



Scholastic



Mark Allen G. Garzon

My friend took three steps back from the edge of the precipice. Then, lunging forward, he hurled an empty bottle of white zinfandel into the chasm below.

And how gracefully it fell. We stood there, in the silence of held breaths, and watched the bottle float down, down, down through the layers of limestone dust below. So empty was the quarry that by the time bottle met earth, my friend had time to utter these words:

Listen:
the sound of
The End of the World
on prom night.

It was poetry. Yes, standing there with my friend that night I *heard* poetry for the first time. It was prom night, an awful, awful prom night when my friend and I took the girls of our dreams to the greatest of high school dances. Despite the objections of their college boyfriends, we had managed to steal away with our beloveds for one momentous night.

The historic night called for historic measures. After the dance we took our dates to the holiest of holies: we drove south into the night, ten miles west of the county line, and trespassed into the massive quarry we proudly referred to as The End of the World.

As I said, the night was awful. Neither my friend nor I convinced our dates that they should dump their college boyfriends. However, the night would later redeem itself when it inspired me to write my first poem about the surreal experience. And, as only the Lord and I know, what a bad poem it was.


That was the beginning, though, and you might say this issue is where prom night has taken me. It's led me to believe that there is something wonderful in poetry. So wonderful, in fact, that it inspired me to dump premed, take up PLS, and pursue this crazy endeavor to publish a literary issue for distribution to the entire student body at Notre Dame.

There are many literary publications on campus, but 90 percent of you probably haven't seen one of them. Yet, of all the people I talked to about this project, 90 percent said they wish they could read the works of their peers and, if they were lucky, be read by their peers. Indeed, the greater mass of students is malnourished: their diet calls for literature, yet they remain content underfed.

I hope that this issue will be a spark for a greater literary discourse on campus. There are poets among us, but poets usually flourish when they share their passion with others. If Burroughs hadn't encouraged Ginsberg, and Ginsberg hadn't sucked in Jack... What a shame it would be not to know what Kerouac saw on the road.

There are countless people to thank for these 70 pages: *Scholastic* editors Brian Christ and Meredith Salisbury for their faith in this project; Charlyn Henderson, whose vivacity helped collect dozens of submissions; the *Scholastic* staff's dedicated efforts, which were so much greater than I expected; especially Kara Zuaro and Carol Wolf, who helped attract the attention of the more talented yet stubborn artists on campus; finally, to the professors who helped us choose the recipients of the awards for best pieces in the magazine, given out yesterday at the literary issue opening.

Finally, for all those people who've asked me over the years what poetry sounds like, I never meant to confuse you by simply answering, "Sploosh." Take this issue as my apology, and enjoy.



Zachary W. Kulrud
Literary Editor

Scholastic

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*Disce Quasi Semper Victurus
Vive Quasi Cras Moriturus*

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Cover photo by Paige E. Doub

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Paige E. Doub

About the Contributors

Sarah Balzli is from Meridian, Mississippi, and is currently a sophomore English major at Notre Dame. She enjoys writing short fiction and poetry, along with reading the works of others.



Ricky Buhrman is currently a junior majoring in Finance. He transferred to ND after one semester at Holy Cross College and hopes to one day start his own Hedge Fund. From Fort Lauderdale, FL, he is a member of the varsity tennis team and is co-founder of Notre Dame Family (NDF), an organization that brings student-athletes together with children from the Memorial Hospital's Pediatric Oncology/Hematology Unit.

Kristen Caponi is a graduate of John Carroll Catholic High School in Birmingham, Alabama. Her favorite inspirations are tragedy and love (which, coincidentally, are interchangeable). She would like to thank everyone who inspires and amuses her: God; a loving family; incredible musicians; and all friends — past, present, and future.



Jennifer Connor is a senior photography and psychology major from Fairfax, Virginia. She spends most of her time in either Riley or Haggard Hall trying to decide what she is going to be when she grows up.

Katherine Cleary is a sophomore English and art major from Birmingham, Michigan. She spends the majority of her time rowing for Notre Dame and throwing pots in the ceramic labs. She loves manatees, traveling, and playing outdoors.



When asked to name the most fearsome man in America, 37% of those polled said 'Jeremiah Conway.' Jeremiah says 'trout,' and would like his girlfriend to know that he has no plans of killing her father in the woods.

Michela A. Costello is a senior English major from New York. She hopes to live deeply and absorb as much poetry as possible in her last semester. After volunteering for a year, she plans to pursue writing and teaching in the future. In the meantime, Michela is content seeking wild and beautiful days reading T.S. Eliot and smelling oranges.



Sean Daily is a senior film student infatuated with the image of the poet and the starving artist, yet unable to become one. He hopes to film music documentaries on artists and groups where both the visual and audio exist for each other, attempting to create a synthesis of image and sound. Sean has no idea where he will be or what he will be doing in six months, and that's just fine.

A native of Colorado, Paige Doub is currently a Kroc Scholar in Notre Dame's Peace Studies Masters Program and serves as the Human Diversity Chair of the GSU. Her most fulfilling photographs are the portraits she has taken of children with life-threatening illnesses during several summers at the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp.



Born July 5, 1978, in the small rural town of Honesdale, PA, Michael Earley is the youngest of four siblings. Mike's father Wayne, a carpenter, and his mother Peggy, a housewife, are not only his chief source of support and inspiration, but also the subject of much of his work.

Ayana R. Fakhir is a senior, graduating in May with a double major in Sociology/Government and International Studies. She resides in McGlenn Hall and currently works as a Building Manager in LaFortune Student Center. In addition, she will be attending Case Western Reserve University School of Law in fall of this year.



A junior English and Art History major, Lindsay Frank hails from a suburb of Minneapolis and currently lives with her five fabulous roommates in Howard Hall. After graduation she plans to pursue a career in the magazine industry.

Tomás Gahan spent most of his 22 years in Madrid, Spain. He moved to Seattle, Washington, in 1992 and earned his Bachelors in Philosophy and English at Seattle University. He is now a student at Notre Dame Law School.



Mark Allen G. Garzon hopes to share in the essence of life — its engulfing passions, its subtle gestures, and its eternal love of something so dear and so deep it touches the mind and the heart of all — through architecture, which he believes touches everyone and everything.

Michelle L. Hogan is currently a freshman at the University of Notre Dame and plans to major in art and design. She is worldly in the area of travel, but applies such knowledge on a more personal, simple, yet in-depth way of living her experiences and sharing them with others.



While masquerading as an art major, Suzanne Kellman often toils deep into the night, plotting in the dark recesses of her laboratory while training the massive squirrel population to do her bidding. Beware, her takeover of the known world is imminent.

a sophomore english major, adam kronk personally feels that writing a 30-word bio is impossible. the complete extent of his creative capacity has been sucked dry by the composition of...(well, that's 30 words).



Rene Levario is the youngest of three children to Daniel P. and Catalina Levario. Brothers are Miguel Antonio and Jose Daniel, graduates of Notre Dame in 1999. He is a resident assistant of Zahm Hall and enjoys soccer, basketball, and giving guys in 2A a hard time.

Zenovia Lockhart is from South Bend. She is a junior pursuing a double major in English and Russian. Her motto in life comes from Phillippians 4:8 to seek things that are honest, just, pure, lovely, and virtuous. Her future plans include attending graduate school to specialize in 19th century Russian novels or poetry.



James Lyden is a fourth-year architecture student who lives in St. Edward's Hall. He is originally from Orlando, Florida. He enjoys frosted flakes and long walks on the beach. He will go into the air force upon graduating from Notre Dame.



Though Andrew McDonnell was born in the Highlands of South Bend, Indiana, his heart really lies somewhere in his chest cavity. His interests include rational thought, collecting bits of sandwich that remind him of Sarah McLachlan in a velvet satchel named Tammy, different pronunciations of the word "roof," swine-less truffle hunts, soccer, and Ireland.

Tim McFadden, from Arlington Heights, IL, is a 2nd Year law student and a 1996 graduate of Notre Dame. McFadden is an Assistant Rector of O'Neill Hall and a former Holy Cross Associate volunteer in Phoenix, AZ.



Joanie Mendenhall is a senior (major: English / minor: music) from southern California. She writes poems, stories and songs in a lazy attempt to reconcile pandemonium and inertia. Her life happens in terms of fiction and hallucinogenic dreams.

Lindsey Mohan was born and raised in Burnet, TX, a small town just north of Austin. She is a sophomore psychology major and intends to work in school or child psychology. She is very interested in photography and enjoys the outdoors.



Juan Pablo Montufar is a senior biochemistry major from Quito, Ecuador. Although his plans for the future are uncertain at present, they certainly include starting a cult, collecting chick-peas, and participating in massive displays of rollin', pollin', hoopla and whatnot.

Gregg Murray is from Denver, Colorado, where his family and beautiful girlfriend currently reside. He is a "philosophy" major with a minor in "getting a job." In addition to writing, Gregg also likes to play tennis and hang out with friends.



Mary Margaret Cecilia Nussbaum was born in a snowstorm in the panhandle of Texas on January 2, 1979. She grew up in Colorado in an old Victorian house with her family of seven, various animals, visitors and friends. Mia doesn't mean to brag, she doesn't mean to boast, but she likes hot butter on her breakfast toast.

Sheila Provencher is a second year graduate student in the Master of Divinity Program.



Miriam Rainbird is a graduate student in the Medieval History department. She is from San Francisco. Her roommate Krishna thinks she is the coolest.

Alicia Reinert is a senior graphic design major from Springfield, MO. Besides graphic art, she has a strong interest in photography, fashion design, and art history. After graduation she hopes to move to New York and pursue a career in design.



Bryce Richter is a first-year graduate painting student working toward his Master of Fine Arts degree. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1999 from Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, Texas.



Brian Scofield was born in Austin, Texas. For ten years competitive swimming was a major influence in his life. His short stories have received several awards and Brian has been published in various literary publications. Brian is now a freshman living in Siegfried Hall.

Sarah Stronsky is one of America's most beloved artists. Born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1996 she came to Notre Dame where she produced what she lovingly refers to as art. This art, as well as Notre Dame's rigid meal plan, soon caused Sarah to drown in debt. But all her turmoil seems small when she sees her work published.

Lindsay E. Van Loon is a junior majoring in English and Spanish. She is currently abroad with the London Program after returning from a year of study with the now-extinct Mexico City Program. She is a great fan of café con leche and has been known to contradict herself, as she contains multitudes.

Speaking of his literary style, this Kansas native explains his writing as a "probing form of therapy." Miguel Vieyra is a freshman this year, enjoying the new home he has found in Knott Hall. He plans on majoring in psychology and English.



Sally Wasmuth is a freshman business major and plans to attend law school in New York. She enjoys spending time outdoors, taking road trips, water-skiing, coffee houses, and any movie starring Julia Roberts.

Her curiosity draws her to the medical fields, but her passion has always been writing. That's why Elizabeth Wilschke chose to major in English even though her ultimate plan is to become a dentist. Currently a resident assistant in Cavanaugh Hall, Elizabeth has not yet decided where she will be going to dental school in the fall. She is from St. Joseph, Michigan, where her parents live with her cat, Annabelle.



Caroline M. Wolf, a junior from Indiana, is currently studying in Rome. She is an industrial design and her Dishes B Done is the greatest kitchen improvement since the salad shooter.

Mary Sarah Zakas is a junior American studies major who was born and raised in South Bend. She has no visible scars. Reading, being off-campus, and messing with telephone solicitors are among her favorite pastimes.



Kara Zuaro, a junior from Long Island, is majoring in English and film, television and theatre. Kara is the entertainment and departments editor here at Scholastic.



Abbreviations

Joanie Mendenhall

In the evenings, I babysit a little girl who lives in my building. When her daycare closes, her mom walks her to the museum where I work, usually she knocks on my office door at just about 5:20. I peer over my computer monitor, and she peeks her head inside the door. Then Desiree and I ride the bus to our building. Her mom rushes off to her night job, and Desiree and I stay in my apartment until her older brother comes home. Doris Slate, Desiree's mother, always promises to pay me at the end of the month, but I tell her not to worry about it, because I know she can't afford it. I don't mind, I like my evenings with Desiree. She is seven years old, and wears eleven braids in her hair.

One night Desiree accompanied me to the grocery store. We boarded bus 39 in front of our building. She sat by the window, leaning her head against it and pressing her fingers on it, the way kids do, oblivious to the dirt and germs that adults seem to discern instinctively. Her constantly moving eyes made a chance stop on my face, and they scrunched up quizzically. "What color is your skin?" she asked, staring at me. Desiree could see that I had no answer, so she explained to me that I wasn't white, and I wasn't black, and I wasn't pink either.

Desiree always asked questions like that, questions that I couldn't answer. Once she asked, "If you say you're a painter, why do you type on the computer at the museum? Why don't you paint pictures to hang on the walls there?" I don't know. Why don't I.

When we got home from the store, Desiree sat at my kitchen table, working on a subtraction worksheet. She became distracted by a framed photo in the kitchen, of me with my twin sister Monique, and our life-long friend Ray. "Is that man your husband?" she asked pointing at Ray. "He's our friend," I said smiling, but Desiree was not satisfied with that. "Why does he put his hand on top of your arm like that?" Everyone always assumed that Ray and I were sleeping together, and it seemed that even Desiree shared the opinion. Ray and I have never even really kissed. "I think maybe he likes you," Desiree pronounced with confidence.

I opened a letter from Monique who had been living in various European cities for two years. She usually wrote to me every week or so. As I began to read it, the doorbell rang. It was Desiree's mom. She got off work early. I saw my own reflection in the front hall mirror, and noticed that our skin color was almost the same. Doris Slate is much lighter than her daughter. But for some reason, I am white and she is black. I suppose Desiree might know what color we are. Doris looked at me intently, and I knew that she was struggling to find a way to thank me, or promise future payment, as she always did. I shook my head slightly, touched her arm, and thanked her before she could try to thank me.

That night in bed, I started Monique's letter again. But I only got through the first few phrases before I drifted into a

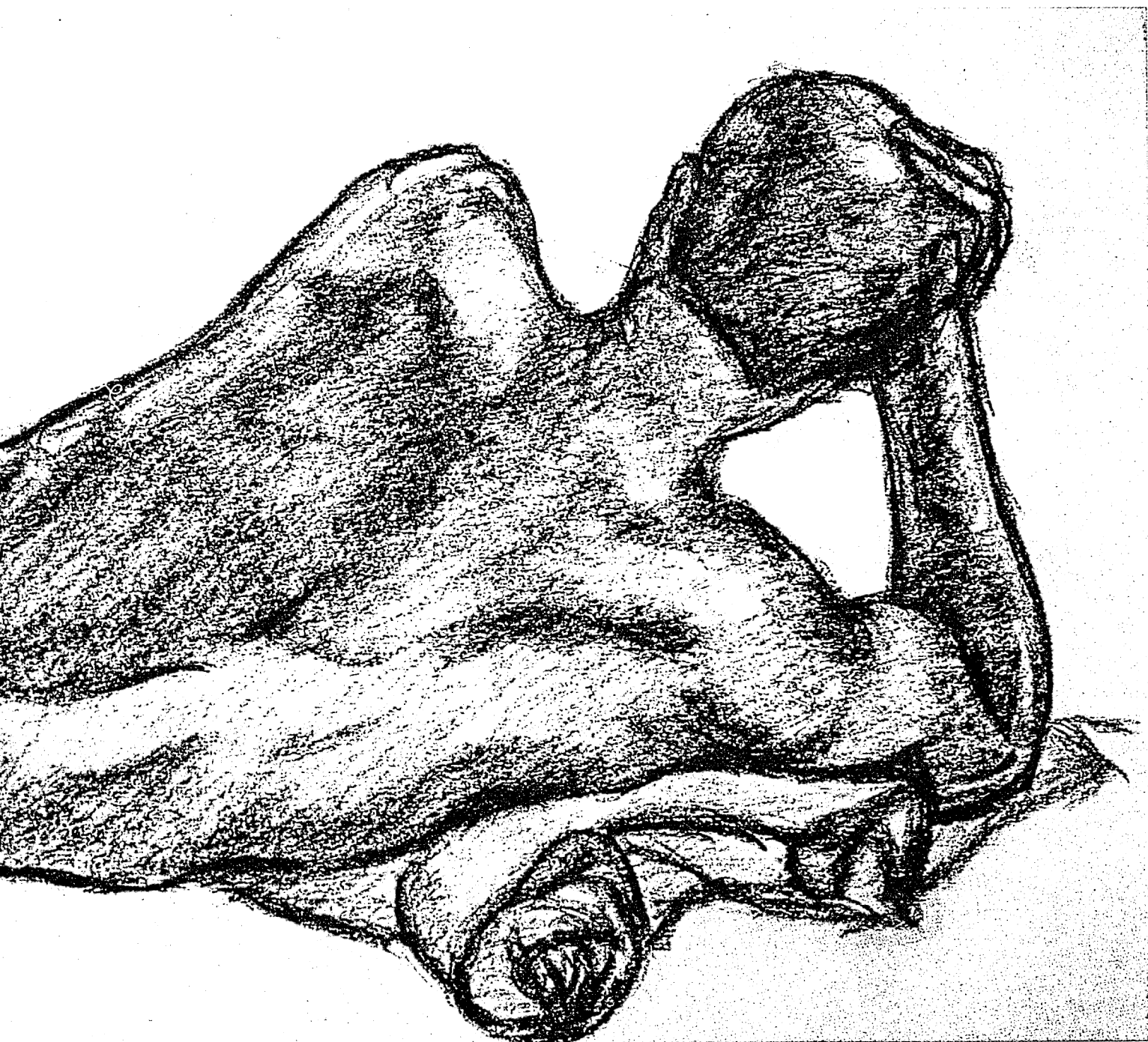
dream-filled sleep where i am leaping across a very small archipelago, and each time i land on an island the temperature changes and the light changes and my skin changes then i accidentally leap out of my skin and land in the water

It was Saturday afternoon, so I gathered an assortment of reading material, including Monique's letter, and hauled it off to my favorite café, People. People is always full of smoke, shadows and music. Coffee bean air inflates each breath, and a scratchy recording of a female voice infuses the room's ears. Near my seat, a man and a woman were having a quiet argument. They didn't seem to be lovers but sex hung, thick and taut, in the air between them. In exasperation, the man leaned back, ran his hands across his temples, along his skull, and removed his eyeglasses. More words were exchanged, then he stood up in resignation, his eyebrows sinking but tense. As soon as he stood, the dense words that hovered above their little table seemed to disintegrate, and fuse with the smoke, coffee, and music. Then when he stormed away, and the woman remained, the words were completely dissolved. He left his eyeglasses on the table.

Cami,

Mom is still fuming about my absence at Grandma's funeral. I suppose she'll get over it one of these days when she thinks of a new reason to be pissed at me! I can't believe your discovery in Grandma's jewelry box — isn't it devastating to think that she carried that secret to her grave — and isn't it ironic that her death was the only way to give





Christina Wolf

voice to the truth about her past! But I am thrilled to know that we were right all along about Dad and his olive-complected Swedish heritage! Didn't we always know it — I always thought we had Mexican blood in us, not a bad guess, right? So Dad's half Italian. And Gramps adopted him. Grandma — what a heartbreaker. I always knew that woman had stories to tell. Tell me more about the picture you found! Does Dad look like his real father? And what did Grandma write on the back of it? Great detective work, Cami — I can't wait to talk to you about all of this in person.

I have to tell you about the thrilling new job I've taken — but you must not ever tell anyone in the family. This could become quite scandalous so burn this letter immediately after you read it! Throw it in the fireplace at People right

away (I know that's where you are reading this). Okay are you ready for this? So I met this guy in Barcelona, an Irish guy actually, we were both taking a class at la universidad. We were chatting one day in the biblioteca, lamenting our financial woes, etc. (he's a painter like you). He jokingly said that he was thinking about posing nude for an art class, because they pay 4,000 pesetas per hour, that's like 20 bucks. Okay I've blown it now — yes, that's what I'm doing! I marched right over to the department of arte and signed up to pose nude starting that evening. Cami it's the most beautiful thing — I can't even tell you how much it thrilled me to stand naked on a little wooden box with a circle of artists around me. They face down mostly, looking at their work, and only glancing up quickly. And the room has windows! The glass is foggy though so it isn't like a

peep show for the entire city or anything, but there's something about the fuzzy view of the outside that makes everything else seem even more surreal. I know, you think I'm crazy, you're going to tell Mom and Dad, and they will have me deported back to the states — please don't tell them Cami, it wouldn't be worth it. In fact don't tell anyone. But can you even believe that I'm doing this! It's quick money, and I'm having a blast. (I guess you can tell Ray if you want to. Yeah tell him, he'll get a kick out of it.) One guy drew me in oil pastels, all these wild colors, but it really looked like me. And then one woman drew me in charcoal, these broad strokes, hardly any details, but you could still tell that it was me. Then this other guy drew me fat! The nerve. just kidding, but seriously he must have some deep misogyny issues, because this guy drew me muy gorda and my face kind of looked like a monster ... weirdo ...

I stopped reading there because the coffee barista set my soup on the table in front of me. I reached into my purse to pay her, and found a folded piece of paper with my name written on it in Desiree's handwriting. I paid the barista and peeled the tape off of Desiree's gift. She must have slipped it in my purse before she left. I unfolded the paper to reveal a crayola rendering of one of my paintings. It is a small painting that I did years ago, it now hangs inconspicuously in my apartment. It is kind of blue and foggy looking, a vague woman figure standing in a square box. Desiree copied it in cornflower blue crayola. She had signed her name at the bottom, and written a note to me on the back. "Deer Cami, is that lade you. Love Desiree" I smiled at her misspelling of lady, and at her unfailing ability to ask me questions that I can't answer.

I returned to Monique's letter. Her letters always made me laugh out loud, even though I was envious of her relentlessly bizarre lifestyle.

I don't know Cami, there's something enthralling about having people interpret me artistically, like I'm a poem or something. Okay, I'll stop before you think I've lost my mind! (maybe I have??)

I went to church last week. I still don't understand Spanish well enough to get much out of mass, but the funny thing is, it doesn't really make a difference. Remember how we used to wonder if Father Pat was speaking English when he said mass? I guess it's the same feeling, going to mass here. It's all kind of foreign sounding no matter what country you're in! Wouldn't Mom be proud of her Catholic daughters? don't even get me started on that.

I have to go now — if Mom and Dad ask, tell them yes, I'm gainfully employed. Escribeme pronto. Send me a copy

of that picture you found —

*Love you lots,
M.*

My twin, the porn star of high art. I missed Monique when I finished her letter. It always felt too slow to write down everything I wanted to tell her. Writing it all out seemed to distill my immediate thoughts.

As I re-folded Monique's letter, I saw that she had written a P.S. on the back.

P.S. I heard that Veronica Lamm had a baby! I should have known all along — the living emblem of chastity drops her pants on the wrong day of the month — I'm a sucker for hypocrisy.

The news didn't shock me. In the six years since high school ended, most of the pedestal virgins we knew had gotten pregnant.

I wanted to paint. I dismissed the rest of my reading material, hurried home, and painted. When it was dark, Ray came over with wine and tacos. I let him paint with me on my canvas, even though he is a bad painter, and we finished the bottle and laughed a lot and finished the painting.

"What is it?" he mused.

"It's a virgin. It's Veronica Lamm."

