

Denali

LANE COMMUNITY COLLEGE • FALL '94



Denali

"IDLENESS IS THE HOLIDAY OF FOOLS."

- MESSAGE IN A FORTUNE COOKIE

NOVEMBER 20, 1994

Cover art by Justin Tindel

Lane Community College
4000 East 30th, Eugene, Oregon 97405
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Fall 1994. Volume XVIII Number 1



DENALI STAFF (FROM LEFT): Dorothy Wearne, Ryan Reynolds, Kenneth Brady, Kyra Kelly, Dee Bugarin, Peter Jensen, Trev Mostella.

From the Editor

In case you haven't seen an issue of this publication before, this is *Denali*, LCC's magazine of literature and visual art. Welcome. *Denali* is dedicated to presenting the best fiction, poetry, photography, and graphics created by students, staff, and faculty of LCC, as well as other Lane County residents.

The theme for this issue was open, and you will find the material on these pages varied and very creative.

As the new editor, I am looking forward to the year ahead. We intend to showcase the work published in *Denali* in a professional, quality format, and to provide all who are published a magazine they can be proud to show to others. Hopefully, we have done that with the Fall issue.

Another goal is to have professional authors come to LCC each term to read some of their own work, as well as give students an opportunity to ask them questions. We did this in November with Diana Abu-Jaber. An interview and a piece of her fiction appears in this issue of *Denali*. We will continue this throughout the year.

The theme for the Winter issue will be science-fiction. Submission forms are available in the *Denali* office and at the SRC. If you have any questions or comments, please contact the *Denali* office in the Center building, 479-F, or call 747-4501 ext. 2830.

Let us know what you think.

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The Emancipate Metronoid

GARY NOLAND

Hiromi came to her lesson with the new metronoid, as Dr. Spear had requested. Her parents had purchased it at a novelty shop downtown. Pyramid-shaped with centaur-like limbs and lion's paws, it was constructed of teakwood, Tiffany glass, and tortoise shell, inlaid with cat's eyes, and richly bedecked with peacock quills and alligator teeth. It wasn't a make Spear was familiar with, but he assumed it would be adequate for the purpose.

Hiromi, at age nine, was already facile at the keyboard, having memorized all of Bach's inventions, sinfonias, and preludes and fugues from the Well-Tempered Clavier; all of Mozart's, Haydn's and Beethoven's piano sonatas; most of Chopin's ballades, scherzos, waltzes, polonaises, and etudes; as well as a host of other works, including several late sonatas by Prokofiev and Scriabin.

Spear feared his student was progressing too rapidly and that his authority over her was wearing off. He had only begun taking lessons himself at the overripe age of *twenty* with a surly, ill-tempered, curmudgeonly old fud (baptized *The Terrorist*) whose connotation fits would cause Spear's supinators, pronators, deltoids and pectorals to tighten and cramp, inducing tics, twitches, and convulsions (to say nothing of memory lapses and sleep disorders). Not until he was thirty did Spear have the opportunity to study with a renowned piano virtuoso who made him start from scratch to unlearn all the bad habits he had accumulated. By this time it was too late for Spear to entertain any hopes of becoming a concert artist. Being shrewd, however, he had managed to earn a name for himself as a *pedagogue*. He knew he'd never attain the facility of most children who started piano at a tender age. Nevertheless, he had a special knack for camouflaging his incompetence by assuming an acerbic and menacing demeanor (a skill he had acquired while under the tutelage of *The Terrorist*). He retained, thus, an outward form of one-upmanship over his students, being especially stern with the more talented ones like Hiromi. (Secretly he wished to lop off her little fingers, for her playing made him feel like a struggling buffoon.) In actuality, Hiromi had such a sure sense of rhythm, a metronoid served no useful function other than giving Spear more time to fume and simmer behind her back.

Winding the metronoid, Spear released the tiny oscillating pendulum from its catch and commanded Hiromi to play to the beat designated thereby. She concentrated on the regular click of the rhythmometer, then began to play a Bach fugue.

After listening enviously for several moments Spear caught a rubato in her tempo and exclaimed triumphantly, "Aha! You're dragging the rhythm!"

Unfazed, Hiromi replied, "No I'm not, Dr. Spear. I'm playing along with the beat, just like you asked me to. If you listen, you'll notice the *metronoid* is dragging . . ."

Spear became tensely silent for a minute, realizing her riposte was a deliberate ruse to undermine his authority. If he belabored the point, she might call his bluff. On the other hand, if he acknowledged his mistake, it would also give her a tactical advantage. The best ploy would be to shift the emphasis of his argument. Upon regaining his composure, he decided to take the offensive.

"That's irrelevant!" he blurted out. "What you fail to comprehend, young lady, is that there are those who are *Technicians* with a capital *T*, and those who are *Musicians* with a capital *M*. If you are incapable of making that distinction (as you evidently *are*), then you're wasting your time learning the piano — and *I'm* wasting my time *teaching* you!"

At this point, Dr. Spear gruffly waved his student aside and proceeded to play the exposition of the same fugue with an exaggerated emphasis on the appoggiaturas. (Needless to say, he had rehearsed his performance all week for Hiromi's benefit, deliberately missing a note or two to make it appear he was acting on impulse.) He halted dramatically, then pounded several clusters with his fists and improvised a rapid atonal flourish from the bottommost depths to the uppermost heights of the keyboard. Swivelling around on the piano bench, he whisked off his bifocals and — wild-eyed and trembly — pointed to his right auditory apparatus, declaring: "I have two of the best ears on the East Coast — and *I* know who *Beethoven* is! Some of my *brighter* and more *cultivated* students (like Dorian or Oswald) also have a good idea who *Beethoven* is."

He paused for effect, assuming a self-confident and belligerent posture to let his cryptic utterance sink in (a shift he had learned from his professors while in graduate school).

"Is there anything else you'd like to play today?" he asked, glancing at his watch.

"Yes, Dr. Spear," Hiromi replied timidly. "I'd like to play you a piece I composed."

Another pregnant pause ensued. Hiromi's countermeasure had caught Spear completely off guard.

"That you *composed*?" he replied acidly. "Well, it's a little premature at this point to *write* music if you've never studied *theory*. Have you read any texts by *George Perle* or *Heinrich Schenker*?"

Hiromi shook her head with downcast eyes, blushing with shame at her ignorance.

With a look of sublime irritation, Spear massaged the bridge

of his nose and donned his bifocals.

"Well, *all right*, go ahead then," he said with an air of toleration, as if he were bending over backwards to make some huge concession on her behalf.

Hiromi wound up the metronoid and set it down on the table behind her. After a few moments of acute concentration, she began to play a slow, pensive introduction that built gradually to a fiery, cadenza-like flourish, subsequent to which the piece proper took off at a lightning tempo. The composition had an intricate webwork of syncopations and polyrhythms, lush and exotic harmonies, inventive figurations, enchanting melodies, and ingenious labyrinths of motival/thematic liquidations and dovetailings. Spear had encountered a similar talent in one of his pupils on a previous occasion and had made every effort to suppress it with all his might — *to no avail*. His teaching credo revolved around the principle that Mediocrity must be nurtured and goaded *semper et ubique*, while Talent should be arrested and subdued before it had a chance to proliferate like a virus. As the charming and brilliant piece unfolded, Spear rehearsed in his mind how he would react to it. Any show of enthusiasm would be contrary to reason. He decided the most effective maneuver would be to damn it with faint praise. He knew from *experience* that nothing was more disheartening to aspiring composers than bland indifference to their efforts.

As he pondered over his next move, preparing to feign a brief bout of snoring interspersed with occasional "suppressed" yawns, something caught his attention from the corner of his eye — an abrupt movement. He rubbed his peekers and looked again. It seemed the metronoid had moved forward slightly. Posing on one wooden leg, it did a brief arabesque, then took a fish dive towards Spear. Reflexively, he caught the device in his left hand, relieved it hadn't fallen to the floor (it was evidently fragile and costly, and he couldn't afford to replace it if it broke). Before he was able to get a firm grip on it, however, the metronoid leapt out of his palm towards the mantelpiece, beating one leg against another in midair as it did so. It began pirouetting in sync to the music, edging its way slowly to the right end of the mantelpiece. In a panic, Spear reached over to snatch it before it dropped onto the marble tiling. Before he could grab it, though, it did a *pas ciseaux*, landing on the sofa, whereupon it glissaded down a large cushion unto the floor and performed a solo dance — something along the lines of a jitterbug in alternation with slapstick splits and attitudes. For a few brief moments Spear was mesmerized by the beautiful music and the metronoid's brilliant choreography. But the spell was abruptly broken when the device leapt again during a climactic passage, beating its calves together sharply. It hopped and bounced hither and thither and Spear chased it all around the room, afraid he'd be blamed if something happened to it. Hiromi was so absorbed in her performance, she was oblivious to the commotion behind her.

Just as Spear got a stranglehold on the shifty mechanism, Hiromi concluded her piece, and the long-case clock sounded the hour. Mrs. Yamashita arrived to pick up her daughter. As Hiromi's mother handed Spear an elegantly wrapped gift and an envelope containing his payment, the metronoid slipped from his fingers and crashed to the floor, shattering into a thousand fragments.

A thick, almost deathly, silence ensued. The stillness was

broken when Spear cleared his throat and apologized profusely for his clumsiness, reluctantly offering to recompense Mrs. Yamashita for the damage. Hiromi looked very sad but didn't utter a word. Mrs. Yamashita stooped to gather the remnants of the metronoid and reassured Dr. Spear that it wasn't his fault and he needn't feel any obligation to pay for it. She informed him that Hiromi would be leaving town for some time and would have to discontinue lessons for a while, but they would get in touch with him as soon as she returned. Bowing graciously, the mother and daughter took their leave.

After watching their car back out of his driveway, Spear poured himself three shots of Cognac and guzzled them down in an equal number of hard swallows. Breathing heavily, he plodded to his bedroom and rummaged through the middle drawers of his chiffonier. Upon finding a .44 Smith & Wesson Special, he entered the barrel into his mouth and blew his brains out.

Having neglected to shut the French window in the adjoining room, Dr. Spear was called upon, within minutes of his departure, by an enthusiastic swarm of green houseflies. They proceeded, without delay, to heartily feed upon his flesh. As they did so they laid thousands of eggs in his ears, nose, and mouth. In the wee hours of the following morning, while livor & rigor mortis were well under way, the eggs hatched into tiny maggots that immediately began feeding on his tissues. By late the next evening, after Dr. Spear's facial features had become all but unrecognizable, an army of beetles arrived to feast on his drying skin. By noon the following day, legions of spiders, mites and millipedes arrived to gobble up the other bugs and consummate the pillaging of Spear's carcass.

A day later, after he had become a blistered and bloated caricature of his former self (leaking vile-smelling fluids from his orifices), Penelope, his weekend helper, arrived to tidy up the premises. Upon encountering the heap of rotting flesh in the corner of the master bedroom, her initial reaction was one of annoyance. Inspecting it more closely, however, she became incensed at her superiors for having failed to warn her about the extra workload. Because of this stone in her path, she would have to miss the matinee she had planned to attend with her friends that day. The three-pronged task of disposing of Dr. Spear's corpse, mopping up his gore, and airing out not only *his* room but every other *frigging room in the house*, would take at least twice as long as she had figured on working that morning — which would screw up her schedule for the entire *weekend!*

Notwithstanding, just as she was about to call down curses on the heads of her superiors, it dawned on her that the task in question was not necessarily as onerous a one as she had initially thought. She recalled that only a few days earlier Dr. Spear had purchased a garbage disposer with an extra-wide drain chute under which rotated hundreds of needle-forked platinum toothblades. Connected to each blade were numerous micro-engineered electrical grindsaws that moved in swift, circular motions while emitting razor-thin carbon dioxide laser beams. She figured that whatever parts didn't go down *that*, she'd saran-wrap and take home to Dildo, her pet Doberman.

As Penelope scrubbed the exsiccated remains of Dr. Spear's blood, mucus, barf, semen and excrement off the bedroom floor, she smiled to herself, picturing Dildo with his wet, beaming eyes, gratefully wagging his tail . . . and *licking his chops*. . . .



BIRDWATCHING BY KENNETH BRADY

As He Sits in the Window

Does vapor chase away clouds
Sundrenched skies of blue paint
Moonless dreaming black stars
To a place hidden from shadows
By shadows?

Window panes crystal gossamer thread
Lightless eyes cast down against glare
Rough hewn brick wearing time surface
Cloak of modern design and ancient
What is real?

Azure winds flutter invisible faces
Float across wastelands of broken
Stolen dreams unlike promises before
Why does he stare upward in such hope
Inquisitive?

Naive dreaming as happiness could be
What he doesn't know his mind passes
Off as unimportant
Is he better off than I?

-KENNETH BRADY

Post Script

MICKEY STELLAVATO

She drew cats — profiles and silhouettes — and I sat behind her. She didn't talk much then, not that she ever became much of a communicator. No, she drew. Her life was a tenuous extension of her art and it was never really anchored in this place; she lived somewhere between this world and the next one over, where colors had personality and shapes told her stories of fear and regret. The two got the better of her on a Good Friday not long ago, when they forced her to take a .357 magnum and blow herself into that realm she was forever running away from.

Both fourteen, life-hungry, and still virgins, we became immediate friends in a passionless world. I could talk enough for both of us, and she didn't need to explain her difficulty with people to me, because I understood. We spoke the same language somehow, that of the earth's messages, of attempted understanding at the inner workings of our species, and we spent many years walking down the same path; sometimes running, sometimes falling, but always eager for the next step. Whereas I became more comfortable with this human experience, she became increasingly more confused by it. She would hide her confusion, weaving it into her strange humor, and I would find myself forgetting.

Her art was large and beautiful and selling. One of the few self-supporting artists I've known, her paintings were more like sculptures and walls depicting her struggle with this reality. They reflected her triumphs and stagnations, requiring that you alter your perception of matter's form and look instead at the illusion we call Self. She was blessed with the gift of appreciation — usually only found in children and mystics — and it was this line she walked; she was more a child than a woman and appealed to the parent in those around her. It was a gradual process, her slide into insanity, and I hesitate to attempt to describe it; she was living in a spiritual wasteland, and toward the end, no one could reach her. I've often thought that her life was cliché, a terrible and predictable script written by a jaded God. For the living who knew her, she left behind a strange, metaphoric echo and, like a pointillist painting, the closer I get to the image of her perception, the less it makes sense.

She was raised in the world of cocktail parties and polished silver where the golden child was neither seen nor heard until all the swaying, well-dressed guests had found their way to their cars and were no longer the responsibility of their most gracious hosts. Her father repaired the hearts of the over-indulgent, and her mother compromised her brilliant mind to become his wife. Together they raised three daughters — all beautiful and gifted and drowning in their father's self-absorption. While my friend was in her early teens, her mother was replaced by the younger and childless woman, and off they ran, mother and three daughters, to a small town in western Colorado. It was there I met her, and there she ran to when the demons finally called her in.

