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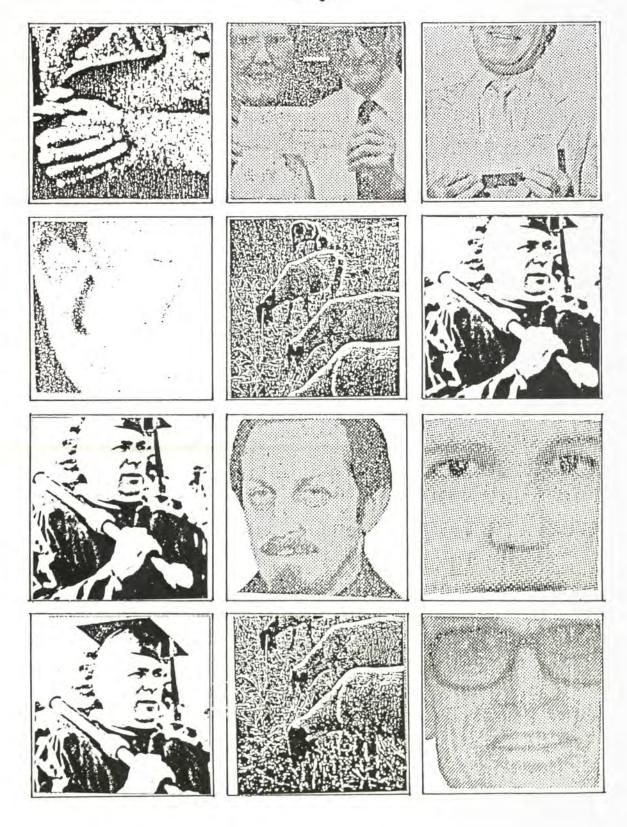
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# the lighter





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#### Sometimes Life...

Sometimes life is such a trip It shoots you down just like a crip Sometimes life can be a joke Make you drink and take a smoke Sometimes life hallucinates Then it seems to mediate Oh, kiss my lips and touch my skin force me into fatal sin News at six Sports at five Bon Jovi dead Jim Morrison alive Come on baby light my fire Send me Botha gun for hire Through it all the fish head grows through it all the mo'jo glows Hold head high don't sniff no glue Just hang def and get a clue



Krista Steinke

Daphne L. Pettaway

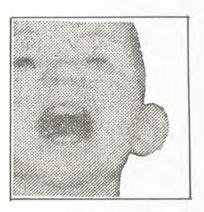
## Fair Warning

Welcome child!
Child: The voice of the poet, soul covered in dust,
Dreams of perciptation burnt by the sun.
Tell me, are you fond of the badlands?
The graves of 20 men before you?
The sight of the blind?

Do you see the open night sky?
The stolen rib of Madam Memorie,
your torn desire?
Do you hear the sound of conformity and the wailing sirens of doubt?

O' child, don't look down. It is a long drop.

Andrew Troelsen





#### Contagious Dream

Helping you meant sharing your pain.
Fearing your reality almost made me stop
But you are the image of a human
Like me.
Something touches me
When you are squinting a smile
Or crying without sound.

Your body is not like others: Glassy Mongol eyes behind thick frames, Hearing aid falling out, Slow, round tongue to express young thoughts. The parts don't work right.

It would be easier for me
To draw the sun myself
Than to pick up the yellow crayon for you
Again and again
But you demand each step a thousand times.
When I take your hand
You pull all of me in.

Your quiet laugh The contagious dream To be happy.

Meg Domroese

Joyce Jacobson



#### Asian Vacation

Short timer-old timer, long time ago.

Scenes appear nightly—can't make 'em go.

Forget truth and justice,
 did'em America's way.

Can't understand 'em,
 just make 'em pay.

Tit for tat, and bombs are for Tet.

Much like the Alamo, but can't forget

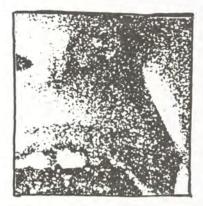
Making the Triangle with circles and squares;

Bombing the masses from forces in air.

