

I.N.S.C.A.P.E

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FIRST PLACE POETRY

Chris Harbaugh

Parkerian Abreaction

the tenorman burps and brays around
the melody--he sifts sounds like a forty niner
pans, and plays only the notes big and round
enough--the bassman makes a bold rush down minor
scales--he marks the boundaries with a regular
blue line--the drummer trips across the high hat,
and the cigarette girl Bebops around circular
tables and pauses stage left where this cat
prospects--a thin black sequined strap slips
off her shoulder and a recently permed curl
the color of fools gold hides an eye as she sits,
counting tips like nights alone--I count words
I weigh my chances--I count ways home
as the saxman blows holes in the ozone.

FIRST PLACE FICTION

Eric Cash

The Second Best Day of His Life

Sam hadn't expected her to stop. He had been following Kelly for the last ten minutes, spotting her just after she had come out of Benning Tunnel. At first, he had thought that he was imagining things, that the car was just another red Chevy. Then he had seen the gash across the trunk where two years ago he had backed into someone's Buick at K-mart.

He wasn't exactly sure why he was following Kelly, wasn't sure what to do now that she had stopped on the shoulder waiting for him to pass. Though he couldn't see her face from this distance, he knew that it had one of those smirks painted on it, one of those looks that she got when she had cornered him, caught him in some random, foolish act of defiance. Her eyes were probably pulled into those thin creases.

He slowed his car and pulled onto the shoulder a hundred or so feet behind her. His window was down and through the woosh of passing cars, he heard her shouting something, but couldn't make out the words. She held her arm out and shook her fist at him. He wondered if she knew anymore than he did about what was going on, about why he was doing this. She had had a knack of explaining things to him.

Reaching into his pocket for a cigarette, he watched her through the back glass of the Chevy. The tape finished with a pop and he flipped it over.

Don Maclean started into a song. "Starry, starry night..."

Sam ran his hand over his mouth.

"Flaming flowers that brightly blaze..."

Her tires spat gravel at him and she swerved back onto the highway. A station wagon locked its brakes, missing the gash in the trunk by what seemed

inches.

Something in Sam's chest swelled. He felt like he had been dropped three floors on an elevator.

He waited long enough to light his cigarette, then he began following her again. He turned off the tape, letting the radio come back on. He pushed buttons frantically. He stopped on a Led Zeppelin song, one that reminded him of his college days. He wished that he had a joint to smoke. It had been years.

When he passed the Fullson turnoff, the sun tried to blind him. He reached over to fish his sunglasses out of the dash and almost creamed a Datsun that had slowed to make a turn. He wasn't used to driving so fast. The driver of the Datsun leaned on his horn, yelled that Sam was a dumbass.

It was at this point that Sam decided to give it up. He could get pulled over by the cops. Then he would spill it all, lose his nerve. But there she was driving in the fast lane, and driving slow like she was taking Molly and Jeffy to the roller rink, like she did when they went to the Grand Canyon, trying not to miss a single rock formation. "That must be Tower Rock. The tall one over there."

His foot pushed the gas pedal even before he realized what he was about to do. He watched the needle pass ninety, ninety-five, a hundred. He had never in his life driven a hundred. The car began to shake wildly. The car had never gone a hundred either. The hairs on the back of his neck stiffened.

He pulled beside her and let off the gas. He flipped his middle finger at her and almost lost control of the car. His hands were becoming numb from the vibrations of the steering wheel. Before he could slow enough, he shot past her.

It was a look he had never seen on Kelly.

For an instant, maybe he even imagined it, as he passed his old Chevy, as he let it pass him back while he slowed, he saw a look. Her face had turned blank, expressionless. No smirk, no answers this time. Her eyes had looked wide and blood-shot. Kelly had been afraid of him, past afraid.

He let his car slow and blended with the rest of the traffic, watching her push forward, away from him and back into the obscurity of the city. He looked for blue lights. Finding none, he took the 32 off-ramp and began making his way toward the office.

He thought about his father, sitting in his chair in his office. Sam had stood at the old man's window, picking out shapes among the clouds. He thought about how in control his father had looked talking on the telephone, pushing his pen across a stack of papers. He remembered his father telling him before he went into the church that he would remember his wedding day as the best day in his life.

But his father was dead now, and Kelly had gotten custody of both of the kids.

Sam pulled into the office parking lot and shut the motor off. He turned the key so that he could finish listening to the song that was playing. It was one that he had never heard. He turned it up as loud as it would go and tried to sing the chorus.

Glancing in the rear view mirror, he noticed that the UPS truck had pulled up the front doors of the office building to make a delivery. It was like nothing had happened. He twisted the mirror and began straightening his hair.

Inside his office, Sam leaned back in his chair and propped his feet against the glass of the full-length window behind his desk. His office was on the fifteenth floor, and he had the feeling that the sky was tugging at him, trying to draw him away.

An hour later, when his secretary dared to peck on his door, it occurred to him that he had been trying to decide whether or not he should let it.

SECOND PLACE POETRY

Karen Craigo

Edges

I hear him trying not to slur
as he asks how my classes are and if I need
any money, knowing already I'm doing okay
on my own, wanting and not wanting
to hear the words. I think of the summer I was nine,
the family vacation at New River Gorge, famous for its
white water and the high suspension bridge
which stretched between the mountains like an arm
across the back of two seats. Dad said
he wasn't afraid of heights, but of sudden drop-offs,
edges in the sky over which you could lose everything
to the water and rocks below. Now, almost 21, I see
why he drove down the center line that day,
with his forearms taut on the steering wheel
and the bridge rocking gently in the wind as I urged Dad
closer to the edge and the shaving-foam water.
I tell him I'm doing fine, and he answers in a voice
liquid as the river, distant as the rocks below.

SECOND PLACE FICTION

Eric Cash

The Proposal

Jacob sat in his dinner suit watching the waiters busy themselves. The conversation had come to a lull. The food had been ordered, and the Widow Mennsfield had run out of words. She was toying with her napkin, waiting.

Then he began.

It was not, she thought, what she wanted to hear, but she listened, nodding at all of the appropriate pauses. The years had made her a patient woman...

It's closing time and I'm just about to lock the door when I see Cooper Jennings' big nose pressed against the window where I post signs telling about sales. The day's been slow, so I put on my smile and motion for his frozen face to come inside. Cooper and I have known each other for years. We're the same age down to the month, and often we've sat in the back playing Cribbage on Sundays when his wife goes to visit her sister in Queens.

As he opens the door, the winter air is sucked in and I'm beginning to have my second thoughts about letting him in. When he closes it, I'm reminded once again that I've forgotten to fix the bell that's supposed to jingle and tell me that someone's come into my store to rob me.