Her childhood wounds hadn't yet festered, and there were years, in the beginning of our friendship, when it all seemed outside the realm of causation. We were young and everything seemed strange and unfamiliar. Parental influence was not something much contemplated then, beyond the sphere of what was or was not permissible, and it was only later, as her mother became lost in her world of alcohol, that her problems began to surface in obviously self-destructive ways. These outbursts of rage and self-flagellation were difficult for me to understand, and when it became clear that she was seriously damaged, it was too late: for me to help, or for her to back out of her destiny.

The last six months before she died were harrowing, for her, for me, and for the others close enough to feel it. She stopped painting and bathing and wandered the West in search of sanctuary. The world had become a haunted house; specter upon phantom upon demon calling her, threatening to steal her heart, caging her in the dark side, and she couldn't stop them. Phone calls to me were filled with these stories and I could do nothing but suggest to her that she must find help, that she needed professional counsel or, at the very least to visit me. (I hoped vainly that if I could get her to stop running then she might be able to ground herself long enough to seek out therapy.) But she didn't visit and she kept calling. Mornings, nights, weekends; always the call, always hysterical and terrified. I began to feel like I was under attack, that she was becoming malevolent, and it scared me; I started pulling away emotionally in order to protect myself and, perhaps, dull my senses to the reality of where she might be headed.

She stopped in Colorado long enough for her uncle to have her committed — her greatest and longest fear come to fruition. As an adult she couldn't be held longer than seventy-two hours, so after that time she fled, ran to her father's, and convinced a psychiatrist that she was only mildly depressed. She was given an antidepressant and released. She was dead a week later.

Her body was found in a horse pasture, amid blood and sagebrush, on Easter Sunday. The local paper ran an article describing her road to insanity, and I knew that I understood all too well the things which can drive someone beyond the wall. She left a letter, eloquent with illustrations and postscripts, explaining how she went to hell and why she was being punished for a mistake she had made. It had become clear to her that purification in the Godhead was her only recourse, and this she wrote with such utter clarity of purpose that, perhaps, peace did descend upon her in those last moments before death.

I spent that Easter staring at the sea, mourning the loss of a friend and a confidante while the fire-red sun, eventually, and for only a moment, kissed the waves good bye, and disappeared over the horizon.

Cruel sister, so cruel you didn't hear the angels in the trees, though they called your name from every branch.

Night time

The color is no color
as day fades into night.
The colors that were
remembered in the dark,
Unzipping their secret life
as the back of a dusk silk dress.

Shoulders wriggle free
of daytime confinement.
The night inhales.

Silken whispers pass from tree to bush.
The night breathes its own secrets,
each thicket sharing its hidden life.

Night after night they meet—
the reaching branches of cedar,
rustling leaves of lily—
mingling nighttime confidences,
Exuding relief at day's fading,
at recession of clamor and bang.

- SARA BAZ



Night

She turns away
with her
wry,
wicked smile.
Hides behind
a flaxen waterfall
of hair.
Vast,
mysterious
and
as indifferent
as she
who
sleeps between
the tangled skein
of stars
in the
black,
black
sky.

- KYRA KELLY



GO ASK ALICE by Kyra Kelly

Roberto on the Slag Heaps

KYLE WHELLISTON

Roberto started playing the accordion when he was in college. He lived in an apartment complex close to campus. When he would practice playing his instrument, his neighbors would turn up their radios to drown him out. Fellow tenants beat on his door and screamed obscenities. The couple in the apartment below him would bang on their ceiling with a broom handle. Passers-by on the street would throw rocks and beer bottles at his window.

Roberto tried practicing at the city park — that didn't work either. He found a spot at a bench near a grove of trees, and started into a folksy, backwoods-style stomp. The birds all flew away. Every dog within a mile whelped and howled. Joggers and bicyclists complained. Eventually a beat policeman escorted him out of the park, warning Roberto that he'd get a noise violation if it ever happened again.

Late one night, Roberto snuck into an underground parking garage with his accordion. As he began to play a fast-paced waltz, several homeless people who had set up camp there approached him. "What are you trying to do, kill us?" they asked. They proceeded to rip the accordion from Roberto's chest. One man violently threw it to the concrete, and each took turns jumping up and down on it.

Undaunted, Roberto had his accordion cleaned and fixed the next day. He headed for the slag heaps, way out beyond the city limits. Finally alone to practice his craft without harassment, he took a deep breath and launched into a scalding polka. The notes and chords, layer upon layer, spilled out into the crisp air. He maneuvered his shiny red squeezebox with time-honed, disci-

plined skill — in, out, compressing, releasing. He had never felt this way before in his life! He was dancing, jumping around on one foot, doing cartwheels, striking awkward rock-star poses, playing the accordion behind his back . . . Ha, ha! Freedom!

When Roberto finished his masterpiece, he collapsed upon the drossy plain. As he lay there, convulsing and twitching, he could detect a faint melody in the distance — warm, soothing, ethereal tones. He slowly regained his footing and made his way across the slag heaps, in search of the strange music.

On a small metallic hill sat a breathtakingly beautiful Irish woman in a black dress. Her fair skin shone like smooth, pure crystal. Her strawberry-blonde hair flowed in great torrents over her lithe shoulders. And she was playing the bagpipes.

The woman was quite shocked by the sight of Roberto and his gleaming accordion, and abruptly ceased playing. Roberto was taken aback as well, and blurted out, "Oh, I'm so sorry . . . I didn't mean to disturb you . . . please keep playing . . . I'll leave now . . ."

But suddenly, they began playing their instruments together — a spontaneous duet for bagpipes and accordion, a delicate, intricate rhapsody of mutual understanding. Their rich harmonies permeated the air, gentle cascading notes, magically entwined.

Had there been any human witnesses to this concert, they would have blurted out vague superlatives between bursts of joyous tears. But as it was, the only spectators were the flocks of returning birds; they encircled the two musicians, accompanying them in a grand, echoing chorus.



PONDERING by Troy McFarland

I Think Sally Field Should Play Me

I think we have some good material here
 For a movie of the week.
 It has all the key elements:
 The beautiful, talented, lovable heroine
 (that's me),
 The equally beautiful, talented, and lovable
 Best friend,
 The brutal history of child abuse,
 The courageous and successful reclaiming
 Of their lives,
 Supported by the again equally beautiful,
 Talented and lovable counselors,
 Plenty of humor, the great scenery—
 Oregon is a perfect setting,
 The mysterious illness
 From which the heroine
 Gallantly rallies
 Aided by her beloved best friend
 and then—
 Recurrence of symptoms,
 Doctor's office
 Tests

The Big C.
 The friends exchange meaningful looks
 While walking on the beach
 As whales cavort offshore.
 Gulls swirl overhead
 The music rises dramatically.
 The sun sets into the sea
 As a voice over recites
 One of the heroine's poems
 And then
 The beautiful, talented, and lovable
 heroine
 And the equally beautiful,
 Talented, and lovable best friend
 Run pell mell for the heroine's car,
 Speed down the highway
 And crash headfirst into Dairy Queen
 Screaming Blizzards!
 and bursting into a blazing inferno!
 I think Sally Field should play me.
 Are you okay with Meryl Streep?

- BONITA RINEHART

Say Grace

RYAN FOOTE

The day broke mildly with pale shades of purple tinting the few puffy clouds that floated above the horizon. The egg man, a ruddy, squat fellow, had been awake for nearly two hours before the sun had dared show its glaring face. James cursed his black mare into action and guided his cart down the rocky lane toward that crazy poet's house. James disdained gossip, but he had heard some pretty heady tales being passed around the pub now and again about the "writers on the hill." The pubgoers did love a good yarn and an excess of ale does loosen people's tongues to exaggeration, so James either ignored the gossip or took it with a grain of salt. He grunted with effort as if he, and not the ancient nag, were pulling the cart up the side of the incline.

Besides, thought James, all writers are a tad temperamental and likely to produce stories about themselves to generate some sort of mystery around their art. He sighed, then spoke aloud to his mare, "Besides, I just deliver eggs. Supernatural sorts of things aren't my business, and that pompous poet's wife is quite nice, right Mary?" James reined Mary right to avoid a muddy patch in the yard and halted her near the rear of the cottage. He alighted with two dozen eggs and a ready smile to greet the lady with. His smile quickly fell away as his lips formed around the curse he uttered when he nearly tumbled backwards, left boot sliding in the mud. He pinwheeled his free arm in the manner of a mediocre tightrope walker skittish on the high-wire.

James caught his breath a few moments after his balance and ambled to the back door. His knock produced an "Enter!" for a reply and James opened the door to step in.

"Morning," James offered, lifting his hat, face turning purple as the clouds outside when the woman seated at the table burst out laughing. James stood confused and immobile, his hat held just off his balding head, while she coughed back her merriment.

"Oh, don't just stand there looking confused, James. Forgive me, but you looked absolutely amusing outside just a moment before and I couldn't help myself." She trailed off, chuckling still.

James placed his hat back upon his head, readjusted the collar of his coarse, brown coat, and went to the kitchen to dispose of his delivery. He sought to cover his embarrassment and said, "How's the book coming, Mrs. Shelley?" He was dumbfounded at the fact that she was a writer. A lot of men at the pub guffawed at this, but James felt a certain amount of pride that he delivered eggs to a woman writer. He genuinely liked Mrs. Shelley, it was that damned crazy husband of hers he couldn't stand.

"Oh, it's coming along agreeably enough, James," she replied. Despite her radical leanings, Mrs. Shelley spoke to him with the slightly condescending tone of one from a higher station speaking to a lesser. She recognized this and inwardly berated herself for it. "I've been contemplating the idea of making the creature a vegetarian."

James shook his head. He couldn't comprehend all this business about vegetarianism. Mrs. Shelley was always quoting some damned fool scholar by the name of Joseph Ritson about not eating animals. Ridiculous, James thought, and said, "Well, I

don't know about what any of your creatures eat. The only creature I'm interested in has feathers; what the missus is cooking for supper tonight," he rubbed his rough hands together and actually licked his lips.

"James," Mrs. Shelley implored, "you really should consider what Mr. Ritson has to say. After all . . ."

"Thanks for your concern, Mrs. Shelley," James interrupted, "but a man without meat is like a Tory without a tax man. See you next week." He finished this last while halfway out the door. He didn't wish to be trapped listening to another one of the lectures; once had been enough for his poor head. As he climbed into the rigging he thought: I could almost believe those ghost stories about them sometimes. James slapped the reins and directed his mare towards the gate. No, he thought further, nothing supernatural around here; stories are just stories. Vegetarians indeed! His stomach rumbled and his mouth watered. He grimaced, remembering that supper was hours away yet and nothing but cold, hard biscuits until then. He felt as if he could eat a whole chicken by himself. He figured he could try, anyway.

The sun had freed itself from the obscuring dark hills which lined the horizon as if paper cut-outs. The day was beginning in bright splendor, but the sun always must set, giving way to the night and the darkness that spreads with it.

Stamping his boots in an ineffective attempt to rid them of chickenshit, James called through the back door to his wife, "Supper ready yet?"

"Keep your tongue in your mouth but take off those boots. It's almost done," Rebecca yelled back.

James sucked his lolling tongue back into his spacious mouth and unlaced his boots. He nearly fell upon his backside for the second time that day, but eventually managed to remove his clunkers. He snuck into the kitchen in stockinged feet, easing around the battered chopping block, careful not to disturb the numerous blackened pots and pans that hung from it, and sprang at Rebecca armed with puckered lips. Ears attuned to recognize such things, she artfully dodged to the left, leaving James to leap headlong past the red-hot stove. He smacked his face into the wall, which received his kiss with stolid patience, then sprawled onto his wide back. James laughed the laugh of the embarrassed object of attention. Rebecca bent over him, concerned but laughing also, and slapped his corpulence with a towel.

"Get up off the floor and let's eat. You are a handful, James."

James seated himself at the homemade table, an older friend he did not have, and swiped a chubby hand across his chin to remove some drool. He had a piece of roast thigh in his paws, and, consequently, in his mouth, before Rebecca had even set the plate on the table. The thigh was reduced to femur before she had even seated herself.

"Don't wolf your food, James," she admonished. James nodded, between sips of ale, then, ignoring her advice, proceeded to chomp his way through another piece of bird. Rebecca

made a face. She loved James, but the man was more of a pig than a husband when it came to eating.

After finishing the meal, James averred, "Ummm, I'm almost ready for breakfast!"

"What?! You just ate a whole chicken to yourself, James Morton. Lord, I don't know how you can eat like you do!" She raised her hands and gray eyes towards the ceiling as if imploring some deity to ease her exasperation. "An entire chicken, my Lord!"

"I think I'll go get me another one!" With that said, James leaped up and headed for the hatchet. Rebecca quickly interceded.

"You'll do no such thing. Now, put that hatchet down and let's go to bed," her voice was stern as if speaking to a troublesome, but endearing, child.

"What about breakfast?" Despite his sonorous stomach, James did indeed look hungry.

"We'll be having blood sausage. Now, let's go."

James complied, rubbing his stomach and murmuring, "Ummm, blood sausage."

Rebecca strained her ears trying to ignore the loathsome sounds of her husband. His stomach was making squishy noises like meat through a grinder and despite her best efforts, she could hear nothing else. She finally fell asleep, a look of repugnance frozen on her face.

James was having a nightmare. A few moments before his dreams had been filled with the images and sweet aromas (he didn't think you could smell in dreams) of roasted duck, but now he was having a nightmare. He was lacing up his boots, preparing to go fetch dinner. Snatching his helmet from its place by the door, he went outside into a vast, muddy field of chickens. There were thousands of them in this vivid dreamscape, but as soon as he laid hold of one about the neck, the rest vanished. He noticed that the one he held was a particularly gnarled and old rooster, looking at him with terror-widened eyes. Its rust-colored feathers ruffled as it scratched for footing or perhaps in an ineffective attempt to stave James off. In his dream, James felt pity for the rooster, but his complaining stomach argued, compellingly, for no mercy.

Grasping the bird just below its writhing neck, James placed it upon the block, stained dark by the juices of previous dinners. He swung the axe in a lofty arc over his shoulder, the blade strangely reflecting a light that had no source. At that instant, just before the honed edge struck, James realized that it was nighttime. He commanded his arm to stop its motion — never kill a chicken at night, everyone knew that — but it was too late.

The blade was askew from James' attempt to halt it slicing diagonally through the chicken's head, leaving the beak and one

eye still attached to the body. The nearly decapitated bird broke free and thrashed about, its pointed beak pecking viciously at James. He fought off the bird, its blood and brains splattering over him, dancing nearly as wildly as his attacker. The chicken at last went for his throat and as its roughly sharp beak plunged in —

James woke screaming, clutching his neck, but the pain that had awakened him did not come from there. Like daggers revolving around and around, rending him apart, the pain was in his guts.

Rebecca had been torn from sleep nearly as abruptly as her husband, his cries startling her. She turned over to ask him what the matter was, but was cut off by a scream; her own.

