

Spring 1997

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Valparaiso University

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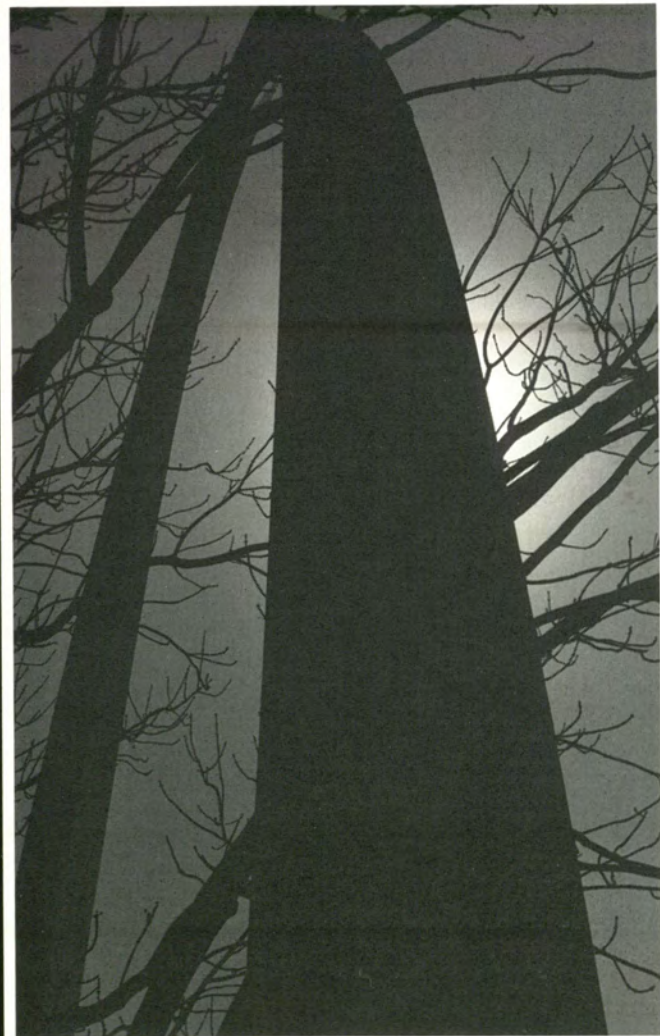
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The Lighter



Spring 1997

The Lighter

VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY

Volume XLII Issue 2

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Contributor's Notes

Preface

To be honest my position as editor can be rather demoralizing at times. A brief review of *Lighter* history will tell you that our circulation is reaching an all-time low when compared to the growth in the student body. I cannot count the number of times campus tours go by the office and *The Lighter* is referred to as either a branch of *The Beacon* or described as *The Pilot*. In the midst of all of these problems (and more), however, *The Lighter* continues to be a presence on this campus.

The most energizing experience I have as editor is the ability to sit down and read close to four decades of past issues. Throughout the years *The Lighter* has, in my opinion, been a strong creative force on this campus. After a brief look at the two issues of the 1996-1997 academic year it is clear that *The Lighter* is alive and well as a creative entity at Valparaiso University.

In the pages of the two issues published this academic year one can find a wide variety of subjects, mediums, and most importantly contributors. This year 44 of our fellow students have published their poems, short stories, photography, and sketches. In a time when student apathy is supposedly at an all time high it is this sort of number that makes me proud to be associated with *The Lighter*.

Just as important as the number of contributors found within the pages of *The Lighter* is the wide variety of students who have shared their work with the VU community. *The Lighter* advisor, Professor John Ruff, once said that the most important section of the book is really the last section—the contributor's notes. After an entire year's worth of experience I honestly agree with that statement. In this issue alone there are contributors from sixteen different disciplines. Many feel that *The Lighter* is simply a vehicle for English and creative writing students, but I believe this number should help to alter this perception.

The primary role of *The Lighter* is to highlight the many different creative energies present on this campus. If you are a writer, a photographer, or an artist I encourage you to consider *The Lighter* as a means for you to showcase your talent. For those of you who support the creative atmosphere on this campus by reading and saving issues of *The Lighter* I applaud you and hope that you will share your interest

with your friends and acquaintances on this campus. *The Lighter* has not been created simply for those who are published. Rather *The Lighter* has been created for the enjoyment of the entire VU community; students, faculty, and staff.

I hope that you enjoy this issue of *The Lighter* and will continue to support it through your readership. Once again I would like to thank everyone who has submitted their work this year. For those of you who were not accepted please continue to write and submit because you can be sure that *The Lighter* will continue to thrive and survive in the future.

Matt Duffus
-Editor-

En Una Noche Oscura

Joshua Eckhardt

The waves begin to crash.
The skies begin to crack
With horrible laughter.
The wind begins to scream
And still my love lay sleeping
Upon my flowering breast
As if the sea were yet at rest
As if he were its master.
The heaves in my chest
And not the seas are what breaks his slumber.
His head rises, eyes open, he gazes
Straight into mine with that subtle bouquet
Of reproach and amused surprise
I alone know so well,
Still holding me,
He speaks his will,
Tied still in our joint stare,
And all is still.

Untitled

Greg Gallup

it's because your pants
fall over your hips
like little tents

crazy fluttering sleep
in your dreams
I want to billow

in your mind
like clothes in wind
on a line of rope

and we stand on broken cliffside
ready to cascade
to the river

and fall
as I fell for you
like little tents without their poles

Rain

Greg Gallup

I reached that place
at the top of one glorious mountain,
and the rain came.
Lightening found me
beautiful
like you do.

Despite my anguish,
turmoil,
frustration,
my eyes hold two secrets.
And they are yours
as the rain falls harder.

As the rhythm grows deeper
and wanders to other places
and enters my blood
and yours
it becomes our soul.
And our bodies are waves in the ocean
filled with rain.

And the beast knows no fury
like that inside me,
inside you,
us.

And the rain knows my pain
in every drop.
With every tear
I taste water
and salt
and sadness.

But always at the top
of one glorious mountain

there is rain,
and thunder,
and lightening finding me beautiful
like you do.

Passage of Time

Amy Gannaway

My mother always slipped off her watch
when she washed dishes.
So I did too. I left her,
determined to do things

my way,
eat supper
while watching TV,
pay someone to clean
my house.

After we were together,
I saw him washing dishes,
and I winced. He changed

for me. I knew
I was my mother's daughter,
what I saw depressed me.
I learned to live

with him.
Now, when I wash dishes,
I keep my watch on my arm.



Evan Gaertner

The Hovering Cloud

Brent Lumsdon

In honor of my card-playing friends' mortality

At four in the morning
it is hard to decipher
whether it is time
to end
or simply time to redeal--

so the cards are shuffled.

Is it late? early?
or is it just right?
We play until sun
creeps through the shades;
we laugh at our blood-
shot eyes.
There will always be time
tomorrow
to sleep.

Ashes, lighters, and empty
cans pollute our table.
A hovering cloud
pollutes our senses;
still, we play.

We inhale smoke;
fill our lungs to capacity,
then smoothly exhale.
We watch
as the smoke disperses
above us, until it fades,
it vanishes.
We separate. Starving
for breakfast,
we'll wake

for lunch. We'll sleep
away the day,
wake dry-mouthed
and hungry, dirty
with smoke.
We clean our bodies
and our senses
in time
to play again,
again in a continuously
repetitious motion--
a habit. A habit
to once more cheat
the hovering cloud.

Closing Time

Brent Lumsdon

An old man sits alone
on the corner barstool
sipping a half-empty beer.
He looks at me.
My attention focuses
in his eyes, for some reason
I can't break this trance.

He is by himself
in this world. He knows no one
cares about him. He waits
for the rest of his time
to be swallowed
by the thirsty mouth of existence.
I alone show interest in this slow
decay. Years and years slipped
through his hands,
and left his dreams
untouched.

He wanted to see Paris,
to dine with a coy French girl
in a small corner cafe,
but he never left Indiana.
He dreamt
of being a sailor
when he was young,
but the oceans seemed too far away,
like everything else in his life.

