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The Lantern Vol. 60, No. 2, Summer 1993

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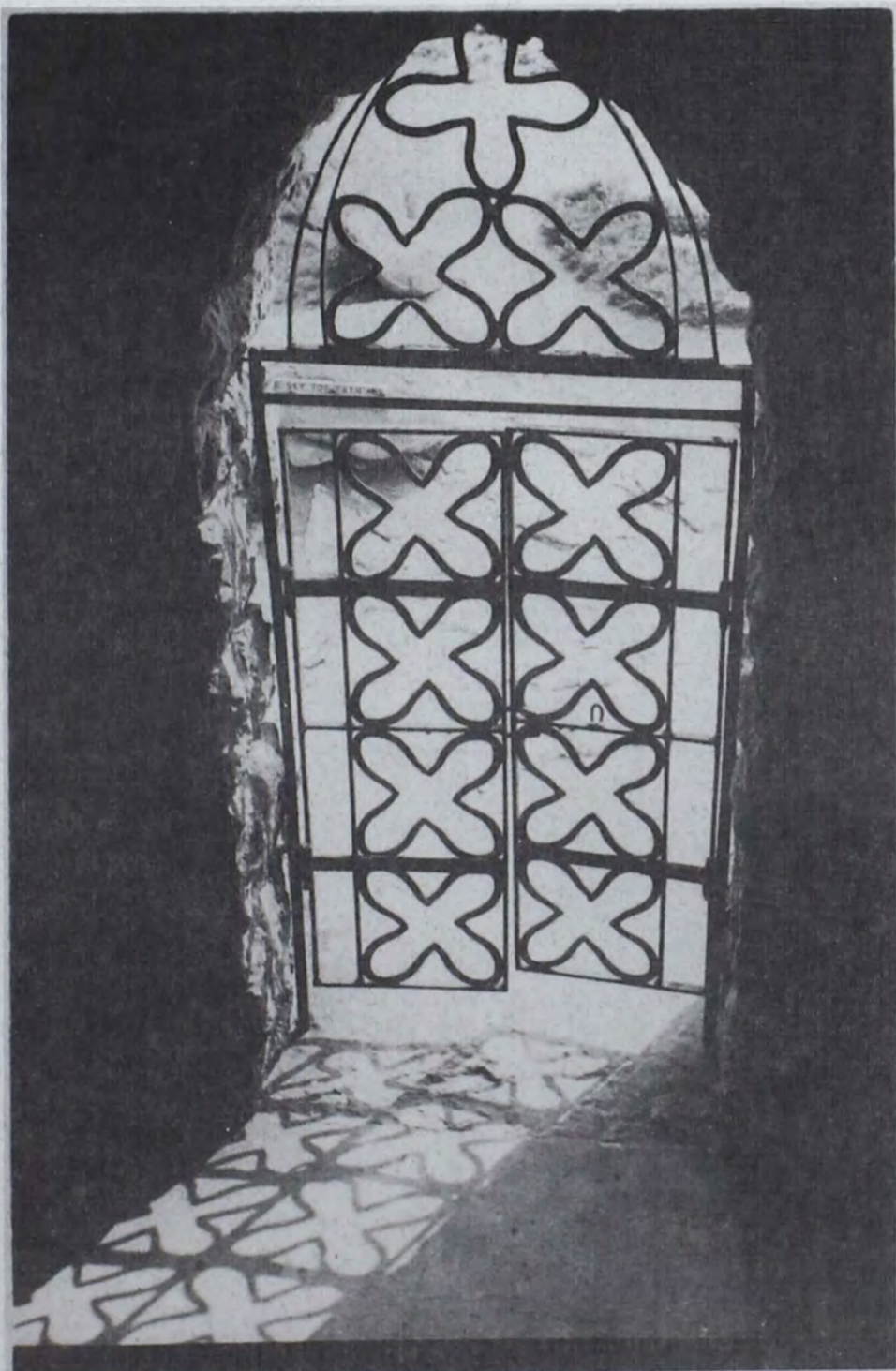
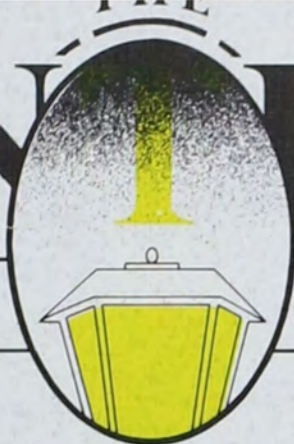
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THE LANTERN

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Summer, 1992

Alan McCabe--WAKE	3
Aaron Rychling--MISCONCEPTION	4
Beth Rosenberg--CLICHE	5
Jim Petch--STANDARD OIL	6
Paula Love--LAKE EFFECT	7
Tim Hannigan--CHARLOTTE	13
Kathrin Phillips--PSYCHEDELIC. . .	14
Rebecca Heyl--art work	16
Regina Foley--PLAYGROUND IN WINTER	17
Chris Kakacek--SHOOTING POOL WITH ANGELS	18
Jeff Swain--THE BLOOD THROUGH OUR VEINS	19
Nha Dominic Bui--art work	23
Letitia Minnick--ICED COFFEE	24
Allen Clowers--BUZZKILL	26
Christopher Heinzinger--IMMORTALITY	28
Anne Feinsod--CATHODIC UNION	30
Gretchen Lacey--CRUSH	31
Gar Donecker--MUSHROOMS	32
Stephanie Hicks--art work	34
Sonja Regelman--CONVERSING	35
Keith Leparulo--EGGPLANT	36
Will Briggs--LETTER TO THE. . .	38
Chuck Webb--STILL SITTING, CONTEMPLATING	40
Paula Love--SENSIBLE LOVE	41
Laura Devlin--MONSTERS UNDER THE BED	42
Maureen Farrel--POISON ROCK	44
Kathrin Phillips--WAITING AT THE DENTIST	48
David Billitto--FATE	50
Abby Rosenbaum--STATIC	51
Chris Bowers--THE THREE C'S	52
Ellen Cosgrove--AS WE FROLIC	53
Beth Rosenberg--NEST	54
Sarah Starr--A BOTTLE OF WINE AND PATSY CLINE	56
Doug Plitt--art work	62
Alan McCabe--BOTTOMS OF PAGES. . .	63
PATRONS	64

EDITOR'S NOTE

The Summer issue of The Lantern features poetry. The Lantern staff offers congratulations to Alan McCabe for his poem, WAKE, and to Rebecca Heyl for her winning cover photograph. We were thrilled to receive a record 163 submissions this semester, thank you to all who submitted. Enjoy!

-KNP

THE LANTERN

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JUDGE'S NOTE

When the writer presents a situation which is familiar to the reader, she or he must introduce an element of surprise that, as it surprises, must convince the reader of the ultimate truth or inevitability of the situation. When that happens, the reader gasps a little gasp and says, "This is poetry." When language is spectacular in the common parlance of Wordsworth yet displays the love of words of Pope, the reader chokes admiringly and says, "This is poetry." When the poem at hand deals with the death of youth with the unsentimentality of Wilfred Owen and the directness of Delmore Schwartz, the result is, indeed, poetry. All of these qualities may be found in the prize-winning poem of this issue of The Lantern, entitled "Wake."

As judge, I must also acknowledge the close second-place honors which go to "Misconception," a poem which will yield much on many re-readings.

--LD

Wake

By Alan McCabe

I saw the skin bunched up around his ears
As if his face was placed with little care
Upon his skull. He wore a Phillies cap.
He clutched with china hands a blanket that
Had never heard him snore. We wondered if,
In matching sweatshirt, did he look a man
Of twenty-four? The cap must stay, because
Through miscommunication one more knife
Had sliced his head, a final scar, a notch
Upon his body, keeping score of all
His life's indignities. In traumas past,
He'd take a week, a month, a year to rest,
Then wake one day to shake his head and say,
"Enough of this, enough!" And that was that.
This week he said enough.

Now here he lies,
The only thing preventing him from waking
At his wake, his silent pride. To sit
Up now would draw too much attention and
disrupt his family and friends
Who drove on icy roads tonight to mourn.

Misconception

By Aaron Rychling

She reluctantly gave her name
sat down with her internal companion,
and the receptionist
slid the window shut.
She knew she was not alone.
They touched one night,
being absorbed like rain into earth.
But absent was that never subtle
pause that spoils the mood.

Later she listened for the rapidly
flowing river, but busy beavers
had already built their dam.
She could relate that to a clog
in her drain, but never before
had she called the plumber.

As she descended down the dark canal
to the light of the open world,
she recalled early yesterday morning
she fed the toilet with forgotten
pleasures, passing it off as a drink gone sour.
She could handle the memory loss
and Saturday morning bathroom visits,
besides,
her body was young and could survive
the private violence. She eased her stomach
often, recently leaving behind her guilt.

Today, in the white room, nearly sterilized,
she put down her *People* magazine
and snapped out of her daydream
to the tune of a turning doorknob.

Cliché

By Beth Rosenberg

I am the bump on the log
The wart on the frog
King of the mountain
and Queen of the bathtub
I am the molehill on the mole on my shoulder when I'm naked
I am sowing the oats of love
I am disjointed disentangled and horribly disengaged
I am the rebel without a cause
Savior without a pause
I am the boat in the oceans of blood on my hands
The mountain
and I'm coming to Mohammed faster than he can say
Slow as molasses
And I'm getting my gun Johnny
Cute as a button mommy
I'm pure as a pile driver
Given to snugness but hating the bugness
Free as a bird strong as an ox
In a box with four locks and four corners on my bed
His head is a rock what's the hard place?
Language is tired and I'm dropping dead beautiful
Who cares where I live
I'm eager as a beaver hot on your tail
And follow that car baby just follow that car
It's earth-shaking lip-quaking pies in the sky
That are bringing this kite to the ground
It's just the simple fact
Can I just tell you?
No
There's nothing left to say
Roger. Over and out.

Standard Oil

By Jim Petch

From Corpus Christi, over miles of dust
and dunes of sand I trekked until upon
I gazed a shotgun shack, abandoned
and dilapidated, and a lone sign.
Eighty-Five 'til El Paso. On empty,
I lit my last Lucky and cracked the door,
finding a solitary cattle skull
and a bottle of standard oil, Crown
Royal, left carelessly behind in a
hurried exodus in another age.
Without pause, I move in to refill, tearing
the seal, hearing the rip of every
dusty fiber. Flowing fuel soaked each dried
cranny of my soiled throat. Quenched, I moved on.
The filling station faded into my
memory, as I hoofed o'er the badlands
Eastwood-esque, burning my standard oil.

Lake Effect

By Paula Love

I flew back from my semester in Spain straight into Wade's waiting arms. We stood together in my parents' kitchen. I knew the words that were coming and my mom and dad out back barbecuing knew too.

"I was wondering," he said.

"Yes?" I hooked my thumbs into the belt loops of his jeans.

"I thought maybe we could get married."

That's it, I thought. Not poetic, but I was never attracted to smooth men. He was thin but I could fatten him up. He'd have his PhD in Chemistry in one more semester, and I'd have my Bachelor's in Spanish. I was not able to take care of myself.

"Yes," I said. We kissed, too wet as usual. He pressed closer and I envisioned our life together--a nice house, me at home with two to four kids, visits to his parents in Florida every winter, sensible investments, retirement, in North Carolina perhaps.

While I was gone Wade had accepted a job as a research chemist at Eastman Kodak in Rochester, New York. Rochester felt like a prison sentence to me. "Do chemists normally just stay with the same company their entire career?" I asked.

