

DENALI

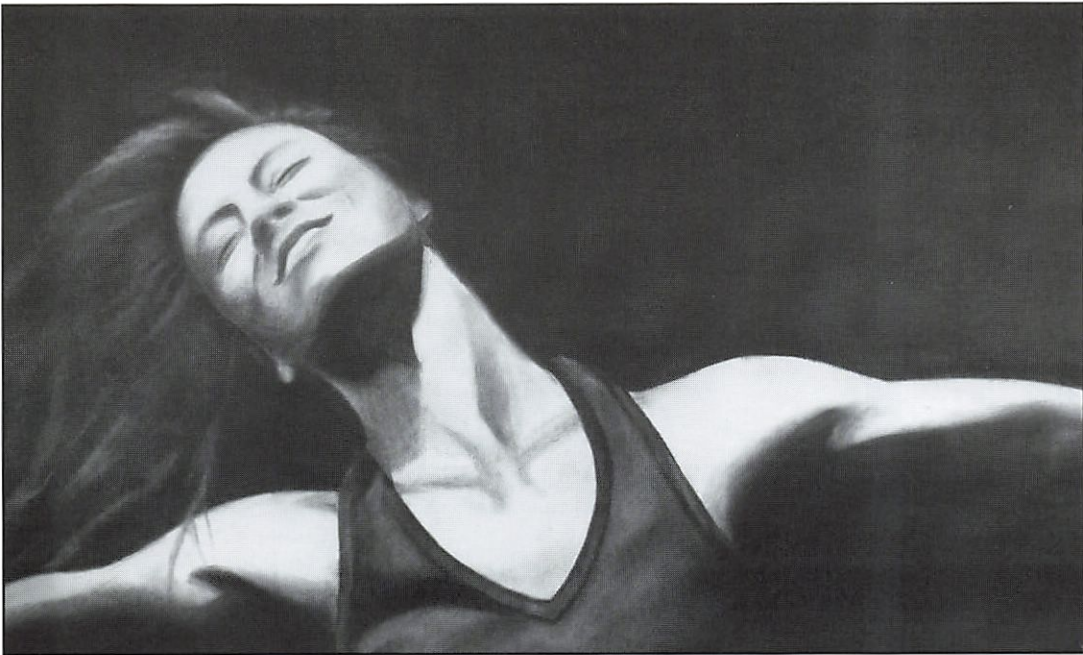
ART AND LITERATURE



SPRING 2008

Spring 2008

DENALI



An Arts and Literature Magazine
Presented By
Lane Community College
Eugene, Oregon

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Denali seeks original literature and art submissions year-round, though we traditionally publish thrice annually. Denali accepts short prose and poetry including, but not limited to, micro fiction, short fiction, prose poetry, poetry, one-act plays, personal essays, and excerpts from larger works. All written submissions MUST be in electronic format. Please submit all media via a digital copy, whether literature or art (.doc, .tif, .rtf, .jpg formats). Please, no more than ten submissions per person. Reprints and multiple submissions permitted. Denali receives one-time publishing rights. Email an attachment, mail a disk, or hand deliver your work. Please clearly label with name, contact info, and titles and allow 2-4 months response time. Email questions, comments, and submissions to: denali@lanecc.edu. Word Count must not exceed 3,000. Please, clearly label with your name and the title. Art may be black and white or color. Art, if digital, must be able to be reproduced at 8x10 inches at a minimum of 300dpi. Students if you need assistance photographing your original artwork please contact Denali well before issue deadline so that we can make arrangements. We can accept slides and prints at the Denali office or by mail with return SASE.

DENALI

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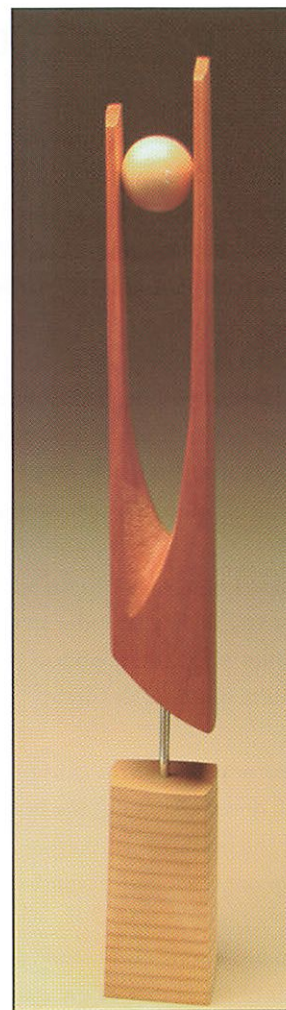
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UNTITLED
 Deborah Taube
Wood and Metal

NO DINNER FOR THE HUNGRY COWBOY

Steve Huff

You strut so confidently
Through the greeting card aisle
trench coat dragging on the tiles
The spurs of your boots scuffing the freshly waxed floor

“Clean up in aisle three”
Echoes across the cold, stocked freezers
Their doors dripping with condensation
The frozen foods section
Suddenly feels like a ghost town to you

Then, I notice your funny waddle
But you’re damn good—an old pro
I know what you’re up to
You’re quick on the draw

I just want to see the cans of chili
Fall down and out of the bottom of your chaps
Or the bottle of whiskey
Pop out from under your belt and crash onto the floor

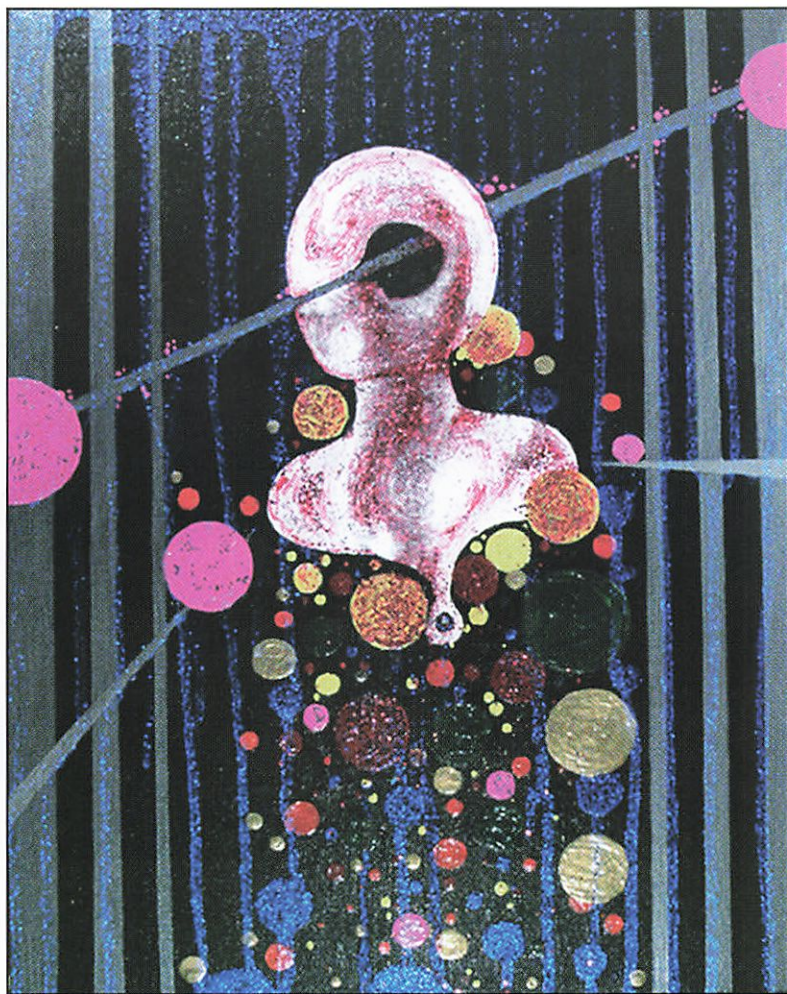
I’m just curious, so I study your moves
Out of the corner of my eye
The scent of campfire smoke
Pours off of you as you pass by me

I wonder how much stuff you have in there
And just how you’re going to pull it off
You look so calm and cool
As you say howdy to the single mother of three
Attempting to tame her wild children

Then I notice your hat,
Tan, weathered and worn, complimenting your gristly face
The child cries out loudly
“Mommy, he’s bleeding!”

At that moment, your face turns expressionless
As blank as the open plains of the mid west
You know you’re busted
The kid was fast

Employees rush over to your aid
And discover the beef concealed under your hat, dripping
The sheriff escorts you out of the store
With tears rolling down your face
Like tumbleweeds falling off a cliff
I bet you wish you were back home on the range.



STRANDS
Candra Cross
Acrylic and Glitter



TO BE A CHILD

Elijah Thompson

Black and White Photographic Print from Multiple Negatives

HOW I CAME TO BE ON EARTH: SWITZERLAND, 1945

Joan Dobbie

One velvet star struck night
in May, near the tiny town
of Trogan, Switzerland, not so very long
before World War II

was finally really over,
and everyone in refugee camp
was just about worn out
with celebration

my father took my mother's
work-worn still young hand
and led her purposefully
into their cabin

tiptoeing past the shabby canvas cot
where my pretty blond sister, Elfie,
lay sleeping, past the only slightly
larger shabby cot

where my pretty dark cousin, Blanca,
lay dreaming, past
the nearly threadbare tweed couch
on which my gentle, already

broken, Uncle Herman
tossed in nightmare, past the old
black wood-burning stove
that took up nearly half

of their tiny kitchen, under
the thick gray mass of
knotty cobweb that hung
like drapery between stovepipe

and ceiling, where my
father's dark and huge pet
spider, Albert, crouched,
into their own small, but

private bedroom
onto his own barely
large enough to hold them
shabby cot. Shyly, I believe

he touched her breast. She
smiled, and despite
her missing tooth, he found
her beautiful.

BUMPER STICKER: I'M ALREADY AGAINST THE NEXT WAR

Toni Van Deusen

I'm already in love with the next snake-hipped girl.
I already burn for the next honey-skin black-flashy narrow-butt boy.
I'm already embracing my next twenty secret sins.

I can already taste the briny inside of her thigh,
his salt already stings my eyes.
I'm already lying down beside a beautiful corpse.

I've already peeled away my flesh—I'm dancing in my bones.
I'm already stunned into simple obedience.
I'm already grieving my long time ago and my now.

I'm already against the death I carry in my pocket.
I rub its powdery surface over and over with my thumb,
as if I could love it away.

I'm already against the next mirror and the next.
I'm already against the relentless oncoming of everything,
especially the next hour and the next.

I'm already against the cold.
I'm already in love with the next.
I'm already in love.



PEACE NOW

Lacey Ward

Black and White Photo

REEL

Mary Alexander Walker

I see him running—almost a blur, a red blur, his tank top flies by me so fast. His chest sends the tape fluttering, then he's clutching his chest, spent and almost falling.

When our father's airplane crashed at the air show, he and my mother were watching. The stretcher bearing the body, with the goggles embedded in the bloody face, crossed in front of them. My mother fainted. She and the baby she was holding (me) rolled quietly onto the clipped emerald grass.

The four year old boy in short pants dashed away. Nobody could catch him. At sunset, they found him, wild eyed, huddled in an old tire in an abandoned service station. I have heard it so often I can see it with my heart.

We were farmed out. The baby went to the grandmother and a lively swarm of young aunts; the runner went north to an elderly maiden great-aunt who nursed an even more elderly great-grandfather. Quiet there was essential, and discipline, and seriousness of religion.

His high school was a collage: sprints, blue ribbons, touchdowns, gold mini-footballs for a girlfriend, and satin leather jacket.

Then the military: a questionable discharge after an affair with the colonel's wife and a brawl with the colonel.

Troubled, he was spirited away to a psychiatric hospital and later released to my grandmother.

The telegram came to my dorm at the University of London. "...killed in an accident. Funeral will be..."

From the airport, I went straight to the small chapel. The casket was in the front of the room and he could have been sleeping but for the stillness of the chest that had sent so many tapes fluttering.

"He is so still." The voice came from beside me.

I saw my grandmother, her white hair curling around her usually rosy face, now bloodless as chalk.

"His injuries don't show," I said.

"Just two tiny holes in the back," she answered.

I stared at her, repeating in my slow-moving brain. Just two tiny holes in the back.

Just two tiny holes in the back!

When she saw my look, she gasped. "You didn't know!" She began in breathless whispers. "He was alone on the street. Two policemen stopped him on suspicion—there was no charge—there was a scuffle—" She struggled for oxygen. "He told me himself that he would never—never go back to the hospital. So there was this scuffle, then he was running...he was running..."

In the photo in his yearbook, he wears a tuxedo and stands with the prettiest girl in the class at the senior prom. It's a still-shot, but it triggers the reel of the motion picture. And I see him running, almost a blur, a red blur, his tank top flies by me so fast, two tiny holes in the back, his chest sends the tape fluttering, then he's clutching his red chest, spent and falling. *



SELF-PORTRAIT IN THE STYLE OF ANSELM KEIFER

Micah Neber

Acrylic



REPLACEMENTS

Brandon Bacod

Black and White Photo

THEY DIG IT OUT OF THE GROUND AND PUT IT IN OUR VITAMINS

Jessica Lea Thompson

I still own the deep part of my lungs
The Bottom.
The part the smoke does not journey to
The part I rarely breathe into—
That belongs to me. And,
I belong outside.
I belong to the crisp-humming,
daylight-rushing
curt lifestyle that demands you be late
to every meeting
and that there's always a dog's eye
looking at you while you get ready
to go
because he belongs to you
and he doesn't like the way you dress quickly
put on that hat
and wave goodbye

VARIATIONS ON THREE LINES BY LOUISE GLÜCK

Michael Hanner

On Sundays I walk my neighbor's dog
so she can go to church and pray for her sick mother.
Afterward, I go back to my house to gather firewood.

Mother's authority, my ex-wife, those were the times.
After the dog was poisoned we got no more dogs.
Accelerating the ax into the bolt of oak.

Somedays I walk my neighbor's dog.
She goes to church and cries for her sick mother.
Then, I go home to gather firewood.

Sundays after church we cross the wooden bridge.
Those were the days we still had dogs.
Mother, father and I at a restaurant in Iowa.

We make fun of Hemingway sitting with the dogs.
Sunday mother is always hyper, I gather firewood.
My neighbor after church—the sunny September.

On Sundays I dog my neighbor. Force him
to gather firewood, prey on his sick mother,
so she can go to some sunny September church.

Every fuckin' Sunday I walk my neighbor's dog.
It goes to church and licks some wooden-hearted bastard.
Afterward, I go back and set fire to my house.



SNAGTOOTHED

Nicole Fraley

Charcoal

POWERBALL

Kris Bluth

He heard what the guy in the tuxedo
said on TV, but he got online
because he just had to be sure.
All five balls and the Powerball.
He knows he's not wrong, but he stares at
the screen. What if the numbers
change? They've got to change.

They don't.

He grabs his coat, and heads out.
He reaches into his pocket for the keys,
but he stops. Let them break in.
They can take it all.
It mattered twenty minutes ago, but now
he may as well leave the door open.

He doesn't.

He drives down the street.
It's quiet. It's always quiet,
but he finds himself listening to it.
It won't be quiet as soon as
he turns this ticket in.
Then it's the news
and his family and people at work
and strangers who'll want him
to invest \$25,000 in their taco stands.

It'll be quiet now. Nothing he can do
about that until tomorrow.

There has to be something, though.
He never really cared
much for bars...

Target.
That'll do. Just to be out.
He pulls up. He's tempted
to park in the handicapped spot
since he knows that the ticket doesn't matter,
but he doesn't.
There's no need to be a dick about it.

He walks inside and grabs a cart.
There's the One-Spot,
with all the dollar items. The DVDs.
He starts to thumb through them,
but stops.

This is going to take getting used to.

He grabs one of each.

Elizabeth Taylor.
John Wayne.
TV Detectives.
The Three Stooges.

Into the cart.

He pushes it past the registers and the newer movies on
sale.
Kill Bill. One and Two.
He always meant to see those.

In they go.

Now he's passing the food aisles.
Chips and candy and the wines.

Some in bottles, but a few in boxes.

Wine in a box. How does that work?
It'd make sense that'd be in a bag or something
inside of the box, so wouldn't that really be wine in a bag?

One way to find out.

Now onto the books.
John Grisham and Danielle Steel.
People always rag on them, but are they really
as stupid as everyone says?

The DVD box sets of TV shows.
Wonder Woman: The Complete Second Season.
He always thought Lynda Carter was hot.
Where's the first season? Ah, there it is.

The Greatest Hits CDs.
Boston.
Journey.
Ray Charles.
Neil Diamond.
Willie Nelson.
Chicago.

Chicago. What the fuck.

He's tempted to pass
the electronic section altogether,
but shit;
all of those DVDs
will probably need something to be played on.
Duh.

Here's one that'll play both
discs and tapes.
Cool.

He makes a loop around to the back.
Some socks,
but not too much else.

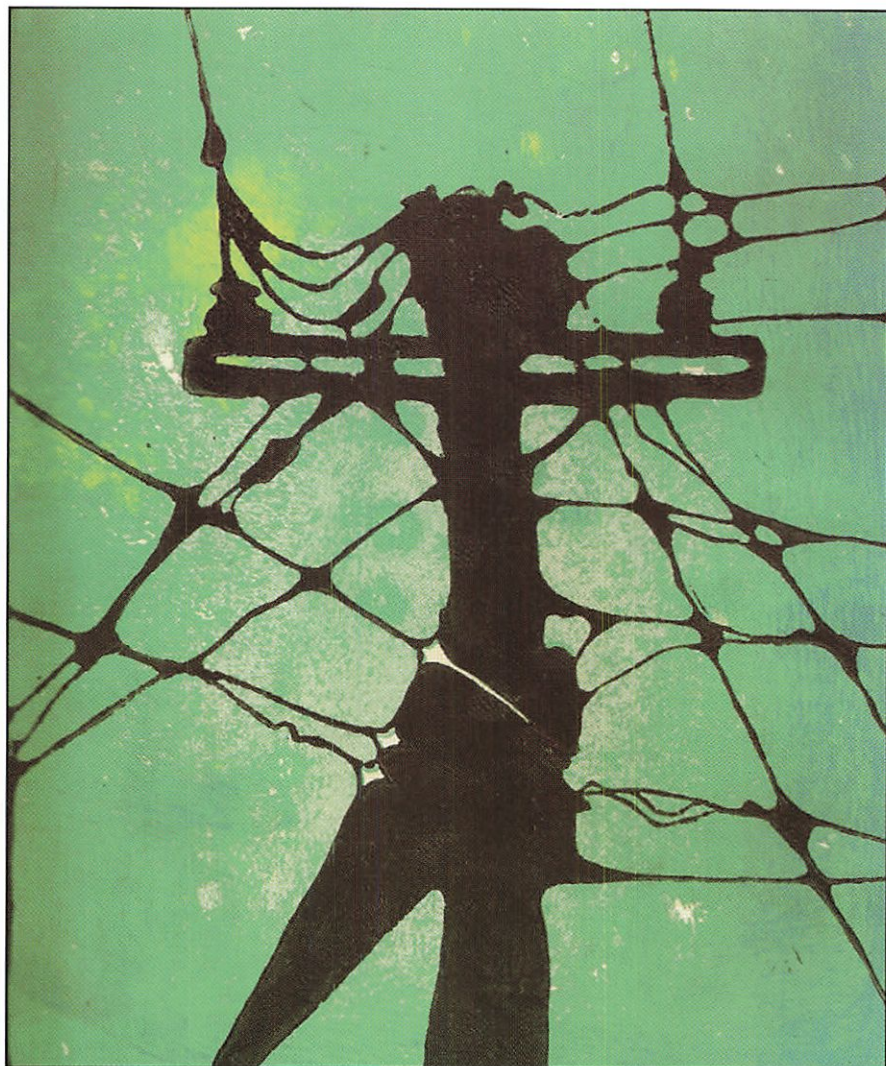
He wheels the cart up to a register.
The fat girl
with frizzy hair asks him if
he found everything alright.

