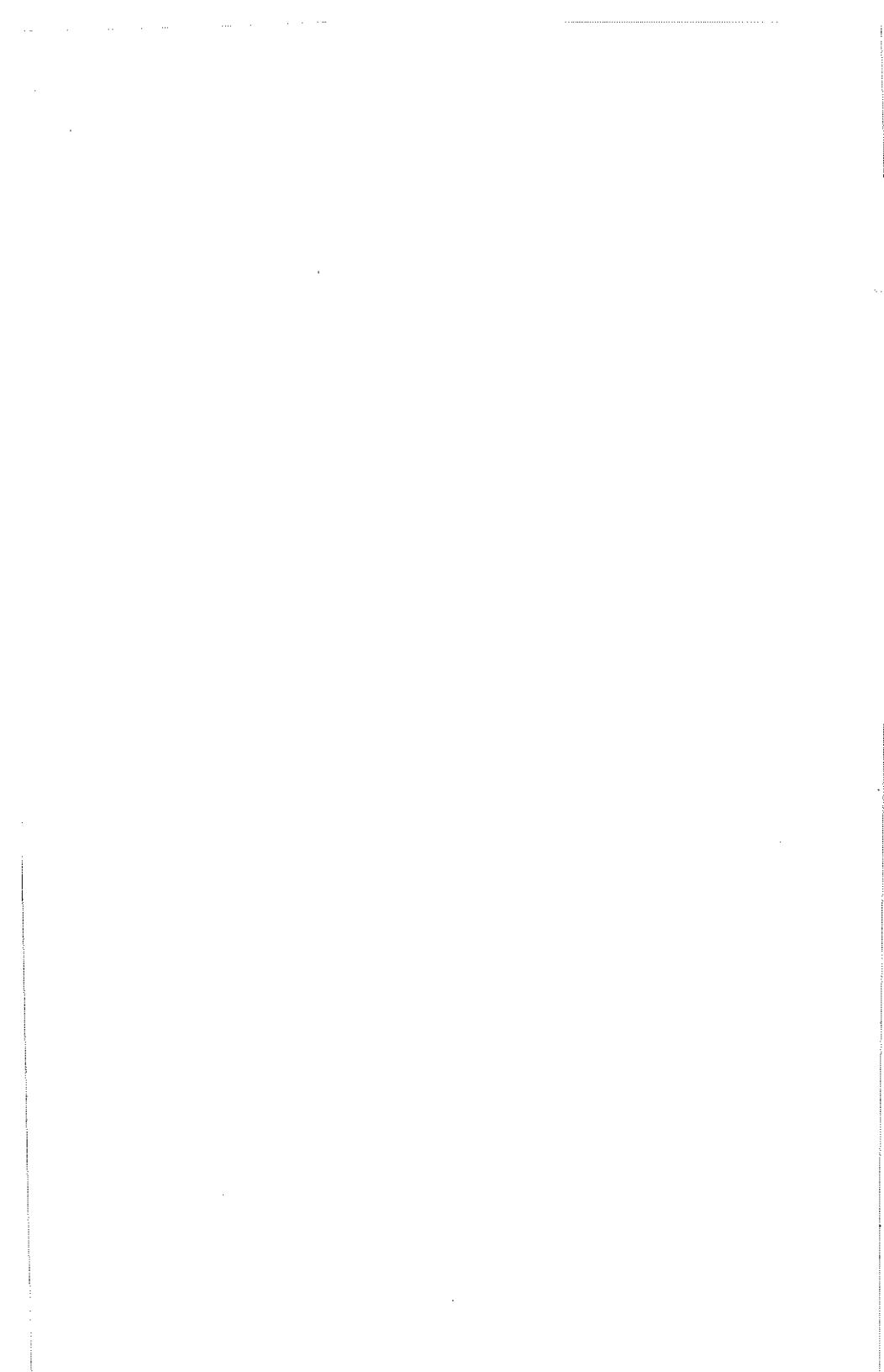


METROSPHERE

AWARD-WINNING
ARTS AND LITERARY MAGAZINE

ISSUE VIII
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METROSPHERE

**AWARD-WINNING
ARTS & LITERARY MAGAZINE**

**SPRING 1990 - ISSUE VIII
METROPOLITAN STATE COLLEGE**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Poetry

CRYSTAL by Linda Swanson	6
EMILY by chris burk	7
HITLER'S EUROPEAN ART GALLERY by John Mason	14
A PEACH by Mindy Speiser	16
MELTING HEAVEN by Elena Fridland	17
NIGHT FLIGHT by Betsy Ann Curry	18
A splinter of starlight by Neva Misenti	24
FORGOTTEN DREAM by Olin Adams	26
STRAIGHT by Chris Arthur	27
GOOSE ISLAND by David M. Barnett	34
I GREW BUT DIDN'T NOTICE by Steve Durgan	35
WINONA by Martin L. Lechuga	36
MOTIONS by Marlene Barber	41
WE CLIMBED OUR FATHER by Bill O'Reilly	42
INA by Helen Chavez	54
MORNING PAINS by Jim Norman	56
CRINKLING LEAVES by Kira V. Roark	57
DEDICATED TO THE INNOCENT by Steve Durgan	61
STREAM DREAM by bazir kaldi	63
THE CAIRN by William H. Chrane	64
HAIKU BAR SCENE by bazir kaldi	66
DIVORCE by Gretchen Palmer	67
FAMILY PORTRAIT by Linda Butler	73
UNTITLED by Olin Adams	75
SEA-GRAPES by Nancy Graham	76
SONORITY IN PLAY by Wendy Trever	77
DESERTER by Gretchen Palmer	78
Another starless night by Lynne Tama Matsumoto	82
QUAKE by Sean Carpenter	89
SEA BY NIGHT by chris burk	90
MRS. OLGA BULKIN by Elena Fridland	92
STEVEN by Lucinda Mason	93
BRAD'S NOT HERE by Neva Misenti	97
INNER CHILD by Jim Norman	105
FOR MY FATHER by Charles E. Lewis	113
STATUES by Olin Adams	115
MOZART by Elena Fridland	117

Prose

A BOUQUET OF FLOWERS by Paulette Barlow	9
Kathleen Tadasa	20
FANCIFUL DIVERSION by Esteban	28
BERNARD by Kent Hups	37
WHORE'S MONEY by Rowena Sandoval Subryan	43
ABSTRACTION by chris burk	59
HAND ME THAT by Garrett D. Weekly	68
THE PRESSING BUSINESS OF MICHAEL WINTHROP by Jim Allen	80
JACOB'S TROUBLES by Marc Cross	83
GIVE US WINGS by W.M. Thomas	94
KELLY DIAMOND by Valerie Brinkworth	98
A GAME OF CHANCE by Jacqueline Mohlman	107

Artwork/Photography

Minka Ricker	5
REFLECTIONS by Janine Conklin	13
James Jackson	15
Karen Natalie (Xanthe) DeGraff	19
Margaret Sartwelle	25
WARLOCK'S DECEPTION by Sean Schott	33
Margaret Sartwelle	40
Farhad Vakilitabar	55
Merle Rigdon	58
Dan Williams	60
Farhad Vakilitabar	64
Minka Ricker	74
SPOTSYLVANIA by Arlin R. Tawzer	79
THE ALL NIGHTER by Sean Schott	88
Dajo	91
PERSPECTIVE by Janine Conklin	96
Minka Ricker	106
Mara Elias	116



MINKA RICKER

Linda Swanson

CRYSTAL

*Lying in bed this morning
watching rainbow reflections
dance on the walls
I am amazed
A small gift shining
fills a room with color
And I think
If we are the Light
brave enough to shine
Imagine the colors*

chris burk

EMILY

(thinking of emily brontë)

*once
some indian summer's eve
she drifted by the window
beckoning
smiling gently
her face misty and pale
garments like gossamer
shining in moonlight
come, into the night
she said
into the night*

*nocturnal winds
breathed promises of desire
warmly caressing my skin
we share the same love
emily and i
love of the night
and its subtle passion*

*i stood near the lilacs
branches skeletal and silent
as emily raised a fair hand
toward the waxing moon
and the breeze touched my limbs
with airy kisses*

*moonlight washed us in silver
lighting our faces
i laughed in ecstasy as the
warm night enveloped us — one
mortal, one shade
both
for a moment
timeless*

*from the east
shot a brilliant star
trailing glowing dust
as it raced through the darkness
emily turned gentle eyes to me
for a moment i
longed to go with her*

*she reached toward me
a glowing warmth stirring
in my hand
i tried in vain to speak
and she dissolved in
misty phosphorescence
her loving eyes
the last to vanish*

*come away,
she said
into the night*

Paulette Barlow

A BOUQUET OF FLOWERS

Iris dug steadily in the dirt beside the house. Carefully she set each iris bulb into the holes she made. The sun warmed her back and she stopped frequently to lean back and let it bathe her face. Fall had always been her favorite season, but not this year. She really hadn't enjoyed anything since they bought the house.

It was their first home; how excited they had been as they toured the small white frame house. Built in 1900, it had been well cared for by Mr. Morris, the son of the original owners. He had filled the yard with flowers, hundreds of flowers. The bulbs she was planting were his; she had found them on a shelf in the basement and hoped they were still good.

Nausea overwhelmed her at the thought of the basement. She leaned back on her heels and stared at the boards nailed tightly over steps leading down to the sealed room. Jeff was supposed to tear those boards off this weekend so they could get into what he guessed was an old coal bin. She had begged him not to.

"I'm going to the hardware store."

Iris thrust her spade into the soil. She hadn't heard Jeff come out of the house and was dreading a confrontation. Pretending not to hear, she kept digging.

"Iris, I'm going to the hardware store," he said, speaking more loudly. "I need a crowbar." Without giving her a chance to reply, he turned and headed for the car.

Iris watched him drive away, rage at his lack of belief in her changing to fear when she glanced back at the boarded door. *Something in that room wants me*, she thought.

She closed her eyes and the nights of the last two weeks flashed in a kaleidoscope of terror; the terror that started the day she and Jeff had tried to open the closed door in the basement. Jeff had left her alone in the basement while he went to find a crowbar, but her screams had brought him rushing back. He had found her lying on the basement floor, shivering and babbling about the door opening and the cold and her perfume. She knew he hadn't believed her when she told him that after he left, the door had swung open and an icy blast of air saturated with the scent of her favorite perfume, Black Iris, had overwhelmed her. The door had still been tightly sealed when he tried to open it after helping her up.

Every night since, she dreamt of women, young and old, chasing her with clawlike hands. She would awaken to a room filled with the cloying scent of roses or lilacs or gardenias or other floral perfumes she couldn't name. She had started sleepwalking, too, and she was always pulled toward the door opening to the stairs leading to the basement. Jeff would awaken her before she descended the steps. She would feel cold and nauseous from the smell of Black Iris, which always engulfed her when she awoke from these nightly walks. Jeff never felt or smelled anything.

"Use bonemeal on those roses. That's what Mr. Morris always said." The shrill voice of Mrs. Gregory made Iris jump. "Mr. Morris was very antisocial and he always married women just like him."

"Women?" Iris stared at the flaming red, dyed curls of the old woman.

"Oh yes," Mrs. Gregory chatted on. "He had three wives — at least, three that I knew of. I've only lived here for twelve years. He grew up in that house. He always married flowers."

"Flowers?" Iris stared blankly at the old lady.

"The first wife I knew was Rose, then Daisy, and the last one was a Lily. That's when he built the lily pond in the back yard. He always planted flowers of the same name as his wife. Romantic, I guess. Florists are like that."

Iris glanced around the yard. "Well there are more than roses, daises, and lilies planted out here," she said wryly. "Surely he wasn't married that many times. What happened to his wives? Did he divorce them?"

"Oh no. They died." Mrs. Gregory shook her head. "He'd drive them to the hospital and be gone for weeks, staying with them, I guess. He'd be married again the next year, though. He was even planning to marry just before he died, and him in his eighties." She shook her flaming curls and

rubbed one rouged cheek. "And you know the funny thing," she continued, "that last one he was going to marry was named Iris, just like you."

Iris stared at the scarlet mouth droning on and on. Finally interrupting, she made a weak excuse about needing to make lunch and tried to escape to the house.

"Oh Iris."

Iris turned, sighing. "Yes."

"You know I was out to the graveyard last week visiting my Earl and I saw Mr. Morris' grave."

"Was he buried amongst a bouquet of flowers, Mrs. Gregory?" Iris asked, smiling.

Mrs. Gregory giggled. "No. Not a one. He must have shipped all his wives back to their families."

* * *

Iris sat at the kitchen table nibbling at a tuna sandwich. She hated being alone in the house, even during the day. *Why does Jeff have to open that room? We should sell the house*, she thought. *Before ... What?*

Rising to dump the half finished sandwich in the trash, she froze. The scent of Black Iris was filling the kitchen. The cold, she knew, would follow. A creaking echoed behind her and Iris turned toward the sound. The basement door was open! Iciness filled the room and numbed her. Slowly, she shuffled to the door and descended into blackness.

* * *

"Iris! Open your eyes! Come on!" Jeff's voice seemed to echo down a vacuum. The darkness changed from black to grey. She opened her eyes and stared into Jeff's pale face. Trying to smile, her cheeks felt stiff, cold.

Cold! Now she remembered.

"Jeff! I walked into the locked room. It was cold and black. I must have fainted," she babbled. "The women saved me, Jeff. He wanted me, but they wouldn't let him have me. In all my dreams, they were trying to warn me."

Jeff pulled her to a sitting position and tried to rock her. Sunlight from the opened cellar door illuminated the room. Iris pushed him away and looked around the room: wine racks filled with dusty bottles lined two walls; a thick wooden table covered with dusty tools and a huge black kettle covered the third; the last wall was covered with pictures — pictures

of women, young to old. The door leading to the basement was shut, nailed closed with boards.

"I found you on the floor when I pried open the outside door," he said weakly. "How did you get in?"

"I walked through that door," she said softly. "You need to believe me. It was open."

Jeff stood and pulled Iris up. They walked to one of the wine racks and Iris pulled down a bottle. Blowing the dust off, she held it toward the light and peered inside. A gold wedding ring lay at the bottom of the bottle of clear liquid. She read the label aloud: "Rose."

"This one says Daisy, and this one, Violet," Jeff said, pulling several bottles out of the rack. "He made wine for all his wives."

Iris smiled sadly and shook her head. "No. Pull the cork out of one, Jeff."

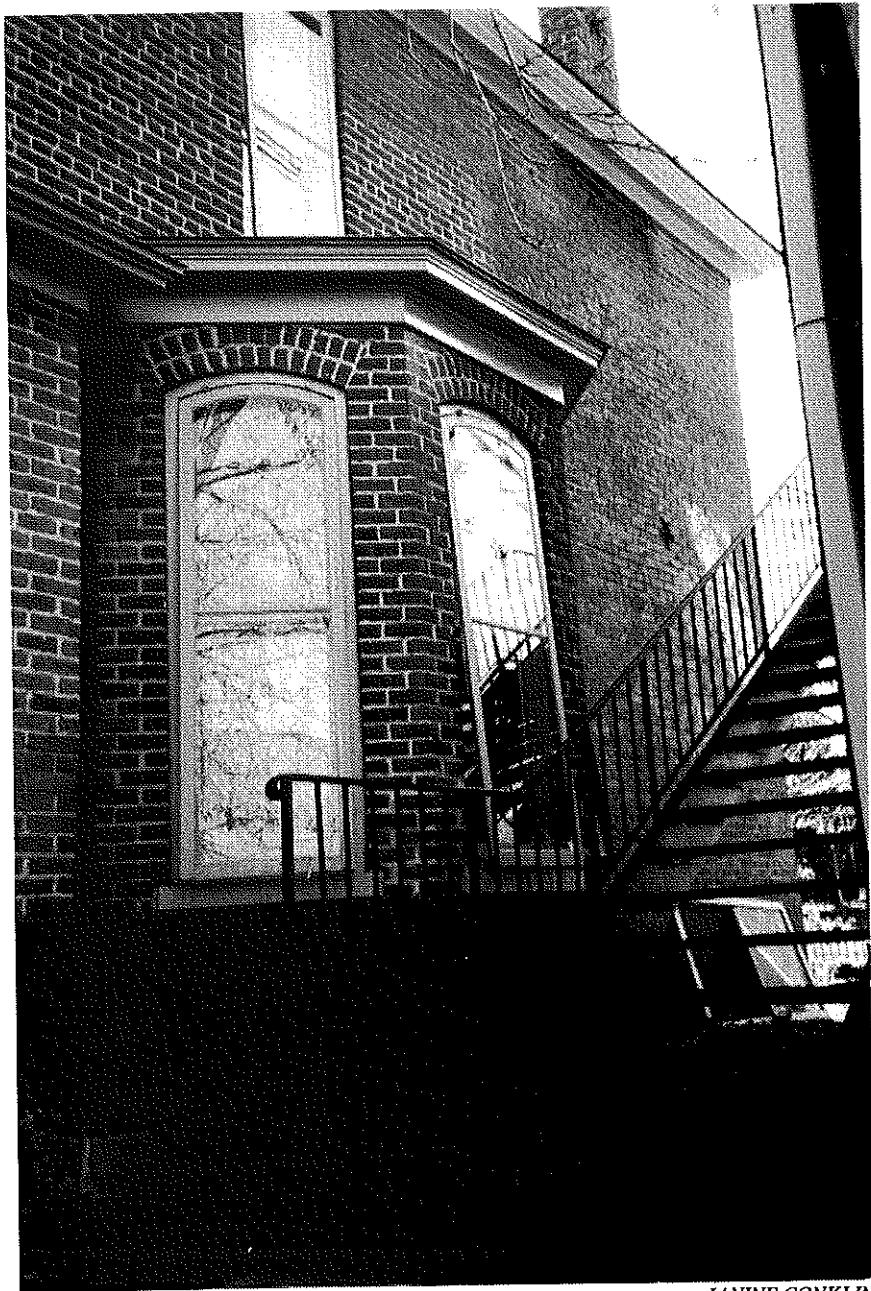
She watched as he dug at the cork of a bottle using an ice pick from the bench. As the cork popped, the room was filled with the scent of roses.

"Perfume!" he exclaimed. "That's why he planted all the flowers! He made perfume for his wives!"

"No," Iris said softly. "He made perfume *of* them. They told me."

Jeff stared at her, his pallor increasing. She walked to the wooden bench and picked up an empty, dusty bottle. "This one was for me," she said quietly. "The label says Iris. And look." She inverted the clear glass bottle and a gold wedding band fell into her palm. Iris slid the ring onto her finger above her own wedding ring and extended her hand toward Jeff.

"It fits."



