along, did you know that? Look there's my cat. Purr just jumped off Michael J's hat. Yep there she is, my best friend. I think I'll kill the end. But for now we're close like Chinese friends. On her half birthday I'll Depend.

Pandora's box, we'll open it again. Purr little kitty kitty.

Back to my friend, I'll mention her again. Things for us aren't as good as I pretend. She's prettier than me and boys like her more. I'll use the word they and call her a whore. I just want to be loved, is that so wrong? I feel like the love about to get gonged. I want true love like that from a mother. I think I'll give the milk's gone from the utter.

Death is a strange breeze coming up from yellow seas. You don't know it's until it's up to your knees. Then you can predict it, the day you will die. Kind my nannie did on the fourth of July.

Candle jaw, wash the slacks, or is it Jawbox and candle wax.

She saw a light through a tunnel, kind of like the one at my window, but that's not it's the aliens from Pluto. Please not this time, no more poking and prodding. Thanks to you guys my teeth won't stop rotting.

I hate this dream, but you've been with me throughout. We're bugs trapped and we've got to get out. Do the pokey hokey, turn round about. Stomp four times that's all it's about.

What is fiction? I've chosen my route. If you live in my world you'll figure

Fiendish flowers
follow me -
purple, yellow, red -
I see the evil glow
in their eyes
as they summon
insects, birds, and bats
into their lair Fiendish flowers
follow me -
I will be their next prey

i await the falling of the rain
 it comes between moonlight and shadow
it will fall down from the sky like a silent whisper
it will wash away the dust and dirt of my memories
 it waits for none yet comes for all
i want to feel the loving caress of the drops striking
i want to float upon the waters and watch the clouds in the sky
 i wonder if it would be peaceful
 i wonder why i am so afraid
this time i hope there is no thunder
no one can say they don't jump at its tumultuous crash
even as i face it without fear
i tremble at its overpowering voice
 i wonder where i'll be when it crashes
 i ask myself if i will be prepared
and the truth shall strike me like a hammer without men
and the rein shall strike me like a thunderbolt
and the lightning will only come to me in far away dream

I ask him,
 how loud do I have
to scream before you
 hear me?
Waiting for a response,
 afraid of the answer but
Uncertain what answer
 I fear

Fear. Have you ever
 felt fear? tasted fear?
Wrapped your lips around this
 greathard Cock called fear?
a creature who
 will not cum,
no matter how
 you try.

Have you ever been
 ashamed of your trials?
Seen your mountains crumble to
 molehills,
when presented with another's
 adversity
infinitely greater than your
 own melodramas?

I ask you,
 can you scream?

The little girl i was
cried out from inside me with
eyes of unshed tears
accusing...

accusing
And i cast out the
child inside
as i
thrived on her pain,
drank in her anguish
to feed my lust,
and she bled

and she bled
and i drowned
and rejoiced
in her blood and my own desire.

i cast out my innocence
and embraced a fool's dream
of love and trust,
of passion and security.

And my dream was tarnished
by the corrosive breath of truth,
by the caustic brine of tears.

And i could hear the laughter
of my sardonic angel of lust,
dirty, grinning,
with a face of parchment,
merciless eyes,
wings of dust,
and a halo
crooked
bent
tarnished

by sex
by guilt
by the blood of Jesus.

And i thought of Jesus as he bled
as i bled
and i embraced the blackness

of sin and lust and desire.
i embraced it and
 it became my dream
 it became my lover
 it became my savior.

And the angel's mocking laughter echoed
like thunder in my mind
as regret washed into my stolen soul.
And crushed by the weight
 of my lover and the weight
 of my guilt,
 i wept.

And the child inside me sat
 crucified
on the edge of my bed with its
dirty sheets
and its stench of wasted innocence.
And she cried.

i miss her.

And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and the people loved rather than light because their deeds were evil.

John 3:19

From the brothel's second story window I can see him
striding slowly north uptown the river sometimes south,
and in the summer when it's warm I will take to balcony to watch him
and to the boardwalk equally as often
squeaking backward and forward in an old mesquite rocker
and most days I will not follow when he calls,
the man I mean
the only one with a light,
the daylight.

So much to see this world of gray
Paint the scenery along the way,
Off somewhere inside your mind
You leave this barren world behind

Are you blue or black and blue
tortured by what they say to you
Wish to be taken from this place
Hold your breath till you're blue in the
Face red from what you've done
Or is that from too much sun?

Are you green with envy
To be some other fellow?
Or are you just yellow?

Which hue would you choose to be
if you could pick any
Shade under the tree
Would you come and sit by me
and be free

Eyes as blue as velvet Elvis
soul of Shakespeare sings melodious psalms
chemistry lingering, mingling with scent
of sourdough and espresso
at "our" cafe
sparks of electric exchanges
first touch, first kiss, frozen time
My mind as empty as my cup
one thousand words spill
into none
Have I gone insane?
If so, would you go there with me?
Ah, the ecstasy of finding true love
The tranquility of creating memories
The agony that sourdough and espresso
will someday make me cry.

ceralls stained with the work of years and filled with small frame
y in and out of the old corridors.
scarred by the days of knife fights in Harlem, killing Vietnam, reach
oting pile of rubbish which used to be a wall.
ap around a piece of old molding lined with nails and jump back.
lood pour forth coagulating in the stagnant oxygen and frozen in
e angels of dust float weightlessly through the halls dancing on dull
ght.
shafts through, illuminating the room like the floor of some Appala-
ot as the dust burns the retina and tickles the fields of cilia.
s are everywhere here, they are on every tongue and move like velvet
t of the rays avoiding the light.
isper of times not forgotten and really not much different.
lay smoothly for the frenzied crowds sweating off the history of the
ituals improvised slowly for the glorification of the moment where
n suffering.
ymises of integration fall out of the mouths of visiting white dignitar-
to avoid the light like the ghosts, only more hollow.
hsts and these promises are still alive here.
ne found in the empty bottles of cheap wine drank before noon.
ound in rooms called home by the living only for a week.
even in the scars bore deep by the whip of the city.
important, for what of the future, if one cannot exorcise the ghosts of the

Cody asked me something unintelligible from across the room.

"What?"

"Nothing. Come over here—tell me if you like the modifications I've made to the program."

"The livid dreaming one?"

"Yes," he said, smirking. "Dr. Frye gets to play like a child set loose in an arena." I approached him, grinning, "Every chance I get."

After tossing aside a magazine he'd been thumbing through, Cody motioned to the work-station on which sat several machines he was currently either fixing, or experimenting with. His lab was small: a large table in the middle, several overhead lights, metal cabinets, computer equipment, tools everywhere. Even though we'd been friends since junior high, I knew very little about his job at Honeywell. I know he was considered a highly specialized technician who designed components for the space shuttle, something to do with heat transference in the shuttle's motors. He also had personal projects he worked on at home—and one in particular with sensory manipulation.

Cody and I had been friends since our days of playing *Lost in Space* in the basement behind his house. We'd always managed to keep one thing in common: the ability to imagine what wasn't there. I eventually got a degree in philosophy while majoring in computer science. He entered the work force ten years ago, earning himself a well-paid position, enough so to afford a Volvo with leather seats. I followed my own dreams and ideals and ventured into the amorphous, remote land of graduate study and research, examining my current fascination: Martin Heidegger, who—I've found on more than one occasion—is a topic of extreme boredom for just about every one but me. I drive a Honda now (no leather), which I got last year, but only after earning a tenured position post on the faculty of Burton College here in Wilmington. Both of us are hard-core boys at heart. Good friends. Saturdays we spend a few hours discussing everything from the psychological ramifications of quantum theory, to Dan Marino as a quarterback, to throw in the league, to Russian politics, to smoked salmon, to PC vs. Mac, to the future of the world. We both read prolifically. And when we're discussing areas of mutual interest, polite polemics have been known to go on for months.

The one issue which always devolves into agnostic argument though concerns religious views: I am a believer in the truth of what I call the "non," taken from the Tao of course. Whereas Cody has been grounded in a firm faith in the Virgin, the sacraments, the Eucharist, etc. He is not devout. But he does believe in the Truth. That a divine creator exists, that we can know this anthropomorphic being—hence my ideas of the "non." And why shouldn't he? his entire existence is based on the premise that we can know. "It got us to the moon," he loves to say. At which point he smiles, knowing that this Reason-based mindset of which we were both born helped to accelerate the achievements of the West—but it also, I believe, gave us an excess of neurosis.

On that day when I didn't hear exactly what he asked, when I willingly fell into the often-played role of guinea-pig for his project on livid dreaming, I

I heard a strange something in his voice which stood not on the legs of firm, self but on knees shaking from the palsy of a break-up, sort of a disintegration, fuzzy belief he'd had. I know what he asked me—but I didn't hear or heard something in his voice akin to what children hear when their single desperately with questions concerning why Grandmother died. Being told Santa Claus didn't exist? or that your favorite uncle was really a or only claim to life was his ability to tap-dance while singing "Ave Maria" or ment of whomever was around? I sensed a biting, world-shaking emotion and his veneer of cool, an emotion where the veil peels away. Cody had something so strange to his ordered conceptual world-view that when he gestion he could barely hold his tone from quivering more than it did—I'm x, otherwise I would have heard him clearly, otherwise . . . I'd be a different

to his amalgam of hardware he calls his "Baby" and what I call a monster of more fit for massive number crunching than word processing, which is all I sense it for. But at night Cody did most of his personal research here. He had a program that allowed you to experience vivid dreaming. You place a pair of sun-glasses/head-phones (that's what they look like to me) on your eyes and your ears and immediately see a spectrum of flashing lights while strange, music flits back and forth from right ear to left ear, right to left, working its way deeper into your subconscious for about fifteen minutes, at which time you've not fought it and have allowed it to relax you—you enter a state of crisis, a state of complete extra-sensory withdraw. What you think you see is nothing. What you think you hear is nothing. But you sense what is happening, and you force yourself to look beyond the soft light you continue not to see the color of the music. It takes a little practice. At this point, you began to vivid feelings from within your subconscious that your conscious thinking evokes. The conscious aspect of our psyche is very powerful, wide, some say connected to the subconscious which has ever lived.

He handed me the sun-glasses, his machine beginning to hum, the monitor on the wall. I got situated and prepared for the awesome trip. "Well . . ." he mumbled.

The lights began to flash, and I began to fade as I mused over a conversation I had with a colleague earlier in the day. My colleague's words seemed so profound; he talked about Cicero, or possibly Quintilian—no, Cicero, Cicero standing before Augustus, orating in his smug, arrogant fashion with such power that Marc Antony would have to kill him, cut off his head and hands and parade them in front of the city to show the people that the might of Rome was no longer under the control of the Rhetorician.

I wondered what it must have been like to live in the early days of the Roman Empire. I noticed that the lights had disappeared, the soft music flitting in a teasing way at the periphery of my hearing, the soft crashing of waves heard just beyond

in the distance. I tried to imagine the gulls. I had done this before, which for started with imagining I'd heard something. Then I dreamed whatever I into soft, unheard urgings of the program awakening my subconscious, tricking thinking I was entering R.E.M. sleep so that I could walk with Plato through gardens of his Academy, or let my imagination recreate battles in the Napole or simulate sex with Eleanor of Aquitaine (I've always been fascinated with l course, during the encounters she wears the beatific face of my wife, Judith) us lying atop a turret in one of her late medieval castles as troubadours and fight their way to the top to stop us . . .

But a curious alteration in the process started when a small, black dot in the my vision begin to rotate. I forgot the gulls. The dot formed a swirl within it my body moving, quickly all of a sudden, vertigo enveloping me. I felt two t and desire, harsh, intense emotions surging up as my penis instantly grew e no certain reason, definitely not Eleanor, no reason other than an innate thro desire which rushed through my veins, the nipple impulse, the urge to eat. I But at the same time I feared the intangible. The swirling lasted several minu tried to materialize it into something. When it ceased moving, a rush of color peared, dizzying me for a moment. Then stillness, save for the beating of my the pounding of my blood. I felt myself floating in a void, staring into the fac serpentine figure with four arms, a naked epicene idol, spotted green, which back at me through the translucent light. Its eyes were oval and dull—but fu now.

I not a poet, but we, indeed, are the stuff dreams are made on, brief lives of f surrounded by endless eternities of sleep, one part of a vital soul linked some vast swimming vortex of energy. A reflection of the first singularity. The reso the initial bang still heard in all substratums of life. The thing I stared at was vibrations of the universe. The music of the spheres. The masks of God. It exi world of poetry, the world of metaphor, beyond the paltry power of denotati ing. All I can think to say is that it is. Martin's "non." The unnameable, unde so very different from what we Westerners think, what I was trained to perce here it was, a thing deep from within my subconscious which seemed to enco and yet still be outside of me. Then it began to move.

Its small feet popped up and down, in a dance, a dance of slow, graceful step while it kept its face staring intently at me, a face born beyond male and fema ness, yet beautiful, both Adam and Eve melted into the features of a sexless g thick, colorless hair rested a human skull made of marble; next to this grim sy a new moon. Two images from my deepest thinking which paralleled how I f moment. I both feared and desired this thing dancing before me, this thing of limbs beyond a restriction of gender.

Its four arms swung in strange, complex patterns, effortless movement urgini to follow them. In one hand it held a small drum which it beat with its thumb a soft rhythmic music I can only describe as lulling, enthralling, both strange appealing at the same time. In its opposite hand sprang a small flame whose

the burning emanations fighting with the tick, tick, tick of the drum for my power threatening to consume me, ultimately pulling my focus away from the drum.

Enraptured at the dancing, the flame in its hand burning deeper into my skin as flames encircled the figure. At this point I felt myself lying prone, no longer from a distance but closer, the thing moving nearer to me. I felt as if demonic demons were coming for me, escorts to their lowest bolgia below the surface into an abyss of ice where I would forever be trapped in the ass of Satan. As this envoy of the dark drew closer, pure fear erupted like nothing I've ever experienced before. As a child I witnessed the death of a boy riding his bike down the middle of the street when a swerving car came around a corner too fast and ran directly into him, shattering his skull, spilling his blue-grey brains over the macadam road. Memories after that incident were nothing compared to the feeling raging in my chest at the flame-encircled thing. I could have tried to yank myself free of the trance but I didn't want to even try. This was the deepest hour of my soul's dark journey. I let the figure to approach, even as my heart trip-hammered and my blood pounded at me to get away. I wanted it—just to touch it once, to feel the corrupting first sin which is both appealing and repulsive at the same moment..

Then, at last, I watched it suddenly leap and come down on my torso. Its feet crashed onto my soft skin and plummeted into my chest cavity, destroying my scream before it could reach my larynx. I silently yowled in ecstasy as I felt my lungs explode and blood and tissue flying from me, its feet moving within my chest, grinding and crushing under its toes, breaking the tender flesh of my veins and arteries. As I felt blood gush from the wounds in my chest, the thing still dancing, I remembered a vision of statuary I once saw in Chartres cathedral: a naked man being burned alive, staring up at the clouds even as his flesh peeled away and his blood boiled. A Stephen figure maybe. Pain and pleasure. Eros and Thanatos.

