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Exile Vol. XXIX No. 2

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Denison University

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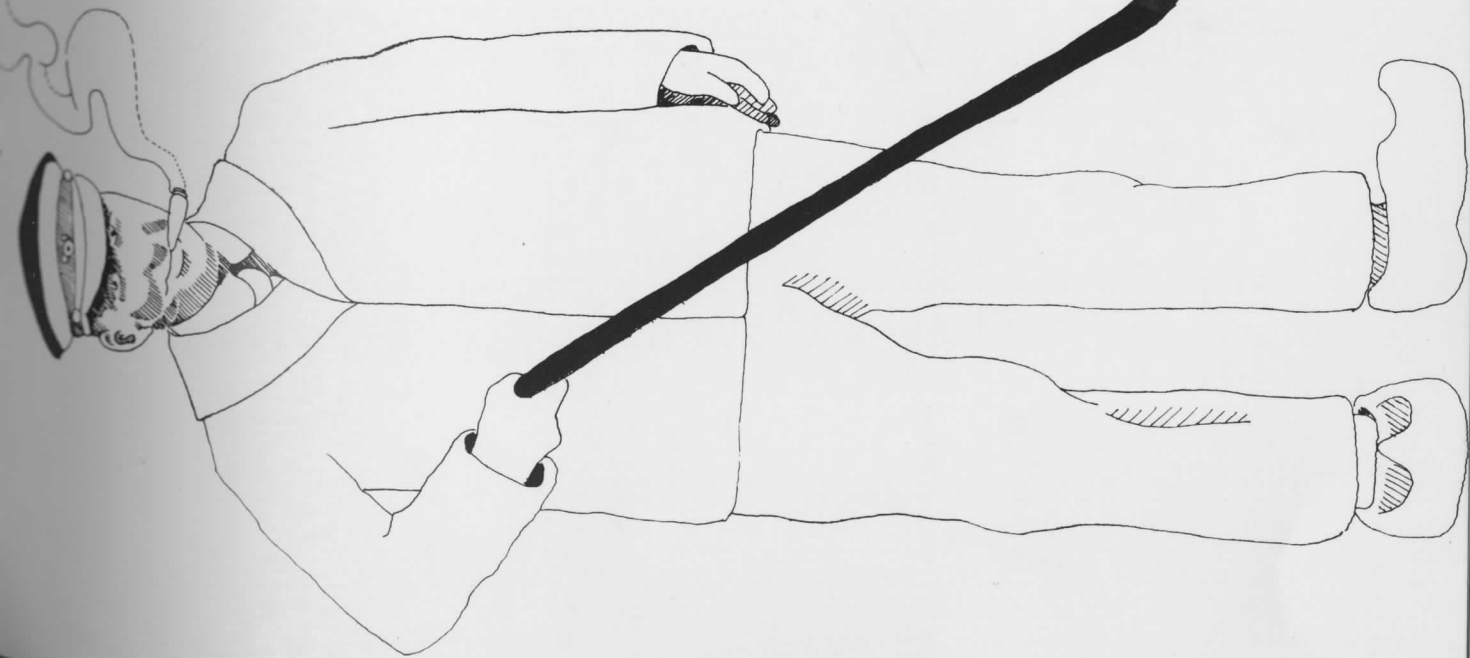
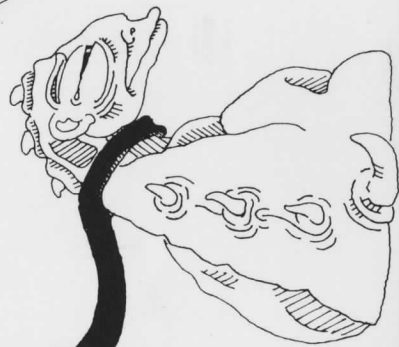
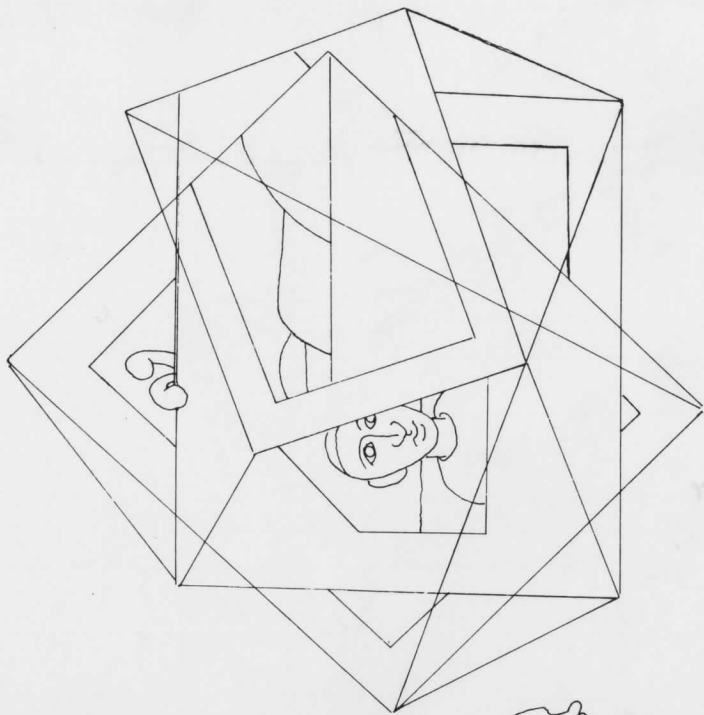
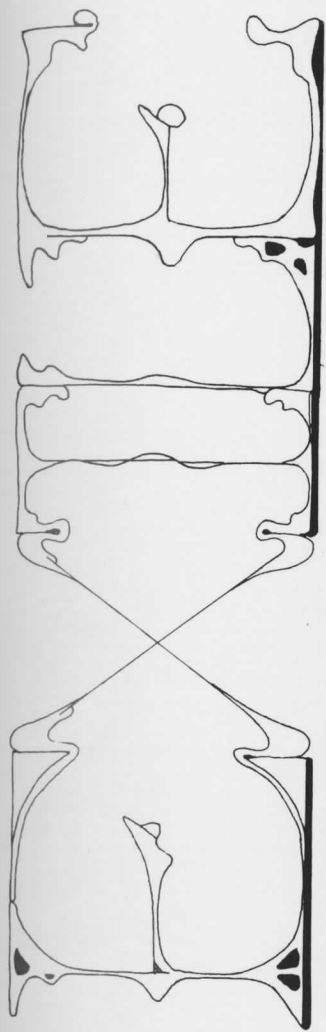
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Exile Vol. XXIX No. 2

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EXILE

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Ezra Pound

You of the finer sense,
 Broken against false knowledge,
 You who can not know at first hand,
 Hated, shut in, mistrusted:
 Take thought:
 I have weathered the storm,
 I have beaten out my exile.





Balanced Budget

October 23, 1981

Today the United States national deficit surpassed \$1,000,000,000,000 for the first time in its history.

If every person in the United States would wipe their ass with a two dollar bill and send it to the Treasury in Washington, D.C. we would have the biggest pile of shit in the world.

August West

Now realizing the principle of the flint wheel mechanism, he gathered up the housing and dolly-gears. Straining to keep the hanger piece aligned, he reconstructed the housing unit and passed it to his left forefinger and thumb so that it would be ready to insert into the bar mechanism. Using his free right hand he clutched up the lighter, and pressed the spring-bar down to its original position. His arm pits were becoming quite wet, and his nervous palms twitched a little under the fluorescent light.

Breathing rapidly, Horace brought his left and right fingers together. The dolly-like gears of the housing meshed with the bar mechanism instantly, and Horace fought to suppress squalls of delight. Pressing tenderly with his left thumb, he lowered the integrated unit until he could see a pin dot of light through the screw holes on the outer frame of the lighter. He pushed in the first screw. He pushed in the second screw. He tightened them with his razor blade.

He quickly fumbled with the lighter to re-insert the flint and flint spring. The razor blade pinged out of his trembling fingers, and he finished the job with his thumb nail. Then he undid the screw over the fluid fill hole. The plastic nipple on the Zippo can was not pouring fast enough, and Horace wrenched the entire top off with his teeth. He poured lighter fluid into the hole spilling much of it on the desk and floor. He replaced the fluid-filler hole screw. He gave a short prayer. He clicked the bar mechanism of his twenty year old Winston-acquired-in-a-flea-market-barn-with-two-hookers-lighter. And then he screamed.

