



Summer 1992

## The Lantern Vol. 59, No. 2, Summer 1992

Chris Kakacek  
*Ursinus College*

Katie Jones  
*Ursinus College*


Stephen Devlin  
*Ursinus College*

Kathrin Phillips  
*Ursinus College*

Pat Benes  
*Ursinus College*

*See next page for additional authors*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/lantern>

 Part of the [Fiction Commons](#), [Illustration Commons](#), [Nonfiction Commons](#), and the [Poetry Commons](#)

**[Click here to let us know how access to this document benefits you.](#)**

### Recommended Citation

Kakacek, Chris; Jones, Katie; Devlin, Stephen; Phillips, Kathrin; Benes, Pat; Orleman, Diane; Rosenthal, William; Hicks, Matt; McCabe, Alan; Mendte, Megan; Starr, Erica; Breckon, Alex; Lane, Bob; Cole, Jonathan; Sommer, Julie; Rosenbaum, Abby; Mast, Janet; Gagne, Paul; Hicks, Stephanie; Barber, Tony; and Lacey, Gretchen, "The Lantern Vol. 59, No. 2, Summer 1992" (1992). *The Lantern Literary Magazines*. 141.

<https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/lantern/141>

---

**Authors**

Chris Kakacek, Katie Jones, Stephen Devlin, Kathrin Phillips, Pat Benes, Diane Orleman, William Rosenthal, Matt Hicks, Alan McCabe, Megan Mendte, Erica Starr, Alex Breckon, Bob Lane, Jonathan Cole, Julie Sommer, Abby Rosenbaum, Janet Mast, Paul Gagne, Stephanie Hicks, Tony Barber, and Gretchen Lacey

THE  
LANTERN

Vol LIX, No. 2

Summer 1992



# THE LANTERN

---

Vol. LIX, No. 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Summer, 1992

---

Chris Kakacek--MR. FOLEY'S TOBOGGAN _____	3
Katie Jones--I CLOSE THE DOOR TO THE BATHROOM _____	4
Stephen Devlin--INSOMNIAC SCRIBBLES _____	5
Kathrin Phillips--AND THEN THERE WERE FOUR _____	6
Pat Benes--GOODBYE, ACE _____	13
Diane Orleman--SILICONE'S A MANMADE MATTER _____	14
Karin Hoerrner--art work _____	15
William Rosenthal--THE NINETEENTH HOLE _____	16
Grethen Lacey--UPON VISITING MANOR CARE _____	19
Matt Hicks & Alan McCabe--LITTLE BOYS _____	20
Alison Sedgewick--art work _____	21
Megan Mendte--OBSESSED _____	22
Erica Starr--LIFE _____	30
Alex Breckon--SHAKESPEAREAN SHAKEDOWN _____	31
Bob Lane--VIOLETS AND MORNING GLORIES _____	32
Kathrin Phillips--MR. COPE TAKES HIS SECRETARY _____	33
Gretchen Lacey--WINTER EYES _____	34
Diane Orleman--TRIPTYCH _____	38
Jonathan Cole--THESE HOT, HUMID NIGHTS _____	39
Julie Sommer--THE CAR'S PLACE IN HIS HEART _____	40
Abby Rosenbaum--SATURDAY NIGHT _____	45
Janet Mast--THE WINDOWS OF A CLEAN HOUSE _____	46
Paul Gagne--AN HARMONIOUS THUNK _____	48
Stephanie Hicks--NOMADS _____	54
Tony Barber--MY WATCH AT MASS _____	55
Bob Lane--DAVE'S FINE PRINT _____	56
Matt Hicks--K.P. DUTY _____	62
Janet Mast--SERENDIPITY _____	63
Patrons _____	64

## EDITOR'S NOTE

In its 59th year of production, this issue of Ursinus College's literary magazine, The Lantern, features poetry. The staff congratulates Chris Kakacek whose contest winning poem MR. FOLEY'S TOBOGGAN appears on page 3. The staff also congratulates the visual art contest winner Brenden Cusack whose drawing appears on the cover.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together; cover to cover, it's full of some excellent pieces of poetry, fiction, and artwork. I want to thank all of those who submitted their works, the staff had a difficult time narrowing it down from the original 102 submissions.

Happy Reading!

# THE LANTERN

## Editor

Bob Lane

## Assistant Editor

Kathrin Phillips

## Layout Editor

Gar Donecker

## Business Manager

Alissandra Kelsch

## Patron Drive Coordinator

Amy Flemming

## Circulation Editor

Stephen Devlin

## Archivist

Maria Costa

## Advisor

Dr. Jon Volkmer

## Staff

Kim Costino

Paul Gagne

Peggy Gavin

Karin Hoerrner

Chris Kakacek

Vanessa Klingensmith

Jeff Smith

## Poetry Judge

Dr. Peter Perreten

## JUDGE'S NOTE

When poets make poems, they are involved simultaneously in the acts of creation and re-creation. They create works of art using words which re-create experiences and emotions already existing somewhere in their imaginations or memories. This act of recreation occurs again in the mind of the reader who encounters a successful poem.

"Mr. Foley's Toboggan," the prize-winning poem in this issue of The Lantern, pulled me into the brief narrative where I, too, rode the old toboggan for those few crazy seconds when all one can do is hold on for dear life, hoping simply to survive, hoping the ride will last forever.

## Mr. Foley's Toboggan

By Chris Kakacek

### NO SLEDDING

threatens the sign glowing  
by the moonlight.  
Ellison Park drops  
below us, spread out,  
encased in quiet silkiness.  
It's ten below zero--  
beer bottles freeze to our lips.  
Uneasy, I scratch my ice-wiry beard.

I still remember the day our neighbor,  
Mr. Foley, left us his toboggan.  
"You only live once," he growled,  
a Pall Mall drooping from his lips.  
Fifty years of adrenalin and  
fear found their way  
into our hands.

But the death machine awaits:  
twelve feet of waxed wood,  
hemp rope, and oiled leather straps  
ready to rocket seven young fools  
straight to Hell.  
I take my place at the curled front,  
sliding cold wet goggles over my face.  
We slowly carve down the slope,  
snow crunching underneath, then  
accelerate as my warm insides writhe.  
Smoky snow crystals sandblast my cheeks,  
fill my screaming mouth.  
Blinded by white, deafened by wind,  
numbed by ice, I am aware  
of only velocity, and the memory  
of old Mr. Foley's smiling crinkled face.

## **i close the door to the Bathroom Upstairs Leaving My dinner Aside**

**By Katie Jones**

Behind the mirror lives a hungry troll  
regurgitating images. Without  
an invitation, it appears with orbs  
of sunken fungus green in front of me.  
I wipe away the steamy countenance  
in hopes of smearing head and body. But,  
its face is clearer now the misty veil  
had vanished. Staring evilly at me,  
the troll contorts its pasty face until  
the mouth is cavern wide and flesh  
squeaks over hollow cheeks. Exhausted from  
these feats, the hungry troll retreats inside  
a box of laxatives to sleep in peace.

I brush my teeth with Tartar Control Crest  
and watch the drain ingest the worm which goosed  
from chin to sink. A mane of tentacles  
and suction cups cling to my slimy face.  
I wipe the snotty strands with one palmed stroke.  
This tiled cell of moldy grout encases  
stale air. In a vise made of oxygen  
my body crushes, flattening my wretched  
physique. Collapsing under pressured space,  
I kiss the toilet brim and pray for peace.

## Insomniac Scribbles

By Stephen Devlin

The cold ran me through.  
Too many old movies,  
too much romance clouds my mind.  
Why has it taken so long?  
Cleansing like the rain,  
tempestuous as the storms.  
All is relative to the temperature,  
maybe I'll get burned if I touch  
or I might freeze right to her.  
Too many decisions,  
none of the answers work.  
The cold runs me through  
the heat is close behind.



## And Then There Were Four

By Kathrin Phillips

Halfway through channel five's midnight showing of The Big Chill I began to cry. Not the sniffing tears of the past few days, but true crocodile tears that burned their way down my face, to puddle on the fur of the cat who slept obliviously on my lap. I couldn't even try to wipe them away. I simply sat and sobbed. My heart ached with sorrow and my stomach seemed to fill my throat until I choked.

"Meghan? Are you coming to bed soon?" Andy's voice rang down the staircase.

I jumped up, spilling popcorn all over the couch and dislodging the cat from my lap. "Yes Andy, I'll be up in a minute. I'm just, just cleaning up a bit."

As I was sweeping up, Andy came padding down the stairs. Seeing him only made me begin to cry again. He crossed the floor in long decisive strides to take me in his arms.

"Oh honey, I know it's rough. We all miss Ted."

Yes we *all* miss Ted. But I, oh Teddy. Teddy was always there. He was always the one to decide what to do, and wasn't he responsible for toilet papering Mr. Cooper's big elm tree? Ted who liked to go to the diner in the middle of the night. Ted whose lips were always red and inviting. Oh yes, we *all* miss Ted.

"Come on up to bed now," Andy was saying and I nodded without responding. Instead, reel after reel of 'remember whens' flickered across my tear filmed eyes.

When I was little, our neighborhood was full of kids. The only child in my family, I was also the only girl in our neighborhood, unless you counted Fat Sally Larson and we didn't. Minus Fat Sally, there were four other kids my age. Dave, Andy, John, and Teddy. We were best friends, always together, always laughing, and almost always in trouble. We called ourselves The Fabulous Five and we were inseparable.

I was shivering. Andy tucked me into bed and went back downstairs to clean up my popcorn mess. Without Andy the house would probably fall down. Pulling the blankets around myself, I tried to sort out my confusion.

Ted had been dead, deceased, gone, for nearly three days now and still I could not even think his name without tears welling up in my eyes. Andy and I had been sound asleep when Dave's phone call woke us. Hysteria clouded his voice but finally we were able to decipher his muddled words. Ted was gone, the victim of a car accident, and we,

his friends, were alone. The very thought made my head spin crazily and I squeezed my eyes shut tightly. When I opened them, the room seemed very bright. Andy's face hovered above me and he was wiping at my face with a cool washcloth. I pushed his hand away and our eyes met.

Andy's eyes. I have always loved Andy's eyes. When we were thirteen and in the same gym class, we had been forced to square dance together. In the midst of dosidos and swing your partners, I had noticed Andy's eyes for the first time. We were the best of friends, joking about the embarrassing and ridiculous ritual called square dancing, and suddenly, there were Andy's eyes, staring into mine. Just like that. I didn't play favorites in our group of friends, it just wouldn't do and there I was, drowning in deep brown eyes and picking my absolute forever favorite.

"Meg?"

I blinked several times, remembering where and when I was and focusing on Andy's eyes.

"Do you want something to help you sleep?"

"I can't believe he's gone, our Ted." I whispered, looking up at Andy. His face twisted and he looked as if he might cry.

"He didn't know. He couldn't have known, it was instantaneous," Andy's voice broke. I put my arms out and we held each other while we sobbed.

It was another restless night for both of us. I could feel him tossing and turning, until finally he pulled me close, up against him--we were like spoons. He soon began to snore. His snore, loud and disturbed, played the background music in my nightmares. Memories, twisted and horrible, wound their way through me and I didn't sleep at all.

Breakfast was a somber affair. I felt the betrayal of the sun, streaming through the window panes and creating patterns on the tile floor. I drank my OJ silently and watched the cat roll lazily in the sun spots.

"What do you have to do today?" A strained conversation began, and was interrupted by the telephone.

To avoid Andy's stare, I grabbed it.

"Meghan, good morning, I didn't wake you did I? I'm never sure with the time difference."

"No John, we're having breakfast." Andy's eyebrows rose as I mentioned John's name. Since we'd married I had formed a name dropping habit on the telephone for his benefit. I didn't want to be the one to mention Ted and so I waited, wondering what time it was in California.

"Has Dave called you yet?" John, cautious fellow that he is, didn't want to shock me.