I watch him as he is lifting the lightened
mug to his lips. He wants to finish it,
but his grip weakens--
the glass falls,
shattering on the floor.
He looks for help,

but no one notices
his glazed, desperate eyes
except for me.
I feel the urge to quench
his pain, but instead,
I order myself another drink.

Lost on the River Brandywine

Brent Lumsdon

I remember another world,
distant from the present.
Side by side Bilbo and I
used to charge
through the wild forest
on perilous adventures.
The woods are now tame,
and my companion has vanished.

I recently visited my castle;
it is nothing
more than a deserted beaver dam.
The ferocious Smaug is merely
a passing, fragile egret,
feathers cover his missing scale.

I sat upon my wooden throne,
but Gandalf failed
to magically appear.
I have forgotten
most of the dreams I dreamt,
and miss the ones I remember.

Heat Lightning

Leisl Jaberg

*On the porch
in the evening,
sweat erupts from my skin-
caused by the humidity that seems to ooze
from everything near.*

*I remember the night in July when the fire
flies were still alive,
lighting that magical path to the field
behind my backyard
where that year, corn grew tall.*

It stretched above my head-

A haven for the fire flies,
they dance through the rows. I
chase the lights farther into the corn.
They call, *come follow.*
Catch me!

I pause, then-

I cannot see home any more, or hear
the musical voices of my parents blend
into one. They shiver in humid breezes
which rustle through the approach of night.

I wonder where to go-
Which way is out?

My friend, staying the night at my house,
comes behind, and shouts, "Boo!"
I jump back,
cracking a stalk.

Breathing hard, I ask

"Do you know the way out?"
I wish the farmer,
the farmer I have never seen,
could have planted soy beans
like the year before,
when I could see all around.

*My mother and father highlighted
against the back light,
my father applied another layer of the bug
spray intended to keep away
mosquitoes and chiggers.*

The sky -so expanded-
sliced by corn leaves-
I look up,

the stars glow to the south.
To the north, they disappear.

Lightning flashes illuminate everything, I think

I am safe.
It is harmless heat lightning,
only to find out years in future
there is no such thing as heat lightning
as everyone told me.

It is just a storm too far away to hear-

but now it frightens me.
Because I am lost
from home-

*I took off running,
my friend followed me faithfully.
Pushing around the stalks, I knew
she was as anxious as I,
to find the steady lights of home.*

Gone

Leisl Jaberg

When people feel socially anxious, they may have more difficulty remembering...worrisome thoughts may interfere with thinking.

-Leary and Kowalski, Social Anxiety

So much to say,
I want to talk-
share my thoughts;
I do.

Maybe you don't think so.
I know you don't.
Everything that comes out of my mouth
sounds wrong

stupid

if sound does come out.
My throat chokes shut.

Everyone's attention is on me.

I cannot think of the answer.
I knew it a moment ago.
I swear I did.

Please don't call on me anymore
I will forget.
It happens every time.
Everything depends on what I say-

I don't know what to say.

blank

Beating so hard, my heart
hurts. My voice-

gone.

All swept away-

Everyone is looking at me.
I have to say something
intelligent.

Now.
Otherwise I will
really look-

void

They will laugh.
I just know it.
They will.
I'll feel stupid.

everybody's waiting

I hear them laugh.

Out Onto the Rocks

Charles Johnson

To anyone distant, we could have looked like ants,
Our bodies forming a string, beelined into the ocean's mouth.
We clung onto the rocks with our toes, while the sea lapped
its tongue into the air.

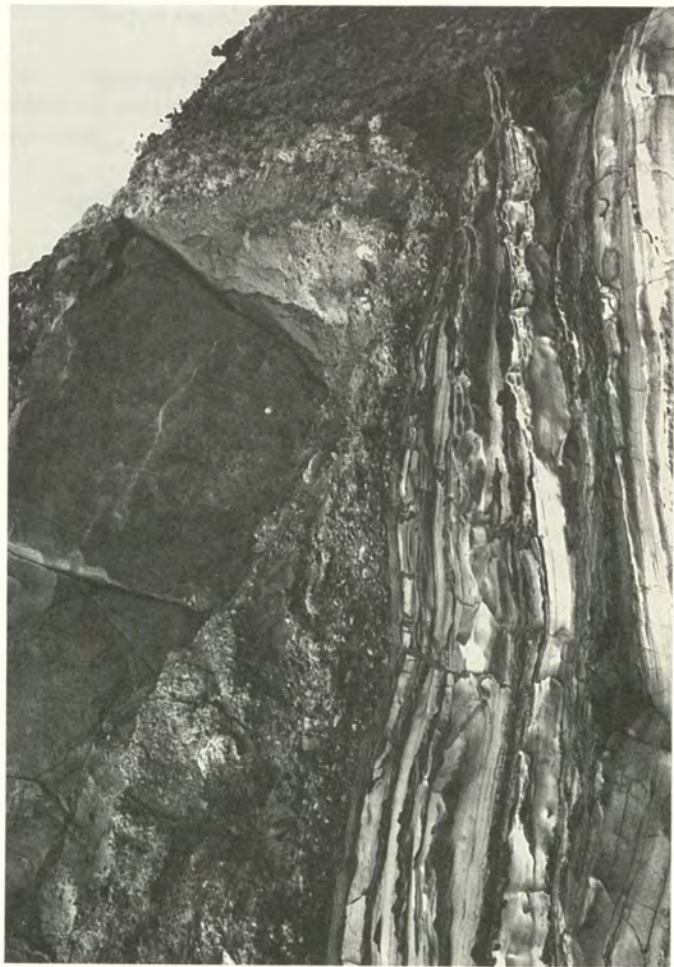
You could feel the hoarse breathing of the sea, as it rumbled
under our feet.

Its foamy kiss touched our faces.

Who would have cared if we were swallowed up by the waves?

Farther out onto nature's pier, we glimpsed the end,
The
Dropoff.

Someone defiant stood at the edge, and awaited.
Welcoming the next wave, shoulders ready,
They took the wave in, and our hearts stood pounding.
Relieved and laughing,
We shared in victory, just us ants and the sea.



Sarah Blum

Rock of Ages

Tell Me that Story

Charles Johnson

Throw off your coat, the one that covered
you from me.
Behind your salt and pepper mustache, I can picture
The scratch in your voice.
You have told me the story of that bomber jacket
Hastily pushed into your hands from a
friend under fire-I know this story.

Where in that span of time, did stripes change
Into Fishing Lures entangled in your hat-become
Entangled in my mind.
Tell me that story.

November 9

Lars Eckstein

fuer Avi

As always at this time of year
the days seem to grow moldy
like forgotten bread

your people ate, drowning in brown mud
between the 9th of November
and the sweet almond smell of Zyclon B,

just like they drank their faith and fate,
brother and sister, in bitter rain
pouring down from ashen clouds

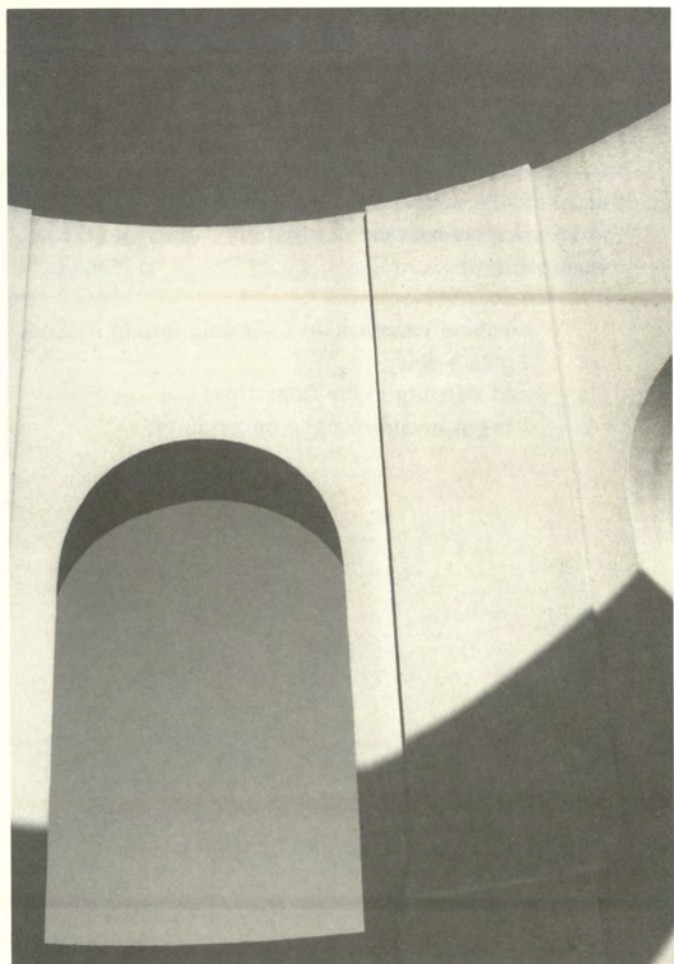
that today send dancing flakes
of faked white innocence
Touching ground they melt.

