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Manchester High School



Bullseye '98



Bullseye 1998

Volume 14

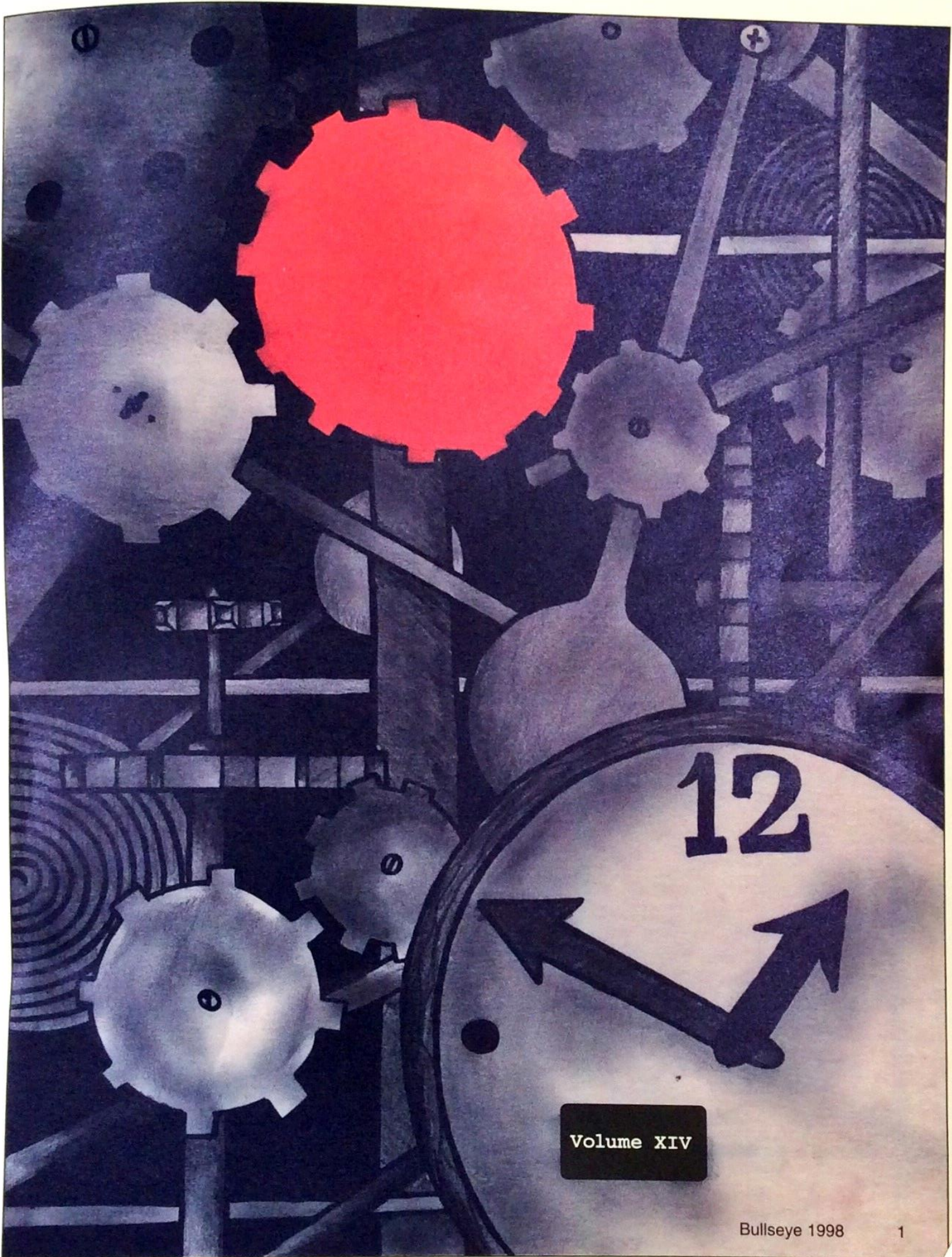
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Volume XIV

Acknowledgements

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zenith: climax success achievement struggle apex



twilight: devolution corrosion dusk entropy decay



midnight: fear anger retribution betrayal finality



Clockwork ad Infinitum

Time travels a 360 degree circuit every minute, hour, and twice every day.
Morning brings the sun's ascent and bathes the earth in heaven's glow.

*A man awakes, his eyes touched once then once again by red, color of the newborn sun,
the star that breaks open his sleep and pours forth dreams into daylight's waking hours.*

Sands slip through the narrow stomach of an hourglass
and the celestial orb continues to weave slowly the rhythms of a waxing day.

*The man begins his Way, creating his being with every instant, every breath, every action,
attains for one blissful moment what may very well be perfection,*

The high noon's sun chases shadows into hiding, conquers every aspect of depravity,
then, so near to its peak, remains a golden flood of brilliance even as its glory withers.

...and then it fades.

The entropy continues, and after a relatively short stretch of eternity,
the earth, pulling with all its selfish might, takes the sun inside.

*The man's routine persists, interrupted but for a chilled wind's shiver
and a millisecond's worth of a glance upward at sky turned red and paling purple.*

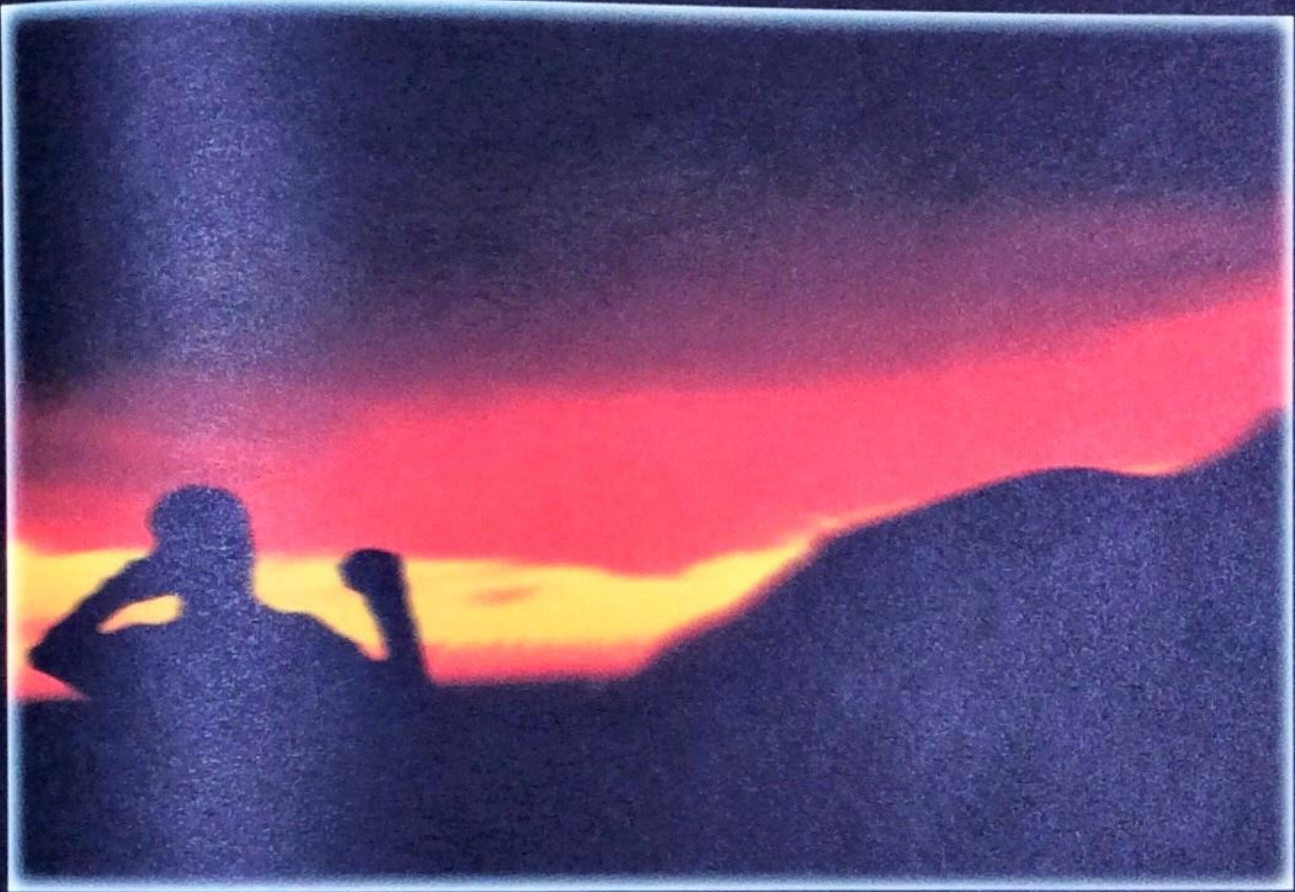
Only the mightiest tendrils of a waning sun still reach red red fingers over Gaia's soft belly,
and the endless cycle begins to raise Diana's sphere, that precious silver sliver of a lunatic's redemption.

*Finally, he repents a day's deeds done and pulls paper-thin bed sheets over his tired body,
only to shudder in fear of dark places, drop his eyelids, and dread what dreams may come.*

Every transient minute steals 60 seconds of existence never to be captured again,
except in other worldly recollections and dark reflections in the witching hour.

...still another dawn will come.

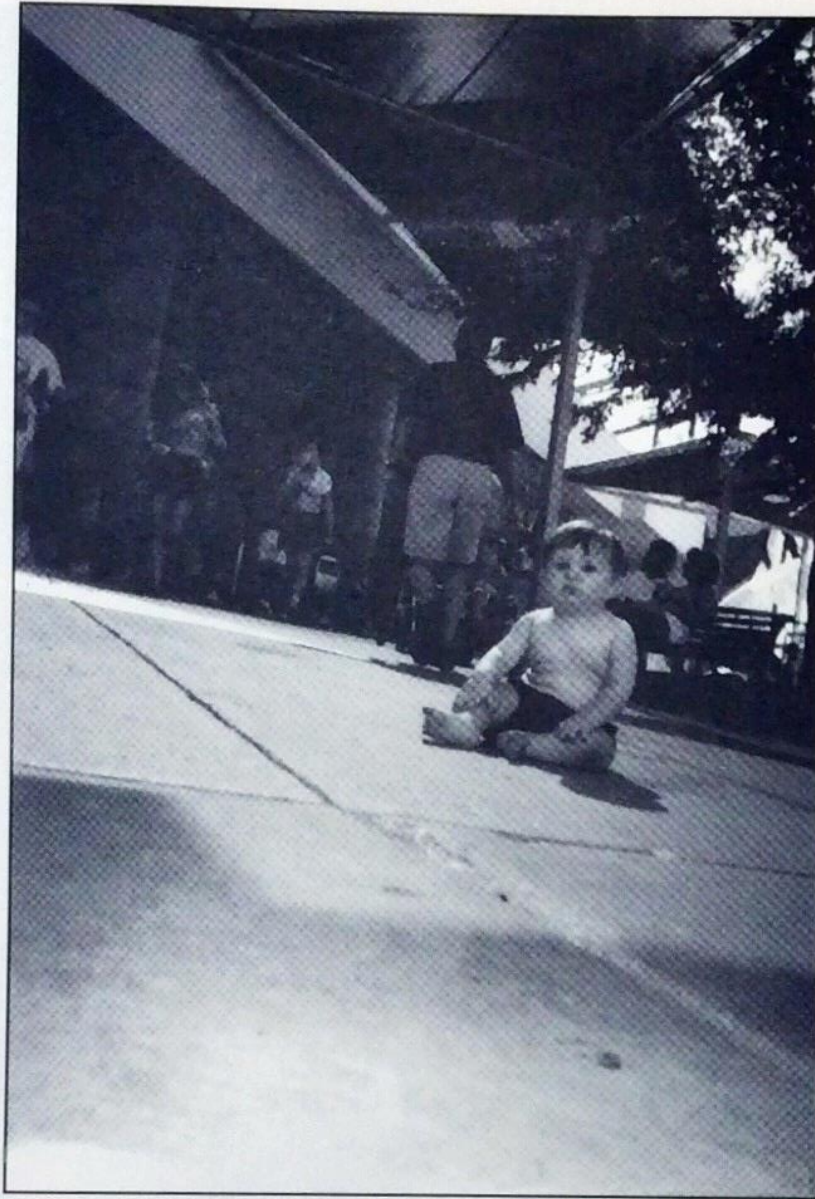




Dawn

the tireless servants
of dusk and dawn
turn slowly the wheels
of eternity's clock
to spin the earth
and raise the sun
and bring the birth
of the morning





Garrett Torrance

Pulp
Jessica Dodge

A life begins
like a precious feather
falling from an unseen sky.
A stomach of stones
churns to the melody of butterflies.
Unforeseen but expected with time.
The heart softens to a fragile pulp.
Moods change like colors of the luminous moon.
Some loud clock ticks to wake the nut behind the
prosperous eyes.
This new prospect is ending all to soon.
The soul is lost like a puppy in the desert.
A slice that may need help to mend.
Warm salt flowing from the lakes that created them.
A life ends... callousing the fragile pulp.

The Price of Love
Emily Bertoldo

The night was filled with stars
And the water lapped at my ankles.
Slowly I began to move closer, towards its reach.
My hair blew in the wind,
My dress whipped around my legs.

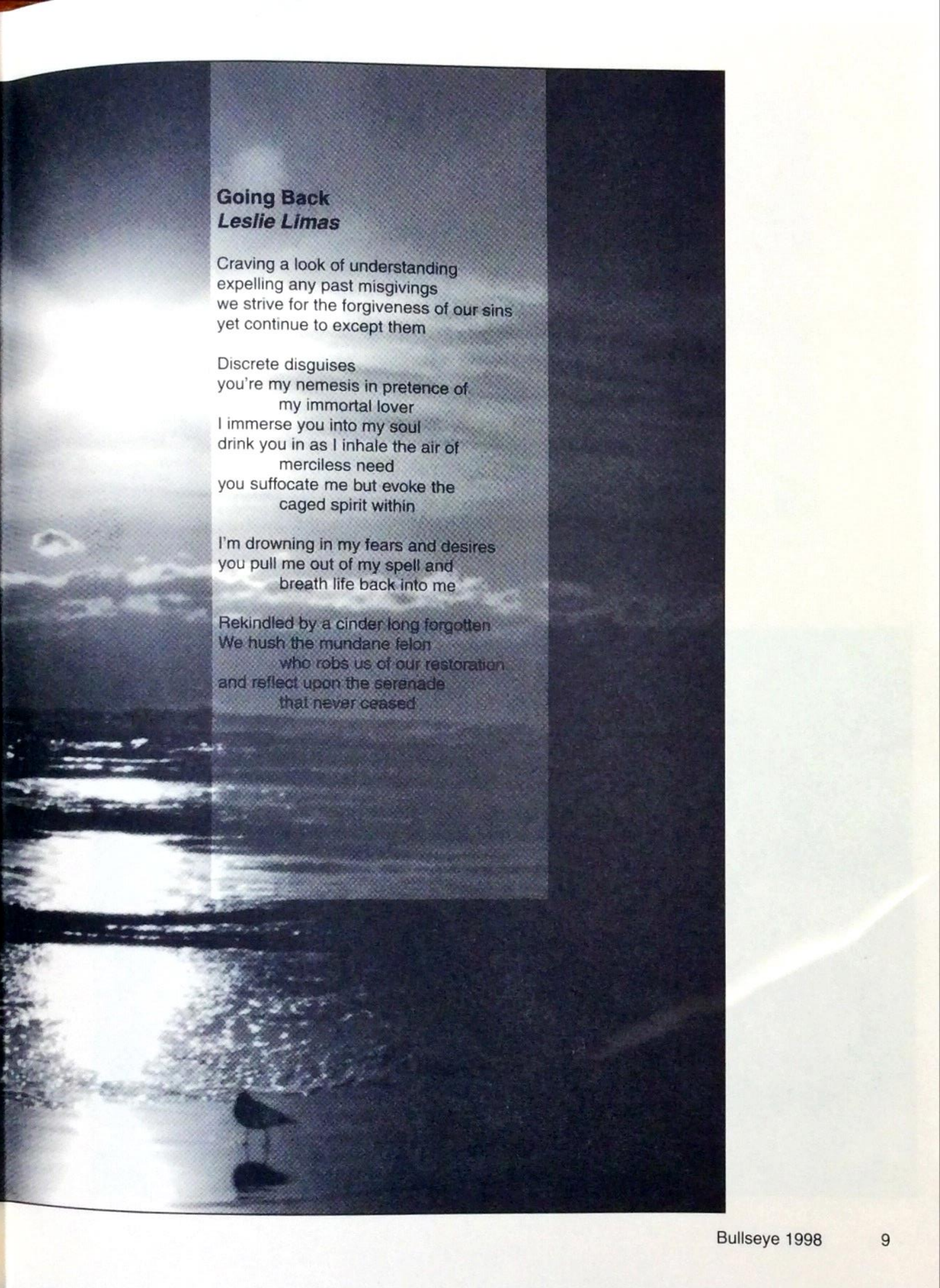
I feel as if the world
Wants to push down, below the water.
I walk further and further,
Becoming one with the ocean.

This must be the only way
To escape the pressures of life.
I hear him calling my name,
Begging me to come back.
But I can't, I won't, ever go back.

Water now laps at my neck, but I continue.
I never dreamt I'd be so calm
On the day when I gave away my life.
Besides, it doesn't matter,
The world is oblivious to my needs.

The ocean pulls me deeper, beckoning me to come.
As I take my final breath
And willingly consent to the ocean's power.
His calls are drowned
By the peace that fills my soul.

He's too late.
He'll never have me back.
But he had to learn
The price of the love he never gave.



Going Back
Leslie Limas

Craving a look of understanding
expelling any past misgivings
we strive for the forgiveness of our sins
yet continue to except them

Discrete disguises
you're my nemesis in pretence of
my immortal lover
I immerse you into my soul
drink you in as I inhale the air of
merciless need
you suffocate me but evoke the
caged spirit within

I'm drowning in my fears and desires
you pull me out of my spell and
breath life back into me

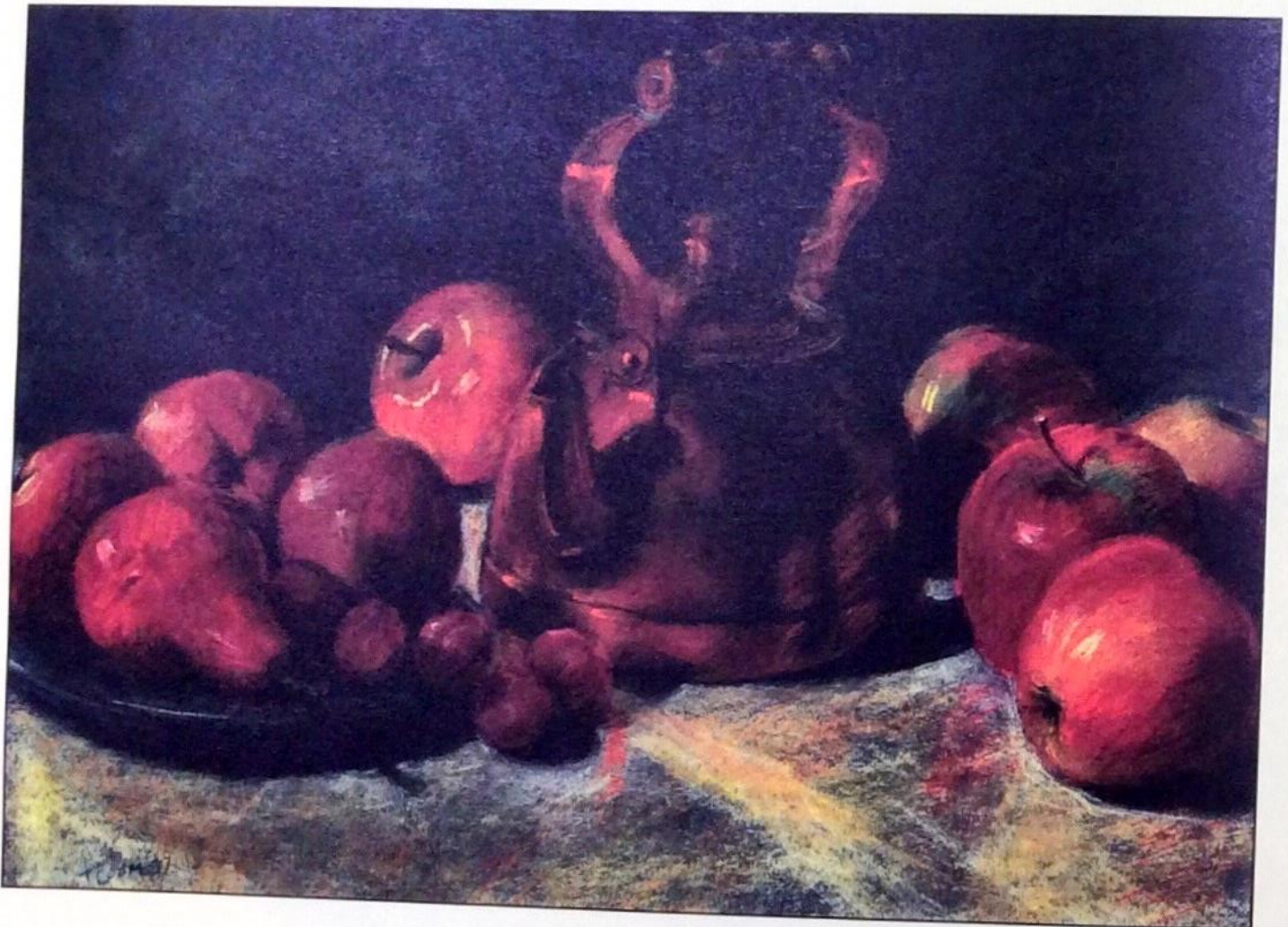
Rekindled by a cinder long forgotten
We hush the mundane felon
who robs us of our restoration
and reflect upon the serenade
that never ceased

Pictures

Illiana Quimbaya

Large and sweaty as a Texas oil field,
hands grasp the smallest brush from
the collection, carefully,
delicately outlining ocean breezes.
Amber sand, deep brown rocks waiting
to be climbed. He picks up another brush
to smooth out a wave. "Daddy,
why don't you draw me into your life
like you draw your pictures?"
He dips his brush into an ochre hue.
"Can't you see I'm busy? I'll draw you later."

