



The background is an abstract painting. A dark red, textured figure, possibly a person or a creature, is seated on a green, rolling landscape. The figure's head is obscured by a large, bright red splash of paint. The figure's right arm is extended upwards, and its left arm is resting on its knee. The landscape is composed of various shades of green and blue, with some white highlights. The sky is a deep blue, filled with numerous small, white and yellow squares of varying sizes, some of which appear to be floating or falling. The overall style is expressive and painterly.

inScape

2008

ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE

This issue is dedicated to Erica Lee Brown.

IN-SCAPE (N.)

The essential, distinctive, and revolutionary quality of a thing: "Here is the inscape, the epiphany, the moment of truth." (Madison Smartt Bell).

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SPECIAL THANKS TO

Morehead State University (MSU) Department of Art
MSU Department of English, Foreign Languages & Philosophy
MSU Office of Communications & Marketing
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Kentucky Philological Association

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DAVID V MOORE

True Nature

Digital Art

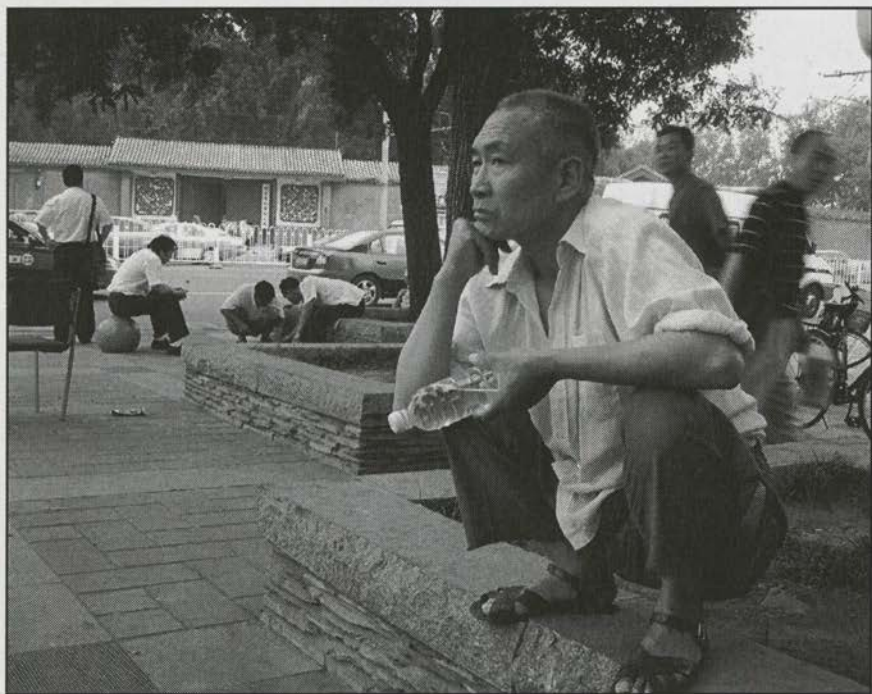
(First Place Art Award)

POETRY

BRANDON MASSENGILL

Grey Words

I listen to words,
spoken & sung
whispered & screamed
but the Whispers
are my favorite
Soft,
& barely audible,
sounds half-underwater
gurgled & faceless.
I stare at everything,
pavement & grass
& overcast skies
& I shy away
from the sun,
Harsh,
much like the
flickering fluorescent
Lights,
epilepsy splintering
through my eyes
into my head
unforgiving & unattractive
washing out features like
scars & casting
blinking shadows that are
sharp & concave
shadows that are both
beautiful & terrifying.
I really like the Whispers
and Overcast Skies.



TARAL THOMPSON

The Thinker of Beijing

Digital Photograph

(Second Place Art Award)

Lilith III

Her hands are large and thin,
bones draped with indigo veins,
glazed with ashen skin.

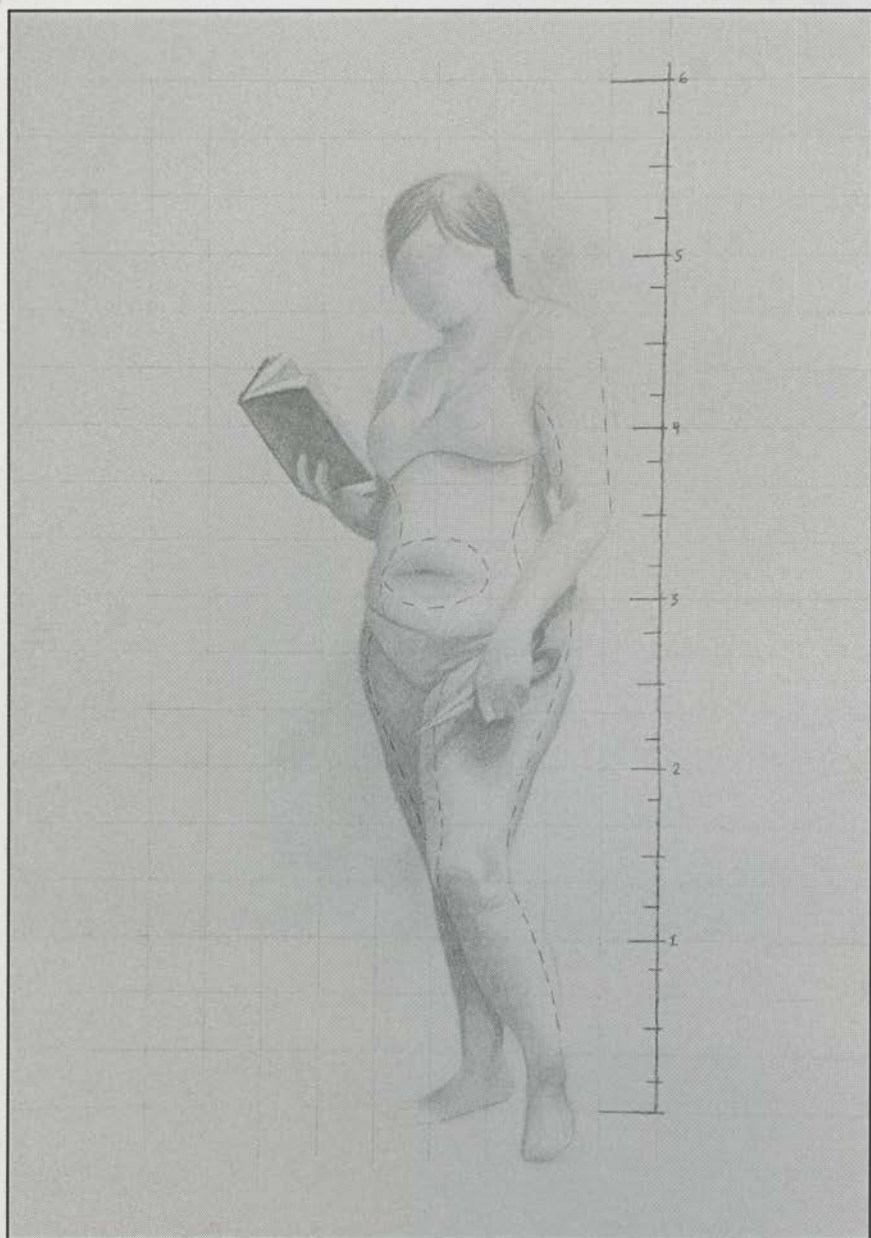
A cigarette is scissored
between two fingers,
she lazily brings it
to her lilac lips,
and her black talons
tapping on the window
sound like rain.

Her eyes are the Plutonian sky,
cold and distant,
glazed and maddening.

I think of asking for a cigarette,
but remember I have my own,
so I ask for a light instead.

Her head slowly turns my way,
she blinks,
a camera shutter
in slow motion
and she tells me
the switch is by the sink.

I ask her if she thinks we'll get cancer,
she says we're both Leos,
and I wish her sunglasses
would eclipse her lifeless eyes,
and I wish the gun in my coat
wouldn't wake the neighbors.



LAURA HAYWOOD

Cut Along Dotted Line

Graphite Drawing

(Third Place Art Award)

SEAN L. CORBIN (*Student Poetry Winner*)

Ode to the Abandoned Record Player

Don't beat yourself up.

You were justified.

The damn thing was just a hunk of plastic and wires
tangled in the abyss of forgotten pleasures,

the needle a relic of days gone by, dripping red flakes,

the neck chipped, its hinge loud and cranky in old age,

the turntable a broken shell of its former self,

barely able to play an EP without coughing up a lung.

You were right to lay it to rest,

to let it pass with dignity at the peak of the garbage mountain

and upgrade to the slimmer, sexier model,

the new generation, the digital friend.

Don't blame yourself.

How could you know?

The CD player may be a hassle, its directions confusing,

its temperament a roller-coaster, its sound a roaring

disappointment, but you're in the here and now.

Pay no attention to the concert next door,

the erogenous melodies flowing from your neighbor's walls

as he celebrates his new union with your old flame.

Who knew the dear thing could be repaired, even improved?

Don't let the old girl's new life get you down –

sometimes these things aren't meant to be.

Just lay back, enjoy your silent maturity,

and don't beat yourself up.

Perverved

Ten o'clock and my city is ill.

The streets are filled with rats

racing back to their nests

after a night of foraging in filth.

The shadows of the alley hide me,

a warm blanket on a cool night.

My blood pumps through my plumbing
as I see my new friend. He's exiting
the theater, his collar erect.
The blinding bright theater,
its marquee a lighthouse for the corrupt,
flashes movie titles with far too many Xs.
I feel the bile rise in my throat
and caress the old rugged cross on my chain;
My Savior is always here to strengthen me.
My friend is walking now, dodging cars filled
with those vermin, those apathetic creatures.
He runs as the rain starts to pour
and the rain makes it perfect.
I will cure my city, the cleaver my medicine,
and the flood from Heaven will wash
the cancer away. But I must remain diligent,
as rats always carry disease.

JOURNEY McANDREWS

New York is Dead

Noise of metal soldiers
reverberates on my windowpanes—
innovation resounds in my ears.
At midnight a satellite
looms in the night sky—
casting radiance on this city—
a cemetery for modernists.

Something haunted and hollow
remains in the graveyard—
life pulsates just beneath the gash.
Frogs copulate on waterfronts,
life clings to itself before dissolution.
Vacant men keep watch at the city gates,
they come looking for me
when the sun cracks open the sky—

I have departed to accompany
human corpses steadily dying
in the echoes of Paradise Alley.

A jazzman's saxophone crowds
alcoves in the empty streets.
Skyscrapers stroke the hand of God,
steel and cement seal our sepulchers.
Bare trees thrash about in Central Park—
struggling to breathe in the yellow fog.
Graves open and we fall in—
metallic worms consume our souls.
A procession of ghosts march
across the dead city—
resurgence of the damned.

The Single Hound

I.

My identity carved
in the curve
of a butterfly's wing.
My soul the shape
of a wild thornbush.
My life etched on
a drifting cloud.

II.

Only human in this life,
blood, bone, and tears.
When my body
disintegrates
in the cool clean
fire of earth,
my corpse will be soberly
offered to the wind,

to scatter me back across
the lush womb of life.
Rain will pour down
on the grave where
they put me to rest.

III.

It did not matter
if I had silk and wood
for my dead flesh,
or a preacher preaching
me into heaven,
or costly flowers
grown artificially
in a conservatory,
or weeping relatives
clothed in black.
It did not matter
that *they* said I was dead
on impact,
my spirit lives in the flap
of an eagle's wings,
in a blue jay's song,
in the hum of a bee.

IV.

In the orb of infinity,
a lump of my flesh
lies in the butcher's scales.
I'm no bounty for God,
my putrid and worm
infested body
belongs to the universe.

V.

The recycling of souls
is left to the earth,
flesh rotting
and melting away,
dirt decomposing us
until it reaches
the lustrous pearl
of the human soul.

VI.

There is no time for civility now,
my life inches by
on caterpillar feet.
Enthralled by the single
hound of existence,
the single breath of uniqueness,
alone and bravely,
my seminal life ends
and carries me home.

VII.

My soul comes
clad in nature,
a peasant remains
at her post.
When the brisk
wind of autumn
creeps into
your morning walks,
when spring bursts forth
Easter flowers,
when summer ripens fruit,
when winter wraps you
in its icy embrace,

remember,
it is me greeting you.
There is no
kingdom of heaven,
no streets paved in gold,
just regeneration and succession
of the *poetic* soul,
those who without one
in this life vainly
hope for one in the next.

—for Erica Lee Brown (1984-2008)

*may your poetic spirit rest
when it finds Emily*

PATRICK JOHNSON

Sometimes
I wish the world would stop
So I could take it all apart
And let the insides dry out
Then place it all back together
And walk away
Leaving a bright blue ball
In the violent darkness.

VICKIE CIMPRICH

Baking Reflections

Guisto's flour. Hobart mixer --

Federal Bakeshop, Ohio Valley summer 1968
icing recipe for gingerbread: 20 lbs pwdrd sugar,
1 tbs corn syrup, 2 tbs

pwdrd eggs, water,
THAT MIXER HAD GEARS LIKE A TRUCK'S

-- at the monastery
in the Redwoods.

Mendocino County pigs
get the half-cooked dough
that squeezes out the sides
of the three oven presses
that bake communion wafer

Once upon a time,
The lucky swine
at Loretto, Kentucky
got mash leftovers
from Maker's Mark.

Untitled

Between one map and another,
I've lost my co-ordinates,
Old Uncle Louie Merton.
At Redwoods Abbey no topo matches
my seven storey molehill.
So near Bear Harbor
as I've finally come,
can the right mountains find my psalm?
United Air's flight lines gash that path
like whitethorns my legs.

Off Ky. 399,
one kitchen bulb, then another,
goes on before light.
The school bus passes by before
the last scales can fall off my eyes.
Above Sheltoewe Trace Trail there
and in Sinkyone Wilderness near here,

I see people still standing
as if they were trees.

The fixed stars, the sun passing over,
pour oil on such distances.

The urge to go or stay
goes or stays.

RHONDA PETTIT

Ersatz Love

Continents away
and seeking my company's quota,
I felt compelled to know, to experience,
though I can't say
why

(I love my wife)

The world

of business is a fractal of the globe's
geology:

shifting, colliding masses

overlain by cities, nations – invisible,
not thought of

until a slip occurs
one mass drives into another –
all that force – something has to give
(I love my wife)

We tilt off orbit,
the boundaries erode,
and so we find ourselves

naturally
in a foreign place
with a foreign set of rules
unspoken

understood



SHATOSHA MADDIX

Pear Shaped

Cardboard Sculpture

(Honorable Mention Art Award)

where I sold my fear of strangeness to obsession
(the young girls here
fall into your hands
like loose change)

and what happened next has the vagueness of god.

Home now,
I am alive with guilt
a sweet taste

ghostly
(I love my wife)

And would I do it again –

The Likeness

See this small blue plate,
its center holding a likeness

of a pale yellow pear
tinged pink near the stem

to make it look the real thing?
I fought another girl

for this – she calls herself
Sky, arrogant bitch,

as if she were big enough
to hold us all, as if she thought

this world the lesser carving
on her dark medallion. True,

she might have seen it first,
but I saw it best:
the fruit unsliced beneath
ceramic's cracked glaze,

taut and shimmering skin
keeping its meat in check.

I keep it close, and moments
free I look until I see it

when I can't see; then it is
in me at my choosing,

its pinkness reddening, spreading,
a ripening the plate can't hold

forever. How desolate the plate
would be without its yellow pear,

but the pear is restless with beauty
and squalor, wants out, is willing,

I fear, to break the plate
and shatter to imagination

all it could one day hold –
without a plan for what next,

without knowing center from sky –
just to be out, be a pear.

SOSHA PINSON

Finger Painting

A young finger, stained
with new discoveries
traces the length
of the white face that lays ahead
softly caressing the cool complexion
leaving behind trails of warmth
where its purity has been tainted:

a blush upon fair skin,
repentance from a kiss of fingertips
on an unsuspecting cheek.
Guards have fallen
unable to procure the inevitable:
temperatures grow feverish
as inexperienced hands
move their way along
boundaries, surpassing them
with each touch...
forever gliding along the surface
until each crevice has been met.
Satisfaction claims his face
once he is spent,
standing back to admire his beauty
whispering a promise of return
as their encounter is cursed
and steadily wiped away
by older hands, unable to understand
their connection.

CRAIG WAGNER

House of Horror

Filth hidden beneath bleached walls
a choking miasma
of chemicals and
affliction

the dying heaped into antiseptic cells
electronic tombstones beeping
one-note funeral hymns

madmen with bloodless hearts
carve their bodies
drink their fluids
promise hope

yet deliver
rehearsed words with no meaning...

"Sorry. We did all we could."

Luna

In immaculate arms
I am complete
Her embrace
sends the blood through me
so fast it tears tissue from
capillary walls

I ask, I beg
her to remain with me
if only for another hour
because it would be one more hour
of strength
of wholeness

She stares down
cold, pale
and responds with
illuminated indifference

Before long
she fades

I become a
shrunk self
collapsed into weakness

I curse her
born unto, yet half raised
abandoned again
alone again

and I vow,
inattentive mother,
to stain your ivory image

they will see you
but know only me,
bastard-child of Luna.

SYDNEY C. ENGLAND

How to Write a Poem

Written for the "Until the Violence Stops" Festival 2007

I rubbed my fingers over the hole in the screen for the dozenth time
as if by doing so the right number of times
I might wish it away. But this time, framed by
the frayed silver wire and
not twenty feet from me,
sat a red hawk hunched on a dead branch of the redbud tree,

the one that grows in Dot's yard and that juts out over the deep gorge
between our properties.

He sits, not twitching: like a prince,
who, seeking his fortune, has ventured into a land
whose possession was soon to be challenged.