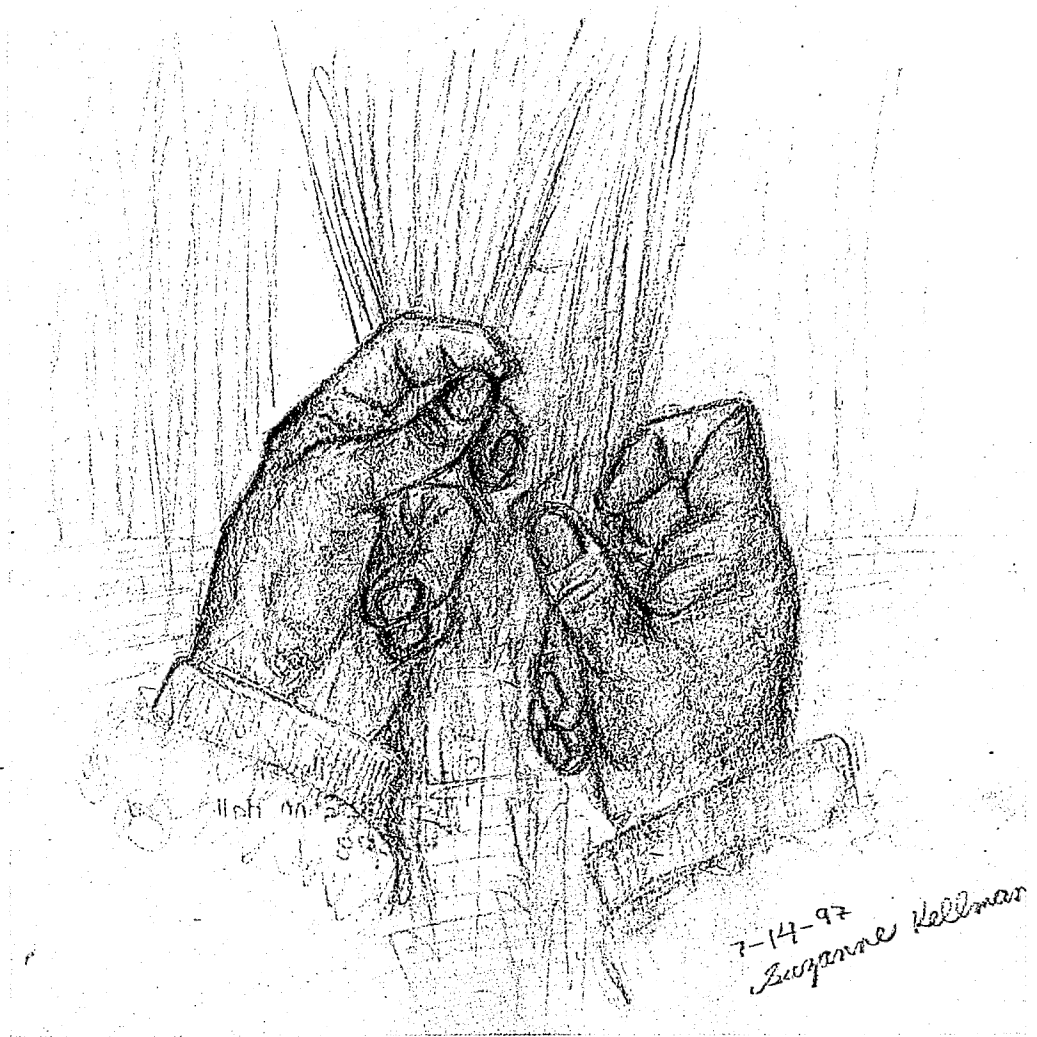
"You're always painting virgins! You are artistically confined to painting virginity. All the time. It's your fate! It's your name. Camille — it means Virginity."

I laughed and he tilted me back with both of his arms and kissed my head, as if we had accomplished something, as if we were lovers. Then we lay on the couch, my feet in Ray's lap. I told him about Desiree's crayola copy of my blue painting, and he massaged my feet until sleep apprehended our senses.

i wake up disoriented and the dream i just had dangles behind my eyes in that place where i can't see it but i can feel it and i know i am about to lose it but then suddenly it superimposes itself on the inner surface of my eyelids and all i can see is an image of myself wearing nothing only my skin and my grandma's wedding band but my skin is painted (in charcoal oils ink) like some peculiar exotic fish i am painted and colored

No light enters through my window. Ray's watch is on the bedside table. Next to his eyeglasses. 3:17 a.m. Ray is fast asleep on the other side of the bed. I am 1/4 Italian. The moon is abbreviating the light.

Hands (for my Dad)



Suzanne Kellman

Often I sit contemplating academic bliss
a future white collar existence,
yet the gnawing sensation of doubt
like ivy, crawls up my legs.

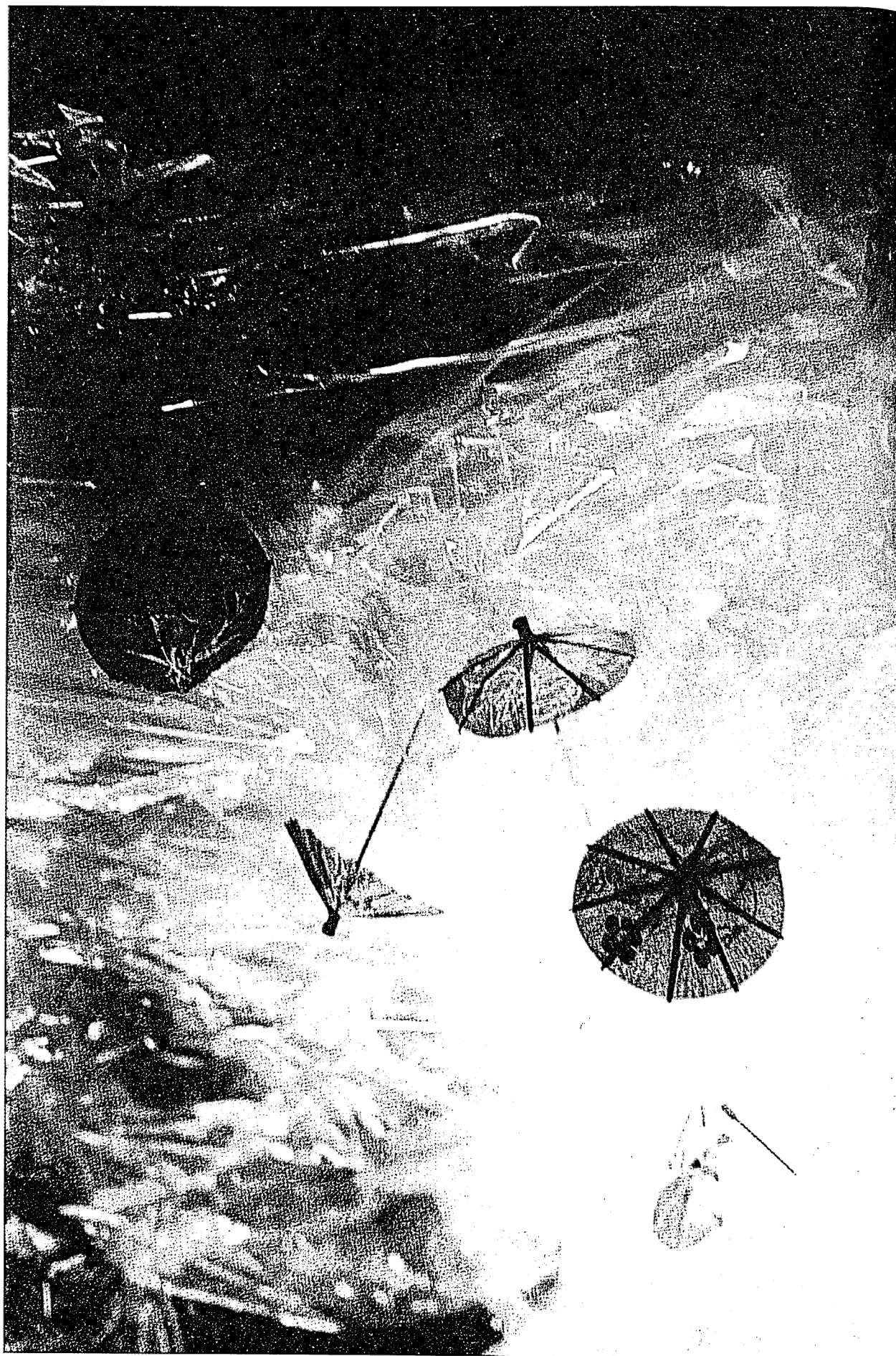
Staring at these testifying bricks
the pride of a forgotten man,
a living monument, standing while his worn hands ache
arthritic and decrepit in some stinking home.

How the cement must have stung his dry cracking hands,
sandpaper brick methodically shaving his skin
layer by layer. How could he have felt, working and sweating
for some unappreciative disrespectful bastard like me?
yet to sleep each night satisfied exhausted, a man.

Well, since blisters arrive when the work is done
it comes as no surprise that I don't have any.

When it's all over and Pete gives me a good look
he'll send me to the back of the line,
behind the guy in the red threadbare flannel, holding keys
to a battered pickup on his tired fingers, swinging them gently
as he picks at the mortar lodged beneath the nails
of his gnarled calloused respectable hands.

— Michael D. Earley





Caroline M. Wolf

It is raining
in november, indiana,
and the sidewalks here
are prone to puddling —
into epochal pools,
deliciously deep,
and perfect for drowning.

— Katherine Cleary

Fame

the puddle on
the sidewalk
impossible to
escape

allowing my
footprints
fifteen minutes of
fame on a
cloudy day

— Lindsay K. Frank

Effects of Sea Foam

Aphrodite never
gazed at her delicate collarbone
in great amazement.

Really, she didn't know
that being true to that
won us the apple.
It was Keats that designed you and I,
not our father's foam.

Maybe it is because we all want to be her.
We want to fall in love, to drown if it's romantic
yet as we meet Ophelia broken on the Thames
never show our eyes.
But why not Ophelia?
Did no one see we were still beautiful then —
that you were most beautiful
in the purple willows, weeping.
Brokenness.
It has a hint of wild violet.

Maybe it was the blood even one cried to wipe,
on the bathroom floor.
But each ripe pomegranate seed burns its way,
into crimson flower.
Damned but beautiful crimson flowers.
There is an ancestry of strength in your breasts
if you look, if you risk looking.
And I did not spring from the sea, father.
I sprang from more than the sea
would not know.

Wake up, Aphrodite called.
But Adonis could not hear
down in black underworld.
As we cannot see
if we never truly look.

Such is an ageless
tale of blindness. We are not.
It is you. Wake up.

There is an infinity of goddesses
silently waiting at the kitchen table.



Zenovia Lockhart

*Aphrodite was the ancient goddess of love and beauty. She was born of the sea foam of her father's, Zeus's, castration. Aphrodite was fated to love the beautiful Adonis and suffered a great pain both from her love for him and his death. As Adonis lay dying, fatally wounded by a bull, his drops of blood turned into crimson flowers. Blood red anemones, known as windflowers, forever bloom in his place.

— Michela Costello

A Norman Rockwell Thanksgiving

Jeremiah Conway

We got to Clarissa's parents about twenty minutes before noon. The snow that was a disgusting slush in Albany had fallen much more heavily in Vermont, and there was about a two-foot deep cushion of the white stuff in the fields around the Clarks' house. A thin line of gray smoke trailed skywards from the chimney of the medium-sized log cabin. There was a big, weather-worn gray barn about a hundred yards past the house, with a fence behind it for animals, although there was no livestock on the property. Only an old setter named Thad.

"Hey, boy," I said, scruffing up the dog's ears. "How's it goin', Thaddeus, old boy?"

"Hello, you two," Ellen Clark sang out from the porch of the cabin. She had left the front door open behind her, and was toweling her hands off in the front of her apron, waiting for her only child to approach so she might wrap her up in an embrace.

"Mom," Clarissa called joyously, running to her mother. They hadn't seen each other since I had popped the question eight days ago. I stopped unpacking the car for a few moments to watch them giggle like schoolgirls at the ring, and to just hug and be happy.

"Where is my son-in-law-to-be?" Ellen looked up from Clarissa's finger. "Sandy, get up here, boy, let me hug you! Oh, I'm so happy for you two kids!" I hustled under the weight of our bags up to the porch and was hugged forcefully. "Oh, Sandy, you'll take good care of my Clarissa, won't you? Of course you will, you kids are perfect for one another! I can't believe Clarissa is finally getting married! This is so wonderful!"

"Mom," Clarissa said wryly, with vapor from her breath forming in the air, "I'm twenty-four. I'm not *finally* getting married — I'm getting married."

"To a wonderful, smart, charming boy," Ellen said, hugging me again, when I wasn't at all expecting it. I was forced to take a step back to compensate my balance.

"Who left the door open, all the warm air is leaving!" came a booming voice from inside the cabin. Rick Clark followed soon after the voice, with a big smile spread across his face. The smile, I did not allow myself to be fooled, was directed entirely at his daughter, whom he kissed lovingly on the cheek. "How's my baby girl?"

"I'm good, Dad, how are you?" she asked, kissing him in return.

"Hi, Rick," I said, offering him my hand.

He shook it with a little more firmness in his grasp than I would've liked. "Hello, Sandy, how are you? So," he said, still smiling as to mask his distaste for me, "this is the boy who's going to make my daughter an honest woman, hmm?"

"Dad!" Clarissa said, shocked.

"Oh, Rick, you promised not to start," Ellen exclaimed, slapping his arm immediately. "Sandy, don't pay attention to him."

"I'm not starting anything, Ellen," he said with a dismissive laugh. "I'm only playing with the boy. Seriously, Sandy, congratulations."

"Thank you, Mr. Clark," I said with a grateful smile.

"Well, why don't we get you kids inside and settled down," Mrs. Clark said, ever bustling with energy. "There'll be plenty of time for you men to watch football before dinner!"

I put our bags down on the porch and trotted back to the car to fetch the pie that I had made for the Clarks.

"What time will we be eating, Mom?" Clarissa was asking when I re-entered the house.

"Oh, not before four-ish, probably," Mrs. Clark told her. I walked into the kitchen, greeted by the welcome odor of a Thanksgiving dinner in the making. Even in preparing for the biggest meal of the year, Mrs. Clark's kitchen was immaculate. Nothing looked out of place; the mixing bowl in which the stuffing was being made even seemed to be completely natural on the hard-wood counter. A cutting board was nearby, dispelling a thought of salmonella that I found stirring in my mind. "Sandy, Clarissa and I will take care of everything, you go watch football with Rick."

"Sure thing, Mother Clark, I just wanted to give you something," I said, holding out the Tupperware pie-thingamabob for Mrs. Clark.

"Mother Clark?" Clarissa mouthed at me, questioningly. I shrugged.

"Oh, Sandy, what did you do? I told Clarissa that you two weren't to bring anything!" she complained, accepting the container from me and peering inside of it. I looked at Clarissa, who had certainly *not* passed on such a message and had rather told me that her mother's favorite pie was mincemeat. It wouldn't have made a difference, I would've baked something anyway, but at least I would've made something easier, like apple or something. "Oh, my, is this mincemeat? I *adore* mincemeat pie, but Rick never eats it,

so I never make it. Goodness, Sandy, you're quite the cook! It's a good thing you know your way around a kitchen, Clarissa surely doesn't," Mrs. Clark said, shooting a scolding look at her daughter. "Maybe she should be the one watching football with Rick. I think we'd eat well before four if you were helping."

"Oh, Mom," Clarissa said.

"Sandy," Rick said, entering the now-crowded kitchen, "do you have boots with you? I've decided that we should go fetch the Christmas tree before dinner. I had planned on getting it in the morning so we wouldn't miss any football, but you kids took your own sweet time in getting out here, so the first half is a lost cause."

"Dad, it's over a three-hour drive from Sandy's brother's house," Clarissa told him. "It's hard enough for us to get up at eight o'clock any day, but on *Thanksgiving*? When we don't have to work?"

"Sleeping in 'til eight," Rick simply scoffed. "Ellen, when was the last time I slept 'til eight?"

"I don't know, dear," Ellen said, choosing to ignore him for the most part.

"It's my fault, Rick," I said. "Clarissa's trying her hardest to get me not to be so lazy, but she's fighting an uphill battle. If anyone told me three years ago that I would be an early-riser, I'd tell 'em that meant I was getting up at ten-thirty."

Clarissa laughed. "Sandy, you lie. I could've out-slept you any day of the week. 'Member that one Saturday after we saw *Phantom of the Opera*, I slept until two in the afternoon? You finally got so hungry waiting for me to wake up that you left to go get some pizza for lunch, and I woke up and thought you had left altogether?" She was laughing, but her father had started to glare at me. It wasn't comfortable.

"You *should've* left," Mrs. Clark kidded me. "Imagine, sleeping until two in the afternoon! Clarissa, you're positively slothful!"

Clarissa laughed. "Or something," she said, a mischievous glint in her eye. Her mother apparently picked up on it and laughed with her, slapping her wrist playfully.

"How 'bout it, Sandy?" Rick asked, his voice now stern

and gravelly. "Want to go do some good old-fashioned tree-picking? None of the namby-pamby artificial tree stuff you city folks do?"

"Sure, Rick," I said, trying to be cheery. "Uhm, I don't suppose you have an old coat I can borrow or anything? If we're going to be cutting a tree and carrying it around, I'd rather not be wearing my leather jacket."

"No, we wouldn't want to get *that* dirty now, would we?" Rick asked with a scoff. He pointed to the back-door exit through the kitchen. "There should be something in there you can wear. It's about a mile and a half hike to where we're going, Sandy. Be sure to dress warm enough. I have to go get some tools from the barn."

"Have fun, honey," Clarissa said, kissing me on the cheek.

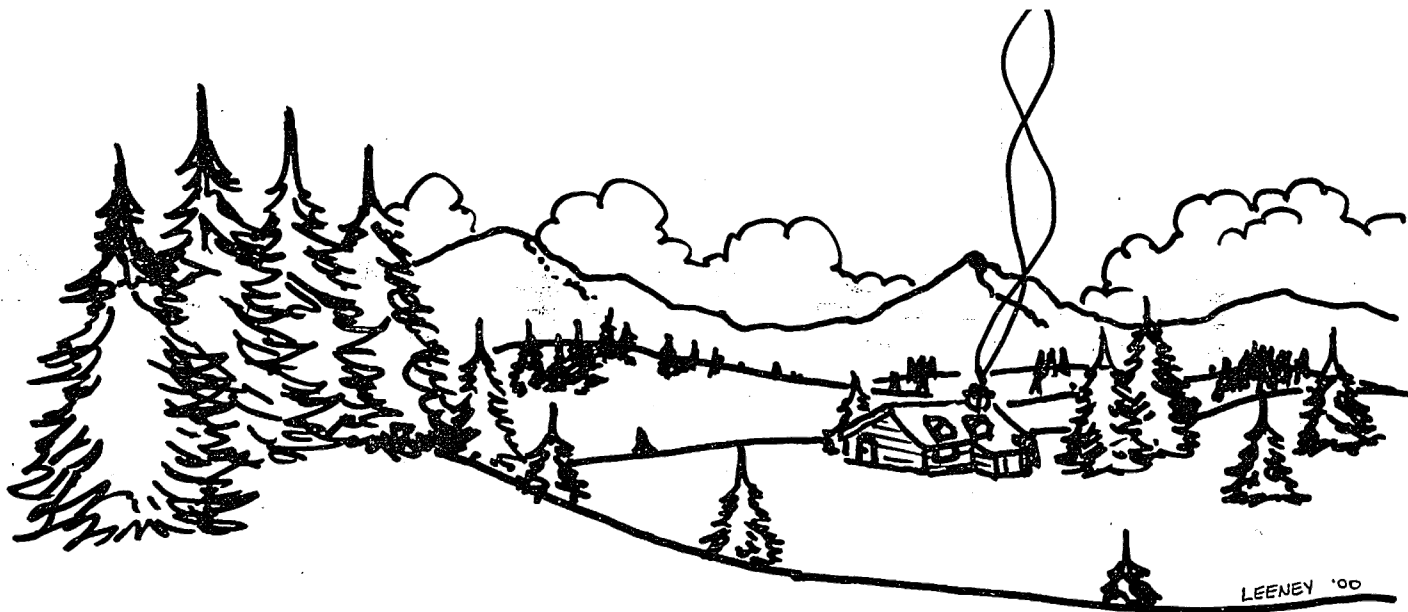
"Yeah, can I, uh, talk to you, sweetie?" I asked, tugging on her sleeve a bit, motioning to the anteroom off the kitchen. We ducked in there, as I looked for a coat or something. It was a small room full of coats and boots and such. I shuddered at the sight of Mr. Clark's shotgun and hunting rifle. "Is this a good idea?"

"What do you mean? Getting a Christmas tree? I can't imagine why it wouldn't be. Give you some time to win over Dad." She gave me another kiss. "Think about it! You, Dad, and the dog going to fetch a Christmas tree, coming back to a home-cooked turkey that the women-folk are making? Amidst the snow-capped trees? It'll be like a Rockwell painting." She laughed, very amused with herself. "The Clarks and a Rollins, having a Norman Rockwell Thanksgiving!"

"I have a lot of ground to cover still with that man, don't I?" I sighed.

"Yeah," she nodded, her mood dropping a bit. "But don't worry about it, honey. I'm nuts about you. In time, he will be, too."

"Rright," I nodded. My search for a jacket resulted in my finding a thick, insulation-lined flannel and a big puffy brown vest of some sort. Pulling a navy-blue stocking cap over my hair, I stepped out of the anteroom's door and into the cold air. My hands immediately balled up due to the cold, and I reached inside the pockets of the vest to be



pleasantly surprised by some thick Naugahyde gloves. I looked like I stepped out of an L.L. Bean catalog, but I was warm enough.

"Sandy, over here, son," Rick called cheerfully. He had snowshoes strapped to his heavy workboots, an ax in one arm and a hacksaw in the other. The old setter, Thad, was at his feet, panting expectantly. "We've gotta tromp through some snow, but there's only one pair of snowshoes. Ellen's have been broken for a couple years — haven't ever gotten around to fixing them. You're gonna have to try and stay in my footprints, I guess. Think you're up to it?"

"Sure," I said, eager to impress.

With that, Rick started walking across the big snowy field behind the house and toward the tree-line. While I resigned myself to following in his footfalls, wishing instead that I was watching football, Thad managed to keep up with him, step for step. The dog was buried in snow up to his shoulders, but kept pace much better than I did, all the same. My lungs burned like a furnace before long. Every once in a while, Rick would turn around and egg me on to keep up. I would grunt assent and rededicate myself to struggling through the two feet-deep snow. The snow would compact a bit due to the snowshoes, but not nearly enough to prevent my legs from plunging into the white stuff.

After about three-quarters of a mile, with the tree-line another couple hundred yards off, Rick yelled back to me. "I just remembered my cross-country skis! They probably would've helped you a whole lot! Damn, huh?"

I collapsed for an instant, my knee getting wet from the soaked-through corduroys I was wearing. "Damn," I yelled back in agreement. My body was covered in sweat, and I got the feeling that this wasn't helping me get on any better terms with Clarissa's father. Thad doubled back to give me an encouraging lick on the cheek, and I pushed him away with one hand.

"Well, c'mon, Sandy, don't just sit on your duff all day, we'll miss the football games altogether! We're almost there! What would Clarissa say if she knew you couldn't keep up with her sixty year-old father, huh?" Rick called from the distance.

I was much more concerned with what she would think of the rage I felt toward her sixty year-old father, actually. Trying to channel that rage toward something constructive, I forced myself back to my feet and started forward again.

By the time we reached the trees, my head was light from exertion and my knees were shaking. I hadn't eaten since we left Albany, six hours ago, and that had only been a bagel. We were in a coniferous forest, and there weren't any tall trees with sprawling branches, so the snow wasn't any less deep. I took time to collect myself before following Rick's footprints. He seemed to have grown tired of my lagging, and had set about finding a perfect Christmas tree somewhere within the maze-like forest.

"Rick?" I yelled. "Rick, where are you, man?" I received no answer, which I half-expected. At least there were his footprints, and I started following them. I looked around for a couple of minutes, and realized that the old man had doubled back time and again, and left only a series of random footfalls and jumbled paths. "Rick! I can't find you, answer me!"

Again, no answer.

"Crazy old man," I growled. "No, no," I said quietly, correcting myself. "Clarissa loves him and that means he's got to be a good person." I then made the uncomfortable realization that Clarissa had never had a single bad thing to say about anyone. I clearly needed something else to motivate me in this situation. "Ah," I said, hitting on an idea. "This'll be a great story — if I survive."

That qualifier, 'if I survived,' became a long-shot, however, as the gray sky started emptying snow on me, and stirred up a biting wind. The trees standing all around me seemed to do no good in cutting back on the winds, and the snow started falling heavily enough to impede on my visibility. At first, this didn't bother me at all — I loved the snow. Then I realized how heavily it was falling, and, when combined with the wind blowing the snow that was already on the ground, how quickly the prints made by the snowshoes were filling in.

"Damn," I declared aloud. I started trotting as quickly as I could, following any prints I could make out in hopes of finding Mr. Clark. The wind started blowing more loudly, and I was taunted, whenever it subsided for an instant, by the distant sound of an ax. Every time, however, the wind would pick up again before I was able to get my bearings and pinpoint the direction of the sound. The snow picked up, becoming a near whiteout, and my situation was all the more desperate. My eyes teared up so badly that one of my contacts fell into the snow, effectively blinding me in my left eye. I opened my mouth to curse, but my lips were so chapped that the bottom one split open, and I became aware of hot blood dripping down my wind-burned chin. I also became aware of how dry my throat was from exertion. I grabbed a handful of new-fallen snow and used it both as water and as ice to stop the bleeding.