At home, my people celebrate the irony
of history that tore down the wall
this very day, and they forget

the wall in Jerusalem where women
and men lament and blame
you for living with the Germans.

But you dove into the darkness,
you found these words between
Kristallnacht und Christus

Treblinka und Talmud,
you shared them with me, too:
Mein Freund.



Sarah Blum

Embracing the Uncertainty

April Pickett

Walking down this winding path
I notice many a flowers, that I dare not pick
their beauty would be destroyed
within the moment.

Warily I continue down the treacherous path-
fearful of what lies beyond this point.
But in order to reach my destination
I must continue...

So along this dark and winding trail
I pick a daisy,
and twirling in my fingertips-
I begin to embrace the uncertainty.

Part, Counterpart

Marci Galen

Part

The crooked picture
on the wall
carries a crack
slicing to meet
the ceiling
shadowed by a gaudy
crystal chandelier
hanging in this
post-modern house.

Counterpart

Dust filters
the air from
the sunbeam blazing
through the child smeared
window beneath
the hundred year old
oak tree whose leaves
wrinkle in the soft
summer breeze.

Nature's Witness

Ernest Ruffleth

All we need is moonlit music
Or the cherry blossoms blowing,
While the sighing summer breezes
Set a stream of petals flowing.

This is where I long to take you,
By the heather and the moss,
Stars could be our chapel's ceiling
Where our petalled rivers cross.



१९०८१७
Smog

Iain Cook

Hippodrome Revisited

Ernest Ruffleth

Pleasures mingle like polite pop bands
Or the droning of incessant insects—
Steak and state flow together, soaked in blood;
Bread and circuses: football and food stamps,
All leach society to sewer grates—
On a flow of passive reinforcement.

The welfare of the masses, contentment,
Decay never spoken publicly, bland pleasantries
Spread by Janus politicians wishing to keep their positions;
Bind the common good as gravity binds men to geocentric thought.

The last gentlemen take their eyes
From sunset skies, and tune their hearts to television;
Every housewife sucks Jealousy's tit while ironing,
Sees Helen eat cake on her favorite soap opera.

Tell me again how everyone can be pleased...
Pad the gladiators, turn spears into soft balls,
Play Romans as the Romans played Greeks,
Forget words and let poets die in the street,
Drain the deluge of history to a trickle
And pretend originality.

Sprezzatura

Ernest Ruffleth

Our souls are as the hollow trees
That beg the world for storage--
Our hearts are filled with honey bees
Like catacombs of courage.

Our world if as the hungry bear
Whose purse is full of money
To trade with those who sell their share
Of happiness and honey.

Summer off Long Island

Ernest Ruffleth

Birds call

From the distance, more respond

From all around.

They fly

interview, now and then

Ace Pilots in the Whipping Wind;

They fly without flapping:

plane formations

Falling off before the breeze.

The bugs they catch, wheeling & diving

Dancing, the bugs they catch:

bronze rings on a carousel-

Circle again, free reign, wheel & dance.

Something sickly sweet

From the tall grass

(the birds do not stop though

cars drive by kicking up rocks,

so loud and common)

The dead smell

Overpowering the summer.

Breath through my mouth

The dead smell

Of old water-rat

Overpowering me.

Lies on its side, greasy

Brown and grey fur,

Its insides covered

a fine blanket of blue-black

Bottle-flies lift and disperse...

Sea gulls fly.

I move upwind

to newly greening marsh

Then an old peeling bench.

Some obese bee,

find thee dandelion,

His movement

Slow and respectable.

Heavily laden sacks of aurum

 rarely visible

Beneath yellow cummerbund,

Under black buttoned back.

The forsythia which once so dominated our drive,

 the birds, our old barn,

 briars and lilac,

Bake golden brown.

Song for Leda

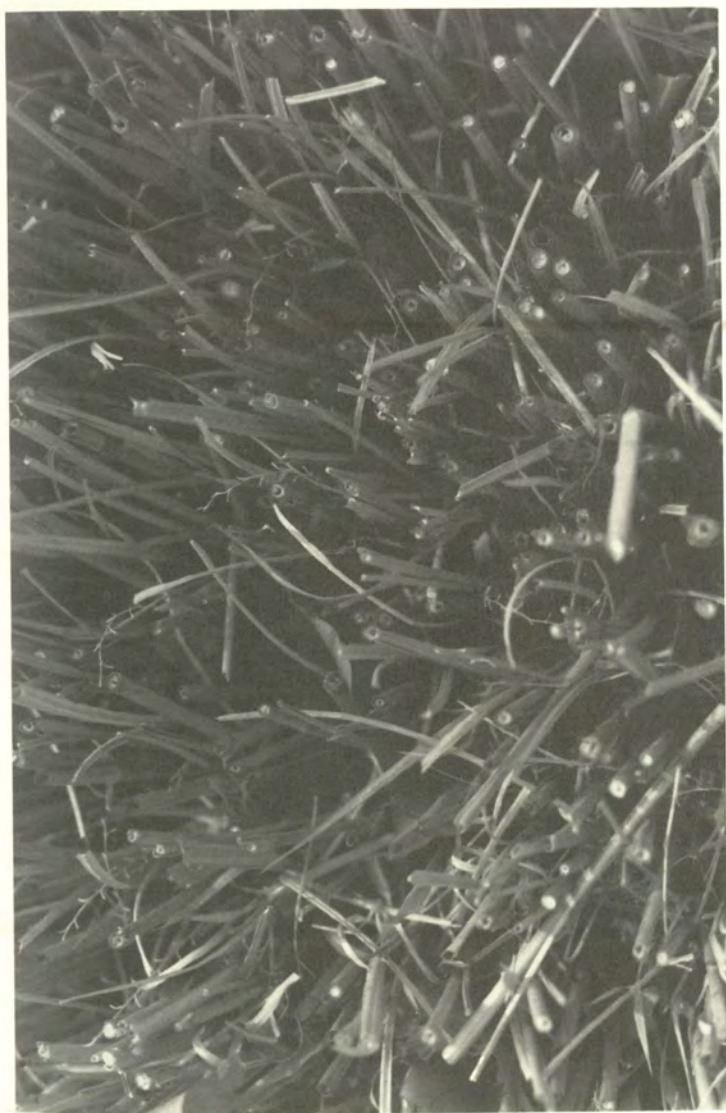
Ernest Ruffeth

As a soft splash of river shone
On Leda bathing in the rushes,
A long black bird fished among shallow sands,
Its black feet paddling.
Zeus gripped the throne in mighty hands,
His knuckles white with lusting.*

So she slipped among the reeds
To the cool embrace of the loving river,
Fish skimmed through the shoals in the water around her
Where the god, renewed in old need,
Like gale winds blowing in summer,
Usurped the swan's form in a flurry
And drank from the eddy's flow.

Bearing down as triremes beating with the breeze,
He clove through the plant encroached river
Where Leda dallied in the water.
Slowing, long neck low among fresh shoots,
Zeus saw her cool dimpled skin prick,
Saw water delicately bead upon her brow.
Waves lapped to a crest on the prow of his breast
And the swan swam against Nature's current.

When she saw the oval bodied bird,
The pure curving chest, the strength in its eye
Seemed to calm her, draw her out to the bank
In the shade by the lilies and ilex.
Up from the water the insolent swan
Advanced to the bower where Leda lay down
In a dream, soft plumage like a blanket;
He bore her deep among the grasses.



