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The Forum: Spring 2003

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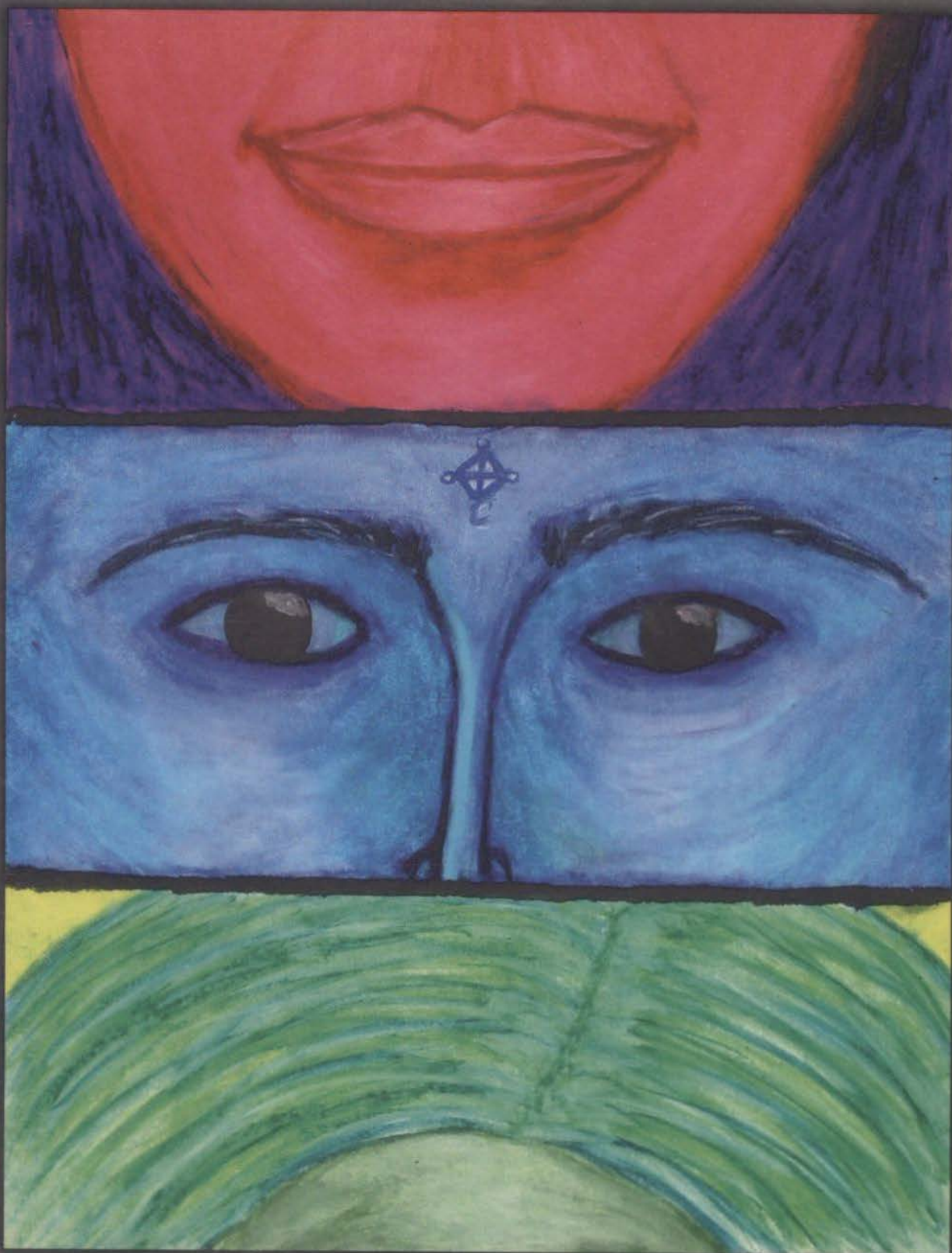
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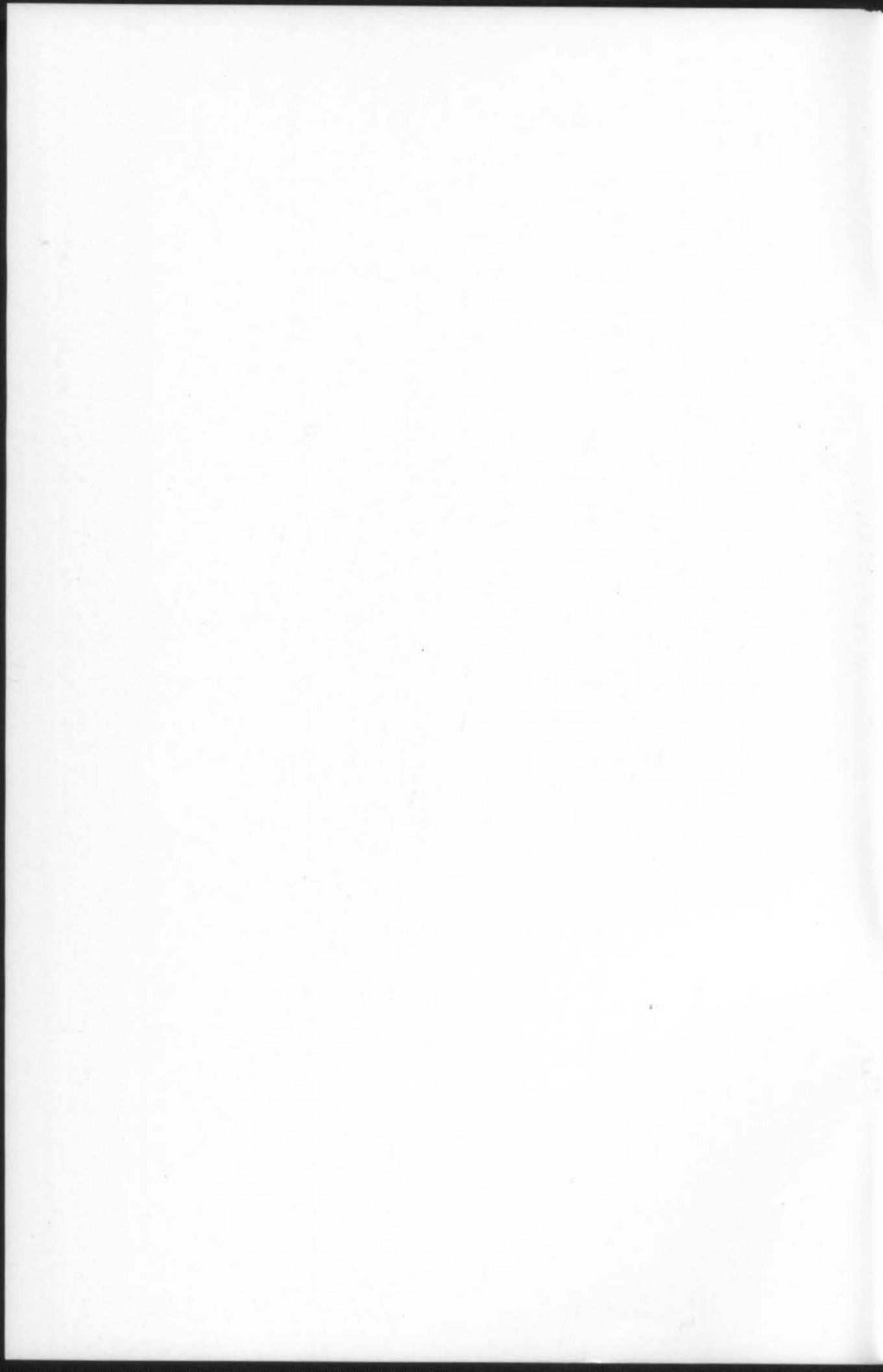
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the Forum