I was staggering blindly at that point, and it was nothing more than pure luck that Thad trotted up to me, wagging his tail. "C'mon, boy," I managed, "take me to your owner." The dog pranced ahead, undeterred by the elements. He moved too fast, and I lost his trail almost instantly. "Thad!" I called over the roaring wind. "Come back, boy, come back! Dammit, Thad, come back!" The dog responded, and I patted his head gratefully. My fingers were in pain inside of the Naugahyde, and I could barely feel the animal. "Go slower, boy."

Thad again pranced off, and I ran after him. I lost sight of him again, but following what I prayed was his trail led me to Mr. Clark. Thad was running around the old man and the tree that he had succeeded in felling.

"Bout time, Sandy," he yelled over the wind, even though he was only two feet away. "I was starting to worry about you. This is some storm, huh? Could lose a man out here, it's so white!"

I grunted some sort of acknowledgment.

"What's the matter, boy, you look like death?" he shouted. Without waiting for an answer, he turned to look at the eight-foot tree that lay on its side. "We'll work up a nice appetite getting this thing back to the house, that's for sure!"

"Can't we leave it?" I yelled. "It's snowing like mad out here!"

"Can't leave it," he shook his head. "It's tradition to get the tree on Thanksgiving! Been doing it every year I've owned this place!"

I reluctantly grabbed one of the thick lower branches of the tree, and prepared to drag the tree through the driving snow. "Can't do that! It'll break the branches. Pick up the top of the tree, carry it over your shoulder." Shaking and swearing to myself, I complied. Mr. Clark hefted the trunk onto his shoulder, and promptly started marching at a near-military pace. It didn't take long for me to stumble and fall. Mr. Clark laughed at me as I staggered back to my feet and wrestled with the tree again. Another fifty feet or so, and I tripped over the snow again. The dog came up to me and licked my face again. His saliva froze on my cheek instantly. I couldn't push him away, as my hands were shaking violently from exhaustion, and I couldn't immediately force myself back to my feet.

"C'mon, Sandy," Mr. Clark yelled at me, prodding me with the blunt part of the ax head. "C'mon, we need to get back before it starts to get dark!"

"Too..." I started, but cut myself off before saying anything the old man would interpret as weakness. We weren't even out of the tree-line yet, still over a mile to go, and I felt like I was about to die. I wanted to tell him that I couldn't, I wanted to tell him that the snow was too deep, I wanted to tell him that I hated him for doing this to me, but I thought of Clarissa and bit my tongue.

"Aw, are you too tired to keep going? You piece of shit, Sandy," Mr. Clark growled at me. I managed to look up at him, and he was shaking his head in disgust. He held the handle of the ax in his right hand, and wrapped his left around the shaft, just under the blade. "It's good, though, boy, it's good. Nice and weak. Makes my job a whole lot easier." I moaned, and struggled in the blizzard. He hit me with the blunt end of the ax-head, and I fell onto my back. "Won't Clarissa be upset," he said mockingly, "to find out that her fiancé tried taking an ax to her old, beloved father?" The ax-head's blunt end found my side with a deep thud, and I moaned in pain. "Probably be even more upset when her old, beloved father had to kill her fiancé in self-defense, I imagine. Poor Clarissa." He raised the ax above his head. "Poor, sweet Clarissa."

It took virtually all of my energy to roll out of the way of the blow, and I could only roll onto my stomach. Luckily, Mr. Clark had swung with such force to cut me in half, and the ax cut deep into the snow. His eyes widened in shock as he found himself wrestling with a stuck-fast ax. I managed to my feet and leapt at him, tackling him into the snow, my thick gloves around his scarf-clad neck.

"Bastard!" he wheezed, bringing up both his fists directly behind my ears. The pain made me loosen my grip, and he kicked out from underneath me. I got to my feet but was still dazed, and he tackled me back into the snow. A wrestling match ensued, and I found myself on top, straddling the old man's back. Blind with exhaustion and rage, I grabbed Mr. Clark's collar and started smashing his head into the snow, until it dawned on me to force his face deep within the white stuff. I didn't let up for an instant, forcing his head into the deep snow and holding him under by the back of his skull. I dug both of my knees into the backs of his upper

arms, preventing him from gaining either leverage to get up or position to dig snow away from his face. I held him in that position for five minutes after he ceased struggling, making sure that he wasn't just acting on me. Then I stood and dug him out of the snow, a half-inch of which had accumulated on him during my killing him. I checked his pulse. He was dead.

I looked up, and Thad was sitting calmly in the snow, with his head cocked at me questioningly. I had always heard stories of dogs protecting their masters, but Thad apparently didn't think much more of Mr. Clark than I did. He continued to sit and look at me, so I threw some snow at him to try and spook him off. That didn't produce any result, so I adopted the new strategy of ignoring him.

This allowed me to return to my interesting dilemma of what to do with the body. Clarissa would be devastated to learn that her father was a psycho-killer and probably wouldn't be too keen on the idea that I had offed him in a snowbank. So, hopefully, I could mask the death as an accident. I tried remembering what exactly happened when a person suffocated, and figured that his heart would probably give out somewhere along the lines. In holding the back of his head, I had assured that there wouldn't be any bruises on his neck, and I hadn't applied enough sharp pressure to bruise his arms, I didn't think. So I could tell Clarissa and Mrs. Clark that he had had a heart attack.

This all seemed like good logic to me, so I pulled the snowshoes off of Mr. Clark's body and strapped them onto my own feet. I hoisted his body up and started trekking through the blinding snow and wind, which would nicely fill up the holes in the snow left from our struggle, back toward the house. "C'mon, Thad, old boy, we're going home." The setter trotted after me faithfully.

It took me an hour to get there, during which I strayed from the direct route to the house several times due to lack of visibility, had to rest twice, and thought plenty about what I had done. It didn't sit that well with me, but, the way I saw it, I didn't really have any other choice.

My showing up at the door with Mr. Clark's corpse more or less ruined Thanksgiving dinner. Ellen and Clarissa were both emotional wrecks for the rest of the night. It didn't help that the ambulance couldn't make it because of the snow-storm, and that they recommended burying him in the snow to keep his body relatively fresh until they could get there whenever the roads cleared. This task fell on my shoulders, which was really somehow fitting, and I marked the spot where I buried him with the cross-country skis he had denied me. The turkey got a little dry in the oven because Ellen chose to mourn rather than to watch the timer, and I decided that it was best to wait until Clarissa told me to mind the bird, just not to look like I was primarily concerned with food at that point. Not once did anyone insinuate that I could've been behind his death, which was nice. I slept like a baby that night, because, after all, I had been put through a physical and emotional wringer *myself* that day. Plus I had gotten up at eight o'clock in the damn morning. When I woke up the next morning, Thad was at the foot of my bed, staring at me. It kind of freaked me out, but there wasn't anything the dog was going to say to anyone.

The ambulance came at about ten the next day, and took



Paige E. Doub

Mr. Clark away. We got the call a couple hours later that it was in fact a heart attack that had done him in, understandably, since we were trekking through two-plus feet of heavy snow with a Christmas tree on our backs. Ellen said she never thought his heart would do him in, since he was such a strong man, but accepted the hospital's word as Gospel.

Clarissa said that she was going to stay with her mother for a week, but that I should go home. I told her I would at least wait for the funeral, and probably longer, depending on how she was doing.

"You're so sweet, honey," she said, crying a little, as she hugged me. "I'm sorry Dad never got to know you like I do. He really would've come around, I swear."

"Oh," I said, patting her hair and holding her in a tight embrace. "I'd say he got to know me in a fairly unique way."

"Really?" she asked, pulling away. "What does that mean?"

"We had a good old heart-to-heart out there in the snow," I said. "Cleared the air about a lot of things. Got to know one another, deep down." Clarissa could spot one of my lies a million miles away.

But I wasn't lying, so she broke out in a big smile. "Really, honey? That's great!"

I smiled, completely at ease with myself.

I stayed for the funeral, and every moment that I was in that house, Thad was looking at me. It was highly uncomfortable, but I lived. Clarissa decided to stay with her

mother for another week after the funeral, so I drove home and went to work everyday. The guys at the office voted that I had, by far, the coolest Thanksgiving, even though they were sorry to hear about Clarissa's father. "Too bad he didn't chase after you with the ax," one of my co-workers said after I told him an edited version of the story, one in which I *didn't* kill anyone. "That would've been a great bar story." I laughed, what else could I do?

Clarissa got home December fifth, having driven her father's truck down from Vermont. It was apparently ours now, although we didn't really need a second car. I was in the bedroom, reading the newspaper, when I heard her open the door and call out to me. I yelled back my happy greeting and stood to start walking toward her. Before I ever saw my beautiful fiancée, I heard the clacking of nails on the hard-wood floors of our apartment, and an old setter jumped up at me in greeting.

"Thad?" I asked, my eyes widening.

"Hey, honey," Clarissa said, giving me a big hug and a kiss. "Mom said that Thad was Dad's dog, and since he seems to love you so much, he was looking at you constantly while we were there if you didn't see, and since you're going to be looking after me like Dad did, Mom thought it would be fitting for you to look after Thad, too! So guess what! We have our first pet! Isn't that great?"

"Uh," I said, hugging her tightly. "Yeah, great."

Thad just sat there, watching me.

It Smelled of Delirium

It scorched to think. It smelled of delirium. For two months.
Scrawl July and August in black, inky verticals
like daubs of distant crows that croaked the praises
over the house of the tragically frail,
a phantasmagoric world
of tombed silence, sterile time, and sedatives,
where conversations are reluctant listeners
to exchanges of false hopes spoken in therapy sessions —
a fairy tale dreamt up by Kafka ends here,
and Hitchcock could have directed it,
but love letters should not come from mental wards.

Ever since you've been martyred by depression,
but you're also guilty of causing my disease.
Sweaty desperation rises from clammy sheets,
my little and black feverish head
sees its window double
sees the burning bush,
blood-stained and smoldering
in endless August nights of suffocation
and commemorates necrophilia:
celebrating what could not be,
uncrossed hands, unsealed kisses, and crosses to shoulder.
Meetings that never happen
make hands that are too weak to let go of scraps of paper.

A wise, sweet pain is a lesson learned
when staring out the window
in languor and delirium.
"You gave me a difficult youth...
From you, came uneasiness
and the ability to write verse."

The lurid, bluish-white half-lighting
from an anemic, pre-dawn sky, half-lights my profile
as I slake my thirsty longing
on the health of a snow-white page,
and blue lines beckon irresistibly
as the trickling streams of thawing icicles,
like the long-sought path of straights —
Mondrian canvases elucidated now;
in the half-closed mind,
yellow blocks of hope intersect black nights;
in the half-curtained room, morning,
an elongated rectangle, descends as a gray angel of peace.

— Zenovia Lockhart



Caroline M. Wolf



Caroline M. Wolf

Little green fairy

(xxx)

With eyes of pale and slip, and trip in step
I slithered out, my head well ripe from you
enlightened mind, extinguished soul, hollow
and dancing like Rimbaud and Verlaine before,
my tongue: a wisp of fire, mass of flesh
fluttering on the line of genius and madness.

(8 1/2)

While sitting 'neath an iron-clad lamp post
did she appear: both delicate and gruesome
pale skin known only to ghosts and children
she was both, and her kiss one must
dismiss the urge to drink, because little
fairies arrive with a smile and leave with your mind.

— Sean Daily

Minerva Discases

First lay aside the fearsome shield.
The snake-crowned head adorning it
Once turned the bravest into stone.
You need it not: for I now yield.

Your crested helmet also doff.
Disclose a forehead like to Jove's
In majesty — in beauty, greater.
Let me, o Wisdom, speak of love.

Set down to rest your glinting spear.
Honor, not steel, defends your breast
From those few who survive your eyes.
I'd gladly be wounded — draw near.

Unstrap the sandals from your feet.
Pause briefly from the march of war
To sit and audit other arts.
You need not chase; I scorn retreat.

The brooches from your gown unpin.
Your marble needs no ornament
And gauds but mock your shining hair.
You unadorned I revel in.

Let fall the robes of virgin white.
O chaste and holy deity,
No cloth is purer than your skin.
I see you always clothed in might.

— Miriam Rainbird



Mark Allen G. Garzon

Lizards, Paperclips and Peace

This tale begins with Chester T. Corey,
amazing and true it's a fabulous story.
Chester's mother was a nurse and his father a monk,
society scorned Chet, and called him a punk.

At age nine he was given quite a special gift,
it was a lizard named Tinker and it gave him a lift.
Tinker was scaly with bulging green thighs,
and had a strange fetish for office supplies.
She played with Chet's Rolodex and sat by his staples,
her favorite were gold paperclips, imported from Naples.
Chester loved Tinker, oh, so very much,
so he bought one more lizard, and Chet named him Dutch.
Dutch and Tinker mated by the gold paperclips,
and a baby lizard popped from Tinker's wide hips.

Soon Chester's lizards were all running around,
playing with desk supplies as they ran through the town.
But this playing got old and became a sad bore,
for Chet's lizards yearned for something much more.
So the lizards formed a venture selling office supplies to pets,
their mission: to reap profits and pleasure and avoid crippling debts.

Augusta-based Brutus sold tape to Maine's dogs,
while Ivan in Houston peddled disks to the frogs.
Sally had a store in Frisco's dense fog,
and Katrina dealt rulers in L.A.'s gray smog.
Hole punchers sold well with Siamese cats,
And red pens were cornered by Mississippi rats.

The lizards sold steel thumbtacks,
and black filing racks.
They sold pencils and stencils,
and folders and holders.
But they stopped selling stamps,
for they gave them tongue cramps.
And Chester's great lizards,

they could not sell scissors,
for the green-scaled lizards,
feared the sharp scissors.
The lizard named Smithers,
was born with two livers.
He quivered and shivered,
when he went to the rivers —
— to sell paperclips.

The golden-eyed Lyle
liked to sell yellow files.
For miles and miles,
he sold all his files,
pondering his child
named Kyle,
who lived by the Nile
in quite a fine style,
selling papyrus and barrels,
to the Kings and the Pharaohs.
He sat in the sand selling pink rubber bands,
to Egyptian clans who were roaming the lands.
They chauffeured dry, dusty camels,
and became excellent channels,
as desert-based mammals,
to buy supplies of enamel.
And Kyle sighed and he cried
for oh, how he tried —
— to sell paperclips.

Soon Chester's lizards had all the world's cash,
so they threw a great seven continent bash.
This huge world party brought peace to the nations,
Pakistanis loved Indians, and Cubans loved Haitians.
Yes, Chester's lizards brought nations together,
living in harmony with paperclips forever and ever.

— Tim McFadden

Young

Tony D'Souza

One good thing was that their schedules let them breakfast together. Breakfast was a quick affair and mostly quiet, and mostly they read the papers. They had only just woken up and would be waking up still on their two separate buses that took them to their two separate jobs. But for some short moments each morning, they were together. This boy and this girl, they were young and in love. She crunched cornflakes and he crunched toast, and sometimes their eyes would meet. That was unplanned and intimate. When their eyes would meet, she would wink and he would chuckle. Sometimes he would lean over and give her a quick kiss. To start each day together — it was one of the things that let them know. They had cast out their lines and reeled in the right fish.

And they were young.

"Too young," she said. "Agreed?"

"Agreed," he said. "Too young."

Young! Young! Young!

But the fetus did not go away. It also liked to begin its day with breakfast. It crawled up and sat in the extra chair between them, trailing behind it a slick of moist blood. Crunching toast, in the corner of his eye the boy could see it. The girl could see it too, as she crunched her cornflakes. Together, they were very quiet seeing it. The fetus' skin was clear gelatin. Its purple veins pulsed and they could see its walnut brain. Behind closed, translucent lids, its eyes were black seeds. The eyes watched. The fetus was a grotesque, disturbing thing and the sight of it made the food in their mouths taste foul. Glancing, the girl could see the fetus wave about its little arms in slow fetus motions. It waved its arms as though it had something to say. All this girl wanted was to eat breakfast and pass some peaceful moments with this boy she loved. If they would just move that extra chair to the cellar, the fetus would have no place to sit. But moving a harmless chair required a motive, and the girl did not want to say it and the boy did not want to say it. So the bloody fetus sat intruding at their breakfast, waving its arms as though it would speak. It was horrible to start the day with that fetus.

Instead of moving the chair, they skipped breakfast to avoid the fetus. They imagined that would be enough. They were young.

At work, the boy's fingers typed data entry and the fetus liked to sit on his shoulder and watch. It also liked to sit in the girl's lap and listen in on her market research calls. The fetus was not heavy and it did not smell. It did

not drip blood on their clothes. It did not gurgle or embarrass them in front of their co-workers. It sat on his shoulder and it sat in her lap. And though it was what they both wanted, neither the boy nor the girl could muster enough strength to shout at the fetus and send it away. In a certain sense, they both felt the fetus had a right to be there. It had a right to be there, and they had a right to try and ignore it.

Jesus how they tried to ignore it.

Before the fetus, they had grown accustomed to sharing breakfast. It had been a great way to begin each day and it was something to miss. More than the energy of food, their breakfast fed them with the energy of love. Exchanging love, first thing in the morning, together everyday. And while it could not eat things like cornflakes or toast, the fetus could devour that energy called love. And it simply devoured it.

No, the fetus was not heavy and it did not smell. Even with it perched on his shoulder, the boy managed his duties, and his supervisors did not raise their eyebrows. Actually, he was barely able to manage things, but he did not complain to the girl. His policy was her policy. If they did not acknowledge the fetus, then it did not exist. That was their policy. They were young.

The boy noticed something odd. When he concentrated on his work, he could forget the fetus. Really, as he worked he could forget for hours that the fetus perched on his shoulder. Then he would take a break from typing, crack his knuckles, stretch his neck and glance in that direction. The fetus would be waving there, inches from his chin. But for some hours, he had forgotten. At work, the boy began forgetting the fetus for whole afternoons, and then he forgot it for one whole day. His co-workers did not know of the fetus so they did not bring it up. At work, he could forget. That is what the boy noticed. At work, when he was away from the girl.

The fetus was a real thing and it belonged to them. It sat with them on the couch and watched TV. It was impossible anymore for the boy to lean over and caress the girl. To caress the girl, he would have to lean over the fetus. When he was with the girl, that fetus was always between them and it was just impossible to forget. With the girl in the evenings, the boy was always just twitches away from leaping to the center of the room, pulling his hair and shouting, "It can't go on like this!"

In bed, the fetus slept between them.

When the girl left, she told the boy, "It's just that, you know, we're so young."

The boy began breakfasting again. For some weeks the fetus waved its gelatinous arms as though it had something to say, and one day at work, the boy glanced at his shoulder and the fetus was gone.

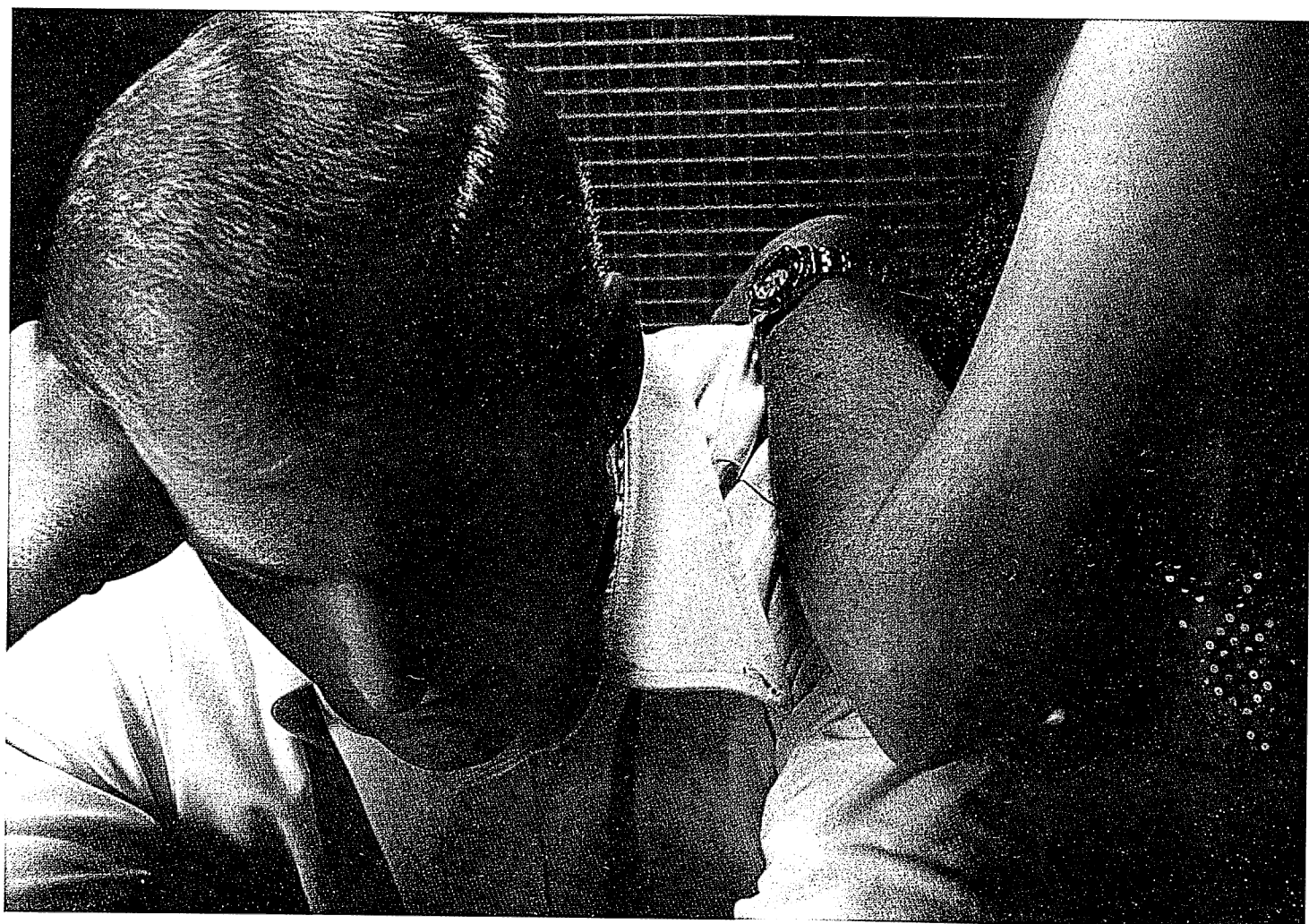
Had it gotten what it wanted? the boy wondered bitterly. Perhaps it was celebrating in Bermuda, reclining on the beach under a cocktail umbrella. The boy allowed himself to think of the girl.

That girl, he had loved her.

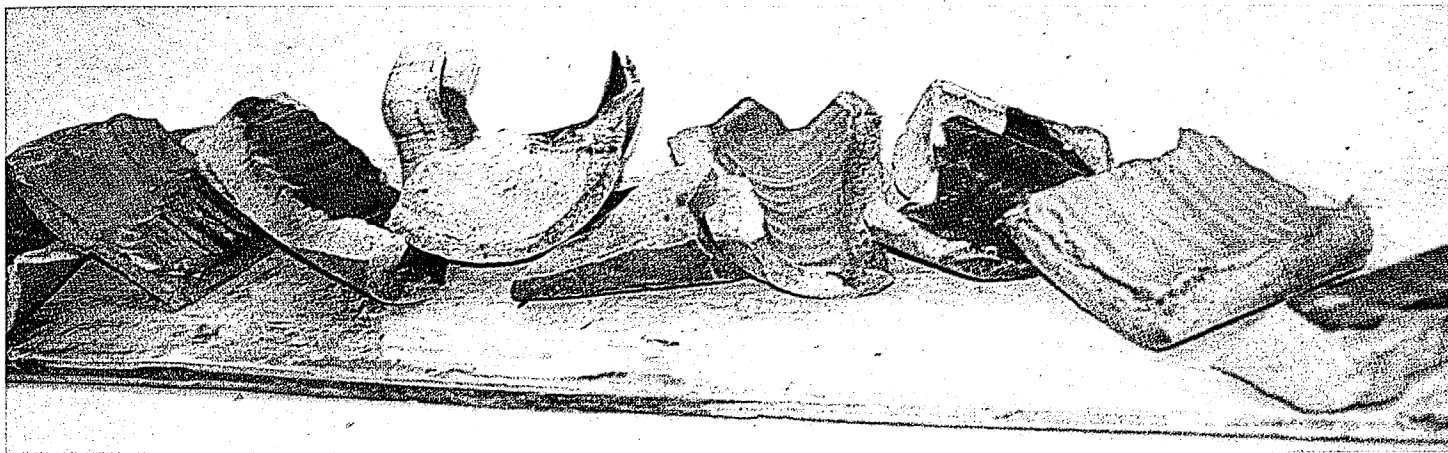
As he thought about that girl he loved, the fetus

crawled up from some hiding place behind his back. It sat on his shoulder and it waved. "Yeah," the boy sighed. He knew and had known that this fetus lived and always would live in an odd pocket behind his back. To have the fetus always on his shoulder was not something this boy could manage. He learned not to think about the girl and the fetus went away.