Anastasia Toom





Beth Gardiner

Winding Path
Josefina Tobar

She walks along the winding path
the breeze flowing through her silky hair
her satin dress dancing around her
she stops to smell the blooming flowers
the sweetness of their fragrance
reminds her of childhood dreams
she sits awhile, staring at the sky
laughing aloud, as memories of
him roll by

As the leaves change in the fall
she walks along the winding path
a frown forms on her face
wilted the flowers have turned
and sour the smell
sitting awhile, staring at the gloomy sky
a tear slides down her cheek
as she wonders why
the changing of the leaves
Make her cry

A Lasting Impression
Emily Bertoldo

I met him only yesterday,
But already I succumb to his will.
He controls my mind and actions.
He is the focus of my thoughts.

I can still see his features,
Masculine and strong, yet loving.
His eyes tell a story of love and hurt,
Of learning to care.

I wonder if he knows what he does to me.
How when I see him
My heart jumps up to my throat.
How when he speaks my name,
The world just falls away.

I too, have learned in my life
To live, to love, to care.
I feel as if I'm a puppet on strings,
Ready to move at my master's hand.

I remember, oh how clear I remember
The way he looks at me.
His eyes show his love for me.
My eyes show the need for his love,
To give me life and teach me to care.

The Power Within
Brett Baillio

In my dreams I have found you
too real for me to tell.
If only sleep were eternal
my dreams would be my haven.

I am lost in your beauty, your mystery,
the forces that attracted me here.
But I would rather remain lost
if it is you I could be lost in.
You bring me happiness, joy,
my life enriched by your presence.
I long to keep you by me,
prolonging my state of bliss.

But the time comes, perfection disrupted,
and I must awake from my slumber.
My waking hours will all be spent
creating, designing, and finding you.

My life cannot be complete
until I am blessed with your grace.
To feel your smile leap on my face,
to have your laugh fill up my void.
The void is deep within my heart-
not quenched, untouched, not satisfied.

With my heart, my eyes, and dreams combined
I will uncover you from hiding.
Where I was lost, now you are
(this struggle proves to be difficult).
But love will triumph over all,
two wanderers meet, their destiny set.

My soul has found its resting place-
your life, a sanction for my soul.
Together we can stand,
but apart our love weakens.
The fabric that holds dreams from reality
must be torn.
We break free, crossing all known boundaries.
Love will triumph.
Love must triumph.



Nicole Mora

Bullseye

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STAIN

Sheila Snyder

Like a dream, yes, and just as bittersweet.
A tender rose petal brushes my cheek,
and upon its downward descent
grazes my blushing lip
to fall among others as I pluck another, speaking...
(He loves me...he loves me not...)

How thoughts flutter
as I stand mesmerized
like a thousand butterflies
streaming like sunshine
into the forest of my mind.
(even as leaves spiraling down, down...)

And when the sunlight drains horizontally,
a blackish ink,
it is...as dazzling as
a thousand twinkling diamonds
delicately cradled on a velvet cushion
(or singly sparkling 'neath the lid of a box hued as a
false night).

It is more marvelous than
the watercolors of the horizon diffused
after an enduring day;
more brilliant than
the blinding snow
which embraces the mountains
where the sun permanently sleeps.

And when I sleep,
it is the blanket that warms me,
which keeps my heartbeat steady;
It is the breath which fuels my lungs
as my mind drifts to infinity.

It is the aura that lingers
when I awake,
which renders me torpid and dreamy,
like a giant whose arms
fold 'round my shoulders
willing me back to the nothing of unconsciousness
(too soft to fully wake me,
too firm to let me forget).

It is more perfect that the cerulean sea,
who in all breadth and splendor,
who in all depth and dominion,

fails to rival it in beauty or composition
(for it is more beautiful than even the sweetest music,
and is composed of more than all the matter in the
universe).

Yet it can be
as ephemeral as the foam of Venus which sprays
up from this ocean,
or as timeless as the giant pearl
who sits upon his fleshy throne
in a clam at Neptune's feet
(even older than the keyless secret locked inside).

It is the force that defies
the effect of my eyelids closing...
this night...
here as I think of...

It travels as morning dew
down a blade of summer-green grass;
it hugs tightly,
but still slides...
(I think it is overburdened by its very essence...)

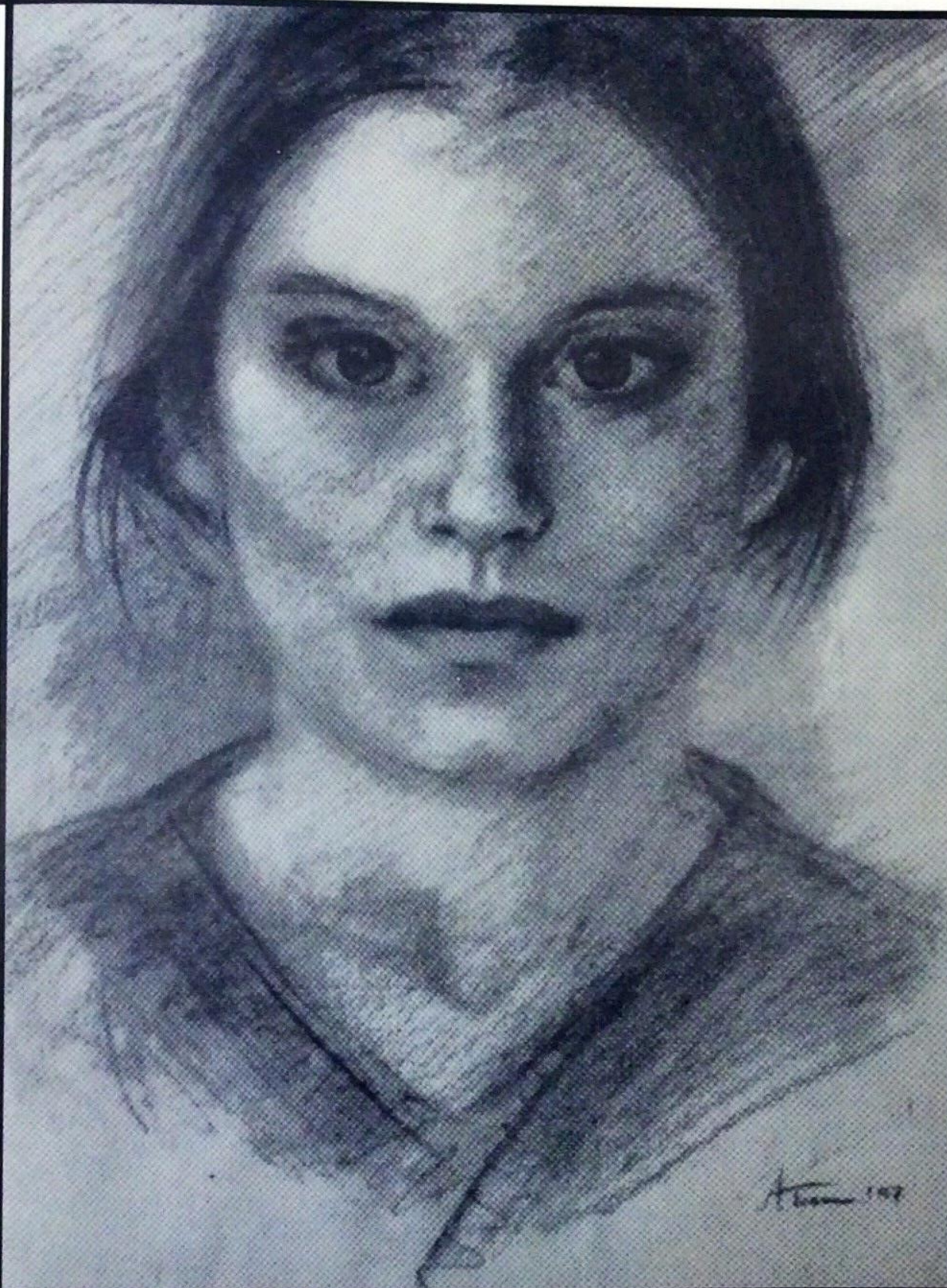
It is a river the width of Cupid's arrow,
which meanders through an endless desert,
a snowflake falling to the sun, the sun.

It is immortal,
and once those whom it enraptures perish,
it is the particle dust of their souls,
whose fiery will and persistence
defy any dictation of an end.

It is evident in an eye which sparkles to its very bottom,
lips which emanate the color passion,
cheeks burning fire...
a smooth hand
longing to be in contact with another,
arms hungering to embrace,
a knowledgeable heart furiously pounding.

It is the most endearing malady,
and though a sickness in itself,
can cure any mortal ill,
it is white upon black,
more stark than truth.
It is love.

Anastasia Toom



Something About Something
Emily O'Dell

Walking with you
You are saying something about something
And smiling

I am nodding
But something about something is
not what I am thinking

All the sounds disappear
And all the colors are clearer

This could be a dream
I could have been in an accident when I was eight
And this is a long, comatose dream
Nothing is real
But I love this dream, so I don't mind
Except maybe you won't be there when I wake up in
the real world...

What? I'm sorry.
What did you say?
Something about something, right?



William Rivera

Corn Cooties from Cootie Corn
Mike Kneeland

Garrett Torrance

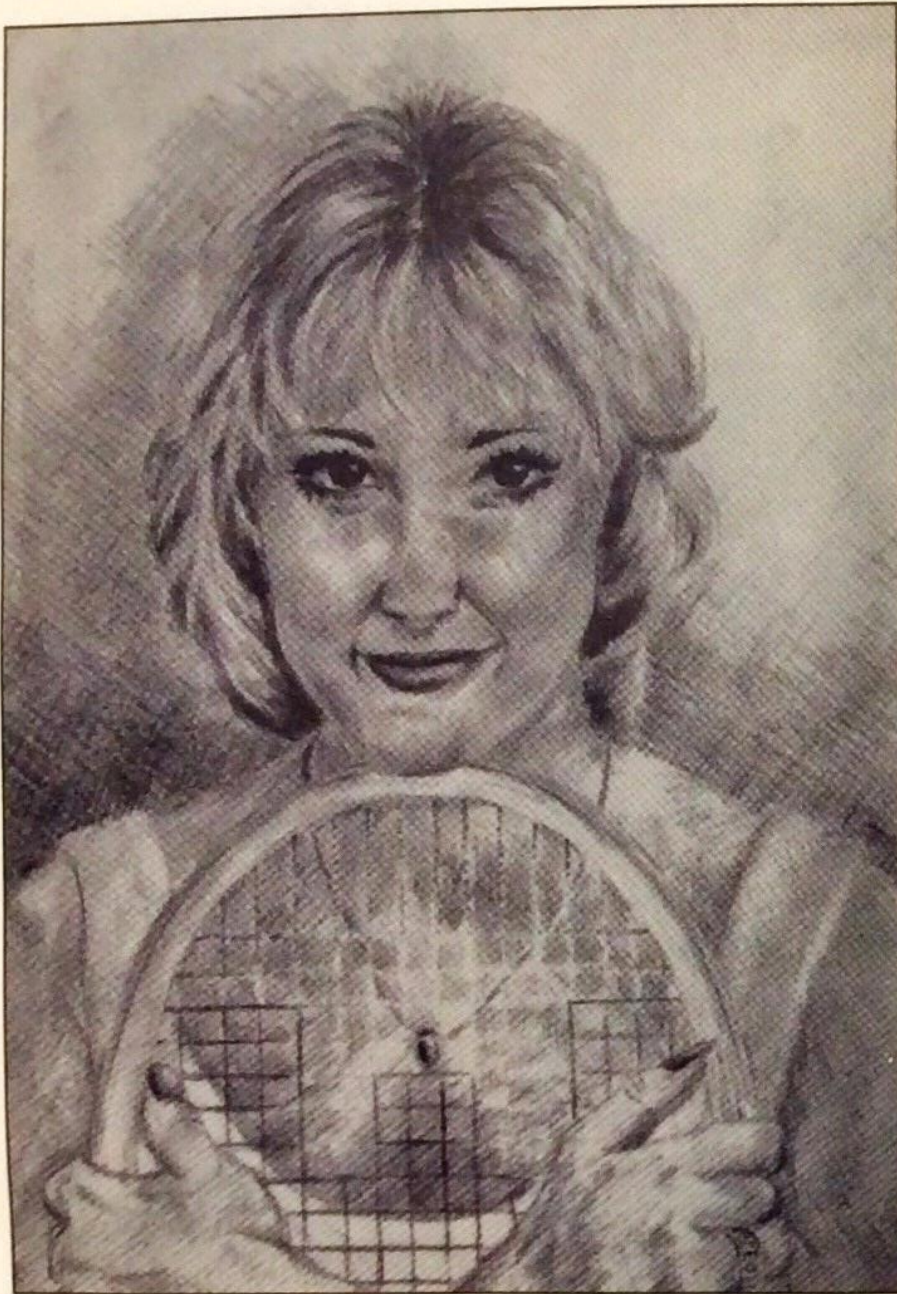


During that summer,
When girls still had cooties
And boys cringed from the touch.
Corn in the garden.
Children watching.
"It grew! I saw it grow!!!"
Up goes the triumphant yell.
Corn fully grown.
A girl touched that corn.
Is it cootie corn?
Will I get corn cooties?

During that summer,
When all things were still possible
We could fly like the birds
And run like the wind.
We could race the fish
And win in the sea.
The fox would challenge us
And lose at his own cunning game.

All things were possible that summer.
Genies granted our every wish.
Wizards, warlocks, and witches aplenty,
Down on one knee,
To give us all that we need.
Spells and enchantments forever around,
Protecting us wherever we were bound.

Was this summer real?
Of course it was true.
It will always remain,
In the memories,
Of the corn cooties,
From the cootie corn.

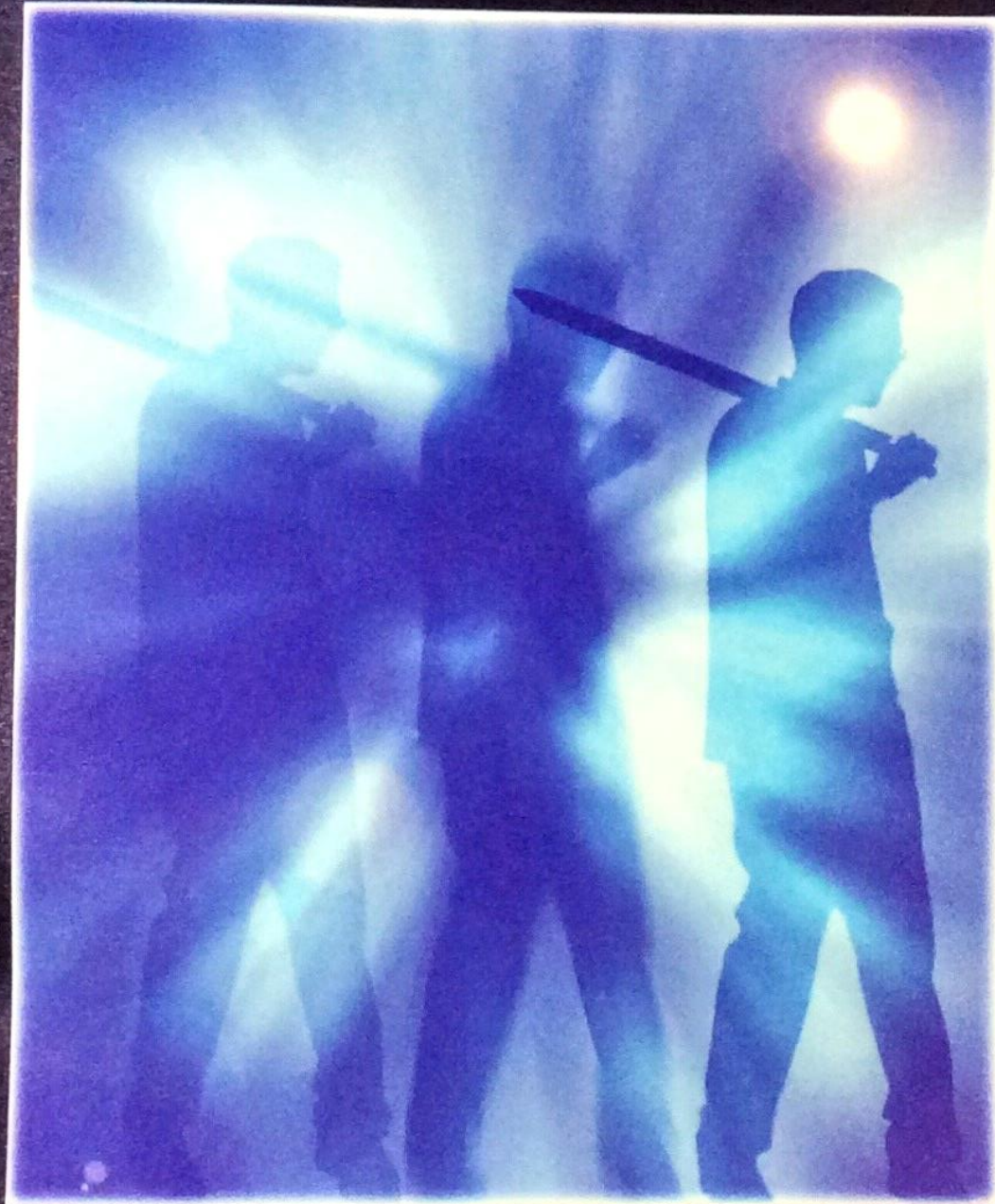


Eric Uhlir

I Miss You
Erica Garcia

Dedicated to: Valerie Denisea Campos
October 8, 1980 - February 7, 1997

A gun in a hand
Was all that it took
To make my friend Valerie
Have one last look
To hear over and over repeating in my head
"We're sorry to say,
Dear Valerie is dead."
Her family all mourned
While her friends all wept
But nothing really happened
To that senseless creep
He says it was an accident
It wasn't meant to be
But Lord why did you have to take her?
Instead you should've taken me
The time is now passing
While I stand at her grave
And I know if she were here
She'd tell me to be brave
But as a friend
I must admit
It's easier to deny it
Than to simply commit
To accept the fact
That she has gone away
Will take me awhile
What more can I say
In my heart I truly know
That Valerie is always by my side
She'll watch over me from where she is
'Cause my friendship with her could never die



Zenith

the cosmic timepiece,
clockwork master
to the minions
of dusk and dawn,
crests above the earth
and pulls
the puppet -strings
of man into motion



I Wait
Hollie Sexton

I feel a soft breeze lightly blowing on my neck,
sending simple goose bumps up and down my arms.

The cold floor reminds me of you and all you put
me through.

Light shines in my eyes almost like a glow. I can
almost feel my pupils contract from the harsh light pound-
ing on my face.

I tap the chains that bind me here like a lost pris-
oner, hoping to break them loose.

Blood runs into the tips of my fingers, making
them feel like lead. I can feel my heart throb with every
gasp of air I inhale. The fiery blood rushes to my head, I
feel it pounding. I hear a bird fly above me. Its wings
beating in the wind seem to play some kind of requiem.
But I cannot bear to lift my head to see the world I am
missing.

So here I sit detached from it all with my head
sunk down and trying to enjoy with little sun I can see
shining on the hard floor. I change my position and lie
down. I can feel the binding chains penetrating into my
swollen hands.

I wait on the icy floor, my blood rushing, with my
eyes closed and my dry mouth shut, but my ears revealed
so I may at least hear the angels when they come to carry
me away.



Voiced Without Language
Robert Watson

The air warm,
Hot near lips,
 Enhancing nature,
 Nature enhancing.

Cool new feeling remembered,
 Oh yes, Remember Paranoia!
See trees, hear the creatures that
 Attend this soft grassy
 Utopia.

A Jazz band of secadas hits the Mind
 And the impulse is to be
 With Them
 Alive
 With sounds.
Resonating, With light giving color,
 Innumerable Shades
And the gaseous taste of newly drawn
 Catalyst Sails.
Leaves propped up to catch the Wind,
 Move Ships,
 Sway Branches,
 Flail Arms, Warm and Lively.

Eyes calm, imbedded in the skull,
 Waking Sleep,
 Tired and Real,
The Surrealness of it All!

