

SPRING 2004





**DENALI** Literary Arts Journal is a student-run publication of Lane Community College. We publish three times a year, once a term. Denali accepts creative submissions from all residents of Lane County. We accept submissions at any time, any month, any year. Contact and submission information should be sent to:

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Cover by Jillian Acosta

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## Own me quiet Peter Hoffmeister

Something wakes me up. I don't know what it is, but I'm sure something did and I sit up. The room is seemingly quiet at first, but the sound grows on me, the sound like a loud refrigerator getting even louder. It's more than a hum, as if the water and ice machines were both running at the same time, water and ice running through tubes and sliding along chutes.

I look at the wall across from my bed. Machine parts. There's no longer a wall of plaster and sheet-rock, as it's been replaced by wheels, gears, chutes, stops, latches and bearings, all of it running smoothly, well oiled, clunking and humming. I can hear it loudly now, filling the room like electricity on the night of a summer flash storm, so tangible I can taste it.

My blanket lays across my lap, covering my legs, but my upper body is bare. Although it is not a cold night, the goosebumps stick up like needles. I shiver and I watch the wall. It has me completely. I'm mesmerized, watching for a long time. And my dog is no longer in my room, nowhere to be found. I'm alone.

Then the voice begins. A voice. And it's very hard to perfectly describe that voice. It is so calm

that it seems at first to be devoid of emotion. The cool, deep monotone can be mistaken for the voice of someone bored or indifferent, someone just talking to cut the silence on a sticky, summer night. The man's voice (it is much too deep for a woman's voice) talks at me in simple explanations and commands, one after another:

"If you sit there now, you're doing the right thing." I sit.

"The pencil on the dresser is in the right place." For a second, I glance at the pencil, then back at the wall, waiting.

"This chair is in the right place." Although the voice cannot point, I know which chair it is speaking about.

"The other one is not and you need to move it. You need to get up now and move the chair." I do not move. It repeats, "You need to get up now and move the chair." The tone remains the same, the inflection too, but somehow I know now that there is anger behind the monotone. It is becoming clear to me.

I get up and move the chair.



*"I currently teach English at South Eugene High School and rock climb with Jennie and Rain whenever I can."*



**Leslie Skye**  
**Renee McMurray**



## The Night I Met Rosie

Mick Gael

Rosie walks in the room, and my jaw drops at least two feet.

Rosie walks into the small neighborhood pub where I commiserate with friends both old and new and I think: So, this is life more abundantly.

I am telling Josh this as he looks at me with Cadillac blue eyes incredulously, as if I say this about every girl and he tells me exactly that.

Yeah, I say, but this time it's different—this time it's true. And all of a sudden I know that in two months I'll be alone on a street corner in Portland yelling into a pay phone: "But I love you, you bitch," while Rosie tells me that she's sorry but we really don't belong together and she's not quite sure how an ugly fuck like me gets laid in the first place. Pity, mostly. But that's not quite enough.

I swear, the only way to truly connect with another human being is to say words you don't mean as loud as you possibly can. Hey, it's always worked for me.

I blush before I realize Josh hasn't noticed my eyes beginning to water.

Josh is a considerate cat, mostly. But don't take him to the movies. He has this uncanny ability to single out the most annoying line and then repeat it constantly for five hours afterward.

Josh says, "I'm a sadistic leather master homosexual." I roll my eyes, glad he hasn't been paying too close attention. Josh says, "And I will tease your sensibilities." And right then, I think I love him.

Not that love is a natural reaction with him. Bloodlust is closer.

Rosie is nineteen, but she got a fake ID—a good one, too—from a friend of a friend of a friend who works at the DMV. Good for her. She smells of cheap pot and cigarettes and I am not in the least bit surprised. What does surprise me is that she walks straight over to the booth where I am sitting and says, "What's up?"

I launch into super-extroverted mode so as not to showcase my insecurities. "Not much. Going to join us?"

She slides in the booth the same way you would think she'd slide into bed naked after a bath. I am fixated on her thighs. I don't usually focus on body parts, but like I said, she's different. I am actually salivating, so I offer her my whisky sour. She accepts with a blush. She's practicing art here. We share a moment—eyes closed—and I am hooked. Whatever magic she weaves, I am party.

Talk progresses over the usual: you from around here, what do you do, what brings you here, until the subject of the band comes up. I hate talking about the band, but I am usually the one to initiate that line of conversation. As always, the irony of this escapes me.

So, let's get this out of the way: I am in a band. We are called the Fathers of Left. I play bass, organ and do backing vocals. I'd like to say it's fulfilling being able to express myself through music, but it's not. And I think that's my fault.

Yes, I'm from around here. So is Rosie. She's a clerk at the greeting card store downtown and she's here to see the show. Dickie Lipkiss is playing tonight. I'm just here.

The opening band is worse than you would



think. They're Jack's Enlarged Something-or-other, and they play disco/grunge fusion. The sound is okay, but the execution is piss-poor. If they are still around in three years, they might be worth checking out, but for now, no.

Rosie is leaning in close, saying something about when she was a little girl, and I am reminded of a Quentin Tarantino movie. My life is lumbering by, one second at a time, but that's not a bad thing.

I'm not listening to a word Rosie says, just nodding and smiling where it seems appropriate. My mind has ceased to function. I feel drunk, but all I've thrown back is two shots of Maker's and half a whisky sour. This time when I smile, my timing's off and Rosie asks, "What?" and raises her left eyebrow and again I'm struck dumb.

Josh says that he can't get a word in edgewise through the silence and leaves to play pool. Rosie giggles—no, titters—like a fifth grader. I look into her eyes and realize that she is eyeing me in a way no one has before. And we hold this pose for the next ten minutes, until that hack band gets offstage. We step outside for a smoke; Rosie brought cloves.

When I see the way the lighter makes her face glow, I suck in a breath and choke. Rosie thinks this is funny as hell, and she knows why. I don't remember ever having been this defenseless before. I think I like it.

Dickie is on, so we head back inside. He is brilliant, as usual, but tonight he's playing covers. The thing about Dickie and covers is that he seems to have such a basic, intrinsic connection with the music that it sounds like he wrote each and every song he plays. It's a wonder to me that he hasn't made it big. But

then, people say that about the Fathers, and look at us.

I am surprised at how obscure Dickie's selections are tonight. It's a rare treat to hear him doing esoteric pop gems, so I close my eyes and reach for Rosie. She takes my hand and holds it high on her back, between her shoulder blades. Dickie starts to play "Pale Blue Eyes," and I am sure this is heaven. Rosie squeezes my hand. I feel her smile on me like the sun, but I don't look. I want this to last.