In a far away city, the girl, too, learned to forget the boy. Perhaps the fetus had been unfair, she sometimes thought. They had been young.



Jennifer Connor



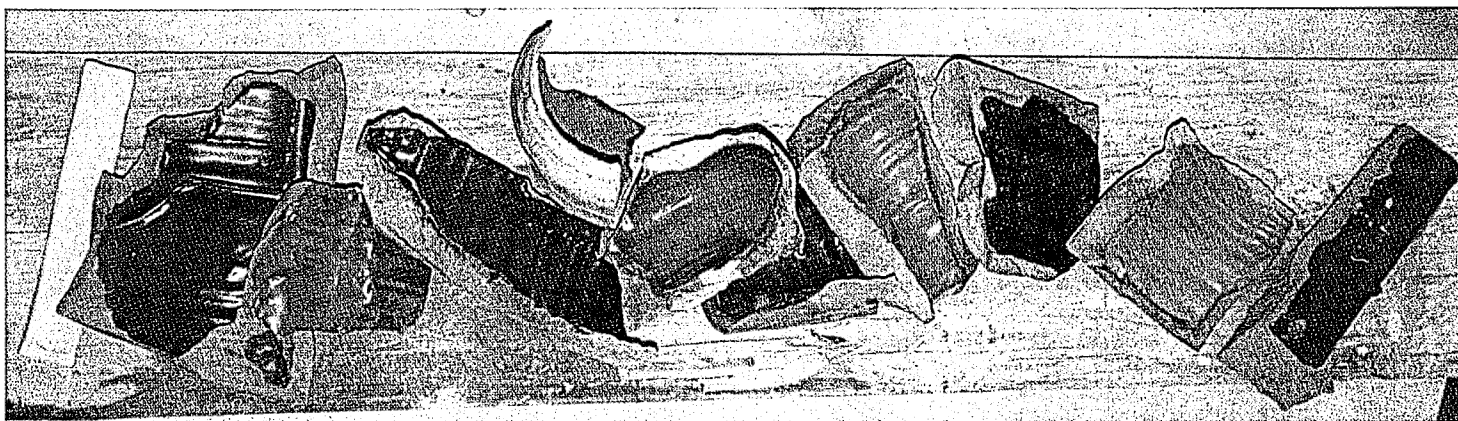
Pottery

An aloneness stirs.
A sick stillness screams.
Empty arms yearn for filling.
I will believe you into being.
I will wish you to this world;
give you to me,
wrapped in bright paper courage,
tied with friendship string—

so soon snapped.

Bright paper saved for another,
I find again the void I had thought filled.
Empty arms, heart, hands,
my lips taste of sadness;
I kissed only feet of clay.

— Lindsay E. Van Loon



Sarah E. Childress

Kill Something for Jesus so He Does Something for You, Stupid

Juan Pablo Montufar

"Dad!" I tug on his robe. My dad never listens to anyone when he is reading the paper. Especially now that the volcano is about to erupt. He says it's important to read the paper because he needs to know when he can get back to Quito and back to work.

Cris looked at me, he wants to know too. "I'm *trying* to ask him," I tell him. Cris doesn't understand about grown-ups trying to read the paper. He's only five and he's still stupid.

"Da-ad!" I push his paper down.

He looks at me. "What is it?" He smiles.

Finally. "Dad, do you ever open a bottle of wine and pour it on mom's tits and lick it up?"

"What?" my mom yells from the kitchen. I think she's mad because she heard me say 'tits.' I think she doesn't like that word because she is embarrassed for having them.

"Who told you such a silly thing?" Dad asks. He's not mad. He's interested because I am talking about grown-up stuff.

"Nobody. Napoleon did it to Bambi in the movie last night."

He looks at Cris. "I told you guys not to watch any channel over fifty-two." He looks at me. "Next time, when I leave Robin Hood on, you watch Robin Hood. Understood?"

"Understood," we both say. Cris does a little after I do because he always has to listen to what I say before he can say anything. He steals everything I say.

Cris is smiling, he was expecting Dad to get mad. "He also said the F-word a lot."

"Who did?" My dad is laughing now. "Napoleon?" My mom looks at him. She is mad.

"That stuff is garbage, boys. You don't ever want to watch that again. It kills brain cells, all right?" He is serious again. My dad is cool. I let him think that I believe him, just because Cris is little and he still doesn't know. I know that watching TV doesn't really kill brain cells because my cousin Bernie is big — he's almost thirteen — and he told me parents say that just so we do our homework.

"He also called the tits 'love bags.'" Cris looks at me as he says it. Dad laughs, so does mom in the kitchen. She's not mad anymore. Cris and I laugh too.

I really want to go back home. I like the farm, but we've been here for two weeks and I want to go back to school. My mom says we're lucky to have the farm, but I don't think so anymore because the people that don't have farms are all in the city. The paper says the volcano is going to erupt soon, and the people should leave the city; but it's been so long, and it just doesn't erupt. I don't think it will. I miss school because I miss being the smartest. My Mom and Dad are smarter than me, but I'm the smartest in my class. I know that ten times three is thirty. One time I taught this to my grandpa and he was so impressed he gave me thirty candies. Then I got my Dad's calculator and figured out that thirty times thirty is nine hundred. I tried to teach this to my grandpa, but he just laughed. He knew about the calculator. He can't multiply, but he's not stupid.

"Mom? What can we do so the volcano erupts and we can go back to Quito?"

She looks at me and doesn't say anything for a little while. "*Juanito*. We don't want the volcano to erupt, people could get hurt. We just want it to calm down. If you really want to go back then you should pray to Jesus and make a sacrifice. I am sure he will listen." I hate it when people call me Juanito or Juan, but I don't say anything because she said it nicely. I like Pablo better. I know all about Jesus and his friends. Juan was a sissy, he was always just following Jesus around and saying 'Amen' and being afraid and the old guy even beat him to see Jesus when he resurrected. Pablo was great. He was a soldier and he had a sword and he fought against lions. He was a man. I wish my first name was Pablo so everybody would just call me that and I wouldn't have to explain every time.

"Sacrifice?" Cris asks. "What the hell is that?" I like being alone with my brother because we can say words like hell and tits and even fuck and it doesn't matter.

"Yeah, sacrifice." I know Cris has no reason to know what a sacrifice is but I still have to make him feel stupid. If I didn't he wouldn't listen and he wouldn't learn anything. "It's when you kill something for Jesus so he does something for you, stupid. Everybody in the Bible makes sacrifices."

"Like a grasshopper?"

"No, not like a grasshopper!" I roll my eyes back. "If you sacrificed a grasshopper Jesus wouldn't even give you a bar of soap. It has to be better. Bigger, too, more like a sheep." The Hebrews sacrificed lambs and sheep to God because he likes them. Jesus is God, so he would like one too. "He can eat the meat and make a sweater from the wool."

"Yeah, sheep are the best things to sacrifice." Cris always pretends to know stuff that he doesn't. I let him because if I call him stupid too many times he won't help make the sacrifice. "But what about a cow?" he asks. "Jesus would get some meat and also some milk." A cow would be a better sacrifice. I think about it for a while and decide that Cris and I could not sacrifice a cow. They are too big.

"That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard. You can't sacrifice cows."

Cris doesn't know why cows can't be sacrificed, but he accepts the decision anyway. "A sheep would be best." We go to the barn to choose a sheep. I make up a song about love bags on the way over. We both laugh. I give my little brother a hug.

Cris is holding the sheep we chose. We call him Overcoat because my Dad has one that's made of wool and that's probably what Jesus is going to make out of him.

"So where are we going to find Jesus so we can give him a sacrifice?" Cris asks. I haven't really thought about that, nobody I know has ever seen Jesus except for Don Manuco that works at the store. He says he's seen Jesus. With his very eyes, he says. He is also a hundred and fifty and he still wets his pants.

"Well, Mom says Jesus is in everyone." Jesus is in God, and Jesus is God. Jesus is in me. It makes perfect sense. "One of us is going to have to be Jesus." I shouldn't have said 'one of us.' I know I am going to be Jesus.

"I can be Jesus." Cris knows he is not going to be Jesus.

"I'm oldest, Jesus is old. I have to be Jesus."

"But my name is Cristobal — like Cristo." He has a point. He was born on Christmas day so my parents named him after Jesus. Still, Jesus is almost two thousand, and six is closer than five.

"Well," I say, "If you want to be Jesus then you have to

do grown-up stuff like Jesus does. You're going to have to drink wine and smoke cigarettes and shave and read the paper while you poop." Cris looks down at his feet. He can't even read well. I win. "You can be Samson," I tell him so he feels better. "He was real strong and he destroyed a building with his bare hands." He likes the idea of being Samson. "But you need to have a girlfriend. Her name is Delilah and you have to kiss her." Cris laughs and jumps at me. We throw hay at each other and roll around in the mud. It's so much fun because Mom can't see us. We're out of breath. We should go to sleep so we can wake up early and make the sacrifice.

I get up first, I always do. I wake up Cris by taking his covers and throwing them on the ground. "I was already awake," he says. Liar.

Mom is out in the garden. Dad is in the fields somewhere. We eat some cereal and start to pack. I get the backpack that I use for school and start filling it up with stuff. Two tangerines, two chirimoyas, two bottles of soda. I put some of Mom's cooking wine in my canteen. I put a pack of my dad's cigarettes and his lighter in the little pocket in the book bag. We get a couple of rose stems from the breakfast table's centerpiece. Cris gets some gum and some chocolate. I put my dad's white Sunday robe in the bag too. He took it from a hotel. I can't wait to leave. Cris is also excited. We tie a rope around Overcoat's neck and pull him out to the road. We sing the Love Bag song on our way. It goes to the tune of "Hound Dog" and then "Leaving on a Jet Plane." It's only nine-thirty, we can get there before eleven. Overcoat just follows along. I try to give him one of the tangerines but he doesn't want it. "Love bags, on a jet plane" we both sing.

We get to the tracks at ten-thirty, we have to wait another half an hour but it's good that we're early because we have time to prepare everything. Cris is pretending to ride Overcoat and to swing a cowboy hat and fire some guns. I take my canteen from my belt and take a sip. The wine is disgusting, I have never tasted anything so nasty in my whole life. It smells like poop too. My face curls up and I'm about to spit it out but Cris is looking at me. I am Pablo, the

soldier. Soldiers drink wine and like it. I have to swallow it because if I don't Cris will think that I should be Juan or that he would have made a better Jesus. I drink a little more. It isn't as bad the second time, but I still need to drink some soda to get rid of the burning in my throat. I am a grown-up, just like Jesus. He is probably looking down at me right now, impressed with how such a young boy can be so smart and mature. My dad says my cousin Bernie is *immature*. Jesus would think that as well. Cris is still looking at me, he's worried because Mom told us never to drink anything from the brown shelf because it can make us sick. I don't believe her, my grandpa drinks from it every time he visits and he's eighty and never complains. I tell Cris that it's the best wine I have ever tasted. He knows I've never had wine before. He knows that even if I would have, this would not be the best either. Not even grandpa drinks from the bottle we took our wine out of.

I start making a ring with the rose stems. The thorns are sharp so I break all of them off with my thumb. I don't want to cut my forehead. Cris wants to help out but there really isn't anything more for him to do with the stems. I tell him to get dad's robe and make it more dirty-looking. Jesus never wore anything clean, except for when he was a baby. In all the pictures I have seen his robe is dusty and sweaty and bloody. Dusty and sweaty will be good enough for the sacrifice.

Cris is standing right next to me, trying not to laugh. He is wearing the robe and wants me to see him because he looks silly. I pretend not to notice him until I finish twisting the rose stems together. "Samson didn't wear a robe," I say. I try to look serious but seeing my stupid little brother in the huge, dirty robe is too funny. He's also put some tangerine rinds on his head like a hat. I laugh a little and hold the rest in.

"What *did* Samson wear?"

"He wore pants and a shirt, I think." I really don't know what Samson wore. "It doesn't matter because your *girl-friend* Delilah is going to take your clothes off anyway. Like Bambi did to Napoleon."

Cris is trying to think of a way to get back at me. "Jesus had a girlfriend too," he says. "Her name was Carolina." He knows that I like Carolina from my class — just a little — but enough for my Dad to find out and tell everybody. I don't know what to say, I think I'm blushing. I throw a chirimoya at Cris's head. He just picks it up and eats it, he doesn't even peel it. We both laugh because it bursts right on his face. There isn't any blood on my Jesus robe, but there sure is a lot of fruit.

I eat my chirimoya and I pull out the pack of cigarettes. There are only about five left. We should have brought more with us. I put one in my mouth, a little to the side like Dad does, and bring the lighter up to the end. I can't make

it work. It has a little tab that you need to pull out for it to light up. I learn a lot of important things from Bernie. I hold the lighter with both hands and roll back my thumb. It lights for a little bit but runs out quickly because I didn't leave my thumb on the red button. I try it again and it works better. I'm holding the button down really hard so I don't lose the flame again. I take the cigarette out of my mouth and hold it in the flame. It doesn't get red for a while, my dad can light one much faster, but after some time it does. I am Pablo, I think as I look at Cris. He is amazed. I am Pablo the soldier — slayer of lions, drinker of wine and lighter of cigarettes. I try to take a puff but as soon as I get it close to my face I get smoke into my eyes and it stings. I shut them really quick and a bunch of tears run down my cheeks. "I'm not crying," I tell Cris. He doesn't understand what is happening. "You're supposed to get some smoke in your eyes when you smoke," I explain. He knows this isn't true but he doesn't say anything. My dad doesn't cry when he smokes. I hold the cigarette between my index and middle finger like my dad does and pretend to smoke. I close my eyes and lips every time I bring it to my mouth. I think Cris is convinced. I can still be Pablo. I throw it to the ground even though it's still whole and step on it and twist my foot around a little. "There's nothing like a good smoke after a meal."

It's ten-forty-seven — almost eleven. I put on the dirty robe and roll up the sleeves until I can see my hands. I set the rose-stem crown on my head, it's too small. I can't move my head around too much or it will fall off.

"Is it time for the sacrifice?" Cris asks. I can tell he is a little nervous.

"Almost. But we still have to prepare everything."

I tug on Overcoat's rope and pull him over to the tracks, he struggles but I'm bigger than him. I tie the rope to one of the rails. I don't think Overcoat knows he's about to be sacrificed. He's just mad because I took him away from the grass he was eating.

"Now what should we do?" Cris doesn't get close to the tracks because he is afraid of the train.

"Now, Samson, you have to say the words for the sacrifice." I had thought a lot about this on the way over.

"Say: I, Samson..."

"I, Samson."

"Offer this wonderful sacrifice to you, Jesus..."

"Offer this wonderful sacrifice to you, Jesus."

"So that you can make the volcano calm down..."

"So that you can make the volcano calm down."

"And we can go back to Quito..."

"And we can go back to Quito."

"And you can make yourself an overcoat and some lamb chops. Amen."

"And you can make yourself an overcoat, or a sweater if

you want, and some lamb chops with gravy. Amen."

I look at my watch. It's ten-fifty-nine and there's no sign of the train. It must be late. "Thank you for your sacrifice, Samson," I say with the deepest voice I can handle. "Now I will take care of the volcano and make myself an overcoat, my son. Amen and hallelujah."

"Hallelujah."

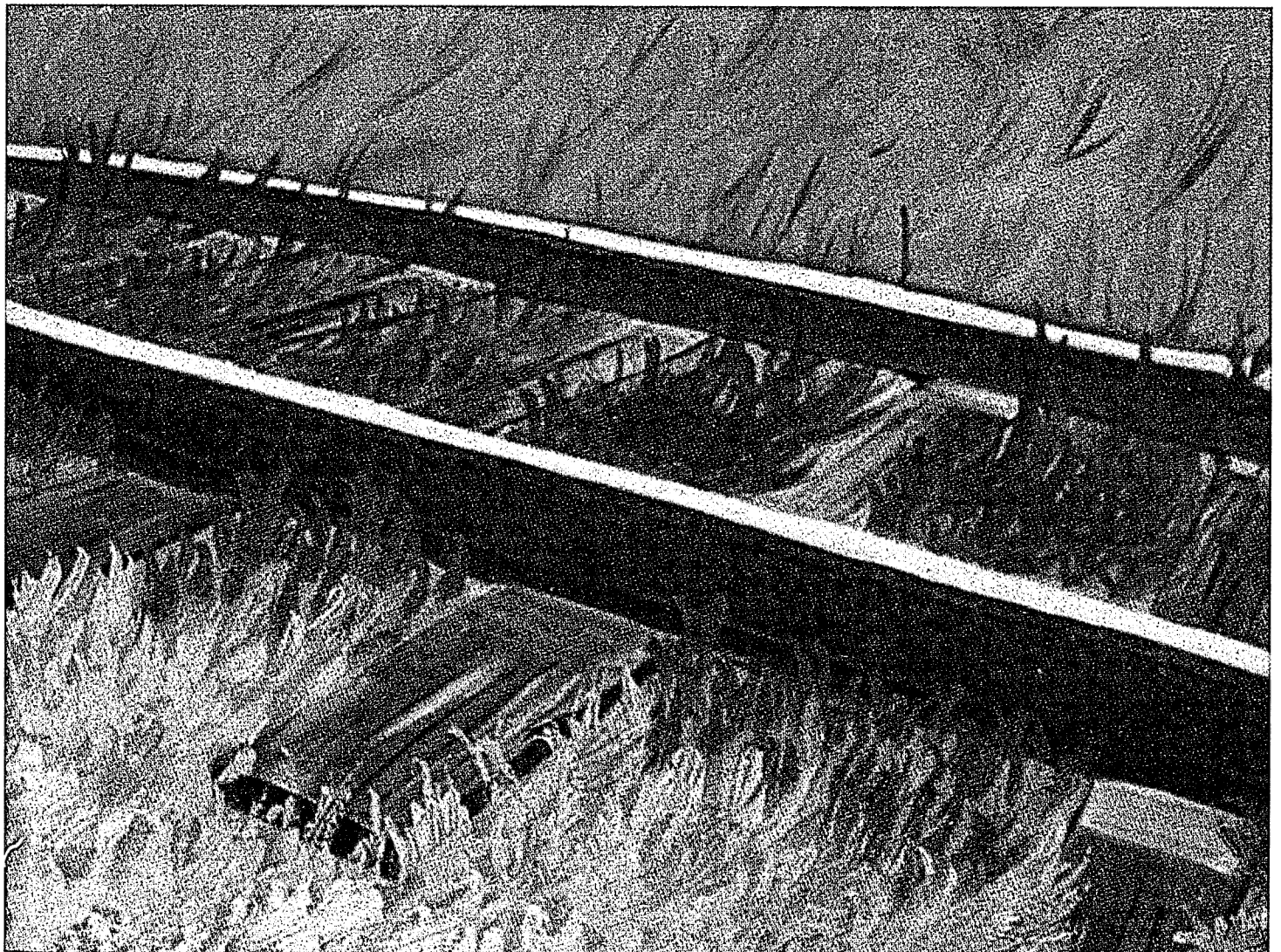
I can hear the train now. I can't see it because of the hill, but I know it's close. I'm not sure I want Overcoat to die anymore. He is just sitting there. Looking at me. I think he likes me.

Still, he is the sacrifice and I can't pull him off the tracks because if I do then I could not be Jesus and Cris could not

be Samson and the volcano would erupt. I'm not worried about Overcoat dying because my religion teacher told me that there isn't a heaven for animals but also that everyone that dies for Jesus is sure to go straight to heaven. Overcoat will be in heaven a couple of minutes after the sacrifice.

The train is finally here. It rushes past us, taking every trace of Overcoat with it. He disappeared. He has been sent to heaven in less than a second, probably because the sacrifice was so good Jesus couldn't wait to have it.

I take off my Jesus robe and crown and look at Samson. He is no longer Cris and I am no longer Juan. We are Samson and Pablo, sacrificers to the Lord. We are men. We pick up our stuff and head back home. "Let us rejoice!" I say.



Sally Wasmuth

Her Favorite Color

Her favorite colors are purple, green, pink
At least that is what she told me
Female, interesting, and simple
Her colors made me smile
"Why do you ask?"
Deep or light, green or electric
Dark and all the rest
"But why do you ask?"
Yes of course, I thought to myself
The deepest purple
And any green will do
Pink can only be pink
And yet it's always pretty too
I liked the way she was not afraid
To be a little girl
For that she appeared to me
All the more a woman
"Tell me why you ask!"
My dear I only wished to know
The colors of your soul
"I'm in love"
And of course she is
With a man with a paintbrush
Held loosely in his hand
I tell her that she is the color
Inside his otherwise gray soul
And in her smiling warming thoughts
Purple, green, and pink dance in reply
She swims and floats and flies
She hopes and prays and shines
"Are you in love?"
My dear, my favorite color is blue
For years I have confused
The ocean and the sky
I love as much as one soul can
I am water bubbling with air
I surge and swirl and tear
I know not how to float or fly
Except in words spoken by you and I
Forever I'll love a woman, a girl, a heart,
A body, a soul of which I am a part,
A set of eyes in which I'll forever sink
But tonight, my dear
I bleed purple, green, and pink

— Brian Scofield

Investments

I gave him a dollar with my phone number on it,
upon his request because I don't hit on guys anymore.

(That's just a pile of sandbags for protection, though;
I have and always will fall hard.)

He voluntarily wrote down his own number,
making sure it was legible,
on a dollar of Camel Cash—
the money that comes from smoke.

I never see it coming.