Could break their backs, but never their movement.

World's safe for democracy
 But not for the People
as the Khe Sahns go rolling along.

Jen Haertling







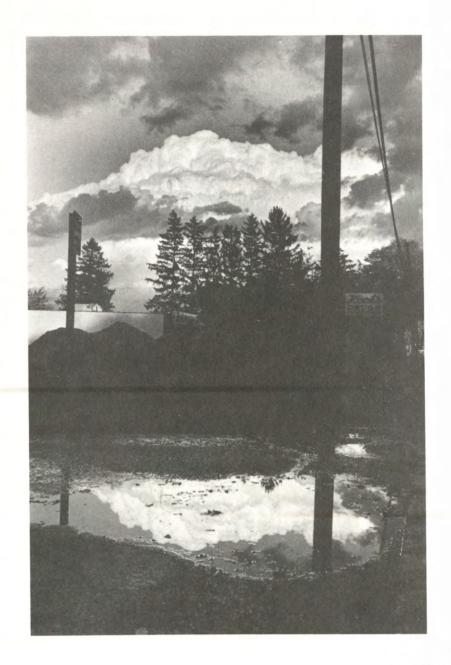
#### Green Forest

When speaking of old still shots, ghosts.
she wept for a time that was cold.
A time she remembered for all of us.
Her face still endures the cold, her eyes still see clean, young soldiers, and her ears still hear the wind blowing away babies' cries. The beautiful Aryan babies were long gone by then, stolen from their mothers by a master race.
Other infants were swung like axes against tall trees in the woman's forest.

Sometimes my ankles feel cold, imaginary hands swing me at a tree-It's not unusual.

Andrew Paul Griffin





Eric Mason

```
how lite our walk becomes and decisive each breath and
   step when there is not ritual routine or any sort
        of re-, just one verse with one melody
          line (so much direction lacking the
             polyphony of reflection) sight
              sung with cold coarse vocal
                  chords, just a string
                    of incongruities
                    and unfamiliars
                     and arcanities
                      who stretch
                        beauty
                         mean
                          and
                          be
                          as
                           t
                           n
                           u
                           0
                           u
                           S
                          as
                         a wad
                        of fresh
                     chewed gum
                that draws to a thread
      between the hand pulling from the kicking
womb to the hand on the lid of our coffin daily closing
```

Mitch Hastings

emotional distance
kept
so i won't cry
when i leave you
because i'm too attached.
and i want to cry
anyway

David Charles Rivers

#### New

The alarm rings
Crisp and stabbing
A whitewashed ceiling
Grabs at my face
My muscles ache
It is morning
This is not my bed.

A peach cocoon
Shrouds my body
It is raining
My legs dangle like dead branches
Over the edge of the bed
I hate cold floors
The alarm screeches insanely.

The damp, unfamiliar cubicle
This is not home
A brisk wind knocks at the window
Winter hinted in the chill
My dreams collapse
In the waking
Bleep-bleep-bleep-click
Silence.

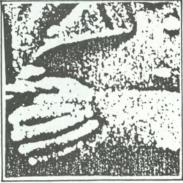
Christy Rueter











## Sundogs

The corn marched past in full parade of midwest soildiers earthbound souls But we climbed each hill into the sky in every valley, lost our stomachs underground

Music moved our working wheels but Sundogs curse a ceiling hung over our heads thru windows Sky should not be framed, only center us We chase the sun

Moved to the spreading of the horizon
Trees would fall away
The earth to open
slowly at the shore
God's hand throws the sun
warm into the water
Its path a burning yellow arc
We follow to its crimson hazy end

We lit a fire to its memory
Ashes in memories shifting sand
Time approaches in its swelling waves
Standing still.
We saw out ships of fate
Sailing on alone.

David Doering

## A Stroll Across the Sky

The tree's brain throbbed
With no breeze to cool the pain
Its hazy hair engulfing the sky
Behind, entwined, floated the night eye.