I tell him that he shouldn't be trying to startle me so with that big nose of his. I tell him that I could've mistaken him for one of those punks who always walk the streets high on drugs. I tell him that I might've shot him or pushed the alarm button. I'm only half-joking. I've been robbed once by such a punk, you know.

"What d'you need, Cooper?" I ask, and slip behind the counter. "Ground chuck, I'll bet. The Missus has made nother meat loaf, so you thought you'd rush out and get more chuck so she'll make another tomorrow."

“That’ll be the day, Jacob.” He smiles. His wife, he’s told me, makes a meat loaf unfit to feed to his beagle. “No. I need four of your best steaks. T-bone.”

“T-bone? Are you sure?”

“T-bone. The best cuts that you have.”

“I have a sale on round steaks. More for your money, I always say.”

He shakes his head no, so I begin wrapping the cuts in freezer paper. As I’m taping them up, I notice through the window that the snow has started again. I’m suddenly wanting to get rid of Cooper as politely as I can because the roads will probably soon get slick and I’ve told my nephew’s son, Larry, that I’ll drive over and take him to see the new Indiana Jones movie.

“You hear that Baxter’s back?” he asks.

I pretend that I haven’t heard him. I ring his order on the register. “That’ll be eleven seventy-five,” I say.

He whistles like he’s seen a beautiful Italian woman. Excuse my manners. I mean...you know what I mean.

Anyway, he shrugs and digs out his wallet. “Well, I guess nothing’s too good for the old Bax,” he says.

The man he’s speaking of is a short, pig-faced Irishman that sold a lot of useless pieces of paper to a lot of his gullible friends. Investment percentages, he had called them. For two hundred and fifty dollars one could own a share in an up and coming business venture. Oranges. Baxter was going to make it rich in the Chicago orange futures market, he had told them. Cooper had bought five shares.

The last time that he had come into this part of the city, Baxter had been driving a long, sky-blue convertible. He had told his one-time friends that he had no way of knowing that there was going to be a mild winter and a bumper crop of oranges that year. He had offered everyone ten cents on the dollar on their original investments to show that he was an honest man. Alex Rakes, the mailman with the buck teeth, bashed out one of the passenger windows on Baxter’s car with a baseball bat before Baxter went speeding out of town. Alex Rakes had lost seven hundred and fifty dollars.

So Baxter is back. Big deal, I’m thinking. The clock says that I only have an hour before the movie starts. I don’t really want to see this movie, but I’ve made a promise and I love my nephew’s son as though he were my own. I take Cooper’s money and hand him the steaks.

“Well, you have a nice meal, Cooper, and tell Baxter I said hello.”

Cooper isn’t moving. He’s fumbling with the paper on one of the steaks.

“You need something else, Cooper?” From the way he’s standing, I know that he’s about to ask me for a favor.

“Jacob,” he says, “I know that business hasn’t been so good lately...”

“Don’t, Cooper. It’s just throwing good money after bad,” I tell him.

"It's different this time, Jacob. Baxter gave me a hundred dollar check back on my investment. He says the oranges were a bad move at first, but now they're starting to pay off.

"Then take the check and buy something, or put it in the bank."

"Jacob, I know I should. I mean, I really should, but Baxter's come up with a sure thing--"

"More oranges?"

"Pork bellies. Baxter says that pigs are dying off everywhere because of that new disease. You know the one...the one on the news."

"I've heard no such news," I tell him. I want to leave the shop now in time to catch the movie and in time to keep my bank account intact.

"Jacob, it's true. He even showed me an article out of Time Magazine. He says that they're dropping like flies and if we catch the markets and buy up all of the surplus bacon, we can resell it later and make a mint."

"I'm a butcher, Cooper. I haven't heard anything about dying pigs. I even have a sale on pork. I can sell you all the bacon you want at a dollar fifteen cents a pound."

"That's it, Jacob. We can buy bacon cheap now and sell it later."

"After the pigs start dying."

"Right. It's a sure thing."

"So what'll it be, Cooper? You want a pound of jowl or some of the Armor Star?"

Cooper dropped his head. He looked like he was going to cry. The smarter half of me said to let Cooper be angry with me for a while, let him miss this big mistake. Instead, I asked him how much he needed.

"Five hundred dollars," he said. Even between friends he knew this was too much to ask. He couldn't look me in the eyes.

"I don't have that much. Do you think I keep that much in the shop?"

"I know it's a lot, Jacob. But you know I'm good for it. The factory is booming. With overtime work, I could pay you half of it back in a month."

"I trust you," I told him. I did trust Cooper. He may have been a fool with his money, but he wouldn't sleep until he repaid the debt. I was doing fairly well. I could afford to go to the bank and withdraw five hundred dollars for an old friend.

I look at the clock. If I don't leave soon, I'll be late for the movie. I'm wishing that I hadn't let Cooper in the store. But, I had no choice of course.

I promise to go to the bank the first thing in the morning and withdraw the money for him. He invites me for dinner and I tell him about the movie. He tells me to have a good time and to give his best wishes to my nephew's son.

Am I too winded tonight? No? Well, the food should be here soon.

Well, somehow, I have remembered the wrong time, so we are waiting and talking in the lobby while people try to finish off their cigarettes. Larry is telling me how much he wishes that he could pick up and leave the neighborhood. How boring it is, he says. How much he wants to be an actor like Harrison Ford.

I tell him that he's only thirteen. I tell him that Hollywood is full of liars and drug addicts and that he should finish school and go to college like his father--my nephew, that is. He laughs and says that I'm probably right. He's very respectful for a boy of his age.

We find seats near the middle of the theater and wait for the lights to go off. Larry's eyeing a group of teenaged girls sitting in front of us and to the left. He starts to tell me something, but the lights drop and we watch the previews. He's trying hard to hide that he's looking at the girls.

I'm thinking about what life in Hollywood must really be like as I'm watching Indiana Jones fight the Nazi's. I wonder what it would be like to have a lot of money, to strike it rich like Cooper wants to do. I picture Cooper swinging on the end of a whip into a big pile of money. The thought is too much, and in a tense moment in the film I break out laughing. Larry prods me in the ribs and whispers for me to hush. The thought won't leave my head, so I whisper back that I'm going for some popcorn. He looks up at me as I stand, then turns to stare at the screen.

I wind my way down the row of people saying "excuse me" and "pardon me" until it becomes habit. When I reach the aisle, I take a few steps up toward the lobby. I stop and try to make out his outline among the group of people. I pick him out, and almost burst out into laughter again. He's looking toward the girls.

I'm wishing that I was thirteen again.