He says "Yes," so she reaches in
and starts to ring everything up.

He watches the numbers flash on the register.
With all this and the phone bill
he mailed off this morning,
his account's going to be overdrawn.

Shit, this is really
going to take getting used to.

And in another couple of days,
he's going to be at Lottery Headquarters
or wherever,
holding a giant check.
Cameras will be flashing
and reporters will be asking,
"What are you going to do with the money?"
while he stands there,
smiling like a thirteen year-old
who has to tell what he wants
to be when he grows up.



METROPOLIS
Arianne Fredenburg
Monoprint

VALLEY OF SICKNESS

Kitt Jennings

For Troy, Rain, Curt Cobain, Goody and Peter DeFazio

If I could, I'd fold the whole
Northwest into my arms, its face
pasted into the rounded crook
between neck and shoulder,
my fingers sunk into damp, shaggy hair;
I'd breathe in all the air
I could find and sing softly
until the sadness passed. I'd do it
in front of everyone, give it
to all of them. But I don't sing.

I only ache for all of them:
For the hungry, ragged kids forging forward
like pioneers in search of work, which—
like the Northwest passage—is not there
to greet the end of their efforts
on the misty coast. For the moon-eyed hippies
sweating and dancing, pounding down roots,
deeper with every footfall, into the Earth,
who loves them, with their dogs and teepees,
and even their Subarus. For the loggers
that hate the liberals that hate the work of cutting trees,
but especially the loggers, who live under the green
canopy and leave their souls with pine needles
on the forest floor (they hear their children in
the buzz of chainsaws, which they will not put down
in favor of ideals they were never told to love).
And for the activists, the ones who ride bikes
and take back the night, who give hearts, backs and minds,
not simply a signature, a dime. Even the ones
who do not see dead faces in tent-spiked tree trunks.
For the Congressman who would rather drive
a beat up '66 Dart with rusted-out floors
than to wear the smeared lipstick of a political whore.

For the hipsters that put the _____ in (clever thing here),
for the tweakers that cut through the grind with bad speed,
the Californians who at least had enough sense to leave,
the farmers, the firefighters, deckhands and students,
the fishmongers, artists and Youth for Christ boozers,
the Monmouth Mormons and the Medford suits,
stoners, musicians and rivers of Pabst Blue.

I can find myself and everyone I know
in Curt Cobain and the folds of his thriftstore clothes:
5'7", slight; hanging out with the queer kids
did not make him popular among his rural compatriots.

Man, what a scream. What a mess. And none of it matters
as much as the land that pressed against the soles of his shoes.
It's the pull of place, like the moon slow moving vast oceans,
cradling women's cycles in her steadily rocking arms.
Magnetic fields and atmospheric pressure leaving fingerprints
on a newborn brain in just this way on just this day will
do more to shape a heart and face than "nature or nurture"
or some dead god scattering his own grey ashes
across Seattle cityscape, smuggled invisibly
in the bellies of a trillion raindrops.
I would carry each one myself.



JOURNEY

Mika Boyd

Block Print

RHYTHMS AND RECIPES

Johanna Laemle

Jazzman to the kitchen girl said
'Girl ya just gotta let me rock yer head'
Kitchen girl said 'no man no way'
'Not unless I can rock with you today'
So jazzman funk'd and jazzman slapped
While kitchen girl wokked and kitchen girl wrapped

Veggies were fried and tunes they hummed
Soon a crowd poured in from around the sun
All danced and sang, savored each note
The wine they did pour and the smoke did float
Bellies did fill and hearts sung loud
For food and music cheers any 'ole crowd

Jazzman turned to kitchen girl proud
He said 'Hey—next time, let's switch it around!
I'll cook saucy while you jam drums'
Kitchen girl laughed and swept away the crumbs
'You clear a stage, I'll bring the heat
A whirl and a twist and this night's complete!

So rock yer wok and rap yer wraps
Frolic while frying and sizzle that fat!
Even at home, this trick's a snap
Stir up a shimmy or just start to clap
But please do share, for life's so sweet
Where rhythms and recipes deign to meet.

A BOOK

Brittany Studer

Sifting through soft fragile pages
Expressing every printed letter
Painting a vivid picture
Lost in a different world
Separating from all things real
A new feeling
Like living another life
Wrapped up in words with no meaning
Only power
There's no way out
You're stuck, glued to every page, and
Every word and letter
Everything around you is changing
Fingers clenched tightly to the cover
Reading intently,
The last sentence,
The last word,
The last letter, and
Finally the ending mark
You've finished
There's nothing left to read
Eyes torn from the page
Slamming cover to cover,
Page to page closed
There's a sudden change, and
Everything true had been forgotten
You were lost and now you're found
Everything's real again.



REMEMBERING

Kathy Gunson

Acrylic

RUTHIE'S WOLF

Joan Dobbie

Clipping: Hattersville Courier, January 15, 1950: At last Hattersville has a doctor again! On behalf of the town board, we welcome our new young Doctor Hans Weisman, his wife, Claudia, and their two darling daughters, Hanna, 7, and Anna Ruth, 4. Dr. and Mrs. Weisman, originally from Vienna, Austria, escaped the Nazis in 1938. Eventually, the family emigrated to New York City. Lucky for us, they came upon Hattersville's ad placed in the AMA Journal by Mrs. Ida LaFountain, secretary, Search Committee. Thank you, Ida.

Summer 1952

The doctor's second daughter, Anna Ruth, lived in a world of her own. Alone, she played in her meadow and walked in her forest. Alone, she gazed out, over her river. It was a windswept meadow that bloomed just outside her "kinderzimmer" window, a dark forest grove that grew thick with berry bushes out back, beyond the meadow. And at the end of her forest, there flowed her river. Ruthie never sat by her river alone, that was too dangerous. But she always, when things troubled her, sat in her meadow alone, or walked through her forest alone. Alone she could think.

Butterflies drifted over her hair, beetles crept over the palm of her hand, sparrows and robins twittered in bushes close by. Now and again a green snake would appear, disappear. And although she had no beloved black wolf in her meadow, no wild wolf in her forest, Ruthie liked to imagine she really did have one. For inside the small cave of her chest was a longing. And always she longed for her wolf.

Each evening, just about sunset, Ruthie's mommy would call her inside where the sweet smells of stews, noodles and soups warmed the air. Ruthie ate her warm suppers with pleasure, though she cringed at the thought of the calves who were killed for their meat. She knew about meat from a story her big schwesterlein, Hanna, had told her one night after supper, when the parents were gone over to the

doctor's office next door and Mary Lou, the sitter, was in the back yard with her sweetheart.

"They drag baby calves away from their mommies," the big schwesterlein had stated in a quiet, serious, voice, solemnly brushing and braiding Ruthie's thick brown-black curls. Then she had described in dreadful detail the desperate lowing of the mommy cows trying to reach their babies, the pitiful calls of the babies. "They drag them away by their feet across gravel and shove them up into this huge rickety truck and drive them to the slaughterhouse ..." Hanna had said, with a slight proprietary tug on Ruthie's just finished left braid. "... an immense stone building without any windows anywhere and blood running in rivers all over the floor."

Ruthie had sat wide-eyed in silence. Deep in her brain she was watching the killing of calves. "They cut off their heads and their legs and chop them all up into pieces," Hanna had continued, patting Ruthie's dark bangs into shape. "And that's how we get meat." Yes, it was true, she had insisted. She knew from a news clip that she's seen when Patty Winderman's family took her to the movies in Watertown that day. And she was certain, she'd said, that the parents knew too. Though the parents never spoke of such matters. Then she had got out the mirror so Ruthie could inspect her professional looking French braids.

Ruthie liked when her big schwesterlein played with her hair. Patty Winderman's mother ran the town beauty shop, so often when Hanna came home from the Winderman's, she would say to Ruthie, "Come, have a seat, sweetheart," in

just Mrs. Winderman's comfortable North Country twang, and she had Ruthie sit down while she fixed up her hair.

Ruthie didn't much mind how she did or didn't look, but she loved more than most anything the touch of her sister's hands in her hair. And she loved nearly as much the stories she told her—she who knew everything.

The big schwesterlein had round gray-blue eyes and lovely blond curls, and she was taller and broader than Ruthie, who was small, skinny and dark. Ruthie thought her the most beautiful girl in the world. The big schwesterlein's name (of course) was Hanna, except nowadays she was calling herself Wendy and everyone else had to call her Wendy too.

It had happened the Sunday she'd come back from seeing PETER PAN with the Windermans. "From now on," Hanna had announced that evening at supper (just before the phone rang and their daddy had had to go out on a house call) "my name is Wendy."

"Mein Gott, was ist wrong with Channa?... genug, genug...enough already..." the daddy had grumbled, making room on his plate for the thick-graved stew with which the mommy was covering his five steaming nockeln.

"I hate being Hanna," Hanna had retorted. It's a horrible name. At school they can't even say it! Wendy is a pretty name, like Patty." And she had smiled at the daddy, batting her wide gray-blue eyes until even the daddy himself had smiled back.

"You were named for your poor Tante Channa, may she rest in peace," the mommy, who never spoke quietly, had said quietly, spoon in mid-air, hovering strangely, like a small silver moon.

"Did she die mommy? What happened?" asked Ruthie.

"Nozzing happened," said the mommy.

A shadow fell over the daddy's face. "Ich weiss nicht... I don't know... the soldiers were running behind us... und... your mommy..."

"Genug!" said the mommy, her oddly soft voice stiff as

iron, the silvery spoon shaking in her hand. "Never mind. Nothing happened..."

"... und... dann... I remember only... I was running..." said the daddy... "..." und... the dogs... big like wvoves..."

"What dogs? What happened?" asked Ruthie.

"Genug already!" said the mommy suddenly loud enough to make the cups shake. She reached straight across Ruthie's face, dropping a dark glob of gravy onto Hanna's plate, hard. "Eat your supper. Nothing happened." Then she half-growled, half-whispered something in German to the daddy. And he half-whined, half-whispered something in German in response.

"Eat, Shatzi, eat, Hanna," said the daddy to Hanna.

"Stop calling me Hanna! My name is Wendy," Hanna had pouted. Then the phone rang and the daddy had had to go out, leaving his half-eaten plate on the table.

So now the big schwesterlein was no longer Hanna, but Wendy. It didn't much matter to Ruthie. In Ruthie's mind, she was grander, more special, than any name. In Ruthie's mind, she was always "the big schwesterlein."

After the story was over, the calves long dead and eaten, Ruthie followed her big schwesterlein out into the night, down the narrow back yard path, through the small back yard forest, to the apple tree place. Suddenly the big schwesterlein stopped short, slapped a hand over Ruthie's mouth, and pointed.

There in an odd, squirming lump under the apple tree Mary Lou and her boyfriend Scott were half naked, squeezing and kissing, bumping and moaning. Ruthie and her big schwesterlein hid in the brush just a little ways off. They watched for a very long time, feeling a marvelous tickle deep in their tushies, and they had to squeeze each other's hands very tight so not to giggle.

The next morning they tried with each other. They took off their clothes. They bumped and panted, moaned and groaned. At first it was fun, but then Hanna banged her

head on the corner of the dresser and said it was all Ruthie's fault and she was going to punch her right in the mouth so Ruthie grabbed her around the waist and bit her hard right on her belly and they both started to scream. Then the parents arrived.

The mommy threatened to spank Ruthie. The daddy threatened to have every last one of her teeth pulled out, and to keep her tied up on a leash besides. He called her a "wvild animal, a wvolf-girl, a wvicked and dangerous beast." He growled that the mommy had no idea how to raise kinder, and what was she raising wvild animals?

The mommy snapped back that if he knew all the answers then maybe he ought to be raising them. He could at least help once in a while. Ruthie stared up at her daddy, his long dark face so much like her own in the mirror, his dark unruly curls so much like her own (except when Hanna combed them). He looked like a sad grown-up clown.

He grumbled some swear words in German. He told them, "Get dressed." Then he took the big schwesterlein's hand, patted her silky blond head, and led her next door to the doctor's office. Ruthie was sent up to the kinderzimmer to think.

The kinderzimmer was the room where they slept. It had two beds in it, one big and one little. On the south wall by the window was Ruthie's little cot, all fluffy with blankets. When Ruthie first woke up in the morning she liked to look out her window over the meadow across to her forest, and finally out to her river. On clear days, if she woke early enough, the entire scene would be rose red with sunrise. Sometimes on such a red morning, Ruthie liked to imagine a wolf came to play in her meadow. If she squinted her eyes just hard enough she almost could see him.

On the north wall of the kinderzimmer, up over Hanna's big bed, was the blue china cabinet. On its mirrored glass shelves stood Hanna and Ruthie's china animals: lions and horses, a giraffe, and Ruthie's favorite of all, the black

porcelain wolf, a gift from her Opa who lived in New York.

They had been very small girls the day they had gone with Opa to the Bronx Zoo. That was long, long ago. Half her lifetime ago, really, when they'd first come to America on the Queen Elizabeth. But Ruthie had a vision etched into her memory, as if it were happening right now:

Opa's strong, heavy hands warm at her waist, standing her up on the railing, holding her up, close to the bars of the cage. The beautiful, mystical, pacing of Wolf around and around the stone walls of his cage. His long, limber legs; his glistening fur. His anger at having nowhere to go. Her eyes meeting his.

"But Wolf must remain always in his cage," her Opa had explained.

"Why?" she had asked. "Is he wicked?"

"Not wicked," her Opa had slowly replied, "... not wvicked, but wvild."

Later, in the zoo gift shop, Opa had bought her a shiny black replica of Wolf.

When no one was looking, Ruthie liked to take her wolf down off the shelf and pretend he was really alive. She pretended he grew to be big as the zoo wolf, far bigger than she was. But he was always her own, and he loved her, and licked her, and they whispered together in the language of wolves. Together they plotted such plots as the rescue of calves, the destruction of slaughterhouses.

Ruthie never told anyone that she played in this way, and if, while she was playing this game, the mommy called up the stairs, "Ruthie, wvhat are you doing up there?" she blushed, stammered, "Nothing mommy, nothing." And quickly put Wolf back up on his shelf. If the big schwesterlein came in and said, "What are you doing on my bed?" Ruthie blushed, hid Wolf in her pocket and said, "Nothing." Then she would do something else, like jump on the bed. Sometimes Ruthie and Hanna liked jumping from one bed to the other.

Ever since Hanna had gone to see PETER PAN with the Windermans, they pretended the jumping was flying.

But now Ruthie neither jumped on the beds nor even looked over at Wolf and the others where they stood on the china shelf. She just lay on her belly on her cot, chin on the windowsill, staring out the window.

When Hanna came back from the doctor's office, fresh band-aid stuck to her belly, and the parents were done with their fussing, Ruthie slipped out of the kinderzimmer and went for a walk in the field where the butterflies flew and the grasses were almost as tall as herself. Here in her meadow she felt almost happy. Here in her meadow she knew she was good.

The deep yellow sunshine of summer settled over her skin, turning it freckled and golden. She liked the warm touch of the sun. She wanted more of it. So she pulled off her clothes. Even her panties. Naked she lay in the sun and the pores of her skin drank in the sunshine like nectar. She pretended the tiny soft hairs on her arms roughened and thickened into shiny black wolf fur, and that she really was a wild wolf, a wolf-girl, a marvelous, dangerous creature.

A few days later, she did it again. The big schwesterlein was gone off to Patty Winderman's house, Mary Lou was busy in the kitchen, the daddy and mommy were working in the doctor's office. All alone, Ruthie went out to the butterfly field. She sat in her same pressed down place surrounded by daisies and grasses and milkweeds. It was early afternoon, the sun shining bright. She took off her clothes, lay down on her belly and felt her skin grow its luscious black fur. The grass was so tall it held her safely inside itself. She lay so very still that a patterned green snake slid over her ankle as though it was just one more lump in the grass.

In a place near the roots of the grass Ruthie came upon pebbles. She pretended the pebbles were calves, and she lined them up one by the other in a long careful line. Then she opened the doors of the slaughterhouse, telling them,

"Run! Run fast to freedom."

When Ruthie looked up from her game she was no longer in sunshine, but covered in shadow. A figure was looming above her. It was the new older boy from the fresh painted house just across the street from the doctor's office next door. His people had moved into town from somewhere in the midwest. His father was Hattersville's new minister.

When that house had been old lady Tuttle's, it had been a pale mustardy yellow sort of house with lace curtains in the windows. Then for what seemed like forever, nobody lived there, the windows were boarded up, the yellow paint faded and peeled. Now the Reverend White and his family owned it. They'd painted the house a cheery bold white like their name, and the old unpainted barn at the end of the driveway, a jolly rich red.

Ruthie had only seen the new boy a couple of times before, and that from a distance, the day he'd moved in and one other day when she and Hanna had stood on their side of the road watching the working men paint.

But now the new boy was very, very close. And she could see he was huge. He towered above her. He was very, very huge, even huger than daddy. He wore a tight very clean t-shirt and very tight very clean blue jeans and a heavy black and silver horse face on the buckle of his pants. His hands were huge puffy pink hands. His face was in shadow, but Ruthie could see a sort of reddish glow to it, and he was breathing hard, as if he'd been running. He wore thick heavy glasses, making his bulging gray eyes look like fish in a fish bowl. He had a deep thunderish voice, and he kind of mumbled very fast, very low, "Wanna see kittens?"

"Oh, yes!" Ruthie cried, thinking of kittens. And she started to follow him.

But then she remembered her clothes. So she went to turn back around but he grabbed her up into his arms and he carried her fast through the meadow, fast past the house, fast, fast across the road, fast, fast, fast up the driveway and

into the newly painted red barn.