Evan Gaertner

Onward: in Two Parts

Ernest Rutherford

Go Gloomy

In this dark bungalow the heart
Is ill before it ever starts,
Where work is slowly done in time
And coffee-breaks control the mind.
Yet no consequence or care,
Affects the slack-jawed gawkers there.

That oozing sloth in which they live,
I live in too, that fine holed sieve
In which we place all hope and faith,
In which we hold our life to slay it,
Or spread it far too thin around.
We spill our seed upon the ground
Of hospitals and asphalt farms
Yet will we grow fat upon their tails,
So do we falter, fall, and fail.

Biology knows no regression
So why does human stature lessen?

Go Gaily

How can you not sing sweet with me,
In easy sounds so beautifully,
Or rest in air conditioned joy?
Come linger with your lover-boy.
Leave off your weary work-worn way,
Leave off, and here beside me lay.

You'll find no softer bed than mine,
The imitation-silk is fine
And longs to gather you therein,
The world may end but to begin
Here. When I speak so to you

And lock myself within your view,
Within your soft electric glow,
My heart croons like a radio
To synthesize your favorite tune
About our bright fluorescent moon.

Could we abide a heat much greater
Without our cool refrigerator?

Rain

Robyn Lira

In the Rain he finds his fear
In the Rain he sheds a tear.

Somewhere in the Rain he mopes
Somewhere in the Rain he copes.

In the Rain I see his face.
In the Rain he finds his place.

Somewhere in the Rain he lies
Somewhere in the Rain he dies.

hisfearhistearhemopeshecopeshisfacehisplacehelieshedies

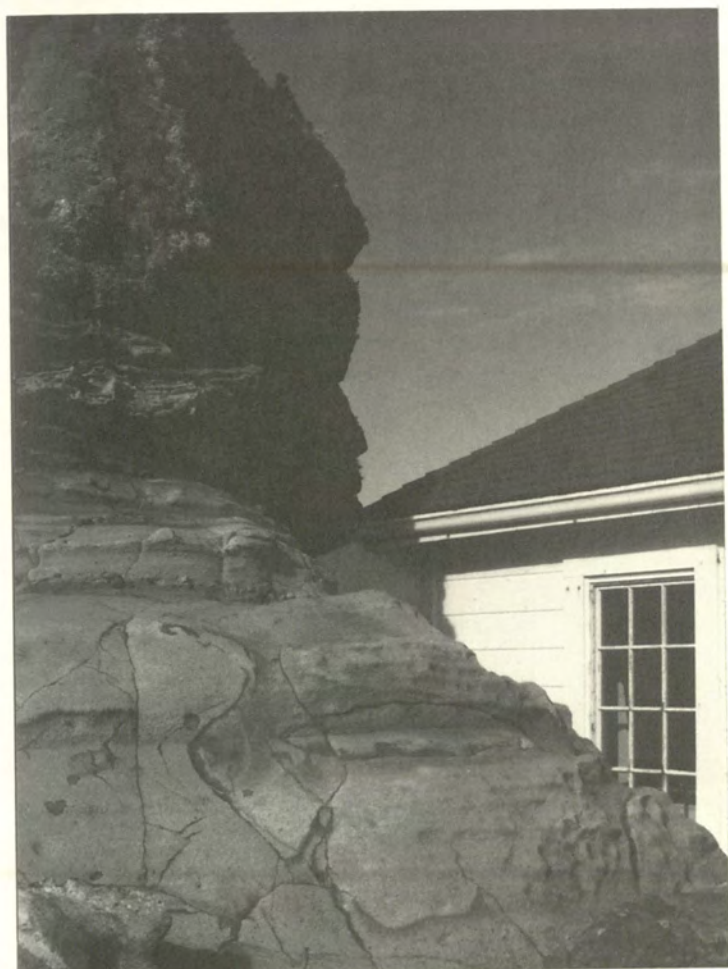
And what am i to do but stare him

straight

in

the

eye?



Sarah Blum

Penthouse Suite

Insane Noise

Scott Asfi

I can't stand it when I can hear so clearly the munchy gooshy sounds of food and saliva rolling over each other trying to mix like oil and water in the mud pit of germs called the mouth.

Macaroni is the worst with its hollowness that lets our spit run through like fresh sewage in the sewers. It's all wetness and glop in there that causes the shivering whillies sound of suction vacuum and garbage compactor and slop.

Those walls it all wrestles in are just too thin to block the goofy-dog-lapping-water-and-swallowing-half-air-while-breathing-heavily noise that's blaring from your face.

Just down half your slobber and THEN start to chew. It's really not that hard! Listen to me - do you hear anything?

No Longer in Galesburg:

Andrea Shidle

(I)

your stage is a concrete slab,
I am your audience of one.

you stand above me,
peering over the edge of the world
dark air hanging in front of you.

the night is a void to be embraced.
willing, you spread your arms

but falter, hands trembling like leaves,
a smile thrown anxiously over one shoulder.

"I'm not drunk, I'm magic" you say.
"watch, I can make the stars disappear..."

you lift your glasses, solemn as a veil,
and giggle, the sky smearing like wet ink.

(II)

still, I can imagine your fingers
slashing poems between the stars.

with head thrown back, laughing,
hair framing the arrogant line of your throat,

you would read them to me
until dawn erased their fragile lettering

leaving us silent, huddled together
beneath the harsh light of morning,

remembering

(III)

these last two months, your poems
have come slowly—if at all.

I find you here instead, pacing this makeshift stage,
wearing your masklike smile, some leftover starlight
flickering behind those eyes—but dying quickly.

you wear innocence badly—it doesn't suit you:
insisting "I am *not* drunk," but betrayed by a grin,

your face hovering an inch from mine
your eyes feverish and defenseless.

(IV)

stars whirl above us like tiny snowflakes,
and I stare up at them, trapped in your arms

spinning, mouth gaping,
your body warm and too close.

dragging me through this waltz,
you laugh into my hair:

"i'm going to be a star someday,
i'm going to be *so* famous..."

head tilted in a helpless grin,
I see moonlight caught on your lips.

you turn away, but your eyes
throw green fire across the night

and I believe
someday you will burn
just like a star

(V)

but tonight, you've chosen a cliff's edge,
a concrete stage, a three-foot drop

and this lesson of mine,
not easily forgotten.
your outstretched arms confront the stars
and old poems melt silver across the sky.

you're balanced between worlds--
tears in your eyes, but on your lips
more power than even the moon could offer.

I want to scream at you,
to make you understand:

this is the only way to save your life,
throw away these smiles, choose your own face

fill the night with these stories--
they are all you have left

do you flicker out so easily?
or will you choose to burn?

it's your turn to sing

can you find the words?
will you choose to be a star?

Untitled

Andrea Shidle

you were the child
I never wanted to have

but Rapunzel
I thought I could save you

that you could be kept
like a jewel in a box

locked in the tower
that my heart became

but some things cannot last

the eyes I thought inviolate
turned murky

and turned away

Untitled

Andrea Shidle

Jonathan, stubborn as ever, is playing the piano.

His tall, awkward body hunched
over a black concert piano, he hacks at the keys
as if his music were a barrier to be attacked.

He plays awkwardly, almost believing
his fingers will hit the right notes
the harder he strikes the keys.

The notes, arranged precisely,
are words of a poem in another language,
but remain meaningless to me.

Above me, his eyes trace intricate arpeggios
as if following the steps of a strange dance,
only a faint understanding in his green eyes.

Jonathan plays the way he moves:
with a liquid gracelessness,
achieving moments of eerie, crystalline beauty
despite the mess of false starts and missed notes.

As lightning flashes during a summer rain,
I see the world frozen, flooded with white-purple light.
Such unexpected stillness, raindrops hanging
as if from threads, the world existing despite the storm.

As a feather falls, moving back and forth
on imperceptible air currents,
so his music lays itself around me:

a series of brief, helpless movements,
still drawing delicate curves upon the air,
but crashing to an inevitable halt,
with a muttered "oops" from Jonathan.

Flash of Illumination

Jennifer Link

A flash of bright white leaps
Across the skies; the roll
Of thunder echoes
In my ears. I can feel
Warm mist swirl around
Me as moist air creeps
Across the ground.