He must be young, inexperienced, I guessed,
to wander so far from the mountain. He sits
poised even so
while the jays and mockingbirds strafe and swoop,
Regal ... pompous, I think, really.

He's ignoring the screams of the diving birds
now blinded by panic. A sudden breeze caught my flypaper attention.
A thought surfaced about how many times I had sat
listening for inspiration from the lake and woods
for my sappy poems about nostalgia and lost love that

I dutifully typed and bound and brought to impress the mostly
indifferent professors who steered my creative writing classes, and
how convenient a red hawk could be.
Odes to rain and fluttering shadows on porch posts.
The last class was all women and ruled by one.

She sat two rows over and was that kind of
ugly that just is, no shape, no remarkable features to make one say,
"If only the nose was ... or the skin ..." There was no place
for a fairy godmother to start to make a pleasant
ending, even if one exchanged the polyester peasant blouse

and black sweat pants for Anne Klein. Like I said, she sat two rows over
and judged all our poems by the Bible. She wrote praises to Jesus
stuffed into rhymes like her ass into those pants, pinched and stretched to fit.
We read out loud and sure that I'd finally nailed one,
I sat listening for her final down beat.

Somehow she had not outgrown the baby fat. Dot and I
would have called her pudgy, if we'd given her any thought.
We were of that age.

I imagined her as a pudgy child, and her thin gray hair,
as dirt and yellow strings.

She looked up at us from her notes, "Not many people know, she said,
"that chicken shit comes in layers ...

that at the bottom is a soft dollop of white that's topped with a speck of black ... that it never quite
hardens ... that the smell stores itself in the roots of your nose hairs and can flood the brain like
a whiff of ammonia, even while you're sitting in a waiting room or standing in line at the movies,
and even after forty years ... or that the sun can beat down so brightly that even on the oldest,
worn, splintered, and bleached wood it can force the smallest tufts of chick down and straw to cast
shadows and make pollen dance in its streams ... and that, if you start young, you can teach yourself
to smile back while he gently plucks your hair and panties clean, before he laughs and hoists you
with his strong arms way up onto his shoulders and gallops you to the kitchen for a Popsicle."

The hawk ducks only once after a near miss, turns
slowly, lifts his heavy wings
and dives. The jays retreat for now.

They've done enough to protect their eggs.
The hawk, without a backward glance,
glides back up the mountain, his curiosity satisfied, if not

his stomach. Maybe it was this appetite
that brought him into the unknown for the first time. They drove
him out. They'd seen the sins of his fathers. He'll know better next time, though.
It takes a keen eye to spot a poem. I never learned to write one, really.
I'm not sure I want to.

TOMMY CHANEY

I Laid in a Quiet Spot, and That's How They Got Me

There's a spot of blood on the pavement
where two old guys knifed each other
until something was gained
somewhere, after the fact.

The police sectioned off the square
with yellow tape and said, "There's nothing to see here."
I swear they did.

People go on about their business inside
coming up with insurance scams
thinking of girls lost in bad weather
from other times and lives,
much like shipwrecks

(They speak like amputees squeezing the nub)

the brooding punks look into car windows outside
a jimmy and a screwdriver and a cold hunger
and nobody cares enough
to watch

(On the street corner up ahead, someone has something for sale ... anything at all)

the soup line gets longer and longer everyday

This isn't poverty. It's murder.

All of it.

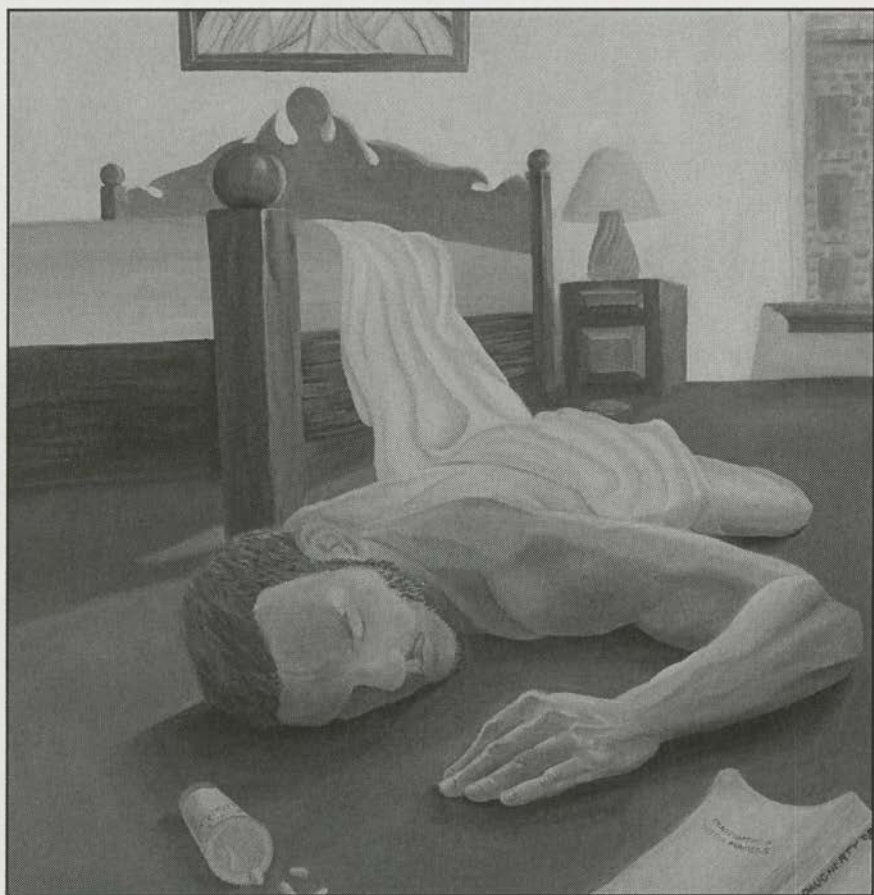
But the guys go on, and I'm too young to even belong
and my friends have all but forgotten the way I looked
sleeping on their floors

The lice have eaten everything (my hair, my body, my blankets)
everything but the bloody
pavement
(the only permanent thing in such a place as this)

When I can't sleep for the noise
Or the smell or the purgatoried
Boys roaming the halls,
I go out to that bloody place
Much alive
and I lay down and give it up for the night
in that very spot
and sleep better than anyone in this
world with half a good name left

The last time- they kicked me out
And it was winter and it was better,
Better than some nights.
And I laid with an old stray and let him lick
My face until we both felt content

I awoke, and he had left.
someone stole my empty wallet, that's
how well I slept.



COLIN DAUGHERTY

Way Too Soon

Oil Painting

The Smallness of it is Eating Holes in Everything I Own

Inconspicuously, like the smells of her clothes
like the arch of her eyebrow
like the taste of her everywhere I put my mouth
I sat in her window, looking out over
what's left of
what we
were, out there in the
dark

A message in Lipstick on the wall, it's
like underwear on the floor of a stranger's home.
You want to pick them up.
There are things you'll never know
if you don't
-you want to read them the right way.
the subtle messages
written in bold letters,
right out there in the open
and still so vague
and double-speak

We say "I love you" so many times
it loses charm.
We get hungry at the same time,
together, as if it were some
strange mechanism, created
by us, lived only by us....the world only ours
when we really
get down to it.
We're hanging there together- in the world, that is-
like so many suicides
like black paper dolls strung across
a little girl's heart
and we don't falter
we don't move

We just hang there quietly
and take turns breathing
in step

I see a glass house in the field, out there,
where the dark eats whatever steps in
and there are lights on in every room.
We can see the people
the blare of blue-green and TV.
the glints of moving things
refracting, seething in the ether,
static and flat in the pitter-patter
of it,
and everything looks so ugly
to them
but we can't wait to get there.

NETTIE FARRIS

The Fisherman and His Soul

Bitterness
knows no sorrow,
but when the world
turns black
and flat—
like a cumbersome shadow—

the young fisherman's soul
rises up in despair,
weeping hysterically.
The market,
astir with merchants
and entanglements,

bombards him
like thunder.
And when he goes out to sea,

he forgets his nets,
drifting
wild-eyed,

in oblivious wonder.
He has lost his heart
to the sea-king's daughter.
Night and day,
he fights the waves,
tugging him, under.

Iron John

Golden days of autumn saunter in
bringing us nuts and plump round pumpkins,
but the fair-haired gardener
rides with the winds of early summer.
He is the color of love in a flash of sunlight.

See his hand reaching up to catch an apple?

Now he's arriving with wild violets.
He is reaching for a key.
A ball is falling.
Mud man moving on the bottom of a pond.
Now he's gone.

RYAN ANDERSONS

Laugh

Asylum
Anarchy is too organized
Grant me the courtesy of a pistol
So that the world won't shy away
But cower
Whatever doesn't kill you simply makes you
Stranger.

LORIE ZIENTARA

Light on Morning Pond

Silent sunrise witness

only spirit eyes

behold the fleeting grandeur

that introduces nighttime to

the day

Power in bowed heads

backs bent in prayer

rising up to catch

each swift moment passing

unnoticed by the waking multitude

Water leaf ascends

and bends

joined one-hundred fold

each slender stalk

silhouetted

and

reflected

by sky mirror

No mathematical equation

enters this chaotic

dream scene

at once peaceful in its blush

and boisterous in

opposing contrast

binding the dreamer

to the dream of morning light

and promise of

new day

Flamingo pink

dancing in gossamer charms

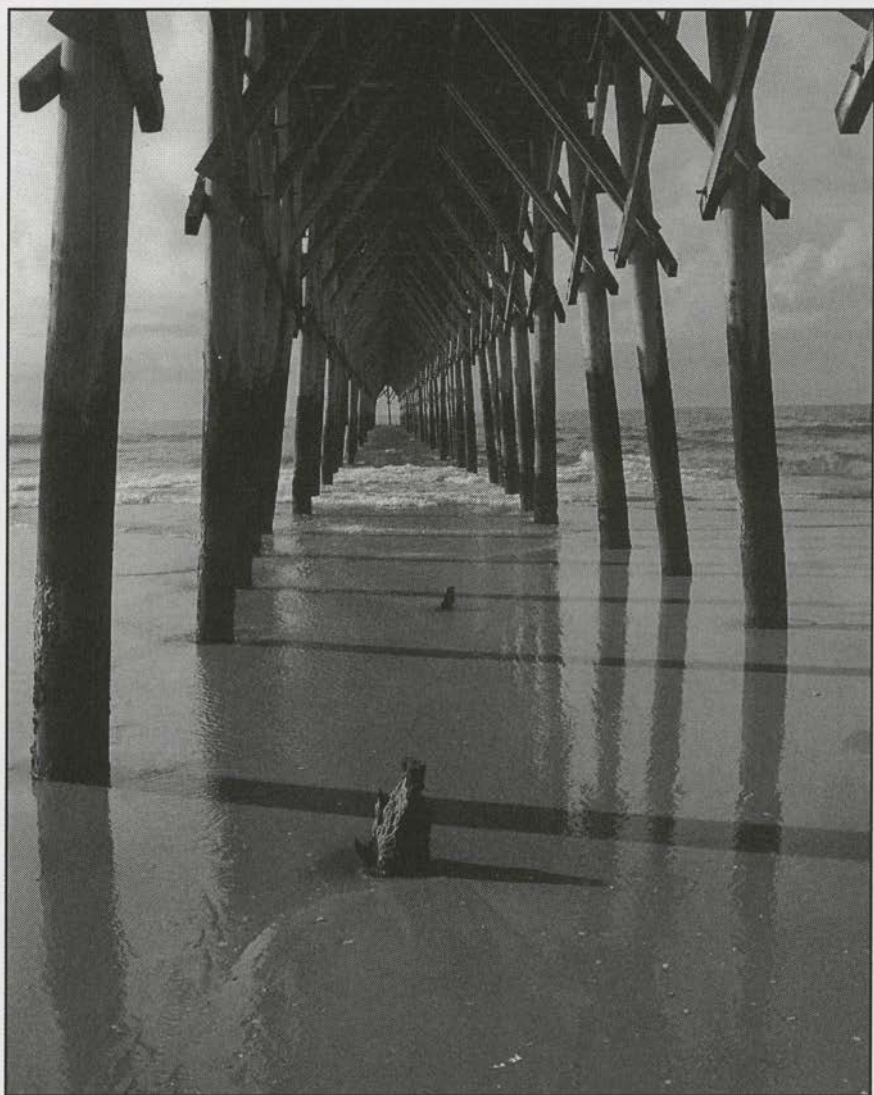
in the arms of

pale washed indigo

all breeze kissed

ready to slip from sight

in paling dawn



DEREK HOLSTON

Under the Boardwalk

Digital Photograph

Morning Up the Holler

It is the early morning
 no light awakens above the hill
too early for the singing bird
 the deer have long since
 settled in their sleep
The morning does not break 'til late

No burning plate of copper
 no neon sky
 just quiet darkness
 enough to test my faith
 in morning

The deepest of the dark
 presents himself in hooded cloak
 and curls his arm to
 wrap all dreamers
as they twist and turn
 in early dreams before
 their bright alarms
 rob them of their last moments
 of deep velvet

Where is the daylight that
 beckoned...
 her skirts of luminous voile
 that swept the wide horizon
 and took our breath away
Already her bright dance has her asway
 above the salted river
 her bright dance into strong morning—
 her departure from the night

It seems too wrong to rise in this deep darkness
 each noise—so soft—yet wakens up the dead
 and irritates each sleeping sense that
 refuses to believe
 this is the start of Appalachian day.

JONATHAN LOUNSBERRY

My Tangible Orange

This orange tangible thought,
So real I could pluck it away
From a tree of triad religion,
Making infinity fall short.

A lesson perchance,
On the consequences of picking fruit;
But no,
No allegory could hold a tangible thought.

It brings my eyes through bursting windows,
To stare indefinite comforting shine;
To long to know when blinded for
Too long to know when blind.

Death does a daring debauchery to us,
All together,
All cradled and nesting.
Still, I think of my thoughtful orange.

If I just scratch the surface,
I can smell the citrus composure.
But no sign of juicy exuberance
Pauses my brain with it all.

Hardly any other fruitful philosophy
Can give me sense.
But the irony of a rotten thing so ripe
Is my tangible orange.

I've bitten into it before,
Within the crimson gold.
It panged my lips with fire and bitterness,
And so I do not trust it.
So here I am God,

Dancing naked in a fruitless abyss,
Tangibility in hand.
God, I must look like a fool.

CLARK GORDON

Seventeen Long Years

your windows and doors
ive seen a million times
oh the start of this was so grand
such promise
big eyes
we could have stood
on the world
big

until i could see
that you were a ghost town
that countless others
had dropped their tools
and walked away
before they ever drove the first nail
that 'brain drain' is a symptom
of a soil with PH so high
that even a thistle like me
can't take root

everyone around you
has something
some dark secret
some ancient laughy legend
an abandoned mine
a flooded valley
a famous singer with a hokey smile
but you,
you have swept every corner

for culture
and collected and preserved it in a nice
tidy
box
and no one has to venture into these hills
to see "art"

no, my dear, this time is done
i have searched and searched
for the part of us that fits together;
everywhere i found revulsion
and a backwards response
to change
and fear
that someone
might tear your mountains down
and expose you
cowering
in this little corner
of nowhere.

You Don't Get to Play

not now.
you missed it
when everyone was up
moving to the music
you were standing against the wall
in your James Dean pose
too cool
too smart to play
but we knew you were aching
and on fire inside
and we are human
and alive and had to keep going
while you watched
so now
you want to sit

you want to play
the chairs all long rotted away
the game over for decades
but you want to play now
now you're ready
and we can only stare
as you try to fit into your kid pants
and scrub away the wrinkles
and smile some excited, maniacal smile
with your shoes on the wrong feet.
no.
you're late.
go home.

SILENA SKAGGS

Sex- The Whore's Rebuttal

I feel your skin near me,
It draws me like a magnet,
The heart of your longing,
The end of your passion,
The beginning of our lives,
The end of my innocence.

Your warm breath tickles my cheek,
As you whisper your request.
I nod my head,
But am overcome by the pounding of my heart.
You step closer and lead me into an embrace.
I feel your heart against mine-
Both pounding to the same beat.

We hold each other close,
And you lead me to the place,
My heart is racing,
My morals are numb,

My mind is yelling,
And my body is giving the thumbs-up.

Gently you lift me like a small child,
Over to the bed,
We kiss passionately,
And begin.
You whisper your love,
And I echo mine.
Both made for the moment,
Made for the art.

Afterward, we lay there,
Tangled up in the sheets,
Making promises,
Never to be kept,
And fooling ourselves about forever.

You fall asleep,
But the keeper of the sand,
A man that even I can't seduce,
Passes me over.
I listen to your slow breathing,
I hear your lies,
I believe them.

Looking at the clock,
I know soon you will rise,
I take a shower,
Gather my clothes,
And stand at the door,
Remembering the past,
Praying for the future,
And whispering my true love.
Wishing it was true,
And not just sex.



**LYDIA WOMACK, ANDREA MULLINS,
COLBY NUNEMAKER, JESSICA REYES &
JENNIFER SHEEHAN**

Untitled

Hand Built Raw Terra Cotta

STEPHEN GRAHAM

Sudden Morning

A lotus petal sank from the ceiling
This morning,
And settled in the dregs of my tea:
A sodden pink muscle.
Sunlight swelled upon the wall.
The world, I saw, was softening.