REFLECTIONS

JANINE CONKLIN

John Mason

HITLER'S EUROPEAN ART GALLERY

*Hitler vacationed in Oklahoma
After Vienna proved too desolate,
He thought hard about his faceless portraits
That forced him failure in Vienna.
He gave the Mona Lisa a harelip.
He carved an infected pus-running scar
Into the chest of the Venus de Milo.
Hitler shrouded his art in clear plastic
And entombed it in the hall closet.*

*Hitler hated watercolors because
A pool of watercolor red didn't look
Enough like blood, like a red in oils does.
Hitler swore he saw the sky bleed and dipped
His brush in red oil to capture it but
The sky clotted before he could paint its face.
Hitler couldn't paint faces anyway
So he changed his trade to performance art
And moved back to Germany to begin.*

*This new performance piece will sweep Europe
A performance piece involving millions.
He will impose his art on Vienna
Make the critics notice and conquer them.
This art will be revolutionary
Spontaneity rolling like firestorms.
He couldn't wait for the reviews.*



JAMES JACKSON

Mindy Speiser

A PEACH

*i gently fondle my peach—
Sliding my tongue slowly
Within each sensual crevice and curve
gliding silently within my mouth,
I feel the peach's luscious wetness.
ever so slightly, i press the peach's
Firm, smooth body against my teeth, lips, and throat.
hesitating, yet overflowing with a lust
For taste, i bite deeply into its firmness.
its moistness explodes inside my mouth—
each chew is pure ecstasy as the peach
Gradually forces its way down my throat,
Forever spent.*

Elena Fridland

MELTING HEAVEN

*Crying angels,
Muted pain,
Mourning angels,
Hissing rain.*

*Melting heaven,
Burning sky,
Frozen amber,
Checkered lie.*

*Tears of angels,
Creamy pearls,
Taste of blood,
Absent morals.*

*Heavy silence,
Angel song,
Silver laughter,
Bloody dawn.*

*Foamy oceans,
Eagle's flight,
Swirling darkness,
Rainbow light.*

*Stinging terror,
Mirrored hate,
Angel madness,
Kind fate.*

Betsy Ann Curry

NIGHT FLIGHT

*He silently glides down from the north,
riding on cold, frosty winds.*

*Copper scales flash in the moonlight
as he turns toward
some far distant glow.*

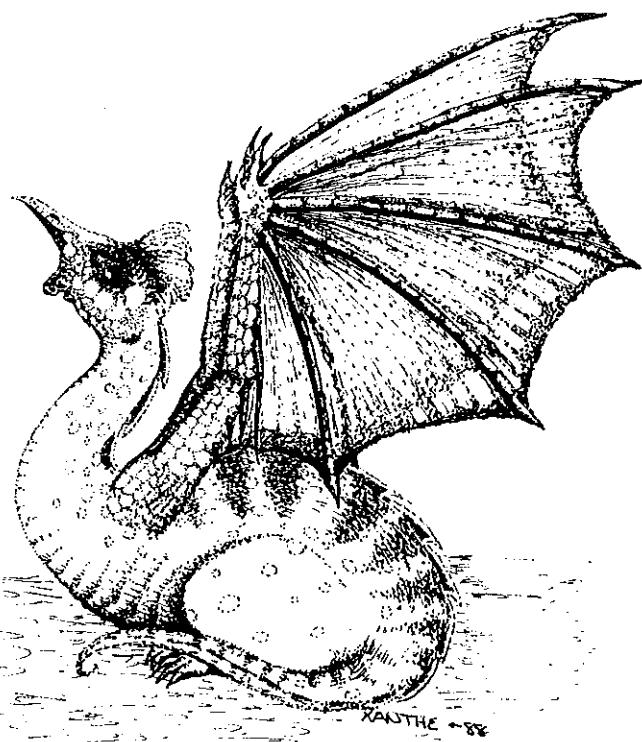
*A quiet town sleeps through the
long winter night,
unaware that death approaches
on widespread wings.*

*Quiet as the turn of midnight,
the great beast pauses in his flight
to rest his vengeful, yellow gaze
on the tiny human settlement
waiting down below.*

*One outstretched claw
clenches in murderous anger
as he contemplates the little houses
behind their flimsy wall.*

*A moment of hesitation,
and the the monster flies on
to search for larger prey.*

*The little town will never know
of the night flight of the dragon.*



KAREN NATALIE (XANTHE) DEGRAFF

Kathleen Tadasa

In Denver's Sakura Square, a focal point of the city's Japanese-American population, there stands a monument. It consists of a bronze bust of a man supported by a granite pedestal, which is inscribed in Japanese on one side, English on the other. Not, as one might expect, a tribute to a legendary Japanese hero or to a prominent American of Japanese descent, instead the memorial honors Ralph L. Carr, Colorado's governor from 1939 to 1943. The words on the pedestal graphically explain why:

In the hysteria of World War II, when others in authority forgot the noble principles that make the United States unique, Colorado's Governor Ralph Carr had the wisdom and courage to speak out in behalf of the persecuted Americans of Japanese origin. "They are loyal Americans," he said, "sharing only race with the enemy." He welcomed them to Colorado to take part in the State's war effort. And such were the times that this forthright act may have doomed his political future. Thousands came, seeking refuge from the West Coast's hostility, made new homes and remained to contribute much to Colorado's civic, cultural and economic life. Those who benefited from Governor Carr's humanity have built this monument in grateful memory of his unflinching

Americanism, and as a lasting reminder that the precious democratic ideas he espoused must forever be defended against prejudice and neglect.

August 21, 1976.

Ralph Carr was born in 1887 in Rosita, Colorado, a coal and silver camp west of Pueblo, to a Scots-Irish miner and his wife. As a youth, Ralph contributed to the family's finances by delivering milk and crushing ore samples for assay. After graduation from the University of Colorado with a law degree in 1912, he moved to Trinidad, where he simultaneously practiced law and worked as a reporter for the local newspaper. In 1917 he moved to Antonito in the San Luis Valley, served on the town council and was later elected county attorney. During this period of his life, he began to specialize in water and irrigation law, and he staunchly defended states' rights in administering western rivers. A Republican, Carr began to gain visibility before his party's leaders and the people of Colorado as he played strategic roles in water development pacts among the western states.

He moved to Denver in 1927 after being appointed Assistant State Attorney General in charge of water litigation. In 1929, Carr was named U.S. District Attorney. Unflagging in his concern for equitable water policies, he maintained that "a Westerner who won't fight for his water doesn't amount to much." The prominence he gained from championing this cause eventually helped put him in the governor's seat. No one could have known at that time what impact this would have on Japanese-Americans facing hostility in the wake of Pearl Harbor.

Robert Carr sits behind the desk in his Denver law office. A silver-haired, affable man, he narrates events in the life of his father, Ralph, with amazing recall, making the 1930's seem like the day before yesterday. "My dad went back into private law practice after the Democrats' New Deal landslide of 1932. In '38 the state Republican Convention was held in Colorado Springs. He wanted to go, to make sure that an irrigation plank made it into the platform. He decided that I, at age 15, was ready for my first political convention, so he, a young lawyer named Jack Shippey and I set out for the Antlers Hotel in the Springs. Once there, Dad tried to show me around, but groups of men kept pulling him aside for long discussions. There were four candidates for the Republican nominee for governor, one

of them endorsed by the powerful Phipps family. It seems the delegates weren't infatuated with any of them. People kept telling my dad to 'stick around, lightning might strike.' Well, Dad had no desire to be governor. He was content in his law practice. He finally whispered to me, 'Let's get out of here,' and apologized for leaving the convention early."

Carr recounts the rest of a long night spent in Room 50 of the Antlers Hotel. Delegates kept calling from the convention, urging Ralph's senior law partners, who had since driven down from Denver, to persuade him to accept the nomination, "to make the sacrifice." "Dad kept trying to name other men for the job, but his suggestions were countered with, 'They aren't known statewide, as you are.' "

Finally, at 4:00 a.m., Ralph Carr returned to the convention wearing pajamas — the bottoms crammed into a pair of hastily donned trousers —and bedroom slippers. He asked if his governorship would help or hinder a friend who was running again for the Supreme Court. Assured that it would help, Carr called for a toilet break, in actuality a conference with his partners, Shippey and son Robert. He emerged from the restroom a reluctant bridegroom, pledging his troth to the Republican nomination. Carr subsequently defeated the incumbent, Teller Ammons, by some 50,000 votes, to become the first Republican governor in fourteen years.

He was a good governor, erasing an \$8.8 million budget deficit in his first term without imposing any new taxes, and defusing potentially violent labor strikes with tact and a good understanding of the issues involved. The people of Colorado responded by electing him to a second term.

Midway through his subsequent term, Ralph Carr faced the acid test of his administration. Two months after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt authorized the Army to remove "any or all" persons from strategic areas of the West Coast as a security precaution. "Any or all" turned out to be residents with 1/16 or more Japanese blood, approximately 115,000 men, women and children, two-thirds of them American citizens by birth. On April 7, 1942, Milton Eisenhower, Director of the hastily created War Relocation Authority, met in Salt Lake City with representatives from ten western states to determine the placement of Japanese-Americans being evacuated from California, Oregon and Washington. Eisenhower suggested the establishment of 50 to

75 temporary camps in inland states to shelter these people until they could find jobs and housing. Although he made it clear that none of the evacuees had been accused of disloyalty to the United States, only one Representative, Ralph Carr, guaranteed full protection under the law if the Japanese-Americans chose to move to his state. The majority's hesitation to voluntarily take in people considered by the federal government to be potential subversives forced Eisenhower to establish ten semipermanent detention camps guarded by armed troops. Colorado got one of these camps, located in the sparsely populated southeastern corner of the state.

"Dad was the only governor who initially okayed the setting up of a camp in his state. He waged a running battle with the Roosevelt administration to keep conditions better in all the camps," says Robert Carr. Animosity toward the Japanese-Americans ran high, and Governor Carr's position received little support in Colorado. Indeed, there began to be talk of his impeachment. The whole Carr family was subjected to threats.

At one point, when violence was about to boil over in one southern Colorado town against the inhabitants of the nearby camp, Governor Carr intervened and warned the crowd: "If you harm them, you must harm me. I was brought up in a small town where I knew the shame and dishonor of race hatred. I grew to despise it because it threatened the happiness of you and you and you." With that, the mob dispersed.

Fortunately, Ralph Carr didn't rely on popularity polls. "My father was a devout Christian Scientist," explains Robert. "He would call his advisor and ask for prayers that he do the right thing. He didn't fear the unpopular stand, and our family supported his decisions." The Governor had an affinity for those with little influence. The son recalls, "Our home number was always listed in the telephone book because, as Dad said, 'the rich and powerful and people with status can always get to you; the only way the poor can reach you is by phone.' "

Governor Carr's determination to safeguard the Constitutional rights of the Japanese-Americans went against the climate of wartime America and no doubt hurt his political career. In 1942, after two terms as governor, he ran for the U.S. Senate against Edwin C. "Big Ed" Johnson. Johnson had openly expressed resentment toward Japanese Americans; Carr, on the other hand, was often accused of being a "Jap-lover." Johnson won the

election by a margin of only 3,642 votes. Carr's own analysis singled out the relocation camp issue as the main reason for his defeat.

Ralph Carr was his party's gubernatorial candidate again in 1950. All indicators pointed to an easy victory over incumbent Walter Johnson. But Carr was suffering from a resistant foot infection which gradually affected his heart. On September 22, 1950, shortly before the election, he died at age 62. The man who had displayed such "unflinching Americanism" was gone; but the Japanese-Americans he had defended in their time of crisis remembered his deeds and erected a fitting memorial in Sakura Square, in the heart of Denver.

Neva Misenti

*A splinter of starlight
slides in
between the curtains
and reflects upon
a handful of your
pale skin
reminding me
how soft you are
in the dark.*



MARGARET SARTWELLE

Olin Adams

FORGOTTEN DREAM

Desperate sleep

*Awakened by the silent chime of round iron bells
whispering straight to the heart sacred tales of blood
and smoke and times gone by.*

*Awakened by the bells, now shouting but no longer heard
Unable to remember their message.*

*Only left with a flaming heart and the cold feeling of destruction
which sticks to the soul the way warm hands stick to cold
metal on a cold December night.*

They way ice sticks to black pavement.

Clinging, only letting go when each takes a piece of the other.

Chris Arthur

STRAIGHT

*Do not put water in my scotch!
I prefer the bite and sting.
I need neither sugar nor cream
Coffee, as life, should be strong
And black.
Keep the pastel colors from my sight,
And the soft curves from my touch,
Give me sharp edges
Straight lines
Let life cut.
Dress me not in pads,
I'll take my shots.
I should rather be crushed
Than slowed.
I've no use for make-up and wigs,
What I am, I am: and shall
Strive to be,
Whether you like it or not.
So keep your tinted glasses
And give me my scotch!*

Esteban

FANCIFUL DIVERSION

Adam lay on his bed and read what he had written.

The Stoning *by Adam*

They wore corpse expressions. All but two. The one who led and the one who fled.

The one who led had a hungry look, lustful. His blue eyes sparkled beneath pointed eyebrows. Sweat streaked his face, red from the chase. He licked his lips.

When they caught him, the one who fled looked pained, confused. He couldn't go any farther. Exhaustion. He just stood before them. Naked. Even his feet.

Sweat on his chocolate body shimmered lively. The whites of his begging eyes glowed beneath a wrinkled brow. He tried to speak but only a whimper left his lips. His shoulders sagged, neck bent.

The hungry one smiled.

"Kill the nigger," he said. "Kill him!"

The corpse expressions on the others' faces changed, resurrected by the hungry one's command.

Each face grinned.

They began to pick up stones from the desert floor.

Hot wind blew.

The prey began to pray until the first stone struck his nappy head. Then he began to plead.

But the stones kept coming until he lay on the sand and flies buzzed near his bloody ears.

His journalism professor had given him a C on the paper.

Adam didn't understand.

"It didn't happen," she said. "You should've known that I wanted you to write about something that happened, not something you made up. This is a journalism class. We write about life. Reality. The truth. Not — not fanciful diversions."

At the time he didn't protest, but on his bed his thoughts of her became critical. And black.

woman doesn't know shit. wonder what she woulda done if I smacked her in the face. Is that real, bitch? I'd say. Is the blood drippin off your chin your imagination? — fuck it

He stared at the ceiling and his mind traveled from thought to thought.

truthtruthtruth pilate asked jesus 'what is truth?' truth truth. fuck, who cares? hate tv dinners. cinemax. mark twain. calaveras county. south dakota, remember mountain goats, black hills —

And his mind wandered and roamed until he ended up 11 years old, 2,000 miles away, sitting in the circular grass island of Mesa Ct., watching a family of gophers.

The sun, three times its usual size, lands on his friend Kip's house.

Wicked wispy clouds speed through the violet sky.

A door slams.

"Adam, come here," a voice says.

Adam stands up, squints his dark eyes and feels sun rays pass through his body.

“What?” he says. “I’m gonna eat.”

The sun dips below Kip’s house. The violet sky turns crimson.

Adam’s eyes relax.

He runs his fingers through his matted black hair and eyes Kip, who’s walking across the curved road separating them.

All but one gopher scurry into their holes. The one that doesn’t chews contentedly on a weed by the light post in the center of the island.

“Come on, you don’t need to eat,” Kip says. “Let’s get everybody and play kick the can.”

Adam nods in agreement. He can eat later.

They walk off; become shadows on the ground.

The lone gopher remains chewing on his weed.

Voices chatter.

Bodies materialize.

Kip, Mark, Bogie, Jeff, Bruno, Monica, Lillian, Buster, Donny, Kissey, Turtle, Mormon, Thad, Rob, and Esteban gather on the island.

Adam watches them.

“Come on,” they call him. “Let’s play.”

The game begins.

Jeff counts. The others run off, becoming shadows on the ground.

Jeff starts to search.

Under the cars. In the car ports. On —

WHISH WHISH WHISH WHISH WHISH WHISH WHISH.

Shadows, running from all directions, become flesh.

All head for the can.

Kip gets it.

Clang, Tang, Clang, it tumbles on the street.

Freed, the others lie on the grass, resting for the next round.

Jeff scowls.

Adam watches him in secret.

Jeff senses him, turns his head, and the two lock eyes.

Adam looks away and studies the gopher chewing on its weed.

Jeff follows his line of vision.

“Hey,” he says, pointing. “Fuck kick the can, let’s play kick the gopher.”

The others turn; see the gopher.

Corpse expressions.
The gopher ignores them; continues chewing.
Jeff's blue eyes sparkle. Sweat streaks his face.
He salivates; licks his lips.
The chase begins.
The gopher circles the light pole; dodges shoes and stones.
Shadows on the ground circle him.
He darts between legs.
Sees home.
Runs toward it.
And runs.
And runs.
Jumps.
Misses.
Scurries on his belly.
Head makes it.
Front feet.
Back —
Slammm!
An asphalt chunk smashes his behind; flips him out from the hole onto
his back.
He wiggles upright; dives for the hole again.
Misses.
Rock pegs him.
He rambles drunkenly, slowly.
And another.
Shoe rubber hits him under his chin, busts his small jaw bones.
And another.
He lies on his back, wondering about his mom and dad.
And another.
And his brother and sister.
And another.
Blood on his dull-beige coat shimmers.
The stoning stops.
His eyes beg.
He hopes they'll let him be.
just awhile

Hopes to say good-bye.

Jeff smiles.

“I’m gonna step on its head,” he says. “I wanna kill the little fucker!”

The corpse expressions, resurrected by Jeff’s cry, grin.

In ecstasy.

Hot wind blows.

The crimson sky becomes starless black.

The gopher prays.

Till its skull cracks; pops.

Its knowledge ends.

Bodies darken into shadows; slowly chant away.

Lying on his bed, gripping the paper, Adam opened his eyes.

He read his story again.

And understood.

The stoning did happen.

And his writing about it was true.