James was convulsing horribly, thrashing about and clawing at his large belly. His face was a mass of pain-induced contortions, sweat in rivulets streaming down it. His bare, copious stomach appeared pregnant, but the squirmings beneath the fat were not made by any child.

His hands flailed at his sides, alternately clutching handfuls of sweat-soaked sheets and releasing, rigidly outstretched. Searing pain racked his insides; his throat unclenched and the pressure that had been mounting throughout his inner pipes was released in a series of shrieks. James had never really known pain. He knew it now as he was gutted from the inside.

Rebecca looked on, frozen in horror, unaware of the macabre ambience provided by the silvery, full moon. James' wide belly was splitting, blood flowing freely down his sides. A dark yellow beak stained red was undulating in and out of the wound, which was rended open further by scaly claws. Blood and entrails erupted around the emerging creature as it pulled itself free from James' ripped frame: a Caesarean birth of a unique revenant. James shrieked no more. Rebecca retched at the sight of the chicken, skinned and featherless, soaked in the juices of her husband. A bit of grayish intestine hung from its beak and Rebecca's last thought was of blood sausage before she fainted.

The morning was a dismal gray one, and to Mary Shelley, a perfect one for writing, especially for the tale she was creating. At the usual knock on the door, she gave her usual reply, "Enter!" She did not look up from her manuscript when she said, "Hello, James. You know, I believe I have decided that my creature should be a vegetarian." She looked up, quite surprised, when a woman's voice replied.

"James passed on a few days ago, M'am."

"What? Oh —" Mrs. Shelley looked upon Rebecca with pity. "How did it happen?"

"I'm . . . not sure," Rebecca lied, sorrow overcoming her voice. "I think something he ate didn't agree with him."

He Can't Read Your Mind

DEE BUGARIN

"What are you so upset about? What have I done?" The cry of a harried partner.

"You know! You know what you've done." The reply of a wrathful "wife."

I was the wrathful "wife." Fred and I had been together for four years. And now here we were, standing nose to nose, screaming at each other.

He'd invited a few buddies over to watch a football game. He told me they were coming one hour before their arrival. He had already bought the beer! "The guys are bringing pizza," he informed me. "There's nothing for you to do."

Every toy our two and six year old daughters owned was strewn about the living room. Our cat Buttons, a Himalayan long haired ball of fur, had shed a week's worth of hair on the furniture. I was trying to bring order to this chaos when he said, "Just leave it. The guys won't care."

That's when I lost it. I started yelling and screaming at him, bringing about his plaintive cry of "What have I done?"

What had he done? He'd let me know that football and his friends rated higher in his priorities than I did. I had barely seen him in the last week. He was off building Neil's house down to dark Monday thru Saturday, while I had school all week. On the one day we could spend even a small amount of time together, he chose other company.

As I glared at him, I saw a look of total bewilderment in his eyes. He had no idea why I was upset. He probably thought I was mad because I had to vacuum. He just didn't get it.

He seemed so puzzled that I finally took pity on him. "Never mind," I said more calmly. "There's no time to deal with it now. Put away the toys while I vacuum." We finished just as the first of the sports fans arrived. I did my "dutiful wife" routine and only ventured into their domain to refill the snacks and to gather the empty beer cans.

When the game was over and the guests were gone, I decided to take a different tack. Instead of reopening the hostilities, I waited for him to bring it up again. He didn't.

At first I thought he was just holding off like I was. Marshaling his defenses. But in fact, he had forgotten about the whole thing.

It was then that I first glimpsed the vast chasm between male and female perspectives. I was feeling rejected because he didn't want to spend his entire Sunday with me. But as far as he was concerned, he'd done nothing wrong. All he wanted to do was to watch a little football with the guys.

He nuzzled my neck as I cooked dinner, and I realized that he was *now* anticipating quality time with me. How dare he expect me to look forward to a passionate encounter when we had barely spoken all week! Our longest conversation was that morning, when we were quarreling at the top of our lungs.

That night in bed he drew me to him, and just as I was about to tell him to forget it, he said, "I've missed you."

Even more remarkable, I heard myself murmur, "I've missed you, too." I was particularly annoyed at myself because not only did I not tell him no, I was busily entering into the spirit of things.

Afterwards, I suppose I could have brought up my hurt feelings and bruised self-esteem, but he had that silly, contented smile on his face, and I was feeling fairly mellow myself.

It seems there is no point in expecting a man to pick up subtle signals or hints, I've decided. If you want him to know how you feel, you have to sit him down and tell him. Men have the intuition of a rock. It's a waste of time to expect them to react to your innermost feelings, unless you've outlined them precisely and clearly.

When a woman says "You know!" to a man, she's wrong. He doesn't know. He needs to be told.

Apology's Last Stand

SETH ERICKSON

And I looked into the sun. It seemed uncommon that I should be lying here, dying. The sand soaked my flesh, bit away at my pores until I ceased to feel it anymore. My skin was red, but not from the sun. Instead, from the syrup that swam from the veins in my chest. I remember thinking about days and days ago as my head swallowed air like a vacuum.

I don't recall, though, winding up like I am now, broken. Just here, humbled, weak, and hungry. It's funny — you spread yourself across the desert, protest death, and starve. I don't think my stomach could hold food, though. After all, I'm holding my stomach.

But who's holding me; devil or divinity? I know the scavenger is holding me, craving me in its circle. It wants to dive bomb and explode into my head. I've had enough of explosions, the scattering of limbs, and that feeling you get when your gut climbs into your chest. I've seen men cry like babies when they feel that. I feel the devil holding me, too.

And I dreamed I was a sailor swimming to my lover, my wife. The depth and swell of the ocean could not stop me. I felt like water slipping through gulfs of treachery, unharmed and defiant. I dreamed I held my wife with my tongue. She tasted sweet, a sugar treat, her lips coated with heaven. I breathed her in and sank, the water melting over me.

The sun is going down now. I am afraid. The sun, I believe, is my only friend. So I talk to myself. Sing, too. I sing the songs of my youth. The same songs that raped me, helped lay out my tears. I am crying; something just climbed into my chest.

And I contemplated my wings. They were broken somewhere, rusting. I tasted wax and knew.

I thought I was beautiful. I thought I saw Jesus walking to me from the sky, his eyelids sewn shut. Had sin blown them closed like it had blinded mine? I prayed. I thought about my brother's baby girl. I wished I was as beautiful. And it was when I thought of her that I felt like nothing could harm me. I gave up my slavery and torture. I thought I had escaped, heard the door to my cage open; I could've sworn relief was near. I tasted words. I knew my desire. It was about achievement, glory, and making my family proud. And I thought about flying too close to the sun.

Full Circle

Not a care in the world
In those days
Cookies freshly made
All things done for me
Love and support in abundance
Just a daughter I was
A mother she was
We were growing together

The first stress I remember feeling
Times were changing
No more security
So many things not done
I feared being without her
Just a girl I was
A woman was she
I refused to grow

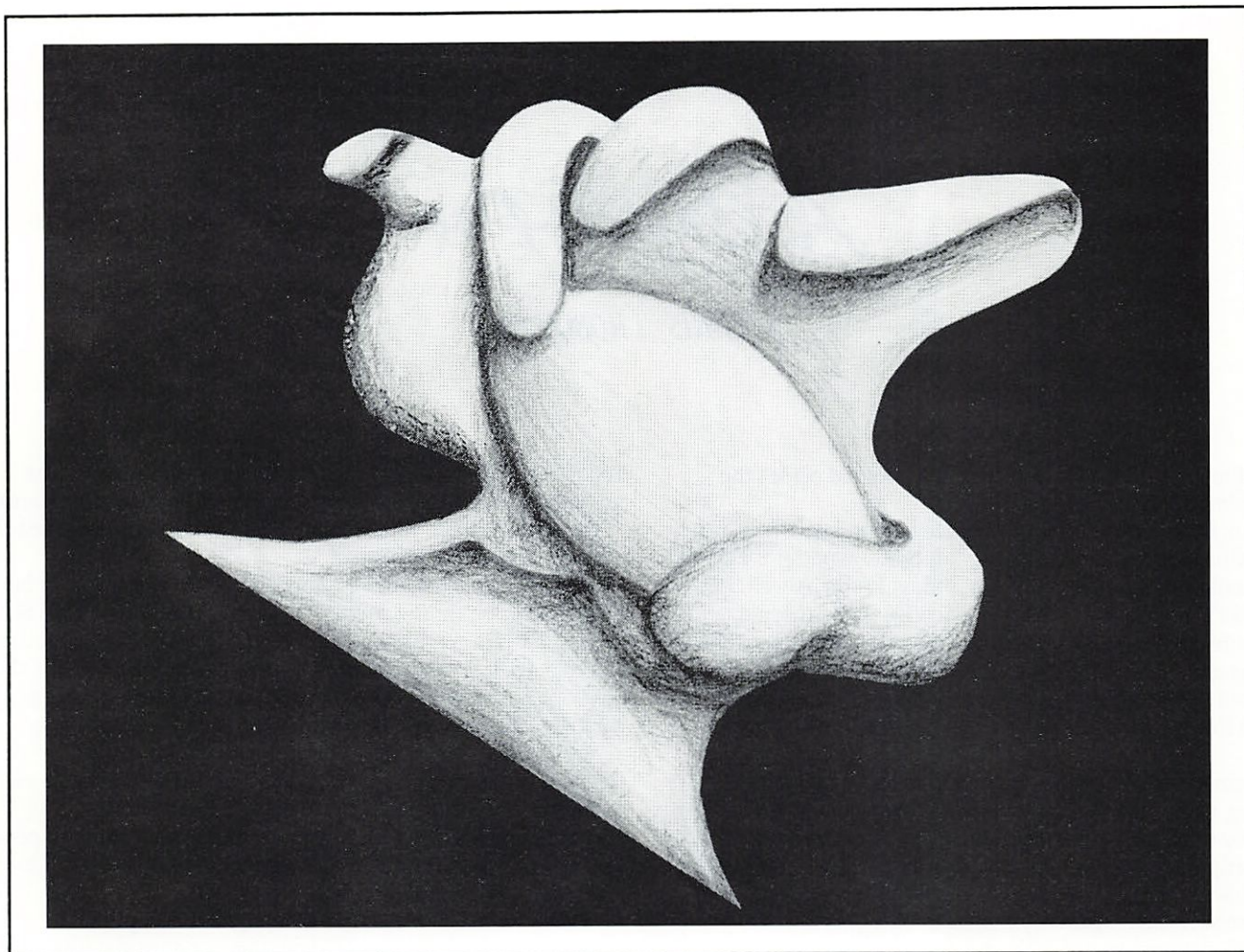
My world had crumbled
I was changing
Things seemed so complicated
Learning to do things on my own
I hated the thought of seeing her
I needed her
An angry girl I was
A free woman was she
I tried to grow

A new life had started
Figuring out how to go solo
She heard her calling
She followed the sound
It took her all over the world
I was on her mind each day
A new person emerged
Without a title
She was growing

Time stood still
I learned to take responsibility
Making a life for myself
Sorting out my feelings
She was in my thoughts always
A young woman I was
Independent
I was growing

The years passed by
Relationships so important
Somehow healing slowly occurred
My feelings so clear
A new understanding
Revelations in life
A strong woman I became
A friend was she
We are growing together

- ERICA GETTY



HAND WITH EGG by Nancy Kile

The Dance

Have you ever danced the perfect dance?
I have.
It's about two people hearing the same song
without music—
A similar rhythm
free of restraint and caution.
I have used so much energy
in trying to dance with you, my friend.
But in the brief moments
that we moved like a reflection through
a mirror,
I always found myself
afraid of stepping on your toes.
For with you,
the beat is always changing.

- *DEE BUGARIN*

A Coffee Pot

DENNIS THOMPSON

He climbed out of his old pickup and headed across the parking lot to the mall entrance.

Damn, there sure are a lot of people here today. Of course! It is the Saturday after Thanksgiving. I forgot. I wonder if I should bother looking for a new coffee pot today. Might as well, I'm here and I'll not do well without my coffee in the morning.

He entered the mall and headed toward a department store. When he got to the store there was steady flow of people moving in and out. He observed some of the people as he walked through the crowd. Some of them looked like they had toothaches.

He remembered how much he enjoyed going Christmas shopping when he was living with his two daughters. That is, up until they were nine and ten years old. Then the marriage broke up. Shortly after the divorce their mother remarried and they, without letting him know, moved overseas. It was seven years before he saw them again. By then they had become strangers. They had changed so much the once warm, caring relationship could not be rekindled. Now they occasionally kept in touch and acknowledged birthdays. The daughters he had once known were gone.

Christmas shopping was something he had not done or thought about for a long time. For him Christmas and children went together.

As he walked through the store he saw a woman looking at dolls. In another area he saw a couple looking at tricycles. He suddenly realized he was smiling.

That is a change, he thought.

He walked to the housewares section and looked at the coffee pots.

"Quite a selection these days," he said to himself.

He finally selected the pot he wanted, but instead of getting one off the shelf he decided to wander through the store first. He could come back and pick up his pot later. He was beginning to enjoy looking around and watching the crowd.

He was browsing in the aisle that had things like hair dryers and such when he noticed a woman at the other end of the aisle looking at something in a plastic package. He guessed she was about 35 years old. She had on a heavy cloth coat that was just starting to become threadbare. She had a sad expression and seemed to be deep in thought.

She does not look too happy, he thought as he returned to looking at the merchandise.

He went to the end of the aisle and looked at the display in the main aisle at the end of the aisle he just left. As he looked at

the merchandise he could see the woman. She still had the package in her hand near her side and she was looking around as if she was trying to find someone. She then quickly slipped the package into her coat pocket.

Well, I'll be damned, he thought. It looks like she may be a shoplifter. One thing I cannot stand are thieves. Too bad. She looked like a nice woman, but you can never tell. I will follow her and see if she leaves the store without paying for it. If she gets out of the store without being caught I will stop her or call security. She cannot be allowed to get away with stealing.

He tracked her through the store, keeping his distance while keeping her in sight. She walked by the check-out stands and went out of the store into the mall.

He glanced around for a store employee or a security person. None were handy and she was beginning to disappear into the crowd. He hurried after her.

When he caught up to her he said, "Hold it, please."

She looked up at him, still walking, not sure she was the one he was speaking to.

"I saw you take that package without paying for it."

She abruptly stopped. Her face grew pale. Her energy seemed to suddenly leave her. He thought she was going to collapse.

Then she gathered herself together. She looked at him, tears in her eyes, her voice trembled in fear.

"I am sorry. I have never done anything like this before. It was a mistake. I will return it, but please don't arrest me."

"I'm not a cop and I don't work for the store. I saw what you did and I cannot let you get away with it. If you don't come back to the store with me I will holler for security." He took a step towards the store.

"Wait," she said quickly stepping closer to him. If you turn me in I might lose my children. I have a daughter and two sons. I am on welfare. If they find out that I have been arrested they could take away my kids."