I opened my mouth to answer and found I couldn't. Andy took the phone.

I didn't want to think about seeing John. He would want to talk about it. I knew he would.

\*\*\*\*

It had happened the summer after my college graduation. We were all enjoying our last summer before the real world truly began. Andy and I were engaged, and spending our first summer apart. He was in Boston, looking at houses and interviewing for different positions. I spent a lot of time at the beach, planned the wedding and tried to spend time with my friends. John would soon be leaving for California. A friend of his father's was starting him out as his assistant and John was thrilled. In the meantime he was sharing an apartment with Ted and Dave. I spent quite a bit of time with the guys, but for some reason Ted seemed determined to avoid me. He was withdrawn and quiet when I was around, and often as not, left when I arrived. One night I showed up early. As usual, I didn't knock. Ted had just showered and was lounging on the sofa in boxer shorts. We were the only people in the apartment and I confronted him.

"What is wrong with you?" I demanded, "You never talk to me anymore, I'm beginning to feel like some sort of outsider whenever you're around."

He grabbed me by the shoulders and shook me. I was almost impressed by the strength in his grip. Andy was never rough with me.

"Are you blind Meghan?"

"Ted, what's going on? Why can't we just be friends like always?"

"Sometimes you are so stupid." He shoved me away violently and stalked across the room, raking his fingers through his dark, unruly hair. Finally he turned to face me.

"I can't believe you're going away." He whispered. I was incredulous. Of course I would go away, I was grown up now, getting married and going on with my life. As I tried to explain this to Ted, he interrupted. "Meg, I can't believe I'm going to tell you this, but I love you. I've always loved you, always will." He said it simply, and then turned away. I put my arms around him, I didn't know what else to do, he looked so vulnerable. He turned in my arms and suddenly he was kissing me, and I, traitorous bitch, was kissing him back.

The scene John walked in on must have shocked him but he never once mentioned it to me. When I married Andy in September, John was our best man. Ted did not attend the wedding.

\* \* \* \*

The funeral was Monday. We flew into town that morning. I clutched Andy's arm as we walked up the church steps. Our eyes searched the crowd, needing our friends. John, tall and slim, looked haggard as he approached. I couldn't think of the last time we had seen him and it was inappropriate to ask. He held me for a long moment before turning to Andy. His eyes, looking down at me, seemed to see inside my soul and I had to turn away. Dave was last to arrive and he hurried in just before the music started. His mouth was cold on my cheek and his eyes were bloodshot.

The wooden pew was uncomfortable, and I wondered when I had last sat in this church. As if he read my thoughts, Andy whispered in my ear.

"We haven't been here since Easter last year, remember?" His hand held mine firmly, and I leaned my head on his shoulder. On my other side, Dave reached for my hand and I gave it gladly. His hand was freezing cold, and I squeezed it.

My wedding. The last time I saw John was at the wedding. Nearly two years, no wonder he looks older.

The church was crowded. All of our old friends were there, people we went to high school with, and many of their parents. I tried to remember when I had last seen these people and could not. Dave's head suddenly whipped around, and I tried to follow his gaze. Oh great. The good-for-nothing womanizer was staring at a tall young woman who stood regally at the back of the chapel. She was slender, elegant, and very familiar in an odd way.

Dave turned wide red eyes to me. "That's Fat Sally," he whispered.

"Fat Sally Larson?"

He nodded. Andy tugged on my hand and whispered "Shh." I spent the next ten minutes trying to look at her without drawing Andy's attention, but it was futile. Instead, I tried to focus on Andy. His profile was strong. He looked secure and resigned. I wondered if marrying Andy had been the right thing to do, maybe if Ted, oh I was confused.

Dave's hand, the one that held mine, had begun to shake. I smiled reassuringly at him, but I, myself, was on the verge of tears. Father Deegan spoke for quite some time, dwelling on Ted's religious life and on his family. He laughed gently as he told a small anecdote of Teddy's first communion, and a ripple went through the crowd. I shook my head to clear it. Here, Father Deegen was talking about Ted's life, his death, and I was remembering the way his chest hair had felt, crisp beneath my hand. Father Deegen continued. He talked about Ted's

adult life, his job, and his friends. His eyes rested on our pew as he spoke, and my heart clenched tightly in my chest.

I looked over at Dave. His face was contorted in an effort to stifle tears. Father Deegen was talking about Ted's family now, and tears welled up in my eyes, then stung their way down my face. Twenty four years old and dead, what a waste, what a fucking waste!! A tiny voice began to shout in my head. Remember his lips Meg? Oh remember his touch. I closed my eyes and covered them with my hands to block my treacherous mind.

Somehow the service ended and everyone milled around, discussing the many merits of Theodore Mark Wassick. With some surprise I noticed my parents and Andy's mom by the rear of the crowd, and we went to them. My mother held out her arms and I fell into them like a child, weeping publicly and unashamed.

As my tears subsided my mother whispered, "Did you see Fat Sally Larson? What a body that girl has developed!" To hear my mother, you would think Fat Sally had done it all herself! I had my doubts.

Fat Sally Larson herself came sweeping across the aisle to take me by the hands.

"Oh Meg, I'm so sorry. You must be heartbroken."

She hugged me and kissed my cheeks while Dave salivated at my side.

"I just had to come back for the funeral. My childhood friends mean so much to me, and as it turned out, I was on assignment in New York anyway,"

"What do you do?" Dave interrupted.

"I'm with Ford. Modeling." She smiled a gracious smile.

"And what are you doing with your life Meggy?" As she spoke, John joined our group with a solemn look at me. John's arrival did, however, save me from answering. His deep eyes took in Sally's admirable changes and he complimented her briefly. And then, his gaze fixed on me.

"John," I began but couldn't finish my thought.

"Would you like to talk about it?"

We made our way to the coat room and sat in two stiff chairs.

"We have to talk about this John. It's been a long time and you can't keep judging me. I didn't do anything."

"You didn't do anything? Meghan you were in *his* arms. Do you want me to just forget everything I saw, everything Ted told me?"

Everything Ted had told him?

"It was just a kiss. Let me explain, I can't bear to be judged."

"Then talk Meg."

"I, I didn't know, how could I know? He didn't talk to me that summer. Finally, I asked him why he was ignoring me, and he said, he said he loved me."

"Bullshit." John's bright eyes drilled into me. "We all knew he loved you."

"No! I didn't know, how could I? And when he told me, he kissed me, John don't you know how it feels to be kissed by someone new after spending so long with only one person? Don't you see? Ted was everything Andy isn't. Forceful, independent, so unpredictable, almost self-centered, and when he held me, I, I..." I choked back sobs and finally buried my face in my hands. My wedding ring was cold against my cheek.

"We all knew Meg. I thought you were blind, even cruel never to acknowledge him. He worshipped you Meggy, since high school, always Meg this, Meg that, and you knew. You must have known!"

His words began to sink in. *We all knew.*

"Did Andy know?" I asked through my hands.

"Damn it! Even Fat Sally probably knew!" John exploded at me, jumping from his chair he tore my hands down and kneeling before me, glared into my face. I couldn't look at him. Fat Sally's words rang through my head, *Oh Meg, I'm so sorry. You must be heartbroken.*

"Oh John! Did Andy know?"

"Of course. How can you be so naive? Ted told all of us, he was so, so consumed with you that he told everyone. Why do you think he didn't come to the wedding? Andy forbade him, threatened him. He was so afraid he would lose you. Andy knew he wasn't like Ted, he couldn't bear to lose you. And so Ted stayed away."

"John, I didn't know." I interrupted his tirade, looking into his eyes and he lowered his gaze.

"Really?" His voice was low and he seemed to really see me for the first time in ages.

I nodded and he clumsily put his arms around me.

"I miss him already," he said softly.

"I wondered what had happened to you." Andy appeared in the doorway, my coat in his hands and a tentative smile on his face.

John nodded at him as he brushed by to leave the room. To leave me alone with my husband, a man I didn't think I knew anymore.

We gathered at my childhood home later in the evening, John, reserved and proper, seemed to watch me. He smoked a cigar and sat with one leg crossed above the other. We sat at the kitchen table, the four of us, while our parents sipped wine by the fireplace. Dave, his eyes red rimmed and nervous, drank too much and talked very little.

I felt like Andy was protecting me, he kept offering me hot tea, and he asked twice if I wanted him to get me a sweater. He held my hand while I talked. I didn't know how to look at him, I wanted to ask him how he could have been so calculating, how he had kept Ted away, and how he felt now. For some reason I had trouble talking to him, he had taken on a new image in my mind.

Everyone laughed as I told old stories and reminded them of all the stupid things we had ever done, from rock fights at the bus stop to playing ninjas in John's yard. As usual, I was the one who remembered all of the details, could tell all the stories. Flipping through old photographs, we laughed at our own faces, apprehensive on the first day of kindergarten, playing football in my back yard, "Was that the day you broke your finger?" Andy asked, and finally, ecstatic at high school graduation. These pictures, the five of us, always the five of us, and I thought of Agatha Christie's book The Ten Little Indians. "And then there were four," I whispered to myself. As I turned the pages of the album, I surveyed my own face, always in the middle, and I studied their faces, these boys that I loved.

Andy slept on the shuttle flight home, leaving me alone with my thoughts. I relived everything, every moment I had ever spent with Ted. The stewardess looked at me as if I were crazy when I laughed aloud. I remembered being seven. The boys had decided to race from the red car in front of Andy's house to the blue one in front of John's. The winner would marry me. They joked around, pretending that they would run slowly, who would want to win me? Ted's voice rang through my head "On your mark, get set, GO!!" And I laughed, because I, queen of memories-long-forgotten, could not remember who had won.

## Goodbye, Ace

By Pat Benes

For one measured hour  
the little church on the other  
side of Main Street  
fills its oak pews with solemn  
trackmen and gymnasts  
a dark haired writer  
that full lipped poet  
and a boyish looking actor.

They come to say goodbye  
to the old yankee runner, teller  
of a thousand tales who'd  
named them all, then at sixty  
took up racquetball  
and just now pulled the camel  
through needle's eye.

I see him pedalling his stationary  
bike, nonstop for eulogies,  
with those knotty veined legs,  
or stiffly dressed at a party  
before the punch bowl, eyes  
leap beyond distorted years,  
hand trembles for an instant  
before it dives into mine.



## Silicone's a Manmade Matter

By Diane Orleman

You know, that stuff Silly Putty nursed some little minutes of a children's hour remember? Kneading molding squeezing till trapped bubbles popped then stretching to the splitting-place elastic gone too far and fashioning new noses to hang hooked on our old ones, recall? redolence of skin-clay tricking up our nostrils and rolling it back into a buoyant ball.

Its pinkness fingered fresh until we tried lifting the scenes from Sunday comic strips, properties of faithful reproduction fascinating us until the flesh became unclean.

We snapped it back into its plastic egg case. Then we cast it out, thoughtless, to rot in some rank refuse heap.

These days it finds its time of serious fame, slipped insidious in chest cavities and other concave places, for effect. Sound bites debate its yeses and its noes. Doctors of lust and lucre testify, Hypocrites. Wolves on corners whistle, while we at home moan our debased desire to look like BettyandVeronica. Instead we sag, are sullied, and we weep.



Kevin Hannon 3/12

## The Nineteenth Hole

By William Rosenthal

Lill died on a Friday, but I didn't find out until the following Tuesday. The memo, written by the president of our college, spent the night nested among the advertising fliers in my post-office box. I read it without perceptible emotion, neither shocked nor distressed that the randomly chosen date for the completion of her cancer had come and gone without my knowledge. I proceeded to my office to paw the word processor for a misbegotten half hour, not realizing until the evening that I was in mourning.

Our relationship inhabited that uncharted region, something more than acquaintances, somewhat less than friends. She had been in charge of the college's media-services department, working in an underground bunker that seemed more her home than the accidental apartment to which she returned most nights. The students she supervised were at once her companions, siblings, and children. In a humorless irony, she had been granted the lifetime security of tenure early in the season of her death.