And it does. The rest of the night, we are together. Dickie completes his set with "White Trash Heroes," and I take Rosie backstage to make introductions and congratulate Dickie on another amazing performance.

Dickie and I go way back. We used to play together in high school in a band called the Drips. He had a thing for shlocky horror films, so we'd dress up in our Evil Dead finest and smear ourselves in stage blood before going on. He was as adept then as he is now, but I think I became a little disillusioned somewhere. Ever the optimist, he insists that once I find a proper muse, everything will be fine. Whatever.

In the midst of packing his gear, Dickie turns to me and tells me he is engaged. I choke on nothing and ask him what the hell he's thinking, but he just smiles. I suppose there are things more important to him than music after all.

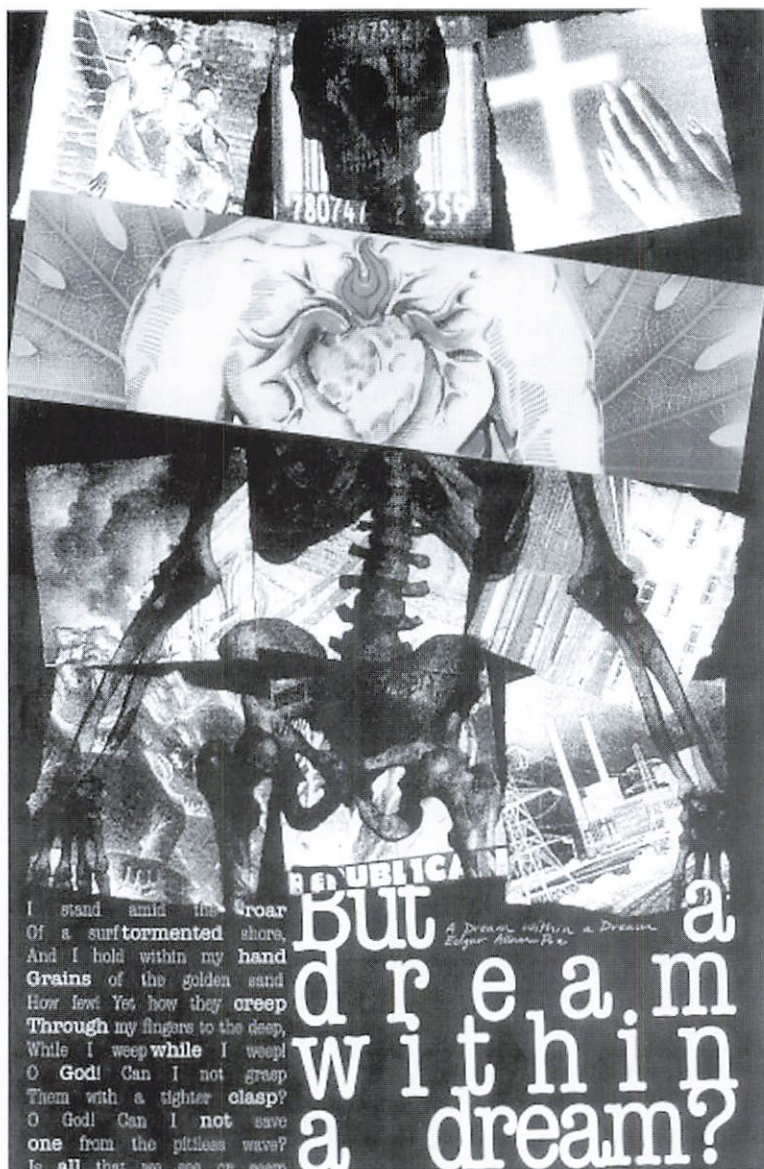
When everyone has left, Rosie and Dickie and I hit the bar one last time for Cosmos. Somehow, I find the composure to wish him the best, and having finished, Rosie and I step into the quiet midnight street.



to never leave home  
secure, yet i must wonder  
is the sky still there

# Dream

Walter D. Logan



"What do atheists scream when they come?" -Bill Hicks



## A ghastly silence falls

Mick Gael

A ghastly silence falls,  
headlong, with the acrobat  
Who has failed to keep his post—  
A fragile position  
to put one's self in—  
And with no weight to catch him,  
no net to break his fall,  
He plummets toward the ground  
which, cruelly, refuses to give.  
Oh, how he longs for the safety of trapeze,  
the comfort of knowing  
it's not his fault,  
the relief  
of having someone else to blame.

*"Would Death change a thing if she could stick her dirty fingers in my life?"*

**Painting 1**  
**Raychel McCabe**



*"I would like to thank Ellen Tykeson, Adam Grosowsky, and Craig Spillman, because I would've never had the inspiration to pursue my art without them."*



**Painting 2**  
**Raychel McCabe**



Street sweeper, secret keeper  
Sees me and I'm digging deeper  
I'm a night creeper  
Wistfully, woefully, wonderfully walking  
Past the witching hour  
Insightfully inebriated  
Belated realizations, and I'm faded  
A warm night surrounds me like a soft silk sheet  
The heat makes the flowers' fragrance stronger  
Silence only broken by a token  
Street sweeper, secret keeper  
Night creeper, like me  
And I am not alone  
A telephone wire whispers and conspires  
Liars, everyone, they come undone  
And I can see their bellybuttons  
We're all gluttons for punishment  
I torture myself by listening to their laughter  
And remember my own in this ever after  
In this lonely night wandering  
Watchful and pondering how I got here  
To clear my bleary head, but how?  
Why am I here right now?  
Is my time never wasted?  
Of all I have tasted this never makes my stomach ache  
Sometimes it's all I can take  
A machine like this can't break  
Street sweeper, company keeper  
Night creeper, like me.

**Trina Persson**



## **An Abysmal Concern**

**Dustin Leland Smith**

What terror springs from open sores  
Within one's fragile mind;  
With seizures cracking fresh new fears,  
Upon those sores to grind?

Are you alive with raw despair  
In searing, unknown, wounds  
Or clawing at the empty air  
And howling with the loons?

Or do you prefer the silent stance  
And stand behind closed doors.  
Then glide about as if in dance  
And sell your days like whores?