WARLOCK'S DECEPTION

SEAN SCHOTT

David M. Barnett

GOOSE ISLAND

*Walking down the beach, with the crunch of shells
Announcing every step to the pungent
Breeze that is always searching for the unbent
Stem or blade of grass, I watch the foamy swells
As they break and tumble and race hell-
Bent for the highest reaches leaving sweat
Behind as a marker of effort spent.
Even as I continue, I can tell
That the hand of man, which has blessed the beach
With plastic slivers here and tar balls there,
Will not continue long enough to reach
Downwards and touch the beauty of a bare,
Unspoiled, stretch of paradise where each
Creature rightfully comes to claim its share.*

Steve Durgan

I GREW BUT DIDN'T NOTICE

*some time ago when Gramma was alive and
the hardy boys were my best friends
i had a dog named poncho who
liked to chase cars and
one time an irate driver
stopped
and got out of his car apparently
meaning to teach some mangy mutt
to chase !!his!! car but
my Uncle Jim saw him and yelled so he left*

*and i heard about it that night and
naturally
got very upset*

*and i told my Dad if someone tried
to
hurt my dog
i'd go and get the twenty two and
shoot him in the leg or in the arm
to stop him
and my Dad said ... no ...*

*if you ever point a gun
at a person
it will be to kill that person
dead
not to scare
not to hurt
so you had better mean it and
i thought about it*

i remember i cried very hard

Martin Lechuga

WINONA

*Winona's spirit haunts the wooded hills
the Manitou has given her voice
to the Chinook that blows through the canyons
and stirs the fallen leaves
of the oak and birch and maple trees.
Her eyes transformed to
shimmering clusters of stars above the world.
Her beauty lies in the yellows and reds
pinks and blues of the sunrise and sunset
in their changing times.*

*Her touch is in the warmth of the sun,
and her tears fall from the sky
to fill the rivers and streams
that move to the sea.*

*Her thoughts come to me
and fill my dreams with the wonder
of Winona.*

Kent Hups

BERNARD

As I lay there on the kitchen floor holding my knee that I had just cracked against the back door, the pain shot up my leg in great white hot bolts of electricity. In the pain-induced fog I could hear someone telling me, "You're lucky that it's not a lot worse."

I thought of Bernard.

It was in Chicago, the second week of June, that I first met Bernard. It was easy to pick him out of the tae kwon do students at the seminar that I was teaching, mostly because he was the only one without arms. As he performed his kicks, I watched his bright blue eyes blaze with intensity, and how the smile on his round face never really disappeared, leaving permanent dimples in his cheeks. The pity that I had first felt for him transformed into admiration that day as he slowly and magically lifted his leg high above his head like a gymnast on his way to winning a gold medal.

Two weeks later I met Bernard again, but this time we were in St. Louis attending another tae kwon do seminar. In those nine days I not only learned a lot about tae kwon do and Bernard, but also a lot about myself. I learned that Bernard was from Germany and that he was in the United States on an educational visa that expired in December of that year. He told me that he had been born without arms and was probably a Thalidomide baby, even though his mother denied ever using it. As I listened to him I realized that he was not bitter about his life. He never talked about not having any arms unless you asked him about it.

The last day of the seminar, I watched as Bernard achieved one of his lifetime goals — receiving a black belt in tae kwon do. As I stood watching, I felt a sense of pride, like a father would for a child.

That night we all went out to dinner at an Italian restaurant that was close to the hotel where we were staying. As we ordered our food, most of us chose the spaghetti, as the waiter highly recommended it. When Bernard's turn came to order, we all assumed that he would have something easier to eat, like lasagne, but when he ordered the spaghetti he received a loud cheer from our table.

I wondered how he could possibly eat spaghetti with just his toes. I had seen Bernard put on his shirt and even write with his feet, but I was sure that he had found something which even he could not do.

When the food arrived, we all sat with anticipation, waiting to see how Bernard was going to accomplish this impossible feat. We watched as he took his left foot out of his shoe and placed it on the table. Then, with the skill of a brain surgeon, he picked up his fork with his toes and pushed it into the soft noodles; then he slowly and meticulously twirled the end of the fork between his big and middle toes, wrapping the spaghetti around the long steel points on the end. We watched in amazement, and as soon as he put the food in his mouth he received a standing ovation from everyone at the table.

The rest of the night was spent discovering what Bernard could do. I bet a dollar that he couldn't open a twist top beer bottle with his toes, but I was a dollar poorer at the end of the night.

As we walked back to the hotel, I asked Bernard if he was going to be in Denver in the future. To my surprise he said that he had a stopover at Stapleton and that he could change his flight to allow him to stay for a few days.

The next week I picked him up at the airport, and as we walked down the concourse some people looked on with repulsion. Others just ignored him. Mothers would grab their children and tell them it wasn't polite to stare. Bernard seemed oblivious. Maybe he had grown accustomed to it, or maybe that part of him had been turned off long ago to help save some of his sanity.

For the next few days I drove him to different parts of Colorado. I quickly learned that Bernard had the ability to attract people like metal to a magnet. At first they saw a person with a handicap, but after the brief visit with Bernard, I was sure they could see the real person behind the handicap.

On the last day of his visit, we were driving home and had to stop for a

traffic signal. While we sat there waiting for the light to change, a young man started across the street directly in front of us. When he first stepped off the curb, I noticed how his body seemed to have been ripped apart and been put back together by someone who had no model. His head was drawn down onto his shoulders and his back was bent over as if he was trying to carry the weight of the world. His arms were pulled tightly to his sides, like a giant praying mantis. His walk was slow and deliberate, with his left foot slowly dragging forward to support his weight and then his right foot coming down quickly from a graceful arc to land delicately on the ball of his foot. He continued this endless process across the street, and with every step he seemed to exert so much effort I expected every step to be his last; that he would fall into a lifeless heap from exhaustion. He finally was able to rest when he had reached the bus stop on the opposite side of the street.

I didn't know what disease or accident had done this to the young man at the bus stop, but I remember feeling pity for him, the same pity I had felt for Bernard the first time I had seen him.

I looked over at Bernard only to find him looking at the same young man that had caught my attention. I opened my mouth to say something, anything, to break the silence that was cutting into me like a cold knife. My brain had ceased functioning. Honesty seemed to be the only way out. I looked at Bernard, and with all my courage, I asked him, "What do you think when you see that?"

He looked at me, and with a slight hesitation he replied, "I feel lucky."

He didn't need to say anything else. Those three words seemed to hold the secret. I looked up and the light had changed; so had my life.



MARGARET SARTWELLE

Marlene Barber

MOTIONS

*In the spring,
an evening
just at dusk,
the fat robins
flock on lawns,
and stretch up worms
like rubber bands.*

*We glide by
on our bikes,
wheels spinning
our laughter
flying out behind us
like streamers.*

Bill O'Reilly

WE CLIMBED OUR FATHER

*We climbed our father.
Handholds on his wrinkled palms,
across the flat stomach,
feet in breast pockets,
through the sweet air of his breath
to sit astride his shoulders*

*Our hands clasped his bristled chin.
High above
we touched the ceiling.*

*We climbed our father.
He ran with us
past the darkened cathedral,
twirled us a dance,
sounding the park
with laughter.*

*Above the wet grass
we urged our hold.
Tightly.
Inhaling Bronx air
we whirled.*

*Our father in wing tips
circling below us
as we rose to the full treetops.*

Rowena Sandoval Subryan

WHORE'S MONEY

I ain't got no real life no more. I left that back home in Kentucky with my ma and pa when I was too young to know my age. I came to New Orleans with Kenny. Daddy told me he weren't no good, but when he sang, ooh that boy was more persuasive than any a them ol' Baptist preachers. He used to make me feel them notes down into my gut and I thought for shore I didn't even need no food long as I had Kenny. He thought so, too, and spent all the money he made singin' in the streets on whiskey and whores. But I ain't mad at Kenny no more. He gave me his old guitar and taught me them blues he learned back home before he went on. I gotta thank him that, 'cause Pa didn't want no whore movin' back home with him. He said, "Girl, you better ask the Lord Almighty to save your soul, 'cause your pa ain't goin' do it." But I ain't mad at him no more neither.

I hooked up with these guys that played on Decatur and got me a little family. Jimmy plays a big ol' string bass that looks like it ain't good for nothin'. He got in a fight once with one a his ol' ladies and she took a wine bottle to it. He kicked her ass 'fore she ruined it, but now he gots the top of it all held together with maskin' tape. Don't matter none, though, 'cause Jimmy's soul didn't get hurt none. Markie shoulda been a rock star somewhere. His hair's 'bout long as mine and nearly as blonde and he dresses himself up like those leather flames in another part of the Quarter. He says he ain't nothin' but an ol' country boy, though, and he plays guitar better'n anybody I know, 'cept Kenny maybe. Now Joe, he's almost a regular kinda guy. He got him a wife with a waitress job an' all. They been tryin' to make a baby, but Joe ain't nothin' without his horn. I been tryin' to

tell his wife to let him play 'fore he fucks her, but she ain't no music fan. She wants Joe to get a "real" job and I ain't 'bout to tell her how I know what turns Joe on. She'd prob'ly scratch my eyes out.

We play down on Chartres Street now. Every day from the time I get up till it's too dark to see we try'n sing some truth to these folks a spendin' all their money on Hurricanes, ceramic masks, and catfish dinners. I used to try to talk to some of 'em, too, usually between "My Daddy Don't Like Me No More" and "If I Ever Get Rich." I quit doin' that though 'cause too many people wanna ask too many questions. Ain't nobody's business who I am or who I was. Course I sing about me sometimes. Who the hell I'm gonna sing about if 'tain't me? But that don't mean I always tell the truth. Everybody's gotta pretend sometime.

I didn't like them thinking they was better'n me neither — I ain't askin' for no charity. I provide entertainment: you listen, you pay, right? Ain't somethin' for nothin'. I ain't like those guys sleepin' on cardboard all day, any place they pass out at. They get up at night and beg the folks on Bourbon Street for money. They ain't got no pride left. Me? I got some. I ain't earnin' much of a livin', but I *earn* it.

I just quit lookin' at audience folks finally. And if I do look, it's like I see me all over, like I'm lookin' in a mirror or somethin' 'cause I don't see nobody but me.

It's gettin' harder now, though. Christmas is comin' and it's gettin' too cold for people to stop in the street and listen to some ol' blues band. If they come at all, they go inside to Pat O's or somethin'. We tried to get us a gig like that, but times is rough here now. The bands with a gig ain't leavin' their club no how. Some of 'em been in the same place for years and there ain't no new clubs in this old place.

This time a year for the last couple a years we all moved in together, even Joe and his wife. It worked out okay. At least we was eatin'. And it was only for a couple a months, until Mardi Gras, when we made enough money to move out on our own again. I got me a studio that ain't nothin' fancy, 'cept for the pretty railing 'round the balcony. But it's my joint and I got me some pictures on the walls and stuff. I even got me a plant named Rikki Lee. I don't spend too much time there, though.

Truly, I spend all my time singin' and drinkin'. When we finish in the Quarter, we split the money outta Joe's saxophone case four ways and usually head for Jake's Bayou where we have Jack Daniels and popcorn

for supper. We didn't make too much today, only \$132.41 for ten hours a work. Days like today didn't used to bother me too much. I figured we'd get a gig and someone'd wanna put us on a record and let us play the Opry or somethin'. Or maybe I'd find a man, someone better'n Kenny and the boys who'd wanna marry me and give me some babies, but I was younger then.

I ain't no dreamer no more. Dreams is like cancer, they eat up your insides. I just have me a good time with the boys and try not to think 'bout nothin' but my new songs now.

When all the money's gone, the boys take to singin' sad songs in the bar, but most a them people there ain't no better off than us, so they just smile and clap but they don't dish out no money. Usually, I sing along anyway 'cause it's better'n goin' home to Rikki Lee, but I ain't in no mood tonight. I had just enough whiskey to feel as empty as the bottle. But I can't tell the boys 'bout it. They got problems a their own already.

I ain't in no mood for Bourbon Street neither, so I walk down another street no tourist would have the guts to explore at this time a night. They don't realize that most a the guys they scared of is all on Bourbon Street with them, tryin' to mooch some drinkin' money. I know those boys anyways an' I ain't afraid. I had too much whiskey to be scared a nothin'.

"Where ya goin' so fast, little lady?"

The voice like to scare the piss outta me, though. "I'm a goin' home, little man." The guy ain't a day under sixty, but he ain't dirty and don't look like no murderer or nothin'. He ain't nobody that belong around here, that's for shore.

"I was lookin' for some place to eat. Got any suggestions?"

He'd look a little like my pa if his eyes was squintier and his belly was larger, but he got more manners than my pa. And he ain't lookin' at me like no paper centerfold neither. "There's some good places over toward Bourbon Street there." I'd hate to see the old guy get rolled for whatever little money he got, so I point toward the tourist traps figurin' that they'll *only* take his money and not his hide.

"Isn't there someplace around here? Or somewhere near your home so you don't have to walk alone?"

I drank too much to be picky. "You like jambalaya?"

"Never had it."

"I knew you wasn't from around here." Lucky for him. "C'mon now.

Ya'all in for a treat."

He says he's from Houston, here on business. But he don't look like no businessman I ever seen before. He got a little bit a gray hair a way back on his head and a smile that's as warm and kindly as my granpappy's was 'fore he died. He can't have much money 'cause his jeans ain't very blue and his sweater ain't no better than Jimmy's when it's clean. His tenny shoes is kinda ragged, too. But he don't have the hands of a workin' man — he has smooth, puffy hands speckled with liver spots. Ain't got no weddin' ring neither.

I take him to Miss Ruby's on Saint Philip. Ain't nothin' fancy but it's close to home and they serve whiskey.

"You gotta try the gumbo. Ain't that right, Kevin?" Kevin's the waiter, the owner's stepson; a nineteen-year-old mulatta with a perpetual hard-on.

"Best in N'Awlins," he admits.

"We'll take two. And two whiskeys."

I love a Southern man. Good eatin', good drinkin' ... good lovin'.

Pretty soon I ain't keepin' track of those whiskeys no more. Ain't keepin' track a my tongue neither. It's like whiskey's character medicine with me. I start play actin', but I'm playin' myself. The one I don't show people too often: the kid from Kentucky who learned to sing in the Baptist choir, the one who couldn't help wantin' to feel good.

He ain't askin' no questions 'bout nothin'. He orders the whiskey and listens to my story. Ain't never had a man listen before, so I keep talkin' like if I keep on talkin' faster and faster and don't let a pause give him room to applaud and end my performance, the night might never end and I might getta finish my story — or I might never have to.

But when I stop, he don't applaud. He looks at me like my retriever Smokey used to back home. That warm, attentive look that makes you wonder if the looker loves ya more than ya love yourself. No one's looked at me like that since Smokey.

That little Houston man goes on up to the counter and pays Kevin for everythin' while I finish my whiskey. Then he helps me to my apartment. I stumble more than I woulda if I'd a been alone. I like his arm around my waist. He feels strong enough to be a laborin' man, but he ain't once squeezed too hard — and no one's ever felt more gently.

My room ain't clean, ain't been for a while, but the room's dark enough

to hide it and we don't turn no lights on. He helps me lie down, brushing my hair from my face like in one a them ol' movies. But it ain't corny when he do it. He feels like he means it, like he only wants to see my face. I'm so busy a feelin' like a goddam princess, I don't even notice his other hand till his fingers find my nipple under my blouse (I ain't never worn no bra) and he kisses me; one of those soft kisses from the inside a the lips.

I ain't never come so fast like I did as a princess. He didn't last no longer. Spent a love, I went clean to sleep.

In the mornin', I look around to see if I was jus' dreamin' 'bout bein' a princess. Ain't no man here a no kind. My head ain't too good for thinkin' now, but I remember a man. Can't think a no name, can't remember no face, but I'm shore there was a man.

I jus' need some Alka Seltzer, some aspirin, an' a cold beer. I'll figure it out.

My clothes from yesterday is sprawled all over; t-shirt's by the potty, skirt's under the bed, panties is missin'. Musta been a man. Where is them goddam seltzers?

What's this?

"Keep on making music, love," it says on one a them Budweiser napkins like Miss Ruby has ...

... He kinda looked like my pa. I 'member him now. I was singin' to him at Ruby's ...

... The son of a bitch! I ain't chargin' nothin', fucker! I ain't never asked you for no money ...

... My God. They's five thousand dollars here. Five thousand dollars!

Guess he coulda treated me like some cheap whore. But what I'm a gonna do with this kinda money? He prob'ly left it on accident. He's prob'ly gonna go tell the police I stole his money. That son of a bitch.

"Ya'all ready in there?" The knock about to scare me to death.

"Gimme a minute, Jimbo."

"Unlock this here door, Roni. What ya'all doin' in there?"

Tryin' to hide five thousand dollars. Where the hell I'm gonna hide five thousand dollars?

"Ro-NI! Ya alright?"

"Can't a lady pee in peace, Jimmy?"

"Jus' hurry yo' li'l ass up, ya hear. We's late already."

The drawer? The mattress? The bathroom? Rikki Lee? Rikki Lee! I'll jus' put this here money in your tray. You guard that now, honey, hear?

"RONI! Move yo' ass!"

"Goddam you is a pain, Jimbo."

"Ya ain't even got ya clothes on yet? Jesus, Roni."

"Shut up. Jus' hand me my shoe."

"You wore them clothes yesterday."

"They don't smell." Ain't he just like a brother? Always a gripin'. But he buys me a beer on the way down to Chartres Street.

"What happened to you, girl? Ya'all left early last night. I thought you'd a been feelin' good this mornin'."

"I am now that I got me a beer." I ain't 'bout to tell him 'bout that man or his money. I jus' keep on drinkin' my piss ass Dixie beer so I can toss the can before we get to Chartres. It don't take long 'fore we's singin'.

Usually, once I start a rockin', I don't see nothin' and I don't think 'bout nothin'. But today I can't help lookin' for that man. I don't want him a comin' up here sayin' nothin' 'bout no money. I done some bad things, but I ain't never been no prostitute. I been a whore all my life, but I ain't givin' nothin' I ain't takin' right back. And I don't want no police hasslin' me neither. He can have his lousy money back. I ain't never asked for nothin'.

But he don't come. All day I'm a lookin' at these folks, lookin' for that little Houston man. But all's I see is newlyweds. An' I start to feelin' bad. I 'member now why I don't look for nobody but me in all them eyes. I keep a recognizin' people, people I ain't seen since I was in Kentucky and they look at me like I ain't nothin' but dirt. They listen for a minute, but they ain't even hearin' the words. I know 'cause they's smilin'. If they was listenin' there ain't nothin' to smile 'bout.

Some of 'em is carrying packages all wrapped up in perty green and red ribbons. I know they's a goin' home to they momma's to a fireplace and a Christmas tree, prob'ly some turkey dinner, too.

I could go home with five thousand dollars. I could buy me some fancy clothes and get my hair done and buy me a plane ticket to Kentucky. I could buy Momma one a those expensive china dolls 'round here and buy Papa a ...

He'd say, "I don't want nothin' bought with no whore's money." And he'd be right. Ain't nothin' but whore's money. I ain't no better'n he ever said I was.

The day jus' keeps a gettin' darker and colder. Ain't nobody stoppin' to hear no old blues band now. I bet we ain't made fifty bucks today. Joe's wife's gonna try to make him be a trash man or somethin' and me and Markie and Jimmy'll prob'ly move in together again.