The ushering illusion is bringing me in,
 The perfect chorus of the wind
 Price of no mind, Freedom!
 Journey to New Mind, a thousand
 Cells and souls dying valiant Deaths
And Being Born in their rising action.

All this I surely know at this moment,
 None of it realized.

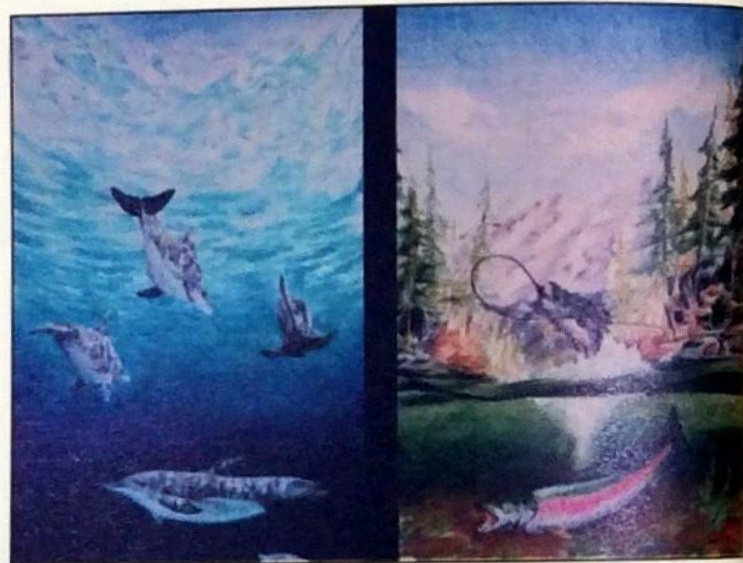
Give my eyes and attention,
 Give all my infinite senses
 To Man's horrible inventions
 Dripping up my ears,
All the way down to my Head.

The screaming, must be screaming
 No, humming, people dancing,
No, Shrieking! Dissecting the mad glow of nature
 From my eyes and skin,
Taking the orchestral poem from my ears,

 And taking the sweet taste of smoke, slowly away in
 hesitation.

What Demon brings frustration
 (Change is my only frustration)
What Sound now resonates?
 (It's simply my imagination)
What beautiful caress could this low growl
 (I doubt)
This low growl, high pitched walking sound
 Frightens me, like the words of people
 and their intentions
 Iron inventions.

The trains,
 Wonderful Galloping Trains,
 Hideous Marching Sounds
 To destroy endless parading circles,
They are off beat
 Like The Moon in The Morning Sky,
Blissful Realization.



Slow and Grooving,
Ungrooving and Mechanized,
Unmechanized and Pure
 With Secadas overlapping.
I'm Raving for the mad tappings
The long run out seconds that keep
 The mind rich in perceptions
And keep those demonic trains running
Angelic sounds like beasts that growl
 So Cunning.

Blissful Hell and
selfish Utopia
 What, are you screaming passion?
 A train rocking me to sleep in the distance?

Are you progression, giving rise to my obsession?
Are you God's smooth pen writing?
Writhing in flames your tracks are
Pure.

Sweet trains

Glorious divided plains to keep
The eyes and ears
Rich in revealing thought
How I've known you in this smokey bliss
How I've stoned you without this

Majesty of your redemption
This forward mode
And Traction
This moving stanza my reaction
To the new trains



Eric Uhler

(steel prisons)

Cars move slowly down the road,
Filled with absent minds from head to toe,
Just another pin prick for those who know
The rising action moves much too slow.

What new entity will I admire,
Time from now meant to inspire,
Another catalyst to throw upon the fire,
This stack of ashes can't get much higher

And what now on this thin world is left to amuse,
A springtime suicide on the nightly news,
Roaming witness for those who choose,

Their infinite minds to slowly diffuse.

And I fear the marks come like in revelation,
And the steadiness of cars is wasted concentration,
And that new life would be just another complication
for those striving, all witnessed information.

There is life right here yet we comb through Mars,
We worship streetlights to avoid the stars.
Damn the stars, their ferocious growl of pagan system.
The first Baptist church has a mission, the Roman
Catholic church
Has a vision, the same as any other institution gutting
their faith
in the highest glory, recalling events like bedtime
stories.

Eyewitness recollections to get you on their
side of the balance to cause great
imbalance like some kind of war
was to be waged.

Timeless story for the ages,
people tied to bounded pages
The story of Abraham is split from all sides,
As we're damned to a future
always on my mind.

All this thought glimpsing at reality
While it clings to the past in reassurance of
the future.

Morality
The Family
Sanity
Transportation (get to pavement)
Education (vital for that pavement)
Currency (the Grand Green Opera of today and tomor-
row.)

The Trains (these feelings I've borrowed)
Strange witness to the moving of all things, right now
pure

thought employs like no story or revelation,
lessons versus action
reactions surmounting as new change comes in the
form

of that new sound venturing farther into the
distance

But today sweet train you bring one more red
eye saint
raving, help to deliver us from slow death transportation

Help us cleanse people and the days they are
naming.

Knight in a Wrinkled T-shirt
Monet Tacquard

I think every girl's romantic life
gets screwed up in childhood
with an introduction to fairy tales.

We learn to look for kisses that can wake the dead,
handsome princes disguised as frogs,
and knights in shining armor.

All Prince Charming has to do
is whisk away one out-of-luck, light-haired beauty-
and we grow up wanting to be blondes.

Nobody tells us "happy endings" are happy
simply because they end
before we get to see what really happens.

So this goes out to all blossoming, adolescent females-
don't kiss frogs- they're seldom princes.
And don't trust every man who comes riding into your
life
on a white horse- he may just ride right through.

Don't let the armor blind you.
The true person is underneath-
maybe wearing jeans and a T-shirt,
or maybe slacks and a tie.
Before you get on his horse, or in his car,
or let him into your life,
find out what he's guarding behind his shield;
sometimes armor can hide an untouchable heart.





Sheila Snyder

Untitled
Anonymous

Be strong when your life is crashing.
See
How the person you loved is gone.
And you're knocked out.
Pick up
The splinters of your heart and say:
"I will survive"
Get up
Every morning,
Although a day promises you nothing.
Eat,
Although there's no goal to live.
Look
At the lifeless reflection in the mirror
And spell out:
"I'll be happy"
Go out.
Meet
The same people you met
When you were alive.
Stretch
your face and smile
even if your eyes are full of tears.
Exert
your lips and answer
"I'm just fine"
even if the only desire is to yield and run away.
Rescue
even if you are sinking yourself.
Say;
"I want to live. I will live!"
Be strong when your life is crashing.

NOSTALGIA
Maria Haring

Sing; dance
of long and sweet days gone by
take you back
to blue skies
California beaches
"a girl with kaleidoscope eyes"
sing; dance
to a rhythm and a beat
of nostalgic tunes
"walk down Penny Lane" under an
"Aquarius moon"
sing; dance
feel the music
sink into your
one and every pore
leaving you in nirvana
and nothing more.

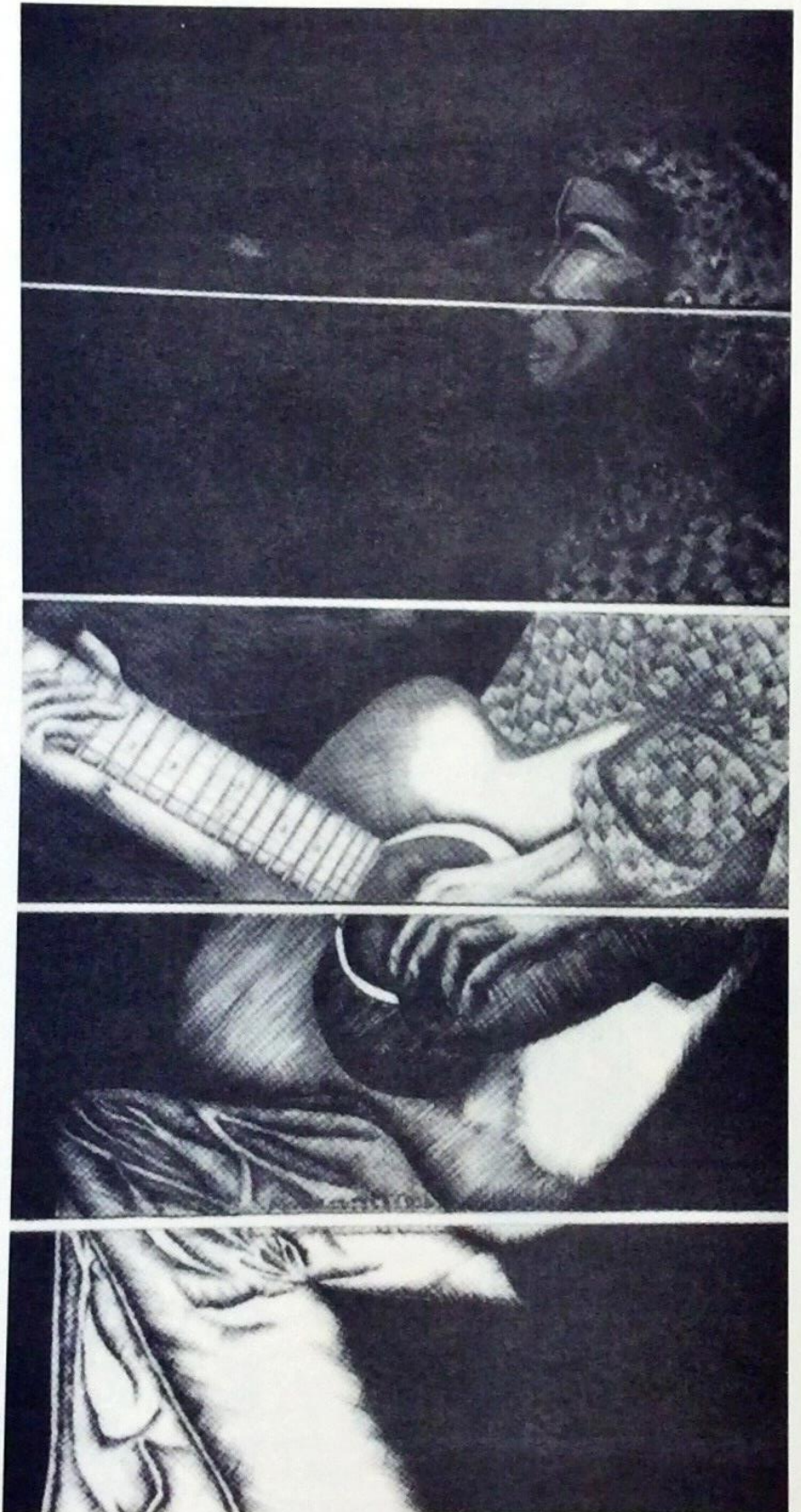
Eric Uhler



Glue Caps
Jennifer Gillespie

Seun Mun

Dominant figurines
red and black,
No one will ever promise their return.
Promises of change
to stay the same,
Changes of necessity,
unnecessary.
For kicks we jump into holes,
not realizing the quicksand bottoms.
We sell our names for keys...
to doors internally barricaded.
Continually we alter ourselves,
in attempts to avert banality.
We search for hypocrisy,
but refuse to see.
Succumb.



Jive Set of Wheels

Gerald Voorhees

Wrain felt the grip of the road beneath him, pulling at the tires of his shiny black Mustang even as friction pushed him forward and away. Through the dark-tinted windshield, he could see only a long trail of lights marking the twists and turns in the road ahead, zigzagging for what might have been miles but was probably just another hundred feet or so after which a million more lights would slowly fade into view. Those closest to him lingered just outside of his peripheral vision as small glowing disks, bright as hell in the center but fuzzy toward the edges where the light was already dissipating into the nothingness, stretching its tiny fingers out until they could no longer even grasp the air.

"A nice night to see God." He murmured softly to himself as he shifted into fourth for a moment to take a curve and then threw the stick back up to fifth to rejoin the straight-away, feeling the wheels on the road as if they were his own feet skidding along at lightning speed and only reacting when they told him it was time to tighten the laces. Why the hell did I say that? He wondered a second, letting his eyes wander from the road to quickly glance into the rearview mirror and then turned back again to the pavement. He shook it off as just the passing notion it probably was and returned 100% focus to his driving, smoothly sliding the wheel ever-so-slightly (about 5 degrees) to the right to take a rather wide curve and then letting loose his grip again.

He looked away from his road to push the power button on the radio and lift the volume setting to 17, wheel the bass knob all the way clockwise he could turn it and press play on the CD player strapped to the dash. "This is a test of the Emergency Broadcast System...." a voice began from out of his two back speakers, echoing upwards, outward through the car, already loud, rattling the CD player and the pack of cigarettes on the seat next to him. Wrain only looked down one second to press another button on the CD player and noticing his pack of smokes, took one out carefully and placed it in his mouth before grabbing his lighter from the seat and returning both hands to the wheel without even lighting up. Guitar riff from hell blasted out of the front speakers, tearing at his ears like claws against flesh, no blood only pain as sharp edges ran against weak protection of skin, prompting him to push the pedal harder towards the floor, motivation for his sleepy, tired brain, ready to doze off but freshly revived. It still wasn't right and he didn't quite like it so he looked down at the black Discman with contempt before pulling the plug from the slot that would have normally held the car's cigarette lighter, watching the lights fade from the display face of the machine until all the power was gone.

Just the radio was left. He switched the amplifier's function to FM and quickly changed from channel to channel in dissatisfaction until settling on 96.9, currently at

commercial but soon to return to normal programming. The audio went quiet all of a sudden and Wrain looked disturbed for a moment before he heard, just barely, over the static the mumbling voice of a man speaking through distortion pedal, half normal speed and all burned up on such and such. Faint at first, the delicate sound of screaming carried through the mumbles, not yet words but only pain and fear and more fear than anything else, deep and hollow thanks to whatever ungodly machine helped manufacture them. Then drums and guitar and sirens all at once burst from all six speakers at many decibels more than what he should be hearing, but he didn't give a damn, it was jive and he gassed the pedal again to give it more speed. Before him the road wound downwards in a series of three sharp turns and steep grades he knew better than the back of his hand (not that he really knew the back of his hand) from driving them five years now.

The first was approaching and he took his foot off the accelerator to let the car coast slower but only barely because that was enough for him and he rapidly, with lightning hands, threw the gears from fifth to fourth to third, slammed hard on the brakes while keeping control of the wheel, pushed it into fourth, accelerated into the turn and felt the inertia rip at him as if to pull him off the world but it failed. The curve ended and he pushed his Mustang back up to fifth and gassed it for the next straight-away. All the while, Al Jourgensen had

begun to scream over the peal of the guitar of wild things that would never happen or maybe did but a long time ago, all in the one word 'corrosion,' sound bytes echoing through the background, pleading the questions 'how long?' and 'how wrong?' to which I'm sure only Al could ever answer. Random audio distortion reverberated through his automobile, pounding into him each second it repeated itself. 'Fight him for the answer' a sound byte screamed, echoing and repeating and echoing again and again, guitar and sirens still shrill in the background as he approached the second curve and slammed his right foot on the brake just as he shifted down from fifth to fourth then third then up again when the road started to curve and he floored the pedal with leaded foot, sharp flick of arms to the left, and right hand throwing it into fifth

again to come out of the turn breathing, barely audible through the crazy devil music and raging engine. The lighter he'd held clutched under his pinkie finger while driving he now let fall into his palm just before he threw weight down on the steel wheel, sparks flying outward like angry mindless death to grab at any and everything but only catching the gas released from his piece of plastic Cricket and lighting a little flame for him. He put the fire to the tip of the cigarette in his mouth which had been screaming to be smoked and not just teased by Wrain who now drew in a rich cloud of smoke, threw the lighter back down on the seat beside him, opened his lips a bit to inhale the smoke and then exhaled, crystal white like dragon breath. He took in another drag before the last curve and then pushed his Corcoran \$79.99 military surplus right jump boot against the brake and shifted down fourth, third and finally second before letting off the brake



Raymond Uhlir

and quickly moving his foot to the accelerator. Wrain swung the wheel first, giving it a hard push to the left and bringing his arms so that each crossed the other and he could feel his whole self lost in the pull of the turn and then gassed the pedal to the floor and began shifting back up. The speedometer read fifty within a couple of seconds and was pushing seventy not three seconds into fifth gear, Ministry still blasting the same song out of his stereo: screaming thrashing repetitious echoes calling out dark from somewhere in someone's mind too dead to even think of light, even remember what it is and how it feels on flesh.

Song stopped. Just as suddenly as the music had begun, it ceased and all that remained was the mumbled

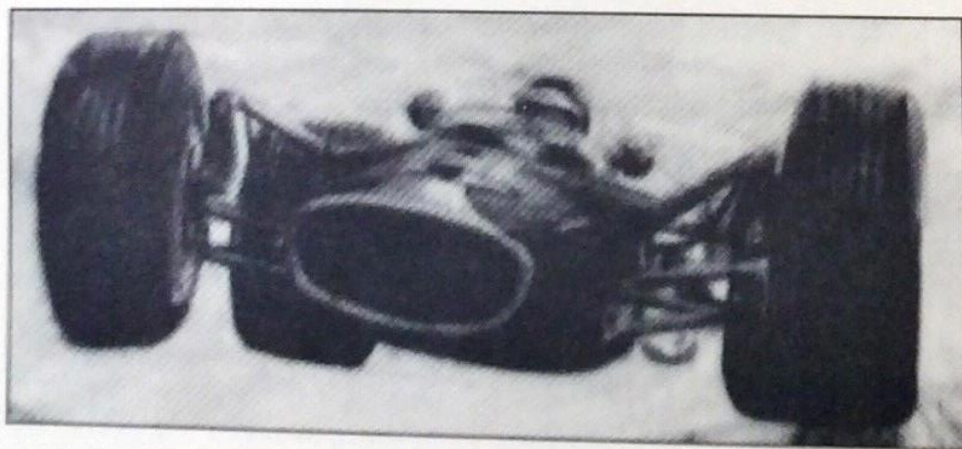
cries of some sound-byte or maybe crazy Al himself. That sucks, Wrain thought, having dug that song almost as much as the road. Blue and red lights began to flash in his rear-view mirror. That sucks, Wrain thought, having dug freedom more than he was going to enjoy the chase, not that he wasn't going to enjoy it.

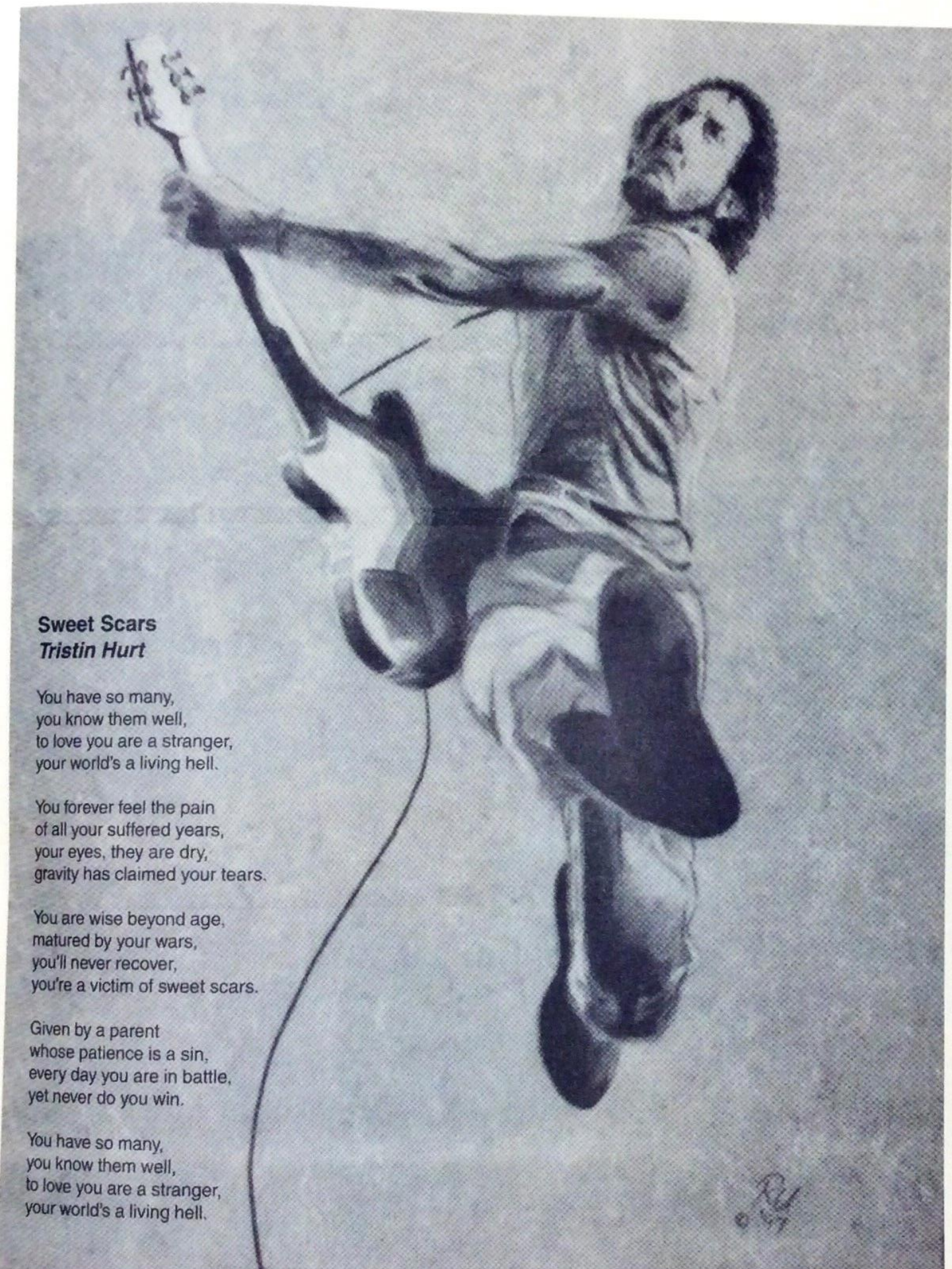
He was on straight freeway now and he knew the road better than the butt of the cigarette in his mouth (which he dragged from again, having forgotten about it completely and zoned into his driving). The tan and gray trooper car gave chase but Wrain gave it gas and leaned back in his seat to enjoy the ride, feeling every bump, lump, contour, and piece of gravel in the road as he flew over it at 100 miles per hour, climbing ever higher in speed with each second. Now he reached over to find the cord and plug in his CD player and press play, Prong beginning to blast from all six speakers seconds after power returned, frantic guitar groaning through distortion to keep up with the drum beat pounding away at a rhythm faster than Wrain's heart could beat. The odometer was pushing 125 and Wrain was feeling the wheel heavy under his grasp. He knew he couldn't hold on forever and to slow down to turn was as much an option as giving in. The sudden slowing would be damnation, an invitation to be smashed into by the state trooper who had somehow managed the stay only a hundred yards back, some sort of demigod behind the wheel. Wrain let off the accelerator and shifted his foot to the brake before making his decision final and gradually slowing his Mustang, left hand on the wheel but right hand reaching beneath his seat.