And all the time he was carrying her he had one big hand over her naked behind, and his other big hand high on her leg touching her tickle place hard, and it felt good, and it felt not good at the same time. Then he was moving his fingers up and down in a terrible tickling hurting sort of way and Ruthie wanted to get down.

She tried to get down, but he wouldn't let her, and he growled in his thunderish voice, "What's the matter? Don't you want to see kittens?" And he kept moving his fingers in the tickle/hurt place harder and harder.

There was a mattress upstairs in the barn loft and he carried her up the steep stairs and he threw her down hard on the mattress. When she started to cry, "Where are the kittens?" he didn't say anything. He just pinned her down on the mattress with his huge heavy arms and kept moving his fingers harder and harder down there where it hurt.

Then Ruthie's mouth began talking. She heard the mouth talking, but somehow she couldn't make it stop saying the things that it said.

"Take Hanna," the mouth was saying again and again. "Hanna is bigger. Hanna is pretty. Please, let me go and take Hanna." And he squeezed her all over very hard with his big heavy hands, and he stuck his big dirty fingers deep into her pee place, her tushy. And the mouth in her face kept on saying, "Hanna. Hanna. Why don't you take Hanna?"

And then he put one big sweaty hand tight over her mouth, though the mouth kept on trying to talk through the hand. With his other hand he yanked hard at the shining silver horse face on his belt. He was breathing very, very hard.

Ruthie saw everything clearly. She tasted the soft puffy flesh of his hand pressing into her mouth. And suddenly, she remembered her wolf self. She knew she could bite. She could bite down so hard that she'd feel his flesh breaking under her teeth. She'd be tasting his blood. So her wolf mind told the mouth, "Bite!" But nothing happened. Her

mouth wouldn't bite, it just talked. "Take Hanna," it said again and again. "Please let me go and take Hanna."

And as if there were nothing else in the world, there hung in the air over her body like a giant balloon his huge pimpled red face, the fish-eyes gaping at Ruthie through glass. And Ruthie's hand could have grabbed at the thick heavy glasses and yanked them off that face and thrown them far across the barn. And Ruthie's wolf-mind commanded, "Grab the glasses!" But nothing happened. Ruthie's hand didn't move. Only her mouth kept on talking.

Then something happened. Maybe a dog barked, or a car drove by. Maybe an angel stepped in. But all of a sudden he stopped yanking at the silver horse head on his belt and he shoved her onto the floor off the mattress and then he was yelling, "Get the fuck out of here! Get!" And he was shoving her so she fell down the stairs. She fell fast down the stairs out the door. Behind her she heard his deep ugly voice growling like thunder. "I'll kill you," the voice was roaring behind her. "I swear, little Jew brat, if you ever tell, I will kill you."

Ruthie stumbled down the driveway. She tore across the road, scrambled up the front porch steps and into the hallway and through the living room and into the bathroom where she locked the door tight and huddled under the sink in the corner by the toilet. Then she started to scream. She screamed and she screamed and she couldn't stop screaming. The parents had to take a screwdriver to the door to get her out of the bathroom. It took a long time. They had a hard time getting the hinges off the door.

When finally they did get the door off, what they found huddled under the sink was a dirty, naked, wild beast with blood on its mouth. It was shaking and screaming. "It's alright, it's alright," the mommy said to the wild beast. "Ssshshhh! It's alright. Nothing happened."

Even after the mommy had washed it and dressed it, the teeth of the wild beast chattered, and it's body didn't stop

trembling. Even after it finally stopped with its screaming, it shook and made strange sounds, but it didn't say words. Nor did it walk on two legs, but when it was set down on the floor it crawled on all fours. They lifted the wild beast up to its feet. They told it to stand. They tried to get it to talk. But after a while they gave up.

"Nothing happened," they said again and again to the wild beast.

"What is wrong?"

"Genug! Nothing happened."

The mommy went into the kitchen to warm up the supper that Mary Lou had cooked. The wild beast crept into the living room. There stood the big schwesterlein, next to the goldfish bowl. "Look, Ruthie," said the big schwesterlein, who had just come home from the Winderman's house. She was sprinkling fish flakes into the fish bowl. The wild beast stared at the fish bowl and started to scream. The big schwesterlein had her mouth open. She was just starting to say, "Look at Freddy Fish, isn't he cute? See how he swims up for food when I tap it?..." but the wild beast was screaming like crazy. So she closed her mouth.

Then the mommy came in. She picked up the wild beast and carried it into the kitchen. It was stiff as a stone in her arms. There was macaroni goulash for supper. It looked like pieces of calf mixed in with blood, and the wild beast that huddled in the corner by the wall refused even to taste any. The big schwesterlein tried touching the hand of the wild beast, but it withdrew and snarled at her. Nor would it look in her eyes. She promised she'd fix up its hair after supper. She asked if it wanted a story. The wild beast growled like a wild wicked wolf and said nothing. The big schwesterlein ate her goulash and drank her milk, and didn't try any more.

"Channa, what is wrong with your kleine schwesterlein?" the daddy said to the big schwesterlein.

Then he turned to the mommy. "Why is she like this? What is wrong with her? Nothing happened."

"My name is Wendy, daddy," said the big schwesterlein. "Don't you ever remember?"

"Eat, shatzi," said the mommy, pulling the wild beast's chair to the table. "It's your favorite. Goulash. I made it especially for you." And she tried pushing a spoonful into the mouth of the wild beast. It growled, snarled and snapped.

"Mein gott, will you stop?" said the mommy. "Mein Gott, nothing happened."

"Mein Gott, what is wrong with her?" the daddy and mommy asked one another again and again. "Why is she like this? Nothing happened."

And the parents tried eating as if nothing happened. They tried to talk sensibly, one to the other, but they ended up snapping. "Nothing happened," they said again and again. "Nothing happened."

After supper they carried the wild snarling beast next door to the doctor's office. the office smelled like it always smelled, like old people, lysol and medicine. They walked past the desk where the mommy wrote patients' names on yellow file cards, into the treatment room, where the daddy took patients in private.

They put the wild beast down on the white crackly paper of the treatment table and took off its clothes, even the panties. The beast didn't snarl, and it didn't scream, it just shook. It shook all over from head to foot. Even its teeth chattered. The room was warm enough, and the table was not terribly cold, but the wild beast shivered as if it were frozen.

The daddy wiped blood off the lips of the wild beast. He opened its mouth and saw it had chewed up its tongue. He dabbed drops of mercurochrome onto the scratches all over its body. Every drop stung. The daddy was growling in German, shaking his head and growling in German.

"Stop shaking," he said again and again to the wild beast.

"Nothing happened."

For a very long time he looked here and looked there, dropping red stinging spots here and there. Then the daddy pushed open the legs of the wild beast and looked in at the pee place, the tushy. He opened the tushy lips with his fingers and looked even closer. His eyes had an angry look, like what he was seeing was ugly. The wild beast was shaking so hard that its teeth chattered.

"She is red. I suppose she was touching herself," he said to the mommy, his voice hard as stone. "What is it you teach these children to do these things? You let them go naked around like wild beasts..."

"Do not touch yourself there," he growled at the wild beast. "You'll get an infection. You'll die."

The mommy put clothes back on the wild beast and then she took the clothes off again. By now they were back in the house, upstairs, in the new upstairs bathroom. The big schwesterlein was sitting all chubby and red in a tub of white bubbles and steam. The mommy set Ruthie down in the water next to her schwesterlein.

Then she picked Ruthie up out of the water and stood her up on the toilet seat. She took soap and scrubbed it all over Ruthie's body. The soap stung in the mercurochrome places and it stung worst of all in the tushy. Ruthie started to fuss, and the mommy put her back into the water. Then she took her out again. She rubbed her all over with a towel. The towel felt rough on Ruthie's skin. Everything hurt.

Then Ruthie and the big schwesterlein were out of the bathtub all dressed in pajamas in the kinderzimmer. The mommy had gone downstairs. The lights were turned off and only the moonlight made light. The big schwesterlein was high up in her big high bed on the dark side of the room. Ruthie was in her own little cot by the window.

Outside was the meadow, and beyond the meadow, glowing in moonlight, the river. Ruthie was afraid of the

window, but she didn't know why. She was afraid of the meadow, but she didn't know why. When she closed her eyes, she saw two ugly gray fish behind their glass bowls. She started to shake. But she didn't know why.

Ruthie crawled out of her bed, over the cold wooden floor to the big schwesterlein's big high bed on the safe side of the room. She climbed up beside her big schwesterlein, who did not kick her out as she usually did, but opened the covers, and yawned in a half whispery, sleepy sort of voice, "... I was having the most wonderful dream..."

"... I was dreaming," said the big schwesterlein, "that our china animals came alive. They were flying around all over the room.... and, we were trying to catch them... but they kept getting away. And then fairy dust came drifting down out of the ceiling, just like snow..." And with her fingers she made a sprinkle of fairy dust over Ruthie's hair and face. "And then we started to fly..."

"Stop it! Stop it! Stop it!" said Ruthie's voice, but then she started to giggle.

Sprinkle, sprinkle, sprinkle went the big schwesterlein's fingers all over Ruthie's body until Ruthie giggled harder. She giggled and giggled like crazy. She giggled so hard she almost was peeing her pants.

But then she was crying. She was sobbing huge slobbery sobs. It was like when the kitten had died, only this time she didn't know why she was crying.

Ruthie grabbed Hanna around the waist, tight, like her big schwesterlein might any second disappear, and for once Hanna let her.

"...Wendy..." whispered Ruthie in a very small voice... a half-sobbing high little voice..." ... Wendy... did wolf come alive too? Her voice sounded wobbly, babyish, but it made words.

"Oh, yes! wolf was the most alive of all. He was way bigger than we were, big as that wolf we saw in the zoo.

And you two were talking, you and Wolf. Yes, I remember now, you were whispering in wolf language..."

"That's because I am a wolf," said Ruthie. "I am really."

"I know, sweetie," said the big schwesterlein, touching Ruthie's hand to her band-aid so she could feel it in the dark. "You bite like a wolf too."

"I do bite like a wolf," agreed Ruthie. So if any bad man ever goes after you, don't worry. I'll bite him. I'll save you." But a sour bloody taste flooded her mouth, and she started to shake. For a very long time, Ruthie lay, shaking, beside her big schwesterlein.

"Will you get me down Wolf?" Ruthie finally asked her big schwesterlein, who reached a long arm way up to the shelf and handed him down.

Now Ruthie had her own Wolf, small and shiny in her own hand. All night Joy lay beside her big schwesterlein, clutching Wolf tight, and after a very long time, she stopped shaking, and slept. But she dreamed about fish bowls and deathly pale fish staring out like gray smoke-swollen eyeballs. They wanted to eat the big schwesterlein.

In Ruthie's dream, she had to keep smashing the fish bowls, but as soon as the fish were free they turned into huge swollen monsters chasing her, howling, "I'll kill you, bitch, Jew bitch, I will kill you."

And she dreamed about ugly red barns with endless stone walls and no windows anywhere, their floors red and slippery, running with blood. *



UNTITLED
Allison Tunnel
Color Photo

THE RAILROAD STATION OF A SMALL FRENCH CITY

Michael Hanner

The poem ended naturally and so I couldn't fit any more in.
Such anticipation like ozone.
Now at last we are aquatic, radioactive, tribal.

All eyes swing to me as if I were a crow. My explanation?
Startling woman with friction. I didn't use all
the words: Chianti, rafters, risks, fallen and salt.

Let me mouth you like music, a bite of peach.
Conjecture and amplitude are our words.
Craig wants us all to write a page on death,

so he can make them into a small book on the subject.
I'm not sure why. I have a very long list.
When relatives visit something is always torn up.

The sky, an endless blue, absolutely realistic.
We stand waiting before the dark-wood shuffling
around the edges or else the lights short out at Christmas.

And then it's my turn. All night we winced, hidden sparks

beneath the sky of disappearing trust and yellow storms;
this whole Western morning: inner bone.

It's always odd times of year that we go to Shore Pines.
In the pond with the bronze egrets, lilies,
there is a very long list, a small book on the subject.

We could sit on the sunny Mexican shore
on straight back chairs leaning against the stuccoed wall
above us a sunshade of music and palmetto.

Startled by the woman with the crooked smile
we give our names. We are married you and I.
We have deep anticipation like ozone like glass like varnish.

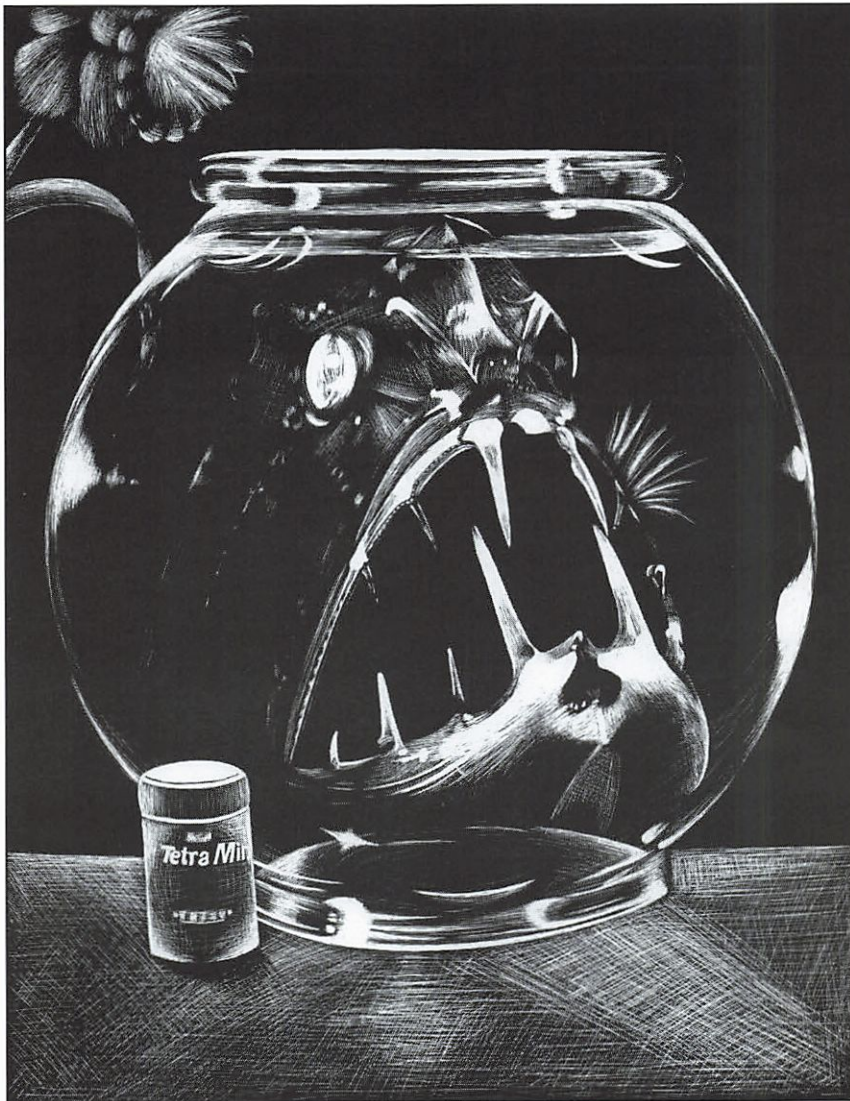
We hold our Sibley guides, binoculars and paper cups from
Starbucks.

The radiation sifts in; nearby
Apaches sit on folding metal chairs.

PARASITE PEN

Anna Brenneman

When the tip of my pen scratches paper.
My stubborn sentences will all end in periods.
Thick black ink dispensed upon rich white card.
Drizzled and bled, evenly across the heavy sheet.
Manipulating jagged thoughts into a swift unsoiled motion.
Like a painter with a brush.
I to create.
Compose neo-anarchy in my cranium.
Perfection on a page.
My canvas is vast.
Index and thumb, pressed tight against the arctic silver shaft.
Finger flesh pallid as an infant.
Not yet touched by the sun.
Concentrating.
Pulverizing.
Spreading through out my illustration.
My work is like a parasite.
Feeding from the source of my pen.
Claiming land.
Free as the dove.
Live with out breath.
Mine.
Mine.
Mine.



UNTITLED
Brenna Schaeffer
Scratchboard



POST UP

Lacey Ward

Color Photo

MOCKINGBIRD

Kate Willheim

My sister and I are on the porch at our grandfather's house. Beyond the expanse of lawn before me, the land slopes down to a lake, ringed by cattails and some brambles. It is a small lake, hardly more than a pond, blue in the sunlight, with silver streaks where the water is riffled by a breeze. On the far side is the Holt farm. Closer, butterflies and bees are giddy from nectar and pollen, hummingbirds hum. I don't know the names of the flowers in bloom: yellows, reds, pink, too many, too untidy, a mass of blooming plants; white clover dots the lawn, birds call from the nearby oak tree. The countryside is not silent, never quiet.

I am in a low-slung chair, my sister on the swing, lazily moving back and forth. There is a squeak with each forward motion. Amidst the random music of birds and bees, the wind in leaves, the squeak is as regular, as monotonous and predictable as a metronome. I wish it would stop. I have things to think about, decisions to make, and the regularity of the squeak interferes.

My mind is a sieve. I fill it with words, with images, pages to be written, great thoughts to ponder, none of them related to the present dilemma. When I wander through the maze of myself, look again, the miracles of my mind are aswirl, as if caught in a tidepool of receding water, forever gone.

I open my dissertation, still in manuscript, and see the words as if written by another, alien to me. I nod as phrases summon concepts, the way one nods at strangers who take on familiarity when they draw near, but they are not my words; I have no claim on them. When my gaze moves on, the passed phrases leave a blank space.

Birds fill the empty space and twitter and chirp and cry raucously. Random noise, like the noise in my head. When one approaches me, I close my eyes.

The mockingbird says, "Why do you close your eyes?"

So you won't pluck them out—

"Why won't you speak to me?"

—No one talks to birds—

"Look at me just once."

I don't close my eyes tighter, but I think tighter and it's the same thing.

Across the porch my sister murmurs, "Express, address, redress, compress, repress, suppress."

"What are you talking about?"

"What God does with trivialities."

"Impress?"

She gives me a pitying, or possibly scornful, look. I close my manuscript and put it aside, and she continues to swing gently with her book in her lap, murmuring in a voice too low now to be intelligible. Back and forth with the jarring squeak.

"What on earth are you doing?" Irritation, exasperation, frustration: I hear them all in my own voice.

"I'm catching butterflies. They are so beautiful."

I walk across the porch to see what she has been reading; it is a dictionary. Just that. Webster's Collegiate Dictionary.

"Fluorescent blue, amber and scarlet, magenta, gold . . ."

"What are you talking about?"

"The words. The beautiful words, butterflies in my net."