Once, we ran home
Underneath the glowing beams
Of the streetlamps, pausing
For a kiss that covered
Our skin with beads of mist. The fury
Of Nature's passion pushed
Us further.

We barely knew
Each other, but you held
Me until the moon traveled
Back into our gaze
And the cool night
Air settled in.

Tonight, I saw a flash
Of bright white - A line
To connect our skies
Once again. I remember.



Iain Cook

The Faces Within...

Pedestrian Refrain

Rory Segety

My horse has fascist dreams.

We proceed from a dark wood of wildest nature,
to a gentle stream.

It speaks of its service.

Here, we buck up for the duration;
then we live our peace.

Passing by Madness (Where I Live)

Rory Segety

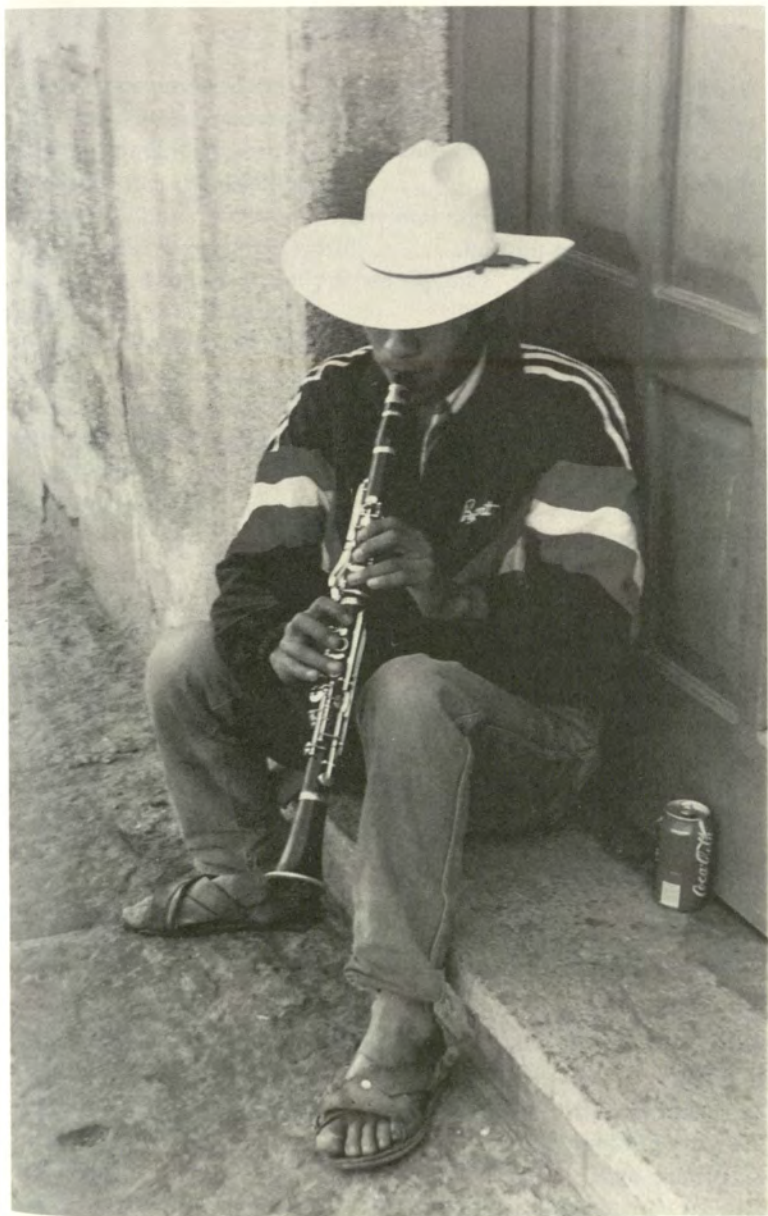
Your shallow bay laps navigable,
cuts in quick earth unbound;
I steer away,
your restless charts loom.
Which be your stay,
should I fasten anchor -
I've taken wide to labour
down the rocks a beaten rest.
But a bed from a floor
your silent waves keep me.

Man on the Street

Susie Kreutzmann

The man on the street
wears all black.
His face is covered
with white paint.
He never speaks.
People gather to watch.
He puts up his hand
as if he is signaling to stop.
But then up comes the other
and I soon see
that he is showing us a wall
from top to bottom,
until it becomes a box
that encases him.

This man on the street,
he is not unfamiliar;
except when he goes home
the white face washes away,
his voice returns,
and he is no longer trapped in a box.
But when he is on that street,
when he is entertaining the gawkers,
that man on the street
-he is me



Christina Williams

As if I Had Never Happened

Alisa Whitmer

You are the pill-bug playing 'possum,
a-bumpity-bumpin' along, quickly
(quietly) dodging blades
of grass and pebbles
and the giants who tease you into your
rolly-polly-pill-bug-position.

You freeze. I hardly can tell
end from end of your
oh-so-clever little serrated body.
End hiding end,
you conceal all emotion,
evoking my frustration and giving me the

Pleasure of imagining myself holding
your ball-self in my open
palm, bringing a perverse
flush to my cheeks.
Lips pucker as I
summons a wind that will send you
forward to my life-
line and back-ward,
back to the freckle on my heart-
line. Sometimes I can't help myself
and you soar past
my fingertips, back
to your home
among the grass and filth--and
for just as long as I can stand,
for as long it takes
for you to believe,
to resume
as if I had never happened--
like your pill-bug nature,
end hiding end,
I'll pick you up and start again.

Binding

Alisa Whitmer

58 in a 40 he pronounces--
(*red-blues red-blue lights tear me*)
from my mind's own world, only bound
by destination, by deadline,
and now by him. My car--
A bridge into the *real* real world
that we slip into just as easily as we slip into
bucket seats, quiet ponds,
traveling beyond roads, beyond cars,
beyond now into a *sacred time*
when our heavy hearts let loose
with each vague passing mailbox,
yelping dog,
waving grandfather,
angel cloud--
All in a time not concerned with time,
only with feeling
free and alone and eternal,
unaware of the conquering power
of 58 in a 40.

License and Registration he demands--
interjecting the language that binds
officer to offender
law to law breaker
he to I.

You may go...and I do.

He to I--about to be bound
by more than by law, bound deeper
than license and registration
than officer to offender--
than wheels to road--
Mocking 58 in a 40
slipping back into warm leather that whispers...*forever.*

Junk Mail

Jason Yasuda

Lying like a kitten we bathed
in rays from above as I taught the young
one all I had learned in 2nd grade,
it made me feel like a man,
so knowledgeable and brave.

Together, on the patio, we absorbed
all that the world had to offer.

A scent of burning leaves
sweetened the soft air, while the neighboring
pine danced with whispers of the wind,
and a flock of geese glided gently
through the sky. A cool breeze
swept over us, and the long summer days

left us in the cold.

I checked the mail on the table, looking
for my Sesame Street magazine,
but to my surprise, it was nowhere
to be found. As I curled up
in the chair, the glowing box talked
of a kid caught in some well. Then,
mother emerged from the kitchen.
She carried an unfamiliar look,
a smile

hiding what was beneath. She sat
on the footstool blocking
my view. My brother climbed
up. Her eyes looked soft,
like if she were asking for help,
she was, but none I could have given.

Her eyes dropped down to her
hands. It was only then I
noticed the paper she held.

"I have something to tell you boys",

*then a sigh, not of relief,
but of the pain that is slowly
ripping her heart
in two, for she,
and only she knew
what was to come,
even if our hearts,
our faith,
our family
were going to be torn
as well.*

"Daddy's, never coming home again."

I looked for reassurance,
but only feel the cold
drops of rain
her clouded eyes could no longer
hold back. My eyes began
to swell from the sting within, stranded
and lost, drowning in the undrinkable
water, no where to go I reached
for help to find myself
sharing the tears. Poor kid was only four,
probably didn't even understand why
he was so upset, instead
only showing the emotions
that he was taking from us.

He used to say, "While I am gone
you are the man of the house, Good-bye."