*"These poems are merely a few moments of reflection that I've  
humbly presented to the public for a little pleasurable perusal."*

**She Bear & Son**  
**Michael Phillips**



*"This image is part of a photo essay titled 'People of the Northwest.'"*



## Cartoons

Wayde

Dad was always mean.  
At the neighbor's house  
I played.  
For a year  
Mostly rode horses.  
Then came a really fun day.  
New TV  
Showing me cartoons.  
"Let's pretend," he says.  
Sounded fun I thought  
I like to play make believe.  
Shows me a box of costumes.  
Everything was there.  
From face paint to glass slippers  
Even really long hair!  
I never dressed like this before,  
I feel weird,  
But I wanna be a cartoon.  
He has a movie camera.  
Says I can be a star.  
Dressed as a beautiful princess  
Except my gown is cut too short.  
My silkies have a hole in them.  
Says magic toys are for.

Toys are weird,  
Just like on the cartoons.  
Like magic wands of fairies.  
Only they hum and are slimy too.  
Seems awful big at first.  
Playing like this isn't fun.  
But after, my neighbor holds me close  
And shows me the right way.  
I learn to have fun  
Months go by.  
The cartoons he shows me  
Like classroom test he grades.  
He feeds me a snack for my hunger.  
Usually during a movie he is making,  
Mostly a carrot or banana  
Only he doesn't let me chew.  
I don't like it,  
But I like him.  
My dad was always mean.  
From ten to fourteen  
At the neighbor's house I played.  
Forever scarring the man  
I am each and every day.

woof bark, woof, woof, woof  
woof, woof, bark bark bark, woof, woof  
sniff sniff, lift leg, pee

## Eye Walter D. Logan



*"Ever noticed that people who believe in Creationism look really unevolved?" - Bill Hicks*



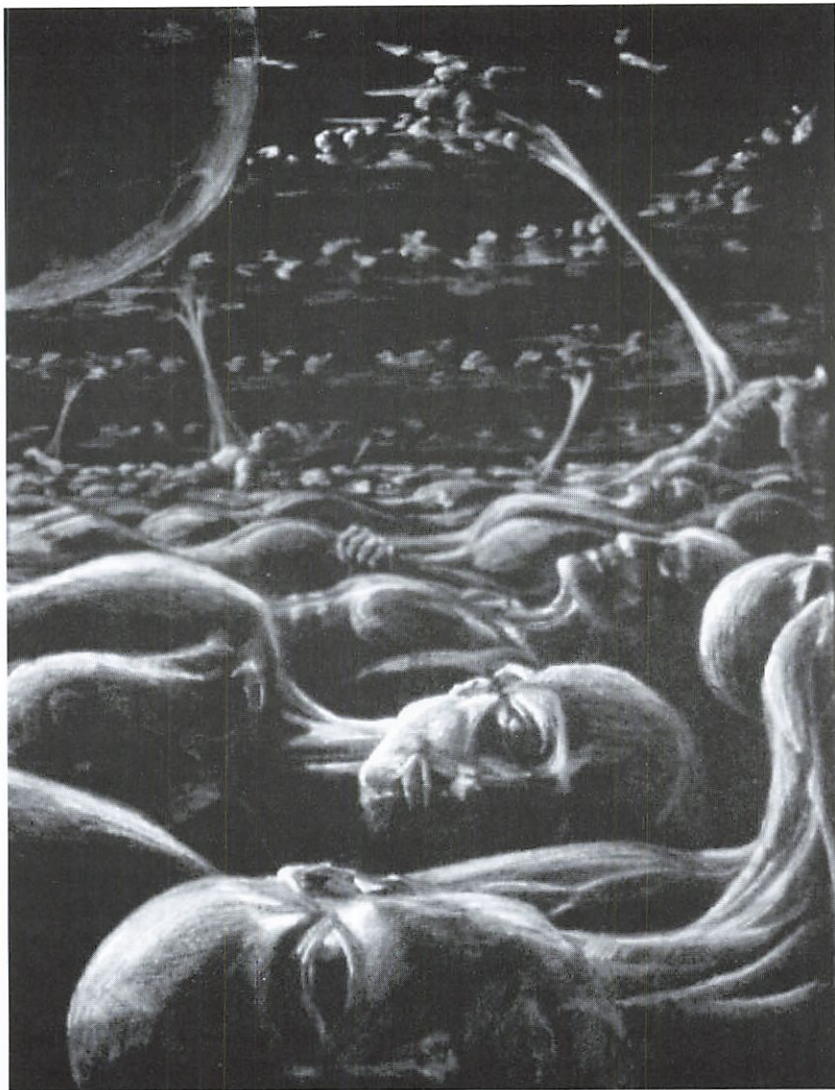
**two timing**

**Lara Coley**

you're splitting my heart  
not breaking  
that would be easy  
pieces  
to hand out  
like candy  
and I wouldn't feel so selfish  
to have this heart  
so full  
it aches  
to give you  
slices of me  
dripping like peaches  
in your warm hands

## Bodies

Walter D. Logan



"I'm tired of this back-slapping 'Isn't humanity neat?'  
bullshit. We're a virus with shoes, okay? That's all we are."  
- Bill Hicks

**'Nam**  
**Lindsay Thiessen**

All is fair in love and war.  
That is what his father swore,  
But little did the child know...  
How far his war would go.

They sang, "All we are saying..."  
They sang as he knelt and played.  
More so would the young boy know...  
How much his fear would grow.

They said make love not war  
They chanted as he saw the gore.  
More so would the young man know...  
How much of his love would go.

As they burnt their draft cards,  
He walked and walked swampy yards.  
More so would the man know...  
How far his war would go.

Free at last, free at last!  
Thank God almighty, free at last.  
Did this war ever plan  
To make a young child into a man?