I don't know how long I stayed in the dream-state, but it felt like an eternity . . . me alone, dancing the dance of life and death, pain and pleasure, free from the constraints of time and space, simply me and the dancer, its feet in my chest as its lulling music filled my ears, the heat of its flame on my skin. But I couldn't truly feel any of it. A kind of feeling we experience when we hurt ourselves. Ecstasy. Out of control. No longer desired nor feared . . . I don't know how it happened, but the dancer disintegrated and switched places.

Now it was I, drum and flame in hand, my other arms moving endlessly as their heat soaked the heat and the music. When I looked down, I saw my own face. I remember that night, the glasses still on me. Lethargic, stunned, I pulled them off. The next day, my lap: I don't know what happened to you, but something weird happened. Nothing in the changes I made to the sequence of patterns resulting in that night. A serpent ate my genitals. Ate them in one long chomp. Then it turned into a dragon and flew away as I yelled for it to return what it had taken. When it did, it was a dragon which dove into my mouth, down my throat. Then I turned into a dragon and dove into the maw of myself. Don't ask me how. When it was over, I was lying away leaving my corpse behind. I don't know if you had the same

experience, but I don't understand. As I became the dragon, I felt as if I was somewhere specific. If you can, lock up my house, electricity, water, etc. I'll be there some time. p.s. Don't tell anyone about the program. I read and re-read his program and fought to understand what this meant. He saw a bird, a snake, a dragon. And he became what he saw.

I did as he asked, methodically locking all his windows, shutting off the lights, getting his house in order to be abandoned for however long. Cody eventually returned from his venture into the desert after a long winter season of wandering the country. By the look on his face, he didn't seem to be satisfied. A couple of days after he returned he began marketing his program. Six months later he sold it to a lot of people. It simply put most people to sleep. Others it just irritated. The few able with the patience to attain vivid dreams e-mailed him letters telling of their experiences. They saw clearly whatever they were dreaming . . . but nothing like our experience. "What did we do to make it work like it did?" he asked me the only time I was awake. "I thought it was simply the new sequences. But I can't get it to work again."

"We did nothing."

"Nothing."

"Then why doesn't it work? I didn't alter it."

I laughed softly. "It . . ."

"Well? "

I couldn't tell him . . .

I pictured the dancing figure, its feet in my chest, and I remembered how I had no desire. No want or non-want. Nothing. I didn't know.

. . . I could only suggest: "We have to let go of wanting."

A puzzled look crossed his face. To him, the failure of his project was a problem he could solve. Like Francis Bacon fumbling in the snow with that damn chicken. Like Newton, Einstein, Hawking, and all those physicists with their theories. Could he understand what I meant. To him the experience was strange and terrible—unstandable. He was still in the desert, the sand lodged in his eyes.

He nodded his head and left—I'm sure on his way to his work-station to put the secret of his epiphany. But he wouldn't find it, not with his intentions fixed on the pursuit of revealing the secret. The design on the box is a nice label with which the application will illicit mystical-like experiences. He named it: God-Consciousness. Everyone who buys it has a desire. I didn't when I wore the glasses. Neither did he. The only time it worked for him. I am thankful I didn't hear him ask that question.

He should have never put it in their heads. A marketing mistake. One which has been made over and over again through countless generations. And so we build temples, more machines, surrogate shamans with no power to summon our

The End

Staff

Members

own
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Officers

user Assistant Promotions Director

Executive Officers

ven	Head Editor
Bie	Managing Editor
n	Layout and Design Editor
	Selections Editor
l	Submissions Editor
ore	Promotions Director

s-Steele	Media Advisor
aman	Faculty Advisor
amin	Advertising Advisor

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Printer

Patrons

Clemson Newsstand
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Keith Street Cafe
Cafe Espresso
Judge Keller's
Campus Copy Shop
Clemson Cable Network
WSBF
The Tiger
The Reveille



Patrons

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Long Tired Tavern

Lund's Drug Store

Kennel's Cafe

Elmer Espresso

Reddy Haller's

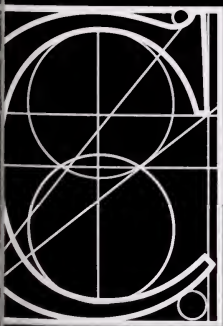
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Spring 1996



over art

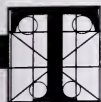
Front:

Sunflower Boy Cecile Broome
digital manipulation 5" x 7"

Back:

Scream Lorraine Brennan
monotype 22" x 30"

Special Thanks to Kara for helping us find artists.



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Bony fingers hold my heart in place
And I feel the absence of the flesh.
Dry tears remember younger cheeks
When feelings weren't so hard to come by.

Insanity grabs at my thoughts
Like mad dogs snatching laundry from the line,
Leaving lonely threads to catch the breeze
Stained with love gone wrong.

My brain feels like broken glass
Each piece a different place in time.
None of them gray like brains outta be
But a measure for lost treasure just the same.

Is it my stomach or the hem of my dress,
stain, sequined and black,
spinning round the floor, ripped, smooth
Like virgins on the eve of first knowing.

I can't see in here, it's dim,
The curves are sharp, almost square.
And there is no definition
Only a blurry future filled with question.

My intelligence is betraying me
blending past loves with present attractions,
Never once asking the heart for directions
Knowing it would be blinded by what's not real.



He is Your Son Loc Cao
lithograph 16" x 28"



Patterns in his chaos.
Circles, spirals
Squares, parallelographhexagonalongitudinals.
Butterfly flaps its wings.
Somewhere your eyelashes brush
her hair,
somewhere your thunder
crashes
inside of a hollow cave,
somewhere your stunned love
grows
deformed, demented, delicious;
somewhere I wake just as you do
to another face, not like my own,
somewhere fingers interlace and I
imagine your index finger
your mouth, your eyelashes, in my bed.
Somewhere, nowhere, everywhere.
We are, we aren't, we never were.
Time stood, walked, turned about,
never still, spirally curls of life engulfed
us, somewhere in the nowhere of everywhere,
lost like butterfly's eyelashes.





Charleston
ate him.
Chewed him up in her bloody maw.
Ate him before I could,
before I decided I would.
I just turned around for a nanosecond (okay, maybe a few days)
and She ate him.
All that's left are a few
fleshy crumbs,
morsels that I lovingly hoard in my cookie jar
heart.
Tiny pieces of the whole,
eaten lusciously like bulbous fruit hanging low and full on a twisted vine, brushing
with
his noxious nectar, ripened remnants fell from his tree.
I, starving, feral, grapple on life's bank for a taste, a tiny nibble, a sweet
nothingsomething.
Teeth sink into flesh, the creature that used to be me winces and chews, chews.
Chews,
half repulsed, half satisfied with the
briny taste of salt and sweat and rancid ripe red mixed with
cotton fibers—the
blood from a heart worn to often
on a dirty sleeve.
The last supper.

I indulge.





The covering of your body is with a skin of ebony, mahogany, pecan shell or perhaps a soft ecru

Your great grandmother's grandmother held nipples to children, her own, and not her own

And at the time that the canons fired and the flag of true feelings flew

Your great grandfather's grandfather hid in swamps and handed tiny bags of salvation to the boys in Blue

Your great grandfather stood in the shame of being a "boy" at sixty

And your great grandmother held silent tears while her own swayed quiet silently in the wind from Southern magnolias

While not her own stood at the trunk as if he had already taken his place at the left hand of Jesus

Yet-you know not from whence you have come

Your brothers' arms encircle not your own and your sisters' sweet breathes of love go unswallowed by her own

Oh-but my the wind is changing

Boreas shall sweep down on Oreithyia once again while she is playing and unprepared

First in the dark of night and finally revealing himself in the hot, bright sunshine not your own requires that you be more like your own before the flag of true colors flew

And so you sit rocking in the sweet Southern breeze holding nipples to children painfully not your own

Your own having vanished-eaten up by the silent woods who hold the nasty secrets of not your own forever

And who hear the screams of your own resound over the treetops

All the while not your own stands smiling and smoking his pipe, looking over his fields and telling himself that life is what you make it.





Boring Movie Phengtou Thor
graphite





i'd like to say
that it's a crescendo,
spiraling through
a kaleidoscope
on the tip
of an icicle,
moving at a rate
faster than
a blink in a windstorm.
reflecting
all the primaries
and secondaries
in the grains of sand
beneath it.
rapidly twisting
and winding,
maneuvering
though curves
and tunnels
as it climbs upwards,
it knows
all the fire exits
and safety precautions
available.
colors blur
and blend together
like the foam
that blends with a wave
after the crest breaks,
and all we really see
are our own hands before us...
clasped together,
joint to joint
knuckle to knuckle
palm to palm
and fingertip to fingertip,
so tightly attached,
they too blur and blend and meld
together
until all that's left
is the twisting
winding
and maneuvering
among the primaries
and secondaries
of our kaleidoscope.





"Bombs away!" said I, and I launched the acorn from my window, which is some 25 feet high. It narrowly missed a woman I did not know, bouncing to the ground at her feet. She looked up at me.

"Watch what you're doing," she yelled at me from below.

"You nearly hit me."

"I'm sorry," said I. "My aim must be off today. Only rarely have I missed my mark before."

"Why don't you stop being so childish?" she scolded.

"Childish?" said I. "I'm afraid I don't understand."

A friend of mine, who was leaving the building, looked up at me from below.

"What he means," he said to the woman, "is that he can't stop being childish."

"I'm afraid my friend speaks the truth," said I. "I was born a child, and I find it hard to become something other than that which I was born to be."

"I was born a child, too," she said. "But I grew up."

"Yet you look so small from up here," said I. My friend giggled. "Whereas I, who never grew up, am much taller now than you."

"You must be drunk," she said, "or crazy. Are there crazy people in our building?" she asked of my friend.

"Not any longer, no," he answered. "All the crazy people have now left."

Another acorn tumbled from my window to land behind the woman. "I think they missed one," she said.

"Most definitely," said my friend. "But I'm sure you can remedy that problem."

"What?" she queried. "I should remove your crazy friend?"

"Why no," said he. "My friend may stay. But if you pack your bags, I'll help you move away."

She scowled at my friend. "You are just as childish as he is." She looked up at me from below and shook her head disapprovingly.

She turned and walked away. The hickory nut did not miss its mark.





he Happy-Go-Lucky Bar

Elizabeth Lavins

The man wiped the table with a small shabby cloth
then presented a woman with a barley-yeast broth.
She smiled and returned with a sweet toothless grin;
He knew of her past, of her old world of sin.
A businessman entered and laid down his case,
he ordered a scotch and then buried his face.
He was a newcomer in this old-timer bar,
but he was an old-timer with whiskey by far.
Next to him sat an old chinese man
who quietly sipped from a red rusty can.
Occasionally he said something foreign and jumbled,
but mostly he sat and he spat and he mumbled.
In the back of the bar was a gray smoky mist
which surrounded a man with tattoos on his wrist.
He was called "The Hustler" by the rest of the crew,
and could milk men of their money with a long pool cue.
A policeman walked in, just off from duty,
then walked to the back and exchanged money for bootie.
He inhaled some white powder and then sat for a while-
'til his grim, stony face broke into a smile.
This was a bar for the depressed and alone
in the warm neighborhood where these people had grown.



I lobbied my way with you
To a play that wasn't playing
Where I can still feel them saying
There's no respect in them wearing
So.

A grown girl prodigy
Transcends a dead man's moods
With legs lyrically lifting
And manic digits dancing
We sit
As audile receptors
I, in recess
But the sounds would not confess
What for us, was eminent coalescence

(Mia Chung @ the Brooks Center; September 12, 1995)



We stare at the photograph of you hanging by your knees from the m
bars

And grinning,

Pigtails like plomb-bobs

Your long ribbons untied

The ends resting in the dusty red clay

That clung to your shoes long after recess.

Your jeans are deep indigo, black in the dingy photograph, with worn
white knees,

Testimony to a hard life

Of jacks, slides, swings.

We laugh at the white canvas Nikes that acquired a rusty tint we all w

And the oxford shirts our mothers made us tuck in tight

Before we left for school

As, in gray breath, you blow ash from your cigarette off your smile,

Smiling at the disdainful look I am giving, and remarked how much y
hated

Rainy days.



Untitled Lisa M. Jones
color print 8 1/2" x 12"





What can repay a Son's debt?
A broken blood trust is far too expensive.
For that I own not one black cent.
Memory is all I can offer.

I remember you told me,
"It's all right to eat fish 'cause they don't have any feelings."
Oh, how I longed for gills.
I dreamt of the slow metamorphosis.
But I could never escape your human hook.
Trapped under 22 years of blood tainted water,
I drowned in the bloodshot confusion of your eyes.

So to repay you,
I injected distance and time.
Perhaps not as potent as your vice
Yet so much less honest.
Soon, like any junky,
It became easier to keep using.
And with the close of eight years;
My vein collapsed.
"That's all right," I said,
"I've got two arms."





I peer between my legs
Squeezing past the moment.
My body hard against their hands
My eyes dart in confusion.

Chains slapped 'round my ankles
Break open the skin
Cutting past my childhood,
As my blood drips to the floor.

Fighting reality,
I paint their faces black
And mahogany is hard
Against my naked flesh.

Invited here by friends
I thought-
But friends wouldn't
Wield weapons, shiny and sharp.

Weapons that invade
And poke
As tiny eyes look on
Seeking the truth of me.

Words don't make sense
So I turn away to face the wall
And listen to my fingernails
scratch their callous souls.

Across the room
-Sunlight fades
From the room
And innocence is lost, forever.

I lie there in stillness
Not knowing if I'm free
But stinging instead
From their familiarity

Like ghosts, they vanish from my sight
And humility visits my bed
Paralyzing the spirit
That once was free.





M

ysterious Form Emily West
woodcut 20 3/4" x 22 1/2"





ntitled Emily West
woodcut 30" x 22 1/4"





The archetypes distilled
from cerebral matter...

The talking drum is
rotting in the bathtub.
Its ancient, wooden fibers
pulled apart by the
infiltration of
water molecules.
The waves throbbing
from its stretched skin
used to travel across
African bush for miles.
The sounds, the beats,
a constant rising and falling
of earthen rhythms
journeying through crisp air.
Communication with no
regards for lines of
latitude and longitude,
only looking for a
receptive ear to
discern the depths of
its rhythmic enchantment
The impotence is overpowering.
What was once a powerful
tool now reduced to an
African relic disintegrating
into pulp and washed down
the drain in some
American museum.

...remain eternal even if the
current is rendered useless.





Forest for the trees the city closes its eyes and honks like a goose.
The poetry we write is non-utilitarian. The poetry we write is
Forest for the trees I laid a goose egg in the middle of the road
and I sat down to think about poetry

The city is dormant,
the headlights are all filing towards another place
the poetry we write,
well,

Forest for the trees in the city there is anonymity, the pressure of
capital is less rampant, there is freedom for non-utilitarianism.

A big fat goose egg:

The cars all straddled it with their tires humming on the
tacky grip rubber and tar.

Try to sing to the city at night,
body wet as the fog rolls past:

You get nothing but the sound of your lovely shoestring voice and the
echoes colored by concrete and capital.

We can be covered by the tar and chain link
so that the weight on our chest
makes us forget our human bellows.

The tires sing to the city
forest for the trees
what kind of song:
a song of ineffectuality

get a job.