"That's the best way to advance, and of course you accumulate retirement benefits and vacation when you stay put." I thought I heard the period at the end of the statement "stay put." "Some scientists will leave the industry and go into academics," he added. That appealed to me, a professor's wife. Wade had been praised for his teaching. I stopped in his Inorganic Chemistry class once. He bounced on his running sneakers back and forth in front of the chalk board wearing his dress pants, Levi corduroys. He pointed to the equation on the board and spoke in a language of polymers and phosphazenes. They seemed like characters in a children's book coming from his chip-toothed smile. I thought he should draw faces on his molecules. I changed my major from Biology to Spanish three years before because I could not grasp Chemistry. Wade made it seem like he was the chef of the universe mixing molecules and making compounds. Maybe he would tire of the corporate world. Maybe I could talk him into academics.

The night we got engaged we went out to dinner to celebrate. Wade wanted to go to a four-star French restaurant in Philadelphia, but I didn't feel like getting dressed up. We settled on a Chinese restaurant at the strip mall down the road from my parents' house in Valley Forge. I ordered Kung Pao chicken, extra hot, and he got shrimp and Chinese vegetables. He reached over and scooped a fork full of my chicken. "Wooo--hot! How do you eat this stuff?" He exhaled as though breathing fire.

"I've got hot Italian blood, remember? Let me taste yours." I popped a shrimp and pea pod in my mouth. "Mmm good, a little bland though."

"It's my lukewarm waspy blood." He smiled, lips pressed together. "O.K. Miss Hot Italian, what do you think about a spring wedding, maybe May?"

"Which spring?" I methodically stuck and unstuck the backs of my thighs from the vinyl booth.

Wade raised his eyebrows. "Next spring, a year from now."

"I'm not sure." I dumped a clump of rice on to my plate and emptied two packets of soy sauce on top.

"You know the Chinese don't actually put soy sauce on their food."

"Well then why do they put it on every table?"

"Conceding to American tastes?" He shrugged.

"Well I guess they don't know what they're missing do they?" I tore open another packet and poured it on, squeezing out the last drops to emphasize the point. "I was thinking about waiting until I get a career going before setting a date. I don't have a clue what I'm going to do with this Spanish major."

"Don't you think you could get established by next year? Besides, money won't be a problem. You can sit around and eat bon bons and watch soaps all day if you want."

"Don't tempt me." I laughed. "Seriously, I'd like to get a feel for Rochester and see what kind of job I get before making any big decisions."

"You just made a big one." He waited for a response as I pushed a peanut around the plate with my fork. "So you want to live together a while first?" he asked. I nodded. "OK. Hell, we virtually lived together for two years at college already. It'll just be a change of scenery." He lifted his water glass. "To marriage?"

"To cohabitation," I answered. We clinked our glasses and drank.

The sky in Rochester was shades of gray and white for our first 42 days there. On the thirtieth day I found out in an almanac that Rochester is second to Seattle in annual number of cloudy days. I confronted Wade with this when he got home. "Do you know it is cloudy in this city 2/3 of the year?"

"Really? What's for dinner?"

"Spaghetti. Yes, that's why everyone's so grumpy here. They're depressed."

"Who's grumpy?"

"The grocery store checkers, the gas station attendants, me," I trailed off.

"It's because of the lake effect. You get a front coming off of Lake Ontario." He held up a camera and grinned. "Look what I brought home. InstaMatic so I can take pictures of you." He winked. Kodak had

a camera collection for the employees' free use. He took pictures of me naked stretched on the bed. He posed me, sitting provocatively, arms over my head, then coyly covering my breasts. He kept them in his night stand drawer. I took them out when he was at work. I looked into my eyes for sadness or happiness and found neither. I found only apology. What was I sorry for? I'm sorry I don't love you, they said to Wade. Did he see it, I wondered? After he took the pictures we made love for the first time in two weeks. In the weeks after I had headaches, stomach aches. I was tired. I just wanted to cuddle. I could not be spent of passion at twenty-one years old. Hadn't we rolled around on the rug for hours kissing and caressing in our first months together? I could not pinpoint the dwindling of my love.

There was not much demand for Spanish majors. I ended up working as a salesperson, they called us Associates, at a department store. I was in the Junior Department where I spent my days checking in clothes, rearranging the displays and ringing up sales. I had the promise of the executive training class in my future. The other girls thought I was biding my time until marriage and children. I felt more like the ice fishermen I saw on Lake Ontario. They would chip away at the thick ice, cut a neat hole with an auger, drop their lines and sit, huddled beneath layers of wool and flannel waiting for a passing bass or perch.

I waited through the steely cold Rochester winter for an invitation to leave. The FBI and the CIA needed Spanish speakers so I applied to both. Wade seemed bemused at my efforts and acted like a father waiting for his daughter to grow out of an awkward phase. The CIA turned me down, the FBI offered me a job as a Special Agent. Most likely, they informed me, I'd end up fighting the drug war in Miami. I'd carry a gun. I said no. I applied to law school and was accepted at Villanova and the University of North Carolina. I was happy until I realized that I couldn't afford the tuition and was not interested in being a lawyer.

"Why don't you teach?" Wade asked me for the eight or ninth time. "You could get certified pretty easily."

"I've never been able to get up and talk in front of people," my standard answer.

"What about staying at the store and continuing on up the ladder?"

"And talk about hair and fingernails in the breakroom the rest of my life, eek!"

"You don't have to work you know."

"I know. You're so lucky, you've always known exactly where you were heading and you have such a great career."

"I'm older." He wrapped his arms around me, and I buried my face in his neck. My protector, my provider.

"I don't deserve you," I whispered.

"I love you," he whispered back.

There was no spring in Rochester. The snow melted in April and the bulbs did not dare to pop until June. The natives joked of two seasons, ten months of winter and two of summer. Wade thought a few days out of town would raise my spirits. We took the six hour trip to my parents' house for their annual fourth of July picnic. As we drove out of the city limits I turned around and said goodbye to the ring of cold clouds over Rochester. I made up silly songs. Wade learned the words and sang along. On the boring stretches I lay my head on his lap and napped and he played with my hair. When I awoke I kissed him on the cheek. I loved his profile--high cheekbones, brown shining eyes, dark slashing eyebrows and a small only slightly up-turned nose. I got out the camera and took his picture driving.

At the picnic I sat on the bench eating a foot-long hot dog while my cousins and aunts hovered around my one carat diamond ring.

"Have you set a date?"

"Not yet."

"It's gorgeous, just right for your delicate little hand."

"And my stubby nails?" I asked.

"You better get that man to the altar or someone's going to take him from you," my loudest aunt said. We all looked over at Wade playing badminton with my five year-old cousin Laura. He held the racket up to his face and pressed. Laura laughed and did the same. "Now you have little squares all over your face," he teased her.

"So do you!" They pressed their faces together and pretended to kiss through the rackets. Laura's mom turned to me, "He's so nice."

"I know." I didn't smile.

I graduated from the executive training program at the department store. My manager called me into her office on a Friday afternoon. "As you know, the Baltimore store opens in a week." I nodded. "They need a manager for the Junior Department if you're interested. Don't get me wrong, we anticipate openings here in Rochester in Sportswear in the next month or two. I don't want you to feel obligated to move but you've done a nice job for us in Juniors and I wanted to at least make you the offer."

"It sounds interesting."

"I'll give you some time to think about it."

"I have. I'd like to go to Baltimore."

"How soon can you go?"

"Soon."

On the lawn outside our apartment that Saturday we played catch with a black and yellow Kodak frisbee. We flung it back and forth. As the rhythm of the tosses picked up, wrists flicking, I gathered strength. "I've been wanting to tell you about my promotion."

"Oh yeah?"

I tried to keep it light but my voice quivered. "It's a good news, bad news thing."

"Good news--promotion. Bad news?"

"In Baltimore." The frisbee sailed and made a soft landing at his feet.

"You're leaving?"

I walked toward him as he stood looking down at the frisbee, biting his lower lip. "They said it was the only way I could advance. There just aren't any openings coming up here in Rochester." This lie was not planned but it felt comfortable and became part of my explanation to my family and friends and me for leaving.

"What are you going to be doing?"

"Managing the Junior Department."

"This is what it comes down to? Manager of the Junior Department? How pathetic."

"I'm not a PhD, I don't read Polymer Preprints on the beach. This is all I can do."

"No it's not and you know it. Damn well you know it."

"Oh OK, I can stay home, have kids, stencil the walls and hang baskets in the kitchen, right?"

He looked down and blinked. It seemed like a long time before he looked up with his face contorted somewhere between anger and hurt. I barely heard him when he spoke. "Why did you say yes?"

Because I do want to stay home and have kids. I want security and comfort. I want to be a scientist's wife. He stood there in the camping shorts I bought him and a shirt with a little penguin over the pocket. The clips on his shorts dangled empty as he waited, feet pointed straight ahead. I was so close to loving him completely. What would it have taken, the shoulders wider or the jaw more squared? Or was it magical, chemical? I sat on the grass and sobbed, "I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry." Wade helped me up.

"Come on, the grass is wet. You're going to get cold."

I left the ring in his sock drawer when I moved out. It was never mentioned. We did not formally break up. I simply faded out of his life. We agreed to date others. There were calls, letters, and occasional visits that dwindled in their frequency and urgency.

When I think of Wade now I picture him the way he looked that last time he visited me in my apartment in Baltimore. He lay on the bed with his legs hanging over the side, wearing a flannel shirt, too warm for April in Maryland. He was thinner than ever, he was running up to 6 miles a day he said. I was dating the man who would become my husband, and he was dating the woman who would become his wife. I didn't want to sound too enthusiastic about my new love.

"I found a Barry Manilow record in his collection," I confided. "On the cover he's wearing a button that says, 'I love beagles.'"

He winced. "Oh, that doesn't sound promising."

"Tell me about your little lab assistant."

"She's attractive. Not as pretty as you. She's a year older than me, divorced, has an eight-year-old son who's a really neat kid. We've gone to some ball games together."

"Sounds good."

"Yeah. Sometimes I don't know. We were talking the other day and she didn't know what the Superfund was. You always knew stuff like that."

"Stuff like what?" I asked.

"Current events. We used to have some good discussions."

"Yeah, but to tell you truth I don't know what the Superfund is either."

He smiled up at the ceiling. He left in the morning while I slept. A note on my dresser said, "The Superfund is government money set aside for environmental clean ups. I'm glad you didn't know. Good luck with Barry. Love, Wade."

Charlotte

By Tim Hannigan

Although He may see nothing
but weeds,
She collects
and dries
beautiful, wild, flowery things.
Beauty is the church of the Mind;
preaches of life
and how to work with time.
The past has worked against Her kind.
However, planted roots keep the soil
from the wind,
and today She is happy
with Her garden
full of rich earth.
The winds still blow,
but hum instead of howl.
But, some of Her seeds were whisked away.
And some did perish, but
the others,
they will brighten a land
She has never known.
These lands of hope,
to sail in their direction
gives promise
to my simple soul.