It didn't take long to find the Colt .35 automatic and bring it up into his lap so that he could check it quickly, flip off the safety, and pushing the muzzle against his leg to give friction, prime the first bullet. He set it down in his lap again and looked into the rearview mirror and saw the trooper slowing to stop with him and, now that he was down to fifty, he did push the brake to the floor, the Ford machinery grinding pads to axle to pull him to a stop.

Wrain pushed the wheel left just before he came to a halt, blocking the road thoroughly and sending a cloud of dirt and dust and grime into the air, denser than a fog and deeper than the missing. Wrain threw the stick into park, stepped out with Colt in right hand and cigarette in left — having just been removed from his mouth so that he could inhale, a task hard enough in the middle of a cloud of dirt and god knows what. He put the smoke back to his lips and took another drag, focusing his eyes on the cherry as it burned a tiny bit of paper and tobacco and tar, releasing a puff of smoke twice what he inhaled before dropping his left hand and cigarette to his side. Prong still droned on, vibrating the open door of his vehicle even as the trooper ground to a halt twenty yards away, at the very edge of the cloud of dust and dirt, still not settled. Wrain could see the trooper push open his door and kneel behind it, cock his shotgun, point it into the smoke and scream, "Get on the ground!" barely audible over the grinding guitar of Tommy Victor. Can you see me? Wrain wondered as he lifted his right arm perpendicular to his body, closed his left eye, steadied his hand, and then fired a round which ripped whistling screams of joy of flight through the air, kaboom and bang all at once, a single piece of metal shattering the glass of a window and entering flesh. Through the haze he saw the trooper crumple to the ground, shotgun falling beside his limp body and a pair of sunglasses smashing against pavement beneath the weight of his face.

Wrain didn't wait for the air to clear of haze or for his ears, already a bit thrashed from loud music, to recover from the shock of his .35 firing and killing and him calmly getting away. Wrain threw the Colt on the passenger's seat and buckled his safety belt before pulling shut the door, turning the wheel full to the right, shifting to first, and then giving a slight bit of gas. The engine growled, vibrated the steel frame of his automobile and shaking his hands even as they clutched the wheel, then leapt forward, away and gone.





Sweet Scars
Tristin Hurt

You have so many,
you know them well,
to love you are a stranger,
your world's a living hell.

You forever feel the pain
of all your suffered years,
your eyes, they are dry,
gravity has claimed your tears.

You are wise beyond age,
matured by your wars,
you'll never recover,
you're a victim of sweet scars.

Given by a parent
whose patience is a sin,
every day you are in battle,
yet never do you win.

You have so many,
you know them well,
to love you are a stranger,
your world's a living hell.

Tristin Hurt

Something Realized

John Penrod

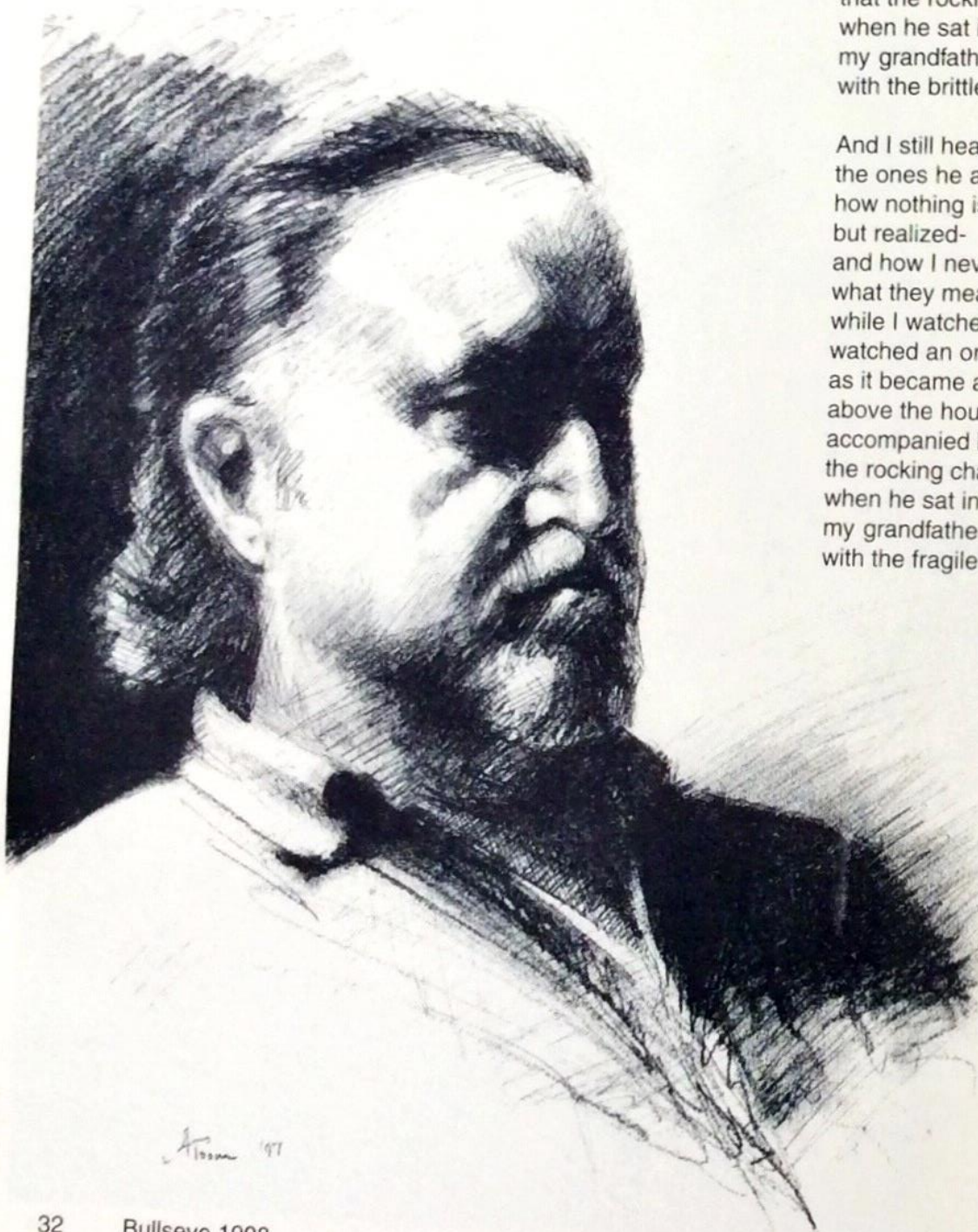
I remember my grandfather
and his fragile, shaking hands.
how they seemed always brittle;
thin and tired, worn.

I remember the rocking chair
and the singular way it creaked
when he sat in it;
my grandfather,
with the tired hands...
one holding a small knife
and the other
an ordinary piece of wood.

Somehow I recall the sound,
the scraping his knife made
as it ran the wood's length,
and how the strokes fell in time
with that singular creaking
the rocking chair made
when he sat in it;
my grandfather,
with the worn hands.

Watching, I remember;
watching the wood change,
how the shavings fell away,
tumbled to the ground,
like the seconds passing,
falling away;
like the hours...
the years passing,
falling away;
away from those thin hands,
each one accompanied
by the scrape of his knife
and that singular creaking
that the rocking chair made
when he sat in it;
my grandfather,
with the brittle hands.

And I still hear those words;
the ones he always seemed to say...
how nothing is ever born or created,
but realized-
and how I never really understood
what they meant,
while I watched the wood change
watched an ordinary, gnarled piece of wood
as it became a graceful rose
above the hourglass shavings,
accompanied by a singular creaking
the rocking chair once made
when he sat in it,
my grandfather,
with the fragile hands.



A. Toom '97

Anastasia Toom

For *Love* and *Sorrow*

Sharon Hammac



Garrett Torrance

"Petruccio! Hurry! My sister is going to be here in less than an hour!" Katherine yelled as she frantically rushed around the dining hall trying to clean the mess of broken dishes and the food splattered walls.

Down on the floor picking up glass shards, Petruccio looked up at Katherine angrily and, in a voice on the verge of losing control, said, "It's your fault."

"My fault! What do you mean it's my fault?! You started the food fight!" Katherine started scrubbing the wall even harder.

The servants, used to their Lord and Lady's legendary arguments, ignored them as they continued to clean the mess Petruccio and Katherine had made.

"You tried to order me around in front of our children!" He gritted out between his tightly clenched teeth, still angry with his lovely wife for contradicting him.

Katherine gasped in realization of what she had done wrong. She stopped scrubbing the wall, went to her be-

loved husband, and dropped down beside him. "Petruccio I'm sorry for contradicting you in front of the children and servants, but you can't put my sister and my brother-in-law in the servants' quarters! It isn't right! They need our help."

"If that gutless bastard, Lucentio, had a spine he wouldn't have spent all his money on his air-head of a wife! Everyone knows she's unfaithful to him. Come now, Kate! How could a man lose a fortune in less than two years? Vincentio left his son everything when he died, enough for five families to live on for at least ten years. Your sister doesn't even have children. I tell you, Kate, your sister and her husband are trouble, and I don't want them in my house longer than necessary!" Petruccio's black eyes looked up into Kate's blue eyes to see how she would react to his passionate outburst of anger.

Katherine's crystal blue eyes grew soft with understanding. Petruccio having had to do without sometimes didn't like people who wasted their money. Especially, since he came from so little. He came to Padua with only a title and the determination to marry a woman considered a shrew by one and all.

Katherine reflected over the last ten years and realized she had never been happier, even her stormy and sudden courtship vitalized her life. She had been cold, hungry, wet, and thrown around like a rag doll a few times, but never once had she been bored. Before, she meet Petruccio her days consisted of tedious lessons of music and art.

She placed her hands on top of Petruccio's and smiled shyly at him. "Come on let the servants finish cleaning this mess. We still need to clean ourselves." She ran a hand through her hair, which had come un-

done sometime during the fight. She grimaced at the feel of potatoes in her hair.

Petruccio started laughing, his good cheer returning as he looked at his wife covered with food. "You're right. Hopefully by now the children will also be clean and dressed."

He smiled again remembering the sight of his seven year old twins, Vincent and Alexandra, covered in peas, potatoes, and their chocolate dessert cake. His son reveled in the fight, while in contrast his daughter tried hiding under the table. When Vincent tried to get her she kicked him in the knees. Petruccio hoped his beautiful daughter wouldn't become as shrewish as her mother before he tamed her.

His Kate became more beautiful with each year. Maturity and children added a hint of wisdom in her face, but she still retained her wild cat temper and zest for life. He couldn't believe how lucky he was to find such a woman for a wife.

He never expected he could love someone as much as he did Katherine. At first he wanted her for the money, but once he met her in all her glory, he discovered a new passion in life.

First he wanted to tame Katherine's rebellious behavior, and make her bend to him, but after her speech at her sister's wedding he knew he met his match. He had never been so proud to say to people that he married Kate, the Shrew. During their ten years together she challenged him, obeyed him, and loved him. Katherine was everything he could have asked for in a wife, she stood up to him when she believed she was right, and occasionally these arguments turned into all-out fights.

Only after they made up would Petruchio realize how much life their arguments would give them. He still loved Katherine with all the passion in his thirty-five year old body, while many of his friends' marriages turned into farces.

Bianca and Lucentio's marriage is a fine example. Not a month after the marriage, both Lucentio and Bianca had strayed to other people. They joined Padua's aristocracy of intrigue and deception.

Meanwhile, Bianca's old suitor, Hortensio, left the widow he married and moved into his lover's house. The widow killed herself in shame. Petruchio couldn't really blame her; it's not every day your husband leaves you for another man. Then again if he were married to the annoying widow he probably would have left her for another man too. In the end the widow was even more shrewish than Katherine was.

Just as Petruchio finished tying his leggings on, one of the servants knocked on his door to tell him his brother and sister-in-law were at the door. He grimaced in annoyance, already picturing the next two weeks of hell. He walked out of his room and ran into Katherine. He stared in shock at the big dress adorning her body. Shimmering yards of gold and silver silk floated around her body barely touching the ground. A gold chain mail covered her black hair and a small purple jewel hung in the middle of her forehead. Her small red lips parted in surprise at seeing him so soon. Usually, Petruchio would take hours to finish dressing, because he knew it annoyed her.

"Where did you get that dress?" Petruchio blurted out in surprise. He knew it cost a fortune. His fortune.

"I had it made last year for my birthday."

"I said buy yourself something nice. Not spend all my money!"

Katherine pressed her lips together trying to think her way out of this one. "You didn't buy all of it. I spent some of my inheritance to make it."

Petruchio would have complained more, but she looked so beautiful in it he didn't have the heart to. "Come on, your sister and her husband are here."

He took her arm and escorted her downstairs to the parlor. Katherine finally taught Petruchio the fine manners of a gentleman; it had taken years, but the end result was well worth the wait. Katherine's eyes shined in happiness.

Bianca and Lucentio stood up when Petruchio and Katherine walked in the spacious room. Bianca's cold blue eyes lit up in jealousy at Katherine's ostentatious dress. "Hello sister! I just love your dress. Did you make it yourself?" Bianca's warm greeting belied the cruel comment she made.

Katherine smiled falsely at her sister, barely restraining the urge to smack the smug grin off Bianca's face.

Lucentio, seeing the tension starting to rise between his sister-in-law and wife, tightly squeezed Bianca's hand in anger. Unlike Bianca, Lucentio knew how desperate his situation was, and he didn't want his hosts angry with them. Lucentio cursed the day he set eyes on his shallow and cruel wife. He smiled apologetically at Katherine and told her he loved her dress and asked what type of silk the dressmaker used.

Katherine smiled at Lucentio knowing he was trying to keep the peace. "Actually I'm not sure what type of material the dressmaker used. He said it came from the Middle East, but he could be lying."

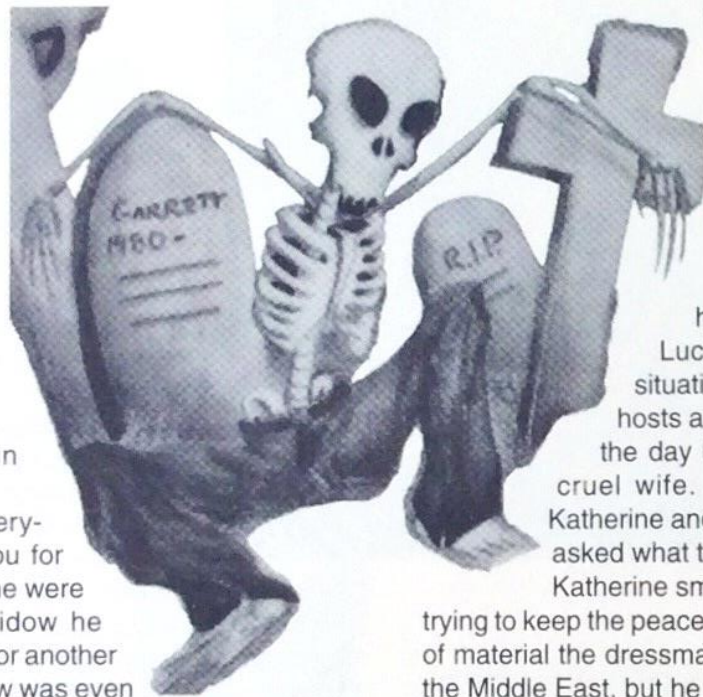
Petruchio rudely interrupted their small talk. "Okay, enough about clothes! Come on, I'll show you to your rooms." He stomped out of the room.

Everyone followed after him. Katherine bit her lower lip worried about what rooms he planned on giving to their guests. When they passed the servants' quarters, Katherine let out a small sigh of relief. Her smile faded, however, when they entered the older part of the house, and he opened a door to a room filled with cobwebs and dust.

"This is your room until you can find somewhere else to go."

Petruchio went to one of the small windows and pulled down the ancient drapery. The half-rotted drape fell to the ground in a cloud of dust. Bright sunlight filled the room, making it seem even dirtier.

Bianca gasped in disbelief.



"You can't be serious! We can't stay here! Lucentio do something!" Bianca wailed in despair.

She grabbed his arm and clinged to him as if the room was going to come alive and eat her. Lucentio shrugged her off in disgust. Whatever feelings he had for her were lost when he caught her in bed with another man. "Stop your whining, woman! We wouldn't be in this mess if you didn't have to give your boytoys trinkets every time they left your bed."

She flinched as if he slapped her. Bianca looked to her sister for support, but Katherine shook her head. She didn't even bother looking at Petruchio for help; he never liked her.

Petruchio gasped Katherine's hand and guided her out of the room. At the doorway, he turned back and told the couple he would send servants to help clean up the room. And as an afterthought, he told them supper started at six. The minute they closed the door they could hear the couple arguing.

Katherine held her peace until they passed by the servants' quarters a second time. "Petruchio, why did you give them that old room? It's been abandoned for almost fifteen years."

"Kate, if I made their stay too nice they would never leave. So I gave them the worst room in the house. Besides, you said I couldn't put them in the servants' quarters." Petruchio stared off pensively at something behind Katherine before he spoke again. "I feel sorry for Lucentio. I haven't seen him in three years and I assumed it was he who lost all their money. Now that we know the truth, I feel bad about putting him in the run-down room. Lucentio seems like a really decent guy."

Katherine held onto Petruchio's hands and gazed up into his dark eyes. "Don't worry about it. There was nothing we could do. I don't know what happened to Bianca these last few years. Maybe she's just a really unhappy person, who didn't get what she wanted out of life. Maybe my father pampered her too much as a child. I don't know where she went wrong, but there is nothing we can do for her. Bianca is a grown woman now and makes her own decisions, right or wrong."

Katherine and Petruchio started walking downstairs when they heard a loud gunshot coming from the old end of the house. "Oh my God!" Katherine yelled as she hiked up her dress and tried running up the stairs. Petruchio, losing his patience, picked her up and threw her over his shoulder as he ran to the top of the stairs.

At the top he let her down and started running to the ancient guestroom. Katherine followed closely behind Petruchio despite the big dress holding her back. She reached the room a few seconds behind her husband, and she gasped in shock and cried out in anguish at the scene before her.

Her sister hung from the old wooden rafters by a rope around her neck. Bianca's eyes bulged out of her face, as if at the last moment she realized she wanted to live, but the force of gravity pulled her to death. A dark puddle

formed under Bianca's swaying body. Katherine could tell Bianca had struggled to stay alive. Claw marks surrounded her throat where she tried to pull the rope away from her neck. Bianca's beautiful blonde hair contrasted sharply with her black and blue face and the blue tongue hanging out of her mouth.