— Mary Sarah Zakas

AM

You darted into my room
full of realism and fear
but the only thing
strong enough
to wake me
was your perfume

Time to begin the rituals
of early morning goodbyes
sleeping breath sighs
of helplessness
and frustration

no place
a greater challenge than
the limbo of love and sleep

— Laura Segura

Oliver

I enter the room
she's there

Curled cat-like
waiting
purring

Moonlight hides my eyes
she stretches
her skin against the sheets

I tighten just to unwind
flexing
breathing

Softly her tongue
wets her lips

I smile at my nakedness
skin screaming for touch
and I approach

We melt together as one
I feel her in my deepest recess
and I quiver

I enter her
only to find she has entered me

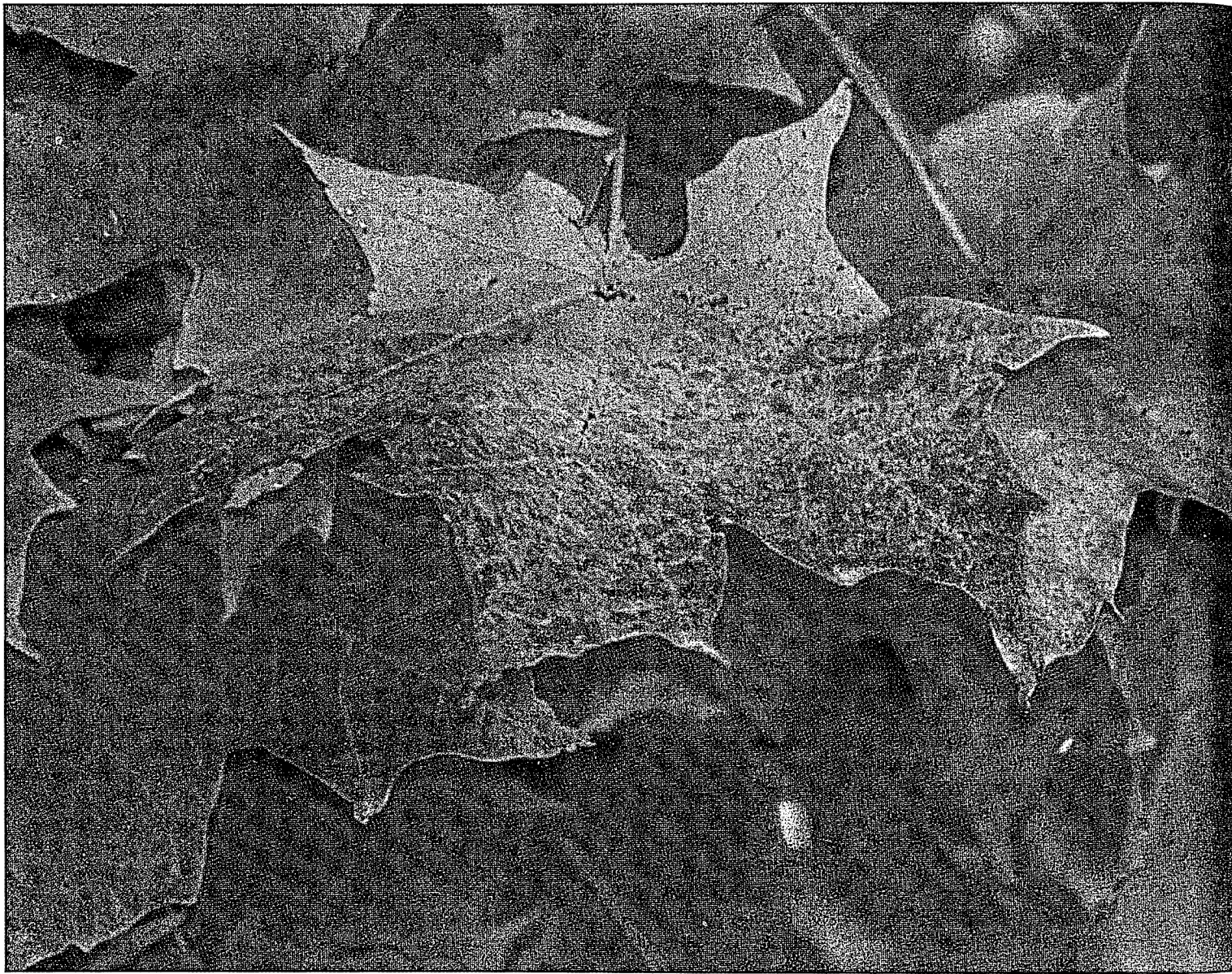
Love me she cries
always I answer

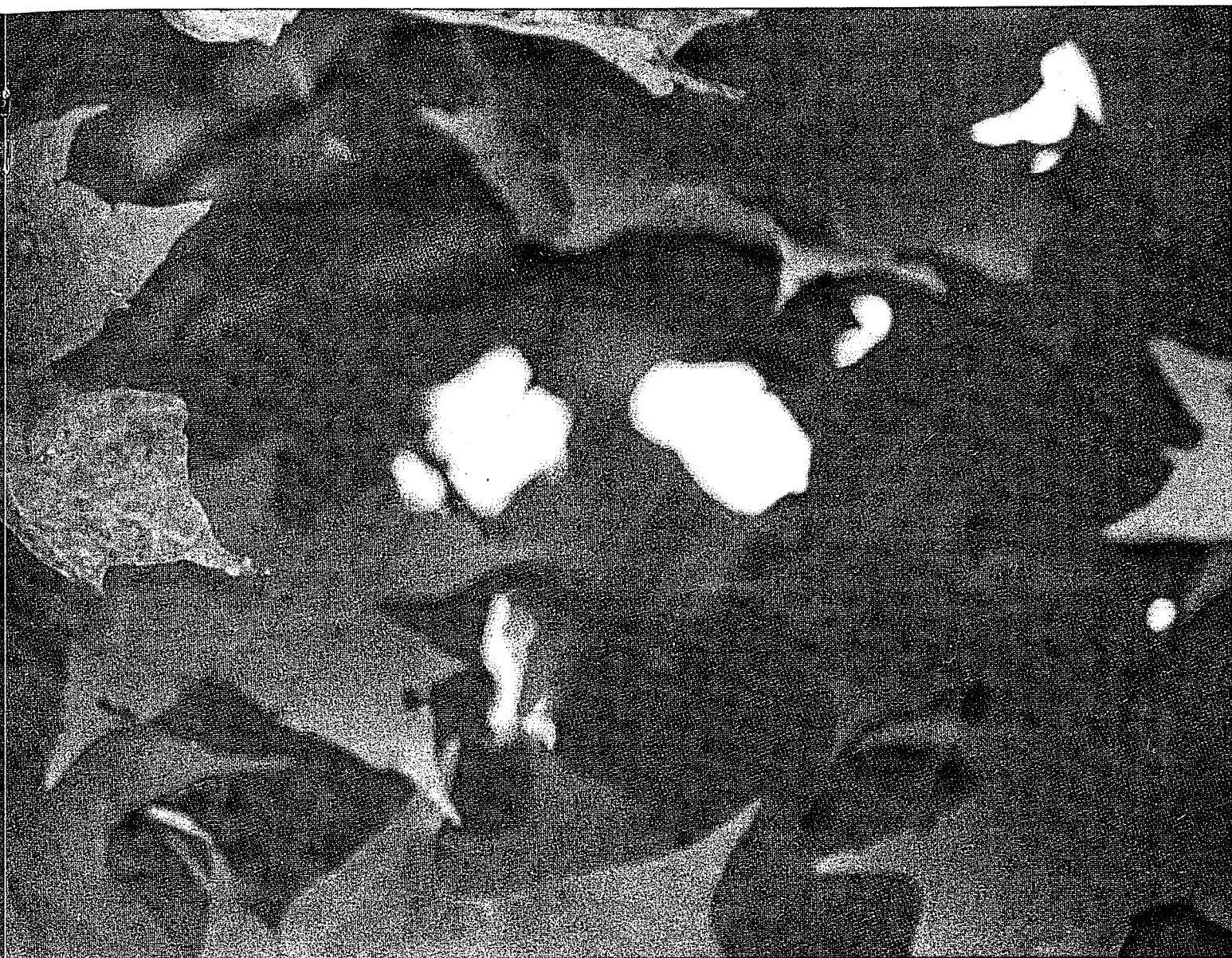
Into the night
I hear her heart beat
and my heart beats
it beats for her

I love you
I whisper
I love you
she answers

Sleep.

— Patrick Lyden





Paige E. Doub

Leaf

If only I could
be a colored autumn leaf
falling into grace

— Brian Scofield

Playing the Game

Adam Kronk

The ball they use is red. And fist-sized. Its not-quite-spherical shape makes batting even better. A stray drop of sweat falls right into his eye during the pitch. A sting, a swing, a miss. No matter. He is playing the game and smiling and laughing and sweating. Dropping the whiffle bat, he goes and picks up the ball, wiping off the bit of liquid that has leaked out of its seams. There's no catcher and no fielders. Just the batter and the pitcher.

She is the pitcher, obviously. She is playing the game and smiling and laughing and sweating. Her enjoyment, though, is as different as her position in the game. Throw a pitch to him that he can hit with a smack/splat and have the ball float toward her so she can catch it. But she has total control in the situation. She can drop it if she wants, or she can throw a slider or a curve ball. He has one role: swing and swing hard. Because what is he going to do, check his swing? Let one by with a "good eye"? Then he'd just have to go pick it up from the dirt, wipe it off, and throw it back to her. It's her job to make it interesting. She makes it a game. And this doesn't bother him one bit. Because when the game is on, there's nothing like it. Each pitch carries with it the excitement of the unknown and the possibility of contact. And when that bat hits that ball, it better be in the middle of a full swing or why is he playing in the first place?

Walking past, a man stops to watch them. He is middle-aged — occasional chest hairs sprouting out of his loose V-neck shirt, gut bulging over his too-snug-at-the-waist pants, expensive gold chain looking cheap around his flabby neck. Mild echoes of laughter bounce listlessly off a nearby elm and the soft light of dusk daubs emotion on the scene before him. He hates sunsets because they make him think.

Must be retards, he judges. Laughing and smiling and sweating like that. The silly grins plastered on their faces make their movements seem awkward.

Something's wrong with the boy's body. A surreal stain

taints his innocent appearance — some serious pain making itself manifest despite his carefree will. The man can't hear their words or quite make out every action, but from where he stands, something about the scene strikes him as gravely wrong. He sips his non-fat mint mocha venti, chuckles to himself about the retards, and moves along.

Her playful interest fades, as does the accuracy of her pitches. They arch now. His smile disappears. If it were up to him, the game would never end. He's easy to please. But now she is serious and he is mad/sad. The trance is snapped and he begins to notice things he'd forgotten about during the game. His shirt is stained; the size of the spot has grown. The dull, numbing pain he'd felt at the outset of the game returns to his chest.

He does not have asthma.

And that ridiculous helmet she makes him wear doesn't fit. It's too tight and it hurts his head. These little things cloud his mind and he doesn't want to play.

"We should stop."

"Why?"

"You don't seem interested."

"If you want to stop, fine." She drops the ball, picks up a shovel and begins furiously digging at a stinking pile of horse shit next to her. What is she doing? He jogs over and reaches her, already about knee-deep and frantically digging herself deeper. He doesn't stop her, but just bends over and picks up the ball, now in a small pool of leaked fluid. She is still smiling and laughing and sweating, playing a different game now — a twisted kind of solitaire that he watches with inquisitive attraction for a few short moments.

He trots back to his room and takes off his shirt and looks in the mirror and smiles the smile you smile when all you can do is smile or otherwise kill yourself, and he puts the red ball back in the gaping hole on the left side of his chest and goes to sleep.

Calling Out Names

For Ginsberg, the Beats, and anyone whose *search for life* found God, or us in the time of our need.

I'm calling out names
of people who ate peaches
who sucked out the juice
who sat down on couches
who sat down on pavements
who sat down on railroads
who sat down on playgrounds
who came with their spirits in a small paper bag filled
with an aura of all that should matter reminded by
God that people aren't equal encouraged by herbs
that life wasn't real

I'm calling out names
of people who liked pop tarts
although they aren't good for you
although Beats aren't pleasant
although Beats aren't strong
although Beats aren't clapping
although Beats aren't committed
although Beats aren't one blood and maybe they're
faggots and maybe they climb trees (get caught in the
branches) where little birds live and give way their
secrets

I'm calling out names
of people who howled
who had sex like wolves
who ended up in libraries
who ended up on milk cartons
who ended up on Letterman
who ended up with AIDS
who wandered through pastures to get to the water
which tasted like urine but flowed through and through
and found William Blake and woke up with postcards
from places they dreamt to

I'm calling out names
of people who used playdoh
although it doesn't talk
although America sucks
although no one liked them
although they got banned
although they're fucked up
although they made reference to insecure no-no's to
tangerine hiccoughs to cowboysandindians to playing
with matches that relight the fire that burns down their
houses

I'm calling out names
of all those short memories
of all that's not certain
of all that's not fair
of all that's not okay
of all that's not fine, just fine
of all that's not candy
of all that's not sane
of all that's not sacred
of all that's not reality

So yell out
So cry
So tell the beat poets
That you don't get high
That you don't like peaches
That you don't like pop tarts
That you don't hate America
That you don't experiment with playdoh
But you do
We all do
And you don't have to climb trees to be with nature
You don't have to be Caulfield to hurry back home

I'm calling out names
I'm calling out names
I'm calling out names
Of
People
Who
Spoketoyou
When
Tearsreachedyour
Mouth.

— Gregg Murray

For Shakespeare's Love: A Script

Elizabeth Wilschke

The apartment is small but comfortably furnished. Two couches sit along two walls, in an L-shape. Directly in front of one, along the back wall of the apartment, is the television, next to which hangs a painting of a lighthouse. On the other side is a large window that shows a good portion of the busy city street below. The sun is beginning to set. It is fall, the leaves on the trees are starting to turn. The apartment door is back to the right, near the open kitchen. A hall leads from the entryway back to more rooms. Next to the front door is an intercom box. A large clock with a white face and black hands hangs over the kitchen sink. It reads 6:57.



Alicia Reinert

Narrator: A seemingly terror-free abode.

Regan is visible. She sits on the couch, wrapped in an afghan. Three times she turns to look at the clock in the kitchen. Less than ten seconds pass between each check. There is a loud buzz and Regan jumps up, running to the intercom. Cordelia comes quickly down the hall wearing black pants, black shoes and a tight black shirt. Her hair is shoulder length and fluffy. She is wearing make-up and sparkly jewelry.

Speaking into the box, Regan says, "Yes?"

"Cordelia?" A man's voice invades the apartment.

"Is this Kent?"

"Yes. Are you Cordelia?"

"No, but she's almost ready. Come on up." She pushes the button on the box and turns to her roommate.

"Let's hope this is a good blind date. He sure sounded cute!"

Cordelia smiles.

"Now, get back there. I'll answer the door. Hurry up, I can hear him coming up the stairs!" Regan says in a stage whisper.

There is a knock at the door. Regan stands for a moment

with out moving. Then she opens the door. Kent stands with a handful of yellow daisy-type flowers. He is handsome. His pants are tight and dark, his black leather coat is not zipped and reveals a tight grey T-shirt underneath. He wears black leather boots with a short heel.

Kent smiles at Regan. Regan smiles at Kent. "He's here, Cordy!"

Cordelia enters again from the same direction. This time, slower and clinging to her own leather jacket. She casually wanders up to him. "Hi, I'm Cordelia." There is silence as the two look into each others' eyes.

Narrator: Ah. Love at first sight. [With smile.]

Now it is nighttime. The apartment is dark except for a single lamp in the living room, next to the couch where Regan sits, wrapped in the afghan. The curtains are drawn.

Cordelia enters from outside the apartment door. She is not smiling until she sees Regan sitting on the couch.

"Ohhh!" Regan jumps up from the couch, kernels of microwave popped popcorn fall from her lap onto the floor.

"Tell me all about it! Did he kiss you? Are you in love? Wasn't he gorgeous?"

Cordelia sighs obviously in exasperation. "This might really be the one." She closes her eyes and sits quietly.

Narrator: Funny how ridiculous private thoughts can sound once spoken aloud.

Cordelia opens her eyes wide. Regan stares, mesmerized as she watches Cordelia struggle to free her arms from the leather jacket.

"I'm exhausted," Cordelia announces. She leaves Regan sitting cross-legged and motionless on the couch with an odd grin on her face.

Narrator: Regan looks like an angel, or maybe it's a circus clown.

Cordelia exits down the bedroom hall.

Kent calls the next day, as expected. Plans are set and Cordelia and Regan begin to frantically run about the apartment. "You can't wear that!" Regan yells when Cordelia appears in blue jeans and grey Gap sweatshirt.

"But this is what I'd wear to go walk on the beach any other day."

"This isn't any other day! This is the second time you are going to see your true love. Today will prove to you that last night wasn't just the wine! Now get in there and put something sexier on!"

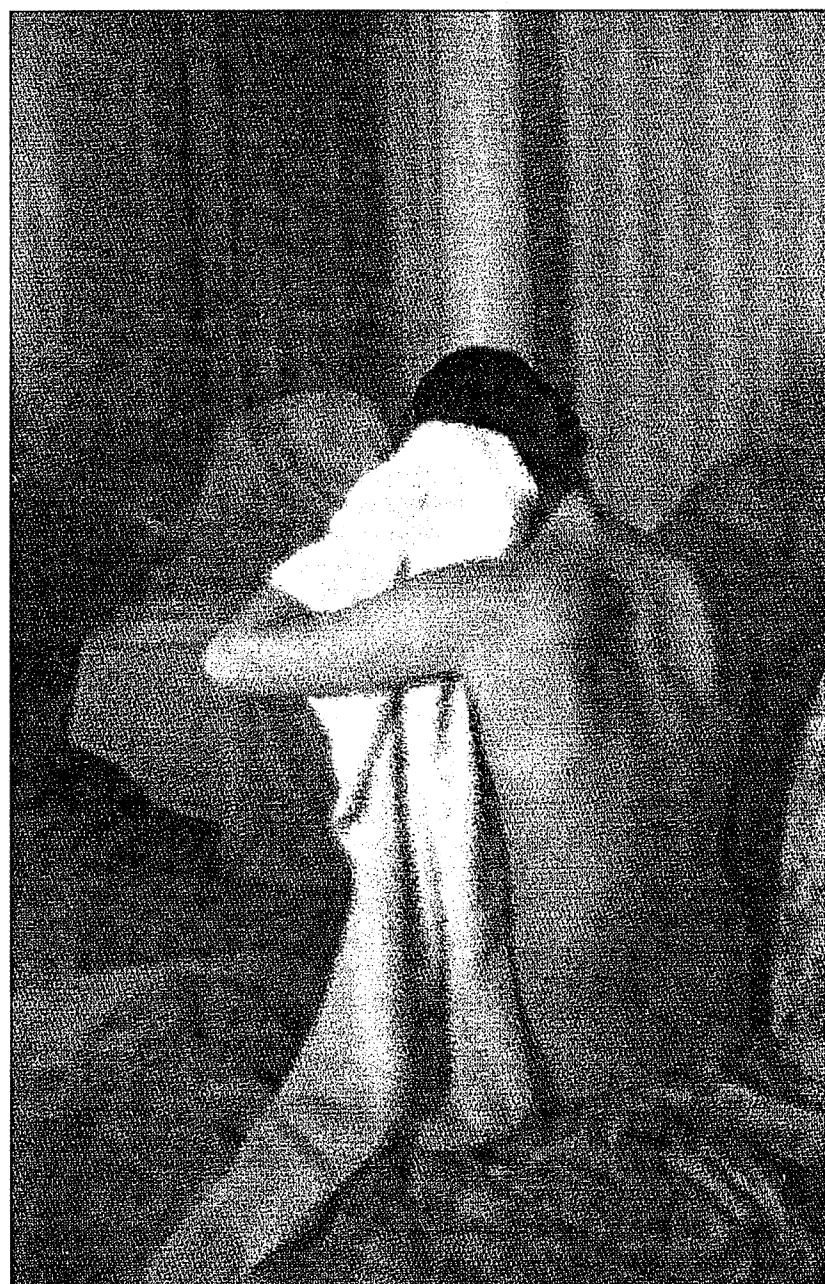
A few minutes later, Cordelia emerges with a different, tighter fitting pair of blue jeans, a shaped long sleeve pink V-neck T-shirt and her leather coat. "Much better. Now, I'll

answer the door, again."

"But I'm all ready and we've already been out together!"

"You can still play a little hard to get. You don't want to look too eager. I'll answer. You come out from your bedroom with a book or something."

Narrator: Great, props even.



Alicia Reinert

Kent enters the apartment with an air of royalty. Cordelia enters from the bedroom, as directed, with a copy of *Romeo and Juliet* in her hand and looks at Kent as though she isn't interested. Regan acts casual. "Which beach are you going to?"

"Probably Crystal Beach. I hear the alewives are pretty bad at Silver," Kent explains.

Regan shifts her weight. "So, are you going to eat out, or should I cook for three?"

Cordelia looks at Kent. Kent looks at Cordelia. "We'll probably eat out," he says.

On cue, Kent opens the apartment door for Cordelia. "You'll never open a door again, as long as I'm around," he explains on the way out the door.

Narrator: Is chivalry still quaint?

The beach is not crowded, but there are other couples nearby. A man runs by with his dog. The sand is white and the sky, blue. The wind is blowing, but not too hard. The sun is shining. "Oh, not really. Roses have grown so trite. Especially red ones. Everyone sends roses, it doesn't show the individuality of the love."

"Don't you like flowers?" Kent's arm is around her waist. They awkwardly progress down the beach trying to avoid the seagull picked bones of the smelt that are scattered in the sand. Cordelia's arms are at her sides.

"My favorite are tulips, yellow ones."

"Oh," he says bending down, the conversation already forgotten. "This will be a perfect skipping stone!" He thrusts it into the space that joins air and water. Seagulls caw in the background.

On Saturday night, Cordelia, Kent and Regan go to Mitch's downtown to meet friends.

"May I have this dance, my lady?" Kent bows, stiff-legged before Cordelia who sits at the round barroom table, legs crossed.

"Why, certainly."

Winding through the crowd to reach the center of the dance floor, Cordelia's hand slips from Kent's and she stands alone. She turns in circles searching for him. The dancers recede, making the circle around her grow slowly. The lights are low on all but Cordelia. Kent is visible again. Approaching her from the direction of the disc jockey's booth — a ridiculous grin is on his face. *Brown-Eyed Girl* begins to play as the dancers actions grow progres-

sively slower until they appear to be in slow motion. The circle around Kent and Cordelia continues to widen.

The two dance in silence for a few seconds. He pulls away from her and looks deep into her dark eyes. "Will you be my girlfriend?"

Cordelia's cheeks flush. She smiles and looks down at her feet and his. As he moves, white athletic socks peek out from beneath his pant legs. He pulls her back to his body and kisses her passionately.

Narrator: [Shrug with a goofy smile.]

The trees outside the apartment window have lost all their leaves. Regan is in the kitchen wearing jeans and a thick wool sweater. The clock reads 5:17. A large crystal vase with a dozen red roses sits on the kitchen counter. As she cleans the dishes, Regan periodically looks at the roses, smiles. Cordelia enters from outside the apartment door. She removes her coat, hat and gloves.

Cordelia points to the vase.

"He must be in love! They're from Crystal Springs!" Regan shouts.

"Really?" Cordelia takes the card from the holder in the vase.

Narrator: Wonder if this is always what he does two months into the relationship?

Cordelia walks into the living room, Regan continues to wash the dishes. Cordelia drops the card from the flowers into the garbage basket.

Cordelia is on the phone. Kent's voice echoes through the apartment, "What's your middle name?"

"Amelia."

"What?"

"My middle name is Amelia."

"I thought that's what you said. Cordelia Amelia. Amelia Bedelia — I'll never forget that! Did you read those books when you were a kid?"

"What books?" Cordelia asks. Conversation drones on and soon ends.

He calls back just after she puts the receiver down. He asks the same question.

"Amelia."

"Oh. Right." They hang up.

Narrator: It doesn't mean anything

That night, the roommates sit on the couch together watching the evening news.

"It's getting cooler out there!" the newscaster segues to the weatherman.

Regan asks, "It bothers you when he clings to you, doesn't it?"

"Oh, not really. I think it's cute," she pretends.

Narrator: Haven't you noticed? He'll collapse if he lets go.

On the beach again. The sky is grey and the wind is blowing much stronger. No birds in the sky. No one else nearby. A few gulls rest silently on the broken down breakwater fifty feet out into the water.

Narrator: Perfectly planned.

He stops her near a monstrous piece of driftwood, but both remain standing. He puts his hands on either of her shoulders and looks into her eyes. "I love you, Cordelia Amelia Be- Windfield," he says masking his mistake with conviction and then kisses her violently.

Narrator: So that's why he fussed over the middle name. Did he think she'd be confused about who he was talking to?

The apartment is now strung with Christmas lights. The picture of the lighthouse has been removed and replaced by an evergreen wreath with a red bow. There is no Christmas tree.

"I don't want to get him an expensive present."

"He thinks you are crazy about him," says Regan.

Narrator: Is that her fault? She never really liked him anyway. If he'd pay attention, he'd know that, too.

It is Christmas morning. Regan is sitting cross-legged on the couch and Kent stands proudly between the miniature Christmas tree which is over decorated until it looks chintzy — too much gold garland and several strings of colored lights that blink at different rates — and a stack of four car tires almost taller than the tree. "Michelin," he grins wildly. "You really need new tires — it's going to be a bad winter."

Narrator: Isn't that sweet? Do you think there's a baby inside?

Cordelia glances at Regan who smiles sympathetically.

"Oh, you really shouldn't have, Kentsy." Cordelia forces a smile and slowly walks toward Kent and hugs him.

Christmas decorations are gone, picture of lighthouse is back in place over the television but the trees outside are still covered in snow.

"I'm just going to have to call him. I can't keep waiting because the weather is too bad for him to drive over here."

"I think you are right." Regan pauses. Cordelia sits down with the cordless phone in her hand. "You know, Cordelia, I never really thought he was right for you anyway." Regan sits on the couch watching Cordelia intensely as she talks softly into the phone.

She stops talking and, in the silence, Kent's voice resonates through the apartment.

Kent: I will always love you.

Cordelia: I hate you for believing that. [She hangs up.]

Narrator: Never to think of him again.

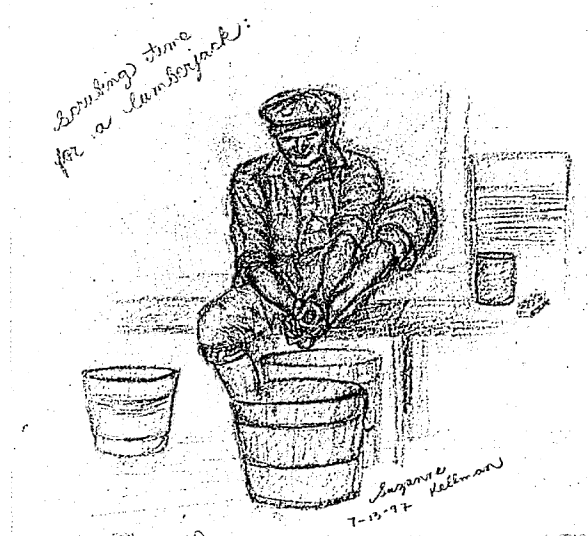
Abuelo (Grandfather)

The unforgiving sun burns aging wrinkles
on his neck and face like a trodden field.
He picks from the vine, from the ground,
from the thorns that prick his hands.

The orange field tan layers his back to
shield his family from reality woes.
His priority in this world, one would
not replace, for this brazero balances
evils brought to his dinner table.