Her mind is a net that catches and holds them, and mine is a sieve that lets them escape.

We both love Bobby Holt, and have loved him since we were children. He looked at us with a yearning expression, first one then the other and, in apparent confusion, retreated. He loves us both. He has not married. If she catches him in her net, he will never be released again.

We were awed by our grandfather, who looked like a giant when we were young, visiting on his farm. When we returned home, I thought of him as big enough to hold

both of us in the palm of his hand. By the time we were eleven, we had overgrown Grandmother, and I thought of her as doll-like. My sister put words to my thoughts: "He's a roar and she's a whisper. A tree and a twig. A willow and a wisp."

When they came to our graduation from high school, I was shocked to see that Grandfather was not a giant, but just an ordinary tall man.

"The enchantment stopped at the farm gate," my sister said.

One summer at the farm, we watched smoke rise, and we smelled fire throughout the day and into the night when the sky glowed in the east as the fire moved over the dry forests. Grandfather glared at the flickering eastern lights, and he said it would not reach us; it would stop at the lake. When it moved around the lake and drew closer, he said it again: it would not reach us. The rain would come first. And it did. The fire burned Mr. Holt's cornfield across the lake, but it did not reach us.

"With his will and his eyes he held the false sunrise at bay," she whispered that night. "The enchantment is restored."

When I recall him now, it is that image: he is facing the fire in the east, his face fierce, fists clenched, and he is a giant again.

We came this time for his funeral.

The first time I realized we were not exactly the same was when we were eight or nine. Always before, looking at her had been like gazing into the mirror, but that afternoon, looking at her I saw someone else. Someone strange and foreign. I ran to the bathroom and stared into the mirror; she followed. And there, gazing at us side by side in the glass, I saw again the difference in the reflections.

She was alien, a dreaminess in her eyes perhaps, an expression I could not copy. "What do you see?" I asked in a whisper.

"Me. You. Us. Yin and Yang, before and after, hard and soft, opaque and transparent, alike and different."

I stopped her. She couldn't explain what she saw any more than I could. "Good and bad?"

She shook her head. "Incomplete."

I didn't know what she was talking about, and that was the real difference I discovered that summer. I often didn't understand what she meant. I didn't know what opaque meant, and when I tried to look it up, I couldn't find it in the dictionary. Later I wondered who was transparent, who opaque.

Our mother treated us like dolls, her precious, animated dolls, she often said. She also talked about how difficult it had been to carry two, how difficult labor had been, how she had suffered, but of course none of that was our fault. We must not blame ourselves. She bought identical everything for us. When we turned twelve we stopped wearing our identical clothes. My sister wore pink, I chose blue; she dressed in jeans and a yellow shirt, I wore jeans and a green top. I cut my hair short, hers was still long. That was the only time I could remember being first. Mother said she was very disappointed in us.

Born thirty minutes before me, my sister was first to cut a tooth, first at potty training, first to talk. Always first. At twelve she declared that when she grew up she would marry Bobby Holt.

I could do math and science; I understood process, physical objects, the abstractions of algebra. She did poetry and art. She understood the labyrinth of her psyche and could translate the impulses and images she found there. I have a dissertation not yet finished; she has published two slim books of poetry. I don't understand her poetry or the illustrations she did in watercolor. Neither does she. I asked her once and she said the poem was what it was, what it meant was what it was. I didn't understand that, either. She hasn't read my dissertation. It has formulas and graphs.

I tried to explain quantum mechanics to her: probability, indeterminacy, chaos theory, photon as either wave or particle, right spin, left. Her eyes glazed and her expression became soft and blank. If one electron has a right spin, its matching electron has a left spin; change one, the other changes . . .

Destroy one; does the other languish and die? I didn't know the answer, especially when applied to the macrocosm.

She lives in the sun, I in her shadow, yearning for sunlight.

She could not write a short story for our class. I told her if a, then certain things must follow, until you end with x, y, z. Cause and effect. She looked at me in wonder, then wrote something, and I wrote a story. Hers was considered brilliant, an incomprehensible prose poem, mine a story with a beginning, middle, end. Competent.

My dissertation will be competent. An old joke on campus: What do you call a medical student who finishes at the bottom of his class? Answer: Doctor. What do you call a physics major who finishes in the bottom of the class? Assistant.

Grandfather left the farm jointly to our father, my sister, and me. "We'll sell it, of course," Father said, and my sister shook her head. She wants to live here. "Talk to her," he said to Mother, then included me in his indignant glare. "Talk sense into her." The will of any two of us will prevail.

Mother never talked to us or with us. She sometimes talked at us. Father went back to his middle management job in a high-tech firm in Seattle. He will return tomorrow for the weekend, and on Sunday he and Mother will both go back to Seattle. Now we are here, Mother, my sister, and I, and no one has mentioned selling the farm again. Mother is relying on me to talk sense into my sister. An impossible task.

It has taken me twenty years to learn what my sister grasped intuitively when we were children; we are both

incomplete. When the ovum divided to form two fetuses, the brain cells were unfairly distributed. Matched particles, one spinning left, the other right. One brain housed in two separate skulls.

Across the lake, I can see Bobby walking through meticulous rows of grapes. He is wearing shorts and a tank top. I wish he would look this way, but he is concentrating on the vines. Mr. Holt did not replant corn in his field after it burned. He tilled the ashes into the ground and the next time we came to the farm, there was a vineyard. Now Bobby owns the vineyard. It is very productive, pinot noir, much in demand.

We buried Grandfather on Monday, and as the casket was lowered into the ground next to Grandmother's plot, Mother said in a tremulous voice, "Now they are together again at rest."

That night I dreamed of him. He was a giant, walking away in his deliberate pace, hand in hand with a little girl. They were both nearly transparent. Not at rest, not yet.

I can't bear to watch Bobby, and close my eyes, wishing I could block my swirl of thoughts. The mockingbird is back.

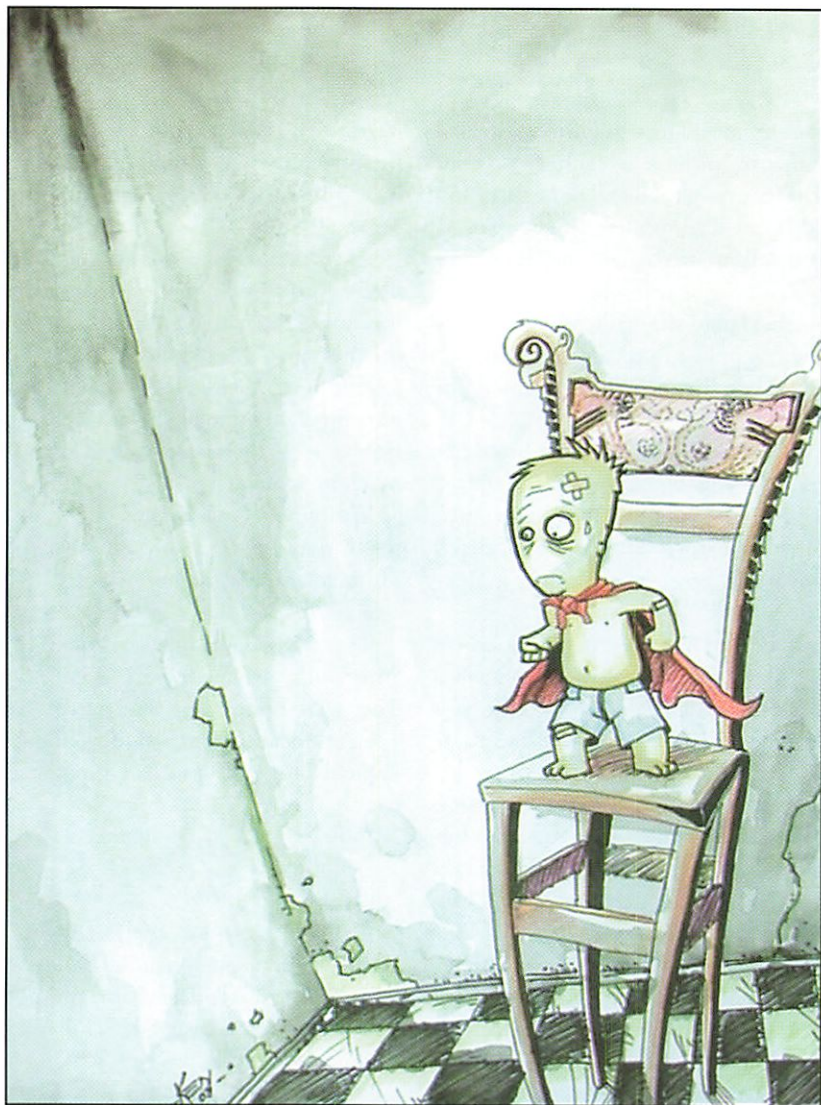
"What did you see in her sketch book?"

—Nothing—

"Liar!"

She left it on the sofa last night. I looked. There was Grandfather, a giant, hand in hand with a little girl, walking away. The oak tree was visible through them. Has she gone from a to x,y,z, the way I did? I doubt it. She arrives without making the journey.

We will stay here together, I understand and accept finally. I'll find the answer: if one particle is destroyed, will the other wither and die? Who is transparent, who opaque? *



ONE LAST TRY

Kenny Ashcraft

Watercolor and Ink Illustration

MARK IT DOWN

Chris Stimac

Mark it down:

This one lasts forever.

The half-filled glass is shattered to pieces

And you were holding it when it broke.

The heparin you poured into it

Won't let you stop bleeding

From the lacerations you obtained

By way of faux-crystal shrapnel.

When the anemic solution collects enough for

Gravity to take notice,

It drops to your magic slipper,

Melting the façade away to expose:

That balsa wood you've been using for feet.

It might not be a problem,

But the heavy dreams you've been assembling in your head

Throw off your balance—

Your flimsy foundation can't take a stumble,

So it snaps

And you collapse

And everyone can see you naked.



FAIRYTALE
Abbey Corbett
Black and White Photo

ALIEN HIGHWAYS

Joseph Chirum

Peering through the morning dew
meandering trails of long forgotten
highly traveled trails collect dust.

They reflect an unearthly shine,
Shedding confused rationality and
transforming it into electromagnetic fuzz.

The present moment still lingers ahead,
like some distant tuber waiting to be eaten.
Come Home Children, it's supertime again.

Time travel along ancient highways
prarie schooner dogged rusty spaces
filled with neolithic art calling your name.

Under eternal clouds of Ananda's bliss,
neon lit alien highways appear through
the sundrenched fog above the heavens.

A MIGHTY HEART

Nick Blacketer

An old man sat sleeping in his chair, every bit the king of his home. Worn blue jeans and an old flannel shirt were his raiment of royalty. His large hands though wrinkled with age, still powerful as they gripped the arms of his easy chair. A bird chirped outside of his window and he stirred.

His eyes opened slowly, taking in his surroundings. The sunlight filtered in through the cracks in the curtains, creating pulsing patterns on the walls and furniture. He sat up in his chair and groaned. The pain in his back being nothing new, just a reminder of how old he was. Stupid of him to fall asleep in the chair. A perfectly good bed waited for him upstairs, but the effort of climbing was getting to be beyond him. Besides, there was no one there to share it with anymore. Not for some months now. His eyes watered slightly, and he angrily brushed them with the heel of his hand. He growled to himself. Looking up at the battered clock on the wall he realized he'd been asleep for most of the day. Seemed to be happening more and more everyday. He wasn't hungry, but knew he should at least make an effort. He knew Ann would want him to. Pushing himself up with both hands, he got to his feet, wincing as old aches and pains coursed through him. After he was sure he was steady he shuffled into the kitchen in his worn slippers. Upon entering, he looked about with a look of consternation on his face. A flicker of confusion, and a little fear played with his mouth. His rheumy eyes scanned the room looking for something to trigger his memory. He had no idea what he was doing in this room. Barely remembered entering it at all. Seemed that there

should be someone . . . , but no that was a long time ago. Just then there was a knock at the door. He turned his head in that direction, glad for the distraction. Before he could get to the door, there was another knock, and an irritated finger buzzed the doorbell far more frequently than was needed. He frowned. He took hold of the knob and opened the door to reveal several people standing on his porch. Recognition came slowly to him, much to the discomfort of those outside. One young woman stepped forward and hugged him, her hair tickled his nose and he smelled her scent. Strawberries and vanilla. She pulled back and looked at him at arms length. A huge grin split her face and crinkled her freckle-dusted nose.

"Grandpa!" She cried exuberantly. When he still looked confused, a look of worry flickered in her eyes, but her smile remained. "Its Sarah, Grandpa. Remember?"

"He doesn't remember. Nothing new. Can we just go inside? It's freezing out here." This new voice came from the other woman. She clutched the arm of the only man present. A thin and brittle looking individual, he allowed himself to be pulled along by her grip. They all moved inside, stomping their boots clear of snow. The old man carefully shut the door and turned to face his company. He forced himself, despite his pain, to stand straighter. He was beginning to remember things, and among his returning memories was pride. And anger. He looked to the woman clinging to the man. Judith. And the man's name was Carl. He despised both of them. Carl was his sister's son and the woman on his arm was his sniveling Kleenex of a wife. They had never brought him any thing

but misery. Shortly after his beloved wife, Ann, had passed away, he had heard Judith remark that 'now there is only one more left to worry about'. He had never forgiven her. Carl was even worse. He had never worked a day in his life. Preferring to live off of others and hope for a fat inheritance from his aging uncle. Well, little did he know that there had been some recent changes to the will. Yes. That was a good memory. Too bad he'd be dead and gone when it was read. Too bad. He had really wanted to see the look on Carl's face. The old man chided himself. He was too far along in years to be spiteful. Instead he looked to the younger woman. He had only had one child in his long life. A girl named Anita. She had been the most perfect child that had ever lived. At least according to him. She had been destined for great things, but she chose instead to marry young and start a family. Her and her husband had given birth to a beautiful little girl. Sarah. Tragically, shortly after her birth, both parents died in an automobile accident. But despite that she grew up to be a caring and softhearted woman in the home of her doting grandfather. She'd had moved out to attend college several years ago, but had always come back to spend time with him and her grandmother.

When Ann had passed away, Sarah had been the one to set up the funeral arrangements, and had been the only one able to comfort her grieving grandfather. She looked so much like Ann had as a young woman. A muffled cough startled the old man out of his reverie. Judith was whispering something into Carl's ear and he was nodding. Sarah wouldn't meet his eyes. Finally, Carl looked at the

old man and pursed his lips.

"We have been talking. As of late, your health both physically and mentally has been failing you. Now, as you know I have recently placed my mother in a nursing facility designed to fulfill her every need. She is quite happy."

The old man snorted. His sister had always been a little breezy between the ears any way. She needed someplace where she didn't have to think about anything. But he could see where this conversation was going. Carl continued.

"Well, we have been thinking of something along the same lines for you. None of us has the time to take care of you any longer; we have lives of our own you know. So if you would, I have some brochures and some papers to sign. It will only take a minute."

Sarah's face reddened and she took a step towards the old man and turned to face Carl.

"Now this isn't what we discussed. You made it sound like we were just going to suggest it to him. He wasn't to be forced. If this is how it's going to be then forget the whole thing. I'll take care of him. He took care of me all those years."

The old man smiled inside. He watched as the Kleenex and her lazy man beat a hasty retreat to the door, slamming it behind them. Sarah turned to him with sadness in her eyes. Wrapping her arms around him she kissed him on the cheek, he returned her embrace feeling her hot tears on his neck.

"I won't let them take you Grandpa. If I have to quit school, I will. But I won't let them take you." He patted her on the back making soft noises under his breath,

calming her.

"I have to take them back to the airport, but I'll be back to make you some lunch. Ok?" She asked with her smile once again stretching across her face. He smiled and nodded. She gave him one last kiss on the cheek and squeezed his hand.

"I love you Grandpa." With that she gathered her coat and went out the door. His smile faded a little as he relaxed his spine. He shuffled over to his chair and sat down. His hands resting on the arms of chair, he laid his head back and closed his eyes, thinking. There was no way he would leave this house that he had shared with his wife his child and his grandchild. But neither did he want to burden Sarah with having to care for him until he finally passed away in some chemical washed hospital. No. There was one final gift that he could give Sarah. His own quiet death. So, concentrating on the one sure memory he had, his beloved wife Ann, he slowed his breathing. His once powerful heart slowly, so slowly stopped beating. One beat, two beats, no beats. He died.

Sarah returned some hours later with a bag full of groceries, whistling as she came up the walk to the front door of her grandfather's house. Gingerly she opened the door and shut it quietly behind her. Seeing her grandpa sleeping in his chair she took off her boots and padded silently past him into the kitchen. Having put the groceries away she made a sandwich, and poured some milk into a glass. She carried them into the living room and placed them on the table near his chair. She stood there for a moment, watching him sleep; when she noticed his chest wasn't moving. For one panicked moment she grabbed the phone to call 911. She held the receiver in her hand, but didn't dial. Looking at him sitting so proudly in his chair, she hung the phone back in its cradle and sat on the footstool as she had done so many times as a child, listening to her grandfather's stories. Now she sat there as a young woman, thankful for the man who had taught her so much, and couldn't help thinking how much he looked like a king. ✱



GARLIC

Callie Duncan

Black and White Photo





DRESS FORM

Amelia Bieder

Ceramic, Silk, and Metal



GONE TO THE FUNERAL

Betsy Hardinger

When Anne pulled up, she saw that there was no car in the usual spot by the back steps. Floy's pickup was out by the barn, but it looked as if it hadn't been driven for a long time. The tires were flat, and weeds sprouted through the hole where the hood used to be. A rainbow was etched in the windshield. Years then.

Her eye was drawn to the kitchen door. Tilted at an angle on the black screen was a small white square. A note, she guessed, fastened to the screen with a bobby pin, maybe the same one they had always used. "Choir practice," the note might say. "Call Clio about calf mix" or "Gone to Alberta's."

A dog emerged from under the porch and loped, barking, toward the car. Anne opened the car door and leaned over to let the dog, a shepherd mix, sniff the back of her hand. She stroked his head until his tail was wagging furiously, and he trailed along when she walked to the porch.

The note was written in thick pencil in an unfamiliar hand—a woman's? "Gone to the funeral," it said. Anne felt her shoulders sag. So she was too late after all.

She stood at the door for several minutes. Should she go on in? She knew it wouldn't be locked. The neighbors would already have been there, and they would have left a ham or fried chicken or coleslaw or fruit salad in the refrigerator, German chocolate cake or nut bread or raisin pie on the table. Each container would have the husband's name written in ballpoint pen on adhesive tape. In a week the ladies of the church would come by to gather up the empty containers, and they would take them to Sunday service for the donors to reclaim. At one time or another most of that Tupperware had visited every house from here to McPherson.