Attracted both by Lill's physical beauty and her scholarship in the philosophy of education -- a field in which I maintain a dilettante's interest -- I had some years ago begun to pay her occasional visits that increased in frequency with the pessimism of her prognoses. I last saw her two months before she died, hours after she had received a medical report compelling her to commence self-grieving -- a ritual whose unrefusable invitation she had declined until that day. (Her rational denial of cancer had extended her life in a way that oncological science will never understand.) When, for the first time, I heard her speak of her death, I learned the hidden agenda of my visit: Lill and I were to take leave of one another. She asked me to "write in" the book I'd brought for her and beamed upon hearing that I had already inscribed it. I told her of the seminar I plan to offer next spring -- a course she had wanted to teach -- without saying that I had already dedicated it to her memory. She lent me two books to use in preparation. We both knew that these were not a loan. These were her first gift to me.

Lill was accorded the honor of a funeral in the college chapel. Enervated by a summer flu and discomfited by Protestant mourning practices, I declined the receiving line and took a seat in the last row next to a colleague who ruefully noted that he graduated from college in 1954, the year of Lill's -- and my -- birth. I cried privately throughout the interminable yet appropriately solemn service, mentally striking the Christianity that will always seem like a personal affront to my Semitic sensibilities. Two or three times, I stole a glance at Ned, a history professor from Kansas and my best friend on the faculty, who had entered late and was sitting amidst the political scientists. I was relieved to see that he too was tieless. His eyes were aimed anywhere

but at Lill's coffin and the preacher.

After the postlude, I braved the heats of the sun and my fever to await Ned. He had exited through a side door and surprised me from behind. We wordlessly fell into step and he assumed the gait that punctuates the rare moments when he is imminent in his emotions: long and rapid strides, regular as a baby's breathing; hands in pockets; head steadied as if in a vise and cast down at a thirty-degree angle of depression. At the first sound of his voice -- a sob -- I mentioned coffee. He suggested a harder legal drug. When he turned his Mazda into the parking lot of a not-yet-open tavern, I remarked that its funereal darkness was the perfect atmosphere for my first before-noon drink in fifteen years. Ned said that this was precisely *his* reason for choosing it.

We proceeded to the unlikeliness of The Sandtrap, a barroom contiguous with the eighteenth green of a golf course in the penumbra of a nuclear power plant. Ned followed his shot of Jack Daniel's with styrofoam coffee; I, fearful of sending a mixed message to an arrhythmic heart, declined the chaser. I sat stupidly with the cup frozen to my palm, wanting to speak but seized by my doubt about the propriety of the toast "To Lill." It took Ned's American-Gothic fortitude to cross the frontier, to speak precisely *these* words for me, for us. Our glasses met. Then our eyes.

As I sweated and spun, my thin blood no match for the collaboration of sorrow and sour mash, Ned and I celebrated the postmortem of a former seminarian's first non-Catholic funeral and an ambivalent Jew's first gentile one. We spurned the vernacular and generated our own *lingua franca*, our voices rising and falling in the simultaneous laughing and crying I hear in schizophrenic babble and Bartok's string quartets. He talked of departed high-school and college acquaintances; I realized that I had lost no contemporary so close as Lill. I teased him about his long-forgotten (so I thought!) salacious remark about Lill; he reminded me of my immediate corroboration. He enthused about the Graham Greene on his nighttable; I gushed over the Dostoevsky in my backpack; we giggled our perverse fascination with a postmodernist whose books we buy for each other. He looked straight at me when he confessed his relief at sighting me without a tie and that he passed the service staring at the walls. Accepting Ned's wisdom in mating ethanol with caffeine, I ordered two more Jacks and javas and seized the toastmaster's high ground, unequivocally *mandating* the "L'Chaim! To life!" of my heritage like some Hebraic Karamazov.

We stumbled back to the Mazda, running a gauntlet of electric carts, polyester pants, and eastern-Pennsylvania vowels. The manager blithely invited us to return soon. Ned smiled and shouted a sure-we-will. Under my breath, I muttered my mordant agreement, that we wouldn't *think* of repairing elsewhere after the funeral of an almost-friend whom we both loved. Ned's gaze lasered my face with the

desperation reserved for our species, the only one to know its own mortality -- a knowledge that demarcates humanity more faithfully than the thumb.

I don't recall a millisecond of the ride back to campus. We circled the hot, tiny parking lot -- the lot in which my car often kept company with Lill's as she lived and then died in her basement home. Home. I announced that I was headed home, a gardenless garden apartment in a treeless suburban steppe, and began a drunken rendition of Simon and Garfunkel's "Homeward Bound." Ned stopped the car, froze me with the ice-blue eyes that entice college women half his age -- eyes I want for myself -- and said that precisely *this* song was playing in the juke box of *his* mind's ear.

Ned went home, too. Home to a Saint Bernard I want for myself, home to the imperatives of a childless two-profession marriage, home to the newly sewn flowers ringing the miniature backyard patio on which corn and wheat grew until just a few years before he, I, and Lill arrived at our college.

Two days have passed. My flu is almost gone. Ned and I have shared only a naked, grunted greeting in a fetid lockerroom. The hurricane of temporary, transcendent life -- this electric, awakening storm that was Lill's second gift -- has spent its fury and our relationship is once again circumscribed by the barriers of nature and nurture, mutually exclusive obligations, and the persistent constraints of masculine emotional discourse. Saturday's hour in a golf-course gin mill has left me with one regret more than the none claimed by fools, dissemblers, and Edith Piaf: that, during a dizzying dance through the eye of a hurricane, I couldn't summon the courage to tell my friend Ned how much I loved him at that moment.

I think he knew, though. Just as I believe that my friend Lill knew I loved her--and that she still knows I still do.

## Upon visiting Manor Care, home for the elderly

By Gretchen Lacey

useless oars  
the appendages of our lives are  
when our bodies  
like wooden ships  
are ready to crack  
and take on water.  
we hang our heads  
over the side  
and watch our reflections  
carried out to sea  
by ripples  
with tiny hands.  
like pallbearers  
these white-gloved wavelets  
transport our image  
distancing us  
from detail and time.  
closer to shore  
the sinking wreckage  
touches bottom  
quietly  
at our most gentle hour.

## Little Boys

By Matt Hicks and Alan McCabe

We were bouncy-bouncy little boys  
Flittering in front of fire-trucks

We were skippy-spitty little boys  
Going goofy on field trip graves

Field trip graves

Field trip graves

Field trips are our favorite days

We were showy-show me little boys  
Girlyes in boxes back on the ground

Back on the ground

Back on the ground

Yours feels funny, we all fall down.





## Obsessed

By Megan Mendte

"Hi, I'm Ashlyn and I am an obsessive eater." I say it like a confession. I guess it is one. The group applauds and I sit down. I begin to feel sick. This is a very bad idea. I look over at Tabby, who smiles and winks at me. She's trying to help me, but it's enough to make me cry. Tabby, with her beautiful body and carefree life has been my best friend since we were babies. People told us we looked like sisters. We always pretended we were.

And now there she is standing there for me just like a real sister would. "Ashlyn Porter..." My heart begins to pound. Somehow I get my fat body to rise and I walk up to the front of the room to get my "one-week" diploma. One week of hell, I think.

As the group begins to break up, Tabby comes running over to me, her usual gush of energy. "Oh Ash, I'm so proud of you." She doesn't mention why she's so proud of me. It isn't really anything we say out loud.

I look back to where she had been sitting. "Your mother didn't make it," she says. Every time she gets honor roll at Mother of Virtue's School for girls, both of her parents are there, beaming, with a camcorder poised on her dad's shoulder.

My father's dead. He died of lung cancer when I was seven. And my mother, well except for the fact that she had sex seventeen years ago, and she loves to cook for me, she isn't much of a parent. "Why do you insist on embarrassing me?" my mother likes to ask.

As I get out of Tabitha's car, she grabs my arm and pulls me back. She looks concerned. I feel guilty and I focus on my scarf, twisting it around my stubby fingers. "It's a step," Tabby is saying, "an important step. Now you have professional help." She looks over at the empty driveway and asks if she should come in. "Not that I don't trust you," she says in a rush, "but, you know, you've been through a lot."

"Thanks Tab," I say, "but I want to take a nap." I get out of the car and hurry towards the front door with my head down, bearing the biting wind. I feel so disgusted with myself. I hate that I can't be trusted alone because I might do myself harm.

I'm on a special diet of nutrients to build my stomach's inner walls back up. My mother's really into keeping only good-for-Ashlyn-food in the house. The refrigerator's full of fruits and yogurt. I take out a couple yogurts and an orange. I know I should go take a nap, but at the same time I know that I'm going to do this. I eat both yogurts quickly and put the orange back. I pull out the pack of deli-cheese, unwrap the white paper, and eat it, slice by slice. I pour myself a tall glass of ice water. I gulp it down and drink another. Then one more. I make it to the bathroom in time to be sick. After I'm finished, I force myself to

throw up again in case I missed anything. In a panic, I get on the scale next to the sink and start to cry. I am obsessed, I am obsessed, I am obsessed... the words go through my mind over and over again.

\* \* \* \*

My mother finds me scrubbing the toilet. "I can't figure you out, Ashlyn," she says. "You're not fat, unless I'm fat because I'm a size or two bigger than you are. Do you think I'm fat, Ashlyn?" I shake my head "No."

"Why can't you get this out of your system?" she says. I start to laugh at the faux pas, if I don't I will cry. She glares at me. "Don't you want to be normal?"

"Don't you?" I snap back at her, "Where were you today? I needed you there for me. It was hard. I hated it. I was scared..." She turns away and heads for the kitchen. I follow her. "Mom? Aren't you listening to me?"

She isn't. She takes out a pot and fills it with water. "We're having spaghetti tonight. How's that sound?" she asks.

"Fine," I say.

"I made an appointment for you today." she says. She is a dental hygienist, so I get my teeth checked more than regularly, "Tomorrow at four."

"Mom, tomorrow at four I'll be at my meeting."

"Oh I knew that, but I thought you could miss just one. Dr. Kelley offered to fit you in before the end of the year when the rates go up."

"Fine," I say. I can't do this anyway. Tabitha isn't going to be there to hold my hand every day.

I get sick after dinner because I feel too full to go to sleep, and I'm very tired. My mother doesn't hear me because I run the shower. I fall off to sleep dreaming about the time daddy takes me fishing, and I'm not afraid to hook the bait. He is very proud of me. "You're my big girl," he says and helps me throw out my line. I catch a tiny little fish that we have to throw back. "That fish is just your size," daddy says, puffing on his cigar. "Let's send him back to his mommy so he can grow. We'll catch him next year."

I sit up stark in my bed, crying. We never went back to get that fish. Daddy had died three months later. I can hear his voice ringing in my ear as clear as if I were still six years old, in a little row boat, on Deer Park Lake.

I sneak down to the kitchen and eat a bag of low-salt pretzels and three glasses of water. Then I get sick. Mom hears me and slams her door. I don't blame her, I'm disgusting.

\* \* \* \*

Tabby comes over the next day with one of her fabulous ideas. "We should move to California after we graduate," she says as she piles on her favorite blue mascara, "We'll get a condo and break into showbiz. Won't that be great?" She's looking at herself in the bathroom mirror.

"Yeah, sure," I say, "I can compete with Roseanne Barr for parts." I'm careful not to talk to her in the mirror, like she's talking to me. I look at the back of her head.

"Stop it Ashlyn," she whines, "I hate when you say things like that. Besides we're BOTH gonna be stars." She pouts her lips like Marilyn Monroe and laughs. "Here, try this color on. It'll look great on you." She hands me the open blue mascara.

I balance it on the bathtub edge. "I'll be right back." I run into my room and grab my compact off my dresser and take it back into the bathroom.

