

denali

Lane Community College Fall 2000



Fall 2000

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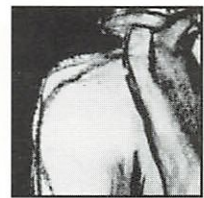
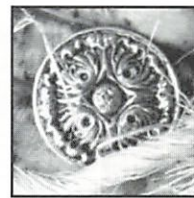
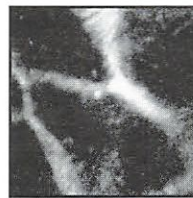
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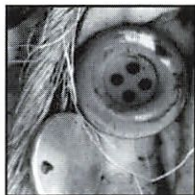
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poetry

Wallflowers

b y A n d r e a L a r s o n

Hiding in the shadows
your view is clear
of all you see
and no one knows
where you are
who you are
or what you know
And they walk by
not noticing you're all alone
that there's no one there for you
No one reaches out a hand
to pull you back
into the sun
into life
into the world
No one can hear you
pleading
crying
wanting
someone to just help you
Someone who cares enough
to tell you they understand
and know how it feels
to be trapped
behind a glass wall
where
on the other side
people walk by
with hearts even harder than your own

Memoirs

b y A n d r e a L a r s o n

I'm sitting, waiting
commanding my silent pen to break forth
with words of intense emotion
I'm at a loss for those words
They are words
that have yet to be said by a single soul
I'm sure of it
I do not credit myself an inventor of such praises
nor worthy enough to give them name
Oh, but only if I knew what they'd be called
so my soft lips could whisper those words
most gratefully to one deserving

Broken Shards

b y L o r e t t a G . M e h l

Softly the breeze blows over the dried, encrusted earth where,
Strewn amid the dust, weeds, and stones lie
The clay pieces — markings depicting their unique usage;
Cooking pot, a study in ebony, blackened by smoke,
Embellished vase, a happy wedding feast,
Ceremonial bowl, belief in the Great Spirit,
Worshipped in chant and dance.
Broken relics in my hand relate the story long since passed,
Of people who loved, laughed, lived.
Shards of pottery left gradually,
Returning to the dust,
Story of man and his earth.

Dedicated to Margie

Fall 2000

Toll

b y R o b i n S a x t o n

Truth is not a dinner guest
welcome to join us
as we sit across the table
air sodden with silence.

Hearts squeeze tears eyes blink back
Bitten tongues prevent hissed accusations

Tension ties us together
Twanging like a taut rope

Better to dine in solitude
Leave truth on the doorstep
Ignore the echo of the bell

Yellow Ladybugs

b y M i c h e l l e M c D e r m o t t

It was this time last year you took me to the hills
to take pictures
You squinted at me through the dusty lens
narrowed the aperture, framed me the way you wanted me.
My shoes were too big, and my legs hurt from the hike,
but I was ringing with the newness of you
watching me looking at yellow ladybugs,
ringing from the brightness of bared skin,
dizzy from my difficult smile
and your lack of instruction in the first sun of the season.
The pictures clicked like quiet guns
and it was done.
We returned,
breathless, pink-faced, envied
with a wild iris drying behind my ear.

A Meditation on How I Move

b y N a t e L a w r e n c e

Sometimes plummeting, sometimes just drifting like a leaf in a quiet brook, lazily making its way toward a tiny waterfall. Then, suddenly...it disappears into the blackness. And peering after into the depths, I spot it, lying as if asleep on an array of smooth round stones, waiting as time draws to an end beneath the continuous water flow... Down it flows, down the hills, down through the thickets and jungles of woody vines, underneath abandoned bridges, over lost shoes, old tires and battered shopping carts it goes. Down, down, weaving below the poplars and oaks, collecting itself into a silent pool, then slowly creeping toward another fall...It whirls farther along the stream in blissful glee, skipping down a stony descent, mixing its exuberant merriment with the subdued music of some hidden wood and then continuing on as in a never-ending chase, with the quiet longing of the sea beneath its soul... plummeting, plummeting, falling, falling, onward, ever onward.

Fervent stream, carry me with you! Invite me into your furious current, let me feel your anticipation and hope, let me listen to your laughter and your whispers. Engulf me; carry me wherever you please. Let me fall in like the leaves that grace your surface. Oh, take me from this place! Lead me anywhere, down toward verdant fields, reeds and apple trees. Carry me away and play a joyful tune below my spinning body as I float, resting in the brilliant sunlight and gentle shadows. Let me lie, let me blend in, let me disappear into this wondrous array of color and sound.

Meditations from a Journey

b y N a t e L a w r e n c e

“The feeling of the forest”

Prickly pine needles, soft, damp moss. The bugs scatter about as you lift the rock/pillow and try to position it in a comfortable way. Night sounds surround you: the “coo,coo” of the owls in the distance, the “creak, creak” of crickets playing together in a natural symphony, the “crackle, crack” as the logs burst and slowly disintegrate into ash and ember. The sounds comfort you, reassuring you — at least you have a fire and trees for your first night on this journey.

“In the throes”

You’ve been striving, reaching forward, trying to break free from the suffocating thickness of the branches — so hungry for the light, yet still so deep in the forest. You long for an open space. As you sit in the dark, in the silence, reaching for you know not what, one thing is certain: the Truth is out there...somewhere. And for tonight, that’s enough.

“At an open space”

Now you’re at an open space. You can see the sky again; you see the sun. You know the direction you’re traveling; you can see the clouds and birds. The sun is shining down, warming your face and back, uplifting your spirit, renewing you. You put up a prayer. “Thank you, thank you for the clarity — for a break in the clouds, a reprieve from the storm.” You can see more clouds approaching, but for now, you’re dry and at peace. What a contrast to the suffocating thickness of the forest.

“The first awakening”

The sound of beating wings wakens you from sleep. Ah...you groan. A sore back’s the price you pay for sleeping on hard rock. You shiver and slowly stretch out your arms. You can see the sun has now set, but the sky remains a pale blue. “Never knew it could feel so lonely up here,” you think. Nevertheless, you are resolved to reach that summit; it beckons to you in your mind, the jagged peak outline black against the lightning-lit sky.

Fall 2000

A Troll Listens to Jazz While Enjoying His Favorite Drink

b y C h r i s t o p h e r A r n o l d

flamboyance fizzles
flipping the soul
of a sweet-cola troll
who listens and sips,
listens,
and sips the sounds —
zounds!
the sound sets him straight!

