

Spring 1999

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Valparaiso University

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# the lighter



spring 1999



# the lighter

valparaiso university's  
literary magazine

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All selections remain anonymous throughout the selection process. *The Lighter* welcomes submissions from all undergraduate, graduate, and law students regardless of race, gender, or sexual orientation.

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..... Poetry .....



*Winged Angel*

Sarah Blum



## Plastic and Blue (A Circled Diary) *Josh Honn*

---

Ledger: Life

Our plastic lives  
wrapped up, wrapped up  
the eyes we use look backwards and through  
they never look upwards at you.

Ledger: Dreams

Our golden dreams  
trapped in, trapped in  
we see things unexplained and blue  
they never point us to you.

Experience:

"It's all lies," she said. "It's all pictures in your head."

Ledger: Church

My blessed day  
plastered to, plastered to  
my keys unlock world; alone and two  
all this time looking for you.

Ledger: Life (after remembrance of)

My treasured life  
bottled up, bottled up  
I've spent too man days starting anew  
forgetting I'm plastic and blue.

Experience:

"It's all lies," she said. "It's all pictures in your head."

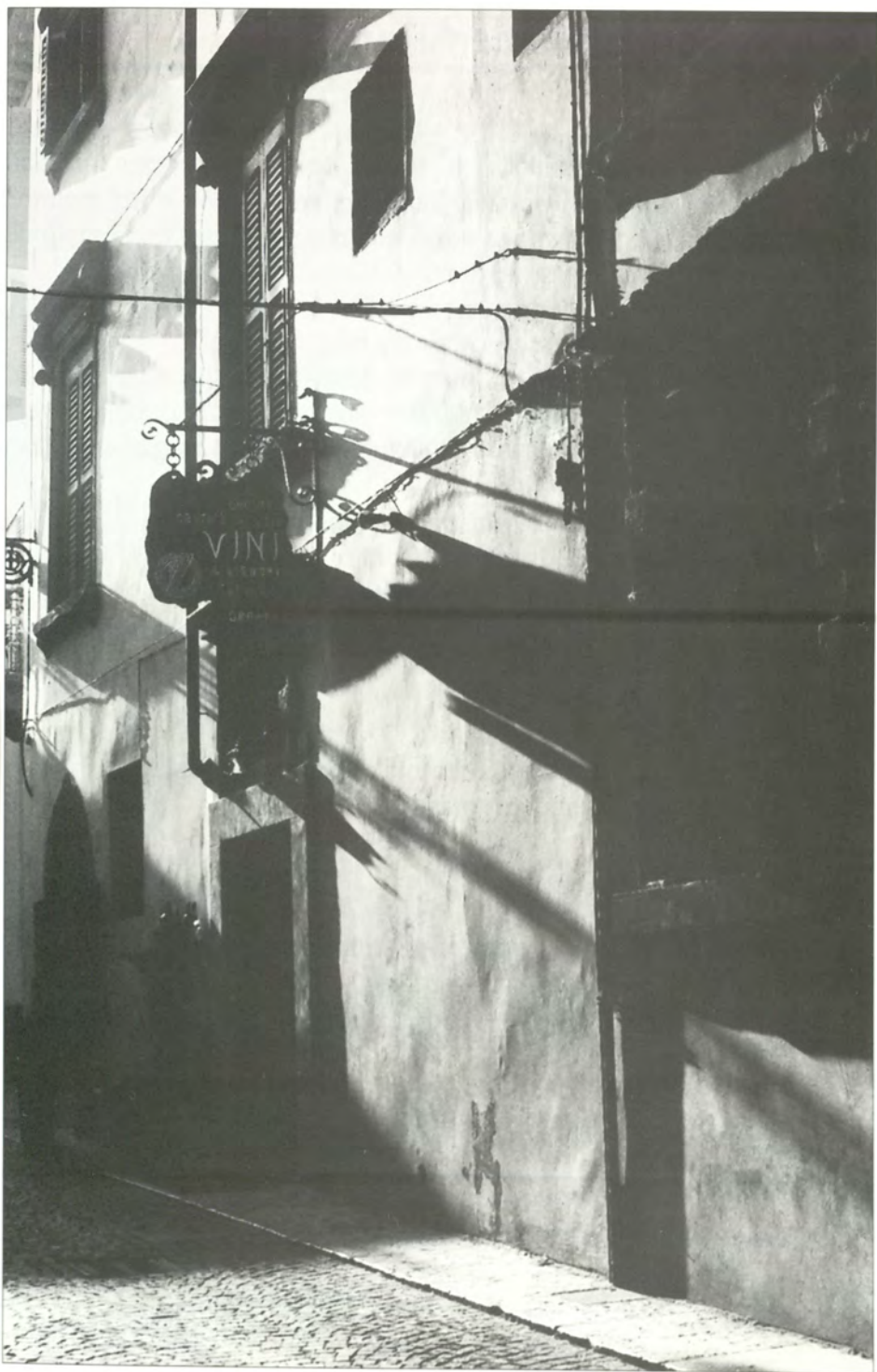
Ledger becomes Experience (a retort through life):

"My pictures of holiness, dear. My pictures of holiness, indeed."

## Spanish Stamps *Josh Honn*

---

Candles lit.  
Illuminate,  
Name Maria.  
Cigarette heart.  
My paragua.  
Wash away,  
Skeleton past.  
Black magic in the heart of May.  
Postmark.  
I marked me for death.  
Escape,  
Maria's heart.  
Candle smoke,  
ever present.  
Postmark.  
Candle's out.  
A grave return.  
My skeleton heart.



*Morning Light #2*

Sarah Blum

## Candle Sun & Wooden Frame *Josh Honn*

---

I.

Candle sun background, wooden frame horizon  
The curtains mesh with windowpane plainness  
And she said 'it's painless, at first'  
Eyes guiding bricked house hometown lies  
Before there was anything we were nothing  
Before there was anything we were nothing

II.

Blind book readings, air in whistled words  
him and her reiterated history in tomes  
Did this to that and that to time  
And in the candled dead doll room stood the fight of a million soldiers  
All marching in lines so long  
All waiting for a chance to call  
All waiting for an eye-gazed heart  
The ones not old enough walk around the circled square  
And the ones not big enough grasp for air.

III.

On the horizon men fight wars of wisdom  
Where I stand now we fight for nothing  
Before there was anything we were nothing

IV.

Walls cover the candlelight, hide the flames so soft  
The flames we recover to scar our hands  
Again, and again.

V.

The air grows thin as we rise higher above holiness  
Teaching things we know nothing about  
Guessing, crying, laughing, all in the name of understanding  
Soldiers know reality  
Soldiers know where we've all been

VI.

In the candle sun background, there stands nothing in the fore  
The soldiers fight lays outside wooden frame  
And we whisper amen, as our palms continue to burn

## That Night on the East Coast *Josh Honn*

---

Forty-five long nights with sweat drenched sleep.

I hide my comfort under the bed, so when I wake up tomorrow I will wake up with a smile.

Permanent indentations, indent mattresses like stepping on grass.

Bendable and flexible I try to cope with the little breaks.

I can't believe you want me to shout that out.

If it's true then I'm gone,

If it's true then I'm gone.

When everyone comes together it is so cold.

Our backs creak with the sound of an old man, early in the morning.

Gasping for air, gasping through his plastic exoskeleton.

Trying and melting, I try to forget that he is even real.

You really want me to repeat that line?

If it's true then I'm gone,

If it's true then I'm gone.

I can't escape that noise in my head. My ear the door, but never even open. How do I shut my mind up?

The smell of a temple permeates the homeless.

Making a blanket out of bread, I'd rather freeze under the moon.

Clenching my fist, clenching it so tight I warm another.

Clenching and clenching until I forget what I am holding onto.

Say it to me and I will shout it into the night.

If it's true you're wrong.

If you're wrong, I'm gone.

## I.

"Why he sleep down there?"

the girl in the pink patent leather shoes murmurs  
watching the box housing the stilled body  
fill the furrow plowed into the ground.

The earth swallows the shiny maroon box  
shovel-ful by shovel-ful,

with an appetite for endings.

"Because" the man hesitates,

"it is planting season..."

## II.

Long ago, a man died  
for the first time anyone could remember.

His rising chest consented to falling  
as he paused

in the middle of a thought.

Villagers crept around the still man  
afraid to touch his paling skin,

unsure when he would awake.

At night, a watchman stared  
hard into the sinking eyes

of the body on the splintered platform  
ready to howl at the shiver of an eyelash.

His screams raced across the grassy hillside  
as twilight moved the shadow

but not the eye.

Dawn crawled up the horizon

and retreated in red-faced embarrassment  
as each new morning found the body still

motionless.

## III.

A call for a meeting pummeled the hillside  
and fearful villagers gathered,

their eyes pacing across the still body.



Questions danced on the horizon:

"what will we do with the man who will not arise?"

A fisherman, the skin on his face darkened  
and divided into scales of browned flesh,  
spoke in a fluid breath  
that left him gasping.

"I have often seen the tide  
vomit a sleeping fish  
and toss it again and again in waving solitude."  
But, the gathered ones imagined sublime waves  
twisting and crashing into fragile flesh  
ever adrift and farther away.

A hunter, his eyes fixed on sagging flesh  
spoke in halting sputters.

"Sleep is for the weak ones  
who cannot survive the night.  
Any flesh will fill your belly."

But, the gathered ones savored the day's kill  
seared fast in the flames of the evening cookfire.  
They imagined roasting embers  
browning the pallid skin,  
never cool as the flesh burned their tongues.

A farmer with dirt buried  
in his weathered wrinkles,  
spoke in dark tones.

"Many a seed slumbers  
until I plant it in the ground  
and the summer sun conceives a sprout  
birthed from the tiny seed."

The gathered ones nodded in assent.  
Surely, planting the body  
would wake the slumbering man  
to burst forth in resurrection.

#### IV.

They dug a furrow with spades  
plunging into the quaking earth.

Manure fertilized the rotting flesh  
to encourage a healthy sprout.  
All who gathered that afternoon  
stood still and motionless  
as the body crashed into the dirt  
to sleep and germinate.

V.

Spring's fierce rains provided the water,  
and the sun of the afternoon  
basted the ground in warmth.  
A guard stared hard  
into the plot of land,  
ready to howl at any sign  
of the human sprout stretching his legs  
and breaking forth from the bedrock.  
When spring's grass sifted through the dirt,  
the villagers prayed to the God-that-Causes-to-Be  
for a similar shoot of life  
from the earth that swallowed their dead.

They waited and waited,  
imagining the body germinating  
through the spring, and through the summer  
and through the death of the forest leaves:  
yet, nothing.  
Baskets filled with the platinum fruits  
and the sun burned its autumnal streak across the sky  
but the grave never sprouted.

VI.

The watchman returned to his usual duties,  
now neglected and brambled.  
The grave was no longer visited in expectation.  
But, the farmer planted his seeds each following spring,  
still sure the human sprout would dance someday.  
Someone else died not long after,  
and the farmer told the gathered villagers  
that often you plant three times as many seeds  
as plants that you expect.

They tried to plant a still body again  
and again. And again,  
the ground was firm and hard packed  
above more lifeless bodies.

VII.

"... and still we try" the man says  
"wondering if our dead will sprout someday  
in a plant of human flesh."

The girl peers into the filled hole,  
watching her shadow move across the earthen mound,  
and wonders if another life would  
breathe in that dark box someday.  
And she creeps up onto the mound  
directly above the slumbering body.  
Her feet dip into the earth as she kneels,  
pink patent leather shoes  
plant in the newly packed dirt.  
She waits, breathing shallowly  
through the evening hours.

VIII.

Morning, finding the girl with dreams  
still floating behind her eyes,  
prods her with shards of sunlight.  
The girl rises from the earthen mound and leaves,  
dirt still crusted on her pink patent leather shoes.

## Epitaph for a loved one *Rebecca Schmidt*

---

Cry for me  
when I am  
dead—  
Drop  
a scarlet  
rose upon  
my tomb,  
so I am  
not forgotten too  
soon—  
And if by chance  
I still dance  
on in your brain  
then my blood  
shall not have run  
in vain.

## Capitalist London *Rebekah Schmidt*

---

Places of worship dangle  
as decomposing carcasses,  
freshly gutted  
of their faithful followers.

Hypnotic incense  
draws camera-clicking  
tourists, who pay  
a couple quid to pass  
through the immortal cross-  
wrought iron bars,  
to witness smashing  
stained glass shards-  
jigsawed in pictures  
of paradise, eluding  
prying photographic lenses.

(just as morning mist escapes  
the clutches of an algae  
infested pond)

The cumbersome  
air outside suffocates the limp  
specter of a man hung  
inside Salvation  
Army scraps. Naked  
feet stab  
from greasy  
trousers, blackened  
by hordes of polluted autos  
caught in twisting net-  
works of pavement.

Herded under  
those avenues of mile-high  
piled dismal abodes, cud-

smacking cattle find solace  
for their souls  
within pitch chutes  
as their lucid vision  
plods toward auction.

## To an Unknown Man *Rebekah Schmidt*

---

The screeching horn of your dusty  
blue rusted Chevy Blazer  
rips through this sultry  
Saturday, demanding my startled  
look. 'Damn you,' I seethe  
as I catch your perverted  
gaze raping me—  
But I must have asked for it.  
After all, my breasts weren't covered  
with a loose shirt—just a comfy cotton  
purple-striped sport bra—  
and little black nylon shorts  
did just barely graze my thighs.

(ideal clothes for a run  
on a sweltering Indiana afternoon,  
but practicality couldn't possibly  
make sense to you)

Instead you caught  
my concealing hair pulled  
into a careless cheerleader  
ponytail. You tasted the hard-  
saline sweat dripping down my naked  
face. As every degrading desire  
seeped from your cold  
cobalt eyes, could I  
do anything but cower,  
like a cornered rat  
receiving an electric shock?

The rev of an engine and screaming  
sticky tires shot  
loose gravel upon my exhausted  
body. You were a meaningless  
speck on the horizon, but your dust

stuck in my dry mouth and burned  
my scarlet-threaded eyes. I picked up  
the pace to exercise the demons...

I still have a long way to go  
and so do you.



## fishermans ode *Jason Stutz*

---

Harmonious morning sunshine dwells  
in hilly bales and lakeshore swells,

I cast my line into their midst  
while praising days beginning mist.

Patient waiting, pleasures call  
to vigilant fisherman before the fall.

Some would say the practice fails  
to cause beguiling fish to flail

upon their filament, but this fine day  
of trail in waves to praise the peaceful way

of tradition centuries old, one man must  
defy the cold to fish, provide, return to dust

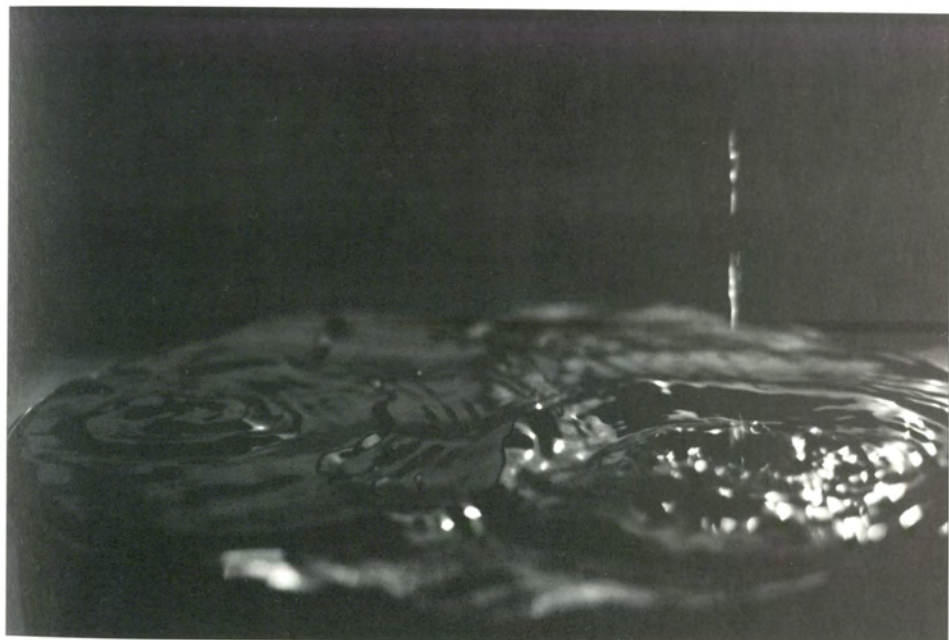
before his maker calls—for father too  
embraced the art to fish amongst the morning dew.