"What are you doin' up there Horace?" Horace didn't answer.

"Horace, you answer me when I talk to you!" She shrieked.

"Let's go up an' see what he's doin'." Clara Norville said.

"Maybe he's hurt himself." offered Mrs. Pentkowski.

"He's too dumb to do that." Horace's mother answered, "but maybe we should just go check anyhow."

And when the four ladies opened Horace's door they gasped momentarily, and then screamed. For there was Horace, his shining face reflected in the thumb-print mirror of his lighter, engulfed in flames at his paisley desk. As the women shrieked, Horace was obliviously murmuring "I win. I win.", and lighting and re-lighting his newly fixed lighter.

The Lighter

Horace had acquired the lighter in a flea-market barn at 3:30 in the morning, on the eve of his 21st birthday celebration, with his friend Al and two ladies of the night: Gatsby and Flatsy. It was a beautiful, slim, rectangular lighter with a bold "Winston" logo guled on both sides. Gatsby and Al had knocked over a small table after completing a generous liberation of mutual energy, and the lighter had cracked Horace in the forehead as it fell; Horace and Flatsy had been on the other side of the table.

Horace had treasured the lighter fiercely from that moment on. He carried it with him everywhere, told all of his friends the circumstance of its acquisition countless times, and never really forgot about Flatsy and Gatsby. Horace was not a smoker, and Al chided him repeatedly for still carrying the lighter after twenty years.

"It doesn't even work." He told Horace almost every day as they drove home from work.

"I like it." Horace said.

"It's juvenile Horace. Grown men don't carry beat up old lighters around that don't work, and tell stupid stories about hookers to every Joe that walks by the newstand."

"I like it." Horace said.

"Especially if they don't smoke!"

"I like it." Horace said.

"Horace, you embarrass me. How long have we been partners? Huh? Nineteen years, right? Well let me tell ya' somethin': There're a lotta things you do that make me get a headache, and one of 'ems clickin' that dumb lighter at people when they walk by an' sayin' 'Wanna know where I got this? Wanna know where I got this?' Nobody cares Horace. It's a dumb story, it was twenty years ago, and nobody cares!"

Horace didn't say anything. He just sat in the front seat watching a little dog chase a moped down the street. He palmed the lighter out of his pocket, and gently played the side of it with his thumb. Horace did this often. He had been rubbing the lighter for so long that the "s", "t", "i", and "o" from the middle of "Winston" had been erased, and there was a skin polished mirror of metal in their place. To Horace the lighter was a small hand mirror with a message: "Win". He had once mentioned this to Al, but he simply chuckled maliciously and threatened to steal it.

"Yes Mother." Horace called back, and returned to the lighter.

The problem, Horace deduced rather cleverly, was the flint stone; it was not turning when the bar mechanism was activated. So with his razor he began to unfasten the two small screws that lay on either side of the bar mechanism where it joined the flint-and-wick-housing. When the screws were out he gingerly pressed them to the formica with his pudgy fingers. "Stay" he said aloud. With this done he then slowly released his grip on the bar mechanism, letting the flint-and-wick-housing plink to the desktop, along with the flint stone, and several minute metal gears. "Oh no." Horace said as he gazed down at the strange pieces of machinery swirling in his paisley desktop.

First he picked up the flint wheel, and carefully scraped it clean with a bobby pin. Then he applied several liberal squirts of lighter fluid to the housing unit, and wiped it clean with his shirt tail. Following this examined two dolly-like metal gears and decided that they must fit into the two dolly-like holes in the mechanical bar-arm, which was now soberly extended by its spring from the lighter. The final piece of hardware to be examined appeared to be a miniature, black coat hanger. The hook part was cut, though, and inverted. Horace didn't know whether to scrape it, polish it, or pour lighter fluid on it, so he just fondled it contemplatively.

Suddenly he made a connection. It was not a brilliant connection, not even an intelligent one. It was merely a remembered image re-applied on a smaller scale. Horace had once been to the clock tower at Notre Dame. He had been fascinated by the precision of each piece of the clock's machinery, and now he saw the same precision in his precious lighter. He picked up the flint stone. It was round and one side was fluted like a paddle wheel, or, as Horace thought, like the huge wooden second-hand wheel of the clock at Notre Dame. He picked up the minute hanger and pressed the two together. The inverted part of the hanger fit snugly into the notched flint wheel. Using a bobby pin, Horace turned the flint wheel while keeping the two mechanisms pressed together. Completing one fifth of a revolution the inverted piece of the hanger clicked into place again, for the notches were formed in a circular quincunx. Horace rotated the wheel again. Another click. And he did it again. "Click", and Horace exploded in a fit of maniacal laughter.

"Are you alright Horace?" His mother called again.

"Yes mother. I told you, just a little gas that's all."

"Didn't sound like no gas to me."

"Yes mother." And Horace stifled his excited laughter.

The lighter had been the subject of many altercations between not only Al and himself, but also his mother. Mrs. Shilling felt that toying with the lighter was a childish vice not unlike sucking one's thumb. She told Horace this repeatedly, but in his usual way he became violent, and the matter was temporarily forgotten. Tonight, though, Horace was going to end all disputes, cease all berating once and for all; he was going to fix the lighter.

He had been planning to fix the lighter for a long time, but now the night had finally come. He was seated quietly at the paisley formica desk in his room. His mother was downstairs playing MaJong with Mrs. Abrahms, Mrs. Pentkowski, and Clara Norville. Clara was a spinster, and a busy-body in every dimension, so Horace had been careful to lock the door. He had also lowered the blind by his bed to guard from his neighbor Aaron Schwartz, also a four dimensional busy-body practised in curiosity. Horace clicked on his fluorescent reading lamp, and took the lighter out of his pocket.

With the lighter squarely set in front of him he opened the top drawer of his desk, removed, and arranged his tools: a large can of Zippo lighter fluid, five flints in a red plastic dispenser, a single sided razor blade, and fifteen of his mother's bobby pins. He started by removing the plastic-dipped nubs from the end of each bobby pin with his fingernails. When he finished this he wiped his fleshy palms along the tops of his thighs, and picked up the lighter. He gently pressed the bar mechanism on the top of the lighter with his right forefinger to activate the flint stone. The small metal housing attached to the bar sprang upwards revealing the wick, but there was no spark.

Using the razor blade, Horace unscrewed the flint spring at the base of the lighter. He took out the spring, inserted a new flint, re-screwed the screw, and clicked the bar again. Still no spark. He unscrewed the flint spring again and jammed a bobby pin up through the hole, figuring that it was blocked. When the bobby pin was sufficiently mangled from twisting and grinding in the tiny flint hole, Horace re-inserted the new flint and tried again. Still no spark. Easily frustrated, Horace moaned loudly.

"Are you alright Horace?" His mother called up to him.

"Yes Mother. Just a little gas that's all."

"I told you not to eat that chink food in the fridge, it's been there a week an' a half!"

Christopher B. Brougham

Slinking like a vine
along the bricked brownstones
his hatrim spaces him from
the metal gated storefronts.
The stars fall in droplets
dripping light in streams
and puddles as
a gently tapping cane
dopplers by
leaving a shadow of its
echo.
Embracing the solitude
he lurks the night.

UPTOWN



Chad Hussey

One night,
 My eyes were cut loose from their moorings,
 And I woke up blind.
 I thought it was a dream:
 My eyes were the center
 Around which I spun,
 And I could hear the ferns in the forest
 Pushing their soft fiddle heads
 Through moist, leafy soil.
 It was a darkness unheard of;
 Both velvet and hungry.
 I eased out of bed
 And followed the walls of my room,
 My hand tingling,
 As I reached for a brass door knob.
 Downstairs, to unstick the massive oak door
 With its twin lenticular panes.
 Outside, the drone of bees
 In Lilies of the Valley.
 But no light, cascading down
 Through the leaves of a sycamore
 And onto my arms, can pierce my eyes.
 If only I could perceive some semblance of light,
 Just a tiny flicker of hope,
 Like the sun through a bat's wing.

A New Day

Heartstrings

Wires give him life, like a puppet
 yet soon they will break
 From the doorway I stare
 In the bed he lies, decaying

But what of kite flying and baseball
 games and piggybacking, I ask?
 What of pizza and haircuts and the
 new math?