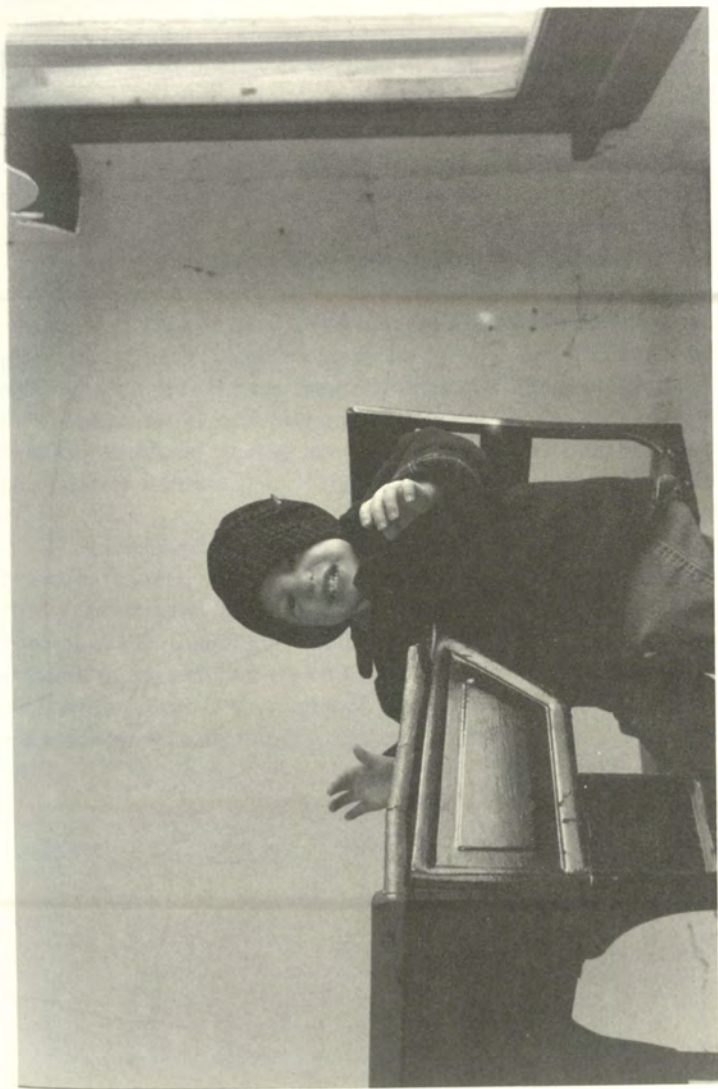
Those special words I held
so dearly were painfully ringing
in my ears. I didn't know
what to do, I was scared, I didn't want
to be a man.

The night settled in, but we didn't

get up to turn on a light,
instead, we sat in the darkness,
minus one. The tears stopped flowing,
on;y because the well had run dry,
we just sat together,
huddled in a ball. Exhausted
and drained, incapable
of getting up to go to bed.

The windows are open,
a gentle breeze keeps the air cool.
A canary sings a sweet song
while some squirrels gather some food
for the winter. Now, relaxing,
I remember how we wasted away
on that night. I used to avoid
that chair and wonder why

we never got rid of it, but now
I know it holds powerful memories
of the night our family was born,
memories burned so deep,
others erased. I have since buried
my father, and again can look
into the tin without the fear
of receiving more
junk mail.



Christina Williams

Rude Awakening

Jason Yasuda

What was that?
That's not my alarm.
What time is it?
I missed class again.
Where are my keys?
Fuck this shit!
Damn it get the phone!
Hangovers suck.
Can I hold it?
Where's my blanket?
Familiar sound?
Too short for a train.
Not a jet.
It's not the fourth.
Gun?
It's over!
Peter?
You there?
Why?
How?
Answer me!
Mom?
Bullet.

A Few Short Years

Cynthia Hamilton

A few short years are all I have to love; to live; to feel the warm glow of freedom shining down upon my soul; to become empowered by liberating passion; to let independence radiate through my veins-bursting from my fingertips-exploding into this mass hysteria that I call life.

A few short years to prove my worth; to rise above this onerous life into which I have been born; to excel in a world of speed-bumps and red lights flashing in the rearview; to succeed, breaking through to the top floor of this glass tower with no visible staircase guiding the way up; to kiss the clouds that so many strive for, though rarely attain.

A few short years to sort things out; to find a purpose; to create order in a society rooted in disarray; to claim my balance as I walk this tightrope of life, trembling a thousand feet overhead; to unearth that which I have been searching for in the deep jungles of worry and doubt that grow in my mind; to discover myself.

Corona

Lars Eckstein

Autumn is eating its leaf off my hand: we are friends.
We shell time out of nuts and teach it to walk:
time returns back to its shell.

In the mirror is Sunday,
in dreaming we sleep,
the mouth speaks true.

My eye descends to my lover's vagina,
we look at each other,
we utter dark words,
we love one another like poppy and memory,
we slumber like wine in the sea shells,
like the sea in the beam of moon.

Embracing we stand in the window, they watch us out on the street.

It's time people knew!
It's time the stone condescended to flower,
time the restlessness quivered with heartbeat.
It's time it came time.

It's time.

(translated into English from Paul Celan's *Mohn und Gedächtnis*)

Zaehle die Mandeln

Lars Eckstein

Count up the almonds,
count what was bitter and kept you awake,
count me in, too:

I was seeking your eye as you opened it up and nobody saw you,
I drew this furtive thread
on which the dew you were thinking
slid down to the jars
that a saying, finding nobody's heart, shelters.

Only there you fully stepped in the name that is yours,
strode surefooted right to yourself,
hammers swung free in the bellcage of your silence,
the eavesdrops did join you,
what's dead put its arm as well around you,
and you went three selves through the evening.

Render me bitter.
Count me in with the almonds.

(translated into English from Paul Celan's *Mohn und Gedächtnis*)



Naomi Strom

Sactimonious Hole

Keeping Up Appearances

Ayesha Qaisar

The party had been a success. Everybody who was *anybody* in town had attended Edith's seventy-fifth birthday party. The whole affair had been rather extravagant: the food catered by the city's best five star hotel; flower arrangements from the most expensive florist; and a guest list which even included the city's mayor.

Yes, Edith had done it again; compared to last year's birthday extravaganza, this one even surpassed her own expectations. And now, the party over, the old woman sat content on her favorite black leather chair, a family heirloom, legs spread lazily on front of her, humming a tune.

Edith's loud humming annoyed Robby, who after an exhausting day felt dizzy and secretly desired to climb into bed for an extended nap. But, the dishes had to be done even before she could allow herself to think about resting. After all, they were Grandma's dishes. Robby loaded the pile of dirty flatware into the sink and began filling it with hot water. How freely the water flowed she thought, the wet mass flowing on to the dishes, making tiny splashes. She put her hands under the tap feeling the hot water run through her fingers, moving them vigorously to relieve the stress. Maybe the dizziness would go away if she let her hands relax, the water now almost burning her skin. But the dizziness overcame her like sleep does a tired man; she felt sick, the bile rising in the back of her throat.

No she could never throw up on Grandma's dishes. *Never.*

She hastily withdrew her hands from the running water, grabbed a dish towel and vomited into it. She felt a little better, the dizziness slowly diminishing but weakening her simultaneously. Why was this happening? she thought. Why did she feel sick so often, especially now when she was doing Grandma's dishes? What if she had broken one? What then?

Mercifully, all the dishes had been placed in the sink. Realizing this, Robby reminded herself that everything was going to be all right. She hadn't broken anything and that was the important part. Everything else didn't matter.

She closed her eyes for a few minutes, trying hard to fight an image which was slowly beginning to envelop her mind. She saw herself standing in the same kitchen fifteen years ago, a shattered plate

scattered around her feet. Grandma had rushed in from the living room finding her teary eyed and on bended knees collecting the remains of the broken plate. She had apologized profusely, explaining that she didn't break the plate on purpose. It had been an accident and she was sorry. Grandma would surely understand.

But now, years later, all Robby could remember were her Grandma's icy blue eyes which chose to solely focus on the broken plate. It was as if she had been invisible, with the exception of the much visible plate on the brown tiled floor.