I spend five dollars on a small bucket of popcorn and two Cokes. I see Harvey Balton and his two sons sitting behind the velvet rope that keeps people out of the theater between movies. I wave and walk over. Harvey lives a few houses down from Cooper, so I ask him if he's seen Baxter.

"Baxter? You mean the crook? I heard he was shot in a bar fight a couple of years ago."

"But Cooper said--"

"Shame about Cooper isn't it? It was very nice of you to give those steaks to his family. They invited us over for dinner. You still have the best cuts in town," he says.

I want to ask. I need to ask, but I mumble a quick thank you and goodbye and go back into the theater. I'm thinking that maybe Cooper has hit bad times and is too proud to tell me the truth. I'm wondering if he has asked the Balton's for money too, and if we will ever play cards on Sundays again.

I'm standing at the entrance waiting for my eyes to adjust. The screen is showing a night scene, so I can't see to make my way down the aisle. I look

in the area where we were seated. I stand there, waiting for the screen to show enough light for me to make things out by.

Suddenly, I'm struck with this feeling. I feel all lonely inside, like the world's become a big, big place. I'm standing there waiting, an old man at a movie house waiting to find my way down the aisle.

And it makes no sense, but I'm not thinking about Cooper any more. It's a lot of money, and my friend has just lied to me--a whopper, I mean. And do you know what I'm thinking? I'm praying that my nephew's son hasn't went down to visit those girls up front while I've been gone. For some reason, the most important thing in the world to me is to know that he's still there before I make my way into all that darkness.

Do you see what I'm trying to say? It is a feeling that I never want to have again in my life.

HONORABLE MENTION POETRY

Joan Altman

The Song of the Lark

She just stands there in Breton's picture,
in a field, holding a sickle.
I can't decide if it is a morning or afternoon sun,
or maybe orange holocaust over France.
She is barefoot, kerchief on head, and now this poor,
ill-dressed girl hangs on a wall in Chicago.
Her eyes are lifted, and there are a few birds
in the sky, the larks I suppose.
Their song and her gaze, if one could follow them,
would rise higher than the larks themselves.
Somewhere outside the picture her duty is neglected
while her dreams are nourished
by something insubstantial, separate
from whatever grain her sickle cuts.

George Barnette

untitled

I don't have to peck
at this ground to
survive.
I'm not that
fucking bird
not that bird on
t.v.
can't bash my brains
out on that stub
frozen stalk,
winter is the hard
days are photographs
inescapable, stuck
clear, and
wait, wait is all
careful, slow
slow thaw but
softer now softer
crumbles brown
cool and fat, dirt
open for the
cut of me
grubbing,
my brains
undamaged
not loosened or
bruised--
sedate.

George Barnette

untitled

Like a child I falter
fall into
my emotions believe
in their power,
wrap around
the feeling, cling
to you when I can
and cannot
be holding you, dream
into that death of
awareness
that is our
soft faces
smooth on
each other and the
hunger of
kisses
wanted
holding me from
rest
keeping me
hungry

George Barnette

Convergence

We rolled
as the beauty
thick and smooth
of that music in my ears
into the driveway. I
stuck, could not
follow her
running
from the sound to
dog bark celebration
love above the tall grass
high notes soothing soaring
through distracted pain
threading softly the
focus of my brain
to see beyond
the car the
day out to happiness pure
as strings tightly
screaming the
moan the
relief of love
and of
a scratch behind the ear.

George Barnette

The Way I Go

the way
washed up under
foot waiting
for tidal escape to
another
goes me to
need leave rust from
torn edge
linger in your
blood, flakes
infect of
my try to get in
into you me
my shit
consist of my
element while
swirled
sucked
away,
for more of you
the you I'm in
I go

George Barnette

A Dream

A dream
it happened!
Took me to the place
of troubled whales
in ice water
where the air was
clean it gently breathed
into the soul of my
sleep to
love me for
the moment of that
feeling of
the vision.

My body wore
the cool winter water
as devotion on the
rising tide of glory as
mountains wore the sea
no less
they spanned the forever
of distant beauty and it
happened they did
touch me.

George Barnette

Out

“I love you, goodnight, I love you.” Nothing could make everything cool and I knew it. I told her I loved her like I was apologizing for something.

The chain on the tall cheap lamp hung, so I sat in the darkness of my livingroom looking at the street light next door throwing designs on the couch through the curtain. The fan on the stove was winding high and steady. I had the place cozy. The wood Tom and Terry had thrown off in the yard for me had saved me for a while longer. It was warm. Even back in the bedroom where she slept.

I had to do something. Read something. See something. Write. Drink some beer. Something. I couldn't just lay in bed with my toes scraping the wall.

But I hate the distractions.

Pulling up hard on the handle of the door kept the hinges from whining in the middle of the swing and on the porch, I was out. Nobody heard me leave.

High-tops, my sweatpants with the pockets and a heavy flannel shirt I got for Christmas were comfortable. How in the hell could it be this nice out and that damned cold in the house? This kind of night can really make you almost happy against your will at first. I stepped around the logs and the broom and that ugly fig tree some guy left here, but kicked the little grill with the refrigerator shelf on it over the edge of the porch. A cloud of ashes puffed up toward my face and I tasted it on my tongue.

There's no light on that side of the house and late at night, when it's clear and cold like this, the sky is always blacker and the stars are always brighter. Just about every night I stand on that end of the porch and just look at the sky and pull my dick out into the cold and piss a long, satisfying piss.

Tonight I pissed like I always do there, straining to shoot it streaming as far out as I can, but before it came down to a trickle and it was still fast, I shot down into the ashes I had kicked into the yard. It had a dull, muffled sound and it packed down the places where it hit.

I turned to the road in front of the house and grabbed on to the beam that ran all the way across the front of the porch and supported the roof. I curled up my legs and hung by my hands, feeling that stretch under my arms and down my sides. I hung till my fingers ached in the knuckles. I let myself down and looked around on the porch, which was faintly lighted by the street light. There was my rocking chair. I thought that it was like the night sky in a way. I felt shallow at my inattention to something I thought was so cool. So I grabbed the chair by the handles and walked around to the side of the house with it. I found a flat spot and began to slowly rock.

It wasn't a perfect smooth motion as it sort of notched in the middle like there was a hump in the wood or I was on a rock or something. But I couldn't adjust it any better so I just relaxed and rocked with my head hung heavy over the back of the chair.

The chair made it right, staring at the blackness of the sky. Digging in my feet, I rocked high up to the tip of both pointed arcs. I wanted it to be more. I wanted to stretch back two magic arrows and shoot them through the bows I rocked on--shoot them into the ground and explode, blast off away from this yard and this trailer. Shoot into space, the black warm blanket with tiny holes burned through it from the fire beyond. Close my eyes and give in to the comfort of that black dream and rest.