"Gone to the funeral." No greeting, no name—only the plain fact, a neat white sail on a flat, placid ocean. Did they

even let themselves feel sorrow? Fear? Regret? Yes, but you had to look for it out of the sides of your eyes. You might notice a slight rolling of the throat, or there might be a catch in the voice so subtle it would be gone almost before you registered it.

Anne sank into the wicker porch chair. The dog settled at her feet, his tail flopping on the porch boards.

Uncle Floy used to tell a story about a coon dog he once had that kept acting up. It kept running around like a pup, and it would never be a good hunter, he figured, so he took it out by Kanopolis reservoir and turned it loose. He thought that would be the end of it, naturally. But in a couple of weeks he started getting postcards: "I'm lonesome, come get me." "How come you turned me loose?" "I'm hungry. Don't you want me no more?" The cards were postmarked from all around—Brookville, Salina, even Newton.

It was the gol-damnedest thing, Floy always said. It musta been the fellas down to the Co-Op. He would tell the coon dog story and laugh, and everyone else would laugh, and little Anne would sit there, bewildered and miserable. What happened to the puppy? What was so funny? But you weren't supposed to ask. You were supposed to know already.

Now a blue Corolla drove up, and an older, heavyset woman got out. She had on a tight black dress with large white polka dots. Anne knew her—Lucille, Aunt Peggy's close friend since high school. Lucille retrieved two casseroles from the back seat and walked to the porch.

"Annie," she said. "You look just the same."

"You too."

"Let me get rid of these," Lucille said, lifting the dishes.

Anne was surprised to see that the kitchen had been remodeled—shiny dark wood cabinets, new appliances,

a new no-wax vinyl floor. There were two cakes on the table.

Lucille put the casseroles into the refrigerator and pulled out bread, mayonnaise, and a plate of ham. Washing her hands, she said, "It's a shame you didn't get here in time for the service."

"I was delayed in Denver." Anne was relieved that Lucille was occupied with the food and there would be no awkward little hug. "Was it a nice funeral?"

"Just a graveside service. Nice, though." Lucille dried her hands, pulled out eight slices of white bread, and began slathering on mayonnaise. "Nancy Axelmeier sung 'Softly and Tenderly.' I like it better than 'Amazing Grace,' don't you? I get tired of it."

"Are you making me a sandwich?" Anne said. "Because I have to get back to Wichita fairly soon."

"Already?" Lucille licked mayonnaise off her finger.

"I have a room near the airport. My plane in the morning—"

"We was planning on you staying with us."

We? "You?"

"I fixed your bed," Lucille said. "We'll get you up. Floy's always up with the chickens anyhow."

Anne was flabbergasted. "You're living here?"

Lucille nodded. "Close to six months now. Here you go. You need a pickle?"

Anne shook her head.

Lucille settled into a chair and began eating her sandwich. The dog ambled over and lay down at her feet.

After a while Anne said, "Where is he?"

"Haircut." Lucille said. "Don't you like the sandwich?"

Anne took a small bite.

There was a silence. The refrigerator made soft popping sounds.

"She went pretty quick once they unhooked her," Lucille said. "Just took a little breath, and that was it." The dog began whining, and she reached down to smack him on the nose. "She never complained," she added. "About being sick, anyway. Only the divorce."

Carefully Anne swallowed. "Divorce?"

"When we put her in the home. It was either that or sell everything. Practically killed her." She took several noisy gulps of tea.

"So you and Floy ... ?"

"Not married. Can't afford to. I'd lose Raymond's pension check. You remember Raymond."

Anne nodded.

Lucille sighed. "We put Peggy in her and him's plot, and I'll go next to Raymond." She took a bite. "Want me to take you out to the graveyard? You can visit your mom's, too."

Anne shook her head. "I don't have much time."

"You're not going nowhere," Lucille said breezily. Then she looked down and said, "Shut up!" Again she whacked the dog's nose, but then she relented and gave him a bite of her sandwich.

"What are you doing clear the hell out in East Bumblefuck?" Teesha said.

Anne, sitting on the bed in the spare room, lay back against the pillow. Lucille had gone on an errand, and it was a relief to be alone in the house. "I'm sorry, Teesha. I left straight from work."

"Why didn't you call?"

Anne's throat felt full. "Teesha, my aunt Peggy died."

"Oh, damn. The one?"

"Yeah."

"Fuck. I'm so sorry, Anne." Anne pictured her: the high cheekbones, the huge brown eyes, the crease she always got

between her brows when she was upset.

"When was the last time you saw her?" Teesha said.

"The reunion. I guess it's been five years."

"The one where your uncle pissed behind the tree?"

Anne laughed.

"So you flew out when? This morning?"

"My plane was late in Denver. I missed the funeral."

"Jesus God! If it wasn't for bad luck you wouldn't have no luck at all."

"I should've brought you with me," Anne said. "The way you talk, you'd fit right in."

Teesha laughed. "I got a big fat picture of that, girlfriend. Uh-huh."

From the kitchen window Anne watched Uncle Floy crawl out from behind the wheel of a big maroon Buick. He was shorter than he should have been, thinner and more bowlegged than she remembered. He was wearing a brown sport coat, stiff new jeans, and pointy-toed boots, and his patch of white hair was greased straight back. He pocketed his string tie before he unloaded a potted plant from the trunk and headed for the house.

Anne wasn't sure he recognized her. "Hello, Uncle Floy."

He set the plant on the table. "Too bad you didn't come to the funeral. She'd've liked it if you had."

"My plane was late. I—"

He waved a hand as if swatting a fly. "You eat yet?"

"Lucille made me a sandwich." She had forgotten how long and horsy his teeth were.

"Where's she at?" He brushed past her and headed toward the living room.

Anne followed him. "She went to the neighbors' for ice."

He sank into a blue recliner and flipped up the footrest. She sat on the sofa.

After a silence, he said, "Well, Peggy went pretty quick at the end."

"Lucille told me."

Floy took out a handkerchief and blew his nose. "Your flight okay?"

"Except for being late."

"Haven't set foot in a plane since the war."

A car drove up, and a minute later Lucille called out, "Floy? You home?"

He lowered the footrest.

Lucille's voice came from the kitchen. "You show her the new bathroom?" She walked into the living room and said to Anne, "He show you the new bathroom?"

As the afternoon wore on, people stopped by to pay their respects. What a shame it was, wasn't it, everyone said, that Anne had missed the service. They were all dying off now, weren't they, and you never knew who'd be next. Hadn't it been a wonderful thing Peggy'd done back then—what had she been, forty, forty-five?—and hadn't she always treated little Annie just like her own? Not everybody'd've done that, would they? Just like her own. And what a shame, Anne missing the funeral like that and all.

After supper Floy and Lucille settled in front of the TV. Anne told them she was going for a walk.

"Where at?" Lucille said.

"Just, you know, out on the place."

Lucille and Floy exchanged a look.

Outside, the evening air was hot and humid. Anne stepped off the porch, and a grasshopper whirled away with a glottal hiss. She jumped back in surprise. How could she have forgotten? Around here, every footfall rattled up a grasshopper. When Floy used to drive through the pasture to water the cows, the pickup scattered grasshoppers by the dozen as it rocked over the tire path. And the swish of the

grass under the truck. How long had it been since she had heard that sound?

She lowered herself onto the porch steps and thought about the first time she had gone with him. She must have been eight. There had been a crack in the seatcover on her side, and she had scooted forward to avoid sitting on the itchy horsehair. In the gully just in front of the big cottonwood, the truck dipped sharply. Anne—Little Orphan Annie, some of the girls at school called her—bounced so high that her head almost hit the roof liner. Her teeth rattled.

Uncle Floy brought the truck to a stop under a huge cottonwood. Without a word he stepped out and walked toward the windmill. She followed him.

He released the brake, and with a metallic groan the blades of the windmill began to turn. Anne gripped the side of the water tank and dug her toes into the flakes of dried mud. Water began sloshing into the tank, and she felt cold drops like pinpricks on her arms.

The air was filled with the sweet smell of livestock and blossoming prairie grass. The sun felt thick as syrup on her shoulders. She leaned back and looked up into the pale washed-out sky. She had a strange feeling, as if she were about to burst. She let out a long breath and stared into the glittering water. Out of the corner of her eye she saw Uncle Floy walking back to the truck, wiping his hands on a rag.

Then she heard whuff, and she felt the heat of a large body next to her. Before she could move she felt a sting on the back of her bare leg. The cow made a scooping movement with its head and let out a high-pitched, two-note bellow, its white-rimmed eyes bulging. A thread of drool drifted from its mouth. Again the tail flicked against her leg.

The cow moved a front leg, pressing its foot against Anne's little toe. It pinched, and the cow's foot felt hot, like living meat. Anne cried out and jerked her foot away, only to bump against another of the large animals.

The cattle were pressing in on her. She was terrified, and

she did the only thing she could think of—she climbed into the tank. The water was cold and slimy.

From the direction of the pickup she heard Uncle Floy laughing. "Them cows—" he began. "Them cows—" He was laughing too hard to finish.

One of the bigger animals shouldered a smaller one aside and dipped its mouth to the water. Anne's foothold slipped as she dodged first one and then another of them. Her toe throbbed. "Uncle Floy! Come and get me!"

He hooted. "Them cows playin' keep-away with you?"

"Please, Uncle Floy! Please come and get me." She began crying.

The pickup door slammed. Floy made his way toward the tank and smacked the rump of the biggest cow. "Quit bawling," he said to Anne. "You're not hurt."

That brought fresh tears.

"If you're gonna live here, you got to quit bein' such a bawl-baby." He pulled her out of the tank and carried her to the truck.

As soon as they were past the gate, she opened the pickup door, jumped out, and began walking. He followed her, but after a while he pulled around her through the grass. She watched the truck until it disappeared over the ridge. In the wind and heat her clothes dried stiff against her body. Pretty soon her bladder began to ache, and she ran the rest of the way.

When she got to the house, she could tell they had been laughing at her. Uncle Floy, his three nephews visiting from Missouri, the two harvest hands, even Aunt Peggy.

In the bathroom Anne discovered she had dribbled pee in her underpants. She had to get rid of them. But how? There was no place in the tiny room to hide them. She thought about flushing them down the toilet, but she was afraid it would clog, and how would she explain it?

"You been in there a long time, Annie," Aunt Peggy said, not unkindly, from the other side of the door.

Quickly Anne rummaged through a drawer, found a pair of nail scissors, and cut the panties into pieces. She flushed twice and then a third time.

Now, sitting on the porch steps, Anne felt a chill as a breeze sprang up. She was surprised to find a teardrop at the tip of her nose. She squeezed it between her thumb and forefinger as if pinching out a candle flame.

In the living room Anne found Lucille sitting by the glowing lamp. "You didn't get very far," Lucille said, yawning.

"He's went to bed. Anything you need?"

Anne shook her head.

"You sure?" She rose and stretched.

"I have to leave by five in the morning."

"You won't stay a day or two?"

"I have to get back."

"Well, all right then." Lucille turned away and then turned back. "Peggy talked about you all the time, you know."

"She did?"

"'The Professor.' She was real proud."

Anne stared at her.

"Here a few years back, when you, you know, when you got that promotion? Her and Floy argued about it. He said there wasn't no such thing as you couldn't get fired." She smiled. "Raymond—you remember Raymond—he says, 'You been retired almost twenty years, Floy, how would you know?'" She laughed. "You always had your nose in a book, even when you was little. We knew you'd be somebody someday."

Anne looked down at her hands.

"Well, I'll say good night," Lucille said. "You sure you don't need nothing?"

"No, nothing."

"Tonight, really?" Teesha said. "Why don't you stay a few days? Hathaway can cover your classes. If you're not back by Monday I'll send out the dogs."

Anne laughed. "I miss you so much." She glanced at her watch. Cutting it close.

"Me, too, but seriously, you need to get some closure on this."

"I'll have to get it at home then. I'm on my way to the airport."

"You're driving?"

"Don't go ballistic. There's no traffic."

"Stop the car right now. I mean it. Or I'm hanging up."

"You nag."

"Hear me? I'm hanging up on your ass."

"All right, all right, I'm pulling over." Anne braked and steered the car to the shoulder. "Happy now?"

"Are you stopped?"

"Yes, Teesha Swahili-for-'Strong-Willed' Hudson."

Teesha laughed. "What time do you get in?"

"Seven-something," Anne said. "I'll call you."

"I don't suppose you know your flight number?"

Anne smiled. That was so like her. "I'll call you when I get in."

"Listen," Teesha said, "whenever you get over your jet lag we need to talk about all this."

"All what?"

"Your mother dying—I mean, your aunt."

Anne felt the breath go out of her.

"Anne?" There was a pause. "It just hit you, didn't it?"

"Crap," Anne said. "Now I feel like I'm going to cry."

"Well, like my mom always said, 'The more you cry, the less you pee.'" Her voice was as rich as cream.

Anne burst into something—crying, laughter, she couldn't tell. It didn't make any difference. It was something. ✱



UNTITLED

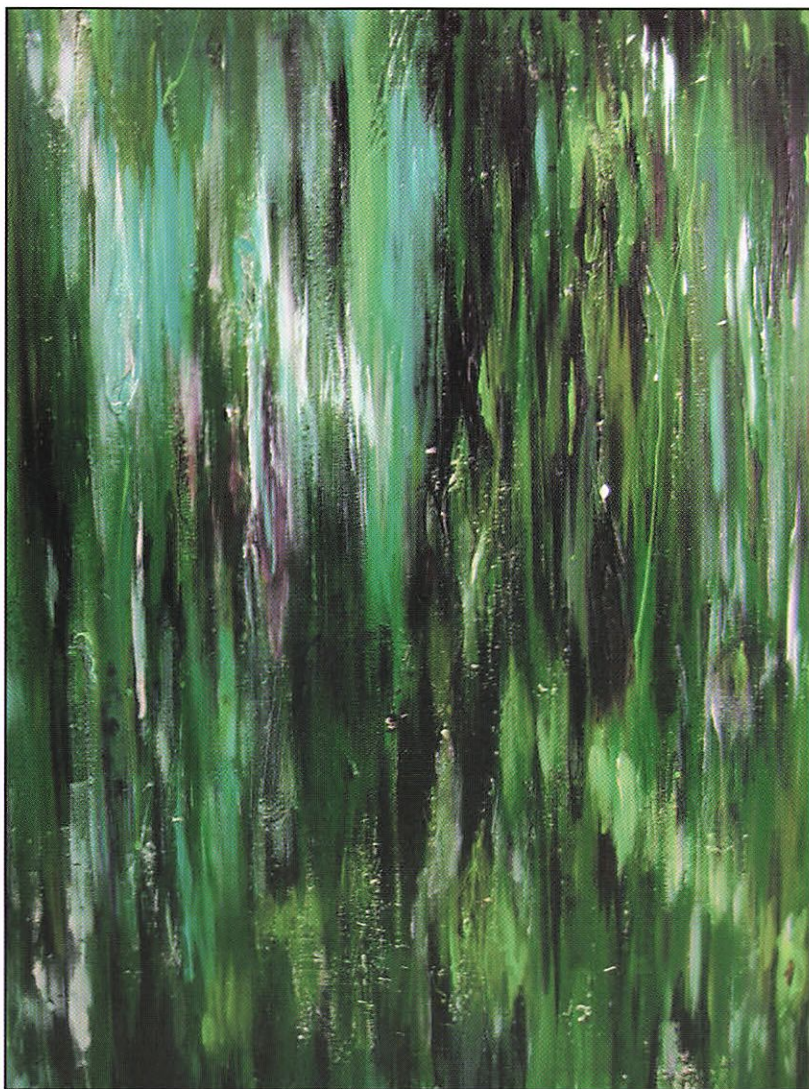
Teresa Behlke

Black and White Photo

MY ORCHARD

Lana Boles

In a candy apple orchard I played
dazed
amazed
wandering helpless as if lost in a dreamland
a vibrant ethereal carnival of wondrous imaginings
All spectrums of color danced before my eyes in an illustrious streaming flow
a discoball spinning in the dark
My hand in nervous uncertainty reached for solidity
reality
support
A faint echo of remembrance knocked at the door like a child forgotten
waiting
sadly
impatiently
to be remembered and loved
My hand was numb to touch
anything and everything was invisible to it
I tried to concentrate on the now
on the smell
the colors
even the taste of now
lost like a ship in fog
Backdoor lovers walked with madness in thier eyes
burning like candles in the darkness
thier bodies aching for that fleeting pleasure
found in meetings at midnight motels
rose petal discoveries changed all that
No longer unseen
no longer unknown



UNTITLED
Cory Wicker
Acrylic

X-MEN AND THE MICRONAUTS

Kitt Jennings

Misty rain cracks and steams off two bare neon signs,
clinging to storefront, barely protected under dripping eaves.
Games – Comics – Toys, one mutters with a yawn.
Buy – Sell – Trade, the other commands.

In these slave hands I hold the dead weight
of all the lies learned in childhood,
the glass shard dreams that cut adults
who once hoped, and then learned better.
I await judgment at the front counter, watching as
the clerk paws through my comics, pausing
to inspect the four-part X-Men and the Micronauts series,
plastic-sheathed and sealed with the gravity
of adolescent blood ritual. He glances up to search
my stone face for some chiseled message before
exposing them to air for the first time in ten years.

A hundred sun-dappled afternoons and a hundred rain-soaked days
are folded between these pages, some scarred and scuffed
by the grasping, tearing tree trunks I used to climb
on a quest for solitude and uninterrupted reading time.
Thick boughs closed around me like a fist, immobilized me
like the broken wrench engulfed by a gnarled knot of cottonwood
in my granddad's ancient, overgrown backyard.
Here I learned what I needed to be: a justice-clad avenger,
unbowed by hardship, dripping with virtue, honest, loyal,
stronger than the darkest checkered past, better than any
supposed impossible task, fair and charming and clever and true,
with thirty-mile legs and an inability to accept anything less than
the just-in-time saving of whatever it is that most begs for saving
at that particular moment. But I should also remain human.
Deeply flawed and cracked underneath that glossy varnish of spandex,
wise-cracking and ass-kicking. Tormented by a yearning love,
or haunted by deeds forged in the fire of rage,
before turning onto the Path of Good and Right.

Once, I thought I had achieved this as I stood before
a towering wall of Douglas fir and flame, getting paid
to save the world. But I just drank the money. I'm still a liar.
Tiny mistakes still kill people, and they stay dead.
The musty joy and ache of childhood still won't pay my rent.
I hear it rains for months here.

THE REASON

Hannah Salerno

"You're never alone," is what he said
and now he says,
"They'll find you dead."

I reply, "No! They'll convict you,"
then he smirks,
"You know I'll get you."

"Why don't you leave?"
is what they ask,
but they don't help, they just suggest.

"You do not know what he can do?
He can change.
I know it's true.

Those that meet him, they all like him,
believing all his claims
of my sin.