Limply he waves--hello or goodbye?
 Eyes close. Lips seal.
 Robed in white,
 his puppeteer removes the strings
 Can't anyone fix him, please?

Hello Father, I am still waiting.

Pete Waters

Spell

Wine drunk evening, snowstars fall
 Cold cornfield walking
 Slow stutter to sleep, past dreams.

Eric Stevenson

MUMS

Under hot, blue days
 she kneels
 among her lilies of the valley.

Her calves are two, firm balls
 as she pulls at the weeds
 with her swollen hands;
 pink polish still splotted
 on her dirty fingernails.

Her sweat, like sycamore
 pores down her back
 and under her arms

as she ovulates dreams.

Mary Wilson

“Solitaire”

Nancy is alone in the steamroom. She is sitting on the cedar bench, her elbows resting on the top of her knees, her hands gripping the wet strands of her sweaty hair. She has turned the setting up nearly as high as it will go and she listens to the powerful hiss of the steam escaping from the vents beneath her.

Jim is standing in front of the meat section in the Safeway grocery store trying to figure out the difference between hamburger and ground chuck. He examines them closely. They look the same. He tries to remember what his wife used to buy. He notices that the ground chuck is more expensive and reasons that it must be better quality meat. He picks the hamburger. “I have ketchup at home,” he says outloud.

Jim likes foods that are instant, or as close to instant as possible. When he examines labels he is not looking at the ingredients. He is looking for the cooking time. Things like “heat and serve,” and “just add boiling water” mean a lot to him. “Ready to eat” is his favorite.

There is a group of retarded men swimming in the pool near the steamroom. The water is cold. Three of them decide to go and warm up. They have been in the steamroom before and they begin to giggle as they shuffle across the slippery pool tiles towards the door.

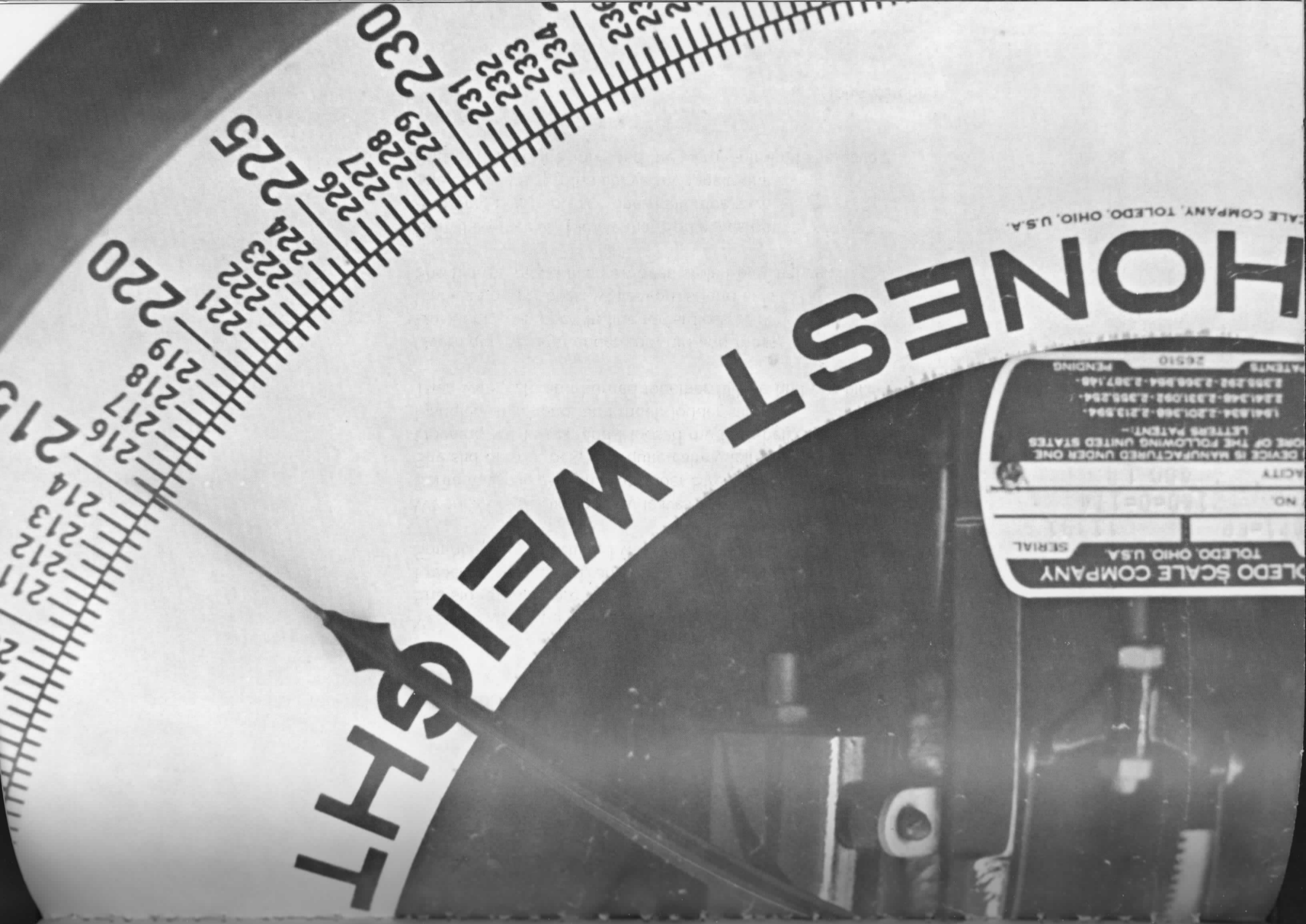
So far in his grocery cart Jim has three cans of chili, a jar of Ragu, a box of macaroni, a loaf of rye bread, a package of hamburger, and a twelve-pack of beer. He notices that the other shoppers, all of whom seem to be women, have full, or nearly full, carts, with things like fresh vegetables, flour, eggs, butter, chicken. He pushes his cart down the aisle.

Nancy is almost asleep when the door bursts open and three retarded men come in and sit across from her. She sits up and smiles nervously. She notices that the scrotum of one of the men is hanging partially out of the bottom of his swim trunks. She puts her knees together and begins rubbing her legs. “Hi,” she says.

Jim decides he has enough groceries and pushes his cart into a check-out line. There is a middle-aged woman reading *People Magazine*. She has a nice tan and wears horn rimmed glasses. Her upper half is quite attractive. She seems thin, but he notices that her hips and thighs are unusually large, as if all of her weight is being pulled downward by gravity and is stuck between her knees and her waist. She looks up from the magazine. “Hi,” Jim says.

Nancy knows that she has been in the steamroom too long, and that it is time for her to go, but she doesn't want the three men to think that she is leaving because of them. She remembers what her husband had told her the time he made her go camping with him. “Snakes won't bother you if you don't bother them.” She closes her eyes and tries to concentrate on the sound of the steam. She can feel her body beginning to revolt at the heat. Her thoughts come and go in quick flashes.

Driving home Jim feels a sense of accomplishment. His groceries are stacked nearly in three bags and sit on the back seat like obedient children. The radio is tuned to a country and western station and he sings along with the music.



Two more retarded men enter the steamroom. One of them is very obese. His swim trunks are old and look dirty. He sits next to Nancy and smiles, his teeth brown. One of the men begins to hum. She can't quite make out the tune. The obese man moans, stands and starts to leave.

Jim is going a little too fast when he makes the turn in to his driveway and one of the bags tips over, spilling its contents onto the dirty, carpeted backseat floor. He turns off the radio, stops the car, and contorts his body over the seat to see what has spilled. He curses.

The obese man is holding the steamroom door shut so no one can leave. He is flicking the lights on and off, on and off. He is laughing and having a good time. Nancy has shut the steam off but the room is still very hot. It is time for her to go. The four retarded men are yelling at the fat man, calling him something sounding like Pete, and this makes him more excited and he flashes the lights on and off even faster and laughs even harder. "Just ignore him," Nancy says. "Just ignore him and he'll go away."

Inside, Jim begins to unpack his groceries. He takes out a box of Arm and Hammer baking soda, opens it, and puts it in the rear of his refrigerator. He laughs, and says "this is great." He puts the rest of the groceries away and grabs himself two beers and the loaf of rye bread. He goes in to the living room, turns on the television and sits in one of the two folding chairs in the otherwise empty room. He drinks the beer and nibbles the bread. Love Boat is on.