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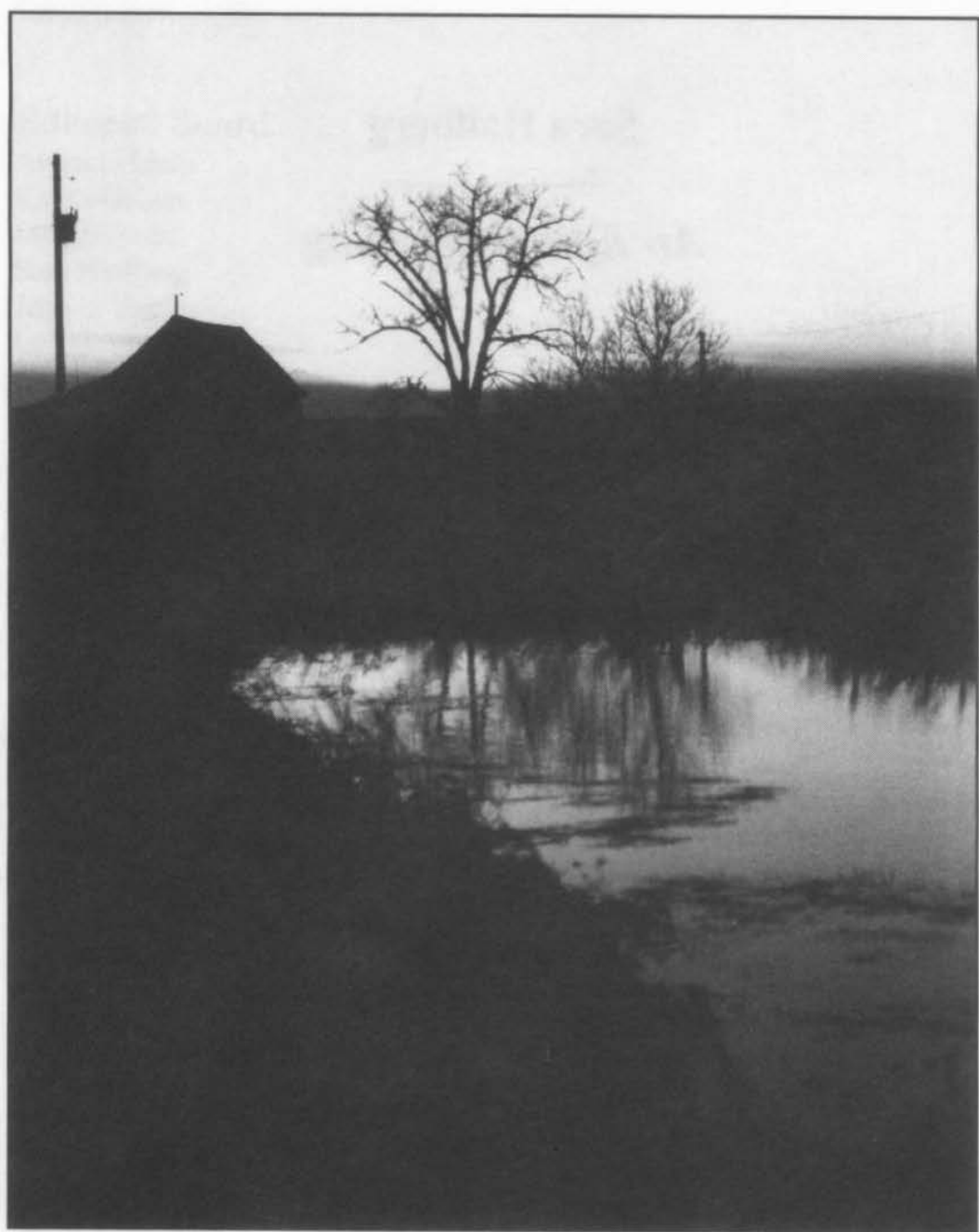
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Sara Hallberg

An Epic Beginning

O Prometheus! Thou bringer of light,
Cast down on shadows
Who do not serve thee like
The Brightness of one glowing ember born straight
From thee. Fair Inhabitant,
Find solace in this traverse hysteria;
When the legacy of thy calling remains so fluct,
So shall steadfastness be the countenance of
So humble a Youth—Thy embodiment,
Thy Splendor! To behold! Before
Thine own shift of wonderment,
All such sacrament; in light
Of trivial misgivings, another,
Which in your fiery footsteps those
Wretches upon this terrain do
Make their way.