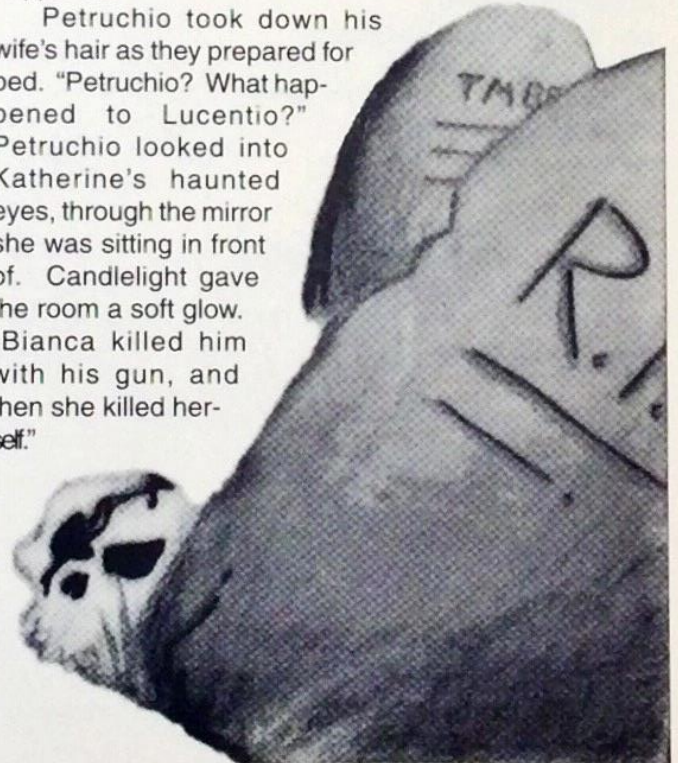
Katherine gagged in revulsion and ran out of the room before she vomited. She made it to the first chamber pot she could find before she started retching and throwing up, and after she smelled the contents of the chamber pot she started throwing up again.

Petruchio stared in shocked revulsion at the sight of Bianca, but he had been to war a few years ago on a short campaign, so he knew what death looked like. He didn't try to stop Katherine when she ran out of the room guessing she was going to be sick. Swallowing back his own bile, he walked the rest of the way into the room where Lucentio lay slumped against the wall, his brains splattered all over the place. Guns, one of the newer inventions, had a gruesome side effect when people got shot.

The gun lay a few feet away from Lucentio. He closed his eyes and went to the door to tell one of the servants standing there to fetch a constable. There had been a murder-suicide.

By the time Katherine finished being sick, the constable and a few other officials had arrived to find out what happened. Petruchio wouldn't let Katherine back in the room, and instead she spent the rest of the day with her two children, entertaining them and trying to keep them from becoming frightened at all the strange people coming into their house. It was dark by the time the constable left, and the two dead bodies were removed from their house, and Katherine found out what happened.

Petruchio took down his wife's hair as they prepared for bed. "Petruchio? What happened to Lucentio?" Petruchio looked into Katherine's haunted eyes, through the mirror she was sitting in front of. Candlelight gave the room a soft glow. "Bianca killed him with his gun, and then she killed herself."



Sheila Snyder

My mind is a seed underground,
that delicate seed of roses
which can never be planted.
When winter closes its frosty door,
the spring's carnival gates open.
And here I show my face,
made different by the stony soil.

I rise a green nuisance,
and my thoughts are the seeds
upon the altar of a dandelion's stalk,
first mirroring the image of
that sun I dared to look upon,
then fading
for lack of knowing why.

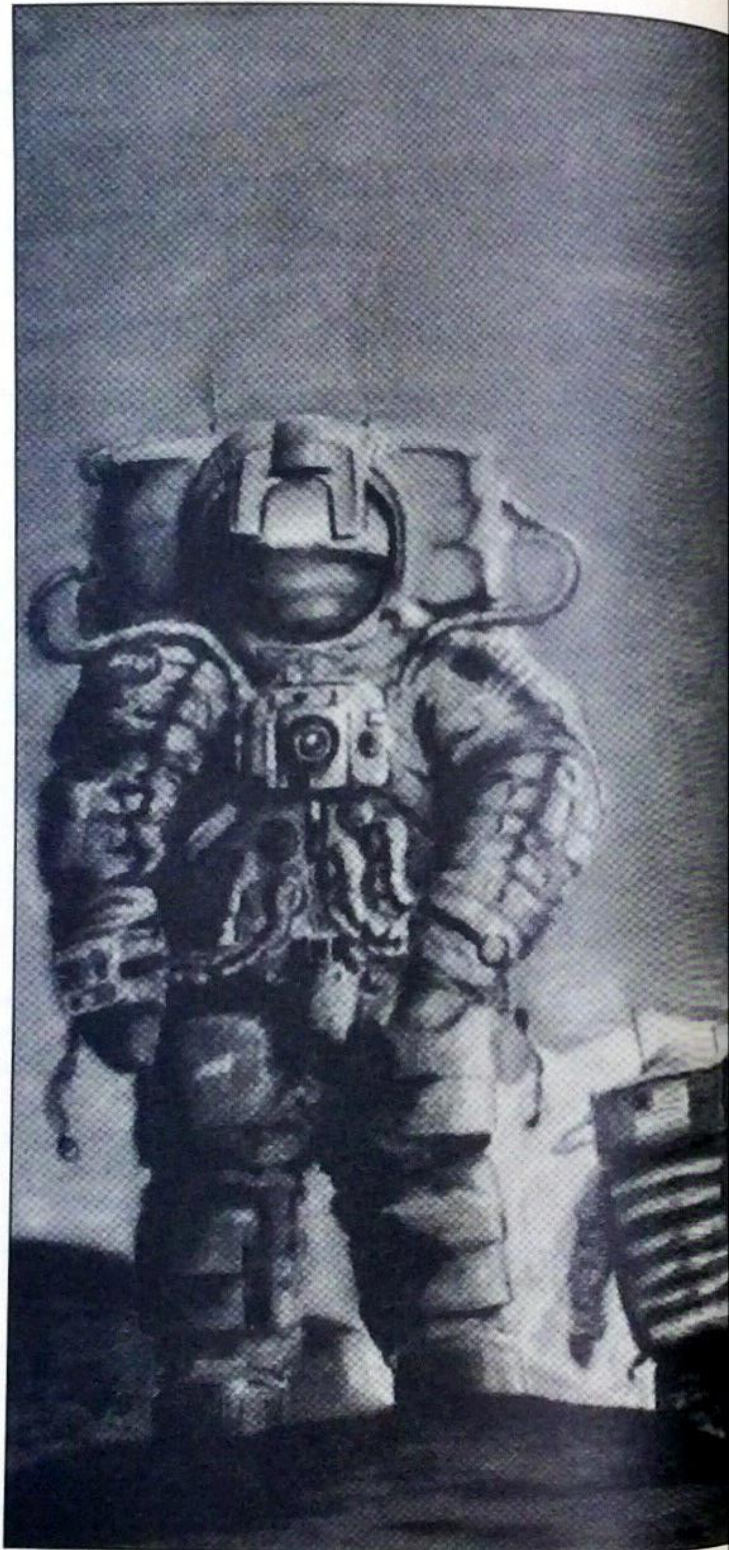
This middle stage of dandelion life
I cannot testify,
for a thing the soul wishes to see
veils itself from prying eyes.

I twist inside my rigid clothing,
hot and uncomfortable,
in this cell above the ground.
The loneliness transforms me,
so that my splendid sun-colored brightness fades
to downy depression.

When the sadness mounts
to the point where I
can bear its spear no longer,
the sky above appears,
though dark,
with tiny specks of glitter
beckoning me.

Before the wind can change,
I have turned into a cottony sphere,
too perfect to be touched,
and I bend to form that mass
from which I was born.

My mother cries here,
and sadness overwhelms
this tiny few inches of surface.
She prays I do not go;
she takes back her pride.
She speaks of seeing me take root,
of growing,
and of arms outstretched,
embracing the heavens.





Raymond Uhlir

But I left her and acted as though
I was glad to see her gone.
All the pain,
painted.

What could I say?
For anger devastates the occupied soul
and thrusts it into a foreign land,
to see it at peace,
this soul unaccustomed to nothing else
but thing after thing to do.

When at last it sees what's happened,
it is angered at this injustice,
and strikes back with all venom in possession.

This is what I did to my mother,
so screaming I threw away those fragile dreams
my bedroom walls had so meticulously encompassed.
And they drifted on the wind.

That once faint breeze turned to stormy weather
and everything was scattered.
I had not only lost my home,
but lost the very foundation of my security,
that is, my memory.

To this day I cannot remember
what happened that day
my bomb of a body exploded,
only recall vaguely why...

Inside I forgive,
over and over,
that parent who nourished me from naivete,
but regret creeps in,
like a surging shadow,
and covers all.

You see,
I never returned to the world,
only to the realms above it.
It isn't good enough
to live without those you hated,
thinking the best was being carried out,
because on this world,
avoidance is destruction.
I never bore children,
for the seeds of my body never reached the ground.

How pitiful it is,
that one such as I
should lead this life of bitter solitude...
it was my fate.

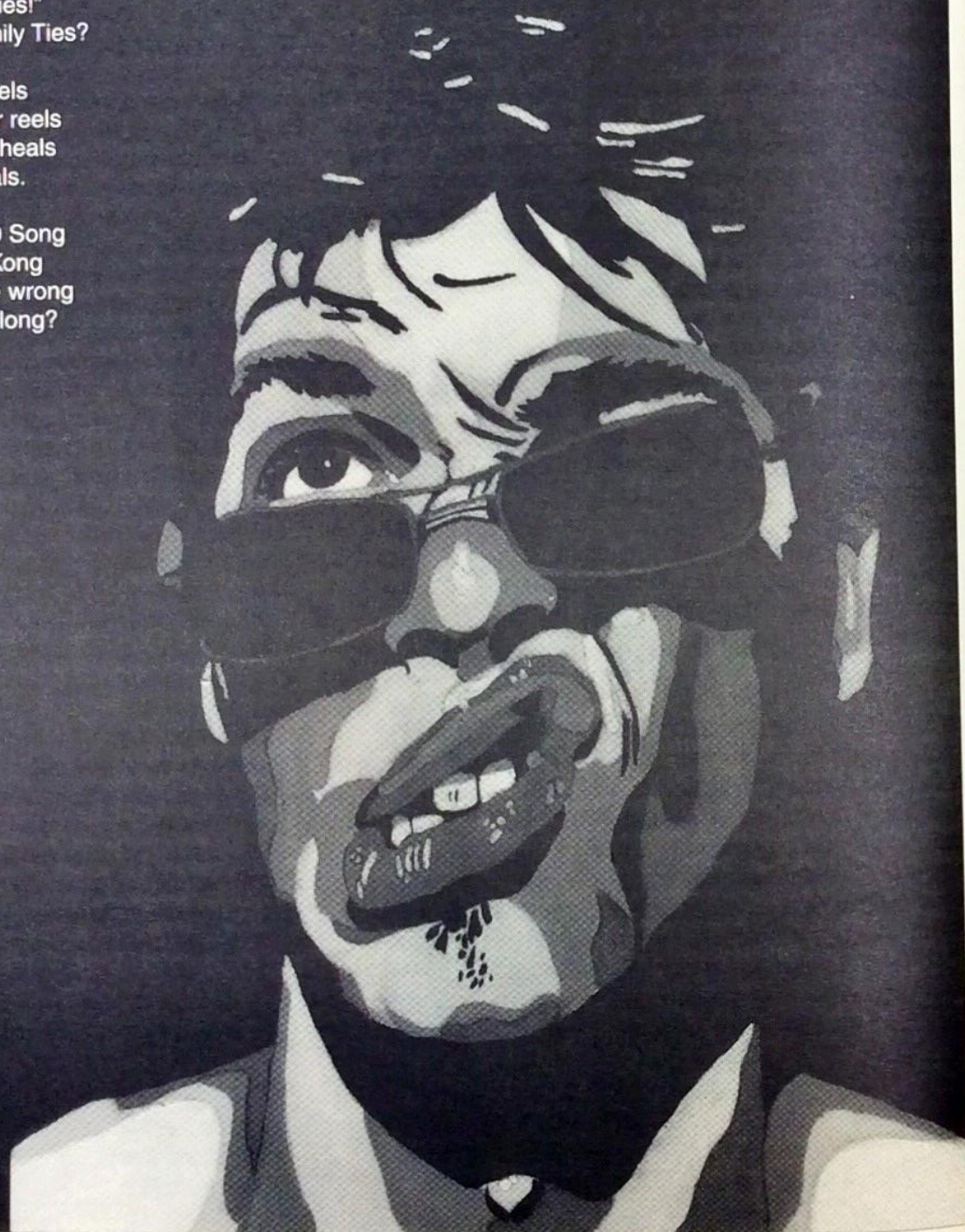
'97 Melodramatic
Annette Garza

Poetry, MTV
Don't you wish you looked like me?
Starbucks and psychology
Bad as I wanna be.

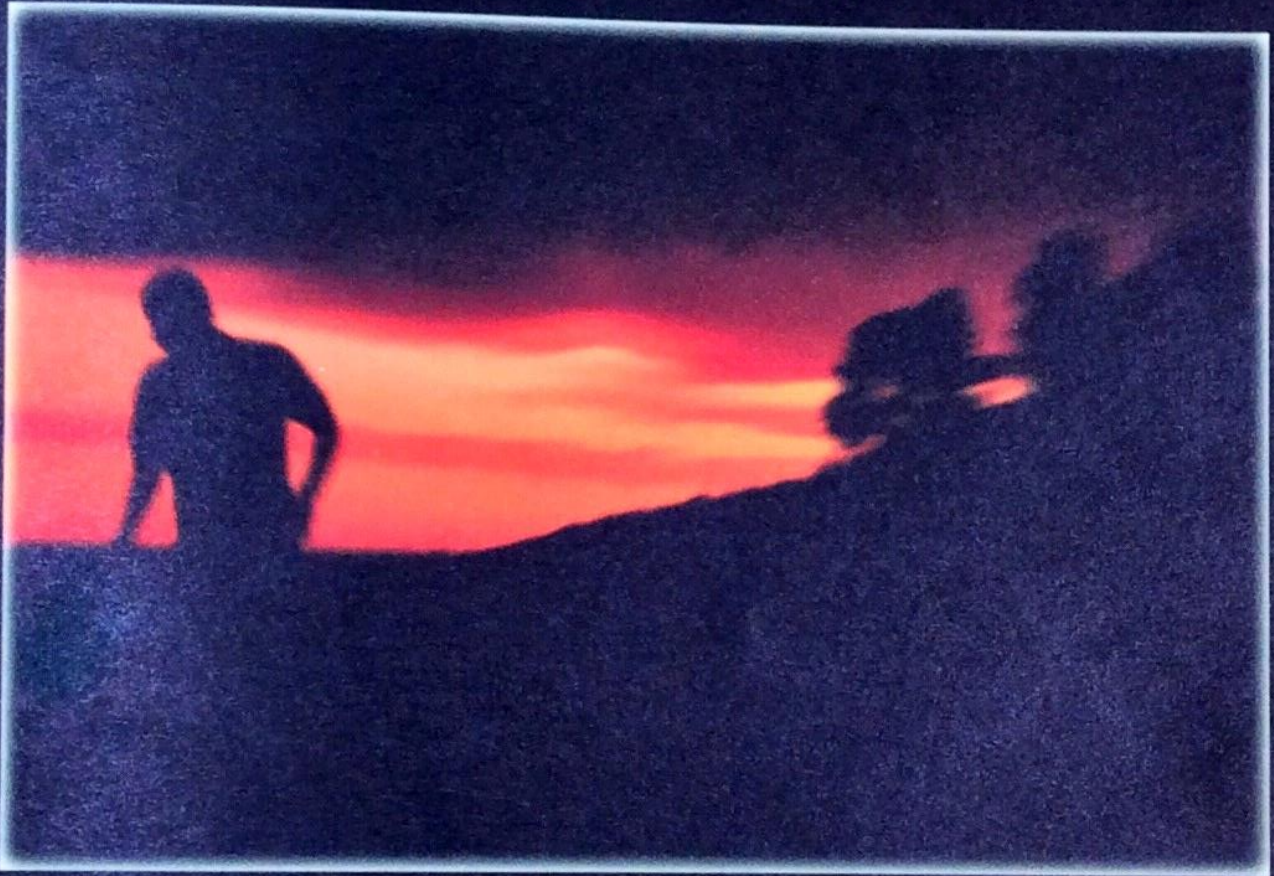
Vicious lies, no surprise
Conspiracy, sneaky demise
"Better than McDonald's fries!"
Where are shows like Family Ties?

Stiletto heels, sex on wheels
Boogie Nights and blooper reels
Emotional scar that never heals
Bulemia and skipping meals.

Hits from the bong, Top 40 Song
China's union with Hong Kong
Heaven's Gate can't all be wrong
Why can't we all just get along?



Nik Amyx



Twilight

friction wears away
eternity's great gears,
slows the pace
of each revolution,
and sunset chimes
the quitting bell
to lax the chains
of dusk and dawn





Forget
Monet Tacquard

It's the reflection that does it every time,
the eyes mostly, the blue-green abyss,
that releases the chains of memory.
She focuses and everything else fades away around
her coal pupils,
the bottom of arctic pools where no light can reach.
Ever since November she's been hiding from herself,
the most painful reminder of an ultimate trespass.

She is careful to keep to the eyes,
avoiding her pale cheeks, full lips
the color sun fades bright clothing.
She dresses listlessly, without acknowledging
breasts, thighs, the firm stomach muscles.
If she could turn into a snake
and slither out of her skin
she would not look back.
Not once, not even
to admire the pretty, slim figure.

Or if she could somehow travel back into girlhood
where the small knots forming under her shirt
could be hidden by a thick sweater.
When she was a straight, symmetrical child
that nobody looked at or felt the urge to touch.

A Place to Hide My Feelings

Christopher Cash

Even at the age of nine I never really had a childhood. In Houston, I lived on a street full of gang members and drug dealers. My neighborhood was called Sunnyside, one of the most feared neighborhoods. It was located on the southwest side. No one even thought about cops; it would usually take four or five calls before one even showed up. Maybe they were scared of the neighborhood or they wanted all of us to kill each other. Why? I would never know. My father and most of my uncles were all gang members, which put me in a situation, and later a decision, that would change my life forever. When I was ten years old, my father asked me if I wanted to be a gang member. Being raised around them and by them, I thought that was the thing to do and the family I needed. The unity of my neighborhood was as thick as a Louisiana swamp. Being a young gang member, the older gang members would protect me, giving me or any other young, smaller person a sense of protection that made us feel older and bigger. That feeling quickly influenced us to do anything to keep that protection from stopping.

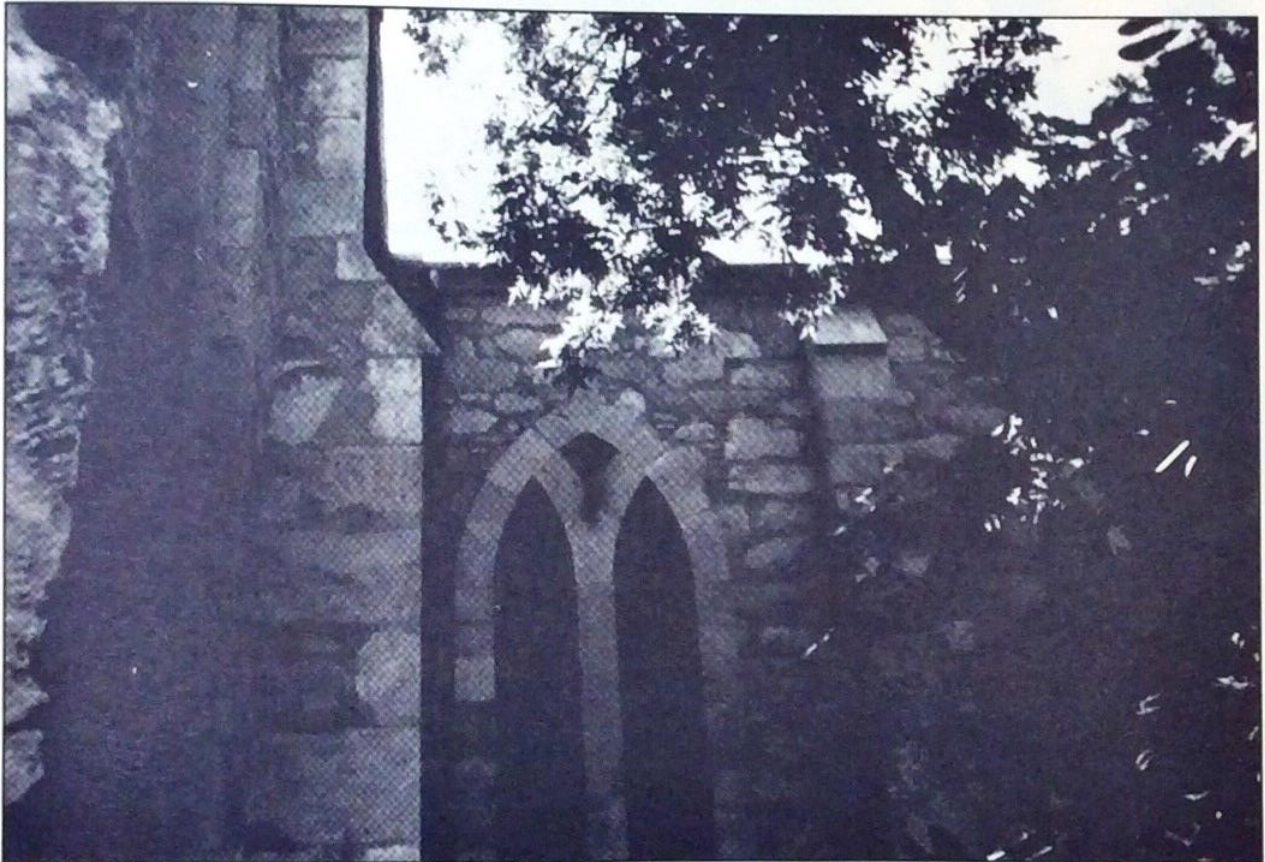
As I got older, my life was constantly flashing before me (my life was at a risk every day because of the color I claimed). I saw many of my homeboys from the neighborhood die, and family members fall short (die before their time), victims of bullets in drive-bys. My life never changed. Strange, some might say, but all I thought about was revenge, I wanted to take from someone else's family because they had taken from mine. Not once did I sit back and think about the mothers that had to bury their sons or the kids that had to be raised without fathers. Maybe it was because when I went to friends' funerals I never really looked into their mothers' eyes. I was young and dumb; I never thought about my life and how it could be gone in a blink of an eye. I was walking in the footsteps of danger. My life revolved around my money, my gang, and my material things. My dad, a part of the BLACK MAFIA FAMILY, was the type of person you never wanted to say "no" to. He was feared by many and loved by few. Therefore, I never refused to do any gang related activity he asked. Between the ages of ten and fourteen, I witnessed twenty-two drive-by's and went to seventeen funerals. My gang was so strong no one said a word about what we did in the streets. You could kill in mid-day traffic and no one would say a word, because if someone did, the person would be "erased" (not heard from).