"You knew that when you ripped off the store. Now come on or I'll call security."

"I didn't think of the risk when I did it," she said rapidly. "It was an impulse. A fit of frustration. Ever since my husband left three years ago I have been on welfare and I am sick of it. We have not had a decent Christmas since he left. I was looking to see if there was anything I could get the kids when I got my welfare check. But there isn't. It got to me. So, when I saw something we could use I just took it."

Her eyes were locked onto his.

"You still did wrong," he commented.

"I know, I know. I will take it back. You can come with me to see that I do."

"If you have kids, where are they?" he asked.

"They're at home. My oldest daughter is fourteen. My boys are nine and seven. My daughter is a good baby-sitter. I told her I would be gone for a couple of hours. I live about six blocks from here."

"Come on," he said. "Let's go back to the store."

"Are you going to let me return it?" she asked.

Grimacing, he replied, "I don't know."

He thought she might make a run for it. She did not. As he walked toward the store she went with him. A look of trepidation enveloped her.

When they were near the store entrance he took her arm and guided her to an area where it was not so crowded.

"Look," he said. "I don't know if you are lying to me or not. But I guess I don't want to risk having your kids lose their mother."

He took out his wallet and removed a couple of twenty dollar bills.

"Consider this as a gift," he said as he handed the bills to her. "Do with it as you wish." Abruptly he turned away from her and merged into the crowd before he changed his mind.

She stared at him as he disappeared.

I don't know why I did that, he thought as he headed for the food court. I am probably just a big sucker. I'll have a cup of coffee and contemplate what the hell I just did.

With his coffee in hand he looked around for a table. A service employee was wiping one off near one of the mall entrance doors. He walked over to it and sat down. He watched people come and go as he sipped his coffee and tried to determine if he had been a fool.

He downed the last of his coffee and started to get up to go buy his coffee pot when he realized someone had just moved up beside his chair. He looked up. It was her. He was completely surprised.

"Hi," she said hesitantly. "My name is Miriam. I want to thank you for what you did."

"That's OK," he stammered. "My name is Brian. Would you like to sit down?"

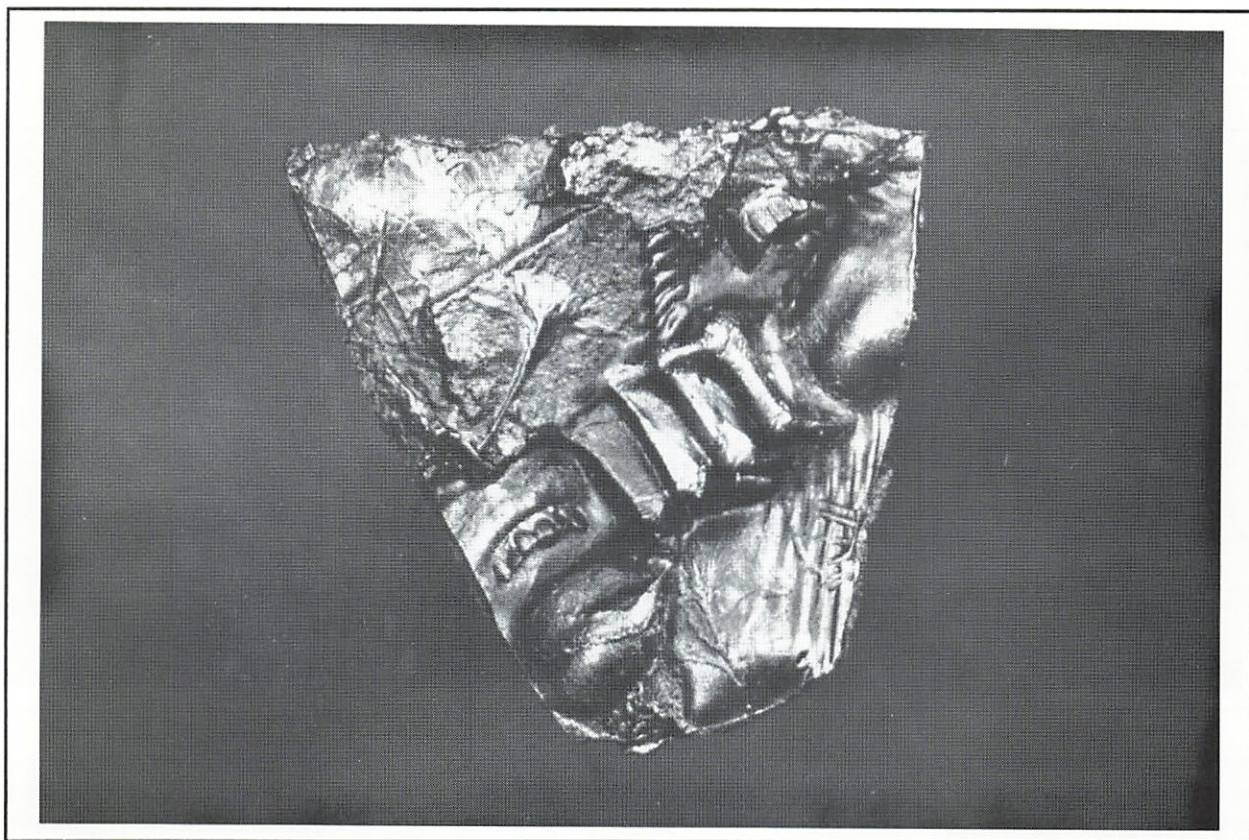
"I took it back. I realized I would not feel right about using it even if I paid for it with your – ah, gift," she said as she sat down.

"Please take back your money," she said placing the money onto the table.

Feeling like a jerk for doubting her and at the same time feeling good that she was here, he asked, "Would you join me for a cup of coffee? I would like to hear about your kids."

"Sure, thanks, but I will need to get home soon," she replied, smiling.

As he got up to get her coffee, he smiled as he felt some of that feeling he thought he had lost forever. Yes, he thought, Christmas and children really go together.



BRONZE KNUCKLES by Ryan Reynolds

Interview with Diana Abu-Jaber

KENNETH BRADY

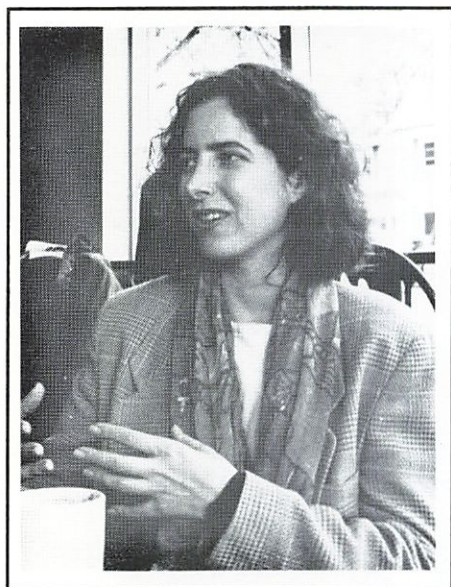
Diana Abu-Jaber teaches fiction, Third World writing, women's studies, and science-fiction classes at the University of Oregon. Her short fiction reflects her Palestinian and Irish ancestry, and has appeared in magazines such as *Left Bank*, *Story*, *Kenyon Review*, and *Northwest Review*. Her first novel, *Arabian Jazz*, was published in June of 1993 and received the 1994 Oregon Book Award for fiction. Diana is also exploring playwriting, and is currently at work on a new novel.

DENALI: What were your first experiences in writing? How did you get started?

DIANA: Hmm . . .

DENALI: Is that an awful question you get asked a lot? At least it's not quite as bad as asking, "Where do your ideas come from?"

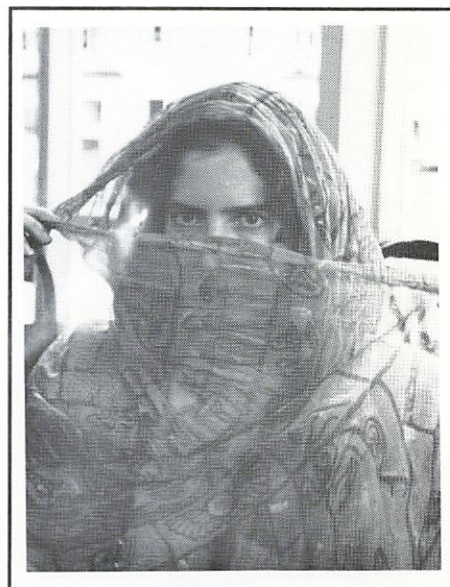
DIANA: No, it's a hard one. Actually, I don't get asked that a lot. Usually people ask about the publishing side of it. They're more interested in the marketing aspect and not the personal aspect. Which is too bad, because that, I think, is the secret to getting published. I think I



"I think people want to know how to write. But I think the deeper question is why to write. If you can figure out why, then the how comes much more easily."



"Right now we're looking for originality, things that are different, pushing the envelope. I don't think modern American realists are doing that anymore."



"Our literature has become very middle class, comfortable, psychological. It's an elitist movement that people don't recognize. The under classes are being pushed out to the edges in fiction."

started writing because I was in this very strange family where we were Arab at home and on the streets we were American. So, I had to figure out a way that I could imagine who I was, and writing gave me a way to imagine myself in the world. If I could write my own stories, and could imagine these characters, then I could also see a way for myself to be. When I was in high school we read John Updike and John Cheever — all the Johns [laughs]. And I loved their writing. Faulkner is beautiful and Hemingway is a fabulous writer. But they didn't have anything to say about having garlic lamb sandwiches in the cafeteria and belly dancing and drinking Arabic coffee. It was a different experience for me. And writing was a chance for me to start recording it.

DENALI: What is your major motivation to write, if you can limit it down to any one thing?

DIANA: There is no *one* thing. But it's good to try to understand your motivations, or what inspires you. I think people want to know *how* to write. But I think the deeper question is *why* to write. If you can figure out why, then the how comes much more easily. It comes from inside of you then, and you're moved — if you'll pardon the expression — in a spiritual way. When people ask me how to learn to write, I tell them to think about why they're writing, what pushes them and what inspires them. To answer your question, I think the motivation to write is in the genes.

DENALI: What advice do you have for beginning writers? What was that first step like for you?

DIANA: It's scary. Really scary. Especially if you're starting at college level. I started when I was too young to know how scary it was, when I was too young to ask for approval. You get to an age when you want mentors and authority figures to say "This is good, you have talent." And in a way you shouldn't do that. You shouldn't look for too much acceptance. Really, it's the stuff that doesn't get approved, that frightens or challenges people, that is the most exciting and wild and marvellous and original. That's the thing people keep forgetting. It's almost human nature. We want people to pat us on the back and tell us to keep going. And it's this wild irony that it may be you don't get published and you don't get accepted and people say "Shut up. Don't write. Stop this," and it's because you're doing something really brave and exciting. One thing I might say to people is try to be really coura-

geous. And find one person — just one — who you really trust, and make sure that person is a good soul to have close by. And finally, try to write for yourself. You have to write for the love of this before you write for the fame and fortune. It's a heartbreaking business.

DENALI: Do you have your share of stories or novels that were written for you but just not accepted by editors or the general public?

DIANA: Yes, I have a few. And I'm not giving them to *Denali*! [laughs] No, I have a couple things I think I'd be afraid to have actually published. Sometimes the stuff that is really dear to you is too unorthodox or personal or strange to put out on the market. You have to figure that if you want to get published you are looking for an audience. Finding out who that audience is doesn't necessarily jibe with what you consider your best work.

DENALI: Did you start by writing short stories or novels?

DIANA: I started with short stories. But I tend to gravitate toward longer forms. I started writing novels in the seventh grade. At the time, I was obsessed with *The Exorcist*. I loved that novel and read it over and over again. Have you read it?

DENALI: Yeah. In about seventh grade, as well. Must be a good junior high sort of book.

DIANA: [laughs] William Peter Blatty was one of my big influences. And I just found out that he is Lebanese. The supernatural, fantasy and science-fiction were all really exciting to me when I was growing up. I kept going with my writing, getting longer and longer. *Arabian Jazz* was not my first full-length manuscript, but it was the first one I felt was complete enough to send out.

DENALI: What do you tend to read now?

DIANA: Because I teach, I'm kind of limited in how much I can read for myself. There's only a certain amount I can investigate. Right now I'm reading a lot of Third World literature. A lot of African, Middle Eastern, Caribbean, and Native American writers. Right now we're looking for originality, things that are different, pushing the envelope. I don't think modern American realists are doing that anymore. We have to look beyond our traditional western literature.

DENALI: How have people responded to your fiction?

DIANA: I've had a few different responses. One woman wrote to me and said I had reunited her with her father. She said my novel was the first thing they had been able to talk about in twenty years. They had independently read it, called each other up, and talked. It's nice to think my novel has a symbolic value. Once, after I had read from a new work, there were messages on my office answering machine such as, "If you keep reading that bunch of lies and propaganda you're going to have to answer to me personally."

DENALI: Who were your major influences?

DIANA: My grandmothers were strong presences in my life. My Palestinian grandmother was a very strong woman from Nazareth. Her family married her off at fourteen to a Jordanian bedouin. She had seventeen children and lived in the middle of the desert. Also, she was very learned. She collected books, and people came from all around, bringing her books. She eventually started the first public library in Jordan in her own home. That strength and love of language is very moving to me. She's definitely a model for me. Joyce Carol Oates is one of my literary influences. She writes a lot about the upstate New York poor. Not many authors even look at the working class. Our literature has become very middle class, comfortable, psychological. It's an elitist movement that people don't recognize. The under classes are being pushed out to the edges in fiction.

DENALI: You mentioned the way in which the supernatural in fiction is being pushed to the edges of acceptance as well —

DIANA: Yes. We insist that there's one reality. And increasingly people keep saying we can debunk these things. There is no mystery in the world and there is no

other possibility. But, we *need* these things. We need mystery and ghosts and presences. We need that other life. It's hard to find a way to maintain the sense of margins — the fringes — of society. Everything is always being pulled to the center. And when you get published, there's a really low tolerance for experimentation.

DENALI: Do you think joining a writing group is a good idea?

DIANA: It can be. Organized groups can be overwhelming if you're just beginning. You have to know yourself and know what is beneficial to your own writing. If you're in a room with ten people, you will get ten different opinions about your writing. That's why I like the idea of having one or two people whose opinions I really trust. You have to have people who read with their whole heart.

DENALI: As far as the business of publishing, what are your suggestions for the beginning writer?

DIANA: Get an agent. A good agent. They look out for your interests. The market is competitive and sometimes unscrupulous, so an agent can help guide you through the rapids of the publishing industry.

DENALI: What's the best piece of advice you can give to beginning writers?

DIANA: Keep writing, no matter what. And even more, keep reading. If you want to write, you've got to read. It's what's going to fuel the fire. It inspires us. And besides, it's a moral obligation. You've got to support the arts over a wide spectrum. Go to theatre, movies, listen to music and see performance art. We all need each other and need to stick together. It's self-supporting and very cyclical.