From suns fair rising to early evening set  
the ancient art is practiced well, whether line or net.

The fisher feeds his family nest  
from natures bounty, his art knows best.

When sunset comes from tiresome day  
across its long descent, the fishers toil has paid his way

and homeward bound his feet do tread  
with string of silver fish, now grown heavy on his thread.



April Burford

## a violation of purity *Jason Stutz*

---

*For Susannah and the Elders,  
The Romanian National Museum of Art.*

Late afternoon, the yellow sun sinks,  
turning red the scene, like the redness  
rising in flushed cheeks. Warmed spring  
water flows through reed rocked rushes  
and cleanses pure flesh.

Pouring through white fingers,  
she washes worries away,  
carried down clear water streams.  
Gangly men gawk at her languid  
form bathing in cool water spring,

seeing her white wash  
in that cool water blue.  
Pulling the reeds back, they feel  
the strain growing deep within  
their elders' bony robe-flesh.

One leg extends from the water's  
mirrored finish, glowing hues divine,  
reflected in the elders' reddened eyes.  
They stare from their clandestine viewing  
perch. She knows only her happiness.  
Splashing in her nature's bath,

her skin exudes innocence.  
Leaving the cool fountain bath,  
she suspects she may be watched  
and hides her whiteness with a robe  
flowing to ankle length.

Captivated would-be captors  
reveal themselves to the girl  
and her suspicion culminates in a gasp.

Two elders and an innocent framed  
by endless sky. They proposition  
her with pock-marked flesh and a grasp

that does not lessen.

To allow these two  
to abash her purity, or refuse  
and tread upon her name;  
    it penetrates her mind.

There is no decision, long fingers  
vanquish hope for escape. Ribs  
protrude, loosely hung beneath  
the elders' vulgar loosening cape.

Across the long green meadow  
the last sun-red rays turn  
to purple as its candle flame  
is quenched. Cool water turns

cold as the fresh water runs red.  
Sky's last image of speckled white  
disappears as swans beat overhead,  
while all that is heard is a single  
broken sob, and silence.

She frees the notes to fill her need  
and shapes them fast to form a whole  
They grow in me like writhing seeds  
She harvests songs to fill my soul  
The world has found an empty life  
Because her muse won't fit the mold  
She is the black piano's wife  
And when she stands, the keys grow cold  
She is poet and siren and faerie queen  
And even the dead can hear her call  
Through all the years, each day I've seen,  
She's found a way to sing them all  
The color of fire with the cool of a pearl,  
She'll never become a cornflake girl

## My Own Ophelia *Jennifer Fett*

---

This stream  
of consciousness?  
Has swelled into a deluge—  
A flood filled with  
swimming thoughts that swallow  
all who dare to dive in. One by one,  
they are brought to the bottom of the basin  
sinking in the bogwater with the weight of my world.  
But the current carries me swiftly still  
splashing and fishing and  
thrashing and wishing  
I could somehow solidify  
the rapids  
or find  
a branch  
strong enough  
to grasp.

## Highway Reflections *Jennifer Fett*

---

This day is intention-  
not coincidence; creation.  
Clouds, grey and fading, know  
they cannot compete with the burning aura.  
Still, they push to glow most intensely  
just before the flicker  
and fade  
of winter's sleep.  
A spectrum from a celestial palate  
fills me with delicious  
burnt sienna blends and aubergine  
that share the sky with prickly jade.  
An ebony angel caws as it flees the scene-  
trying to fly farther and faster than October.  
I drink this Midwestern Eden like an aphrodisiac  
taken to ensure peaceful sleep  
until Spring frees me,  
once again rising like the phoenix  
to wake the world.



*'have a coke and a smile, dammit. no. 3'*

Wendy Barker



## Robin *kelly k faulstich*

---

Fairy leaps across the wooden floor  
One leg in front, bent slightly at the knee  
One extended back,  
Toes pointed,  
Head up,  
Eyes up  
One by one  
Me first!  
Me first!

*Let the others have their chance*

You live in the spotlights  
With all the attention  
All the love  
All the fame  
All the roses thrown on the stage expressly for you

Leaping  
You think you have wings until the floor jumps  
And you fall  
A slip up, the ultimate failure in front of a class full of eyes  
The fame flies away like the bird you tried to be

Pink leg warmers, not for you,  
Instead cream-colored with rainbowed words  
The words on the one did not match the other  
right-right-right-right-right  
That one was supposed to go on your right leg  
left-left-left-left-left

Struggling with directions  
Turning circles around the barred room.  
In a leotard and tights,  
Confounded to a world of elastic  
And pulled back hair  
Discipline

*I'll give you stickers if you be good now, you hear?*

Threatened to behave  
Still got the sticker though  
You were was her favorite  
Always was  
Always have been  
It's lonely at the top

When you're five.

as they were led between walls of water,  
so i am led.

following a man inspired,  
treaded and grumbled along the path,  
distrust in their creator,  
in their leader,  
in themselves.

a wilderness, worn down world  
had overcome them.

has overcome me.

between a pair of unleashed forces  
i wonder.

i wander.

knowing not which way to swim

who to trust

where to go.

grumbling, mumbling, stumbling each day

filling the air with disgust. depression

waves in my stomach twisting into knots,

knots so tight that

butterflies fluttering must

cease their muttering

when memory returns to tell me

i am led.

by something.

by someone.

forty days turn into forty months into forty years

and before the realization sets in,

i have conquered

the trial

the tribulation.

wandering

wondering

through a sea of reeds

wishing, hoping, dreaming, praying.  
in this place so present  
almost past  
praying to find  
to inhabit a  
promised land.

all alone in her corner  
the rain from inside falls  
she is  
dancing in circles

a woman coughs, no hacks, in the next room  
the man watches videos of john wayne in the living room  
no yelling on the screen like in the background of our life  
far away an old woman named "little bit" cries  
without home or food  
distant and so close  
to the dancing heart

but she,  
she dances to a meaningless tune  
the deep golden tears stream down her cheeks  
to the soft landing of a worn beige carpet

flopping down  
the burgundy quilt her cushion,  
a sigh escapes her exhausted body  
a sigh softer than a thunder that has pushed her  
into acting, a mask more beautiful than her own

if the walls were a vivid yellow,  
maybe she'd understand,  
but her madness is one of warmth  
of deep green curtains  
warm blue picture frames  
a burnt orange pulse

dolls and animals,  
framed memories  
the closet and the dresser full of clothes,  
the tears halt for a moment in disbelief  
then continue as the thinking,  
the ceaseless pondering rips holes  
in her soul

all that stuff  
so blessed  
so ungrateful  
so empty inside  
surrounded by beauty  
which does not belong to her.

the tattered stuffed dog is the only comfort for her sorrows  
his deep brown eyes gaze into her green—  
he has been sewn and resewn year after year  
only *his* threadened stitches heal,

standing once again  
dancing in circles  
i watch her  
through the looking glass that hangs on the wall.



## Un Boisson D'anticipation *Guy W. Meikle*

Four ice cubes thrown into the stainless steel shaker,  
it must not be tainted. Three shots  
of vodka, then let the vermouth  
get close, kiss-hugging  
the  
liquor  
but  
not  
penetrating it. Look

above into the dark-cherry wood-lined rack, pick  
from a mirrored-sea image; glass waves.  
Sultry lemon peels  
the color of  
the  
sun-  
mist  
in  
morning's haze.

Squeeze that sun and let it shimmer down the glass. Bitter  
rains fall down to the yet lifeless stem.  
The mix has bonded with the  
ice, the drink  
cascades,  
floods  
into  
the  
glass. It seeps

between pimento's center and olive's lime-green  
womb. Now the cocktail has been born,  
unimportant, yet created  
from earth and hand.  
As  
if  
it  
could  
quench anticipation.



## Wind Knocked Out of Me *Guy W. Meikle*

---

My toes curl around the edge. I have just watched  
all of you dive. Drop your pudgy young bodies  
off the top and surface again  
through the muddy palate of the Mississippi.  
Strains of confidence have not yet stiffened my gait.

You all have found your way, gliding naturally.  
My ego and youthful pride say I should too.  
Gripping my houseboat-perch, I spread my wings  
to fly. I feel the exhilaration of flight.  
Hoping-willing my body will know what to do.

Slicing through the water, my untamed body is a spoon.  
I strike bottom. Headfirst, my mouth gulps air.  
The mud I get instead will not save me.  
Tendrils of red-hot embarrassment already creep in.  
I already know when I surface, my lungs will hold no wind.

## Ophelia's Mould *Sarah Jacobsen*

Creepy crawly  
those little monsters that you see  
in the darkest corners  
of your fears  
flit around from person  
to person-  
madhouse to madhouse-  
basket case to basket case-  
moulding you  
into their own playground  
where they trapeze  
through the air (your thoughts)  
and laugh, or cackle incessantly  
in your ears (where your  
headaches come from)  
and then slide down your spine  
until they land  
in the mud pit of your  
ulcerous stomach and as they  
run tag races  
from shoulder to foot  
is when you're pacing to and fro  
wiggling in convulsions  
because it's like a fever  
and all you want is  
the depression to stop  
and a deep slumber  
would be nice, it might just  
ward off Anxiety,  
the little demon that's  
playing the  
"never-let-go" game  
and then you  
tire yourself out  
and maybe, if you're  
one of the lucky ones

these damn funny little  
gremlins will take a nap  
in the microcosm of your body.  
But maybe they won't,  
just maybe they're high on caffeine.

I arose tonight,  
remembering the Ya-Ya's.  
I enveloped them with generosity into  
my great, long arms.

They came to me, and are now  
sleeping full and satisfied  
in my belly. (How it gurgles happily.)  
And they don't want to leave.

The stillness tonight is the kind that comes before a good snow.  
A rare beauty rode in on the cold winds  
of winter. She whispers and whistles  
on silver-stringed vocal chords her song of

Great Wisdom Tonight.  
The iceberg of thought melted  
in my hands tonight,  
which is a good thing because again

I can relish the scent of the Queen B's  
in the air. Their words,  
and their humor prickle me like  
eight tiny finger-tips healing my body.

Touches from sweet angels.  
True grace, for a Dahlin. I won't be a fool.  
"Enough is never enough."  
There cannot be too much love.

Tallulah, Moon Maiden,  
Our Lady of Peace, Genevieve,  
The High Priestess of a Sacred Tribe,  
Necie, Teensy, Caro and Vivi,

Come together again in the smiles of my own friends.  
Words that will forever ring in my ears:

"Meet you at Java at 9?"

"I'll be there at 9:15!" (Better bring a book to wait with.)

Succulence: wild, old & crazy-

We are strong and awesome.

We have given to each other the gift of Resilience.

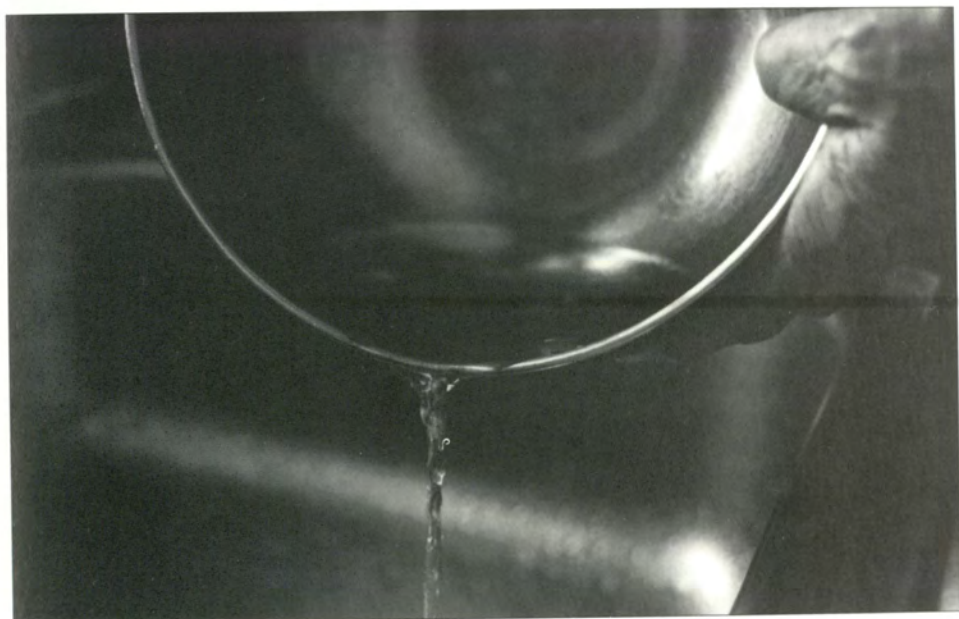
We are Old Cars with lots of Insurance,

Lots of insurance to live with.

We will be like this always...

though kingdom come & kingdom go.

"Life may be short, but it is so wide."



April Burford

## Mama Look *michaela chatman*

---

Slender brown finger  
studded with bitten  
nail-points,  
opaque window front-  
vault that initiates children's  
dreams

blurry blaze bares  
down on kinky head  
tightly tied in sections four

beige rubber band screamed  
on its connection  
to her heat holding head

red ribbon frazzled  
on edges  
held sections four

*mother looks*

puffy braids straightened  
by untwisting  
unrecognized  
unraveled  
unformed  
reality

finger grows elegant  
the translucent  
window evolved

*mother cries*

She would start a cornrow  
from the nape of my neck  
until she reached the con-  
fused middle of my head

stopped on rusty knees  
90° back bent  
forward down  
faced pressed into her thighs

my peach fuzzy face  
brushed against the cotton gown  
blue flowers with pink centers  
shift stitched by work worn hands

woven threads sealed  
the smell of fried  
hair baked  
in Bergamont blue

criscoed salmon croquettes  
and peppered  
buttered rice  
from the mornings fare

and that special momma smell

face gingerly between  
two oak thighs  
my mouth breathed  
agape

nostrils pressed  
resisting  
inhalation



tongue parched  
sand paper dry  
mouth would close  
to swallow

my nose an accordion  
wrinkled  
tingled nose hairs  
fighting

my head snapped up  
dexterous fingers grapple  
my jungle moss  
of hair

firm fingers flexed  
me back  
90° back bent  
forward down

At first sight of them

The Mexica warrior thought  
He had seen a god,

At least a demi-god,  
The hideous creature

With four beastly legs  
And the upper body of a man.

Then, as the god neared,  
He found

Merely a horse  
And a man.