So Prometheus! Will you get over here
And light my cigarette?



Holly Noonan

Dan Buckland

Samuel's Apple Orchard

Rising simply, abruptly, plain. It basked on the surface as clearly as your hands are visible to you right now. Pleasing and easy was the sight, exploited like a whore for a simple piece of metal. It quivered with no self-pity for it was what it was, a naïve idea it had, that on the surface it could be appreciated. Appreciated for its humble body, its naïve tongue, its subtle grace. The line grew to see it, and they gawked at it, and as quickly as they came they left. And it sank down shifting back and forth, twisting and turning. Because it was left alone, it was left to sink into forever; no one bothered to adopt it or to swallow it whole. A naïve idea, it had it squandered its dream, and so it is to be dismissed because of lack of responsibility, and lack of discipline.

He went through, back through and into the center of being. The water of the River balanced and surrounded his toes. Exhaling, the River pulled down on the back of his legs. The River bent itself to brace his body, and he allowed himself to be pulled down. It broke his surface, and underneath the horizon which only existed to him. He heard the whispers he heard everyday; he knew it was Time to go. He stepped from the River, holding the water against his body. He dressed and walked into the Apple Orchard.

As Samuel walked through his Apple Orchard, the trees would bend towards him, and the Apples seemed to be trying to pull themselves off their branches in an attempt to get to Samuel. Though they could not hear him, they felt him and were drawn to him. Samuel pulled himself back and looked down upon his Orchard; the trees in the Apple Orchard were arranged in a perfect circle. All the trees in the Orchard pressed into the center of the circle. There was a clearing of dark green grass. And in the middle of the field there was a large stone. This is where Samuel sat.

Like every morning Samuel waited patiently, waiting for the sun to show. When the sun's light began to pour out, Samuel fit what light he could in the leather bag slung over his shoulder. And then he walked among the green trees, the tops moving together holding each other. He

walked to each of his apples, and reaching into his bag he pulled a small amount of the light out. With it he washed the dark shadows off the Apple, and he took the shadow in his hands and put it in another bag that he carried at his side. He heard them whisper to him, he heard it through his Apples. Their little voices coming to him and pulling his hands, "Please," gently tugging at his sleeves. They came to him, "Protect me," walking small, "Please, help me," leaking from the Apples, "Please find me." And Samuel would pick them up and lay them back down inside. And he would whisper to them, Apple by Apple, small quiet words, so only the Apple he was talking to could hear him.

That night Samuel was sitting on his stone, and he saw a bird flying through the sky, her long tail coming behind her. It came down and landed among the trees on the edge of the clearing. Samuel got up and went to talk with her. She was dark blue, but her coloring grew heavier and lighter across her wings and tail, and she also carried a golden star on her back.

"God, you have such a lovely face. I almost forgot how beautiful your face can be. I am sorry darling but I must tell you this is all in vain, you know that right?" she said.

"You don't know that," he said.

"Oh yes I do. They will all forget you."

"They will not. I give them everything they ask for."

"You know I am telling the truth. You have felt it, it is coming to take them away from you. You know of what I am speaking. I am sorry, I truly am, but soon everything that you have done will disappear."

"You are a liar and you always will be."

"They don't even know what you do for them. Samuel, you don't exist to them. They speak to their imagination, not you."

"Leave me alone, just leave me alone."

"You don't exist. You never have, and you never will."

"Leave now." And Samuel swung at her, but she just flew off. She felt everything coming to him; it is almost time. And every tress that her tears fell upon became full of termites and of the Apples worms grew from the center and fell to the ground. Samuel sat and closed his eyes, and he said to himself, "I am real, I am real, I am real."

For many nights after that, the sun did not come. When the clouds began to sleep in the surrounding hills and the moon was out, Samuel sat on his stone. And if the Apples could hear, they would hear him singing to the moon, softly letting his voice walk ever so slowly out of his mouth and pace down around the trees in the Orchard.

Winged, crowned heroine
Of my unrelenting virginity
Swallowing escaping
Chasing my will
Your eyes fall
Tame and black
Shaping my voice
I Lift you up
Cupping you in my
Hands, as thin as air
Perched benevolently
You lay with me
Glimmering brilliantly
With the star on your heart
Nestled, humbly against my chest

The sun rose the next morning, and Samuel walked into his Orchard. He walked upon the tree line, and kneeled down next to the base of a tree. Inevitably it must all happen, coming together, being created, and becoming pale. But Time comes when it is all forgotten; no signs, no storms, it will just be forgotten, it will all be forgiven in the end, mercy. It just won't be the same, love it while you have the time, because you just don't know.

Samuel dug his hands down in the dirt, broke it, and shook his orchard. Change comes upon you, expect it. Samuel rolled onto his back and looked up at the Apples hanging from the branches. He yearned to hear something clean, but he felt it all coming through the Orchard. Time is coming. The Apples above him burst open, and thrust themselves upon him; he heard them.

"Would you like a bite of this fruit?"

"No, thank you."

"Now, John, are you sure?"

"Yes, Anna, I am. Now please, I am busy."

"Oh, it is quite wonderful you know, very clean, very red."

"Anna, please get off my lap."

"You are no fun, you know that, always work, work, work. No fun for you, John."

"You know these are important things that I must keep to."

"Oh, I know, but I just want to share a little bit if it with you. It is very clean, I promise, and look how shiny and red it is."

"Just a little bite, then will you leave me alone?"

"Yes, yes, yes, I'll get out of your way, and I promise not to touch you. Here, I'll even bite off a piece for you."

"You were right, it tastes very good, but it is not clean. It only looked clean. I can taste the poison on the skin. It really doesn't matter anymore, it's different now. Please give me more."

The Apples pulled themselves back in, the Time separated everything, and he was forgotten. In a moment things change, spaces in arms become everything. A hand yearning for another touch on her body. This became everything, once he was forgotten.