12 Steps

DIANA ABU-JABER

The Isle of the Dead

I was crossing the bridge, seeing the river mist rising like saints, like the white hems of saints, the lace of steam covering river surface, encircling rocks, so thick, covering my hands when I held them out, all the way up to the wrists.

We were powerless

The Monday meeting was held in a hospital room with a sign on the door, Warning, X-rays Being Taken. Inside, the group was assembling chairs, some members already seated and curled up. The overhead lights deadened their skin, drawing lines and shadows into their faces like a hypnotist surfacing the images of dreams out of the mind and into the skin.

"I'm almost ready to throw out my scrap book," Duncan said. We slid forward, putting our shoulders and necks into listening, waiting for words that would give us ease.

"All my pictures of feet. Since I was a cub scout . . ." His eyes welled; he grimaced. "I can't . . . it's so hard on me. I cruise the streets every night, just looking at women's feet, dreaming of holding them, the sweet, tender soles—of hurting them. I know it'll kill me if I keep it up. I only stopped cutting my feet two weeks ago —"

We applauded, gently.

"I still take off my socks, dream of walking on ground glass, on broken ice."

Restore us to sanity

The bridge was shining, clean as a penny, as I walked back, the Oregon sky like stone, always near-rain. I stopped on the bridge and felt my heart hanging inside me like a moon, then my ribs unlatching, and all I consisted of was the pewter sky, with the slightest touch, all my limbs would break apart, swim like fishes to the true, greater moon. I had sat, silent, through another session. All the meetings in the world would never give me emotion or an inner life.

Daphnis Et Chloe

That night, I saw a man standing outside a convenience store. His hair was blue with night, his blue-lidded stare and violet trail of Camel smoke diffused in the dark. The moon was silver-horned and seemed to drop silvery motes of light, sweet as musical notation. His fingers were white, lit by the tip of his Camel. He held out a leaf of money; a twenty.

"Give you the whole works if you if you buy a six-pack out of it for me."

It was just a week after I'd been laid off. I was still nervous, not used to unemployment. When I came back out his lips against the bottle were wet, his eyes full of night.

Images Oubliees

We traded names and Claude offered a ride home in his T-bird. We rushed down the ever-wet streets, the fir trees bending toward us, all outdoors drawn in charcoal and water.

He snapped on the radio and it began talking to us. "Run your fingers over my buttons and roll your tongue over my

volume knob, now the tuner. Now move my switch from mono to stereo . . . stereo to mono, to stereo to mono . . . oh, yes."

Streetlights dashed the windshield; I saw the downy skin of his upper lip, the slanted, expressive brow of Clark Gable.

"How old are you?" I asked.

"Fifteen." His fingers slid along the steering wheel.

"FM to AM to FM —"

"I'm interested in you," he said. "I like your readiness. I'd like to get to know you a lot better."

"How old did you say?"

The street was deep and wide as a dream, an ocean surface filled with lights.

The hair fell down over one of his eyes as he kissed my fingertips, my other hand on the car latch.

"Claude, I'm thirty-two."

"Stroke my antennae gently, gently."

He bit the tips of my fingers and I caught my breath like a cat with a heart in its teeth.

In my dream that night I was falling, arms and legs spread, through layers of water, acres of water, long fingers of seaweed, strange music, the fish were singing songs from another darker, bluer planet.

L'Après Midi D'une Faune

Tuesday, my therapist Teresa had a basket full of brilliant, wide-hipped roses on the floor between us.

"Sometimes the rest of the group seems so much stranger than me," I said. "Like I'm out of my league."

She bowed her head; her face obscured by a black silk scarf. "The process remains the same," she said. "You read the figures of the world as if they were words in an erotic novel. You are imprisoned by your desire for life, your flight from the past."

Turn our will and our lives over

My first lover had me when I was fifteen and he was thirty-five. Jorge was filled with a black, swelling blood that drove him through sleepless night, amphetamines, topless bars.

"Claude is only fifteen," my therapist said. "think of the time given you to live. Do you really want him, or do you want revenge?"

A searching and fearless moral inventory

"But what are we supposed to do with this . . . time?"

"Fill it with meaningful activity."

The exact nature of our wrongs

"I used to pray and pray," Mina said on Wednesday, catching her tears in her hands, "please make him stop. Saint Agnes, Saint Susanna, Saint Cecelia, take his fingers off my body, take his breath off my face!"

We waited, the room luminous.

"And now, I pray, Saint Joan, Saint Mary, make me stop, or please let me stop this!"

"Thanks Mina," we said.

I heard breathing, wet like an animal nosing through brush.

Duncan was staring hard at my feet. When it was his turn, he looked at me and smirked. "I don't have the *luxury* of not speaking. I don't have the *luxury* of self-indulgence."

The Mournful Iron Bells

Claude telephoned me after the meeting. He told me about his parents, his schooling at the hands of Jesuits, his secrets. "When I lived at home, I would sneak outside and watch my big sisters dress through the window. I watch TV and pretend the pretty star is my sister Elphie taking off her bra."

I closed my eyes. *Hang up, I tell myself, hang up, hang up.* "Claude."

"Your voice is like melon. Like honeydew. You speak in pomegranate seeds."

I would not think of the slick of his hair in moonlight, his shadow of a dimple. "You are fifteen years old," I told him. "And I gotta go." I hung up.

These defects of character

"How do I stop it?" I asked Alma. What do I do when it gets bad?"

"Pray," my sponsor said. "Get down on your knees and pray to God. You can't do this on your own."

We knelt and my prayer was, "Dear God, please why don't you help me? I know he's just a boy — this is *crazy*. A boy and I don't even know him. Why do I want him? Why, when I begin to feel, is *this* what I feel? Why don't you ever *answer* me? Oh, shit!" I stood up.

"Your best thinking got you here," Alma said, standing. "Surrender your will."

The phone rang and I wouldn't answer it. Alma lashed my arms in hers like I was Odysseus tied fast against the siren song, punishing himself for simple desire by letting himself still listen. And just listening hurt like arrows in my lungs and ribs and throat.

Impetusoso, Fiero

I stopped at the river, watching the span rise over mist, the bridge of sighs, the water morning-white as milk. I stopped then, turned, and walked back into town.

"I'll give you the meaning of your dream," Claude said, cradling a latte in both hands. "The Jungians see the unconscious in the ocean, the impenetrable depths. Force, mystery, vital truth. Have you ever been hypnotized?" His eyes were lifted, his gaze steady as chamber music.

"Um. Could you tell me — do you, um, work?" I asked.

"I'm a computer programmer." He sat back and tucked a Camel into the corner of his mouth.

A stand of Douglas fir just outside the cafe bowed forward, cupping the wind, spreading their boughs. Claude tapped at them through the window. "The Greeks believed that each tree was a kind of alphabet, each capable of composing different kinds of messages. The gracious palms were all love letters. The fir trees were all constancy, fidelity, strength. The trees each contained their own meaning, like the intrinsic emotional life of music, the *dasein* of Bach."

He signaled to a waiter, ordered me another hot chocolate.

Remove our shortcomings

"How do I fill myself?" I asked on Thursday.

Tereza shifted beneath her satin wrapper. "Close your eyes," she said. "Relax. Your legs are heavy. Breathe deeply. Your blood is sand."

"All right."

"Where are we?"

"In a clearcut."

"Describe it."

"It's tangled. We have to step over broken limbs. There are ashes. The ground is smoking. It goes on forever. The crust of the earth is scalded. There are ruined stumps and stray, fallen trees. I see loggers far away, working in silhouette, lifting hoes and pitchforks."

"What do you hear?"

"The breath of honeybees, the sound of figs ripening, the music of stars becoming visible."

"You hear music?"

"Sound of ashes."

Le Tombeau de Couperin

I walked to the library. The backs of the books reflected gradients of light like the backs of waves, deep surf and animal movement. The sound of the room was the sound of a seashell, of the wind made up of all the sighs and laughs and shouts in the world, the moving, living breath of us all, rushing over the earth, toppling wheat fields and rattling windows and shaking firs.

I opened a book. I read, "It was fall and we did not go to the war anymore." The sea shell sound rushed in on me then and I thought about the stillness of the book and how its spine conceals life and vigor; the reader comes and sets the life in motion and yet it is always there, going on without us, and we are all only poor visitors of the timeless, gracious host of texts.

Hemingway told himself, make it good and simple and straight, and if you can't be good and simple, make it straight.

Willing to make amends

Friday, the members stirred coffees, dropped powder from jelly donuts. Tabitha held the top of her blouse closed with one hand.

"When I turned down the street to my house," Maurice said, "the wind blew a curtain open, and I knew then that God had given me a gift. A reward for being in this group and being so good. It was a reward of thighs and breasts and white arms lifting up for her nightgown, all framed in a window like a present with a bow around it. I crept up to that window ledge every night after that for the next month. I would wait for hours for the curtain to blow open, and to see her there again, undressing. Then one night, I guess she saw me out there. Somebody called the police, and when they arrested me I knew it wasn't a gift from God."

Clair De Lune

"God, grant me the serenity . . ."

Our arms folded over each other's shoulders. We looked at each other's eyes.

Afterwards, Alma hugged me, then said sternly, "Did you forget — ninety meetings in ninety days! Where were you yesterday?"

Duncan stopped me outside the x-ray room as I was leaving. "This is for you," he said and handed me a small plastic box.

I opened it and it contained what appeared to be toenail clippings.

He looked at me intensely. His gaze was coal, his mouth a streak. "I'd like to trade. Toenails. There's something about the shape of your loafers. I want you. I think I love you."

I stared at him, straight anger starting like a blood clot caught in my brain, a black pulse of energy, smoky music. I flung the box of toenails so it skidded down the corridor, all the way to the

cafeteria entrance. Then I started laughing and the anger rose up in the sound, flapping red and black flags, and it frightened Duncan away. And then it was out of me.

Made direct amends

The river, the full-hearted jinni, the Willamette ran wild like the source of all music. On my way back from the meeting, I watched a blue heron crook its snake neck and spear a fish. Then it floated away like a thing that had never existed.

Les Parfums de la Nuit

Claude was already there, a placid devil, a dove, on my front steps, waiting, hands curled around the railing, his face grim, still, filled with magic, a gargoyle's cunning.

That wintry noon, the Pacific sky was deep as a tempest, black as a threat, the scowl of overburdened rain clouds across the sky's brow.

Claude came down from the steps and his hair flew in the

wind, a pale streak.

Personal inventory, prayer and meditation, and a spiritual awakening

"Virgins are made and not born," Claude said, pulling the bedsheet over his head like the garment of a cherub, the sweep of the milky way.

Jardins Sous La Pluie

Saturday, we watched the dawn come fire and gold and streaked with lilac rain.

"This is my first kiss," I said, and some blaze like fieldburning across my chest and down my spine made me feel it was true.

I walked out into the morning with leaves like copper pennies everywhere, and Claude, a sleeping dove, a burrowing animal in my bed, and my foot on the square, bronze planks of the bridge, the words of my narrative and confession already in my mouth. My spirits were heady with rain.

A Pantoum for Your Style

You have a way of wearing clothes:
You make the world around you flow
And turn the wind into your friend.
The light becomes your second skin.

You make the world around you flow
Like curtains riding in a window.
The light becomes your second skin
And crosses it with rippling cloth.

Like curtains riding in a window,
You rise on light and fall in air
Across the ripples of a cloth
That rides your limbs like folding wings.

You rise on light and fall in air
Like waves of skirt and curly hair.
What rides your limbs like folding wings
Is silk or cotton flutterings.

Light waves of skirt and curly hair
Turn the wind into your friend.
Bright silk or cotton flutterings
Smooth your way of wearing clothes.

- *PETER JENSEN*

Quinn River Crossing

KENNETH BRADY

On April 15, 1938, I took the biggest step of my life.

"Daniel McIntyre. How old are you, son?"

"Sixteen, sir."

"You sure? You look as if you couldn't even be fifteen yet. Still wet behind the ears."

"No, sir, I'm sixteen."

The rough, tall, crewcut tank of a man glared at me from behind his desk, a folding table set up in the gym at the old grange hall. I kept my gaze level, and he must have seen something in my eyes, maybe the determination I didn't even know I possessed. His eyes flickered away and he handed me back my paperwork.

"Okay, go on over there." He motioned to a woman who was examining other boys' eyes and ears. "But you better not be lying to me. The Corps doesn't need liars."

I shuffled over to the line to be examined, heart thudding in my chest and a smile growing on my face. There I was, finally getting out of New Jersey, heading for God knows where. I was off to join the ranks of the Civilian Conservation Corps. And I smiled, full of innocence and visions of the world, as only a fifteen year old boy who had forged his birth certificate can view it.

A week later, a truck dumped twenty-three boys in front of a shiny, new quonset hut out in the middle of the Nevada desert. We stood there for about a minute, thumbs up our asses, wondering what we were supposed to do. The unspoken question was answered soon after by the man we would all learn to love to hate in the next few months, Sergeant Henry Jacobs.

"Well!" he yelled as he strutted from the door of the quonset. "What have we got here? Get those packs off the ground and hustle 'em inside."

We all stood around, hesitating.

"Didn't you hear me? Pick up your shit and bring it in here now! Ain't none of you city girls ever seen a desert before?"

I often wonder if my life would have turned out any differently if I had kept my mouth shut like the rest of the boys, but I didn't, so I guess I'll never know. No, I had to speak up.

"No, sir," I said. "There ain't any deserts in New Jersey."

"New Jersey?" he asked, his voice bellowing like a loud-speaker. "What's your name?"

"Daniel, sir. Daniel McIntyre," I replied, wondering what he would do.

"Holy Christ . . . McIntyre! We got ourselves a real live Irish boy from New Jersey! Anyone else here from New Jersey?"

No one spoke, no one raised a hand, no one moved. Next thing I knew, we were being hustled into the quonset. On the way in, Jacobs stopped me.

"I'm watching you, McIntyre," he said.

We were assigned bunks and foot lockers, and sent right back

outside and marched over to the assembly hall, just another quonset in the desert.

There were another three groups like us, making for almost one hundred thirty boys, all under the age of twenty-one, and I imagine a lot of them under sixteen, like myself.

The camp commander talked to us, gave us a pep talk, I suppose. His name was Bill Jeffries, and didn't have any military rank as far as I could see, but he insisted on us calling him Captain Bill. So we did, and he treated us more like his kids than workers.

Sergeant Jacobs, on the other hand, wasn't so nice. He drilled us like we were in the Marines, which he was. The CCC was a job where he could train young boys, like us, and he treated it just like his former job, training Marines.

We ran, we did pushups, situps, and every imaginable exercise there is. Some were unique to the desert, like digging trenches in the sand and filling dumptrucks with gravel. I began to see the whole world as one big desert, lifeless and dead.

After two months of desert life, Sergeant Jacobs came to me while I was finishing up my allotted chores, namely cleaning the trucks at the camp.