## Unromantic Western Eulogy

Ian Epstein

The Gold Rush ended and left us with Levi's Jeans  
Now even those are starting to fade

We traded the Conestoga for the Coleman complete camping kit  
And the Oregon Trail is a video game

Is it still called riding shotgun, if you're packing a 9mm?  
No more gunslingers, now we're all armed with cell phones

We all thought Jimmy Stewart shot Liberty Valence  
Then we learned that atom bombs killed John Wayne\*

Oh, give me a home, where Buffalo plays Green Bay at three  
And the deer and the antelope have tags in their ears

Dust and sand become parking lot flotsam  
The modern desert is made of pavement

I saw a Wal-Mart bag flutter downwind  
And said to myself "Surrogate tumbleweed"

In Salt Lake City they wait for Jesus  
The aliens beat him to Roswell

Not enough tribal linguists to tell us what all these Indian names mean  
The Onion reports more people fluently speak Klingon than Navajo

The only crowd nowadays who live in denim and plaid  
Listen to punk rock & think the country sucks

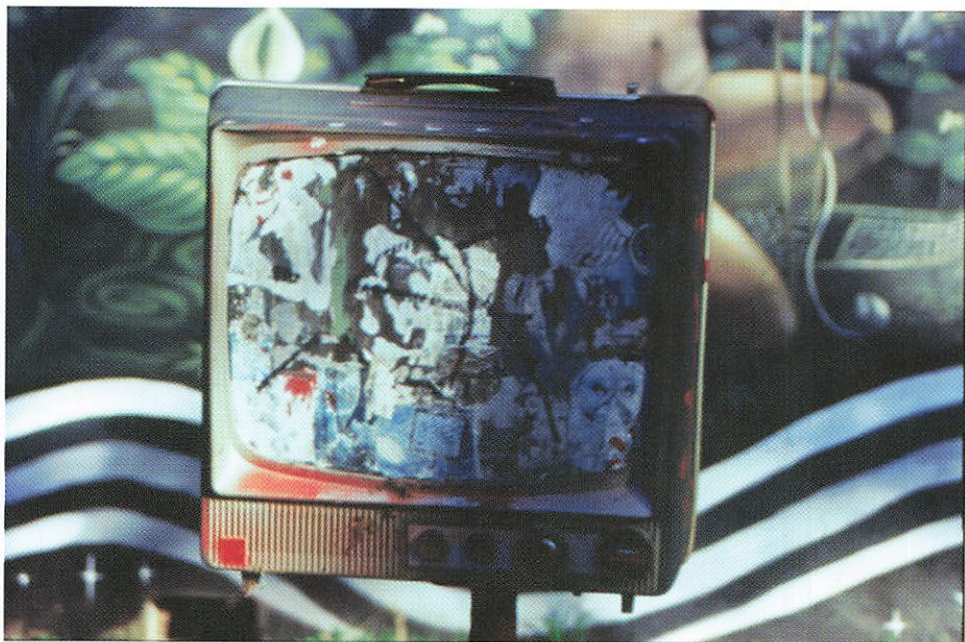
Exchanged the cattle stampede with the charity marathon  
I don't slop the pigs... so much as I restock the buffet line

\* There is speculation as to the origin of the cancer that afflicted John Wayne. Originally thought to have stemmed from habitual tobacco use, there is evidence to suggest that he, as well as several others, contracted cancer as a result of working on the site of the 1955 film "The Conqueror" in an area of the Utah desert that had been saturated by radioactive fallout from the nearby Yucca Flats atomic bomb testing range in Nevada. What this means is that the Duke was so badass that only nukes could kill him.

*"I love the Eugene area—it's composed of so many characters, you cannot help but be influenced by all of them."*

## Useful T.V.

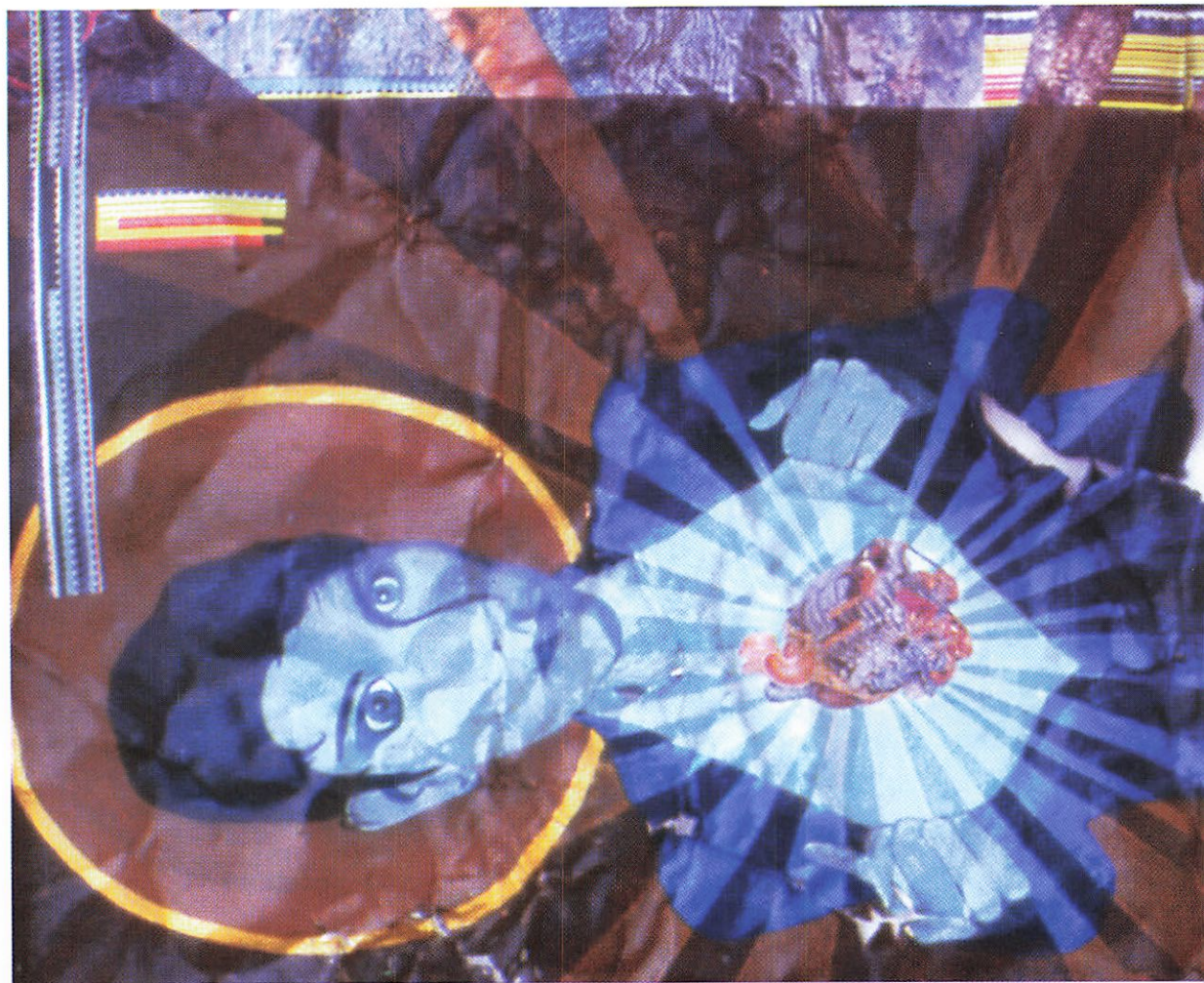
Mike Ward



*"I try to view things differently than most people."*



## Woman with Man-Made Heart







Shawn Mediaclast

22 her lips may say no  
i should take her word for it  
the mace says "fuck no"

**Snoop Dog**  
Sean Shanahan





I arrived at the Crocodile cafe at nine o'clock sharp to look for a dark-haired female drinking coffee and wearing a hat like a purple bee-hive and when I found her she was staring out the window at some dogs tearing into the trash across the street. "You must be Francesca," I said, trying to sound smooth, but intimidated by the size and shape of her hat. "And you, Anthony," she said, putting out her hand to shake mine.