Samuel sat down on his stone. Feeling alone, he knew it had been coming for quite some time, he was sure of it now. He eventually heard their voices fade, and he felt he was losing his voice. And slowly their voices were completely gone. Then, defeated, he drew his voice into himself. For if there was nothing for him to hear there was no one to answer to, so he was not needed. The memory of Samuel faded away, and his impression he left on the Apple Orchard was forgotten. The Orchard was then left unattended. Samuel sat, and slowly he came away into nothing, for that is all he ever was, without the Orchard. But his eyes remained, no shape, no life, no will, just a witness to it all. And the Apples voices drifted off unheard. And then everything slowly faded to fall. Then winter, and then darkness slowly started to spill out of Samuel's bag and overtook what remaining light was left in the Orchard. And all you could hear were voices in the darkness. All Samuel could see were veins that ran through the darkness, for it was a living thing. But the Orchard was held in space, tangled in the veins, forgotten.

She sat on the moon, crying, bringing rain onto Samuel's Orchard. The moon dimmed and so did the star on her back, as time swept underneath her. Close your eyes and talk to yourself when no one is around, and feel how alone you are. Only silence remains, and you must listen for him, because in time you might hear him. Because he still sits upon his stone, alone forgotten. And he might one day get his voice back, and alone in the night he might try and sing to the moon.

Cassandra R. Hodgson

only with you

misstep
is that what this is?
i think i made a wrong turn
went off the beaten path
slept too near the cliff's edge

inattention
that's where this came from
i stopped watching
forgot to wait
just did my thing

inadvertent
i didn't mean to
it just happened
rested on my laurels
and got swept up

infatuation
or so they say
constantly faced with unreality
crazy little thing
or is that me?

tripped
i took a fall
lifted my eyes
accidentally
but with zeal

reckless
maybe i didn't take heed
lack of caution
but i don't mind
living on the edge

is the safest place to be
only with you.



Teresa Mathew

Kelly Boyer

Where Is My Mother?

People always ask, "Do you want to find your birthmother some day?" with veiled curiosity. Each is afraid that they have somehow overstepped that appropriate line, fearing that they have either offended me or become too personal. Yet, I myself am plagued by that very same question. In one sense it would fulfill the black voids in my memory, but it also feels like a betrayal to the parents who raised me as their own. Each day, as people pass by, there are discernable features that are uniquely theirs, yet semblances of their relatives as well. Some family inherited trait that has surfaced in the future generation, as insurance that the legacy continues. Every day, they can look in the mirror and know exactly where they can find out from whom they get their eyes, thighs, style, and flair. Not knowing is like looking in the mirror at a stranger.

Sitting on a bench, I appear to be like any other teenage girl resting from a hard day of shopping. The passersby probably do not think about the fact that I am oriental. They do not think of me as being different, but I notice the differences. It raises questions in my mind such as, "Where do I belong, and will I ever be in the majority?" Being able to look around and see everyone looking like me would give me a sense of belonging. Yet, even in my motherland of Korea, I would be considered an outsider, a foreigner, an American. America has been my homeland since I was a year and a half old. I have been submerged in the culture; I am just as American as my neighbors and friends. As I sit on the bench and think about the differences between the passersby and myself, I think about what it must have been like to come from Korea to American and the gaps that change created.

There are hundreds of people everywhere. A distant voice is speaking over the intercom system announcing the final boarding for Flight 200 to Seattle, Washington. Warm arms are surrounding me, keeping me warm. At this moment the world is safe, and no harm shall dare intrude upon this moment. But something is not right. Normally, I would be napping on my mat next to my mother. I had a mother before her, but I cannot remember her now. My last mother left me with this new mother. I like the smell of this mother. She smells clean and safe. Why are we here among all these people? This is not my normal routine. Suddenly, I feel the arms letting

go, I panic and look towards Mother. I am wrenched from my security. Oh no, not again. Do not leave me, Mother. My last image of security is a face so like mine, dripping wet, luminous tears down her cheeks. A stranger whispers encouraging words, and though in a language I cannot comprehend, they are strangely comforting. As we move away, I hear my mother saying through her tears, "An nyong ee keh sehyo" (good bye in Korean). This confuses me greatly. Why is she crying? My mind goes blank.

Where are we? The strange lady is next to me. What is she saying? Where is my mother? Why am I not with the other children? "bae-ko-p'a-yo" (Korean for "I am hungry"). I said I was hungry. Why is the lady looking at me strangely? I notice the other people. Why do they look different? Their big, open eyes are scary. That one there has yellow hair and that one has brown. They have such big noses. Why are they holding babies? I am bigger than those other little ones. Where is my mother? I want to cry but I am so confused. Sleep, it is always a good solution.

Owwww! My ears hurt. It feels like I am falling. Where is my mother? Why am I not at home with my friends? The other children would be eating. The lady gave me a cracker. We are still sitting. Where is my mother? The other babies are crying. There is so much noise. The lady is making noise again. "You are going to a new home today, where they will love and care for you. You are a very lucky girl, Cho." I heard my name! I look inquisitively at her. She has a sincere smile on her face. Somehow, that look comforts me and conveys what her words cannot. There is a tinge of sadness in her gaze, which confuses me, but I cannot dwell on it among the other confusions of this day.

We are walking towards a group of people. They seem to be excited. All around me are the other babies. Where are we going? The lady hands my frail body over to yet another stranger. I cannot take much more. This woman has kind eyes and an encouraging smile, but she looks nothing like me. She hugs me close, much like my other mother, but she keeps calling me Kelly. What is a Kelly? Who is Kelly? All around, there are more people that look like this stranger. I was to learn that these people were to become my family, but at the moment they all looked odd. Lights were flashing from little black boxes. Someone murmurs, "She is nineteen months old and only weighs eighteen pounds!" All I know is that these arms seem familiar, feel familiar. Yet, as I gaze around, none of the faces look like mine. Where is my mother? I again look at the woman holding me. She has salty tears rolling down her cheeks as well. The scene seems so familiar, yet the faces are so different.

Someone shouts, "Kelly! Kelly!" It is my adoptive mom. "You looked like you were a million miles away. What were you thinking about?"