I rocked hard on this dream for as long as I could. And then I stopped.

My ears and hands stung with coldness. I slowly worked my knees, feet on the ground, barely rocking at all. I pulled and creased the collar of my shirt till it slightly touched my ears with protection from the cold. My armpits heated balled-up hands. Late in the night, the chair was still. Beneath the night sky, I slept.

Eric Cash

The Turtles

Tony still won't believe me about the turtles.
But I don't bother to ask. He calls me on a Wednesday long
distance from Iowa (his kids screaming, a gameshow
blaring in the background) to give me this soap box
about the do's and don't's of his marital bliss. And
then this thought about the turtles

Kate's in the small bed
sweating for the thrill of it, watching the fanblade
turn: thirty-nine, forty (she counts aloud). I'm in
the kitchen, hugging my knees, taking quick breaths, watching
her breasts through the doorway as they rise and fall to
the rhythm of her voice. I hear a crash downstairs, then
the screaming begins again

Teresa? No, I tell him, I've never seen the youngest.
The announcement of his first, a boy, we celebrated
(the four of us) by watching the sails push their way
into the port. We were drunk with ourselves, didn't need
the champagne. With the second came a card with storks.
I sent a card and a present, a mobile with blue...

I've left my raincoat somewhere. I'm standing on the footbridge to the
park, the wind is cold in my wet hair as I stare into the water looking for

my reflection. The rain makes round frames of itself on the surface; water gushes through a hole cut in the wall of the small dam beneath the bridge and makes a whirlpool

yes, I say. I realize Tony's changed the subject. His mother is sick with the and something falls into the whirlpool. Then again. And I see them crawling up the tiny dam--hundreds of them. Bright green even in the half-light, they pull themselves out of the swift run off. Clinging to the smooth face of the concrete becomes stone ten feet above the creek, they stall. They make slow attempts, feel the stone as a blind man greets a friend. The change in surface seems to confuse them; they become unsure and one by one, three at a time, they fall, spin in the pool and sink

and then he asks me about the AA meetings. I am caught off guard and tell him the truth. He starts in with the lecturing, just like the first time. I want to shut him up, make him listen. I want to tell him why it was him that I came to that night, wet, alone, cold to the bone. I want to tell him just one more time about the turtles, how they seemed to know there was no hope, how they kept on climbing. And about Kate and the sympathetic smiles of the doctors. But I don't.

I pretend to listen, but can think only of the turtles. I am thinking of those days when the weatherman couldn't seem to get it straight, when I walked listening to the sickening songs of sparrows.

I am wondering if they were turtles at all and not angels.

Eric Cash

Message

The drain is Morse code beating
against the siding I promised to paint
last spring, in that time when your skin
like finch songs and morning sounds
eased the constant buzzing in my ears.

I am beyond myself in this unusual cold
as I watch you rise, wordless, rigid,
stretching like one of those characters
on the fake Egyptian vase we circled
with cloth and placed on our special table.

You are a strange alphabet sending messages;
I need to hear, but cannot seem to decipher.

Laura Caudill-Cash

*It Was Under Those
Trees She First Found*

It was under those trees she first found
the missing elements, all those layers
of truth and disguise on the blanket-soft
mosses--verdant velour smelling of rich soil
and rock, stable as a white country church.
She knew the hardness of the wood, branches
reaching up the balance the blinking leaves--
bright eyes opening, the wind as soft
fingers wiping away the dew-sleep. The rough
torso, bulk of the visible, supported the green
facade so the blossoms could dance
like gypsies--beyond self-doubt.

But it was under those trees--
far beneath their pomp and bloom
that anchors reached deep to the center
of molten earth--holding fast--
feeding their needs from what the ground
could give, and holding on. As she
lay there, she wondered if those roots
could forget the skying branches, if her
new leaflets could ignore those subsurface
anchors they feed from but cannot see.
She felt her roots tugging at her, knowing
she would drown in the ashes and dust.

Brian

If I look at you long enough
maybe I will know more than just
the way your hands move in clay,
the shapes of shadows on your face
when your hair falls into your eyes,
or the green of those eyes, the depth
which disturbs me and draws me through
a mind maze where the walls are high--
so high I cannot see their bounds. Still
I want to capture you, your beauty and your
youth, to seal you in some photograph for my
memory where you will always be poised atop some
high rock, looking as though you could leap into
the air and disappear. While I am watching from my safe
distance, I am wishing I too could fly from the edge,
make some impression on the wind or leave my name
etched into its side. You will never need to wonder
how hard it is to strike the ground, how it feels
to crash back to earth, shackled by your own
gravity and the gravity of all that makes
you into what you are. Can you teach me
how to live? Can I watch you from here
just for a while until I find my own
sharp edges, my own feathers, until
I can know what you know about being,
just being, that makes the difference
between us? If I can. . . If I look
at you, into you long enough. . .

Laura Caudill-Cash

The Young Artist (for Susan)

She's a paisley girl,
full of thin threads
intricately woven,
the pattern
never repeating
though imitated. She sits
in a dark kitchen, picks
at her tofu, uses chopsticks
('cause she likes to)
and grinds oil and canvas
images in her mind, thickly painted
for texture, vivid colors leaping
to the looker's eyes.

She says she has grown
into herself, says meditation
made all the difference between then and...
And when she sees the inside
she smiles at all the people
in the marketplace, her mind full of dancers
in bright feathers and cheese cloth,
asking nothing. It's free, the dance,
because it doesn't belong to anyone.
She struggles for the leg movements
in bold yellow on mahogany.

Blues for the afternoon, never
in morning, for it deserves
more attention
than a blue could bring.

Twisting her brown hair
into long strands around a finger,
she searches the cloth
for one more image,
stretching into the marketplace,
the faces separating and blending
into a blur.

Maybe tomorrow
a color will come, a shape
to make her brushes dance again.
Now, though, it is time
for herb tea and future-gazing,
time to slip off the sandals
and challenge another night.

Laura Caudill-Cash

Antiquing

I go there for Anna's company, fondle
each piece of spectral depression glass,
each Occupied Japan, each finish, and
she tells me of a lump on her head that itches
and won't go away. I always cover
every inch of the store, searching for that
perfect treasure buried in old boxes
of 1960's newspapers. She likes me,
gives me good breaks on Blue Willow
and lets me wander like a child, stopping
to touch the pretties in Grandma's window,
hands stained with strawberry preserves and clumps
of crushed corn I'd fed Grandad's milk-cows.
I give her my money for wooden boxes
or Willow or maybe a lamp, and she says,
"Come back again any time." The bells
on the door open the sounds of the street,
and the sunlight burns my eyes like I'm
not yet awake or ready to return.