"McIntyre," he said, his voice lower, calmer than usual. "I've been watching you, and I like you. You've got a spark, an energy. I think you might make a good leader. So, I'm going to make you Platoon Leader."

I stood there, sweating under the Nevada sun, and stared. Me? In command of others? I didn't know if I could. Before I had a chance to reply, Jacobs threw me a set of keys.

"That means you'll be driving that truck there." He pointed to the truck I was currently washing, the newest, shiniest dumptruck in the bunch.

I found my voice. "But, sir . . . uh, I don't know how to drive."

"Well," he replied, smiling for the first time in the months I'd known him, "you better get to learning quick then."

He turned and left as I stood there, soap drying on the hot metal of the truck, washrag in my hand, and a set of keys to that truck. My life changed, yet again.

...

The gears groaned in protest as I jammed the shifter into second, the truck lurching forward and the entire crew of boys behind me screaming at me and yelling to learn to drive.

"Why the hell did Jacobs let you drive this thing?" the boy next to me asked. Conrad was his name. I don't know that I ever knew his first name, or that of anyone else in the camp of boys. Most of us were last names in a team. He was Conrad and I was McIntyre.

"Because I'm Platoon Leader, I get to drive," I replied, trying out my leadership skills.

"Bullshit," Conrad said, and I lurched and ground the truck

into third, bouncing off the camp driveway and onto the dirt road that led toward Winnemucca.

A storm hit during the last week, knocking over barns, killing a few farm animals. We were sent to help a family repair their ranch, which was hard hit. The man of the ranch was off in military training. The purpose of the CCC, Captain Bill explained, was to help people and to help the country. We rebuilt things, and sometimes got to build new things, too.

But this time was just a cleanup. I lurched the truck into the driveway of the ranch, and turned off the engine, then jumped out, the rest of the boys piling out of the dumpbed after me. They were all covered with dust from the drive, and looked as if they'd spent a week in the desert sand, instead of just an hour drive. Conrad and I were the only clean ones; it was an odd contrast.

The damage to the ranch was significant. Shingles were missing from the roof of the house, a few windows had been shattered, and debris from the fallen barn littered the ground in all directions. We walked through the gate toward the house and I noticed the sign that had fallen from where it had hung before the storm. Quinn River Crossing, it said, letters hand painted on wood.

"That's the name of this ranch," said a woman's voice as I stood looking at the sign. I straightened, startled, then remembered my manners. I shook her hand and introduced myself.

"Hello, ma'am," I said. "My name is Daniel McIntyre, and this is my platoon. We were sent by the Civilian Conservation Corps to help you clean up the damage."

As I talked, I stared, watching the way she smiled when I talked, her hair blowing slightly back from her head in the light breeze. She had long, brown hair and eyes that seemed ready to pull me in through their will alone. I swallowed, with difficulty.

"Yes, I know," she said. "And we're very grateful. I'm Rachel Thoreson. Please, come with me."

She turned and walked toward the house, all of us following, most of the boys brushing dust from their clothing, and running saliva-slickened fingers through their hair. After all, we were in the presence of a lady.

Rachel introduced us to her mother, who was busy collecting broken glass from the porch and throwing it into a bucket. Then we went to work. I had a few of the boys set to gathering shingles, a few more helping pick up the broken glass, and the rest got the duty of collecting all the other debris strewn around the property.

Conrad and I set to fixing the gate and sign that had fallen down. As I stood on the edge of the fence and leaned over to pound a nail through the old wood, Conrad whistled quietly.

"Wow," he said, in an awed tone. "You see that girl, McIntyre?" I looked toward the house, where Rachel was walking around with a large pail of water, giving each of the boys a drink from a dipper.

"Yeah, I see her." I found it difficult to say anything further.

"What I wouldn't do to get her in the haybarn," Conrad said.

"What?" I asked. Conrad claimed to be eighteen, but he didn't look it. And besides, I had claimed to be sixteen. "You wouldn't know what to do with her."

"I wouldn't, eh?" he replied, smiling widely. "And you would? I grew up in The Bronx. Got all the women I ever wanted."

"Sure," I said. "I believe that." I finished with the nail and stepped down, pulling my shirt from my sweating body. My chest and arm muscles had developed nicely in the last few months. And I had a tan, one that I'd never even seen anyone have in Jersey. All of us boys here had tans, deep brown. And it made my brown hair seem a bit lighter, softer maybe.

"Let's work on the gate," I said.

"Quiet, she's coming this way."

I turned, and there was Rachel, walking toward the gate with the bucket swinging lightly from one arm, the dipper sliding on the rim. She was every vision of perfection I could imagine, even down to the dirt and stains on her simple, blue dress. Somehow, for me, the fact that she didn't mind being dirty in front of the boys made her more real, more down-to-earth.

"Water?" she asked, when she was close enough.

"Sure," I responded, walking closer. I stopped a foot from her, and she filled the dipper with water, handing it to me. I drank, and saw that her eyes never left me, watching my every move as I watched hers. The water was as sweet and clear as ice, and some ran down my chin to my chest. The coldness felt good against my skin, and I closed my eyes to take in the feeling.

I felt a tickle on my chest and opened my eyes to see her running her fingers along my ribcage. I stopped drinking and stared. She withdrew her hand, but not hurriedly, and smiled. I tried to smile back, but found that my breathing had become difficult, as if the air had grown humid as a summer day in Trenton.

Conrad took a drink when I put the dipper back in the bucket, looking at me with a strange sort of fascination evident on his face. I found myself gazing at her dress, where the sweat and spilled water made it cling to her breasts.

"There's plenty more, if you want it," she said. It sounded as if she were saying it to both Conrad and me, but her gaze never left mine. "Anytime you're thirsty."

I drove the platoon back to the camp at dusk, and we ate heartily, discussing stories of the day with the other platoons. After I had cleaned up, I sat in our quonset, reading an Oscar Wilde paperback, and drifted to thoughts of Rachel, her hair blowing in the breeze, dress dirty and plastered a bit with sweat and water.

Two hours after full darkness, I grabbed Conrad and he helped me push the dumptruck all of about twenty feet from where it sat, so that Jacobs wouldn't hear me start it, then I cranked the engine over and drove away down the drive, waving back to Conrad as I went.

I parked the truck off the main road, near the gate to Quinn River Crossing, and went inside, walking slowly toward the house. Before I had gotten all the way to the porch, a voice called softly from behind, and I turned to see her there.

"Don't knock. You'll wake Mama." Rachel sat, legs crossed, near the gate. I walked to her.

"I was hoping you'd come back," she said, and her voice had the quality of music in the cool, still night. "Come with me," she said, and took my hand, led me around the back of the house and down a path. I followed, entranced.

The path left the feel of the desert behind, and grew into more lush trees and foliage. The sound of moving water became apparent, and I felt the cool, smelled the fresh scent of the river I knew to be near. Rachel stopped near the edge of a rock that

looked down upon the slowly moving water.

"That's where the water you drank came from," she said, and I felt myself drawn to her body. She wore a clean dress, plain and light blue. I put my hand on her shoulder and she gazed deep into my eyes.

The kiss came as a shock to me, but I quickly found its purpose, and returned it with equal enthusiasm. Our hands found each other, and worked their way around to clothing, until we lay on that moss-covered rock in the still desert night. My first act of lovemaking was pure, so simple and fumbling, and awoke a feeling that my mind had never known, that my body had never acknowledged.

We sat on that rock for an hour afterward. I held Rachel in my

arms, feeling her heartbeat, her breathing on my neck, and knowing that the world was not just a desert.

I left soon after, following Rachel up to the house and kissing her goodnight, the last touch for the day. And I drove back to the camp in silence, in song, in tears and laughter.

My life had changed yet again.

No one noticed I had been gone, and I returned the truck and slept the rest of the night, floating somewhere in Quinn River. And when I awoke, I knew I'd see Rachel again. I worked knowing that the world was not just a desert. For even in the middle of a desert there is always an oasis.

An oasis, like Quinn River Crossing.



COVERED BRIDGE by Dorothy Wearne

Caravaggio

Your smooth surfaces glide across dark meadows of whisper,
and your many faces
emerging as they do from the deepest mysteries,
drip softly
with the knowledge of sexuality and death.

You are that other Michelangelo, not Buonarrotti,
but one who committed murder
and fled Rome into a darker night of wanderings.

In a dismal corner in the church of Santa Maria del Popolo,
we find you hidden
aside crumbling plaster and plywood floors.

As if banished by the Vatican for their religious immorality,
your delicate and strong quadri,
lifelike yet bizarre,
tell the story another way,
reaching behind and pinching the ass of reality.

I find you again unexpectedly in the Basilica Di San Pietro.
Even the priest, as he opened the basilica for the German tourists, had ignored you
until I pointed you out, hiding in an obscure corner.
Still, so it seems, Mother Church isn't pleased with your behavior.

You're connected to another reality, too precise, too flawless, too uncanny.
Your darkness contains so much light that they must hide you in the shadows
where you wait, knife in hand, for those who believe in you.

-JERRY ROSS



GARGOYLE ON AN ELECTRIC INSULATOR by *Cameron Michaelis*

Dr. Doctor, a Jar

A rich creamy foam,
The thick frothy lather,
A slight purplish tint,
Lord, what 'n ales a-matter?

Aroma of . . . berries?
A dark colored hue,
An experiment in science,
From the great Dr. Brew.

A full bodied drink,
Brewed with love and good care,
To pour over the lips,
And to tingle one's hair.

The keg was a-chilled,
The mugs frozen, too,
As you yearn for a visit
With the great Dr. Brew.

It freshens the mouth,
As it wettens the throat.
A damn fine feeling,
To a thirsty ol' bloke.

He works from one's toes,
All the way to the nose,
To these berries this ode,
By the great Dr. Brew.

The taste is divine,
In this stein of mine,
The brew made so fine,
It's a liquid gold mine!

The worlds a-weavin',
Soon you'll be heavin',
Conscious receding,
Love, the great Dr. Brew.

- U. B. 28

Calling Me Without Words

Larger than I know large, wider than I know wide
Horizons stretch, but what does this stretching entail?
Dry shrubs, that manage to grow, how much can one adapt?
And yet, I am drawn into the scenery, I am becoming part of the landscape
My form is incomplete or can it be that a Cypress 3,000 years old could be incomplete without me?
And then there is heat, pounding, scorching, pulling my ligaments from their prospective bones and leaving dust
This is what I crave, to be burnt, burnt off this planet, burnt from existence, burnt till my traces of reality
correspond with the drawings on the cave walls, thousands of years old with no artist to claim them.
And then, I can come from hiding, when the shade welcomes me out and the moon is not so bright
Let my new reptilian skin slither and slide on these desolate lands.
Now, I belong, with the Gila, for I fear not the label of those ignorant enough to call me monster, and I tread no
longer in fear of dehydration from what the rich purify and covet.
Horizons stretch, but what does this stretching entail?
Illustrate me upon the sand, let the wind do what she will, for I have formed this time without fear of the burning
heat, or lack of precious water
This time, I understand large and I am part of wide.

- ANTONIA MIANO

Journal: Fifteen Minutes

RYAN ROGERS

(These words are taken from the personal journal of Raymond P. Rollins. They represent a first-hand description of the events that preceded his fame. Certain parts of the writings were edited out in order to tell the story in a concise fashion, but the essence remains intact. Since the journal lacks a conclusion, a brief synopsis of the missing information appears at the end.)

I have lived in Montana. It is true and it is a significant point to keep in mind as the rest of this tale unfolds. For it was there that I was taught, and it was there that I died. And it was also the reason that I did what eventually, perhaps unfortunately, I did.

But the entire story of Montana must be shelved for the moment and told at a later time. Because it is far too sordid a tale to begin with if this is to be printed on the pages of any respectable publication. And this, friends, is certainly a respectable publication. Isn't it?

Certainly.

So for now I must force myself to stick to the details of the matter at hand. For though the sordid-Montana bit contains and encompasses some very interesting places and events, none are as exciting nor as crucial as this one. Remind me though, to tell you about Montana before I get too carried away with this story. Because it is quite important to understand.

Now, then. What I had in mind was the tale of the night of August third, nineteen-hundred-eighty-four. You'll remember. Ronald Reagan and the Cold War. An age when people wore pastel colors, daily. The rich and the stuffy ruled supreme, and the rest were forced to make do with whatever "trickled" down. Yes, you'll remember.

It was out of this that I rose. Rose into a position of significant visibility, considering I had only weeks before been an unemployed misfit. A bum. Living on government handouts and an occasional cigarette butt. Slept out back of the Wal-Mart on Fifth and Main damn near the police station. As a matter of fact, I was often woke up at night by the sound of screaming sirens. But they never came for me. Never even checked. Not once. Not until the night of the third. But I wasn't there, then.

The first time I felt it was on a sunny day, walking through the midtown park. I saw the boy running through the grass barefoot, with the light in his eyes and reflecting from his blond head. He wore overalls and a red shirt underneath. The green under his soft feet received him gently with each bounding step. I stood transfixed. My thoughts stopped and I stared. I merely watched him leap joyfully from the earth into the air like an angel. God, what pristine innocence he was. A divine cherub leaping through the very air I struggled to breathe. I stood on the hot tar road not moving, not breathing even, only looking. The boy stopped and turned to meet my stare. And as I looked into his eyes I felt myself lifted from the earth.

Floating. Surrounded by a sea of rainbow colors. Dreamlike and peaceful. I could see life in his eyes. With each of my senses, I could feel the love that he felt. I was able to understand all of the complications in his life and realize his ambivalence towards them. To this child, life was a game to be played in the fullest. I could see his birth, his existence before birth, could feel the sensations that he felt in the womb. I became entranced with him. Perfection.

I knew he must be mine.

It was obvious. It was unavoidable.

But before I had a chance to take him, a very rude and inopportune motorist drug me down from reverie to the hard earth. She pounded on her horn with nothing short of fury. A tempest she was. And her hair was a most startling shade of red. Imagine! Being awakened from such a peaceful daydream to be accosted by a snarling bitch with a fiery head, mouthing cruel words and making wild gestures with her skinny arms. It was a terrible experience, and to this day I wake in the night with a vision of her still fresh in my head. She haunts me, friends.

But I moved quickly out of her way and wished her a good day as she passed, her body still quaking with rage. And I forgot entirely about my previous vision of that perfect child, only seven or eight years old. I didn't remember at all until later when circumstances forced it upon me. Then it returned, clarified.

The spot where I slept was occupied by no one else, which would explain why the police left me alone. The others slept closer to the railroad and further from the police station. They slept huddled together in the nights like pigs (which they were), on the sidewalks in front of low-rent housing or all-night adult bookstores and porno-movie-houses. They slept with empty bottles of paper-bag-wrapped wine or whiskey held tight in their dirty hands. They woke in the night only to vomit on themselves and check their to see if they'd forgotten any last drops. They slept on the sidewalks, and so the police regularly hassled them and occasionally arrested some of them.