Psychedelic Iridescent Infidelity

By Kathrin Phillips

the night i almost died for you
the moon was stark
in the cold black sky
and the clouds
were mere scarves of white
draped over the stars
in scattered disarray.

i screamed loud
loud louder loudest
i ran screaming through the hall
down the hall
along the hall
up the hall and back
then fell to the carpet
the rust brown carpet
to watch the ceiling hover over me
to think--i want to walk on the ceiling
to stamp on the lines and cracks
to be upside down

when i put the knife in and
the red blood spilled out
i thought of the first time i bled for you.
i thought of your smile
and your red flowered tie
and i watched red drip
on the carpet
making patterns
my roommates wouldn't like and i thought
of wide bottomed seventies ties in iridescent colors
and i squiggled the blood along the wall
to make a pattern for a new tie
then i sucked the cut with my sunkissed-rose lips
and made them vampire-red instead

and i was dracula
and i was forever and always
for always and ever
dying for you in the hall on the rust carpet
only i didn't like the carpet
only the taste of the coppery salt blood as
it ran down my throat with my tears

oh my god oh my oh my
i whispered the familiar words
knowing too well the last time they escaped my lips
was as your white hands
stroked my believing flesh

the night i almost died for you
i thought your love the be-all and end-all
until i realized that to die for you
i was dying for her too and
i knew she wasn't worth my life
with her skinny arms and her silly smile
and i drew her on the wall with my blood
drawing her and crossing her out with a big red X
and wishing her deader than me
deader than the carpet and the blood and the psychedelic ties
deader than the seventies
and i knew i shouldn't die just yet
i had things to do
and oh you
you may be my be-all my end-all
but you aren't worth my life either.

even so i lick my wound for you and think of your lips
on my skin, sucking my blood and taking from me
all i have to give even if i only have one life
and i am offering it this once
in hopes that we can make the world go away
by feeling groovy
by clapping and knowing that we're happy
and by swinging in the playground after dark
by the sign that says no playing after dark
if you weren't playing in the dark,
what were you doing with her?



A Playground in Winter

By Regina Foley

A slow moving splintered swing
Rocks back and forth
Like a pendulum keeping time
For a motherless doll who waits,
Twisted and torn and patched with love.
And as she stares,
The merry-go-round
Catches the winter wind alone.
The concrete sand sleeps
Beneath a brew of aged leaves,
Concealing the tiny engraved prints
Once made by hard-working hands.
And the faintly painted hopscotch,
Kept company by a few cold stones,
Pleads for Nature
To endorse a child's laughter.
The basketball hoop,
Chipped and weathered and beaten with use,
Is empty, and its frayed strings hang alone.

Shooting Pool with Angels

By Chris Kakacek

The rain-soaked headstones brood like billiard balls
Against a lawn of felt. A raven, eight-
Ball black, attracts my eye. His shadow falls
Along the ground and ripples over slate
and grass. He circles round a twisted oak

To light upon its branch. Below, in stone
Squats an ancient altar. It cloaks
My gut with cold uneasiness. Alone,
A sculptured angel mourns, still wet from rain.
Her blackened wings are cracked and draped with moss.

Like chalk rubbed off a cue stick, mildew stains
Her weathered fingertips, which reach across
The table's surface, dressed in lichen green.
One hand is broken; vandals are to blame.
Disfigurement cannot remove her keen

Eyes' invitation: come and join our game.
I almost see the brightly colored spheres
Collide and ricochet and crash like waves,
Then slowly roll across the felt like tears,
And fall into their pockets, to their graves.

The Blood Through Our Veins

By Jeff Swain

We've been cut off from our family for five years now. Once we were discovered, there was no longer a place for us in the garden. So now, cast out, we keep an apartment down the Jersey shore. Juicy got her G.E.D. and now works nights at the Wawa down the street. I'm a construction laborer working when I can. All over something my father called unnatural. But for Juicy and me nothing could be more natural. More right.

I'll never forget the night we were discovered. Halloween '87. Rolling on the living room floor like two sweaty animals in heat. My white vampire face streaked down her from mouth to belly. One of my dad's six packs, half finished, next to us. Juicy's leopard skin costume on top of my sneakers. Lights out. Windows open. We never heard them come up the steps. Or open the door. First thing I heard was my aunt scream at the sight of her daughter riding me. Juicy cried out. And crossed her arms over her breasts.

Looking over they were all kind of blurred. Dad. Mom. Aunt Rae. Uncle Dick. Michael. Yes, Michael. Dressed as King Arthur. I used him to focus. Standing there with a tinfoil crown on his head wielding a cardboard sword he'd been calling Excalibur all week. "Wow," he said.

Aunt Rae fell into my mother's arms in tears.

"Jesus Christ," came from the old man. Then he fired up a Lucky Strike.

And to this day, although I won't swear to it, I thought I heard Juicy giggle.

Uncle Dick and Aunt Rae collected their daughter. Uncle Dick and my father had words. Michael was sent to bed. And my father pulled me into the kitchen by the collar of my cape.

"It's not right," he said.

"Why?"

"Because it's not, that's why."

Then Mom crying, "Ronnie, it's in the Bible."

"I don't believe in God."

My father: "You what? What about children, have you thought about that?"

"Juicy and I don't want any kids. We'll adopt."

"You make me sick."

"Harold," My mother pleaded, "Don't say that." Her sobs became dry heaves like she was choking on something. Her mascara ran, making a sad clown face out of her.

"But Dad." I reached for Mom but he pushed me back into my chair.

"Don't 'But Dad' me. Do you realize the position you put your

mother and me in? What are we supposed to say to your aunt and uncle?"

"Dad, I love her."

"Love? How can you love...Love? You're sixteen. I forbid you to see her. It's not natural."

"Dad you can't do that."

"Don't tell me what I can and..."

Looking over at her now, sleeping huddled in a blanket, she slides her feet down trying to fix the covers. Her auburn hair lubriciously covers her face. And her full lips promise the most wanton pleasures. No, dear father, the question is how can you not love somebody like her.

* * *

Through the rain-soaked window the autumn leaves form a kaleidoscope of golds-oranges-reds. Ronnie's father, my uncle, is dead. Michael is coming with the news. And today makes me three weeks late on my period. I don't know what I'll do if I am. Ronnie's been such a wreck I haven't had the heart to tell him. Who knows. Maybe I'm not. I've been late before. Just never this late.

Leaving the family has always been harder on him. My parents were older, tired after raising four before me. They had been through the wars and were mostly just coasting through my life. But Ron, he was the older of two brothers. My aunt and uncle put a lot of stock in him and had big plans for his future. That's the problem: they were so busy living for him they never saw the life he was living. Yeah, we hid the sex; every couple that age hides it from their parents. But we never hid our relationship. They just never saw it. I knew that all hell would break loose if they ever found out. But Ronnie was unrealistic. He took their not saying anything as consent. I warned him that he was being naive.

Well, after they found out about us the shit really hit the fan. Ronnie said his dad even roughed him up a bit.

They refused to let us see each other. Which was a joke because we went to the same school. Uncle Harold went so far as to follow Ronnie to make sure he wasn't going to see me. Which of course he was.

I was always attracted to Ronnie. Even as kids I'd always wanted to be around him. Probably because he's everything I'm not. He's smart--he's taking night courses at the community college. He's funny. And everybody seems to have a genuine liking for him from the moment they meet him. Me on the other hand: I barely got by in school, I only got my G.E.D. because of Ronnie's help. And the boys I met only seemed to be interested in one thing; they didn't want to know me. But Ronnie did. He knows more about me than anyone.

Even as kids, being the same age and growing up down the street from each other, it was natural that we'd hang out. He'd stop by my house before school for breakfast, we'd lunch together, come home and hang out in one of our houses. And because we're cousins we'd be able to go up to our bedrooms for privacy. Our parents thought we were studying. And, yeah, sometimes we were.

I hear him in the living room straightening up. He hasn't slept for days and he won't talk about it. I hope Michael can give him what he's looking for. But I have my doubts.

Juicy's up. It's about time. I love the girl, but if there's one thing I would change it would be her penchant for being late.

Late. As in the late Harold Cochran. They buried him yesterday. Yesterday it rained so I had off. I should've gone to the funeral--for me, not him. Staying away was his idea. Not the priests. Or the shrinks. It was his and now I have to live with it.

Juicy was always a tease. In second grade we sat two aisles away from each other. We had Mrs. Khopin, who taught my mother in grade school. Well, anyway, Juicy would whisper, not so anyone else could hear, just me. Her voice would go off in my head without her lips moving. When I looked over she'd pull up her skirt and show her slip. Then it'd disappear and she'd be grinning. Not from happiness. But satisfaction.

Up in her room she would change in front of me. Watching her tits grow was marking the passage of time. In seventh grade I showed her my hard-on. As freshmen we did it.

And all that time nobody ever caught on. That is what's so fucking unbelievable. One time sitting on the back stoop with the old man, Michael may have even been there, anyway, I was asking the old man about love. And you know, specifically I was speaking about me and Juicy and I just assumed he was too. He told me that love was good. That it was what men and women were put on the Earth to do--love one another. He said the noblest thing a man could do was to take a woman.

"When do you find love?"

"You don't son. Love has a way of finding you."

"How will you know?"

"You'll know. Believe me, you'll know. You'll meet someone that will just totally turn you around. Your heart will skip, your palms get all sweaty. And you'll find yourself wanting to do things that you'd never be caught dead doing."

"Like dancing?"

He laughed. "Yeah, like dancing."

"Is love like fate?"

"In a lot of ways it is. You can look for it, search high and low, and never find it. Then bam! It hits you. In a smile. In the way her hair falls. It could be anything. But you're never in love until love finds you."

"Is that why people who fall in love live near each other?"

"Wha?...Generally speaking, yes."

* * *

Oh God is my belly sticking out? Don't be so paranoid. Everything's fine. I'm not. We're too careful. Oh I wish Michael were here and gone already so things can get back to normal. I can hear my mother now: "Justine Catherine McMurphy. Didn't I tell you something like this would happen?" Always the full name when the words of my mother, the prophet, rang true.

Like, two weeks before we split she came into my room and said, "I know what you're up to. Don't think I don't. But if you do, I promise you'll live to regret it." I faked ignorance until she got disgusted and left.

We'll show her. We'll show 'em all. We're going to make it. Ronnie will finish school and become a famous writer. And me. I'll do something. Keep track of the money. Keep us together. I can't live without him.

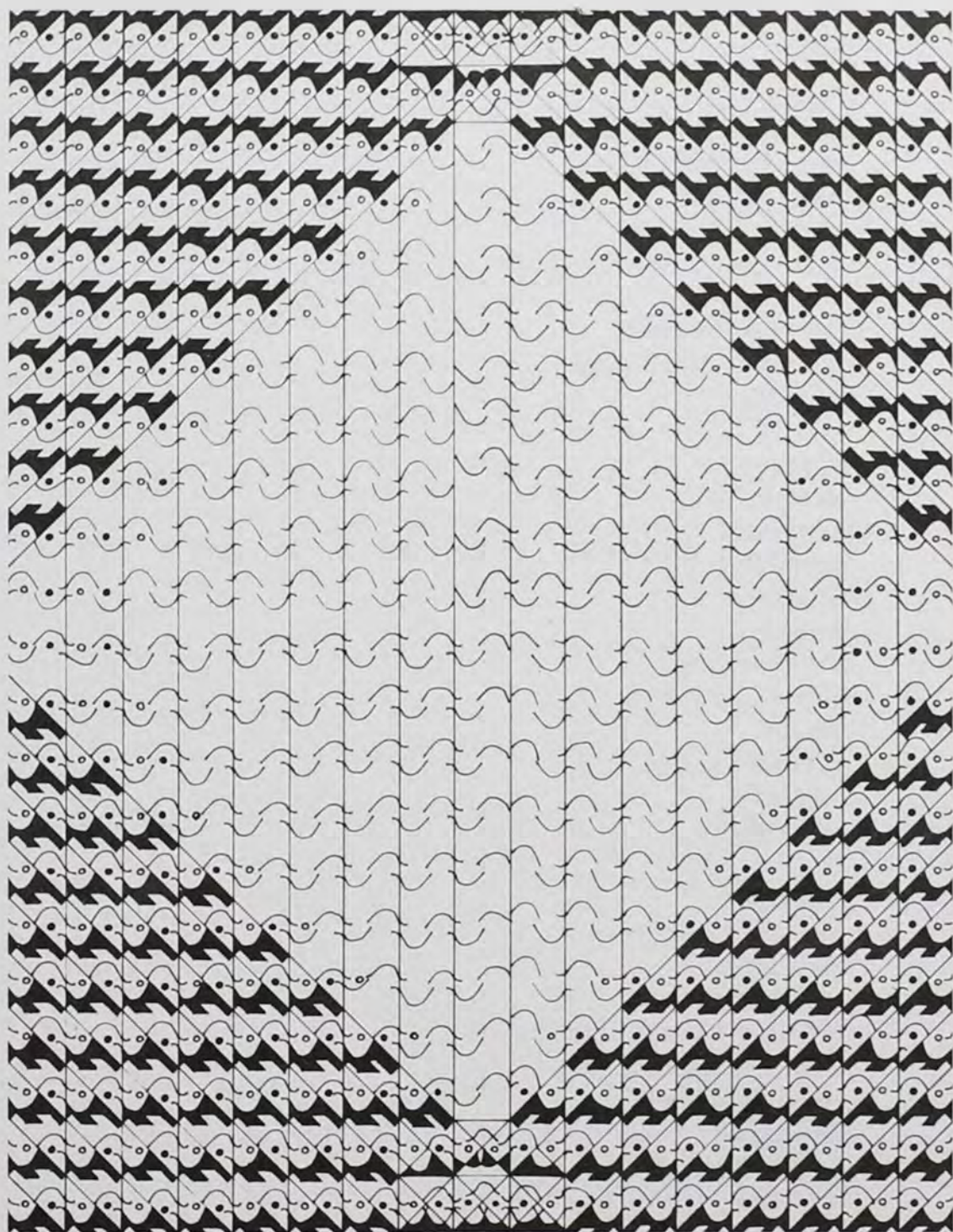
I've been in love with Ronnie since my older brother Paulie's wedding. Ronnie was the ring bearer and I was the flower girl. And he had to dance with me. "Since I Fell" by Herb Albert. Dad with his 8mm movie camera. Stogie in the corner of his mouth. Double scotch waiting at the table by Mom. On home movie nights I'd always ask him to show Paulie's wedding. Just for that dance.

