

Spring 1990

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Valparaiso University

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Spring 1990
Vol. 35 No. 2

Lighter



Courtship Between Birds

***Whistling through
the fleeting childhood
gap which endears a smile,
recurring pleasant dreams of
flying free,
a relaxing restructuring
of priorities--***

***I can offer you these with
the inclusion of love into
life's interconnected web
with food, sleep, and imagination.
By no illusion or abstraction, we'll
probe obscure primal
elements to find a rational
basis for our abandon, and
lacking that, we'll simply sing
in the face of society's
silence.***

Courtship Between Birds





Knife Sharpening Man

With inverted tricycle on a path of cool, gray

sidewalk canopied by giant sycamore leaves, I mimic

the knife sharpening man. Walking city streets,

he calls the Scrubby Dutch (fat old ladies

in cotton dresses) from their porches

of battleship gray. Imitating his cries,

I pedal up and down the block, only as far

as the big white tree. Barefoot

with callused soles and scabby toes from months

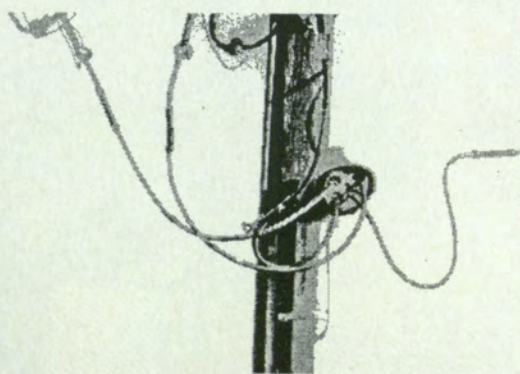
of shoeless freedom, riding until I stop and turn