I was much more secure. There was a hole in the wall in back of the Wal-Mart where I lived. It was an old delivery door which had been replaced by a larger steel door about fifty feet down the side of the building. There was an exhaust source of some sort in the upper corner of the doorway hole which supplied me with sufficient heat, so that I wasn't shivering and miserable like the bums on 32nd. My blankets I kept in a pile on the cement floor along with other assorted items I had picked up over the years: lighters, flashlights that didn't work, an old GI mess kit, discarded books missing their covers.

I left my things there every night, and yet wasn't once harassed about living there. Chances are the owners of the building never knew I lived there; I was a good tenant, legal or not. And so, as I have said, the police left me alone.

But on the night of the third they came for me. They came angry, and frightened. But I wasn't there, then. I had been, however, only moments before they arrived.

August the third was a beautiful day. The sun was high in a crystal clear sky, a warm pleasant breeze blowing from the east. I woke up that day feeling wonderful, and headed out for a walk around town. Sometimes I would go to the park and sit on the benches, and in fact I usually did so. But on this day I decided to go across town and wander through the shops, and watch the people there. Maybe I would go down and walk along the banks of the river. The day was open, friends.

I saw the three of them as they got out of the car. It was in the parking lot in front of the Sears mall on 15th. They were a family. The father was a tall, strong looking man with tousled brown hair. His wife was a beautiful woman who wore a wonderful summer dress and a straw sun hat on her head. The boy ran along in front of them, happily. They all seemed quite pleased. They laughed and smiled at each other as they crossed the lot.

I followed them through the lot and into the store. The woman in the hat stopped and gave the boy some money, and he began to run off through the store. But the woman called him back, gave him a kiss on the cheek, and said something to him as he waited impatiently. Then he turned back around and headed through the store again, walking this time, through stretching his pace into a near-jog of anticipation until it soon became too much and he broke into a run. The woman and her husband watched him go, then walked leisurely in the opposite direction. I followed them for a few moments, then left to find the boy . . .

Wait! I almost got carried away and forgot all about Montana! You must remind me of these things, friends. I've a terrible memory. After I stated its importance at the beginning of my story, I feel compelled to let you in on it lest you be driven insane with the curiosity. Certainly, it is a must. So, then.

When I lived in Montana, I was a much different man than I am today. Indeed, I was a picture of success. An all-American. Yes, I realize that it is difficult to believe. But please, suspend for a moment your doubts, and listen to a tale of the man I was.

Originally, it was Wyoming. A late Thursday night in Sheridan at County Hospital I sprang from the womb and entered this world. My mother held me in her arms, I suppose, and perhaps I even felt a moment of security in my infant's brain. But that was all I would ever see of my natural mother, as she peddled me off to adoption the next day. My little soul was thrown to the mercy of state agencies and the pseudo-parents that carried me away weeks later.

They were nice people. I grew in their Montana home and in their love to be a strong little boy who was, at the age of ten, a parental dream. Good student I was. In fact, I skipped entirely the fifth and sixth grades to be transferred directly to junior high school. Schoolwork was never a trouble in this fellow's childhood, friends. I was a good mannered gentleman, and a proud churchgoer, even a stern watchdog of my parents faith. If they, in their capacity as adoptive parents, ever knew the good I did them, perhaps they would have thanked me for my efforts. But they never took the chance and anyway never got it. Because they were gone by the time I graduated from high school.

My father was a hard-working man who believed sincerely in the concept of working to the death to achieve a loosely-defined American Dream. He owned a corner grocery store right down the block from our house and during junior high school I helped out, working there on weekdays after school. He once told me, "Never let those bastards get you, son. Hear me? They'll get you

if you don't watch out." I never really figured out what he meant when he said that, but it has remained with me to this day. He was a man who carried a lot of weight in his life, mainly stress. The stress may have been partially caused by his work ethic, but the majority of it was certainly caused by his wife.

My mother was not a particularly taxing individual by personality or choice, however. She was a beautiful, saintly person, who would surely give her life to save a dying stranger. When I returned home from school as a small child, my mother would always have cookies ready with a glass of milk on the table. Or a slice of pie. Something, anyway, always awaited me when I came through the door. She would sit out on the porch on Sunday afternoons after church still wearing her church dress and straw sun hat, and would tell me fantastic stories about far away lands and exciting people.

Occasionally, though, she would change. It didn't happen often, but when it did it was terrible. She would lock herself in the room upstairs and cry to herself for days. Laying in bed trying to sleep, I would hear my father trying to comfort her. She would have none of it, however. Her normally soft voice would change to a harsh screech as she yelled at my father, shouting obscenities and all other conceivable ugliness. She would yell and cry for days, sometimes weeks, and then suddenly come out of the room looking and acting like her normal self. She wouldn't remember the incident if you tried to ask her about it.

If I had known any friends in my classmates I might have leaned on them for support. But none existed. I considered myself far too busy with academic pursuits to consort with them. So when my adoptive parents were killed in a nasty sudden twist of metal, I leaned on nothing. And when I was told the secret of my life soon thereafter, I stopped grieving entirely. For, as you may have surmised, I was living with comfort and security in my unquestioned belief that these two persons were my natural parents. But the accident changed that.

I was at home when it happened. My parents were returning from a dinner engagement in town when the yellow line was blurred, crossed, and turned upside down. Their car was crushed and their limp bodies afterwards hung upside down suspended in the cold night by seatbelts. Instantly my father was killed. The steering column went through his head. My mother was alive when the paramedics arrived, her small frame contorted and trapped by the mangled steel. And it was she who told the officer, as she died, what to say to her adoring son who was at home peacefully resting with a book.

He came to the house in the early morning as the sun was just beginning to light the eastern skies. He came and he knocked at the door. He knocked, I answered, and gave me the news. It hurt. Yet when he explained to me what my mother had given him as last words, it hurt even greater. To learn that my parents were killed, and then to learn in the same night that they weren't my parents! I can say that I remember that night and the following days as gray angular images that mean nothing concrete.

The memories are gray but I know that I graduated from school, then began wandering around the country. I hitchhiked, or jumped rail-trains. I had no money, since my adoptive father's business was in debt when he was killed. Not a place to live. No bed to sleep in, though I know that many of you will feel little pity for me on that account. Somehow I came to California during that time, where I lived for a few years (and eventually returned), then traveled around the country living as a bum on the streets of innumerable American cities. And I would still be traveling today, friends, if it hadn't been for the coincidence that

took place in the shining white aisles of that store during the sunny day of August third.

Now. Where was I?

Oh, yes . . .

I walked through the store until I finally found the boy in the toy department. He stood in the aisle surrounded by toys stacked nearly to the ceiling. Behind him, the bright greens, yellows, and reds of toy trucks. Before him, a mesmerizing panorama of rubber balls in every imaginal color. He looked beautiful and serene. The hair on his head was impossible golden thread. In his small hand was his mother's money. I looked at the bill, crisp and green, and moved my eyes slowly up the young arm. The crook in his elbow was soft and white. His mouth was slightly open in awe, and his eyes were moving quickly back and forth as he assayed the items arranged before him. He wanted something desperately, but did not know what.

He was pristine, friends.

And then I realized. It was him.

He turned his eyes to me and immediately the colors again surrounded me and lifted my body from the earth. Like a lightning bolt shock, with a sudden flash of brilliant white light. But more powerful this time. And it seemed different. So powerful that my head became dizzy with it, and I was forced to squint my eyes to see him. The colors around me spun black and dark red, deep blue and purple paints, in a magnificent spectral illusion that appeared as reality. It seemed far too real to have been a mere hallucination in my mind.

My stomach turned over upon itself and twisted with the rays of color. My head seemed filled with the emptiness of eternity, and indeed as I continued to spin towards him I realized that I was one with the entire cosmos. My thoughts were nonexistent, my only focus being the great peace that overtook my body. I relinquished control.

He was mine.

He belonged to me.

I belonged to him.

It was impossible, and it was perfectly clear.

So I moved towards him, floating through space, and took his arm in my hand. Again I felt a shock as of a lightning bolt and a brilliant flash of white light. And you will never guess what he did then, friend. Oh! It hurts so! Even now I can hardly make myself say it. But I must. I must!

He screamed.

He screamed at me. He yelled "Help!" Oh! It hurts!

The colors began to swirl and I felt myself being dragged down from my peaceful state, through consecutive and progressively more intense levels of pain. Pain as though my heart had been torn from my chest. Pain as though my soul was on fire. Down and down further, as the colors swirled around and I struggled to hold my grip on his little arm. And I went further, and they swirled faster. He screamed. They swirled and he screamed and the lights were down and mommy and daddy and where am I who help me too I help he screaming come here at the foot of the bed bastard crash! lash! perdash! The last of the wine Christ crown of thorns red where are my soldiers, Lincoln? Who have you been? Where is the end? Of this maze? This puzzle? Oh, it hurt, hurt so so black so hurt so hurting me I can't

help I know help help hurt hurt give gg ggg h uu r t me

• • •

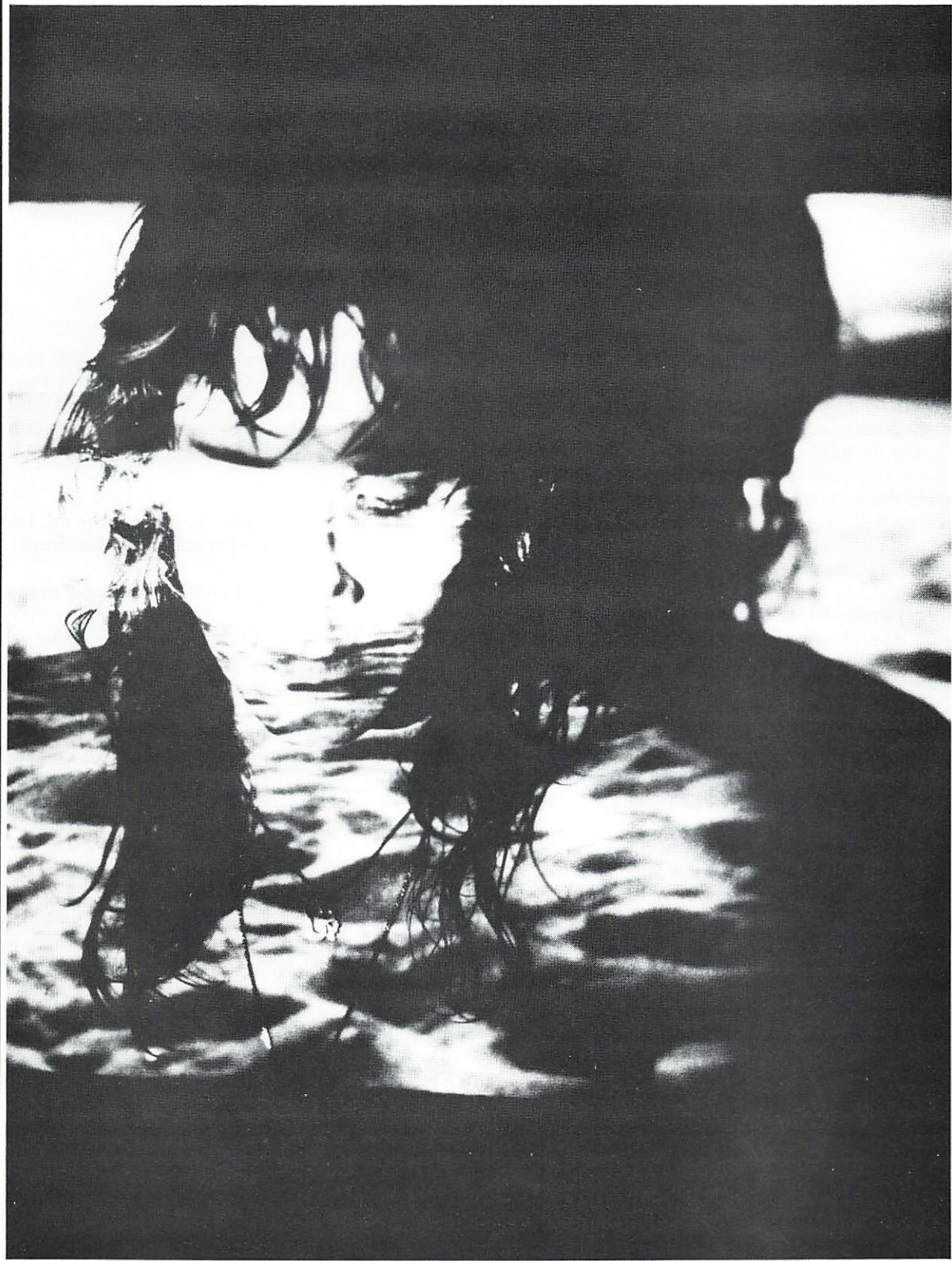
The journal ends there. The events which followed sent a shock of disbelief and confusion throughout the entire nation. Rollins took the child from the store. Somehow, no security guards in the store reported seeing him leave or hearing the boy, Billy Craig, scream for help. From there, Rollins took the boy to his "home" in back of a Wal-Mart store, ironically across the street from Stream County Police Department headquarters. An employee inside the store heard the boy's screams and called the police. When the police arrived, they found the child's body strangled and stripped of clothing. Most of his hair had been pulled from his head; his arms were broken and tied behind his back. Rollins was not at the scene.

Five hours later Rollins was apprehended after assaulting a clerk at a local 7-11 store. Rollins had stabbed the victim repeatedly in the neck with a switchblade knife, then called the police and turned himself in. The clerk, a mother of two children, died two hours later at County Hospital. After being arrested and taken into custody, Rollins confessed to the abduction and murder of Billy Craig.

Rollins pleaded guilty to the charges of kidnapping, sodomy, and murder in Stream County Court, and Judge Harold Nickelson sentenced him to life imprisonment at Thorogood Correctional Facility. During this time the media coverage of Rollins' case was extraordinary. Numerous television and newspaper interviews were done in which Rollins spoke about his personal philosophies of life. Despite his crimes, his eloquent words sparked the interest of many people. These people, mostly young Americans, extolled him as a wise philosopher and followed him with a religious fervor. Thousands of letters were received by the governor asking that Rollins be pardoned and released. John and Norma Craig parents of Billy Craig, were not asked to do any interviews.

After Rollins had served just two months, a book was published which he had authored with the help of a professional writer. The book, a collection of Rollins' thoughts on various social problems ranging from legalized abortion to air pollution, went to the number one spot on the best seller's list only one week after its release. A group of people in the Midwest claimed that Rollins was an incarnation of Jesus Christ, and that the book was a new Bible. A Washington Post poll indicated that Rollins was more popular at the time than the President of the United States.

Three years into his sentence, Rollins was judged insane and moved to Benkhurst Hospital for the Mentally Ill. He soon claimed to be fully rehabilitated and continually asked that he be released. His requests were denied, and one doctor was quoted at the time saying that Rollins would "never leave the confines of the hospital unless he was no longer breathing." A portion of the preceding journal was to be published in the *Benkhurst Times*, a hospital newspaper. The day before it was to appear, Rollins died during a shock-treatment session being administered by hospital staff. He was forty-six years old. A full investigation is being made into his death.