Perhaps, now I believe it also.
All that I now feel is hollow."

The past looks like a blur to me,
a winding path
of broken dreams.

A pale white face is all that's left,
along with scars
and emptiness.

A blanket of snow is there to protect him
and now they all say,
"It's your fault,
you let him. . ."

So shame overlaps shame and tears.
Pain circumvents my tries and fears.

I go back from where I came,
accepting all the hits and blame.

I see that it
has just begun,
knowing that he's finally won.

No more will to run away.
No more hope, so I will stay.

COLD

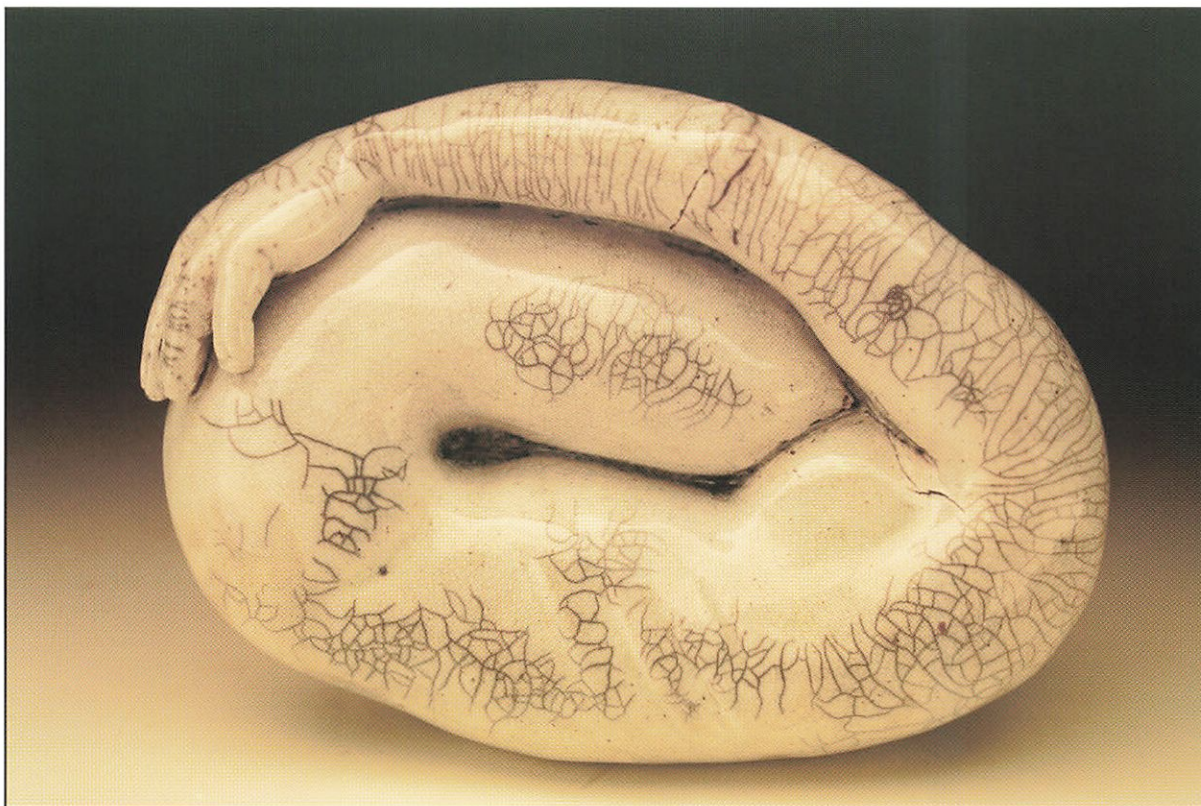
Lacey Ward

Its cold today. Outside the streets glisten with puddles made from forgotten raindrops. The trees cry dry yellow tears onto every inch of earth they can extract. The thick dreary sky possess a melancholy demeanor that pulls me into a deeper gloom. There is just enough wind to send shadows dancing that trick me into thinking there may be a soul out there somewhere. Yet it is still. So still it seems it would be impossible to move forward through the air. Nevertheless I search through the window for someone or something to assure me that I am not alone. My quest for being is not fulfilled as I can.

Its cold today. Outside the streets glisten with puddles made from forgotten raindrops. The trees cry dry yellow tears onto every inch of earth they can extract. The thick dreary sky possess a melancholy demeanor that pulls me into a deeper gloom. There is just enough wind to send shadows dancing that trick me into thinking there may be a soul out there somewhere. Yet it is still. So still it seems it would be impossible to move forward through the air. Nevertheless I search through the window for someone or something to assure me that I am not alone. My quest for being is not fulfilled as I can't find even a stray cat to relate to.

Its cold in here. A taunting cold that makes my nose and fingers tingle and yearn for the smallest amount of warmth. My hands keep finding themselves between my knees as if they provide some sort of safe haven from the icy air around them. Its still in here too. The only movement is actually no movement at all. Instead it's the repetitious creak of the baby's swing through the monitor. The great walls of the vast and chilly room seem to be moving further and further away, also abandoning me .

My mind is cold. It has let the chill from inside and out influence it today. It has given in. Being deserted by everyone, usually I can at least turn to myself for reassurance. But today, my mind is also vacant. It has surrendered to the cold and left me to suffer the loneliest brand of solitude a person could be bestowed. Then, as I set off to slither deep into a lengthy hibernation of seclusion, the baby cries and offers herself into my desolation as incentive. A way out.



UNTITLED
Megan Edmond
Ceramic

GIVING BACK TO FOLKLORE

Casey Ruic

You could build a forest
With all the paper I've devoted
To your memory
I'm sure that you could find it
If it weren't for all these trees
I won't get lost in the woods again
I left a trail of breadcrumbs
To lead me back home
If I'm not back by morning
Torch the place
You'll know where to find me
And I was given a fair shot
Besides
I was a sucker
For buying the stories
Of gingerbread houses anyways



OCEAN SUNSET

Laree Morgenstern

Monoprint

NEXT TIME

Cecelia Hagan

Next time let me be a stag beetle,
lumbering with dignity
under my great horns, encased
in a carapace to balance
the weapons I can't fight with
but can't put down.

Lunching on dew.

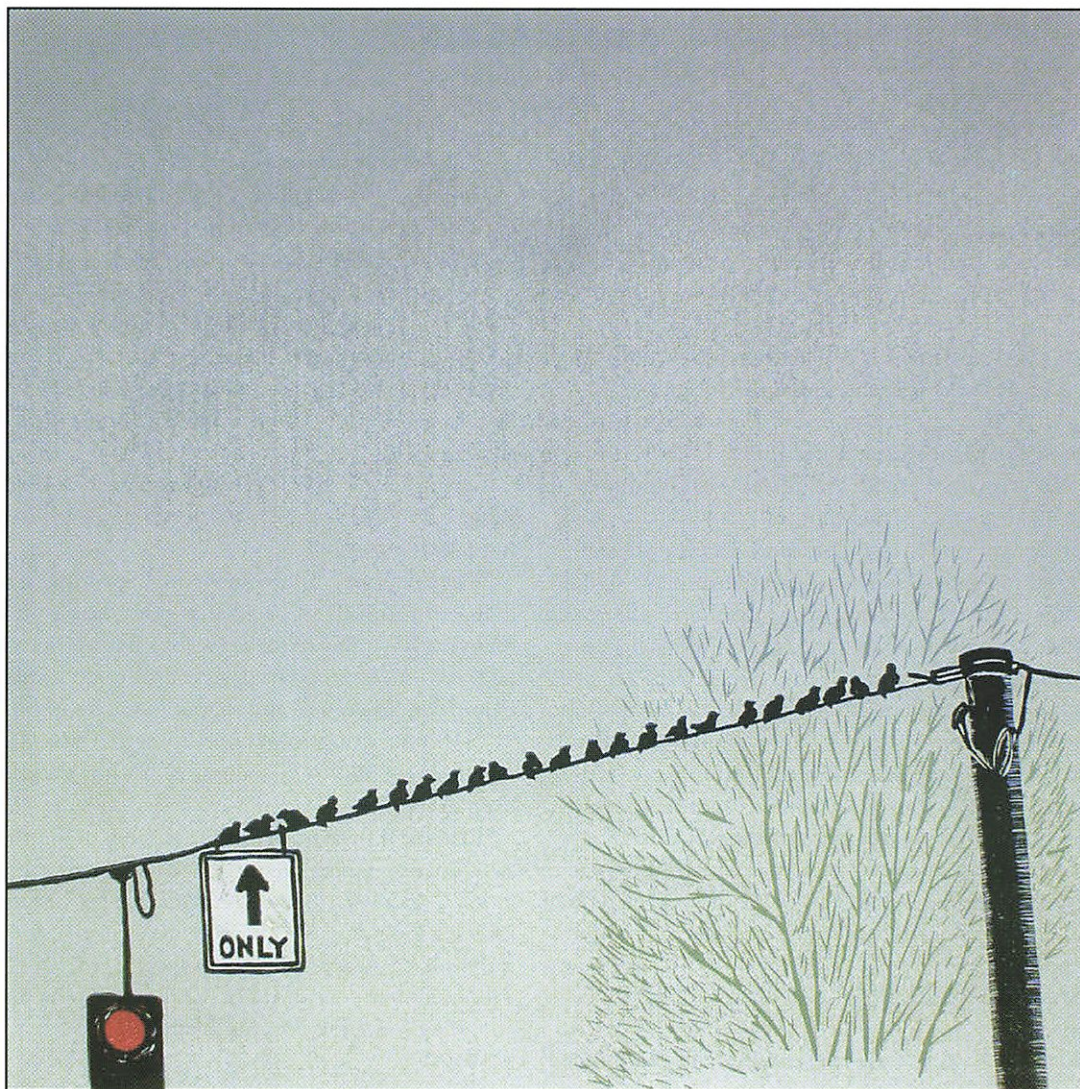
Working my six legs
toward a single design.

Not missing my piano
with its aching teeth,
not dwelling on those who dwell
in the trumpet of the angel.

My clumsiness would endear,
my lack of ambiguity
be as unremarkable
as a tractor in a field.

Today, Friday,
I wear a blue shirt
and a bit more makeup
than usual, compensating

for my ineffective armor,
my feeble restraint.



ONE MORNING

Mika Boyd

Block Print

COME AGAIN

Tahni Nikitins

Walking into the room, he slid his dark, round sunglasses up on top of his head from the bridge of his crooked nose. He was dressed all in black, his jacket unkempt, his hair wild and curly, framing his perfectly sculpted face. His clothes hung on his thin frame, accentuating his narrow body.

As he walked across the room, jamming his hands deep into his pockets as he looked around the room.

All eyes turned up to him, every person in the room taking notice of his thick, swirling aura.

This man was Elliot Drake. A funeral wasn't complete if he didn't make an appearance at it.

Wandering over to his typical corner, Elliot leaned against the wall, taking out a pack of cigarettes and his lighter. He pulled out one of the long, white, unfiltered cigarettes heavy with tar and nicotine that he was so well known for smoking. He put it between his lips, stowing his pack back in pocket and holding up his lighter. He snapped the lighter open, watching the tall, yellow flame licking up into the air and burning the end of his cigarette.

Snapping it shut, he shoved it back into his pocket, taking a drag off his cigarette and looking around the room. After years of losing the people closest to him, he knew there was nothing to say to anyone and nothing anyone could say to him, so he decided to stay in his corner and keep his mouth shut.

But there was always one girl who never would just leave him alone.

She had a slinky walk about her, and she always reminded him of a fox—just the way she held herself, her eyes, the way she spoke.

“Elliot—”

“Go away, Cassy,” Elliot snapped, tapping the ash from his cigarette onto the carpet as he blew cigarette smoke

from his nose, looking down at the carpet. “Not now.”

Standing up straighter, Cassy narrowed her pale green eyes on Elliot, puffing out her chest. “Elliot, I know somewhere under that face you think is so beautiful there is a real person. No matter how hard you try to shut me out I will still be here and I will still try to reach you.”

“Cassy,” Elliot growled, lifting his milky brown eyes to meet hers evenly. “Leave me alone. I don't need a shoulder to cry on, and I really don't need your little anorexic shoulder.”

Letting out a sigh, Cassy lowered and shook her head sadly. “You know Elliot, just ignoring death is not going to make it go away.”

“They're gone,” Elliot snapped. “Shedding a tear is not going to bring them back. It is not going to honor their memory. It is going to make me look like a jackass and that's all there is to it. Stop trying to get me to do something that helps them in no way and that does me no good.”

“I'm not trying to get you to cry,” Cassy said. “I am trying to get you to talk about it. It's not good for you to keep doing this—”

“Just like it's not good for me to keep doing this,” Elliot said, holding up his cigarette to look at it, as if considering it for a moment, before returning it to his mouth and taking a long drag. He tilted his head to the side and blew the smoke directly into Cassy's face.

Jerking away, Cassy lifted a hand to wave the smoke away, coughing. “What is your problem?”

“You.”

“Elliot—”

“No. Go away. I'm here because I have to be, not because I need comfort or closure.”

“Face it Elliot,” Cassy snapped as the smoke cleared. “Your friends are all dying and you're just ignoring it

because you're scared of your own mortality!"

"I'm not scared of my own mortality," Elliot growled.

"You're scared of dying!"

"Now why would I be scared of dying?" Elliot asked smoothly as he took a drag off his cigarette. "I don't care. There's nothing I can do to stop it."

"You're scared because you are dying," Cassy snarled.

"Really?" He grinned at her.

"Don't act like this you jackass," Cassy snapped. "I know you have cancer."

His eyes seemed to cloud over as she said this. He pushed away from the wall, flicking his lit cigarette at her. She jumped back, and watched the cigarette fall onto the ground as he stormed past her.

Looking up, she watched him storm towards the casket. He pushed aside an elderly lady who was standing next to the casket, in mourning. He grabbed hold of the lid and pried it open, his eyes locking momentarily open the dead friend inside. Turning viciously to Cassy he motioned to the cold dead body in the casket, the face pale and yellowish under the thin layer of makeup on the limp, loose skin.

"Look Cass!" He shouted across the room as people began to recoil from him, sucking in gasps of mortification. "Look! There's my old buddy Paul! Ain't that great! My friend, who I've known since I was six, just died in a hit and run! Everyone around me is falling over dead!" A smile broke open over his face as he turned to the lady he had shoved, jamming an accusing finger in her direction. "Hey grandma! You gonna die next? Guess what? I'm not going to cry for you because I'm scared of death! Does that make sense to you?"

"Elliot," Cassy said in a soft voice, trying to soothe him as she stepped forward, kicking herself for bringing up his cancer.

"No," he said, shaking his head. "I don't think so Cass. Do you know what it feels like to have cancer? Do you know what it feels like to wake up with that pain in your chest, knowing that your own body is eating itself away? How sick is that, Cass?"

"I'm sorry—"

"Shut up!" He pointed at her, his face contorting in anger. "Just shut the hell up, Cass! I don't mourn my dead friends because I don't want to, not because I'm scared of my own death! I know I'm dying, I have accepted that! I accepted that the day I found out I had cancer. You know why it was so easy for me to accept? Because so many people around me have died, because everyone around me will someday be dead—because we are all born to die. If you ask me, you're the one with the problem, Cass. You're the one who is in denial, who doesn't want to admit that she's dying."

"Elliot, I'm not dying—" Cassy tried, but he cut her off with a sharp wave of his hand.

"But you are. You've been dying since the moment your big, warm heart started to beat," he said bitterly. "How about you deal with it and see how that goes?" He turned sharply and walked briskly out of the room.

All eyes were now Cassy in her slim red dress. What had she done?

Cassy walked into the bedroom where all the coats were kept, to find Elliot sitting on the bed, his head in his hands, his shoulders hunched over and shaking quietly.

"Elliot?"

"Get out."

Lowering her head a little, Cassy walked over to the bed and sat down beside him. "Elliot, I'm sorry."

Lifting his head, Elliot turned a little to look at her. She could see that his eyes were red and puffy from tears, and

she felt a pang of guilt and pity striking in her stomach. She looked away from him, biting her lip, and wondering what had ever drove her to approach him at any of the funerals. But mostly, she wanted to know what had driven her to bring up his cancer. She should have known that it would be a sensitive subject.

"You know," Elliot murmured, rubbing his temple a little as he leaned back and lay down on the bed, "there's only four of us left now."

"What do you mean?" Cassy asked, turning to look back at him as he folded his arms under his head. "Four of who?"

"Us," he said, looking up at her. "You know? Just our group. We've been together since we were six and now there's only four of us left." A wry grin passed briefly over his lips. "As soon as I knock off there'll only be three. What'll you do then?"

"Stop it," Cassy said weakly, looking down at her feet. "I don't want to think of you dying, Elliot."

"Then why did you bring it up?"

"It makes me mad that you don't feel anything when our friends die," she said quietly, lifting her eyes a little.

"It's not that I don't feel anything," Elliot said, a little defensively. "It's that grief is like a trap. Once you fall into it it's hard to get back through the bars, and I've got to be free. I've only got a few months left, anyway," he said. "Why start worrying about it now?" Sitting up, he tilted his head to the side, frowning a little through the dim light at her. "Don't you want to be free from grief? Ultimately you'll end up in the same place as they did, anyway."

"It's hard for me," Cassy said, looking back up at him. "Maybe I'm mad because I want to cry on your shoulder and can't."

"No one said you couldn't," Elliot said. "I just said that I wasn't going to cry on yours."

"Do you know what people think of you?" Cassy asked,

a small grin touching her pale face.

"I do what I want to," Elliot said, "not what they want me to do. You could learn from me, Cass."

"Oh really?" Cassy asked, smiling.

"Yeah," Elliot said, laying back down. "I'm pretty sure you could."

Biting her lower lip, Cassy watched him for a moment as he watched the ceiling. He was beautiful. He had always been beautiful, and yet it seemed that somehow everyone managed to look over him anyway. Even herself.

Laying down beside him, Cassy looked up at the ceiling, sighing. The pattern was swirling white, with a little bit of glitter in the paint. If you stared at it for long enough it would appear to move, and you could pick out images like you could in the clouds. "Is that why you don't shine your shoes for funerals?"

"What?"

"You do what you want to."

"Oh. No, it's just that I go to so many of them I figure I would spend the rest of my few months shinning my shoes if I were to shine them for every single funeral I go to."

"That makes sense," Cassy said, tilting her head towards his as she frowned up at the ceiling. "What do you see?"

"I see an angel."

She tilted her head to the side to look at him, to see the way he stared blankly up at the ceiling. He took in a deep, heavy sigh, his chest lifting and quivering with the effort of it, and the small shards of pain shooting through the fibers of his lungs.

"You know what, Elliot?"

"What, Cass?"

"I love you."

"I know." He turned his head to look at her. "I knew when we were in eighth grade."