And none escaped the opened eye
It probed the night outstretched wide
The path was cleared
Hands groped out and touched the sky.

The globe grew still and stared Beyond to the other sphere Unblinking, rising high. And peace was there,

For a moment...

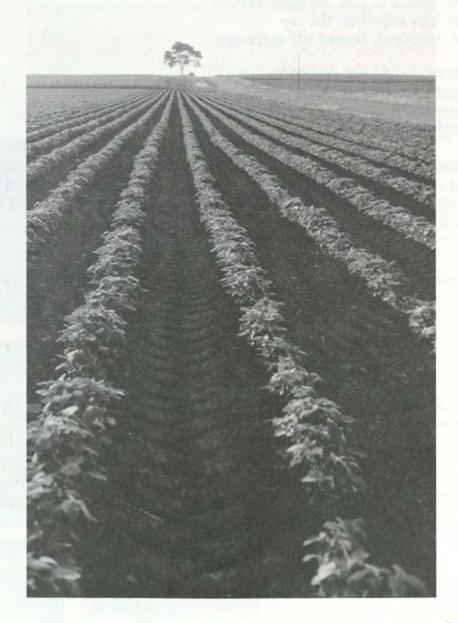
Richard T. Gosse











Laura Gatz

#### Icarus My Love

I never liked Brueghel's version of Icarus, white legs flailing in the green sea, no one giving a damn. In my mind, he is frozen, falling and falling while his feet never touch the water. Caught between death and the sun, there is an awful lovliness to melting wax, flying-away feathers, real canvas scream.

Imagine a woman in this story. She is in love, she thinks maybe and he is struck by the way her thin fingers look, curled around a wineglass. They don't quite mesh, these two, because she is too ready to believe and his hands are too white and she isn't even a virgin. So he leaves. Terrified of entangling himself, the only alternative is light.

Remember, Icarus.

I am the one who watches, knee deep in the thick water, with drops of (maybe) your last glimmering splash falling from my face.

Remember I love you.

Celeste Duder



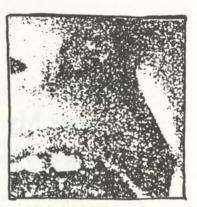














## Ever Moving and Ever Still

I am the wave Beating furiously Returning each time a little different But always at home

I am the candle
That burns for the Virgin
In the darkness of the cathedral
Ever moving and ever the same
Burning as in generations
And generations past
Ever moving and ever still

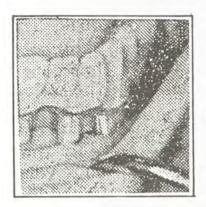
Ever moving I am
Never the same person that I was
When I wrote that last line
But changed by one line
Ever moving I am
Still abiding
Ever constant as I ebb and flow
Returning to flicker a while
In the darkness of the cathedral

Joyce Jacobsen

## Whirling

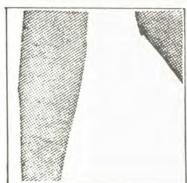
Everchanging and traveling more the beauty of soft curls ascend heavenward as my prayer in the eve. Colorless, yet beautiful, wing weave it into intricate patterns and wind plays it masterfully. Charming and intimate, it dances my eyes into a wonderful gaze and tears escape as witness to the sweet melody of smoke.

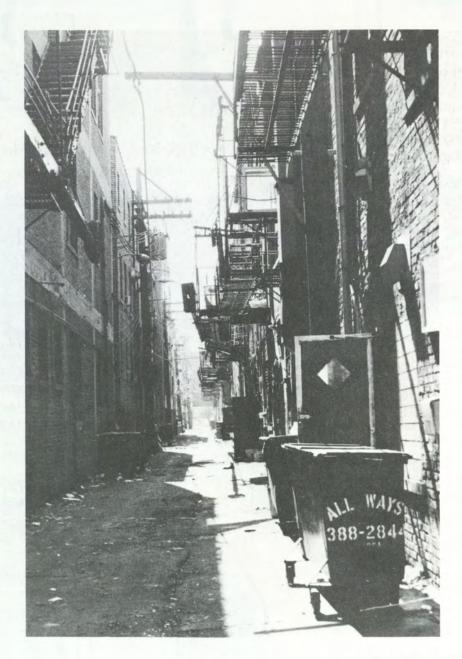
Stephen Williams











Sue Swanson

#### Ashdance

I.
I have energy, I am energya nervous twitch moving between my skinpouncing on a flickering flame I call heart.
A black seed, 30 of themthey take the dancers and remove them from thought,