Tabby gives me an odd look. "Ash, it's one thing not to have a mirror in your room, but to only use a compact to look at yourself? That's really..."

"Really what?" I ask, "Would you spend hours staring at THIS body?"

"I've got to go Ash," Tabitha says as she takes her mascara. "I hope everything goes well today with your group." She looks like she could cry. I don't bother telling her I was getting my teeth cleaned instead of going to the meeting.

I stay in the bathroom and make myself get sick. It doesn't make me feel any better. I lay on the cold tiles and cry until Mom calls me to dinner.

\* \* \* \*

She decides to take me shopping the next day. I refuse to go until she threatens to pick things out for me on her own. At least if I'm with her, I won't be alone in the Plus Size store.

The mall is crowded for Christmas. There's a line for Santa and Christmas music blaring in the background. Usually I buy my mother a china doll for her collection and she gives me money for whatever. This year we're doing this shopping thing. I don't like it.

"Mom, Can we get out of here. I feel dizzy."

"Did you eat this morning?" she says.

"Yes," I say, but I hadn't and I did feel dizzy. "Let's at least sit down." Mom asks me if I'd like something from the food court. I say, "salad and water." She gets me a burger and a Coke.

"Mom, I'm on a diet!"

"Why? You're not fat. You're big-boned." She pushes the burger wrapped in yellow paper at me. "Red meat's good for your stomach," she whispers as if the mention of my bad stomach might clue the entire

mall into my problem.

"I'll be back," I say. I spot the bathroom and make a dash for it before I get sick. Once I'm in the cooler bathroom, I feel less dizzy, but I'm in the line already, so I make sure I don't have to get sick.

In the stall, I bend over, holding my hair and make myself throw up. My eyes begin to water and I choke. I look down in the toilet and fall to my knees. Blood. It starts to come out voluntarily now. More blood than I've ever seen before. I hear an old lady's voice, "Honey, are you all right?" Then there is darkness.

\* \* \* \*

I wake up to blazing lights and a calm soothing voice. "Daddy?" "Ashlyn, you're in the hospital. I'm Doctor Timmons." My eyes begin to focus and Dr. Timmons' deep blue eyes smile at me, without accusations or threats. "You had a close call, my dear," he says as he runs his fingers through his white hair, "but we'll fix you up just fine. Our House-Psychiatrist would like to speak to you if that's okay."

I close my eyes to the memory of the mall, and ignore his question. "How did I get here?"

"Your mother called an ambulance," he says. "She's out in the hall if you'd like to see her." I nod. "I'll send Dr. Fizzer in later, she's very nice, you'll like her," he says leaving the room.

My mother comes in looking like she should be in the hospital bed. "You really have it in for me, don't you Ashlyn," she says, "Do you realize what a commotion this little scene made? It was a mad house in that mall." I turn and stare at the wall. I feel as though my eyes could burn a hole through it. My eyes become heavy and I doze.

When I wake, my mother is gone and in her place is a young woman, about thirty with short blond hair and high cheekbones. "Do you know why you do this to yourself?" She is so blunt, I'm taken off guard.

"No," I say, then, "I guess it's because I'm fat."

She smiles lightly and I feel comforted. "You make yourself sick because you're fat? But didn't you read the brochures that you got at your disorder class? Throwing up only gets rid of the protein, not the fat cells."

I nod because I did read them and I know this.

"You have a disorder that you can't stop. You are obsessed. I'm going to recommend you to a special hospital in New York City for eating disorders. It will help you save your life. Good luck, Ashlyn." With that Dr. Fizzer is gone and I am alone. Alone.

\* \* \* \*

The hospital is very nice. My group is a mix of young and middle-aged women with either bulimia or anorexia. It's funny that I had never

called it anything, but now we say the words every day in session.

My roommate is skinny. She looks like she's never eaten and her eyes are sunk deep in her sockets, but I like her. Her name is Lindsey. She's anorexic. When Tabby visits, she talks about how we should visit all the time and go out when we're better. Lindsey has fake i.d. and she promises to get us some. Tabby looks skeptical, but she thanks her. Lindsey tries too hard to seem normal in front of Tabby.

Tabby also writes me cards and letters every day. It keeps me occupied while I'm waiting to get better.

Meanwhile, my mother never visits. I've been here three weeks without so much as a call. My group talks about my mother in session. I'm very uncomfortable. "How does it make you feel, Ashlyn?"

"Pretty ticked, I guess." I'm not a big help to the groups effort to solve my problem. They seem to resolve it by the end of session, although I know differently.

"Hi, Mom. It's me."

"How are you, Ashlyn? Did they say when you'll be done?"

"No, they didn't. It's not a fat farm or something. It's a hospital. When are you coming to see me?"

"You don't seem to understand, Ashlyn. "This little retreat of yours is costing me a fortune. I have been working overtime and I'm exhausted."

"Is that a 'never'?"

"Is the food alright? I could send you some food."

"The food's fine."

The line trails off to that ear-ringing silence that drives me crazy, "Well, I gotta go," I say, "or I'll miss the kayak race." I hang up the phone and head back to my room with the bitter sweet taste of tears on my lips.

Without throwing up every day, I feel like I'm gaining weight. I start to panic and ask Tabby to bring me a box of diuretics. "Not even if you begged me on all fours," she says, and she tells my counselor. We have an emergency group session to talk about it.

Everyone takes a turn telling me their diuretic sob stories. "I'd take them to flush everything out of my system twice a day," says a girl named Susan. She runs her bony fingers through her thinning hair and laughs bitterly, "I really thought I needed them to get through the day," she says.

I find myself getting mad. The whole situation is ridiculous. The entire group put together couldn't weigh as much as I do. I tell them this and Susan shuts up. The counselor asks me if I want to talk about my weight and I say, "Not unless we get some fat people in the group." My voice rises and cracks as I talk. "I mean, I have a reason to take diuretics. I'm FAT. You guys are SKINNY! I'm not sure why YOU don't eat, but I think I have a damn good reason! "

I turn to Susan and feel the tears welling up in my eyes. "You could

eat anything you want and still be thin, don't you see?" I realize that I sound hysterical. Susan starts to cry. So do some of the other girls. "I'm sorry, but I just don't get it," I say to no one in particular, "I can understand why I wouldn't eat. I can live on the life-time supply of blubber on my thighs." I stand and hold my hands out so that they can view my fat body. I'm huge!"

For no reason in particular, I start to laugh. My face gets hot and I look apologetically at my counselor. "What a performance, huh?" I say. Everyone breaks out in relieved giggles. I was glad to hear them laugh.

"I think we've made a breakthrough," says the counselor. She is smiling proudly at me as if I just took my first step. We talk about an exercise plan. Tomorrow I will start aerobics and weight training.

The classes are fun. Within a couple weeks I start to see a change in my shape. I have a ways to go, but I'm thrilled with the results. I start to project a goal for myself. I borrow several health food books from the office and write up a diet plan. My doctor approves it and I hang it up on my bulletin board. I don't feel the need to get sick, and I can feel myself getting stronger.

Everything's going great until I find Lindsey.

She's face down in her bed. The blood from her wrists has seeped through the sheets. "She was taking a nap! She was, I saw her lay down!" I scream this to the nurse on the other line before I even explain what has happened. A dozen white coats arrive and take her away. When they're all gone, the hall nurse arrives to take me to another room, but I can't take my eyes off the blood. The nurse finds a letter on the desk for me and Tabby. She left Tabby her i.d. since they look more alike than me and Lindsey. In the letter she says that she isn't worth the effort all these nice people are putting out for her, that she had been cheating by hiding her food in her shirt than flushing it down the toilet. She hated herself for doing that. I start to cry hysterically and the nurse takes me to another room and gives me a sedative.

I wake up to see my mother's face. I close my eyes and look again. "Oh, Mom it was horrible," I sit up and hug her. I'm thrilled that she's finally come. I get a stiff hug in return.

"This place isn't good for you, Ashlyn. Besides you seem much better. Look, you've lost weight." She motions to the mirror on the wall for me to observe.

"If it isn't good for me, how come I seem much better?" She's stumped, but only for a second. "I don't have time for a fight, pack your bags. I'm not going to pay all this money for you to wake up dead." And that is that. We leave an hour later, against the strong recommendation of my counselor. She begs me to keep up with the aerobics and nutritious diet. I promise that I'll try.

Tabitha is going to Cancun with her parents for Spring Break. She asks me to go, but I decide that a tan isn't worth exposing my fat body to such scrutiny. "Next year," I promise. Tabby says she'll bring me back a surprise.

The sweet March air grabs at my hair as I bike through my neighborhood. Mom didn't come home last night. I hope that this new love interest will brighten her life, although she won't tell me anything about him. "His name's Jacob," she says with little emotion. That's all I get.

But then, that's all I want. That is, someone for her to be with. I think a lot of her resentment towards me comes from the anger she has for my dad for dying. I felt that anger too, but I was seven years old. You can't hate someone for dying.

The air is still cold, but it feels good. I watch the road rush beneath my front tire. I've kept up with my exercises, but I found biking to release the most stress. I also threw myself into school. I was a month and a half behind, but after two weeks back I have a grip on my classes. I'm driven by the memory of Lindsey. I'm afraid that if I stop for a minute, the blood-drenched sheets will catch up to me.

I veer left into my driveway, drop my bike in the grass, and jog into the house. I grab a bag of low-cal popcorn and start to munch. I can feel myself being pulled in. "No!" I yell. It echoes through the empty house.

I push away from the table and run outside. I was close, too close. My face feels hot and I start to shake. Too close, too close. I think of my father and how he would have given anything to be here with me and I'm mad at myself for being so stupid. I sit in the grass and shiver. The urge to get sick is almost unbearable. Blood-stained sheets floods my mind and I shake my head, But I hear Lindsey's voice. "We'll go dancing every weekend when we get outta here." She never got "outta" there. I put my head on my knees, hold myself and sob.

Mom drives in, but I hardly notice until I hear her voice. "What on earth are you doing? You'll scare the neighbor's dog with that noise!" she says, "Here, carry this in." Handing me a bag of groceries, she steps past me into the house.

I follow her. Mom, I want to talk to you about the bulimia. I want to talk about me." Mom looks like a deer frozen by car beams.

"You don't do that any more," she whispers.

"Mom, I feel like doing it right now, I always will. It's a disorder."

"Ashlyn, please..."

"Mom, I need you, you're all I have."

A single tear streaks down her face and I begin to sob, "I want so much to be your friend, I want so much to talk to you about this. Mom, I'm sorry, please."

Mom turns away from me and sniffles. "Ashlyn, if you feel like you

could still get sick, call the doctor." I feel like my lungs could collapse. The back of my neck starts to sweat and I taste popcorn and acid. I shove my chair back and run for the bathroom.

"Ashlyn, no! Not this again," Mom's voice is cut off as the bathroom door slams.

I force the foul taste up and choke on the throw up. My hot tears mix with it in the toilet and I flush. I kneel on the floor eye-level with the bowl and wait for Mom to call me to dinner.



**LIFE**

By Erica Starr

I'm not

afraid

of death

it happens

when  
it happens.

I'm afraid

of underwater  
mines.

Gigantic

spiked

metal balls

Suddenly

**LOOM**

up

on you  
in your sleep

and haunt

your

every move

waiting for

the tiniest of touches to  
detonate.



## Violets and Morning Glories

By Bob Lane

73 years old and still  
can't cook for himself  
so at seven,  
twelve,  
and four  
he visits  
The Lincoln Diner  
which feeds him  
now that she's  
gone.

Her Violets and  
Morning Glories dead,  
two years,  
on the wooden  
window sill  
even though the closed  
door to her white  
tiled bathroom is just  
four feet away.

Stockings still drape  
the shower curtain rod.