The Soldier-Priest

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b y L e o R i v e r s

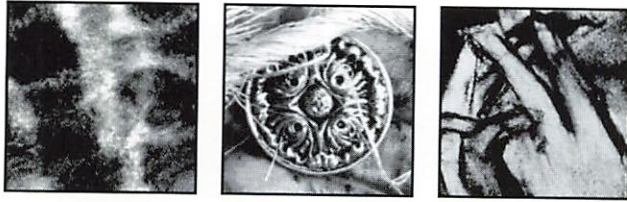
The clean white clouds, the very high clouds
cast shadows on the world
like an invisible herd
of cattle bewitched to cast
cool shadows, swift moving shadows
that go across the patchwork quilt of farms
in the long green valley
like sparrows across one's gaze.

The ball of the world is a patchwork, too,
of battlefields some
old and dry and scattered with lost bones
others are new and wet with
good earth tilled with bad things
and still other yet untouched places seem
almost wrong with beauty
like a whore, still pretty, but
waiting on a street
to be taken some place ugly.

I've seen enough, not it all, but enough
to know
you can't beat back war with your fists
or, with words wonderful enough,
make whole armies
drunk with fear of the battle to come
and what they've already seen
of slaughter, sober again, sober
enough to see themselves in each other
as if confronted with a mirror.

The awakened man, the man who can read
the writing of all that is lost
in the faces of their mothers
the self-tamed man, the man
who no longer loves too much
the fumes of his own passions
the man who longs to place something wholesome
in the hands of the woman
who has placed a son or daughter in his hands
he makes his peace with his own madness
whether in a room in a city or
a place in the country
he does not go to get, or go to go
he waters the furrows of his reach with labor
and reaps
for the world a small patch
turned back from brown to green.

Fall 2000



fiction

about the author

Mark Christian is a 48 year old student and computer instructor at LCC in Florence. His love of writing started when he wrote his first book by hand in his early twenties. In those days he rode fast motorcycles, lived in a teepee, and threw wild parties in Southern Oregon. To his displeasure, he had to leave the pen (but not the Harley) behind to make a living and entered the world of business management. He traveled the U.S. extensively and spent time trading in China. When he turned 40, he decided his true passion was writing, so he left the business world. Since then he has been studying English, and has been writing for the last eight years creating a series of adventure, romance novels. The series is called *The Life And Times Of Norton Baily and Samee Ravenhair*, and the titles are: *The Death Of Norton Baily*, *Rock On*, *Mystic Trail*, *How Do I Live?* and *American Dragon*. Mark wrote the following short story, *Wizard Hunter*, to entertain his children.

W h

Wizard Hunter

by Mark Christian

It's a cool, clear day on the Oregon Coast, and I'm sitting at an old wooden card table in the attic study of my small home. Pausing from the research I'm doing, I glance out a window and notice a middle-aged woman and a young boy moving furniture into the vacant house next door. As I continue to watch them, the lad impresses me with his great strength - it seems that if he can get his arms around an object, he can lift it. I try not to let it distract me and turn back to my research.

After reading for a couple hours, I get up and head downstairs for a cup of tea and feel my stiff, eighty-year-old muscles groan as I begin to thaw from sitting so long in one place. I make my way to the wood stove and pick up a hot kettle with a dish towel when someone knocks on the door. I put the kettle down and go answer it. To my dismay, it is the landlord.

"Mr. Winters," he said giving me a stern look.

"Forgive me, is it the first already?" I asked sheepishly.

"It's now the tenth," he replied dryly.

"Come in, come in," I said, "I'll get you a check."

I shuffle to my desk and pull my checkbook out from beneath a pile of old books and hold it up for him to see. "I've got it," I said, "hold on while I fill it out."

"That will be fine," he said mundanely.

"I see you rented out the old house," I said.

"Yeah, not-so-young couple and their brat. Let me know if they disturb you."

"Do you know where they're from?" I asked.

"California," he answered.

"What brings them to Oregon?"

He ignored my question. "Hey, any of these books worth anything?"

I pulled my glasses down my nose to get a better look at him. He was in the process of picking up one of my most prized novels - handwritten with color illustrations from the fifteenth century.

I got up quickly. "Hey, don't touch that, it's very delicate!" I said and took it from him and put it in a cupboard. Then I showed him the door. "Here's your check, and I'm sorry for being late."

He grunted and left.

I closed the door and went to the wood stove, steeped a cup of tea, and went to my study. I sat down and peered out the window trying to catch another glimpse of the new neighbors, but I didn't see them. "That was quick," I murmured to myself and thought how just a few minutes ago there had been a large load of furniture and boxes in their driveway, but now it was gone.

I turned my attention to a new treasure I had just purchased from a book dealer in Portland: a Chinese manuscript, written in Mandarin during the twelfth century describing the appearance of the great

wizard, Merlin.

Somebody began knocking on my door again.

"That pesky landlord. What does he want now?" I grumbled in frustration.

I went downstairs, opened the door, and was surprised to see the young boy I had seen earlier, fidgeting from one foot to the other. He looked up at me with a smile that revealed a missing tooth.

I grunted and he ran off.

An odd child I thought then anxiously went back upstairs to my book. The learned author claimed that she had seen Merlin in a small village off the southern coast of China, in 1226.

I stopped reading and scribbled the year on a small piece of paper. Then I pierced the paper with a straight pin and stuck it in a map near the name of the small village mentioned in the manuscript, Zhanjiang, China.

Stepping back to ponder the newly updated map, I reviewed the locations and years of all the recorded sightings I have of Merlin: Saint Nazaire, France, 1143; Zhanjiang, China, 1226; Mangalore, India, 1333; Koekenaap, South Africa, 1806; and Canavieiras, Brazil, 1910.

As I continued to transcribe the Chinese manuscript, I was excited with the consistencies it had with the other documented sightings: Merlin was always seen in or near a coastal town; the weather would change dramatically whenever he would appear; and his description was nearly always the same - a tall, willowy old man with a long gray beard, wearing a dark hooded robe, thick leather sandals, and carrying a driftwood staff.

After careful consideration, I updated my prediction of where Merlin might be living now. I grabbed an Oregon map from the desk drawer, unfolded it, and began to search for a community approximately 200 miles farther north of where I lived.

I had just picked out a likely location near the Washington border when someone knocked on the front door again. I began to feel invaded as I went downstairs to answer it. It was the boy looking up at me with an ear-to-ear grin.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"I'm David," he answered and then was quiet.

"I'm Mr. Winters. Do you want something?" I asked raising my thick eyebrows at him.

"I just moved here," he said looking past me and into the house.

"That's nice," I said.

"It looks like you have lots of cool books," he said.

"Do you like books?" I asked surprised.

"Yes, may I take a look?"

Why one so young had such an interest intrigued me. "I'll let you come in as long as you promise not to touch anything," and I opened the screen door to let him in.

"Okay," he agreed and walked directly to a stack of books on my desk. I shut the door and then he shocked me as he began to read some of the foreign titles aloud.