SUBMERSION by Mickey Stellavato

Uno

NORMA GRUSY FISHER

The morning of my fourteenth birthday began just like any old day. I ignored the alarm clock and did not wake up until Mom yelled louder at me than what was playing on my radio. The only difference about today was that this morning she sang "Happy Birthday" to me in addition to, "Hey Jesse, you'd better get up or you'll miss the bus!"

At school no one knew that it was my birthday. My friends and I hung around during lunch break, then shuffled into 5th period ready for our daily nap. Mr. Zoner teaches this class, and he's so boring. I mean let's face it, there's got to be a better way to teach social studies than forty-five minutes of silent reading every day!

Halfway into my dream where I'm cruising down the road in my brand new Porsche, I was startled by the sound of my name.

"Jesse Holmes!" Wow! Mr. Zoner could actually speak! "Jesse, they want to see you in the office." I was in such a deep sleep that I didn't even wake up until my friend Josh punched me in the arm.

"What? The office, oh, OK, I'm outta here." I quickly closed my textbook and slithered out of the room. I was actually glad for an excuse to leave, even though I couldn't figure out for the life of me what they wanted. I'd never been called to the principal's office before, except for the time when Josh and I carried towels into the girls' locker room. How were we supposed to know that there were girls in there? We got in trouble, big time.

"Have a seat inside Ms. Baer's office, Jesse. She'll be right with you."

What did the school counselor want with me? My grades were fine. There were no obscene holes in my jeans; and it had been weeks since I'd listened to my headphones during math class.

"Oh, hi, Jesse." Ms. Baer entered and began looking for something on her desk.

"Hi, what's up?" I asked. "I don't mean to rush things, but did I do something wrong?"

"No, Jesse, not this time," Ms. Baer replied as she sat down. "Oh here it is. I was just trying to find your dad's phone number. He called earlier and left a message for you to call him back."

"That's strange," I responded, taking the paper from her outstretched hand. "He's out of town, at some conference; we just talked to him last night."

"I don't know why he called you either except that he was sayin' somethin' about it bein' your birthday, and that it was *very* important that he get in touch with you today."

Ms. Baer stood up and pushed her chair back. "Since it's a local number, why don't you go ahead and use my phone. I've

got a meeting to go to now anyway. See ya."

Local number? Why would Dad be calling from town? He wasn't due back from his trip for three more days. I was racking my brain for answers. For a brief second I debated whether to postpone the call and return to class . . . but visions of Mr. Zoner tipped the balance in favor of the call. 5-0-3-5-2-2-5 . . . Rringg . . . Paahp . . .

"Hello?"

The voice on the other end was unfamiliar to me. I paused a minute. "I think I must have the wrong number. Sorry to bother you," I hastily added.

"Son? His voice intercepted me as I was about to hang up.

"Son, is that you?"

"Who is this?" I could just see Josh disguising his voice, trying to play a trick on me. But whoever was on the other end of the phone sounded too intense to be fooling around. Besides, Josh was in Zoner's class now.

"Jesse, my name is Matt Collins. I'm your father, Son."

Silence. "Uh, hh, hh, excuse me, Mr. Collins." I finally found my tongue. "I don't know who you are but you're *not* my father. My dad's name is Pat Holmes, and I'm his son, Jesse Holmes. I hope you find who you're looking for, but I've really got to get back to class now."

Enough of this bull; now if I could just hang up.

"Happy Birthday, Jesse. I remember the day you were born in Meadows, Illinois on a cool November morn."

This guy really was nuts. He even knew what *town* I was born in. His tone of voice sounded sincere; I stayed on the line.

"You know Son, what I'm about to tell you will be hard for you to accept, and believe me, it's a million times harder for me to have to admit this but I, uh, left you and your mom when you were less than a year old. Times were hard and money was tight. Your mom and I argued a lot about the bills. She blamed me when she had to go to work while you were still just a baby. I felt like a worthless bum for not providing better for you two. So one night when she offered to buy me a one-way ticket on the next bus out of town, I agreed."

What could I possibly say to this stranger? If this news were true, why didn't Mom ever tell me about him? Had I really been living a lie all these years? Was this man my dad?

"Try not to be too hard on your mom, Jess, for not telling you about me. She never had any reason to believe that I'd ever come back into your lives again."

"Well then why did you? Why now?" I asked.

"Those are fair questions, Son. And you know, the truth is I probably wouldn't have come back to see you if it weren't for the fact that my dad, which would have been your grandpa, made

me promise that I would tell you about him. He wanted you to know, Jess, that you had a grandpa who loved you very much. He passed away last month in Denver. I was there when he died and he made me promise to talk to you, Jess. I'm real sorry that you and he didn't get to know each other. You would have liked Grandpa. I'm so sorry . . ."

There was an awkward silence while his voice trailed off, obviously engulfed in emotion. I really didn't know what to say. "Umm, this has all been kinda heavy for one afternoon," I said. "Do you think that maybe we could continue this conversation later? I really do have to go now."

"Oh yeah, sure, no problem," he replied. "I'll be around; I'm not going anywhere till we have a chance to work things out. I'll tell you what. I'm staying at the Welcome Lodge on the edge of town. Just give me a call when you're ready to talk some more, OK?"

"All right."

I couldn't believe it! Suddenly in just a matter of minutes my whole life had been turned upside down. I stood up to leave but found my legs giving in to the weight of my body; I kid you not, my knees were shaking. Somehow I had to get out — outside — anywhere. I needed to think — *alone*.

I remember walking out of school as though I had someplace to go, like to the parking lot to meet Mom or something. Then before I knew it, I was downtown; I don't even recall if I ran the entire six blocks, but there I was, sitting on a picnic table by the railroad tracks, crying like a baby. My god, I hoped nobody was watching. I didn't want anyone to see me in pain; pain that dishonesty had created. Why didn't my mom tell me about him? Why did she lie to me all my life? Why did he have to show up now, or anytime for that matter?

Believe me when I tell you, I've never cried like that before. Part of me was ashamed; the other part felt relieved. I just laid there looking up at the sky. I knew it was time to get up and start heading back . . . but I didn't know where to head back to. School? . . . *NOT!* Home? No, that would mean facing Mom.

I put my hand in my pocket and closed my fist around the crumpled paper with "his" number on it. I knew exactly what I had to do. But what about Mom? What was I going to tell her since she probably already had something planned for my birthday?

I found a pay phone and dialed home. School was out by now, so she wouldn't wonder why I was calling her. "I'm going to stay in town and shoot some hoops with Josh and the guys," I lied.

"OK, Jess, I'll come in and pick you up in a couple of hours and we'll go out to pizza for your birthday."

"No, Mom, that's all right; you don't have to bother picking me up. Josh's dad is bringing us home after he gets off work. Maybe we can do somethin' later, OK, Mom? See ya!" I hung up the phone before she could argue. Whew, that was close.

I used my last quarter to call Matt's number. I didn't know exactly what I was going to say; I just knew that I had to start saying it — whatever it was.

"Hello!"

"Hi, it's me, Jesse. Could we meet and talk some more?"

"Sure, you bet. How about in twenty minutes at the 'U Can Wait Pizza Parlor' I saw at the corner of 1st and Elm?"

"Yeah, there's only one restaurant in this town and that's it. See you there." I raced around the block and plopped down on a bench in the designated eating joint.

Marcy, this real cute freshman, was working the counter. I

usually am real shy around girls, but today I was totally confident. I was on a roll talking to her, and just about to ask her out when Matt came.

I forgot all about Marcy and turned toward him. We stood looking at each other for about 10 seconds; it seemed like 10 years. I reached out my hand to shake his, but for some reason we grabbed each other and hugged instead; you know, the kind that you see people in the movies do when they haven't seen each other for a long time.

"Hi Son," he said. "I'm really glad you called."

For the next five hours we sat across the table from one another, eating pizza and talking. It was weird, but cool how easily we could relate, even though we'd just met. It seemed like we had known each other forever.

Then out of the blue he said something that jolted me back to reality.

"Let's go deer hunting this weekend, Jess. I hear there's some great hunting out this way."

"Hunting?" I couldn't believe he just said that. "Why in the heck would we do that?" I checked to make sure my ears weren't plugged. Mom had taught me for as long as I could remember that hunting an animal down was *not* an acceptable form of entertainment.

"Ah Jess, come on, you mean to tell me that you've never gone hunting before? Gosh, you don't know what you've been missing. Why, Grandpa and I used to go every season. We hunted, camped and walked all over the hills together. I tell ya, Son, there just ain't nothin' that brings a father and son closer to each other than huntin'!"

I stared across at this man who in less than eight hours had become known to me as my birth father. I looked him straight in the eye and very slowly and deliberately asked, "Why would we have to *kill* something in order to get close to each other? There's no way that I would go out and kill an animal and call that fun."

Now it was his turn to be shocked. I could tell that the message was getting through to him though. Being extremely pleased with myself, I leaned back on my chair against the wall . . . Whoa-aa . . . there was *no wall*, and I fell flat on my butt, hitting my head on the concrete floor!

When I regained consciousness, I was in a hospital bed with Mom and Matt standing over me. You could see the worry in their eyes; it was kind of funny looking up at both of them, looking down at me. I could see plain as day where I got my nose from! Seriously, after my parents told me that I was going to be all right and that I'd just had a mild concussion, I tried to sit up on my elbows to have a conversation with them. But my head began to hurt like hell, so I plopped back on the pillow instead.

I recovered in a couple days and went home to a confused step-dad and an apologizing mom. She had a difficult time explaining why she had kept the truth from me, about my birth father. The four of us went to therapy for awhile.

Matt stayed around town for six months. During this time, we volunteered at a wildlife preserve every other weekend. We bonded quite nicely without ever raising a gun; the only shots we took at the deer were with a camera lens.

Oh yeah, and get this, I guess Josh and I ditched Zoner's class one too many times, because Ms. Baer, has given us the "official duty" of carrying clean towels into the girls' locker room every morning. She must have overlooked the fact that the cheerleaders have an early morning practice. We feel real punished. Of course, the girls are never in the locker room when we are, but hey, it's the thought that counts!

Remember the Time

(for Eric Cox) -version 2

Remember those times when the children played
you, forced on grown up feet, to wander in corners
all of which you knew too intimately.
Recalling all those yesternights
when no one called out, for you, in your aloneness
all of those times, I was there.
When falling down didn't hurt you
but the pain from forsaken motherhood
bent you to bleed and scream in abundance
all of those times, I was there.
The moments became the minutes
and the minutes have become your life
the hours that bay you
were moments spent
wandering where you are
knowing you were somewhere
I can't remember now.
When you walked so long, despondent
driving your soul through the rain
you walked alongside me.
When he broke my heart and left me, fallen
it was to you whom I quavered for comfort
though you were yet unearthed in my waken states.
Sorrow accompanied all your pleasures
and when the world began resplendent, again
it pained you to remember your many paltry ecstasies.
All those treasures you locked away in your chest

I was there, I used my key
to fortress your memories
to press you toward our way.
Our Joy, produced by the mistakes of all others
who have marched loudly through our corridors.
There is no other to whom I have entrusted my hearth.
Remember that day when I scorched your liking.
I was there beside you when you covered your head
so that no one else could witness your crying.
Shut tight your eyes
so that you could look into your mirror and see nothing.
The hand that wiped your tears, still
belongs to me.
Our passage beginning
just as it was in your mind
all those thoughts ago.
Remember the time?
Remember the time?

- EDEN AJRIAN-OMARI

Contributors

Diana Abu-Jaber — I was born in a part of Syracuse, New York, where the street signs were both in English and Arabic. My story, "12 Steps," is the basis for my play "The Steps."

Eden Ajrian-Omari — Painter, poet and gay rights activist. Former co-chair of LCC Gay and Lesbian Alliance. Originally from Brooklyn, NY, currently a senior, fine arts major at the U of O. I hope my contributions empower people socially and politically. There is no room for omission and marginalization for any peoples within our United States.

Sara Baz is a writing tutor at LCC and an aspiring environmental journalist.

Kenneth Brady — I'd like to thank the academy.

Dee Bugarin — Life seems to happen when I'm making other plans.

Seth Erickson — I like expensive beer, PBJ sandwiches on cheap white bread, and never mind, it's not important. I'm just me, you're just you, and we're in it together.

Norma Grusy Fisher — I'm a returning adult student to Lane with a B.S. degree from the U of O in sociology. I love to write, and am considering the field of journalism/newswriting for when

I grow up! (My kids will probably beat me to a career). I've published a children's story, "Kira," on the importance of spaying/neutering our pets.

Ryan Foote — I identify myself entirely by my studies; it is my existence.

Erica Getty — This poem, "Full Circle," is dedicated to my mother. Some of my toughest lessons were learned because of these very hard years, and for the first time in my life I understand. I thank you, Mom, for bringing me into this world and for standing by even when it's from afar. We have truly come full circle.

Nathan Hearn — I'm a second year graphic design student.

Peter Jensen — I teach writing and literature at LCC and LBCC. In between, I'm a freeway flyer. I experience crepuscular events on I-5 that only poetry can explain.

Kyra Kelly — I've been scribbling, performing, storytelling, and basically driving people nuts since I've been capable of speech and muscular control.

Antonia Miano — writing has been there for me when no one else was around. No matter where I go or who I become, there's always paper, pen and a thought.

Contributors Continued

Gary Noland was born in Seattle in 1957. His music has been performed throughout New England, on the West Coast, in Japan, and broadcast over cable television and radio stations across the United States. Gary teaches a music theory and composition course through the Continuing Education Program at LCC.

Ryan Reynolds — Midnightnoon is comprised of Eugene, Lincoln City, and parts of Salem, all in spiritual twilight. It's where I dream and where I hope to go when I next break down. I eat pain like chocolate.

Bonita Rinehart is devoting herself to being purely ornamental. Oh, baby, oh.

Ryan Rogers — 20 years old, originally from Alaska, have lived in Eugene for two years, hope to transfer to UO, hopeless goof, please send money and food. Thank you.

Jerry Ross — I started writing poetry in high school, and was editor of the poetry anthology *The Flame*. I take writing poetry seriously; it's an important art form. I am also a painter.

Mickey Stellavato — yes is a world and within this world exists all worlds — e e cummings

Dennis Thompson is a student at LCC on the Dislocated Worker Program learning autoCAD and technical writing. Creative writing is a hobby he does whenever he has time.

Justin Tindel — Sometimes I try so hard to relax that I end up totally stressing myself out.

U.B. 28 — The tap gurgled, the sacred juices flowed, and the eternal admonition was understood: "Brew The Keg Here!!!"

Dorothy Wearne . . . and you can quote me on that.

Kyle P. Whelliston's bio is not nearly as witty as the others on this page.



INSTINCT FOLLOWS by Nathan Hearn