GEORGE FILLINGHAM

At the Intertribal Powwow Along the Trail of Tears, Hopkinsville, Kentucky

" sweating dancing for hours . "

Allen Ginsberg

Sweltering in September under Sycamores,
Campers ring the riverbank, line the access road,
The sun dehydrating a sweat bowl of souls
While grills sear meat, fountain drinks flow,
The Cherokees and wannabees,
Mothers with strollers pushing heat heavy kids,
Meandering past the stalls of trinkets, tee shirts,
Leathers, feathers, jewelry venders;
The decked out fancy dancers, traditionals
Regaled in calicoes and buckskins,
Young men, elders, white folks, red folks,
Patchwork folks of mixed ancestry,
All shuffling, chanting, stepping, whooping
As round the drum the singers cry,
They wail and whip, they shout and thump
The drum that thuds between them;
The sacred drum that snaps and twitches,
Jerks and lurches, thundering out the heartbeat
Of the people, rocks, inside its cradle,
Hammers out the world again, again, again.

The Pantomime

"We see not our signs:..."

Psalm 74:9

To bracket timelessness inside of time
Augustine took eternity from God,
Made time intrinsic to the mind sublime,
A presence mirrored in the soul's façade.

With fifty summers grazing on my youth
I recognize the timelessness of time
Arriving like an impacted wisdom tooth,
Each birthday candle flame a painful chime.

The irredeemability of time
That Eliot referred to in Quartets
Is time not taken, time not spent, not lived.
But mine is limited to time survived;
I strain taut joys from slack regrets,
But muted, turned symbolic pantomime.

WILLIAM SALAZAR

Death

Death came knocking
it went up the holler
down the clearing,
and into the house,
and settled on the ridge
of the Tennessee Mountains.

It took the young and the old
and licked its chin from the left-
over morsels of the mother's
cries.

At dawn the mourning sun
rose, grief-stricken in

the midst of the mist and fog.
Birches, Maples and Elms,
sentinels whose up-rooted
solemnity had begun
to loose their fire-
had turned red, then yellow,
and finally brown.
Skeletal armies whose
arms stretched out to the sky.

Caravans of mule drawn carts,
folks marching to the cemeteries
carrying a burden on shoulders
of aged fathers and kin.

The noon sun found the
silhouette of the Turkey Vultures
prancing by the roadside show.
And up the tree tops
Eagles devoured its black
dressed-up prey: Weasels and Ferrets.

Night fall found hawks
battling for deeds and misdeeds
with the night Owls and Ravens
reverent co-conspirators
who at dusk come knocking at
death's door.

Emptiness

For CS

I don't know what sadness
settled upon me first or
where.

I think it was the muscling of the oak trees
dwarfing the springtime
ferns, ginger root and mushrooms

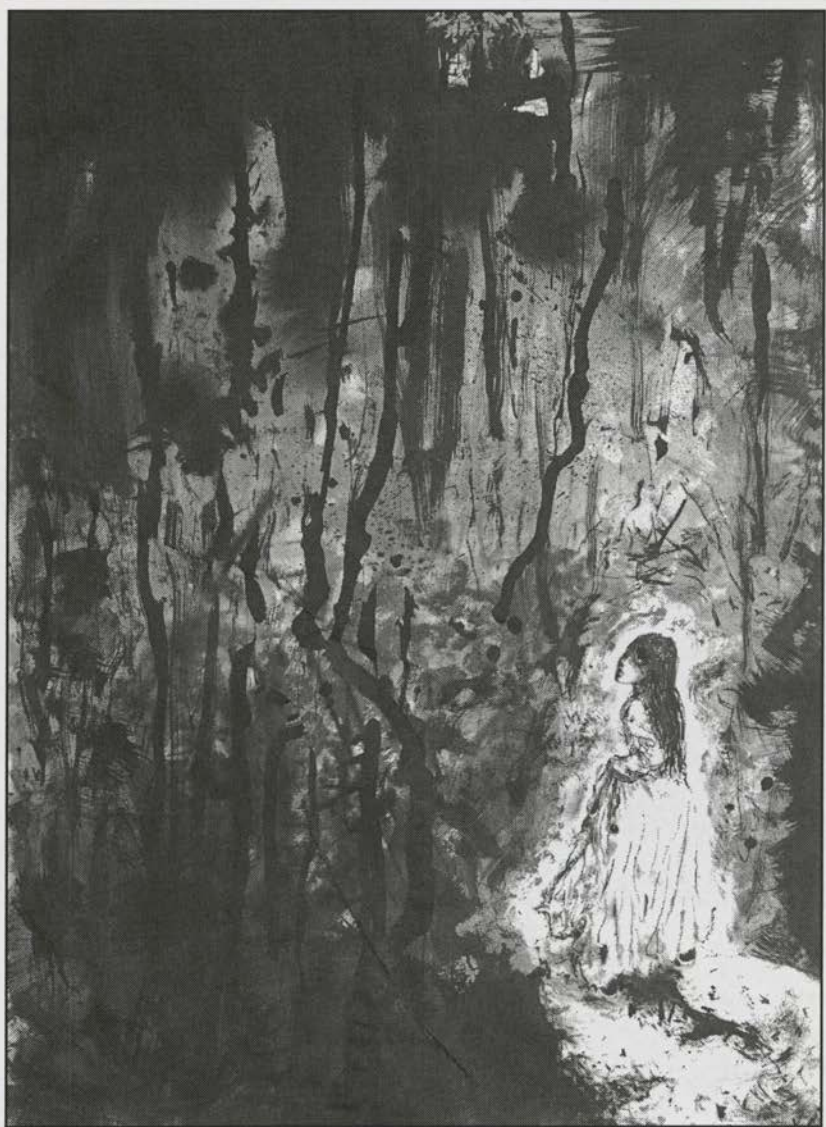
of the decaying undergrowth
of our lives.

Perhaps it was the summer berries
their brambles ensnarling the Sycamores
and the grief we shared-
along.

Then again I think it was
the afternoon light
filtering through the Blue Ash
holding captive the spores,
the muted sorrows
And
the still-birth angle of the Autumn
night.

And in between
the anguish
a muted cry came
ripping into our misery
like moths on the
underside of leaves.

But I believe it was the mountains-
And the winter winds
that triggered my own grief.
Dimming the mourning day
light and bending the
Spirit of the Sourwood,
The Sycamore,
and the graveyard.



KERRY ADKINS

Dread

Ink & Acrylic Painting

ANTHONY FIFE

Things I'll Leave in Kentucky When I Go

A jacket for autumn
a sweater for autumn
so my ghost can watch the leaves go red
and walk the color-washed hills;
my ink tracks in a magazine,
growing dimmer as each year piles on
a new edition; Jesse Stuart
on a shelf, we never got along, say hello
to cobwebs as they come; some money

At Keeneland, limestone cathedral,
circuit where the horses ran
away with my dollar; so many midnights
at the man-made lake, counties
wide, emptying my smoky lungs
through cold water stillness; Waterfield,
the place where I met
Holly, who waits for me out west.

ERICA LEE BROWN

Eulogy

The television lies to me
in bright, variant color
high definition
images of gray
all these low frequency international voices
have nothing to say

Texas bought Iraq
from the windows of Washington
with money that couldn't cure
my swollen jaw



STEVEN RODGERS

The Integrity of Women

Digital Art

The little white men
in big blue suits
say I have all the power
all the power
to burn brown mothers with empty cradles and broken land
all the power
to cool scorched desert soil with the blood of young,
learning men

Divided
a nation without leaders and truth
so full of cancerous air
we can only breathe
our inevitable nuclear end
self-inflicted terrorism
the constant color
of a (e)motionless flag

America is a seductive liar
mouth warm with oil
pink carbon thighs
pressing against the black tongue
of shattered democracy

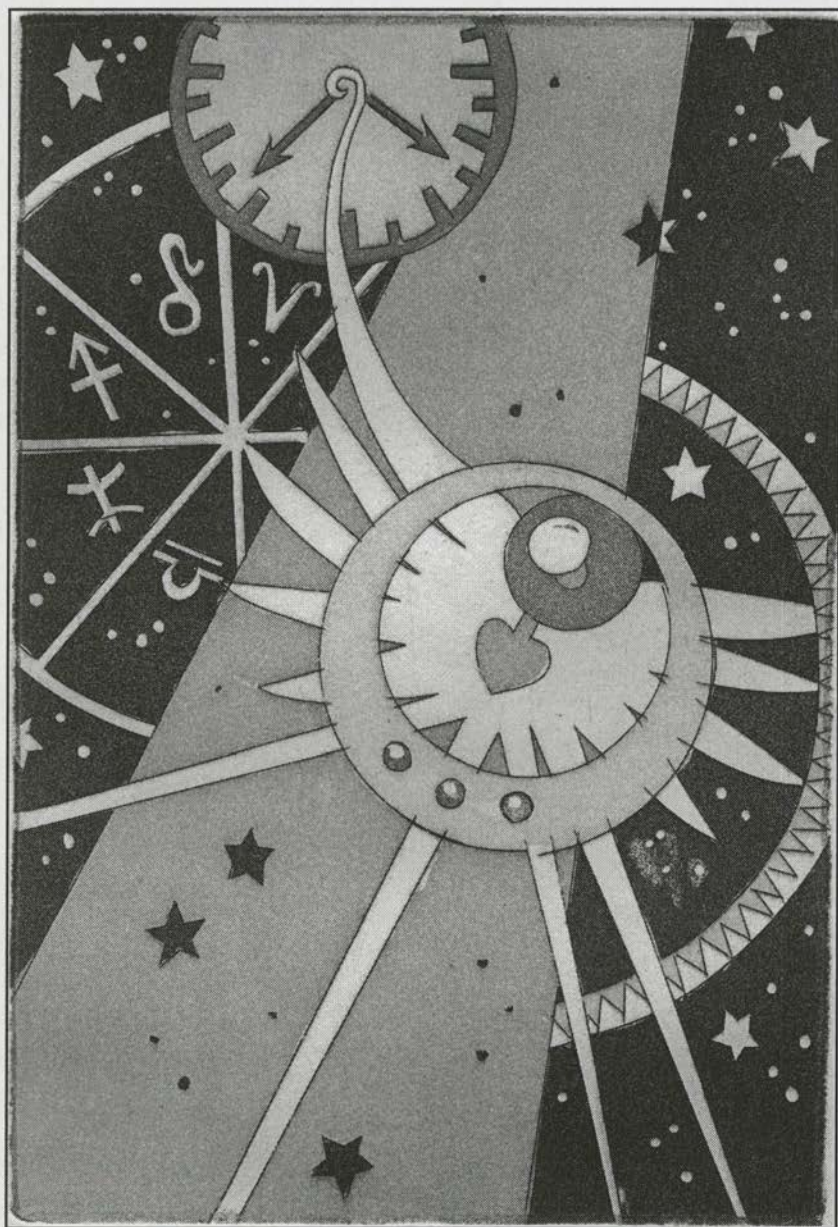
But I have all the power
all the power
to loosely vote
to freely speak
to blindly follow
pay my debts and bury myself

I have swallowed the red
hidden the white
borrowed the blue
I have become silent
inside of you
my hollow country, my dying union.

Red Lunar Fist

the moon
hangs heavy in the sky
a soft, shattered whisper
a round needle dragging
against smooth vinyl grooves
the old, tired
spinning, spinning, stop
of a hot record
a 45 of worn rhythm and blues

this moment
with my hand outstretched toward
the warm, orange night
feels familiar
like the first time I saw my father cry
the same illusion
of touching something rare
his tears, the red lunar fist above
reflections of light
distorted by years
distant images of dying giants
a final, finite pulse
thick amber clouds rest above the mountains
my father closes his dark, wet eyes
fractured earth clings to the moon
as the harvest turns to dust.



RYAN NEWBERRY

Rarely Ignorant

Intaglio Print

FICTION

AARON NELSON (*Student Fiction Winner*)

The Bishop Game

"Are you looking at anything in particular?"

"I'm looking at ... everything in particular." In my mind as I construct it and when I first say it aloud that will sound cool and clever, but the more I run it over in my thoughts the more I'll regret saying it. There's nothing especially clever about it.

"I understand." The clerk will speak softly and knowingly, like a daytime talk show host, with practiced smiles and measured cadence. She'll look the same way she did last week through binoculars: a little like Diane from *Cheers* if you made her 18 again and broke her nose, like what happened to Marsha in that episode of *The Brady Bunch*. I wonder now if she watches as much TV as I do. She's still a pretty attractive girl. I think face to face, she'll smell like white musk and fabric softener. She'll hover around me for a moment, then she'll float away to check on the only other customer there.

The glitter coming up from the counters will look as though fresh snow has fallen only in the glass boxes, with special fluorescent lights to show off the gems and make everything twinkle enough to melt the kind of little hearts that thrive on materialism. I feel better about swindling these people, since all the calculated lighting and the lifeless elevator music are all just elements in a special, legal con game they play every day. It doesn't really matter whether they deserve it or not. Justification is a luxury I've become quite accustomed to doing without.

When I'm in the store, I won't be sure how to act natural. I'll let myself take in all the sights, every inch of every cabinet, until I come to a gorgeous necklace with the perfect price tag. I'll begin running the numbers through my head, and I'll reason that after taxes, it should run about \$1900, \$1910, somewhere in there. I'll do my best to be casual when I motion for—let's call her Diane—to come over and unlock the back so I can get a better look at it. I'll do my best to look genuinely interested, to make things legitimate. I'll have to put on a face, express wordlessly just how perfectly the necklace fits the occasion. "Emeralds are my wife's birthstone," I'll explain, since it was my mother's birthstone, and so if I were asked about it, I could say my wife's birthday was May 2nd. "But I've always had a thing for diamonds." Then it'll strike me odd to use my mother's details for a fictional wife. I'm not going to think about that anymore.

"Those are GIA certified diamonds, ranging from a quarter carat to a full carat, VS2 clarity..."

Right around there, I'll stop listening. People love to show that they know what they're talking about. She'll make very little effort to try and decode the technical terms. I'll gather, however, that

they're good diamonds. She'll handle the necklace like some poor puppy that's up for adoption, and she'll act like it's some special gift to let me hold it.

"... and an eighteen inch, fourteen karat white gold chain."

I can't run through this too quickly. I'll give her a nod, inspecting it carefully, wondering how much I can get out of it from a fence and how much I could get out of it just trying to sell it myself. "I think I'll take it."

I'll hand it back and I'll follow her to the corner of the store with the hole in the wall and the door to the back room and all the certificates and awards declaring what a marvelous jewelry store this is. The local news channel will say it's the best in town. She'll go through a door, where the jeweler will usually be setting gemstones or repairing rings or whatever jewelers do with those magnifying glass goggles they wear, and she'll ask me how I'd like to pay.

"Cash," I'll say, my wallet already opening in my hands. I'll take out the crisp hundred dollar bills, pretending I'm not sure just how many I'm carrying, and I'll count out all but five of them. I'll count them again.

I'll set them down on the small counter surface, hanging just over the edge on her side so she can pick them up easier, and she, too, will count them twice. On the second run, she'll stop, and she'll stare at the third one, the one with the little green fingerprint on the corner. Her eyes will probably narrow. Maybe they won't, maybe she'll do her best not to look suspicious at all. "I'm going to go to the back and get a box for the necklace," she'll inform me, and she'll shuffle away the same way she does in the showroom, gliding around with perfect posture. Perhaps I've spent too much time just checking her out instead of monitoring the store. I'll hear a door open somewhere on the other side, a rear exit, out of sight, and I'll hear the traffic outside, the lunch rush, and I'll hear the door close back and the traffic hush again.

By now, I'll have opened my cell phone under the counter and placed a call to the first number in the phone's memory.

"Hey honey, are the kids back from their field trip yet? I was wondering if you guys wanted to go for ice cream."

On the other end, I'll hear my accomplice—let's call him Sam Malone, keeping with the *Cheers* theme—laughing his deep laugh. "Yes dear." He'll do his awful imitation of a woman, a butch Marge Simpson with a tinge of Yoda.

"I'll be home in an hour. Love you."

Sam will laugh some more and hang up.

At some point in here, I'm hoping the other customer or customers there will have walked out. I hate crowds around when I'm working, and in two weeks I've never seen this store any busier than two customers at once. I'll hear the same out-of-view door opening and closing, and the young woman will return. Maybe she'll have forgotten the box in all the confusion, and I'll hear her swear under her breath and run to the back to grab one. Maybe she'll be more level-headed and snag one on the way back through. She'll very neatly nestle the necklace in its padding, compliment

me on my choice or my taste, count out change, thank me—I love the irony in the “thank you” I’ll most certainly be getting—and she’ll wish for me to have a wonderful day. I’ll give her the same nod I use when I’m examining the necklace, and I’ll leave for the exit. I’ll get into the front seat of the Crown Victoria parked at the other end of the lot. Sam will ask me how things went. The dash clock will say it’s something like 12:27. Everything should have worked so far. The easy part was over. I’ll slouch down in the seat and watch the storefront.

When I was a child, maybe nine or so, I killed a dog. I didn’t mean to. I just wanted to scare it off. It came up to the yard, harassing the cats and rooting through our trash cans. I don’t remember exactly how I wound up getting violent. I had a baseball bat, the one I used on my brief stint on the school team. It just growled at me when I got near it and I just... growled back. I tried to shut it up and it tried to fight back. I killed it. It was a big bloody pile of fur, there in the driveway, voiding its bowels and making these awful noises. It was trying to whimper or something, but its throat was pretty messed up by then, so it just gurgled. I tried to get it to shut up again. I ran back inside and my mom told me it would be okay. She buried it for me and put the bat in the grave with it. I got a new one. I never told anyone else.

“Are you looking at anything in particular?” my accomplice asks me, noticing that I’m staring out the window.

“I’m looking at everything in particular,” I reply, smiling. He only vaguely looks like Ted Danson. The Crown Victoria has a powerful heater, and I aim the vent away and slunk in my seat.

“Do you think this is going to work here? What if he doesn’t go to lunch or she wants to see another cop or something?”