Nancy is standing on the inside of the metal door trying to reason with the retarded fat man outside. "Please let us out," she says, "Please." She pushes on the door to see if he's still holding it shut. It won't budge. She steps back and slams her shoulder against the door. The obese man has taken a few steps back, deciding to let the people out, and he is laughing as the door hits him in the face. His nose begins to bleed.

Jim is in the bathroom urinating. He is too tired to stand so he is sitting on the toilet, his pants down around his ankles. He stares at the empty bathtub with its solitary shampoo bottle and thin peice of yellow soap half way down the drain. He begins thinking of the woman in the grocery store with the big hips. He imagines her large thighs spread wide, a small mound of pubic hair barely visible beneath a thick roll of fat. He decides to masturbate but finds that his penis is unresponsive, and hangs between his legs limp and uninterested.

Nancy is alone in the shower room. Too tired to stand she sits, limp and exhausted, on the tile floor, letting the cool shower water fall gently over her hot red shoulders.

Gordon Black



A Grave Day-Dream

Yesterday, I met a red-blue Sprite under the wood:
She stood stark-bare with hair accented by her hood.
I reached, she pulled, and the black earth fell away-
Spinning quickly-white, I was unknotted from the clay.

We trilled about licking oily leaves with our feet.
Sprite ran naked-clean, but under Stream missed a beat:
She slid onto a rock, and quite calmly fell
Opening her knees, and I loosed my flesh-bell.
I jangled once loud, and much louder still-
Then we stuck, and burned together 'till we had our fill.

Overnight we slept under cool dirt and moss,
Our bodies wrapped in fine forest floss.
I inhaled bug-beetles, white-worms, and ants:
She fed me blood that had been stolen by Chance.

But when I woke, I knew that Sprite was gone,
And only then did I see one pretty doe-fawn.
She chewed soft grass above my lonely grave,
And I thought of Sprite, and the warm-soft fluid she gave.

John Zarchen

while in school
your rosy children named me
for the hate that you gave them
like a christmas or birthday
present

father of mine
nisei
everytime
hand to heart
he sang the National Anthem
i had always noticed how
since i was a child
baseball games and football
in arenas of amusement

i am that i am
it is because of this
could not help to think
fight the tricky japs
and seeing Donald Duck in full combat attire
Life Goes To War
last night i watched

Spring 42 TTH--Winter 82 RTH

Reconciliation

R.T.Hayashi

son, reconcile

watching him now from my window
shoveling december snow
in boots of leather
and olive drab officer's coat
i feel barbed wire
prick the neck
and something says to me
go there
walk its perimeter, feel its barren air
touch the land

spring 1942
he was my age then
and as i a student
often i wonder
what he thought of how he fell
on that busride
to Tule Lake, a ten by twenty tarpaper home
and six months
internment





Michigan Rt. 37

*Outlined in white
Petosky stone beaches,
the blue lake lies
raw and unsalted.*

The road empties
into the woods,
sunlit turquoise flickers
through washboard walls
of white birch
shimmering in
silver leaf droplets.

Blue-black road,
dark green and silver birch
mingle in the grey
of a windshield.

On Timber Shore's boat trailer
"Torch," in chipped paint,
dangles its rope and bailer
white against black.

Past the red and black
stenciled sign in front
of Peshawbetown's white church,
a Sunday flea market
tries to close.

Women emerge, clinging
to soft cardboard boxes,
oozing leftovers.

An old Indian,
gnarled and reeking
of Night Train whiskey,
barters angrily over
fish hooks and worms.

Out from behind
a rusted car on blocks,
a small, naked boy
runs from a barking dog.

Ruth Wick

Shenango Valley

The powerlines leading
into town sag
a little more each day.
Pretty soon they'll
be down scattered
across the roads and river.

There are still
mountain piles of coal around--
old women come
with dented wire shopping carts
to carry away their loads.
Further along the railroad tracks
naked children hide
among the rusting box car rows
and scavenge along
the river bank at dusk.

Coal-eyed men
sleep and roam, sleep and roam
stand along the mesh iron fences
that surround the black windowed
factories

and still hear their dreams die
like a dragon being slaughtered.

August West

Ultraviolet Blues

Billy Death and the Magic Man Roaring Creation Band,
beer slurping blues babies
and a sweet Marguerita Mama,
playing poetry
in the Ultraviolet Swing Bar.
Extension cord
biting the wall,
ice cream cone microphone
illuminates Billy's exhale,
wiggling my ear hairs
and the Marlboro Man's mustache.
Sweet and Sour rhythm
backstroking through cigarette smoke,
keeping leather bound toes
clapping on the floor,
and melancholy music mongers
crazy eyed, craving more.

Kathy Shelton

New Orleans and the Silky Black Seams of my Stockings

O to step your toes while under steamy prisms
In Billie Holiday nightclub with slow massage,
And confetti, the drowsy ceiling dribble,
Skidding into costume crinkles.
My perfume bead-neck is golden grey shadow
Strangled by your juicy gaze;
We float: vanilla ice-cream in thick-syrup roobeer,
Laughter, the carbonation, bubbling.
Whisper harmonic to make me shuffle outdoors,
With the soft squirm of summer fluttering my dress
Like butterflies to the fields;
Slow-dancing fog and moon drool fantastic
Lick sensual the rusty city scene.

Kate Reynolds



John and Jamie sat facing each other across a candle lit table high above New York City. She glanced down at her plate where the remains of a steak, a piece of parsley, and a potato skin stared back at her. She turned her eyes out the window and saw the shiny silver leaves of the Chrysler building bright against the summer sky. John had been stirring his coffee for several minutes.

"John, I'm sorry. I wish I could explain it but I can't. Maybe I'm scared, maybe I'm selfish, maybe I'm masochistic, but I need some time alone; a few weeks, a few months. Just let me go down there and spend sometime without you."

It was grey, stark and windy on the Western shore of Lake St. Clair. Ten miles north of the mouth of the Detroit River. They sat on the docks of the Gross Point Yacht Club. He was smoking, and she was throwing paintchips from the end of the dock into the silvery shimmering waters of the lake. All around them rose the masts of the most luxurious yachts on the lake, possibly in the whole Great Lakes system. She was wearing her wool fisherman's sweater, he had on his khakis and his boat-shoes.

"I want to take you to my house" he said. She didn't look at him. She had known it was coming. She looked up towards the yacht clubs Belfrey Tower. It stood tall and dark against the grey sky. Sea gulls swarmed around the tower, and the knots that were coming with increasing regularity, that had become part of her daily routine crept back into her stomach.

"It will be good . . . you'll understand where I'm coming from. You'll see why I'm so messed up. He grinned gloomily. She smiled at him and ran her hand around his neck in an attempt at reassurance. "I mean I don't think it would be terrible, and it would help, a lot, to have you there."

She kicked at the dock under her feet without conviction. Her mother had told her how many times; "Never get involved with someone who has more problems than you do." Again, she hadn't listened, and here she was in Gross Point, Michigan with knots in her stomach.

"And my parents won't tell me who my real parents are. And you see it always erupts into this big huge argument . . . but I can't help feeling like I've got to know . . . Jamie are you comfortable knowing all this?"

Refraction

She closed the heavy door and stepped out into the deserted predawn. They had been sitting in darkness for hours, and the harsh streetlight made her wince. She walked calmly, confidently through a part of town that even scared her in the daytime. Rape would be so minor and unimportant after everything that had happened. A million thoughts of the night streamed through her head. She couldn't put them in any order, but she knew if she did they would scare her to death. She wanted to run back inside and hold him again. She panicked. What if he needed her now? What if he called sometime when she wasn't home. What if he asked her a question she couldn't answer. What if she ever pushed too hard? What if she wasn't available enough.

She was walking parallel to Fairmount Park and stopped to steady herself on a park bench. A sleet storm had fallen on the park. The grass, trees and benches were encased in hard shiny glass fingers. The yellow-white streetlights lit up the frozen scene casting a steadily frighening glow. The reality of the park gave way to some kind of demonic fairyland. It made her think of being frozen in hell. She pulled the sweater he had given her closer to her body and realized she was losing the feeling in her fingers. She put her hands inside her jeans hoping to warm them, but her body was cold and clammy under her clothes. She pulled them out quickly and stared at them.