## Mr. Cope Takes His Secretary To Lunch On Tuesdays

By Kathrin Phillips

Wrapped too tightly  
around his finger  
the golden band looked  
to choke his hand.  
Surely he knew  
his boundaries.

Across the table  
he stroked her  
white palm  
and twirled  
the bracelet  
around her  
bony wrist.

Her eyes were drawn,  
resisting,  
to the wedding ring,  
then fell upon her own  
in spite.

Plucking nervously  
at the tablecloth  
with her red red  
fingertips,  
she spotted a hang nail  
and remembered long ago  
her mother's words.

Only cheap girls wear red nails.

## Winter Eyes

By Gretchen Lacey

There wasn't much gas in the car. She had forgotten again to fill it up and sat in the driveway wondering if there was enough to get her to town.

There wasn't. The car sputtered to a stop on the narrow icy road that ran through the reservoir and split the lake in two.

She got out of the car and was met by a chilling breeze that rolled off the lake and encircled her. The jeans and wool sweater were unable to hold off the cold wind, and she shivered as she drew her neck and chin down into her collar like a tortoise who has been startled into its shell.

Sitting on the rear bumper, she looked down the road behind her. She was four miles from home and at least six from town, and already her toes were numbing.

She heard the sound of tire chains approaching but did not look up until a pick-up pulled alongside her and the driver called out, "Mrs. Lawrence, you all right?"

She turned to see Wes Emmens, the neighbor's boy, his orange-capped head leaning out the window.

"What are you doing out so early?" she asked.

"Hunting. I just shot me the biggest buck that I've ever seen," he said as he got out of the truck. His words met the cold air and formed little dancing clouds around his mouth. His face looked so young to her, his red cheeks still smooth where a man's brisk hairs had not yet grown. His eyes were wide and singing. "I had to go back with my dad and even with the two of us we had a hard time getting it into the flatbed. How long have you been out here anyway?"

"Not long. I'm out of gas, I think."

"I can fix that," he said. "I have a can in the back."

They walked around to the back of the truck, and he opened the hatch.

"There he is," he said, proudly pulling on one of the antlers that stuck out from under the tarp that covered the massive animal. "But don't look if you're squeamish. I had to use extra rounds on him. He just wouldn't go down." He found the gas can and walked over to her car. "Wait in the cab," he called over his shoulder, "it's warmer."

She did not hear him. She was fixed on the antler, and reached up to pull back the tarp. First the wet nose appeared. Half-frozen drops of blood beaded around the nostrils and trailed around the closed mouth. The eyes; two dark riveting orbs, glazed with icy film, these winter eyes stared back at her, betraying a visible fear she unwillingly recognized.

She fell back a few steps, her eyes closed tightly, as if to block the revival of memories her mind had already begun to retrace. It was the

previous winter. The snow was piled up. The driveway had not been shoveled and she abandoned the car at the top of the drive and walked through the deep, trackless drifts towards the house. She had been gone three days, his moods had become unbearable. She went from room to room calling her husband, looking for him. Then the garage where his car sat unused.

Upstairs she opened the window and looked out at the woods behind the house. The trees were bare and still. She called his name. Again, and again. But nothing. Then there was a sound and some motion coming from the trees and the dog appeared. When he reached the clearing that was the start of their backyard he stopped. She whistled and he seemed to look up at her but he would not come closer. Then he turned and went back to the woods.

The snow was cold without her boots. She found the tracks her husband had made and leapt in and out of his large boot prints, going faster than she wanted. The path was a straight one. He had walked out the back door, across the yard, and into the woods without veering.

The dog was laying there in the snow whining nervously. He jumped up and started barking as she took the last two strides, but she did not hear. Her ears were deaf with fright, a fright that gripped her with a hundred tiny hands squeezing around the stomach and throat, and pushing her temples together so that her eyes were forced to stare straight ahead.

The rifle had fallen to one side, his hand still on it. Slumping and curving, his body draped the base of the tree. The snow around him had melted and re-frozen into wine-colored ice, and his eyes, frozen in fear, looked up at her from bearded face.

"Okay Mrs. Lawrence," Wes said, walking back towards her. "That will get you to town, but you better fill it up before you start back."

She was bracing herself on the open hatch, and he looked at her face and then covered the carcass. He jerked the tarp over the head and a rear hoof bounced loose and stiffly came to rest in front of her.

"Are you all right?" he asked. "I should have kept this darn hatch closed. Come on, I'm going to take you home." He slammed the rear door and walked her to the passenger side and helped her in. "I'll come back for the car later."

A fog was thickening and Wes drove slowly. She looked over at him, but what she saw was her husband. They were driving home together, from a party, and he was picking a station on the radio and holding back her hand with his knees. She was laughing and kissing and he drove slower and slower until he stopped and closed his eyes.

When they reached her house, Wes pulled up to the back door.

Neither moved to get out, but looked straight ahead at the tangled split-rail fence that was falling down in several places. "I backed into it one night," she explained. "I didn't know I had the car in reverse."

"I'm real sorry Mrs. Lawrence."

"About the fence?"

"No."

"Let's go in and I'll make some tea," she said.

"I shouldn't."

Wes sat at the kitchen table while she filled the kettle. With her back to him she concentrated on every small sound that he made: slight shifting in his chair, elbow then forearm against the tabletop, his swallowing, his breathing. Like a fragrance he surrounded her, and she inhaled the slow parade of memories that he unknowingly evoked.

"There. Just the way you like it," she said, turning from the stove. But the sight of him sitting there, his eyes lowered and beardless chin pointing down, severed her thoughts, and her mistake struck her heavily. She dropped the mugs in the sink and a splash of scalding water caught her wrist.

"Let me see," he said, as he turned her hand over in his. She felt a tremble leave his fingers and travel up her own arm.

He paused before letting go, then nervously took a step back. "I guess you...I mean you must really miss him."

She did not answer. She was still feeling the lingering warmth of his palm against the back of her hand, and she reached up to his shoulders and drew him closer.

"I'm nineteen," Wes said shakily, as she closed her embrace on him.

Around and around they turned. Stepping and kissing. She held him fiercely about the waist while his hands moved from the air to her back without direction.

The small of his back touched the counter and he braced himself, planting his feet firmly on either side of her. She stepped back. "Your sweater," she said.

"Mrs. Lawrence, I..."

Before he could finish she was slipping the sweater over his head and followed with her own. She bent over slightly as she pulled her brown braid free of its tie, letting her hair fall down over her shoulder. A stray strand lay across her cheek and as she tossed her head to the side she was met by her own reflection in the kitchen window. She stood still, touching her hand to her mouth. Her lips were red and tender from the fervency of their kisses.

Wes looked around and grabbed a cloth from the sink and gently handed it to her. "I'm all right," she said, wiping her cheeks. "I'm all right."

The dog was barking outside and scratched at the kitchen door.

Wes walked over and held the door open for him, but the dog turned and ran off.

"He won't come in anymore," she said.

"I better go Mrs. Lawrence. Thanks for the tea."

"But you didn't have any."

"No, I didn't."

Alone again, the house was dark and empty. She heard her car pull in the driveway, and went to the window. The headlights were on and shining straight ahead. And there was Wes Emmens, the neighbor's boy. He was hammering the post and replacing the rails of the fence.

She lay in bed listening to the banging of his hammer, long after he had finished and gone home. She tried to sleep. She saw the deer, staggering forward. Then bang, bang, and down he went. His cold dark eyes staring up at her. She lay in bed, hands over ears, blocking out the distant shots she was hearing. But they could not be silenced.



## Triptych

By Diane Orleman

Where she sits when it is announced  
Becomes significant.  
That she is attired in Tintoretto  
    red matters  
Less than that she reads from holy tomes.  
The statement of her satin says all  
To outsiders, hearts hardened.  
Sheer scarlet reveals  
Forbidden parts. The candle snuffed,  
She feels herself as one with vapors  
Disappearing upward. No matter  
That she knows nothing  
Can be created or destroyed.  
With a scent of brief acrid smoke  
She knows her nothingness,  
At the whim of pursed lips,  
    and expired.

The announcement takes her unawares  
At the table. Answered,  
A ringing phone pronounces fertile news.  
The smallness of it surges  
    until she feels  
In an ephemeral instant at once eternal  
Herself eclipsed.

The child will come  
Of science, not of passion:  
The tampering of men's minds with miracles.  
The unholy books tell how  
The donor doles, the carpenter crafts.  
She feels her back  
    bowed on the oaken table  
The future untimely wrenched from her  
Womb-trapped like a candle in the kitchen.

## These Hot, Humid Nights

By Jonathan Cole

On these hot, humid nights of Summer,  
I stare out the window like a voyeur's  
mirror image, sitting in the beach house  
which stands by the dunes at the end  
of the road. The fog rolls up from the beach  
where the warm, black ocean rushes  
over the sand, cool and white.  
Bank after bank of gently twisting  
mists flow up the dark street.  
The yellow glow of a street lamp drips  
through the floating droplets, finally touching  
the shadowed asphalt and hidden grass.  
Still the waves thrust in  
to cover the shore, then slide out,  
only to thrust again.

Stepping through the doorway, I feel  
the fog surround me, and leave behind  
the dirty stove and plastic garbage bags. Wet  
from the steamy air that holds  
me, I breathe deep the ocean's salty scent.  
I can almost taste it like a drop of sweat  
on my lips. I walk down the shadowy path  
to the water's edge where the waves crash.  
The sound calls across the night sky,  
and I can imagine the Siren's songs  
from mythology. I dive into the fresh water.  
Ripples mark my entry on the calm  
surface, spreading gradually outward and fading.

## The Car's Place in His Heart

By Julie Sommer

"What is going on with you and Derek?"

"What do you mean?" I say. "We're just friends, Mike."  
I put my lukewarm Miller Lite down on the table.

"Then why the hell was Adam just singing 'Torn Between Two Lovers'?"

"Maybe because he's an asshole?"

"That asshole is my friend, Jen."

"Exactly my point. Come on, this is stupid. Let's go back and drink." I take his hand and lead him over to the table where our friends are sitting.

"How nice, the happy couple's back," Adam says. "What'd she loosen the leash and let you hang tonight?"

I sit down and light a cigarette. Mike says nothing as usual. Ever since Mike and I started seeing each other last September, I've been dealing with that kind of shit. Whenever we play this one category game, one of his fraternity brothers shouts "people who people in this room have slept with." This leads to a hysterical round since two people say "Jennifer" to remind Mike that two hours before we hooked up I was dating Derek. Then, the guys, especially Adam, will ask Derek "how I was." Derek, who is exceptionally clueless, just laughs and puts his arm around me. It usually goes on for about fifteen minutes. I don't say anything, because then I'm Mike's bitchy slut of a girlfriend and Mike never stops it because that means he's whipped.

The thing is, he is whipped, but then again, so am I. I have been since the first time I kissed him. We actually eat together at meals which is taboo at this college. Mike calls me to tell me he got home okay after leaving my house which is about 500 feet away. I named my pet hamster after him and wear his lightning bolt earring in my third hole. We even watched a bridal fashion show together. I know it's gay, but it's also love.

My roommate, Stephanie, lifts Adam's hand off her knee. "Touch me again and you'll find that hand shoved up your right nostril."

"I love a chick with power," Adam says. "You want this hand down your pants, don't you?" He extends his arm and admires his hand. His fingernails are so dirty they look green. He leans closer to Steph and spills beer on the table. It drips over the edge, creating a modern art design on my suede skirt. The waitress glances at the mess and tosses two napkins on the spill. Adam pours himself another beer. "Hey, Mike, you watching the Phillies game with us tomorrow?"

"No, Jen's having a root canal, and I have to take her home."

"Jesus Christ. Can't you even go to the dentist by yourself?"

"I don't have a car, Adam," I say.

"Well, fucking get one and let Mike watch the game." He puts his

cigarette in my new beer.

"I like the dentist," Mike says. "They give out free toothbrushes." He reaches over and pours me a new beer. "Adam, this stuff is \$5.50 a pitcher. Next time, use an ashtray."