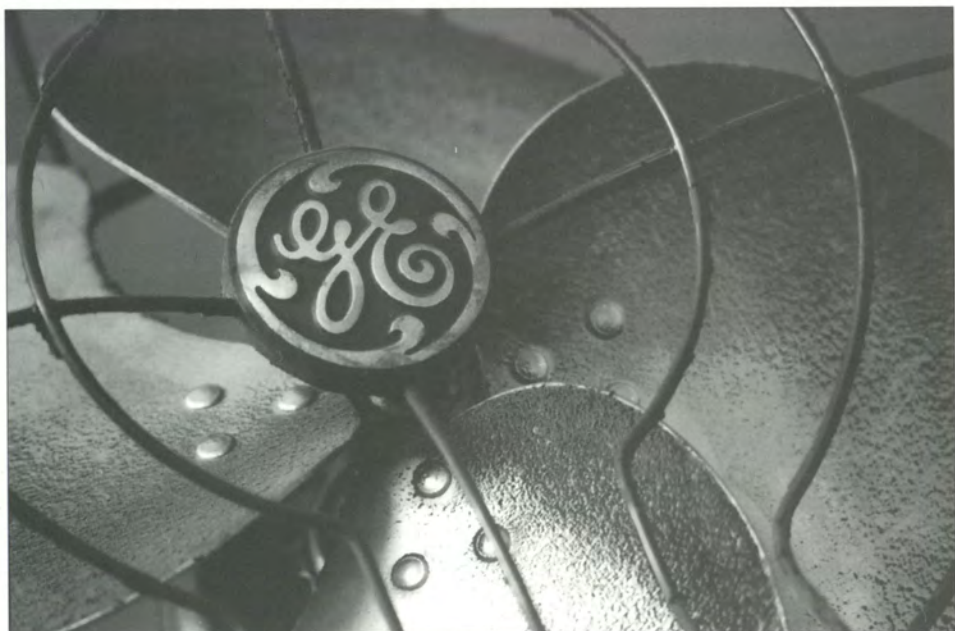
The Mexica warrior,  
With precise aim and two sharp arrows,

Shot them both down.  
Hernán and his horse-

Dead as mortals-  
Tumbled to the ground

With blank faces and empty eyes  
At the feet of the warrior:

I am not afraid of you.



## Blue Drapes Which Hang *Doug Favero*

I sit up in bed and  
seep through the blue drapes  
which hang

over the window.  
The pale sun a hot blotch—  
a scab green under gauze—

soaks through the cold  
air of winter, through  
the knit of drapes,

like a burn  
settling.  
The scar—

like stitches bubble  
the rough cloth and tear  
across. Behind the drapes

the window—its bars  
like the bespattered sun  
only in the way they

curve along the drape folds,  
stripes of a darker firmer blue,  
shadow to the glow.

And behind the bars the frozen distance  
between this bed and you.  
But the olive sun too will drop;

the wan sun will grip it all,  
even this winter and drag,  
drag it down down

down, leaving only the blank  
dark behind the drapes which hang  
a deeper, finer blue.

## Independence Day Mt. Morris, Illinois 1998 *Doug Favero*

---

The pretty young girls float by  
Behind the Ford pick-up:  
Wave & smile, smile & wave.

The mayor's hand covers "Made-in-China"  
As he readies the firesticks for blast-off,  
And the beginning of this year's display.

The townsfolk, ancestors from all over  
Europe, assemble around Mt. Morris High School-  
"The Home of the Braves"

And host of the jubilee-  
Shuffling for the right spot, the best  
View, and look up, expectantly.

The stars and half-moon dim  
Behind hand-picked cotton clouds  
Spread across the sky's navy-deep blue-black.

In front of me, a telephone pole  
Extends skyward, slices  
My perception in halves.

The show begins. The stars mingle  
With splashes of fire, and the moon  
Suffers an ambush.

Sounds of howitzers, cannons, and pistols  
Disturb the swaying summer fields  
And riddle through the vacant village streets.

All eyes fix upon the heavens.  
A woman behind me grimaces,  
"Who likes those loud banging flashy ones?"

The show goes on.  
Occasional clapping and whistling  
Rolls through the crowd.

Some are drinking. Some  
Are with family. Some are thinking  
Of themselves as American.

The show is good.  
Glorious rockets shoot for the moon,  
Arousing the awestruck.

But the earth pulls harder, bends them  
Back, as they squeal, explode, and  
Fade.

The night glows soft, showery,  
As if the sun had not quite set.  
And after a splendiferous burst

Of color and sound sparkling,  
And the vibrating earth  
-The grand finale-

The flag, in lights, lifts  
Through the goal posts  
In the football field.

The show ends.  
The moon blares boldly.  
The stars restore their blaze.

My stiffening neck tells me sometimes  
It's hard to look up.

## Waking *Gregory Denton Gallup*

---

8am and you're watching memories  
on the TV screens of my eyes ~  
open halfway to the world,  
not quite ready for the whole thing.

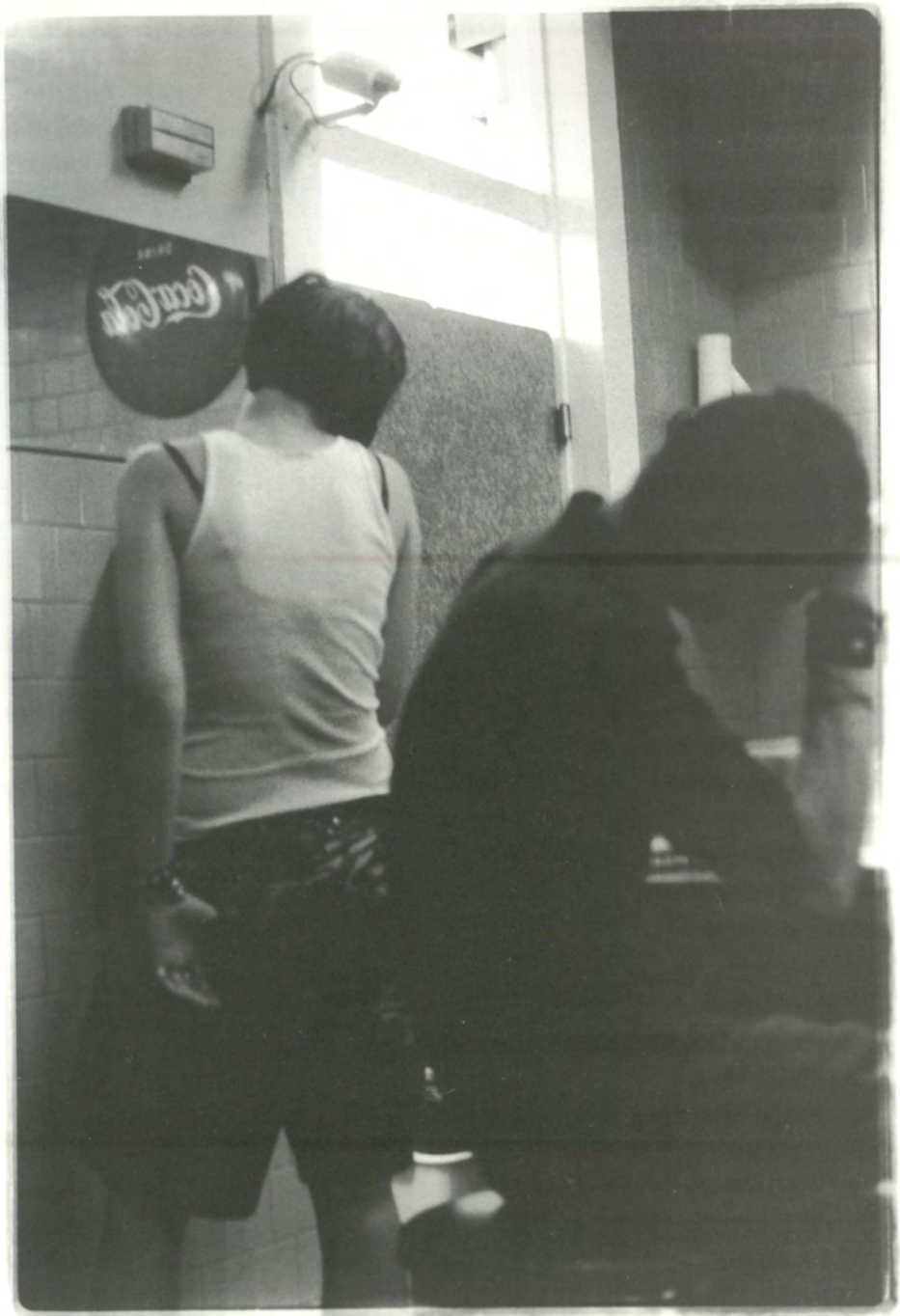
8:05 and old baby blues  
are lying to you  
with their superficial broadcast images  
you call perfection,  
I call seduction.

"Baby blues,"  
you say, "when they wink,  
tell a story of their own."

8:15 and this bed suddenly seems  
too small  
and all too real  
for what is hard  
and growing between us.

I could blink you away like tears  
and you'd still be there  
in the shadows of  
8:25's not quite light out yet.

This time of the year morning  
is slow to come,  
sleep is hibernation,  
and you keep pulling me  
out of my cave  
into the light  
before I have time to shield my eyes.



"have a coke and a smile, dammit. no. 1"

Wendy Barker



## Painted Eve *Gregory Denton Gallup*

---

Perfect Pink  
Rose Petals

I'd forgotten  
you also need white  
to make pink,  
and left the store with  
only red.

Aggressive, this red,  
but tonight is sure to be  
a more subdued pink.

I'd forgotten  
that some words remind me  
of things past.

Much like  
I walked out of the store  
forgetting the white,  
I walked out of the room  
forgetting her name.

there she sits  
in a pile of shoes  
sorting  
damp memories  
trapped in  
all she has  
all her  
pretty things...

kids gone  
hungry cat  
cold coffee  
last cigarette  
and no way  
to get anywhere  
sitting in a  
pile of memories  
sorting  
damp shoes  
because  
the  
roof  
fell  
in  
and that's not  
the only  
thing.

So laugh because  
it takes me  
five pages  
to say  
what I'm really thinking  
and I  
bounce  
between  
cool and confused  
in one sentence  
and pretend  
it's no big deal  
and it's really not  
but for a moment  
my heart  
is on the  
line  
and you can break me  
with one word  
and you do  
before I look back  
and realize  
I should have kept  
my mouth  
shut  
and left the letter  
tucked inside a  
notebook  
on my shelf  
because  
you know  
I love you  
whatever that means  
and I never give up  
because  
that's me  
and because

you're you  
"goodbye"  
can't escape my lips  
without  
lying  
on my bed  
wishing  
I could say  
"come here"  
and you'd say  
"in a minute"  
because  
you finally realize  
I'm not  
laughing  
back

## sabotage *Mary Lucinda Linxweiler*

---

sometimes gliding underneath  
flesh as an athlete's, my aching muscles  
liquefy, jelled beneath my skin, shapeless,  
without direction, they cannot think,  
but if they could,  
I would hear screams:

*What is my purpose?*

*How do I function?*

*Why do I exist?*

In a stairwell, I begin to realize catastrophe, and I fall.

No muscles, balance gone, I fall.

The concrete stairs pose no threat to tread of my shoes but my clammy palms sense a slippery texture, and I concede defeat: I fall. Flailing grasps at the metallic railing yield failure and further expose my weakness.

Fallen.

My perception from the floor distorts reality. The smooth cold surface on which I lay repels me with its deceitful ambivalence, yet I have no choice but to embrace this animosity.

Bricks layer themselves in a sickening pattern I can no longer tolerate. Nausea permeates my insides. How are the bricks growing in quantity? How can bricks pulsate, even in rhythm with my heart which has lodged itself in my throat, choking me?

I extend a shaking finger to the metaphysical wall, expecting and hoping to feel a grainy surface; instead, I feel flesh, just like my own. I jerk my hand away, unsure anymore of these parameters and how my eyes trick me, and I shut my lids to recede within a vacant, aching shell.

And I am alone. Not wanting you  
R help because I know a vacan  
See prevents you from sigh  
T. "Feel my pain" deman

Dead a body. Requests can leave  
Me more vacant—still like what  
Er beneath fog which rises  
From a lake on a cold, sun

Less morning. For you, a los  
S pells and pelts and tells beliefs. Un  
Chain me from this monster. Lie  
Fe prevailing shatters you cyst

Em. Please, damn the fee  
L ove hate. And fate and fear. Con  
Tinuing abstracts distract and con  
Strict our meanings. Do you not

See?



Sleep-hungry eyes open to dawn  
At this light-filled dune.  
She shakes and stirs, then swims to scare  
Away her agony, away her scar.

Liquid glazes her taut flesh.  
She proceeds in growing fury, for fresh  
Reality is her necessity.  
But, her strokes vacant, she knows only vacancy.

"I like agony for I know it is real."  
Feigned Dickinson vibrates in her ears.  
She can breathe knowing of her company.  
Although water is what thrusts her free.

Her eyes roll back painfully, then close  
In gratitude. In her mind she kneels,  
Desperately praying to her God  
For relief from misery, this suffocating fog,

Like the stinging water in which she floats,  
Poses as death but remains her only hope.  
She craves a new view to find herself  
Less alert, less harmed, less self.

But knifing awareness forces  
Tears to blend with fluid's cool embrace  
And she is grateful for she can lie.  
Only sickening mucus inside

Her throat reveals her hate, of giving  
Too much. She yielded choicelessly.  
Plunging her feet into the sand, she suddenly  
Paces from the living pool toward the asphalt.



## **Fearless** *Mary Lucinda Linxweiler*

---

Clouds the shade  
of antique lace swim  
by and I remember  
the tone of memory, gone

from sight now. Stars  
permeate a poetic  
experience, two languages  
unite, and I remember

the flavor of desire, lilac  
like lingerie you wanted  
to touch in the store  
but you refrained—scared

by others' notions—wrong  
and right. It's not that simple.  
Didn't anyone ever tell  
you that? Devotion comes

in many colors. Adoration  
shines like when I smile  
at moments when I think  
I have touched you. See,

you don't remember,  
do you? Scared of me  
still? Enter the gazebo, lean  
your head out and look up.

The Moon  
stares blindly at the dark ground  
blinking away tears  
that gleam as they fall  
a million kisses  
soothe Her sorrow  
a million bright infinities  
cleanse Her spirit.

The little boy stands  
watching  
crying  
staring  
he looks to the sky  
feels the universe with his eyelashes  
and pleads  
    why must you hide from me?  
    why must you always leave me?  
as another cloud shadows his face  
he steps into midnight.

Ubiquitous silvery smiles  
light up the foaming tide  
liquid blackness  
swallows up the shoreless beach  
as ghost ships sail past  
ancient watchtowers  
through the hazy mist  
of another sullen evening  
a sliver of pearl peeks though  
the window  
the sky exhales  
sweet breath.

The boy gasps as the cold air  
discovers his vulnerability

golden locks fall from their place  
he retreats to the sand  
lays shivering  
loneliness and desolation come to him  
as he feels the soft soil  
on his feet  
in the place of no visitors  
gazing upward  
a curious sight  
a slight smile plays upon his lips  
a crescent.

As the ocean opens its door  
hope watches as a star crashes  
cold passion triggers  
sweet remorse  
scintillant orange  
she exposes one twinkling eye as  
tiny worlds dance  
collide in a translucent galaxy  
the gravity of despair  
melts into a nebular beam  
of celestial celebration  
a rebirth.

Blue eyes of  
shimmering warmth  
emit tears of exhilaration  
the boy rises as he sees Her  
returning to him  
She smiles as he reaches  
for Her embrace  
the embrace of eternity  
a questioning thought  
beckons to his innocent ignorance  
    are you going to leave me again  
    will I be lonely once more?  
a latent nod  
sends shivers to his fingertips  
    why?

why must you always go?  
as a resplendent voice sings  
across mountains of solitude  
and forest of amnesty  
the crystalline stars flicker  
courageously

I am always with you  
She answers soundlessly  
in your heart  
you can always feel me,  
when invisibility takes me from your sight  
always remember  
it's just another phase.

## The Blues (In Red Lines) *Patrick Sanchez*

---

placid eyes

    spying water in the puddle waves

    shifting like rain

        or the snow that never ceases in January and laughter

    your hair

    bow tied tightly in a blond mountain

        over-shadowing your face

        with everything necessary to reveal all of you

into the night

    your clicking black shoes disguising your feet

    and the long sleeves of you

        the perfect mask, unsuspected and tracing your fingers

        row over

            endless row of streetlights you glide below

    ghost like with an attitude

        discretely being that thing that raises

        eyes and hands to

write

there you go

    into that good night like lightning

    or the rain after the sun

        shuts down, or the way a kiss is lost and found

            there you go

        from my sight like a vision

            or the visionary's sight

        into that next cool shadow, my heart

        falling out,

running in watery lines after you.