"Unexplainable Phenomenon of Old World Magicians," he said, deciphering the foreign text slowly but accurately, "... The Wizard's Paradox."

"You can read them?" I reacted with surprise.

"Yeah."

I sat next to him and said, "Some of these languages don't even exist anymore, it would be impossible for you to understand them."

"Show me one," he challenged.

I picked out one of my oldest books, written in a dead-San dialect. I pointed to a sentence. "Can you read this?"

He concentrated and said, "You will know him by the clothes he wears and the staff he bears." He stopped and laughed, "It rhymes, like a little poem."

I put the book down and asked, "Where did you learn how to read like this?"

"My father," he said proudly.

"What does your father do?" I asked, growing intrigued.

"He travels."

"What does he do?"

"Fixes things."

"What kind of things?" I prodded.

"I'm not sure exactly."

"Where is he now?" I asked.

"He's gone."

Someone interrupted our conversation by knocking on the door, and I went to answer it. It was the woman I had seen with David earlier, and I greeted her, "Hello."

She looked me up and down before calling out to the boy, "David, what are you doing?"

"Look Mom, Mr. Winters has books like ours!" the boy said enthusiastically.

His mother apologized, "I'm sorry, I lost track of him."

I opened the screen door to let her in. "Oh, that's okay," I said smiling, "come in."

As she entered, I noticed she was quite pretty.

I offered her a chair, "Please, sit down. You must be tired from moving."

"Thank you," she said while looking around the room, "you have an interesting book collection."

"Thank you," I said and poured her a cup of tea. I looked at her curiously and added, "I'm impressed that your son can actually read some of these languages."

She smiled and watched her son explore the room. I could see her pride in him. Then she turned to me and changed the subject, "I see that many of these books deal with wizards."

"Yes they do, and I see you're no stranger to these foreign texts either," I said impressed, then contin-

ued, "I love wizards and wish I could be one. They are such a colorful part of our culture, don't you think?"

"You think they really exist?" she asked.

"Yes, I do," I said and then hesitated, "... well at least one anyway."

"Who's that?"

"Merlin," I said, and the boy suddenly stopped what he was doing and looked at his mom.

"Merlin!" she laughed, "he's an Arthurian legend from long ago, and if he really did exist, I'm sure he must be dead by now."

Then she got up to take a closer look at a particular book of mine, *Merlin, Fact or Fiction?*.

"May I pick it up?" she asked.

"Go ahead," I said, "What type of work does your husband do?"

There was no reply.

"You have interesting tastes," she finally said, while slowly turning the pages.

"Thank you," I said and pried from another angle, "What brings you to Oregon?"

"We love the rugged coastline and ..." She became so absorbed in the book that she didn't finish her sentence.

"What are you reading?" I asked curiously.

She closed the manuscript and turned to me embarrassed. "I'm sorry," she said, "I love old books and get caught up in them."

"Your son said you have an old book collection, too," I said, "I would love to see it sometime. Do you have any about wizards?"

"Oh, yes," she replied.

"Then you like wizards too?" I asked hopefully.

"I love wizards," she said, her eyes twinkling, "more than you could imagine."

"What about your husband?"

"Oh, he's fond of wizards too."

"But you think they're just fantasy?"

"There's no proof they exist, is there?"

"There have been sightings of Merlin," I said boldly, "in fact, several throughout the centuries."

"What proof do you have?" she asked.

I got up and said, "Follow me," and led them to my attic. I showed her the map on the wall. "These pins show the years and locations of the sightings I have spent my entire life researching." I pointed a pencil at all the different locations I had marked. Then I unfurled a small paper attached to the pin stuck along the coastline of France. "This is the oldest recorded sighting I have of Merlin: Saint Nazaire, France, 1143."

She turned from the map and walked around the room glancing at the papers and journals I had strewn about. Then she changed the subject, "You must meet my husband. Can you come over?"

"When?" I asked, delighted to get a chance to learn more about this mysterious family.

"Now, if you're not doing anything."

This was sudden I thought and became puzzled when I remembered that earlier the boy had said that his dad was gone.

Before I had time to respond, David was in front of his mother pleading,

"Can I call Dad home, please, please?"

"Go ahead," she said, "I'm sure he wants to meet Mr. Winters right away."

"Hooray!" he hollered running down the stairs.

"Slow down!" I yelled, but he was out the front door before my words could catch him. "Are you sure you want me to come now? You're still moving in."

"Please," she insisted.

"Okay," I said and followed her to the kitchen, put

on my heavy leather sandals, grabbed my driftwood staff, and headed out the door behind her. The smell of the fresh pines and dew on the grass heightened my senses, and I picked up the pace to keep up with her.

The boy came skipping toward us with a big smile. "Dad's on his way!" he yelled.

I was laughing at his exuberant bounce; when suddenly, a shadow cast itself upon the land. I looked up and saw giant thunderheads forming rapidly. The temperature tumbled, and the hair on my arms rose from the static electricity building up in the air. Gusting winds began blowing the trees around and tiny droplets of moisture struck my face with force.

I pulled the hood of my cloak over my head and followed the mysterious lady to her house. As I stepped inside, I was astonished! Just a couple hours ago I had watched them move in; and now, instead of disarray, all of their possessions were in order. What I noticed next took my breath away: hundreds of old books organized in sturdy oak bookshelves. I had never seen such a collection. I put my staff down and walked over to a large, leather-bound manuscript. "Do you mind if I touch it?" I asked my host.

"Make yourself at home," she said.

I pulled the antique book from the shelf and translated the title from French to English aloud, *Necromancer's Book of Spells and Potions, Unabridged*. I stopped reading when I realized that this was the type of book a wizard would have.

"Where did you get this?" I asked beginning to look at my neighbor in a new light.

"Would you like a cup of tea?" she said avoiding the question and walking into the kitchen, "My husband will be here shortly."

"Yes, please," I replied.

I closed the book and turned my attention to the unique collection of ancient artifacts that decorated their home: Viking jewelry, Mongolian coins, Italian pottery, Franc swords, odd-shaped stones engraved with unknown symbols, Chinese tea sets, oak walking staffs, and wands of various shapes and sizes. Were they magic? I wondered and then laughed at the absurdity of the thought.

She came back from the kitchen with my tea and offered me an overstuffed chair in the front room.

"Thanks," I said sitting down and took a sip of the hot steamy liquid. I enjoyed the pleasant orange flavor it had to it. "Umm, very good." Then I pressed for more information, "I didn't catch your name."

"Oh, I'm sorry," she laughed, "I'm Anna."

"And your husband's?" I asked.

"Merl, and what shall we call you?" she asked, "Mr. Winters?"

"No," I said, amused at the thought of how close the name Merl was to Merlin, "please, call me Fairfield."