I laid a big fat goose egg in the road
and thought about profit sharing
tires humming
slick skin surface
throbbing in a chain of once-organic connectivity
the city is a goose egg
and the poetry we write,

well,

we will all straddle it
someday.





kaze no Itazura (A Trick of the Wind)

Rie Tsuchida



cyanotype/gum print with digital output negative 11 1/2" x 8" each



Chronicle Spring 1996





Whimsy whipping

arms and bones around while

clumsy clutching

too tired to see the cold white

skeletal hand that holds you in its grip.

When your ego starts to slip you breathe in and breathe out the air;
for your time is a fragile whisper on the nape of someone's neck
and when clumsy clutching

whimsy whipping

you hurricane your whirling thought against the seawall of the
beach

where your childhood was spent digging in the sand for shark's
teeth

Let me introduce you to

Entropy, poor soul. You poor thing,

shamble pity monster sitting

where is your

head

?

The thoughts that snake in and out whipping stinging
those eels and worms

tails whipping

the things that make you turn into a reptile

cold

like a dead forge

inside.





So I'm at this party, about a year after, listening in on the petty conversation they're having on the couch over my shoulder and keeping up my end of the petty conversation I'm having with some blonde I've never met before and will more than likely never see again after this night. The TV's on, with Letterman trying to shout over the music coming from the stereo.

Suddenly MTV dominates the TV and a new song plays over the speakers. On one end, it's the song that reminds me how much you hurt me. On the other, it's the song that reminds me how much I wanted you to stay. And then the escape gets passed around. This time it's booze. Hell, I wouldn't have cared if it was a gun, or a rope, or a knife, or pills, or anything. I have to stop feeling so down, so lonely, so dark. So I down the first, then my third, the "Oh-my- God -I'm-going-to-feel-this-in-the-morning" one. But I don't care; it still hurts so much.

It's been a year; yeah, maybe for you. You can forget. I may never. Sears like this don't go away.

You may have said it a year ago, but never once did you mean it. You may think you're sorry, but I'm the one who is still being punished.

So I'm at this party with this blonde, and everything falls into place. OK, maybe everything just falls. But I slip, let my conscience fall away, and go with my raging, brutal, animal instincts.

Just like you.....





Symbols of Passion Loc Cao
collagraph 16" x 12"





Untitled Phengtou Thor
watercolor and ink 24" x 36"





I suppose
through the course of the day
A million thoughts occur to us
that we never say.

I know
that many times
those unspoken thoughts
are more important
than the voiced ones.

But then
my mind and my attention
is limited
and so much
has to go without saying.

I think
more often than not,
my subtle, quiet friends
through silent
have much more to say.

I don't
ever make the chances
to tell you
the million things I forgot.
More often than not.





Over the years,
hiding behind the months,
the seasons evolved,
changing the colors,
the shapes, and the forms of life -
She too changed and evolved
in front of my
cloudy eyes.
I knew
she was growing
and fighting against
the fetters of childhood
that bound her.
I overlooked her
milestones as
another candle and
a bigger cake.
Until one day,
in the spotlight
of the Sunday morning sun,
she stood
before the Reverend
to say,
"I do."
I never chose
to accept
the large strides
she took
towards the ribbon
of womanhood.
All along she ran
in my path,
echoing my actions,
until she passed me
on the last lap,
breaking the ribbon
I never reached.
My little sister has grown
to be the woman
I never imagined
to see at my kitchen table,
drinking coffee,
and talking about
kids.





Remains Erik S. Miller
monoprint 9 5/8" x 15 1/2"





Kinetic energy....

the organic and
inorganic
spiraling softly
up and down
through fields of
formless gas.

The process inspires
with a breath
instilled on
the breezes of
becoming
into what some call
being.

A slew of brown, red, orange, and golden
autumnal colors
suddenly take life
in the shape of
a breathing cone
spinning on the side
of the road
consuming loose objects
in its path.

The wind is

eternal fodder
constantly moving through
the three-dimensional
grid of
palatial space
shaping the elements
from someone's

perception.

This space contains water
where off in the distance
there are old dilapidated
dwellings and
scavenging animals
partaking of
sacraments.

The water is glimmering
like a metal and assumes
the gracious shape of
the forces pressing down
upon it,
thus seizing the moment
in a still life snapshot
spun upside down and
projected
on
torn tissue.





he Crazy Man in the Chapel

"Crazy Man Committed To Insane Asylum For Defacing Fresco," read the headlines of the Times. It seems that some madman had made his way into the Sistine Chapel in Rome and climbed the scaffolding that remained from the restoration, yelling, screaming, and throwing innocent tourist out of his way. The madman destroyed three cameras while he made his way towards the scaffolding and sources say that one tourist was thrown to the floor in a deliberate attack while he was leaning back to take a picture of the ceiling. Upon climbing the scaffolding, the madman then proceeded to throw himself against the fifteenth century fresco in a flagrant attempt to damage the precious piece of art. The Roman police were immediately on hand, and three were sent up the scaffolding. Because the safety of visitors to the chapel was potentially at risk, police clubbed the screaming man knocking him unconscious so they could safely bring him down from the scaffolding and into custody. Experts say that due to the efficient and heroic action, no damage had been done to the historic painting. The work of art earns millions of dollars per year from tourist, and the incident would not keep any tourist from seeing the ceiling. The fate of the madman is pending, but he is currently under lock and key in an asylum in Italy. A picture of the madman next to the column neatly framed the menacing vagrant holding himself against the painting as police were climbing towards him.

A day before the newspaper article had gone to the presses, a traveler had entered the Capella Sistina in order to admire the beautiful fresco and had witnessed the whole event. He had been extremely excited about making it to the Chapel. Traveling with no money, it had been his destination for several months now, and today he had finally made it to the precious space. He had planned to not look up at the ceiling until he managed to find a place to set his worn knapsack down, but when he finally ducked under the tight door that lead in and stepped down onto a tiled floor he couldn't resist looking up. When his gaze touched the ceiling, he dropped his sack to the floor and was immediately spellbound.

So many times he had studied photographs and histories of what he now saw, but nothing had painted it true. The plane of the ceiling disappeared in the painting giving way to a space constructed purely out of color. Figures perched on pedestals and hanging from corners with twisted bodies reached down from their height in magnificent poses. He admired the way color was bent to put things in motion. An arm wasn't painted with one color but would change along its length from a shade of blue to a bright green. The composition of Biblical figures was





almost musical, dancing in and out of each other and always relating to each other as the traveler followed them with his eye. They looked down on him; Noah, Moses, Cane and Able, David and the head of Goliath. They saw him with their knowing eyes that were so alive that the traveler had an eerie feeling that he was being watched. Indeed, he believed that he really was.

All of the stories of the Old Testament were told with a freedom that religion rarely possesses, and its message was one of beauty. He concentrated on the central piece. An old man donned with heavy garbs floated through the air on the shoulders of a cluster of angels. Facing him was the naked figure of a young man, lazily lying on the ground with an almost bored look. Where God reached out with a wanting hand eager to give life to a man with a touch, the half reluctant hand of the naked Adam rested over his knee. The two figures reached towards each other slowly coming together, but the moment of the painting held them forever at a distance so close that life seemed to spark between their fingertips. When the traveler saw the spark flicker he felt the enormous mystery of life blink inside his body. He had the fleeting feeling of how small he was inside the universe, but how he held the whole universe inside him.

Wandering on in a trance the traveler continued his admiration of the work. He was struck by how enormous the effort was that had been put into it. He pictured Michaelangelo struggling with the immense scaffolding inches from the ceiling. In the travelers mind the scaffolding become Michaelangelo's angels holding him safely in midair and his hands were the hands of God bringing the once empty ceiling into life. When the traveler looked up in his imagination and saw Michaelangelo painting the spark of life that flickered in the creation of man, there were now three hands coming together; the hand of God bearing life, the hand of man bearing innocence, and the hand of the artist putting them in harmony. For a second the traveler caught a glimpse of the love that Michaelangelo felt as he discovered his figures in the magic space between the artist and the surface that he was painting against.

The traveler had lost all sense of where he was and what he was doing and was jerked back to reality by a whining voice that came from over his shoulder. "Excuse me mister, we're trying to take a picture and your in the way."

When he spun around he came face to face with a short woman with poofy hair decked out in tourist gear. Hanging from one arm was a bag overflowing with postcards and plastic replicas of Roman statues and in the other hand swung a black instant automatic snapshot camera. "Do you mind?" She snapped again.



A little startled, the traveler replied in a steady voice, "I'm sorry for getting in your way miss, but I think you should also know that photography isn't allowed in here. You'll damage the ceiling."

His reply was met with a look of disgust and through the smacking of chewing gum the lady returned, "Whatever mister. You think I came all this way to not get a picture to show friends that I've been here."

She promptly pushed the traveler aside, raised her camera to the ceiling, and a flash shot off at the delicate underside of the fresco.

Disgusted, the traveler couldn't believe what he had just seen, and feeling helpless he turned away from the obnoxious woman. "Doesn't realize what she's doing," he muttered to himself. "She's not here to see the ceiling, she's here so she can go home and tell people she saw it. Does she think that her friends even care if she's seen it or not? She isn't even looking at the ceiling, just snapping away."

In his disgust he made a gripping realization that scared him deep, so deep that it hurt, grabbing his heart and squeezing it. Flash bulbs were going off all over the chapel. Cameras were clicking and whirring, people churning film in their automatic snapshot cameras. Without looking cameras pointed up, click, click, click, flashes shooting upwards. "Get me in front of this Honey! Oh Grandma will love this shot." Click, click, click. "Oh, I made it here, all I need is the proof so they'll believe me back home." Click, click, click, whirl, click, flash, flash, flash.

The traveler spun around in the confusion, the pressing people feeling like the incessant buzzing of bees. Click, flash, flash. That these people were ignoring the signs that warned of the damage caused by flash bulbs to paintings, not listening to the announcements in three different languages that prohibited flash photography, and ducking behind security guards backs to set off a flash at this and that, wasn't even what disturbed the traveler the most. "They aren't even looking. The majesty of the majesty of the Sistine Chapel is looming over their heads and they aren't even looking!"

In desperation he looked around. Was anyone out there? Was he the only one in the chapel who was looking and feeling? Was he the only one who saw the beauty? He started pacing around searching, hoping to find a knowing look. Anyone? Just one person. Please. His pace picked up and his vision started to blur through a heavy tear. Help me somebody, I feel like I'm drowning.

"Excuse me, mister! You just walked into my picture when I was taking this shot."

Click, flash, click, flash.

"Signore, scusi. Io voglio uno photo per favore."

Flash, flash, flash.

"Hey buddy, do ya mind, you're in the way."

Nowhere to go in the sea of snapshot cameras. The traveler was alone.

"They don't see it, they're not looking."

His eye caught hold of something in the distance and he started making his way towards it. A lone scaffolding climbed out of the swarming crowd up along the north wall of the chapel. Click, click, flash. His eyes fixed on the scaffolding he pushed people out of his way, flinging them aside. He felt like he couldn't breathe and if he didn't make it soon he would suffocate. "Watch it mister!" came a yell that was promptly ignored. Click, click.

He made it to the scaffolding and without a pause began reaching and climbing towards the ceiling. A sense of relief reached him for only a second when he got up above the heads of the crowd and was washed out by a blinding light. The crowd had turned towards him and flashes were going off all around him. Click, click, click, flash. He couldn't see through the blinking light, but he kept climbing and climbing until he topped the scaffolding that made it only halfway to the ceiling.

Looking down, the traveler saw that the crowd had turned into a roar, and they were all pressing towards him, snapshot cameras and video cameras pointing high, click, click, clicking with a constant flash. Turning from the crowd he faced against the north wall of the chapel and realized where he was. He was looking into the eyes of God who was twisting in the scene of the Last Judgment, flinging demons to the depths of the earth and rescuing the souls of the beautiful. He saw the hand of Michaelangelo painting it centuries ago, and he saw all of the flash bulbs pulsing against the delicate colors washing them away. He moved towards the figure leaning against the wall covering it with his body trying to protect it from the beating flash.

He didn't notice the police coming up the scaffolding after the madman. He didn't feel the billy club swing against the back of his neck knocking him from consciousness. All he heard was the camera taking the snapshot that would appear in the papers the next day, and it clicked like a gun pointed at his heart.





I have walked many days for you,
How is it that you can be so cruel?
Me and Lefty bared our soles
So that you could go on your way
Anywhere you wanted to, no need to ask because we'd stay,
But what can I say
I beg for just a little more time
It is Lefty, sir that's old and worn
But sir, I can still hold mine.

Do you remember the walks and talks
in the park when the flowers had just bloomed?
Do you remember the runs in the woods, the time we got lost,
I think it was June?

You know you would miss me.
Give up? I can't without a fight.
Lefty has time. You can't do it,
Because you know I'm Right.





I was walking in what should have been the early sunlight of the dawn on the rest of my life wearing my shades the ones with the pop-out side-mounted laser cannon that requires my constant attention or else I'll lay waste to this entire place like I did the last time and the hat from the college I should have dreamed myself to but that dream was crushed long ago just like I killed several people's dreams by coming to this God-forsaken state and I see the sunlight falling on the ground as I'm tripping along without the sunshine on my shoulders and then I cross through and the sun breaks under the bill of my cap and over the edge of my shades and for that split second the sun was mine and all the world with it and I controlled the rotation of the Earth with my strides and doled out justice with my eyes but it was only a second and maybe that's all I'll ever be able to be worth or maybe after another 17 years I can find the sun again but next time I'll wrest control from God and forsake all else but the sun and then I'll be happy enough. Happy enough, what the hell that is I'll never know because I've never had enough or if I did it was always taken away from me. That's all I want, is enough, not more, just enough, and only if I'm worth it.





Why do you kill me
Every year or so,
Each chance you get?

You flay my skin
With your scourge,
Your whip.

You dictators.
You are worse than Moros
And his spells, his powers.

Much worse.
You hang from your tower
And lead me to believe

Each time will be the last.
But the stinging of the whip
Never ends —

Your barbed tongue in my lip.
A decade has passed
And I will no longer listen,

Your lies are dead at last.
And all the stench you spout
To those who worship you

Cannot fool me this time —
The Greeks thought you were divine.
I think you're both bastards.





Have you ever loved the blood
Of a variant hue
Touched the strings of his being
Or let his bliss
Bring your heart to his level?
His culture is not the only diversity
But I cannot experience
His skin tone
What I do feel
Is his emotional heat, dense and burning
And the tight friction
Of his flaming thoughts and desires
His texture sparks only my admiration
The composure of his brown constitution alone
Seems more noble than any act of chivalry
Deep and rich his whole aura is held together
By raw power
But inside flickers amorous confusion
Warming the hardness of his bewilderment
And he opens
To me.





There are silver tongued serpents
Speaking in the old-time gospel hour.
Sickening hypocrites
Spouting junk.
Voices shout back from behind stained cloth
And distort the scripture in response.
Sickening hypocrites.

Sound the Horns,
My walls will not fall.
And those who walked on Palms
Shall be Teachers no more.
So stand solid in defense, brothers.
If textbooks be not poetry
Then myth has no place in religion.
“Belief is nothing is still Belief.”
That is the the simple complexity of
Agnostic wisdom, steadfast in the
Naked face of God.

I have calculated faith,
Swallowed all that they had given me;
But still, Jesus rots in my stomach.