into a world I never knew.

Glorious 'spots' and their projecting spiritshurled into existance-

carefully avoiding meand as the tears again falling happen-I feel them rip as a meteor into the earth, past my browrun red river-

run river, run.

II.

Soot. they know how to pray with ashes, I pitch them into my inferno. They eat them for dinner. They roll with the dust, breeze in their hair; thoughts-whisping past them.

I cough. I suck in the soot.
I choke up lungs, and to my surprisean occasional dancer.

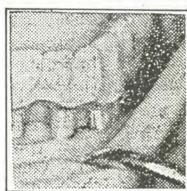
Andrew Troelsen











## The Witnessing of Michael Athmann

Michael Athmann glanced away from his television to get a view of the car parking on the street outside his kitchen window. He saw a relatively expensive, clean, dark blue, family station wagon with a bumper-sticker that read "What the scripture says holds true forever. (Jn 10:35)." The doors opened and two women stepped out, carrying boxes of literature. Mr. Athmann recognized the type; Bible Truthers. He had names for all of them-He's A-Commin'ers, Fear the Lorders, and others not quite as polite. These were definitely Bible Truthers. And both of them women. He grunted to himself.

They knocked, but he waited a moment so they would think he'd been in another room reading or sleeping and they were causing him an inconvenience. When he did answer the door, he found two well-dressed women, one about four or five years older than he and the other about four or five years younger. The older woman wore small sensible earrings, a neutral color lipstick, and low black heels—as humbly dressed as a middle-class suburbanite woman can be. The younger woman dressed more elegantly and had long dark hair that parted around her collar to lay on her shoulders like two tiny wings. She was very attractive.

The older woman spoke first. "Hi. I'm Ellen Mund and this is my friend Shelly Lerner. We're just going around doing some Christian work." She pause, expecting to be invited inside, straining to maintain her forced smile. The temperature was below freezing.

Mr. Athmann took this opportunity to introduce himself, "Hi. I'm Micheal Athmann," and gave them a well-rehearsed, perfectly timed, smug, natural little smile. He stood in the doorway, solid as the door itself, inviting no one in. Although, looking at Miss Lerner, he was tempted to.

"Well," Ms. Mund recited, her breath puffing angelic clouds of steam with every word, "religion today is suffering some real problems, isn't it? I'm sure you've seen on the news and on TV all the problems religion has been having. The reason for this is that they're not teaching the real truth from the Bible, are they?" Her habit of ending every other sentence in a question suggested to him that she was a Sunday school teacher, and probably on the bazaar committee. So much the better. "Do you belong to a church, Mr. Athmann?" she asked. "No."

"Oh. Well, we have with us some literature on the truth of the Bible that we offer at the publishing price of twenty-five cents a copy." She produced two small magazines, "Bible Truth in Today's Religions" and "How the Bible Teaches Us." Ms. Mund read a few passages from each and commented on them in what Mr. Athmann guessed was the most condescendingly polite voice that she could manage, as if to say "Do not be afraid, for I come with good tidings of a great joy" to a classroom of first-graders. He dug two quarters from his pocket and bought a copy of each magazine. The women thanked him and turned back toward their car.

"Could I ask for a little more of your time?" wondered a suddenly friendly Mr. Athmann.

"Excuse me?" questioned Ms. Mund, turning back around.

"I just want to share something with you. Would you care to come inside?"