"That's a nice name," she said as David came crashing into the house.

"Dad's home!" he yelled and right behind him, walking briskly, came a tall bearded man wearing a light-colored duster, beige shirt, jeans, leather boots, and carrying an oak walking staff. When he saw his wife, he smiled broadly; and with young David glued to his side, he greeted her with a long kiss.

I tried not to stare but noticed that he was lean and robust with dark hair, olive complexion, brown eyes, and a wry twist to his smile. He looked to be a friendly sort in his forties, and I could see his likeness in his son.

He turned to me; and when I looked into his eyes, I sensed a depth of character that I had never encountered before - and it made me feel uneasy.

"So you're Mr. Winters," he said cheerfully, "it's nice to meet you."

I stood to shake his hand and wondered how he knew my name. "It's a pleasure," I said.

Anna went into the kitchen as Merl sat down. Then the boy jumped in his lap. Merl looked at him and laughed, "Do you want something son?"

David giggled and began rummaging through his father's pockets until he found, and pulled out, an unusual looking stone.

"What is it? What is it?" he asked ecstatic, quickly

touching the engravings on the stone.

"A special runestone for a young necromancer that's been good," he said tickling his boy, "Now go figure it out while I talk to Mr. Winters."

David laughed with delight and rolled off his dad's lap and ran into a bedroom.

Anna came in with tea for Merl and sat next to him

"What's your last name Merl?" I asked.

"Gravis," he said simply, "So you hunt wizards?"

"How did you know that?" I asked surprised.

He looked amused as he ignored my question, "What would you do if you found a wizard?" he asked instead.

I thought a moment before replying, "I would learn more about him or her."

"Like what?"

"I'm not sure where I would start," I said and hesitated, "... I guess I would like proof whether they really exist or not."

"You hunt wizards and don't know?" he asked incredulously.

"I know it seems silly," I said, "but I've been fascinated by wizards all my life, and I've dreamed of being one. I suppose seeking them makes them come alive - especially Merlin."

"Why Merlin?" he asked before downing his tea all at once, leaving droplets in his mustache.

"Because of all the legends about him ... and the sightings," I said confidently.

"Sightings?"

"Yes, I have records going back nearly a thousand years documenting the existence of Merlin on four different continents."

"Sounds like he gets around," Merl said looking puzzled, "Maybe it's not him. What does he look like?"

"He looks somewhat like you," I laughed, "but much older. He wears a robe and not a duster; sandals, not boots; and carries a staff made of driftwood, not oak."

"It sounds to me like you're describing yourself," he said looking me over.

"Yes," I chuckled, "I try to emulate the one I seek." Then I pointed to the large book that had impressed me earlier. "Tell me about the manuscript, *Necromancer's Book of Spells and Potions, Unabridged*."

Merl smiled. "Oh, it's nearly the same as *The Magician's Guide to the Secret Powers of Nature*. Very little difference, really."

"Could you be more specific?"

"It covers your simple to complex spells," he said nonchalantly, "everything from storms to time travel."

"Time travel? What do you mean?" I asked, not believing what I was hearing.

"Wizards use time travel to get around," he replied.

"So you believe in magic and wizards?" I asked.

"Absolutely."

Going with a hunch, I blurted out, "Are you a wizard hunter too?"

"No, I'm a wizard," he laughed.

Startled, I nearly dropped my cup of tea. "What . . . why are you telling me this?" I stammered.

"I would like to train you to be a wizard, so I can get some desperately needed help." He turned and looked compassionately at his wife and rubbed her knee, "and so I can spend more time with my family."

"I don't understand?" I asked, my heart pounding.

"To be a wizard is what you've always dreamed of, isn't it? This is what you said. I will take you on as an apprentice."

I was so overwhelmed by his preposterous offer that I laughed so hard I cried.

Concerned, Anna got up and patted my shoulder.

"Are you all right Mr. Winters?"

"Yeah," I sputtered. After a few minutes, I regained my composure, and she sat back down with a look of relief. On the other hand, Merl stared at me with a smirk on his face.

Just then, David came running in the room. "I figured it out! I figured it out!"

"That didn't take long," Merl said with a laugh.

"Can I show Mr. Winters?" David begged.

"Sure."

David placed the stone on the coffee table. Next, he waved his hands in a pattern over the top of the mysterious rock while murmuring an unfamiliar sequence of words. He touched one of the engravings; and to my disbelief, the stone suddenly began to spin and then spun faster and faster until it was but a blur of bright light rising and hovering at eye-level.

Staring at the object, I suddenly felt hypnotized. I tried to pull my eyes away; but couldn't, and I began to feel frightened. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Merl quickly pull a wand from his shirt sleeve and wave it at the stone; then he muttered an unfamiliar word, and the stone stopped. The boy caught it as it fell, and I came out of my trance. Merl deftly put the wand back up his sleeve.

"Good job!" he said to his son.

"My very own hypnotizing runestone!" David exclaimed with appreciation, "Thanks, now I have one like yours."

"Be careful with it," Anna said seriously, "you know the rules."

"Okay," David agreed, and his parents laughed as they watched him run out the front door.

"What just happened?" I asked feeling uncomfortable.

"Your first experience with a magical stone," Merl said.

I braced myself before asking, "Who are you people?"

Merl smiled and said, "I am the one you have been seeking 'Merlin' and Anna and David are wizards also." He chuckled, reveling in the moment of my surprise and added, "So you have found a whole family of wizards instead of just one. Pretty good day for a wizard hunter, don't you think?"

I couldn't respond.

He continued on as if nothing had happened, "You can call me Merlin - Merl doesn't do much for me. It would be good for David to train with someone of your maturity. With a couple of easy spells, we can get you looking and feeling years younger; and as a wizard, you can live thousands of years. Did you know that?"

I was too numb to react.

"Umm," Merlin said with nose turned up sniffing the air, "Anna is warming up some of her delicious home-made pea soup and bread, just right for a chilly day like today, don't you think?"

I caught the wonderful odor. "It smells good," I managed to croak.

Anna came in with a basket of hot bread and said, "Soup will be ready in a few minutes. Here, you can start with this."

I took a slice.

It became quiet as we ate, and I finally got up the courage to say, "I've got a million questions."

"Don't worry Mr. Winters," Merlin said swallowing a big bite, "you will have millenniums to seek out the answers."

Anna put her hand on Merlin's knee and said, "Now

that Mr. Winters is going to be your apprentice, let's call him by his first name, Fairfield."

Merlin suddenly looked surprised when he heard my first name. He stopped chewing and took on a distant stare. After an awkward silence, he turned to me, his face brightened, and he began to laugh so hard that he began to choke on his bread.