the tricycle over to work the big wheel

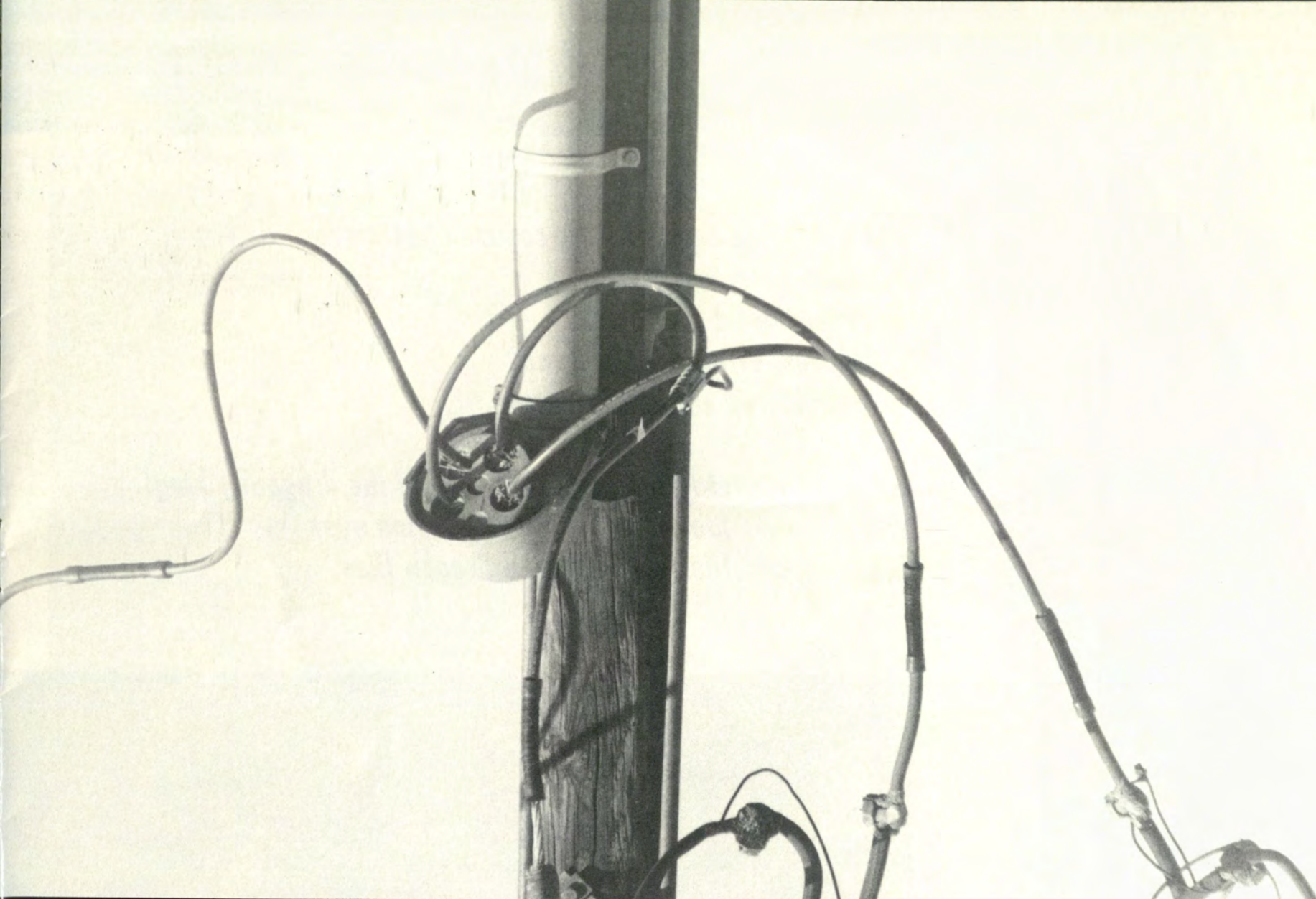
with small hands, like the grinding

stone of the knife sharpening man

fra
gil
e



Jen Haertling



Any Questions ?

*Black angels of destruction
Strip me
Naked
As I run through the vile streets.
Tanks
penetrate my fragile darkness.
Debris covers my
violated soul.*

We are out of milk.

*Depressed
Red
I stare into the mirror.
A new zit
Damn.*

You trash my heart.