That's why I don't believe in God. Because if there was, He or She would never have made a reason to keep us apart. It's not fair. With all the bad marriages and divorces you'd think they'd be happy that we have each other. So we're family. So what? If we weren't, then got married, wouldn't we be family then? I swear I don't get it.

* * *

Still raining. The leaves are pressed against the glass like bloated baby faces. Get away from the window. Maybe I won't let him in. No. I have to take whatever he brings. Wearing a tinfoil crown and wielding a cardboard sword he calls Excalibur, he comes. Maybe to sanctify. Or to drop the weathered flesh of our father on the doorstep. Either way he has the upper hand.

It's not right that it has to be like this. That Juicy and I had to leave. That Michael had to grow. That my old man had to die. That you have to give up what you love to get what you love. All because we have the same blood running through our veins.



Iced Coffee

By Letitia Minnick

My pen scribbles
page
after
page--
restraining my hand
from clutching
the warm cup
waiting
at the desk's edge.

The high-chested
professor goose-steps
from door
to wall
to door
as he spits
humanistic
behavioral
existential
analyses.

My eyes drag
from the clock to
the rim
of brown sludge
curdled
in my cup.

Talking
through a tin can--
he babbles
something about
the square-root of Freud
over the Piaget of two,
and I find myself
wondering
where the steam
has gone.

The correlated stage theory
is found significant
as the professor's
miniature moustache
meets his lower lip

and notebooks close.

Having wandered
to the washroom,
I follow
my fingers
tipping the cup--
and coffee
swirls
down the drain.

Buzz Kill

By Allen Clowers

Onto the sidewalk,
 I stumble out that place
 That just gave me my fix
 An earful of jazz & conversation & a mouthful of Firewater
 --I'm feelin good--euphoria 2-nitel

I ain't walkin, but my feet r draggin me somewhere
 South Street 2 B exact
 My 2 friends taggin-a-long, each creatin their own poem

South Street, the place 2 B, after all,
 I'm here, Mr. Wonderful threads--maroon pants &
 A shirt with yellow, blue, and maroon letters melted into it

Who cares what every 1 else is wearin?

Cuz that fine sister with the orange blouse
 & stinging perfume may not B callin my name
 But she's sho'nuff callin my attention
 & u have it sister.

Until my stomach gives that nagging kick 2 the gut
 Can't u smell them Philly cheesesteaks?
 Can't u smell that pizza?

Mouth wide open, my nose
 Tells my feet where 2 drag me & my 2 friends tag-a-long

On the way 2 our destination, wherever that is,
 South Street opens up its circus 2 me
 The trash does cartwheels all around
 Musical notes are shot out of horns
 All the clowns are doin their own thang
 Some drivin their buggies, blowin their horns
 Tryin 2 lure innocent kiddies
 2 their after-hours show
 & of course there are freak shows
 Spiked purple stuff zippin down the middle of their heads

Damn, that Firewater sho is burnin now & putting me out
 Of my mind
 --I'm feelin great--euphoria 4 ever

BANG! A loud shot that no 1 else hears
The gun? Her beauty, her essence, her very nature
The bullet? Those brown eyes, once soft as clay,
Now hard as rock
The target? My very pride that consistently
Wants 2 run away from her
--I'm feelin like shit--Buzz Kill 2 nite

Immortality

By Christopher Heinzinger

It is the weekend of our fraternity's ski trip to New York state-- a glorious weekend with the guys that involves skiing, drinking, snowmobiling, drinking, shooting guns, and more drinking. I look forward to it every year--seeing old friends, getting away from college, and going crazy. As I am leaving, I go downstairs to ask Alex if he's ready. He said he would be unable to go because he had to attend a funeral on Saturday. When I asked whose, Alex's usually cheery face turned bitter. One of his good friends from high school, he said.

"How did it happen?"

"He cleaned up and organized all of his baseball cards at home, wrote letters to his friends, then went out into the garage and shot himself with his Dad's .38."

"Damn, I'm sorry," I said, not knowing what else to say. Alex talked a little about how his friend built a computer from a kit and had a full scholarship to Colgate, and how he was always so cynical and never really happy. Alex wasn't really surprised. I left him with a pat on the shoulder and my cheesy words of wisdom, "Hang in there buddy." Walking down the quiet hallway I shook my head, telling myself I didn't even know the guy, not wanting it to ruin my weekend.

Shaking my head did not work. A five car caravan made the four hour journey, some of it on snow-covered mountain roads. In the middle of a curve, my truck started sailing towards the guard rail that separated the road from a waterfall. My truck kissed softly off the rail, not even a scratch, and Pete, riding shotgun, laughed uproariously. I just cringed and pulled back on the highway.

As soon as we got there the drinking began. In fact, the guys in the van had already gotten a nice start on the keg of Yuengling. Around 3:00 a.m. someone starts yelling to fire up the snowmobiles. And who revs it up but Steve, our drunkest brother. Mind you, this guy is also the most accident prone. He's broken both of his collar bones playing soccer and an ankle skiing. So there's Steve throwing one wild leg over the snowmobile, yelling a general invitation for a passenger. When I plead for Steve to turn it off and come inside, my frat brothers stare at me like I'm the crazy one, and start calling me princess. Steve takes off, and sure enough, goes thirty feet straight into a big oak tree. Where Steve landed there was, lucky for him, plenty of soft snow. Nothing to add to his bone fracture tally tonight. I called it a night.

Skiing at Hunter Mountain was intense. The hills were total powder. But I could feel that I wasn't skiing as aggressively as I usually do. I was carrying my way through moguls, not flying through them. I didn't drink as much as I usually do. I played the wet rag all weekend, nagging my friends to take it easy and be careful.

I drove to my parents' house in New Jersey Sunday night in time

for lasagna. I was immediately relieved to be there. I just wanted to read the paper, watch TV, and go to sleep.

"Chris, we have something to tell you," my mom said, before I'd even taken off my coat.

That unknowing, scary feeling rose in my stomach--the feeling that I might puke any second.

"Kevin Carroll was killed in a car accident in Albany, New York."

Kevin is a guy I'd partied with through four years of high school. I spent two weeks with him and other seniors touring England, where his favorite pastime was trying to perfect a British accent. Now he is gone. My mom said he lost control of his car on a patch of ice, killing himself and seriously injuring his brother.

I've often heard older people say that kids my age think we're immortal, and I guess I've acted that way too many times. But Kevin is the third friend of mine who's been killed in a car, and Alex's friend--that guy who put all his baseball cards in order--his is not the first suicide story whispered to me in an aching tone. I do not sleep well this night, even though I'm in the safety of my parents' own home. On my way back to school the next day, I drive very carefully.

catholic union

By Anne Feinsod

i, vegetable, sit back and let my eyeballs get massaged:
 hey you! click that's right, for only \$39.95 click all the
 colors of the rainbow and they even smell reall click this
 beautiful commemorative coin is half the size of a half-dollar--
 only bigger! click.

The finest hand to eye coordination leads me through
 a million worlds, a thousand words, a hundred ways.
 i acknowledge the TV as my friend. The TV is a honey-tongued
 beast. The TV is out to get me the TV wants to own me.

i, hull of a human being, allow my mind to be tampered with:
 a panting, ranting, white-faced romeo lies prostrate to an
 indifferent, eyes upward juliet on the cable channel. click
 a bright green field replete with technicolor bugs fighting
 over a brown speck dances by. click red red splashing over
 bright shiny sharps wielded by silhouettes confused and full
 of rage. click.

For lack of better companionship, the TV is my furry feline
 friend, the TV is my tickly titillating tease the TV is my
 burbling bubbly baby.

For lack of a will, the TV is my master.

i draw closer to the TV; over time it is my greatest
 love. It needs to fulfill my everything.
 To become one i marry the TV fuck the TV suckle the TV
 gobble the TV as my mate my child my meal.

When the TV has drained me dry the hunger
 points painfully in my direction.

i cannot help myself as my lips lock hold
 to the screen and i bring my fist forward
 to connect in an all powerful transcending
 blast.

god bless the TV
 TV bless god

Crush

By Gretchen Lacey

like a needle
fallen from a Christmas tree,
hidden in the rug below;
harmless little needle,
able to prick but a heel
while the heart high above
bleeds not
and feels nothing
from a tiny harmless needle
in a rug.

Mushrooms

By Gar Donecker

I am committed to eat you.

Propped on my elbow, I clean you
like an apple on my sleeve, I
pop you in, and chew,

dirt and all.

1.

Wiping grimy clouds from my eyes,
my stomach aches as I awake to
muffled cries.

I've crushed my house while sleeping--
A broken window is wedged beneath my fingernail;
Blood splashes and stains the grass like ink.

The hands are awkward, huge, too white.
Tears, a slow giddy trickle, wash
away a caterpillar with a pipe.

2.

Supermarket mushrooms, upstart produce,
picked, washed, wrapped,
struggle against the cellophane and
burst it.

They roll
 themselves along linoleum.

They are hollow and quick.
The ones with mouths direct: they
explode out the door.

3.

My daughter found a woolly bear
among the mushrooms in the garden.
She dug it out, and cried
when I shot it with *Raid*.

4.

The ground is clean and flat,
and the sky holds
the dirt in the billowing cloud.

5.