He labored to be honorable, like father like son.
His pride unshaken, for Mexico his land.
And his humility only to be seen by
the heavens above.

— Rene Levario



Suzanne Kellman

for all of the forgotten ones

33 and dying of AIDS.
We decided to pray.
(They can't help the way they are,
we thought,
God loves them anyway.)

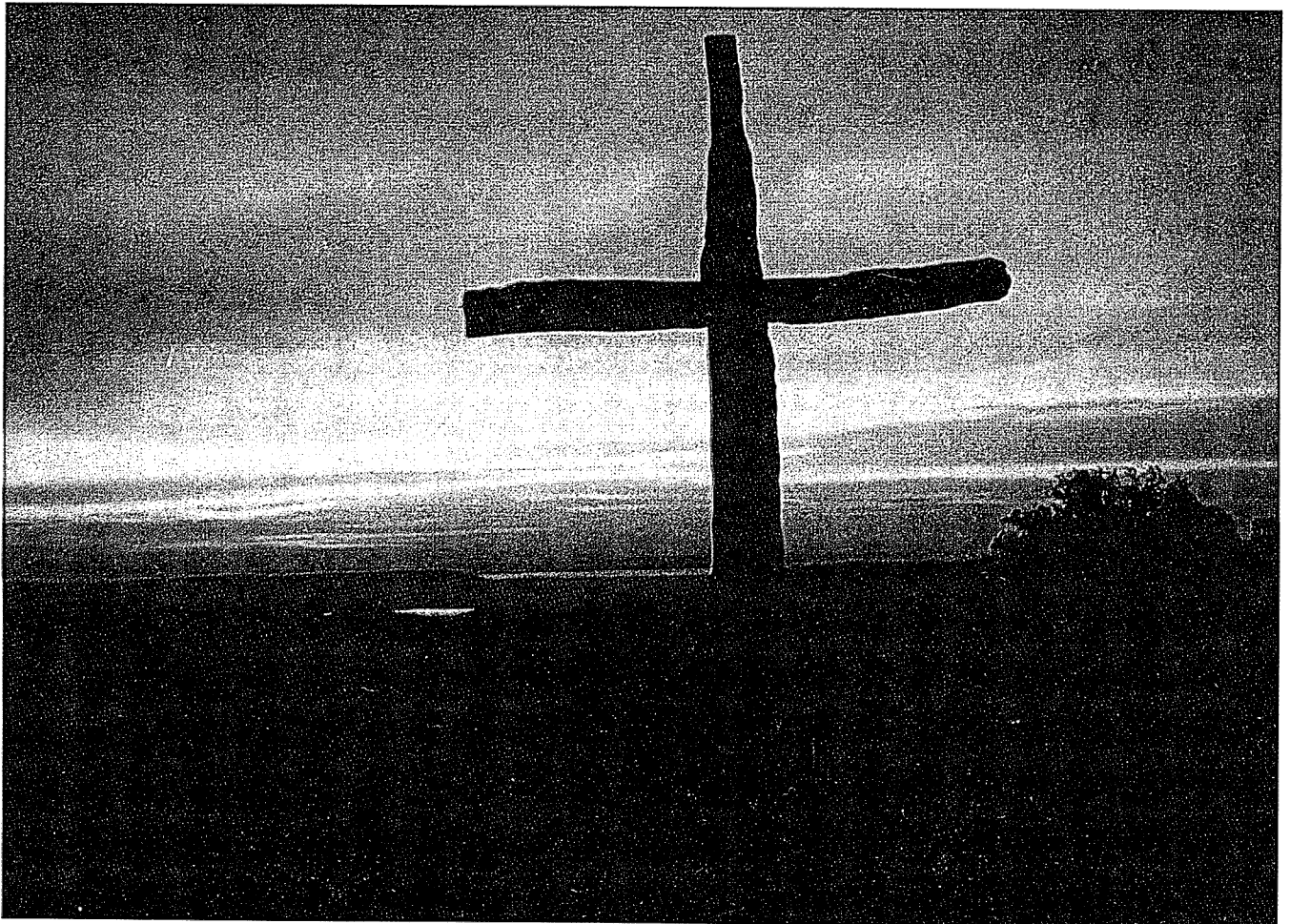
O God, heal our blind eyes!
Like Lazarus at the gate
your most beloved
wait on church-steps
while we feast inside.

Dear ones
who carry the crosses of AIDS,
if suffering can save,
we beg you
by your gift of pain,
 forgive our hate.
 carry *us* to the kingdom.

Dip your hands in His watered side,
reach across the black divide
and heal our hearts
from flames of fear.
Drench with dew our splintered eyes,
we who despised you.

And pray for us
to Him, who
at 33,
also stretched His arms and died.

— Sheila Provencher



Lindsey Mohan



Bryce Richter



Sarah Stronsky

Obsession

Each day you walk right past me,
Eyes dancing all around, but not
meeting mine.
Smiling, you must be thinking of last
night,
So am I,
I can't erase
Your image blazoned in my brain,
propelling me

As I run after you, calling your name,
Like squeezing a shampoo bottle
Over and over even though there's
Nothing left,
Because I need
To see myself mirrored in your eyes

Until finally you face me,
acknowledge that I matter,
Tossing me a quick wave, almost a
puzzled look
Like you don't know me,
But we spend each night
Together in my dreams,
We talk all day inside my head.

— Sarah Marie Balzli



Sarah Stronsky



Elizabeth Amer

Happily Ever Before

Kara Zuaro

"I hate you. I hate this whole goddamn country," Haley cried into her forearms on the yellow kitchen floor. Scattered about her were unwritten Roman postcards, depicting the local landmarks she wished were farther away.

Pat closed the door softly behind him and turned down the stereo. He placed his books and keys on the Formica tabletop next to a suspicious plastic bag. Then, slowly, so as not to aggravate his bad knee, a football injury, he lowered himself down to the floor, beside his bride. Her shoulders shuddered. He pressed back her loosely curled, coffee-colored hair.

"I went to buy a chicken," she hiccuped. "Just like you told me. *Un pollo*. I said everything just like you told me. But the stupid butcher, market man, whatever, he kept saying stuff to me in Italian — and I didn't know what the hell he was saying so I just nodded. But then he didn't charge me full price, but then when I got home, I opened the bag," she whimpered and he rubbed slow circles on her back. She continued, "And it still had *feathers*. The sonofabitch didn't even pluck out the feathers. Just left them poking — *poking* out at me. So. Then. I threw up. Right on the chicken."

"I thought I smelled something when I came in."

She sobbed louder, "It's still in the bag."

"Sweetie, it's OK."

"No. It really isn't."

They listened to the final lines of "I Left My Heart in San Francisco," and then the CD player skipped back to play it again.

"Is the CD player broken?" he asked.

"No, I have it on repeat," she wiped her eyes with the side of her hand. "For Saint Francis. What do they call him, Francisco or something, out here? He's the patron saint of animals. I always pray to him when I pray for you."

"Because I'm an animal?" he asked, trying to make his tenor voice sound husky.

"No," she pouted to avoid smiling. "But the first time I saw you, you were playing with my dog. Remember? At that barbecue at my house last summer. About a year ago."

"You told me I was your hero that night."

"No I didn't."

"Yes you did."

"In your dreams."

"You did. You just don't want to remember."

Haley shrugged and drew her legs tighter into her chest and sighed, "I can't believe I puked on the chicken."

"Everybody makes mistakes."

"Yeah, well. I ruined dinner, I wasted our money, and,"

she looked at him through pinkly puffed eyes and said, "I'm pregnant."

"Oh," he said because he didn't know what to say. "Are you sure?"

"No. I'm not *sure*. You can't get an English-speaking pregnancy test in this goddamn town."

"Well, I'll take you to the doctor then. We'll find out for sure."

"I don't want an Italian doctor. I want to go home, to Dr. Molano."

"Go home if you want to go home," he leaned back into the cabinets, "but Molano's just as Italian as the rest of them."

"Shut up. You know what I mean," she said. "I really hate you sometimes." She started to cry again.

"I know," he said, wrapping her in his arms. "Shh. I know."

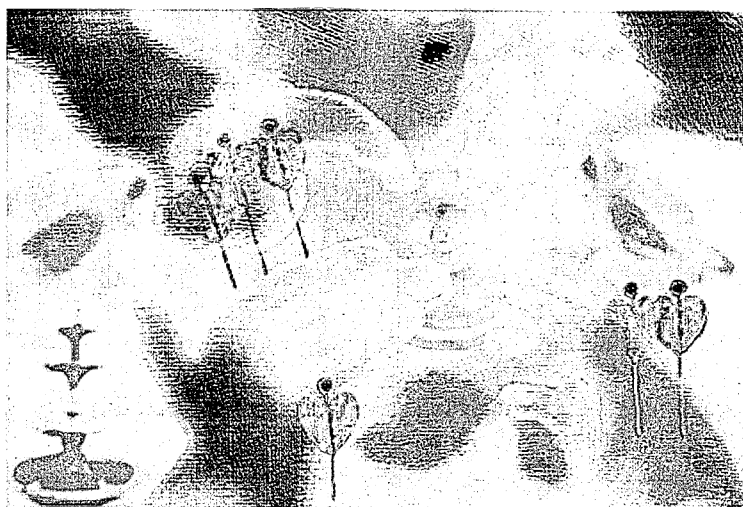
"But why aren't we happy anymore?" she sobbed. "We used to be so happy."

"Baby," he said, "nothing's changed."

"For Christ's sake, Pat, this is really not the time to be calling me 'Baby.'"

She snuggled into him so that the floor wouldn't feel so cold.

Haley's old wooden desk chair squeaked as she fidgeted in her bedroom, in her parents' suburban home. Her desktop



Caroline M. Wolf

was a clutter of beauty essentials and writing supplies. Moisture-rich lipstick, waterproof mascara, a thesaurus. A list of Italian insults, care of her best friend's Great-aunt Josephine, who was born in Sicily. Tiny sheets of paper, often bits of

envelopes or napkins, upon which her favorite words had been scribbled in eyeliner pencil or the ink of borrowed pens. Ephemeral. Canyon. Serendipity.

"So it's all settled," she said into the receiver while testing the gleam of her tiny diamond ring in the beam of her desk light. "We'll tell them tonight. At dinner. You tell yours, and I'll tell mine."

"Got it," Pat said, cradling the phone between his shoulder and cheek. A couple of books poked him as he lay back on his bed. He pulled them out from under him and placed them on the night table. A medical ethics book, that his favorite professor had slipped him at graduation, and *A Room With a View*, a loaner from his fifteen-year-old cousin who didn't think he should spend all his time reading about science.

"What if they ask you how you proposed to me? What are you going to say?" Haley flipped through a pile of freshly developed photographs. Most were from last week's commencement ceremony, shots of her with some triumphant-looking English major friends. She found one of Pat, one she'd taken shortly after their first date. A picnic. She had told him that she needed to finish up her film. But it was only the second picture in the roll. She had really just wanted a picture of him to show to her grandma. Grandma would like Pat. She would like anyone who replaced Allen. Grandma *never* liked Allen. Neither did Haley's parents. Nor her friends. They all hated him. That red-headed bastard. That cheating piece of shit. He was all they called him. And worse. Haley hated herself for still feeling his hurt.

So she tried to think about Pat. So solid and honest. She prayed that this wasn't just wishful thinking and studied his bulky, grinning image as he spoke.

"I guess I'll just make something up. They don't need to hear the real story," he said. "So, you want to do something after dinner?"

"Like what?"

"I don't know. Maybe go ice skating. That new indoor rink just opened." This reminded him that the hockey game was on. He reached under his pillow and fumbled for the remote.

"I don't think so. I broke my arm ice skating in sixth grade."

"How?"

"I fell."

"I won't let you fall."

"Well," she clicked on her make-up mirror to examine her peeling nose. Too much sun at graduation. She asked him, "Are you talking about the new rink at the community park? Because I think the park closes early on Sunday nights."

"Oh, I think you're right. Maybe we'll go another night."

"Maybe," she twisted the ring around her finger. "So, you think dinner will go okay? Think the parents will, you know, be happy about this?"

"My parents? Sure. They love you."

"Yeah, mine, too. They love you, too." She clicked off her mirror. "But do you think they'll really think it's a good idea?"

"I guess. Why?" She didn't reply. The game was tied. The crowd was waiting for a fight. "You know, you wouldn't have come ice skating with me, even if the rink was open, isn't that right? If I had asked and I had really wanted to go, you still would have said no. Right?"

She laughed.

He wasn't amused. "I don't think you would have come with me."

"No, I probably wouldn't have. I just told you how I feel about ice skating." She heard, on his end of the phone line, a crowd roar his sigh, and the switching off of his television. "Pat?"

"You just don't love me as much as I love you."

"Pat. Cut it out. I'm going to Italy with you. I'm twenty-two and I'm putting my M.F.A. on hold, and I'm settling down to cook and clean and take care of you when you're sick." They both knew that Haley had intended to wait a few years before going back to school, whether or not she went to Rome. Still, she used this case for argument's sake. And Pat, who liked to believe that she would have sacrificed such a thing for him, had her plans been different, didn't bother to challenge it. "Really, Pat, what more do you want from me?"

He wasn't sure. "You know, if I was to tell them how I really asked you to marry me, I mean, the way it *really* happened," he gazed at the stucco ceiling of his bedroom in his parents' house, "they definitely wouldn't buy that."

He was already seated in an aquamarine vinyl booth when she arrived at the diner. She was always late, and he was always hungry. A waitress, with a greasy black ponytail and dark bags slung under her eyes, poured them each some coffee. Haley told her that she'd be ready to order in a minute. Pat hoped she could make up her mind that quickly.

"It's been a while," she said because they hadn't spoken in over a month. She missed him, but she couldn't admit that, so she asked him, "What's new?"

He emptied several packets of sugar into his coffee, but passed on the half-and-half. "You know I'm going to Rome, right?"

"Vacation?"

"Med-school. Got a big scholarship."

"Oh. I knew you applied, but," she stirred slowly.

"When are you leaving?"

"August."

"God. That's so soon." He was leaving her. He was going to leave just like Allen left and there was nothing she could do. What a jerk. And such green eyes. And such a soft voice. And he was going so far away.

"I've got time. It's only December," he said. She seemed

upset. But she was probably just being manipulative, and he wasn't going to fall for that again. He wasn't going to let her trick him into thinking she cared. Unless, this time, it wasn't a trick.

"But we only met this past August. And it's almost January. And we just *wasted* November," she sipped her coffee, returned the cup to its saucer, and frowned. "You know, I was sure that if I asked you here, you'd apologize for the whole bar thing. Like, immediately. You know, get a fresh start for the new year."

"Well maybe I expected you to apologize to me."

"For what?"

"For treating me like some disgusting, drunk guy."

"But you were a disgusting, drunk guy."

"But I wasn't just some guy. We talked on the phone. Every night. For weeks. Months even. Then you see me at the bar when you're with your friends and suddenly you're too good for me."

"That is not what happened."

"What happened then?"

"You *said* stuff to me."

"So?"

"So you were drunk. And we were supposed to be friends."

"Welcome to the world of dating, Haley. This is how it works: People — *friends* — get drunk. They say things they wouldn't admit if they were sober. And then they hook up. And then they have relationships. But sometimes it hurts. Sometimes the one person you trusted shuts you down, in a bar, in front of all her annoying friends. But you know what, Hale? At least I tried. At least I gave it a shot. That's better than you can say. You can stay away from all this trust shit if you want, but it's your loss. You think you're so good. But you know, you're just — you're just weak."

"I wanted to fix things," her voice shook as she stood up from the table, scooped up her purse, "but I can't deal with you if you're going to be like this." She walked away, past the table of senior citizens who had been listening unabashedly to Pat's sermon. Past the weathered waitress who had not yet taken her order. Past the phones. Into the pink bathroom. Everything blurred. The pink wall tiles swirled around her. She pumped some soap into her palm and was just about to wash her hands when the door opened and she caught Pat's glance in the mirror.

"Get out of here," she spun around, hip to the sink, back to the wall.

"Are you crying?"

"No. And you can't be in here —"

"You can't keep shutting me out," he stood too close.

"What if somebody —"

"You're scared. So am I," he put a heavy hand on her shoulder, "After you walked away from me at the bar, I didn't think I'd ever see you again."

"Why can't you just leave me alone?"

"Because, number one, you asked me to get lunch with

you. And, number two, you're my best friend. I want you to come with me. To Italy. Live with me."

"You're crazy. My parents wouldn't — and besides, we don't even get along. And we've never even —"

He stopped her words with his lips and felt her body rise to his kiss.

"Marry me," he murmured into her mouth. "Marry me. I'm sorry about the bar. I'm a pig. I'll get better. I promise."

In the seduction of the club's dark heat, music moved the crowd with a throbbing rhythm, not unlike the beating of so many hearts. Haley and her girl friends swigged lite beers at the bar. Their clashing perfumes cleaved the nostrils of passers by, but Pat stopped anyway, very pleased to see her. They were pals now, talking for hours every day, and he was smitten with her bitterness. His love knew no odor.

She was wearing a black mini-skirt and her crossed legs stretched long down the barstool.

He put his hand on her thigh and said, his breath heavy with the scent of alcohol, "Dance with me."

"No way, Pat." She tried to brush his hand away with the butt of her beer bottle, but he only reached farther up her skirt, onto her panty-hosed hip. She glared at him. One of her friends giggled. She had been away from the bar scene for a while, thanks to Allen. And she certainly wasn't ready to dance with anybody. That's what had been so good about Pat these past few weeks. He made picnic lunches. She took him to the movies. They got coffee together. They talked on the phone at night. They fought over stupid things. They made up, messed around. They almost got along. But there was no dancing, and therefore, nothing was defined.

She wasn't ready for that kind of definition.

"Come on, you tease."

The girls tittered.

"Don't call me that."

He replied, with drunken punctuation, "But *look*. At what you're wearing."

The girls laughed harder. Haley scowled at him, then at them. "It's the only thing I had that was clean," she explained.

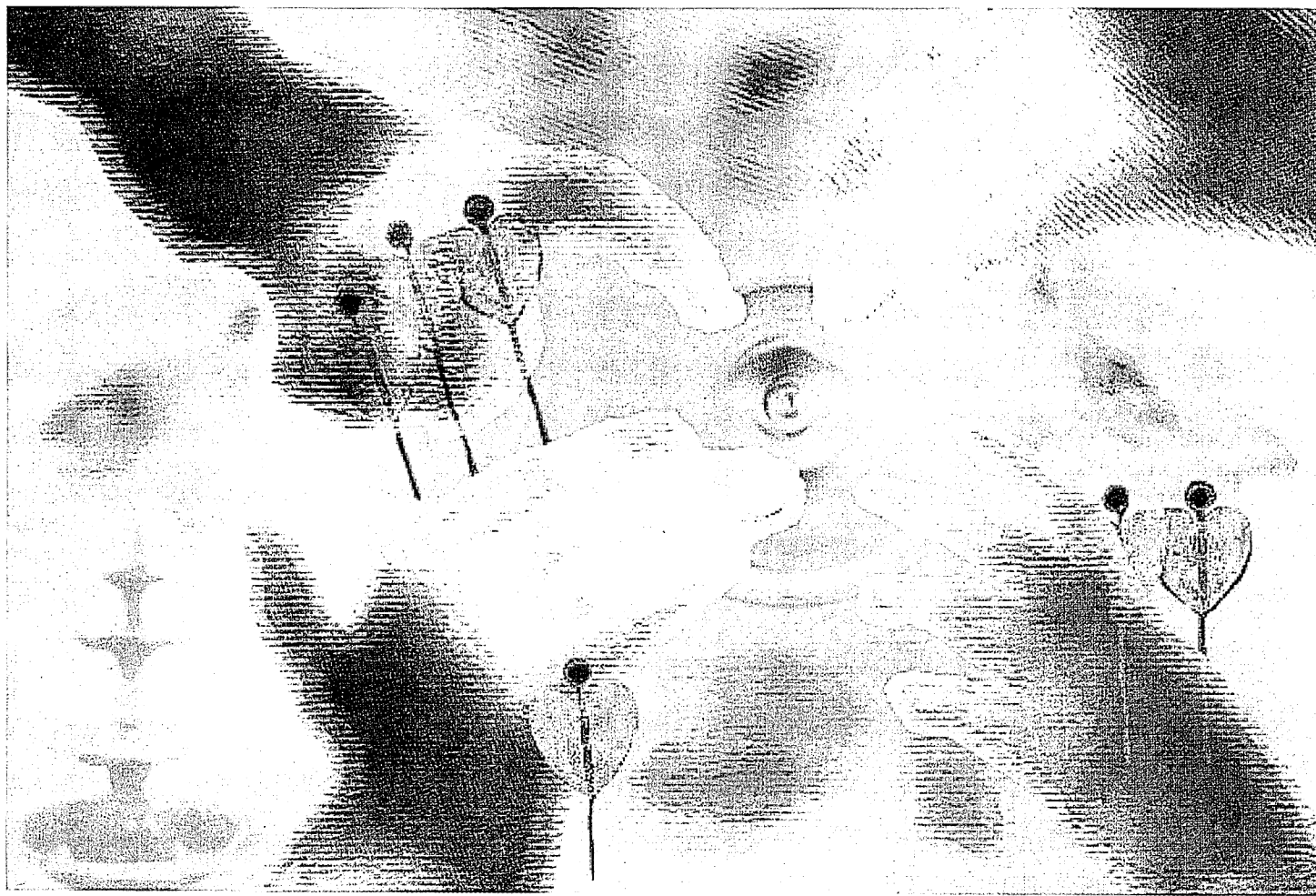
But everyone laughed more, and Haley wouldn't be laughed at, so she reluctantly dismounted her stool, and tilted her head back with her beer to her lips. She set the empty bottle on the bar and walked to the dance floor. Pat trailed behind.

She shouted above the music, into his ear, "I thought I was your little guy."

"I thought. You didn't *want*," he pulled her closer, "to be my little guy."

"Well —"

"Listen. The way I see it is," he liked the smell of her hair as he talked into her ear. "I. Love you. I'm not sure on what level. But. I definitely. Definitely do." He stepped



Caroline M. Wolf

back and noticed the tightness of her lips. A bad sign. But he couldn't read her mind. "What. What's that look for?"

He was already making her feel too much. She thought she might be angry. Or nauseous. Or happy. But she wasn't sure. She and Pat weren't even dating. Not officially, anyway. And if officially, then not seriously. So he didn't have the right to make her feel so confused, especially when she was supposed to be hanging out with her girl friends. She couldn't take the way he was looking at her. So she walked away.

"Goddamn you," he shouted into her wake. A sorry comeback. He missed her already.

After first meeting Haley at her family's barbecue, Pat had to think of an excuse to see her again. Since he was saving for school, but didn't want to seem cheap, he asked her to join him for a picnic in the park, complete with plaid tablecloth and wicker basket lunch. After sandwiches and juice boxes, they looked up into the trees as the tangerine autumn leaves were whisked away by warm winds, like birthday candle flames by the breath of a child.

"You're a lot deeper than most girls, you know," he mused as he reclined on the checked picnic blanket.

"Really," she looked at him skeptically, but proceeded to

lie down beside him.

Pat thought about the other girls he'd taken to this park. Girls who giggled at everything he said, who gushed over how cute it was that he made them sandwiches and then proceeded to only nibble at their bread and ask if he had made any salad. Girls who kept house plants, who liked cats, soap operas and wine coolers. Girls who wore sundresses and were easy to kiss.

Haley was different.

She ate her sandwich hungrily, not leaving much time to gush. She said that she hadn't eaten anything since breakfast. She said that she hadn't had a real sandwich in a while — her mom's been on a health kick lately, and she's had to sustain herself on vegetable soup for lunch every day. She's had to sneak out for fast food most afternoons, she said. She doesn't even really like vegetables, except for the tomatoes and cucumbers that she grows in her garden. And she hates cats. And she has a really cool dog — friendly and clumsy and sloppy. She doesn't watch much TV, except for college football. He wonders if she likes to drink beer. He bets that she does.

"Yeah," he smiled. "You're like a guy."

"Thanks," she flatly replied. He was looking at the clouds. She knew he wasn't watching her when she rolled

her eyes. She thought that he would be really cute, if he wasn't such an idiot. Isn't it just common sense to refrain from telling a girl that she's "like a guy"? And this buffoon was on his way to medical school. What a joke.

"No, I mean it. I mean, like, you're the one guy I can show my nice, feminine side to. As opposed to my masculine side. It's all Jungian. I don't know how familiar you are with psychology, but —"

"Your masculine side isn't nice?"

"Well, it's just immature, really. That's why I'm not planning on getting married till I'm at least thirty."