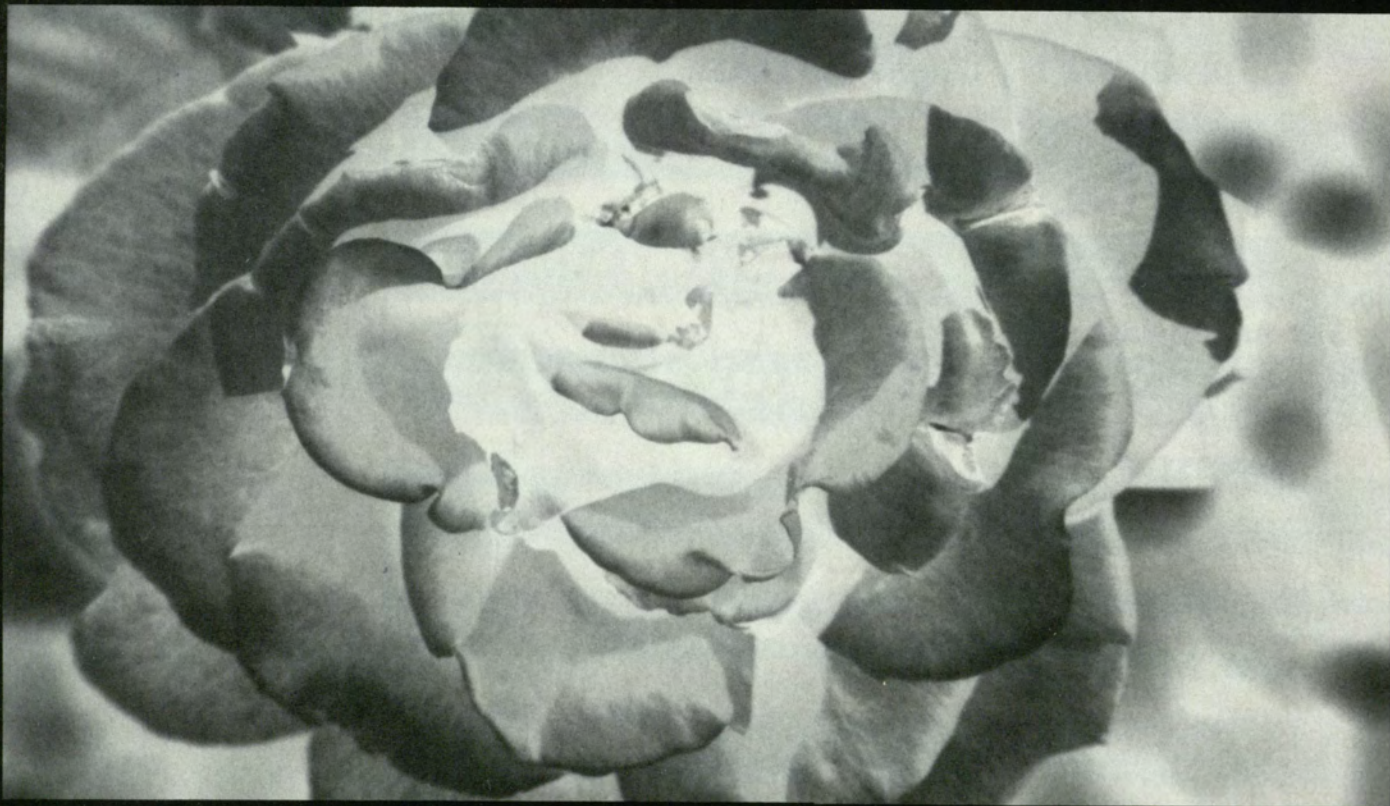


"Morningfrog Bog"

*In Morningfrog Bog lives the common bottomdog,
Lilywhales, lemontails, and
Yellowfeathered sunsnails;
Turtlenotes, swallowboats, and
Downybattered minnowthroats.*

*And in the Morningfrog spring is crowned the dragonfly king.
With his eight-foot wings and silvermellon eyes
This dragonfly flies faster than a dragon flies.*

Jason Scherschligt



Angela Antommaria

shelter

*nothing here carries the fat
of the land even his voice
is thin as he whispers at her
so talk to me babe talk*

*but his black eyes aren't
on her busy catching the whole
room sideways at once how
the woman in a gray sweatshirt
coats her lips bright purple
while the old crazy in the corner
is hassling the high school
football star from Crown Point*

*she smells only desperation
rising off him like smoke
from the orange end
of his cigarette it is catching
in this shelter and yes
she talks about her white
dog how he is getting old
she knows he will die
soon any day now
oh yes she talks
because she does not know
what else to say*

Tracey Fletcher

Celeste Duder



PROPHET

(Lights come up on CLARISSA.)

(She holds up a packaged condom.)

CLARISSA

My manager, Trilla, he gave me a box of these for our first anniversary together. He hands them to me, he says to me (he's got this long, long face like a horse or a bloodhound, whatever, this long, long face, he's not smiling) he hands them to me, he says (he's perfectly serious) one year he knows me (he's been good to me, of course, all that shit you read about managers, it's really just, you know: *shit*) he hands the box of these things to me, he says:

Be Safe.

And I cried.

Because you know what this is? A symbol. A symbol, comes two dozen to a box.

A symbol of love and caring and concern that we wish each other away from *really touching*.

See, I was married once.

He was so great, such a funny guy.

Larry.

We were so poor, but (what's the saying? I don't know).

And we saved and saved and saved and saved and saved and finally we can buy two plane tickets, we're goin' to see my family in St. Louis. And we're sitting in the plane, and it's cold (not really cold, but chilly) so I got my goofy red mittens on and Larry sees I'm scared shitless so he's gonna cheer me up, so okay:

He pulls out a box of these things, and our nickname for them is "gloves" (you know, "no glove, no love," 'cause, of course, we can't afford children, nothing like that, and this is, mind you, before anybody's calling them "Death Control" or running full page ads in the paper; *Christ*.)

"Gloves."