FIRST PLACE ART



Susan Fossett

untitled

photograph

SECOND PLACE ART



Self-Portrait

Robert L. Davis

drypoint

HONORABLE MENTION ART

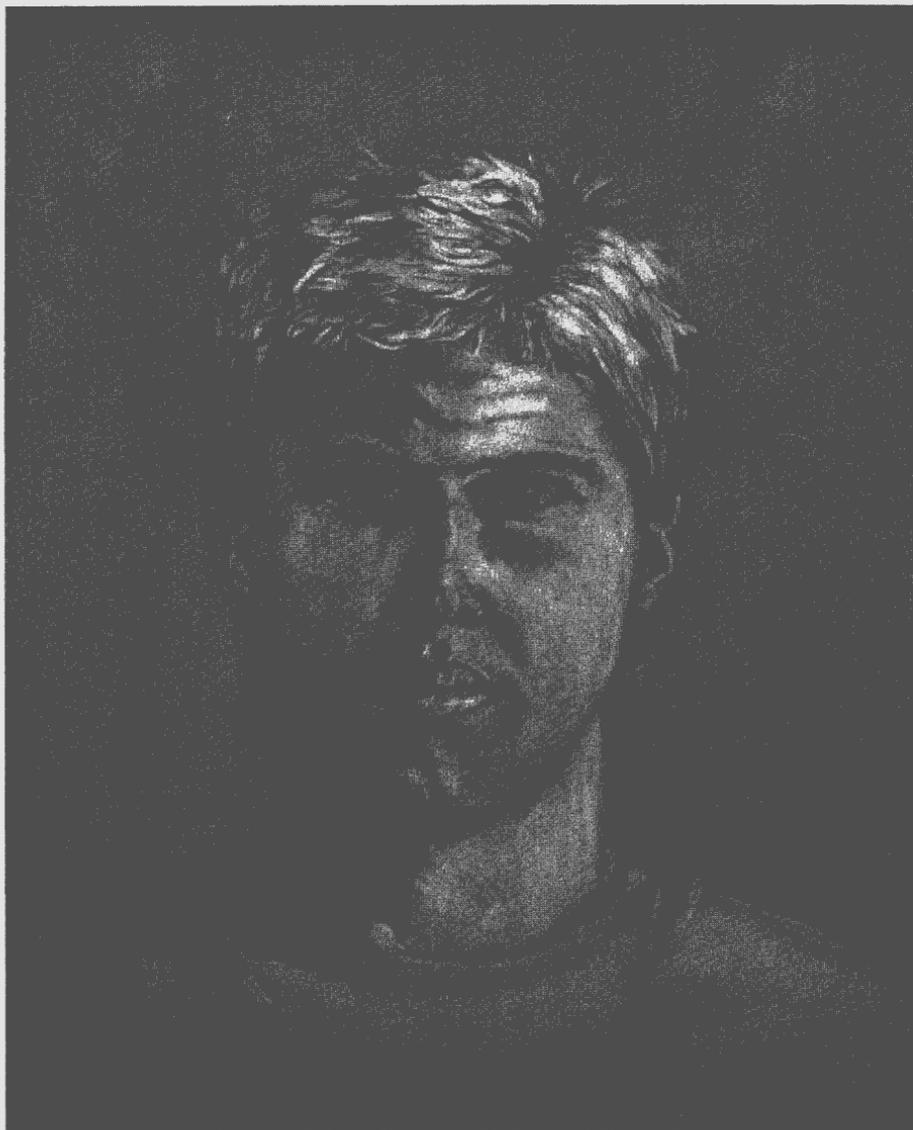


Reclining Figure

Rita Cameron

charcoal

HONORABLE MENTION ART



untitled

Chris Conley

charcoal



Joseph Felice

Patricia's Sunglasses

brush and ink



Intimate Moment

June M. Hamilton

photograph



Sitting Figure

Jennifer Hart

charcoal



Glen D. Meade

untitled

photograph



Jennifer Starr

untitled

charcoal



Ladonna I

Kitty Wilson

photograph

Karen Craigo

Lula

Lula runs in sensible shoes
when she slips away unnoticed.
Sometimes I see her beside the road
clutching the neckline of her housedress,
her black purse bouncing off her hip
as her orthopedic shoes slap the pavement.

I think I could fold Lula
and tuck her under my wiper
like a neglected parking ticket.
Or maybe I could place her in my glove box
next to my laminated car registration.
If I didn't stop at all, just drove past
without slowing, wouldn't she float
in my tail wind like a gum wrapper
until she gently touched down at home?

Usually she rides in the front seat,
hops in like she knows me and talks
about someone else's uncle or aunt
while she calls me by that name, her name.
I take her where she needs to go;
once it was to a drug store that burnt
down years ago. Lula sat and stared,
her prescription crumpled in her hand,
her pain comfortable in its familiarity,
until I drove her home in silence,
deposited her at the slot in the door.

Karen Craigo

We Sort Clothes

This
is no summer
hillside--the mound gives
under our lovemaking.

This is the pinkest
pile, and you say
you've lost my skin
in the pastel
silk.

Kisses,
new wool on my
shoulders and arms,
your soft scent overwhelms
my gym socks, it's
Feb. 14th
and I haven't
a thing to wear,
Coin-op the farthest
place from
here.

Jennifer Hester

Surface Structures

“Life is a farce,” he thought and forced his hips into an old pair of football pants. He was 28, balding, and worried. Where was the fun, the chicks, the dough, the point? His girlfriend said he was self-centered and his analyst said he should take time to figure out what he wanted. The rent was due in two days and he was out of milk.

The early morning sun reflected off the formica countertop as he took six plates and seven saucers to the small table, opened the window, and took the screen out. His mother had given him the dishes and he thought of her as he looked at the parking lot across the alley-way. His analyst looked like his mother. He remembered the god-like statues he accorded her as he frisbeed the saucer into the parking lot.

It took fifteen minutes to cover the highlights of two years of conversations with a Freudian and to exhaust the plate and saucer munitions. He collected the bowls.

Visions of his girlfriend shaving her head to protest testing shampoo on animals took two bowls while the remaining ones carried her chastity vow and the vibrator he found under her bed the following week.

When he saw the wreckage effected by his own hand he felt the surge of power shared by all destroyers of dishware. He poured celebratory Lucky Charms into a Hardee’s Moose cup and turned toward the refrigerator. “Shit,” he said, peering inside, “there’s no milk.”