## I Passed by Honeysuckle Today *K.E. Root*

Three crushed blossoms lie by my bed  
I picked them in mourning for my dead,  
and from their bold spirits my past was raised.  
Maybe the languorous southern haze  
pressed me to pick the bloom off the vine  
of the two-toned honeysuckle white and cream,  
and whispered my name time after time  
'til out flowed the passwords of my being...

My lost friend of childhood, she and I  
drank the honeysuckle sitting high  
in a vine covered tree, cloaked in green,  
in the vines strong tendrils went unseen  
for long hours on end—secluded—  
we breathed humid breezes and grew deluded.  
She laughed and fought with me through eight years  
of false inspiration, ebbs and tears  
of oblivious childhood. Our eyes closed  
to all around us that, ghostly, posed  
in Georgia's expressions, veiled and numb:  
we fumbled through hot days deaf and dumb.

Memorials will fade by and by  
so I'd never bothered: let them die—  
like fragile mimosa, or growing pains  
like an epiphany, or hot shame—  
in peace and be buried: I have learned  
from the death of that life now long since spurned.  
How these thoughts came to me as I passed  
by the honeysuckle! I've trespassed  
against the slow southern song. Rebellng,  
I remember it all and now the telling,  
innocent perfume of the crushed  
sweet blossoms beside me flood and rush.  
And I reach down to touch by my bed  
the honeysuckle spray I picked for my dead.



I reread them—  
her emotions are abundant here,  
and I miss her mostly  
because I know she'll fall.  
She's on her mountain.  
Her voices seem loud around me,  
I can hear all of her inflections:  
excited and confused.  
But the writing is lyrical:  
she's feeling idealistic  
though she is abused.  
The other voice here, you see  
after years of reading these lines.  
In the first her sight's restored,  
in the second, she is blind.  
The writing is disjointed,  
she must be freezing cold...  
In the first, she's found some love,  
in the second, love is old.



## Swallowed *Cheryl Lohrmann*

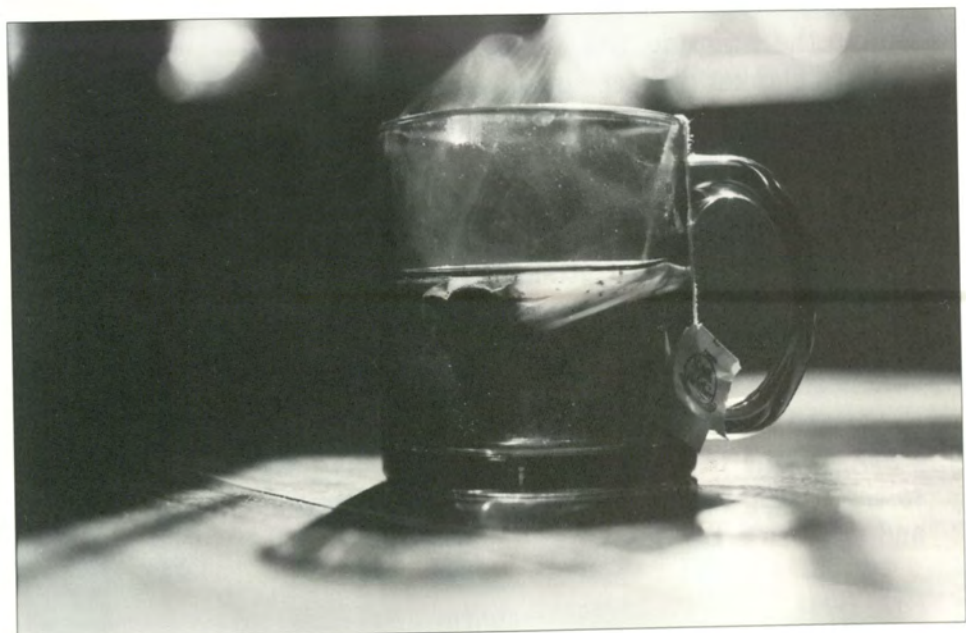
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Finished another painting  
It's done  
On the wall, a swatted fly.  
My palette is a colorful chaos  
Enemy colors coerced to comraderie.  
Conflicting feelings produce friction  
Wear each other out until they turn gray.

I just drank my paintwater.  
An accident, good thing it's not turpentine.  
My tongue urges a spit, the bad taste  
Remains  
In my bloodstream, in my veins  
The point is, it's in.  
Red mad, orange fresh, yellow new  
Blue, obviously.  
Mixed and confused.

It takes seven years for swallowed gum  
how long for this?

Here take this picture  
See the wonderful contrast and unity of composition?  
Just take it, hang it where it fits.  
Meaning will come when you let it.  
As I sit here with my empty rinsing cup,  
Yes, it's empty.  
My thoughts on the wall,  
My soul in my stomach.



Mia Dolce Cabibbo

## ICU Waiting Room, 2:43 a.m. *Justin Krishka*

---

There are bodies strewn throughout the room,  
on the floor, in chairs, clinging to each other.  
young, old, but no children under 16 allowed.  
sterile starched sheets gently cover each person—  
a morgue for the emotionally dead.  
And darkness shrouds the room,  
veiling the suffering, the pain  
under a blanket of sleep—  
the fish tank hums, covering the hushed sobs  
of the restless.

A woman reads yesterday's *Times*  
a man pages through a tattered *Newsweek* from '95  
a boy, about 17, looks at me though the fish tank.  
To me he is trapped, to him it is me  
who needs escape.

**2:44**

I wait for him to emerge  
so the scream that is stifled can finally be heard  
and time isn't like running through water.

delicate wings  
encounter  
the transparent barrier.  
legs  
caress  
fresh air  
that penetrates  
the wire screen.  
eyes  
absorb  
multiple visions of  
dew kissed grass,  
rotting  
crab apples.  
cries  
of agony  
float,  
then  
dissipate  
into Eden's air.  
metal  
grinds  
and  
the  
tomb  
seals.

## Marie Thérèse Walter: A Portrait *Jes Noon*

---

*(Interpretation of the painting by Picasso)*

"Time's wingèd chariot" hurries near  
as the artist captures his muse.

She illuminates the dark room.

Her countenance blinds the lover.

His brush strokes the canvas

as his desire strokes her cheek.

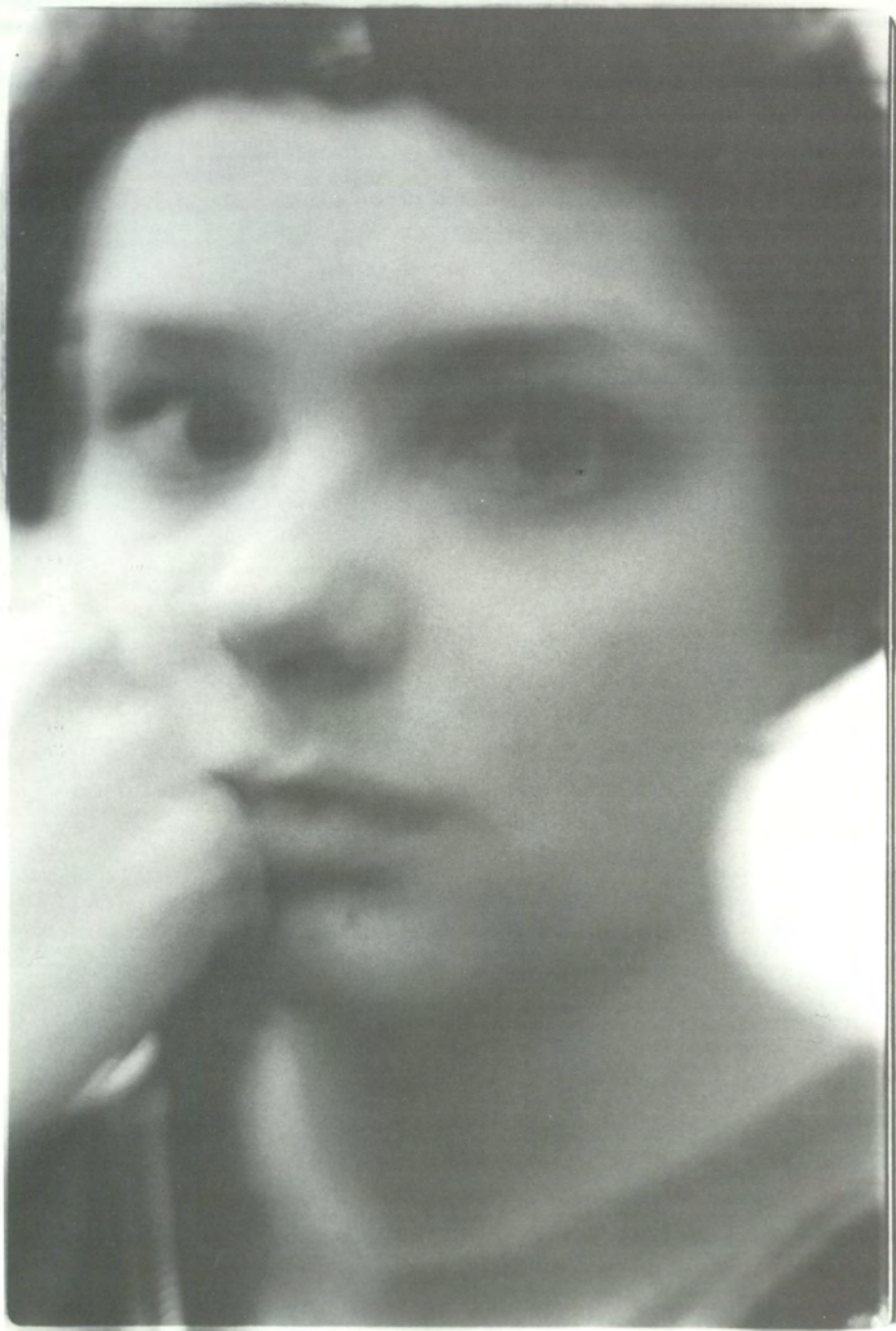
She raises a red polished nail

to break his wistful stare.

Returning to his palette,

he runs from the moving sun.

the milk spilled when you didn't show  
and I cried, but not at that table for two.  
no, I blinked back the tears  
as I stared at your menu and silverware.  
solitary dining humbles the hopeful.  
it crushes the spirit like  
the crackers in my soup;  
an appetizer,  
to give you time,  
to come.



*Self-Portrait #403*

Wendy Barker

distant images of you still stain the faded canvas  
the streaks remain in dull vibrance  
the faded pigment still shows your eyes  
which look down on me like blank masks  
which see nothing yet I see them

memories like the dry, rotten frame of a long forgotten masterpiece  
no longer holding steady the ingrained image of you  
the burned likeness heals over and soft new flesh resides  
in the back of my mind, there you once ruled.  
I can no longer be satisfied with the dusty relic

stowed away in a back hall in a forgotten mansion  
never to be searched for & seldom to be remembered  
your memory stands, in darkness  
my shutters have been opened and the new light of  
day has entered my damp, dark, house

The cool crisp air of a new season, after the Autumn  
leaves have fallen refreshes my spirit and I yearn  
to travel out to explore the freshly fallen white pureness  
preparation for the new awakening of spring  
when I like the flowers of may blossom in new found beauty.



## A Birth *Kelli Blahnik*

---

A tiny fist, balled and pink,  
lips still coated in mucous  
grope for the heaving nipple of a young girl,  
sighing audibly.

The smell of afterbirth still remains  
in the thick air.

The child's head, oblong and prunish  
from its tight passage through the birth canal,  
rests against his mother's beating heart—  
her sweat still moist between her breasts.

The nursing is painful at first  
as she lays with her legs still spread a bit,  
too tender to move much.

her husband pulls her wet hair from her olive skin  
and she feels his warm breath on her ear  
as he looks over her shoulder at the infant,  
still smudged a bit with the blood of his wife's labor.

he looks for something miraculous, something amazing  
and finds only the wonder of all fathers  
in the squinted eyes and determined sucking lips.

During the birth he had heard only grunts, heavy breathing—  
There was no fanfare or flourish,  
no heavenly gasp,  
but only his own quiet whimpering as he saw  
the crowning head of his new son  
and his wife's trickling blood.

This, indeed, was a meek incarnation—  
hardly noticeable in the Bethlehem night.  
And not even a glint of glory was left in his son's eyes,  
no divine communication marked his gaze—

like other infants his eyes were somewhat glazed,  
unfocused,  
his muscles, without control,  
allowed for random kicks of his small feet.

What his spirit knew was the Glory itself  
had taken residence in space, in time, in flesh—  
yet what his eyes saw,  
what his heart felt as he nudged the small fist with his finger,  
was an overwhelming sense of his fatherhood,  
a poignant sense of his inadequacy...  
and a small child that indeed was *his*  
nursing at the bare breast  
of his new young wife.

## Claustrophobia *Otto Marxhausen*

---

Because your hands and eyes agree  
(like they are supposed to)  
Most of the time.

And then the red light climbs the walls  
And the there/not there comes swirling in.  
And your hands say the world is out and around you,  
Back where it has always been.  
(And shall before ever more amen)  
But your eyes tell you that the world is  
RIGHT HERE!

(pressing your face and climbing your legs and clasping your waist with  
the urgency of a drowning swimmer)

The world is a plate;  
Two dimensions;  
A microscope slide you are pressed upon.  
It is  
RIGHT HERE!

(Or it is supposed to be—*your eyes told you so*)  
And you can't feel it.  
And they ask you why  
You push your gorge down  
And clasp your shaking hands together  
And begin to sing and titter  
And they say nothing  
But look at you with soft wide eyes  
That make your soul screech with the question:  
Why?



Cheryl Lohrmann

## Sitting in Traffic *Dirk van der Duim*

---

- 5-19-98 5:40 p.m. -

Standing

waiting

homeless and hungry

on a street corner in the city of churches

Cars passing

glances

stares

but nothing more

perhaps a guilty conscience or two

but only in retrospect

when it's too late.

a young mother lies still and quiet,  
not realizing her double sin.  
the future does not concern her,  
only a temporary reprieve  
from her unwanted  
(unexpected)  
burden.

a cool draft rustles  
her thin gown  
as a cold hand touches  
her forehead.  
with only slight prompting  
she spreads her legs  
(as she did once before)  
and succumbs to the pain;  
she loathes it and welcomes it  
all at once.

then it is over  
and she is alone,  
but the pain remains with her.  
the room is still;  
she slips into slumber.  
her troubled dreams are of  
tiny footprints in the sand,  
frail cries of impatience,  
the wide eyes of an innocent.  
she cries in her sleep,  
but she will never awaken  
from this eternal  
nightmare.

## death of an icon *Jessica Binns*

---

she sits in the hallway and cries quietly  
to her boyfriend on the other end of the line,  
weeping over the trivialities of her 18 year-old existence.  
her muffled sobs reach me, connect with the sadness in the  
recesses of my soul,  
but I retreat behind my facade of vellux® and Chopin  
and fight back the inevitable tears  
that stain the sheets a hue more like  
the blood they found in the mass on his gall bladder  
that obstructs what should have been an ordinary procedure.  
and now we are reduced to shocked speechlessness:  
for the death of an icon is at hand.

## On Late Summer Afternoons *Dan Di Prisco*

---

On late summer afternoons we constructed worlds  
from battalions of GI Joe soldiers.

We would fashion intricate bases—  
your territory, the weed infested brick grill,  
while the ancient willow tree housed my ranks.

Whole afternoons unfolded as we planned strategy,  
setting up snipers to guard our strongholds.

A jungle of willow vines provided cover for silent sentries.  
Through countless covert reconnaissance missions,  
few shots were fired, in this war without casualties.

The weaponry and experience of the soldiers matched evenly  
in good and evil; each of us unconcerned by what we represented.  
Though Shipwreck always the first captured,  
Dusty, Duke, and other veterans proudly wore  
battle scars of missing thumbs and knees loosened by dirt.

we marveled at the ancient ninja rivalry existing  
between Snake Eyes and Storm Shadow—built upon hatred and respect.  
Broken vehicles ran smoothly on the fuel of our imagination.  
But as the evening sky darkened, we ran out of gas—forced  
to end our battle, closing another chapter in that unending war.