I count the bills out again, all 25, neat and too perfectly crisp. I take out the one with the smudge, and put it back in as the third bill in order. “Be more optimistic. I cased this one carefully. She isn’t a day over nineteen, she’ll be there alone, and we’ll be convincing. She’s blonde. Worst case scenario, she calls the police and the police find this car while we’re on the highway.” We have a different car already in the parking lot, an old Pontiac with the paper floor mats from the buy here-pay here dealership still in it.

“I like this car,” he says, laughing his deep laugh.

I like this car too. It’s pretty stately for a domestic. The dash clock clicks to 12:15. He parks far away from the store. We begin to wait, since timing is so important.

On his cue, I could imagine the jeweler coming out of his storefront. It would be 12:30, maybe 12:31, he was pretty punctual. He’ll tighten his coat up and quickly make his way to the Chrysler Crossfire parked directly across from the door. He would be going to a steakhouse on the other side of town. I’ll wait until his taillights disappear, then hop out and sit in the back seat of the Crown Vic. Our car will take his good parking spot, quickly and crookedly.

Sam will bail out and open the back door for me, leading me by the arm, really manhandling me, and he'll drag me through the storefront and straight to the back.

"Ma'am? Ma'am?"

Diane will return to the counter and look so adorably confused. I'll have to change from my pleasant family man face to the bitter, hardened criminal scowl. She'll be too confused to talk.

"Did you just sell this man a necklace?" Sam will ask her. For a moment, for a little comic relief, I'll imagine Ted Danson and Shelley Long having this conversation in the bar, Cliff and Norm chatting while looking over bracelets.

"You know, for every diamond they get here, twelve children have to die."

And no one will believe him.

"Yes, I did, just now..." She'll speak quickly, and she'll give a tight little nod.

"Would you mind letting me see the bills he paid with?"

"What is this about?"

"My name is Officer Brown. There's a good chance—I'd bet my kids' college funds on it—that he gave you some counterfeit bills."

"I thought so! I knew it! But I had the bank across the street look at them for me. The bank said they were real." I honestly can't imagine how she'll be reacting at this point.

Sam—no, Officer Brown now—will really do his best to sell things. The fake badge will pass Diane's inspection, and she'll hopefully get fueled by some sense of self-satisfaction. Deep down she'll *know* that those bills are fake. Of course, to get by the bank, we'll have to use real money and make it look counterfeit.

"Well, the bank isn't the same as the treasury. They do look awfully real." He'll hold them up to light, inspecting, admiring. He'll know my face from wanted posters. It'll be a great coincidence he found me. Searched me. Found a necklace on me. If she says I did it, she'll be some kind of hero.

"If you'd like to wait, my dad will be back from lunch soon, he's the one you should be talking about this with."

"There's really no need." He'll take a piece of paper from his pocket, give her the number of the local police, a fake local number as his personal phone, and an informal receipt for a diamond necklace that will become property of the police as evidence in a counterfeiting case. Oh, it will be promptly returned, with thanks and commendations, after my trial. She'll get her picture in the town paper. She'll like that. He'll apologize for having to use a scrap of paper, but his signature will make it just as valid as any official form. He'll give her his word.

She'll still be a little panicky, but it'll ease her mind when Officer Brown motions to the "unmarked cruiser," complete with Ford's "Arizona Beige Metallic," that is a good, common color for plainclothes cop cars. If she would look at it up close, she'd find no computer in the dash or lights hidden in the grille or a shotgun mount, but from 200 feet away in the hazy winter sun and through the glass of the door, it passes off well. She'll buy it. She'll take the receipt for nothing. She'll buy it all. And that will be that. The last step will be hitting the interstate before her dad gets back

and decides to test out the phone numbers. No doubt her dad, who had obviously been a jeweler for a long time, had heard of this grift. For the final touches, he'll handcuff me right there in the store and manhandle me back out, just as he had yanked me in.

My mother died when I was sixteen. She always had this terrible cough that she refused to go to a doctor for. Sam and I had been big-dreaming friends for several years. I could sit here and try to recall just how exactly it all came to this, and I'd sure as hell love to blame it on my mother's death. I don't think I could.

"What?" I ask, when Sam says something that jerks me out of my daydreams.

"I asked you if you were ready to *do* this thing. If your head's not in this, it's not going to work. Your head is always in the clouds, and this is a commitment sort of thing." The clock in the dash reads 12:17.

I assure him that I was ready. We go over things one more time.

Get the necklace.

Pay.

If the girl disappears, I call and ask if she's just going to the bank, and if she isn't—if she's just outside calling the police or if she gets in her car to go find her dad or whatever—we abort.

If it all works, I go back out to the car.

When the old man leaves for his 12:30 lunch, we put on our play and get our money back.

By 12:45 we would be on the highway.

I look around carefully and head out into the cold, making my way to the jewelry store.

My first girlfriend and I had an awkward relationship. It was right after my mom had died, and I was pressuring her pretty hard about sex. She said she didn't understand the world or something like that. She said she wasn't ready. Like the dog, I'm not sure how things got violent. I don't know what came over me. I'd heard that line a thousand times before in movies and court cases—"I don't know what came over me"—but it was true.

To this day I still think about her. I wonder if I regret it. I honestly don't know. It was still the best night of my life.

When I was 25, I pulled one grift too many. I spent two weeks planning it and all my free time dreaming about how it would go. I didn't plan for contingencies. I never thought that the little blonde would call our bluff and pull a gun. I never thought such a pretty thing could spout such obscene language. When the real cop came—Officer Salyer—and patted me down, he didn't notice the little metal shim in my back pocket. Someone once told me about how you could pop off the child safety ring from a lighter and straighten it out. He started taking his witness statements and he left me on the curb, didn't hear me opening the handcuffs. He



CASEY McCOWN

Casa Borinquen Viejo San Juan (series)

Digital Photograph

took Diane's gun away and unloaded it. He turned his back to me. The jeweler can keep his gemstones. He can set and reset the diamonds and the emeralds. Before our cars go up for police auction, some mechanic can have them. He can have all the Pontiacs and the Fords he wants. Before the backup arrived, though, I had my own moment of dominion, of control, clarity and peace. Salyer. Backup did arrive. They were a little late. I didn't like Crown Victorias as much from the backseat. The other cops were awfully mad at me, and Sam was too. None of that matters, though. I watched the world pass by, the rear car window like a TV screen, stores and houses and pedestrians and headlights, like opening credits to a show, and every mundane detail had a special meaning, since this would be the last time I'd see the world outside of a prison cell for a while. I'd like to think that if the guy behind the wheel weren't eyeing me in the rearview mirror like he wanted to kill me for what I did, he'd have asked me if I was looking at anything in particular.

TUSKIN ROBERTS

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Breakfast

I'm scraping day old yolk off one of my two forks. Danny is playing with his shadow, a dozen silhouettes of himself painted on the kitchen floor. He is entranced by the idea that he can have more than one shadow I think, and, on his hands and knees, he slaps the ghosts open handed.

I never really cooked before the custody stuff was settled and my son started staying with me. I would finish off last night's pizza, put some coffee on and count the minutes until work. Since he's been visiting I've bought skillet, pans, pots, groceries and silverware. I try to cook when he's not here, but it's not in me.

"Ed," he says.

"Call me dad or daddy."

"Ed, Ed, Ed, why do you make coffee, Ed?"

He asked me for my name yesterday, and now I regret telling him Surely he knew it before I told him though. Didn't he? I couldn't remember if I had ever told him.

"Just because I like it. Tastes bad." I stick my tongue out. Danny laughs.

"Why do you like it if it tastes bad?"

"I don't know. I just started drinking it one day and here I am."

"Here we are," he says.

How smart is he? Smarter than me, probably. He got that from my dad. My dad was a smart guy. College professor, physics and chemistry doctorates He died halfway through his third degree, which would have been in philosophy. I always thought that was weird, that he wanted a philosophy degree after being a scientist for so long. Maybe he saw something, something mortal

men are not allowed to look at, the shock of which killed him. Maybe he discovered a cancer in the weave of things, a sneaky but malignant triumph of the Devil, etched into cosmic history, injected into the bloodstream of humanity when God took a second to blink.

Not long after Dad died, Ella and I got a divorce, and I haven't been sure of anything, let alone why I like coffee, exactly. Danny is the only consistent thing in my life. Well, Danny and work, but I like Danny a lot more.

Suddenly I have the vague sense that I have forgotten something. That's typical on the weekends, now. I have been trying to multitask recently, trying to do mom things. I go over a mental list, visualizing blue ink on lined notebook paper, with hand drawn boxes beside the items. The bacon is frying, the laundry tumbles in the dryer, the coffee percolates. I feel less like a dad, and more like a weekend mother when Danny is here. It's easier for us both that way. He seems to respond better to it. When I kiss his forehead, when I raise the pitch of my voice, an aura of recognition seems to come over him. Sometimes I try to remember Ella's mannerisms, try to feign the little things that make her unique. I move like a dancer when I sweep the floor, that's one thing I can do for him.

"You want eggs Danny?"

"Eggs but not runny," he says.

I move the bacon to a plate covered with a paper towel and crack two eggs into the same skillet. The grease keeps them from sticking; these are the kinds of things that Danny has taught me. Put rubber bands on the lower cabinets' handles, keep the toilet paper in his reach, these kinds of things. He is still slapping at his shadows. I try to keep an eye on everything. Withitness, I think it's called. Awareness, the great Buddhist principle, as elusive as my son's shadows.

The eggs are sizzling, and I put the bacon in the microwave to keep it warm. Does that even work? I go back to the eggs, the buzzer on the dryer goes off and Danny has disappeared. I walk out of the small kitchen and find him sitting in the hallway, pointing at nothing. It's a little eerie. I wonder if this is normal.

"What is it Danny?"

"My guy is in the bathroom!"

Danny is becoming infamous for his attention to human needs concerning his "guys," a dozen or so imaginary friends that I believe have grown out of the soil of his loneliness. Maybe that's too much of an adult interpretation. Adults have an interesting way of making everything sinister, morose, depressing. There may be nothing sinister about imaginary friends.

"C'mon back in the kitchen, kid."

He walks back to the kitchen and lays under the card table. I wish I could give him more on the weekends. I wonder if he has the potential yet to do something for someone just because it makes that person feel good; does he know how to lie through his teeth; can he placate? Really the question is does he feel like he should visit me on the weekends or does he actually want to?

Children have always been an alien concept to me, and I find myself looking at Danny constantly, thinking, what do you really want? I find it a joke of God that people are charged with raising children but most can't ever remember being one.

I flip the eggs with a spatula that has a rough, melted edge. Teflon, *remember*, new Teflon skillet; you can't use a fork. *Remember*. Cancer or something. So many things out to get us, Danny. I take my eggs off the skillet and lay them on the paper towel beside the bacon. Danny's egg needs to cook a little longer. I think that's how you keep them from being runny, or maybe it's just how you burn them. I can always fry more, I think.

"What's your guy's name, the one that's in the bathroom?"

"Tomfred. He's a wrestler."

"Professional or Greco-Roman?" I ask.

"Alligator," he says. So smart.

"Alligator wrestler?" I want to lie and tell him that I wrestled alligators as a youth, hardly older than he himself, I wanted to say the trick was to hold their mouths shut and they would just give up. I want to be one of his guys, with all their needs recognized and accounted for.

I think his eggs are done, but I'm afraid to poke them and find out. I hate seeing eggs erupt, spilling yellowness all over a skillet, making me start over. They look flat, dry. I take them out, and lay them on top of the bacon.

I look to my right and say, "Danny, your eggs are done. How many pieces of bacon ..."

There he is. He pulls the cord to the coffee maker, hard jerks, *one, two* I feel my balls receding into my stomach, my fingers prickle with sweat. He's looking at me. I drop the plate and just as I reach for him the pot falls. I shove him away, and then I think about the puddle shaped scars I'll have on my arms maybe for the rest of my life. He's looking at me, not crying or anything, just looking, as I raise my hands and lower them again, skin peeling and blistering. I wonder what I look like to him, burning and kneeling on the floor with an army of shadows around me.

Lunch

I sat down with my Save-a-Lot bag in front of me. I took out a bologna and cheese sandwich and a cardboard cup of chicken soup that Marie said I could just put in the microwave. I didn't know if she knew really what she was talking about, so I just ate the soup cold before anyone could come into the break room and see me. She had trouble reading, sometimes. I tossed the cup into the trash can in the corner.

Paul Ribon came into the break room later. He was a stocky guy, early thirties and triangle shaped, with broad shoulders and small legs. His head was covered in stubble. He was long winded.

"Hey, Greg," he said. Ribon never said howdy. He always said "hey." He called fall autumn, too. People at the plant called him "rib-bone."

"Howdy."

"Stamping machine is busted again."

I shook my head and made a noise.

Ribon kept talking. "They going to make me and you go home early is what I heard."

I'd been arguing with Marie into the wee hours. I was tired and not paying attention to the stamper that morning and that's what happened to it. I didn't say anything.

He was talking again. "Just a bologna sandwich today? What I got is some pretzels, you want some of them?"

"I had some soup."

"Tomato? Chicken?"

"Chicken."

"I don't see a bowl."

Was he calling me a liar? "It was one of those cups you heat up in the microwave," I said.

"Those things."

I nodded. Ribon put a plastic bowl of tomato soup in the microwave and sat down across from me at the table while it cooked. I opened the coke Marie had packed for me and took a drink. There was ice in the can.

"I heard you put a nail in that stuff, that coke, and it'll melt overnight," he said.

My belly tightened a little. "I never heard that. Why does it melt?"

"Some kind of chemical thing or acid."

He looked me in the eyes when he spoke. Not a lot of people did that anymore, especially to me. I looked away when he did it. It was ... offensive is the word, I guess. There was something about Ribon that was offensive. It was something in the way he talked, the straight look he gave people, the nosiness maybe. He was always looking at people like they were doing something they weren't supposed to.

"It's funny what you put into your body... hey, what happened to your hand?"

I looked at the back of my hand casually and shrugged.

"Bruised my knuckles a little."

"I see that. There's little bruises on the two biggest knuckles is why I asked. What's the reason you bruised them though?"

God, was he ever nosy. I took another bite of my sandwich. I figured a decent person wouldn't ask again.

"Hey, Greg, I said what happened to your hand."

"I hit the ceiling fan this morning putting on my shirt, that's all. I was in the bathroom where the ceiling is lower."

"You got a ceiling fan in your bathroom."

I didn't know if that was a question or not. I wanted the boss to come in and tell us we could go. I would've dropped my sandwich right there and gone home. I wanted to see Marie, I wanted to tell her she was good to me and that the thing wasn't her fault. The thing was my fault, I was the

stupid one, I failed second grade after all, she had got good grades in school. I was just dumb and mad.

The microwave bell went off. Ribon took his soup out and sat back down. He slurped it loudly. I'd be embarrassed to slurp as loud as him. I put my sandwich, half eaten, back into the Save-a-Lot bag and threw it into the trash.

"Hey, that was a whole sandwich nearly."

"Well," I said.

"I guess where my mother made me finish my plate whenever I ate I just can't throw food out like that, and we were poor when I was a kid too, so that's got something to do with it. You want some of these pretzels."

I shook my head. Did he think I wasn't poor when I was a kid? Did he think he was the only poor one?

"Did you hear they were going to let us go home early?" I asked.

"Uh-huh. Jerry at the end of the line told me. Shit, though, I could use the money."

I got up from the table and drank the rest of my coke as fast as I could I tossed it in the trash. There was a rock of gas in my belly now. I would tell Marie I was sorry, I would hone up to it, I would just tell her I was sorry and that would be it, and we'd do it and we'd both feel better. I walked out of the break room.

"Hey," Ribon said when I walked out, "what's up with you today?"

I stopped for a second in the hall and looked back at him.

"Nothing. Just tired."

"Everything alright at home?" he said.

"Is that your business?"

I turned and kept walking. Jerry went into the break room behind me. I heard Ribon saying to him, "Man that guy can chug a coke, if it was an Olympic game I bet he'd make gold every year." His voice became broken murmurs as I pushed the metal bar on the exit door and went out of the building. My lips moved as I tried to remember what I was going to say to her.

Dinner

The old man is in his hole again. He feels silly, sitting there in his bomb shelter, a TV tray unfolded in front of him. There is no TV down here. He doesn't need a TV for dinner. There is a radio sitting on top of an icebox, an old radio that is shaped like a capital D lying on its back. It probably still works. He would turn it on, just for some music, but the songs are all new and people talk about things that mean nothing to him, or probably to anyone else. He touches a forked piece of Salisbury steak to his tongue. It's still too hot.

He remembers his grandson, talking about how a song saved someone's life once. There was a time when the old man believed that only bomb shelters saved lives, and only Russians and Chinamen could take them. Wrong. You need no one to take your life. He wonders if he really

believes that a song can save a life. A Smashing Pumpkins song, his grandson had said. He doesn't know why he remembers this.