Unless I give them the money. We could all pay our rent till March when we'll have Mardi Gras money. And we could have Christmas dinner at my place. A real Christmas dinner, not no jambalaya and beer like last year. I'll make a turkey and some sweet potatas. I could even get one a them fir trees and we could string popcorn on it and all. I'll buy Jimmy that bass at the hawk shop, and get Markie a new leather jacket. I'll even buy Joe and his wife somethin'. Maybe a record player with some sax records so they can make that baby they been wantin'. Then I'll be Auntie Roni. I'll like to be Auntie Roni.

"Ain't no use in stayin' out here no more," Markie says. "Ain't nobody stoppin' no how."

Joe and Jimbo start packin' up they shit and I ain't never felt no better in my life. They goin' be so happy when I tell 'em 'bout the money.

"Ya'all goin' meet me at Jake's?"

"Nah, Roni. The ol' lady ain't workin' tonight. She ain't gonna be happy 'bout today so's I bes' not make matters worse. I'm a goin' straight home," Joe says.

"Aw, ya can't. Ya gotta go to Jake's. Bring Tammy with ya."

"Ain't no big deal, Roni. I see ya'all tomorrow anyways."

"But I got a surprise for ya'all and ya ain't gonna believe me less I show ya."

I finally have to promise to buy 'em all some supper 'fore they'll meet me. They's thinkin' I ain't got no money so if I's a promisin' supper must be somethin' worth hearin'. It is, my friends. It is.

It's rainin' like a hurricane now, but I ain't mindin'. I'm a gonna be warm all winter anyways. I might even buy me one a them perty rabbit coats.

Ain't but a minute till I'm walkin' up the stairs at home and findin' my door busted open. My pictures is all broken all over the floor. My clothes is in pieces from the window to the john. And Rikki Lee's home ain't nothin' but clay shards buried in some coffee. They stomped on her green and yellow leaves, leavin' her worse than when I didn't water her for a while. They took the money, too.

Ain't goin' do me no good to cry. Ain't goin' save Rikki Lee or the money — or me and the boys.

Ain't nothin' but whore's money anyhow. But what I'm a gonna tell the boys? I can't buy 'em no supper. Shit, I can't even buy 'em no beer. Can't give 'em no Christmas dinner neither.

That son of a bitch! I knew he was goin' 'cause me some trouble over that fuckin' money. Better to always have nothin' than to have somethin' and get it taken away from ya.

I's just goin' tell 'em I's sorry. I's sorry I can't give ya no new bass, or no leather jacket. Sorry I ain't goin' be no auntie, neither.

I ain't nothin' but no loser. God gives most people guardian angels an' he gives my name to Satan hisself; an' Satan don't ever even take no vacations! Don't believe in no sunshine neither. Anybody who says rainy days ain't gloomy ain't got no heart. Wish I didn't have no heart. Ain't easy to face ya'all friends when all ya got's a little bit a pride.

Joe's at the jukebox right next to the door when I walks in to Jake's. Just the sight a him pulls the plug outta my throat and the faucets in my eyes get to runnin' all over again. Ain't nothin' more humiliatin' 'cause ain't no way to turn 'em off.

"What's a matter, baby? Somebody hurt you?" With Joe's arms around me it feels better, but even so it feels worse. Much worse. Kinda like seein' somebody off at the bus station, somebody ya know you ain't never goin' see again. Ya say ya gonna get together, but you know things ain't never goin' be the same. So, ya get an empty, sad feelin' 'bout time when ya think a your friend, 'stead a bein' happy 'bout 'em.

"Sit down here now, Roni. Tell me what happened."

One arm ain't so much — least the tears slow down some. "Joe, that son of a bitch broke into my place an' he stole our money."

"What's goin' on here? Ya'all okay, Roni?" Markie asks, walking up with Jimbo and Tammy.

"She says somebody broke in her place."

"Did he hurt ya, Roni?" Jimmy asks.

"He took our Christmas away, Jimbo."

"Calm yourself now, Roni. What happened exactly?" Joe says.

"I met this man from Houston, see? An' he gave me five thousand dollars, but then he musta changed his mind 'cause he smashed up Rikki Lee and took it all back. I was goin' buy ya'all some Christmas ..." "

“It’s okay, baby. Don’t cry now.”

“Baby? Ya’all callin’ this here tramp ‘baby,’ Joe? She ain’t yo baby. She ain’t nothin’ but a lyin’ tramp. Ain’t no man goin’ give *her* that kinda money.”

Ain’t nothin I could do but start to swingin’ at that bitch, but Joe don’t let me hit her. He grabs me ’fore I get to her jaw, and Markie grabs her ’fore she can do nothin’ but open her big fuckin’ mouth.

“If’n ya’alls worth that much, I got a street corner for ya!”

I ain’t never wanted to knock nobody’s teeth out before — but I’d like to make her choke on ’em!

“Ya’all stop it now! Roni! Tammy! Ya’all stop!” Jimmy says.

“Roni! Stop, goddam it!” I ain’t never heard Joe use that harsh a voice before. He’s a lookin’ at me like my pa used to ’fore he’d start tellin’ me ‘bout my devilish ways.

“Ya’all don’t believe me neither, huh? None a ya’all believe me.” My daddy didn’t believe me neither. Him and my momma looked at me the same way. Jus’ like those audience folks do. “I don’t need ya’all anyways. Ya’all’s opinions ain’t important to me. Ya’all ain’t important to me neither!”

I ain’t a very good liar, but they’s lookin’ at me like they believe what I’s say’. Ma and Pa believed me too. Why didn’t neither of ’em believe me when I really was tellin’ the truth? And why ain’t I got the courage to explain? Prob’ly ‘cause it’s easier to run away.

These ol’ buildin’s smell moldy in the rain. Ain’t hardly no cars or no people out here. Neon lights light up this street, old gaslights light up this narrower one. Nothin’ lights up mine ’cept for the lights inside a Miss Ruby’s.

I’s sure he ain’t there. That li’l ol’ Houston man ain’t goin’ come back here after what he did. The windas is all fogged up so’s I can’t see inside.

Ain’t nobody here anyways. ‘Cept for Kevin.

“Kevin?”

“Roni? Uh ... What ya’all doin’ here?”

“I’s a lookin’ for that Houston man a brought me in here last night.”

“Ain’t never seen him.”

“Ya’all seen him last night, Kevin.”

“Ain’t never. An’ I’s got work ta do here, Roni.”

"Ya'all ain't even got no customers, Kevin!" He looks at me likin' I's scared him or somethin'. An' he ain't no little guy neither. Ain't much younger'n me an' he ain't no smarter."

"Alright. Alright! I seen him with ya last night. But I ain't never seen him since!"

How's I manage to get this here entire world mad at me! I ain't wantin' to hurt nobody. Ain't never hurt nobody. I's a jus' wantin' to have me some Christmas ...

"Ah, now Roni, don't ya'all cry. Sit down right here. Ya ain't gotta worry 'bout that ol' man's money. I's a take care a ya."

"What money? I ain't never said nothin' 'bout no money."

"Well, uh. I mean ... course ya ain't. But ... well, what's a fine li'l ol' thing like you goin' want with some ol' senior citizen if it ain't money?"

"Kevin, I's ain't no prostitute. Ya'all believe me, don't ya?"

"Shh. Stop this here cryin' now. Course I believe ya."

"I's a jus' wantin' to be happy, ya know? Ain't nothin' wrong with that. Is there?"

"Nah, baby. Ain't nothin' wrong with that. A pretty li'l thing like you oughta be happy. Kevin here goin' make you happy."

"Don't kiss me like that, Kevin. Ya'all's hands don't belong there no how."

'C'mon, baby. I'll take ya home. Ya ain't gotta worry 'bout nothin'. Ol' Kevin'll take real good care a you."

Ain't this here rain never goin' stop? Kevin puts his jacket round my shoulders, but I still ain't warm. Ain't no warmer walkin' up the stairs to my ...

Kevin, listen! They's somebody up there. It's prob'ly that Houston man again!"

"Let's get outta here, baby, c'mon. Ya'all can stay in my place."

Ain't no way I's a gonna let that son of a bitch get away. He made the world mad at me an' I's goin' do somethin' 'bout it.

The door's open jus' enough so's I can see the light from inside but I can't hear no noises now.

"What the fuck ya'all think ya doin'?" I hit the door real hard so's to make a real loud noise.

"Roni! We was worried sick 'bout ya'all. Where ya'all been?"

It's Jimmy and Mark. They got my place all picked up: the pictures that

wasn't broken into pieces is all hung again an' Rikki Lee's gone 'cept for some a her dirt.

"Ya'all didn't have to do this."

"We's sorry, baby. We's sorry 'bout what happened at Jake's with that there bitch Tammy. An' we's sorry 'bout ya'all's place, too," Jimmy says.

"We brought ya'all your share a the money for today. Looks like we'll be splittin' in threes from now on, though," Markie says.

"I's sorry."

"Aw, baby. Don't ya'all be sorry. Joe's better off as some bartender somewherees anyhow. Them ol' drunks ain't goin' kick his ass as much as his ol' lady do now!"

"Ain't that the truth!" Jimbo agrees.

Hey I's a forgot all about Kevin. But when I turns around to say somethin' to him, he ain't there. "Ya'all seen Kevin?"

"Kevin?"

"Yeah, Miss Ruby's stepson? He was here with me jus' a minute ago."

"I ain't seen him, Roni."

"I ain't neither," Markie says.

"He musta run off scared a that there Houston man. I thought ya'all was him."

"Lucky it weren't, with that there girlie behind ya!" Markie laughs.

"Take off this here wet jacket now, Roni. We's got some Jack ta warm ya's instead."

Jimmy takes the jacket from my shoulders an' throws it on the floor. Ain't right to be doin' that with somebody's property when they's only tryin' to help, so I go over an' pick up the old gray thing an' all kinds a money spills outta an inside pocket. I start to shakin' real hard an' that ol' Budweiser napkin falls out, too. "Keep on making music, love," it says.

"Look a here, boys! Here's my money! That son of a bitch Kevin took my money! No wonder he's a run off so quick."

"Yahoo! Lookit all this!"

"We's rich, Roni! We's rich!"

Maybe that money weren't nothin' but whore's money, but we had us one hell of a Christmas. I got Jimmy that bass from the hawk shop and Markie that new jacket. I got me a real rabbit coat and some purple suede boots with high heels and silver studs! We had turkey and sweet potatas

and cornbread, too. An' we drank all the whiskey we wanted till Mardi Gras when the money was all gone.

I did send Momma one a them dolls, but I didn't send Papa nothin'. Ain't heard nothin' 'bout Kevin since that night. Ain't never seen that Houston man neither, but I hear Joe and Tammy's gonna have them a young'un.

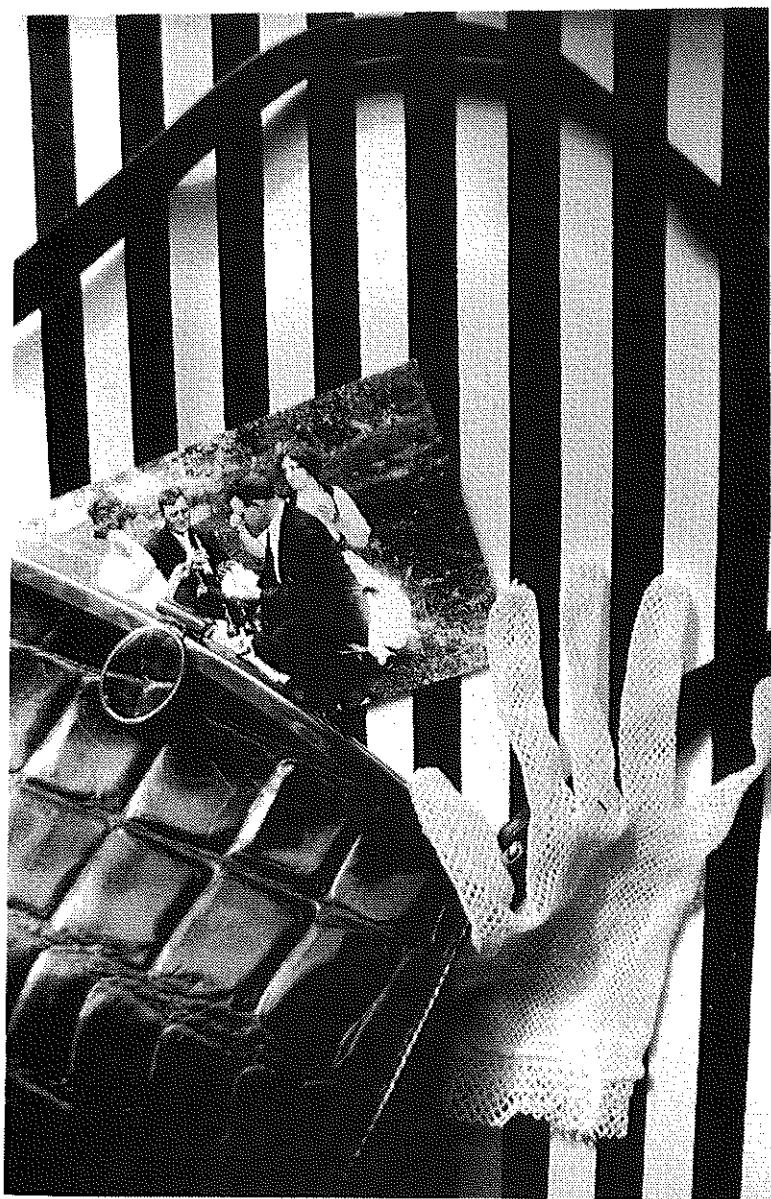
As for the three of us, we's still playin' there on Chartres Street an' we's richer than ever. We's got each other.

Helen Chavez

INA

*Lying between
crisp
white
sheets
the middle aged woman
slipped
out of her coma.*

*We took in her last breath
transforming her soul
into oxygen for our
blood.*



FARHAD VAKILITABAR

Jim Norman

MORNING PAINS

*The morning pains have come again.
You know, the ones I told you about.*

*They make me cry ... in the shower sometimes.
Like I've said before, remember?*

*Your pillow is still here.
It smells just like you.*

*To you your pillow is just a pillow.
To me it's inducement.*

*I'd like to wash its case.
But I'm afraid it might wash you away as well.*

*I heard you last night.
Did you call me? Did I call you?*

*I dreamt last night.
You and I were there. In the same place. Together.*

*You touched me. I touched you back.
Your smile illuminated the room.*

And then, together, we collapsed.

*Can you hear me right now?
I can feel you.*

*Will you please come back?
I need to do laundry.*

Kira V. Roark

CRINKLING LEAVES

*Wooden bodies in redwood forests
Old as the fires that scar them
Slide together, splinters ripping and tearing
In skin of twigs
Spotted moon dries layer after layer.*

*Wind. It whispers, hums in branches, rubbing
Creaking, the force of the tidal moon
And they move with each other, waltzing in the
Darkness, swaying
To whale songs that echo in the caves.*

*One limb then two, tangled, entwined
And snap! It breaks, she bends away from
The pain. Smashed bark, bruised with the
Pleasure, lurches
Forward, leaves dropping, sighing to moist floor.*

*Clouds screaming air, knocked together and
Again branches grab, clenching
Tangled amidst broken bird nests.
Gusts ram from western stars, the torn one
Leans, cracks, silently falls, pounding.*



MERLE RIGDON

chris burk

ABSTRACTION

Walking slowly in the midday heat, i hadn't noticed his subtle figure shaded by boughs of pine. The first strains of music snaked through the air, caressing my ears. My footsteps faltered; all sense of direction became vague, uncertain. Something exotic yet familiar ... a wisp of smoke from a past future, or perhaps a future's past. Ears and soul were listening wide. The sonic hum of a fine sitar spread outward, a wave of syrupy quietude. Figures clustered beneath an ancient pine: others moved around me like faraway insects. Liquid sound enveloped me in gentle ribbons, drawing me closer to the source. The world fell away like a dry husk and the music was there, seeping into my soul. i looked over shoulders and heads; he was there, draped in velvet and plumes. The sitar whispered and sang. i began to feel the frequency and vibration of every note. The watery music continued to curl about my body like Nepenthean mists. He wore a Buddha's smile. The nature of his long, waving hair matched the song beneath his calloused fingers. He turned azure eyes to mine in recognition and welcome. i; motionless, mesmerized. As he played, i found i had synchronized my breaths with the creative breathing of the sitar. A peaceful Zen smile, the serpentine strains of the instrument: i lived in eternal Now.

As the sun receded into the West we sat in the dirt road and he played. He wove through the sitar a golden tapestry of sound as hollow figures milled around us like so many drifting clouds. i had forgotten they were there, as i had forgotten such music existed within myself.