So Larry goes, "I'm gonna put on some gloves." And he proceeds, the sight of God and Little Green Apples, to pull out the box of them, opens 'em, starts rolling them down his fingers, so he is now *wearing* ten of these things on his *fingers*, like gloves.

And he's wiggling them at me, I'm laughing like a hyena (I got this hyena-like laugh) when. . .

(Pause.) I don't know.

(Pause.) We're in the air. . .

(Pause.) He's wiggling these. . .

(Pause.) I mean, the *whole fucking thing*.

(Pause.) The whole fucking machine starts pitching and rolling and shaking, throbbing like some, I don't know, like the, what, the Hand Of God has hold of us, it's *shaking* us, we're gonna be sprinkled over some, what

some *cosmic salad* someplace.

And Larry, he's so funny— (I mean, so funny-*weird*) —he looks right at me and says (and the joint is a mess, mind you, fucking buzzers and "Please Stay Calm" *intoning* from somewhere, and, of course, all this screaming, which is only to be expected) I look at Larry, he takes my hand, and I can't *feel* his hand, so I take off my goofy mitten, and so what do I feel? *These stupid—*

Anyway.

He's got ahold of my hand with both of his, and with my other hand, I'm clutching my seat, he says (and I know he says it quiet because his lips barely moved, but I heard him above everything), he says:

"Honey, I think this is it."

(Pause.) And next I knew, the side of the plane, the whole side of this monstrous machine, just. . . peeled away.

(Pause.) Roaring.

(Pause.) Blue sky.

(Pause.) Larry.

(Pause.) It's like something out of a Three Stooges movie: he's got hold of my hand, he's *floating* straight out toward the sky.

I mean, like there's *wires* on his legs or something, this is some kind of crazy *stunt*, and I know we're thinking the same thing, like "I'm terrified, but this is really very funny-looking." 'Cause he *smiles*.

Then he throws up and it goes back in his face. I have hold of my seat with one hand, one hand I got hold of Larry, and then he just. . . wasn't there anymore.

I felt a—

Slip
Snap
whoooooosh. . .

And in my hand are nine of these things like little worms in my fist.

And he is sucked out into the sky.

But not quite, because just like fucking Larry to take the stupid way, he takes a detour to Heaven through the engine.

I mean, *tha-roooo* the engine.

(Makes a slurping noise.)

They found his tie wound around something.

And the tenth Little Wonder of the same type as the nine others that I still held in my astonished fist? (I mean, I think Larry must have somehow planned this in the eternity of a moment before he was diced up) the Tenth Little Wonder was found hanging off a little loose screw in the engine.

(Pause.) Can you imagine what those investigators *thought*? Ha Ha *Hah!*

(Pause. Sighs.) Now, what is a sane person supposed to do with this?

I mean, I know we need these Little Wonders and everything. And blah, blah, blah, "Think of it as Death Control" and so on. I mean, they're telling us that one of these Little Wonders (did you know they had these things in Ancient Egypt? I read that somewhere, like *Life* magazine) they're telling us at some point along the Yellow Brick Road of Modern Man, at some pin-prick point before we all started dumping *sewage* into each other, they're telling us that one of these Little Wonders could have stopped a plague.

But *because* of these Little Wonders (*ten* of them, mind you, which I should think would be insurance of *some* remarkable kind) *because* of them, the hand of one silly, stupid, cockeyed little man slipped out of my grasp

(*Slip.*
Snap.
whoooooosh. . .
Gone.
And I never felt him one last time.)

So you'll pardon me if I am understandingly bitter.

I mean, I am a contemporary human being.

In a fucking *crazy* time.

I want him back (but no, he turned himself into Larry-wurst) so the next best thing is I want to *feel* somebody.

Skin to skin.

(Pause.) That's why I got *into* this business, for god's sake!

And I don't want a Little Wonder in the way because though I will grant you they have been around a long time, *feeling somebody* has been around a lot longer.

But. . . what's a contemporary human being supposed to do?

(Pause. CLARRISA opens the package, removes the condom, rolls it down over an index finger. Holds up the index finger.)