"Oh, I was just thinking about how I must have felt coming to a strange land and strange people," I say.

"You were definitely confused," she recollects. "You would go from person to person as if you were searching for your mother. It took awhile for you to figure out that I was the constant one. You were lost for a little while."

I thought about her saying, "You were lost for a little while," and think that I am not so sure that I have found my way yet. True, I realize that my family resides in the people I have been raised by. Yet there are parts of my life that they cannot conceivably give me no matter how hard they try. Some people do not experience the sense of panic that they do not have roots. Instead, they adapt quite well and move on with their lives. Others are haunted by the fact that they do not look like their mother, father, siblings, grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles, each realization causing a greater sense of panic. Each day is a constant balancing scale: on one side there is gratefulness for the wonderful life in America, yet sadness is always lingering in the background with a haunting resonance asking, "Who am I and where do I belong?"

Some people are content not knowing, but the ambiguity intrigues and motivates me to find the answers. So in answer to those curious people, yes, I would like to find my birthmother some day.



Erica Martin

Kathleen Crane

Angels on the Court

Sweat dripped off my nose onto the hardwood floor. With less than two minutes left to play in the Regional Championship, my teammates and I found ourselves down by fifteen points. An aching feeling somewhere deep inside my chest increased as every second ticked off the clock, bringing us that much closer to losing everything we had hoped for, worked for, and dreamed of all season long. In my heart I knew this was the end; we were going to lose. But I kept fighting against the inevitable. I clung with all my might to a tiny voice of hope inside me. If they would just miss this next free throw, or if we could just get a quick steal and a layup... I fought harder than ever, hustled after every loose ball, and played with every ounce of determination inside of me, refusing to allow myself to admit defeat. I did not want this game to end; too much was at stake. But with three seconds left, I desperately lunged at the ball, lost my footing, and flew headlong into an opponent. As the shrill sound of the referee's whistle pierced the air, I realized that I had just committed my fifth foul. I had given everything I had, but it was not good enough. We could not win the game. We would not go to state. And there was nothing I could do about it any longer. As the referee led me to the bench, I looked over my shoulder to the stands. Through my sweat and my tears, I saw Mr. Fisher, my high school science teacher, and wondered if this was how he felt, too.

Just a few short months ago I sat in chemistry class one morning in my new red dress, daydreaming about the half court trap we had added to our playlist the night before to stop that feisty point guard from Richardton. I didn't notice how silent the classroom had become until Mr. Fisher began to speak. His face, once full, was now gaunt and sallow. His eyes, which once twinkled with laughter and mischief, now expressed a profound sorrow and exhaustion. Everyone had noticed a change in Mr. Fisher, but we were so consumed in our daily activities we hadn't given it much thought. We wrote off his symptoms as the flu or maybe a virus. But as Mr. Fisher faced our class that morning, something in his face told me that his illness was much more than that.

We all listened with disbelief as Mr. Fisher explained through his half choked voice that the doctors had finally determined why he had been

feeling so crappy for the last few months; he had been diagnosed with a malignant form of melanoma. The cancer affected the epidermis of his internal organs and was spreading rapidly. His voice cracked, and Mr. Fisher visibly struggled to maintain his composure. But after a moment, Mr. Fisher lifted his head, the corners of his mouth turned upward and a glimmer returned to his eye. Though the doctors told him it was quite serious, he smiled and told us not to worry. "I firmly believe that I will be well again, and I'm going to do everything in my power to do so." He explained that he would still be in school everyday and that we were to treat him as we did when he was healthy. "I don't feel sorry for myself, and I will certainly not tolerate pity from any of you!" said Mr. Fisher with a tear and a twinkle in his eye.

William James Fisher was the resident "mad" scientist of Mott High School. Above his desk hung a sign (presumably swiped from a hardware store) proclaiming "Fisher Nut Department," which was actually quite an accurate description of daily activities in his classroom. After his carefully crafted lecture had concluded, Mr. Fisher would use the last few minutes of his class to read aloud from such titles as "101 Uses for a Dead Cat" or "Explosives for Dummies." A fierce rivalry existed between Mr. Fisher and his best friend, our balding English teacher Mr. Moore; the student population did much to aid in the propagation of the slanders they hurled at each other. We scurried from class to class in anticipation of comments such as, "Did you hear about the science teacher whose English skills were so poor that he couldn't even alphabetize a bag of M & M's?" or "Class!! You must really let poor Mr. Moore know about the article in this noted science quarterly that states that teaching English is now conclusively linked with severe hair loss." Like many good chemistry teachers, every October 23rd from 6:02 am until 6:02 pm, Mr. Fisher observed Mole Day (in honor of Avagadro's number) as if it were a religious holiday. He was a practical jokester, picking on students and co-workers alike. The girl's basketball team submitted what we knew was a futile petition to our miserly school board for uniform funding. After the petition was rejected, Mr. Fisher took it upon himself to raise the funds for us by taking up collections in his classes. He raised \$1.47, which he presented to our team captains with much pomp, circumstance, and sarcasm.

In addition to the laughter and the jokes, Mr. Fisher was an excellent teacher. His enthusiasm for protons, invertebrates, and covalent bonding was contagious. He had a brilliant mind and was a dynamic speaker. His descriptions of cellular respiration and the theory of relativity were poetic. Beyond that, he made each student that set foot into his classroom feel worthwhile and important. We knew that he genuinely cared for each of us. Like only a handful of his colleagues, he had refined the balancing act between discipline and high standards with respect and friendship.

Mr. Fisher also loved sports. He adored the game of baseball and never missed a high school sporting event. With the same gusto one would regularly reserve for the likes of Michael Jordan and Magic Johnson, Mr. Fisher would announce the starting lineups for "our very own Mott Cardinals" at most home basketball games. As he was never a great athlete himself, he especially identified with the proverbial underdog; the Cubs, the Bears, and closer to home, the Mott Lincoln High Girls' Basketball team. Without a player over 5'9", we had to rely on our speed and teamwork to be successful. Though we had experience on the squad, in the past we had fallen short when it mattered the most. But after a tough loss, Mr. Fisher was always there to support us. "We'll get them next year," he would say. But we all realized that there were only so many chances left.