DAN WILLIAMS

Steve Durgan

DEDICATED TO THE INNOCENT

*Lauded gift of reason
is clouded by smug self importance
and the demons of this world
scream and caper in glee
as the creator's child calmly
destroys another of his simple brothers
in the great cause of humanity.*

*Behind the metal bars
shivers a small bundle of fur
too exhausted to scream anymore
as its eyes continue to burn
from the mascara
liberally and methodically applied
to the naked flesh of its eyes.*

*Do monkeys have souls?
If so, please pray for those
one and a half million sacrificed
solely in the pursuit of a cure
for polio, not to mention
the countless primates hooked on drugs
that man may better understand
his own vices.*

*And remember the dogs
whose mouths were mutilated
that Pavlov might stumble
across the grand idea
of response conditioning so very important
to the careers of a million psychologists.*

*A baboon lost his heart
that blood might course
a little longer through the veins
of a little girl who died
only a few days later, anyway.
No one asked the baboon
if he was finished with it
before they cut it out of his body.*

*What sour, wry look there must be
on the face of our creator
as he views man, creator in his own right,
of the atom bomb and poison gas and chemical waste.
God watches as his child destroys
another of the truly innocent
in the cause of science
or for the love of money.*

Could God have made a mistake?

bazir kaldi

STREAM DREAM

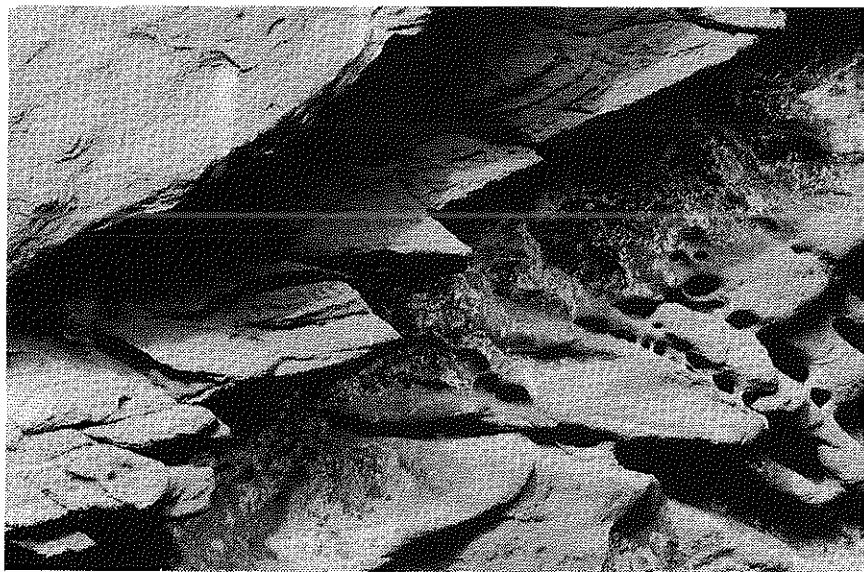
*Lying by a stream,
eyes closed on a sunny bank,
I hear your murmurs
and drift into your flow.*

*Floating in your pools,
teased by your ripples,
hearing ever hearing,
your giggling ripples.*

*Slipping over rocks,
smoothed by your fluid hands,
sliding ever sliding,
deeper into your flow.*

*Traversing your channel,
caressing your banks,
feeling ever feeling,
your surging currents.*

*Breathing your rapids,
in pulse quickening tremble,
then drifting ever drifting,
with you toward the sea.*



FARHAD VAKILITABAR

William H. Chrane

THE CAIRN

*I slumber and dream across centuries,
On this barren windswept plain,
Where crashing waves sweep the ragged shore.
I, attentive the muttering, the whining wind,
My only converse, this demon haunted crypt.*

*Time after time, I hazard the plain,
Where fools rush to their doom.
As in a mist, a mighty battle rages,
Serried ranks roll backward and forward.
Steel flashes like a sunlit sea.*

*I see in wolfskins, wild and shock-headed,
Kinsmen maniacally wielding red axes.
Tall men in horned helmets and glittering mail,
Eyes cold and blue as the sea.
I also am embraced within the melee.*

*I dream, I see and recognize
Myself, tall and rangily powerful.
Shock-headed, bearded and naked,
But for a wolf hide girt my loins.
I yell and slay among the ranks.*

*After blinding sheets of terror
And cataclysmic abyss of battle subsides,
The drums thunder their dirge.
Evil and death dwell in the storm of carnage.
The roar of conflict dying.*

*I fought beside the chiefs till dusk.
Could not be on all parts of the field.
Now, wounded unto death,
I lay in my great cloak, fending the chill
And glazed approach of the dark side.*

*A feasting of ravens, a red flood of slaughter,
No pity, no mercy — none expected.
Altars crumble, priests gray and die.
On yonder plain where heroes fall,
None safe from the stroke of the ax.*

*Afar lay the glittering mail, as wheat after reaping.
Among them, thousands clad in wolf hides.
I slumber and dream till thunder of judgement day.
I, attentive the muttering, the whining wind,
My only converse, this demon haunted crypt.*

bazir kaldi

HAIKU BAR SCENE

*at the bar again
depression sets in at 5 p.m.
after a few beers.*

*visions of Greek isles
fade in an ice-filled glass of
Metaxa five star.*

*my head turns intent
a petite blond wearing red
who looks like you did.*

*another crisis
time flies by, but can't decide
should I still love you.*

*the shell of my soul
like the vault of an old castle
the foundation cracks.*

*problems to sort out
another glass-eyed author
with his world of pain.*

*have another round
to drown away those memories
of what might have been.*

Gretchen Palmer

DIVORCE

*Inside-out emotions struggle
to seize handfuls of rage blindly
reflecting precious shared moments:*

*five of us licking a dripping ice cream;
singing "Old MacDonald" crossing Kansas;
twenty-five years of warm suppers,
magical Christmas eves,
bedtime stories both real and pretend,
through new beginnings and bitter failures
we endured.*

*Now I walk up to my house
alone.*

*My days belong to me;
my nights are without pain.
The pulsing indignation slowly dissipates.
With old sheets folded inside new walls,
I start to make my bed again
and sweep the ashes aside.*

Garrett D. Weekley

HAND ME THAT

Characters:

CHAT

PANK

Scene: *Somewhere in the mind's eye*

(As the curtain rises, we see two men, Chat and Pank, sitting at a wooden table in a pasty yellow room. There is no other furniture besides the table and two red cylinder stools. The room has only one door and no windows. The floor and ceiling are covered with gray tiles. Each tile has a G.I. Joe figure superglued to its center. Both men are dressed in gowns with green and black three-inch vertical stripes.)

CHAT: What do you suppose the biological ramifications would be if it was possible to crossbreed a cactus and a bowling ball?

PANK: I don't believe the world is ready for an idea of such magnitude. *(He gets up from his stool and walks to the wall opposite him.)* Okay, I've got one for you. If everyone were to die right now, who would get to play with all the toys?

CHAT: I guess whoever left their pasta machines on. *(He stands up and moves to the other side of the table and sits down.)*

PANK: Wrong! Only cartoon characters would be alive. So, in turn they would be the only ones playing with our toys.

CHAT: Oh yeah! I bet you a box of Hostess products that I can smash your head through this table.

PANK: Well, I don't think you can do it. So you're on. (*Chat gets up from the table and Pank moves toward the table.*)

CHAT: Bend slightly at the waist so I can get a good grip. (*Pank bends and Chat places his hand on the back of Pank's head.*)

PANK: Ready?

CHAT: Only when you are.

(*In a fatal swoop Chat pushes Pank's head down on the table.*)

(*Bonklish!*)

(*Pank lifts his bloody, gashed face off of the table.*)

I told you that you couldn't do it.

CHAT: I guess you were right. (*Both men return to their seats at the table.*)

PANK: Tell me, Chat. What are you thinking right now?

CHAT: Not a whole bunch. I'm just wondering about a few things.

PANK: What kind of things? Furry things? Dead things? Broken things? You have to be a little more specific about things.

CHAT: Chill, Pank. I'm not thinking about stretch garments or anything like that. I'm just wondering if bleach would taste better if it was illegal. I mean, would people actually enjoy the taste, or just like it a little more if they had to get bleach from their local pusher?

PANK: Yeah. I think that society would just really wig the outer extreme. Just think of all the people who are slaves to fashion. Once bleach was outlawed, they'd have to get rid of half their wardrobe. Imagine going to jail for having acid washed jeans. The thought makes me warm all over.

CHAT: If only there were justice like that in the world. Life would be so much nicer if bleach, no matter how it tastes, was illegal.

(*Both men stand up and push the stools away from the table. Chat walks to the door and taps his finger on the knob. He touches his groin and then opens the door. His eyes widen at the sight of what is in the closet. It is full of toasters stacked on top of each other. He takes twelve toasters and walks back to the table, where he proceeds to build a pyramid.*)

Ya know Pank, your idea has given me such a thought. I don't really know how to say it. It's such a mind blowing idea.

PANK: Really? What is it?

(Upon replying, Pank drops to his hands and knees and crawls around the table. Chat hands Pank a toaster and then walks to the closet. Chat returns to the table with sixteen toasters and builds onto his pyramid. Pank grabs his toaster with both hands and smashes it on his already bloody face. He takes the broken toaster parts and makes a pile under the table.)

CHAT: Okay. Pank, I want you to try and picture this ... What if the human race had evolved without thumbs? Just think about it. Wouldn't it be weird?

PANK: No thumbs, huh? Whoa! That is too dang wild. The possible scenarios are endless. First of all, our hands would be smaller and our arms would be smaller as well. We wouldn't have near as much upper body strength. Our hands would be almost useless. Gosh, everything would have to be different.

CHAT: Right. Even tiny things would have to change. Clothing would be different. Without a thumb you couldn't button buttons, zip zippers or tuck in your shirt. Holding a pencil would be almost impossible. As a matter of fact, cutlery would be too complicated to use.

(Pank abandons his pile of broken toaster parts and centers his attention on the Sgt. Slaughter figure by his left hand. He grabs the figure and snaps it away from the tile. Pank flicks the superglue off of Sgt. Slaughter's feet. Chat returns from the closet with thirty-four toasters and begins to build a wall between the table and himself.)

Pank, you have got to be crazy. What you're talking about is impossible. You have to think as if you've never had a thumb and not put ideas in a modern sense. If we didn't have thumbs, we wouldn't know better. Maybe the human race would have evolved into a super intelligent race and people would use their brain power to come up with ideas to compensate for having unusable hands. How do you think you would feel if you were born into a whole different reality? You wouldn't know anything else. The way you lived would be the only way you could understand.

PANK: Yeah, but think of things you take for granted. Nothing in this world would be the same without our good friend the thumb.

CHAT: True. You also have to consider the other possible evolutionary conclusion. What if we evolved without a thumb and the gorillas and chimps evolved with a thumb? We would be the ones playing the naked jungle bingo and they would control the world. It may not seem like much, but without our thumbs, we'd either be a super intelligent, advanced civilization or we'd be picking bugs out of our hair with four fingers.

PANK: Yeah, I know what you mean. We'd either be a race of complicated machinery designed to fulfill a simple task or we'd be swinging from the trees, playing with our bananas.

CHAT: The thought is just too intense to even consider anymore. What else you got in your head?

PANK: My name is Chat and that's the fact ... just jokin'. Nah, I'm just tinkering with afterlife and eternity. When you die and pass onto the eternal afterwards, what does your body do?

CHAT: What do you mean?

(Pank stops playing with the Sgt. Slaughter figure and puts it on the floor. He crawls out from under the table and stands up. Chat grabs Pank's hand and walks with him to the closet. Both men stack forty-two toasters on their arms and walk back to the table. Chat drops his load of toasters on the floor and Pank drops his load of toasters on Chat. Both men, standing in a mess of toasters, begin to wrestle with each other.)

PANK: What I'm trying to say, Chat, is when we die, what does our body look like? If you die in a car crash and had your arms ripped off, would you have to walk around for all eternity with bloody stumps at the end of your shoulders?

CHAT: I see what you mean. Like if you got decapitated and also happened to be suffering from hay fever, would you literally be sneezing your head off until the end of time?

PANK: Kind of perplexing. I don't know the answer.

(Pank and Chat stop wrestling and brush themselves off. Chat picks up a toaster, walks to the closet and throws it in. Pank gets down on his hands and knees and crawls around the floor, snapping G.I. Joe figures off the tiles as he crawls around.)

CHAT: Okay Chat, it's your turn.

CHAT: Alright. I really enjoy having a good dental plan.

PANK: Really? So does my dentist.

CHAT: Does your dentist have a thumb or did he evolve without it?

PANK: I hope he has a thumb. How would he pick my teeth and cut my gums if he didn't have a thumb?

CHAT: Good question. I'll get back to you on that after I've researched it a little more.

(Pank rolls over on his back and puts his hands on his chest. Chat throws four toasters into the closet and then sits on a pile of broken parts.)

PANK: Did you know that thirty-six percent of adolescents can't do math?

CHAT: Gosh, I wonder what the other half can't do.

PANK: Hey, I've got an idea of what we could do for excitement. Let's assign names to all the individual potatoes in a ten-pound bag and see if we can remember their names next week.

CHAT: That's cool. Too bad we already did it yesterday with the package of Oreo cookies.

PANK: Damn! I knew the idea sounded familiar. Well, what are we going to do now?

CHAT: Let's tape our thumbs to the palms of our hands and see if we can evolve.

PANK: Yeah. Then we can see if we can take out the trash or not. Where's the tape? Let's do up our hands. I'm ready to evolve.

CHAT: Wait a minute. I just remembered that we don't have any tape. We used it all up taping our feet to the floor last Christmas. Don't you remember? We wanted to see what it felt like to be trees with exposed roots.

PANK: Hell, we don't need tape. We could use shoelace string and tie our thumbs to our hands.

CHAT: Yeah, that would work. Let's do it.

PANK: Okay, where are we going to get the string?

CHAT: That's right! All we have left in here are a bunch of toasters and G.I. Joe figures, and the only door leads to a closet. Sometimes I really hate working in the right hemisphere of the brain. I just wish we were on the Creative Staff and not the Irrational Thinking and Surrealistic Thought Staff. It sucks working here. This brain may think, but it sure as hell doesn't

PANK: have imagination and accessories.
I know what you mean. You and I are just battery-operated
toys in a wind-up world.
(*Curtain*)

Linda L. Butler

FAMILY PORTRAIT

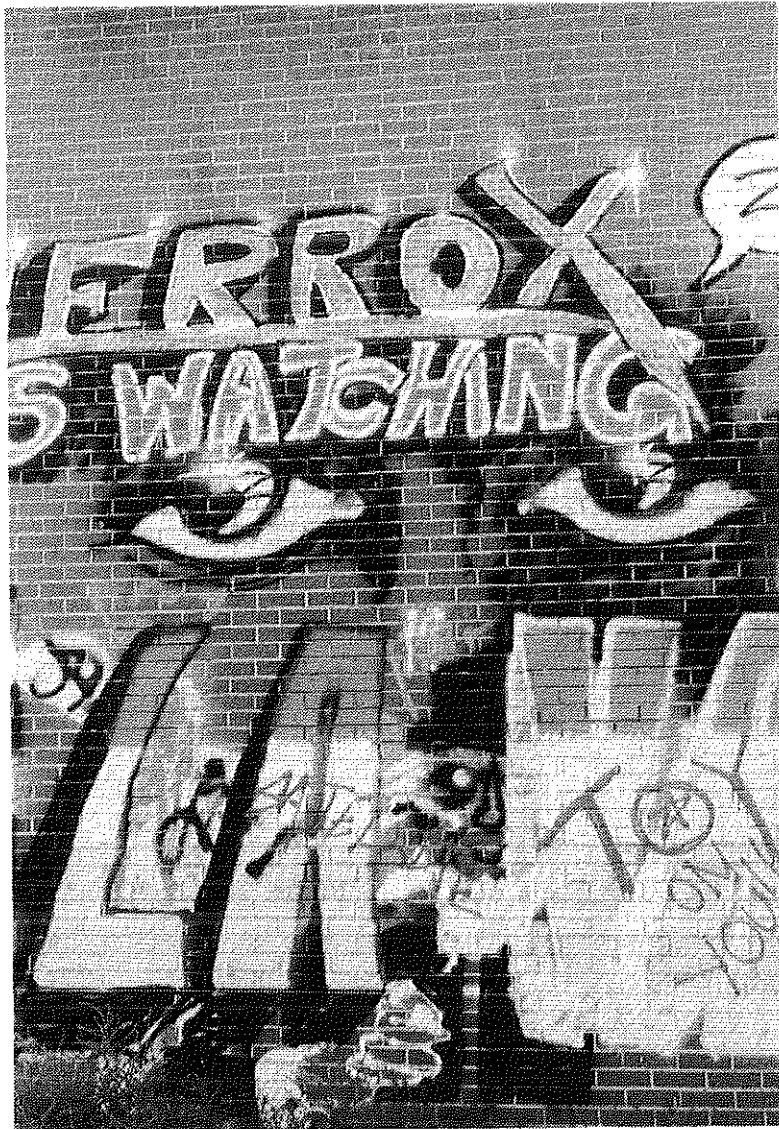
*Eyes staring
From an unseen world*

*Lives lost
Like oils in paint*

*Faces captured
But not caged*

*Time traps the lives
In a photograph shield*

*Years keep them in little books
And torture future eyes.*



MINKA RICKER

Olin Adams

UNTITLED

*Suffering soul standing on the street corner troubling all.
It's the street corner man.*

*Selling his white powder, candy and rocks and plastic bags
full of sweets to sour the mind and dampen the soul
and erode the body.*

*Spiteful vengeful bitter soul standing on the corner
flaunting your bitter sweet illusions to
the young unwary and spiritually lost.*

*Standing on the street corner reeking of waste destruction and
stale alcohol.*

*Dirty fingernails laced with gold jewelry and fine silk shirts
like a prostitute in a white bridal gown.*

*Suffering soul on the street corner scared of your own shadow.
Why don't you leave street corner man leave my corner
go back to the foul pits and under world where you came from.*

Nancy Graham

SEA-GRAPES

*The hour of the sea-grape
bends midnight memories,
then wafts them off
to ride Plumeric breezes
easily, as Pegasus
could mount the clouds
trailing tropic laughter:
Rain
on temperate travellers
left behind.*

Wendy Trever

SONORITY IN PLAY

*In music class today,
I let my mind drift
With the music, along out of the classroom.*

*And I was with you
Watching the sunset, on a hill
Surrounded by green skies*

*We sat Indian style
Legs folded apart
And I didn't know how to tell you*

*That I wanted you to see the part I hide,
In the dark —
The shaky, sensory, steamy side.*

*And the music played
But the harmony ceased
And I was brought back by Bach*

*Sitting in a plastic chair
Legs folded together
And the cassette player stopped.*

Gretchen Palmer

DESERTER

*I must take leave from private wars
and climb the mountain trails
far above grim battlefields,
where I've been about my Father's work:*

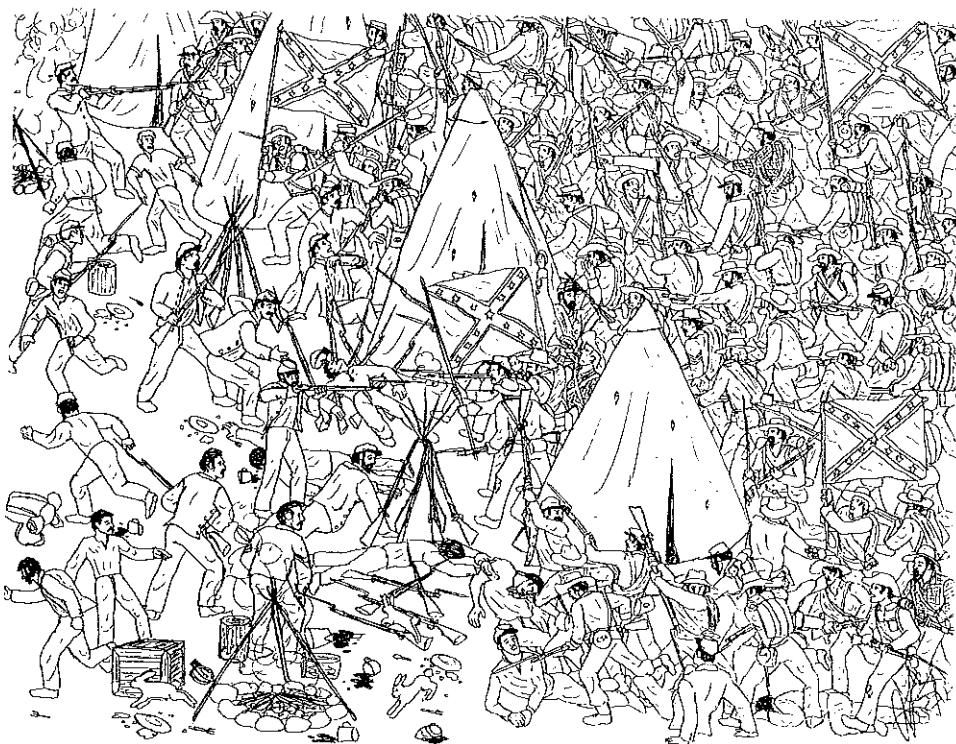
*I painfully recall Laurie's blank stare
as she confessed her husband
beat and raped her;
now she hates herself too.*

*Could I give hope to the African mother
who whimpered as she desperately lifted
her bony child to dried-up nipples,
cradling it as he died?*

*Spiritlessly I blessed weary soldiers
beside the Wailing Wall
who were willing to fight
for barren land and prophecy.*

*What could I say to Apache teens
hidden on reservations,
rich in a heritage — unattainable now —
uneducated and alone in their native land?*

*I must take leave from suffering.
Tonight peace will be mine
as I Ascend the peaks;
I will take the cup and pray
where I need not question the reasons why.*



SPOTSYLVANIA

ARLIN R. TAWZER

Jim Allen

THE PRESSING BUSINESS OF MICHAEL WINTHROP

This is insane, Michael thought. His eyes were widened and bloodshot, and because he hadn't had any water for a while, gummy streaks of drool clung to his cheeks, turning the dirt on his face into mud. His wrists bore angry red scars where the ropes had chastened his futile attempts to slip the knots.