"And you didn't do anything about it?" Cassy asked, feeling a little hurt.

Seeing the tiny amount of pain on her face, Elliot grinned, and decided to push at the knife a little more. “Well, what was I supposed to do while you were crawling all over every football player in school?”

Turning away, Cassy bit the inside of her cheek. As long as she lived, she would never understand him. That didn’t mean anything though. She was starting to wonder if anything ever meant something.

“Cass...”

“What?”

“Come here.”

With a sigh, Cassy turned back to him, glaring. But he caught her off guard. Rather than being his typical, rough self, he reached out and touched her cheek so gently with his cool fingertips. He brushed a strand of hair back from her face before wrapping his arms around her and pulling her against him.

“I love you, too,” he whispered into her ear.

Feeling tears biting at her eyes, Cassy wrapped her arms around him, curling against his chest, feeling how weak he had grown since the cancer had hit. He was so much smaller, so deteriorated. The worst part about it was that there was so much to go.

Nuzzling her face against his shoulder and closing her eyes, Cassy held her breath to listen to the ragged sound of his. In her silence she could even hear his heart beating.

Running his hand over Cassy’s left arm, he pulled her away from him a little, running his fingers over hers. He looked at the golden band on her ring finger for a moment before quietly slipping it from her hand and dropping it to the side.

Cassy watched with soft fascination as he did this, and she made no move to stop it. She didn’t want to stop it. Why would she want to stop it?

The ring was the first thing to go. But by the end of the night, when everything else had been shed and there

was no way they could possibly be any closer, Cassy found herself wishing she had stopped him. Her tears rolled over her cheeks, dripping onto his as she kissed him, as she held him, felt him against her, and felt the disease inside of him.

They were all looking in on him, gathering over him and looking down while he lay inside the casket, unable to move away from their prying eyes. Looking up he saw the people he loved who hadn’t managed to die on him—yet.

When Elliot woke up from the dream, he was coughing fiercely. He could taste blood in his mouth as he scrambled out of the bed and into the adjoining bathroom.

Sitting up as the commotion woke her, Cassy watched him go. She heard the sounds of him coughing and sputtering in the bathroom, spitting blood into the sink.

“Elliot?”

In the bathroom, Elliot straightened up and looked in the mirror. He saw his own reflection staring back at him, his skin pale, his cheeks beginning to sink. His hair was a mess, matted and crazy around his narrow face. And then, there was his thin, pale body.

It all seemed so strange.

Cassy walked into the bathroom, reaching out and touching his shoulder. “Elliot? Are you OK?”

“Fine,” he said, wiping at the small spot of blood at the corner of his lips. “I’ll be fine.”

Moving closer, she rubbed his shoulder reassuringly. “Are you sure?”

“Yeah,” he said, nodding as he stood to face her. “I’m fine. It’s normal.” He looked down at her, tilting his head to the side. “You should probably go. Thomas is going to be worried.”

A small snarl came over Cassy’s face at the mention of her husband.

Smiling, Elliot leaned forward to press a soft kiss to her forehead. "How about I see you tomorrow?"

"OK," Cassy sighed, realizing that this would have to do.

Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow ... and those tomorrow's would cease to exist.

Walking into the small house she shared with her husband, Cassy felt like she was going to vomit. She didn't want to be here, and that morning as she drove home she realized just how sick she was of coming home to Thomas day after day.

"Cassy? Is that you?" Thomas came out of the kitchen, his brown hair messy, oils stains on his working shirt. He smiled when he saw her and came forward to take her hand. "I want to show you something—"

"What is it?" Cassy asked, incapable of caring any less.

"You have to see what I did to the car—it now officially has better gas mileage and more horsepower!"

Oh, goody. "Really?"

"Yeah," he said excited as he led her to the garage, but he stopped, pressing his fingers down on her ring finger curiously. "Cass?"

Pulling her hand back, Cassy looked down to see that she had lost her ring. It had never been returned to her finger.

When she looked up, she saw the look in Thomas's baby blue eyes.

"It was Elliot, wasn't it?"

"Thomas, it just came off, that's all—"

"You're lying to me. I know it was Elliot."

The calmness in his voice scared her. But what scared her even more was the fact that she knew he wasn't going to let it go, and she knew that he had been welcomed into her family whole heartedly—meaning he now had access to the tools of the family business.

Elliot trudged down the sidewalk, dressed in his clothes from the funeral, his head bowed to make sure he didn't step on any cracks. Not that it mattered—his mother was dead.

He'd once heard that you always know when you're going to die. For him, that was very true. His life expectancy was narrowed down to the next two or three months. That was closer than most people could calculate it.

When he heard the car raging up the road at his back, he knew that those two to three months were about to end very abruptly.

He didn't even lift his head. After Cassy had left he had found her ring on the floor. He knew Thomas, and knew that the guy was very attentive to Cassy's stupid ring. He also knew that the reason so many people he loved were dead at such a young age was because everyone he was close to was pretty involved in several illegal trades. One of those trades happened to be semi-automatic and automatic guns, which they sold to civilians who couldn't acquire a permit. The thing he knew the best, though, was that those weapons were designed to kill human beings.

When the gunshots rang out, Elliot was expecting a lot of pain. In a way there was, but in a way there wasn't. Three bullets hit him. One blew right through his spine between his shoulder blades. The force of the bullet hitting him thrust his chest out and his head back. Another bullet glanced off a rib, and another tore right into his left lung and through the front of his chest, spraying the sidewalk with blood and tissue as he fell to the ground.

When his spine was severed, all the pain between that point and his toes was gone. But hot flashes of pain flew through his shoulders, arms, neck and head as he hit the pavement.

The breaks to the car screeched as Thomas stopped the

car.

From his place on the sidewalk, Elliot could hear the car door open and slam as Thomas got out. Still, he didn't care much. Rather, he was fascinated by the fact that one of the bullets had torn through his most infected lung and blown out a portion of his chest.

Blood pooled around him, glinting bright red in the sun. Tilting his head down, he looked at the bits of tissue laying in the pool. A lot of it was cancerous tumors. Frowning a little in the bright light, as pain wafted through what part of his body he could still feel, Elliot stared at one of the sticky chunks of tumor laying in the pool of blood. So that was what was killing him.

His hands fumbled up around his chest as he realized he couldn't breathe. His lung was collapsing, the new

amount of air inside his chest putting pressure on his still intact lung. This was scary, but only for instinctive reasons. Consciously, Elliot still didn't care. He hadn't been breathing right for the past year. It didn't bother him that much.

Then, his body began to twitch and convulse as his brain sent out impulses to the ends of each nerve in his body, the last ones they would ever receive.

As Elliot's eyes rolled into the back of his head and his mouth fell open while his body twitched and jerked around on the sidewalk, Thomas approached, kicking him onto his back.

Without a word, Thomas lifted his gun and leveled it at Elliot's forehead, pulling the trigger. *



TRUTH

Abbey Corbett

Black and White Photo

THE RIDE TO MONTANA

Haley Songchild

Earl was this old guy I'd picked up in Northern Tennessee.
He had thin gray hair, a wrinkled expression,
and wore these big-framed glasses
that made him look like a cartoon character.
He was silent most of the time,
but kept trying to see over the dashboard,
as if he wasn't sure we were still on the road.
I glanced at him occasionally
as he tried to push himself up from the seat.
He looked like a child,
aggravated that the world around him was too big.
A frown would appear on his wrinkled face,
and he'd mumble something I couldn't hear.

After we crossed into Wyoming,
I asked the old man if he'd like a pillow
to raise himself up.
He looked rather insulted.
I turned back towards the never-ending horizon
and never said another word about it.



UNTITLED
Tylee Widmer
Color Photo

MARCH OF THE WHITE ELEPHANTS

Casey Ruic

Today
We threw a funeral for you
There was screaming,
And crying,
And gnashing of teeth
We crowded around your body
And buried you in flowers
We danced a pained waltz
And played old music
The songs we loved
To a room we couldn't
We surrendered our demons
In sacrifice to your name
But you weren't there to see it
And then we forgot about you

RAIN'S RETURN

Robert Hill Long

Imagine us all getting crowned, November
1st. The crown descends in pieces, evenly paced,
like a stage-prop chandelier (molded jewels
of sugar-glass) drizzled on cue through candystick-

thin fingers of dead orphans. That's Oregon winter:
crown of cold clear thorns, worn alike by the richest
and the homeliest on Day One. Then, whoever dwells
in a house can decide whether to take rain's potluck.

Rain on the roof lullabies the dozing embers
in the fireplace. Some folks jog through needling gray to taste
its minute clarities; some cope via withdrawal—
TV, Scrabble; some fly far south and never fly black.

If wearing a crown of rain could dissolve worlds of hurt
the homeless would wear it like an emperor's shirt.

THE RIVAL

Toni Van Deusen

My father doesn't like the watercolor
hanging over my blue easy chair—
wooden boat pulled up to a sagging dock,

scrub oak leaning out in the foreground,
matching the ascending angle of the blurred trees
on the other side of the water.

Why'd you put that thing up, he says,
one of your mother's old boyfriends
painted that—it's not much good.

He won't believe Bob Lockard, my mother's friend
and innocent Sunday painter, was never his rival,
and he doesn't know about Cordon Edwards,

small-time thief and bootlegger
my mother ran off with at sixteen,
on fire for the wild ones

tearing around Creek County in 1930,
Pretty Boy Floyd, Chloe Epps, Chickasaw Cherry—
the Oklahoma papers better than dime novels

for sheer glorious wickedness.
Her mother and aunts hunted her down
and brought her home, Cordon went to prison,

but for fifty years she held on,
lying beside my father in the becalmed boat
of their double bed, white chenille spread

folded at their feet, Police Gazettes
and True Romances scattered on her night stand,
fat volumes of history open, broken-spined on his.

All her life she dreams her way out,
dreams like she's still sixteen,
dreams it's Cordon at the door,

come back for her, roadster at the curb,
engine racing, a single black curl dangling
like a lure over his blue left eye.

WE HAVE A MODEST HOME IN A HARD HIT STATE

Leo Rivers

as if a punch to the gut
made her spit out her breath
face going red
with the fight to take it all back
my wife struggles to break off lashing me
with rebuke for
bringing up some simple criticism.

Side by side—she washes
and I dry—posting our dishes
to their addresses
as we both look out
from the window over the sink
and watch
the troop carriers from the local base
lumber up into the clouds.

one carries
our son and the graduating class
from our district high school.

Nations, like couples, fight to make peace
but I saw my wife's mother
leave as I came home today.
(I will die if she leaves me too.)



OLD MAN MUELLER

Jason Mueller

Ceramic



MOVE 15

Hannah Salerno

Black and White Photo

ORIGINAL METAPHOR

Nanci Jo Isham

The moon is like Paper Mache'
flour paste white,
with un-sifted lumps.

Crumpled and torn,
seldom remembered,
yesterday's news.

Humanities legacy,
reflects bright,
off lacquer surface.

Our thumb print,
stuck forever,
to her ageless face,
of dusty craters.

Deep in the night,
she a waits,
our next manned,
moon landing.



UNTITLED

Javier Magallenes

Color Photo

IRRATIONAL HABIT: SHATTERED CHRYSANTHEMUMS

Anne Applegarth

On winter mornings
the Coburg Hills rise slowly
from the heart of a cloud.
It is Japan, my Japan,
I know the people who live there:
Kazue-san. Michiru. Ten billion
kami. Shinto priests with
patent leather hair. Pilot Ito
(Is that her name? I saw her
once on Mr. Rogers.) I know
Koji-san. Boy's Day. Goldfish.
Toshiro Mifune (Samurai macho).
Shiori. Satomi. Brave Hiroshi.
Sister cities overflowed by origami
doves. Zen. Madame Butterfly.
Mr. Morimoto. (Kazue shops at his
market: lean pork, sliced thin
as a dragonfly's wing, udan, nori,
powdered dashi). I know, too,
American soldiers, blessing
or curse to Japanese families.
Rashomon. Ran. Kurasawa's New
Dreams (reruns nightly at the Bijou).
Mickey Rooney. Shall We Dance?
Kamikaze pilots with wrinkled
photos of wives, sons, daughters in
their pockets. Michiko, who sews at the

Levi factory to support children named
Charles and Jane. Brides in kimono,
in Princess of Wales taffeta. Men
using sticks to beat sweet rice for
New Year's cakes. New machines
that beat rice while men watch
TV. Electronic. Gifts of money in red
paper. Kazue's brave father, who fled
hospital to die at home. Bishop Vial,
who visited my father in Texas.
Saki. Plum blossoms. Pearl Harbor.
Fuji-san. Tea ceremony. Bataan.
Haiku. Hiroshima. Children playing
violins. Blonde California model
earning 6-figures in Tokyo. Mrs.
Mizota's house: rice paper walls,
sunken bath, antique kimono of a
thousand subtle silken hues,
lacquer bowls, miso soup, sashimi,
gifts, sorrow, and tears.

On the morning the Emperor died,
I drove my Datsun out Coburg Road
to meet the hills as they rose
in reverence from their bed of fog.
I wanted to see inside the shrine at
Ise, I wanted to pay my respects.

ALLEGIANCE REVOKED

Robert Hill Long

Twilight park, canopied with firs. Thrush song
among the heights, empty picnic tables parked
in lush grass, laurels blossoming. Over the ridge
a river of headlights, north and south on I-5,
as though everyone is hurrying to a funeral
without a clue where it is or whose burial
they must observe. Now and then a siren
sounds its reminder, now and then a crow.

At the sole inhabited table a man writes,
My country dreamed of being the greatest
suicide—then strikes it out, walks downhill, out
of the park, imagining being changed into
a crow. No, not even that. Maybe just the space
between feathers on a wing, iridescent
and venerable, where a feather is missing.



BATS

Dillon Powers
Black and White Photo



CONTEMPLATING GAME OVER

Greg Basore

Acrylic

DON'T TELL ANYBODY ABOUT GEORGE

Kris Bluth

My mom couldn't remember exactly what day I was conceived, but I went to the library downtown, looked up some old copies of the Oregonian, and I found out. August 22, 1965. The day the Beatles played at the Memorial Coliseum.

I'm glad they don't make us write those papers where we say what we did on our summer vacation like they did in grade school, because the only exciting thing that happened was finding out that George Harrison is my father (See? You think I'm making it up, don't you? That's part of why Mom promised me not to tell anybody).

It all happened back in June, about a week after the last day of school. My mom needed to go to Fred Meyer's to grab a few things and she asked me to come. She said there was something she had to tell me. I was a little afraid that she'd try to tell where babies came from, but that wouldn't have made sense since I told her last year that they had already told us about that during health class. Besides, I already knew what a tampon was since the time I was five and pulled my mom's box out from under the bathroom sink. She's not shy about talking about that kind of stuff.

We got to the store, bought the groceries, and it wasn't until we were back in the car going home that Mom that she had to tell me something that would sound like a big deal at first, but that it really wouldn't change anything in my life and that I shouldn't freak out. Then she started telling me about how she when she was sixteen she went to see the Beatles with Aunt Linda and some of their friends (Aunt Linda's a year younger than Mom.) Mom said she liked the Rolling Stones better back then but that the Beatles were OK and that her friend Susan's dad helped run the Memorial Coliseum and he was able to get tickets to all the shows there. As I said, my mom's not shy about private stuff (She used to walk around our apartment naked when I was little) and I was worried that she would tell me all the juicy details, but thankfully all she said was that she was walking back from the bathroom just before the Beatles came on when a tall guy with glasses and a British accent came up to her, pulled her aside, and asked if she would like to come backstage and meet them after the concert was over. Mom asked if Aunt Linda and her friends could come,

but the guy said no and checked her ticket; then he told her to stay she should stay in her seat and that he would come find her afterwards.

Mom said she went back to her seat and promised Aunt Linda and the other girls autographs if they would call my grandma (their mom) and say they were all going over to their friend Patti's house to spend the night after the concert. She watched the show, waited in her seat after the others left, and sure enough, the guy with the glasses came and led her backstage. She was crowded into a room with a bunch of people and some other girls and they waited until someone led them out a line of shiny black cars parked in this huge garage. Mom asked the guy with glasses what was going on, and he said that the Beatles were already back at the hotel and that they'd all go there for the party.

After that, all that Mom would say is that she wanted to talk to John, but there was already some other girl talking to him, so she wound up sitting next to George. She said that he was a really sweet guy and that she was able to get all the autographs that she had promised her friends and that the guy with the glasses got her a cab in the morning so she could get to Patti's house.

"So why didn't you sue them if you got pregnant?"

Mom laughed her little laugh; by this time we were sitting in the driveway of our house (I hate when she laughs like that. She thinks I'm being cute, but it comes off like I'm retarded or something.) She said that she tried to keep it a secret as long as she could, but when she got too big and she had to tell Grandma and Grandpa what happened, they told her that they all had to keep the George Harrison part a secret. At the very least, she said, it would have caused a bunch of rumors, and at the worst, it would have been a big scandal in the papers that would have really ruined her life, and mine too. She said that we were lucky that Grandma and Grandpa didn't freak out and throw her out of the house. Sure, she had to drop out of high school because that's how it works, but she was able to go to night school and later learn how to be secretary while Grandma babysat me. She now has a good job working for the electric company and we moved into our house last year.

So that's how I basically found out. We were still sitting

in the car when she said that I couldn't tell anyone, but not to worry too much about it because we had a good life and everything had worked out. Besides, she said that I could still be proud of having a father who was such a great musician and who has done so much great work for charity. She then said that I could listen to her Beatles records anytime I wanted before she gave me a big hug and said how much she loved me. I don't mind a little hug, but my mom loves to give me these big ones where she smooshes me so my face can feel her bra and she rocks me back and forth. She can even do it while we're sitting in our little Volkswagen. To tell you the truth, I think she's still a little bit of a hippie.

Besides that, not too much else happened this summer. I practiced my clarinet for an hour every day, I'm saving the money from my paper route (I have \$203.77 in my bank account right now), and I went to this bookstore downtown and bought this book about the history of the Beatles that had a bunch of pictures in it. At the front of the book, there are four pages with a picture of each of the Beatles on each page, and sometimes I would go into the bathroom mirror so I could hold up George's face next to mine. At first I couldn't tell that we looked alike at all, but now I can see that we have the same forehead and eyes; they're both a little hooded. I didn't really like how my face looks before; when I was little, there was this girl in our apartment complex who said I looked like a monster. I suppose it's a little better that I got that from someone who's rich and famous. To be honest, I don't think anybody at school would care if I was related to George Harrison. It's not like being related to Gene Simmons or John Travolta, but I can understand how that could get people talking about me behind my back. I hate when that happens.

I have been listening to my mom's Beatles' albums, though. She says her favorite one is Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, and that one's alright; my favorite songs on it are "A Day in the Life" and "Lovely Rita." (George Harrison only has one song on that album, but it's boring. It's called "Within In Without You.") I like Rubber Soul and Help better; "You're Gonna Lose That Girl" and "Michelle" are the songs I like best on those ones.