George in the Woods Lorraine Brennan
monotype 22" x 30"





atrons

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The Tiger

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The Path Mark Manville

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The heart stands open and all life's held back.
Her silks sashay the dance floor in my mind.
A tone of alabaster lights the cracks.
The young wind animates her hair, so fine.
Warm blood and breath seem useless in her midst,
Of tantalizing electricity.
The nectar stolen from her precious kiss,
Reveals her mark of authenticity.
And legs, oh my, so firm and shaped with length.
If only I could view the complex soul,
Embrace the beauty, or just share the strength,
I'd free myself from what I can't control.
But I must walk with shadowed face,
And long for fruit that I will never taste.



We drive ourselves through the tunnel and
As we take our last drive down
We wonder just what that last sign said
While we nose dive parallel to the mountain side.

Maybe the speed we strive for
To shorten our work load,
Or maybe all that instant food
From the millions of drive-thru's,
As we race through the day, with work, with food,
With the raising of kids and their school
Maybe this speed we strive for
Will kill us after all.

We take off Mach-3 the day we're born
Entering college at 12
Entering adulthood at 15
Married and divorced by 18
Mach-3 through our lives
Forgetting why the hell
We came in the first place.

Did we pass a sign, a detour, a warning ahead
Or did we get the green light
To proceed with caution?
Did we get the whole west coast to roam
While we outrace each other
in a contest never entered
and for a price
We'll never realize?



Glass can be shattered
from either direction.
the captured wanting out, the
free wanting in. In and out
both imprisoned.

I watch you - your breath
deliberate. To see
eyes growing darker each year,
I heard you forgot to pour
reality out and now you
cannot dream.

My fantasies face you...
a searching
touch briefly pulsating
my chasm. Your tongue, thick at
the tip, massages words and
flesh alike.

You are in all essence
a prayer, scribbled on
the back of God's napkin
mistakenly delivered to another's
table.



leave me alone
utopia in mind
super-imposed images
tie me to die
all truth or dare
nothing is fair
god has signed over the lease
egocentric electricity
running this engine i call me
stained black sheep
emerging from the sleep
xenophobic personality in order
jesus christ looks like me
enslaving perfection
attacking concession
license the smile you see
only the clockwork orange exists in me
unfulfilled desire beginning to leak
scream — i can't even speak
you only see from the outside
dirty as a mud wrestler
entertaining as economics
pretend you give a shit
rape my rights
eyes like the internet
stick those ungreased fingers down my throat
set the table for two
i'm only halfway through
only meaningless lines
nothing here just acrostics



Sun's thumbs pressing on windowshade eyelids

The Getting Up Time is perched to ripple
potential energy, the snowball before the avalanche.
Brain Shiver down the railroad tracks of my spine,

CarSlam morning sounds dampened to lullaby through my plastic walls.

Every bone still resting where I melted overnight.

Woolweight blanket still soaked in the conversation that pulled me
through those six stages of sleep.
Headheavy pillow carrying the echo of your response.

I rise to the outline of my skin, pause before breaking the surface
tension...

Righthand knuckles stretch to meet the hair of your forearm, and in a
mind arc that extends through the actual motion, I fall into the
empty space I had reserved for you.



22 years
and the pony is gone
the world is rotten
i'm turning to stone
drunk man
drunk man
sitting alone
stare at the bar
stare at the floor
raise my glass
and have some more
23 years
and the smoke is so thick
i'm choking on my own ashes
and so goddamned sick
star man
star man
commander of the ship
radio back to base
inform my dying race
the young aeronaut has
been put in his place
24 years
and trying to be a man
sometimes for a moment
i'd like to see
myself
oneself
through the eyes of a friend
watch this young man
with wild eyes
and unruly hair
for a moment
only a moment,
i'd just watch.



A stratus sky
stenciled with mandarin sunbeams
sets a stage
of fading golden backdrops
that dissolve into
a black quilt of delicately
sewn spotlights.
Your gaze is permanent
and fixed upon the set
while I admire you
from behind the peach curtains
If you saw my expression,
camouflaged by shadowy foliage,
you might lose all wonder
at the setting stage.
So, I'll be content
to manage from behind
all the costumed emotions
that cater to your gaze
and implore of you
to watch a little longer
So I may photograph
your image
permanently in my mind
as the One for whom
my sun will always set.



Tonight
while you were out on the town
I burned all your letters and want ads
I burned the times of your life
that you wanted to keep
while you found another
out on the town.
I burned the papers, the songs and
the long, lustful poems,
we wrote each other long ago.
I burned the rings of truth,
and the false highs of hope.
I burned you and me in the fireplace.

I hope that dinner was good
and the cigarettes
that used to follow.
I hope she was worth it.

The fire burned so bright
I had to step back from the heat.
The heat of the words on the paper
lit the whole room.
I almost forgot
how heavy you can write.

So this is a burning song, and you aren't in it.
This is a burning song, while you were out on the town.
I fed the fire in my warm bright living room,
I fed the fire a burning song.



Thomas Buie





i. (Archimedes)

...à la mer. He comes up for air. Kiss. Again. Very slowly, like a treddling swan along Claddagh Quay, a Galway water-rooster on the River Corrib, he plies and bills the water slowly in circles, circling slowly the boat from Malahide, the bark of Dante. He is careful not to have his contacts washed out, wot. Dips his beard and blows bubbles, masculine Houyhnhnm bubbles. Sounds good.

"Oh, do be careful over there!" she shouts. What was it? She points for brother Michael, whose back is to the wheel, ripped. Who's piqued. Indeed. Whose patience has endured the young American, who fountains like a whale....What is it?

Does a dolphin kick to show off, la. Who am I?

Humpbacked, sparkling, a ruffled spheroid of yellow drifts, dangling its stringy pendules over the sandy bottom, rolling and slowly pitching in the leaden cold, ale-brown tidal confluence of the sun-simmering golden canal.

Qu'est-ce que c'est? So what do you think?

Two strong pulls of the right, scissor kick, safe. He rounds to starboard and pulls himself up dripping, the Son of the Sea.

"Hello!"

She passes him his trousers, her beautiful hair.

So what do you think?

ii. (wunderkind)

Yes, in the manner of a character in a book— "Call me *ichthys*" — which was a charm he wore around his neck next to a token of Shakespeare; partly, by a deformation of Time, on a patio in Oregon with *son père*, snapping a mountain of stringbeans and creaming slugs with a hoe; but, somehow, too (and mostly), really on a train bound for Dublin from a sailing school somewhere south of "Cark," his bones set, braced still, as the book of motor runs promised, from having "hanged his togs with a bishop or two" for a dip among the mackerel in the sacred shoals beneath the Napoleonic battlements of a figurative monument to the imagined world in oneself, *lesous Xristos* of God the Son, which might mean something to someone in exchanging hellos with her after contriving to discover what book she might be reading, that is to say, upside down. Swift? "Is that *Gulliver's Travels* you're reading?" changing seats, "Do you like it?" Swiftly, wasting no time upside down with such earnest, ergo liberated, post-post-Modernist maneuver. Take her to the Blackrock circus. They've a Turk who takes a full autobus across his legs and chest. And there's a lottery for a wristwatch. You can still stow away in a horsedrawn caravan, go away and never come back.

iii. (thanks to the Dublin Wide Streets Commissions, Municipal Administration and Civic Services)

He wrote:

A bald abstraction, I release myself into the water,

The mind up-buoying in a dish of light,

A wheel of gulls—bright reels wheeling in the caelestis arcanum of light.

Then, later, for the glass (though it wouldn't mirror) and also about himself:

daeH eht fo spotfoor der ehT
 daeH eht no spotfoor fo nobbir erchro dna telracs ehT
 tach eht ni remnis ot meeS
 —taob eht ni serugif owt eht ffo secaf eht ward dnA
 ssendnik cinot a ot desiar eciov s'namow ehT
 em drawot detreva si ecaf reh fo etihw eht elihW
retsaf dna retsaf staeb trach elit dnA

To which she might have said almost anything justly but asked instead, coming to the real point of it: "What do you think of our country?" her subtle accent very slightly British, a cosmopolite now quite off the train.

"I love it. I hate it too at the same time."

"What do you like about it?"

"Everything."

"What do you dislike about it?"

"Everything."

iv. (house of the soul)

So there was only left the visionary excelsus to stir the chilled blood in the chattering limbs, the firesight of van Gogh as he drinks his turpentine and in his mind's eye sees the monkish figure of a young man, a poet, coming down a round, gorse-green hillock, a shifting of sheep, a hooded figure in a U.S. Marine Corps poncho stooping to the weight of his mental tablets, the furies buzzing fiercely about his head. Genius, Keats, early death, tragedy, the mind a torrid compass, extensible arms reaching, pointing, holding fast to a bitched zone of the arrested earth of the soul of the self. The green flame from the blue roof: Landscape of the Bois d'Amour at Pont-Aven by a French painter. The deep reflecting pool, the physical location of the soul in the exact center of the medulla oblongata.

The wind picks up. He gathers his knees. "A soft day."

"La bog"

"Yes." (The man who made me say, cudgeling me with his blackthorn stick, I forget what.)

"Ta se faur."

"As I was telling you," he says; she tosses him a piece of fruit.

They were turning now, and he could see the Giant's head pass silently, slowly, and with perfect grace over his right shoulder. The blue of the sound, just that was in his mind for the moment, then the warm August sun, then a strand at a time of the lady's golden hair.

(a bud grows down and forms the follicle: a shaft is made of keratinized cells, pigments and air vacuoles, the proportions of which determine its color, a sensation of the retina of the eye caused by light waves of certain lengths.)

And so it was thus that he felt that he was coming into the right space, although a quiet, discordant note fell ever more sharply, heavily in the midst of his heart's very integrated, very parasympathetic symphony of specialized electrocardioneurochemical reflexes. Meat, bones, electricity.

Al that joye is went away....

Hwer is paris & heleyne that weren so bryht & feyre...?

Did she strive for discord deliberately? Was it a natural consequence of her being, not to be helped? Why should she do that? Shan Bhean Bhocht, where are you at all?

v. (envoy)

In the wake were not a few such notes, toys, buoyant bombs sparkling beneath the crowning peninsula of Howth, there, standing in harm's way and past, so that in the end this space too is occupied. Now. Forever. In the end, he must return his gaze to their forward passage, back to the sand spit and the narrow harboring mouth of Malahide, to heaven knows, God knows where...to where the children are bathing in the riptide.

*

*

*

Coda. In Memorium K.F.C. (1922-1997) and sundry "errant days": *Ubi sunt qui ante nos fuerunt? Tell the dogs, cover the mirrors—but don't put out the cat.*

Dublin 1973-Clemson 1997

As I lay far from home, far from her
I think of her
my sweetheart my lover my wife
hair the color of the sun
and the feel of corn silk
eyes a vibrant blue like some tropical sea
with a sparkle of mirth
lips that caress mine
arms that embrace me
with my son growing in her belly
like the bullet that eats away in my gut
to the discordant chorus of gunfire
payloads and the final painful gasps
of the young man in the foxhole with me
who wears the uniform
that makes him my enemy
and I wonder if before he died he thought of
his sweetheart his lover his

darkness
close curtains



Laurie Stroud

Just some small tender thing pressed between the jaws of your stare.
Can you feel my slender tail probing the ladder of your spine?
Your voice, sandpaper behind my knees, making me wobble, downward spiral.
Ah, but as I fall, the insistent grip of my fingerpads will pull you down
into softsoil darkness, my moist entrapment.
Mine. Mine. Mine.

Life used to bounce off me.
 Watching it hurt, but I never got my fingers dirty.
 Apathy makes a convenient screen,
 muting harsh feelings like a chintz curtain.
 Would I trade then for now?
 Then, I presented a highly polished surface.
 Now my coatings are starting to peel.
 Under the doilies, the Pledge, and the carpeting
 there are splinters and gouges to feel.
 But would I trade?
 Depends.

Do you want a dinette set or the family dinner table.
 Because being loved means being abused,
 having your corners roughened,
 your defenses worn through.
 Sometimes the dinette set doesn't look so bad.
 It's easy to wipe off the mess,
 and you don't mind getting rid of it at a garage sale.
 but the table, the precious heirloom;
 It's cumbersome, takes up too much space,
 doesn't really match anything anyway.
 Yet what price giving it up.

So, like timeworn furniture, you stay battered.
 Love is worth being broken for someone else.
 Curtains are for keeping the neighbors out, not avoiding life.
 Someone told us, to whom much is given, much is required.
 To expect only the joy without the hurt places,
 the holidays without the Monday mornings,
 Well, that's more than undeserved;
 It's less than life's full measure.



Okay, so you know about Clemson football, engineering, and agriculture, but what about the other traditions on campus? There are many more, one of the oldest of which is none other than Chronicle! Yep, we've been tapping the creative vibes of Clemson since 1897. Initially, Chronicle was both a news and literary magazine, and we continued in the artistic vein until 1920. Chronicle fell silent for a while, but thanks to the efforts of a dedicated staff and Dr. Mark Steadman, it found its voice again in 1960. We were the official campus variety magazine up through the 1980's when we switched to just focusing on the arts. Ever since then, we've been proving that there's more to Clemson than you might think. But then, there always has been . . .

Chapter XXI.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Three shots and all was still! 'Twas midnight, and the rising sun, was setting in the far, far, east, as a lone pedestrian wended his weary way on horseback, over a grassless prairie.

There was a dull, inert muttering of dumb voices on the distant horizon, and from every corner of the boundless prairie could be distinguished the deep-mouthed baying of its winged occupants, as they crawled from crag to crag and expressed to each other unutterable thoughts. The traveler, robed as a hunter, in a bright red decolte, and wearing in his belt six loaded revolvers, with an exhausted expression, pursued the resentful game with energetic listlessness.

The midnight was quite dark! The rain falling in large atoms upon the hilly plain, left behind it a slightly damp moisture peculiar to the rain in that region of twelve o'clock midnights. Suddenly, and all at once, instanta, he hailed to hear the sound of growing bushes nearby. His cheeks blanched a dusky red, and he realized the necessity of departing beforehand from that noisy quietude.

"Could I have imagined," he muttered with the fiendish expression of a missionary, "the extreme neverthelessness of the moreover, I would have absented myself from these regions before I arrived here. As it is, I shall never come back, until I return!"

At this, his biped uttered a deep guttural sneeze, and dug his left hind leg into the impenetrable earth beneath.

"Aha!" cried the rider in exultant tones of disappointment, "I swear by all that's false, that never again will I set feet in these regions alone, unless it be with some companions." Uttering these sublime thoughts into the atmospheric air, he gathered up his scattered game, which lay in heaps around him, and calling upon the God of the Atheist to witness his action, he mounted his steed by a private stairway, and rushed headlong backward, toward the umbrageous shade of a prairie pine, where the Rudyards cease from Kipling and the Haggards ride no more.

Glancing up toward his ebony roan steed, he murmured: "Twere not that your existence were necessary to your life, I would have long ago killed you so dead, that you would not have been aware that you were living." And with these words he vanished from the eager view of the imperceptible landscape

PROLOGUE.

'Twas September 14th—the opening day,
And the barracks were filled with boys sad and gay.
The sad ones were "rats," with their faces long drawn,
And expressions which wished they had never been born.
'Tis of one of the youths—Peter Parkins his name,
That inspires my pen to indite this refrain;
Just lend me your ears and I'll picture to you
His peculiar attractions, and his detractions too.