"Oh, sorry. Wanna dance?" Adam rises and starts slam dancing. He focuses on this short, heavyset red-haired girl. He picks her up and throws her into the crowd. Her short skirt is up around her waist, and I can see her purple and green paisley underwear. Bored, Adam grabs the microphone from the singer's hand and starts singing an off-key R.E.M. song. Steph and Derek get up to dance.

"You having fun, Jen?" Mike puts his arm around me.

"I guess." I finger the tiny, blue crystal that hangs around his neck. "I just wish Adam would suck it up."

"He's just jealous. He knows I love you and would rather be with you than him. It pisses him off. I do love you."

"I love you, too, Mike."

He kisses me gently. I open my eyes and find Derek staring into them from the dance floor. Adam is now dancing with a girl who has purple hair and a huge skull and crossbone earring. Although he is attached to this girl like Glad Wrap, he manages to find time to grab Stephanie's ass. I count five times so far.

"Jen, I have to go to the bathroom. You going to be okay?"

"Sure." I run my hands through his thinning hair. Mike's trying to grow sideburns, but they're kind of sparse. "Hurry back." I watch as he makes his way through the drunken crowd. He turns around and waves.

"You two are so queer," Adam says. He has returned for another beer.

"Thanks for driving tonight."

"No problem." He chugs his beer and pours another.

"Mike would've driven, but the Corvette's at the shop again. It's been having so many problems lately."

"Yeah, since he met you."

"Maybe the car's upset because I took its place in Mike's heart," I say.

"Yeah, his friends aren't too happy either." He ashes once again in my beer and returns to the dance floor. Derek makes a beeline to the table.

"Jennifer, I need to talk to you," he says.

"What's wrong?"

"Can we go in the other room?"

"Well, Mike's coming right back."

"He won't care, Jennifer. He's my frat brother."

"Alright." I scan the bar for Mike. We get up together, and I tell Steph where I'll be so Mike will know. The other room has red and yellow light bulbs. Pinball machines are lined up against one wall and

there's a huge pool table in the middle of the room. It's pretty much deserted. Derek jumps up and sits on the pool table. I awkwardly lean against a pinball machine that has a woman's chest lit up.

"Tell me something. Why Mike? How could you want him and not me?" Derek leans back and checks his gelled hair in the Space Invaders screen.

"What? Where is this coming from?"

"I had you first, Jennifer."

"What's that supposed to mean? You slept with me first."

"No, you know what I mean. We were dating before Mike ever came along."

"Let's get one thing straight. We were not dating. We were screwing."

"We did more than that. Remember we split that bottle of Sambuca once."

"Exactly my point. We would get loaded and then have sex. Great relationship, Derek."

"It was more than that, Jennifer."

"Bullshit. We used each other."

"But you have to admit we had great sex."

"Are you kidding? Half the time I was so wasted I didn't remember it and the one time I wasn't, it was over so fast I didn't know it even happened."

"You just excited me."

"Don't nauseate me. Your hand excites you."

"That's cool." He sticks his hand inside his gray sweatpants. "Alright, you can pretend that I don't turn you on, but I remember the way you used to scream."

"Only when you tried to pull my hair out. A relationship is not just sex anyway."

"Okay, you wanna talk. Fine, let's talk."

"Talk about what? We have nothing in common. Last time we talked, the only time we talked, you said you couldn't believe there was a black girl in my sorority."

"Well, you shouldn't have a nigger in your sorority."

"See what I mean."

"No." Derek jumps off the table and corners me between the pinball machine and Pacman. "I don't want to see you with him anymore."

"Get used to it."

"Adam says you still want me."

"Adam is full of shit, Derek."

"He says you talk about me all the time and were really jealous I was dancing with Steph." He crushes me into the pinball machine. The nipples blink on and off and the bells ring.

"Get off me!" I try to shove him off. He licks my neck on both

sides like a dog. I push his face aside. He bumps his head into the Millipede game.

"What the hell? What's your problem, Jennifer?"

"My problem? Maybe that you make me want to vomit." I start for the other room. He tries to grab my hand.

"I'm sorry, Jennifer," he says. "Adam told me to be forceful. He says you like it like that."

I scan the dance floor. I see Adam molesting a forty-year-old woman in the corner next to a speaker. Her hair is actually gray. I push my way through the gyrating bodies.

"Adam, can I talk to you?"

"Fuck you, Jen. I'm busy."

"I want to speak to you now. Outside."

"Fine." He turns to the woman. She has a wart under her nose. She's wearing sky-blue eyeshadow and cotton candy pink lipstick, totally wrong for her complexion. "I'll be right back sweetie," Adam says.

We walk outside. The air is still warm, but the parking lot smells like exhaust instead of spring. Adam stands next to a window with a fluorescent Coors Light sign in it. He looks blue and red.

"What the fuck do you want? I'm scamming on a babe and you ruin my rap."

"Please, Adam. She's heinous, and old enough to be your mother."

"I always wanted to screw an older woman." He laughs. "So, what do you want with me?"

"I just want to know what you said to Derek."

"None of your business."

"It's my business when it's about me."

"It's between brothers and if it's about you it's your own fucking fault for being such a slut."

"What did I ever do to you, Adam?"

He flicks his cigarette at my feet. "Mike was in line to be Intra-Fraternity Council President, you know that? Our fucking guy holding the Ultra Paddle. Now he doesn't even sit with us in the caf. You're a cunt."

I can't speak. I can't even repeat that word in my head.

"Hey, guys, what's going on?" Mike walks over and puts his arm around me.

"The usual," Adam says. "The bitch is ragging on me again. She's too sensitive."

Mike's jaw tightens. "Who the hell do you think you are talking about my chick like that." His face turns red. "You're just pissed I have a girlfriend. You're jealous."

"Yeah, right. I don't want no ball and fucking chain!"

"That's good since you've already crashed and burned with at

least ten girls tonight. You can't even come close to what I have for five minutes."

"She rules you, man. Get a clue."

"Fuck off." Mike shoves Adam into the window. "You don't know shit."

"Don't push me, asshole. She's a fucking whore. She was massaging Derek's balls while you were pissing."

Mike takes a step back, shakes his head and laughs. "It's not going to work, dickhead. Get used to it. Jen's here for the duration. Cut the shit."

"I can't believe you'd let a chick come between us. We're brothers." Adam tosses his cigarette in the gravel. "We pledged together. Remember the Alpo stew and the vinegar milkshakes, dude? Stick with the brotherhood."

"Make your choice. She doesn't have to come between us."

"Fuck it," Adam says. "I want a beer." He storms back into the bar.

"Jen, you okay?" Mike puts his arms around me. "Come on, let's go back in. He's still my friend and our ride."

"But, Mike, you didn't hear what he called me?"

"What, hon? What'd he call you?"

Tears blur my eyes. "Nothing, Mike."

He looks at me and then back towards the bar. "Let's just forget it." He picks at a hangnail. "Come on, I'll buy another pitcher. We'll straighten it all out."

"I can't go back inside."

"Oh." Mike glances at the bar. "Well, I really should go back in."

"But what do you want to do, Mike? Are these guys going to make your decisions all your life?"

"I'm sorry, Jen. You come in when you're ready. You understand, right? They're my brothers."

"Sure, Mike." I watch as he disappears into the bar. I won't go back inside. I can't. I spot a pay phone at the Exxon station across the street. I start to walk. I've put up with this for so long. I just can't do it any longer. It's not like I want him to give up his frat. I just want some consideration, at least a little. I wonder how my hamster will adjust to a new name.

"Jen, wait up."

I keep walking.

"Jen, please. I'm sorry."

I continue to walk.

"Jen, I'm out here because I want to be."

I stop and turn around.

## Saturday Night

By Abby Rosenbaum

We gaze at each other  
through the light of a solitary match,  
silent,  
our tears speaking by themselves.

"He..." her voice chills the silence,  
"I couldn't stop him."  
She doesn't even wince as the flame  
burns her fingers.



## The Windows of a Clean House Are Worth a Weak Poet's Weight in Mold

By Janet Mast

There's nothing to despise in keeping house.  
It is an honest living--dust and windows  
and doing what must be redone in a week.  
Clean grout might not inspire every poet  
to reverent verse but it must have some worth,  
or there would be more famous odes to mold,

like, "Ah, the salient scent of creeping mold  
doth waft salubrious throughout the house,  
and tempt the nose to celebrate the worth  
of languid days spent poeting, windows  
closed against the brutish breeze." (The poet,  
it seems, could not afford a maid this week.)

Though dishes were attended to last week,  
the counter's overflowing. Greenish mold  
is growing on some food-like thing the poet  
meant to eat. The curse of keeping house  
is that it steals the time, and precious windows  
of opportunity slam closed on your worth.

My mother can name a hundred birds, the worth  
of fifty years at the kitchen sink. Each week  
she scatters seed to draw them to her window's  
enclosed view. Still, her patience failed to mold  
a daughter who finds grace in keeping house.  
Though in her way my mother was poet,

her art was lost on me. A non-poet,  
I find in laundry no symbolic worth.  
The act of ironing will never house  
some steamy metaphor, or even a weak  
simile. I wash the dishes; I don't mold  
soapy wings and fly through lyric windows.

Whoever first called eyes "the windows  
to the soul" was probably some poet  
whose wife had been all morning scrubbing mold  
from bathroom tile and shot him a look worth  
a thousand words because he'd spent the week  
diddling his rhymes and laying around the house.

I will attempt to mold my own small worth  
in this: A poet wouldn't last a week  
if forced to wash windows and keep house.

## An Harmonious Thunk

By Paul Gagne

Harmonius Thunk was as usual half-awakened by the atonal percussion of the phony news wire on the atonal all-phony-news station. Beside him this morning (this morning of mornings) was someone he did not know. Her name, he assumed, was Melody or some variant (all names being variations of Melody). They were both naked as far as he could see, but Harmonius's round body was white from the chill, while Eroica or Joy, or whatever, stayed warm in her brown skin, all lids and holes closed to the outside.

Harmonius heard the nasal news narrator recount the previous day's murders, 61 for all those stat fanatics out there, and told of the expected media barrage at the wedding of the action-adventure star Paul Maul.

Thunk's first words of the day had the willful balance of a balladeer's whisper. "Baby, baby, baby. Baby, we got a big day ahead. Wake up. This is gonna be huge! That guy, Paul Maul, he hired me to play at his wedding." Naked and tall Harmonius got up and out of bed, trailing blanket remains on the floor. "Yeeeeeaaahh," he sang.

In her incoherent dream-sung state, the woman rolled over toward Harmonius, exposing a pair of nipples that reminded round Harmonius of the skin on chocolate pudding when Grandma doesn't cover it up in the fridge. Harmonius leaned over, and gave each brown breast a kiss.

"Hold on, puddin', this could be a great day." He'd been waiting for something like this, of course. He had been practicing the aesthetic dissociation (as they termed it) techniques championed by Drs. Fjord and Young so that he, or a part of him, could tell his inevitable story of greatness. Or was it Dr. Lapdog's treatment? No matter. Multi-talented Harmonius wanted more control over his fictive, fictile mind.

Harmonius looked out the window on his way to the bathroom. Glorious ticker-tape leaves were already feting him as a few air-brushed clouds looked on. As he did every day, he said, "I am me," into the large bathroom mirror. The mirror, in turn, reminded Harmonius that his head, as well as his body from mid-torso down, is shaped like the bare light bulb that set the tiles agleam. His Dizzy Gillespie cheeks and Charlie Parker belly were notes of discord in Harmonius's head. Friends described this look, for some reason, as offbeat. After whatever happened last night with Lady Day--it still hadn't come back to him-- Harmonius thought himself just right. It all depends on how

and where you look at (his) things. But they needed to be clean things, so he showered under the pointillist head of white noise and water.