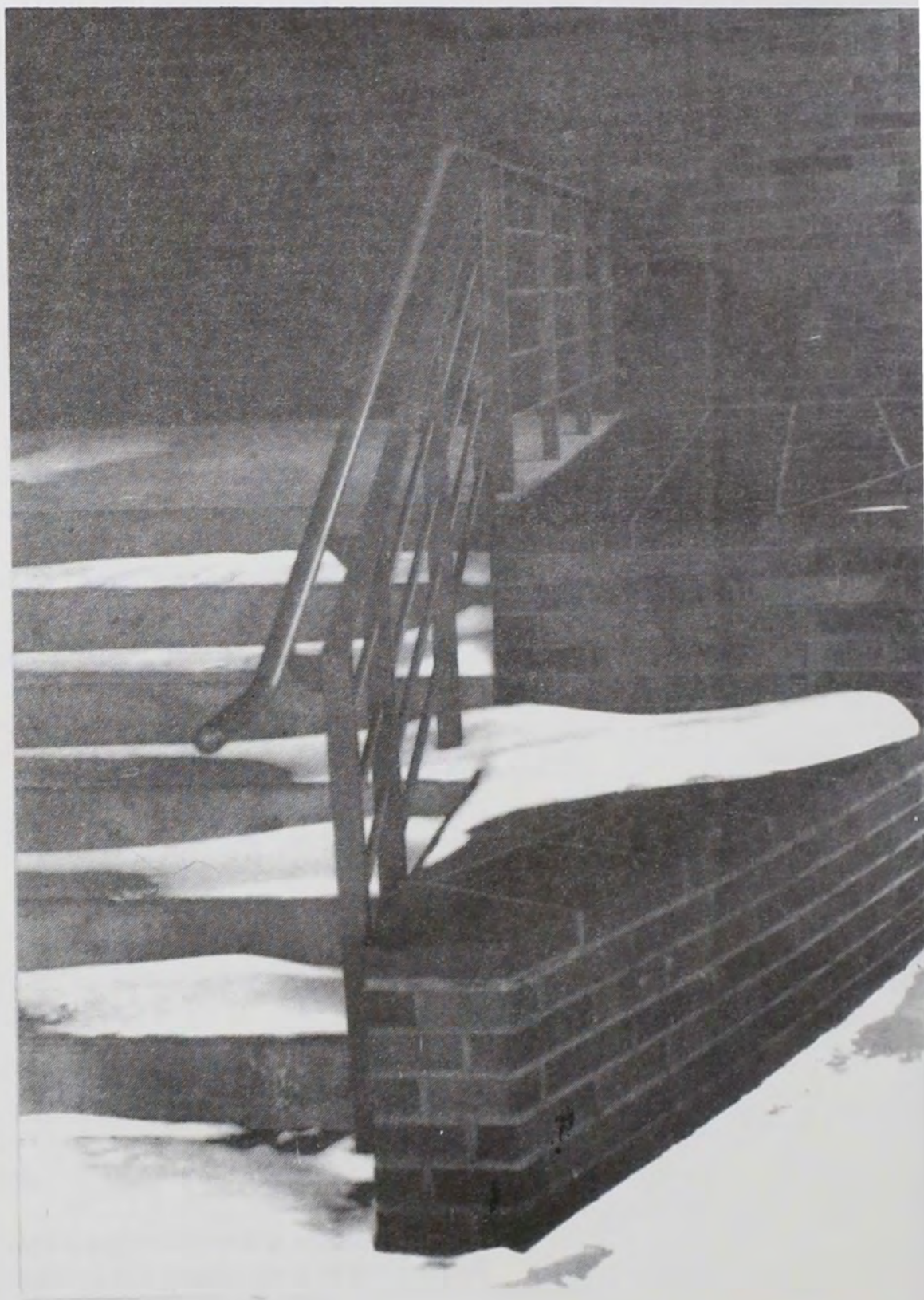
The rain brings the mushrooms.

6.

Quietly, whitely,
self-conscious, politely,
small thousands of Sylvia's
droop around gravestones
and point the way.

7.

They weren't exactly mushrooms,
and it is a dream because
the troops are too clean,
and I have no daughter.



Conversing

By Sonja Regelman

Sometimes
transported to an extrinsic mood
and I hear you speak
I hear you thrive
I hear you exist
and you pause
the comforting sound
as your lips leave
your smoking cigarette
and you breathe
air that I exhaled
air that I enriched
air that I ingested
air that I expounded
Sometimes
transported to a world
where words surge
as they leave your lips
where thoughts dance
in the space between us.

Eggplant

By Keith Leparulo

Making my best impression starts with scrubbing the toilet bowl. My roommate, Frank, stirring his *extra special chicken sauce*, called from the kitchen to ask if I finished the crapper. At that point, I confided in the Poly-John, proclaiming this would be my last effort on the dating market. Things were great the day before when I first discovered Holly would come with her friend, Jill-- probably not the kind to discuss the Kantian Retributive Theory of Crime and Punishment, but who cares? I guess I could help out. Freeing hair-clogged drains and scouring toilets would be the price I paid. I wouldn't complain because nothing impresses like a sparkling toilet. Then I could move on to better things. I would do eggplant (after calling Mom for help). But what a great thing to do! Not that my cooking eggplant mattered all that much in the grand scheme of things, but it might serve another purpose. Jill might think it sexy. That would be fashionable, a base to build on later. "You mustn't think me cheesy." That line would blaze a path straight to Jill's heart as I glopped piles of eggplant on her plate. Maybe I could hook her with, "I must confess, your beauty has me at a disadvantage," or simply use, "What's cookin good lookin?"

Frank didn't see the humor. He thought I'd scare big game away. He said my lines were stupid and only a ding-a-ling would try such a thing. I wish that had been our only problem! We had line dividing over much lesser things. For example, when it came to music, our disagreements reached nit-picking extremes as he argued for James Taylor and I for Van Morrison. It seemed more important to him that he gain control of all of the compact discs and the player. It didn't stop there. He didn't think I could run the range. Then, late getting into the shower, he reluctantly came forth, delegating oven/range duties, "Let the rice simmer a few minutes longer. Remember to stir my sauce. If the bird's dry, pour water on it. You might want to bump the oven down to 325. Don't forget your eggplant." Simmer? Extra special sauce? What's this kid's secret ingredient anyway? Three toads and a lock of hair? I'd show him who the real culinary personality was around here. Who did he think he was, Yan Can Cook? The Frugal Gourmet? I'd shine in his absence, provided I didn't char his chicken. Okay, first things first. I needed an apron: protection from the sizzle-pop hiss spitting grease that can burn you.

That is, the apron upstaged by the girls arrival somewhere between eggplant parmesan and standing rice. They came with food and drink. They brought double fudge brownies, chocolate swirl cheesecake sealed with appropriate tinfoil covering, and a bottle of Rose de Blanc. We drank decent wine, sampled Frank's sauce and engaged in conversation. The place burst with energy! All systems go. I spoke with Holly, finding myself at that disadvantage. That spilled

over. Jill, the honey-blond can't-do-wrong love-of-my-life, joined me in the kitchen where I stood at the range stirring everything unnecessarily going, "Oh really?"

The first hour eased by and the ice broke. Holly and Jill plowed through mountains of food while ritually chanting things like, "Just half of that please," and "Give me just a sliver."

Complimented at last, my eggplant a smash, Jill inquired, "When did you learn?"

"Nearly five years ago, in a small province just south of Madrid," I said, patting the corners of my mouth, "Señora Carbone taught me eggplant, quiso, sauce."

All in all, we made fun of everything. Imagine our surprise, though, when Jill got through undetected and changed the tune from "You've Got A Friend," to "I Touch Myself" by The Divinyls. That note echoed in my head as the evening drew to a close.

So the dinner party thinned. Jill decided to leave. I'm not sure what happened. I went over it again and again in my mind. Perhaps I offended her. Did I repulse her? Did my humor inadvertently turn her off? Holly stayed behind with Frank leaving me with a stack of dishes. Passing by his room, I wished to bid them a good night. In lieu of "sweet dreams" and "sleep tight" I caught a glimpse of their situation; Frank on his bed, hands folded over his belly, smiling at Holly who still bopped around, running her finger across the wallpaper, crunching an apple. Frank told her *you are* a bad girl and *you need* a spanking. I eased away from the door after hearing her say, "I have been naughty." I returned to my room, smiling inside, thinking about a wonderful evening and the leftovers I'd have in the morning.

A Letter To The Civil Rights Movement

By Will Briggs

Why did you forget about me?

Equal opportunity or the opportunity for opportunity?

The plight of a young poor black man labeled--inner city ghetto,
going to school with white middle class America...

White is right!

kriss kross

Cross over or crossed out

"X"-ed, Malcolm, Martin,

What is it about?

HISTORY!

History dating further in time than any that comes to mind.

Is it yours or is it mine?

Timbuktoo

Mine is a terrible thing to waste,

Sit down and have a taste.

Waste, wasteland, that's where he's from
the ghetto...

"Oh, don't say that too loud."

He is!

"He definitely is proud."

Aunt Jemima, bitter sweet,
be weary of the food you eat.

Food?

Food for thought, You No! the kind you're taught.

His story,

I mean history.

AmeriKKKa is a great place to live or
die in suppression.

Inflation depression

oppression degradation -- Ross Perot, oppression of "you people."

"I got so much trouble on my mind"

Public enemy,

or public enema?

That's what this country needs.

A foundation built by who?

Not you.

You're black or blue, jigaboo
nigger, nigga, what made you figure that
Huey P. Newton
had the right to pull the trigger.
"From the hand of the nig that pulled the trig."
Chuck D.,
or me.
Public Enemy, not I.
I don't know
what's truth or lie.
I'm on the margin, that's where I am.
Is that a sin?
All I want to do is fit in.
Open your eyes, I'm marginalized.
Reach out and touch someone.
Me.

still sitting, contemplating...

By Chuck Webb

a peculiar melancholy settles over me again
finding its home still unoccupied by other thoughts
almost like a warm summer day which will end in downpour
promising a release of some sort...
so i go ahead and put that tiny piece of paper on my tongue
anyway
and await the messenger it brings with my release
hoping that this time the answer will stay with me
so simplistic in its nature while being conceived
but the first to dwindle when the world overwhelms me
oh god why does it seem that my world is full of all the words that
are never thought
during my other time
i begin to slip from myself
the promise becoming real with each passing age
i hope this time the glories i see are the reality i wish to become
a world where the daisies i speak to and shield from harm
will continue to tell me the secrets that elude those others that
know the world
but promise only destruction
piece by piece by piece
i slowly see the answers unfolding in the tapestry that weaves
itself around me
shifting, changing, melting, becoming fluid all at once
the true purpose becomes solid
and i take its hand
marrying myself to its ideals, and hoping, still hoping that with
the coming of dawn
i will still find its warmth with me...

Sensible Love

By Paula Love

A sensible love
We have
Waited till the fifth date
Patiently
Used condoms
or a diaphragm.

Oh yes, there were the times in the car,
in my aunt's pool,
On the deck on summer nights
Firefly landing
In my hair
Mosquitoes
biting his legs
The neighbor's back light goes on
We freeze, and giggle,

Ninety-two percent effective
They say on the wrapper
What about the other eight?
We planned in two weeks
Just the right size, seventy-five
At the country club
Brides maids in yellow in March,
Gardenias and altar sprays,
D. J. and chicken piccata
Or beef bourguignon

We now schedule
During his naps,
Lock the door in case he wanders
In and peeks
At Mom and Dad
And a sensible love.

Monsters Under The Bed

By Laura Devlin

Wild mustangs roaming free on the plains.
A flattened mosquito caked to the wall,
legs dangling like an accordion.
Overhead, 147 stars, 5 comets,
2 planets, and one unidentified
flying object whirl motionless on the
ceiling, dull, a sickly greenish-yellow
in the light, but could be brilliant and glowing
in the darkness, especially since my
lamp has been burning so long.
Burning to chase away monsters.

The cooling plaster soothes my back, and my
mind is as numb as my throat. The vodka
in my punch singes my sinuses as
I chew my pretzels, feeling each turn, each
ridge, each grain of salt.