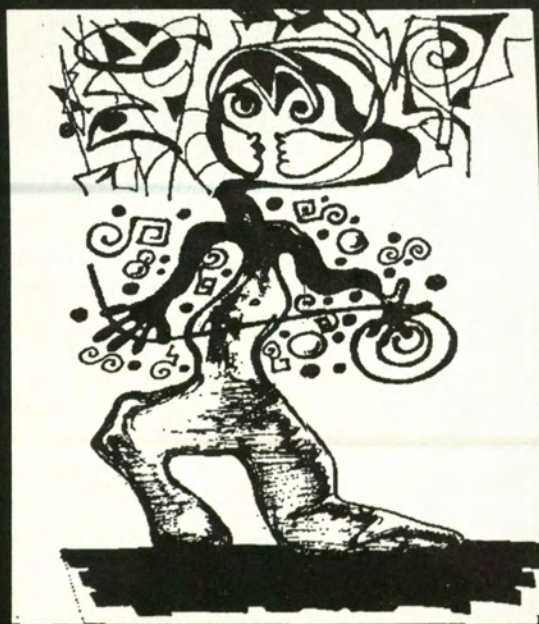
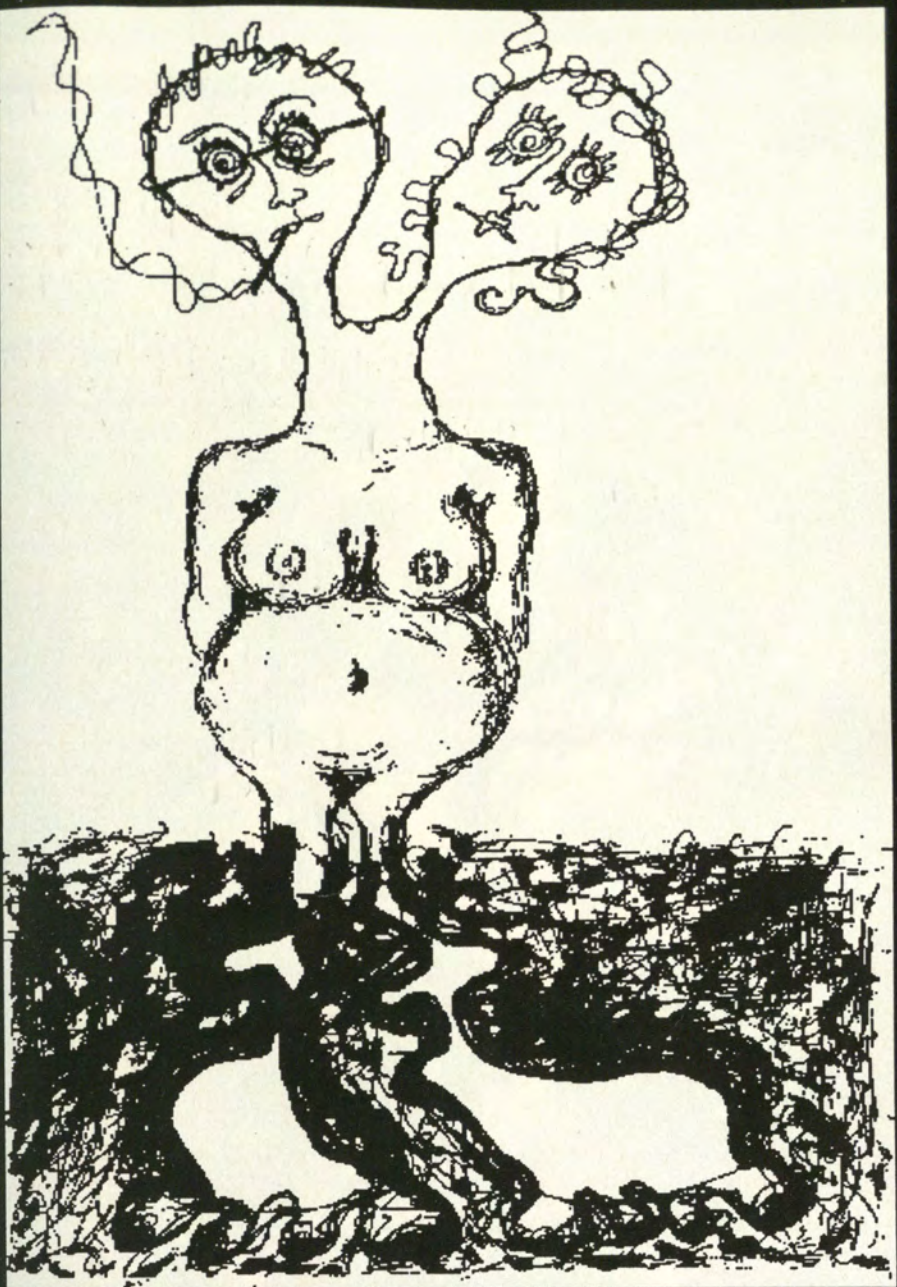
CLARRISA
Honey, I think this is it.