Ever since he could remember, Harmonius Thunk had wanted to be black. He had always admired rhythm and blues. Then he encountered rap, funk and jazz. Jazz. Improvising within a framework was one of Harmonius's hobbies. So here's this music that does it as a rule! These people had to be on to something. Then he discovered the art and authors and poets. The culture! He wanted to be a part of it. Affected speech and black bed partners were as much as he could do to realize the dream. (White) Friends wondered about an identity problem. Could he be a racist against his own race? To be black. Sell out! Imitation nigger! Hold on a minute...

Shined and buffed, Harmonius stopped to pee--something he should have done before or during his shower. The deep, diving sound of Harmonius's piss in the water reminded him of some of the New Age shit they been calling jazz lately.

Baldwin Barth Beckett Borges Ellison Hughes Hurston Nabokov Naylor Walker Whitman Wilde Wright watched Harmonius saunter back into his bedroom to be greeted by a groggy Salome wriggling and shimmying her way out of the flimsy sheets. "Mornin' baby. What's your name? I'm Harmonius."

"Felonious?" she said, pulling up the sheets.

"No, no. Harmonius. H-a-r-monius. Thunk." Thunk slid back into bed, confident of his clean self.

"Oh. That's weird. I'm Ella Fitzsimmons."

"C'mon, baby," Harmonius said. "Get clean and dressed, we're going to a wedding."

Ella pulled away and dropped the sheets, which fell to her waist. "I'm not going to no wedding with you." She squeezed his face, puckering his lips and kissed him loudly. "Besides, what would I wear?"

"Wear what you wore last night. It's white and you can have a good time in it, right?" Harmonius thrummed his fingers on the taut flesh around her hip bone, pushing the sheets down all the while.

"You don't think the bride's not gonna object to me wearing garters, do you? Isn't that a tradition or something? Otherwise I guess I'm not doing anything too special today. How long this gonna take?"

"I don't know. An hour, maybe two," he said like a child as he nuzzled and nudged her compassionate navel. "How long do weddings usually last?" Harmonius's fingers were nowhere to be found as Miss Ella lay back, opened up and belted out a song of joy.

Two hours later, when black denim-ed Harmonius Thunk served breakfast (ham slice and potato product for her, pound of bacon for him, orange juice and coffee for all), Ella asked, "So who's getting married. Somebody you know?"

"Baby, it's somebody we all know. And love, too." Harmonius paused for a full rest. "Paul Maul."

"The washed up, what, porno star?"

"Action-adventure. Get with it. Radio says there's gonna be a media *throng*. They should know, right? I think they're sponsoring the whole thing anyway." Harmonius scooped four slices of bacon into and through his mouth, leaving only some greasestrokes around the outside. Thirsty Thunk then drank his coffee, black, in one head-tipping, chair-tilting adventure that almost left him on his back with a thud.

In stark contrast, Ella, wearing a white chiffon "robe" that Harmonius had stolen from another black bedmate, became artfully demure. She cut her ham slice into thirty little pieces. She would go to the wedding. She wouldn't go. She took half an hour to finish her orange juice.

To hurry her along, Harmonius paid homage by re-canting her sex song in his best contralto, note by horrible note. "All right, all right! I'll go, I'll go," she said as she fluttered back to the bedroom. Harmonius continued the cantata until Ella reappeared, looking as ravished and ravishing as she had or had not the night before.

Her small, white cocktail dress, matching hose and boa, along with three-inch heels, made her look like a sixties soul diva. "Weren't you a blonde last night?" Harmonius asked.

"And weren't you a big, black stud last night? Shit, who do you think you are? A blonde. Shit. Are we going or not?" Incredulous Ella flipped the boa over her shoulder and clip-clopped over to the front door and continued clip-clopping around the tiled foyer, occasionally breaking into a little girl tap routine.

"You're gonna be tapping that shit a long time, baby. I got to get my sax ready." Harmonius rooted behind the living room sofa for the large rectangular case that held the saxhorn that would make him famous. The heavy case was beneath some rolled canvases and a flimsy wooden easel.

"Ready for what? I hope you play better than you sing."

"Paul Maul personally hired me to play sax at his wedding." He pulled at the case, dislodging the art implements which, due to their discipline, provided the room with a muffled cacophony that complemented the clip-clopping in the hallway. Harmonius blew on the case.

"At the wedding? Who in hell has a lone sax player at their wedding? I've heard of trumpets, maybe, but not saxes."

"What do you know, Miss I-can-sing-better-than-you-can. Besides, it's probably the reception. I don't know any songs to play at a wedding anyway." The latches on the case were slightly rusted, just enough for Harmonius to cut three fingers before popping the lid.

"Oh, OK, then you're real prepared for this, huh? Listen, if you screw up, I'm with the good-looking guy across the room, OK? Where's this taking place? How long's it gonna take to get there?"

"Calm down, calm down. What the hell is it ... Dirges ... the Jan L. Dirges Art Center or Gallery or Museum. Something like that. It's about three blocks away. Isn't that something?" He shined and buffed the stylized swan-shape with a chamois cloth that had come with the instrument when his mother first rented it for him in the seventh grade. "All right, we're almost done."

"Hurry up, I just saw a couple of news vans go by. God, now I'm even kind of glad I got with you last night. Maybe we'll be on the news."

"I'm gonna be all over the place, baby. I don't know about you but I'm gonna be a hit." Thunk brought the instrument to Ella for show.

"It's a little small for you, don't you think?"

"Nah, no way, baby. That's just because you've only seen 'em in pictures before. Besides, this could pass for an alto, couldn't it?"

"I don't think so. But come on. There's all kinds of people outside."

"They couldn't be here for me yet. Could they?"

"No, baby. Let's go."

Someone had nailed up a sign on Harmonius Thunk's front lawn:  
**THREE BLOCKS TO  
MAUL PAUL**

Ahead of Thunk and Ella, a crowd of people slowly, if frantically made their way down the street. "We gonna fly over these people or what?" Ella asked.

"I can't do that yet, but I'm bigger and more important than them. They'll get out of the way." Harmonius became resolute in his steps. Head held high, leading Ella by ten feet, Harmonius navigated the herd with great acuity, in part because of a perfect poking technique with the saxophone. Soon, Harmonius was only distinguished from the denim-ed host of humanity by his gleaming sax. He did not even worry about the mass. He looked at the trees. They were celebrating him,

the hero. The colors reminded him of a Bird solo, going every which way, with unexpected flourishes, only to fall back in step when the precise time came. A pair of staid pine trees marked the entrance to the Dirges Compound.

An iron gate was decorated with Gothic letters: JDS - for some recluse writer who bequeathed the compound to his alma mater upon his rumored death. Paul Maul had evidently dropped out of the same place, and was now using his clout to wreck the place for his wedding. Three armed guards, all black, in all black, controlled the gate and the crowd. Harmonius could see photographers in the trees, and the Goodyear blimp above.

After failing to come up with his pass for the wedding, and also failing to impress the guards with some dialect, Harmonius started playing the sax. Everything he learned, he put into this one minute of playing. Harmonius envisioned himself, knees bent, sliding the animated, quivering notes from the mouth of the instrument. Man, he was *italicized*. And so, he thought, was everyone else. Ella forced her way to the fence. One of the guards tilted his head, looked toward the sky and said, "Taps?" He shook a finger and looked at the guard next to him. "This crazy motherfucker's trying to get into a wedding by playing Taps? Or is this some kind of threat? Boy, who do you think you are? Give the boy some oxygen. He's not getting enough."

"Man, you don't know what you're talking about. That's a great jam. C'mon, Paul Maul hired me for this gig, man. C'mon."

"This boy's got to be crazy," the guard said. "Aerosmith's playing in there right now. Word is the lead singer's taking the bride's garter off with his tongue. Boy, I'd like to see that. No way you'd ever jazz it up enough to please Mr Maul. You better go on home. And don't bother us with that shit no more."

Ella made her way over to Harmonius who stood there, fingers in place on the instrument. "What's wrong here, why aren't they letting us in?"

"Little lady," the guard said, "you can go in if you want. We'd be happy to make you happy."

"No, I don't think so," said Harmonius. "Come on, Ella. There's nothing left to do."

"Sorry, baby. I might never get another chance like this. Did I mention to you that I sing?" Ella walked between two smiling guards who opened the gates while the third held Harmonius.

Harmonius yelled, "I'll never get another chance like this either. Come on, don't go in there."

The guard ushered humble Harmonius back into the pack of people.

It took Harmonius ten minutes to get back near the fence. People were more reluctant to give way a second time. He made his way along the fence to a tree with a nesting photographer and played some more Taps. At the last note, Harmonius looked up at the anemic black branches before the increasingly white sky. He looked down and began walking home. The leaves that had heralded his arrival lay wet and useless in the gutter.

At home, Harmonius turned on the stereo and dropped to the sofa. On clicked the community college jazz station and its adolescent announcer stumbling over his words and a bad remote feed. "A star, yes, a star is born here tonight at the wedding of Paul Maul. Ella Fitzsimmons is, as I speak here, astonishing the lolling luminaries with her vocal mastery."

The rimshot click of the power button was the last sound Harmonius wanted to hear today.



## **Nomads: people who move frequently (in search of happiness)**

**By Stephanie Hicks**

Lunchbox in hand,  
skipping towards the house,  
suddenly  
I stop.

I recognize,  
backed up to the front door,  
that big silver truck.

The letters, U-H-A-U-L,  
written boldly on its side,  
become blurred  
in my eyes.

Blindly running  
up the front steps,  
I stumble  
on the brown cardboard boxes,  
with my name scribbled on them.

Little Golden Books,  
Barbies,  
Candyland  
haphazardly tossed,  
in a packing frenzy,  
into wine cases.

I remember  
pencils, freshly sharpened,  
bearing the impression  
of my teeth marks,  
still lying in the desk  
back at school.

## My Watch at Mass

By Tony Barber

Tick for me, and her and he,  
and for all who dream and hope  
for something more than the  
"wrath that will divide us  
upon the last day." What about  
the rain that will soak me today?  
Echo loud, louder damn it,  
pierce these painted-pretty  
windows that keep in this  
nonsense for all us to hear. Let  
me hear the rain dance upon the  
pavement, nowhere near Eden.  
Just tick, and let me witness you  
pass by those eleven, who never truly  
offer you a break, a chance to rest.  
Take me to the twelve, let  
me follow you to the place where my  
heart shall never cease to be  
free from the pressures of Catholicism.  
Free from my penance of a lousy five Our  
Fathers. Free from the destination set  
forth by those blinded by their collar  
made from gold, for it is they who  
are banished so far away, that they  
can't even begin to see the simplicity  
of my watch's second hand, or the  
steadiness of my heart's tick when I  
really am sorry for my actions.

They just continue to preach, perched  
atop of the podium, standing upon the 6,  
farthest from the top of the numbers,  
closest to the bottom. Somewhere  
between Hell and Homilies.

## Dave's Fine Print

By Bob Lane

David is just getting in from work, it's 4:53 p.m. Claire sits at her desk in the living room of their two-bedroom apartment. She stuffs a few pieces of pink paper in the top drawer of the antique desk. Fiery red hair is smoothed out by her right hand while the left pulls at the chest of her PENN sweatshirt.

"How was work?" she asks. Same question almost every day since he can remember.

"Fine," he says, "and the magazine?" Same response since the week after they were married three years ago.

"Fine." Perfect.

David hangs his wet trench coat in the closet and walks towards the kitchen. Claire rises and heads towards the door. David turns to watch her and says, "Where are you...?" She stops at the table next to the door to sort through the mail David has brought in.

"Never mind." He answers himself.

"I felt like Ratatouille today," she says. "It'll be ready at 6:00."

"Great, I'm gonna go to the study and relax."

David dries off his glasses with a paper towel and makes a gin and tonic. Claire stands, unnoticed, in the doorway staring at his six-foot frame. He opens the refrigerator, "Damn," no lime. With the rocks glass in his left hand, and briefcase in his right, he heads out the other doorway and down the hall scuffing the heels of his loafers over the hardwood floor.