"The devil is insane," the Captain intoned, as if reading Michael's mind, "and the devil is in you." Staring at the Captain, all Michael could think about was the jovial, red-cheeked face of the Quaker Oats man on the cardboard cylinders of cereal that had lined his mother's pantry when he was a child. But this stern figure had nothing of the jolly Quaker's benevolent countenance. He was rotund with a mane of white hair that poured out of an awkward flat black hat like milk from an obsidian saucer. He spoke with the thunderous timbre of God himself.

"Look, sir," Michael croaked, "I'm sorry I violated whatever weird customs you people have here. But if you don't untie me now, I'm going to call the cops." It was only after he had said it that Michael realized the absurdity of his threat. His throat was so raw, both from the lack of water and from the all-night psalm readings at knife point, that he could barely muster a whimper. And what if he could yell? The guy was obviously the Grand Poobah or whatever of this backwater town. Judge, jury, and ...

"What doth one do to rid a sponge of soiled water?" the Captain asked rhetorically. "One wrings it out. It is compressed so that it will no longer accommodate the unclean liquid." He wiped his meaty hands on his black robe.

Michael's vision blurred for a moment, his eyes looking inward in a panicked light-speed review of the events that had brought him here. The alimony lawyer in New York promising jail time; the index finger floating before closed eyes above the atlas and stabbing a point somewhere in northern Idaho; the midnight escape astride his overburdened motorcycle; the giddy feeling of freedom and anonymity as fresh sunsets led him westward; the peculiar quaintness of horses and buggies driven by long-bearded men in an isolated town he had never heard of; the winsome girl with the flaxen hair and the old fashioned bonnet embroidering a sampler on the steps of a blacksmith shop; the flurry of strong hands pummeling him seemingly out of nowhere as he asked her to join him for a beer; the bitter cold night spent trussed up like a corset by the side of an abandoned rock quarry and reciting penitent verse by torchlight; passing out under the chill moon and awakening to full sunlight in the middle of a circle of stern and hostile faces; the captain accusing him of tempting a virgin.

"All I did was ask her her name," Michael pleaded through frayed vocal cords, shaking the reverie from his swooning mind. With each minute, he despaired more of finding a way out. Out of the corner of his eye he noticed two men standing beside a pile of stone slabs carved out of the quarry, one of whom he recognized as holding the torch that had illumined his nocturnal penance.

On the Captain's signal the men brought the first slab and lowered it onto Michael's ribs, where it made a curiously pleasant pressure, like a hug from an ardent lover after a long absence. Michael thrashed and bucked, but the heavy stone pinned him to the ground.

"A good sponge will return to shape after the wringing," the Captain pronounced. "A wretched one lies limp and dry and broken. Though it be forever in the tub, it never can be restored. What kind of sponge are you, sinner?"

Another nod of the Captain's head brought a second slab, heavier than the other, which the men carefully stacked atop the first before departing to get a third. Michael's lungs still heaved even after he heard the first rib snap.

The Captain smiled a little, then turned his righteous gaze to the pond at the end of the quarry where so many broken sponges lay.

Lynne Tama Matsumoto

*another
starless night
cold
stark
stolen dreams
startled
into waking passions
a child's cry
betrayed
by a mother
deaf
within
her own pain
raped by her self-esteem
and rampaged by her very own anger
starless night
cold
stark
stolen dreams startled
children
breeding
children
breeding children*

Marc Cross

JACOB'S TROUBLES

He walked slowly along the city street, hands in his coat pockets, going nowhere in particular. It was late. The rain had stopped and all was quiet except for an occasional whoosh of car tires passing by and the mournful wail of sirens in the distance. The air was fresh and cool after the rain, and the breath of it seemed like life itself. The rhythmic patter of his shoes on the pavement echoed in the night, and he smiled whenever his rubber soles squeaked.

On he strolled, listening to the sounds of the night and his own footsteps, and gazing at the reflections of the city lights in the rain spattered street. Then, suddenly, he found himself at the door of a bar by the name of "Mr. D.'s." He wanted to keep walking, but an irresistible urge to see what lay behind the ornately carved door of "Mr. D.'s" overcame him and he went in.

He walked through a short, dark alcove into a cramped room lined with booths, and was momentarily disappointed by its nondescript appearance. The lighting was dim. He walked up to the bar, parked himself between a guy who looked like an automobile salesman and another who reminded him of a divorce lawyer he'd once known, and ordered a beer.

The bartender cocked his head slightly, raised an eyebrow and said, "Okay, comin' up." It tasted good and he took a two-gulp draw (unusual for him, at least in public). Turning to his left he looked at the "car salesman," who was staring into a shot glass of something very dark, and noticed a small group gathered around one of the booths that lined the perimeter of "Mr. D.'s." In their midst was a man — short and slight with medium-length dark hair and a pencil mustache. He seemed to be holding

court. "I wonder what he could be saying to make them look so rapturous," he thought between sips.

He finished his beer and ordered another. It was getting noisier. He looked over at the booth again, and now it seemed as if half the people in the room were gathered around the man with the dark hair and pencil mustache. Forgetting himself, he downed his beer in several quick gulps and ordered yet another — which he also drank rather quickly. He began to feel light-headed — "Maybe it's the air in here" — and looked around the room in darting glances. At the intricately carved veneer bordering the walls and ceiling. At the scantily clad brunette and her tipsy male companion. At the three men and two women who were growing more boisterous in proportion to their sexual advances toward each other. And — again, and again — to the gradually increasing crowd around the mysterious man at the booth.

It was as though the man could feel his penetrating gaze. He got up from his seat at the booth and walked over to the bar. "It's nice to see a new face around here," he said. "Your name is Mark, isn't it?"

"Well, yes, but ... but how did you ...?"

"I could sure use a hand at the moment. Would you care to help me out for awhile?"

"Well, ah, sure ... I mean, yeah, I guess I could help," came the unsteady reply. "What did you have in mind?" It seemed to Mark that every eye in the place was on him. He felt a crawling need to get out of "Mr. D.'s," but curiously he couldn't get himself to move a muscle.

"Good, good!" he exclaimed, and lit a cigarette. The glow of the match highlighted his face — and particularly his eyes, which were coal black. "Hey, Joe," he called into the shadows. "Bring it over, will you?" A tall man with stringy hair wearing a black leather trench coat appeared with something under his arm, and handed it to the man with the pencil mustache and coal black eyes. It was a black velvet case. A hush enveloped the room as he opened the case and pulled out the most exquisitely detailed electric guitar Mark had ever seen — a Les Paul hollow body lined with silver and gold, and inlaid with such intricate designs in turquoise that his eyes widened and his jaw gaped.

"Mark," said the owner of the guitar, "I'd like you to play a few songs. My friends here need a little entertainment, and I've got to go out for awhile." Mark was trying to reconcile the strangeness of his present situation with the fact that not one hour earlier he had been walking in comfortable solitude down a rain-soaked street. He had his wits about him then, but he wasn't so sure now as he looked into the man's coal black eyes. He had drunk the beer too quickly, and was having trouble focusing.

"Um, right, okay," he said. "By the way, you didn't mention your name."

"Mr. D.," he replied with a toothy grin. "If you need anything, ask Joe and he'll take care of you. Would you like to do a couple of lines? Joe, bring the bag over here! Mark, this stuff'll knock your socks off."

Joe handed Mark a straw. Mark knew what to do with it, and in a flash the lines were gone. He felt exhilarated. Whew!

"Yeah, okay, yeah. A few songs. But I'm really not very good."

"Don't worry about a thing," Mr. D. replied. "This guitar can practically play itself. Just start strumming and see what happens." He got up to leave, then turned and smiled. "I'll be back shortly," he said, then made his way through the throng of admirers to the ornately carved door, and was gone.

Mark picked the guitar up and ran his hands over it. What a beauty it was! "Well, here goes nothing," he muttered, and plucked a few notes. Before he knew it, he was playing a jazzy rendition of Jimi Hendrix's "Voodoo Child." The crowd grew. They were standing shoulder to shoulder, talking and laughing loudly, shouting and cheering. After a few more Hendrix numbers, Mark launched into Led Zeppelin. He was amazed at how closely his voice resembled Robert Plant's, and the guitar truly did seem to play itself. Was this really happening, or was it just a dream? His fingers flew but he couldn't feel them. More people arrived. It was getting hotter, stickier, and noisier. The crowd was becoming agitated. A fight broke out in the back of the room, but it was over almost as soon as it started.

The mood was changing. Things were starting to get ugly. Someone threw a chair half-way across the room. It struck a thirty-ish woman with red hair squarely in the face. She went down and didn't get up. Mark was in the middle of a monster riff — sounding hotter than Jimmy Paige ever had — but he suddenly felt sick to his stomach and simply wanted to get up and run. He was wrapped up in something he didn't even begin to understand

and longed desperately to escape ... but couldn't. He was locked in.

He started to play the Rolling Stones' "Sympathy for the Devil" and the crowd went wild. He could hear their shrieks over the wail of the guitar. They moved like a sea of writhing snakes to the beat of the song. "Pleased to meet you, hope you guess my name. But what's puzzling you is the nature of my game," he sang, sounding every bit like Mick Jagger. He looked around the room. The walls pulsated. The intricately carved veneer bordering the walls and ceiling took on a new look. It was a battle scene from ancient history: legions of horse-drawn chariots, warriors grappling with each other; piles of dead bodies littering the field.

Just then Mr. D. came through the door. He looked ecstatic and raised clenched fists in the air. Joe went over to him with a long staff. The crowd roared. Mr. D. raised the staff over his head with both hands. Suddenly there was a blinding flash followed almost simultaneously by an explosion, then clouds of acrid smoke. The clamor of the crowd ceased. All was quiet, except for a drip, drip, dripping sound. Then nothing.

Mark awoke to the sound of groaning and the smell and taste of sulphur. A thick mist blurred his vision. Then the mist began to evaporate and he could see. He seemed to be in some kind of pit or dungeon. There were others in there with him, some of whom he recognized from "Mr. D.'s." From all but a few came the sound that had awakened him. It was eerie, much like that of the rising and falling murmur of wind blowing through trees. He looked up and saw heavy bars covering the pit. Beyond the bars he could make out the walls of an enormous cave with a large hole in the ceiling, and blue sky above. He tried to assess the situation, but the situation was past assessment.

"Look there, up in the sky!" someone screamed. It was the thirty-ish woman who had gotten slammed in the face with the chair. Everyone looked. There was a collective gasp. Through the hole in the ceiling of the giant cave could be seen what appeared to be flying angels. There were twelve of them and they were coming closer. The closer they got, the more discernible their features became. Another collective gasp went out when it became apparent that the angels were aged and decrepit, with thin, wispy hair, deep wrinkles, and shredded white robes. They seemed to have trouble simply staying in the air. Closer and closer they came until those in the pit could see the expressions on their faces — lifeless expressions, eyes devoid of spark, toothless mouths hanging open. It struck Mark that they

were looking for a place to die. Down, down they plummeted, through the hole in the ceiling of the cave and through the bars covering the pit. There was a loud thump; then clouds of dust shared the air with shrieks and a drip, drip, dripping sound. Then nothing.

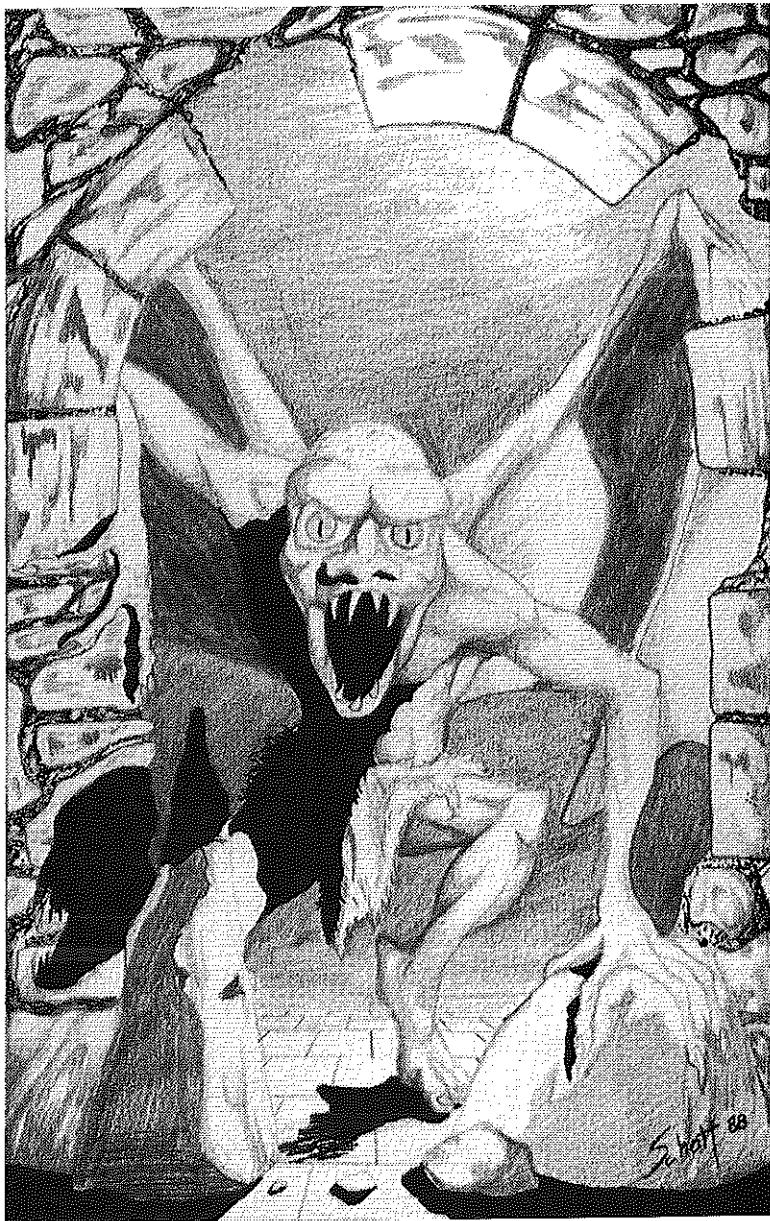
When the clouds settled, Mark and the rest were out of the pit but still in the cave. There was nothing left of the angels, but at the mouth of the cave stood an urn filled with scrolls that had not been there previously. Several people went over to investigate. They shuffled about with helpless looks, trying to guess what the scrolls in the urn meant. Then a plump, elderly man with short curly hair came forward and said, "These are the troubles of Jacob. In them is to be found the reason for our bondage and the secret of our deliverance." The people were speechless. "Their meaning has long eluded us, tormented us. But we *must* interpret them quickly if we are to succeed in thwarting ... him."

"Him? Who do you mean?" asked Mark.

"Why, the Evil One — Mr. D.," replied the man with the short curly hair. "He's coming for us. Even now, at this moment, he's coming. We *must* hurry!"

A vast cloud covered the sun and enveloped the cave in darkness, and a cold wind began to blow. Mark looked into the faces of the people he had played for at "Mr. D.'s," and wondered if their expressions mirrored his own. Some were anxious, other ashen. All had destiny etched deeply into them. For an interminable moment there was complete and cacophonous silence. Then came a drip, drip, dripping sound ... and ...

Footsteps.



THE ALL NIGHTER

SEAN SCHOTT

Sean Carpenter

QUAKE

Is a r t i c u l a t i o n all?

The glancing

snicksnack glance

of the West —

Is this all to grip in the fluid hands, crackling?

Sound

black

smoke

inhaled

touched, fluid cracks,

Casks filled rolled topped pushed —

Breath heaves in roiling gasps

breaked

stones

burying flesh, mound, mounded of stones,

Solid,

Weight as heavy as sphere on milk shoulders

What I hear?

This, no soft drip, melting groans, Thunder washed,

cleaved to moist.

What comes?

Silence?

Mist.