Anna patted him on the back until he was okay. Then he looked at me. "You know the map you have in your attic?"

"Yes, how did you know about it?" I asked.

"Anna," he said his face still red from laughter.

"What about the sightings?" I asked firmly.

"When you become a wizard, you also become a time traveler," he replied still trying to contain himself, "Because of this phenomenon, you are the wizard in all of those sightings of yours."

Silence intervened as I tried to comprehend what he had said. Then it began to dawn on me as I realized the affects that time travel could produce.

In a stunned, pitiful voice, I asked, "You mean to say . . . it was 'me' in all of those recorded sightings? I was the wizard in Saint Nazaire, 1143 . . . and China, 1226?"

"Think about it," he confirmed, "the description fits you perfectly."

I became overwhelmed. "No, it . . . it can't be."

"Yes it is," he said stoically, "you have spent your entire life tracking yourself and thought you were me."

Fall 2000

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dorianne laux on poetry

as told to Heather Edwards

Poet Dorianne Laux
is Associate Professor
of Creative Writing at the
University of Oregon.
She just published her
fourth book, *Smoke*.

Anyone can write poetry. But not everyone who writes poetry is a poet.

"Being a poet is a lifetime commitment to language and imagination. A poet is more intuitive," Dorianne tells me. She is sitting calmly in front of me, the living tangible difference between a poet and a person who writes poetry. She says the difference isn't quantifiable.

"Sooner or later, everyone feels the need to express themselves," she says matter-of-factly. "But not just anyone can pick up a cello and become a cellist."

"Poetry is a craft. It's sculpture." She reminds me of the dedication necessary to chisel a thought, an idea, an experience into a poem. "Art is all about obsession." I put my pen down, listening, waiting.

"The poem is a dream the reader has to fall into and believe from beginning to end." Dorianne explains to me. "As soon as the reader doesn't believe you, the poem is over, it's lost its power. The poem is a void to be gazed into with such awe."

We talk about the midnight oil, about doing whatever it takes to make a poem happen. She doesn't feel guilty about using a thesaurus to find that one exact word. "I believe in cheating, in stealing lines, words, ideas. These are tools of generation," Dorianne explains. "What can I throw in the fire?" she constantly asks herself to generate ideas.

I ask her if inspiration can be earned. "Absolutely," she says, striking the table with one small clenched fist. "But" she cautions, "not everyone can make art out of inspiration. Art rarely

comes easily, it has to be worked for."

Dorianne believes the poet must be utterly vulnerable to the world. "The poet must constantly be reading, writing, thinking, rewriting. By being completely engaged in the human experience, you are paving the way to a point where you don't have to work for it." I understand that this is how we earn it. It might feel like a bolt of lightning, but you've been standing in the rain with a rod all along. The poet at optimum output is stripped bare to battle the world without armor. If you are this engaged in your life and the world, you don't have to wait with pen in hand for inspiration. It will come when it does, regardless of what you're doing. "I'm usually just doing my laundry," Dorianne says.

I wonder out loud if an artist needs to suffer to create art, to appreciate it or to understand it. I've heard art dismissed often because someone feels he or she hasn't "suffered enough to get it." Dorianne tells me how she always felt guilty for not appreciating Emily Dickinson. It was years before she realized she hadn't suffered enough to appreciate Dickinson, that she hadn't been open enough. "I didn't need her yet," she remembers.

Suffering isn't necessary to create art, but those who have suffered recognize it immediately in others. "Suffering is letting yourself love," Dorianne declares. "We know that the ones we love the most are going to die and we're going to lose them. We know there's nothing we can do." She pounds the table with both fists this time, leans forward, imploring me, "Why would we do that to ourselves?!"

Why?" She tells me the universal questions are the important ones, the ones good poetry asks.

Dorianne loves the possibility of "entering into another consciousness." She knows the sustenance in poetry, the nourishment it provides.

Where does she go for nourishment? "I never go back to 'The Wasteland' for fulfillment," she smiles, familiar with the academic struggle of reading T.S. Eliot's post-industrial poem about American society. I ask if there was a catalyst in her life, what Virgil guided her to her own enlightenment? "I go back to Neruda," she divulges. Dorianne finds solace in the "domestic moments" of his surrealism. She loves the beauty of his language, but recognizes the difficulty of translation. "He was my mission-giver," she says of her catalyst. "I read Pablo Neruda's 'Letters to Miguel', and I just wept. I finally realized 'Oh, this is what poetry's all about.' Poetry is the emotional history of the world. It has nothing to do with the rational world."

We discuss the rules of art, the purpose of art. What is the purpose of art? I have the nerve to ask her. Dorianne laughs, throws her head back a little. She has had this conversation so many times, I know. She has asked herself so many times. "It all comes down to the human condition." If you can transcend your own physical reality, the reality of the rational world, you can experience poetry. You can live a good poem. She leans back, explains this with an authority and insight she has earned from decades of investing herself in poetry.

"I was twelve when I began writing poems. I've always thought that if I'd had more options as a child, more money, I might have become a painter or a photographer - maybe even a filmmaker. I love to make images, I love color, I like to create scenes. But I was tuned into language. So, with a pencil and a piece of paper, I could make that happen, create worlds with words. It was a cheap art form and I'm grateful for it."

I admit to making an inexcusable mistake in poetry. I read every "I" in her poetry as though Dorianne herself was always the narrator. "I chose to create a frame for my experience. If I wanted to write an autobiography, I would," Dorianne replies. It is important to distinguish the poet from the narrator in the poem. Each poem must be its own entity, it cannot depend on explanation from the poet about where it came from or why it was written. "The poem has nothing to do with you as the poet." The poet is a necessary medium.

After earning scholarships, grants, a degree in English, awards, a Fellowship in Poetry, a professorship at the U of O Creative Writing Department and publishing four books, she is humble. "I never knew people like me could get published."

I tell her I admire her bravery, the risk taking necessary to reveal yourself enough to publish your life. "You have a right to your life," she declares without pretense. "You can't protect the ones you love in life and you can't protect them in art." She reflects on the privacy in obscurity. "The sort of wonderful thing about poetry is that nobody reads it," she laughs.

"If we're lucky, our poetry will last. True poetry resists analysis. It defies analysis and it doesn't need it to survive." Dorianne believes people are free to read or write poetry as they will. With an almost bewildered look,

she is certain of her own authority on the poetry of other people. She believes you must trust your critics before you listen to their critiques. She trusts those who are willing to tell her "no," but ultimately believes in trusting yourself and trusting the poem.

"Who am I to tell you 'no'?"

Dorianne makes this clear, "If I had to choose between my poetry and my life, I would choose my life," she tells me. I am surprised, but there is no doubt in her voice, only awareness, thoughtfulness. She knows the former cannot exist without the latter.