"You're such an irresponsible child Robby," Grandma had said angrily fifteen years ago. The word "irresponsible" held no meaning for her then, but now she understood it well. Her mother had been irresponsible to marry her father, a man of "lesser breeding," two words Grandma often used to describe the man responsible for her granddaughter's creation. The marriage had ended in divorce, with both parties deciding it was best for Robby to stay temporarily with her grandmother. What was temporary became permanent.

Robby opened her eyes, her mind trying hard to filter out the disturbing past. The past was over, finished; it would never come back again. *Never.*

She closed the tap, the sink now full with hot water. Yes, she would soak the dishes for an hour first, just the way grandma had taught her, and then scrub them clean. Edith liked her dishes to be spotless, especially when they made a sharp squeaky noise if a finger was run across them.

Edith was still humming when Robby walked into the living room. She was repulsed at the way her grandmother sat on that awful chair: her body slumped deep, head titled to the left side, and legs spread out like a chimpanzee basking in the sun.

She too wanted to relax, not for a while but for days on end, and certainly not on that horrid chair. She'd secretly planned to burn it when the old woman died. Not sell it, but burn it. And she would never hum that silly tune either. *Never.*

"So Grandma," Robby started as she squatted down on the floor next to Edith. "Wasn't the party great? Everybody showed up."

"Of course! It was splendid that Mr. Delaney came," Edith replied cheerfully. "I was so excited to see him and his son. Weren't you dear?"

"Oh yes," Robby lied.

Mr. Delaney was the city's mayor and an acquaintance of Edith's. A real dim-wit, Robby had concluded, especially after having

brought his son to the party uninvited. Of course Edith didn't seem to mind at all.

"You *did* meet his son, of course," Edith interrogated, her voice suddenly losing its cheerfulness. "He's a rather charming fellow, he just passed the Bar Exam."

"I did, but he's kinda weird. Too bookish," Robby replied, trying best to avoid her grandmother's attempts at playing cupid.

"Maybe you should call him sometime. He *did* leave his number," she retorted, deliberately ignoring what her granddaughter had said.

There was no point in arguing with the old hag, Robby decided. It was best to shut her mouth. Maybe she should call the mayor's son, maybe then Grandma would leave her alone. Just maybe. Of course it would be best to keep all of this a secret from Mike, he didn't need to know everything about the party. She *loved* him, not that bookish lawyer.

The conversation now finished, Edith adjusted herself by folding her arms snugly against her chest. Robby quickly realized that her grandmother was ready for a nap. It was best to leave her alone.

After a few minutes Edith was sleeping soundly, her breathing slowly becoming more audible. She was a heavy sleeper, having fortunately, once slept through a fire alarm which had gone off when Robby had accidentally burned brownies in the oven. Her deep slumber annoyed Robby who was beginning to feel rather sleepy herself. But *she* still had to finish the dishes.

Damn the dishes, she thought trying to reason with herself, *why on earth didn't grandma buy a dishwasher?* After all, they weren't living in the dark ages anymore. She was tired and the dishes could wait.

However, contrary to her inner desire of not wanting to wash the dishes, she stood up and walked directly to the kitchen. Somehow her body failed to comprehend her thoughts. This angered her even more; now, even her own mind didn't listen to her! What next? Frustrated she drained the water from the sink and began to wash each dish in a maddening frenzy, scrubbing hard with a coarse sponge till each made a squeaky sound. The entire load took her an hour to finish. She was very tired now. Carefully she set each dish on the drying rack near the sink, wiping off the excess water with her hands.

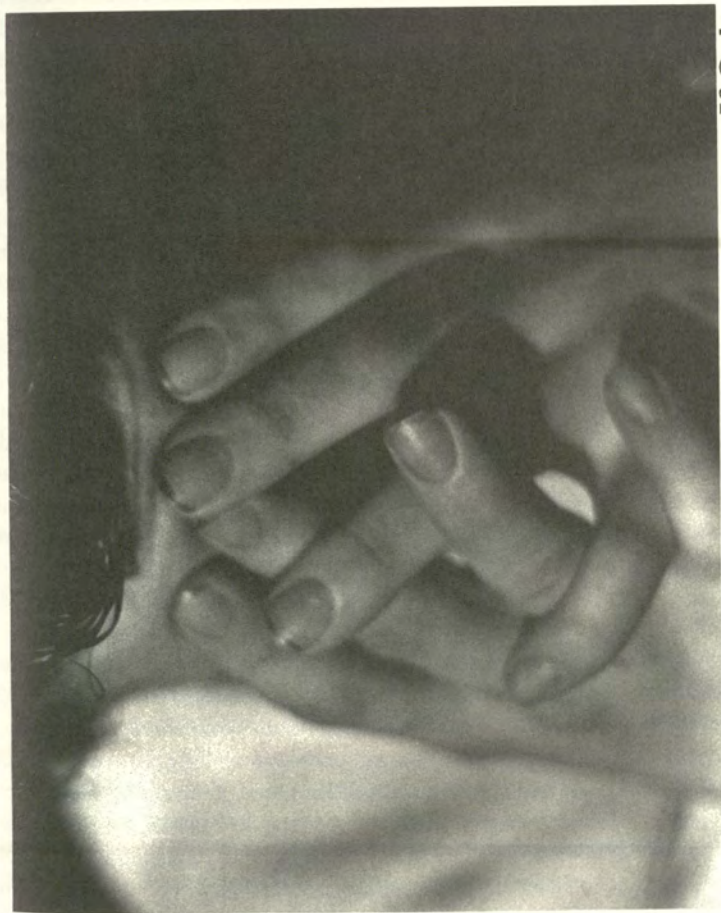
Somewhere between wiping the last plate and feeling excessively tired, she developed a violent desire to send a plate crashing to

the floor. Now that ought to awaken Grandma, she thought, tossing the plate lightly between her hands like a frisbee. In a moment she would let go of the plate shattering it into tiny pieces as soon as it hit the tiled floor.

"C'mon!" Robby heard herself saying out loud. "Wake the old woman up."

Edith was sleeping soundly when Robby let go of the plate. She was *still* sleeping after the plate hit the floor with a loud crash and broke into three sharp shaped pieces. Robby, disappointed, bent down to collect the pieces, disposing of them into a black trash bag and placing it into the dumpster outside.

When she returned, she tidied the kitchen and made herself a sandwich. Edith was still sleeping.



If Only

Ngomi Strom

A Superglued Studebaker

Sage Rebuehr

I'll never forget the time my Grandpa superglued his arm to the bumper of his car. I'd just finished washing his Studebaker. The pale blue finish matched the sky as it reflected the sun. Diapers that once protected me and my brother, now caressed the hood, the door, every handle and silvery knob. Parked in the front lawn, shaded in part by the birch tree, it glimmered.

My Grandpa always paid me to wash his car although he did it in a round about way so it didn't look like he did. "Don't wait for handouts," he told me. He'd just leave a dollar and a stick of spearmint gum on the front seat for me, forcing me to get in the car. He'd always yell from his wicker chair on the front porch over to Arnie's next door in his slightly gruff voice, "Look at that will you Arnie, he even does the dash for me! This one here knows how to do it!"

My grandparents have lived next door to Arnie and Bonnie since before Eddy St. was even a street. My mom baby-sat their kids and my uncles hid snakes in their screened in porch during the summer. Arnie retired from Baker Perkins five years after my Grandpa and now spends his time at the Lutheran Cemetery mowing lawns, trimming bushes, and watering geraniums.

"You lazy bum," Arnie yelled back, "if he wasn't your grandson, he'd call you cheap."

My Grandpa could only throw out his arm as if to shield himself from Arnie's words and gulp down his lemonade. I wiped the cloth across the dials and button. Each of us doing what we always did.

My Grandpa's had this car probably as long as Arnie's lived next door, maybe even longer, but unlike Arnie, he treated it like a new neighbor. He only used it when the sky was as blue as the finish and as clear as the windows. Of course these days just happened to fall on Wednesdays, golfing day, tomorrow, which was why I was washing that day.

"All done Grandpa!" I called to him from the lawn. Before it can be returned to its home in the garage, before he could pull it in ever so slowly just until the windshield touches the large red fishing bobber hanging from the ceiling, he must inspect every niche, every cranny, every corner. He knows this car better than he knows anyone in his family. He's put up with it longer than any single person and it

has done the same with him.