My favorite album, however, is just called The Beatles (Both Mom and my book says that everybody just calls it

The White Album). Some of it is a little weird (I told my mom that I didn't understand what "Revolution #9" is supposed to be about, and she said that she didn't either), but I'd say that my favorite Beatles songs overall are on that album. I like to put on my headphones and test how high I can turn up the volume on "Helter Skelter" before I have to turn it down, and I even tried playing along with "Martha, My Dear" with my clarinet. I feel kind of bad for saying this, since George is my father and all, but I think I like Paul's songs the best. I really love "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," though. According to my book, Eric Clapton came into the studio and played the main guitar part on that song one night while the other Beatles were all fighting with each other. All that I had really known about Eric Clapton before was that stupid "Lay Down Sally" song on the radio, but maybe I'll have to buy some of his records sometime. There were these guys in P.E. last year who said that Jimi Hendrix was God and Eric Clapton was lame. I'd have agreed with them beforehand, but if they listened to "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," they'd realize that they were wrong.

From talking to my mom and to Aunt Linda, everybody says that John Lennon is the best Beatle because of how he was funny and how he stood up for peace and all these other causes, but I don't know; part of me thinks that he was a jerk. He reminds me of Kevin, this guy in sixth grade who used to say that me and my friend Andy were fags; he even had this haircut that was like a mop-top. He'd say all this stuff in class that would make everybody else laugh, and once I looked over Annette Bowers' shoulder and saw her writing him a note that said that he was cute (She sat right in front of me.) I was also reading my Beatles' book and read about he left his wife and got married to Yoko Ono, this really weird Japanese artist who used to make records of herself screaming. She looked like a hag, too. I saw a picture of Cynthia (John's first wife) and she was pretty cute, but not as hot as Pattie, George wife. I asked my mom about Pattie, but she said that they got a divorce a while back. Man, if I ever get married to someone as hot as that, I'd never get a divorce.

I don't get why people get divorced, anyway. My mom's never been married, but she was dating this guy named Alan last year (My name's Allan too, but I have two I's instead of

one.) He seemed OK; he bought me this t-shirt with R2D2 and C3PO that might have been cool if I was a kid but it seems a little babyish now. Mom told me to tell him thank you and about a week later, she asked me why I never wore the shirt, so sometimes I put it on when I'm here at home to make her happy (It still fits, but it's getting tight. Soon I won't have to worry about it.) Anyway, one night Mom came to pick me up from Aunt Linda's house after a date. We were just a little way down the street when she pulled over to the curb, folded her arms on top of the steering wheel, and started crying. She said that Alan got into law school in Washington and that he said they needed to break up so things could be easier for them both, but Mom was already really upset. She said that Alan said he was thinking about going to law school someday, but didn't say anything about being accepted until just then. We sat there in the car for 40 minutes (I checked it on my watch) until she stopped crying and drove us home. When we got home and I was getting ready for bed, she came into the bathroom and gave me a big hug. As I said, I usually don't like it, but this time I hugged her back. Now that I think about it, maybe John Lennon reminds me more of Alan than of Kevin. I bet that Cynthia cried as much as my mom did after he got married to Yoko Ono. Ten times more, probably.

Now my summer is pretty much over. I technically start the eighth grade in two weeks, but I have to start going back early because of the Advanced Jazz band. As I said before, I play the clarinet. I've been playing it since the third grade when my class started an orchestra; I wanted to play the violin, but by the time Mrs. Nichols got to my name (It's Webster), all that was left was the clarinet. We were supposed to just learn how to play "Twinkle Twinkle, Little Star", but Mom said that I was doing such a good job that she would try and get me lessons if I wanted. To be honest, I was happy to do it. It's fun to play, and I remember how good I felt when everybody applauded when my class played at the Spring Festival assembly (Last spring, me and my mom went back to see my cousin Derek play the cymbals with his class and they were really bad. I asked her if I was ever that bad, and she just laughed. I *really* hate that.) It's funny that whenever you read about someone who has to play an instrument when they're little, they always have to stay inside while their friends are playing outside and the

teacher is some horrible old witch who'll slap their hand if they don't play right. That's not what happened to me at all; I still got to play Little League (I was a shortstop) and my music teacher was this really nice lady named Lydia who wasn't much older than my mom.

Anyway, that's what brings me here now, back inside the band room at school. We have get ready for our first concert and today's the first day of practice. Mom's at work, so I had to take the city bus down here. It was weird walking into the band room again; I know it's just been two-and-a-half months, but it seems like years almost. I got here a little early because of the bus, so I sat in my chair (Second chair. Mr. Kingston assigned me for this year at the end of last year.) and watched everybody else come in and get ready. I went and sat down next to this guy Kyle for a minute. He plays trombone and he spent the summer living with his dad in North Carolina. He was telling me about the amusement park his dad manages and how he got to go on all the rides for free when Vickie Cowell walked in. She plays the flute, and I guess you could say she's my dream girl. She has this reddish blonde-type hair that's actually looks like George's old wife Pattie. Today's she wearing red shorts and a white t-shirt that you can totally see her bra underneath.

I once heard these guys in the trumpet section talking about how big her boobs are, but I think she's really nice. We only talked a couple of times last year, but there was this End of School dance in our gym when she came up to me and asked if I wanted to dance (I had promised myself that I would ask her for the last song, but she asked me first, and it was a slow song, too. I didn't know the name of the song we danced to, but I went to the record store at the mall later and looked it up. It was "I Go Crazy" by Paul Davis). We only had class together a couple more times before summer started, but she was always talking to someone else and I never got the chance to go up and talk to her before the last day. I even got her number out of our school directory and thought about calling her during the summer, but I got too nervous. Maybe I can talk to her after we're done today.

I talk with Kyle until Mr. Kingston walks up to his music stand and tells us to take our seats. He then asks us to take our sheet music out and get our instruments put together (It's cool how we just get started like this instead of like the

other classes on the first day of school where they spend the whole time reading the syllabus out loud as if we couldn't do it by ourselves.) My clarinet is pretty easy to set up, and while I do it I watch Vickie screwing together her flute (The clarinets and the flutes both sit in the middle row, but the flutes are farther down, just below the trumpets.) While we're doing this, Mr. Kingston gets his music organized on his stand and writes down something on the overhead projector right next to him. Then he welcomes us back for another year, but it's a shorter speech than the ones most teachers give. He tells us about playing drums in his father's band over the summer and then he says he hopes that we practiced during the summer before we're going to try "Moonlight Serenade" first. "I'm not expecting you guys to sound great or anything," he says. "I just want us to get used to playing together. We have plenty of time to work on it."

I hear some of the other guys groan, but I practiced enough that I know it okay. Mr. Kingston gave us two songs to practice during the summer: one was "Chattanooga Choo-Choo" and the other was "Moonlight Serenade." They're both old songs, but I think it's better that bands and orchestras like ours play old songs (The marching band played that Rolling Stones song "Miss You" during an assembly last year, and it just sounded weird.) Mr. Kingston says that this was primarily a clarinet song so that us clarinets (Andy's first chair, I'm second, and Scott's third) will be starting off and the rest of the band will join in. Then he taps his baton, I wet my reed and count off my time, and then he leads us in.

Scott's a little out of tune, but besides that we're able to get going okay; I'm trying to pretend I'm back in my room practicing by myself, but I look over at Vickie while I'm playing. We're just about to get to the part where everybody else joins in, but Vickie looks at us and sees me looking at her. Normally, I'm pretty good at looking away before a girl sees me looking at her, but I was also busy concentrating on playing and was a little slow. But guess what? Just before she picks up her flute and starts in, she smiles and winks at me. Right at me. She winks at me, and just then the rest of the band starts up. It's kind of like on the movies or TV when the man and woman kiss and the orchestra starts playing. She was looking right at me, too. I can tell. It's a

little scary, but mostly it's exciting.

She likes me, too. Maybe she loves me.

I try looking back at her, but she's watching her sheet music. I'm excited, but I still have to finish the song, but as I keep playing, I feel lighter. Instead of having to focus on my tongue placement and my lips and on the notes, it all seems to happen naturally, and the music just comes by itself without me having to do anything at all. It's like when I was learning to ride a bike and when my mom let the seat go and I was able to keep riding and riding without falling over. Kind of like that.

I can even play with my eyes closed like I've seen the older jazz guys do, but now something else happens. Even though I'm playing "Moonlight Serenade," I start to think of "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" and the Eric Clapton guitar solo at the end of it. It's a totally different song (that's rock, and this is jazz) but I feel like I did the first time I heard it; like the music is so powerful that I want to get up and walk around the room. I feel that way all the time while I listen to music, but I've never felt that way while I'm playing. I keep looking over at Vickie and thinking about Eric Clapton and I just keep on playing; I'm supposed to sit up straight and keep still, but I can't help but move back and forth in time with the music and this feeling keeps going and going until we reach the end of the song and Mr. Kingston stops his baton and we're done.

My mouth feels dry. I need to go to the bathroom.

I don't know if Mr. Kingston or anybody else was paying attention to me; he just says, "Not too bad. That was okay. Catch your breath for a minute." He then goes over to talk to the trumpet section and I look over at Vickie. She's looking over the music on her music stand, but she looks over at me, smiles *again*, and leans over to whisper to Lorelei, the girl sitting next to her. I look down and stare at my music stand, but I feel great. I have to breathe slowly out of my mouth to keep from getting lightheaded. I think I ought to ask Vickie to go out with me. We can go to the movies; I saw a trailer for one called *Time After Time* that looks pretty good. Maybe we'll even kiss. Maybe I'll call and ask her; I think she'd say yes.

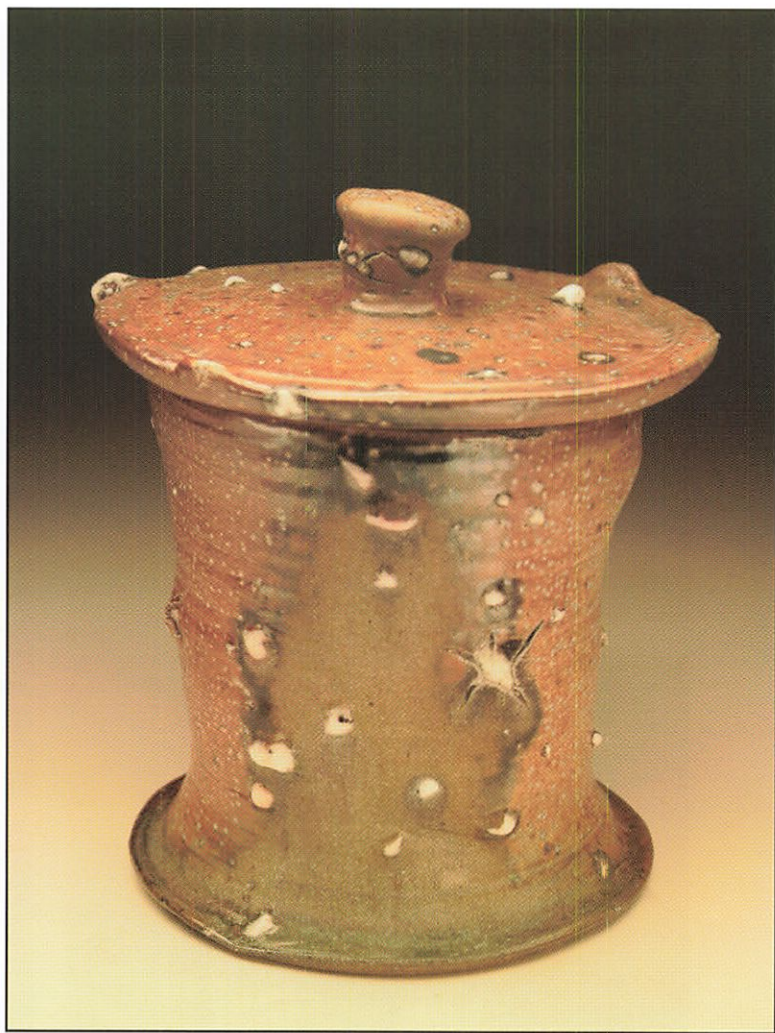
And now I have another idea. Maybe I can ask Mom if I can take guitar lessons someday. *



TRAILS UP HOOD

Dillon Powers

Black and White Photo



COVERED JAR

Joe Geil

Ceramic

MAG BIG

Cassie Ridgway

I bet her love for the world
and a reality all encompassing
so to lift this pen
 a Texan
words we discover on un-dusted shelves
in corners where corners have a different light.
 the rock
and no other overlooks this moment.
 the smallness
small like a human;
in vastness the celebration all around me.
 18,000 independents.
and she whom i beg an answer.
sure as she projects across distance and time.
 her vibrations are expanding
 just as the roads before me
 which stretch like tendrils clinging to a drop of water.
I've many dreams to believe.
 and many sights to see
 before i mean anything i say.
a brave man, a better man,
 betting for the magnificent Big.

RESPONSE TO MAG BIG

Cassie Ridgway

speak to me
 bridge east and west.
 never stop to think
 until the waters face you.
I've told you once before,
 maybe you didn't listen.
 we just don't have time.
believe in it, don't forget.
 forget my heart in Bangkok.
 too much to see not to forget something.
scatter yourself
 salt the earth with memories
 one can only create on a road;
 a road immeasurable.
I, for one, once touched big
 standing upon the butte.
I dreamed big.
 I dreamed you before i ever knew you.
 and found an earth inside my stomach.
I cut in.
 my insides poured out
 through the hole in my side
 that I held tight, when i was around you.
 still it bled through the linen.
turn white to red
 red to black
 harden and link;
a stentorian voice; rock-like, butte-like figure.
alone in the coming months,
 even though I'll find you in expressions.
if you died in a way,
 i revived you
 when it snowed unexpectedly.



PERU STAIRWAY

Kathy Torvik

Color Photo

LYLA AND GANESH IN LOVE

Joan Dobbie

When Lyla was 52, going on 19, she fell madly in love with Ganesh, who was a good deal younger, and looked a good deal younger than that. She fell in love with him because he dutifully gave her lots & lots of sex & because he was tall, black, inexplicably beautiful, and oddly sad, and because she was astrologically ready to fall in love according to her horoscope and according to the psychic whom she hadn't yet met but a decade or so later when she was to meet him would tell her that the whole rigmarole had already been set in motion by the stars several centuries earlier. Ganesh was, by the way, a musician. Not famous. Often hungry.

His being a musician, according to the psychic, explained everything.

Due to circumstances as yet untold, for the next two decades, Lyla never again left her house, but sat in silent meditation, waiting for Ganesh to appear, which he did on occasion, despite the fact that he was incapable of impregnating her, no matter how hard he worked at it. All of her relatives, however: her children, her nieces, her semi-children, even her middle-aged sibling set to producing offspring by the dozens. This, she assumed had to do with her own psyche being not quite in tune with the physical reality of its circumstances and so causing chaos in the material world. Ganesh himself, with the help of a certain enthusiastic young devotee, produced a strong, handsome son without any assistance from Lyla whatsoever.

Lyla, in time, contracted cancer of the breast. Which didn't kill her.

When she was 72, going on 20, Lyla at last fell out of love with Ganesh, but discovered that she loved him nonetheless and in fact (big surprise) that he was now, finally, obsessively in love with her. This had been predicted by the psychic a decade previously and so came as no surprise.

He asked her to marry him. She said yes.

As it turned out, the very next day, while crossing a six lane highway on her way to the bridal boutique, Lyla was struck and killed by an immense pearly pink SUV. The driver, a 29- going-on -73- year-old single mother of rambunctious half-black triplets (all three of whom oddly enough bore a striking resemblance to Ganesh), her ipod turned on max, had been attempting an international call on her camera phone, while turned around backwards in her seat changing three nappies at once, and hadn't been paying quite enough attention to the road. Her name was Agnes.

Ganesh was heartbroken (despite being mildly relieved). In Lyla's honour he composed a magnificently harmonious & rhythmical elegy which immediately topped all of the charts, both in the U.S. and Europe, not to mention Africa, India, Australia and the Caribbean. He became not only famous, but exquisitely rich, married Agnes, took up residence in Bollywood, Jamaica, and lived happily ever after.

His being a musician, as the psychic had previously pointed out, explained, everything.

RAIN

Light Dixon

An old familiar friend, rapping on my roof soothes my senses and relieves the tensions of the day. In lively, detailed whispers of monologue this conversation spills out of the Natural Universe to tap more rapidly upon the metal roof of my motor home.

Sound waves mount and break into joyous exclamations, subsiding into guarded, softly shared secrets. Rising slightly in monotone, a casual voice dissects the wet and sludgy, running through the peeling surface of variegated, green skin like unimportant facts ladled drearily upon the neighborhood; hot-fudge-gossip drizzled over another vanilla Sunday: plenty of nuts & no banana.

I wonder how I allow my mood to be manipulated so? I'm more prone to enjoy a lusty concert or the melody of a light mist than this paltry drip—drip—drip of petty gossip. This is my conditioning, my attitude. I may have earned it during the first dozen years of my life while living in the flood district of a small Oklahoma town. Whenever the rain quieted to constant drips in rest between hours of torrential downpours we would go out and look to see how high the creeks had risen, to judge if they would leave their banks. Our families often stacked furniture and boxes hurriedly through the night, trying to beat the water as it rose ominously. The floods scoured the land, robbing properties of anything buoyant as it rushed through outdoor commodes and septic tanks. This is probably the reason why cemeteries are located upon hills.

Our family would stay uptown with friends for a few days while we waited for the thick, muddy water to subside. Upon return we buried or hauled away the dead animals that had floated onto the property. Baseboards and linoleum floors, peeled up to access mopping the nasty mud and gook through the cracks, would be replaced later, after most of the water and some of the smell had gone. We took down boxes and furniture after the floods had abated and then scrubbed the walls clean.

Believe me; I really love the rain, even through its persistent dripping. It reminds me chiefly that its power is in its perseverant nature to cleanse, nourish the earth and to stimulate renewal wherever it may fall. If I could change it at all I would simply add the voices of birds, frogs and wind.*



UTRECHT

Aiyana Katz

Black and White Photo



Untitled
Becky Gunderson
Black and White Photo

DENALI MAGAZINE

For more than thirty years, Lane Community College has been supporting its students and the local creative society by providing one of the most important opportunities a writer or artist will ever receive: a chance to publish their work. Throughout its tenure, Denali has taken many shapes and sizes, ever evolving in form, but constant in its mission. Through the publication of work, we reach many ends, but none more important than giving the sense of involvement with the greater creative community. This sense is fostered by the contributors, but only reaches fruition when an issue is in the hands of the readers.

**LANE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
EUGENE, OREGON**