"Your hat is really something."

"Yeah, well it keeps the rain off," she said, patting it with both hands.

"And the bees too I imagine."

She looked me strangely, and smiled. I didn't know what I meant either so I sat down across from her and quickly picked up a menu to avoid eye-contact. "I hear the bacon and eggs here are something," I said.

"Yeah, if you like slaughtered pig entrails and unborn chicken embryo."

I glanced over my menu at her to see if I could detect a hint of irony perched on her brow or some sarcasm pursed between her lips, but she just kept studying the menu as if it were a final exam. If she were a vegetarian my first impulse would have been to ask for the check right then, but if she was one of those I don't-even-wear-leather-types, I would have excused myself from the table and ran. I decided to stay because I'd seen her red cowboy boots beneath the table that sacrificed a small herd in the making.

The waitress came to our table, a slender girl with dish-blond hair and a pale, hung-over look on her face that said, fuck you. "Are you ready to order?"

"Go ahead," I said, nodding to Francesca.

"I'll have the Belgian waffles," she said.

I'd been dreaming of slaughtered pig and chicken embryo all morning, but I didn't want trouble so I said: "I'll have the pancakes." Just to be safe. We gave the waitress our menus and I smiled at Francesca wanly because at least now I wouldn't have to suffer through my meal fending off her anti-pork rallies and holy cow sermons. I would just eat my pancakes, smile, and the moment I got home, call my buddy Julio and tell him he was an asshole for setting me up on a blind date with a vegetarian. "Dude, she's cool" was all he said, but that could mean anything these days.

Francesca took off her hat and set it beside her and her hair was a mouse-brown bob that showed off her slender neck as she looked back out the window at those two mangy dogs, one an oily gray, the other a moldy marmalade, now humping near a fire hydrant. "Can you believe that?" I asked, blushing, since this was only our first date.

"Yeah," she said. "The horny little bastards."

Any girl who wasn't afraid to use a word like "horny" was cool in my book, but I was afraid to tell her that since I didn't want her to think I was just trying to get in her pants and is also why I did not tell her about my own brief stint as a vegetarian when I discovered that during that terrible famine in Ethiopia—the one that broke your heart to see Bono singing on the same stage as Michael Jackson—sacks of grain were being flown out of Africa to feed cows in England just so we in the West could have our double-bacon cheeseburgers. I ate nothing

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**Blues for J. Dube**  
Sean Shanahan



but salads, tofu, and bread while lecturing incessantly on the horrors of meat politics. I thought I was doing the right thing, what Bono would do, until the Thanksgiving dinner blow up when I tried to convert everyone to vegetarianism and the turkey ended up in the fireplace. I sat at one end of the table with my grandmother sobbing at the other, and as I stabbed a wrinkled yam with my fork like St. Anthony skewering the devil, I realized that the only thing that had changed in the world was that I was a bigger asshole.

Francesca continued to drink her coffee in silence and was probably thinking of a polite segue where a harmless comment on the weather could suddenly turn into a desperate plea for me to boycott bovine growth hormones. I started to plan my counter-offensive where I would agree to quit eating chemically-enhanced meat products provided she do something about the starving Colombian bean pickers who died so that she could get her caffeine high. "Well," she said. Julio says you're quite a poet." Quite a poet, indeed; she was masking her militant vegetarian agenda with literary small talk; everyone knows that there is no such thing as "quite a poet," and that the word "poet" is often used as a euphemism for "jackass." Oh, not only was this chick a vegetarian, but a mean spirited one to boot. "Oh yeah," I said, lighting a cigarette. "I write a pretty fuckin' mean haiku."

"Really," she said. "I love haiku."

"Oh, really?" I asked.

"Yes, Basho is probably my favorite."

"Yeah. Uh. He's great."

I knew the name Basho, but only as he is mentioned in a joke by Chevy Chase in the movie *Caddyshack*. I figured if both she and Chevy knew who he was he must be great, but now I had to consider she was being sincere and that I was really the vegetarian bitch in this relationship. "I used to write poetry in high school," she continued. "Mostly dark, angst-y stuff about my personal life, you know, the kind that makes you want to put your head in the oven."

"I won't read anyone's book who has committed suicide," I said. "I already know how their book ends."

She laughed and I noticed she had a pretty smile which is what lead me to consider the magnetic breasts she displayed beneath her pink vintage sweater donning a sequined poodle even though I knew, as a fellow poet, I should keep my eyes off that poodle. I noticed she had freckles, too, and that her lipstick was the color of bricks, but I didn't want to fantasize. I only wanted to know if she ate meat. "Julio told me you spent some time in Europe," I said.

"Yeah, I studied for a year in Paris."

"What for?"

"I was a French major."

"*Tres bien!*"

"*Parlez-vous Francais*," she asked, and her green eyes lit up, excited by the possibility that I might actually speak it.

"No, I took Spanish in high school, but I like the way French sounds." She looked let down, and studied a callous or something in the palm of her hand. "But, hey," I said. "I'm an ace at pig Latin."

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She smiled at me to be polite, as the waitress came and dropped our plates down so hard I thought they'd crack. I waited to start eating until Francesca had finished spreading a pad of butter across her waffle, and thought: So what if she didn't eat meat? At least she wasn't a vegan, for God's sake where you might as well date a broom handle. She was about to take her first bite, when she turned to our waitress still pouring our coffee and said the eight magic words: "Can I get a side order of sausages." She may as well have asked if anyone around here was up for group sex. "Yes," I said. "I would like a side of bacon too."

I turned to Francesca and smiled.

"So," she said. "Can you recite me one of your haiku?"

"Well, no," I said. "I don't really write haiku."