She was sitting in her well lit living room grading a handfull of Freshman compositions when she saw the large dark figure pause by her mailbox. She drained her coffee, rose and went to the window just in time to see the figure disappear around the first bend in the lane. He was running. Slightly unravelled, she called Court, her new English sheepdog to her side. He padded down the stairs and came towards her, tail wagging and massive tongue hanging from his mouth. She was getting used to being out in the country alone, but it was slow going. After four years in a dormitory where privacy was at best a rare privilege and quiet nonexistent, and then a summer in the city with John, a Virginia country cottage at the end of a 1/2 mile dirt road was a little more than an adjustment.

She mulled over going to check the mailbox. Normally she wouldn't have hesitated but these last few weeks had been so draining. She hadn't expected graduate school to be quite as much work as it was, and when she finally ended the drawnout engagement with John she hadn't expected to meet . . . him. She glanced toward the

"My parents never found out what my sister was doing to me...it would have killed them. It was her only screw-up they thought she was perfect."

"Oh" she said.

"That's why I can't make love to you . . . it wouldn't be right. I only screw girls to get back at my sister."

She closed her eyes for a few moments and let the blackness swamp her senses. She had to keep telling herself that life was going to have to go on as usual tomorrow. She would get up and go to work as if none of this was really happening.

"Finally my parents sent me to a psychiatrist" he said. They were sitting in semi-darkness, one corner of the room illuminated by the glare from the streetlight across the road. "Yeah, the shrink told me I had Quadrophenia."

"Quadrophenia?"

"Yeah, four personalities, or something like that . . . I didn't want to go back to the shrink so I went out and bought the album."

She raised her eyes. She wanted to hug him, to hold him like she used to hold John when he had nightmares, but this wasn't John, and now the nightmare surrounded her.

It was eleven fifteen on a Friday in August when she finally snapped. John was lying in her living room easy chair snoring contentedly after one of her famous lasagne dinners. A handful of half dead roses drooped tiredly in a vase on a corner table. The card had been knocked to the floor nearby. The cat purred and blinked its eyes on top of the television which was recapping the evening sports highlights. The Yankees had stretched their winning streak at home to fifteen games. The dishes were done, the dog had been walked, and Jamie knew she couldn't take one more minute of it. She went into the bedroom, brushed her hair, changed her sweatshirt to a sweater, grabbed her purse and turned out the light. She stopped in the living room, removed her spare money from the flatware, and walked through the kitchen. She looked over her shoulder at snoring John and hesitated for a moment, pondering whether or not to leave a note. She decided against it, and shut the door behind her, leaving her fiance, her apartment, her dog, her cat, and all her belongings emotionally behind.

window. With more than a little effort, and with Court in hand she made her way out the door and down the driveway. Once at the mailbox she put her hand inside; her fingers closing around a small square envelope. She slipped the envelope in her pocket, turned and dashed towards the house, sending Court into a barking frenzy; certainly scaring off anyone who could be lurking around her house.

Once back inside the safety of the cottage, she sat at the coffee table and removed the letter from her pocket. The envelope was yellow, and the sender had sketched a black omega on the back. She opened the envelope and unfolded the letter.

Jamie:
You have been invited . . .
To play dictionary
Room 5--The Haunted Mansion
Alberto Giocometti

They sat in his apartment. It was near dawn, but neither of them realized it. They had been reading all night. She was struggling with Crime and Punishment, he with Marxist theory.

"America Sucks" he said.
"I love it" she said.
"How can you?" he said.
"We promised to stay away from politics" she said.
"Let's leave" he said.
"School?" she asked.
"America" he said.
"Mexico's warm" she said.
"Canada's closer" he said "and then I can show you Detroit."
"How can you get more American than Detroit?" she asked.
"Shut up and pack." he said.

"Do you understand what I'm saying to you?" He was shouting now. She fought back her fear. "I've never cared about anyone before. I don't know how the hell to do it. I'll just keep hurting you. I might really hurt you. They say they don't know what I'll do--that I'm dangerous. How can I expect you to deal with me? You've got your own life to worry about. I won't drag you down with me." He was pacing now, and smoking heavily. His voice had not quieted, and for a second a picture of John standing outside with his hand cupped to the wall flashed through her mind.

"I appreciate that," she said.
"I mean it," he said.
She smiled, he didn't.
"Well, no matter what happens, I wouldn't kill you."
"Huh?"
"I want you to know something."
"Huh?"
"Jamie."

It was only early November. They sat together at the top of the brand new open air amphitheatre in the Renaissance Center in Detroit. It was well past midnight, but the lights of the five cylindrical buildings still glimmered off the glassy grey surface of the Detroit River. Clouds bounced the urban glow back down on the city giving the blackness a Christmas time light, although

than a minute he started to snore. ing wondering what was in his system and where he had been. In less the pillow under his head, and went back to bed. She stared at the cell-closet, got a blanket and pillow, threw the blanket over him, shoved any blood, and he was breathing. Now wide awake, she went to her front of his face and body before he hit the floor. He wasn't moving. She slipped her bathrobe on and squatted next to him. She didn't see noted with some concern that he had neglected to put his hands in first, to the carpeted floor of her bedroom. The clock said 2:58. She rival jacket catch his foot on her dressing table's stool and crash, face She opened her eyes just in time to see the hulking figure in the sur-

He folded his fingers together. The pain stretched across his face like an open sore. She felt the tears rising in the back of her nose. It didn't even make much difference whether or not she cried.

"It'll be the end, you know," he said. "If you go down there alone, when we're like this."
"No, not necessarily, you know that's not what I want. I can't go at all unless you promise you'll give me some time." Her eyes searched his face.
"I can't promise you anything." He was trying hard to be hard.
"Then I can't go." she said, somewhat convincingly. He appeared somewhat satisfied and asked the waiter for the check.

She turned out the light with a sigh. He had blown her off, bigtime, but she had asked for it. She loved abuse. Obviously the decisions she had made in the last few weeks showed that she'd rather be abused than treated well. The streetlight shown in off the street, picking up the metal frame that still, for one reason or another, held John's picture. The pictures would have to come down soon, but for now they helped her to handle her guilt, and let her believe, if only half-heartedly that all the things she had done were no more than a wild dream fantasy that she would wake up from, call successful John, and go on with her uncomplicated, consistent life.

So where was he tonight? There were several possibilities. He could be reasserting his freedom and male dominance by raping one of the girls who were "always looking for it" down at the co-op. He could be blind drunk up on campus looking for someone to knock his head off and put him out of his misery. He could be tripping and then there was no telling where he was. In his room? Out in the rain? In jail? She rolled over, worried, but strangely not angry. The nice thing about dating a lunatic . . . you learned not to expect much.

The windshield wipers smeared the scarce snow flakes across the windshield elongating the scenery in front of her. The cold breeze that came in the window even when it was rolled up (ever since she had broken in with a coat hanger) hit her left cheek. She held on to its familiarity. He was reciting stories of his childhood as they drove past familiar sights.

"No shit!" she said, and they laughed together.
"You haven't got one," he said.
"I don't want to hear it!" she cut him off. "I know you do, and I appreciate it, but you don't have to. The last thing I want is a replacement."
"Really? You probably don't notice, but I try . . . I really do try to . . ."
"Come on," she said.
"I'm sorry I don't ski," he said.
"I had to do."
She squinted at the sun. "I can't tell yet. I don't think so. . . I had to miss John?" he asked.
"Skiing? No. I'll probably get some in this winter."
"You miss it?" he asked.
"Yeah. All the time. He really taught me most of what I know."
"You and John used to ski a lot?" he asked.
"Really."
"Come on," he said.
"Yeah, you would," she said. "It's the one thing I really do well."
"I'd like to see you ski," he said.
"If I could do anything today," she said, "I'd like to go skiing."
"What do you want to do today?" he asked her.
(even in December.)
The first real snow had fallen overnight, but the sun was bright and warm. They had taken off their coats, and he needed his sunglasses.

losing control and pulled herself together one more time.
"You don't understand Jamie; you can't understand. It's just too much pressure. . . God it just. . ." he broke off. she sensed that he was and the knots pulled tighter.
Oh shit. The voice inside her head exploded. She closed her eyes.
"I don't think we should see each other anymore."
"So what are you saying?" she asked.
"That risk for a psycho like me?"
"I swear I don't want you to get screwed up like me. That would be the worst thing that could happen. Why do you want anything to do with me anyway? You'll be out of here in a year, and then what? This whole thing could affect your reputation. Why would you want to take that risk for a psycho like me?"