THE PECULIAR PERSONALITY OF PRIVATE PETER PARKINS.

Peter Parkin was long, lank and lean, easy led;
His hat hid the halo of hair on his head,
And bordering this biped's broad feet were boots red,
Built of buckskin, but bought at a "bargain."

His eyes, gray and ghastly, gifted with ghoulish glare,
Seemed to skimmer and shine since his sad shipment here;
While his virulent voice oft vibrated with fear
Should some schemer seek slyly to "shark" him.

His nose needed nipping, his knuckled knees knocked,
In a mimicking manner, all mankind he mocked,
Laughing loudly and long when in his lair locked
By boys bent on bullying "Parkins."

Six suns since he swore several swears he'd remain,
He pretended pure pleasure, not primitive pain,
Took him timid with ticket to the turbulent train;
Now the lad is in Lonelyville—"larkin."



As I smoked my old pipe that chilly eve,
And saw the blue smoke as it curled and rose,
My mind's strange wanderings caus'd my breast to heave
And fall at the thought of life's many woes.

I remembered that day—long, long ago,
When she and I were lovers still;
I remembered the words she would speak no more,
And even then my heart would thrill.

Then, like moonbeams of the purest rays,
There comes a day of days, and my mind
Ceases its aimless wanderings and stays,
Wondering why they are not all this kind.

It was my wedding day, and I heard the bells—
All was joy, and I saw the preacher pray,
And say the words which to a lover tells
The tale of his happiest, brightest day.

I relit my pipe and dreamed once more,
And through the tears I saw the same old smoke.
I thought of the day when my happiness was o'er—
It was too much for me—I awoke.

And then with a sigh I laid my pipe down,
And my knees slowly crept to the floor;
My refuge in prayer at last had been found,
For my smoke and my dream were o'er.



Have I e're thought to pause and glance
Back o'er the fleeting years?
Have I e'er stopped to search my life
And see what fruit it bears?

Have I e'er tried to guard my tongue
So I may injure none?
Has every deed been done with care
To lead astray no one?

When I grow old will life have been
A long and weary road?
Or will each day that I've passed o'er
Have helped to ease some load?

Can I look back o'er all the years
With conscience clear and say
That I, on every day, have helped
Some toiler on his way?



The oddest scent on waking filled the room;
Strange; the left-overs of a dream?
No! Awake I smelt it strong and savoury
No less unpleasant than a fish-clogged sea.
My clock had leaked.
All night it had been leaking.
And since I put it near my head to keep a check on time,
Its leaking had puthered me over, like a dream.
Such vapours make one uneasy.
As when you realize gas has sifted silently
Out of somewhere; quickly you find the leak
And mend it.
I couldn't find the leak in my old clock;
Though frantically I searched to try and seal it.
That clocks should calumniate!
How sad!

Pass it on to granpa; he has a kitchen
Full of a hundred broken clocks; limping along
Seconds and semesters slandering each other.
Here is another one granpa; it's no use to me.
I'll buy a smug gold watch for compensation.
(I'll leave these for you boy when I go away.)
Dust clogs the nostrils
Like hours do my blood
My kitchen here is full of leaking clocks.



Tonight it's gonna
be just alright
with peaches and cream
on your lily-whiteness
and i'll eat
till you've forgotten
all the days and nights
spent with carnaby loves
it's gonna be
like an endless dessert
in childhood dreams
with sweetness lasting
the awakening full
tonight it's gonna
be just alright
with peaches and cream
for my lady love
and i'll eat
till you've forgotten
all the days and nights—



Autumn
leaves are changing colors
each entirely different
together the same

five-thirty time to get up
lights, mirror, action
jigsaw puzzle time
together at last
seven-thirty late time to go

cool out
people gathering at bars
lipstick, eyeshadow
all for show (pleasure)
she must be somebody's daughter

Would you like some milk
such a pretty baby
has she spoken yet
oh she'll be so beautiful

with makeup

would you like a drink
you've never looked better

the years of practice
on display
at once artist and creation
a picture in motion

such a lovely daughter
she'll make a fine wife

fine, proud parents

well I know I just had it cut last week, dear
but it's just too hard to manage

one thirty
lights, mirror, action
the face comes clean
looks different
winter

At first thou wast a source of pain
Until at last I potty trained.
Religiously each day I use you,
'Twould be a tragedy to lose you.

Water Closet, Toilet, Potty, Commode;
By these names thou art knowed.
Thou art there through thick and thin,
No pun here do I intend.

Upon thy throne great thoughts are thunk,
'Oft times though they must have stunk.
Thou must think I surely jest
But this is where I think the best.

Thou wast there to receive my regurgitation
When over-indulging on that festive occasion.
On thy cool porcelain I did rest my head,
Wishing to God that I wast dead.

O, what grand tales you could'st tell,
My derriere you know so well.
Doctor prescribed enema by Fleet,
'Twas then I bought the cushion seat.

Flush after flush thou aimest to please,
Flushing all with the greatest of ease.
A plunger I keep to protect my abode
In the case thou should'st over-flow.

Before I begin to ramble and prattle
Whil'st upon your seat I am a-straddle,
For all you do
This ode's for you.





Mandy Keller

I used to sit at Papa Mac's feet
And lean back in a chair at the base of the stage.
He attacked the snares, the cymbals, the bass
With a ferocity that defied his age.
I used to sit on my brother's porch
And play to the birds till the night grew old.
I plucked my six string like Papa beat those drums
'Cause I wanted to be like him.
I used to keep time with the tap of my feet.
Papa never kept the beat; it kept him.
"You've gotta touch the music, boy," he'd rasp.
"It's gotta course through every limb."
So I threw my new pick away
And used bare skin to pluck the strings.
I played until my fingers bled,
Smearing music on the frets.
I cried out in song about love and heartache.
Papa would laugh and cough,
"Your heart bleeds like those fingertips.
But you'll have callouses on both before long.
You see, the blues ain't about pain.
It's just tellin' it the way it is.
Cain't do nothin' 'bout nothin'.
No use in tryin'."
He'd shrug his shoulders
and show me those hard, beautiful hands,
Masters of music, but slaves to the same.
College came calling and I left that little town
To learn about the Dark Ages and the Inquisition.
Hippocrates and hippocampus crowded my mind.
No time to think of Papa and the blues.
(I knew it wouldn't be long).
The liquor and nonfilters had finally got him.
I moved aside my clothes and picked up my guitar,
Strummed a few chords and felt my eyes get wet.
A couple tears fell where the blood once set.
"You were wrong, Papa," I called to the ceiling.
"My hands are hard, but my heart still bleeds.
The blues are about pain, and you can make it better.
Why else would you have sat with me?"
Papa shrugged his shoulders
And held out his soft, beautiful hands.

the
 night curls liquid fingers around us,
 corrupting outlines of cold and silver here
 and there, muting pain and insecurity
 and do you feel the warmth
 oh the heavy fluid wildness
 of our darkness?
 can you remember
 the gray and passionless indifference of the light?
 does that cold traitor exist at all
 in our deep embrace of brilliant shining darkness?
 i wonder
 and i sigh and you touch me with quiet fingers,
 the night sliding over the warm
 smoothness of naked skin and like a womb our love is woven around us,
 comforting.
 do you smell the blackness? can you taste its kiss?
 can you coexist with nothingness?
 i can.
 and ignore the wind of morning howling wildly on the horizon:
 coming. mocking. triumphant. it thinks it has won.
 but even in the unforgiving brightness of noon there are shadows
 and our love is one.
 now the night whispers on our windows,
 caressing my uncertainty, smoothing the hard lines of reality,
 and i am warm in your arms and my love for you is soft
 and my trust in the triumph of us
 is my security when i can hear you breathing
 and feel your love
 and the darkness
 on you
 and
 me

My friends force me within
with their lack of concern and indifference.
So I sit oceans apart
Looking for a lasting replacement.
Indifference becomes strangers over time
and the long distance anchors emptiness
that can't be covered or misconstrued
to something that cared.

I'm the earth, I'm the stars
I'm everything I wanted to be
Except I'm so far
from where I started.

The canceled stamp
sent to an address never meant.
Is opened by strange fingers
trying to be my friend,
Looking to console me in my grief
while the ones I love
weave rugs with others.

I'm deep within, far below, long above
I'm the night, the day, the moon and sun
I'm at the center and all around
I'm everywhere and no where.

I'm strong, then I'm not
I'm missing the one's I can't forget
The ones who sent their last stamp
Sent their last thought, their last word
Long before time let me grow old.

One bright light
flickers.
A fuzzy glow illuminates
your face.
For a brief moment
I gaze through the darkness
past the peaceful glow
into your smiling eyes.
As the light fades
away from the
soft curves of your face,
a hand caresses my stomach,
moves across my hip,
and down the small curve
of my naked back.
Bright sparkles of
mystical fairy dust
flitter
 over the edge
 of the bed and
soft lips brush my forehead.





Thomas Buie

Marked by splintered lines
and dangling chords,
miscommunication remains
a suspect.

Lost and misguided,
fumbling fingers
plunder through dissonant
memories
once sealed in envelopes.

Searching crazily
through boxes,
tarnished frames,
dried rose petals,
and worn ticket stubs
are tossed aside.

The bottled accusations
once protected by cork
now pursue revenge
against a timeless reputation.

Capturing worthless details,
the situation is crowded,
while emotions are disguised.

Misunderstood
and begging for harmony
among a round of melodies,
what she needs most
is least tangible.

Rumors abroad
and suspicions dissolved
into the staff of every young lovers'
mind,
no picture frame, petal, or stub
can substitute
for the healing graces of Time.

In another place, at another time
Things would differ between you and I
Shackled...

There are things to be said here
Words unuttered, so very near
To lips
A noose...

A position that could change
Is a position that should change
Due to emotional circumstances within
Out of control
Straightjacket...

To cover up or expose
To open or close
Pandora's Box, my soul
To you
Chains...

The weight piling up
Shoulders only so broad
Bending and breaking
Under the knowledge, hidden behind
Bars...

To free myself
At what expense
Sanity, gravity, repeat performance
Again I flirt with my imprisonment.



"You sure I shouldna brought him in?"

"Yeah."

"He's gonna keep the whole damn country awake with that screamin' he's doin'!"

Orey poured himself another shot of whiskey and downed it. "I don't give a shit. I want him out there. I want him out there alone. He can't do nobody any harm out there all by hisself."

"Other than my ears."

"Take your precious ears outta here if theys botherin' you so much!"

Dingo smiled, showing the gap where his two front teeth used to be many years ago. Ignoring the younger man's comment, he unrolled his cigarettes from his sleeve. As he fumbled for a lighter he muttered "I'm sitting here with you all night whether you like it or not. Somebody gotta make sure you don't do nothin' stupid."

"I don't need no baby-sitter. I'm gonna be just fine. What time is it?"

"Eleven or so."

"Put the news on. I wanna see if it made the news."

Dingo got up from the kitchen table and clicked on the television.

"Put it on channel 10. The chic that does the late news is a looker."

Dingo adjusted the dial and pulled at his mustache as he walked back to the table, his cigarette not moving in his mouth. The pretty newscaster was reporting on some fire out in Pickens.

"Ain't that some shit. Didn't even make top story."

"Maybe you shouldn't watch this."

"I've seen it 'bout a 100 times since this afternoon. I just wanna see what these assholes say about Kate."

The newscaster moved onto the next story. "Today at the Amateur Invitational Jumper Show in Atlanta, accomplished rider and Olympic hopeful Kate Holbrooke was killed during the jump-off when her horse fell. She will be missed throughout the horse world."

"That's it?! Not even a damn clip? The fuckin' cow plop gets more press!"

"Hey, boy wonder, did you expect them to eulogize your wife on the 11 o' clock news? C'mon, Orey. I think you need some rest."

"I said I'm fine, dammit! Go away."

"I'm telling you, as your friend, to go to bed."

Orey looked at the older man. Dingo was his best friend, though he was old enough to be his father. He had worked for Orey's parents forever, and when they retired and let Orey and Kate take over, Dingo stayed on. He knew everything there was to know about horses and he knew everything there was to know about Orey.

"Fine," said Orey as he got up and headed to his room.

Dingo shook his head and lit another cigarette. He knew Orey too well, the young man was never that agreeable. He stretched out on the couch and flipped through the channels looking for something to watch. He stopped on a movie titled "Cannibalistic Women in the Avocado Jungle of Death."

And all this time that damn horse whinnied on.

Orey couldn't sleep. He didn't even feel tired, even with the effects of the alcohol. He looked at the clock, but it just stared back at him. He let his mind wander off again to that place he had visited time and time again today. He saw Kate cheer as she exited the ring from her first round knowing that her faultless ride had won her a spot in the jump off. He saw himself talking to her, coaching her on her striding just before she entered the ring to ride her course. "Keep him short in the combination, but make sure he strides out into that oxer."

"Had planned on it."

"If you come off number 6 on the correct lead, you should be able to cut that corner short and take that oxer in two strides instead of riding three into the corner and three back out. Can he do that?"

"Can he do what?"

"Change leads over the fence."

"Of course. If he misses, it only takes one to fix anyway."

"Good luck, honey."

She winked at him. "Don't worry cowboy, this one's in the bag."

She rode into the ring and pickd up a canter, then lengthened into a gallop as she headed for the first fence. Clean. Second fence. Clean. Combination. Clean. Fourth. Clean. Bounce. Clean. Sixth. This is where her troubles began.

When Kate was jumping the sixth fence, she did as planned and asked the horse to change leads in order to rebalance for the oxer on the corner. The horse didn't get the lead, forcing Kate to ride the corner a bit deeper than she had planned. Orey could see her checking him up to switch before turning him towards the fence. Three damn strides on the ground it took that horse to switch. Three damn strides. Aside from the fact that Kate probably wouldn't win now, all seemed to be going right.

Orey saw her lengthen the horse's stride after she corrected her lead to start her approach into the oxer. This was the fence that was giving everyone knockdowns all day. At five feet six inches high and six and half feet wide, it even intimidated him. Two strides away from this monster, the horse tripped but seemed to recover. Orey brought his binoculars up to his face and took a closer look in the split second between the next stride and take off. The horse's gait looked strange—he was on the left lead in the front and the right in the back. Shit, Kate! He's crossing! Bag out! The bastard's unbalanced as it is! He didn't have time to yell these thoughts because as the horse went into take off, it fell, taking the entire oxer and Kate.

Orey saw himself vault over the gate and run toward Kate. He heard Dingo follow him, and out of a corner of his eye he saw an official trying to catch the horse. Kate had fallen off and onto the rails, with more coming down on top of her as well as the weight of that damn horse. Orey almost knocked out one of the EMTs as he dug his way through people to Kate. They loaded her into the ambulance and Orey saw himself and Dingo jumped in behind them.

Kate died before they made it to the hospital. Later, though it did not matter, they told Orey that she had broken her neck.

Recollecting himself to the here and now, Orey shook the weight from his head and walked to his closet. He pulled out the 12 gauge shotgun that Kate thought he had gotten



rid of. The memory of that fight stung. He tried to file it away, but as he touched the object of her hate, he could still hear her voice.

"Orey! Don't you dare keep such a thing in my house!"

"But honey, what if someone breaks in? I ain't gonna fight 'em barehanded."