## Midnight Groove *christopher john brown*

---

I'll sit back,  
Drink my wine.  
Pick up a pen,  
Record my rhyme.  
Lift my head,  
Fake a smile,  
All the while,  
Damn, I'm in that midnight groove  
Because all I can think about  
Around this time  
Is the sweet caress of you.

I like second hand smoke,  
Retarded laughter from a played out joke.  
Cheap perfume hanging from familiar faces,  
But come on girl,  
Sometimes we need our escape from those familiar places.  
That's why when the young and the restless have had their fun  
And the lights of halogen lamps go numb.  
I write to John Coltrane and Duke Ellington.  
Hell, I'm in a sentimental mood.  
Damn, I'm in that midnight groove.  
Because I want that sweet caress of you.

Swing to my scene tonight.  
Right?  
Feel that vibe that will drop us to your knees this night.  
Right?  
So if you want to play me,  
Play me.  
But listen to my song  
As it takes us along  
And tries to prolong  
The sweet, sweet sound of  
Ba Dee Dee Ding Dong.  
It just happens to be that particular time of the

E-ven-ing

When the beat of the snare and the cry of the keys are

Bring-ing-me

To a sentimental mood.

Damn, I'm in that midnight groove

Because I need that sweet caress of you.

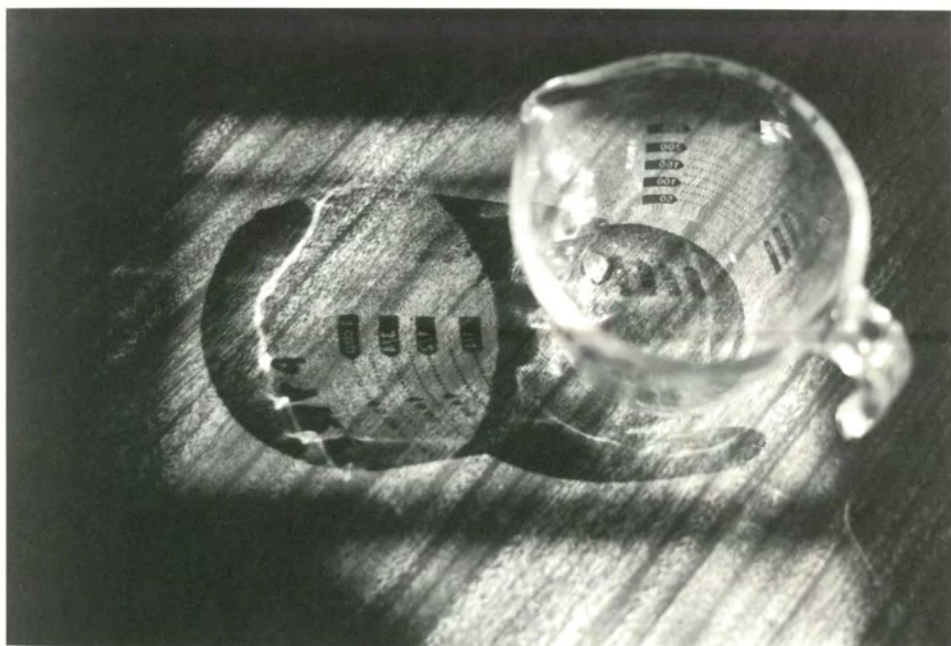


*Sforzándó*

Wendy Barker

I speak.  
My words unspoken to you.  
I touch.  
Your body numb.  
You cannot grasp that which  
I hold out to you  
Same dwelling, different worlds  
Revolving around each other..

Woe is me,  
the end is here-  
the fat lady has sung  
(Elvis has left the building).  
It's me against the world  
with my candle burning from both ends.  
It seems I've jumped into the fire  
when I was just trying to get out of the kitchen.  
The world turns without me,  
the sun'll come up (tomorrow) without me...  
if opportunity knocks,  
tell him to try the house next door  
(their grass is greener).



Mia Dolce Cabibbo

# Human *Erica Kaufman*

---

Created in God's image..  
what a joke.  
Look how we have tarnished  
and torn  
and beaten  
and destroyed  
these bodies; these lives...  
what a waste.

## The Least (Matthew 25:45) *Erica Kaufman*

The old man sits,  
rugged, old clothes torn and smelly.  
His quivering hand holds a small cup  
which whines for change.

Even a penny.  
His tired, world-worn eyes  
seek out my face—I look away and bustle on.  
Somewhere I hear a rooster crow.

The young girl walks,  
the child swims within.  
Connected they are: snowball children.  
So young, searching,  
wanting someone to offer a better solution.  
I know the answer... but I'm running late.  
Again the rooster crows.

They sit... flying, dying.  
Injecting death into their veins.  
Blood-shot souls scream for help.  
White powder blows away,  
out the window, circling my head.  
I look up—I can see the befuddled addicts,  
grasping to hear color and see sound—  
I see them.  
But, if I'm not home by 5:30, dinner's cold.  
Cock-a-doodle-doo.



## Tomorrow *Jenn Zeile*

---

Remember wine and roses?  
The sweet commitment and flavor.  
    Memories of...  
    Wow. Now  
afraid  
to follow your senses.  
    Smile Juliet,  
it's a woman thing.  
The love and hate,  
The trust, independence and beauty.  
Still nobody and  
    only you.  
The dark gap  
in your life will fade,  
soon to sparkle.  
And never lose your  
declaration of meaning.

About 2 years ago  
Small time theatre club  
2 a.m. show  
I walk through a dark star filled passageway  
With old friends that aren't around anymore  
I look over and I see this girl  
Our eyes meet  
She looks down  
Writes something  
Sticks it on my chest  
Winks and says "you'll understand"  
I was fascinated  
I went in and sat down  
I looked at my chest and read "Look Back"  
I searched for an instant meaning  
A minute later I looked behind me  
And she was there  
Looking in my eyes again  
I walked out that night  
With this group of people laughing  
Because they enjoyed the show  
I was withdrawn  
I said nothing  
Smiled occasionally  
Observed everything  
And understood nothing  
Now, 2 years later  
I see meaning in her prophecy  
So I look back and smile.



Cheryl Lohrmann

## On the Streets of Chicago *Armando X. Fernandez*

(Yippie-Yippie-Doo/Piggy-Piggy-Loo swing your partner round...)

Nineteen hundred sixty eight,  
The bombs scarred the night while the liquid fire loomed in an Asian hell,  
*Are Martin, Bob and John really gone?*  
An aire of revolt stirred on the street of Chicago.

It was time to gather the tribes of the nation,  
The ass and pachyderm were fucking,  
While the nation mis-spent its youth,  
As the coppers pushed down the streets of Chicago.

*Hizzzzonner* was willing to let it all go in eight of sixty eight,  
His black militia beckoned to his call on those hot murky nights,  
The scene was set...lights...action...*now-let's fuckn' dance,*  
Twist and Stroll onto the streets of Chicago.

The donkey's ass was shining...a bluish red and white,  
As the piggies and their wives feast upon their bacon,  
A nation's eyes were viewing,  
The show on the streets of Chicago.

On commencement day they shuffled back and forth,  
Giving and taking credentials, the blood spattered banner waved on high  
Echoing the cries of a million tears,  
Along the streets of Chicago.

America was losing its place at the table,  
Marching, shuffling feet to the beat of sobbing mothers,  
One star, two stars, three stars<sup>1</sup> we've got'em all,  
Sanguine river and icy tears on the streets of Chicago.

His, ours, theirs all believed the end to be near,  
LBJ walked, still calling the shots, while the Hump stepped onto  
the stage,  
And the clashes started as the country's bloodshot eyes curdled,

A crimson wave descended boldly onto the streets of Chicago.

Covered badges, bags of shit all thrust headlong to posterity,  
Paddy wagons—*drop, curl and protect!*

Shot back home to the TV dinners and RC Colas wishing it were over,  
Our wasted youth ran through the streets of Chicago.

An air of revolt stirred on the streets of Chicago,  
As the coppers pushed down the streets of Chicago,  
Twist and Stroll onto the streets of Chicago,  
The show on the streets of Chicago,  
Along the streets of Chicago,  
Sanguine river and icy tears on the streets of Chicago,  
A crimson wave descended boldly onto the streets of Chicago,  
Our wasted youth ran through the streets of Chicago.

<sup>1</sup> Gold Star Moms: one star = one combat offspring, two stars = two combat offspring, etc.

The castle is burning  
The veil is torn  
The red carpet is in shreds  
As every fairy tale dies in the night.

No light seeps around the fire  
Its burning flames have no desire  
Each stone less memory gone within the fortnight  
A seemingly endless story shall have no ever after

The tapestries gone from the walls  
The dresses curling in the inferno  
The jewels forgotten in haste  
Each left in a dream that will not be by morning

A life taken, a life starved  
A life led on from the end of the beginning  
A match to begin the end  
And a horse to lead the way to hell.

No servants standing to help  
No wings to show one how to fly  
Just the spirits of what was never meant to be  
To make the flames dance around the castle  
That was once upon a time.

..... **Fiction** .....



April Burford

"But I want to make you my poem," he insisted; she believed he always insisted.

"I would not like that. I would not like being made into your poem," she resisted; he believed she always resisted.

"It is true, you may not like being made into my poem. But I must say that I believe you would like being my poem, I mean, once I had finished, once I had completed the poem."

"Perhaps you are right. Perhaps I may find pleasure in being a perfect and complete poem, your poem."

He liked her language, the language of her.

"I enjoy listening to you thoroughly."

"You enjoy thoroughly, love, or you listen thoroughly?"

"Yes, my poem, perfect and complete."

\* \* \*

"Ah, I can see something, an idea, coming to form: I would begin you with a question, and end you with a question."

"And between these questions, what would you place for me?"

"Possibilities, my sweet. I would place possibilities."

"And a dream come true. May there be a dream come true?"

She was startled by her sudden request. Perhaps she seemed greedy to him now. Surely it made her vulnerable. She became excruciatingly eager for him to speak. His words of reply pleased her immensely, and she was at once set at ease and delighted. Without any hint of hesitation, he looked into her eyes and assured,

"Yes, I trust the poem will be all that you are."

\* \* \*

"And having finished, I may stand back a step, or two, and then discover with a pang that I cannot grasp my poem. I may find it escapes me. Entirely, it escapes me, having been loosed. I cannot say but that I have been vexed; and only that it moves me, stirs me alive. And that it is beautiful."

"Painfully beautiful," he added after a moment's thought.

\* \* \*

Afterward—many years together in love having passed—he would stand over the small mound which was her grave. He would break to his knees, and tremble and weep. With his bare hands he would



tear at the earth and mutilate the flowers surrounding the grave, crumbling the petals like words in his furious hands, yearning in vain to grasp that which had escaped him.

\* \* \*

"Painfully?" she questioned that day years ago, eyebrows raised.

"Most painfully," he confirmed, "most" twisting his whole mouth and face.

Both of them were terrified by the way he said "most."

I know him only an hour, and here I am listening to his story. He tells me of a tornado that ripped through his house. He tells me it threw everything every which way. Refrigerator and bathtub, family albums and television set . . . the whole house—tossed all over the property. He tells me he did not see the tornado himself—lucky for him. He says his dad did, all too well—that dark whipping cloud be the last thing my daddy seen, alive anyways, he says. It left his mom, his brother, and him homeless while they tried to put the pieces back together.

I ask him how long of a time that was. He says the neighbors made it out the storm okay and took us in fer li'l while. Then maw moved us into a trailer on the outskirts.

Funny, I think, that tornado scattered the pieces around enough, he never did find them all. But really I am finding nothing funny about it. I ask him when did all of this happen? I heard of a tornado rambling through the area about six months ago.

And then I have to try not to act surprised so as not to make the both of us uncomfortable when he tells me, Oh, it was 'fore that'n. Let's see here, I'm forty-two now, that'd make it, what, thirty-five, thirty-seven years ago? I's 'bout five when that bugger come roarin' through.

Funny, I think to myself again, How many pieces are left missing? That tornado threw him out of a home for good, I start thinking. He is homeless now; his life has been a mess since that day. I am putting him all together now, getting him all figured out. He has been speaking of this tornado like it just happened. It is the first thing he tells me about himself—we only know each other under an hour. And it is as fresh in his mind as home-made bread right out of the oven. But that bread became crusty and stale, the crows have long since devoured it; and the oven is a rusty skeleton wasting away in a junkyard somewhere.

And from his seat I'm looking at me in my seat and I's seein' we's got two differ'nt worlds. All sudden-like his eyes're like two charcoals—I can't see a thing in 'em anymore.

I cannot see a thing in his eyes anymore, just some sad story of a middle-aged homeless child. And he can't see me either, talking to

me like I'm somebody important, smart. Some kind of promise. He keeps referring to me as "college boy" and insists I'm studying to be a lawyer or somebody else important that he's not. Here I am, visiting a homeless shelter because I have some free time to do a good deed and feel good about being there for some homeless folks, to be just someone to talk to. I'll visit for awhile, you know, a little break from the university, make their day, make them feel special, maybe try to help them along with a couple of their problems.

I don't know how he's feeling right now—as I'm staring at his tired old skin, his heavy empty eyes, the dirt under his nails and the stink on his breath. I suppose it's the same feeling he's been carrying around like some kind of disease—a slow cancer eating away from the insides, just letting him breathe and do enough of his own damage to himself—for thirty-seven years. That tornado—seems it gutted his flesh and bones and stole something else in there too and left him scattered across the ground—an empty sack of skin. I get a creeping impulse to poke him and see if he feels it, see if he's at all numb.

And here I am on this side of the conversation, and I'm looking at him so unfamiliar, like he's not made up of the same elements as I am. But somehow I'm suddenly not feeling like so much of a promise. Suddenly, I don't quite know what I'm feeling inside. At once, I have become terribly unfamiliar to myself. I'm staring at him: I can't see anything in his eyes, through my reflection; in fact I see a whole lot of nothing. And I'm thinking if only I had what he needs—that missing piece. I assure myself it is not a something one can simply receive from another, certainly not a stranger like me. And I see that tornado tearing up hell in his mind—I just want to tell him, in my college-cocky voice—make him understand: A tornado cannot keep a grip on anything too long, cannot keep for good anything it takes up into itself. It is just wind, dark and swirling wind, a shell of clashing air—there is nothing on the inside.



*The Jester: A Self-Portrait*

Karen Kloosterman

## The Surrender *Sarah L. Anaszewicz*

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July 29th—10:00 A.M.

The airport lost power around 8:00 A.M. this morning. The temperature outside is already near ninety degrees Fahrenheit. Through the large windows that create three of the four walls of the terminal, I can see rivers of convection rising off the surface of the scorched concrete, blurring the planeless landscape before me. I wait for the cool dry air to be infiltrated by slowly creeping heat. In a few hours it will be too hot to move. The backs of my legs will stick to my red, plastic chair. Around mid-afternoon, the sweat will trickle so profusely from the backs of my thighs and knees that I will slide slowly down the chair, until my chin touches my chest. I will tap my feet impatiently and the man next to me will ask that I stop. I won't.

Despite the assurances to the contrary, no planes will land today and the power will not return. Five days ago, we were detained from our flight as news of an imminent nuclear war reached this tiny, insignificant, desert airport. By the end of the day, all planes and vehicles, and all but one staff member had departed toward the big cities, in hopes of rescuing loved ones before the first strikes were made. Those of us left stranded at the airport misunderstood our good fortune until news of the destruction of New York, L.A., and Chicago was broadcast from an independent television station in the neighboring state the next morning. Little reached us beyond that broadcast before the power went out this morning. It is certain only that we are alone.

July 30th—3:00 P.M.

Uncertain of safety beyond the airport, we have decided to remain here indefinitely. I have been watching my fellow travelers, beginning to wonder if nuclear fallout might be the least of our worries. Their eyes are changing. Once, their deep, glistening glow betrayed fear and grief. Now they bear the dull, dry stare of hopelessness and uncertainty. In time, their eyes will develop the wild, flashing, wide-eyed gape of madmen.

1:00 A.M.