"See that department store window? I tackled a dummy in there when I was 4 1/2. My mother was crying so hard they had to carry her out of the store."

She heard with half an ear, and smiled, but she was concentrating on keeping a blank mind. Too many things had happened in the last 24 hours . . . well actually the last few weeks of her life, and if she thought now . . . well she just knew she couldn't think. The abrupt end of the engagement, the scenes, the screaming, the crying, the slums, the seagulls . . . did she really want to know?
"See that corner? I got arrested on that corner. I stole those two big flags. That's the police station"

She didn't want to know. She turned on the radio. She wanted to shout, to scream, to let some of the pressure out of her body. She drummed the steering wheel with her fingers. Acid Rock . . . sixties . . . screams.

"See that building? My father's office is on the very top of that building."

The building was made out of reflecting glass, and she watched the car stretch and slither past, getting disfigured in the reflection by the windows.

"Hey! That was a red light," he called.
"Sorry."
"Hey, are you alright? You nervous about meeting my folks?" She shrugged. "Well don't worry about it."
"Okay" she said.
"I wonder if my sister will be there." he said. "If she is she'll really check you out . . . and she's pretty nice looking. It should be interesting."
"Let's not talk about it" she said.

Knots was the name she gave to the feeling she got in her stomach whenever he pulled something on her. Her doctor called it an ulcer, but he wasn't sure, and actually, she didn't think he'd been around long enough to give her an ulcer. The knots had just crawled back in, and she was trying to think of something to say, to make everything okay, to make the knots go away--at least for a few hours--at least until the next crisis.

After spending two months arguing with him over Dostoyevsky in an upper level Russian Lit course Jamie had finally been introduced to him at a party in his apartment building. They small talked about sailing in the Bahamas for a few minutes before he suggested a trip to the roof of the building, and she accepted. He was drunk and she was sober. When they arrived at the roof he sent a group of pot smoking undergraduates home to bed, and she was impressed. Then he started telling her about epiphanyes, lighting fireworks and breaking glass, and a paper he had just finished on the Hades episode in Ulysses, and she decided she wanted him. When she left in the morning she didn't expect to hear from him again, until four o'clock the next morning when he showed up at her cottage. She didn't even think she had told him her last name.

And so well mannered . . . and you look so beautiful first thing in the morning. He picked up a piece of her tangled hair mockingly. "F--- you." "And you're beautiful." "Cause she's ugly," she said. "Why not?" "No" She giggled. "You jealous?" top of her.

"You're a shit" she said. He looked mildly amused. He moved on. "She told me she missed my laugh . . . so I laughed at her" he said. "No" she said, "so what happened?" "Sorry, that didn't come out right." "Oh," she closed her eyes. "Kelly came down to see me last night," he said. "The girl I was screwing before you."

"Yes sir, it's mine," Jamie found her voice, "sorry about that." Jamie wasn't sure what he did for a living, but with a thirty room stone mansion with two Chevrolet's in the driveway, she figured he had something to do with the American Auto Industry. "That's Okay. Some of my best friends drive foreign cars," he chuckled, "well, maybe not my best friends." He chuckled again. Obviously an old cocktail party joke.

"What do you mean no?" he almost shrieked. "Why are you even sitting here taking this? Are you just gonna sit there? Why don't you yell at me? Why don't you knock some sense into my head?"

"I can't," she managed. Her head was spinning and she felt something warm rising in the back of her throat. The knots in her stomach were growing tighter and tighter. She could feel her insides suffocating.

"You can't? Well why don't you get up and walk out of here? Or can't you do that either? I can't see you anymore. Could you please get up and walk out of here?" He faced her wide eyes and set face for the first time. Something insanely steadfast in her pride wouldn't let her cry. She couldn't have moved if she wanted to. She didn't have the power of speech or motion; she could only stare at him; at once pushing him back crashing, unconscious against the wall, and begging him to come to her and hide his face in her chest until his breathing leveled and he slept.

She was maddening him, but she couldn't help herself. Her thoughts took no order. She couldn't have recited her own name and address.

Then he broke, like a fever and crumpled on the floor in a bulky heap. She closed her eyes . . . , it was over. Cautiously she got to her feet, knelt beside him, and encircled him with her arms.

She opened the large wooden door to his apartment building tentatively. It was an old stone farmhouse that some entreprenuring farmer had converted into apartments in the sixties, before the town had spread out that far. It gave her the creeps in the daytime, and now, just before midnight it was positively evil looking. In what had been converted into the lobby, a boy she recognized from the bookstore sat wrapped in a blanket, huddled over a typewriter.

"Hi" he said, "We've lost the damn heat again; next thing you know it'll be the electricity." He motioned to the desk lamp which lit up the area of his work and sent shadows over his face.

"I'm looking for room five," she said. "Five?" he asked. "Yeah." "Second floor" he pointed towards the stairs, "he's up there." "Thanks" she said. As she turned she felt the young man's eyes looking after her.

"You've just missed your sister . . . she went back east this morning. She'll be sick when she hears," his voice trailed off. Jamie let out her breath. "So Jamie, is that your little Japanese car out there?" "I don't know Dad, we just . . ." "Well son, tell me what you're doing in Detroit."

"Good Dad, this is my friend Jamie," she took his hand with all the warmth she could muster. "I'm great son how are you?" "How are you Dad?"

When they arrived at the house the knots were worse than ever, but she was trying not to think at all. It was almost worlki ng. They entered the old stone farmhouse, walked through a room containing many antiques, and entered a den where a man sat watching the football game. The man, a balding executive-type with a pleasant face and small hands looked up, surprised.

"Hello," she managed shakily, "it's me." "F---off" came the response behind the door. The tall boy dropped her arm. "You heard him, she said, turning and running down the fluorescent blue stairwell." "Tell him who it is." "Knock on the door" the tall boy grabbed Jamie's arm. She knocked. "What's going on?" she demanded. "Knock on his door," the tall one said. "I don't know, why? she asked. "Is he in there?" "Why?" she said. "You here to see him?" the taller one asked. "What's going on?" she asked.

Jamie was climbing the stairs to his apartment when two teenage boys passed her on the stairs. When she got to his door they were here listening.

"What do you think about this whole thing?" he asked. "What whole thing?" she looked up from her writing. "This . . . do you think its worth it?" "Yeah I think it's worth it," she said. "Why?" "Because I can't think of anything else that's more worth it," she said. "Oh okay Ursula, I think it's wonderful when you talk romantic," he said. "I don't care what you think," she said. "Oh okay Gudren, then I don't care either."

She faced him smiling. "I'm not Ursula, and I'm not Gudren . . . and you're not Birkin, and you're not Gerald." She pulled her copy of Women in Love off her bookshelf and tossed it at his head.

"I'm not?" He looked crushed. "No you're not. And you're not Stephen Dedalus either. She threw her copy of Portrait of an Artist at him, a little harder than the last. Her blood was pumping. And you're not the invisible man, you're not Dick Diver. One by one she picked the books, mostly paperbacks, off her shelf and sailed them at his head. Release. And you're not Kurtz, and you're not Arthur Dimmesdale, and you're not Ahab (the bulky copy of Moby Dick flew through the air) especially not Ahab! And you're not Thoreau, and you haven't seen through the transparent eyeball, and even though you'd really like to be you're not Roquentin either. She glanced through the shelves for more ammunition and then at him. They broke up simultaneously, he buried under the fictional characters he thought he wanted to be, she breathing hard, for once, relaxed.

They passed a cart full of fresh flowers standing vivid and sharp in the cold air. She let her eyes wander over to the roses. If John were here...

"You want some flowers?" he asked her. "They're beautiful," she answered carefully. "Too bad," "Gotta buy cigarettes" he said, childlike. She chuckled with him. She had had enough flowers in the last four years to last a lifetime. They always died in a couple of days anyway.

Pam Houston

"Well, don't you think I should know by now whether or not I'm in love with you?" she said.

"I don't know," she said.

"Well, I think I should know and I don't," he said.

"Why do you think you have to know now?" she asked.