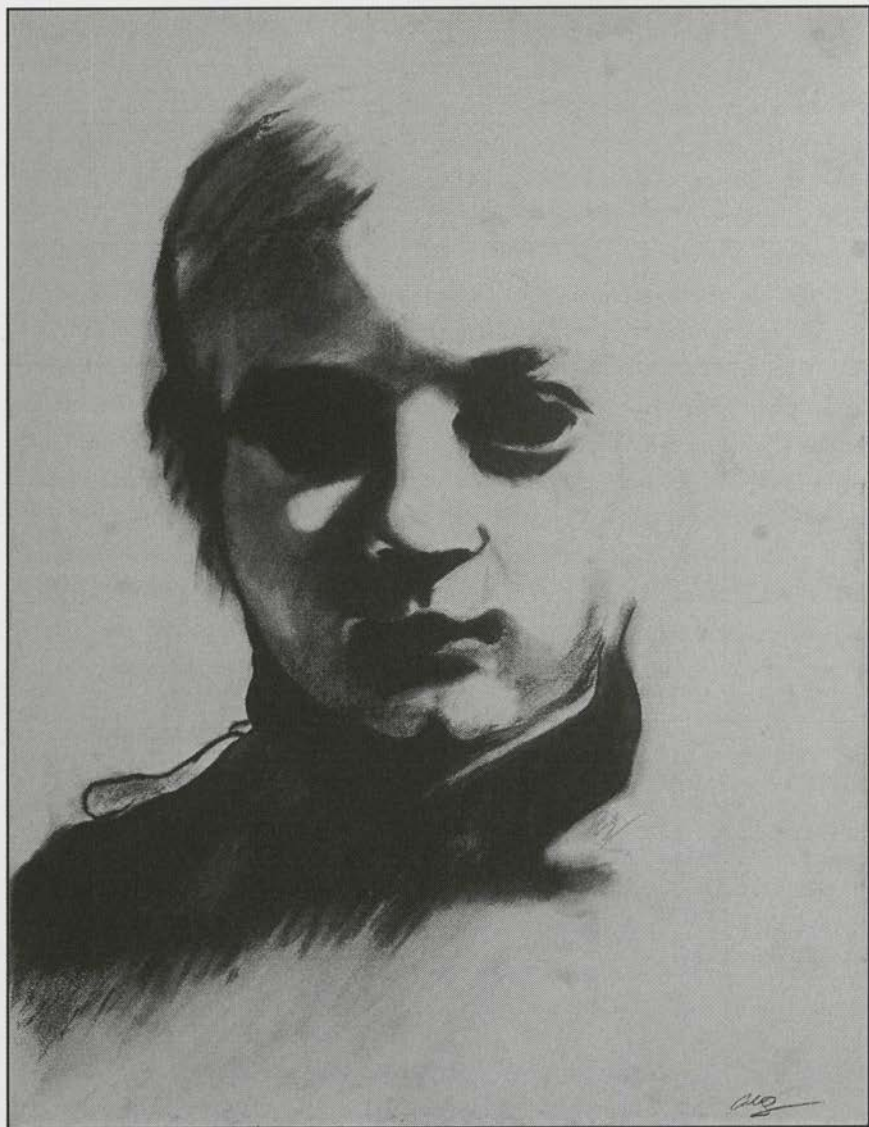
The old man suddenly feels guilty that he has come down to this hole in the ground. He feels embarrassed with himself that he would pack a microwave, a TV dinner, a chair and a table down into this ridiculous barrow. In the corner of the basement is a mummified rat or maybe a squirrel, curled up in itself, shriveled and brittle. In his darkest hours during the 1960's he did not think of dying. He did not think of huddling in the shelter, cowering with his long arms around his entire family while feeling the world shudder. He thought about living through the onslaught, he thought about slowly, slowly withering into nothing, watching tins of Spam become hollow as drums.

The steak is still too hot to eat. A tiny sliver of insulation has managed to drift into the pile of corn in the corner of the tray. He picks it out and wipes it on his pant leg. His wife, Edith, told him not to wipe things on his pant leg, that that is what children do. He thinks back to Germany, eating potted meat with his knife, wiping greasy streaks on his fatigues. He killed one man in Germany. Just one, but that was enough. He had gone to veteran ceremonies and veteran funerals and talked about the war with pride, bragging about his one cockeyed German corpse. When the German fell to the ground, shot nearly at point blank distance in the neck, he said something that sounded like "sandwich." Sometimes he really believes there is no meaning anywhere.

A brown spider as big as a half dollar crawls over his shoe. When he sees it his knee jerks and the tray nearly flips over. He grabs it desperately, sticking his hand in the hot mashed potatoes. He looks around and wipes the potatoes on the floor. Some things have rung in his ears his whole life.

The old man met his wife at a county festival when his was eight, but did not discover this until he was forty, telling a sporadic anecdote to her in bed about a horse getting loose from an Amish buggy and turning over stands. The horse's owners were trying to calm the animal down and the crowd was shouting and walking backwards. He had hid under a candle dipper's table with a little girl.

He begins to eat a fork load of mashed potatoes, which are still a little frosty but somehow hot, the way all TV dinners get. He swallows it anyway. If this, this dinner that is, is one of his stories, he will never tell it. Too sad or something else, but he will never tell it. He has an unfinished book of stories in his house on the other side of the yard. He believes they are good and three or four of them got published in magazines. He screwed a French prostitute in Europe and she left her notebook of couplets in his coat pocket by accident. He had given her the coat to keep her warm before he knew she was a prostitute. She did not speak English, but the language of sex and money is universal. When he found the notebook full of illegible French poetry he tore the pages out and wrote a letter to his mother, a letter full of lies about everything being okay. Then he wrote some more, only he tried to be honest. He never stopped writing after that, and while he was writing he never stopped trying to tell the truth. That was something. The last time he saw the notebook was three decades ago, and inside the front cover a faded message read, "The BITCH gave me CLAP!"



CALEB SPENCER

Youngster

Charcoal Drawing

The corn has a rubbery texture, but the steak is oddly pleasing. Not filling, but pleasing. He tries to move the gravy off the steak and onto the potatoes, but all he gets is a membrane of brown goop between the tines of the fork. Maybe the time is now. He pulls the bottle from his pocket. Enough to kill him, definitely. He figured about twenty for his body weight, as he is a small man, and he had put twenty more in just to be sure. He wondered if he would do them one at a time or in a few handfuls.

He got up and walked around the bomb shelter. It was a horrid place, built with paranoia and bad cement. There was an old twenty-two lying on a wooden shelf, covered in a dusty fuzz. Would that be quicker? Would he have the guts? Was it wrong to wonder what Edith would think if she had lived long enough to watch him kill himself? He fingered the bottle, rolled it from thumb to index, and remembered playing harmonica on his porch. He tossed it in the air and remembered the cup and ball toy he had when he was kid. When he caught he remembered baseball, remembered breaking his collar bone in a fight with a black man at a fountain in Cincinnati, remembered dancing with Edith in a puddle of spilled vegetable soup.

The old man went to the radio. He put his finger on the knob. Maybe it would save his life, but how? What song could do that for him? Maybe an old tune, something that stirs the memory, or a new song he had never heard that touches something down inside him. He pinched the dial hard between his fingers and tried to breathe normally. What if it was The Smashing Pumpkins?

JESSICA STUMP

Chapter 1: The Answer

Her lily-white bra reflected the moon coming in through our bedroom window, and with that textual illusion of a pearl before me, I found myself wanting to caress the material as much as the round, fleshy pearls it barely contained. My fingers, however, could not be stopped, and so I traced a single digit up between her breasts in a straight line that ended with a bony, butterfly collarbone.

Somehow through the process, my whole hand became involved: palm hovering over heart. When skin pressed against skin, I felt the cool night sweat of a person who no longer dreams, and I wish I could say that I felt her heart beat, but it would be like a virgin's touch on the first try—for how can you tell when a heart beats, if the one inside your own chest never bothered to move?

"Eggs?" Riley shoved a plateful of yellow fluff between me and my morning paper.

"Sure," I said smiling, watching her scoop the exact amount of a cup onto the plate. My wife returned to the stove to bring the rest of breakfast; bacon, toast, and jam.

"Strong bones," I joked, lifting a glass of milk high into the air, but inside I knew that nothing grew.

I watched Riley at the end of each sentence in the Daily Gazette, walking a mechanical path through the kitchen: each foot precisely in the middle of a black, or white tile, but never on both. A chess piece I thought happily, my little chess piece, and such a noticeable change from the night before.

I enjoyed being with her at night the most. During the day she is what could be called animated, yet, not quite alive. At night she may look like the unmistakable twin of a corpse, but at least there is a peace, a deep comfort on her closed purple lips which cannot be penetrated—no matter how hard I try.

I was pleasantly surprised, however, to see her back track through steps, pausing to sit with me at the table. It was a subtle switch-up in Riley's routine, and I would not miss the opportunity for break through if there were one to gain.

Her wrist slid across the table with hand poised in a slight curled position for gripping a spoon buried under eggs. My own hand interrupted the task, shocking her into attention when she could not shake my hold. With limp fingers in mine, I asked, "Why do you love me?" Silence was always the answer to this open-ended question, though I might ask everyday if given the chance. For Riley's brain operates like a restricted program, reading 1's as "Yes" and 2's as "No"; there can be no 0 or 3—not even a 1.5.

Juilene was different. A beautiful girl, whose green eyes seemed to care too much about the world, but who could blame her? The Normal ones all looked that way at some point.

Ever since the first Still-Heart was born, they've been shown the meaning, the importance behind their tiny lives. Every preacher on every corner—whether wearing a collar, robe, or rags—has told them so. Pointed in every unwilling face and screamed that the end was near, and it was their personal battle to fight the apocalypse that walked among them.

In this regards, Juilene was no different. The way she carried herself, she seemed well aware of the effect her life held over others—myself included. Everyday at work she would smile, laugh, and peer into my eyes, trying to figure out mine: a life that would last forever.

"What's it like?" Juilene asked, coolly wheeling up a chair to my cubicle.

"Haven't you asked me this before? Like, a million times before?"

She smiled at my light-heartedness and sat down beside me, adding, "I just thought that today you might have an answer".

"Well, there's nothing new." I filtered in her image, leaving nothing to the imagination. "I'm still the same dead man I've always been, walking, talking, and thankfully, no rotting!"

"Ewww!" She said swatting at my arm, in a half-giggle, half-squeal. "Don't talk about that".

"And why not?" I smirked. "Does all that pus and maggots get to you?"

"Oh hush, Dev," She said, crossing her arms uncomfortably. I perked up at the mention of my name.

"Come on, Juilene. You wouldn't like me if I was some rotten piece of meat," I no longer made side glances, but swiveled around to face her, "would you?"

"Of course I would!" She sounded hurt, leaning forward with pointy elbows on her knees; knees that were, likewise, sharp and a split second from touching mine. She rested her chin neatly on two small fists, which would leave behind knuckle prints whenever she decided to move. If there was one thing that stood out about Juilene's features, it was this: the girl was sharp.

I was caught off-guard, as she suddenly leaned back in the chair, confidently crossing legs that seemed to cut down a paper wall between us. Juilene then blurted out a question that, to my knowledge, had never entered her mind. "Dev, I know you're not like the others. What makes you so *different*?"

She must have seen that I had no answers by the look on my face.

"What are you doing? Get back to work, Dev! I need those numbers in before you leave this building." Mr. Baker barked these commands over the top of my head, but paused momentarily to take in Juilene. "Hello there, Mrs Décarre." He beamed: pudgy, red cheeks balanced on the corners of his smile.

"Why does that man have to be so rude to you?" Juilene remarked, to herself more than me.

"I don't know," came out indifferently as I resumed typing. "But he certainly has a fondness for you".

"Don't remind me," She flushed, getting up to return to her own three carpeted walls.

As she walked away, I glanced back over my shoulder, smiling at her hips that swayed back and forth in her heels. "I think it has something to do with your pulse".

Never in my life had I seen a man lazier, or less productive than my boss, Mr. Baker. Over the course of three hours, Mr. Baker passed through my section of the office six times, making sure that his earlier words had taken full effect. Pleased with his findings, he carefully stuffed his large, seem-busting self into the elevator and ascended one floor above to his office suite, leaving me alone with my numbers.

For five years now, I have been doing this exact same job, starting straight out of high school. I was designated to add our company's stock numbers and sale percentages into a specialized computer system. I did not "calculate" our numbers, mind you, but simply punched at them on a keyboard; a tedious, mindless skill that the Normals save for a Still-Heart. And it must be said, that for the entire time I've been here, none of Juilene's observed *difference* has managed to seep through.

Of course the job didn't pay well, but the people more than made up for the lack in that department, and besides, I knew it was the one place offering security. After all, not everyone is ready and willing to open up loving arms to a Still-Heart, and I'm smart enough to know where I'm needed.

Letters From Home, Inc., is a business that produces, sales, and distributes—what else—envelopes and various other stationary supplies. I memorized that standard definition from a box of printer paper beneath my desk.

It's no big secret that most of our letter paper tends to side on the frilly, flowery kind, while the more stream-lined, professional templates wind up, so to speak, tucked away in the margins, taking up a mere twelve percent.

The guys who worked for the company were mostly Normal. They stood around the vending machines in the afternoon and traded jokes about the dominating selection of our feminine products.

The latest one I remember overhearing was by Jake Dillard, claiming that the company had enough girly-ass paper in stock to write a love letter to every woman, girl and whore in the world.

The women who worked for the company were, by and large, Normal too. And when they came in contact with such a joke, they usually rolled their eyes and laughed, playing along. However, I secretly spied some who would stare past the man telling the joke, and upon returning to their desk, shredded the first piece of paper they found.

Of course, I'd like to think I had it better than Riley, though I knew it wasn't by much. My wife stood in a factory all day, pushing color-coded buttons that made giant robotic arms assemble parts for automobiles. In my mind, the arms were just an extension of her own. Yet, Ronald's words continued to haunt me.

As I escorted Riley from our car to the factory doors, Ronald ran towards us with a cardboard sign hoisted high above his shoulders, clutching it with strong, street-lived hands and shouting, "Live without sin. For, ignorance is bliss!"

The homeless preacher had a point to make, but I had heard it before and I still didn't buy it.

I was completely absorbed in the flickering cursor on my screen, counting the number of times it disappeared and reappeared, and comparing this with the time displayed on the toolbar. The cursor matched exactly with the seconds; sixty of its magic tricks equaling a minute. Wanting to produce my own magic trick, I went a step further; predicting on what cursor flick Riley would call. By the company's time it was ten till six, and her call would be my excuse to leave as well.

All this counting was stopped short, by a warm, thick hand on my right shoulder. Their grip was tight, but not imposing, and I instinctively knew that its owner must be Greg.

"Hey you."

I spun around, expecting to see him in one of his high-spirited moods—but he wasn't.

"What's the matter?" I asked, as he stole a chair from an empty cubicle.

"Nothing," Greg shook his head and rubbed his palms together; a classic sign that he hoped to ward off personal questions.

"How's Riley?"

His composure granted a certain amount of caution, so fearing the worst I replied, "She's fine, Greg. She eats, sleeps, goes to work, comes home, and occasionally smiles at me. *Why?*"

"Just curious" His voice lowered as he studied the folds of the cubicle. "O.k." He gave me a look I had seen somewhere before, like the preachers outside, each convinced of their purpose. "What about you?"

"What about me?"

"Well, whatever happened to those dreams you told me about? Do you still have them?" He was fishing for something.

"Yes" I stated hesitantly. "But they're not dreams, Greg. It's more like a memory; something that you see for the first time, but can't hold on to. I don't really know what they are."

"Yeah—well I think I know where you can find the answer, Dev." It was wrong of him to mess with my emotions, especially since he alone knew that I had them.

"Where?" I asked, biting my tongue in preparation for his bitter joke.

He produced a medium-sized version of the King James Bible from the inside of his jacket, and handed it to me with a definite firmness.

I looked at the gold leafed letters in disgust. "King James? What is this shit, Greg? Some kind of joke?"

He stood up to scan the room 360 style before sitting back down to respond.

"No, no. It's just a book. Promise me you'll leaf through it tonight, Dev. See whether or not you find any of the answers you're looking for."

Not wanting to argue with a trusted friend, I agreed to give the book a once over.

"What the hell" I sighed, shoving the book down into my briefcase. At this point, anything would be better than the thought of numbers. So it seemed only natural that when Greg left me with a ringing phone, I didn't bother to look at the time.

After returning home with Riley, I stayed preoccupied for the rest of the evening with King James. I read the book page by page, tearing out each as I went and molding them into miniature basketballs for the trash can. My shots were all hit and miss, but I was proud of the ones that made it past the rim, because *they* meant that I was at least accomplishing something, if only to conquer my boredom.

When the last page was finally ripped from the binding, and another basketball of verses had bounced into the floor, I noticed a yellow post-it sticking on the inside of the back cover. The note had obviously been placed there by Greg, and was in his same scribbled handwriting. I peeled it off slowly, leaving behind a residue on the leather, and read aloud to myself:

Marcel

The One Night Hotel

320 Black Street

I threw the tattered remains of King James into the trash, along with the rest of its pages, taking the note and propping it up against the clock on my nightstand.

There was no moon shining in through our window tonight, and even if there were, no lily-white bra to reflect it. Riley had requested to take an extra long shower before bed, and I had let the event pass without even a question as to why. I lay on top of the sheets, waiting for the light under the bathroom door to become something more than just a line. 1 a.m. glowed faintly through the post-it, reminding me to set the alarm for 6 so I could get up and drive Riley to work in 5 hours.

As for myself, I would take the day off; judging by the name of the hotel, I didn't have much time.

REX EASLEY

Crossing Indiana in Darkness

They'd been inching up a long hill for some time now in fits and starts. Traffic surrounded them, a swarm of cars three lanes across, front and behind. And all at a dead stop again. The man wondered darkly what he would do if they reached the crest and found another endless sea of cars stretched out before them. That would be it, he thought. That would be the last straw.

Beside him, the girl pulled her scarf off her head and twisted it around one of her fingers, tighter and tighter, like some kind of desperate bandage. When he glanced at her, she forced a weak smile.

"Bad time of day to hit Chicago, I guess," she said.

"If we hadn't spent so much time looking for that stupid restaurant you wanted to go to... you said you were positive you remembered where it was."

"I thought I knew. I thought it was right off Belmont Avenue."

"Do you realize we wasted an hour driving up and down that street? Now we barely have enough time to stop at a drive-through."