(Crooks the index finger twice.)

CLARRISA
(As she crooks her finger; in a puppet's falsetto.) Bye-bye.

(Lights snap out.)

BY JAMES SERPENTO



Exquisite corpses by Kristen Meyer, Krista Steinke, and Eric Levin.



Kelly Day

The muds of March
And the winds of April
Sometimes make perfect partners
To a finally lit cigarette
And a restless, weekend spirit.

I've got to stop teething on this psuedo-crestof experience,
Sucking the finger of four-years' fore-play,
Quoting beer commercials,
And howling at the night ahead.

But still,
I imagine myself
Sitting in a café,
My bi-focals distorting the red-checkerd tablecloth
While my water glass quivers
And shakes with the groans of trucks
And shouts for more fries
Or a family special with the soup, not the salad.

Andrew Richter



Danielle Digan



Pse
udo





Start with color.
Orange, for the cheese
resting heavy in her hand
as she grates it
onto the Formica counter.
And blue, for the worn
cotton shirt falling
from his shoulders
as he stirs a cast-iron
pot of lentils.

Add shape.
A pair of china plates
yawns hungrily on the low
table, waiting to be filled.
His hand pauses lightly
on her shoulder, fingertips
tracing the curve
of her collarbone.

Introduce light.
The eat in the half
darkness of a candle
flickering between them,
the moons of his nails
mirroring white.

Perspective?
Maybe he will remember
this, maybe she will see
it is the beginning
of a story.

Celeste Duder



Gretchen Beck



or
an
ge

*It Would Be So Nice If You Knew
What You Were Talking About or
Alternative Greeting Card Message*

Ignorance does not become you
and stupidity is no longer
the fashion cry of the season.
I can understand the occasional
fallacy, but your continual wrongs
are much too much for anyone
to bear. It is driving me
Batty, like you and I
don't want that particular ability
even if it is rather existential and
aesthetic in aura.
So I'm afraid I must decline your
invitation to kangaroo plains and
wildebeast huts.
But thankyou, for thinking of me.

Marjorie Thomas

Nice

Photos Laura Gatz



**be
ar**

Soon

When we finally make decisions
Only about which salad dressing

We are going to use—

Thousand Island

French

Italian

Diet Italian

Creamy Italian

Diet Creamy Italian—

That's when I am moving

To a place where

All 215 distinctive dressings

And mixtures of dressings

Are laid out for me at an open bar.

That way,

I can sit back and sleep,

Dreaming about all the ways

I could choose to use my single,

Unfired synapse.

Andrew Richter

Soon

Soon

Krista Steinke

Soon

Soon

syn

apps

e.



Krista Steinke

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The Lighter staff assumes all responsibility for the contents of the magazine. Views expressed within the pieces contained in this magazine do not represent official views or opinions of Valparaiso University, but instead are creative expressions of individuals within the university community.

EPITAPH

***Roses are red,
hearses are black.
If you are dead,
you ride in the back.***



syn
aps
e