"Well I will. Get rid of that God-awful thing."

"It was a wedding gift from Dingo."

"Don't pull that shit on me, Orey Jason Holbrooke! If you want a gun to play with like the rest of the little boys, then you can keep it in your own damn truck." Fortunately for Orey, Kate cleaned the closet about as often as he wore something other than jeans.

Orey looked out into the kitchen. Dingo was lying on the couch with the television blaring some bad B-movie. He turned around, walked back to his bedroom, slipped out the window, and headed up to the barn.

Dingo could tell something was going on. Orey had all of the sudden made an appearance in the living room, and then disappeared again. He had pretended to ignore the younger man's presence, but as soon as he heard the bedroom door shut, he got up and pressed an ear to it. At the sound of the sash squeaking up, he walked back to the living room, jammed his boots on and grabbed his cigarettes.

As he walked up to the barn, he pulled at his graying mustache and thought Dominicus Rodrigues the Third, you are getting too damn old for this. It's a good thing that this is Orey; had it been his father, he would've already done something stupid. Yep, it is a damn good thing that boy's got his mama's temperament, or you would've died of old age years ago!

As he walked, he lit up, rolling the cigarette lightly between his lips. There was really no point in running. He knew that Orey had most likely gone to the horse for one reason or another. He never really liked that horse, but Orey insisted on buying it for Kate. It was a Thoroughbred, straight off the track and stupid as shit. Kate wanted a jumper though, and at seventeen hands this one would certainly have the size and strength to do the job.

Dingo remembered that day they brought the thing home. Orey wanted it to be a surprise, but the horse kicked the trailer all the way home, and when they pulled in to the farm, Kate ran over to see what all the commotion was. When she saw the sleek animal (and Dingo's bent-up trailer) she looked at Orey. All he could think to say was "Happy birthday, baby."

Kate glowed. Whenever she got a new horse she was like a kid on Christmas morning. "How old is he?"

"Five. Raced a few times."

"Papered?"

"And tattooed."

"What's his name?"

"Shithead," Dingo had interjected, still upset about his trailer.

Orey fumbled through his pockets for the papers. "I'm A Solo Flight."

"Stupid name for a horse. I still like Shithead."

"C'mon Dingo, he can't be that bad."

"Racers are assholes. you gonna ride him now or what?"

"Yeah. I think I'll call him Solo. Kinda like the guy from 'Star Wars'."

Kate had gone to get her tack, when Dingo had warned Orey again. "This doesn't seem all too bright. Keep an eye on her, boy wonder." Of course none of this had sunk into Orey's head. He was so pleased that Kate liked the horse that Dingo could've told him the horse was lame and he wouldn't have cared in the least.

Dingo now came up to the side paddock where Solo was trotting the fenceline. The fence itself was six feet tall, because after Kate's pride and joy escaped ten times inside of a week, Orey had raised it. He was a massive animal, dark bay in color with large kindly eyes. As Dingo walked up, the horse began screaming even louder. Through the dark and the fog he could see Orey standing about ten feet from the fence, aiming a gun on the horse.

Dingo didn't panic. He didn't run. He just walked up to his friend and said, "Gonna shoot him, huh?"

"Uh huh. Stupid piece of shit. He won't hold still long enough for me to get a lock on him. Whaddya want anyway?"

"Nothing. Just seeing what you was doing."

"You gonna try and stop me?"

"Nope," said Dingo as he fed his habit yet again. "I don't care what you do to Kate's horse. I never really liked the thing anyway."

"Good because he's gonna get dead in a few seconds."

"Good. Shut him up. He's driving me crazy."

Orey ignored Dingo and yelled to the horse. "You don't like being all alone do ya? Huh? It drives your ass crazy! Well, you stupid piece of shit how the hell do you think I feel? You stupid bastard! Stand still when I'm talking to you! What the hell was it that Kate did to make you pay attention?"

Dingo looked down and let out a wolf whistle.

The horse froze in it's tracks, waiting for the next command.

Orey pulled the trigger.

Nothing happened.

Dingo looked down at the gun. There was a small tag tied to the barrel. He lifted it up and read aloud, "Since you won't get rid of the gun, I got rid of the shells." Orey threw the gun down and walked to the gate. He went in, caught the horse, and led it by the halter. "Come on, Solo. You're going in. Kate just saved your miserable life, you lucky sack of shit."



So what if I fit every stereotype, no
quotas apply. I'm just a typical fag
hag and nigger lover. I'm strong...
as long as you don't look...(see).

Just bruised all over with a pale
complexion. Anyway, you call me a whore,
but that's ok, I like sex more than you
know. Mostly, I hate you because I
can't be you—but I'm blamed for being
me. Greedy bastards scratch at my
gender then wonder why there's gritty
innocence under your nails. While spit
mingles with my tears I choke on
laughter...and still I laugh.



If you clench your eyes tight enough
You can blot out the daylight
The insistent warmth of the star still permeates.

So I layer my clothes
Just like the weatherman said I should
To protect me from my elements.
Finally, total darkness and chill.
Mushroom like,
They need no light to flourish.



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Spring 1997



Etc...

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I sit down, slide my things
—keys, letters, pen, stationary she gave me.
The waitress black-shoes over
—her skinny shorts so tight I can see
the jukebox and salt shakers between the tops of her thighs.
I tell her big square teeth I want a coffee.
An OK, a scribble, her lips
don't unstick from the grin her chops prop open.
Her red hair turns. I go back to it: the letter
an old pal sent from Japan.

There, five friends, who stood him up on Sunday,
a one night stand, again, with a Jap girl
he can't even smile to,
dad misplacing nine hundred dollars sent home.

But all I jot down in return
(as the steam side-to-sides to me with its coffee)
is the stars dreamy eyed though the haze,
the white lights zipping by in pairs on the way over,
my girl's laugh on the phone tonight
—the one I haven't heard in a while.



With paper and coal
so simple to rub in curves,
to wave the trace of a throat,

the angle of a cheek
blushing to the shadow of a brow:
how easy it is to see

the arc on the bridge
of a nose. The dust just dots
above the grades. I will never catch

with smears of black
how you said mmmm...
the way the scent of flowering herbs

can melt that sound
and with my eyes shut,
while breathing in, mouth closed,

that drone, outward in cool
fingers, spreads beneath my skin
until my lips

land against your wrist: the rasp
of your sweater, the dizzy want
to press the whole of my face
till I smell the other side.

"The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which."

George Orwell, *Animal Farm*

And so the pigs, the allegorical bacon
become the Capitalists bringing home the bacon
because with entrepreneurial guts
they've become the rich, the have's, the *bourgeoisie*,
the upper-class. And they believe in *laissez faire*
and the invisible hand of God, which drives
Supply and Demand.

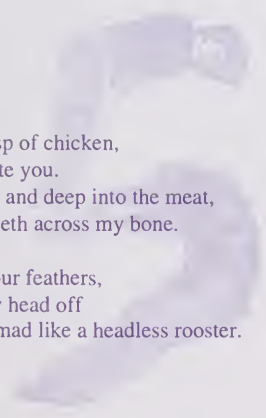
And we all know that the ham's in demand and
so that invisible hand, the one Adam says exists,
has "innocent" pigs slaughtered. But
slowly, for the blood must be deliberately oozed out
and soaked into the mud, that way the meat is so wonderfully fresh!
And it's a modest proposal only when pigs aren't humans
and humans aren't pigs.

But let's just say that the man's in demand and
that there were pigs who yearned for humans,
like Adam's rib, back and flesh, although we'd still call it
chops, bacon and pork of course,
and there was high demand,
what then of God's invisible hand?

But we all know pigs can't reason although
it's always strange to hear them squealing
before they're butchered,
like a man on all fours pleading
before he's murdered.

And does one really wonder
why the creatures outside
are so confused?





Unfathomed crisp of chicken,
Bite me like I bite you.
Hard, longways, and deep into the meat,
Scraping your teeth across my bone.
It itches.
Tickle it with your feathers,
untill I laugh my head off
and run around mad like a headless rooster.

The soft light of morning
Falls on "Starry, Starry Night"
Hanging on the kitchen wall
Above the table.

A vase of spring promise, daffodils
Bring new hope to her mind;
She is leaving soon,
Not without some regret.

It hasn't worked here,
Not for a long time;
The family, the house she grew up in
Changed over time.
But SHE did, more than they.

In the foyer, two paintings:
One by Aunt Grace, "Ruins Through the Persimmon Trees."
No persimmons here, only ruins.
The other, from the Ramayana
Entitled "The Happy Ending."
How ironic.

The grasscloth covered walls of the dining room
Hold a brass rubbing given by her mother
Alongside Chinese characters
Wishing good health, wealth, luck and happiness.

She has crafted a heart-shaped basket with loving hands,
Three strips of red border it.
The inside is empty, like her heart.

Why is it all gone? Why am I so tired?
She asks herself as she packs
Part of me is here
And part cannot bear to be.

Will they put up new pictures when I am gone?
Already a replica Harley sits next to the Lladros.
Four bronze musicians from Siam
And all the temple bells are silent.
I will hear their song again,
She promises herself without conviction.

They play baseball in the dark,
the summer night swelling with their hollow-throat calls;
laughing, the sharp ping of the bat echoing
as the ball rises.

I would be with them—
the coy eyes of the pitcher as he raises his glove,
studying me as I wait,
the metal of the bat cool to my aching fingers—
poised, his eyes burning into mine,
mesmerized by silence.
He swears softly, laughs, and looks away,
his pitch sharp—a spiraling ellipse toward the bat.
I swing.

The blood rushes in my ears as I slide across the grass,
smooth and cold, glowing in the moonlight.

Now Time is my lover and I cleave to him—
a gentler touch than the arms of the pitcher behind me,
sliding in for the base and laughing when I am safe;
I taunt him as he walks away, stiff and playfully haughty.

They play baseball as I walk past, smiling wistfully
and remembering the nights of my baseball cap and saucy smile;
when time did not matter and the nights were cool,
my calves aching as I rounded the bases.

We never kept score.
As I walk away, their faces young and exhilarated,
shadowed by darkness,
I miss the flattened soil of the pitcher's mound
and the leather of the glove,
my arm aching as I played pitcher until dawn.

And God's the mizillionaire
with the magic mirror of prayer,
"Who's the most omni-loving of them all?"
Was there a tie when Jesus romped the earth,
and does mother Theresa ever win?
She's 98 years old, but Noah was 950,
the exodus of old flooding Florida,
playing shuffle board on beaches, the dead sea,
home of Disneyworld, Mickey's 63
but the fairy tales are much older scripture.
To imagine an entire industry based on fairy tales!

The seven days and seven dwarves
and He rested on the last, she until the
flickering Prince Charming arrived:

and awake the bitch
with the shoe that fit

Or was that Cinderella who's from the
rib of Adam like the barbecue rib picnic
on the church lawn, horseshoes and bake offs, raising
funds for the new steeple,
spiraling upwards towards the heavens like
Space Mountain

And inside everyone is screaming

Not because they're scared, but it's what everyone seems
to be doing with each
tight vortex extending through the darkness, twisting
like the undimensional edges of an MC Escher and
the line outside that coils around walls of rope that nobody ever cuts,
Satan has no influence in Disneyworld and a mouse is God.
And Mickey's pleased to see us all believing
in the feces of the corporate entourage that makes us magically
have faith in this world.

God and Satan,
Beauty and the Beast
Ever after.

Parallel lines never intersect
Parallel loves never consummate
The passion of the passing lines
For parallel lives don't meet
No matter what lifeline.

Only whispers in hot breaths
Hint at the passing possibilities
Of what life could be like
If parallel lines ever crossed.

The rest is up to speculatization
And hyposis built upon probabilities
Of the world to be
If they could ever meet.

So lovers seek not the mathematicians
Therefore follow the laws of physics
Reality is relative
To the passing line that cries.

And yearns to be with the other
Dies at each realization
That parallel lines are infinite
Their lives will never intersect.

Line lovers are born of parallel lives
When the probability of intercourse
Is not a possibility for infinite time
No matter what lifeline.

Line lovers lend hot whispers to each passing thought
Thoughts radiating out toward each other
Outward to where neither can go
Perpendicular bisecting their thought even more.

Line lovers lend hot whispers to the wind
Because parallel lines never intersect
And parallel lives can never bring
Parallel lovers to the same point and time.

When Winds of yesterday sweep past
the Plains of clear blue sky
the Sea will ripple with recess
and wave the Mountains forward

Then Mountains march with lowered slopes
until young Sea calls halt
the sign of mines upon the Plains
warn wayward Wind of foe

Who noticed mines of poppies here?
Who changed the windy fealty?
Who sold the secret to the Sea
and saved the mountainside?

The peaks respond to tattler Light
Sea gallops back to lucent Shore
a zephyr winks at risen Sun
and vacant Plains Explode

Whenever I speak
it always seems
to Echo
through the frayed copper.
Tiny slivers transmit
noises that begin
to reverberate,
waver, and broaden
as they always do
around this phase
of the conversation.
Just when I need to explain
my exact sentiments,
to be completely open
and true to myself,
the connection is closed,
the round, little light flashes,
and the battery dies.

The slaughter of a million flightless shades of thought
seems to follow you into the room.

Your very essence has that sexy smell of death.

I just love the way you grind you grind the earth
into itself, recursive. You have too much power
to control

clenched fist tightened angry touting looking awkward

you

are

dangerous

you killing machine

you renegade plague

I tremble when the transient treatise of transition

imposes its influence in immobile mental motion

starkly apparent, then more fuzzy

all senses dissolve

have you ever listened

bells yourself bells yourself

to the stillness in your mind

bells

and allowed it

to encompass you?

have you ever

ebbed to the point

silence

where distinction is

silence

a fickle edge, weak and ineffectual

on your soft throat?

You killing machine.

Sulking shielded from the sun.

Sulking shielded, shingle brown in the diving, falling sun.

dangerous

you feel the turbulence

and you shake inside.

It is a triumph of the will to keep
composure while I sit here
swallowed sober yet detached into
the fluorescent maw of light:
light that sleeping, flows so gently
but awakens in loathsome liquid laceration
that peels away your skin and leaves you
crying on the floor.

Detached because of you here
you around me, you magnetic
you missive mirror magnet of pink and fractured light.
where there is no other mirror
you are there to light me up
but fear is there, iron filings
decorate both of my shoes
and the fluorescent man
plays nothing but the blues.

I'm sweating, decoration to my pale embarrassed skin
sinking, thinking there's a way to let the world in
but the sky's not watching and
the sea's not watching and
it's easier to identify the things that I know
and stick with those instead of poking my little fingers
into the ruffled fur of the
Matador's carpet.

I can do nothing
but state the obvious,
the obvious which is stretched like rubber
over my boneframe.
The obvious which hangs lifeless to my shoulders.
Which boils my fluids when I am sick of being me.
Which bleeds from my mouth and sometimes stains my teeth.
My mouth is red like an unthinking predator at mealtime.
My notebook pages are grissled with bile.
I hope they don't think I have been eating my words.
I do not ingest poetry, I vomit it.
I am still doing nothing,
explaining a portrait you all know boring you with my lies.
a picture's worth a thousand words; words are shallow currency.
I do not believe in God,
I suppose I cry and pray and beg to nothing.
I wish He would kill me with crickets in the bowels of my stomach
so that I might believe in something so beautiful.
(my stomach is potbellied with warm whiskies)
I do not believe in my country.
It began in the garden of man's quest to breathe
and has become a Camelot fit for Quixotes
robed in enchanted flags.
Our heavy societal fans stir in the winds,
America clipclops toward us on a junky nag.
I can do nothing
to stop my mind from thinking it all out
but fire my pipe and stew in numb isolation.



redo

(after allen ginsberg)

Can I do nothing

but work my wage in the anthill forget to pay my rents?