HONORABLE MENTION POETRY

Steve Inskeep

Zoo Jazz

Yo! Elephants!

Two snapshots on a wall:
On the left,
a trainer smaller than the mother's
trunk leads two of them gray suckers
around, mom and baby, walking
in step. The trainer wears a short
haircut, a white dress shirt, a thin black
tie, black dress pants, and shoes
so brown and ratty
that he doesn't have to worry about where he steps.

Seconds after the photographer's
impeccable rhythm compelled
him to snap this photo, the trainer
raised his baton, the elephants
stood on their hind legs, raised
their horns, threw away the sheet
music to the baby elephant walk, and howled
an abridged version of "Yardbird Suite." But that's
not on the wall, and like all the great moments
in jazz it won't happen again.

Yo! People!

The photographer missed a shot
of the Yardbird Suite
because he turned to take
the picture on the right. Here
the camera saw the people watch the show. A dimple
on a cheek and a cultured pearl in
an ear;
a red scarf covering a gray head
with a mouth that drops open as if
its owner were endorsing dentures; some
Christopher Robin riding unseen shoulders
in the background;
a man with nothing better to do
than tilt his loose-flesh face to see
around the baseball cap before him.
Maybe that is not why his face tilts,
because every face tilts, twenty-two
faces all angled left as if the whole
crowd woke up with cricks in their necks.

An exception:

One man faces the wrong way,
smiling from bald spot to bald spot
under a nose which, through a genetic
defect plus the magic of photographic
perspective, is, like the elephants, larger
than the trainer in the other photo. This man
faces the wrong way so that those
straining to see the elephants will instead
see him. His posture marks
him as a politician, but his
syncopation
might just be a great
moment
in jazz, one man failing
to
turn his head as all the
others
did and in the process
wailing:

Yo! Me!

Steve Inskip

Funeral Oration

I save souls.
I keep the bodies cold.

I
remember Mrs. Mary when her hands
were not so cold, and never lay across
her body, one atop the other, creased
as this piece of paper, dead as the words I read
aloud from it. The funeral home smells
of flowers, suits, and people old enough
that they don't think of Mrs. Mary when
they think of death. This service happens not
for Mrs. Mary but for them and me:
she couldn't care what I say, couldn't hear
as I recite: *He leadeth me beside
the still waters. I shall not want that much.*

I
remember Mrs. Mary, member of
the Lions' Club, Ohio Stare Grange,
the Vinton County Chapter--Business and
Professional Women, dead of cancer at
the age of forty-six years, six months, four days.
A roll call of names and numbers--that is the song

of death. *I spoke to her before she died.*
She said that she was ready. So I say.
But this is not the crucial fact. It seems
today that spiritual speech can not
compete with the significance of
the Lions' Club, Ohio State Grange,
and Vinton County Chapter--Business and
Professional Women. *We all must learn*
from this that our own time is coming soon.
Our words and deeds will someday vanish away,
and at that time just one thing shall
remain...
--a crumpled sheet of paper read aloud
by a gray parson on a sunny day.

I save souls.
I keep the bodies cold.

The funeral director stands in the corner,
his hands across his body, one atop
the other, waiting for the signal to press
the atomic button that will fill the room
with canned music and live emotion. *We*
shall never pass this way again.

I
remember Mrs. Mary, but not this way:
her hair done up in curls, and roses in
her cheeks to match the ones around her coffin.

I
remember Mrs. Mary as a piece of paper,
becoming creased and folded, but gathering
a short list of scratch marks before

I
say: After the music, the funeral director
shall take charge for service.
and quietly throw the paper away.

Steve Inskeep

Night Game

Listen, boy,
I want you
to look at me when I
look at me.

A giant with a nose
like a mudslide.
A dirty baseball cap.

The giant fumigated
Listen Boy's blue-green eyes,
his bowl cut,
his disgustingly clean
uniform.

F-f-f-forgot to run.
The boy had been thinking of
a gold shield
on a white helmet--men playing exponential
hopskotch across
a white desert. Men
took ten-foot strides there,
easy. Listen Boy was at least ten
feet from home plate

when the white ball
arrived like a crashing
satellite.

Where's your brain?
In the moon?
If Listen Boy answered
at all, he would have
to say yes.

David Masters

The Big Sandy

You remember that curve
You remember how the road dips
Then drops precipitously
You remember losing your breath
As you plunged over the hill
Drop sharply and there's the curve
Brake wildly and veer to the left
Brake wildly and there's the bridge
The bridge and swirling waters
The bridge and troubling waters
You remember all this and rain
Rain, always rain everywhere
All week it had rained
And the Big Sandy roiled below
Boiled dark and malevolent
Roiled muddy and unfriendly
Troubling and uncaring
Challenging the compass of the banks
Doing as it damn well pleased
Swollen and pregnant with flooding
You remember the bus
The big, yellow school bus
The bus with children smiling
The bus with children yelling

In sheer abandon and young at heart
There were no signs to tell
Of Godly anger or man's last sin
Had the driver or bus met failure
Had there been a sudden commotion
Who can decipher it now
The clues too washed away
Drifting toward a mystery
Propounding a public conundrum
As the bus veered in panic
Then shot ahead with glee
Toward the looming precipice
Pirouetting in leaden grace
Framed in an instant time warp
As it passed the curve
Turned it into a straight line
Geometrically clean and neat
Propelling its human cargo
Into the raging Big Sandy
Wallowing there
Like pregnant hippo
Desperate for a shifting foothold
Seeking a continental shelf
Beyond the deluge
Then eyes and faces and voices
Swirled with the water
Defining a sudden tragedy
Then gone
Wiped clean
Flowing on
Leaving no trace.

C. M. Thomas

Immaculate Burning Calendar

Not for the ease of giving up,
The frozen rage of iron is mollified by rust.
Dew plays its tiny harp, arpeggio of mist.
We can't forget we're obsessed,
And transmute so slowly, never certain we're different.
Certainly your anger felt like gravel,
Churning into cement.
You brailled the air with gestures
Closing on emptiness: Where are the gentle
Men, those who aren't afraid
To love like women?
When your husband left
With your insides, left you
With a new human to raise alone,
Did you hear the hive of your heart swarm irresolutely away?
Perhaps you placed the clock face down
And did your solitary dance.
Did you yearn to turn over in sleep
And embrace nonfiction?
I believe you found your mirror wanting
Somebody beside you.
Mornings at your easel, you lean in silver shadow,
Violet wandering jew cascading by your throat.
The thick white paint of solitude

Is all over you.
But thin soled saviors haunt steamed over taverns;
They're crying for one more beer,
Before the apocalypse of ice,
Before their lovers moan
For the other, the one with the immaculate
Burning calender. The remembered weight of words
Evaporates: Birds are groaning in their ragged nests again.

