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The Mockingbird

1978

The Mockingbird

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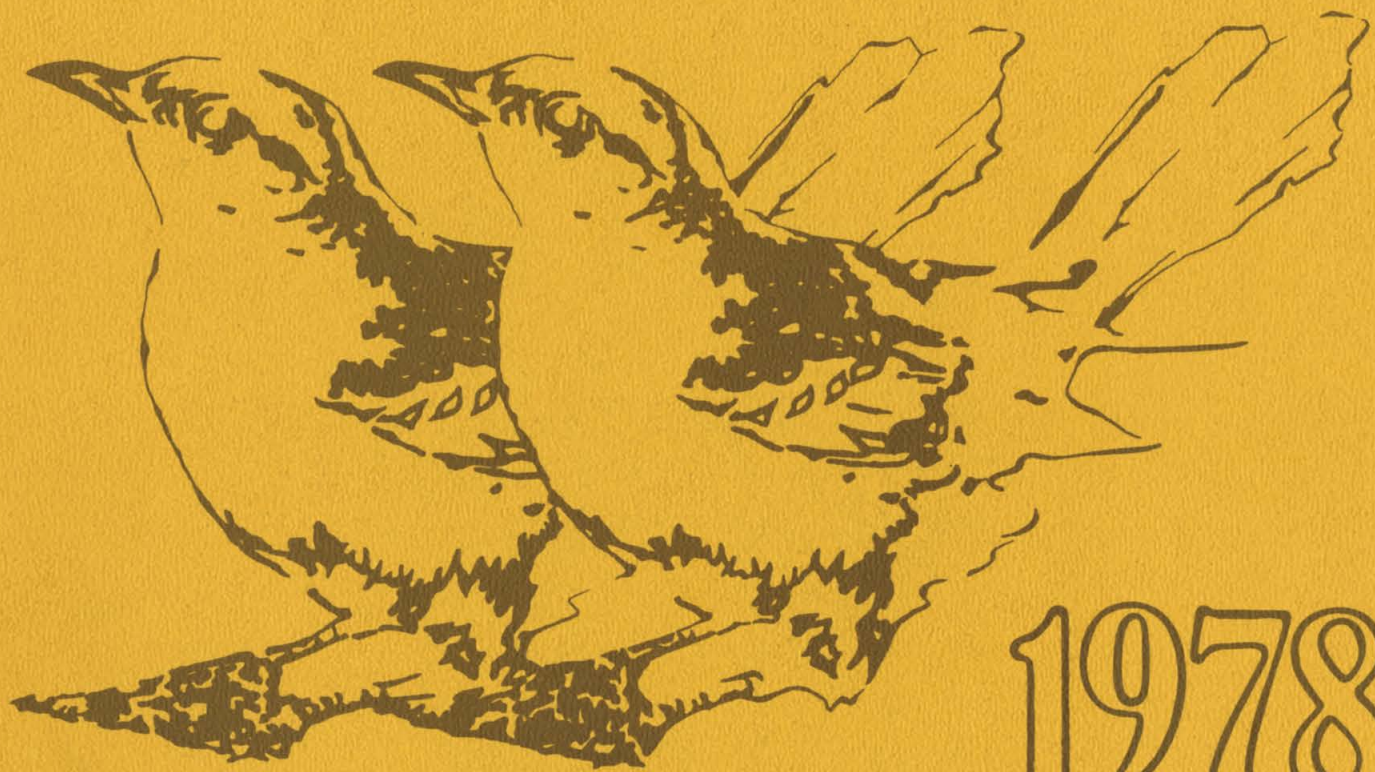


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1978

MOCKINGBIRD

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KATHY LEWIS
Honorable Mention Photograph



TED AGUIRRE
Honorable Mention Print

TO JEAN'S KID

Time was when a mooncalf
stirred -- sublimberly,
in a sanguine glow.

Her wetbird body crouched.
her foggy face cleared.
her pulse became a wave

That flung her gasping for
a blinding beach.
the cry that jumped

From off her tongue
has held so many forms,
but quite this one

Before; she looks like
you, her mother said,
let's name her Jean.

Most rivers start
as springs
or pools of rain:
the muddy earth drips,
and trickles meet in creeks,
and waters fall down
ponderously
to the sea.

Most rivers, all but one,
but that one runs in
reverse through a bedrock
of years, and moves
to turn its sluice
into blood.

It commenced to flow
in our mother the sea
long ago, before her
face was even wrinkled.
The moon moved her,
the sun lay hot upon her
rolling tides for
eternity, except when
passion wearied into
clouds -- then they were
apart, and longing held
even air's breath
until the tall rain
washed them together.

Somewhere, sometime, who
could say, the river spouted,
swelled beneath the sea's emotion,
inhaled till it had filled her belly,
till it had breathed all the water, then,
there, where the huge thighs were stretched
round a continent, there the river spilled,
stood.