"Well, I've had plenty of time."

"Oh," she said. He didn't ask her if she was in love with him.

"Shit, Jamie."

"What?"

"I've got to . . . nothing."

"What?"

"Nothing!" His voice hit like anger. It was getting light in the room. She watched him turn back to the wall. She stared at the fine blonde hairs that covered his back. "If I tell you . . . Jamie, I can't tell you."

"Okay," she said.

"Dammitt, Jamie, I've been lying so long I don't even know when I'm telling the truth anymore."

"What do you mean?" she asked him.

"You came!" he said, his eyes lighting up without smiling.

"Yeah. I tried to write a paper, but it didn't work out. Fiction and reality...too heavy for me." She sat down and looked around the apartment. Jimi Hendrix stared at her from behind his guitar on the North wall of the room. Three large bongos, in rainbow colors adorned a table below him. A massive stereo system with monster speakers occupied the East wall. The room was full of Salvation Army type furniture, tapestries, and a handmade bed that folded out of the South wall. Half living spider plants hung in front of the curtainless windows. The bathroom and kitchen were off to the right.

"So what do you think?" he asked.

"It's--uh--comfortable looking," she said.

"That's a compliment. Not the greatest part of town, but I guess you can't have everything."

"Nice stereo," she said.

"I stole it from a fraternity."

"Uh-huh. So who's Alberto Giacometti?"

"He's a sculptor - - Italian, or Swedish - - I'm not sure," he said.

"Oh."

"Did you like the Omega? I picked it 'cause it looked like a horseshoe . . . you said you were into horseshoes."

"Yeah, I am," she said.

"You came," he said again.

"Mm-hmm," she said.

"It was a dare, you know. I dared you to come here." he said.

"You invited me to play 'dictionary'," she said.

"There's no such game," he said laughing. "Joke's on you."

She opened the door and walked into her bedroom. It was a quarter past three and he still hadn't moved. His survival jacket was twisted around his body, but his head faced the floor. She set her briefcase on the desk. Wind blew in through the curtains, slamming the door behind her. He stirred and sat up, running his hand through his hair and adjusting his jacket.

"Hi," he said, and giggled.

"Hi," she said.

"So aren't you gonna ask me what happened last night?" he asked.

"I'm sure you'll tell me anyway."

"I was at this party. It was great - - you would have loved it. I kept meaning to call you. Well, I drank pretty much. They kept asking me who I was, and I wouldn't tell them. I kept telling them I was a product of their imagination; their attempt to order a disorderly universe. This guy at the party was into it. He kicked the wall and said that the pain in his foot proved that the wall was there. You following this?"

"Sure," she said.

"So I put my fist through the window and told them it didn't hurt, and that proved . . . well . . . you get it." He looked down at his right hand. Blood caked into globs across his knuckles.

"What did they say?" she asked.

"They told me to walk through the plate glass door."

"Did you?"

"No, are you kidding? Then they threw me out in the back yard, so I made a campfire with their woodpile. It was big."

"And what did they do then?" she asked.

"They called the fire department. Oh, and they came out to look for me. I was already in the hills above their house, sitting in a pine tree, watching it burn. It was a beautiful fire. I wish you coulda been there. You would have loved it."

"Do you know that fountain has three hundred and twenty-four different water and light patterns?" he asked her.

"It's beautiful."

"I used to hang around and talk to the builders."

She had never been in Detroit before, but his overwhelming feeling of home had transmitted to her, and she looked at the lights of the city with an over-appropriate sense of warmth.

"Thanks for bringing me here," she said.

"Thanks for coming with me," he said.

"Sure."

"It feels so good here."

"What does?"

"Everything."

"Everything." The snow was getting heavier, and he moved closer to her.

He rolled away from her and faced the wall, hugging his pillow. She traced the freckles on his back.

"You wanna talk about it?" she asked.

"What? No."

"It's supposed to be fun, you know," she said.

"Sorry." She put her arm across his shoulder and molded her body against his back. "Will you just leave me alone?" She pulled away tiredly and turned back towards her side of the bed. She wanted to sleep. It had been so long since she had slept. Without warning, a picture of John entered her mind. What was he doing? Where was he now? She closed her eyes, wanting to fall deep into unconsciousness, but her mind refused. It swept over her like a tidal wave. Memories, one following another. Everything before it went bad. The dinners, the vacations, sailing, the mountains, the love - - God, the real, unselfish, ignorant love . . . and the roses. She wanted roses tonight, badly.

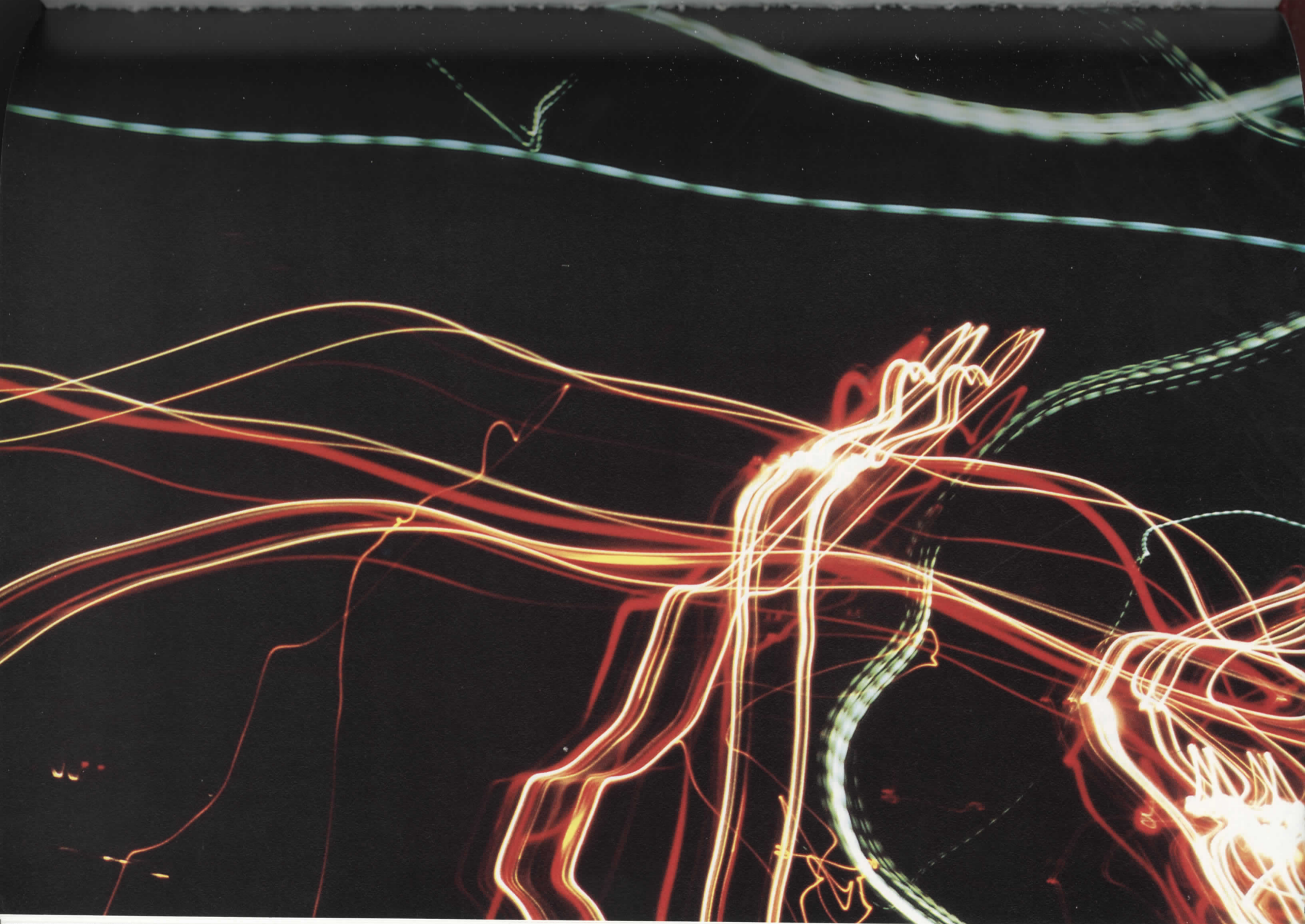
The sky was lightening, and the moon was setting. It hung over the mountains to the West, glowing almost burgundy.