I stay away from the bed, where shadows
twist and swirl in waiting, where the monsters
could be hiding, conspiring. Instead,
they're tangled in the sheets, growing larger
like spreading stains. Pre-soak, cold water only.

I can feel the darkness moving outside
my curtains, still there, pushing and feeling.
It tickles the back of my hair and wants
in, but I push it away.

My creaky closet door, the silent clock.
Pooh, lopsided ear grinning. My arms ache
to hug him, but I sit motionless on
the red carpet. Sitting still,
so they won't find me.

Itching but not scratching, needing to
shower so I can finally feel clean,
the darkness dances outside my light,
knowing it will one day find a way in.

Another sip of my juice,
my Yogi Bear night light,
a sahara desert poster.

I wish I could exhale and melt into
myself, sinking, slowly sighing away,
to become a hiss of air from a bicycle pump.

A book, a wall, a hand.
The light burns on,
keeping my monsters under my bed.

Poison Rock

By Maureen Farrel

Each of us had our favorite. I liked to swim, Davis liked to ride bikes, and Buttons liked to talk about the kids who died on Poison Rock. I can still remember the roller-coaster inflections in Buttons' high-alto voice, which, springing from a well of relentless passion, gave the story a mystical, yet comic effect. It was the Gospel According to Buttons, wherein the children were martyred and the rock became Our Lady of Perpetual Morbidity. And even in the summer, when the rock was moss-covered and there was more to do, we'd meet there and Buttons would re-preach the tale. Sometimes it was three boys who died and sometimes it was two boys and a girl and sometimes the sex of the three children didn't matter. But they always died the same way--riding their toboggan over the rock that jetted into the hillside and skidding into the icy lake below.

Like the rumor that Old Lady Miller kept a demented daughter in the attic and the story that Dougie Brewer's basement was filled with dead cats, the Poison Rock legend had been part of local folklore for years. It was a good story, made better by the belief that the children's ghosts haunted the rock and that their images could be seen in the lake at the base of the hill. And all that summer, when Buttons and I were nine and Davis turned ten, we looked for the ghosts and listened to Button's amendments to the tale. And although we never saw the ghosts, what we discovered would haunt us forever.

"They say one of the kid's eyes popped out and they had to stick it back in for the viewing," Buttons would often conclude.

"Nuh-uh," I'd reply, forever mindful of what he'd said about how babies were made, and resolved never to believe him again.

"Yeah, huh. And another kid's skull was so smashed they had to hold it together with a vice."

"Buttons, they don't hold people's heads together. I asked Mr. Harding. He said they'd just close the casket."

Mr. Harding ran Beaumont's only funeral home and his daughter Tess was my oldest sister Jodie's best friend. Sometimes when Jodie was babysitting me, she'd take me there and coax me to look at the bodies. The parlor, or the "dead room" as Tess called it, had once been a living room and was a mere swinging door away from the Hardings' avocado-green kitchen. My sister would push me through and I'd have nightmares. But my mom blamed my fearfulness on Buttons' morbid tales. "That Buttons Tyler is a bad operator," she'd say, and Jodie would be stuck with me yet another evening.

My mother was right, though. Buttons was creepy. He used to say that his real mom had a heart attack when he was born, right after screaming that the Furies from Hell were skulking about the delivery room. I later learned that she was still alive and had been a high-school

senior from Cleveland. I also found out that his birth name was Matthew, but when Dr. and Mrs. Tyler adopted him they said he was "cute as a button," and the name stuck. Davis and I, being shamefully jealous of Button's blond hair and his pale blue eyes, said that he was "cute as a butt," realizing that even in second grade, when he lost his front teeth and grown-ups still made a fuss, that Buttons could outcharm us two-to-one. Davis and I, whether we liked it or not, were as bland as mud pies--with brown hair, brown eyes and brown futures.

Not only was Buttons handsome, he had the good fortune of being adopted by the Tylers. They were rich and didn't have other children and if Buttons said, "You're not my real mother," Mrs. Tyler would cry and then buy him a G.I. Joe. I always wished the Tylers would adopt me, but then again, as the sixth child in a family of eight, I had the advantage of having broken-down parents. And since Davis' dad left when Davis was three and his mom was always waitressing or going out with "uncles," he and I could stay out later than anyone else could. And in those slow motion days whole worlds could be created in twenty extra minutes, and usually were.

The best thing about that summer, though, was that Davis' new uncle, "Uncle Roy," gave us passes to the pool at the Lakeside Motel. Roy was the night clerk there and he swiped three passes, at what seemed to be great personal risk, so that Davis, Buttons and I wouldn't come barging in during his afternoon trysts with Davis' mom. We neither understood nor cared about Roy's motive and were as eternally grateful as anyone who doesn't comprehend what eternity can be.

"You mean we can use the pool every day?" I asked Davis, completely impressed with his coup.

"Yeah, as long as we go when Tess Harding is lifeguarding because she won't say nothing to the boss."

It was true. Even though Tess dwelt with the dead, she was decent and as long as we swam during her 2:00-6:00 p.m. shift, nothing was said to Mr. Sherry, the Lakeside's resident manager.

"Uncle Roy says we gotta be quiet and not draw attention to ourselves, okay?" Davis set the rules in his customary tone, which was actually pleading tinged with whining and fear.

"Sounds good to me," I said, wondering how Buttons would get permission to swim without Mrs. Tyler sitting on the sidelines. He simply swindled a bathing suit and towel and left them tucked under the rock every day. After a while, each began to smell, but for nine-year-olds on a mission, such was the price of fun.

"Hey, do ya think the Lakeside was here when the kids died at the rock?" Buttons often asked. "I mean, maybe the ghosts are in the swimming pool, too."

"Nah," I'd reply. "The Lakeside's too new. Why would ghosts haunt a pool? They like dark places."

"I don't know. Let's check the deep-end just to be sure." Buttons

included the Poison Rock Legend in everything we did.

The search continued well into the summer. Other adventures came in the form of salamanders caught by the creek and forts built from branches and discoveries made in the woods. Every day was injected with laughter--the kind that overtakes the body and lasts so long that all else fades. Twenty-five years later, I can still remember that laughter, just as I remember the day that Buttons had to leave early to visit his cousins in Binghamton. "If we're gonna go swimmin', we gotta do it now," he said, planning to dry off at the rock.

"Yeah, but what about what Uncle Roy said?" Davis reminded, "He'll get mad and take away the passes and stop seein' my ma."

"Ah, you're chicken shit. Roy's not gonna find out. We'll go for a quick dip and then go home. I can't wait till 2:00." Forever defensive about his cowardice, Davis agreed to Buttons' plot before I could register my disapproval. By then, I didn't dare.

It felt strange going to the Lakeside before noon--sort of like going to school without socks on or not finding Mom home at supper time--and the threat of being caught took the thrill out of the swim for both Davis and me. Buttons was oblivious to the glares of the morning lifeguard, however, and did his traditional belly-flops off the high dive. He wasn't even afraid when the lifeguard told us to get out of the pool while he went inside, even though Davis and I were certain we were about to be reported. We huddled in our towels and pleaded Buttons to stop swishing his toes through the puddles at the side of the pool.

"Come on, Buttons, let's go. We're going to get in trouble."

"Ah, you guys are sissies. The lifeguard's just going ta take a leak."

"I don't think so. Look, someone's watching us from that window over there." Imagining movement at the drapes in one of the rooms facing the pool and certain it was Mr. Sherry's room, I was now frantic to leave.

"You're such a wimp," Buttons said, pulling a striped shirt over his tanned, dripping body. "I'll show you there's nothin' in that room." Buttons stomped over to the window and peered in while Davis and I stood, hearts in our throats, wanting desperately to run.

"Buttons, you're crazy," I whispered, hoping he'd get scared or bored or miss the warmth of the puddle. But he stared through the window, mesmerized as if the Poison Rock ghosts were looking back. He didn't say anything, but summoned us with his left hand while leaning against the casing with his right. And as curiosity overcame fear, Davis and I met Buttons at the window of Room 112 and looked through the parted curtains and onto the bed. A sliver of sunlight ricocheted the room, lighting it enough to see the balding man--his flabby sides jiggling--and the young woman beneath him.

Chlorine burned my nostrils as my wet bathing suit clung to the crevice of my underdeveloped buttocks. Numbness had set in and the

suit felt heavier than usual. "Buttons," I whispered, "let's go. He's hurting her. We should go tell someone."

"They're just making a baby," he replied, his pale eyes glazing over. "I told you that's how people make babies."

Davis squinted, curled his upper lip and lifted his hands to his brows. "How's come Tess Harding wants to make a baby with Mr. Sherry?" Davis asked, shaking and gaping as Tess glanced up. She looked as made-up and as stiff as the people in her parlor.

Buttons giggled, but Davis and I ran as fast as we could, not stopping until we reached the safety of Poison Rock. Buttons was still laughing when he caught up, even as he struggled to regain his breath. But when he saw that we weren't amused, he plopped beside me, combing the moss on the rock between his pudgy fingers and staring out into the woods that lined the horizon. For the first time, I felt blood rushing to my face and wondered, as my arms began to tingle, if nine-year-olds had heart attacks. But for some reason, I couldn't look at the boys nor ask for help.

After that day, I stopped going to the rock. I even stopped going to the park to watch Buttons and Davis and the rest of the Beaumont Braves play—even though I loved baseball almost as much as I loved swimming. I suddenly realized how angry I was at not being allowed to join the Little League because I was a girl. I was mad about not being an altar boy, mad about having to wear dresses to school, and mad about something I couldn't even name.

In time Buttons became Matthew again, and Davis moved to Tennessee with his mom and his new Uncle Bill. Matt eventually became a lawyer and moved to Connecticut with his wife and two daughters, while I stayed close to home and became a teacher at Beaumont Elementary. And it's funny, but even after all these years, even now that Becky Boginski is the star pitcher for the Beaumont Braves, and no one has to wear dresses to school any more, my students still want to know about Poison Rock. "Miss Coleman," they ask, "did three kids really die up there at the rock? Who were they?"

"Sure did," I say. "I couldn't tell you their names, but legend has it that they were two boys and a girl."

Waiting At The Dentist

By Kathrin Phillips

When I opened the cover
I saw The Truth About Amy Fisher
and How To Please Your Man
plastered on the pages
with An Overnight Beauty Tip
Drink Eight Glasses Of Water
and Do Situps Each Night
Try Different Positions
but don't forget to Floss Your Teeth
before you go for Beauty Sleep.
And a Twenty Minute Make Over
makes your life complete
like nothing but Homemade
Low Calorie Fat Free
Sweet Honey and Walnut Rolls with a
Clear Glaze Frosting.
Please Call Now--Send No Cash
It was Make-Up Madness
in all shades of red
and the Dracula Blood Red
was my favorite
on her nails and on her lips.
What If He's A Virgin?
And the picture is a soap opera man
sprawled along the sofa.
What if he is?
Are You Intimidated?
What If You Are?
Wait a minute, this is the Nineties.
How To Tell If He Likes You
What To Say If He Does,
and What Do You Do If He Doesn't?
I was reading the magazine
seeing the pictures
learning it all
like How To Make Him Feel Good All Over
and How To Make Your Eyelashes Three Feet Long
and What To Do With A Problem Face
you know, Combination Dry And Oily,
and what to do if your iron broke
right before your Big Interview
with the Top Man At The Top Place
and you just knew you'd blow it

if he asked you Anything Personal.
That's Harassment Buddy.
And what if the magazine was out of date
and told you falsies were in
along with clogs and lycra in neon shades
and what if
what if the world ended
and you didn't know it because all you ever read
were women's magazines.

Fate

By David Billitto

"What will come will come."