Soon mere land
was flooded, drenched,
years remained the only
channel.

. . .and

change: the main flow
forked into phylum,
genus, an artery splinters
into capillaries, thousands

of species of rivulet forged
on, and where a trickle
wet the dust, something
shook itself, and breathed.

Not a sound
but something strangely
kin. . .resonates
resonates.

The right tone will
make a room
resonate, a normal
sound becomes much
greater, the
whole room sings.

At times
not a sound
but something strange
resonates
downriver.

Now and again a creature
remembers, recollects,
tells the river story.

Tells it with the body,
tells it from the beginning
when the earth and sky

Curled up into an egg
and hatched a trillion new
surprises; the tale unfolds

And likewise does the teller.
the body moves from plant
to fish, from gills to

Lungs: sound like healthy
ones, her mother said,
i think i'll call her Rachael.

JIM ANDERSON
First Place Poem

So, you want
a new
dress

Something new
. . . to wrap
that mother-starved
motherly body
of yours
in

And we'll all feel new
in our sweet pastels
. . .God how will I explain
if she sees that--
she'll get offended
me talking about her matronly body
. . .but it's true
Even her eyes
are matronly--

I'll never have a sister
she says
she'll never have a child--
that doesn't stop me being a
perpetual brother--
we invent the things
we cannot be

Oh,-- I was just thinking of you
and that new dress

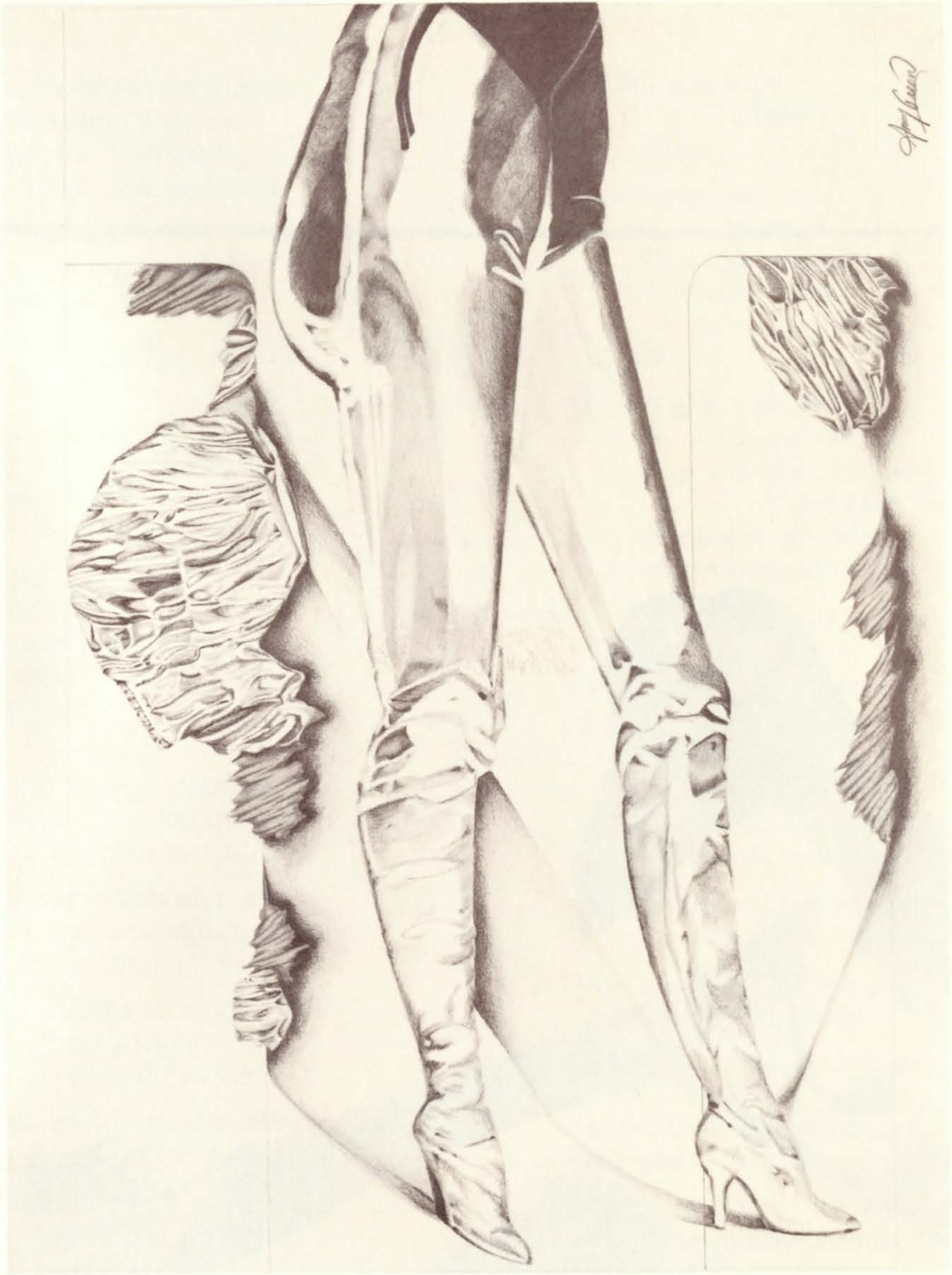
I was thinking of something
with soft sloping lines--
something which follows
the pear-shape of your body