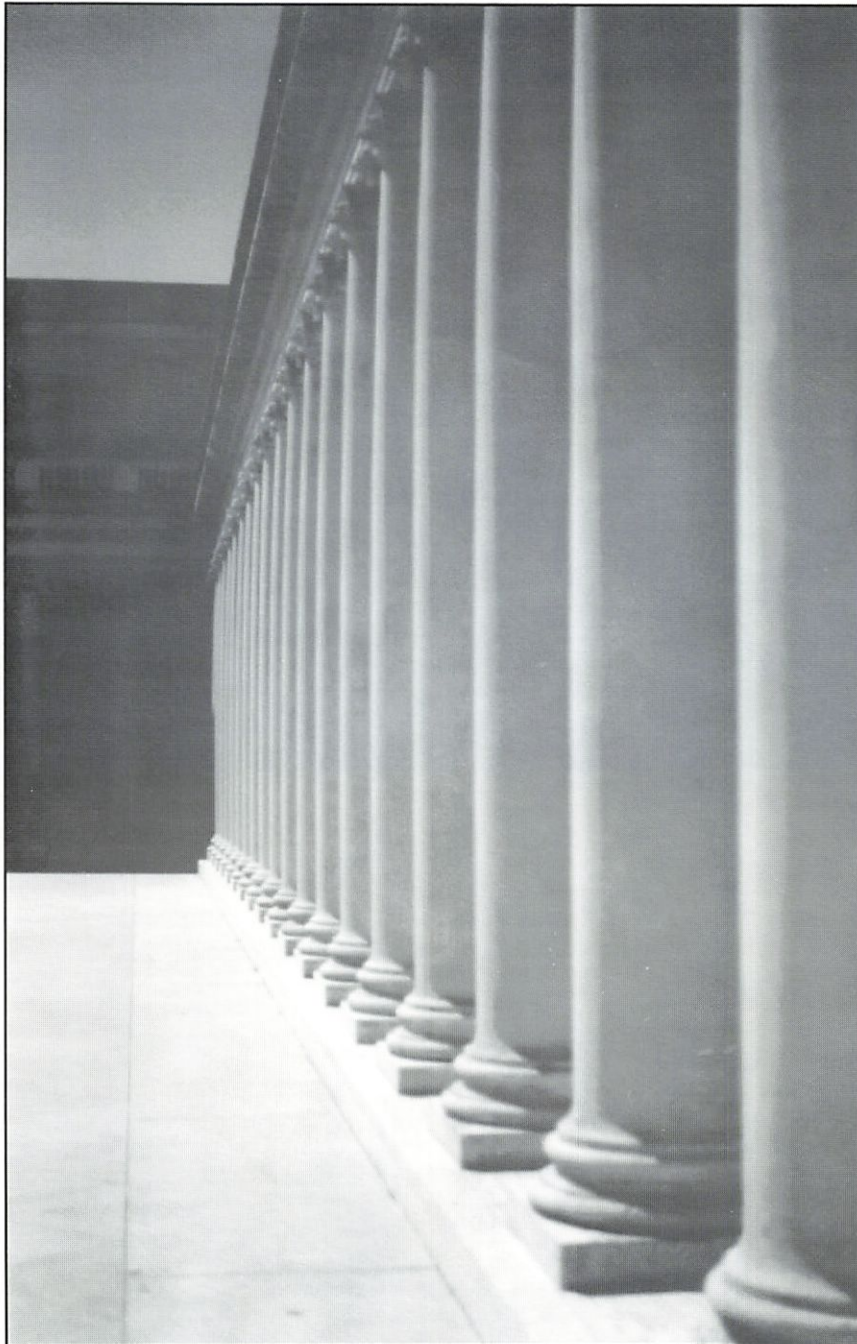
**“ with a
pencil and
a piece
of paper...
I could
create
worlds
with
words ”**

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photography 3-D art

S u s a n N i n e



Legion of Honor Columns

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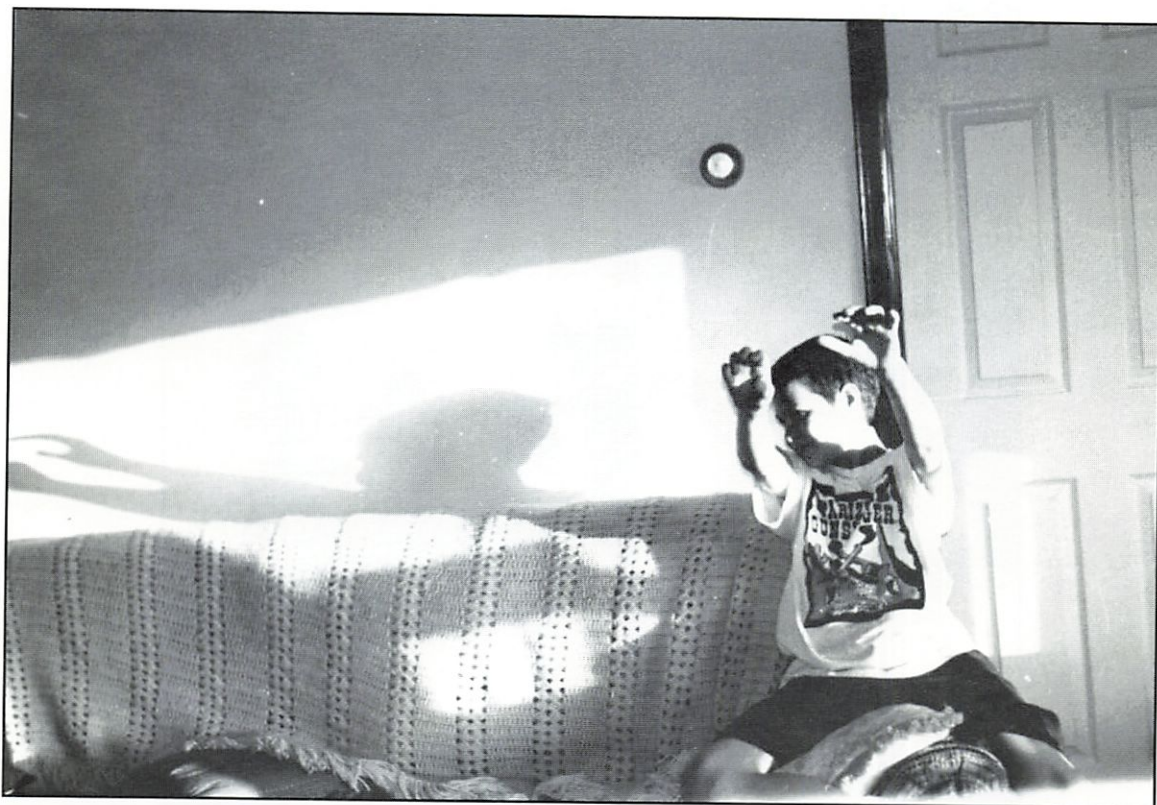
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L a u r a M c C l i m a n s