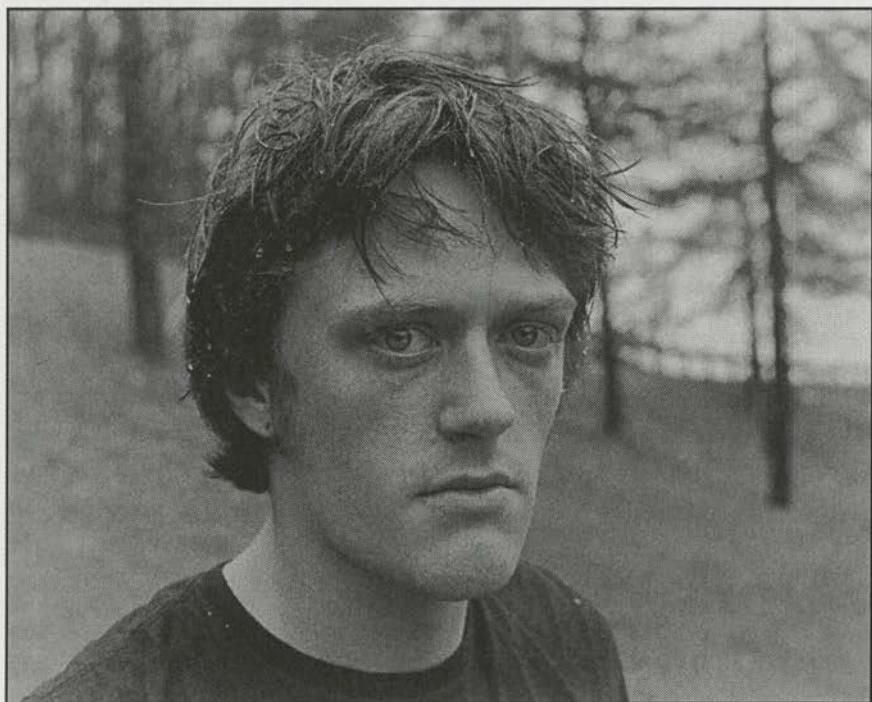
"I wanted us to go there together," she said, her eyes blinking rapidly. "I thought it would be romantic."

"Well, now look where it got us," he said. "We can't afford this. We should've just gone around on the outer belt, like I wanted to do in the first place."

The girl looked out the window, focusing on the next road sign, and tried to keep her voice steady.

"Maybe you think we shouldn't have come at all," she said at last. "Maybe you think this was just a big mistake."

"Don't start with me," he muttered. "All I'm saying is maybe we shouldn't have come this way."



HEATHER UTTERBACK

People Are Strange

Black & White Photograph

But it was a mistake; that was exactly what he thought. The trip to Madison hadn't gone badly at all. Even checking into the hotel wasn't as awkward as he'd expected. But now they were late. Now it was almost six o'clock, and they still hadn't eaten, still weren't even clear of Chicago yet.

The cars ahead of them crept forward a dozen feet or so, then stopped.

"Will she be worried if you're late?" the girl asked, darting a glance at him and then looking away.

"No," he said after a moment. "That's not the problem. I just don't want her to get suspicious."

The traffic began to move, but then he suddenly had to brake hard again, and the big Buick stalled. The girl bit her lip but didn't say anything. He started the engine with a roar and they lurched forward, pulling up close behind the car ahead of them.

"If we can just get over this rise, maybe we'll be able to see what's going on," he said.

She shifted uncomfortably in her seat. For a few minutes, neither one of them said anything. When they finally reached the crest of the hill, he could see that the traffic was beginning to thin out a little bit some distance ahead of them.

"What did you tell her, anyway?" she asked suddenly.

"You don't need to know," he replied. He flicked his turn signal on and watched for an opening in the string of cars next to them.

"I have a right to be curious, don't I?" she said, her eyes beginning to water again. "I'm in this, too, you know."

"Stacy, I'm busy right now," he said.

She stiffened and stared intently at the road ahead, her fingers working her scarf into another tight little ball. He glanced at her and knew that she would ask again.

"All right," he said at last. "She thinks I went to visit my friend Ed in Wisconsin by myself. I told her I needed to get away for a few days." He kept his eyes on the traffic. "Which was true, by the way."

"Oh." The girl pulled a Kleenex out of her purse and dabbed carefully at each eye. "And you don't think she suspects anything? Ed won't let anything slip?"

"Don't worry about it. Ed's okay. She never talks to Ed anyway."

"Well that's good," she said. He wondered if she meant it.

A gap suddenly appeared between two cars next to them on the right, and the man cut over quickly, squeezing into the opening.

"Now we're getting somewhere," he said to himself. "If we can get off this highway, maybe we'll be all right."

She didn't appear to have heard him. In the distance a jetliner cut through a gray-orange piece of sky, dropping lower and lower, until finally it seemed to be hanging above the highway just ahead. Suddenly she turned toward him, pushing her long dark hair away from her face.

"What?" he said.

"I don't know." She pulled her legs up under her, Indian-style, and watched the airliner until finally it passed overhead and disappeared behind them.

"Come on, what is it?"

"You don't want her to find out about us, do you," she said, eyeing him. "You just want to keep on like we are now."

The man sighed heavily and began to explain as though he were talking to a child.

"Of course I don't want her to find out. You know as well as I do what kind of problems that would cause for us right now..."

"That's what you always say."

"Because it's true and you know it." Up ahead he saw a sign for the exit to Indiana Route 30, the road he'd been looking for. He checked traffic to his right to see if he could squeeze over to the exit ramp lane. "This is not a good time to bring this up, you know."

The girl didn't say anything, and he wondered if she was going to start crying. Instead she turned the radio on and began moving the dial from station to station, searching for something she liked.

"Not now," he said harshly. "Can't you see I'm trying to concentrate?" She switched the radio off again. Arms folded across her chest, she leaned back against the door and glared at him.

He ignored her for the moment. He was watching the traffic closely and wondering why he'd thought it would be such a good idea to bring her along. After a while, she said,

"Now you're mad at me, aren't you...I'm always making you mad at me."

"Listen. This whole situation is difficult enough without you giving me a hard time, too."

"I don't want you to be mad at me," she said. She reached out to stroke his hand, but he pulled it away. She watched his face for a few seconds, waiting for him to look at her, but he concentrated on the road. "I'm sorry," she murmured at last.

He didn't reply. They reached the exit from the expressway, and he followed the ramp down to a four-lane road and a forest of gas stations and fast-food restaurants. She looked around for a moment and then pointed to an Exxon station up ahead.

"Could you pull over up there?"

"Now what?"

"Just pull over, please."

The man turned into the parking lot and stopped off to one side, near the front door. The girl jumped out and hurried away from the gas station to the convenience store next door. He watched her for a moment, then opened the glove compartment and pulled out a creased and tattered map. When he tried to unfold it, a large piece came off in his hands. Finally he gathered it together and threw it into the back seat. He waited, checking his watch several times, but she was nowhere in sight. He was just about to get out of the car and go look for her when she reappeared, carrying a brown paper bag.

"Okay, let's go," she said, sliding into the car.

He swung the car around and pulled back out onto the highway. Peering at a highway sign,

he said,

"I think we're on the right road now. I think we take this all the way back across Indiana."

The girl pulled a bottle out of the bag.

"What's that?" he asked.

"Just a little something for the trip back," she said. She twisted off the cap and began filling a paper cup.

"Would you like the red, or the red?" she asked, holding out the cup to him. He took it from her, frowned, and tried a sip. She poured a full cup for herself and drank it straight down. Immediately she began to fill the cup again.

"Hey," he said.

"Last chance to party before we get to Ohio," she said, flashing him a smile. She leaned toward him with the bottle and reached for his cup, but he pulled it away. "Okay," she said, pouting. "Be that way."

He glanced at his watch again, then speeded up, moving to the outside lane.

"We're really going to have to make up some time now," he muttered.

"So what if we're late," the girl said. "Let's not go back at all. Let's just keep on going." She took another long drink from her cup. "I know. Let's go to Mexico."

"I can pull over somewhere and call her," he said, as though he hadn't been listening. "I'll tell her I got a late start, got held up by traffic in Chicago."

"I wish we could just go to Mexico. Taxco was nice. I had a bad time in Mexico City, but Taxco was really nice..."

He glanced at her.

"When were you in Mexico?"

"I went with my mother when I was eighteen, just after high school. I got alcohol poisoning."

"What?"

"These older men picked up my mother and me in this bar we went to after dinner. They kept buying us tequila."

"What do you mean, older men?"

She took another drink, tipping the cup too fast and spilling a thin red trickle of wine down her chin.

"They were older," she said. "They wore frilly shirts and pointed shoes, and they both had these thin little moustaches. They kept telling my mother how beautiful she was. It was right after her divorce. She was thrilled with them, so she made me go along with it."

He looked over at her again, trying to read her expression.

"And?" he said.

"They got us drunk and they took us back to their hotel. They...you probably don't want to hear this, do you..."

"No, I don't."

She grinned at him and drank more carefully this time. "In the taxi," she said, watching him, "one of them put his hand under my dress and started to..."

"I said I don't want to hear this. Now shut up."

She waited for a few moments.

"Anyway, I got sick. I had alcohol poisoning. I had to stay in the hospital for a few days. Then we went through Taxco on our way back to the states. It was so beautiful there, and so peaceful, with the mountains and all. Can we go there, just the two of us? Nobody will know where we are..."

He didn't say anything. The sun, now low in the sky, glared in the rear-view mirror, and he reached up to adjust it. Then he looked at his watch again and drank down the rest of the wine in his cup.

"Quit worrying," the girl said. "Come on, who knows how long it'll be until we're alone together again?"

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"You know," she said. "What with all these complications..."

He passed his cup to her, and she filled it again. Leaning against him, she tried to put the cup to his lips.

"Just hand it to me," he said finally.

"Okay for you, buddy boy," she said. She began humming, an off-key version of a stripper's tune. After a few seconds, she began to unbutton the buttons of her shirt.

"What do you think you're doing?" he said.

"What does it look like?" She raised the wine bottle to her mouth and took another long drink. Then she pulled first one arm and then the other from the sleeves of her shirt. With an exaggerated sweep of her arm, she threw the shirt into the back seat. Reaching behind her, she unfastened her bra and slowly removed it, smiling at him all the while.

"Put your clothes back on. Somebody could see you, you know."

"I don't care." She moved closer to him, trying to press her breasts against his arm. "Thought I'd be all talk, didn't you..."

"Come on, Stacy. I'm trying to drive the damn car."

She pulled back quickly and glared at him.

"All right," she said. "Be difficult if you want to." She took another quick drink and put the lid back on the bottle. She slipped her shoes off. Then she unzipped her jeans and struggled to unfasten her belt buckle. "Catch your eye yet?" she asked, winking.

He stared straight ahead at the road.

"You're going to be awfully embarrassed if we get stopped by a cop."

"You could help me, you know. I wouldn't do this for just anybody."

He glanced at her and looked away again. Finally she gave up on the belt buckle. Picking up the wine bottle again, she brought it slowly up to her mouth.

"You've had enough," he said. "Put it away."

"No! I'm old enough." Some wine spilled on her breast as she took another drink. "You can lick it off if you want to," she said with a grin.

He didn't say anything, and she covered her breasts with one arm.

"Well, you're not allowed anyway," she said at last. "You're a married man." She waited for a few moments, but he continued to ignore her. "Sorry," she said at last. "Come on, let's do something." She slid over as close as she could get and reached for his belt buckle.

"Just what the hell do you think you're trying to do?"

"Come on," she said. "If you move the seat all the way back, I can squeeze in on top of you."

He pushed her away, then let off the gas and swerved into the right-hand lane.

"We can do it like this," she said, trying to crawl onto him. "Bobby and I used to do it like this all the time..."

Suddenly she was flung forward in the seat as he slammed on the brakes and pulled the car over to the side of the road.

"Whoops," she said, giggling as she pulled herself back up in the seat. "I forgot."

"Like hell you did."

"No, I forgot, honest I did." When he didn't reply, she said, "Well, you've got a wife. I don't see why I can't mention Bobby once in a while."

"It's always something with you. What else haven't you told me about?"

"Nothing!" she sniffed. "What do you mean?"

"You know what I'm talking about."

"There was just this one thing..."

"One thing?" he said, struggling to get his belt buckled again. "And just what was that?"

She gathered herself against the car door, crossing her legs again.

"Come on," he said. "What else should I know about you before I go leaving a woman I've been married to for nine years?"

"You're not going to leave her. You'll never leave her. Never, ever!"

"Listen," he said quickly. "I just need to know what to expect from you, that's all."

She sniffed again and twisted the cap off the wine bottle.

"You won't like it," she said softly.

He waited, and she drew her legs up and hugged her knees. She was quiet for a long time, watching him in the gathering dark, trying to read his expression. Finally she said,

"I used to sleep with two guys at once. Not in the same bed at the same time" she added quickly. "I mean when Bobby, my boyfriend at school, started fooling around with other girls, I went home a lot on weekends, and then I met this guy Dan and I started seeing him. But then when I got back to school Bobby would come over, and he always wanted sex." She hesitated, looking at the man's face in the dim light. After a moment she said, "So I'd let him do it."

"And they didn't know about it?" he said wearily. "They didn't know about each other?"

"Dan did. And he tried to get me to break up with Bobby. He even took me to New York for a weekend once. That's when Bobby found out. But I told him that if he was going to fool around, so could I." She began to cry. "That was right, wasn't it? That was fair..."

The man sighed again.

"The day I told Bobby I'd gone to bed with Dan, he sat on the floor and cried for hours. He said it would never be the same between us again. So I kept sleeping with him, too, and I told him I didn't sleep with Dan anymore. But I did. Because Dan was always so nice to me, and he didn't get mad at me about Bobby."

He had been gripping the wheel tighter and tighter as she talked. Now he said,

"I'm going to have to stop and call soon. I don't want her to get suspicious."

"You're mad at me again, aren't you? You always want me to tell you things and then you get mad at me..."

"I'm not mad, exactly," he said in a tired voice. "Just... I don't know. Disappointed, I guess."

"But I love you," she said. "I didn't love either of them. I don't think it was love..."

"That's even worse."

She curled herself more tightly against the door.

"Just because you used to love your wife, that makes it okay? Where are you going to sleep when you get home tonight? Huh? Where are you going to sleep then?"

He shook his head. "I can't help that. You know I don't love her anymore, but I've got to be careful."

"I'll bet you still do it with her, don't you? Don't you!"

He didn't look at her or say anything, and she shivered.

"You'd better get dressed," he said, his voice flat. "I'm going to pull over at the next place I see."

She leaned over the back seat to find her bra and began to put it on. Suddenly she stopped, as though she had just thought of something.

"Can we turn off the road somewhere? Can we go down one of these side roads and pull over and make love?" When he didn't answer she said, "I'll do whatever you want."

"Put your clothes on," he said. "There's a gas station up ahead."

She began to cry quietly. She fumbled with her bra and then stopped. Up ahead was a cluster of lights, and the man slowed down as they drew nearer.

He pulled into a gas station and stopped off to one side, away from the pumps. The girl ducked down in the seat and struggled to get her bra fastened.

"Here," he said, reaching behind her. He pulled the bra into place over her breasts and then handed her the shirt. She took it from him and used it to dab at her eyes.

He got out of the car and walked over to an open spot with some light. She watched as he took out his cell phone and began to dial. She finished buttoning her shirt, and then she opened

the wine bottle again. There was still a little left, and she drank it slowly. She could see him moving around as he talked into the phone.

"It's not fair," she murmured. She lifted the wine bottle again, but it was empty.

After a couple of minutes he put away the phone and returned to the car.

"Everything's okay," he said, sliding in behind the steering wheel. "She doesn't suspect a thing." He leaned over to kiss the girl on the cheek, but she pulled away. He started the car and swung back out onto the highway.

"Is there any wine left?" he asked, and she shook her head.

Evening had turned to darkness, and there was a chill in the air. The man rolled up the window and put the heater on low. The girl sat quietly for a while, then said,

"Can I put my head in your lap?"

"I suppose so, if you want to," he replied.

She curled her body on the seat and rested her face on his thigh. After a while he reached down and began stroking her hair. She was feeling sleepy from the wine, and she yawned.

"We're only a couple of hours from Ohio now," he said. "We'll be there before long."

She drew herself closer, feeling the warmth of him, and the drowsiness became stronger.

"You do still love me, don't you?" she whispered, but in the darkness she drifted off to sleep without hearing a reply.

PATRICK JOHNSON

God's People

William watched as his child moved from the sofa to the coffee table. Her little knees bending and toes gripping the carpet experimentally. There was the smell of cigarette smoke and breakfast.

"He said he'd be here around eight." Velma was leaning on the arm of the chair glancing from the television to the clock. "I'd say he'll come a little earlier. I made sure and called him so he wouldn't forget."

William caught Haven in his arms as she reached for him. He tickled her tummy. She smiled and her blue, bright eyes turned toward the television. "He would have come anyway."

Velma didn't say anything. She got up and disappeared into the kitchen. She left her burning cigarette on the edge of the coffee table. William leaned over and stubbed the cigarette in the ashtray. "I'm not hungry."

Faded mint green and white were splayed across the walls; fluorescent light flickering. He stared at her small frame in the front of the stove. "You're not leaving my house without some food." She turned and pointed at his torn jeans. "And you're not going to work in those pants." William watched the grease drip from the spatula she was pointing. "What would people think of your

grandmother, letting her Will out in those kinds of clothes."

The sound of sizzling grease. William closed his eyes and took a deep breath. "In an hour I'm going to be covered in tar. If I wear another pair, it'll be the same thing."

When he opened his eyes she was sliding two eggs from the pan to a chipped plate. Gravy and biscuits steamed opposite the glazed looking eggs. He looked out window; there was mist rising from the grass.