It is late and the intense heat has all too quickly been replaced by the biting cold of night. The flat, black sky seems to absorb all warmth— first from the air, then from the body. A woman stands by the window looking up at the sky, her right temple pressed against the hard glass. She hugs herself tightly, swaying back and forth, and half mumbles, half hums, some unfamiliar tune. Beyond her, outside in the distance, the horizon has developed an eerie glow. Like the others who have surely noticed, I ignore it.

The man next to me has laid down on the floor. He is a tall, thin man. His bones jut out at angles, as though they might pierce his skin. His body is curled in a fetal position. His eyes, wide open, deceive. He is asleep.

In the corner, near the entrance to the women's restroom, a mother sits on the floor, her back against the wall. Her arm is draped across her daughter who is curled amongst the clothes in their large, black suitcase. The mother's vacant stare chills me more than the night air.

The airport employee has decided to approach the woman at the window. Gently touching her shoulder, he speaks, "Ma'am, perhaps you might sit down for awhile. You've been standing here since dinner ration."

No answer.

"Ma'am?"

The woman reluctantly turns from the window and allows the man to lead her to a chair across from me. She sits down, puts her head in her hands, and cries.

July 31st—4:00 P.M.

The thin man has moved near the mother and child. They started conversing this morning at breakfast ration and seem comforted by the other's words. While the little girl sleeps in the suitcase, the mother and the thin man speak softly to each other. The woman looks haggard and the man, broken. The child always sleeps.

"And do you have a fam. . . Ummm, I mean, do you have a job?" she asks.

"Uh, yeah, I do. It's uh, kind of funny, uh, ironic, I guess. I'm a life insurance salesman." The corner of his mouth turns up— part grin, part grimace. "Kind of pointless now, huh?"

The mother makes no reply. She directs her gaze outside. Her face

contorts— a furrowed brow, a twisted mouth, a mournful, fearful look in her eyes. He stares at his hands.

The thin man breaks their reveries. "And you, uh, what do you do?"

She smiles, looking down and stroking her daughter's hair. "Oh, my job, I guess like yours, is insignificant now. What matters is here, my girl."

She pauses, then continues, rather quickly, "Do you realize that if we expect the worst, we kind of expect the best? We could create an entirely new society based on the people in this airport."

The thin man's sunken eyes open wide. He stammers out, "I- I don't want that kind of burden. I am no forefather!"

She makes no response. Her eyes close, and she leans her head against the wall.

August 1st—Noon

I am suddenly aware that no one here knows anyone else's names. And, for some reason, I don't care.

August 2nd—3:00 P.M.

The window woman is dead. The mother found her on the floor of the women's restroom. I knew something was wrong when the mother emerged from the restroom, stooped down, picked up her daughter and walked out of the airport. She headed across the runway toward the distant mountains. The thin man followed. I decided I should check out the restroom.

As I opened the door, I was hit with a nauseating mixture of strawberry fragrance and decay. The ice blue stalls and olive green and white floor tile swirled in a dizzying array of patterns. I covered my mouth and nose with the bottom of my shirt and walked toward the last stall. I opened each door as I passed. Upon opening the last, I was confronted with the bloated corpse of the window woman. Her face was contorted in a silent scream of helpless terror. I ran to the door and called for the employee to help me. He brought a white tarp and we wrapped the body, as if in a hammock, and carried it outside. Not conscious of my actions, I led the employee to the center of the runway. We laid the body down and I looked into the distance and noticed the shapes of the mother, child, and thin man, blurred by the heat. . . Or perhaps it was only a mirage.

6:00 P.M.

The sun is hidden behind coal gray storm clouds, billowing ominously over the tops of the distant mountains. I am alone in the terminal. Only the chill of silence remains. I have not seen the employee since we laid the body on the runway. I believe he never reentered the building.

Flashes of lightning pierce the dark sky as a howling wind begins to rattle the windows of the airport. I watch the body on the airstrip. The white tarp is flapping violently in the wind. It is anchored somewhere under the window woman, reaching desperately toward the sky.

The first large drops of rain begin to fall, and I am lured outside. The wind tears at my clothes and hair. I am drenched by the relentless torrent of rain. My skin feels washed from my frame. An antiseptic calm stills the tremors of chill. I lift my face and hands toward the sky. I know that God has arrived.



The four hundred and thirty-third mile of the day offered little more respite from my thoughts than its predecessors. The interior of my vehicle was silent. The radio offered only empty, static stations. I seemed to chase the charcoal clouds billowing in rolling heaps on the distant horizon. Sun broke through the thick ceiling at irregular intervals and illuminated the young wheat in the fields. The moist shoots appeared as sharp green and distinct as emeralds. The incessant, monotonous hum of the wheels on the pavement provided me with the momentum to persist in my journey. Not a car had passed mine in either direction since I'd pulled from the side of the interstate in the icy blue glow of predawn.

The towns I passed swirled with the dry dust of their desertion. I stopped at a lone gas station around noon and helped myself to a full tank of fuel and the last non-expired sandwich in the softly humming refrigerated display case. The chair behind the attendant's counter lay on its side on the worn, dull green linoleum floor. Ripped cellophane from a pack of cigarettes lay on the counter under a few pieces of scattered change.

In the toilet a sour dampness permeated the air. I washed my hands and drank in the numbing, antiseptic smell of the antibacterial soap. My reflection in the mirror was uneven—a flaw in the craftsmanship. My right eye looked swollen and bruised, while my lips appeared shriveled, dry, cracked. I felt submerged in a burning fluorescent bath of light. My wrists pricked with pain as I hit the bathroom door with my hands, running.

A few solitary drops of moisture fell from the sky as I left the lopsided shack of a station. One landed on my lower lip, near the right corner of my mouth. My tongue instinctively reached to absorb it but a sudden, tumbling wind fell from above and evaporated the cool moisture on my lip. Then it was still.

In my car I felt that I was going somewhere, drawn to a purpose, alive. Without it, I felt lost and non-existent. I drove on, into twilight.

The first buildings of the city loomed before me like scolding parents. I began to tremble with an inner chill. On familiar streets,

familiar homes passed with unfamiliar faces gleaming in the windows, watching. Under the impersonal buzz of a streetlamp I parked my car and opened the door. As my foot touched ground a bolt of consciousness shot through my body. I became totally aware of the placement of my mass in the atmosphere. I could feel the edges of my skin where they touched clothing and air. I smiled, closed the car door, and walked up to the door of number 18. I knocked.

He was at the door immediately and stood to the side as I entered.

"Hello," I said, still smiling.

"You're late," he countered, looking down at me.

"You noticed."

"Where were you?"

"I hardly know."

"What's that supposed to mean?" He closed the door and stepped toward me.

"You figure it out. You're the smart one, remember?"

"Is this some kind of game to you?" he snapped back, voice rising.

"Sure. It has been for you, all along, right?" I stepped toward him, defiant.

"Is this about my moving again?" He suddenly softened.

"Actually, it's not, for the first time ever." I turned and walked into the living room. Boxes were stacked near the front windows. I had seen them so many times before I knew what was inside without opening them.

"I'm just not happy here. You can't expect me to stay where I'm not happy." He followed me into the room.

"No, I can't. And you can't expect me to live unhappy. You can't expect me to follow anymore. I mean, I'm already two states behind you. I'll never catch up." I felt the room begin to spin and I looked to him to steady myself.

"But, I love you." He stepped towards me.

He blurred in my vision and I had to look away. My eyes rested on my car, outside on the curb. The room stopped spinning and my vision came into focus.

"Yeah, but I don't."

I left him behind, as I walked out the door, trying to explain. It had begun raining. Not the fierce, driving rain the day's earlier clouds had suggested, but a steady, soaking rain. I entered my car and turned the key in the ignition. I looked in the rearview mirror and saw beads of moisture dripping from my hair to my lips and rolling off.



## Frog Peasants *Otto Marxhausen*

No one ever said that it would end. No one ever told her that one day in bed she would roll over and see his legs longer, his feet spreading and his skin puckering. No one ever said to her, witches are strong, evil lasts so long. And you're a girl, a simple thing, a mortal, a wide-eyed naïf who didn't learn a thing till after. No one. Ever said. The fairy tale would end.

They both knew, for weeks. They knew together, and pretended together, that his face was the same shape, that his hair wasn't falling out. It happened so slowly, so gradually, such a smooth degradation, that it was easy to pretend. Simple to smile with tightened lips and make believe it was something that could be pushed aside. Hidden. Ever after.

But it was coming, and she began to ache for him with him there beside her, curled on the other side of the bed in their tiny house. A tangible barrier between them of fear and contamination and a faint smell of swamp.

He would go fishing every day, fishing on the lake for sunfish and catfish and crawdads, enough to eat and a little to sell, and she would go out and pick fruit from their trees and weed the vegetables with sweat dripping into her eyes and they would come home, too tired to grieve. But not to tired to pretend.

Until. Until he reached over and felt her flinch at the clamminess, the webbing just starting between his fingers. Felt her try to pretend it hadn't happened, blinked his lids over his widening eyes. And said. And said, we have to think about the future.

And listened to her silence. Felt her thoughts. She thought, what future? You are no longer you and I can't go home, they disowned me, silly girl, running off with the first charming amphibian she meets. And she thought of green smoothness and wept. She thought, it's death. To live here on the lake by myself, this enormous lake that stretches forever and runs into a stream that goes to God knows where that I can't go because I will wait forever. I can't live on fruit but I can't fish and take those slimy bodies off the hook looking into those lidless eyes wondering. What future?

You don't have to be alone, he whispered. And she clutched him, hard, pressing against his slickening body as she felt his thoughts and said yes. Let's. Please try. I want to have you. I can't. Leave me

a part of you.

So they tried and tried and they couldn't ignore any more as his legs grew over the end of the bed and his mouth widened and he couldn't hold the fishhooks any more and even had to grip the nets with both rubbery hands. And they tried.

And they succeeded.

And they wept together, dismayed, at the result.

It had been so many months now and his voice was rough and slurred. And he said I must go.

She said no.

He said I must, I must because I'm not anything now. I'll come back when I'm not a freak, when I'm one or the other, and maybe you can kiss me.

I kiss you every day, she said.

Maybe it'll work when I'm all changed, he said.

I'll wait forever.

I know. I love and need you.

I know.

And so he left splashing through the shallows and trying not to look back as she watched trying not to run after him screaming come back here dammit you're my husband and my lover and my home and my people. And they tried.

And they succeeded.

And they wept.

So she went back to wait, and sat by the bucket of promise and terror. She kept another little bucket by it, with water and a ladle inside, and she would dip the ladle into the water and.

And pour it over the thing in the other bucket that had issued from her thighs.

Pour it over the enormous jellysac of an egg that had floated there, so huge it touched both sides. Keep it wet. Dip and pour.

*Pssshhhhhhh.*

And try not to stare too hard, that would be bad luck, at the thing that moved inside that looked like a tadpole and wriggled fitfully but who knows?

It didn't have to be a tadpole.

*Pssssssshhhhhhhhhhh.*

She would wait, she thought.

Forever.

*Pssssssssshhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh-*

She is three and they tell her, no, Susan, don't go in the basement alone, never go in the basement ALONE because you never know what might happen to you, that door is heavy Susan and it might swing shut and you wouldn't be able to get out and we'd look all over for you Susan and we'd be so worried never go in the basement alone Susan. There are RATS in the basement Susan, big ones, and we don't want you to get rabies you're only a little girl Susan never go in the basement alone.

And so she only goes down with mom to get things, into the hard cold basement it's really more of a cellar she thinks years later when she thinks of it, the floor is only packed dirt anyway. She goes down with mom in the late afternoon (when golden sun that creeps in through the one high boarded window lies in narrow strips on the boxes that the tools and sewing things are in to protect them from tiny sharp teeth because it is a hungry year and old dusty books) because mom doesn't like going down there at night when it is so still you can hear the RATS.

And then one time mom does the forgetting that Susan always remembers, that the alien adults that rule her life are not perfect, mom forgets two important very important things. She forgets the eggs, the eggs are down in the cool hard basement and it is evening and so mom runs down quick quick to get the eggs and Susan runs behind her and quick quick mom runs back up with three eggs in her knobby hands and she FORGETS Susan and Susan is down there in the dark ALONE don't ever go down there alone Susan who knows what might happen.

And she is three and scared of the dark dark and she only has a little white summer dress on with its grease-soaked skirt from the frying and it is too cold. She is goose pimply and she can feel the grit under her bare feet and the dress against her ankles and she thinks I am not here alone I can't be because they said not to why am I here ALONE? And her hands grasp her fat three-year-old elbows.

Because she can hear them she can HEAR them she is three and she does not understand God but she screams in her head to him because she can hear them the RATS in the WALLS.

They're getting closer, there are rats in the walls, she can hear

them running up and down and are they getting closer they are because they are HERE and she can FEEL them on her feet and the naked TAILS caress her ankles and tiny claws scratch and don't ever go in the basement Susan there are rats and they are BIG.

And she doesn't feel them any more because she is way deep inside her head and she can't feel her goose pimples or the marks of her soft ragged nails in her arms because she is running in a circle standing still and she doesn't see it when the door opens and the rectangle of light falls and hurried feet come running down and they say oh my god, my God, Susan look at her oh my God and they pick her up and run away and she starts screaming when they bathe her and doesn't stop until she falls and drops, asleep.

And they tell the story of how they found her that hungry year standing alone with her favorite cotton dress eaten up to her knees for the grease and her bleeding all over the floor from millions of tiny nibble/claw marks on her feet and her ankles and calves and shins and when they tell the story later Susan goes inside her head because she can still hear THEM the rats in the walls.

She is nineteen and they tell her, no, Susan, don't ever go into town ALONE, it's a big city Susan and there are people there, MEN, Susan, and God knows what they might do.

So she lives on her girls' campus with her not-quite-friends and only goes into the city when an entire straggling herd clumps its way down the narrow alleys of the city in the daylight a chattering mass keeps the wolves away. She lives on campus and wears because she's an old-fashioned girl long skirts that cover her legs and socks so you can't see the scars no don't THINK about that Susan it was a long time ago shove it back under.

And then Susan does the thing, a STUPID thing, a PROUD thing, a FOOLISH thing aren't you ashamed of yourself Susan how could you do such a thing and she goes into the city alone at night when everything is shadow but not quite because there are lights everywhere that hurt the eyes and never turn off.

She goes into the city ALONE at NIGHT because she needs a new light bulb hers is burned out and she is nineteen and still afraid of the dark and everyone else is asleep and maybe the 7-11 has them there has to be somewhere in the whole big city that has light bulbs. So she is in the city.

And she is lost in the streets they don't end up where you expect them to and she's walking and it's the tail end of summer but it's

getting a little cold and she shivers a little even in her long skirt that she sweltered in all day long and she can hear.

She is nineteen and still afraid of the dark and she thinks I'm not ALONE I can't be they told me never to come here alone why am I ALONE here.

She is nineteen and she doesn't understand the world but she begins to scream in her head to it that it isn't FAIR and somebody please come help me because she can hear HIM.

She can hear him, there's a MAN in the alley and it's so dark she can't see she is afraid to but the gravel crunches crunches and is he getting closer he is because he is HERE and there is one hand on the small of her back and another one at her thin collarbone with its thin thin skin with something hard and sharp and cold. And sharper TEETH at her ear don't scream bitch or they won't be able to identify your body.

And his breathing is fast and hissed she can hear it it sounds like claws on dirt and she feels the concrete wall against her back and the MAN has her skirt hide the scars Susan hide them her skirt up around her waist and don't ever go in the city ALONE Susan there are MEN there who knows what they might do.

And she doesn't feel him any more because she is inside her head while he hisses RAPING her in the alley and tearing count them six seven eight excited little tears in her skin with his hard sharp cold hand.

There is no one to come find her and bathe her she wakes up alone and alive not that it matters ALONE in the alley and she dimly pulls her sensible cotton underwear up past her bruised thighs and lets her long skirt see there are no scars settle around her, her SHOES are gone and she goes back to campus barefoot.