First Flight

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A n g i e D e l a p l a i n



Red Galoshes

S u s i e M o r r i l l



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S u s i e M o r r i l l



Untitled

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B r i g i t t a H a w e s



Mama Deer

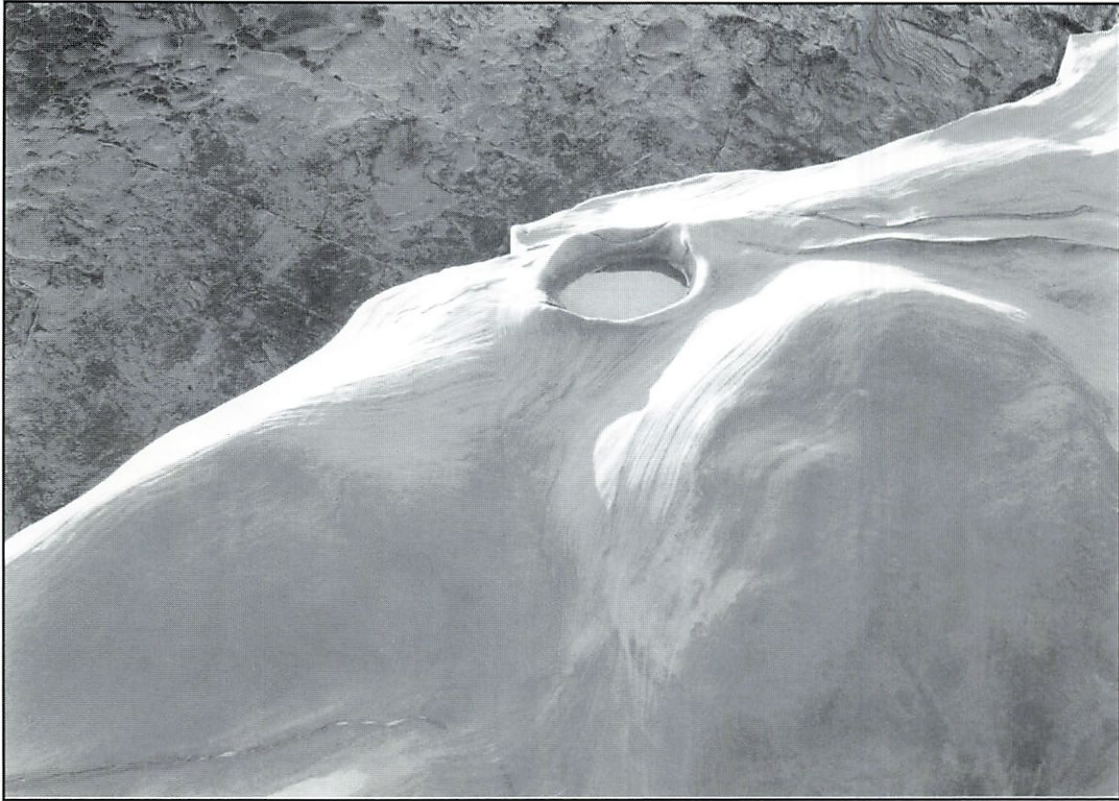
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Sandstone Form

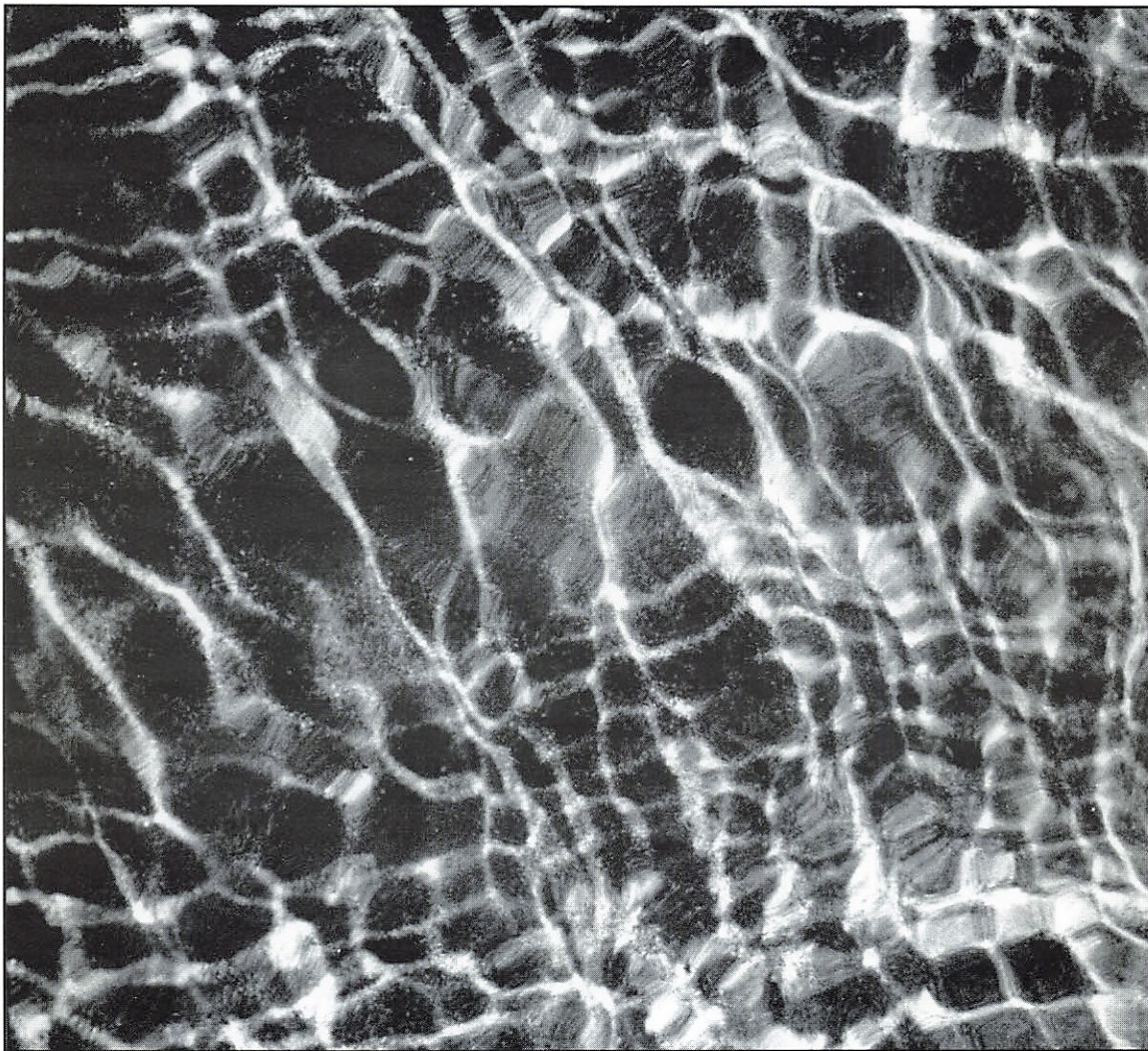
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Society's Token Rewards