But basketball seemed quite petty after what had just transpired in the science room that day. Our class was silent. We sat through the next hour not knowing what to say or how to say it. When the bell rang, Mr. Fisher held the door open for us as was his custom. But as we filed past, we stared at the ground not daring to make eye contact. The good-natured ribbing and smiles that usually followed me out of his classroom were replaced with silence and an empty feeling in the pit of my stomach. Mr. Fisher tried to break the mood as he yelled after us, "C'mon you guys! Lighten up! I'm not dead yet!" But his words had the opposite effect on me. Tears came from nowhere, threatening to escape from my eyes. Usually crying in school is on the top of the list of embarrassing moments in the life of a high school student, but somehow I didn't care. Maybe it was because I loved Mr. Fisher so much, but maybe it was because everyone else was crying, too.

A melancholy mood hung over the school all day. We all realized that Mr. Fisher, not one to be taken lightly, was completely serious about getting well. But we were all secretly asking ourselves the same question: "What were his chances . . . really?" This question and the consequence of its answer hung thick in the air of our school. Though no one dared to speak, we all knew the truth. Mr. Fisher's chances were nowhere near what his optimism allowed him to believe. The truth was too hard to speak out loud, so we remained silent. Maybe we thought hiding behind the silence would make all of the events of the day disappear.

But the members of the girls' basketball team were not allowed to hide for long. Mary Hoherz, the basketball coach, confronted the awkward silence the moment she stepped on the bus. "I know what happened in school today, and as a team, you need to decide how you are going to deal with Mr. Fisher's illness." As the bus bumped and jostled down the road, we began talking. And as we talked, we became a team for the first time, truly unified by our love and respect for Mr. Fisher. We decided that just as we believed in ourselves and in our team's ability to succeed, we must

also believe in Mr. Fisher's ability to conquer his illness. Our goal to win a birth in the state tournament seemed comparable to Mr. Fisher's goal to be well again. Through hard work, a positive attitude, teamwork, dedication, heart, and desire we knew we could accomplish anything. Why wouldn't the same hold true for Mr. Fisher? For these reasons, we decided to dedicate our season to Mr. Fisher.

We stepped supremely confident off the bus that afternoon. We had always believed in ourselves, but now we had no doubts about our ability to succeed. We may not have been the tallest or most experienced team around, but we were special. We were not only playing to win, we were fighting for a life. We felt if we worked hard and believed in ourselves, we would win that trip to the state tournament, and in the process, give Mr. Fisher the strength to battle and beat his disease. We possessed a real, tangible power, and everyone felt it. Our confidence that night carried us to a forty-point victory over our opponents. After the game, we began a tradition that would carry over into every game and every practice for the rest of the season: we knelt on the floor of the locker room and prayed for Mr. Fisher. This prayer became a living, binding force that held our team together through the highs and lows that were to come.

For the next few days, we prepared both on and off the court, determined to show everyone our team's newfound purpose. On the court, we practiced with astonishing focus and intensity, brilliantly executing play after play - each day meeting new challenges and conquering them with confidence and ease. Off the court, we began brainstorming ideas of outward signs that could be used in our school and community to help others to recognize both the transformation and newfound mission that our team had undertaken. In honor of Mr. Fisher's favorite color, we purchased green shoelaces and hair ties. We came up with the slogan 4UWF, which stood for "For You, William Fisher". The slogan could be seen everywhere, from the alphabet beads on our shoelaces to each of the walls in our locker room. With green posters plastered everywhere, soon everyone knew about how our team had dedicated our season to Mr. Fisher. We sailed through the first half of the season, gaining strength and confidence with each victory. After defeating several district rivals along with Mandan, the Class "A" powerhouse, our team steeled itself as we prepared to face our most formidable challenge, the third ranked team in the state, the Washburn Cardinals.

The night of the game, the air was thick with anticipation as the sound of hundreds of rowdy fans filtered into our locker room. The air was electric, and together as we knelt to pray, a supernatural power came over us and followed us onto the court. There was no other way to explain what happened that night. We relentlessly executed our half court trap, stealing pass after pass from our bewildered opponents. On the offensive side, every pick seemed to stick, every pass seemed to burn, and every shot

seemed to drop. We played with one mind and one body, as we had never played before. We worked harder than ever because we felt we had never wanted something so much in our entire lives. And this want, this desire, all stemmed from our love, respect, and admiration for Mr. Fisher. Yes, we wanted to win, but we wanted him to live so much more. Basketball became more than a game, it became a prayer. That night on the court, we prayed with more fervor than ever before, laying down our wants, fears, desires, and hopes. With our whole body and soul, we set out to physically prove our love for God, each other, and most of all, Mr. Fisher. God listened. That night we walked away with a thirteen-point victory over Washburn.

Still undefeated, our team, now ranked number three in the statewide power poll, began gaining recognition. We used the positive energy we gained from our win over Washburn to increase our momentum during the second half of our season. With every win, Mr. Fisher's spirits soared. As our team gained confidence, Mr. Fisher gained confidence in his own ability to win his battle with cancer. After every game, Mr. Fisher would collect high fives from the teams as we walked to the showers, "to collect our positive energy," he said. When a rough day rolled around, he drew on the support and strength of our team.

Though our team continued winning and his spirits stayed high, Mr. Fisher's health continued to fail. We knew he had not received encouraging news at his last visit to the oncologist. Rumor had it that the doctor had informed Mr. Fisher that he had only a couple of months left to live. Left with no other treatment options, he had agreed to participate in an experimental study. Though the research proved promising, the experimental medicine brought with it the side effects of excruciating bone aches and a terrible cough. Each day growing physically weaker, Mr. Fisher was no longer able to stand up during an entire class period. Half joking, he told our chemistry class that he was going to bring his lazy boy from home and lecture with his feet up. A few days later, he proved to be true to his word. As he leaned back against the cushioned recliner, he sighed contentedly, smiled and said, "This is the life!"