--Tiresias

Take comfort dear soul
as we are powerless
against the night fairies of fate.
Set dreaming,
in a senseless box.
We continue living
walking pirate planks
blindfolded but smelling the sea's gnarly brine
we step, foot after foot and continue.

Like puppets hanging on thread
dancing to entertain--
the careless movements and chuckled rhythms
are shown on a stage that could collapse
and engulf the participants
and attract the awe of the crowd
but it is this irony that,
as a member of the audience
we laugh at the finality of the theatrics
knowing we'll soon spend our own time entertaining.
We are the dumb waiters in the crowd
waiting for the plot to unfold
and if we'd stop our laughing
and look at our wrists
we'd see the relaxed lines of the master puppeteer.

There is no comfort in knowing
yet only agony in not
and that is why blind faith is so beautiful.
It keeps us going, without questioning
we rely on trust and belief
in mythic characters, spirits and deities
waiting to die and hoping for better.
And the old saying about how the cards were dealt
is all too true.
So we hope for a pair
and pray the game isn't stud.

Static

By Abby Rosenbaum

Remember
the first time
you saw
the whiteblue crackle
under your covers?
And how you felt
like a god
when you realized
you
had created it
rubbingandrubbingandrubbing.
Do you know how you
lost that talent
that pride
that control
and let others be your gods
making you cracklepop...spark
only for their enjoyment.
Learn
to be again
and bring back that spark
that is
your life.

The Three C's

By Chris Bowers

As far back as I can remember
I played follow-the-leader with
my brothers, my friends and myself,
and I played to win. Long nights out
in the snow, my drool freezing to my chin,
we played and played and played.
And laughed, we laughed.

Winter changes to spring,
spring to summer and summer
to school. Our parents taught us
to listen to our teachers,
our teachers taught us to listen
but not to hear. In order for you
to see, someone else must go blind,
they said. In order for you to live,
someone else must die, they said.

White milk was seven cents,
chocolate eight. I paid with dimes
and collected the pennies I
received as change. Two, five, seven,
in order for me to be rich,
someone else must be poor.
So be it, I said.

I always liked the feeling of
warm melting wind before rainstorms, but
when we changed for gym class the air
would bite at our skin. While undressing
we caught a glimpse of each other
and our bare flesh, but turned away
out of shame, embarrassment and fear.
It was hard to know what to look at,
or even how to look at it, our bodies
expanding, our new hair all over,
so as we grew we all just looked forward,
not even at ourselves, and made small talk.

As We Frolic

By Ellen Cosgrove

Scamper...

Whirl past the bearded man with four suitcases who can't get the key from his clenched teeth and into the keyhole.

Scuttle...

Bound by the bedraggled group of six who just completed a twelve hour station wagon ride from Holland, Michigan.

Sprint...

Gallop down the hall while our bare feet sink into the carpet and our bodies tumble through double door after double door.

Super Fly Snuke...

Our uncontrollable bellies slap against the water surface of the Hotel Charles indoor swimming pool.

Splash...

Cannonball canopen ganor into a chlorinated bliss and soak every parent on the wood pool deck.

Scream...

The whistle twirler lifeguards boot my brother and me out of the pool even though we did not see the sign that said:

ABSOLUTELY: NO RUNNING NO DIVING NO HORSEPLAY

Trudge...

Slug back past the key clenched man and the group of six. Slither back through double door after double door as water slides from our suits and into the carpet.

Drip after drip after drip after drip after drip.

Nest

By Beth Rosenberg

(did you ever notice how things are closed and open all at once)
 And my skin is alive
 I can see the tails in the holes
 And I know that I'm infested
 nestled breathing in the holes
 I want all the things that are itching me
 To come out of the holes backwards
 And dive into my eyes and eat behind my face until I'm a big
 fucking wooden mask with no eyes and no mind and then I want
 you to push my face around and make it talk
 for me so I won't have to do it And then I want
 you to eat out my heart and leave only these
 turning little tails so when they open me up
 they'll be so surprised because they'll see that
 I'm nothing underneath nothing underneath that
 I never had a heart and that I never had a
 mind and Jesus I'm not to blame Jesus I'm
 not to blame I'm not
 I don't want you to hold me while I shake
 You don't even see that I'm crumbling into
 dust collapsing because of all the holes If the
 insects weren't there if I couldn't see their hard
 little tails peeking out all of the time I'd collapse
 into a big pile of pink They're holding me up
 they're making me real And what you're looking at now
 is a hive a swarm of larvae eating the shit
 in my brain coming in through the holes in
 my skin I don't have a heartbeat all I hear is
 a buzz I don't have a brainwave all I
 know is a buzz like hard busy bodies sliding back
 and forth and pushing their tails that have eyes on
 them out of my skin to see where I'm going and move me around
 But god do they itch god do
 they itch Sometimes I wish I could tear at
 my skin and break open their holes and go
 See? See why I'm like this? See why I'm
 like this? But then I know that without
 them I'd lose all the substance and I don't
 want to lose it so I think
 that god is this holy and why is my body
 this body a temple in such a
 state of decay and why am I seething
 and squirming and why are there ripples

under my flesh in it and in it and why does
it feel like the bugs o Jesus the bugs are
in my eyes and in my ears and in my
mouth in my skin in my brain
and in all the holes in every pore in
every filthy little pore filled with crawling
smooth little bodies turning and wiggling
and operating this hive like a monster
o Jesus I'm not to blame

A Bottle of Wine and Patsy Cline

By Sarah Starr

Lenny cut out of work early, as was his privilege, being the owner and all. He could almost taste the ice cold Budweiser as he maneuvered the gigantic toilet bowl truck up the steep and winding driveway to the Enola Sportsman's Association. A while back they used to make him park it in a regular space in the lot, until one day when the rim of the toilet bowl knocked the rear view mirror clear off Buddy Compy's brand new F150. Things got pretty heated, but Lenny agreed to split the damages fifty-fifty with the club, which was only fair since they wouldn't let him park the bowl in the fire lane that seemed custom made for it. After that he parked it there all the time, and folks didn't seem to mind. Now that Lenny'd made his way up the board of directors and pool team captain the fire lane was all his. At the Big Game Season Banquet last year they even presented him with a sign that hung on the wall above his spot that read, "RESERVED FOR LENNY GERMAN." He parked the bowl. He didn't have to lock it. There was no cheating or stealing. Folks at the club were good people.

He waved a hello to Joe Spencer, doorman and manager of the club. He didn't like to shake hands, on account of Joe not having any fingers on his right hand. That might make Joe uncomfortable. He took a seat at the bar next to Bob Reiber. Bob was wheeling and dealing about some new stain remover he was selling. He was about to go get it out of his car and do a demonstration for the guy next to him when Lenny sat down.

"Well hey there, Len. I was just thinkin' about ya, wonderin' when you'd show up for a little rematch. You bring yer stick?"

Lenny was just about to reply when Toni, the daytime bartender, brought him his usual Bud with a glass of ice on the side, the dice, and a few tickets to play the numbers.

Bob didn't wait for an answer, he just left to get his stain remover and his stick out of his Lincoln. He giggled and hollered over his shoulder, "Don't you even back out now, Len. I just got paid today and I'm gonna whoop your ass just once, 'Mr. Eight Ball,' or whatever they call ya."

Lenny just sipped his Bud and chewed on his ice. He wasn't quite in the mood for Bob tonight, but he figured he could use the money Bob was about to lose. He unpacked his stick from the fancy leather case that Vera bought him for Christmas and chalked it. Folks were starting to filter in slowly and the club was filling up. Pretty soon it would be packed. "Memory Lane" was setting up to play.

The band was pounding out "Mony Mony" as Lenny ducked down and squinted through the smoke filled air to line up the eight ball. The guys had gathered in the pool room to see Bob get his ass whooped

once again. None of the older guys danced to "Mony Mony" when the band played it. It was more for the ladies and the younger couples. Besides, it made most of them blush when the youngsters screamed, "Hey, hey, what, get laid, get f-----..." in between the verses. Lenny especially hated that part. People shouldn't talk about making love like that. That stuff was private. He concentrated on the eight ball, and sank it.

Hoots and hollers gave the band a run for their money as Lenny just smiled politely, and made his way over to where Bob was standing to shake his hand.

"Looks like I ain't never gonna learn, huh, Len?" Bob smiled. He was a good sport. Lenny liked that, even though he half figured it was because he was a salesman and all, and working with people was his job.

Bob handed Lenny the crisp fold of bills. "Come on, Bob, lemme buy ya a beer," Lenny offered.

They made their way through the crowd to their seats at the bar, which were underneath the moose head past president Ed Colbert shot in '72, and next to the gopher Billy Rae Bailer hit with his truck on the way back from deer camp last year. No one knew that but Lenny, though, as he was with Billy when he hit the rodent. Billy had never shot a darned thing in his life, and it was a clean hit. Sizeable gopher, too. Wouldn't hurt anyone to pretend Billy shot it himself. Lenny shot a hole in its rear while Billy held the bugger down, which was a real project it being so stiff with rigormortis. Besides, it made Billy the proudest guy in the club to have his kill hanging on the wall next to a club legend like Colbert.

Vera arrived at about 8:30 to take over the nighttime bar shift for Toni. As soon as the kitchen closed Loanne would change out of her apron and join her as barback. They always needed to double up on Fridays because of the crowd that the band drew. Vera used to hate giving up a weekend night, but Lenny noticed that she never complained anymore. In fact, he thought she really seemed to like it these days. She had some girlfriends in the Ladies' Auxiliary, and found her niche with the regulars. Lenny was proud that she was his woman, especially when she was behind the bar. Folks said Vera made the best batch of Alabama Slammers in Cumberland County. She looked beautiful as ever tonight, and Lenny hoped that they would share some private time later. It had been a while. Lenny was no spring chicken anymore.

But Lenny could tell Vera was mad about something when she came over to where they were sitting, without his usual Bud and ice on the side in her hands.

"What'll ya have, Bob?" she asked Reiber, not even looking at Lenny.

"Don't look at me, Mr. Eight Ball's buyin'. He just took me for all

I was worth." Bob smiled and patted Lenny on the back.

Vera just looked at Lenny, grinding her teeth and rolling her eyeballs when he said, "Two Buds please, Vera, Honey."

Before Lenny could even mention the ice she slapped the Buds down on the bar and turned her back to wait on Billy Rae, who was pointing across the bar right next to Lenny's head and telling his live-in girl, Angel, about the night he shot that gopher up on the wall that came at him with fire in its eyes. Lenny watched as Billy Rae stood up from his bar stool and made a gurgling sound with his impression of the rodent, "foamin' at the mouth, eyes rollin' back in its head!" The whole bar could hear him. Angel just chewed her gum and said, "Wow," then looked at Billy Rae, the gopher, and Billy Rae again in awe.

"Thank you much, Loanne," Lenny said when she brought him the ice herself. He watched Vera, enamored with Billy Rae's stories, plant herself next to him at the bar while she smoked two Virginia Slims during her break. Angel had gone off to do a line dance with some girls from her salon to "Achy Breaky Heart."

By midnight Billy Rae was good and tanked. Vera spent most of her time pouring drinks for him, and laughing at his stupid jokes, most of which Lenny had told him anyway. She made it a priority to serve everyone but Lenny, so Loanne took care of what he and Bob needed to drink. When the band slowed it down with Patsy Cline's "I Fall to Pieces," Lenny thought he might ask Vera to take a break and join him on the dance floor. He wondered why she was so angry. Wasn't their anniversary, and her birthday wasn't till March. But whatever it was, he knew she couldn't resist that old favorite. It was, after all, their song. He stood up and made his way over to her side of the bar. Vera was talking to Frank and Audrey Wentz, regulars at the Sportsman's.