C. M. Thomas

untitled

The poems were written the way I lived my life,
It was all instinctual
When we get down to loneliness, poetry is just talking.
Reduced to this arithmetic, the insomniac's tally,
I rest on the floor, staring at furniture from underneath.
You walked downstairs and touched my face,
Told me dreams are the beginning,
Everything.
In the face of nothing to say,
Nothing else to say,
I slouch into midlife.
All I know is what I feel.
The simple sentence is all I long the utter.
I thumb for hours through phone books, just talk.
I wanted to sacrifice everything for something.
But ice, like concrete, is mortered around my body.
I am a trout, frozen.
Lifted in a chunk from below,
My eyes appear stunned,
Staring up at the funny lights,
Breathless.
There was a time when I thought I understood,
I lingered there too long.

Jeff Weddle

Ah, Sweet

I have seen you not darkshroud
stalking and grim tautsmiling on
scythe but dull aching pressure
constant only worrisome if considered
and I usually don't.

I have felt your fingers digging
hidden holes and punching mountains
up up through skin, telling me ha ha
I'm here I'm here and what say we forget
all else.

I have known you as constant
boon companion clingtight bloodbrother
always peering over shoulder and thigh
building and tearing walls of egosickness
at worst times begging a giggle.

I suppose there'll be no epiphanies.

I suppose ends come crashing silent past
fleshwalls and unfinished pages stand gutted
worse than muteness.

Jeff Weddle

The Woman Poet

the woman poet wears a thin black dress,
her breasts loose beneath, nipples dancing,
screaming look at me, hair in tight waves like
a medieval woodcut of a milkmaid or a nymph.

i picture her sweating, grunting, her strokes relieving
a cow's discomfort, or mine, or lying naked, save for light gauze
at her breast, in a forest, worshipful creatures gathered about her,
a lucky swan or bull nuzzling parted thighs.

she smiles, her eyes like crystal lightning, striking, looking for
the truest conductor, hinting a feast you can almost taste.

i bet, too young to understand, she dreamt of sticky suckers
going liquid in her mouth, tongue swimming in warm saliva, the dull ache of
frustration, of wanting but not knowing what, waking with tiny fingers still
hiding in the warm folds of an even-then-wise vagina.

i bet as she got older boys took her into cars or down along riverbanks and
traded their awkward lust for her holy abandon and believed, most of them,
the conquest was theirs.

and now in a woman's body, the girlish glow mixed with ripe curves and fire
and poetry, she glides into my fingertips, whispering secrets and grinning,
and slowly spins away.

HONORABLE MENTION FICTION

Dolly Woods

Blue Boy

“I went for a walk in the woods and happened upon a small baby laying under some leaves. So I took it home. He has pointy ears and lives in my basement. I feed him sardines and peanut butter.”

“Thomas Hollis, Thomas Hollis.” Mrs. Jones’ tightly pulled gray hair caused the monotone words to spit from her mouth. “Thomas pay attention.”

“No, I really did.”

The class stood for the pledge, the boards squeaking under their feet.

“I found a box floatin’ in the river. A wooden one. And it was full of eyeballs. I took it home and stuck pipe cleaners in them, and they turned into orange martians.”

“Shut up Thomas. And to the Republic for which it stands.”

“I saw a Indian standing in the corner of my room this morning. He was big and had real war paint on. He looked at me and shot an arrow into my wall.”

“Thomas, go to the office.” Mrs. Jones continued “with liberty and justice for all.”

2

The long gray corridor stretched on for miles. Thomas’ boot heels clicked down the hall. Big black boots with shiny spurs. I found a pair of spurs once, in the desert, and a big gun holster, too. And a big cowboy wearing black fell out of the sky. He said he’d teach me how to shoot, but I was better than him.

“Still mumbling about. Come on in Thomas, your usual chair is waiting.” Alice the secretary, nodded toward the chair in the corner of the

principals office.

“I found a cap once. On the steps of the courthouse. It was blue with white stars Prince Poison dropped it on his way into the electric chair. I got it in my closet.”

Alice held her freshly sharpened pencil up to the light. After it passed inspection, she pricked it into her corn yellow bee hive. She loaded her stapler with a fresh supply. “Thomas you and your stories.”

“No, I really did. I find all sorts of things. I betcha I could kick over your desk and find something really cool.”

“Uh, huh. I bet you could too.” Alice skimmed some PTA letters to be sent home. “Well, you take these papers to Mrs. Jones and keep still in class.”

“I found a briefcase full of papers once. It was black with two gold snap hooks. There were papers written in French. An FBI man came to get them but they’re hidden in my room.”

3

“Be quiet Thomas. Take your seat and copy the math problems.”

“I found the first math problem. I dug it out of my back yard. It was in a brick box on funny thin paper.”

“Thomas. Sit down and put away your book. Try not to be so lost this afternoon.” Mrs. Jones was serious.

“I found a lost boy once. He lived under a tree at the park. He ate ants and snails, but now he just sleeps there.”

“Thomas go to the office and call your parents. Come back when you’re not so full of stories.” Mrs. Jones pursed her lips and flashed exasperated eyes.

Thomas cleared his desk and silently walked to the office, wondering why no one believed him. He dialed his mother’s work number. No answer. He tried his father’s work number. No answer. Thomas spoke. “Okay Dad, I’ll meet you in front of the school. Bye. He’s gonna come get me.”

Alice grumbled in agreement and shoved him out the door. He trodded down the hall with the park in mind.

I found a snail in the park. It was wearing a small tiny chef’s hat. He was gonna be dinner for the blue boy.

The park was fading colors of late fall surrounding a green pond and various old, fancy looking ugly statues. Thomas pulled the tree branch from the evergreen.

I found a forest once. It was growing under a big evergreen and a

4

blue boy lived there. Tonight he was having flies for supper.

“Bye, blue boy.” Thomas whispered. “I’m goin’ home now.”

Thomas’ spurs stuck into the dirt. He liked dirt, you could find anything in dirt. He marched straight toward his house.

The park was only a few blocks from his house. Lots of trees and flowers grew in his yard. The closet and shelves in his room held many things, but the bookcase next to his bed held the best stuff: a ski cap, a brick, a dirty gun holster, and a jar of peanut butter.

I found a peanut butter mine once. It was down in a hole of our swimming pool. A water proof seal kept it from getting soggy.

Thomas unscrewed the red plastic lid and dropped in a sardine. He rolled it down the laundry chute and waited for the burp, before going to bed.