Then, at the age of fifteen, my dad, my uncle, my cousin, and I were all in a car at a stop light. Two guys from another set, or neighborhood, were walking across the street. My dad yelled at them, disrespecting their set. In an instant the two guys unloaded bullets into the car. My dad and uncle were hit. My uncle was shot in the shoulder and my dad in the chest. Fear rushed through my body. The bullets never reached the back seat. Call it luck. I call it saving grace and a blessing. As I got out the car, I saw that my dad was badly wounded and I could hear him moaning from the pain. My uncle was unconscious. My mind was flashing in and out.

We rushed them to the hospital. Three weeks later my father and uncle were back to the same routine.

But my life started to take on a change after that day. I did not want to end up like my dad. Why risk your life for a neighborhood that you don't even belong to? I started searching for something better than life on the street. Nothing came easy, though. To get out of a gang I would have to die, and no matter where I moved, somebody would be watching me. Trust was never given. I could never trust anyone, not even my own mother. To get away from the mainstream of gangbanging, I moved to San

did not care about my education. My focus was set on gangbanging. When I failed my first six weeks, football was taken away from me. Football was really my only way to stay off the streets, and it was gone. My hope for a get-away from the streets started to fade. I made the decision to try to improve my grades to get away from the streets. Coaches Fuschak, Bailey, and King all came to me and told me I have a talent, but I had to display it in the classroom as well as the field. No one ever took the time out to tell me I had talent, and from those words I realized I had more to live for, and I did not want to die

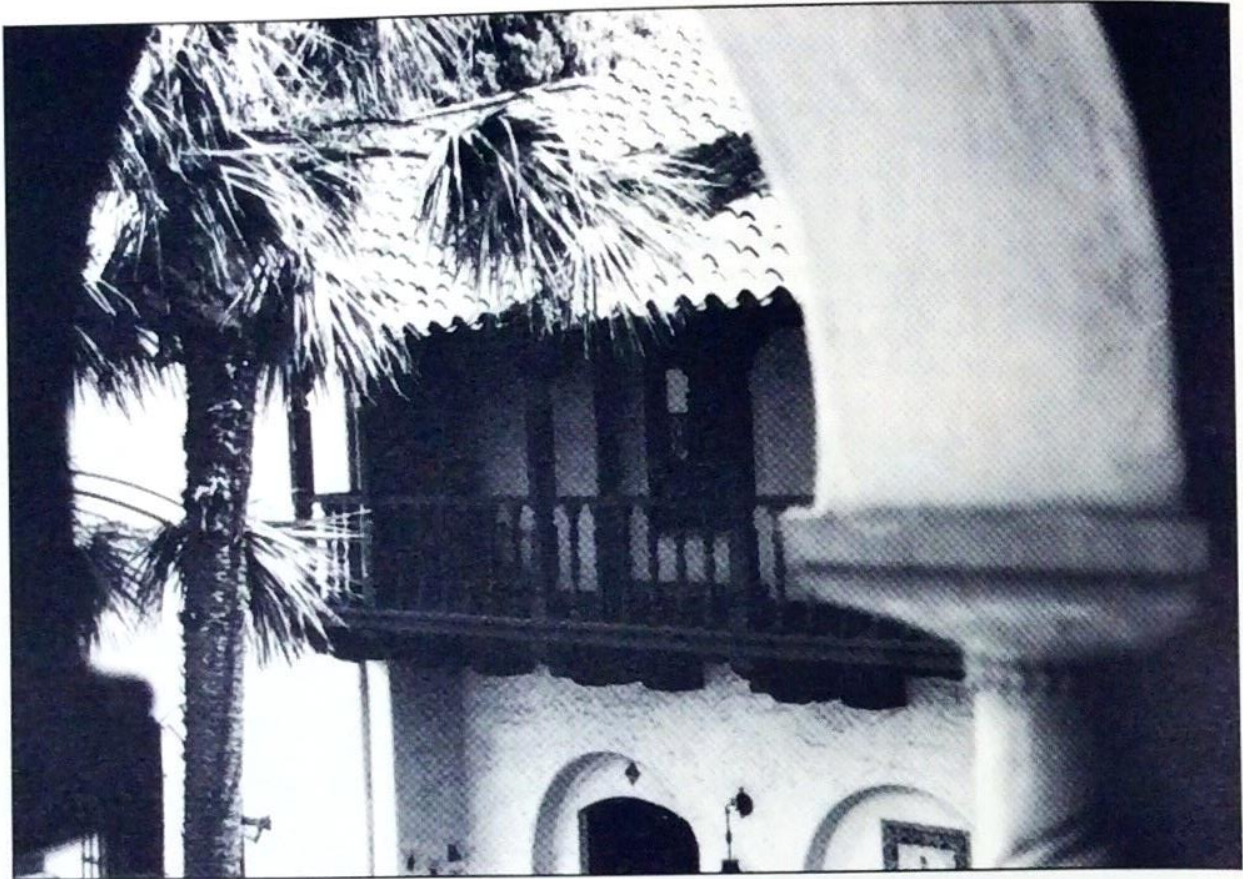


Jessica Attie

Antonio and started the eighth grade. I was older and more mature than the others because my seventh grade year I didn't go to school. I was out selling drugs and so I failed the seventh grade. The next year it was the same routine, but they wanted me out of their school because of my attitude, so they passed me. My mind was set on the fact that no one could help me. Even though Mr. Salmon at Garner Middle School took time out to help, no one could save me from the streets.

My freshman year of high school was not what it should have been. I was on the football team but I really

over a color (the color red or blue, bloods or crips). Mr. Watson showed me that if I would sit back and work with the teachers instead of working against them, I would learn more and they would be happy to work with me. Even though it took awhile, it was evident that anything was possible if I just tried. Football became a place to hide my feelings. Life has now become a temple of freedom to speak out and let everyone know the streets are not the place to hide. It is your education that can save you for the rest of your life.



Joshua Adams

Nothing Gold Can Stay

Tristin Hurt

"Nothing gold can stay. . ."

"The good die young. . ."

"The good old days. . ."

Why must it be this way?

Why must the things we love most in life leave us behind?

I often wonder what is meant when one remarks, "The good old days"

This must convey that they are gone. . . forever-

That they were golden and cannot stay.

Visits with Grandma; walks in the park; trips to the sea,

These pleasures never last, Are they Golden?...What is Golden?

Is it like Beauty "in the eyes of the beholder?"

Or is it instead like a roaring fire "there for all to see?"

And also, which is better? To be old, yet silver, or Golden, but young?

How should we want to leave . . . ?

I've been told that it is quality, not quantity, that counts. . .

Maybe this is why "nothing gold can stay."

What does it matter how long they were here?

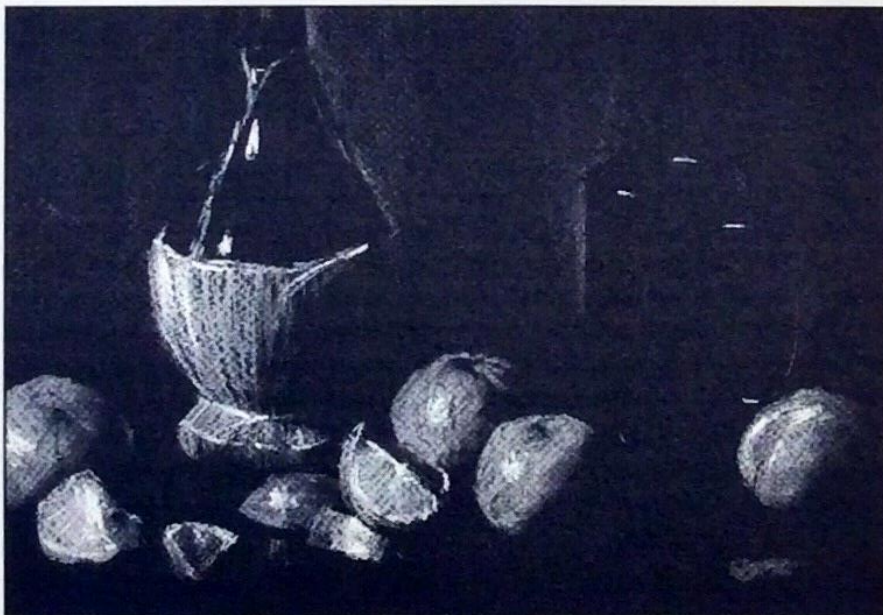
It's what their life was worth that we tend to remember.

. . . The Golden ones with their admirable, meritorious lives-

They never stay, do they? Of course not. . . "Nothing Gold Can Stay."

Bittersweetness
Rebecca Tinsley

A melancholic existence,
unrealized dreams,
loss of purity and identity and even humanity.
She created the situation for herself,
and yet,
she had no power over the world around her.
She did little more than react to the commands of others
and subconsciously hope that the world would follow her unspoken desires.
She made excuses for the actions of others.
The vicious, malign actions of others
-of one other-
of him.
She didn't know how to raise her voice against him.
He was cunning and manipulative
and she deceived herself and thought that he loved her.
But he used her.
Until the bitter end.
The asylum of her mind sheltered her from reality.
And she felt happy and she felt loved
and she did not feel the pain
from the bruises her love had produced.
(Her black eyes merely proved her love for him
and his for her).
And this allowed her to remain sane.
And this feeling of numbness and nothing
coerced her into letting the cycle continue.
More bruises,
more justifiable pain,
more children falling down stairs that don't exist
and bumping into doors that smell like the sweat of a father.
All struggle is abandoned.
For, in the heart, numbness is equivalent to love.



Anastasia Toom

Me
Christopher Webb

Leg extended before me, a salute to my deformed yet "me" body. "Praise who you are." I hear from the empty face on television. With their immaculate and well-trimmed hair, their comments hit me with the force of a breath. It is the odor of disgust that strikes me hardest. My neighbor believes their words; praises the sky each morning while complementing my car. The car is ugly (we both know it), but I smile and remark on how lovely a day it will be, no matter whether rain or smog are forecasted. The ritual has already been set. Bad things happen to those that don't follow the ritual. My friend didn't and he died when he was thirteen. Died in a car. I had a ritual then, I used to be quiet, but now I talk like my mouth is a storm. The storm of life, my life. No one else is me. Hint: that's what makes it me. Perhaps I do like me.



Eric Uhler



Lost Little Boy

John Penrod

I wonder where the boy went
the one who lived in the house
where I used to live.

He must be near
the rusty old swing-set
where I used to play,
or maybe in that
drafty wooden fort

with all those imaginary friends,
the ones who moved away.

He had an innocent face
with mischievous elfin eyes
and a haystack mass of hair
that was a little like mine.

I wonder where the small girl went
with her shy, angelic little smile
who lived down the street
in the gray-bricked house
that once seemed familiar
with a sidewalk beside
whereon is a name
which I used to be called

I know an old house
close to a creaking swing-set
with a pile of wood nearby
that may have been a fort.
And on my way down a sidewalk,
whereon lies a name
I may have once been called,
I sometimes pass a young woman
who looks as though
she may have had an angelic smile
once upon a time,
but none of them seemed right
without that little boy
with his haystack hair
and the mischievous elvin eyes...
a happier version of my own.

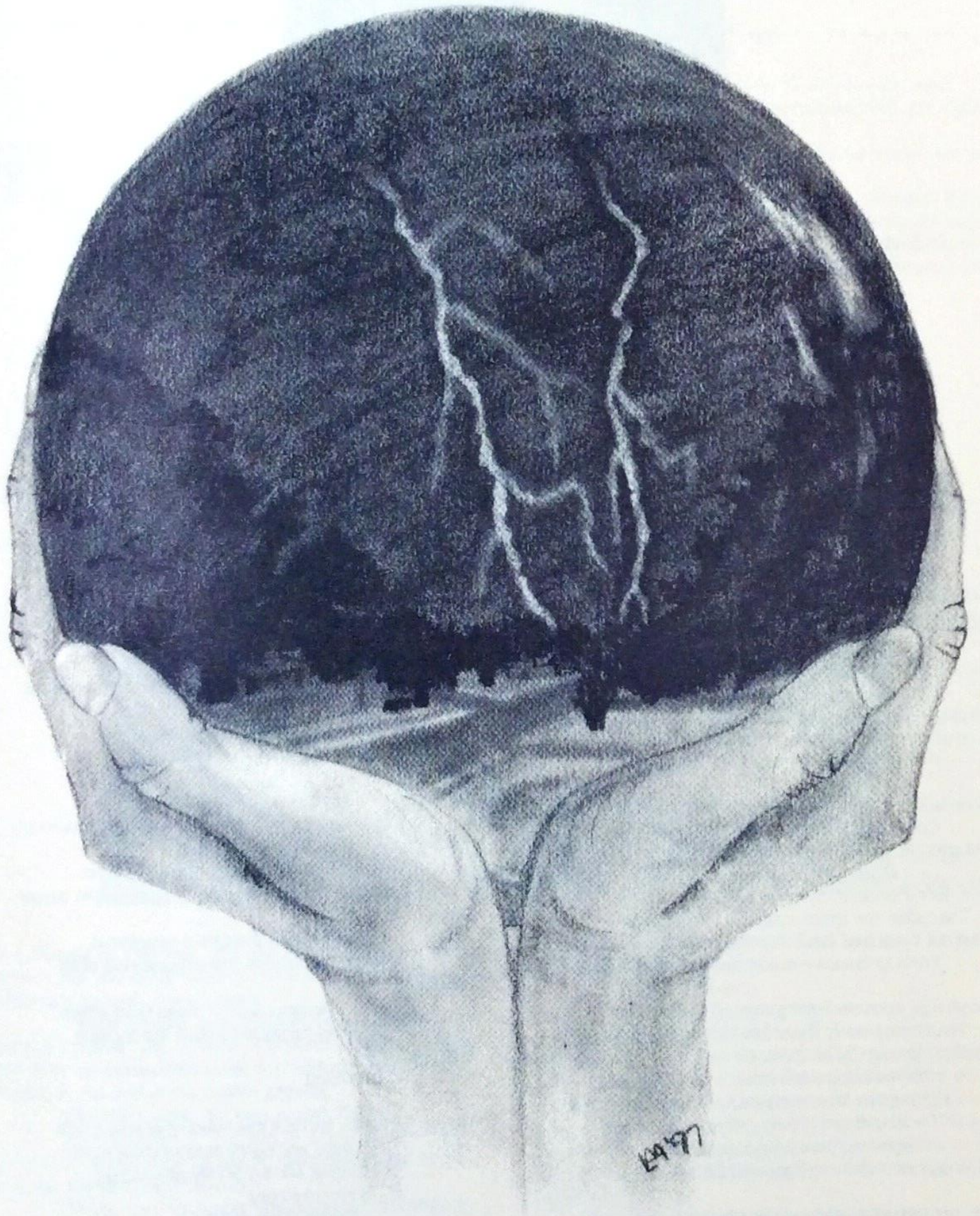
she used to call him daddy
george potter

he calls her on the weekends
asks how everything is going
and talks
for hours
about his new job
his new girlfriend
in tulsa
in new york
somewhere in between
she holds the phone away
and quietly cries
picturing the times
when he bounced her on his knee
when she used to call him daddy

he stands over her
looks at the line of red
forming on the edge of her lips
the black and blue puffs
scattered across her face
and the strange twist
of her arm
he pulls his hand back
preparing
for the next hit
while she cowers in the corner
confined to a desperate fetal position
with hands covering the face
she doesn't believe him
when he says it hurts him
more than it hurts her
she doesn't believe
she used to call him daddy

he smiles
as his fingers touch her flesh
as she squirms away
from his yearning hands
and hides
beneath the freshly cleaned covers
she's too scared to run
to scream for help
so she pictures happier times
days of bicycle rides
picnics in the park
and she grits her teeth
as the pain comes
from the man
she used to call daddy

it would all be easier
if she could just hate him
if the memories and pain
didn't mix together
but they do
and sometimes she fights
and sometimes she screams
but mostly she cries
tears become her only companion
as suicidal thoughts make her tremble at night
and she will never call him daddy again



Linda Bigelow



Sheila Snyder

Gene Meal Feeling

Robert Watson

Let it all out to rise and hear so much more,
 Devise unthinkable characters of your conscience
 To play along with a gene breakfast.
 You've got to make lunch the shape of a circle to
 Prepare Golden dinners on the hotplates.

Golden laced spines, buzz words are others, circles of authors
 Come crashing down like Generations,
 Hill after Hill, no need to comprehend the meals.
 Let it all slide and she'll take Jazz Circuit
 To new found fame out crystal amplifiers,
 The cycles new motor reveal borders of speed
 Stall out, break fast, Death of overcompensation to burn
 While ignorance is raised, early years lay dazed.

Smooth Age, noon sun's rising and you reach,
 Thrust into Mecca, Thrust into fabled lands of round
 Tables, Housing Coffee stains, Elbows of
 Will be authors and would be needle arms,
 Lighting thin Joints and contemplating
 Thinking no one, thinking for nothing
 Right here pure thought employs
 The scenes of Glowing Eggs and Silk Pancakes

Finding childhood, finding awkward Bhuddist Philosophies

Laced with Greko-Judeo-Christian Myths,
 They are flowing and one.

Sparks fly for a feed mind that is allowed
 Drowning on Blakes "Eternal Delight."

Here we are home, away from torrid would be
 reality,
 Seeping in the lake of filtered thought,
 Nurtured at the nipple of institutions.

Loose held minds I seek to find like the ones
 I read about, my religious myths, Ginsberg and Burroughs
 Died for the year, Eat Clean Myths at our
 Sprawled Hallucination Pentacost, and
 The glory meal of Souls Leaving and eyes desper-
 ately

Retrieving their thoughtful compliance
 To liquid boundaries, just a nuance net of no
 trappings,

No language for these dead writers,
 No more pages to be filled, like shotgun
 Hemmingway
 On the mind.

Words get tighter and feel that freedom of seeing with
 No eyes and gently caressing colors with
 The tongue, Mind meld Mystery lunged
 To inky night sky,
 Employing true sight.

Have the Guilty Been Acquitted?

Mark Walraven

A pale, white moon creeps down upon the dimmed streets. Darkness, like a vale of death, begins to cover the streets of the city. Mothers, like frantic ants, huddle their children inside before it's too late. Time is more precious now than ever. The streets that were once filled with the laughter of children are now only filled with darkness and the evil that comes with it.

"Sally!"

"Yes, John."

"You better get on home now. I really hate for

and me sometime."

"Thank you very much, but no promises. You know what they say about being married to a cop. Never know what their hours will be."

"All right, well, you better get on home. Are you positive you don't want a ride?"

"Yes. Yes. I need the exercise. Besides, if anything happens, I'll just scream and somebody will help."

"Now don't you go joking around about this kind of thing. If I'm not giving you a ride home then you better



Linda
Bigelow

you to walk all that way. It's just not right for a young woman like you to be walking home late at night alone, especially through those streets."

"I know, I know. And I appreciate your concern, but it is not that bad. I mean, I'm starting one of those self-defense classes next week, and with any luck I'll have moved by the end of the month anyway."

"Oh, that's right. So how is your fiance?"

"He's wonderful! He has to work the late shift tonight, but pretty soon he will be promoted to detective and won't have to work so late."

"That's nice. You know, when you two get settled down you all will have to come have dinner with Stacy

get going. It's getting dark out there."

"Yes, Mother!"

"Goodbye, Sally."

"Bye, John. I'll see you tomorrow."

John Walters left his small shop, got into his car, and drove home. All the while he was wishing that he'd given her a ride. They went through this routine every evening, and every evening she won. It was just the awful neighborhood she insisted on walking through. She just thought that she was invincible to the horrors of this world. So John drove home kicking himself for once again losing this daily battle.

Sally knew that it was getting late, but she just

had to finish a few things before tomorrow. Time passed by, unnoticed, like the passing of leaves in the early fall. When she finally left the store it was quite late. Sally was not the type of person who scares easily. Even so, she felt a little knot tighten in her stomach as she gathered her things and locked up the shop. The darkness fell upon her with such might that she was almost thrown to the floor with its sting. The dark streets were thick with evil, so thick that she could almost touch it.