Practical wet, fluidrushed past course,

past weed, past cemetery stones,

past crackles

snicksnack

silence a r t i c u l a t e

chris burk

SEA BY NIGHT

*a great yellow moon
the eye singular
looks down across a living sea
the gemlike surface of the water
shivers, shifts,
moonlight glinting on
distant tide
a wave gathers itself into a
shimmering crest; glowing
subtly green;
sounds of air and water
as the crest pounces,
collapsing
into hissing lines of foam
which creep
hand over hand
toward a silent shore
here, the sea slides its
sensuous tongue
along pale sand, whispering
an endless mantra
these waning waters
draw themselves back
into the indigo depths;
sand sighs and is momentarily dry
somewhere
under the patient moon, beneath
the satin skin of the sea
eternal motion continues*



DAJO

Elena Fridland

MRS. OLGA BULKIN

*Mrs. Olga Bulkin desperately wants to be liked
By everyone,*

*Her neighbors, cats, even a grocery clerk in the local
Store who always packs her things wrong, placing the
Eggs on the bottom, under the apples and milk.*

*Mrs. Olga Bulkin doesn't leave her neat little house with
A knee-high, pink picket fence and the garden full of
Roses and tomatoes, unless her dress is crisply ironed
And her grey hair is neatly layed back, and her gloves
Are white-white.*

*Mrs. Olga Bulkin never gets robbed, because the thieves
Remember when they were little she invited them in
And gave them lemonade and sugar cookies.*

*And everyone smiles back at the serene greeting from
Mrs. Olga Bulkin, who always seems happy.*

*Mrs. Olga Bulkin, who sometimes just cries and cries
And hugs herself and giggles into her pillow
Because she doesn't know if she is "madder than the Hatter"
Or just like everyone else, only wants to be liked
By everyone.*

Lucinda Mason

STEVEN

*Today I gave my son a glimpse of my pain.
I told him Good-bye.*

*And turning my back to his departure then
turning to see he was not watching me,
watching him.*

*I told him to go play
without me and
alone he marched off to war (camouflaged in laughter)
he would learn what my cradle arms and
whisper could not teach him.*

*Playgrounds have
revolutions, too.*

W. M. Thomas

GIVE US WINGS

On a day not too far past, clouds billowed across the sky and the leaves burst with the reds and oranges of autumn, holding captive all who chanced to notice. As she drove home along the highway, Suzanne searched out the shocks of vivid color crunched in between the grayish dullness of the buildings, and she, too, surrendered herself to the romantic notions of that time of year. She daydreamed of flinging herself into a pile of leaves or drinking tea under a soft down quilt, watching the autumn rain. The eleven screaming toddlers she had just left behind at the day care center were as foreign a thought to her as was the usually annoying ugliness of the pollution-stained buildings and the warm, man-made smell of air.

The soft-rock love song on the radio abruptly ended and an overzealous disc jockey interrupted her thoughts. Her dark hair whipped across her face as she turned to change the station.

She looked up from her stereo just in time to swerve to avoid hitting a duck in the street. She only saw it for a moment, but it stayed in her memory as if it were still in front of her. Obviously injured, the duck was alive, his orange beak wide open, as if screaming for help, and one of his webbed feet stuck to the hot tar of the road. His snow-white wings were flapping wildly, like a madman flailing his arms. A screech echoed in her ears as the truck behind her veered to miss the duck. She lost sight of the bird in her rearview mirror, but knew it was probably safe for another few minutes until the roads filled up with late afternoon traffic.

She tried, unsuccessfully, to forget the duck as she fumbled through her purse until she felt the square pack of cigarettes in her hand. She pulled one out and lifted it towards her lips, but her hand was shaking so badly that it dropped to the floor.

As the insidious sights of the city continued to blur past, her mind was jammed with thoughts of a rescue. Her ideas flew past almost as quickly as the buildings, each plan dismissed as futile. Without risking her own safety, there was nothing she could do.

She felt like a child on her father's farm, remembering the horrifying grunts and squawks of animals gone to slaughter. Whenever her father went about this shameful chore, she would run to her room and cover her ears with her hands until it was over. But she could never suffocate the sounds of the panicked beasts.

And now, the thought of the fear the bird must have felt was overwhelming inside of her. She knew he must have been scared, the hot pavement burning his feet; small, helpless, vulnerable, stuck to the pavement with no hope of escaping this terrible wrath of man.

She wondered if he was thinking of the coolness of a pond when he died. Or the freedom of flight, the air rippling through his feathers, and cars and highways nothing but a dream.

She drove away from the city. The duck emblazoned on her memory, she drove on.

Amid the crimson-colored aspens and pine-filled air of the forest, she stopped to breathe in the unadulterated scent of nature. She came upon a large pond, dark with the mysteries of the life it held within. The surface rippled with the slight breeze. It was hypnotic. She skipped a pebble across the surface, creating delicate circles around the stone.

Resolutely, she pulled off her boots, followed by her faded jeans. She reached down and pulled her sweater gracefully over her head, her arms stretching up into the blueness of the sky. Her arms dropped slowly to cast the piece of dark wool gently to the ground. Her pale white skin shone pure as a dove in the late afternoon sun. She raised her arms in a great swooping gesture, and as she jackknifed, suspended in air, time seemed to stand still. A moment later, she plunged below the surface of the blue-green water.



PERSPECTIVE

JANINE CONKLIN

Neva Misenti

BRAD'S NOT HERE

The policeman on the phone told me to lock all my doors and windows cuz an undoubtedly-murdered man had been found lying in the middle of a road in my very neighborhood, this very evening, and the policeman knew that there was a dangerous psychopath prowling around out there.

My stupid neighbor, Suzette, called to ask if Brad, my roommate, was home or if he was out fooling around with any number of beautiful-busty-blond-Brillo-brained bimbettes ...

I chuckled in a fallaciously phlegmatic manner and then, of course, I hung up on her.

I put a packet of popcorn in the microwave and I slid a pirated copy of "Animal Crackers" into the VCR and I dumped a can of chicken-licken' seafood supreme gilet entree into the cats' bowl and I truly enjoyed watching all the pretty, sparkling, shining, flashing, shrieking lights outside my window.

The policeman had said that the corpse had shoulder-length dark-brown hair and blue eyes, was 6'4", approx. 180 pounds and wore only one crystal earring and a pair of avant-garde tie-dyed underpants ... just like my unfaithful, scumbag, surrealist-poet, demon-boy-friend, Brad!

I opened a can of cherry ginger ale and I ordered out for some moo-shu whatever and I got out the kitchen shears and I cut and slashed all the photos of

Brad

and I listened to the odd sounds like people knocking on my doors and trying to break my shatter-proof, burglar-proof, no-pest windows and then I disconnected the phone and, of course, I was very happy that the policeman had called to warn me.

Valerie Brinkworth

KELLY DIAMOND

Lanny Roberts stood petting the tall colt through the white corral fence as his father, Jed, talked with George Cottrell. George had many beautiful quarter horses, but Lanny thought this one, a half Thoroughbred, was the best of them all. In fact, this glistening, blue-black two-year-old was the prettiest horse he'd ever seen, even considering the ones he'd seen at big horse shows. He imagined that if he ever saw such a thing as a black diamond, it would reflect blue light just like the silky black hair of this animal. George had said he expected to get a lot of money for this gem if he ever sold him, and Lanny was sure that was true. For the first time in his seventeen years, he really wished he was rich.

Suddenly, there was tension in the air. Lanny turned around in time to see the redness creeping up his father's neck as his voice raised, and he pounded on the open tailgate of his battered pick-up truck.

"Now look here, George," he said emphatically. "We got to get that old boundary fence replaced. The posts have rotted out and the wires are half layin' on the ground. I'm tired of your cattle bein' on my place."

"I'm perfectly willing to fix my half of that fence," George answered, "but I'm not going to fix the part in the gorge. My hired man paced off our whole fence line and he says the middle is on my side of that canyon."

Your hired man can't count high enough to pace off three miles!" retorted Jed. "I paced it off, and I found the middle on my side of the canyon."

Lanny wondered, as the argument grew louder, how two grown men could get so upset over a fence. The unwritten law of the range said that a man was responsible for the right half of a boundary fence as he faced it

from his own property. Surely they could determine where the middle was, even if it fell in a place as wild and rough as the gorge area.

"Why don't you each fix half of the canyon fence?" blurted out Lanny, as he approached the two men. "That would settle this thing and be fair to you both."

The men stopped for a moment and stared at the sandy-haired young man. "No!" said George with finality. "The middle line is on my side, and I won't fix any more than my share!"

"Well, I say it's on my side, and I ain't gonna fix the fence down that hellish hole neither!" Jed climbed into his old truck and slammed the door. Lanny jumped quickly into the other side, and they roared away down the dirt lane, leaving George in a swirl of dust.

Lanny studied his father's determined features as they drove the short distance home. "Why don't we fix down one side, Pa, and maybe then George would fix down the other one. We've wasted too many days sorting out cattle. School's starting soon, and I won't be here all day to help you."

Jed pondered a minute. "Nope, I ain't gonna! You know how much them new metal posts cost, and the wire. George can afford to do it, and I sure can't. He won't do nothin' he can bully his way out of!"

Lanny didn't doubt what his father said. George was well-known for taking advantage of people whenever he could. He'd pulled some tricks on them before, too. But the important thing was to keep the cows apart, and with such a dry summer, they couldn't afford to have his cows eating their grass. Lanny resolved to ride out the next morning and figure out what materials it would take to fence the canyon.

"Maybe when one of his fancy bulls gets cut up goin' through the fence he might fix it," added Jed. He stopped by the house door, climbed out of the truck, and slammed the door again for good measure.

It was still early morning when Lanny got the worn saddle adjusted on his old sorrel mare and rode out of the barnyard. She walked stiffly for a good mile along the sandy cattle trail until her muscles loosened up. Lanny thought how wonderful it would be to ride a fast young stallion ... especially a glistening blue-black stallion ... sweeping effortlessly across the prairie together and down through the canyons and up the forested hills.

The mare breathed harder and began to sweat as the terrain got steeper. It was going to be another scorching August day, he could tell. Maybe the

rattlesnakes would be holed up in the shade instead of sunning themselves on the rocks. *Which is worse?* he wondered.

The mare picked her way carefully along the trail as it got rocky. "Good thing I didn't pull your shoes off yet," Lanny said as they splashed across the shallow stream again on the winding path. "I wouldn't want you to get sore feet and gimp all the way home."

They soon reached the small meadow where the old fence line ran across the canyon floor. Cattle tracks crossed through the broken-down fence as if it didn't exist. Lanny knew the cattle were entering the gorge upstream on George's ranch, where it wasn't so steep, and then following the creek down into their property here. The cows just naturally ambled further down to their lower pastures from this spot.

Lanny took off his mare's saddle and bridle and tied a long rope from her halter to a cottonwood tree so she could graze.

The boulder-strewn slopes of the canyon walls looked forbidding from the bottom, but he'd climbed up and down them before. There were even game trails crisscrossing along the rocky sides, which the cattle would be sure to follow if just the fence along the canyon floor was rebuilt. Lanny knew it would be a long, grueling job to put up a new fence, especially in the summer heat. He thought about the few days of fishing he and his dad had planned on — and sighed. "Well, old girl," he finally said, patting the mare's red shoulder. "My Grandad was man enough to build a fence through here ... all by himself ... so it can't be as bad as it looks. Don't get yourself tangled up, okay? I'll be back."

Lanny attached a small canteen to his belt and broke off a leafy branch from the cottonwood tree to distract snakes with, if need be. He climbed noisily and threw rocks up where he intended to go. "You snakes — move out — scat," he yelled, as he climbed beside the tumble-down fence. "I won't bother you, if you don't bother me ..."

He had never really paid any attention to this fence before, but now he noticed it was strung together with all different kinds of old wire. *Grandad was an economizing old gent, just like Pa is now*, he thought. *And just like I'll have to be to make it as a rancher.*

Lanny examined several different strands. *This stuff looks like some of the wire that's in the collection on the feed store wall*, he thought. *I could take some home and become a collector, too.* "Hmmm, never saw any like this, though," he said aloud, as he inspected the bottom strand a little closer.

It was a single strand of wire instead of two wrapped together, and it had funny barbs on it that were flat, diamond-shaped metal pieces. Lanny found a broken piece and stuck it in his shirt pocket. *I'll bet Mr. Goodman would be interested in seeing this*, he reflected. *Maybe he'll want some to put on the store wall.*

It took most of the day to climb up and down both canyon walls, and Lanny was tired and hungry when he got back home with his calculations. "You were right, Pa. It's going to take a lot of money to fence that canyon, or even half of it. Should we get George and have all of us measure the fence line together?"

Jed looked discouraged. "I already drove up above and remeasured it while you were riding home. I guess I was too hasty last time." He got up and paced through the kitchen. "Now I figure the middle is just about where the creek comes through the canyon, so we'll have to do one side, after all. I've got a little money in savings ... I'm sure it'll take it all for materials." He sat down again; his weathered face looked tired. "It seems a body never gets ahead in this world, Son ... at least a rancher don't, unless he had money before he come here ... like Cottrell."

Lanny and his father left for town right after the morning chores were done. Jed was solemn-faced as they loaded the new fence posts and wire into the truck. "Well, Son, this takes care of our savings," he muttered.

The old piece of odd wire fell out of Lanny's pocket as he bent to pick up a roll of new barbed wire. "Oh, Mr. Goodman," Lanny called out. "I found this wire on our place yesterday. Does it have a name?"

"Let me see that," he answered. "Whoa ..." he said, whistling softly. "Did you find any more of this? This is Kelly Diamond ... named after the guy that invented it ... it's worth a bundle. A big bundle!"

"Really?" Lanny's green eyes lit up with surprise. "I saw quite a bit of it there in our canyon where Grandad fenced years and years ago. That whole fence is a hodge-podge of different kinds of old wire."

"You have struck it rich this time!" Mr. Goodman said excitedly. "You bring me all the Kelly Diamond you've got, and I'll buy it from you. Cash money. In fact, bring me all the other old wire, too. I can sell it all to collectors. They pay unbelievable prices for the old stuff."

Despite the stifling heat, Jed and Lanny worked happily all the next day, rolling the old barbed wire from their side of the gorge into coiled loops and

carrying them up to their truck parked on the canyon rim. "I can't believe this is happening to us, Son, I just can't believe it," Jed said over and over. "Just can't believe it! When we get this stuff sold, we'll get all dressed up and take Ma to the River Bend Inn. We'll have big steaks, and listen to the band, and celebrate all evening!"

On the way home, Lanny closed his eyes and bowed his head. *Please let it be true*, he prayed silently. He couldn't imagine this was for real, but the possibility was wonderful.

The next morning they were at the feed store early, waiting for it to open. Jed deposited most of the money into his savings account and chuckled all the way home. "I'm gonna call George up as soon as we get home and tell him we're doin' our side of the canyon — and he has to do his. Of course, if he absolutely refuses to do his side, we'll have to do it for him. Old George would come unglued if he knew about this. He can't stand not to be on the top end of every deal!"

Jed and Lanny bounced along in their pick-up on the dusty pasture road to the canyon. Jed was jubilant. "Yep, George told me he was not fencin' any of the canyon and we're never to mention it to him again! Darn! We're gonna have to do it all ourselves!" His laughter filled the truck and drifted out to the cattle, who lifted their heads and stared at the strange noise.

By the end of the week, Lanny's sturdy shoulders ached intensely from carrying the heavy metal fence posts through the rough terrain to where his father was pounding them into the rocky soil. "I've never worked this hard in my whole life," Lanny said wearily as he dropped the last bunch at his father's feet. "It must have taken Grandad weeks and weeks to do this, working alone."

"I'm sure it did. And he had to cut down cedar trees and make posts before he could even start — then dig a hole and plant every post before he could even begin stringin' wire." Jed poured water over his neckerchief to swab his sweaty face with and handed the jug to Lanny for a drink. "My Pa wasn't near as tall as you, Son, but he was tough. Wished you could have known him as a young man. These was still wild parts then. He never went off anywhere without his pistol."

They finished the whole canyon on the Saturday before school was scheduled to start. On Sunday morning, after breakfast, Jed silently handed his son an envelope.

Lanny took out the ten crisp one hundred dollars bills and looked questioningly at his father. "What's this for?" he asked.

Jed got a misty look in his eyes. "You've worked hard for me since you was knee-high to a hitchin' post, Son, and I've never had much to give you for it. That's to say thanks."

Lanny stammered out his own thanks and asked to borrow the truck. He drove to Cottrell's and went directly to the corral. He was stroking the black colt when George walked over to him. The colt nuzzled the boy's ear. "Mornin' Lanny. That colt seems to really like you."

"I'd like to make you an offer for him," Lanny said.

"You're a good judge of horse flesh," George replied. "I'm afraid he's a pretty expensive horse, though. I've got some other good colts you might be interested in."

"No, I only want this one."

"Well, how much are you offering?" George asked, trying to conceal a smile.

Lanny took the thousand dollars out of his pocket and handed it to him.

"Where'd you get this?" George asked in surprise.

Lanny dropped his eyes to the ground and stirred the dust around with the toe of his boot. "Well, I guess that money really belongs to you ... only you said you didn't want it."

"What are you talking about? Me — refuse money?"

Lanny took off his faded cowboy hat and told the whole story of the antique barbed wire. "... so you told Pa he'd have to fence the whole canyon and not to mention the matter to you ever again. So we did, and sold the barbed wire from your side of the canyon, too. Dad gave me this money for a present, and there's nothing in the whole world I want to buy but this colt."

George stared at Lanny for a long time. He wondered if the open honesty and goodness would be in that face twenty years from now. He thought of Jed, rugged and poor, but still making that last appeal for him to fix half the fence. George sensed that the Roberts possessed a quality he had lost long ago. He looked out across his handsome holdings and felt strangely poor.

"You know," George said thoughtfully, "it would have cost me a lot of money to do that fence, and my hired man would have complained — for months — about doing it in this heat. I think you more than earned this money." He took off his hat and wiped the moisture from his forehead. "But I have a problem about selling this colt. I got him to start a line of blue-black quarter horses from him. I know they'll be big sellers."

Hope faded from Lanny's face. He felt sick in his insides as he realized that even money can't always make your dreams come true.

George looked past Lanny at the herd of mares coming in for water. "But maybe ..." he continued slowly, "since you're such a good hand with a horse and could handle a stallion ... maybe we could work something out. You could give me free stud service for my mares for a few years, until there's another black colt to replace him. I need good help around here, too, when the hired man has a day off. If you're willing ...?"

As the words sunk in, Lanny couldn't speak, so he happily nodded his head in agreement.

"I suppose after this whole fence deal with me you'd like a signed contract and a receipt for your money? Let's go draw one up." George put his arm around Lanny's shoulder and they walked toward the house. "By the way, this horse has a lousy name on his papers — Meg's Blue Shiner. Would you like to call him something else?

Lanny laughed at the name and thought a moment. "Yes, I would ... I'd like to call him Kelly ... Kelly Diamond."

Jim Norman

INNER CHILD

*There are many times when I can hear you crying
And I know you are in so much pain
And you cry for me to come hold you
To tell you that we are o.k.
But I can not find you
You are buried somewhere, somewhere deep
And I cry too.*

*There are many times when I can hear you laughing
And I know you must be playing
And you want me to come and play with you
To tell you it will always be this fun
But I can not find you
You are buried somewhere, somewhere deep
And, again, I cry.*

*There are many times when I know you are very angry
And I know you have been abandoned
And you scream at me to come save you
To tell you that I will always be there
But, for the life of us, I can not find you
You are buried somewhere, somewhere so very deep
And I scream and weep in torment.*

*There are many times that I have searched for you
And I will continue to search
And I will find you and we will find ourselves
To exist in harmony with one another forever
But, for now, my inner child, know this
I love and cherish you
You are my life force
Everything will be o.k.
And, for you, I am crying.*



MINKA RICKER

Jacqueline Mohlman

A GAME OF CHANCE

That September night was the hottest night I can remember. The weatherman had said, "unusual weather." Even though the leaves were turning red and gold, summer would not rest. The air was thick and the flies were fat and sluggish — buzzing too loud and hanging on the screens like ugly ornaments.