"When do you go back to school?" Velma was leaning on the door frame between the living room and kitchen watching Haven in front of the television entranced in the brilliant colors of cartoon violence.

"We're going back in three days." William sat at the table and flipped through one of the out dated calendar with black and white pictures. There was a collection of them in a leaning stack in the center of the table.

"College doesn't start until Monday." She turned her pepper color head around, her faded eyes staring through big framed glasses. "Why don't you all stay as long as you can?"

William began shoving food in his mouth. "We need to get back and get some rest."

"When do you think you'll graduate? There's that credit card and that loan."

Will sighed; mouth full.

A faint chirping came from outside. William got up, walked past his grandmother, kissed Haven and opened the door. His father's truck pulled up; it was rusted where a dark set of ladder racks had been mounted. The chirping turned into a squeal. His father still hadn't replaced whatever belt was worn.

"I'm gone." He stepped out the door and was greeted by thick hot morning air. Mist still clung to shadowed gaps in the trees.

Velma entered William's room with Haven stumbling behind her repeating the newly learned syllable "ma." The vertical blinds blocked out the sun. Shadows and dark spaces were on the paneled walls. A small pile of clothing lay crumpled on the floor. She picked up a book.

Bookshelves lined the walls.

Haven clung to the corner of her crib. "Ma."

Many of the books leaned inward. Velma picked a random spot and jammed the book into place and then tried to straighten the lines. Haven whined out as she flopped on the floor staring at her hand. "Ma."

Velma grunted as she lifted Haven from the floor and sat her down in the crib. The child giggled and fell and stared up at the ceiling. Her lids drooped and her breathing became more even.

William had already made the bed. She smoothed out a single wrinkle in the flowered print comforter. The springs squeaked and the headboard knocked against the wall as she adjusted the pillows.



JOELLE SCHULTZ

Cradling a Nest of Birds

Ceramic & Mixed Media Sculpture

William nodded and hammered in the nails not letting his fingertips touch the metal. "The Allen's usually pay you when you want, don't they?"

Warren nodded as he pressed a line of sealing foam at the edge of the section. "Yeah, but its going to get hotter and I'm thinking we'll take a few days off."

Eric said something about fishing. No one spoke. They kept working.

When they were finished, Warren tossed the trimmed pieces of metal from the roof to the back of the tuck. Eric had his shirt around his head squatting in a skeletal vehicle shade, head down.

William stood at the edge of the new roof and looked up at the sun. His knuckles grew white as he held the hammer. The tape peeled from his skin. There was no wind, no sound of birds. Just the rapping of crimson droplets on heated metal.

William stood at the edge of the garden; the earth was white and cracked. The dusky plants wavered in an unfelt breeze. "Do you want all the rows tilled?"

Velma held a Pepsi with a tissue covering the top. She breathed in deep leaning against the faded brown tool shed. "Yes." She shook a fly off her head. "But you don't have to do it all today."

He pulled off his shirt. "It'll be done today."

The tiller sputtered and the tines jerked to a halt. The corn shivered as the exhaust huffed out white puffs of smoke. His grandmother looked up from the edge of the garden.

Gleaming cars glided down the gravel road, one after another. People's faces were shadowed and he could only see the reflection of dark greens and red. The air smelled of gas and heat and torn earth. One of the large cars pulled off the road and into the yard. A woman wearing a green dress and matching heels stopped at the edge of the garden and looked down at Velma working and began talking.

William got on one knee and began working bleeding fingers among the hot and hissing metal. Velma and the woman's voices covered the low rumble of cars passing by. William breathed heavily as his sweat was soaked up by the damp dark earth.

Velma's voice came through the evening haze. "Say that again Rosie."

"God is everywhere, he's always there."

Williams fingers shook. They were covered in hot oil. His fingers slipped on the lose bolts.

"God is even in the sun." William looked through the blades of corn. Velma was standing looking down the rows.

William primed the engine. After a few tugs the engine roared to life, tines tearing at earth and smoke rolling over top the corn stalks. William followed the jerking tiller down the rows, his eyes resting just in front of the metal guard. The earth cracked and crumbled before disappearing underneath the metal.

The dark green forest stood around the garden as William moved the tiller up the last row.

His uncle had gotten off his four wheeler and now stood on the other side of the fence with his red arms hanging over. "You've done a better job than I can do."

William turned off the plow and wiped his face with his shirt. The tilled earth was dark and moist, his shoes sank in the dirt. He stared down at the rusted metal plate between the handle bars as his uncle turned up his beer. Velma's heavy breathing and hacking hoe filled the dark spots between the trees.

William stood with Haven at the edge of the freshly tilled garden. She babbled and rocked back and forth on her feet. The sun was almost gone and the coolness of shadows began to take hold. The rows were dark green lines.

He did not speak. Instead he crouched down and pulled off the child's shoes and socks that the grandmother had put on her. Then he removed his own. Haven froze in place and stared down at the grass.

The child did not smile or laugh when William picked her up. Her little face still turned down at her raised toes. Haven did not notice that they were in the middle of two potato rows, the leaves looked rough and clean.

Water rattled in the creek.

William stood Haven up and let go of her hands. She smiled and he watched as her toes sunk into the earth. Still, she did not move. Instead she pointed down and mumbled something. William scoop up some dirt and held it out to her. She grabbed two small fistfuls and clenched them tight smiling.

William ran his hand across the earth looking down the row. He could not see past the corn.

The sky was dark. There were no stars. Fire flames lashed out above the rim of the rusted out oil drum. William and his father sat in cheap plastic recliners staring at the glowing metal. A few orange ashes whirled into the dark sky; somewhere the burning trash had shifted.

"Today was hot." Warren's eyes were half open, his shirt folded up and resting on his dark shoulder.

William nodded. "Wasn't too bad this evening; got the entire garden plowed."

Warren took a long drink from his Bud Light. He held back a belch and flung the can into the darkness. "Are you sure you're going to go tomorrow? Mom said something about the yards need mowing and the bushes trimmed."

William pressed in on the side of his Pepsi can. It clicked. "Tomorrow I'll take care of the yard."

"She says there's no one that can trim the yard like you." Warren opened the cooler beside him. Water flashed in the firelight as he shook another silver bud light. "You want another pop?"

"Yeah." William took another Pepsi and leaned back in his chair. He could feel the heat coming through his shirt. "I've been offered an office job this semester."

His father shook his head and held his can in front of his face. "Sure will be a lot nicer than being on a hot roof."

William nodded. "It's going to be available all year long."

His father took another drink of his beer. His eyes lowered and he shook his head. "My son."

They said nothing. The flames had died down and the belly of the oil drum was a bright orange.

Heat and cut grass thickened the air. William breathed in as he hefted the old weed eater on his shoulder. The gas dripped out onto his red back. He did not blink as sweat dripped from his eyes. The sun was so bright it covered the colors of the sky.

"Come over in the shade and rest." Velma called holding two Pepsi. The cordless phone was face down on the picnic table. "You're going to get too hot."

William sat down the machine and opened a Pepsi. He watched as the sweat formed puddles on the dirty table top. He could see the green reflection of the tree above him.

"Did you hear Rosie talking yesterday?" Velma was looking off to the side, she held a cigarette, one of her fingertips tapped her chin.

He nodded.

"Don't you think this would be easier with Him involved?" Velma turned as William sighed. "Now I'm not trying to tell you what to do Will, I'm not that kind of person."

William glanced toward the gravel road. It was white in the sun.

"I just think that you'd be a lot better."

He stood up and drank down his Pepsi. "I've got a little more."

Velma stood up, spilling her Pepsi across the table. The brown liquid seeped beneath the spaces between the boards. "Will you at least think of it for Haven."

William turned away from Velma and pulled on the string. The engine sputtered.

"She's with God now, and you can be with her someday. We're all God's people."

The engine sputtered again and William grunted hard. The entire body of the weed eater shook. Black smoke came from the corrobator. The trees leaned in a strong breeze.

"You've got to pray. That's all." Velma was walking toward William, her shaking hand outstretched.

She let out a small scream as William pulled one more time. The string snapped up in his face. For a moment, neither move. The string wavered in his hand.

"William?"

He tossed down the weed eater and stalked out into the sun. Velma slumped in the shade.

William sat beside Alton on a rusted tailgate. Staring at the dark shapes of headstones. The engine was popping and cracking as the metal cooled. There were insects in the darkness.

Alton glanced up. "Remember when I said my name would be in the stars?"

William nodded and dusted off his pant leg. "You wanted it right in Orion's Belt, didn't you?"

Alton nodded. "We were made for the stars William, we're suppose to be up there." Alton pointed with his finger while still clutching his drink.

He did not look up. He stared at the lumped shapes ahead of him. "No one looks to the stars anymore."

Alton stared at his hands as they cradled his drink. It was a sea of light on a slash of white against a dark sky. William got off the truck and moved past tall headstones and stopped right in front of one. The earth was still torn at his feet. There were no clouds. There was no wind.

"We were not born of stars."

The grass was faded in the sun. Velma was peaking into one of the tied grocery bags sitting by the cracked wooden door. William watched Haven overturn a basket of small toys. It clattered onto the floor. On the television was a muted sweating man holding a book in his raised hand pointing.

"Are you sure you've got everything?" Velma stood up and touched her hair. "You got all the cups and diapers?"

William nodded and slipped on his shoes.

"When do you think you'll be able to come back home?" Velma leaned up and kissed William on the cheek.

He shook his head. "Depends on how classes go."

They both stood at the door, staring at Haven moving her hands over the face of a doll. Velma picked up Haven, hugged her until the child let out a small cry. She then kissed her and handed her to William.

"Call me when you get there."

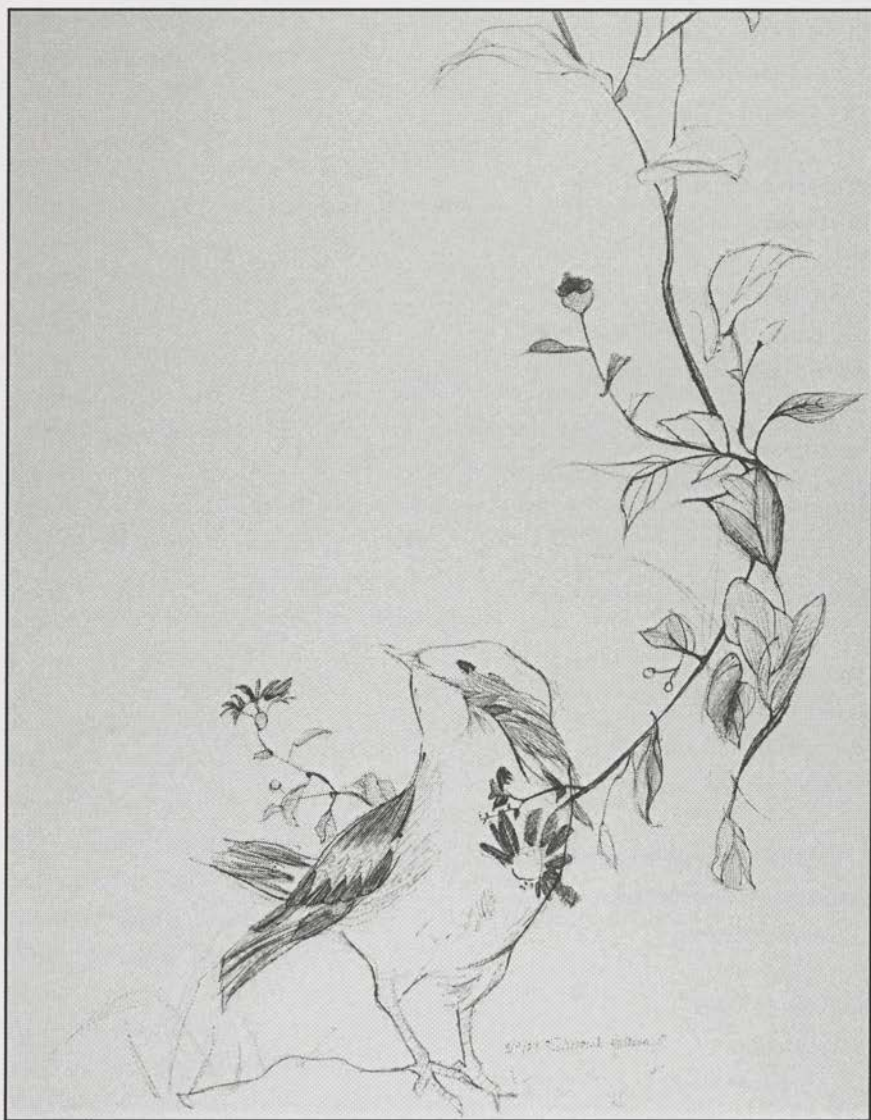
"I will."

He picked up the bags with his free hand and opened the storm door with his foot. The hinges creaked. A cat scampered away. William glanced back into the house. "I'm gone."

She kissed him on the cheek once more. Velma did not move from the door even after the dust had settled onto the grass. The clock chimed three times, it echoed though the house.

ALEX SCHULZ

Night Shift



DEBORAH SLONE

Spring

Ink Drawing

CERTAIN THINGS

There are certain things
I respect about a woman's beauty

The way her hair smells
after a shower

The way she sits or stands
when unaware that anybody is watching
a gentle, unconcerned expression

The small area of skin exposed
between the top of her jeans
and the bottom of her shirt

The small indentations of her lower back

A slender arm
attached to an unseen body
reaching from inside a car
to pull the door shut

The tip of the tongue slightly protruded
an expression of deep thought
an inquiry of the world

The eraser of a pencil
resting on the lip
more thought

The grace of leaning against a wall and sliding down
in one smooth motion

Wiping some sleep from beneath her eyes

with the outside edge of a finger
Scratching the inside of her nose
near the outside of the eye socket.

THOUGHTS TURN WICKED WHEN THE BRAIN IS ON UNNATURAL HOURS

There are still large amounts of fear and anxiety in me.

Why is this so?

Left alone with my thoughts?

Cold?

I rode the elevator to the 16th floor. I really had to piss after those four cups of coffee. The door to the bathroom said 'Women,' but it didn't really matter. This had once been an all male dorm, so the bathroom was the same. Besides, the floor was empty. Nobody had been there for weeks. I closed the door and pissed in the stall. Strange how the mind works. When I know there's not anybody, I still fear somebody. Not a specific person, just somebody. Relieved, I traveled back to my post. The only noise to keep me company, the sound of the air conditioner, which was on too high. I indulged in deep thought. I wrote, I thought of her.

JILL

I'm in love with your concept
what you as a person represent.

I see myself with you
doing things that never were
and may never come.

Anxiety mingled with regret
for never telling you how I felt.

I give you books
to always have a reason to go back.
Though you are now with someone else
your company still comforts me,
and maybe I'm holding out.
I'm always holding out.

Ridiculous.

I'm here, you're there.

There are others
but why

can I not
shake the hold you have upon me?

The night comes softly,
my thoughts hit hard.

SELF MOTIVATION

"You should be doing your homework."

"I know."

"Then why aren't you?"

"I need to work this thing out."

"What thing?"

"With the girls."

"It's always about that."

"I know. It stresses me out."

"Whatever you say, but ..."

"Listen," I interrupted myself, "to me, this is important. This is big."

"Man, you can't write a love poem for something, for a love, that hasn't occurred"

"That's not what I'm doing."

"That's exactly what you're doing. Taking the cake out before it's done, already counting the eggs in your basket. You haven't even been to the chicken coup."

"Chicken Coup? Like a vagina, like sex?"

"Go back to what you were doing."

It's the middle of June and I'm wearing a snow cap.

A lone girl steps out the door to go for a jog, 5:54 am.

I have seen more sunrises in the last two weeks than in my entire life.

KATIE

The door clicked as she slid her access card. She came in and leaned across the counter, smiling at me, resting her elbows gently, head poised between.

"Hey."

I looked up. "Hi."

"What's up?"

"Working."

"Oh. Doesn't look like you're doing much."

"I'm not." But I was. I was devouring her with my eyes. Slender. Skinny arms. Small breasts. Brown

hair past her shoulders. Two dimples shown with her smile.

"Do you want some company?"

"Not really." Yes.

She came around the counter and placed herself on the small, green couch. "Wanna have a seat?"

"Sure." More than anything.

I moved to the seat next to her. She put her hand on my leg. I put my hand on her shoulder and leaned in and kissed her. She kissed back. I ran my hand down her arm. She leaned back as I unbuttoned her pink blouse. I slid my hand under her bra and cupped her left breast. Then I stopped. "Have you ever been in love with a concept?"

"What?"

"Have you ever been in love with the concept of somebody?"

"What are you getting at?"

"Well, there's this girl."

"Yeah?" Upward inflection of hope.

"Her name's Jill."

"Oh fuck you!" She threw me off, buttoning her shirt.

Then I woke, startled by the sound of somebody sliding their card at the door. She came in and leaned across the counter, smiling at me, resting her elbows gently, head poised between.

"Hey."

I looked up. "Hi."

"What's up?"

"Waking."

"Oh yeah? Sleeping on the job?"

"Dreaming."

"What did you dream about?"

"You."

"Really?" Upward inflection of hope. "Do you mind if I ask?"

"We made out. I put my hand up your shirt." She blushed bright red. "And I told you I was in love with the concept of another girl." Her face dropped.

"You could have just said you didn't want to tell me."

"You still would have wondered."

"Not too subtle in your feelings toward me, are you?"

"See, that's the thing. I think I'm actually in love with you. Not just the concept of you, but you yourself."

"I don't know what to make of this." She turned and walked away. Her black bra strap slide slightly down her shoulder and she pulled it back up with familiarity. A small nuance of beauty.

CONSUMPTION

It frustrates me to desire somebody so wholly

It consumes me

You have to be ok with yourself before you can love someone else.