"Well, hi there, Frank. Audrey," he said. "I wonder if you wouldn't mind me stealin' Miss Vera for a moment."

"Why 'course not Len!" Frank boomed. "Matter a fact, I might just ask this one here to dance, too. Audrey?" They hung their his and hers Cumberland Valley Eagles jackets on the bar stools and promenaded to the dance floor in a myriad of matching plaid.

"What do you want, Leonard?" she growled under her breath. She didn't even move her lips much her teeth were clenched so hard.

"I just want to talk to you, Vera. Come on, let's have a spin. It's Patsy, Honey." She wouldn't even look at him as she rubbed the same spot on the bar clean, cleaner, cleanest, immaculate.

"Just go sit down, Leonard," she said.

"What, Honey? Why? I mean, I just don't know what it could be makin' you so..."

For the first time that night she looked him square in his weathered, confused face. "You sure don't know Leonard. You don't know much about me at all. Why don't ya just sit there on yer ass and

have another Bud with yer god-for-saken ice like ya do every goddamn day of yer life!"

"Vera...I--"

"Vera what? No, I am not dancing with you to goddamn Patsy Cline, I am not gonna get you any more goddamn ice, and I am certainly not--"

"Are you still bent about the toilet seat?" Lenny asked. "I said I was sorry, Honey." Lenny had made Vera test another one of his innovative toilet products. This time it was a heated seat. Only something went haywire and it burned the hell outta Vera's rear. Lenny felt like a dirty ring around a toilet bowl. Three weeks staying off her rear and it was all healed, but he figured she was still pissed, what with the Ladies' Auxiliary not letting up with their questions about her mysterious absence and all. Vera was good at making excuses. Lenny didn't like lying, but for that kind of private stuff he figured some fibs wouldn't hurt. White lies, just like Billy Rae's. Besides, Vera was in the running for the Auxiliary's coveted "Women of the Year" award. Lenny wouldn't want her to lose on account of a silly embarrassment.

"You are such an ass, Leonard. No wonder you're in the toilet business." Vera was never smart to Lenny like this. It wasn't just the toilet seat, it was something bigger.

He grabbed her arm and twisted it hard. "Would you please lower your voice?! Folks are lookin' at you! They can hear you cussin'!"

"I will NOT lower my voice, Leonard! I don't need to," she screamed, "because I am not talkin' to you!" And with that she slapped her rag on the bar, and turned around to open a beer that Buddy Compy forgot he was even waiting for, as he and everyone else at the bar stood watching the fiasco, mouths gaping open. Everyone was hushed except for Patsy:

I fall to pieces, each time someone speaks your name...

Lenny was mortified. He turned his back to everyone. Then he heard it. The loud, raucous laughter of one drunken Billy Rae Bailer.

Lenny took three firm steps to where Billy Rae was slumped on the bar. "You got a problem, Mr. Bailer?"

Vera stood by the register, frozen. Folks started to back away. Billy Rae picked his head up off the bar, kind of, and made a motion to stand up. Nearly missing entanglement with the bar stool next to him, he grabbed onto Lenny's overalls in the process of becoming upright.

He spit, "No sir, Len. I think you got a problem, bein' as I'm--"

"Leave him alone, Lenny! He's drunk!" Vera ran out from behind the bar.

"Bein' as you're what?" Lenny didn't even look at Vera.

"Bein' as I'm fuckin' yer woman!" Then Billy Rae exploded in a drunken snicker that was echoed by a simultaneous gasp from the entire bar.

The bottle Vera was holding shattered on the hardwood dance floor at the same time that Lenny snapped.

"Lenny, I--," Vera stuttered. "I'm sorry, I just..."

"Shut up, Vera." Lenny said it so straightforward and calm that it froze Vera in her tracks, except for the tears that rolled down her face and over her gaping mouth.

Lenny paused for a moment only to be inspired by Patsy:

You want me to act like we've never kissed...

Stools flew backwards and Lenny dragged Billy Rae to the door.

You want me to forget...Pretend we never met...

Bob ran over to try and stop Lenny with some logical salesman talk, but got caught up in Frank and Audrey's matching jackets, which started a big ruckus between Bob and Frank. Joe Spence reached out to grab Lenny by the shoulder and talk some sense into him, since fighting was grounds for suspension of club privileges. But grabbing a guy when you're missing fingers is nearly impossible, and he caught air, of course.

You walk by, and I fall to pieces...

Angel, just returning from the dance floor with her girlfriends, caught wind of the last part and dove across the bar at Loanne, thinking she was the heathen. The tangled mess of Angel and Loanne spewed behind the bar and into the liquor cabinet, shattering bottles of liquor and sending Lee Press On Nails flying. Loanne snatched the first bottle she could get her hands on, and launched it at Angel's hair. A two gallon jug of Thunderbird, it was a poor choice aerodynamically. It missed, and hit Ed Colbert's mounted moose head, which then caught on fire when Buddy Compy, mouth still hanging open, brushed his cigarette against the doused moose's nose. A veritable riot began among the hunters, who took out their frustration on the band making it a total clubhouse brawl.

The door was wide open, and Lenny was bent over in his fire lane parking spot beating Billy Rae's head flush left against the oversized ceramic bowl when the mass exodus from the club occurred. Folks stampeded out the door, hunters running with as many mounted trophies as they could save, band members hoping to salvage a few unbroken guitars, Bob Reiber looting the liquor cabinet, and Frank and Audrey grabbing onto their jackets for dear life.

It must have been the hysteria that somehow got Lenny's attention away from his abuses of Billy Rae as Joe Spencer hollered to Bob Reiber to call the fire company on his car phone.

A heroic spark ignited inside Lenny's heart. He looked at Vera. He looked at Billy Rae on the ground. He remembered the first time he had danced with Vera to Patsy Cline. She had looked radiant in her cacti print gingham. That didn't matter now. She and Billy Rae could have each other, but to hell if Lenny was going to let anyone tear down that clubhouse for something so stupid.

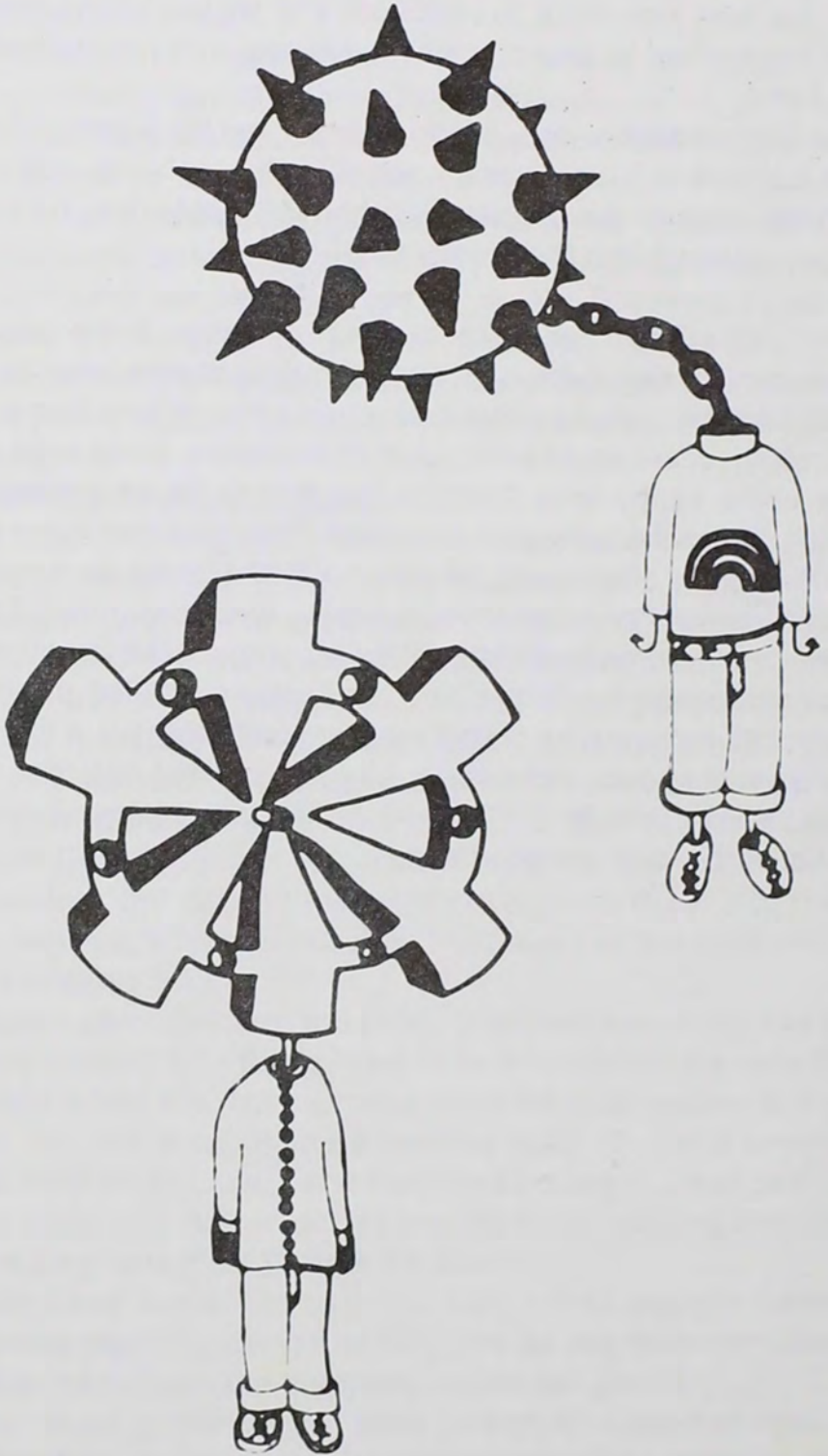
He ran to the pile of mounted trophies the hunters had saved. With superhuman strength he dug through the massive collection, tossing moose head and deer head and rainbow trout aside, until he found it.

"Len, are you nuts? What the hell do you think you're doin'?" screamed Joe Spence.

He was just about to reach out and try to clutch Lenny with his left hand when he saw the look in his eye, and the stuffed gopher in his hand.

"I gotta do this, Joe. A man's gotta have his dignity." And he gave one last look at Vera, huddled over Billy Rae, sobbing. Joe looked over at Vera, then at the gopher, and then back at Lenny. He understood. Lenny plunged into the smoky club.

Folks still talk about that heroic night, when Lenny saved the club from certain destruction, beating the fiery moose head to a smolder with Billy Rae's bogus gopher. No one can figure how that one man and a stuffed rodent could extinguish all that blaze. Folks even say that all the while Lenny was battling the flames he was singing "Mony Mony." Now he's the club president. He sits in that same spot at the bar every day after work, drinking his Bud with ice on the side, served by Toni or Loanne since Vera, logically, was suspended. The board of directors once suggested that they put some of the treasury into fixing that damaged side of the bar, but Lenny overruled the motion. Ed Colbert's moose was pretty much ruined, so now a burned gopher hangs in that spot, right above Lenny's charred barstool, that reads, "BILLY RAE BAILER'S ROAD KILL." No one seems to mind it there. Folks at the club are good people.



Bottoms of Pages, Backs of Books

By Alan McCabe

You figure,
the anthology editor had to look up
superscript,
footnoting,
and a dozen other items in the user's manual
to put the damn thing there.

I mean,
you know who Moses¹ is, right?
Sure, who doesn't?
So there must be some other
Allusion here
Not immediately apparent.
Distracting as it is,
You better look.

You suspect the editor
of having panicked in the
Shadow of giants².

You forgive his
desperate desire to have his
 tiny voice
Heard.

¹prophet from the Old Testament who led the Israelites out of Egypt

²beings of extraordinary stature and strength, but by no means indestructible

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