I remember standing at the screen door watching Mama rocking back and forth in that old wood rocker as the day disappeared into pinks and lavenders. She spent most of her evenings there since we had moved. Daddy's new job had him traveling from one small town to another selling things nobody needed. Mama was forever complaining, "No women folk around here like back home. No friends, just long days and longer nights."

I must have stood there for ten minutes watching her in that little flower print dress. I could see little beads of sweat around her neck. She never wiped them away, though. That old wood porch was just a squeakin', and Robert was curled in her lap fast asleep. Every once in a while, she would brush away one of those big tired houseflies around Robert's head. Oh, she would go on about how Robert was a mistake. She'd say, "Hadn't planned on this little thing running around when I'm getting so old, him only three and you being almost grown — fourteen is it?" She was always a year off. I was fifteen. Poor Mama, she wasn't old then. It was just that life had played a trick on her, giving her hopes and dreams but never telling her how to keep them alive.

Funny how nature takes away one thing and gives us something else. I was in high school then. Didn't need Mama as much. Daddy was gone all the time, so Robert became Mama's life. And I wonder if it was enough to

fill her days. Surely it wasn't enough to fill her nights.

Oh yes, I remember it was hard moving and making new friends. I was at a vulnerable age. That night I was going to the town's Harvest Festival with two girls; neither of them were good friends. Didn't tell them any secrets, but they were nice enough.

I didn't go out onto the porch to say goodbye to Mama, I just talked to her through the screen.

"I'm going now," I said.

"You going now, honey?" she said, still rocking in that old chair.

"Yes, Mama. I won't be late."

"Okay, honey. Have a nice time. There's money on the table for you," she said, not looking at me.

"Thanks, Mama. Bye, Robert," I said, and left her sitting there with Robert curled in her lap like a fat cat. She had left four dollars and fifty cents on the table for me.

"You bring a sweater. Weather might change," she said. She was always telling me to bring a sweater — it was part of her goodbyes.

Back then I was cursed with a profusion of perspiration, so I had tucked tissues under my armpits so as not to have those ugly ol' rings and then loaded my shoes with talcum. I had to walk a piece to where I was to meet those girls and I didn't want to be all a mess before the night had started.

Even though I walked slowly and was not more than a few yards down the block, I could feel the moisture sprouting around my head, and my body began to prickle as the heat made it come alive with sweat. I still hate that sticky, salty feeling when my body is too hot.

I used to love walking down the little hill from our house, feeling the heat penetrate the thin soles of my shoes. I would look in the open windows as I passed and wonder what it would be like to live there. I felt safe among those ancient trees with their droopy thick arms, heavy with leaves and spreading across the lawns like giant umbrellas. That night the flowers dotting the yards seemed especially large, as if they had grown too long and yearned for care. The sleepy street snaked around for about a mile to the main road and was filled with the quiet of barking dogs and chirping crickets on a hot summer night.

The girls' excitement radiated like the heat off the burning asphalt. Their made-up faces shone under the fading lights of day. I only wore lipstick then, pink, pale as the morning sky on a hot day. They had spent some time

preparing themselves in hopes to attract two special boys. Those two were sorrowfully boy crazy, with a capital C. That's all they talked about — that is, if they weren't talking about what they were going to wear.

"Hi, Carolann. You look all nice," Margaret said, her sharp eyes examining me. One thing about Margaret, if she didn't think you looked good, she wouldn't say so. I liked that about her.

"Thank you, but I am hot. Whew," I answered.

"Yes indeed. It's a scorcher today," Stef said, carefully dabbing the resin of moisture on her face. All the townsfolk said "scorcher" when it was hot.

"Let's go. The carnival will be crawling with boys. You've never seen anything like it, Carolann," Margaret said, her hormones thirsty with desire.

The humid night air amplified the tinkling music of the rides, or maybe it was the intense heat that made the notes sound so clear. Whatever the infectious sounds were, they burned a special excitement in us all. We stopped at where the road seemed to drop off, and from there we could see the whole carnival. It was like fireworks bursting on the ground. The smell of hot dogs and popcorn sizzled in the air. They were right, I had never seen anything quite like it. Oh, it was a special night.

We tunneled our way to the rides between the sweating bodies. I felt like a piece of white linen cloth in a pressing machine.

"Isn't this great?" Margaret asked me a thousand times that night.

And I would reply, "Yes, it's wonderful."

Margaret and I rode the ferris wheel, which usually makes me sick; I didn't get sick, not even when it stopped at the very top and we swung back and forth above the sea of lights. In fact, I liked being up there, allowing the breeze to dry and cool my inflamed flesh. It was so very hot that night.

Afterwards, we walked around. Margaret and Stef were beside themselves with the number of handsome boys at the fair. There were boys not just from our town but from all the surrounding areas; their eyes were fiery with lust.

Part of the carnival was full of all sorts of games and boisterous voices. Boys crowded around the little booths, showing off their strength and whatever abilities a particular game demanded to win a trophy. The giggling of the girls encouraged their boyfriends to win them a prize, which flamed the competition and implied discreet promises of a special reward.

The shadowy light behind the game booths harbored young couples' simmering embraces. The girls clutched their souvenirs of stuffed animals and cupid dolls close to their bodies.

Margaret and Stef found their two special boys and were occupied with the game of flirting. I had been kissed once by Jimmy Lynn Frederick down by the old pond when we were swimming. Other than that, the only things I had known of romance were from the books I devoured. I waited, amusing myself by watching the crowd as I sipped on a cold drink; allowing the ice cubes to melt one by one in my mouth. The stare from a boy who was working one of those game stands — bottle toss or some other game of chance, caught my attention. Embarrassed, I looked away. After a few moments, when he was busy helping some people, I glanced back. The yellow lights hanging around the booth cast a golden glow around him. He was about my age, tall and indeed, handsome.

When Stef and Margaret had finished talking with their boys, we left the arcade, but not before I gave one last look over to the booth. The boy waved at me. I didn't know what to do except to smile.

As we walked in that sultry night, I kept thinking about that handsome boy who worked in a game of chance. I was glad that Margaret and Stef were preoccupied with the plans for a later rendezvous with their boys. I didn't tell them about the stranger who held my thoughts.

The time passed slowly and the novelty of the carnival began to wear on me. I was planning some excuse, like my mama wanted me home early, so I could leave. I was relieved when Margaret and Stef went off to meet their two boys to fulfill their hopes of a night of stolen kisses. They made a fuss about leaving me, but I assured them I would be okay. I found a place away from the crowd to sit and cool down and smooth out my starched white clothes that had grown limp. I still thought of the boy.

"Hi," a voice said, so sweet and low.

As I turned towards the voice, I was looking into the most beautiful pair of green eyes. The color green like when the sun shines on a prism and makes a rainbow on the wall.

It was that boy's eyes.

My face flushed as I felt the heat rising in my body, embarrassed by the fact that I had just been thinking about him.

"Hi," I said.

"Hot tonight," he said, his eyes reflecting the glow of the carnival lights.

“Yes, a scorcher.”
“You like the carnival?” He asked, his eyes asking more than his words.
“Oh, yes. It’s very nice,” I must have answered, unsure of myself and his intentions.

“I saw you before, remember? I waved,” he said, almost scolding me that I did not reciprocate his pursuit with more than just a smile. “I’m Steve.”

“I’m Carolann,” I said, giving birth to a new sensation.
Our formal introductions were made. He sat next to me and told me how he worked with his father, who owned some of the game booths. And how he lived in a place called Flaxton which was in Kansas. I was intrigued by the mysterious life he led with the carnival. It had a romantic quality about it, like running off to the circus. I imagined myself living such a life. We made small talk about school and our folks and whatever else we could think of to make the conversation last.

We walked around the outskirts of the carnival, pulling sweet sticky pieces from the cotton candy and trying to find some relief from the sweltering night. A boiling fever pressed hard inside of me when he brushed against me. My weariness was replaced by laughter as Steve told me stories about the carnival.

I didn’t want the evening to end, but time fought against me, and it was time to go. Stef and Margaret had vanished in the night’s magic.

“I’d like to walk you home. I’ve finished work for the night,” Steve said.
Mama’s lectures of easy girls flooded my mind, but this was not a matter of being an easy girl. “I’d like that,” I answered, trying not to sound too eager.

We walked slowly down the darkened street in the moonlight. I remember the gentle touch of his large and rough hand as he held mine. Sometimes we would not talk, just walk and steal glances of one another in the shadowy light. The sweet fragrance of my perfume flowed from the experience of this scalding new emotion.

We sat for a while on a little bench at the edge of my yard, talking and making promises of seeing one another in the morning. I said goodbye to him. He wrapped his strong arms around me, pressing his lips on mine, pulling me closer until I melted into the heat of the night. It was a passionate kiss.

Oh, what a night with its green heat.

I crawled between the clammy sheets and listened to the crickets sing their night song. Embracing my pillow like a phantom lover, I gathered the spell of secret glances, innocent touches, echoes of laughter and the fervor — when I dared to meet his eyes — into a dreamy wordless realm of carnival lights. Sleep did not come easy. I was anxious for morning to show its face.

With no second thoughts like the kind that come with age, I left the house early. Mama and Robert were still sleeping.

The morning was cool. The heat of the night had been lost in that kiss. I walked quickly, anxious to see those green eyes, to hear his voice, to feel his warm embrace.

My heart pounded. I did not think of myself as being foolish. We had promised to meet, and I was fulfilling that promise.

I reached the place we had stopped and had looked over the whole carnival. A crushing torment filled my body. Where once the lights danced in the night, now there was nothing. I walked through the empty place where the carnival had created magic such a short time before. I stood there watching the sun turn the treetops golden. The early morning breeze picked up a discarded paper and carried it across the vacant lot. Every so often the paper would dip down to kiss the ground.

For a long time after that night, I wondered what happened to that stranger. I never saw him again, but I still see those green eyes, that sharp face and remember that first passionate kiss and the game of chance.

Charles E. Lewis

FOR MY FATHER

*As time drifts dutifully onward,
I dig deep into the treasure chest of my memory,
You are always shining bright and clear.
Remembering as you would sweep me up,
Holding me close to your beard-bristled face;
And the love that spilled out, a puddle unavoidable,
When it seemed unclear to me,
You had to go away,
To a city bright and golden.
Smiles and frowns and unwanted leaving,
Now down to visits,
A package at Christmas.
A letter, a phone call,
moments spent quickly;
I missed you so much.
It was time for a change,
You called and I came,
To live and laugh and share.
No more were you alone,
You and I, we were as one,
And life was colored as rainbows.
To wake in the morning,
sharing the daily paper,
Watching as we grew together.
Sun walking afternoons
love like a blanket curled around us.
Often walking into glistening night,
Stars brilliant
twinkling in your eyes,
The moon casting the shadow of two.*

*A cold grey morning gloom
came creeping catlike
To take away your strength.
Something was happening,
Though you always concealed,
The way your body and soul cried out.
In your sleep
murmuring in cold sweat,
You knew too well and did not speak.
In a temple of stone,
No sun through the windows,
You reached out and I came near.
You said you knew the answer,
it was time to go.
I understood but could not accept it.
You smiled about the weather,
Smiled when I was crying,
Smiled when you said, "I Love You."
Where are you now?
I hope it is better.
I smile when I think of you,
You showed me wisdom's wild flowers,
Helped me learn when to jump or stall,
Your hand helps me up when falling down.
I loved you then, I love you now,
Goodbye my father,
Goodbye my friend.*

Olin Adams

STATUES

*Lovers holding hands and kissing at the bottom of the sea
Statues of red clay and white marble
with hearts of bronze
True to the earth
Eternal, shaped and molded by the warm tide
Droplets of water
Passionate water
Dripping from the heart
Cleansing
Enticing the lips to touch
Lip to lip and lip to breast
Caressed by the warm water
Forever bringing their souls together and entangling
their destinies as the tide and the waves are entangled
with the ocean.*



Mara Elias

MARA ELIAS

Elena Fridland

MOZART

*If angels could cry butterscotch lizards
from the sky of peach
while water caught fire below them
in purplish gobs of waves
your music could speak.*

*If feelings were notes
yours would be gossamer
and so tender that rocks would cry.*

*You would bleed
not red blood: rather lavender-lace.*

*If gold were like mercury
it could be crushed with opal leaves
and produce your heart in a sound
of a baby choking on butterflies.*

*You invented immortality
and poured it onto a page
made of cream
and at the touch it crumbled
into the purity of a Botticelli fountain covered in
moss.*

*Your agony and laughter
blended into a chalice licked and wielded by flames
simmering and boiling
like a stew of warlock's magic.*

*And you became Pharaoh —
God-man buried in a pyramid
of your heavenly music.*

CONTRIBUTORS

Olin Adams grew up in the cities of Mazatlan and Denver. His writing style has been influenced by the great Chilean poet Pablo Neruda.

Jim Allen, when not watching cartoons or otherwise neglecting his teacher education studies, writes warped stories that make people say "huh?"

Marlene Barber is a part-time student and full-time mother. Her poems have appeared in Cardinal Poetry and Colorado Womanthology.

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Valerie Brinkworth is a junior and an English/Creative Writing major. She is married and the mother of six sons, 15 to 25 years old.

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bazir kaldi is Gus Winterfield, Ph.D. He enjoys women, writing, wandering badlands finding fossils, traveling to Greece, and ouzo.

Charles E. Lewis is a Pre-Professional Writing major who enjoys reading, writing and skiing. Mostly skiing.

Esteban says: "There's a malevolent influence in the world that's disguised itself as human nature. It's not."

Lynne Matsumoto is a Human Services major whose main purpose seems to be figuring out how she reached puberty and menopause simultaneously.

Neva Misenti writes poetry so she won't spontaneously combust. Her newest muse is a sizzling poet named Francois.

Bill O'Reilly, born and raised in New York City, now lives in Denver with his wife and three children.

Kira V. Roark reads lots of books and often runs to the mountains to breathe pine air.

Margaret Sartwelle says: "It is a long baptism into the seas of humankind ... Better immersion than to live untouched." Tillie Olsen

Sean Schott has been studying artists for 17 years. He likes macabre subjects because they make people stop and think.

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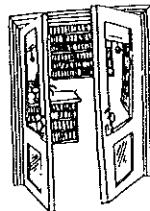
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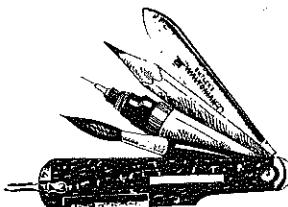
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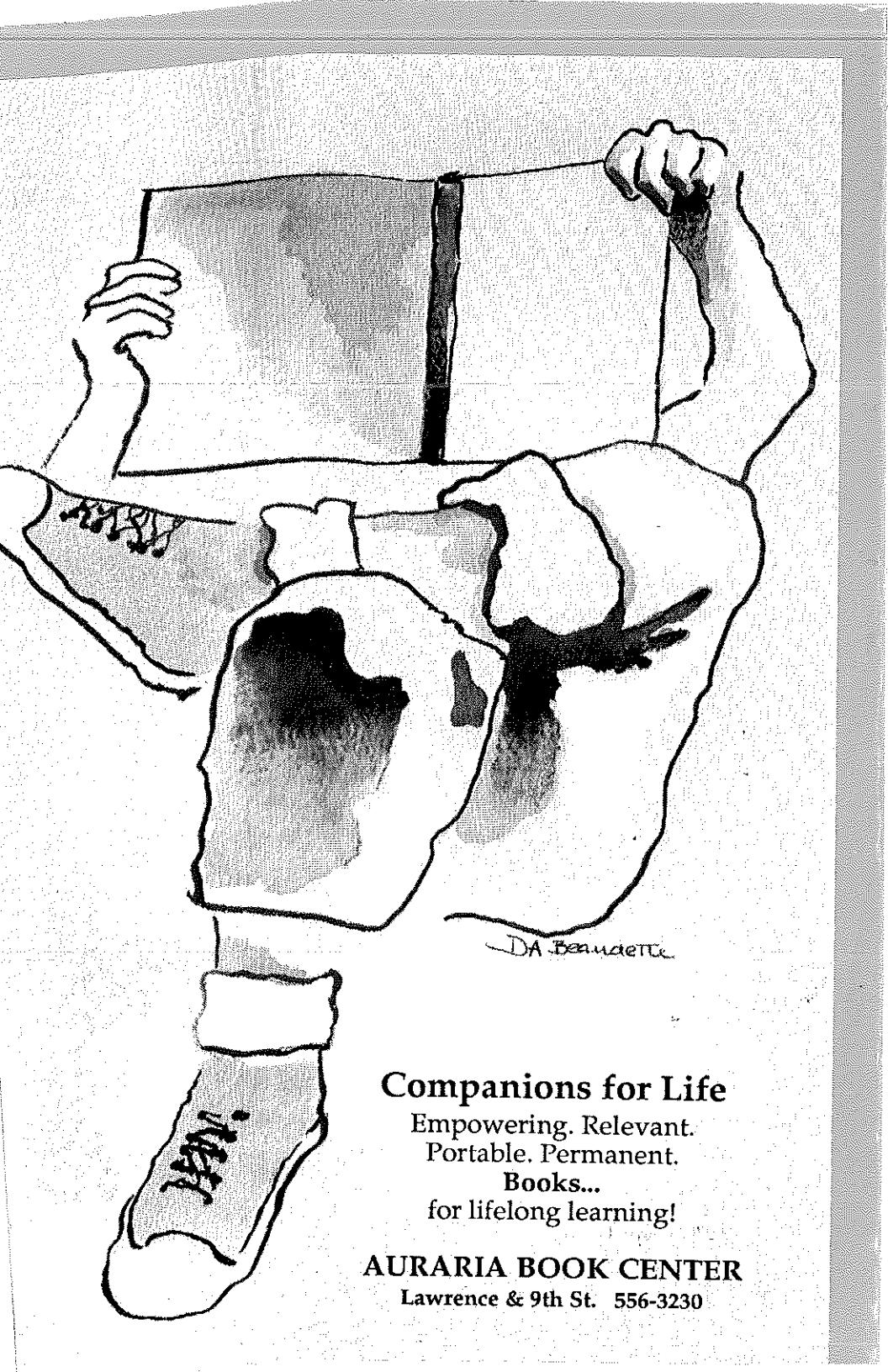
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