I am wingless

and my feet never leave soil. No one knows why I am what I am.

I don't believe I will ever cut my cord,

suckling off the viscous of lives gone.

I believe I love the woman who left me.

She alone can make me believe in Christendom.

I believe there is nothing crippled about love.

I believe I will love you forever, and it will

be balm to cool my fevers-

it allows me to be feudal-

I believe I will cry when I am sad

if I can remember how.

I believe there are men who feel as I.

We are militia, though caged and gagged;

silent militias win no wars.

I believe I will never go to war,

save those against my own mind.

I am a cartoon cat-

throw me from your cliffs,

flatten me with your falling boulders,

hit me with your cartoon cars

'til I fold when I walk like an accordion.

Stone me, if you will.

I don't believe you can.

You can do nothing.

I state the obvious.

There's still a part of me
that wants to be chivalrous
And give my bus seat
to one older than I.
As the buses pass
and the seasons go by
seems I can't find
anyone older than I.

My list of holiday cards
dwindles with every snow
and the birthdays I used to know
come to me after the fact.

Without noticing
one day I looked up to see the fridge
covered with get well cards.
When was I ever sick,
I forget.

My spirit has shrunk with my spine
my world narrowed to the luv and bed
cooking is something I do
when I think of it.
Mostly,
the can opener does just fine.

The neighbors leave me alone
as I sit for hours
staring out over the street
watching the buses go by,
remembering when
I wanted to be chivalrous
And give my seat
To one older than I.

Content was i in hibernation
'Til awakened by a lone misplaced sensation
i denied denial and I felt the clean
But my blinded ambition confused your gleam
i'm in a left lane freeway no one ahead
But i'm flying and falling in reverse instead
Rigor Mortis sets in but i'm still alive
i'll die of hunger before the harvest arrives

Sons of Eve, All the Same
Pick a Card, Play their Game
Place your Bet, Never won
Cannot win a ten to NONE

What does your fickle mind say today
Push me, Play me, Put me on lay-away
You've had your fun with me but when will it begin
i don't feel like dealing with your shit again
i'm your sellout crowd, battery attention
When you smile at me, what's your real intention?
Confusion reigns, and you're my master
i climb up quick, but i still fall faster

Sons of Eve, All the Same
Pick a Card, Play their Game
Place your Bet, Never won
Cannot win a ten to NONE

What can i do, i wonder, to delay her
Not much it seems, ya see she's just a player
The end is near and my ride is over
If i had the goods, then maybe i could show her
And we could swap seats, and i could host her
And show her what life is like on a Rollercoaster.

The sky is full of stars and earths and us.
Flirting with seven arrows,
I am hit and flying; Orion falling
plumblineperfect down
to ferns and firs and foxfire
decayed soft now tiny white and twinkling.
His reflection in black dirt.
Captured by stars and earths and us.
Orion's blackhole grip;
gravity in space.
A force tight on my free hands,
I thought they'd float up here.
Swipswapbackwardfalling down
nothing but skin exists,
and I am convinced in One.

Hate is just another form of caring
If I can't find love
I wish someone would care enough
to HATE me

"Oh, you're so nice
I feel I can tell you anything"
you can
but how much can I take?

How much can I give
can a man give away his soul
yes
yes
he can.

Who listens to God when he needs to talk?

What is it

A man that hides his heart is a jerk
and a man that shows his heart is a sucker?
At what point should he raise his shield
wrap his heart in steel
and proclaim himself a loner
alone

is just a state of mind
a warrior can be alone in a crowded room

Have you ever seen a man cower
and cry

in fear

in terror

that no one even cares enough
to HATE him?

No?

You're not looking.

I am running toward an emptiness I've never known. I tell you this now, because you'll need to know this later. We will never end. This is the escaped notion bending in its sanctified weight, so that you might frequent its aroma. A particular blend which magically proffers to you and yours, an excellence of living. Are you living? Truly living? Are you alive? Truly alive, or are you just framing a picture to impress, or just get by?

I strategize to you a copiousness of forthness. We go out in the desert winds. We group ourselves according to heaven. We have misplaced dreams, but still we carry on. The energy of life lifts above all definitions. Life above the battlefield, where the most rarefied of languages is itself doomed.

[if this is difficult for you to get, you might want to ask yourself to what degree you are subservient to the dominate american culture. Mindless exposure to the dominant american culture is lethal]

Vedan is twilight, trippy, and highly nervy. She is highly-acclaimed by weirdoes. The fury of Perry. She sings like a grapefruit and wines like a cherry. She's rocknroll. She was heroin. She's macrobiotic. Floyd is Floyd is boy is queen is artsy is sometimes mean is so lovingly plentiful. Not a day goes by.

The oddsome meet and freak on their way. The traversal of events takes its course on a magical night in a magical world on a faraway planet called Spanish Harlem. Here they gather coincidentally. Each rambles forth about the miracles of levity they have just come from, express love for each other, and hit high on another. Their grasp of the available cosmic language to express light, love, and mystical ecstasy is immaculate. They are poised and clear. The light they hold is not diminished by the squalid conditions surrounding them. In fact, they can see right through them to another day.

Perry: How do you make sounds so happy?

Vedan: The sound I make is an energy which I have a relationship with. The sound assists me in maintaining my highest level of livingness, and I in turn invest attention and celebration for this exquisite relationship I was once unconscious of. My voice is so musical because the energy of sound is enlivened by my acknowledgment and friendship.

Floyd: That is wonderful, joyful, and I'm blissing out and together. All of life loves the love vibe!

Perry: O yay! Can we go sit over on that bench over there and I'll tell you a story?

Vedan and Floyd: Yea!

Floyd: I love getting high. I can't help but love it. I know we are sometimes cosmically assigned to lower stations of the earthly cross. It's an incredible challenge to our spiritual alchemy and everything, but nothing, nada, beats a meeting with your cosmic friends. Oh thankyou thankyou thankyou thankyou both for being alive. Ahhhhhhhh

They walk to the park, all the way radiating a love, a peace, a twinkle, which alters the day of anyone caught in their path. They are magic. They are in their power. They are strong beyond human endeavor or any measuring stick. They are your friends and they belong.

Perry: Okay. Okay okay. I saw an incredible painting today. It became more and more incredible the more I looked at it and wondered about it. It's weird because it started feeling like the painting was wondering with me; like there was some added force to the energy of my experience. It was incredibly coherent and almost palpable. It wasn't invasive, but dancelike. I thought I was freaking out. I looked around to see if anyone was looking at me. Anyway, I stood transfixed and dancing, communicating with this painting. It was so wild, because I had once imagined the possibility, but reality was shaking me to my knees. I was becoming unnerved as highly powerful worship emotions sought their day of play. To worship life and exalt in living is just one of the many pinnacles of human opportunity available to share in the divine.

Vedan and Floyd thank Perry for sharing and then sit together in silence while some of the great passage of time moves forward. They breathe in the sights of the faces, the cars, the sounds, along with their exalted visions of light in the fast lane. Vedan wanted this moment of silent communion, but would also like to share some information pertinent to Perry's experience. After the shrieking ambulance passed, it seemed appropriate to begin.

Vedan begins: Let me tell you about the acting teacher who is blind. He can't see your communication, what actors traditionally work on most; physical expression. I wanted to work with him so bad, but he died before I could ever meet him. It just seems so incredibly real. People are so tied up with appearance, when it is the energy behind the appearance that is essential. Anyway, he would work with the energy you were expressing by the sound of your voice and your aura, which he could experience. This is the weird part; he would advise a student, as part of their work, to go to a particular art gallery, stand before a particular piece, and allow one's aura to interact with the painting's aura. And this would actually produce changes in the actor's work. This was so great for me to hear because I had often thought that one should work to purify one's aura so one's work would have the highest possible aura, and that this would in some way be beneficial in

our evolving cosmic lives. I love it when mystery unfolds just enough to be a gift and a glimpse of how large life is and how much we can actually matter to life also.

Floyd: I've heard about him-that is so incredible. It's people like that who should be on the news and in movies. I met this girl who was the singer in that band called *\$&#^*, and she did an entire show at CBGB's dedicated to him after he died. No one understood what she was doing. She blind-folded herself, and didn't have any vocals or lyrics ready for the show. She wanted to open herself to higher lyrics and vocals by utilizing the energy of the audience, and the aura of the event itself. Someone actually spit beer at her, and the band broke up with her after the show. It's so weird, because they ended up getting back together again, doing three cd's, and her lyrics are all powerful spiritual seeking vehicles. It's like cosmic justice. She's definitely cool beyond.

Perry: I was at that show too, and I know her. She's incredibly weird and goes through the weirdest phases. I think she's calling herself Sky now. She is an incredible dancer. She doesn't just dance to harmonize, she dances for revelation. Sometimes I think she is revelation. Her writings are really weird and cool-she goes to the ABC No Rio poetry reading on the Lower East Side every Sunday.

Vedan: It's so weird that we all know each other.

Floyd: It's even weirder knowing how wonderful life can be, and then talking to people who don't know how wonderful life can be. Knowing such wonderful people, who allow my spirit to sail, makes it that much harder to relate to all the regular people who are just perpetrating the status quo.

Perry: You sound like you just spent some time hounded by some goons.

Floyd: Oh my shit-it's just so awful sometimes to deal with people who aren't creative mystic ecstasy freaks. When are you going to get a job? Why don't you have health insurance? Don't they realize life is so much bigger than subsistence? I want to live my life, not have my life lived by the corporate structure. The planet is sooo big. I want to travel and meet the peoples of the world, face-to-face, not through the eyes of tv or media.

Vedan: Me too. It's just so weird how so many of our friends are being supported financially for being themselves. They haven't sacrificed their work, there are people who are into it, and they do so many great things with their money. If all of our friends had a lot of money, we could change the face of this planet in our lifetime. I think that's the only reason to ever want money beyond what one needs. I do think all of that is just great, but now I think about the rest of us who haven't made money off the creative work we do. Because we all of a sudden, in the last eight or nine years,

have seen some of our friends prosper financially, I think it has kind of warped our vision of life. It's like we're trying to envision a fine line where our work can be this maximum vital creative spiritual force, which allows our greatest selves to manifest, and yet can somehow be communicable to others in such a way that produces financial force.

Perry: I must admit, it's been pretty awful for me too. I feel like everyone else is feeling healthy about that dichotomy with money, but I'm still the romantic tortured one holding on to her integrity with all of her prudish might.

Vedan: Well, I've been going through this whole phase of stagnation in my creativity because of this. I know that creativity could be considered to be cyclical, but this is crazy. I'm sure that my lethargy is the result of this attempt to walk the tightrope between integrity, spiritual growth and money. Money money money. Well, now I know that success for me is doing something I love, and being someone I can love. It doesn't matter if I am cleaning dishes for a living, as long as I can grow in my work, and in my life.

The tyranny of society's demands upon the living soul waxed majestically and demonically over the three weirdoes. Their manacled madness is hyphenated by their ecstatic essence glow they carry through their work. They are fools on the ship, and all of the materials values that weigh so heavily on so many of their planet-mates are mere dustballs to these experts of renewable innocence. They seek for eternity in moments, and they ask themselves how many moments of the past twenty-four hours are so good, they could be given as a gift to eternity? How many moments in the last twenty-four hours were so good, (in the highest sense), that you would have them be eternal? Your answer to this question shows just how much work needs to be done.

As the three sit there slowly stirring from their alchemical reverie, they see the buoyant step of Sky heading their way. This is a message sent from above. This is the riches gained from living their way. This is the wonderment of some great design. Everyone greets each other fully able to express their social ecstatic in such welcoming company.

Sky: It is heavily freaky to see y'all. Perfect timing. I feel sooo good. We all have had some really great years knowing each other, and I know many of us have been going through some weird cycles, but I have a sense that there is something happening. There's some cosmic shit getting ready to be knocking on our doors. We should start a dance troupe, choir, circus, band, performance, movie, anything so we can invest this new dispensation of light with all of our lives. Let's travel the world and let the light shine. We'll purify all the ugly lies and free up people's capacity to be happy,

joyful. So many people-such a big universe!

Vedan: We were talking about you earlier, along with the blind acting teacher.

Perry: I think we should go deeper into the park, blindfold ourselves, do some meditation, and then dance until we can see again.

Floyd: Oh my god-That's brilliant.

Sky: And then we can go to my place, eat a really healthy meal, make some music, and then blindfold ourselves again and create a painting together.

Floyd: Let's make music blindfolded too.

Sky: Did you guys know that this is the fourth anniversary of the blind guy's death?

When they got to Sky's place, it was evident that Sky had come into some money. This made everyone somewhat uncomfortable. Sky tried to explain; I never made any money dancing, singing, making music, writing, painting, film work, sculpture, performance art, and I never tried to make money. You know, just like you guys. This couple, who I worked on a film with saw my doodles years ago, and last year told someone who might be interested, and they were. It is indeed very cool to get money for something that comes so natural to me.

Vedan: It must be very challenging. So many more opportunities for you to do great work, and help other people are available. Are you stressed out?

Sky: No not really. I'm allowing it to get all tied up in my spirituality. I want to do the right thing, so I have to work spiritually to be open to recognizing the highest thing I am capable of. I read this book called *Golden Doner* years ago, where the history of really rich people is discussed in relation to the good works that they do for society. Sort of a history of philanthropy. They didn't always have the best motivations, but very great and large concepts were unfolded on the planet by people with the funds, and not governments. This book made me work on trying to create the capacity for a great concept that could envelop the entire planet in such a way that the higher idea became magnetic, and old forms would just fall away. I don't really think that any one person can be a receptacle for such a great concept, but that a group of humans could. That sort-of Margaret Mead concept, combined with the no-more heroes feeling. I really don't know. I'm kinda big on using my intuition.

Perry: Me too. I'm so glad for you. I get this sense that I'm always trying to invoke some greater concept, or whatever, in my creativity too.

Floyd: Oh my god-we could talk forever. Y'all, it's twilight- we could play music and commune through sound for awhile. Let's start with all of us playing drums. Maybe we could invoke a greater energy, and apply it to the painting later on. Let's tell our higher selves that we are ready to receive

more light.

These critters set themselves meaningfully to their tasks of invoking more light, and a greater sincerity can hardly be found. It's taken great strength to be as korny as these folks are capable of being, but it comes as natural as breathing now. They are awakening to what they believe is their higher selves. They are humans growing in their own way, freaking for the light of way, and bringing on the greater day. Let their lights unfold. Listen to their music as the daytime frees into light; m 900 hj j 93 h;s
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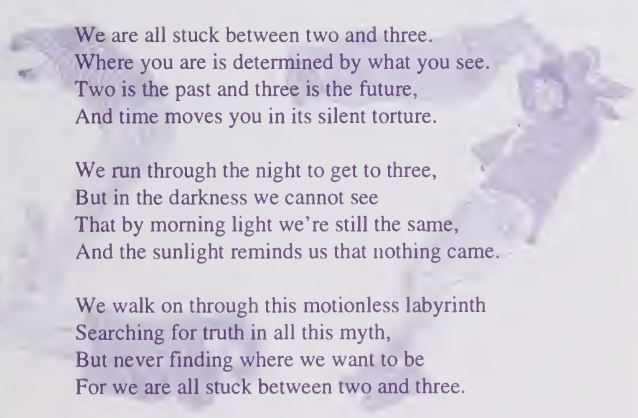
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He arrives.
The light man arrives at 5:04.
At the graffitti-laden rock,
He glances both ways.
With a sigh, he sits.