Something soft depending
like your mother bosom--
but I didn't say this
to you

TOM LAWHON
Honorable Mention



JON BUCHANAN
Second Place Print



AMY GREEN
Honorable Mention Drawing

OUR MOUNTAINS

KAY DECKER

First Place Essay

With the dawning of each new season in the mountains, the fever for exploration - that desire for the excitement of discovering unknown paths - would flood through our veins until the urge could no longer be denied. My brothers and sisters and I would abandon our squabbling, united by a common goal. Together, we sought the opportunity when, for the few rare moments our parents' attentions were focused elsewhere, we could skip away to continue our explorations unhampered by their watchful eyes.

Despite our youth, the knowledge we had accumulated through numerous expeditions greatly exceeded that of most adults. Nevertheless, Mom worried when long hours passed before we reappeared.

Living at the foothills of the same mountains he had explored as a child, Dad knew the temptations his children were subjected to. Yet he also knew the dangers of the alluring forest, where the same sun-speckled shadows which camouflaged fawns often concealed rattlesnakes. And, knowing the care-free abandonment of children at play, Dad usually joined Mom in her cautions. "Sneak off like that one more time, and you'll wish you hadn't," he would warn, attempting to be stern and not quite reaching his goal.

Despite their worries, our parents knew it was useless to hope their warnings and threats would be heeded; the moment the opportunity presented itself, we wasted no time. Sliding under the rusty wire fence at the foot of the hill, pumping laboriously to the top,

then merging quickly with the trees, we made escapes Tom Sawyer would have envied.

The mountain stretched one long, sparse arm down to the top of our hill. Here we entered, immediately sheltered from inquisitive adult eyes. Since it lay within the boundaries of family property, we felt as if this small part of the mountain was exclusively ours. Affectionately, if inappropriately, we called our claim to the mountain "the Jungle." We spent many happy hours here as small children, before our expanding minds and bodies led us to seek further horizons.

A deep gully divided the Jungle into two halves. The gully no longer served as a water runoff, and decaying trees had fallen throughout, providing a spongy, moist brown carpet, spotted occasionally by a small patch of soft green moss.

One side of the gully sloped sharply upward. At the top of this steep slope, small but stout pines sheltered the gully. Battered by the elements, these pines had only a few sparse branches; however, they extended their sturdy lower limbs invitingly only a few feet above the ground. Short legs and arms were just long enough to reach these lower branches, and these became our favorite trees. Scrambling to the outer edges of the limbs which extended over the gully, we built a small tree house from which we could guard the front entrance to our Jungle.

Blackberry briars were scattered throughout the Jungle. Although we greatly enjoyed the berries, the bram-

continued

bles served still another purpose - that of providing much-needed coverage when we played cowboys and Indians.

The Jungle still echoes with our battles. "Get that Indian - he's behind that rotten log," a cowboy would yell. Seconds later, the bloodcurdling screams of the "captured" Indian reverberated through the Jungle, and counterattacking Indians dashed through the foliage in pursuit of a fleeing cowboy.

When, at last, we tired of re-creating history in our battles, we found evidence of ages long past when we proceeded farther into the forest. Trees began to look older and bigger, and many had fallen, resting in various stages of decay until, at last uniting with the rich dark loam of earth and fallen leaves, they nourished new seedlings.

The soft rustling of leaves and branches overhead, the occasional snap of a twig underfoot, and sometimes the whistle of a bird or rustle of a small animal in the undergrowth were the only noises invading the stillness of the forest. Even we, the noisiest of children, would speak with lowering voices as we proceeded deeper into the forest. Whispers seemed irreverent, and usually our voices faded into silence.

While sometimes our visits were quiet meetings with Nature, other times were just for fun. One of our favorite times to visit the mountains was in the late winter, following the last of winter's heavy snows. The sparkling white diamonds would loosen their grasp on the tall trees and plop heavily to the earth in huge, soft lumps, dampening the forest floor until our booted feet could hardly free themselves from the slush. Warm sunshine banished the

bite of cold winter air, and carried a hint of the spring to come.