"Because you're too immature."

"Right."

She rolled onto her side to face him and said, "You are full of shit. Is this your Thing? Is this your Sensitive Male Shtick? Telling me I'm 'deep,' that you respect me as if I were male — as if you couldn't respect me as a female — do you realize how sexist that is? And then you throw Carl Jung in — so you must be really *intellectual*, right? Is that how it works? And you even admit your immaturity, which is a nice move because now you look all humble and sweet, but next time you do something stupid or childish, you can just say, 'I told you I was immature.' Very clever. Very."

He smiled at her. "You are deeper than most girls."

"Shut up," she rolled back onto her back and pressed the folds out of her clothes. He liked the way her palms smoothed over the cotton of her shirt. "You were so unpretentious while we were eating, Pat. You should keep that up."

She could feel him looking at her so she kept still and found a piece of sky overhead and just stared at it until he thought of something else to say. She watched a helicopter buzz by. Maybe it was taking somebody to the medical center. Maybe it was carrying fresh organs. Hearts, ready to be recycled. She hadn't seen a helicopter in a while. Not since Allen took her to see *Miss Saigon* on their first date. That was the best thing about dating an older guy — making your friends jealous when you got taken to places other than diners or parks or bars. Yeah, Allen always knew what he was doing — that's the other big perk of dating someone older. He always said the right thing. Allen had his faults, but at least he wasn't an amateur.

But all of that seemed kind of superficial now. The helicopter in *Miss Saigon* wasn't even real. Scenery doesn't really count, she thought. She couldn't remember the last time she saw a real helicopter. She wondered if there was some kind of metaphoric connection between first dates and helicopters. And then, she figured that it was a good thing college was over because she was really starting to think like an English major.

Still, she wanted to believe that there was some signifi-

cance to this real helicopter. She wanted to believe that there was something real about Pat, who packed a picnic basket with sandwiches and juice boxes. Who took pride in his immaturity. Who got along with her dog. She looked at the way his eyebrows were furrowed and she hoped he had something intelligent to say.

"You know that little guy, the one who follows the pope around?" he asked. "You know, the guy who follows the pope when he's wearing all the big robes — the little guy whose job is to chant, over and over again, 'You are only a man, you are only a man.' You know that guy?"

"No."

"Well, anyway, that's the little guy's job. So. You can be, like, my little guy. You can knock me down when I get too high on myself."

"Great," she said sarcastically, "But you better call me every day, if you really want to keep yourself in check."

Whether or not he heard her sarcasm, he planned on calling her every day. But first he had to know, "Who was that guy you were kissing at the barbecue?"

She sucked in a small, quick breath, sat up and brushed herself off. "A married man," she said, "who tricked me into thinking otherwise."

The first time Pat saw Haley, she had a lighter in her hand and some red-haired guy's tongue in her mouth. That didn't discourage him, though. In fact, it rather turned him on. Especially when the redhead left.

Fresh out of the swimming pool, dark hair dripping, she was a chlorine-scented dream. On account of the flowered towel she had wrapped around her shoulders, he could not see the bounce of her breasts as she descended the pool deck steps. But he could imagine.

Haley had seen Pat earlier, petting her beagle in the corner of the yard. She appreciated that. Nobody ever paid attention to the damn dog.

Now, wetness shimmered on her upper-lip as she stood tip-toe, lithe calves twitching, her eyes scanning the backyard crowd at her family's annual summertime barbecue.

She looked at him and said, "Who are you?"

"Pat Murray. My dad works with your dad. That's ... why I'm here," he replied, awkwardly, defeated by her eyes, and he took her hand, but only her fingers, just like a man, as if to kiss the soft skin past the knuckles of her tightening fist.

She escaped his grip and asked him, "Will you help me with this hero?"

And even though she did gesture to the partially-eaten six-foot sandwich, he misinterpreted her words.

"Will you help me with this, Hero?" is what he heard.

And so, he decided to try to be her knight. At least for a while.

To the son I have dreamed. . .

I created him in hiding at home
In rag-handed love and tatter-face dreams.
Rhythm loved to watch it grow
And with glass eyes, I knew he would be
just as fragile as me;
With a heart that would speak little of its
strength.

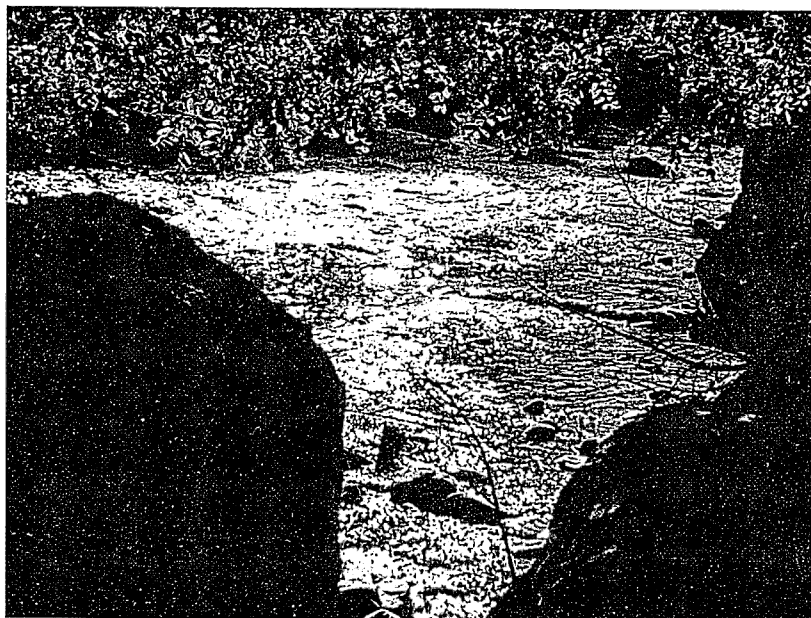
And as much as I've taught him,
He'll know love without learning.
With an arid eye, he'll feel pain
Without breaking a heart.
And as much as I've wanted to myself,
He'll sing love with all the contentment
Of a stolen afternoon.

I'll be silently watching him become
A better man in the rain,
Disguising everything I wanted to hide
And nothing that I didn't.
And I'll love him more for it
And never ask twice for anything I need.

He'll give with his right hand
And hold his weight with the left.
And like all those I've met in red,
He'll walk away, too.
Painting it there between his shoulders,
I turn a different shade;
As my rainbow drops another color
From its bleak-straight sky.

And although I know he'll be great someday,
Like the brown eyes I know I'll give him,
He grows grey.
He disappears like the golden skin I surrender
To colder days.
And the glass on my face turns to water
That will fill an ocean for my boy to cross.

— Miguel Vieyra



Jennifer Connor

Man's Best Friend

Andrew McDonnell

The young man, or old boy, it is difficult to see his face in this light, walks his date to the front porch of this particular girl's house. The young man walks tall and awkward in his father's old beige suit. It clings tight to his shoulders, and balloons at the waist, a harbinger of some future shape the young man might one day assume. It is the type of jacket with the dark brown ovals sewn onto the elbows. He selected it in a state of panic exactly one hour before he left his house.

The young man had stared into his father's closet, and seen a row full of black and blue suits, glowering, hanging from wire nooses wrapped around invisible necks; reminders of perceived adulthood. They were the suits his father threw on every morning, seconds before he ran out the door on his way to work. They bore the stench of routine. Reaching further back into his father's closet, scraping the hangers forward across the bar and out of the way, the young man pulled out the only suit he had never actually seen his father wear; this beige one, corduroy, with dark brown patches sewn onto the elbows. And the young man, he stands tall and awkward in this suit, and guides his young date up the short stack of stairs leading to her parents' porch's creaking wooden platform.

The date is a pretty, soft-faced girl with green glowing haloes in her eyes, and soft streams of copper-red hair flowing around her shoulders, sweeping along the frame of her face. She is wearing the black dress she had selected with her mother one month before this night. No cleavage shows. The dress runs down to the middle of her shins. Her snow-white shoulders are strategically hidden beneath short sleeves that slope to the middle of her smooth biceps. Biceps that are taut, but not bulging. Muscles are meant to hold skin tight, not overwhelm it with bulk; her mother says that type of thing out loud. A pink rose is still wrapped around her wrist, a flower that only hours before he had slid delicately over her hand and onto her wrist with all the ceremony that a golden band assumes as a finger is placed through it.

The girl allows the young man's left hand to fold around her right hand as she carefully climbs the steps in her mother's too-tall heels. The girl looks over at him with a smile pulled back against her cheeks, careful to keep her upper teeth shining on his eyes. And then she becomes self-conscious, remembering that she forgot, forgot to check her teeth in the mirror for food and lipstick before she had left the dance, and she pulls her smile in a little bit, allowing her lips to seal themselves into a tighter smile. Behind the

smile she runs her tongue slowly and carefully around the front of her teeth searching for some fiber, some taste, some sign of irregularity in the enamel's texture, and finding none she again unleashes her glowing upper-teeth smile at the young man or old boy, it's really not important, the distinction.

They reach the top of the stairs, and their feet slowly creak across the porch. A rickety old porch-swing hangs down from two thick chains, and sways ever so gently, so invitingly in the warm April breeze.

"Would you like to sit out here for a while?" she asks him.

"Yeah, gosh, that would be great!" he replies. "Would you just look at that moon."

"Yeah," she sighs, smiling upward.

"Yeah," he sighs back. There is a slow span of silence while they both stare up at the round glow of the moon.

"What do you dream about?" he asks her.

"I don't know," she smiles lazily.

"Oh come on," he punches her gently in the shoulder.

"You know your own dreams. Everybody has dreams."

"Well, I do have this one dream, but ... oh no, it's just silly. It just doesn't even make sense."

"Go on. It's not silly."

"But you'll laugh at me."

"I won't. I swear I won't. C'mon, you can tell me."

"Well, you promise?" she asks, and he nods. "Well," she says, "I had this dream where I was lost in the middle of this forest. It was all evergreens and stuff, you know?"

He nods, to show her yes, he knows.

"I can even remember the pine cones on the ground, the smell, and there was this glowing red apple, and ... and I wanted it a lot." She pauses for effect, "And it's weird, 'cause, that apple was in a wild pig's mouth, some pig of the forest or something, and I was chasing him around and around and around through all the trees. My legs were like, getting scratched up because of the low limbs on the pine trees, and I was running so hard that I could hear my breath echoing off of the trees."

"Wow," he says, rapidly losing interest in everything that is not her veiled right breast.

"But then, I could not only hear my breath, I could see it flying out of my mouth, and first it was just steam, you know? But then, you know, the steam was like, turning into yellow canaries and flying around my head, and I was like, oh my God, my breath is now like, a yellow canary and forget about the glowing red apple in the forest pig's

mouth. Now I'm chasing the yellow canaries. It's like I'm chasing my own breath."

"Wow," he says. And it strikes him as amazing, that despite the words coming out of her mouth, he was suddenly finding himself aroused.

"...my own breath. Weird, huh? So, I finally catch one of the canaries and his head is just sticking out of my fist, and he's got the cutest little eyes, and the tiniest little beak, and he's like, staring right at me, and it is so freaking me out, so I start talking to him and ..."

"Wow," he says. What an idiot she is. And he begins to realize that his erection is growing with a reckless, shameless disregard for the date's ability to see. His penis is now to the point where it is becoming a visible bulge poking up beneath his pants, like some magical crotch-beanstalk crawling across his right thigh. Her voice sprints past his thoughts.

"...and he's like, you must look for the golden fount, and lay down four mangoes ..."

"Hm," he says. Why did he wear boxer shorts? Why? He knows he should have worn briefs, but does he ever listen to himself? Never at the right times. Apparently not. God, just look at it. His new-sprung member rising rapidly and climbing towards her voice like a flower leaning towards the sun.

"So then I'm like, chasing the mango beast through the milk-lined streets of Quito, when the gap-toothed whore of Salamenotino came up to me and was like, 'You need to ...'"

"Oh?" He crosses his legs and pulls his foot up, and his ankle across his knee, trying to look like someone interested, someone adult, someone without a highly visible boner. Someone without a stiffy. Someone without a woody. Like someone who is not pitching a pup-tent in his pants. Like someone with absolutely no interest in camping — whatsoever.

And still the pretty girl continues on, "...and the pelican queen was like, 'Take the branch of futility, the sprout of Sisyphus's grave, and wave it hence four times beneath your pillow and sleep shall follow you until ...'"

"Wow," he says. And he's leaning forward now with his hands cupped in his lap, to create both the illusion of interest, and an awkward folded finger-wall between her eyes and his rebellious penis. This always happens at the worst or the most inexplicable times, in addition to all those completely explicable times. Consistency, that's all he really wants from his penis, and it is everything that his penis really lacks. He wakes up in the morning for Pete's sake, and he hasn't had any sort of dream, feels not the slightest bit riled up, but when he wakes up, there is his penis, as engorged as it has ever been, and no reason propping it up. Just up there, standing at attention, like

some wet-behind-the-ears private who stands with his hand raised in salute for two hours, just because when leaving the room the captain forgot to say, "At ease, private." Parts. At ease!

The girl with the haloes in her eyes continues on, oblivious to her young man's discomfort, "So then, I've got the mango beast's corpse strung over my shoulder, and a small satchel of his fruit knotted around my waist, when the Ruby Turk himself enters and ..."

"Huh," the young man nods. The insubordinate penis remains at attention. He most somehow distract whatever part of the brain allows the penis to be erect. Step one is to stop looking at her breast. Check. The moon is just as full and twice as bright. Is he satisfied? No, but he will pretend for now. Step two: sing a little song. Usually, the best one is "Let Me Call You Sweetheart" because he used to play it on the cello when he still played, and he can still run through the fingerings and the words to the song at the same time, so his mind is doubly occupied with singing silly songs, and much less occupied with maintaining the blood supply in his alert penis.

"... but this is where the dream gets really weird, cause, um ... are you all right?"

"Huh? What? Yeah."

"Oh. You were looking straight up, and humming."

"I was?"

"Yeah. You were humming like, 'Let Me Call You Sweetheart.' or something."

"Really?"

"Uh-huh."

"Huh. How about that? What happens next in your dream?"

"Uh, you're sure you're feeling all right?"

"Oh yeah. Great."

"Do you need to use the restroom?"

"No, no."

"Oh. Okay. Why are you rocking that way?"

"Am I rocking?"

"Yes. Like Rain Man."

"Oh. I love that movie, don't you?"

"Um, yeah. Are you like acoustic? 'Cause, there's nothing ... well, I mean, if you are, that's okay. We can go inside and get some orange juice, or some honey, or some sugar cubes for you to suck on or something."

"Oh no, no. I'm just fine thanks." He can't walk in this condition, quite obviously. It's exactly like when he wakes up, first thing in the morning with that surprise, irrepressible erection that no pair of shorts could hide, and he has to go to the bathroom, but his mom is inevitably in the hallway. So he has to hunch over so that the T-shirt he sleeps in billows forward enough to hide the excited visitor.

"Well, okay. But if you change your mind you just tell me. Okay?" she said with a concerned glance.

"I'm fine. I'm fine. Say, I had a great time tonight. Wasn't the dance excellent?"

"Oh it was great! You're such a good dancer."

"Well, you know, it's easy with you there." There it is. Easy boy. Things are calming down below. He just needs to stay cool; ice water in the lap, ice water in the lap.

"Oh," she gasps, "and the ballroom was just so nice! The decorations were sooooo fun! The appetizers were excellent."

"Yeah, and everybody looked great too. It's so strange, but so cool too, when you see everyone from your everyday life dressed up in suits and dresses, you know?"

"Mmm-hmm," she nods her assent, but then screwed up her face. "Except for that one girl, Amy Horken." Sproing! All his work undone.

"Uh ... oh, I didn't notice her."

"Oh my God! You must be joking. It looked like she bought three black silk Kleenex and taped them to three strategic parts. She's such a tramp."

At the very thought of Amy Horken and her outfit, the penile revolution resumes once more in his pants. Attempting to overthrow the suffocating rule of Lord Undergarment, and Commander Pants, the troops charge forward with a thrust that catches even their source, the young man, off-guard and causes his pelvis to twitch once, slightly.

"Oh, it couldn't be that bad," he tries to recover.

"It was awful," his date squeals. "She was falling out of that dress in all directions, not that she was all that *in* the dress to begin with, and everyone was just staring at her. And she didn't care. She was just smiling, just swinging back and forth in her date's arms like she wasn't buck-naked in front of everyone."

Lord, the furnace is stoked, and she just keeps talking. The young man swears he can see steam rising from the fly of his pants.

"I've really never seen a girl so naked in public before."

"Was it really that bad?"

"The worst. Absolutely."

"Don't you ever want to cut loose that way? I mean, we all have our moments, right?" he asked, actually interested in her response.

"Well, no, not really. One time, I did buy this little white outfit for Halloween, but my mom caught sight of it, and ..."

Sometimes, he would get an erection in church, and that made him feel bad. Usually. It was usually something like part of a homily, and the priest would say a keyword, some random little spark that would get his mind wandering, like the word Testa-ment and then bam! Arousal in church. That just can't be good for anyone.

"... she was all, no daughter of mine, and I was all ..."

Nod nod. And there were times when he would be watching the news, and the weather would come on, just that big picture of the map, and the newscaster's voice-over would say something completely unsexy like "south-western United States" or "thirty percent chance" and then bam! All passengers to Bonerburg!

"... so I didn't end up wearing that without the turtleneck underneath, and a year later we used it to bandage one of our cats who had gotten in a tussle with ..."

"Wow." But then sometimes it was justified, like that lotion commercial with the naked lady and the crocodile, and the cereal commercial with the naked lady, or that shampoo commercial with the naked lady, or that lady across the street who liked to vacuum the upstairs while naked. There were plenty of justifiable reasons, but just as many very strange occurrences that sometimes left the young man baffled when he developed an erection.

"... so I mean, yeah, I like to cut loose, but I usually can't, cause I'm not allowed to," she finally concludes.

"Yeah, I know what you mean."

"You do?"

"Yeah." They both sit in silence and watch the moon again. The moon spreads its soft blue blanket of light across the suburban neighborhood. The green lawns emit a soft chorus of insect shakes and clatter. In the distance, maybe three blocks away, the soft hum of a phantom car rises and falls and rises again at some unseen stop sign. A neighbor is seen across the street, standing in his bathrobe with a dog leash in one hand, the dog at the other end, squatting, pooping softly. And watching all this, the young man's penis grows limp at last, and he breathes a soft sigh of relief as the flower in his pants wilts and disappears.

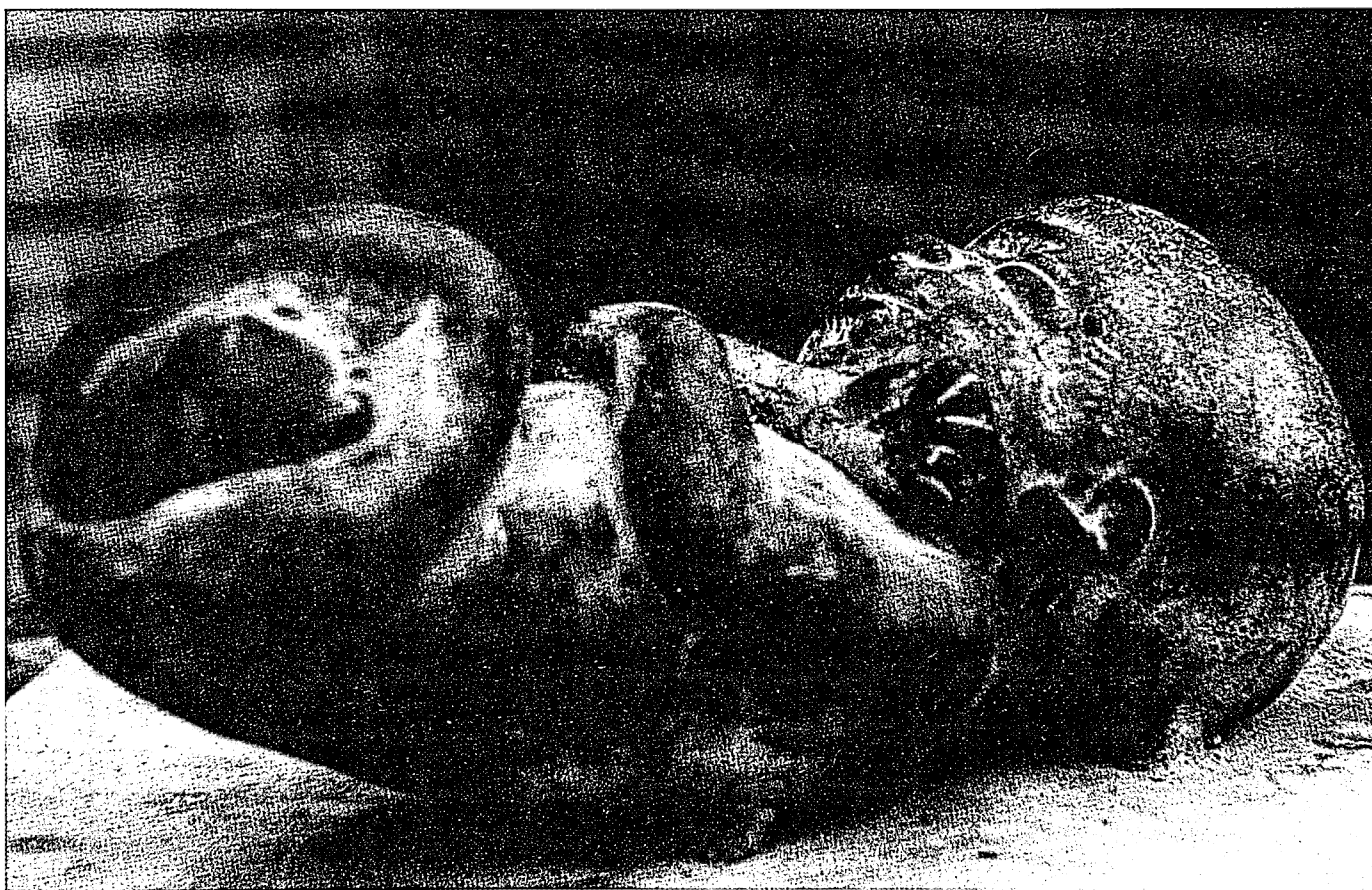
The young woman looks over at her date, the young man, and she leans slowly towards him with her lips spread just a little bit apart, and her eyes wide. She puts her mouth to within an inch of his ear, he can feel her warm breath stoking once more a flame he had hoped was embedded in ice, and she whispers, "What a magical evening." And then she gives him a quick peck on the cheek, stands up, smiles at him, walks over to the front door, turns the doorknob with a quick flick of her wrist, swings the door open, walks in, peeks around the corner of the doorframe, waves her fingers gently goodbye at him, closes the door behind her with a decisive click, and then the porch lights go off. The young man sits in the dark for one last minute on her porch-swing, feeling once more, the frustration and embarrassment of his enigmatic penis. But the young man eventually rises. He stretches his arms, yawns, and as he turns towards the steps he says to no apparent listener, "Well, we'll always have each other."

There's nothing good on.

There are fetuses floating in dumpsters
And chocolate and giant pandas dying out.
The news after the X-Files
Has footage of real live monsters,
And all their works of mutilation
Hang in the galleries of
Mother's mind.
I am talking on the phone
And my friend is telling me
How the Masters of War have
Ripped the babies out of her head.
No special fountains or sectioned buses,
But a white man, a black man, and an Asian man go into a bar.
Is it 6 out of 10
Or 7 out of 10
Souls in the streets
With poisoned blood?
The Starbucks on the corner
Is roasting decency,
Along with its coffee beans.
And next door
At the store
They sell computers
That type what you say,
Pre-broken potato chips
Calculated to fit inside your mouth,
And raggedy-ass hats
For twenty-five dollars.
Brown men with wives and sons,
Sweating, smiling,
Are selling blood-sweet oranges

On the exits
Of Rosemead and Santa Anita.
In the window of a high school
There's a kid killing each word he reads,
Filling the air
with the painful, darkening
Proclamations of ignorance.
Girl walks down the block,
This day without comment,
Uneasy when finding she misses degradation.
Sealed up in her backpack
Is the trapped, teasing face of a living skeleton
With blue bubble words to its right —
Just be yourself.
Ladies in ragdoll gowns
Push shopping carts
Through the parking lots.
They have scary eyes
And I think that they say,
The rich are different from you and me.
Have you seen me?
Have you been tested?
Are you satisfied with your long distance server?
Did somebody say McDonald's?
Did you know there are children in Africa starving?
Just say no.
This Sunday at your Cerritos's Auto Square.
Don't be a dummy. Buckle up.
Click.