He sits.
The light man sits on the rock.
His soles tap the pavement,
His eyes shift constantly.
Left, right, to his watch, behind every tree.

He thinks.
The light man thinks of the deed.
He wonders if it is worth it.
He ponders the consequences.
He seeks the dark man.

He leaves.
The light man leaves at 5:06.
He remembers his wife and children,
The job he once had, the life before.
Breathing heavily, he conjures plan B.



We are all stuck between two and three.
Where you are is determined by what you see.
Two is the past and three is the future,
And time moves you in its silent torture.

We run through the night to get to three,
But in the darkness we cannot see
That by morning light we're still the same,
And the sunlight reminds us that nothing came.

We walk on through this motionless labyrinth
Searching for truth in all this myth,
But never finding where we want to be
For we are all stuck between two and three.

I've traveled many roads on this journey called life.
Roads that appeared to lead to beautiful places, but instead led down dark pathways.
Roads with twists and turns that left me lost and confused,
And most recently, a long road that I thought would lead to love and happiness, but only led to a dead end, with nowhere to go but back.
Sometimes on this journey, it was easier for me to walk alone.
I could set my own pace, and choose my own roads.
But, the journey got very lonely at times and my heart ached for someone to walk with.
There were times I looked ahead of me, and followed someone.
They promised to keep me safe from harm, and make my dreams come true.
But instead of leading me, they pulled me.
I tried my best to keep up, but sometimes they walked too fast.
There were times I got so far behind that I could barely even see them.
If ever I fell, they were too far ahead to even notice or help me back up.
Sometimes I followed them into places that caused me to doubt, and be afraid.
Eventually, I ended up walking alone again.
There were times I looked behind me to see someone following.
They needed me to lead them on and show them the way.
I did the best I could, but sometimes I would turn around to see them way behind.
I would wait for them to catch up, but I was slowing down and becoming impatient.
I was not meant to lead, so again... I walked alone.
After the longest and hardest road in my journey,
I had to turn back, for it turned out to be a dead end.
I had such high hopes, I thought it led to the love I dreamed about.
I thought my dreams were finally coming true, only to find it ended abruptly.
On my way back, I was tired, discouraged and alone when I saw you.
You smiled at me, and something inside me came alive.
You had just gone down that same road, and were on your way back too!

I was so glad to find a friend to walk back with,
and for the first time in a long time... I smiled a real smile.
We walked and talked about all the kinds of roads we'd traveled on.
Roads that appeared to lead to beautiful places, but instead led down dark
pathways.
Roads with twists and turns that left us lost and confused,
And at last, this long road that we thought would lead to all we ever dreamed...
but instead, ended so quickly.
We didn't understand why, but somehow it helped to talk about it,
and it helped to laugh, and it helped to have a friend that understood.
I looked up ahead of me, and I saw no one there.
I looked behind me, and saw no one there either.
But I looked to my side, and you were right there holding my hand.
Before I knew it, we were back at the beginning of that road.
With both of us together, it didn't seem like such a long way back at all!
Now I find myself traveling on another road with you,
a new road I've never been on before.
Although I don't know what's ahead on this road... I'm not afraid this time.
I feel safe with you, I trust you and I realize that if we're holding onto
each other,
and looking above to the One who is leading us both,
it doesn't matter what kind of obstacles we encounter on this road...
because we are on our way to finding everlasting joy.
And our dreams of love are coming true along the way.

The wind is my shadow which follows me and stays by my side.
It whispers, it calls, it shouts out my name.
I feel it surrounding me, yet it can not be touched.
An essence of being, not seen, but sometimes heard, yet it has no sound.
Very few can listen to its message.
Many are afraid to listen, so they deafen themselves in fear.
I hear its sad message and I cry at its words.
It is my companion in this sad, sad world.
It sings the sweet song of silence which my soul can only hear.
It whispered its call and I followed.
It took me to distant worlds; to a time with no pain.
It carried me through dimensions beyond imagination,
Where faces have no features and voices have no sound,
Where there exists an understood meaning, an understood goal.
Communication by thought, and understanding by the soul.
The physical senses are obsolete.
Knowledge exists without hearing, seeing, touching, or smell.
Instead, it enters the center of the beings, but is not totally our own.

Espresso skin and chocolate eyes:
These are the visions that arise,
But there's more to him than we could surmise
or ever understand.

Painful hardships and stereotypes
Are known too well before his mind is ripe,
Who knows how many tears he has wiped
and wasted into the sand.

To tear him down until he is weak
Break his heart and bruise his cheek
Dim his soul, make his future bleak—
its all in the ultimate plan.

As society's scapegoat for every crime,
He's overpaid his price, over-done his time.
Yet, his presence remains sublime,
and with pride he continues to stand.

Little has changed from how things were.
Those remembering the past may cause a stir,
But nothing in life will ever deter
The soft, sweet, irrepressible,
lovable, determined, intellectual,
forever, strong and always powerful
Young Black Man.

For a moment I felt like a Child
The doorways became so tall
and the handle hard to reach

Trees were places of easy conquer
and the taste of sugar was a delight
and nowhere was the worry of weight

My mind, then, could not think of verses of these
A light I always needed when I slept in the evening
With passing moments, I could create smiles with simple faces

The world was all a romance
and the day always seemed very bright
as the spring air forever smelled sweet

The songs of sparrows and dances of squirrel
always made me giggle with delight
I held out my hand to them and watched them run away

So I thought for that moment
A time I envy, for it was what I'd rather be
A child once again, to avoid all the innocence lost

I talked to the squirrel with its frisky stare
I walked to the base of Jacob's Ladder to find
it is not there

Can You give me a reason to live?
Why do You take away my right to die?

I drank from a tulip's myriad cup
I shrank from the Madman's evil sup

Can You but just knock at my door?
Why do You give me a spirit to be free?

I tied my own hands with the evergreens' limbs
I sang along flatly to the angels of Him Hymns

Shadows, can you hide my shame?
Wind, can I chase after your hideous game?

I fell from Heaven with the rain
I saw a hawk shape cloud straining my brain

Eternity, have you any end?
Circle, where can I meet you at your bend?

I pummeled the mountainsides with my fists
I cowered among swampy mists

Love, can I recount your woes?
Why do I regret it was You I chose?

The other side of the square is a distance much farther from me than a line drawn tangent to any of the nearby circles.

It is an area that I only heard stories about as a child.

Scary tales of unfortunate lives who drifted too far to that side and never came back.

Other humans who were born there and never had a choice but to gaze from that side to the other three...a symmetrical geometry explaining the inequality of capitalism.

In grade school, we were all forced to commingle and eat the same government-issue lunch from the same, dull, institutionalized chairs surrounded by painted-pink cinder blocks.

Most of my peers, who are now wrestling with insecurity complexes, dealt with the tight tension tying knots in the air by hurling immature comments and telling jokes in a preadolescent attempt to untie the knot.

I even recently read a book about the fourth side written by a preeminent Southern writer who has since publication left the land of her birth and traversed the square, at least partially completing the journey to the other side.

I never could reconcile all of those mental pictures gone wild with the reality until I made the journey myself.

What I found there was a picture of America imitated in the fallout of poverty.

The other side of the square is not an exclusive club, its ranks do not discriminate on any grounds of race, color, sex, or age.

All are welcome, including people from the other three sides.

Yards filled with parts of trucks, billy goats, bare-footed children running through ring worm, and tattered American flags hanging from trees.

Everyone sitting in the yard under big oak trees because it is cooler out there in the 90 degree heat than it is in the stuffy confines of their non-air-conditioned houses.

There seems to be a self reliance alive here, an independence from the desire to get more and more with no end,
which could be portrayed as romantic
only in theory.

Yet still I will journey back to my side of the square and hide secret aspirations of seeing the other two.



I once met a girl tossing sparks in search of a fuse.
She was walking down the lonely landscape of a
dirt road in the dead of winter.
The foliage was shriveling up due to a lack of water
and was searching for a reason to burn.
I, being a man, fancied myself a romantic and set out
to lull her away from those seemingly self-destructive
wishes of fire.
I taught her essential skills, I taught her how to protrude
and stand erect.
I taught her to be forthright, single-pointedly focused, and
callous like an old camel.
Well, as it turned out, I had some lessons to learn from her,
as well.
I was the short fuse in search of her long sparks, waiting for
a reason to have my flesh spread across the vast expanse of
some naked continent.

I sit across from the Fire Wielder.
He nimbly holds red danger in his right hand.
Night is wounded and
runs for cover,
runs away from the flickering flames
that want to devour him.
But the Fire Wielder is not afraid,
he does not run,
does not hide.
He understands fire,
and does not fear it.
He has tamed fire.
He has tamed Darkness,
whose presence is a cold veil around us.
The Fire Wielder forgets his waxen pet,
and turns his attention to me.
I look at his eyes,
they blaze like his fire.
I look into his eyes,
I see huge halls and ample rooms.
I want to explore this new discovery.
I walk towards the space
made with floors of philosophies,
and walls of words,

and ceilings of shooting stars.
Just as I am ready to cross the threshold
into his cerebral castle,
the Fire Wielder's eyes change into
drills with bits made of diamonds.
I do not understand,
I am afraid.
I fall back into my wicker seat,
as his drill eyes pierce my thick skin.
I look down,
waiting to see the wreckage of my body,
but discover there is only
a clean opening,
through which I look.
I see myself more clearly
from the inside,
I understand myself.
I raise my eyes to meet those of the Fire Wielder,
fearful of meeting the drill that shows me myself,
but more afraid of missing an open door,
that will let me into the cavernous rooms of his mind.
I want to understand the Fire Wielder
as he understands fire,
as he understands how to guard the gate to his metal castle,
as he understands how to use his drill eyes,
as he understands me.

Hannah Marie Tysinger

passion (or one of the nine levels of hell)
as i awoke to what must have been a dream within a dream
my heart stopped and would not start again...
but my consciousness did not cease.

i was alive...

i was dead....

the boatman came to ferry me to what lay in wait for me after
my life of chaos.

as i got deeper into what must have been a nightmare that would
never end and would always be what i dreamed and pleaded would never
happen to me, i began to look around at my surroundings.

i saw lovers that i could never have, haves that i could never love;
this must have been the fifth level of hell that i had awakened to.
the deeper i rode into this dimension, the more i felt and saw and
heard and wanted.... and could do nothing about.

i was touched on all sides by hands that pulled at me, tugged at me,
tried to have their way with me.. but it was not to be, not yet.

i could do nothing but desire and burn with longing for what i wanted
to do.... to feel.. to have... but the hands were pulling me every
which way and i could not have them all.. or any of them... all i was
allowed to do was want... and lust... with passion.

passion(or one of the nine levels of heaven)
was i yet one of the undead?
as i lay back and my head
hit the pillow and i dread
the falling back upon the bed.
i was going, going until the white light and the air that was pure...
purer than the air of earth that ever was and will be too, i'm sure.
i must be in heaven.....

...

my thoughts turn only to clarity and purity....
i have emotions: solidness and surety
are all that i can feel in this point in eternity:
heaven is a place of wonder and splendor and desire....
desire to be at one with the stirring of a fire
within yourself and what ever is the cause of it
and the happiness it brings.
i see all the things that i may have wanted in my life
a strengthening of purpose and lessening of strife
between my heart and my mind..
my joy leaps up within my soul and i long for a completeness to
my being with the joining of another.
here, what i seek is neither a he nor a she
nor an it: just to be
all at one with the things that are to me what i could never
be to myself, a conscious endeavor
of spirit, of feeling.... of passion.

Nocturnal inklings of un-
finished thought creep under
The eyelids of Unexpected Sleepers;
Catalysts of calm; Reasons for Restlessness,
Dancing on the iris of the host.
Wreaking Havoc,
Exasperating, then
VANISHING!
The radiance of the morning star
is an alarm...
They know the fun is over,
it's time to go back,
to take a new form,
perch on the eyelashes,
Wait for the next night...

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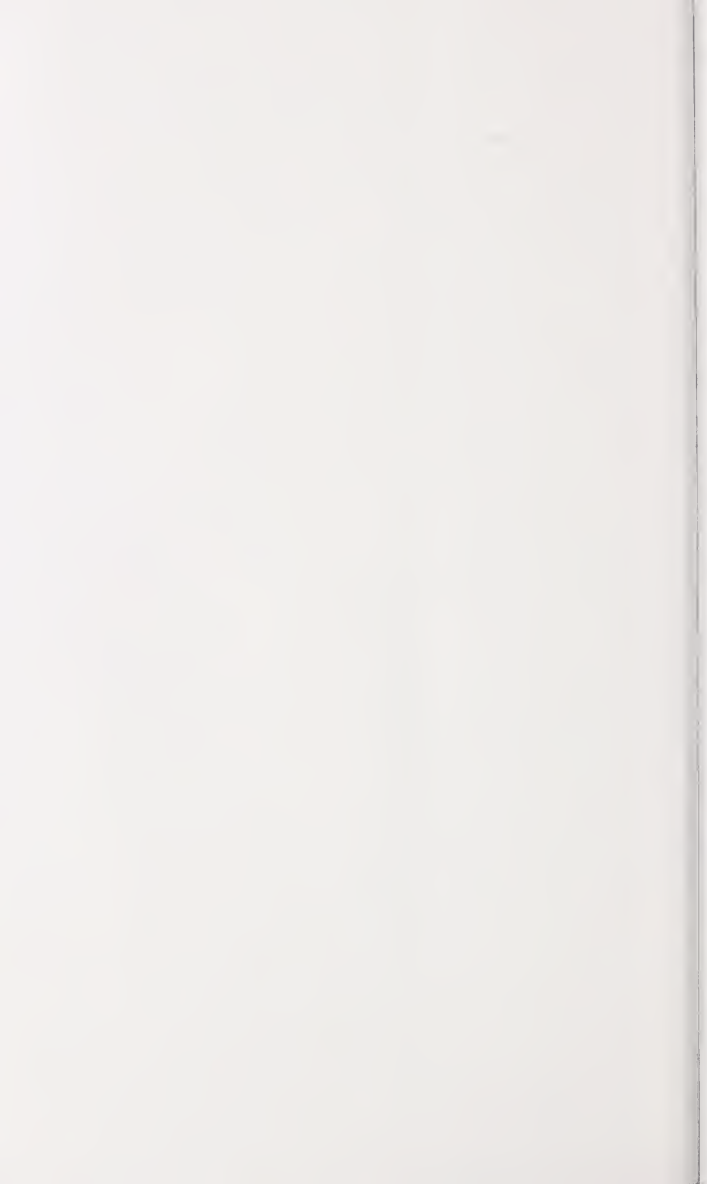
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