Thomas opened his eyes to snatch the Saturday morning sunshine. Saturdays were the best. Thomas spent the whole day in the park. He jumped out of bed and pulled on his favorite jeans and a sweatshirt. He bounded down the stairs to his place at the breakfast table, Captain Crunch with Crunchberries, his usual Saturday morning feast.

I found a box of Captain Crunch once, in the dumpster behind the grocery store. I took them home and when I poured milk on, little flea sized fish with wings hatched out of the crunchies. I put them on my windowsill in a bowl of colored water with a little plastic tree. But they all flew away, except one.

5

Thomas chewed the last Crunchberry as he walked out the door. The walk to the park was a short one. Thomas met Buster by their favorite bench.

"Hey you little shit head. Heard you got kicked outta school again."

"Yeah, nobody ever believes me." Thomas sighed.

"Well you little dick, you tell so many big ones! You better shape up kid or they'll throw you out for good. Wanna feed the ducks?"

"Yeah, lets feed the ducks. They reminded me of angels. Little water angels. I saw an angel once, when I was at the beach with Mom and Dad. She was on business. She had pink sparkly wings and was teaching a bunch of old people how to swim."

"Oh, shut up Thomas! We'll talk later! I'll race you to the pond!" The boys ran to the pond, circling the usual obstacle course of waste cans full of broken bottles.

"I found a bottle once. It came out of the faucet in my back yard. It had a note that said 'I am stranded on a desserted island. Please send chocolate pudding.'"

"Damn you, you little shit. You never quit do you." Buster was annoyed but enjoyed the stories somewhat. "Who the hell would be stuck on some stupid island and ask for chocolate pudding! They'd want help to hell outta there!"

"Not if everybody else had desert and he didn't

6

"Geeze, Thomas, you are so stupid." Buster shook his head.

"If I'm so stupid, why do you play with me?" Thomas looked up at

Buster's chubby pock marred face and then to his torn imitation leather jacket.

"Cause you little piss head, I feel sorry for you and you'd never make Jr. High without me."

"Oh, I don't want to go to Jr. High anyway. Besides you'll be gone when I get there."

"Maybe not," Buster realized the true possibilities of this. "let's feed the ducks." He took two small bags of cheese puffs from his pocket and they fed the ducks in silence.

"I bet I can really gross you out!" Buster stared hard at Thomas.

"Yeah."

"Yeah. Watch." He pulled a folded piece of paper from his pocket. He unfolded it to reveal various legs and sections randomly flued about the page.

"I didn't even kill it first. Just tore it into pieces and glued 'em right on."

"So." Thomas wasn't impressed. "What's so gross about that? I've got lotsa spider parts in my bathroom. I got a whole box full under my sink. I found them in a map of Egypt. If you were packing around cat guts or something, then it might be gross, but they'd have to be fresh."

7

"You little shit! Don't nothing freak you. What you wanna go find a cat and skin him alive?"

"Maybe later. Don't you got nothin' else to show me?" Thomas waited patiently for an answer.

"Hell no I ain't got nothin' else! Shit, it took me all night to catch that freakin' spider."

"Geeze, Buster, it ain't my fault you're no good at finding stuff. I thought you liked finding stuff and showin' it to me."

"Well, dammit! if you'd quit bitchin' about everything I do! Forget it little shithead." Buster jerked his back toward Thomas. "Little dick, lies all the fuckin' time."

"Let's go to the movies. We can find stuff later. We might even find stuff there. Sometimes theres neat stuff in old popcorn buckets. "I found a cow's tongue in one once. It was kinds sticky and slimy. It's in a jar in my room."

"Shut up, dammit. Let's see a scary movie, ok."

They walked past the big evergreen at the edge of the park. "Wait a minute." Thomas said. "I gotta do something. Stay here." He knelt down by the tree, pulled back the branches, and said "Bye blue-boy. I'm goin' to a movie. See you tomorrow."

"What the hell are you doin' now? Talkin' to trees?!" Buster was peeking over Thomas's shoulder. "Jesus! Fuck! You little shit! You found a dead kid! A freakin' dead kid."

They stared down at the blue tinted face of the bulging boy.

“Who found the body?” The dark faced police man flipped through his pad.

“I did.” Thomas spoke up, mystified by the flashing blue lights and the crowd. “I been talking to him to him every day now for a week now. We’re gonna have lunch tomorrow if it doesn’t snow.”

“A heavy set woman wearing spotted blue polyester pants with a tear stained face ran screaming into the crowd. “My baby, My baby! Lordy! Lordy! Give me back my baby!” Suddenly the police were no longer interested in Thomas. He kicked around in the dirt and looked at the people for a while. Buster was standing around with his hands in his pockets. Thomas kicked some more dirt around and slipped away.

The morning paper read.

BOY FOUND DEAD IN PARK

Thomas fumbled around with the paper. He held his dino-scissors tightly and cut out the article, then tacked it on the inside of his closet door. He put on his cowboy boots and headed for the park. A light misty rain sprinkled on his face. He pulled the blue cap with white stars over his head. The rain drizzled on the sidewalk and rolled under cars.

I found a car once. It was inside a house I saw at Grandmas, and it had a piano inside it. I tore off a piece of the vinyl seat and put it in my room.

Thomas skipped over to the tree and pulled back the branches. The peanut butter sandwich squished inside his pocket. “Here’s my lunch blue-boy.” His eyes widened when he looked under. “Guess he finally woke up.” His thoughts were interrupted by a gruffy voice.

“Hey kid, get away from there!” an old drunk clutching the last weeks issue of Time stumbled up. “Some kid founda dead boy under there.”

“Really?” Thomas said.

“Yeah, whole town’s talkin’ about it. Regular little hero whoever he is.”

INSCAPE CONTEST WINNERS

FALL 1990

FICTION

FIRST PLACE

*The Second Best
Day of His Life*
by
Eric Cash

SECOND PLACE

The Proposal
by
Eric Cash

POETRY

FIRST PLACE

Parkerian Abreaction
by
Chris Harbaugh

SECOND PLACE

Edges
by
Karen Craigo

ART

FIRST PLACE

untitled
by
Susan Fossett

SECOND PLACE

Self-Portrait
by
Robert L. Davis

INSCAPE STAFF

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George Barnette
Ben Buckner
Karen Craigo
Bil Farrar
Chris Harbaugh
Jennifer Hester
Robin Pennell

Faculty Sponsor: Elizabeth Cooley

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The *Inscape* Staff would also like to thank the judges of this semester's contest:

ART

**Susan Moffett Matthias, Indiana University
Southeast**

POETRY

Michael McFee, University of North Carolina

FICTION

Mary Ann Taylor-Hall