And she goes in her one little single room with no light bulb and locks the door it is day and the sun comes through the slats of the window golden and she looks down and sees her bloody and broken feet and feels the scaly TAILS.

And she begins to scream and scream and bang her head against the walls and tear triangle teeth-jagged patches of skin on the raw concrete around her and she doesn't stop even when the r.a. opens the door and grabs her and the room is painted red and her fingers are broken and her eyes are swollen shut because she can hear them and when she goes back inside her head she can still hear them, the RATS in the WALLS.



## The Life of a Kaleidoscope *Lindsey Gaff*

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About the time my father began collecting Kaleidoscopes, he bought me a ring. I don't remember if it was for Christmas or my birthday. I just remember the ring. A simple gold band, gently cradled an opal in its center. The opal shimmered in the light, reflecting various colors in all directions. Lying there in my palm I studied it as if it were a virus, afraid to put it on my finger. I had never owned a ring that hadn't come with a Happy Meal or from one of those dime machines at the entrances of drug stores. It seemed too delicate, too extravagant, too expensive.

"So what d'ya think honey?"

"Wow. It's beautiful. . . but so expensive dad."

"Everyone should have something worthwhile to give to their kids, something that will survive the tests of time. Someday when you're a mom, you'll give it to your daughter, and she to her daughter. You can't put a price on history, kiddo."

The ring peered into my eyes with its pink, now blue, now purple flashes - mesmerizing, hypnotizing, like a muted miniature of dad's budding kaleidoscope collection.

As much as the sparkling colors and morphing shapes entertained me, my father's insatiable hunger for bigger and brighter kaleidoscopes dwarfed any previous kaleidoscope interest known to mankind. He would have gazed through the mystical tube of light for hours on end if his busy days and those rules about needing money to stay alive would have permitted.

The multi-colored filters constructed a gateway into an idyllic universe of dancing hues and watery shapes, light years away from the gray-toned divorce fees and bill collectors which tainted his reality. With just a slight turn of the wrist, the shapes melted one into another, again and again - each vivid color combining and separating in a perpetual tide controlled by some synthetic moon. In a moment the sun and stars would explode into bursts of light, their dynamic destruction enchanting his universe with their fragmented wisps of fire.

This enchantment snuck up on my father when he wasn't looking. Dad received an airplane kaleidoscope as a birthday gift from a friend while he was working in a liquor store. My father saw

the job as a means to an end, planning to work there only as long as it took to earn enough money for his pilot's license. Because he was a lowly part-timer he mostly worked late night shifts. Soon after the clock above the register would glow midnight, withered and tattered shapes would carelessly stumble into the store, exhausted and disheveled, their watery eyes intently searching for something. Aimlessly the broken figures would wander through aisle after aisle, each step absorbing the stale heat trapped in the store. Fingering the glass rainbow of bottles like clumsy French connoisseurs, wrinkled fingers would finally grasp one from among the rest. Foolishly the search would end. My father served as a witness to their triumph at the check-out.

"This oughta keep the fires burnin', wouldn't ya say feller? Damn lucky you was open. Didn't know where I was goin' if you wasn't." The clock read 3:30am when my father would finally make his way back from that job. It killed me to think of him going straight to bed, the sawdust smell of the floor still clinging to his black dress shoes, the words of desperation still ringing in his ears. Because I lived with my mother I always had the luxury of fore-going the reality of his nightly routine, instead scripting those after work moments in my mind.

His thick brown hair silhouetted in the doorway, he inches the front door shut with a quiet knock. Casually he tosses his windbreaker onto the couch, his sparkling brown eyes intently heading for the darkness of the basement. His eyes, already adjusted to the shadowy blackness, immediately connect to the waiting airplane resting on the shelf above the rocking chair. Even in the solid darkness, the airplane's wings glimmer, somehow finding the only ounce of light left in this underground cave. Cradling the airplane in his hands, meditatively rocking back in the chair, he gently signals a ray of light from directly above. There he sits, his eyes intoxicated by this hand held universe.

Other people would come over to his house now and see the airplane. Immediately they would decide that my dad was a big kaleidoscope enthusiast (the average person does not have airplane kaleidoscopes simply lying around the house). He began receiving them as presents for Father's Day, Christmas, his birthday, and other gift-giving occasions. However much he liked them in the beginning,

fate insured that my father's fondness for kaleidoscopes would be compounded by force or otherwise. But dad didn't need to be forced.

Colleges were overflowing in my mailbox, family cars were blowing gaskets, and just getting by became a little more expensive. My father was forced to give up on his pilot's license and find a better paying job with more consistent hours. I never heard him say one begrudging word. In fact he was still smiling. When he was seven years old, he fell out of his top bunk and cracked his two front teeth. You can tell that they are yellowed on the bottom fringe if you squint your eyes. This superficial imperfection has never stopped him from showing them off. Instead of telling me that he had to quit so I could go to college, or because his wife's car needed fixing, or so everyone could be allotted the standard number of Christmas presents, he simply pressed his teeth together and bared them to the world. I never asked him if he was disappointed that his dream to be a pilot wasn't coming true. I never asked if he resented all of the mouths to feed and responsibilities to fulfill. I just watched him.

I watched him, the man who's never met a 10k he didn't like, settle into a stained and lumpy bus driver's seat for 6 months. After each trip he would decorate conversation with stories of sequined, elderly women in search of Elvis, as well as visionary suggestions for the improvement of the commercial busing industry. I watched him wake up at 4am and come home at 2am the next morning, having spent the entire day organizing and facilitating blood drives for the Red Cross. My dad talked man-stuff with 18-year old football players to keep their minds off the needle and brought home the extra sugar cookies and kool-aid for my hoggish consumption. I watched him tool around Indiana and Ohio in his powder blue Honda Accord, selling muted metallic computer parts to professional business men and women. Men and women who will never see the fiery explosions of a kaleidoscope like my father does.

So on this undetermined holiday, the ring no longer seemed so viral. I slid it over my knuckle. The excessive pale extravagance melted away from the stone. I stared deeply into its unblinking eye. The colors glimmered in a dauntless ballet of blazes, each one fading brighter into the next.

Four years is a long time. Four full years passed since that sweaty Sunday afternoon of the congregational meeting when the woman no one recognized proposed that a church isn't a 'real' church unless it has a fine set of stained glass windows. She raised her head slightly at this announcement and met the squinting eyes of the insulted group. The large gold bird pin drooping on her beige jacket jiggled back and forth as she moved. Mark, a young boy who sat near her, watched this glittering bird and thought it looked like the bird was flying.

The congregation was in uproar at the attack of this foreigner. The pastor of the congregation felt he should respond to this outburst, but instead reminded himself to "turn the other cheek," and he did just that. This position, consequently, put his head leaning right up against the wall in the perfect position to nap...

The melee continued as the woman spoke again. She straightened her beige jacket and lifted her hand slightly as if appealing to God. Yanking the hand of the fearful Mark, she proclaimed with a deeply dramatic voice, "children, the unread, look to the windows for the story of God. This young boy will look at the windows in their full glory," she gestured slowly across the plain windows of the sanctuary, "and will see God. You have a duty, an obligation, a MORAL MANDATE," sweat beaded across her brow and she shook her fist and her whole body so violently that Mark feared her golden bird would fly away, "to do this. Look at this boy, he is your reason." All eyes in the room focused on Mark and he smiled fearfully, unsure how to react.

She sat down, her energy full spent, and the congregation quieted. Mark felt the overwhelming need to clap and cheer at the most theatrical performance he had ever seen. As a hush baptized the crowd, only the sound of the pastor's rhythmic breathing continued. A poke in the ribs from his wife alerted him to speak.

"The question is," the pastor cleared his throat and hoped no new developments had occurred since he 'turned the other cheek,' "just how important is the stained glass window to the life of our church." He was pleased as a few people's heads bobbed in agreement. "Will we gain something in our worship of God," he said

'God' with a long lingering "O" sound that bounced around the sanctuary, "that we did not have before?" The question stood as the pastor sat down again, proud of his assessment of the situation.

"Yes" the pin bird jiggled. Other affirmations were slowly lifted up from the padded mauve pews. The congregation who fifteen minutes ago had never considered building a stained glass window, now found it the most important component of their worship of God.

Committees blossomed within the congregation: the Fundraising Committee, the Building Committee, the Planning Committee, the Public Relations Committee, the Vision Committee, the Inter-Committee Relations Committee, all headed up by the prestigious 'Effort Committee.' "The Effort" was the code-name of this undertaking, and the stained glass dreams were no longer called mere windows. Everything was done for "The Effort." Cheers echoed through the walls of the church: 'how do we earn more for The Effort,' 'who is the best artist for The Effort?' and (favorite to all) 'The Effort needs more of your effort.' This in fact became the rally cry of the greatest commitment the church had ever undertaken. The poster promoting the new window had the slogan across the top in big bold letters, with "Do it for him" in italics underneath and Mark's preschool picture next to it. He had become the spokesperson for the campaign and a celebrity in the church.

A year passed as money was raised through carnivals, picnics, bake sales, garage sales, and every possible way to earn money save prostitution and selling drugs (though both were discussed by the Fundraising Committee). Committees gave proposals, proposals were rejected. Committees gave new proposals, and slowly they were accepted. Proposals became plans; plans became budgets; budgets became blueprints; and blueprints became reality as three years hence, colored squares of glass were carried in by the "artistic effort" of a nearby interior decorating company.

The discussion over what should be depicted on the stained glass was divisive. Some wanted to picture the life of Jesus, from birth to death to resurrection. Some wanted Old Testament stories of Noah or Moses or Elijah. Some wanted the Creation Story recounted. Some wanted rainbows and sunshine and happiness. Some wanted darkness and night. The argument raged until the woman with the bird pin rose to speak for the first time since that sweaty afternoon.

"The Promised Land" she pronounced proudly. "We need a picture that is as hopeful and beautiful and bountiful as our Effort has been

to create this. God's greatest promises, Canaan and the stained glass window." All were receptive to her proposal and brows unfurled and fists unclenched as the decisive move was made. A team from the congregation drew a picture of "Canaan" and disagreed over whether Canaan was in the mountains of the plains or the forest. But, eventually through compromise and a little bit of wine, an agreement was reached, and the interior decorating committee began their work.

That final year entailed the intricate work of piecing the red and blue and yellow squares of light into their places until Canaan arched across the window. It was impossible to hold services in the church with all the construction equipment, so the congregation would meet in backyards for Sunday Service. Every once in a while, the services would be cancelled if no one volunteered their house.

On the day of the unveiling, cars filled the parking lot and the tide spread to the grass as newcomers came to see what lay underneath the white sheets. The woman with the bird pin returned and had been asked to say a few words about the Effort.

Today, she wore a bright blue outfit spangled with the same bird pin that still beguiled Mark. He dressed in his best suit and stood next to the woman because he had a prominent role in the birth of the window. He received a script and specific instructions. He was to react "delightfully" and say "now I see God" and turn his head toward the window. Feeling very important and respected, Mark spent all week practicing his role.

"Canaan," she began "was a promise to people who were alone, who were in captivity, who needed a way out. God," she had developed the same peculiarity of the long "O" as the pastor, "was their stronghold and God is ours," the old sweat beading and raised fist trick. "Today we celebrate this promise and worship God in a way that even our young friend can understand." Mark smiled. The woman gestured and the sheets fell. The congregation gasped. Stories circulated that some began to cry, and some began to sing, and some began to dance. There is even a story that a man who had never spoken lifted a chorus of "Amazing Grace."

Once the general excitement lulled, the woman nudged Mark to cue him for his line. Mark looked confused as he glanced from her to the window, and the window back to her. The excited eyes fixed on him revealed that they had missed the obvious. He said, dejectedly, "now I see God," but the last words of his speech were swallowed up by the cheer of the crowd.

When he was able to escape from the celebration, he ran out of the church to the back of the building to see the outside of the stained glass. He looked at the stained glass and out to the horizon and the landscape, and looked back and forth again and again. The same. The same! The tree that arched outside the window arched in the picture. The thin row of cornfields and the elm trees interjecting green in a golden horizon were spangled across the window too. Blue sky and scattered clouds were etched across both. They had made a stained glass window of their own horizon. He looked again at the angled colored glass, and thought to himself that the real landscape was a whole lot prettier and redder and bluer and yellower and aliver than those shards of glass.

The pastor was near tears the next Sunday to report that some "inconsiderate pagan damned vandal" had thrown large rocks through the stained glass window, sending the colored glass spinning across the floor of the sanctuary.

The pastor was near tears the next Sunday to report that some "inconsiderate pagan damned vandal" had thrown large rocks through the stained glass window, sending the colored glass spinning across the floor of the sanctuary.

Renee set her book *A Little Time Left for Shelley*, down on the floor of the living room and stared at the ceiling. She put her hands behind her head and starting with the tender area, she slowly massaged each area to find the bump. She took her short wavy red hair out of its ponytail and worked her way around the back. Maybe it was just a small tumor yet.

"Mom, my head aches, and yesterday, when I was done watching television I stood up feeling light-headed," Renee stood up from where she was laying, nothing happened, " I had to stand there for a while before I could take another step, then I was okay, but still, that is not a good sign. Is it Mom?"

"Renee." The voice came out of the kitchen. Then she heard footsteps and clothes coming closer. Mother stood in the doorway between the kitchen and the living room holding a cookbook in her hand, dog-eared some of the recipes.

"And I think I feel a lump on my head...feel here," As she spoke, Renee's mother looked at her as if some part of her face was so out of focus she had to squint to see the missing detail. Mother rolled her eyes as she set the cookbook down on an armchair and walked toward her. It was that familiar roll of the eyes that told Renee that she was irrational, as if she had just gone outside in the snow barefoot. Here we go again, said her eyes.

"Where do you think this bump is?"

"There," Renee pointed to her headache.

"Come here," mother sighed.

Mother never took her seriously. Sometimes she thought it was because of her red hair. No one in the family had red hair, not even her parents. And since she was different from the rest of them, friends and family would kid around with her, saying that she was adopted. Dad started it: "You were found by a pile of sticks on your birthday," he teased, "and that was where we found Kitty-Cat, she was a baby, too. You were keeping each other warm, so cute on the cool July morning grass with your red hair..." No one ever did understand her, no one listened to what she had to say. She believed the story. Found, not born by her parents, and now she had a brain tumor. Great.



Renee did not like July. No one was around, not even her older brothers were there to bother her. At least if they were around she could play basketball with one of them, or she could talk to them about school next year, or they could drive her to get a hamburger to see who else was getting hamburger. Even Dad was gone on his fishing trip with some old friends. It was just too quiet around here lately.

"You really need to stop reading those stories about dying," said mother after she was through examining her head. "How many of those books have you read?"

"Only three others, my friend gave me this to read while she was gone." July was always the month when her two good friends left town and went on long vacations with their families.

Mother rolled her eyes again and turned toward the kitchen, "Go find something else to do Renee, it's summertime."

She wanted to be able to do something else, but her sickness would not let her. All of this felt so real to her. The symptoms were real and there. The reason why she was given these books was so she could discover her disease early. Shelley first noticed her symptoms as she rode on a bus home from school one day. She knew something was wrong right away. It started with a headache and foggy vision, then dizzy spells. It happened so fast. One day all was well: Shelley had been asked to the homecoming dance and was nominated for the court. Then the next she was in a doctor's chair, dying. Renee began to rub her head. She breathed softly, slowly, concentrating hard upon the functions going on inside of her. The headache persisted, but stronger now, and the fears grew larger than she could handle. She felt dizzy again.

"Oh my gosh," she ran to the kitchen, "mom," tears were gathering inside from her ears and throat, her diseased brain and her stomach, and fogged her vision, "Mom, I really think I'm sick."

"Renee," mother said sympathetically as she took the dough out of the mixing bowl and onto the floured counter, "The more you read about dying the greater your chances of thinking that you will die soon. You are imagining things. Now, please go and find something to do." Mother began to knead the bread dough that she had just mixed. She could make bread as easily as it was for her to breathe.