Finally, with only one regular season game left, our record stood 17-0. In our final contest we were to square off against the Dickinson Trinity Titans, the only other undefeated team in the state. We hated Trinity with a passion, and not just because they were our main competition at the moment. Their enrollment was over seven times that of our school district and with so many more students to draw from, they nearly always had a competitive team. They were ranked first in the state and had been all year long. They were the only thing left standing in our way on our quest for a perfect season and a trip to the state tournament - the only thing, we felt,

left standing in between our goal to win for Mr. Fisher enough strength to survive.

For days preceding the game, the phone in the school office rang off the hook with calls from sportscasters hoping to cover this battle of the "unbeatens." The television station came down from Bismarck to film a clip for the sports highlights. Coming from miles around, people began arriving in Mott before noon on the day of the game. They were jammed body against body into our gymnasium, lining the walls under the basket, the doorways, hallways, and every available space in between. At half time of the junior varsity game, the staff began turning people away.

All of the attention this game had brought our team shook us up a bit. Our usual confidence was replaced with nervous tension. Collectively, we tried to ignore the feeling, tried to "get our heads in the game." But despite our best efforts, we walked on to the floor that night scared and intimidated. We did not play with confidence. We did not execute the offense that we had been running so brilliantly all season long. We simply could not pull ourselves together. After an exhausting mental battle, we lost the game by five points. We were disappointed, some of us devastated. We felt we had failed Mr. Fisher, that we were responsible for his declining condition. If we had only won he would be up walking around, not confined to a wheel chair. Though we realized that we could not let this one loss destroy our team's morale, each day - each practice was a struggle.

We couldn't help but feel a little bit sorry for ourselves. But with end of the season tournaments fast approaching, we needed to find some way to pull ourselves together. The other captains and I tried repeatedly to build up our team's spirits, but nothing seemed to work. The night before tournaments I remember lying in my bed looking at the ceiling, and wondering how we would ever be the team that we had once been. How do we win back our confidence? How do we regain our focus? Where would our strength come from?

The next day when I walked in the front door of the school, I saw my answer. In front of the locker of each player on our team was a rose, a balloon, and an envelope dangling from a green string. Inside the envelope, a delicate gold angel pin was nestled into the corner. Each pin was attached to a letter:

ANGELS ON THE COURT

At a time when I was really down, you chose to do something very special. It really helped to know that you cared enough to dedicate your season to me, and it really helped to lift my spirits. I will always cherish that caring act of kindness, and all of you will always hold a special place in my heart.

It is a true example of the strong character of your team both on and off the basketball floor.

I have always thought of angels as being special. You definitely were my angels this year. Please accept this pin as a small symbol of my appreciation! During the tournaments, may you soar like the angels you are.

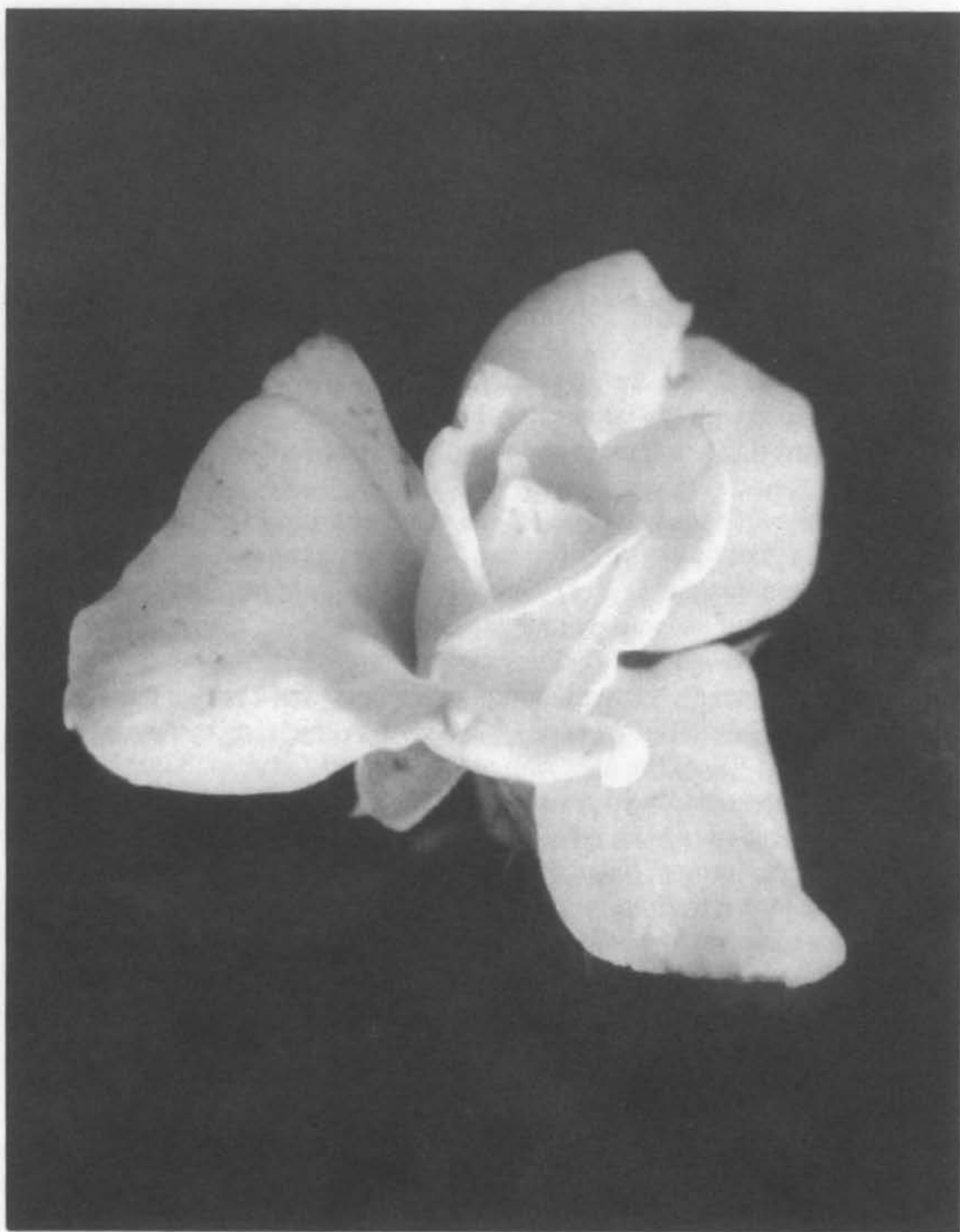
Good luck and God Bless each of you.