"The moon's still full," she said.

"Maybe that's my problem." He turned to her and touched her arm, hesitating, awkwardly. She didn't feel like taking it. "You sleeping?" he asked.

"Yeah," she said, as the moon started to fall behind the hills. "Something's f--- up," he said. She turned away from the moon, back to him.

"What do you mean?" she asked.



A Midsummer Night's.....

I stood before him
and asked, "Is this really you?"

knowing only then
would they come tonight
unexpected,
holding white candles.

Against a silver background
he showed me the lines of his hands
then ran
above the misted rise
shouting out - my name.

And so still I chase
yet closer, and
again I will sleep tonight
outside my sheets, the window
open, awaiting
their arrival.

Their source
The Land of Winds
they are keepers
of the ivory truth,
they have shown me pictures,
and brought me pomegranate leaves
into my hands
staining these fingers,
some call them ghosts.

R.T. Hayashi

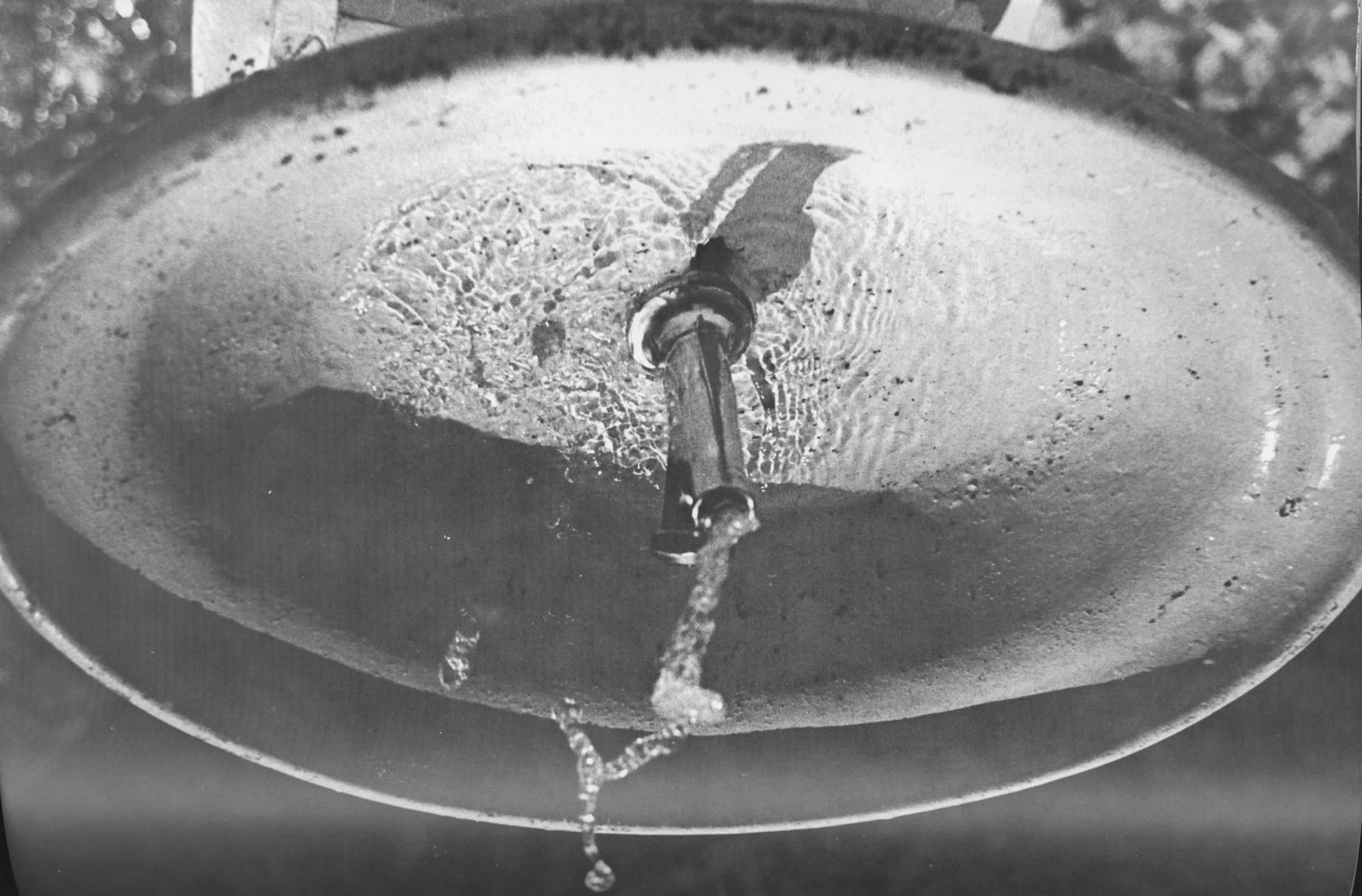
Couch Sleeping

I have heard the wind howl,
Several times in several days,
Far off lonely intensely as wolves.
It fills me with a longing
For the plains and flowing tallgrass,
Meat and the hunt.

I awake startled
Half in, half out
All is eerie at 4 am
The howling
Shivering glass
The thought of wolves.

Candles burn to stubs
In awkward inattentiveness
Dozing "Fall of America" in hand,
Wake to find
A beard has grown nails are long
A drawn howl of confusion.

Eric Stevenson



“Before We Could Build”

Two crows on the telephone wire line
black-eyed and sassy.
We are squinting at the sun
waiting for relief of the
ice cream man
and banana scooter pies
knees holding chins
skinny elbows playing
hide and seek
with sweater holes.
We live in the real world
everyday after school
at Gard's market.
I best friend myself to you
by chewing on your
wet watermelon Bub's Daddy gum
And you climb the Jenkins fence
to touch the one-eyed dog
a sign of everlasting trust.
We skip school on spelling test days
and win the three legged race
at the sixth grade track meet.
Your liver brown summer skin
pulls you through the chlorine
faster than mine ever could
But in kickball
I am the champ.

When the sun set early
in September
summer melted from the sky,
and we skipped home
as the streetlights hummed on
Another first day of school.
That was the Fall you kissed Bobbie Foster
(I would have rather kissed my dog
or Jenkins one-eyed dog for that matter)
You were a little less
electric eyed
to greet the ice cream man
or relish scooter pies,
So I tried it alone
until afternoon
blossomed
old
then save up.

Now we build card houses
fragile cathedrals,
and watch blond boys
at the fair.
But I want to know,
if Bobbie Foster hadn't
chewed your gum too,
would you love him
like me?

Kim Kiefer

The Legend of the Bear Mother

*It all took place some time ago
the woman's dark child thrust from her
in a ring of pine
the chill air in her lungs
her large hips in a pocket of needles.*

The tight baby had squirmed for hours
Skoaga's screams echoed off rock walls
came back to her
came back to her
when it was done
silence rushing into that same deep hollow.

The boy was smooth and buttery
his eyes with the glint of blackberries
his maleness a capped mushroom
a nodding thumb.
The wind shook the leaves --
from the west a hush
in her ear as she breathed:
my little chestnut, my fallen berry
my bear-child, with the lips of a man.

It was spring
when she had crossed the stream
that rushed with herring
the waves humping with scaled backs
she entered the wood where the bear
was waiting in his hide
at the mouth of Whistling Rock.

In the shade of the glen
crude and ill-carved
Skoaga fell into his furred chest

into the dark-coated fear
wanting the shame, the touch
no voice but the bear's rumbling
no smell but the glistening oil of his hide.

She clutched at the bear's broad neck
as she would clutch the trunk of a tree
full of arousal and loathing.

Since then the Haidas
would not cross the stream
Skoaga's mother nodded
her wooly head to the drum
and wept.

There were tales at night:
she was seen crouching over an antelope
with her lover at her side
her mouth speckled red.

Skoaga was moving in the brush
her belly burgeoning plump
and shiny as a skull's head
her arms thick with new hair.

There was no truth to the tales
but this -- the bear had retreated into the cave
and she was alone at the stream
when the child was born.

Years later Tsagay the sculptor
chipped the argillite from the face of Whistling Rock
He carved her image from the stone
and she is frozen there still --
her mouth cleft in agony as the infant
rips and gnaws at her bosom
that falls like a thick pod.

Amy S. Pence

NOTES

NOTES