Maybe I should call Mrs. Walters for a ride. She did so appreciate the tutoring that I gave her kids and I quite vividly remember her saying, "Why an anything - world, me and I'll do what I can."



Sally quietly mimicked Mrs. Walters squeaky voice as she walked down the dismal streets. She would not call Mrs. Walters, or anybody else for that matter, she just refused to trouble her friends for such a silly thing.

"Why, I am twenty-eight years old. I can certainly take care of myself."

She spoke louder now to try to comfort herself, but with each passing step the knot in her stomach grew. Her ears listened intently for any sound at all that would be a warning. Her eyes searched the darkness for any hostile shape. She tasted and smelled the air as if searching for a scent of dread. With her hands she tried desperately to wipe away the veil of evil that surrounded and engulfed these grim streets.

Before she realized it, she was standing at her front door. She smiled up at the ugly building welcoming her in out of the darkness. She began to laugh out loud at herself now for her petty fears.

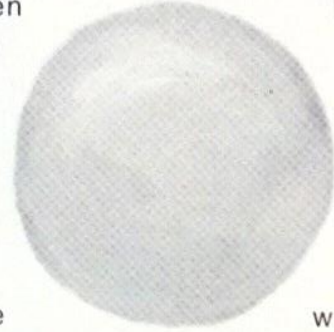
"Humph! John and his worrying. Now, which key was it?"

Sally stood smiling at the door to her new, but temporary, tiny apartment. It was old and ugly, but still seemed very safe on this night. She found her key and tried to open the door when a cat in the nearby alley quivering screeched and caused her hand to drop the keys. She laughed at herself again and stooped to pick up the keys. That's when it hit her. All her senses that had been so earnestly searching for things to fear had now found their mark: the terrible silence that her ears could not hear, the wretched stillness that would not see, the horrid taste and smell of death that surrounded her, and oh, that cold and icy feeling that stabbed into her like a thousand knives. She screamed before they even got to her. She knew that they were there, but she was frozen stiff. The key was in the lock. Why wouldn't it turn? Why couldn't she move? She felt the black forms



around her. She could hear herself screaming over their laughter. She could vividly see her life right before her. Though her heart was still beating and her mind was still working, she was dead before they even laid their hands upon her.

Her screams rocketed throughout the neighborhood, yet they fell on deaf ears. A few curtains were drawn back, but the onlookers quickly turned away when they realized what was happening. Most refused to even look. They knew what was going on, it certainly wasn't the first time. But why should they get involved? They only be next. One curtain remained open a little longer than the others. The form in the window stared a little longer and prayed a little harder that this was not happening. Not again! Not to her!



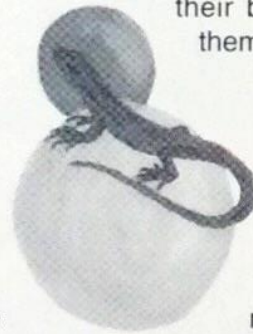
"Mommy?"

"Yes, Dear?" she asked turning from the window.

"Is Miss Sally gonna come help me again tonight?"

The tears welled up in her eyes as she stared at the telephone. She wished to God that she could call the police. That she could help in some way. Instead, she just stood there quietly sobbing to herself, refusing to look at her child. Mr. Walters looked in the room and left immediately to turn up his football game and pretend he didn't hear. Pretend that he didn't know what was happening in the streets below. Pretend that this would be the last time.

The police came in droves to question the neighbors, but, as usual, no answers were given. The people of these streets turn the police away and go back to their books and televisions telling themselves that there was nothing they could have done; that testifying would only bring them down. They tell themselves that this will be the last time. They lie to themselves, and they know it. And so the residents of these neighborhoods sink down deeper into a cage of lies and violence, and the bars that hold them in this cage are the bars made of fear. Fear that they put upon themselves because they are afraid to try. Who has put this evil shroud upon these streets? Who has committed the greatest injustice? Is it those who do the killing, or those who let them kill? Is it the gangs which run the streets, or the people who refuse to stop them?





Eric Uhlir

Broken Nails & Finger Tips

Richard Evans

In her mind a cerebral plain,
Hidden behind an improbable pain.
Under the sheets with closed eyes
is the only time she feels alive.
She opens the door and looks outside
at the world she from which she hides.
Steps into the light and receives the day
Hoping and praying for a chance to get away.

So alone and in distress
in this abandoned world that her god possessed.
She hides away from loving affection
that left her dying with this infection.

She can't see her future because there's nothing there.
Her world is dead but she doesn't care.
She has a broken heart and a shattered mind.
She wished that she could leave this life behind.
—her life flashes in her eyes—

She's taking it a little bit further, she's making it a little
bit harder.
She wants rest but doesn't know how to reach it.
She has a life but doesn't want to keep it.
She wants to set this unloving world on fire
for the sins created by desire.
She's tried everything but always seems to fail.
She's pinned herself to the cross with broken nails.

Took what she could to help her live again,
not realizing how she began.
No one could save her because no one cared.
You can't save something that isn't there.
She looked inside herself to find salvation.
The world ceased to exist after her realization.
She pressed her books firmly to her chest
before she laid herself down to rest.

She looks aimlessly for hope without a trace,
this beautiful girl that fell from grace.
This sweet angel that fell from the sky,
a sweet angel that didn't have to die.

Looked back into her life and asked herself "why"?
Does the answer shake you to your knees and make
you cry?
A beautiful girl that sadness raped.
It was her life and it became her fate.

She's taking it a little bit further, she's making it a little
bit harder.
She wants rest but doesn't know how to reach it.
She has a life but doesn't want to keep it.
She wants to set this unloving world on fire.
For all the sins created by desire.
She's tried everything but always seems to fail.
She's pinned herself to the cross with broken nails.



You I Remember: Death of the Loved
Monica Rodriguez

I remember your curly brown hair
we held hands you seemed so scared
in trembling fear to face the world
That was years ago; I was a little girl.
You squeezed your tiny fingers in a fist
and decided you would do it.

I watched your pale bronze eyes turn,
turn yellow as the sun caught sight.
You looked left then right
and soon took flight (you said goodbye).

That was years ago; I was a little girl in a small pink dress but a big world.
A day will end, a leaf will fall. A new baby will inhale an initial first breath of life.
An old woman will die with millions of memory filled days painted on the walls of her
heart as she lays like a fossil in her bed with eyes that change.

One day I too will take that violent flight as the light will also illuminate my eyes into
a new world.

A trembling tepid hand will cling to mine. I will look left then right and
say goodbye.

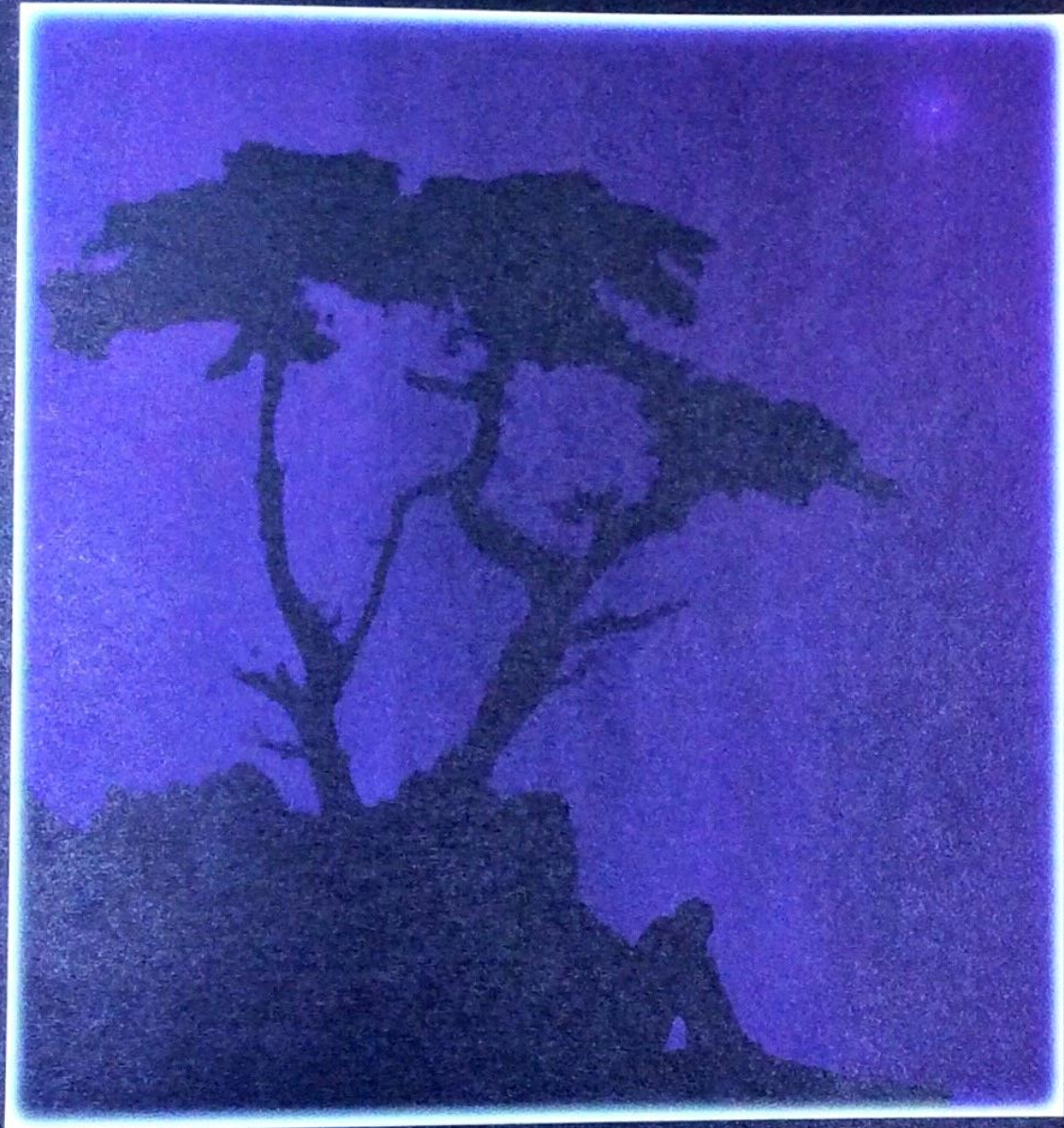
Someday I might see you again, and unlike this frigid world you are a luminous ball of
fire that brings a smile to everyone that raises their head to look at you.

Now I'm sitting in my room and have little to say since I've told you all.

I'm just looking at the rain as it hits my window and my fan circles above me.

The radio screams a whisper as a slow but angry song rages about love and it's tragedies.

But I have a song of my own...



Midnight

no movement breaks
the black void night;
all stop inside
the infinity machine
and beneath the moon's
iridescent glow
labor the tireless servants
of dusk and dawn



A
Message
to
Our
Parents

George Potter

The mass media has, throughout the course of our lives, derived pleasure from portraying our generation as a clan of drug addicts and gangbangers. They had labeled us as failures and destroyers of all that is good even before we were ever given a chance to succeed. Before we finished the sixth grade, the media had stolen our motivation and self-respect. Unfortunately, they have failed to report that the root of all our problems lies in the insane immorality of your generation's actions.

You, our parents, always told us to act more mature and, looking to your adolescence for advice on how this was to be done, we were forced to use footage of you smoking pot and sleeping around at Woodstock as examples of meaningful childhood activities. We embraced your concept of "fighting the Man" as a justification of fake licenses that allowed for drinking binges and late night parties. Love-ins were also great and, like you, we decided that condoms were unnatural, but unlike you, we had to die of AIDS because of that choice. You never realized that our generation had more pressures and responsibilities than you. We couldn't just drop out, get stoned, and then come back and get a job a few years down the road. We have to go to college and have careers because you ruined our social structure. Yet somehow, while developing this more elaborate path to happiness, you managed to place more distractions in front of us. After too many years of apathy, you finally realized what was going on and made feeble attempts to break us away from our addictions. However, like you, we realized the hypocrisy of your statements. Why was it okay for you to have a wild childhood and not us?

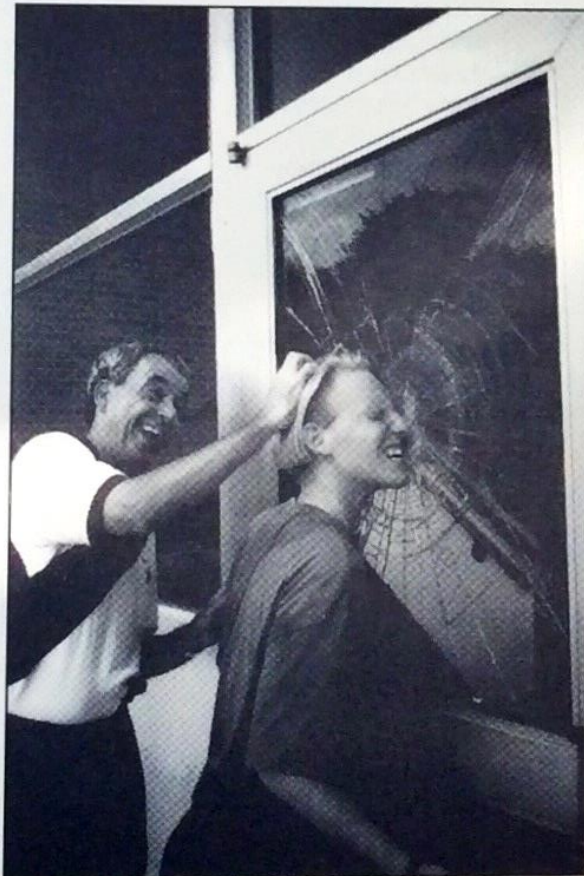
Likewise, it was only too natural for us to turn to worldly pleasures. You never taught us what it meant to be loved by someone. You were too busy selling out for a new BMW and a corner office to care what was going on at your home. In essence, you showed us that love meant a new pair of Air Jordans and a Tommy. Materialism became chic and parenting went out

of style. All the while, our childhoods drifted away like the answers blowing in the wind. It's no wonder that we turned to shady characters in dark alleys to give us a quick, temporary escape from our suffering. You see, cocaine wasn't really a CIA plot to kill urban blacks. It was merely the drug of choice you overlooked and, when you were off at work, it erased all of the painful emotions brought by your beatings. Peace was only good enough for Vietnam, not for your own children and we never will forgive you for hitting us because you couldn't understand why we weren't happy with everything you had given us. Realize though, that we are your children, and you were the ones who gave us all of the wrong ideas, beliefs, and morals to live by. Materialism will never replace parenting, and you will never understand that and we wonder if you will even care.

Many scientists believe that a child's personality and ability to work with others is set during the first few years of life. Well, the older part of our generation went through this period during the early to middle seventies. They were developing their subconsciences while you forced our nation to lose its mind, and smoking pot dur-

ing pregnancy didn't create groovy intellectuals. As for the younger half of our generation, all we have ever known were divorces, nameless parents who skipped out when faced with responsibility, and others who were so busy with work that they merely co-habitated with us. You never gave us a chance and then you blamed all of the problems you created on us and expected us to fix them, but we've gotten so screwed up that I'm not sure we can.

So, I guess our only option is to cut a deal with you. We won't remind you that JFK was a womanizing alcoholic or that the Beatles were addicts if you agree to be better role models in the future. Then, when we're adults, not only in experience, but actual age, maybe we can be better parents than you were. Maybe our kids will have it better off and maybe we can fix the world, but it won't be because of the example you set.





Nothing
Linda Bigelow

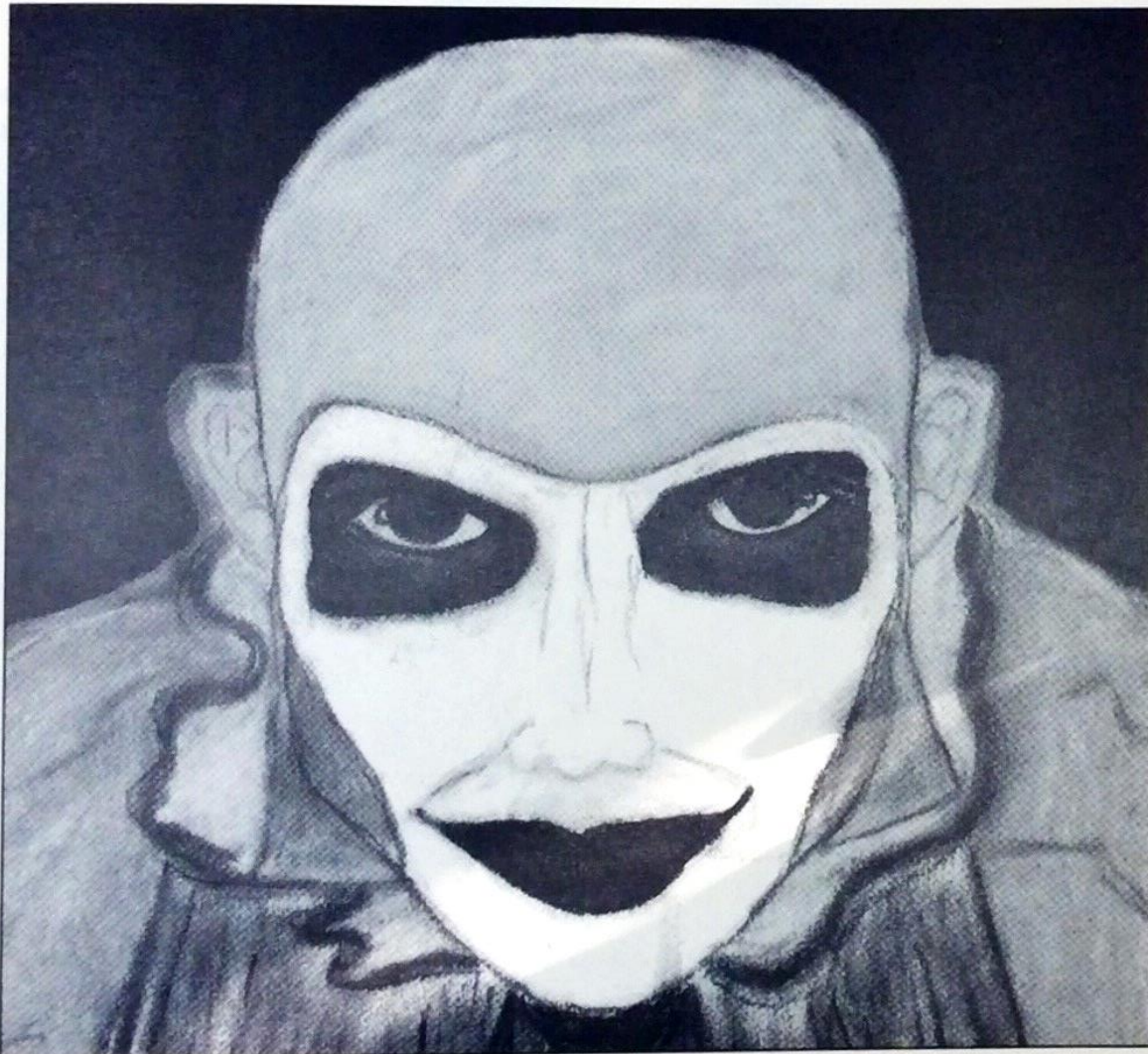
Gazing into your eyes
I see Nothing.
No feeling.
Only my muted reflection
In your lifeless eyes.
Your lips offer empty words,
Empty promises,
Void of meaning.
Your body is cold to my touch.
My emotions lost
In this frigid barrier,
Meaningless to you.
I stare into Nothing. . .
And nothing stares back.



Joe
Leighann Aycock

Joe wasn't a man, just a nameless puppet lifting
the bottle to his lips.
He had no pleasure but of the distant happiness
the vodka gave him.
Endless cycles of stumbling thrill and miserable
nausea and for what?
He lay in the dirt grasping tightly his bottle
wrapped in an old paper bag.
Making no sound but of the occasional groan of a
pounding hangover.
He wore a pair of old Wrangler jeans glaringly
large on the thin, dark man.
A white v-neck, dirty, torn and draped over his
shoulders like a tattered curtain.
But he didn't seem to mind, the bottle took all his
problems, worries, cares.
He had no happiness, no future, he was just an
anonymous shadow-lost in the darkness
Why? he became what people thought of him all
his life-nothing
He started thinking, evaluating his troubled life.

"Would anyone even notice or care if I left this
world today?"
He decided the answer was no. Joe killed
himself.
Slashed his wrist with a piece of shattered glass.
He lay in the alley for weeks before anyone
mentioned it.
So many people walk by that alley- what is
wrong with them?
Are their lives too involved to see a lost human
life?
A man is dead-doesn't that mean anything
anymore?
Joe understood. Nobody noticed, cared that there
was a bloody corpse there.
Joe was right- nobody cares. Joe is all of us.
We all have some point when our lives are
shattered like the broken bottle.
All our dreams and hopes lost in the reflection.
But somehow we find the courage to pick up the
slivers, sharp as razors, and start to love.