Mr. Fisher

As I read the letter, I laughed and cried all at the same time. After tearful embraces with my teammates, I knew we were going to be just fine. We would win this tournament and this trip to state for Mr. Fisher, and everything would work out.

But as the final three seconds of the championship game ran off the clock and the final buzzer rang, I knew things would not work out, at least not how we had imagined. Yes, there were tears—our amazing season was over. But it had all become more than just a game, more than a season. I thought of all of images and feelings we would remember about our season; the long practices, the exhilaration of beating Washburn, and the pain of our loss to Trinity. But most of all, we would remember how we made a difference in the life of the man who made such a difference in our lives. As we sat, remembered, and prayed, the aching feeling in our stomachs was gradually replaced with a feeling of contentment and peace. There we sat, twelve girls sitting crying on a basketball court, sharing a love of the game, a love for each other, but most of all, a love for our teacher and our friend. This amazing love was worth more than any game, any victory, any championship. We knew that Mr. Fisher felt the same way, too.

On February 27th, 2001, William James Fisher lost his battle with cancer.



Danielle Jessen

Heather Nelson

Dream Candle

A candle burns so steadily
bright yellow—orange light
only flickering falsely
against the windless night

Breath against a frail flame
a glimmer—once or twice
recover an everlasting gleam
its looks are those of ice

Never a darkened shadow shown
to weaken a determined state
just an all 'round thoughtful glow
where dreams can animate

Directed towards an endless sky
and pointed towards the beam
focus on the dulling speck
time to create the dream

Close your sleepy eyes
and blow against the dying flame
the light slowly melts away
but the dream shall forever remain

Dear Forum Readers,

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1. Print a hard copy of your work.
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3. Complete a Submission Release Form.
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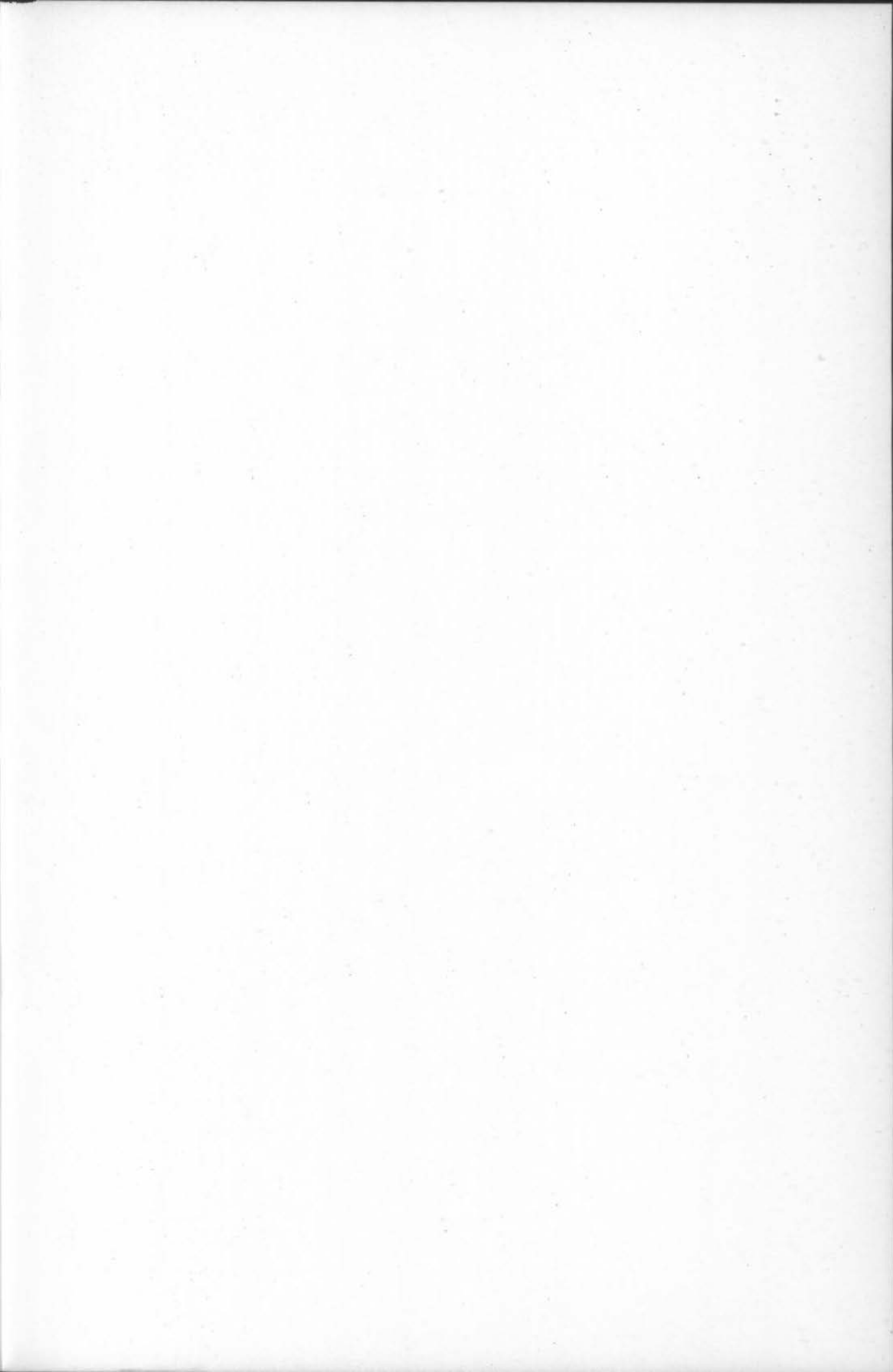
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