The two women, although somewhat confused by his request, obliged. Mr. Athmann placed his hand lightly on the younger woman's back as she stepped across the threshold. He led them to the kitchen, had them sit down, served them each a cup of tea, and gingerly placed a piece of shortbread on each of the saucer edges.

Then, excusing himself, he went to his study and grabbed his Bible from the bookshelf. It had no special place there. It was alphabetized by title, like the rest of his books, occupying the space to the right of the Bhagavad-Gita. Returning to the kitchen, he placed it on the table in front of them, face down, so they wouldn't be sure if it was a Bible or some other book. Face down, he thought, it was a concealed weapon, like a gun pointed through a coat pocket. He drummed his fingers on it while he sipped his tea. Setting down his cup, he stared blankly outside, as though doing difficult math in his head. He watched a sparrow fall vertically into the frame of the window, light on a bush, and nervously twitch its head from side to side.

"Sparrows," he said to the women, "two for one penny or five for two pennies-depending on which gospel you shop."

"Pardon me?" Ms. Mund asked.

"'Fear not, you are of more value than many sparrows.' It's in Matthew and Luke, but they charge different prices for their sparrows." The two women looked back, bewildered.

He thought that this might be too easy. Looking back, he remembered a group he'd tagged "True Believers", who had called him "Brother Mike." They had come, nine of them, in their dirty tee shirts and faded blue jeans, travelling in a beat-up station wagon with "Jesus Saves" sloppily painted in large red letters across the side. They hadn't even known much about the Bible, they had just kept professing their faith. Even with his most powerful Bible verses he couldn't combat faith. The day had ended in a stalemate, but Brother Milke invited them back anytime. He'd enjoyed their company.

All at once, he flipped open the Bible, spun it around and pushed it toward Ms. Mund. He'd opened to a chapter in 1 Timothy. "Could you read this please?" he asked her. "Second chapter. Start with the eleventh verse."

Ms. Mund glanced at her apprentice who was straining to see the text and realized that she had no choice.

"'Women should learn in silence and all humility," she began. "'I do not allow women to teach or to have authority over men; they must keep quiet'-This is ridiculous!" Ms. Mund interrupted herself. "This was written thousands of years ago. It's completely irrelevant today," she complained.

Mr. Athmann sat silently and looked consolingly at Ms. Mund, who looked right now like she could use some consoling.

"How can you possibly think you know anything about religion?" she demanded. "You don't even attend a church."

"Exactly," said Mr. Athmann, and grinned. "Mr. Athmann, I'm going to go home and say a prayer for you." Ms. Mund, close to tears, forced the words from her mouth. "I'm going to pray that you look in here." She tapped the Bible with one finger. "I'm going to pray that you look in here and find the Truth. Because it's in here Mr. Athmann.

"We'll be going now," Ms. Mund concluded. And with that both women made their way to the door, Ms. Mund in a flustered rush, the pretty Miss Lerner quietly following. Mr. Athmann suppressed his urge to watch the young woman from the back as she left the kitchen, choosing instead to stare out the window. The sparrow was gone.

\* \* \*

Leaning forward in his chair, Micheal Athmann handed a signed check over to the Bible-salesman, a kid of about twenty-one, already balding, trying to earn his way through college by selling topical reference Bibles door-to-door. Mr. Athmann considered this practice one of Christianity's most severe corruptions; these kids would never make enough to pay their tuition, they'd get abused at most households, and they really didn't have any idea what they were selling. He knew he shouldn't support it, but he could never let the starving students down.

"Thanks a lot," the young man said, handling the check as though it were fragile, sacred. He carefully inserted it in a leather pouch and started for the door.

Mr. Athmann stood and offered his hand and the two men closed the deal. "You ever read one of those?" Mr. Athmann asked, indicating the Bible.

"No," the student chuckled. "But I can appreciate it. It's paying my way through school." Both smiled through the silence that followed, then the younger man added, "Thinking about God only makes me depressed."

"Me too," agreed Mr. Athmann. "But you should read it, you really should."