"Really? You said you did."

"I do write, but it's really more of a free verse."

"I'd love to hear some of it."

"I don't have anything memorized, but if you want I can show you some other time."

"I'd like that," she said, taking her first bite of waffle.

After we finished our coffee and sausages, I felt post-coital and lit another cigarette. I loosened up and started talking politics, not meat politics, but the more general the-system-is-fucked variety of politics where we both could agree a revolution was in order, but a revolution of the heart, since violence only begets more violence and the pigs eventually become the people and take over the farm, that

kind of thing and so when finally she offered to pay the check I didn't protest.

We arranged to meet the following Saturday at the same time and place and she said my poems were "a must." I laughed, but she put her hand on my arm and looked at me with eyes the color of Basho and said, "No, really, I'd love to see them."

I went home and immediately dusted off some old poems that had been sitting on the shelf and began to revise them with a passion and vigor I hadn't felt since the last time I'd revised them to impress a girl. And, after several hours of contemplating whether or not to keep a comma in place or just throw caution to the wind and break the line, I printed them out as I shook my head and whispered to myself: Fucking genius!

I showed up the following week with a copy of Basho's Complete Haiku in one hand and a folder of freshly printed poems in the other. She was sitting in the same place with a different sweater but the same hat that today looked less like a bee-hive and more like an upside down bird's nest. She shook my hand and looked happy to see me, but even more happy to see the folder. "Oh," she said, tugging it gently from my hand. "You remembered to bring your poetry."

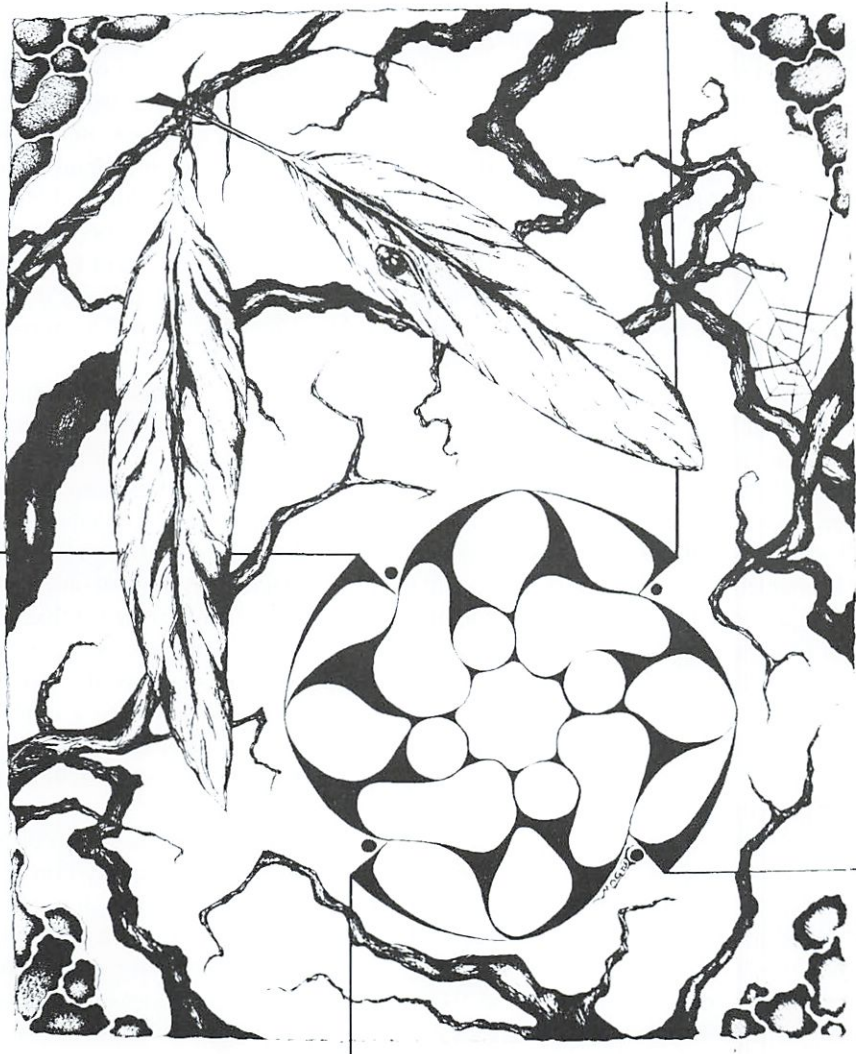
"Yeah," I said. "Be nice. Ha-Ha."

She placed it on the seat beside her then put her hat on top of it like a paper weight and we both ordered coffee, but I ordered the eggs and bacon right away as if I claiming them for the Spanish crown. We talked a little about the weather and laughed about the memory of those two dogs by the fire hydrant and I wanted

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Mark O. Griffin



*"I'm a multimedia design student at LCC. I am perpetually inspired by the indigenous ancient cultures of our planet and by Nature itself."*

*"Stay human." — Michael Franti*

to ask her about her hat and her life and where anybody got a name like Francesca anyway, but before I could finish my food, she was already leafing through my poems: "Well," she said. "If you don't mind?"

"Not at all," I said.

She put on a pair of those horn-rimmed glasses with grandma chains on the side and started to read while I tried to read a newspaper, but caught myself thinking about her naked and was so disgusted by my shallowness, I tried to dignify the image by giving it a pair of silk panties and a black bra. She had remained silent after about five pages with only a pleasant smile on her face and I started to get nervous. I had always considered my poems to be laugh-out-loud funny because they always made Julio crack up, especially the second one entitled, "Mr. Giggles," which was a lyric poem written in heroic couplets that used the image of beating up a clown as a metaphor for masturbation, but she didn't laugh once, only smiled and when she handed me back the folder she said: "Wow, you have a great imagination."

"Thanks," I said. What did that mean? A great imagination.

"I really liked the one about the woman who wears the lobster as a hat."

"Thanks," I said again.

I had often read someone's poetry I hated and given them the same generic two-pronged reply to avoid hurt feelings: 1) make a general comment about some positive quality and 2) cite a specific poem or line or word that stands out from the others, not as anything spectacular per se, but simply as the lesser of the many evils. What did it matter if she didn't like my poetry?

She liked Basho. She liked sausage. That was more than I could say for most of this fucked up world.