He pushed himself up from his chair on the porch with a loud grunt and mumble and hummed to himself as he wobbled down the sidewalk.

"Let's see what you did today, boy," he sighed as he made his customary tour around the car beginning with the headlights. I held my breath as he rounded to the right side of the automobile occasionally rubbing the finish with the diaper and nodding and grunting which sounded pretty positive to me. I knew I did everything right. He'd been watching me the whole time and called out every two minutes, "I'm not going to tell you again to use the light setting on the hose! I don't want you hurting her!" or "I am not going to tell you again, boy, get every inch of that baby before you even think about making me get down from here!"

I'd made it to the rear of the car without any harsh words, maybe a few shakes of the head and muttered curse words but nothing I hadn't lived through before. Then he saw something. Just above the right reflector on the bumper, he began furiously rubbing with the diaper. Up and down, putting all the muscle he had left in him into it, his face turning red, his eyes squinting together, his periodic grunts of approval turning into one long sustained low beastly sound. I couldn't quite tell what he was trying to get off the fender, his movement was too hurried and swift for me, but I knew it was not coming off whatever it was.

The next thing I knew, he fell forward a bit catching himself on the trunk as the small round red reflector landed in my Grandma's bed of giant marigolds.

"Look what your carelessness did boy! Go get me the super glue in my toolbox!"

"The--"

"You heard me!"

I found it tossed aside on the workbench, a crusty little thing that probably hadn't been used in ten years. When I brought back the tube, he'd already figured out the best angle to place the reflector in to cover up the old discolored spot. He applied a liberal amount of the glue on the little piece of plastic while continually glancing over his shoulder to see if Arnie was coming around the side of the house. The same strength that he put into budging the reflector from the fender he put back into trying to get the stupid thing to stay. I tried to tell him it wouldn't work, that he should just buy a new one. "Everything on this car is original and as long as I am alive it is going to stay that way,"

he answered.

Then, he stopped moving. All that motion and energy came to a halt in an instant and he stood as still as he could, his right arm flush with the fender. Maybe he'd got it to stick. He'd got something to stick all right. His arm. A spot on his upper arm, between his shoulder and elbow, was attached to his car. Just what he always wanted, I thought. My self-satisfaction did not last long, however.

"Get me off this thing!" he yelled between his teeth, not wanting Arnie or my Grandma to find out what happened.

I didn't want to hurt him, he is my Grandpa after all, so I didn't know quite how to get his arm unstuck. I picked up the tube of glue, but it was so old that the label, and any hope of discovering a reasonable remedy for this predicament had smeared away long ago. I could only think of one thing to do.

"Remember how I gnashed my arm when I fell off the slide at the park a couple of years ago on a broken bottle? I had the biggest bandage I could find on that thing for about a week with no improvement. You made me take it off. 'It needs some air' you told me. Well, this is sort of going to be like that," I told him and put my hands on his shoulder and quickly pulled.

This time he couldn't keep his voice between his teeth. Arnie came round the house and my Grandma came to the front door.

"You two roughhousing again?" she asked. "Try not to hurt your grandfather, O.K.?"

She returned to her work, but Arnie stayed, garden hose in his hands, trying to find something to water. I slapped my arm round my Grandpa's back, took a look at the damage and said, "I hope it's not too hot tomorrow. Looks like you're going to have to wear a long sleeved shirt."

Contributors Notes

Scott Ash is a junior graphic design and individualized audio/video production double major from Ann Arbor, MI. He likes to bike, run, play with digital video, and ask for money. If you like his poem, *Insane Noise*, then please send him some money.

Sarah Blum is a sophomore art major from Rockville, MD. She loves her family, friends, photography, and the Washington Redskins. She hopes to design Absolut ads and eventually go to Japan.

Iain Cook is a pseudo senior Music and Art major from Alpina, MI. When he is not in one of his many classes he spends his time dreaming of cool sculptures, a red Harley-Davidson Fat Boy, a 1968 Mercury Cougar XR7 he saw in N. Chicago burbs, mountain bikes, and life beyond school. "Every act of creation is an act of destruction"—Picasso. Mr. Rogers rules! Good beer and good friends are what it's all about.

Joshua Eckhardt bids a fond and appreciative farewell to E.P. Ruffeth, the only poet he's ever known.

Lars Eckstein is an exchange student from Tübingen, Germany. He is studying English and physical education and hopes to teach one day.

Evan Gaertner is a senior planning to attend Concordia Seminary with his future wife Christi. He has enjoyed his time at VU and wishes that things were getting better here for creative freedom. And finally without Peter, his brother, Evan would never have tried to take photos as good as those that Peter took during his lifetime.

Marci Galen is a sophomore social work major from Troy, IL. She loves Monet, daisies, saving the environment, and fellow non-meat eaters. These words by George Bernard Shaw paraphrase how she perceives her life: "Some people see things as they are and say 'Why'. I dream things that never were and say 'Why not'."

Greg Gallup is an English and secondary education major from Indianapolis, IN. He plays cello for the VU Chamber Orchestra and is currently learning piano. He is an active member of Sigma Chi fratern-

ity. His interests include creative writing, reading, music, art, and watching people at the mall.

Amy Gannaway is graduating in May with an English/humanities double major and communications minor. She is busy planning her July wedding and preparing for graduate school in the fall. She is happy to be in *The Lighter* this semester for the first time! In her spare time she enjoys sleeping and playing solitaire on her computer.

Cynthia Hamilton is a senior criminology/psychology double major from Crown Point, IN. In the fall she will begin working on a degree in counseling which will hopefully lead to her lifelong goal of entering a mental hospital (as either a counselor or a patient).

Leisl Jaberg is a senior English major from Howards Grove, WI. She is also minoring in writing and geography. After graduation she may go on to graduate school for a Master's degree in library and information sciences. If not, she will do something else. Recently she visited Colorado for the first time during the Handbell Choir tour.

Charles Johnson is a junior English major who has contributed to *The Lighter* before. He dreams of going to California.

Susie Kreutzmann is a junior English major from Belmont, CA. She is a former A&E Editor for *The Torch* and is spending this semester studying in Germany.

Jennifer Link is a junior elementary education major with a writing minor who wants to encourage all those fellow closet writers to submit their work to *The Lighter*.

Robyn Lira spent her childhood in San Diego, CA, and Arizona. She is an English major with a minor in gender studies. She enjoys writing and the outdoors.

Brent Lumsdon is a junior English major from Franklin, IN.

April Pickett is a senior psychology major from Jasper, IN. Her future plans include attending Law School at Regent University and co-hosting a television show with her dear friend, Ayesha. Someday she will

join the struggle for true democracy in Pakistan. April also intends on journeying around the world with a yet to be announced companion.

Ayesha Qaisar is an International student from Lahore, Pakistan. She is a senior majoring in English with a minor in secondary education. Her major interests include traveling, writing, and Omar. Her future plans include having a family and publishing a novel. Ayesha plans to host a television show with her best friend, April, entitled "What's Wrong with America?"

Sage Rebuehr, a senior English and secondary education major from Plainfield, IL, is delighted to once again be a part of *The Lighter*. She loves jelly beans, England, the color green, and looking at the stars.

Ernest Ruffleth is a poet of small means and wild aspirations.

Rory Segety is Half A Person from the Midwest, studying English, French, and Art History. He holds a fascination for print advertising, and finds life to be textured by mysticism and ritual.

Andrea Shidle is attempting an art major, despite the rest of the world. Someday she hopes to paint as vividly as she dreams. She has no Faeries to thank, but (as always) these poems are for Jonathan, if he wants them.

Naomi Strom is a sophomore art major from Bainbridge Island, WA. Her goals include being a photojournalist, going to Africa, and hang gliding.

Christina Williams is a junior political science major (with a concentration in international relations) from LaPorte, IN who once fell through the ice at the Dunes in order to get the perfect picture.

Jason Yasuda is a senior, going on super senior, from Indianapolis, IN. He is studying early childhood development with minors in psychology and writing. In his free time you may see him skate boarding on campus (although that was recently banned) or just hanging out with friends.