R o n F i n n e



Atlantis

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R o n F i n n e



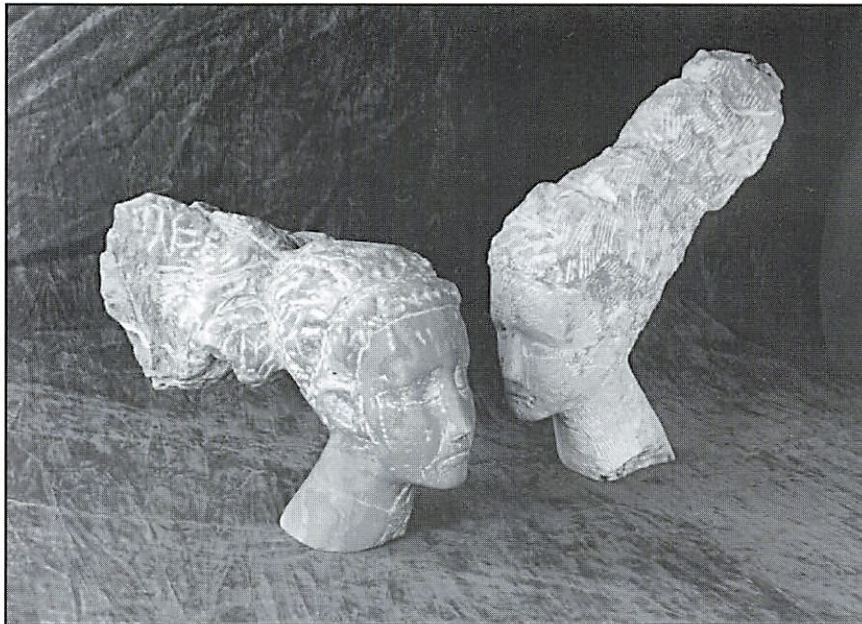
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Radio Child

J o e S c h m i s e k



Peace & Tranquility



Tranquility

N a m i k o R u d i



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A n g i e D e l a p l a i n



Portrait of Secrets

S k y e M a c I v o r



Geometry For Life

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S k y e M a c I v o r



Value Study

J u d y A l i s o n



Contemplating Creation

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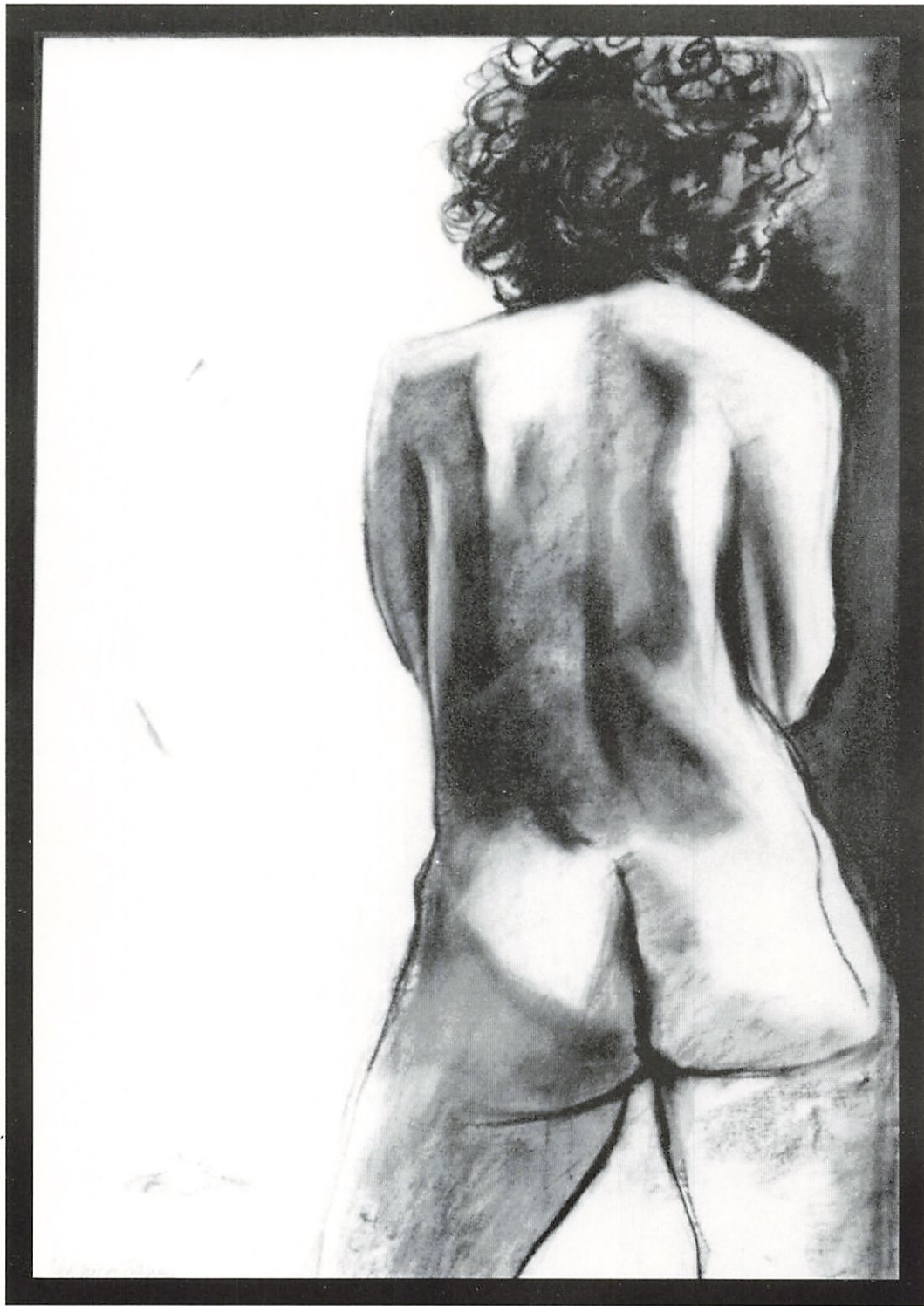


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