At this, the student raised his eyebrows, wrinkling his forehead like one of the disciples in a Caravaggio painting.

After the student left, Mr. Athmann lifted his new Bible from the table and felt its weight. Paging through it, he read over his favorite passages to test the translation. He would put the new Bible in his car, he thought. He didn't yet have one there.

Brian Jung



#### The Race

A bang springs the tensions of my body straight every muscle stretched meeting the water

slicing it feeding my senses for a split

second I don't know all of it
everything is moving
I hear the ringing in my ears
take a gulp of the crowd cheering
feel the pounding
pounding feet and hands on water
my mind races
as fast as my body
faster
ringing voices pounding colors

my body gasps pulling from the deepest resource of my brain slams to the wall

Meg Domroese

















the moment has arrived and it is now there it went.

to know is to be. and of understanding...? well that is something entirely different.

progress
go
produce
achieve
do
consume
progress
achieve
move

consume

go
the
blindfolds
sheeping
efficiently
with
utility
flying
quickly
successfully
from
womb
to
tomb

(past the patches and plots bearing the beauty of still and between and unmoving motion) 4

a love cerebral contrived and fitting neatly in a package is a live benign and its happiness a glorified degree of masking aching emptiness which, atop a mountain of props is safe from the wave's fingernails scabbering away the feet of it's clay pedastal,

for a while.

see the hobo walking no where walking back alley scruffy squacking all day walking brown-bag-purple-red juice talking

"no place to go"

yes no place to go

" 'cept inside"

yes, in there

"away the ache"

the pain the here

"inside"

yes yes, inside away the here just away, please just a way away

5

#### karma in a three teired universe

sojurners

we are whence from all fall like to water only rising clouds up the from to the

ground

Mitch Hastings

Loiuse S. Whitman

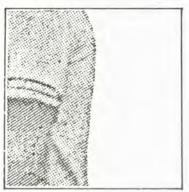


#### Almost Sunrise

Amazing how it ends, finally. After all of what has passed between them, she is simply too tired. Not merely tired but so empty that it takes the last strength in her body to fall alone into bed. It's almost sunrise and they've been sitting in his car for years or maybe it was just a couple of hours. He insists on love while she thinks how nice it would be to feel him around her, lights shining through his baby smooth skin. It's so very complicated she can't think anymore and even though she wants desperately to love him there is only the emptiness.

They've had too much to drink tonight, anyway, so it all comes down to the fact that she would prefer to walk up the stairs, unlock her room, and fall into bed now this instant rather than driving to his place, undressing together and kissing him before falling asleep. It's easier this way and the evening ends sooner. She holds him briefly in the car as if to say I'm sorry you had to know this.







Celeste Duder

#### any day now, any day now...

got to wonder why there was no goodbye scene this year; location, sense, and testing spaces, walls like, kept that play today from going on and on. a thousand miles rest between blueprint points, dissection reaction, letting go towards faces, coming to live inside a life of seeing ghosts and questions, stuff we never think of happening to each other.

so wonder why there you were a ghost a block away staring from the leaves in my old front yard; there never was a goodbye scene played out then, even for the bones of friendship. now they're cracked and burned away, ashes swirling through still green leaves that bring back your face like a hi-beam over the hill bouncing off nighttime median yellow. don't pass on too fast, even when imagination fails stay awhile and shake hands through my mind's eye to remember summers years ago wasted in a second. sadness is gone, buried with a child's heart and a cold box in June, there is no aching part inside, no emptiness

there is no aching part inside, no emptiness needs to be filled, I just wonder why I saw your face after so much time has wound around my eyes.

Fritz Eifrig



## Trip

Maybe it was the incense. What did he call it? At once exhilarating and tranquil, a trace tickled my mind rousing my Spirit. Yes it was the scent I felt first. Or the music. Melodies weaving into my dreams, Harmony flowing into my soul. "Remind me to borrow that tape." Very Indian, or was it Oriental? Anyway, elaborately simple, it stole my concentration. Rationality gone, Fantasy was mine. I lived imagination. Maybe for the first time.