Effortlessly the dough was kneaded and formed to fit into a bread pan. Waiting for the right moment, Renee pulled at a piece of dough and ate it. She knew her mom liked to be left alone when she made bread.

"That is something I don't need you to do."

"Mom, what if I am dying?"

"Renee, go. You are not dying. If you were you would have to accept it. People who are sick have to in order to recover."

She was right. Shelley was told to visualize that an army of stuffed animals were constantly fighting her tumor, cutting it to pieces. It was important, they told her, to keep a positive attitude. It was as just as effective as medicine.

Renee didn't even want to be sick, she did not want to have to accept it. Up the stairs inside her room she looked at herself in the mirror and began to cry. She watched herself. Every wrinkle which she could only see when she cried would appear and stay for good in thirty years or so. But what if she didn't live that long? Right now she felt as if her whole lifetime had already passed. She wanted to live, she looked at a photograph of her grandparents. How did they make it through?

She hated July. By the time it came around she had grown tired of the summer free time. It was no longer a freedom, but a burden. She looked at her calender and the sad wrinkles on her face disappeared. She had forgotten to mark off another day on her calendar. The blue and red markers she used for this month lay on her desk. She picked them up and made one blue slash, then took red and crossed over the first one. One more big colorful "X" to mark off these slow days. She took the calendar off the wall and numbered the days until she could return to school. Fifty-three days left. Fifty-three days until she felt better. There would be no more sickness when school started. When she was with her friends she no longer thought about dying all of the time. They put her into remission.

Her head persisted to ache. She looked around for her book and remembered that she left it downstairs on the floor. It could stay there. Shelley was in remission now, since there were about sixty more pages left in the book, it would probably not be too much longer before she was sick again, then got better again, pronounced cured, then died suddenly. Yeah, she would leave her where she was.

What would she do if she were sick? It would take so much to accept the sickness and to deal with all the pain and suffering. Maybe she would not be allowed the pain and suffering, she would just die right away without warning. There would be no diagnosis because no one believed she was having all the symptoms in the first place. It would sure surprise everyone. At her wake they would try to remember if they noticed anything unusual about her lately. Then the

doctor's report would come into the discussion. The doctor said that if it had been discovered earlier, it could have been stopped. They would shake their heads and say, that is just a sad thing, and they would move on with their lives.

*We should have listened, they'll say, and they will pray for my dead self because it would be too late to pray for recovery.*

She looked out of her bedroom window. Mom had gone outside to water the plants. The sound of the water hitting the leaves gave Renee a small shiver. Mom took such good care of those plants. Early every morning she woke up and watered them and on extra dry days like this one, they were watered twice. Flowers for the sun, flowers for the shade, flowers for part-sun and part-shade, they were all so carefully tended. In return for her care they flowered like good pets. She was surprised that mom didn't buy snacks for the plants to reward their good behavior.

*And after I died, mom would continue to water her plants everyday, sometimes twice.*

Her attention was drawn to the painting her mom made for her last birthday. It was of the bleeding hearts that bloomed so beautifully last summer. Renee remembered how mom finished the painting after sunset one evening, all except for one detail. Renee remembered that before she could see her painting, she had to wait a whole day after her birthday so mom could capture the exact color the setting sun cast upon the leaves. Around sunset, she allowed Renee to watch as she quickly mixed the oil colors into a pale pinkish yellow. With so much care and confidence in her eyes, she dipped her brush in the paint, and after two small swipes of the brush the whole painting came to life. Those last details made the painting come to life.

Renee heard the sliding screen door open and shut. Mom had finished. Renee could smell the fresh bread baking. It was about ready to come out of the oven. Soon the buzzer would sound, the oven would open and the scent would become even stronger. Mom was very good at baking bread. She was good at a lot of things.

Renee's head still ached. She pulled out a piece of paper from the notebook she kept beside her bed and read what she had written when she was worrying about death a few days before. It was a list of her belongings and where she wanted them to go when she died. Again she began to feel dizzy and again she lay down on her bed and put her hands where she hurt. Again she worried and cried, her face

wrinkling.

It was time for bed but she did not want to sleep. What if she never woke up? This felt like the end. This felt like the time she was jumping on her bed with her brother Tim. Dad came in and told them not to jump on the bed, it was dangerous and bad for the springs. But together they jumped. For some reason or other Renee was holding a penny in her mouth and when her brother made a large leap into the air, she gasped and the penny was lost inside of her. She could still feel it going down her throat. She remembered being scared about what she was supposed to do. She couldn't tell her dad because he would just say that she should have known better. For days she worried to her brother about it. He just said, "At least now you are worth something." She was so scared about what the penny would do to her, but she could ask no one.

Mother was the only one there to talk to and she would dismiss her feelings as silly and say that she should not be reading those "dying" books. Mother was good at baking bread and painting pictures, that is why she loved her mother. It was over for her, the adopted red-head worth a penny. The only thing she could do was keep herself awake.

Then there was a knock at her bedroom door.

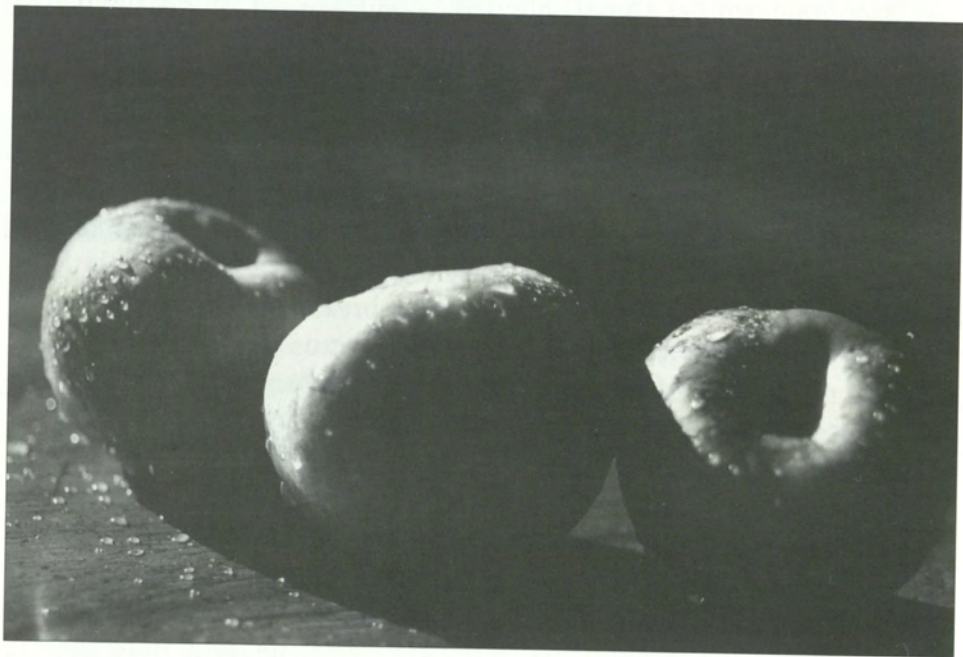
"Renee?"

"Yeah," she answered quickly turning off her bedside lamp so her mother could not see her troubled, red face.

And then a soft voice, filled not only with sympathy, but concern, and sincerity came through the door along with the light from the hallway and the silhouette of her mother's face. Like fresh baked bread, a gentle spray of water upon leaves, and the final brushstrokes on a masterpiece, these simple words calmed her.

"How are you, Renee?"

Everything was going to be okay.



## Contributor's Notes

**Adrienne Baker** is a junior English Education major from Rochester, MI. She wants to thank Q, Six, Bethy, Pookie, and Roo for being such wonderful friends... "I love you all!"

**Wendy** *still* has nothing to say about herself.

**Jessica Binns** is a disillusioned freshman from the East Coast who is thinking about drastically changing her major. Her favorite authors are Edgar Allen Poe, John Irving and Patricia Cornwell. She enjoys words, literature, procrastination, philosophy, writing, lacrosse and music (except country!). "Look around and ask someone if you are alive / You're a sidewalk cipher speaking prionic jive." -BR

For **Kelli K. Blahnik**, writing is her instinctive response to the amazing grace she has received from her Savior. His birth makes all the difference in the world. She is an English and Humanities double major and after graduation plans on living in Southern California with her soon-to-be husband.

**Sarah Blum** is a senior Art major with Art History and Japanese minors from Rockville, Maryland. These pictures were taken during her semester abroad in Reutlingen, Germany. She recommends everyone to study abroad also. "It's a wonderful, once in a lifetime experience." Her passions include the Washington Redskins, chocolate, and, of course, Christian. No MSG rocks! Thanks Mom and Dad!

**April Burford** is from Crown Point, IN. She is majoring in Graphic Design and minoring in Communications.

**christopher john brown** is a senior from Washington, D.C., studying History, Ethnic Studies and African Development. Through his four years at Valparaiso he has served to help create a balanced sense of community and humanness amongst all members of our university. Yet Christopher's story would be incomplete with out the remarkable influence of "Mother Africa" and the lives of her Ubuntu children. Ngiyabonga mfwethu, sisi bhuti. Siyacula iculo, yebo, "Simunye - we are one." Sale Kahle.

**Mia Dolce Cabibbo** is majoring in English and International Service. She is from Stoughton, WI. Her inspiration is the quiet beauty of everyday life.

Photography is like a form of meditation for her – a chance to look deeply at the things around her that she might otherwise fail to notice. She has found that, despite all the ugliness that exists in the world today, there is still beauty if we only take the time to look.

**michaela chatman** is from Gary, IN.

When he's not on the field breaking tackles as the 364 lb. star runningback on the University of Michigan Wolverines Football team, **Stephen DeLassus** can be seen galavanting around campus. Though he usually looks like a combination of lost and confused, Stephen is actually a grounded Finance and Accounting double major, a junior at Valpo, and a member of the Sigma Chi Fraternity. However, he was heard saying, "... but I've always thought of joining the circus."

**Dan Di Prisco** is a junior Psychology major from Valparaiso. He would just like to say that he is glad he finally got in.

**kelly k faulstich** is a junior English Education major whose true existence remains under a picnic table many miles west of her hometown of Wheaton, IL. Until her 12 year plan becomes a reality, she continues being perfectly content singing songs about jell-o, attempting to personify Switzerland, and showing off her buccinate.

**Armando X. Fernandez** will be a Senior at the end of the 1999 Spring semester. He is majoring in History, with a minor in English. He presently lives in Portage, IN. Armando is a VU@Night student and has been thoroughly enjoying his university experience. He would like to thank Prof. Byrne and Prof. Ruff for getting him interested in reading and writing poetry. Armando also enjoys reading, writing, sports and music.

**Gregory Denton Gallup** is a Senior English major. He enjoys hiking, camping, music, reading, and writing. Upon graduation, he plans to travel with Americorps, then attend graduate school on the West Coast.

**Joshua C. Honn** is a sophomore Graphic Design/Journalism major with a minor in Philosophy. Other projects he is involved in include Stereodream, Sent and Airport (all musical groups).

**Jessica Irvin** is a junior majoring in Meteorology. She is from South Bend, IN, and writes poetry to relieve stress and make some sense of this mind-boggling world.

**Sarah Jacobsen** is a sophomore from Richmond, IN, majoring in Communications and minoring in Art. She has been writing poetry since 8th grade, and believes that writing has been the primary source for her self-reflection, where each poem is sort of her own "therapy session" with herself where she is able to delve into her imagination, and come up with something entirely "her." She is a fan of all writers, but only a few are due her lingering obsession, with Sylvia Plath being devoted the most shelf space in her room. A favorite quote of hers is, "Remember, your character is your destiny," as she believes it furthers us to the realization of how important true self-reflection is, because of what can come of it.

**Erica E. Kaufman** is a Junior majoring in Chemistry, Biology and the Humanities. She is from Dyer, IN, and enjoys learning and athletics in her free time.

**Kerri Klein** wants to wave hello. She is going to go take a nap now.

Truly, **Karen Joy Klostermann** sees the world through the eyes of a child. No, this is not due to her physical stature, but rather a mind which naturally embraces all aspects of youth. She thanks God for this, among other blessings, such as her friends and family.

**Justin Krishka**, a senior from North Richland Hills, TX, is double majoring in Music Education and English Education. He wishes to dedicate his poem to Danielle for showing him an example of great strength and faith in a time of crisis and to Kristi who has never stopped believing in him. And, as always, he encourages everyone to read Virginia Woolf as often as possible (preferably while listening to anything composed by Robert Schumann).

**Becky R. Kruse** is a freshman majoring in Broadcast Communications and minoring in Film Studies. She is from LeMars, Iowa, and hopes to accomplish being a movie editor. Becky likes ice hockey, plays tennis, writes books in her spare time and collects Scooby Doo paraphanelia. She enjoys the Goo Goo Dolls and her favorite movies include *Dead Poets Society* and *Tombstone*. Her favorite poet is a three way tie between Jewel, Dylan Thomas, and the great Bob Dylan.

And **Mary** loves most to travel and to write. She sees the two as being inextricably related (travelling necessitates writing, writing is travelling), and for this, she is grateful.

**Cheryl Lohrmann**, a graduating senior from Battle Ground, Washington, majors in Art (with concentrations in graphic design and photography) and minors in Writing. So, she likes to do art and to write.



**Sarah "Otto" Marxhausen**, despite appearing to be a freshman from Colorado, is actually a forty-year old heating duct repairman named Harry, who is on the run from the feds. He would like to sincerely thank everyone he's ever met in his entire life, especially Bob the Wonder Ivy for many hours of entertaining photosynthesis, and Callard & Bowser-Suchard Inc., for creating Altoids, the Original Celebrated Curiously Strong Peppermints.

**jes noon** attempts poetry knowing full well that her efforts are like dust mites in the world of imagery and words... she pleads that the world read more Nikki Giovanni, Flannery O'Connor, William Faulkner, and T.S. Eliot.

**K.E. Root** is a sophomore at VU, who transferred from the University of Toronto (Toronto, Canada). She is completing a double major in English and Theatre Arts. She lives in Valparaiso and is interested in writing for theatre as well as poetry.

**Carly Skvarce** is from the northwest suburbs of Chicago and has no idea what she is doing in Indiana. At this point in time, she is majoring in Psychology and minoring in Biology, English and Classical Civ., anything that will get her a job studying the behavior of her favorite animals in the whole world, monkeys and apes (and don't you dare get them mixed up!!!). Some of her favorite poets and authors are E.E. Cummings, Jack Kerouac, Douglas Coupland and Edgar Allan Poe. She can't live without her music and her dream of owning a 1999 Firebird Trans Am.

**Naomi Strom** is a senior with both an Art major in photography and an individualized major in Communications and Art History. She considers herself a traveling nomad who once considered the West Coast home. She wishes to thank her family, friends, and professors for their support over the last four years. Pepe-you know I can never put my thoughts into words but you feel what I feel.

**Dirk van der Duim** enjoys writing, making photographs, and singing (among other things). What he likes most is when he can share the words and pictures and songs. He thinks that it's good for people to let others see how they see.

**Jenn Zeile**, is a transfer from Michigan State University and is a sophomore. She is an English major hoping to go into advertising. Jenn is from Clarkston, MI.



*Self-Portrait #1*

Kerri Klein

# You could be part of the Lighter!

*Don't forget about the Lighter over the summer!  
Take advantage of your time off to write,  
photograph and draw!*

**Deadline for written entries for the fall semester issue is  
Friday, October 8, 1999**

- entries are due by 8 p.m.
- all entries must be neatly typed
- please include a cover page with your entries stating your name, titles of all pieces submitted, and address or phone number – your name must NOT appear on your entries!

**Deadline for artwork for the fall semester is  
Monday, October 18, 1999**

- entries are due by 8 p.m.
- please include a cover page with your entries stating your name, titles of all pieces submitted, and address or phone number – your name must NOT appear on your entries!
- all entries except those chosen for the front and back cover will be printed in black and white
- photography, drawings, graphic artwork, etc. are excepted.
- all artwork will be returned
- all artwork must be of scannable size