The waitress dropped our bill from the sky sending the two mint bars scattering to the ground which I quickly bent over to pick up to show her that I wasn't afraid of hard work. I dusted it off with my shirt and offered it to her, but she declined with a polite "no thanks," as she put on her hat. I said I would to pay this time until I discovered that I'd left my wallet at home and had to give a sheepish: "I'll pay next time."

"Don't worry about it," she said.

I asked if she wanted to meet again next week, or maybe go to dinner or a movie or maybe even a poetry reading, but she said she was going to be out of town all next week and suddenly appeared to be in a great hurry. I made her write down my number on a napkin smeared with a brown coffee ring, so that she could call me when she got back. She put the napkin in her pocket and said, "Well it was good seeing you again," and gave me a quick hug where she smelled so nice, something like coffee and peaches and wind, but something in her smile told me she was sorry.

As I watched her purple hat disappear down the sidewalk I saw the oily gray mutt standing alone across the street and looking at me stupidly with his tongue hanging in the breeze, and I knew she'd never call me because when a girl like Francesca goes out of town, she never comes back.



Donovan J. Keith





## **You, Me, and the Fucking Moon**

**Brian Ramey**

Spark, fire rages on a riddled mirror.  
She spines my lust to empty,  
With smiles of jagged laws.  
Fuck you, eat shit, choke.  
On your higher educated words  
Used to wash the crust off my pants.  
Pants caked in unsophisticated dirt.  
My dirt, stained with my flesh,  
That bleeds from material wounds.  
Blood that is no longer red,  
But blue.  
Like your suits, your skin.  
With black hearts, bloodied clubs, and diamonds galore.  
But for me only rusted spades,  
To dig this grave of my humans.  
I know when a man is dead.  
He is repeatedly cold and circular  
Like the moon.

## Ode on Crossing Nebraska

Ellis Sol

- O I rode, crossing infinite fields of yellow and green  
    Knotted body tangled with grease and self hate, I rode.
- O I rode, hot, hard, thundering rails of steel  
    Clickety, clickety, clickety, clack, clang, I rode.
- O I rode, bearing east, running from demons  
    Chasing my soul, screaming at the sun, I rode.
- O I rode, and rolled rolling tobacco while rolling along  
    I tapped the blood of Christ, I rode.
- O I rode, daydreaming Kerouac madness  
    Blowing on space girl, craving cushy comfort, I rode.
- O I rode, ranting at seas of corn, battling mirages of delirium  
    Singing "Goin' down to Mardi gras, gonna' get me the Mardi gras queen," I rode.
- O I rode through hungry locust, pestilence induced starvation  
    I made the great escape, traversing my mind and still I rode, I rode.

*"Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it."*

Thomas Gray



Like the mother of Odysseus, she was.  
Did their thoughts turn to the womb of their origin?  
How far did the space become between the heart and navel?  
How many footsteps fell behind her neck?  
The nape of which they once did nuzzle as the sobriety and painlessness  
of Maternal Love nursed them to sleep in her arms.  
But who should they seek if the call of the waters that comb the deep  
should bring her to a place of immortal lasciviousness and languor.  
Yet their footsteps fall in her shadow.  
Unlike Anticleia the dark was not her antecedent.

*"I have been involved with art since a very young age, and it continues to be an integral part of who I am. LCC has been a good outlet for some of that energy."*



## Lilith

Anne-Marie Steinhouse

Daydeath and owls awake me  
Evening lifts me to the sky  
Mists and shadows call my name  
On ominous nightbirds do I fly  
Next to the darkness, I know no other  
Eternity's kiss upon my soul  
See me mortal for what I am  
See my heart as black as coal

*Note: Some claim that Lilith was the first wife of the biblical Adam;  
others say she still haunts the skies as the mother of demons.*

*"This is my third term back at Lane Community  
College. I am pursuing my AAOT with intent on  
majoring in religious studies"*

## Untitled Anita Varnon

Towering timber tilts,  
after a treacherous storm cracks its thick throne.

Roots run along the rocky shore,  
and reach for the rushing river.

Even on the edge of the earth, they can survive the elements  
and emerge for an encore.

Early in the evening an elegant eagle embarks east,  
toward its home in an everlasting evergreen.

Sun shines down on the sacred sanctuary, casting silent shadows  
over the savagely splintered shrubbery.

*"I am a Forestry Major transferring to OSU. When  
I write, it's a personal, spiritual journey that I like  
to share with others that feel like me."*

## La Mancha, Spain

Tina M. Calhoun



"My artwork is comprised mostly of still life and portraits. I'm enjoying experimenting in black and white acrylic compositions this year. I plan on majoring in art at the U of O next year."

**book lernin'**

**Light**

This thick, viscous liquid  
Slowly slides down my throat.  
Doing my best not to regurgitate  
The bitter sting of medicine  
Society has prescribed for me

"We are only trying to help you,"  
I hear them saying from behind the masks  
As they operate on my larynx  
Adjusting the pitch of my voice  
To the pitch of their own

I wonder, now, if later, after this operation  
I'll be able to stand the sound  
Of my own voice.  
My 'own' voice?



## Morning

N. Martin Zol

Driving to pick her up, I scan the streets for traces of the familiar, architectural and psychic equivalents of a compass, something that I can use to orient myself. I notice that I've now adopted a familiar "Space 2000" mechanical tone, a sort of tight-lipped narration that rattles in a language of bolts and screws. This I reserve for times of real stress.

Street after street passes beneath the hypnotic swagger of my vulcanized treads, rolling through a summer weekday morning blushing with regret and carrying the stale perfume of peach bag-wine. Silent with my thoughts I pass trees filled to the point of bursting with green leaves seemingly suspended from a cache of invisible wires. This college-town postcard subtitled with used cars, abandoned couches with the stuffing barely falling out, all patiently waiting for student apathy and spring barbecues for new meaning, litter cast off in the flower beds, the smell of grass clippings thick in the air. I see the same familiar sights, am blasted with the same hot wind through a half open window as I drive, hear the same gentle yawn of the collective student-body as morning chases REM sleep and coffee grounds towards a sloppy march the machine of human improvement one more time, student minds like steaming kettles bursting with wit and sarcasm, forced enthusiasm and a burning behind the ribs to connect, succeed, and move on, all this that I know and love, and I helped build and live, still, stillborn on a grafted Tuesday morning when I'm driving in my car to pick

up my now ex-girlfriend, so we can get a test to see if I contracted a sexually transmitted disease from her during our brief and intense relationship.