The door to his study is closed, so he pushes it open with his right knee. It's dark; the shades on the two windows are drawn. He sets his drink on the desk just inside the door and pulls the chain on the banker's lamp which emits a solemn green glow. He plops down in the swivel chair at the large wooden desk and opens his briefcase.

David surveys the bookcases which line the room. The colors and sizes of the books' bindings form a mosaic that he thinks should be inlaid on a church wall. He opens a filing cabinet drawer to his left and pulls out a file filled with newspaper clippings of various sizes.

Each of the clippings has one thing in common: the heading. The upper right corner contains the phrase, "Dave's Fine Print" in large, bold letters. The upper left corner contains the name David Abrick printed under a black and white photo of the writer. The picture is cropped so close around his face, he feels more claustrophobic each time he skims through this collection. The articles are arranged chronologically in a tome he pores over, turning each paper over after

glancing at its headline. He stops at one and whispers the headline aloud: "When Communication Becomes A Writer's Dream." He reads the first couple lines, "What can you do when you find it hard to discuss feelings with the person you love? Become a writer." He wrote the article two years ago.

\* \* \* \*

Claire and David Abrick met at The University. David was a journalism major in his senior year, Claire a freshman English major. After David graduated he got a job at the Daily Dispatch, where he did his internship for two years, and worked his way up from office boy to having his own daily article. When Claire graduated, they were married, and she went on to graduate school for her MFA in creative writing.

When they started dating it was very casual. Neither of them ever spoke about relationships, love or marriage until the day he asked her to marry him in the Sunday edition of the paper. Claire's friends told him it was so romantic. David thought he kinda owed her after all the poetry she wrote for him.

A few of her poems had been published in a small literary magazine called Salmon Skies. While attending graduate school she did a little side work for the magazine on a regular basis. Proofing and typing kept her in spending money. When she graduated the magazine hired her part-time.

Claire never showed David any more of her work after she began to get published, and he never asked about it. He hit the bookseller, around the corner from the paper, every month to skim through the latest issue of Salmon Skies. If Claire had a poem in it, he would buy the magazine to read her work over and over at his desk in the study. David turned the second bedroom of the apartment into a study so he could have a place to do work at home. Claire never went into the study, not even to clean.

Claire's work got more and more personal. The October issue had a poem of her's that kept David in the aisle of the bookseller for forty-five minutes. He read and re-read the single stanza:

Storms clear the horizon  
and stir the seas. Winds  
scatter seeds of life  
while emptying trees.  
With no storms

in our eyes  
and no wind  
in our  
hair,  
how will life's ebb rise?

"Are you going to buy that or memorize it?" A salesman was standing in front of David.

"Sorry." David put his glasses in his blazer pocket and unfolded his wallet as he headed for the register.

He was late for dinner, but Claire didn't say anything. He couldn't stop thinking about the poem. He wanted to ask her about it. He could barely eat.

"Are you okay?" Claire looked up from her plate.

"Fine."

Fine. He knew he was just going to have to ignore it, maybe it would go away. Maybe she wanted to go away. They never talked about being happy or about kids or about the future. They were just married that's all. But that wasn't all. He couldn't bring himself to say anything, so he excused himself from the table to go to the bathroom. He stripped, got in the hot shower and bawled for a good half-hour.

The next week the paper ran his "Dave's Fine Print" article about the way couples sleep. David wrote about spooning and cradling, but said, "The best night's sleep occurs when the space between the man and the woman is proportional to the amount of time since they last did the dishes together." As David was writing the article, he remembered that the last time he and Claire did dishes together was a month, or so, after the wedding. Now they have a dishwasher.

The day the article came out he asked Claire if she got a chance to look at the paper.

"Yes, after school."

"Well?"

"Well what?"

"What did you think of my article?"

"I think you had two comma splices, but besides that it was fine."

David hoped the article would crack her. Maybe Claire would remember how they would always have those great suds fights when he would help with the dishes. He wanted to give her a chance to talk about how she felt, and give himself a chance to talk about how he felt. The paper laid, rolled up, on top of the logs next to the fireplace.

\* \* \* \*

David flips through the clippings until his fingertips are the color of the dark grey blotter that protects the wood on top of the desk. He goes into the bathroom to wash up. The entire time he stares at the ceramic holder in the wall which holds his and Claire's toothbrushes. They face away from each other in holes farthest apart. His is green, and its bristles worn so that they spray out from the very center of the head. They seem frayed at the edges. Hers is red, its bristles look almost new sitting on the angled head. "For those hard to reach spots," he remembers the advertisement.

"Dinner time." Claire stands in the doorway of the bathroom.

"Claire, did you buy a new toothbrush?"

"Yeah, why?"

"Never mind, let's eat."

A casserole sits, covered, in the center of the small round table. David thinks the table gets smaller every time they sit down to eat. It's set with two glasses of ice water, two plates, two napkins, two forks, and two spoons. Perfect.

David clears his throat as he unfolds his napkin on his lap, "Smells good."

The rest of the meal is silent except for the clanking of forks against the plates. Claire finishes first and waits for David. They put their dishes in the sink, and she asks him if he can stack the dishwasher for her.

"I really want to get started on tomorrow's article," he says, "I still need an idea."

"Will you proof something for me later? It's an interview with this new poet whose work is being featured in the next issue of the magazine."

"Sure, later."

David scuffs down the hall, stopping in their bedroom to put on slippers. The king-sized bed is made with an extremely feminine floral comforter. David compares it to the curtains. They match. He never really noticed how the greens and pinks made him feel uncomfortable. The white rug and white vanity remind him of his mother's room. The top of his dresser is cleared off except for a wedding picture. She looks beautiful, she's smiling and he's kissing her cheek. He brushes her cheek in the picture with his thumb. The glass is cold. David turns the light out and goes back to his room. After he pulls the chair up to the typewriter table, he turns on the goose-neck lamp, inserts paper into the machine, and begins to type.

His watch reads 1:36 a.m. The hot light from the lamp burns his face. The paper is blank. He turns off the typewriter and the lamp. He trudges to the door through several balls of paper, the efforts of several hours of bargaining with his typewriter. The hall light is on and their bedroom door is closed. He climbs in bed without disturbing the covers on her side of the bed.

On the way home from work the next day David stops at the bookseller to purchase the new Salmon Skies. He doesn't read it in the store, only glances at the table of contents to make sure she's in there. "David" by Claire Abrick, page 18. In an almost state of shock, his hands open to page 18. The salesman comes down the aisle and revives David with a "Good Evening." David closes the magazine.

On the subway ride home he opens to page 18. He reads:

Rain outside  
 Hits  
 The fireplace-brick  
 Sidewalk  
 Like tiny  
 Champagne glasses  
 Shattering.  
 Their contents  
 Empty  
 Like fingers  
 That reach out  
 For a lover's  
 Hand.

He remembers the night they came back from their honeymoon. They drank champagne by the fireplace and hurled the empty glasses into the fire before making love on the floor, in front of the fire, for the rest of the evening.

David rides the subway past his stop to the end and walks the four miles home. The cool night air whistles the words of the poem in his ears, "Empty", "reach out." David gets to the apartment at 9:30 p.m. and tells Claire he already ate and was working late on a big story he had to get in early tomorrow morning to finish. He sorts through the mail and says good night.

David gets up at 4:00 a.m. and throws some clothes, deodorant, and his toothbrush in a brown paper bag. He gets on the subway and a half hour later arrives at the newspaper's dark offices. The night watchman lets him in so he can go up to his cubicle. David sits in the

dark silence thinking about the first poem Claire wrote to him:

I inhale springtime air  
that doesn't taste  
like anything in particular  
just good;  
and I know, like that air,  
I will always have you  
who will never let me  
drown  
or  
suffocate.

Minutes later, David pulls the string on his desk light, flicks the switch on his computer terminal and begins to type the headline; "When Living With A Stranger Gets Too Difficult." He hits ENTER a few times and continues typing; "If you've given all you've got and can't live there much longer, it's time to buy new luggage." David's tears hit the computer keys to shatter like champagne glasses.



## **K.P. Duty**

**By Matt Hicks**

Doctors will tell you  
Chemotherapy wrecks your hair  
But what can you do?

It fell out  
And you puked under the lights  
All over the ground

So what?  
Everybody dies.

Yes, he was stupid  
Or existential  
But insubstantial either way

Besides you have a life  
A job  
Rewarding, fulfilling, important

You love to cook  
And dine  
And even make love sometimes.

## Serendipity

By Janet Mast

I saw you once about a year ago  
from somewhere in the slender, gray-lit place  
between awake and half-remembered dream.  
I was not looking for your face this time  
but there you stood beside my bed, solid.  
You wore a blue t-shirt and jeans

and spoke

my name--but cautiously, as if you were  
unsure of who I was, as if confused  
to find the years had settled in my face  
while yours, forever twenty-seven, stares  
from under glass in black and white. To you,  
perhaps, I was the ghost

who visited

your dream precisely at the instant I  
was dreaming you and by this accident  
of intersection, met each other. There.  
You saw me. I could hear you speak my name.  
Not memory, not insubstantial mist  
but you and I.

Two night commuters brush  
against each other on the platform, step  
through parallel turnstiles then pause and blink  
in recognition as the doors slide closed  
against a deepening space, and small windows  
clip past like strips of film, and words  
begin to form themselves. I know you. Wait.

## PATRONS

Jane Agostinelli  
 A. C. Allen  
 Alumni Office  
 Marc & Kerri Applebaum  
 Delores Arnold  
 Jane Barth  
 Paul Bashus  
 Berman Museum of Art  
 Nicholas Berry  
 Barbara Boris  
 Todd & Cara Bowers  
 Anthony D. J. Branker  
 Doug & Nancy Cameron  
 Antoni Castells-Talens  
 Catherine Chambliss  
 Vincent Coll  
 Paul & Lori Cramer  
 Maria D'Arcangelo  
 Louis DeCatur  
 Richard & Rachel DiFelicianantonio  
 Craig DiLouie  
 Carol Dole  
 Shirley Eaton  
 Andrew Economopoulos  
 Eileen England  
 Juan Espadas  
 Judy Evans  
 George Fago  
 Mary Fields  
 Gerard Fitzpatrick  
 John & Edwina French  
 Judith Fryer  
 Thomas Gallagher  
 Colette Hall  
 Cindy Harris  
 Jennifer Healy  
 Joyce Henry  
 Ronald Hess  
 Jeffrey & Nancy Hughes  
 Barbara Imes  
 Peter Jessup  
 Houghton & Nancy Kane  
 Linda Karenkiewicz

Margaret Katz  
 Margot & Rob Kelley  
 Jeanne Kerl  
 Steven Kneizys  
 Sue Koester  
 Donna Landis  
 Bernard Lentz  
 Joyce Lionarons  
 Jim Lobue  
 Annette Lucas  
 Stephanie McNulty  
 David Mill  
 Jay Miller  
 Lisa Moore  
 Lucia Murphy  
 Jeffrey Neslen  
 Nightingales  
 Frances Novak  
 Dominic O'Brien  
 Beverly Oehlert  
 Heather O'Neill  
 Peter Perreten  
 Andrew Price  
 Bonnie Price  
 Sally Rapp  
 Richard & Margot Richter  
 Carla Rinde  
 Jean Rodenberger  
 Nydia Rojas  
 William Rosenthal  
 Jahan Saleh  
 Kim Sanda  
 Patricia Schroeder  
 Ray Schultz  
 Jim Sidie  
 Keith Strunk  
 Martha Takats  
 Victor Tortorelli  
 Theresa Tuscano  
 Ursinus Bookstore  
 Derk Visser  
 Jon Volkmer  
 Jane Whitman  
 Theodore Xaras



Printed on recycled paper.