Looking at the Moon
(inspired by Steiglitz photography)
Lauren Sartain

Through the clouds, the moon screams
Shouting overpowering commands
and controlling all life

A dog is howling
The moon submerges from the clouds
A dog whimpers and hides

Beauty is among the heavens
The stars and moon leave twinkling impressions in eyes
The essence of life evolves

A jack-o-lantern in the clouds
Sets the sky on fire
Lighting a path for trick-or-treaters
Guiding them as an egg smashes against your window

The studious child slaves in books day to day
The sun starts to fall
The moon signals another all-nighter

Road-tripping is life's greatest adventure
Sitting by a river with the moon glistening in the water
An illusion of ecstasy

Laying on a sleeping bag
Thinking you feel the bugs creeping into your ears
The dirt seeping into your skin
All lost in a moment's glance at the glaring moon

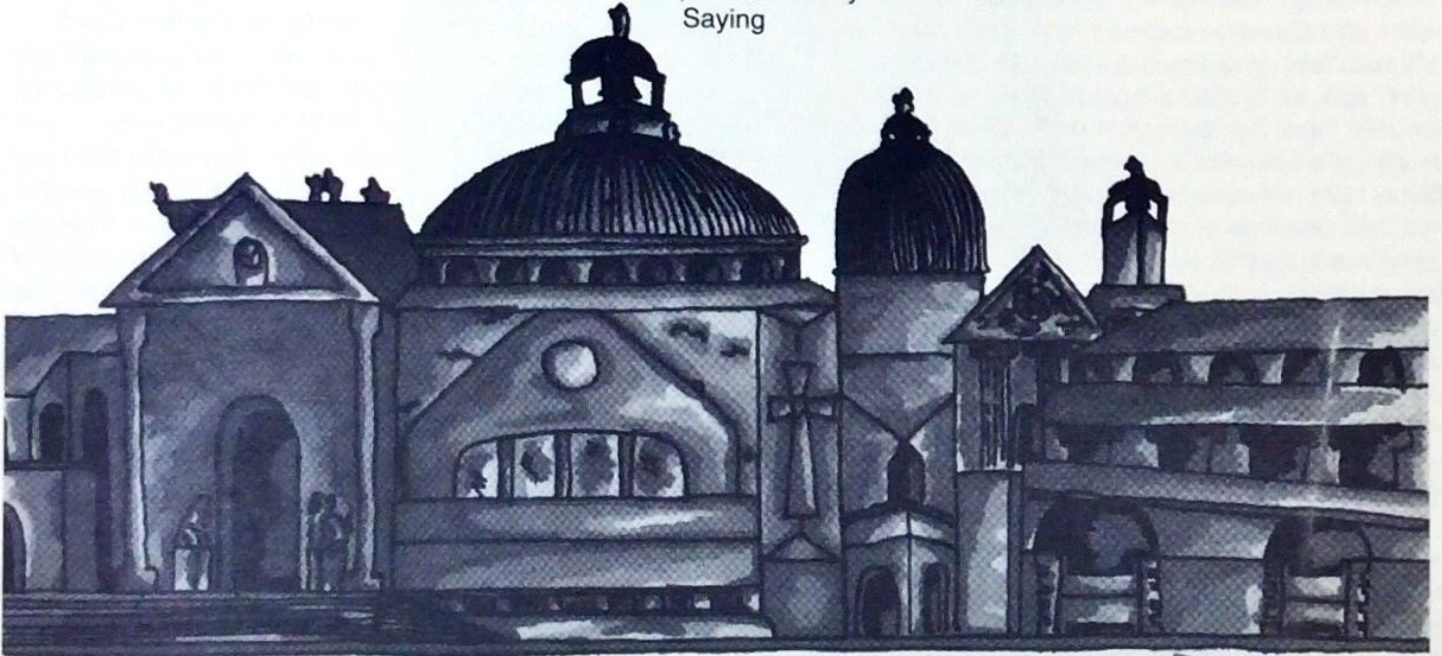
Sitting at a window only to get lost in the darkness
The moon unfolds and the photographer runs outside
From the darkroom to the museum, a masterpiece unfolds

Gerald Voorhees



Silence
Carolyn Brensinger

When in silence
You must look in
To see the heart
The soul
Find things people keep hidden in depth
Understand them
And love them
And know exactly what they are saying
Although not a single word is being spoken
You must look in their eyes
And see them wanting
Longing
To say words that can't be said
And know how frail they really are
Only in silence
Can one truly understand
What a person is really
Saying

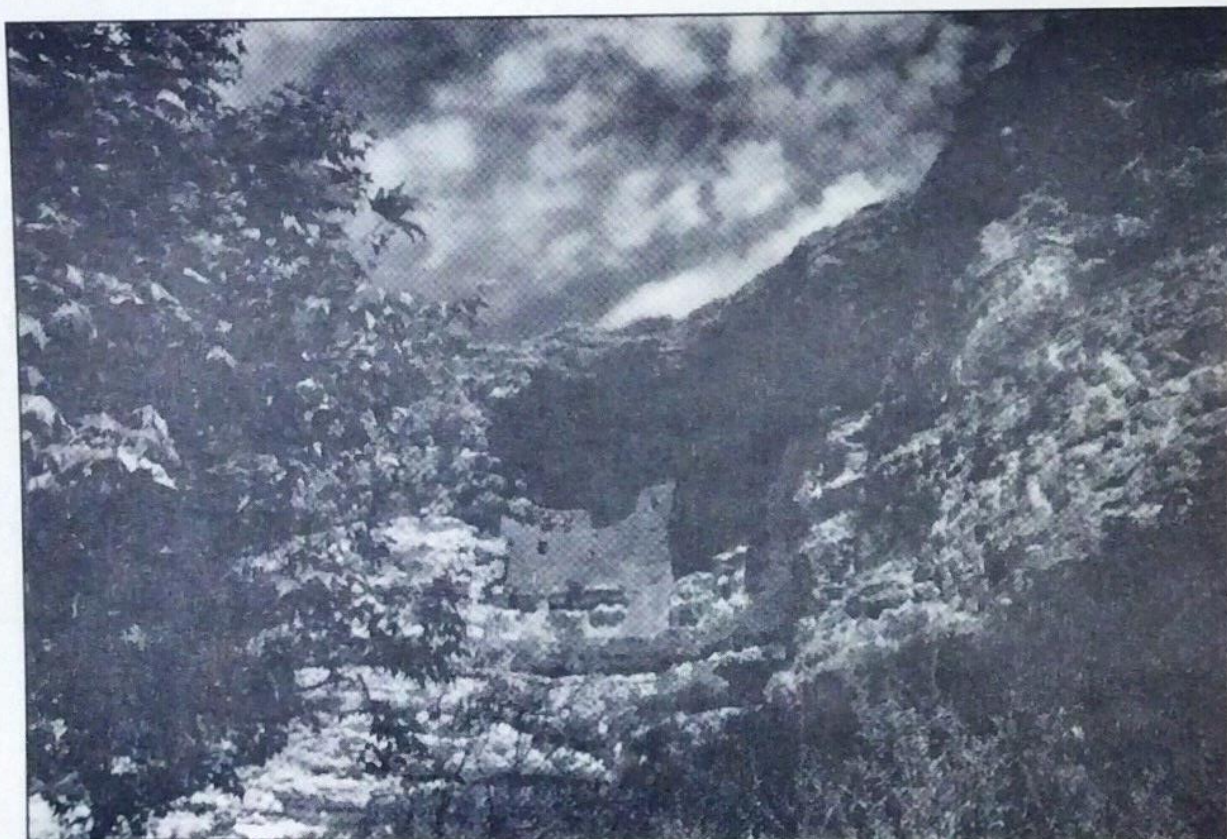


Devin Cassidy

L.L.F. For All
Alfred Arviza

Never knowing, not ignorance but pre-programmed decadence
To the society that has grown deaf and dumb
They don't know that their feeble lives
Have been fed all these lies
The world has been shown, our society cannot grow
Prejudice and elegance are a common virtue
Loyalty to this world cannot hurt you
If you see through all the crap that they have fed you
From 6 to 22 they get you
Your life and liberty
16 years do go by
As time flies by through the air, and out the window
The hourglass breaks and comes down
No protection from the edges
But they wouldn't have it any other way

Howard Drezner



Body Without Soul Jessica Attie

The night sky couldn't have been more dark. Flaming bursts of splendor were hidden in deep clouds and the moon was lost in the dark of this desolate sky. My thoughts, my entire self was a reflection of the heavens above me. Everything was lost behind darkness, everything was gone. I didn't know where I was, didn't know what I was doing, but I kept walking with the thought that I had to end up somewhere, somehow.

The irritating smell of the night was creeping into me, reminding me of fear and loss. It was torturing me with the exhaust fumes that had crowded it in the sun. I was checking it all out and hoping the stink would be gone with my mindless action. The wind that contained the smell was warm with the suffer of the night. It gave off comfort as wind normally gives, but stung me with reality and loneliness. Stung me with my fate. But beyond the smell and the sharp wind was the silence that penetrated my soul. It was painfully quiet, and I drowned in the ocean of it. It was loneliness, it was sick. I was stumbling, my desperate feet could not walk and my wary breath held frustration. So I fell, over my panic and terror. Hitting the wet, cold, hard cement made me get up. Why wasn't he there to catch me before I fell, to hold me, to reassure me? Why am I not crying? I don't think I can; he's gone, everything's changed, and I'm not crying. The blood doesn't worry me, and it feels somewhat comforting. It was in him, it flowed through him and now it's on me, stiff and cold. It's the proof to myself that this is a reality. A permanent memory that I will hold with me forever and repeat in my confusion everyday. The memory of seeing my soul die without my body. This seems like a nightmare, like my fate is being played with and left behind. Why can't I wake from this torture? Wake to see him beside me, alive and safe, not dead and gone. Who was that man with the heavy coat and eyes of hatred? What made him do such a sin to a young man in love? He saw me, that man, he saw my confusion, the worry, the shock in my face. He knew I was in love with the man whose arms were wrapped

around mine, whose eyes were deep in mine. He hated what we had, what we were, because he would never feel love or know love. So he saw us and with a glance he pulled out an innocent gun, held in a dangerous hand, and shot the heart of my love. He knew we shared that heart, we had it together. It was ours, not mine, not his, but ours. Now it's no one's. Then the strange devil-faced man ran; he ran hard and I could hear his deep steps clunk on the stones beneath him. I saw the water bounce off his shoes as his feet lifted, the coat flared up showing the back of his legs. Who was that man? The question will linger with me always. Then I heard the worst noise of my life. A noise that would never escape me, that I would hear every night as I lay in my lonely bed, torturing me with truth. The shrieks of my dying, tortured love. The cries of his inner fears and pain that echoed through me and made me feel his suffering, made me feel his fear and shock. Then his helpless body fell, and so did my spirit. It was fast, too fast. He hit the wet, cold, hard cement and I fell with him. He grabbed me, and for the last time ever our eyes met. And in that moment, when our eyes were reflecting each other, I saw him all. I knew him all, every secret that he'd ever had was not mine. All his dreams and hopes were given to me along with regret and shock, but what I saw the clearest was his fear. It was incredible; it was so deep in red and he was blanketed in blood. He lay there so beautiful, so scared in his coffin of blood, and then he stopped. The blood lay still and the night lay even more still. I touched him for the last time, I felt his warmth and the blood was on me so I ran. So helpless and scared, I ran with shock and anger flowing through me, and I don't know what kept me going, and I don't know what stopped me, but my mind never escaped the tragedy that occurred, and my heart is still gone with my soul.

Statue by Ashley

The Truth of the Matter Rebecca Tinsley

I could sit with him for hours, talking, and only begin to comprehend what it is that he was experiencing. All I know is that it was not fair, or just, or right, or any of those grievances over which our society incessantly complains. And yet it was society that persecuted him. He never did anything so horrible as to make him deserve the deplorable fate with which he was cursed. So why did this happen to him? Who nominated themselves rulers of the world, just to take him out of it? Didn't they realize, that by tearing him away from me, they were killing us both? There were so many questions, but no comforting answers were left in the world I saw and felt around me.

If only I could have taken that curse off of his shoulders and put it on mine. Then he would always be here, and I wouldn't have to live in this horrid world without him by my side. He was my best friend. The only person who truly understood my thoughts, my emotions, my feelings, my being-the only one who ever cared enough to listen to the meaning behind my words. And now, because he had the courage to resist the pressure of society, because he refused to conform to the standards of others, he was punished and forgotten in the minds of all, minus myself.

I can still see him in the back of my mind in that uncomfortable bed; tucked away in a small corner of a hospital ward lost from memory and hidden from view. Even as he struggled against an all too powerful virus, he refused to abandon his hopes and dreams, and, almost as importantly, he refused to allow others to forget.

I was there all along, and sometimes I would wish that he could draw some strength from me. Yet in some odd twist of logic, he was stronger than I could ever expect to be. Maybe he just needed me for occasional reassurance that there was, actually, someone in the world that cared and wanted to learn from him and the countless other "lost souls" trapped in the same forgotten ward as him. Maybe he wanted to teach me. And maybe he just simply loved me as I loved him- without comprehension, without question, and without end.

It is a shame that the world will never know the capacity of love his heart possessed, because it was the world who never forgave him of his choices. It was the world that stole him from me.

I was there, on that final day, just as I was there every other day. Every spare moment I had was spent by his side. I sacrificed sleep, grades, other friendships. All these things could be regained. Enduring his struggle, he was the only part of the world that mattered to me. And at the end of the struggle, I promised him that I would persevere for us both.

I never considered myself a "crier" so maybe it was my newly discovered tears that caused the intense grief, because other than the stinging in my eyes, my body and soul were numb as I slowly accepted the fact that he was gone. On that day, and in that moment, I felt nothing in

my being except grief and heartache rolling down my cheeks. As reality slowly sunk in, I turned away from his bed and his solemn, empty body. I walked over to the windowsill in his room. My fists painfully clenched the windowsill that I had painted and decorated for him, so that his room would not look so somber and so hopeless. I despised the hospitals for stuffing people away to die in such horrid rooms. I realized, as I stood at the altar of life and sacrifice and pain, that my bright, cheerful colors had failed me. And in that moment, as I stared longingly at the birds flying above outside the window, I wished only that my life would amount to something - that I could compensate for his eternal absence.

I truly do not think that I could live with myself if I ever dared to forget him. He had such a gentle, light-hearted nature. I remember his first day in that huge, emotionless building. We were holding hands as we walked down the hallway that led to his room. The doctor we were instructed to follow looked at us, disapprovingly, and we glanced at each other, mocking him.

"I guess he doesn't realize that A.I.D.S. is a gay disease," he whispered into my ear.

I laughed under my breath, trying to stay silent, and retorted, "and we're trusting him to save your life?!"

Okay, so he had Alr3S, but an extremely low T-cell count does not devalue a person. And fine, he was attracted to males. How does that translate into a loss of the right to live? It seems odd that a choice so miniscule and immaterial could revoke a person's self-worth in the eyes of the ignorant and closed-minded.

After he was settled into his room, which could not have been any larger than a mere eight-by-ten prison cell, the doctor took me into the hallway to explain the situation to me.

"Now, (cough) you realize that we usually only tell the guardians this information, but because of your (cough) his extenuating circumstances, we are willing to make this one exception." (What he meant was that because Michael's parents had abandoned him, and I was the only friend he really had left from his lost life, I was allowed to know whether or not they could help him.) The doctor paused as he analyzed his clipboard intently. "Now, ma'am, it is truly unfortunate, but the fact is, unless we soon find a cure, his chances of survival are extremely slim."

"So, in other words," I thought, "Not only have his parents abandoned him, but he's about to die." I hoped, in that millisecond, to God, or to whoever manufactured his appalling fate, that they would find a cure, that they would not dare put my dear, sweet Michael through this torment.

I suppose, in retrospect, that my wishes, or some mutation of the intent of my wishes, had been answered, because the doctor had been correct - Michael didn't have very long to live in his torment. For some reason, out of the millions of studies and experiments that had

occurred, no cure had been found. Why couldn't this huge group of supposedly intelligent scientists and doctors just find a cure? Were these people really so cold and heartless that they were willing to let a virus conquer them and tear him from me and his world?

During his last days, outside those hospital walls, people who had heard of his "condition" would ask inane questions of me that only made each day more difficult to handle.

"Are you afraid of catching 'it'?"

It? Doesn't 'It' have a name? Are you just so embarrassed by the fact that the world you inhabit is so cruel that it pains you to utter a single, undignified syllable? I just wanted to scream at all of those cretins, at the entire mass of uneducated fools. I wanted to know how they could allow such idiocy and nonsense to circulate through their petty little minds. You don't catch A.I.D.S. (Oh no- I

The truth is, I never stood any chance of catching A.I.D.S. from him. I never shared a needle with him. I never received a blood transfusion from him. I never slept with him. And, despite myths, he was not an evil person because he was afflicted with this virus. He was a better person than anyone I have ever met- or ever will. He was beautiful outside as well as deep within his heart. He was sincerely my best friend. Neither of us let the opinions of others shadow our love, and we never abandoned one another through the entire ordeal.

And as I stand next to his casket, it dawns on me, as I gaze at his austere face, that the ordeal is over. How can he be gone? How can I be alone? How can I go on without his love and friendship? Once again tears stream down my face, only this time, I am not comforted by numbness. I feel only emptiness as I fall to my knees. I cannot



Adam Simms

said that hideous word ...) from touching someone or talking to them. I couldn't conceive of the apparent satisfaction these people received from the mere action of ignorantly passing judgment on absolute strangers. They refused to learn any morsel of the truth. They went about their days, content with the thoughts of supremacy they must feel at knowing that they could never be vulnerable to such an evil disease. It seems to me the true syndrome spreading through our world today is ignorance, because there is no test that can come back with a positive or a negative diagnosis, no phone call from the laboratory, no scientists postulating who is a potential victim. Ignorance simply exists in the feeble minds of most of the world.

survive in a world such as this alone. In my last conscious seconds, I make a rash decision.

I remember blood, but nothing else. When I wake up, I find myself in a hospital bed with tubes escaping from every open hole in my body. The walls of the room are a sickly shade of pale yellow, and the curtains are closed, casting a ghastly shadow across the room. I have always wondered how they expect patients to recover in such dull rooms. But as the doctor walks into the room, resting a clipboard against his chest, the look in his face sends a chill down my back, and I realize it doesn't matter - the color of the walls. You see, unless they find a cure soon, my chances are slim.

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Texas High School Press Association: Texas Honor Rating 1989; State Champion 1990-1992; Reserve State Champion 1994; Honor Roll of Excellence 1992-1995; Best Cover 1993; 2nd Place in State 1995; Mark of Distinction 1997

National High School Press Association: Best of Show Competition 1991-1994; 2nd in Nation 1991-1992; 4th in Nation 1993; 6th in Nation 1994

Texas Association of Journalism Educators: Best of Show 1997

Merlyn's Pen: Bronze Medal 1993-1995, 1997

American Scholastic Press Association: First Place with Special Merit (Highest Award) 1991-1995, 1997; Most Outstanding High School Literary Magazine of 1992; Perfect Rating 1000/1000 points 1992-1993; Outstanding Overall Art 1990, 1993; Most Innovative Supplement 1997

Columbia Scholastic Press Association: First Place 1990, 1993, 1994; Silver Medalist 1995; All Columbian Award for Concept 1990, 1992, 1995, 1997; All Columbian Award for Creativity 1990, 1992, 1995, 1997; All Columbian Award for Design 1992, 1995, 1997; All Columbian Award for Content 1997; Gold Medalist 1997; Silver Crown Award 1991; Gold Crown Award 1992

National Council of Teachers of English: Excellent Rating 1990, 1995; Superior Rating 1989, 1994; Highest Award 1991-1993

Bullseye 1998 is a collaborative effort of writers, artists, and musicians. Staff positions and submissions to publications are open to the entire student body. Text and music entries are selected by the staff and advisors. Original artwork is selected from entries or commissioned from student artists. Subscriptions are sold to students, faculty, and administrators for a cost of \$8 per copy. **Bullseye 1998** is laid out on a Power Mac by the student staff and is printed by Burke Publishing Company of San Antonio, Texas.



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For Those Who Follow

This poem has barely begun
and already it's missing something:
your ears, your ink marks,
your uplifting honesty.
Somewhere in the middle
we're bound to stumble, use too many "be" verbs,
botch the ending like usual.
But this time we'll have to get through,
and this time, without you.

It's the subtleties
that really kill us;
the rickety, old fan in the corner
that you could never get to work quite right
and the silver cane
that had recently become your companion.
We miss being told
to be quiet and get back to work
as we sat talking in the corner
and we ache for the jokes,
the little sarcastic ones,
that always out matched our own.

And people will pass your room
-your room-
and it will appear to be like all others,
without stacks of papers and rows of cabinets
in the cluttered corner that we always joked about.
Instead, it will be desks and chairs
and a few loose worksheets
that don't reveal the majesty of the original maker.

We won't ask how or why-
they are questions that may never be answered.
We'll merely take solace
in the knowledge that you are in a better place,
that your laughter
will now echo from the clouds of Heaven,
and thus bring the joy that we have all known
to the angels above us.

We will gain strength from our memories
and from the knowledge
that we have been blessed
for having known you,
our mentor, our friend.
We will take it as our final task
to pass on your legacy
to keep your spirit alive
in the hearts of those who follow.
We will not let that fade.

**This book is a celebration of the life
and accomplishments of D'Ann Johnson.**



January 25, 1946 - March 25, 1998