The car ride is filled with the usual mixture of self talk, an amalgamation of motivational gems I've collected for just such an occasion, subtle and not so subtle attempts to prune my rage before it blooms full blossom into a flower called Murder and I'm hauled off to the museum that holds everyone who finally gives over or gives in or gives up or forgets to give a shit and carries to term their Dionysian impulse, claiming the exclusive right reserved for God, to own another person for a moment, to decide their fate, to sin with consequences they can't own. "Enough," I say, momentarily drenched in a morbid sap, and proceed to scatter these thoughts from my mind. "Should I bring her coffee?" I wonder.

My thoughts of anger, now at a rolling boil in their iron casket, are busy making friends with my Martha Stewart cordial training on what would be sensitive and appropriate when taking one's ex-girlfriend to the V.D. clinic to get a test that she didn't want to take so that I can know if I have genital warts. Coffee? No. That's too much fuss, I decide. And besides, I don't want to seem pathetic. "Maybe a little too late for that," I hear, from a different direction entirely.

Pulling up to her apartment complex, my heart is dancing badly out of time with the rhythm and sway set in the rest of my body. My nerves are icy and a chilling familiar vice of anxiety begins to spread tense with blue tendrils from the pit of my stomach, under the hollows of my cheeks, circling around my

neck. I take some deep sensitive breaths and begin the embarrassing journey from my car to her door, a tightrope walk from my perspective to her kitchen, where my ideas, the reasons that I'm so invested in aren't welcome. Where we just need to get this over with, and I feel weak, badly composed, awkward, and I'm tripping over my heartfelt desire to do what's truly best for us. And so I walk with trademark shame, the shame that every one of us that knows what good intentions and bad screenwriters are worth, who knows that when the cue comes and the cameras are rolling, they won't have any Oscar-worthy lines to deliver, and the moment dies, and the opportunity just walks by without a word. It'll just be me and her, in a showdown with no end, my desperate need to be understood and approved of and her disgust for me, for this, and us. And our conversation won't ever be finished for me. There will always be things left unsaid. Undone.

The car ride won't get much mention here, because there's not much to say. I try to start conversation, but that's not as easy as you might think with a big two-by-four of denial and silence and shame and hardness and hurt wedged between my throat and her throat and so she says there's nothing to talk about and that she's fine. Really. I become a guidance counselor. I become a splendid mediator, weighing words like a merchant. I am a park ranger. I am feeding deer. The frame of the car begins to melt and warp as my rage grows, because I'm a real person you fucking bitch, and I fell in love with you, you piece of shit, and I already have one illness for life, and the glass is breaking, fires are bursting in my lungs, and I want my cries to raze buildings, and I want the

ground to burst with the pain and polite murder I'm subjecting myself to in order to "make this easier for you." My guilt is a vile testament to my own ability to negotiate away what I need vs. what you want.

The V.D. clinic is an Ayn Rand building, a titan metropolis, and I feel black, queer, and retarded in a room of women busy not making eye contact with me. I'm trying weakly to smile, trying not to look like the insensitive boyfriend who is here for a pregnancy test against his will, trying so hard to let people know that I'm a good person and that I didn't do anything wrong. Really, I just tried to get close to someone, to have a relationship, and it all fell apart, and now I'm busy taking responsibility for both of us, shuffling across the floor littered with women's gardening magazines, large office plants and children's books with a clipboard in my hand and a prayer tumbling from my lips as fast and my breath can carry it.

She goes in, and like I said, I'm praying like a nun in the back room of Studio 54, and she comes out, and tells me she was wrong, and she didn't have genital warts, that she was mistaken, and that she doesn't have anything to say, and just wants to put it all behind her.

"Can we go now?"

And we did go, except we left something important behind. Or at least I did. I left it all behind. My love for her. Any trust I had. My last gasping flicker of hope in any salvation for our wounded communication. Everything left, we burned it all to the ashy core. For the sake of comfort. So it would all be "okay."



*"N. Martin Zol is the mostly out of practice and occasionally talented written double life of a one time student living in Eugene."*



**Conception**  
Rebecca S. Hill



*"I believe that creativity and free expression are integral to a person's sanity. I found that spending days on this project, turning it in different directions and only concentrating on one part at a time resulted in a splendid final piece. I hope you enjoy the clutter of my mind!"*



## Cigarettes My Company

Lou

Silence fills this house. My only company is the sound of crickets sawing to the darkness of this damp and lonely night. My cigarette keeps going out. The smoke is my comfort now. So I will strike another match, the warmth of fire in my mouth. The phone will not ring, and I have so much to say, about nothing. The blinking light of my sleeping Mac reminds me that no dial tone is to be found tonight, I have nothing to fight. Only chores to begin and leave unfinished until another time. Words of fondness lay empty upon the whiteboard. Kitties slink to and fro across the keyboard, through the window, and into the night. I can do nothing now. Experience this time, know this feeling, appreciate the last minutes before the hand strikes twelve.

*"From Bay Area, California, LCC student for 2 years, too many interests to name!"*

# Want more Denali?

Visit us online at  
<http://www.lanecc.edu/denali>

It's been an interesting year here at the helm of Starship Denali. An arduous journey beginning months ago in a galaxy far, far away. I've been blessed this term with a wonderfully gifted staff of artists and designers—without their help, the magazine wouldn't be nearly as cool. We've come a long way since the days of autumn, when the leaves were falling in 2003. We've graduated from a mere meager staff in the fall to a crew in the spring composed of the finest production talent the college had to offer. My thanks and praise to the friendly staff over at LCC's Printing and Graphics staff: Gary Anderson, Trish Hamer, Shirley Nagy, and Ram Rattan. Despite the stress put on us all by the magazine's deadlines, we all came through with all our teeth and no black eyes. This being my last issue for the academic year, I feel it very necessary to thank you, the readers of this fantastic publication. I thank you for the opportunity to share your artwork, your photography, your pressive written word. My gratitude to the multitude of incredibly talented authors and artists I've been lucky enough to meet over the course of the year—without you, the lifeblood, there would be no interstellar fuel for this spaceship. Without you, we would always and forever be lost in space.



—Jayce Barnhart, 2004

Haikus by: Ian Epstein, Howard Ebert

There were a couple mishaps in last winter's edition of Denali: For one, we misspelled photographer Stacy McKnight's first name. Author Andrea Summers also had an axe to grind concerning her piece titled *Indifference and Other Deadly Addictions*. There were several unauthorized changes made to her piece by the editorial staff before it had been submitted to the editorial board for publication. Our apologies to these talented women, both of whom have agreed not to sue the magazine or the college.

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