Maybe sleeping with her.
Embracing her carnality.
Or walking with her
close to me
and feeling her human touch
-more human than people.
(She is the world, yet not at all worldly.)
She affected me, elemental.
I felt substantial.
Maybe for the first time.







Maybe the pinkorangepurple sky of the sunset -once I'd opened my eyes-over the greengrayblue mountains...
Or the bright whitening moon full and rising fast behind us.
The aethereal revealed,
I knew divinity.
Maybe for the first time.

He said we were
Beautiful
as we slept.
Being watched without knowing is
Rare.
Must have been deep.
Didn't know I could sleep through these things.
Didn't know a lot.
I was happy.
Maybe for the first time.

Suzanne Albinson



Kim Krizaman

## A Passing Car Grunts and Rolls Up Its Windows

The rain waves down on the six and seven and eight year-old boys and they turn their head up and laugh and the drops run into their open mouths and they drink and laugh and spin because their mothers can't see them.

And a passing car grunts and rolls up its windows.

The youngest of them spots a puddle and charges. Each bounding step destroys the rain's tiny water ways, each step anticipates the demise of the great lake at the end of his sprint. He leaps, soars, raises his feet and crashes them dwon. From his shoes splashes the water of childhood, dripping with the love of rain, with the love of mud.

Yes,

I would love to play in the rain.

I would love to play in the rain if it weren't for the dribbles that crawl down my nose or light upon my lips like pesky flies.

Brian Jung







#### Arkansas Joan

rain falls in and out of light, silent choruses glinting across glass expanse; car beams spear my head, all around, the cold winding vines into my bones while soft fog whispers soak my shoes.

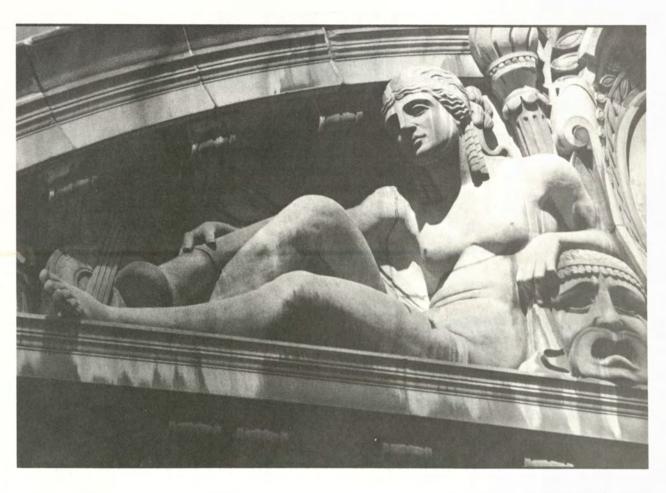
she walks quick through this nod I'm on, almost carved in nightime black and bruise, there's a smell of tears around her, a high lonesome sound of loss and dark rooms salt and empty bottles.

Arkansas Joan-twisting life out the hole in her tooth, a last chance dive through troubled sleep. telling me about Janis Joplin, and St. Paul the apostle, the time she got bounced from a country bar, combing out my hair with memories of children left behind. crazy twenty years or more.

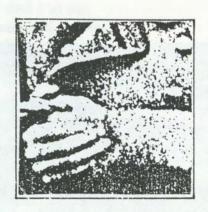
her leather soft skin slips beneath
the sheets breathing sighs from smiles
so safe from death. wrapped in the night
a kiss tastes the scream in her teeth;
my fingers smell of cocaine melting
ice scars across her belly, but the mirror's
in her eyes as she twists away from me.
I catch the glint of metal and go out to check the knives,
thinking of bus stations and the beats
of highway lives rapping amphetamine—
she sits away, a hundred miles, rocking clutched hands,
cackling to country radio dreams.
life isn't always clean, friend.
life isn't always clean.

Fritz Eifrig





Jayson Mellom



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