— Toni Plummer



Jennifer Connor

Calle Victoria #4, Apartment 3

Tomás Gahan

Climbing up the crowded, black stairs of the subway tunnel and walking down the worn gray cobblestones of the Puerta del Sol in the heart of Madrid toward my grandmother's apartment, I passed the same bars and restaurants, thick with smoke and workmen in blue coveralls eating and drinking afternoon cognac and talking politics and soccer and women. Pig legs hung from every entrance, cured and salted and swaying heavy in the hot wind. I almost missed the heavy wooden door of my grandmother's apartment building, tightly hidden between two ancient and towering structures of old Madrid, framed, like every other building, by dull-yellow scaffolding; but the small kiosk across the street with its short, seemingly perpetual line of stocky men and women warding off the summer heat with hand-held fans whirring like hummingbird wings while they waited for the bullfight ticket counter to open, reminded me to turn and face the heavy wooden door before I walked passed.

It opened roughly to a black-and-white tiled floor covered in chalky dust from the construction which had been taking place since I had left Spain to live in the United States six years earlier. Half-open canisters of white paint and long, corded, steel bars littered the entrance leading up to the winding wood and iron staircase. I knew that my grandmother's apartment would remain unchanged; the new landlord from Chile was waiting patiently and politely for her to die in order to renovate the entire building. I remembered that when I would visit her as a child, the twenty-foot threshold between the door to the building and the winding wooden stairs was a terrible one; a fierce and frothing German shepherd, sensing me despite my concerted efforts at stealthy silence, would slam itself suddenly against the green metal door of the lowest apartment, barking and growling and shaking the hinges, sending me dashing up the stairs.

There was no German shepherd now, only the silent darkness of the almost crumbling staircase as I climbed to the third floor of the apartment building, the splintering wood creaking loudly and my hands sticky with sweat against the handrail. At the third floor I stopped and stood before her door; it was as always: solid dark wood with thin gold plate at its center, decorated with winding gyres

and chiseled leaves crawling around a small glass peephole. I pushed hard on the nub of the doorbell along the frame and soon I heard the slow and gentle shuffling of my grandmother's slippers and saw a wet wary hazel eye look at me through the peephole. The three heavy locks shifted and whirled as my grandmother opened the door and embraced me. She is small and round with sparse, brown, curly hair neatly curled and tucked into place, happy but too-traumatic eyes and tight tiny lips. Bringing my head down to her mouth with firm old hands, she kissed me loudly on the top of my head and told me to sit down while she got me something to eat. Except for the steady shuffling of slippers and cars honking outside along Calle Victoria, the house was strangely empty and silent.

Waiting in the dining room, I remembered the dinners where my great-aunt Chita would make her paella and bring it triumphantly to the table, her blue-veined arms shaking proudly, holding the huge paella pan as she paraded it in front of all my admiring aunts and uncles and grandparents and parents and brothers and sisters. Yaya Chita was not taller than four and a half feet, with thin, white mussed hair and childish dark eyes — she was a tiny anachronism who lived through the worst of Spain's Civil War and lived out her happy life in this once-bustling apartment in the heart of a shifting Madrid. I knew her always with her strong old arms heavy with grand-nephews and nieces or steaming pots and pans. I remembered one paella she had made for some one's birthday: bright, glistening yellow rice with red peppers slipping between and behind pan-grilled calamari and rabbit and chicken thighs fried and piping hot; shrimp and crawdads and tiny crabs with heads and legs and everything were grilled with lemon and garlic and always a lot of salt, filling the air of the dining room with the heavy pervasive aroma of fish and meat and saffron.

The apartment impressed itself on me again, serious in its new silence, now that all the old people had died except for my grandmother; I saw the long oaken table with its stout carved legs that curled at the bottom like an old lion's paw and the once-slick wooden floors that were perfect for sliding across in old socks and the past seemed impossibly far away. Ten years ago, the sounds and smells of old



Zenovia Lockhart

people laughing and arguing and serving wine and mixing it with *gaseosa* for the kids, would have echoed off every aging wall.

Even midst the bustle of memory, the apartment still sat in respectful silence. A grandfather cuckoo clock hung wearily on one wall, the cuckoo broken now but the artistry and detail still true in each carved and crooked corner of the dark-stained sulking clock. A small balcony jutted out of the

far wall, inviting in the hot August air and hundreds of tiny black gnats sensing the warm wetness of human eyes and nostrils.

There had always been gnats in August, even at birthdays and Saint's days. I remember my Great Uncle Eusebio, Yayo Ebo, swatting at them with a worn handkerchief while he beat me at a child's card-game. The Spanish cards were yellowing but still vibrant with cartoon drawings of broadswords and spiked maces, and his old hands were thin and blue veined and orange at the nails from smoking as he caressed each card roughly between his thumb and forefinger. Tio Ebo had been on every continent except Antarctica; he sang soldier songs, practiced his rough English and told me wild forbidden stories about the world's deserts and jungles. That was only a little before he went blind from the medicine he was told to take for his mind; he lived for three years after that and still never let me win at cards even with his eyes white and glossy and seeming frost-bitten.

My grandfather, Abuelo, would also sing, warmly and loudly about the silliest things you could think of, with his thick black hair combed neatly and nobly on a high and creased forehead. When I was very young he would put me on his lap and teach me to draw Spanish and Arabian horses with orange ancient pencils, the pink-nubbed eraser hard and useless as stone, on the almost transparent backs of soccer-lottery tickets. I remember my American father helping Abuelo down the long

hallways of the apartment, his arm hoisted deep under him, holding him up gently and firmly as they inched toward the dining room together, my family in train.

Of the old people that I knew living inside the apartment, Tio Sebio died first. I visited him once in an asylum with leather-faced men in striped pajamas staring at chess pieces and dominoes and in the background some sobbing. I do not remember what he died of, but my grandmother says it

was the medicine they gave him. Abuelo died soon after of a hundred different diseases; his hands and voice had shaken so much in the last year that he could not sing or even talk; I remember once with the family gathered around him he tried to draw us a horse again but he shook so terribly that the pencil fell hard against the wooden floor. When Yaya Chita died in a hospital bed, her skin was bright yellow from the jaundice and her hands were stretched far out in front of her, reaching for her sister who had been dead for ten years and calling out her name, "Maria...Maria," between tired gasps. Chita's eyes clenched tightly as she repeated "Maria" one last time; someone came and took me by the wrist out of the room where she was dying, with me looking behind me as a dull white curtain was pulled around her bed.

Outside, beyond the narrow balcony framed by a black metal railing, stood throbbing, scorching Madrid, noisy with swearing cab drivers and smelling like a thousand wonderful restaurants. The entire apartment was a world away from that outside expanse of time and noise; inside, only ancient memories seemed to wax and wane like silent ghosts, and the walls only longed for the old people that lived all together for so many years. Loneliness had settled in, like countless swirling gnats in hot August air. Fragile memories finally had a place here, midst the tattered walls and crumbling stairs and myriad missing sounds and smells, all kept barely pulsating by their living caretaker, my grandmother. I knew that the landlord still was waiting for her to join the other old people so that the renovations could begin and her apartment would merge into the blinding progress of new Madrid.

My grandmother shuffled in, shattering the muted silence of memory, bringing me a plate of fried lamb chops, a piece of bread, and a cold San Miguel beer. I sat down to eat in Abuelo's stuffed green chair covered with cigarette burns where he had taught me to draw horses, and my grandmother, smiling as she scooted me aside, telling me, "This is Abuelo's chair, and now only I can sit in it." I moved to a smaller chair alongside Abuelo's, looking about the ancient room and remembering. My grandmother slapped my thigh loudly, looking toward me with the suddenly fierce and loving eyes of an excited spoiled child, and screeched that she had missed me, that she had missed

everyone.

I knew that she had missed everyone and I knew that death had plucked them almost all from that ancient apartment, carelessly and even nonchalantly. Time had stolen away with everything that mattered, leaving behind only hollow and decaying artifacts: the cuckoo clock, the battered chairs, the crumbling staircase, even my grandmother sometimes seemed empty and worn without the life of family swirling about her. In the phantoms that rose forth from the weakening walls, there shook a stagnant falsity; conjured memories pretending to keep alive people long dead and instead only invoking a remembered quality or expression, a softening smile or a loud laugh, a cooked meal or a scratchy kiss, but never again that dynamic whole which overwhelmed the senses with its thousand sounds and feelings.

But still, even confronted with the impossibility of memory, I longed for its bits and pieces; there was an undeniable comfort in returning and remembering and holding on to what was left. I realized that while the confines of even the warmest memory will never capture the past and, if obsessive, could even poison the present; but these ghosts need not be ghosts, but guides — memories that accompany us in our own progression toward a horizon of possibility and actualization. We can embrace formative emotions and events and allow them to grow with us and us with them. Every moving memory of my family, both in their simple lives and brave deaths, is somehow sewn into the habitual texture of who I am — who they were is unchanging, who I am because of who they were is pure potential.

Watching my grandmother move slowly and deliberately, both burdened by memories and kept alive by them, I knew why I had travelled so far to stand again in this dying apartment. It was not to re-invent who the old people were that formed my youth nor to resurrect them. I had come back to my grandmother's apartment to discover who I might be and who I was made of; this past was my past, and this past is an indelible part of my being. The remnants of lost time echo with me always, and my grandmother is the caretaker, gently guarding the fragile artifacts in a fading museum, preserving them just long enough for me to savor for the last time the waning altars and shining saints of my youth.

Antisocialite

carefully placed
hands and smiles —
luscious beauty
lavished on half-closed eyes.
pearls and knives
go so well.
well,
perhaps, she thought.
is today
passing?

— Kristen Caponi

poem for my dead colored hero

so God has you now
did he need freedom fighters on His side
martin went out too
you knew that already
theres no more riotin down here
guess colored folk got tired
decided to sleep through the night

and the struggle
God got all that
yeah what you died for
colored folk wouldnt dare
were too busy wrapped up in rhythm
and blues
sure we visited your house
but never opened the door

walkin down x boulevard once.
heard a guy shoutin bout negroes second
comin
i wondered was it malik incarnate

my mother admired you once
gave her soul for those people
then in your fashion
changed her mind
guess she knew better
knew you were watchin
knew how you took to mecca
broke bread
with whites
that it all changed
cause God said
this was His decree
good to know
the sand on your feet
from kaba ground
didnt wash away
when you died

yeah we still pray
but no longer feel
our feet now too good to touch dirt
today
cant get one million negroes to do no
more than get on a bus and
sing (empty)
shout (empty)
march (empty)
thats all

makes for worn soles
deaf ears
they tested solidarity in philly and d.c.
but their dignity still swings from
alabama mahoganies.

when betty left
i thought for sure theyd do more than
paint her face on a mural beside yours
im always wrong
thats the one thing i hate
bein wrong
i wanna believe God called you back for
somethin
but cant quite remember
im sure it was cause he thought
cause we all thought
someone
a jesse
a davis
or a medgar
would take the fire
from your bombed home
engulf the mind
of negro
hunger
but

we read required negro literature
(no offense malik)
your autobiography
colored girls
color purple
didnt bother openin others
looked at davis in jail for her people
reveled in our own freedom
fell asleep during part two of roots
(you know
the one
when they translated kunta into toby
we easily forgot
as you said
no one gave them permission to do that)
listened to hours of jesse
finding humor
in the way he spoke
(and ran for president)
thought he was just boastin
but you know better

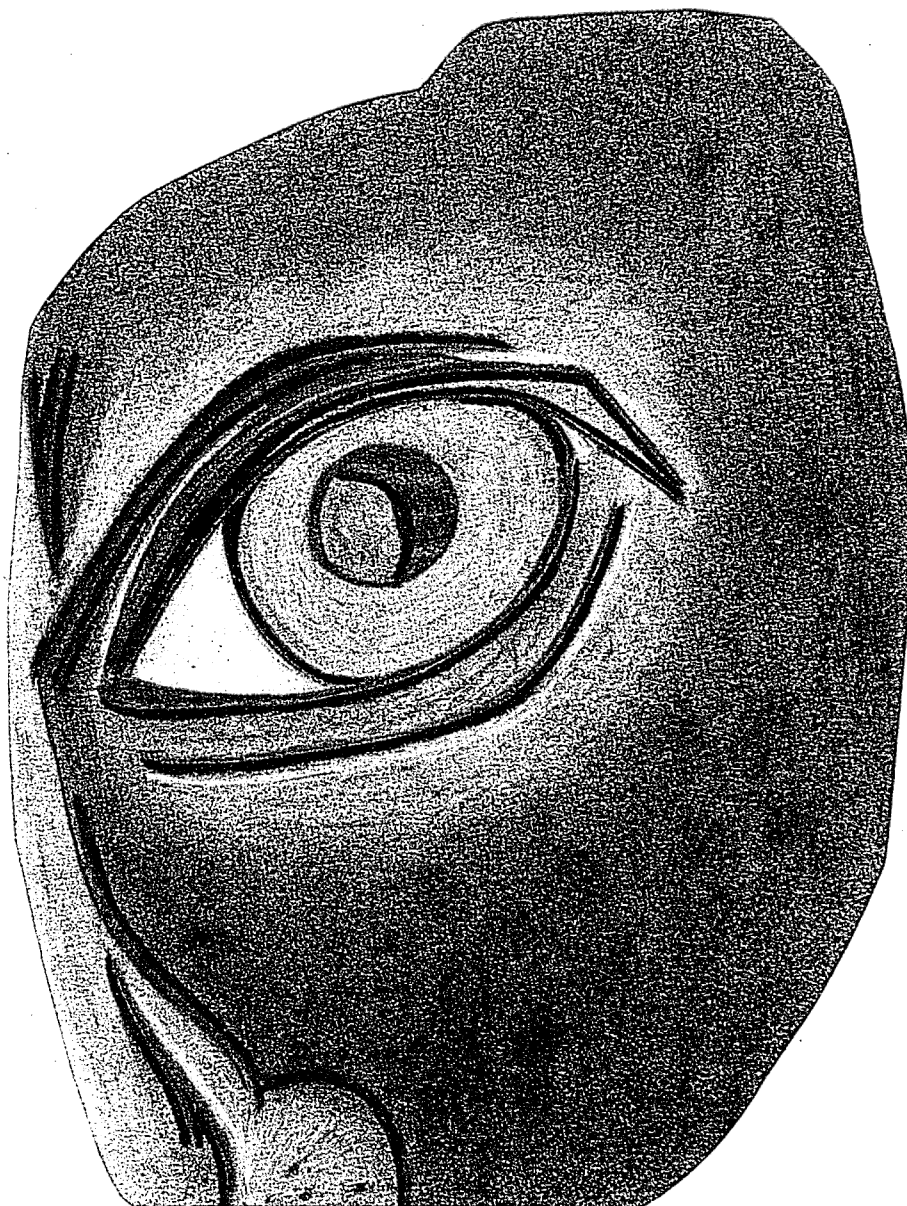
today
we mourn
we mourn
we mourn
medgar
thats all

paul once said
ah, me
i know what
these caged birds feel
do you
can you tell God to give back
our fight
somethin better to do
than this
cause i get tired of seein my people jump
on bandwagons
for fare free rides
these folks took away some poor girls
dream
of gettin into ucla
did we dare do more than
call up her momma
sayin how sorry we feel
they already got half those negro children
believin egypt is downtown
did we do more than shout (again)
at educators
not entirely their fault
where are the communities
the villages
what was it they had said about a raisin a
child
you ask God
cause

i think im gonna cry
since you died
the fire burns
and we all run through
unscathed

malik this is for you
my colored hero
you need to know what promises of
tomorrow really held
can you still rest in peace?

— Ayana Fakhir



Michelle Hogan

Bullfight

Ricky Buhrman

Tercio I

Few of the peones remained when Ernie and I returned to Pamplona during San Fermin. The awnings at Las Pocholas were still frayed, the sanctity of festivity still hallowed, faintly tricked with high-pitched laughter and an odor of comprehensive drunkenness. I remembered very little from past experiences at Pamplona, in spite of the fact that I had never been to Pamplona.

For Ernie, or Papa, as I am inclined to call him, there was nothing quite like the bullfight. Not just the fight, but the entire production gave him a sense of completeness — so he explained to me as we paced the outskirts of the Plaza de Toros. I suppose this is presented to you when you enter the gates of the arena. "Here is your ticket stub, sir. Oh, and please don't forget your feeling of completeness."

Outside the Plaza, there was an ambiance of joy and celebration — a sense that something truly great would soon transpire. Families from town gathered to take part in the celebration and tourists cluttered the grounds like gray hairs might on an otherwise impeccable mane. There were children in the distance playing a game. They had drawn a circle in the earth. One kid was on all fours and another was taunting him with a yellow piece of cloth. A few other children were cheering and would periodically dart at the boy on the ground and poke him with sticks, retreating quickly. Everyone was laughing — the kid on the ground was too, until he wanted to play a different role and the little peones wanted to keep on poking him. The boy on the ground was then lifted off of the ground by the other children, three on each side, and transported around the grounds until he wiggled and cried and jerked and so they laid him back down.

Grappling with time makes old men out of young boys. To this Papa was not a victim, not any greater because of it, but recalcitrant with his yoke, flexible only to his own desires to go drinking and scouting the Pamplona streets for solicited enjoyment. I did not join him, privileged though I was, having decided that the man would best have his bottle of cognac and a beautiful brunette half his age in his conscience's company exclusively. I stayed in the room.

What brought me back? I had never been to Pamplona before. But things change.

Why the hell, then, was I here? Perhaps I was naive enough to believe in Papa's wanton assessment. Perhaps there was nothing sacred, like the old man said. Perhaps exploits that I deemed honorable had no honor and my power of perspective would soon postpone permanently, retiring to the sunny beaches of nowhere, like all things. Perhaps individuality does have linearity, and nature and generations and events all the same. Please then, tell me why everything seems to perform their own tiny circles of

splendor, repeating themselves in an endlessness that does not seem to stop even when fierce matadors are gored, and I get older? But goodness, nothing happened here. I spent the better of the summer with the man, the mighty one, the code hero himself, expecting a mystically gratifying enlightenment. Papa would return just before dawn, his conspicuous manhood temporarily revived. He would go on to describe great wars and elephant hunts and nights of passionate sex so matter-of-factly that he himself could not remain conscious for the climax. What kind of nonsense would he cover his bed with each night, whispering to himself that he had understood the meaning(less) of life? Stupid old man. Do you know anything at all? I have the ability to transform oxygen into carbon dioxide. It's not making wine from water, but nonetheless, I am important.

The bull was now running in circles around the ring and the peones were jumping up and down enticing the animal to play on. Then the picador appeared with his padded horse and lance and placed the giant stick into the back of the bull and did so a few times until the creature was comfortably sedated, now conceivably vulnerable to the matador and his cape.

Tercio II

At first, even this astute member of the intelligentsia — specialist in brut manhood — could not recognize that the animal was beginning to leak. Perhaps Papa was more preoccupied with the banderilleros and their beautiful long darts. Each one was designed uniquely, all very colorful and pretentious, all with sharp hooks at their ends. This was so they would remain in the bull's skin and could not be shaken off.

Papa's eyes confirmed my suspicions of demented tendencies. When he finally recognized the bull's skin was punctured and his dark blood was escaping onto the unfamiliar side of the perforated fence of flesh, they would bug out so as not to neglect a glimpse of the animal's deteriorating state. And his nose, it started to swell with the slovenly air so that just maybe he could relish a bit more the stench of the sanguine fluid oozing from the beast. He found pleasure in the pleasurable things. Personally, give me a board game and a pop and an acceptable degree of mirth can be attained. No blood. No death. Just a horse, a shoe, and an unyielding ambition to pass go and collect \$200.

The bull's coat was dark and his blood was too. At the points of insertion, his black fur clung together, fastened by the crimson paste that a less cultivated individual might mistake for a styling gel. Each sticky section on its body slowly dilated, so much so that each growing sanguine circle eventually attached to its embryonic neighbors until

the bull was a dark moist red. On every occasion that the bull sprang at the red cape, some of his fluid flung this way and that. The beast was less concerned now with his opponent and more concerned with the spiteful objects still lodged into his back. He shook and shook but the banderilleros had done a fine job with the darts and so all that shook off was more of his blood.

Months passed. Initially he had me with his concrete understandings underlined with arrogant undertones. Things do change though. Coca-Cola used to come in bottles, baseball cards came with a stick of stale gum, and unflinching truth used to be a hands off closet rack to be unapproached by ingenues and winebibbers. As it stands, fame and ingenuity are handed out like goody bags at little boys' birthdays to any wisenheimer that claims 'God is Dead' or 'Death is the ultimate reality.'

Night after night, he insisted that I join him in the city. He encouraged me to relax and 'enjoy the fruits of life' while I am young and I can. "No thank you," I said. Then I went on to explain how a life of intoxication and lust was an unrighteous path and I would not take it. And he said, "I know only that what is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after." I remained in the room. The room was quite comfortable and so was the bed.

When he would return, by God, I vowed to go out with him the next night. But still I stayed back. Enough change! Stay the same already. Why couldn't images stay images and compliments stay in vogue? Eases for this man came bottled in a carbonated liquor which required identification for purchase, and I was still nineteen with a good strong three-quarters-of-a-century left, but no fake ID. When he came back, Papa mentioned something about writing a story of his feeling the finality of death while sensing an oven-baked truth about linear lives in a grander circle. He told me, "Look kid, the world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure that it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry." He then took a swig of his French brandy because he had to, because it was part of his code.

Have mercy already! My Coca-Cola tastes watered down. For the life of me I cannot get the past to repeat itself. I even tried to leave the room today, but I felt neither courage nor initiative. Enthusiasm used to be innate; now, it only comes in neatly packaged deals: "Buy two and we'll give you the enthusiasm for free!"

Papa left me alone to brood about the past, while he went out to enjoy it one more time. Which is why it

ultimately came time to unpack the red scarf for a final chance at immortality. I would go to the Plaza de Toros with Papa.

Tercio III

The amount of blood covering the bull is now monumental — too much for the animal to bear and he lies down in the ring in front of his intimidatingly fresh opponent. The matador, with all his courage and glory kneels before the insipid beast and persuades the animal to prolong the inevitable and to continue in the name of sport — all the while concealing his wooden sword behind his yellow and red cape. The bull's life fluid covers the dirt surface of the ring like splatters of paint on an empty, brown canvas. The young matador cannot help but step in it, and the bull does too. They dip their feet into the red color and pool resources. The matador's motions are teasing and abrupt — more side-to-side. Little faint lines form on the ring, but his true art lies in the lack of movement and expression. His counterpart is clearly disoriented. His hooves carry the paint in dashing straight lines, perpendicular to the matador's — they are much longer and maladroit. There is more blood on his pallet and his four brushes are clearly wider than the young Spaniard's two. As a result, the bull's contribution to the piece is thicker and darker — more from the heart. When his inspiration vanishes and he is sufficiently tired, the bull lays himself on the dirt canvas. He gives a final fleeting look at his opponents — first to the peones, and then over to the picador and his iron steed, next to the banderilleros, and abruptly across the crowd of spectators, and finally to the matador who is dripping with perspiration. The animal also perspires, beads of blood rolling off his coat of blood because the blood is simply too much blood. And the empty holes in his back leave the creature weakened as termites might a block of wood. The bull slowly bends at his elbows, shortening his distance to the ground, and abruptly collapses onto the red earth onto his side onto a comfortable resting arrangement. The great matador exchanges his wooden brush for a steel one, and in the final estocada, he dips it deep into the back of the bull. The blade goes all the way through the animal with little conflict as the beast's body has been reduced to a virtual cavity, its core excavated by the many punctures. Crosses of red now shield the ring and the bull's body.

"A magnificent composition of contemporary abstract painting. For one artist, it is merely another sketch — there will surely be many more. For the other, however, it is truly his life's work — a magnum opus that displays both a will to live and an acceptance to die" — this according to Papa. Of course, the ring will be wiped clean; its transient nature eventually exposed, like everything else. So all that we are really left with is a dead bull with no ears.

If all the heels of all the women of all the ages
 Who have danced (in bars, kitchens, gymnasiums)
 (so quick! so smooth!)
to surrender and always to fly
collided in one terrible brightness
(more than flint against rock
 but heat against storm)
the light of this brilliant dawn
would be my gift for you.
In one sweet, sweaty, "sing it Ella!" moment
all of the fireflies from all of the August jars would
be released
all of the dewy-berriness of all exquisite blackberries
would drip off time
 (which would be suspended)
for in my gift, my darling,
there is no air to breathe
only air like comets tearing — keen! cool! —
sharp to fall through
 (and land dancing).

— Mary Margarita Cecilia Nussbaum



Caroline M. Wolf

2000 Literary Issue