MAKING UP FOR LOST TIME

I guess the rain was making up for lost time. It had been so long since it rained.

I threw the Frisbee. It glided through the air. Hand to hand across the field. Gray clouds moved in, a bolt of lightening shot across the sky, splitting it asunder. The rain came down in huge tear drops. We continued to throw. Neither looked up, neither seemed to notice. The Frisbee simply continued its flight. Hand to hand. If anything the game proceeded more feverishly. The disk flew further, I ran harder, kicking up the water that was pooling. Katie's hair clung to her shoulders as she caught it and threw it back. I jumped, grasped the disk, and fell back onto the ground. She stepped forward, her gray shirt stuck to her chest, outlining the cups of her bra. I stood up, shorts covered in mud, and approached her. We kissed with force enough to reconnect the sky, but water continued to pour down our faces.

NUMB

The shower

Warm

But you feel numb

Can't move, just sit with the water flowing over you

The water beat on the top of my head. I sighed, extended my left arm. I placed my palm against the tan tile wall and leaned into it. My thoughts were distant. I could physically feel my brain being filled to capacity. How come the things you want to do the least, are the things you must do?

When thoughts escape you, it hurts.

THE LETTER

The letter was small. Perfectly square envelope, stamp beautifully positioned; evidence that it had been prepared by delicate hands. In Jill's neat, feminine script, my name, my address. When had it shown up? I don't remember checking the mail, but here it was in my bag. I rubbed my hands together to get the cold blood flowing. I took off my snow cap to loosen my brain. Then I stopped. I knew what the letter contained. I didn't have to undress it to find out. I stared. It stared back.

"I hate you" it said.
"I know."
"You don't love me."
"That's not true" I told it.
"You're the one who left me."
"I had to go to school."
"We could have been."
"But you are. You're fine without me."
"What about you?"
"The jury is still out on that one."
"You were always over dramatic and tried to be too clever."
"I hate you."
"No you don't."

June 21, 2007

Dear Jill,

I received your letter. It really spoke to me. I understand that things are different, that we're in different places now, but would you hold it against me if I said I still want you? I mean I still think about you. You used not to wear bras under your shirts, you never really cared if I saw your nipples. You see? That's not me trying to be clever. It's me telling you that I like your tits. You still have my book. I'll come get it one day if that's alright with you. Listen, I know your letter said you hated me, but I hope that's not true. I work late nights and you come to me in the early hours of the morning. Do I ever come to you?

Sincerely,

David

HATE

I've grown to hate this room,
every noise it makes,
the way it sits, the way it lays.

The air conditioner kicks on,
and it's all I can hear.
It frustrates me.

It reminds me of somebody
who speaks excessively loud to compensate for the fact

that they have nothing to say.
They know and you know it
and they know you know, but they continue on.

I sneeze and blame it on this room. I hate.

The windows sit the same for eight hours and I hate it.

It's cold and I hate it.

I could be happy to go away and not come back for five years.

I hate this room, the way it makes me feel, the way it makes my knees hurt.

I hate that it can't hate back.

I'm stuck here.

It can only be a room and I hate it for that.

URGENCY

"Just cover my goddamn shift, ok? I've got somewhere I have to be."

"I'll sleep on it Dave." I want you to owe me.

"This is not a sleeping matter, Steve!"

"Well ..." offer me something.

"I'll cover your shift next week."

"I don't know." Perfect.

"Don't be an ass!"

"I'm not being an ass!"

"I just have to get home!"

"Fine, I'll do it."

"I owe you."

"Whatever." I'm going to make sure you're aware of this favor every time I see you.

June 19, 2007

Dear David,

I hope you get this. I didn't have your phone number or e-mail address, just this mailing address. I'm not sure how to tell you this, but I'm pregnant. I'll stop you right there. You know it's not yours because we never had sex. Hell, you never even worked up the courage to kiss me (or grab my chest) like I knew you wanted to. The real reason I'm writing is, I'm moving. Joey and I are going to

try and find a good place to live for when the baby comes. I'm pretty sure he's the father. David, stop judging me. I can see your disappointed eyes already. Look, I know you loved me, or at least what I represented. I don't have that free spirit anymore, the one you so adored. Damn it David! Why didn't you ever say anything? Why didn't you ever tell me how you felt? I loved you. I love you. Didn't you know that? Don't you know that? Why were you so afraid to let us be? Maybe then I wouldn't be where I am. I'm 17 and I can't have a fucking baby! I guess I shouldn't blame you. Keep in touch. Here's my new address:

123 south 1st street

Louisville, KY

40213

With Love,

Jill

ARRIVAL

I hit my knuckles against the wooden door. It sent a deep echo into the apartment. It almost sounded like it was empty. I knocked again. No answer. A guy opened a door across the hall.

"She's gone."

"What?" I asked

"The girl who lived there, she left last week."

"Do you know where she went?"

"No."

"Were you a friend of hers?"

"You could say that." I slept with her on at least three occasions.

The blonde guy made eyes at Katie and I could see his fantasies in all too vivid detail. I attempted to scream "Fuck off!" as he turned to go inside, but it was unintelligible through my sobs. Tears were streaming down my face. I put my back against wall and slid down to the floor. The warm drops hit my hands.

"We came to see *her*, didn't we?"

I shook my head yes. She leaned her back against the wall and slid down next to me.



TARAL THOMPSON
The Doorway Greeters of China
Digital Photograph

CONTRIBUTORS

Kerry Adkins is a sophomore at MSU majoring in Art.

Ryan Andersons is an Art Major, Creative Writing minor from Charlton, New York. This is the first time his work has been accepted since his high school literary magazine *Le Font* and a letter published in the back of issue number 35 of Marvel Comics *MUTANT X*. He is currently taking Graphic Art classes and hopes to someday write or draw comic books. Ryan would like to thank his girlfriend Jess for her love and support, and all his friends.

Erica Lee Brown was born in Springfield, Ohio in 1984, and lived in Eastern Kentucky from 1990-until her passing in 1/22/08. She graduated from Johnson Central High School and was a senior at Morehead State University at the time of her death. Her son, Matthew Lee Bailey also died as a result of the injuries sustained by Erica in the accident that took her life. As a full-time employee of Maurices, Erica prided herself on public service and responsibility to her community. Her immediate goals were to graduate with her Bachelor's degree, pursue her love of teaching, marry the love of her life, Matthew Bailey, raise her son, and write. Erica was a participant in the Governor's School for the Arts, 2001, and a Kentucky Colonel. She is the daughter of Brian and Nita Brown, and sister to Tim and Jennifer Brown, as well as aunt to Peyton Trimble and Benjamin Brown. Her family misses her, and is thankful for the outpouring of love they have received since her death.

Tommy D. Chaney is a junior at MSU working on a Bachelor's degree in Sociology with a minor in Criminology. He is from Morgan County and has lived in Kentucky for most of his life. He writes fiction and poetry from time to time, and is interested in starting a workshop for local writers. His work has been published in *The Southern Writer* and *Pens on Fire*, an online literary journal. He is currently editing his first novel and writing his second, as well as polishing several short stories.

Sean L. Corbin is a sophomore at MSU majoring in English with a minor in Creative Writing. His work was published in the Spring 2004 issue of *Aurora* at EKU. He spends his free time writing, reading, and philosophizing. His influences include Stephen King, Grant Morrison, Neil Gaiman, Gerald Stern, Crystal Wilkinson, and Rebecca Howell. He is currently working on the first in a series of novels, as well as a poetry collection.

Vickie Cimprich is a poet. She received an M.A. in Medieval English and Creative Writing at University of Cincinnati. She has published in such places as *The Journal of Kentucky Studies*, *Coffee*

and *Chicory*, *Catholic Rural Life*, *Cincinnati Magazine*, and *Enquirer Magazine*. She is the author of *Pretty Mother's Home- A Shakeress Daybook*. She has also been the recipient of two Kentucky Foundation for Women grants. She is originally from Breathitt and Lee Counties.

Colin Daughtery is an Art major at MSU. He won second place in the 2007 issue of *Inscape*. His current work compares relationships between people; those that are close to each other or people that never met before, but are trying to do the same thing through a different medium. He feels that "why" is the key to everything and is constantly examining himself and his interests to try and find why things are appealing to him.

Rex Easley teaches creative writing and literature at Thomas More College in Crestview Hills, Kentucky. He has published fiction and poetry in various literary journals.

Sydney C. England is a native of Pike County, and has a Master's degree in English from MSU. She teaches English and Developmental Studies at Pikeville College. Her work has been published by the Knoxville Writers Guild.

Nettie Farris is a poet living in Louisville, Kentucky and is a KPA presenter. She teaches writing at the University of Louisville and Indiana University Southeast. Her work has been published in *Journal of Kentucky Studies*, *Heartland Review*, *Louisville Review*, *Hawaii Review*, *Wisconsin Review*, *Zone 3*, *Pegasus*, and *Appalachian Heritage*. She has received three first place prizes in the Metroversity Writing Contest (1 graduate poetry--1989; 2 graduate research--1991, 2005) and two first place prizes in the Kentucky State Poetry Society Contest (2006).

Anthony Fife is a professor at Clark State Community College and is enrolled in the Masters of Fine Arts Poetry program at Spalding University. His poetry has appeared in the *Inscape*, *Sticky Kitchen*, and *Hazmat*.

George Fillingham is a poet. He found his calling when he saw Robert Frost read poetry. His work has been featured in *The Lyric*, *Best Poetry from Little Magazines*, *Negative Capability*, *Ketch-Up*, *The Logos*, *Zone 3*, *Kudzu*, *The Round Table*, and *Open 24 Hours*. He has won second place in the National Competition from *The Lyric*, been the featured poet in *Ketch-Up*, and is the four time Night Rider Award winner from *The Round Table*. He is currently working on a novel and a full length drama.

Clark Gordon is a 36 year old father of two and a resident of Morehead since 1990. He is a former musician, a current atheist, and a future middle school science teacher.

Stephen Graham is an English major at MSU. He writes and plays music with the garage/noise rock group The Love Dealers, based out of Newport, Kentucky.

Laura Haywood is an Art major with a minor in Women's Studies. She has presented her work at the 2007 *Mt. Sterling Gallery for the Arts Juried Exhibition*, for which she won an Honorable Mention, the 2007 *University Open Juried Exhibition*, in Lexington, KY, and in the 2007 issue of *Inscape*. Her current projects focus on issues surrounding female body image, aging, sexuality, menstruation, and a critique of popular stereotypes of women.

Derek Holston is an Art major focusing on Graphic Design. His current projects utilize black and white photography. He believes that beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Patrick Johnson has a B.A. in English from MSU. He is currently working on an MFA at Spalding University.

Jonathan Lounsberry is an English major. He is currently writing short fiction, poetry, and has just started working on an Appalachian novel.

Shatosha Maddix is an Art major. She has won first place in Painting at the 2007 Maysville Community College High School Art Competition, Best in Show at the 2007 *Lewis County High School Art Show*, second place in the *MSU Student Exhibition* at the Gallery for the Arts in Mt. Sterling and 2007 Art Leadership Award. Her current projects are dramatic and realistic.

Brandon Massengill is an English major and Creative Writing minor, with aspirations to use his degree to become a cab driver. He has been published in *Inscape*. He is currently working on a collection of short stories, and will continue to write until Sallie Mae coerces him into getting a real job.

Journey McAndrews is an English major and Creative Writing minor. She is currently working on several short stories, a novella, a novel, five collections of poetry, and a book length critical analysis of Kathy Acker's work.

Casey McCown is a Studio Art major. She received an Honorable Mention in the 2007 issue of *Inscape*. Her work has been presented in *Midstream*, 2005, and *Ascending*, 2007, at the Claypool-Young Art Gallery, and the 2007 *MSU Student Exhibition* at the Gallery for the Arts. Her current project is a body of work in digital photography titled *Viejo San Juan (Old San Juan)*, focusing on the welcoming doors of restaurants and homes in the city. The series is intended to bring others' attention to the idea that the world is constantly changing around us.

David V Moore is an Art major at MSU. He is currently working on a series of digital works that address dream states and sleep disorders.

Aaron Nelson is a Communications major, focusing on Electronic Media, with a minor in Creative Writing. He is originally from Dayton, Ohio and is currently working on several stories and poems.

Ryan Newberry is an Art Education P-12 major. Recently, he has been reading books about ancient civilizations and their ingenuity in creating art and architecture. His *Inscape* piece was based on this theme.

Rhonda Pettit is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Cincinnati, Raymond Walters College, and a member of the KPA. She received her B.A. and M.A. from the University of Kentucky and her Ph.D. from the University of Cincinnati. Her poetry has recently appeared in the *Seneca Review*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *Colere*, *Trivia*, *Raven Chronicles*, *For a Better World*, and *Out of Line*. She has published a critical study of the work of Dorothy Parker, called *A Gendered Collision*. In 2006, she was awarded a writing fellowship at Hedgebrook based on a manuscript of poems. She is currently working on a poetic drama on the subject of sex slavery.

Sosha Pinson is a freshman English major at MSU. She is currently working on poetry and memoirs in an attempt to define her personal writing style.

Tuskin Roberts is an English major and is currently working on a series of stories about people riding on a bus, as well as a longer work about a kid who decides to skip school, set in one day. He says that a very helpful reader told him that it wasn't the theme of meals that unites the stories of "Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner," but that each story deals with a missing woman. He thinks it's interesting the way your work ties itself together like that, even when you intentionally start with a theme.

Steven Rodgers is an Art major with a concentration in Graphic Design. He won first place in Graphic Design at the 2004 *Annual Burley-Coal High School Competition and Exhibition*, 2nd place in Graphic Design at the 2004 *Kentucky All-State Competition*, the 2004 MSU Leadership in Art award, the Art Meets Women's Studies Internship in both 2005 and 2007, and the 2007 *Inscape* logo competition. He is currently an Intern for both the Morehead Writing Project and Office of Student Activities, Student Designer for Eagle Athletics and the Designer and Vice President for the Visual Arts Guild.

William Salazar is a poet, originally from the Southwest. His work has appeared in the *Pikeville Review* and *Appalachian Heritage*. He has recently received an M.A. in English from MSU. His

poetry intertwines culture and geography, and takes on a psychological perspective. Currently he is working on translating his poetry from English to Spanish.

Joelle Schultz is an Art major. Her work will appear in the 2008 *MSU Senior Exhibition*. Her current project is a look at innocence in relationship to oneself and others related to their atmosphere or environment.

Alex Schulz is a junior at MSU. He is majoring in English with a minor in Creative Writing. He has been recognized by the university as the outstanding undergraduate in creative writing. His current projects include several short stories and a longer, experimental piece mixing prose and poetry, which his story "Night Shift" is a part of. He is also the editor of *Inscape* and wants to thank everybody involved with the publication, including the readers.

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Silena Skaggs is a freshman at MSU pursuing a degree in Nursing. She is from Elliot County and writes solely for her own enjoyment, but enjoys sharing her work with others.

Deborah Slone is an Art major. Her work has been presented in *Images from the Mountains*, and her current project involves images of the Southern landscape. She enjoys painting, gallivanting, wandering, dreaming and margaritas.

Caleb Spencer is a senior at MSU majoring in Art. As a graphic designer, he is currently working on various logos and other print design projects. In 2006, he co-designed a mural for the Commission for Children with Special Health Needs and in 2007 co-created the Bronze Moon sculpture on MSU's campus.

Jessica L. Stump is an alumnus of Morehead State University, taking her B.A. in English. She currently resides and writes in her hometown of Harold, Kentucky, and is an employee of the *Appalachian News-Express* daily newspaper. In fall 2008, she plans to pursue an M.F.A. degree in Creative Writing, with a specialization in poetry.

Taral Thompson is an Art major. She won first place in Pencil Drawing at the 2006 *MSU National High School Art Day*. Her current art projects are only what is assigned in her 3-D Foundation and Color Foundation classes.

Heather Utterback is an Art major. Her work was included in the 2007 *Mt. Sterling Art Show*, for which she won first place with a photograph, and will be included in the 2008 *MSU Senior*

Exhibition. Her current projects include a series of ceramic chicken legs with faces and a box they all live in, as well as a tile set based on a drawing from her Drawing 2 class. She feels she is learning so much from the MSU Art Department. She wants to give back to the community of Morehead as much as she can.

Craig Wagner is an MSU student from Phelps, Kentucky. He is majoring in English, with a minor in Print Journalism, and hopes to someday have a career related to either, or in creative writing. He mostly writes prose and poetry.

Lydia Womack is an Art major focusing on Graphic Design. She spends most of her free time and class time drawing different creatures and people. She grew up in the Philippines as a missionary kid.

Lorie Zeintara is a poet. She has been in Maine for the past seven years, caring for her mother who passed away a year ago. She has now returned to eastern Kentucky. The challenge, wonder, and delight of poetry writing was opened to her while she studied at MSU from 1997-2000. She has presented her pieces at the "Annual Terry Plunkett Maine Poetry Festival" at the University of Maine in Augusta. She feels that morning is the time of day that inspires her the most.



Inscape is a Morehead State University publication with a long history of cutting edge visual and literary art. Media and genres of work range from prose, poetry, short story, long narrative, non-fiction and creative essays to photography, printmaking, drawing, painting, sculpture & digital art.

The Department of English, Foreign Languages & Philosophy offers MSU students the opportunity to submit work for publication. Students may submit poetry, fiction, non-fiction or drama. The works are reviewed by a panel and top selections are included in *Inscape*.

The Department of Art offers students two opportunities to have their work juried for publication. For every issue, jurors review the competitive pool of submissions for both the cover design and the visual artwork published within *Inscape*. Their selections help form a unique and diverse issue of *Inscape*.

For specific guidelines and submission dates, visit www.moreheadstate.edu/inscape.



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