On such days happiness and joy were as natural as breathing, and even the loser of snowball fights could not remain angry for long. At such times Nature, too, rejoiced; our shouts resounding through the trees were as much a part of the mountains as the silence which prevailed on dark autumn afternoons.

We learned much from the mountains. We learned the forests can be gentle, yet harsh. Soft spring winds that nourish the newly-blossoming foliage can become a cruel tempest overnight. The mountains taught us to enjoy nature, yet respect it; and that often, simple happiness comes not through a driving search for the end of a golden rainbow, but through relaxing in a place we love.

EMPIRICAL WINTER LANDSCAPE

I see a field of snow
a fence
a high ridge visible behind the trees that grow on
a sun
a sky
a cloud
another
I shall not tell you about the transparent trees of winter
how their coats of many colors fall apart and fade and
lie in rags at their feet
Nor shall I describe the battlefield that is
last year's cornfield
the lines drawn
the dead and broken soldiers with missing ears
Or offer even a simple assumption like
Fields are really empty forests
You in turn are not to tell me of imminent resurrections
I see a field of snow
a fence
a high ridge visible

TONY CLARK
Honorable Mention

KATHY LEWIS
Honorable Mention Photograph



ART TAYLOR
First Place Print

THE FIRST DAY

My father grew violent the other day in his unreason
Having no answers to the raging curses of old age
I packed some books in an overnight bag and started walking
the narrow road
As evening mist settled round a deserted house
Feeling no familiar comfort I slept there a stranger
Rat-like among the rafters with my revulsion
Next day seeking work so I could escape and leave
the old man to his madness
Everywhere told they were taking no applications
Thinking only of bricks and dollars green
leaves of numbers
I left that empty house cursing heading home
by way of the cemetery
Up the hilly gravel-and-clay road and
there he stood
The mist lifting as if chased away
by his waving arms

ANONYMOUS
Second Place Poem

CASTING

We used to fish here.
Rowed out to that point where we
Couldn't get by walking.
But the water there bred bluegill
So we rowed and cast our lines,
Watched them fall straight and deep,
Waited while the sun passed over.
A patient man, content to wait
For the big strike that never came,
With the son he never had.

MARY L. FOXX
Honorable Mention

TOYS

JAMES MINTZ

First Place Short Fiction

Aunt Crystal was always different from the rest of us, a real lady and a generous one at that. Her very life was different--I think destiny made it so, or perhaps some kind of writing in the stars. She left Tomotla Creek as soon as she graduated from high school, in the spring of 1940--got away from the miserable place while she was young, as Grandma often said in later years. But she came back frequently, and her visits were the absolute high points of my early childhood, on a par with Santa Claus, snow, and the days when Mama and Daddy didn't fight.

When she left she went east to Charlotte and found a job as a secretary trainee in one of the offices of Butler Brothers Manufacturing Company near Pineville. That didn't last long. She soon met and married G. Edward White-more, a lanky student at Johnson C. Smith University. With the war on its way, he was to become an officer in the U.S. Army.

I never liked G. Edward that much. I always thought he was somewhat slack-jawed and dumb, but my mother, who was two years older than Aunt Crystal, adored him. A fine brother, she always called him, so handsome in his Army suit with the brass buttons and the stripes down the legs; and who, she never failed to point out (especially if my dad was within earshot), provided so well for his family.

Although I could never see Uncle G. Edward's finer qualities quite as clearly as my mother did, I tolerated him. In fact, I even came to like his uniform, if for no other reason than that it was

so crisp and new. (As opposed, say, to my dad's threadbare, greasy overalls.) But that uniform was about all I could find to like. Otherwise he seemed cold and distant and somewhat condescending to us country folks. Not that it mattered to me, for I could have taken Uncle G. Edward any way he came, even if I'd hated him, because I worshipped the woman he married. Or, at least, I did for years.

After their marriage Aunt Crystal and Uncle G. Edward usually came back to the Creek for a visit two or three times a year. Most of the time they arrived in the dead of night, after I was asleep, perhaps because they had to drive so many miles. They'd write Grandma beforehand to say they were coming, and since our house was only a three-minute run (or a five-minute walk, if you prefer) from hers, I was usually the second person in the entire valley to know her visit was imminent. I would have accepted nothing less.

Those magic nights were always better for me than Christmas Eves ever were. I'd go to bed early, and before the sun ever rose, while the roosters still crowed and the dew still hung heavy on the trail to Grandma's, I'd go to her, slipping into the bedroom called the upper room where she always slept.

Seeing her there, breathing so softly with the dawn breaking outside the curtained windows, was a wonderful thing, even if G. Edward was only a few feet away. I enjoyed looking at her nearly as much as anything else. I'd creep close and sit cross-legged in the

floor beside the bed, watching her in moonstruck awe, trying to guess what joyous things she'd brought me this time. Often I was uncertain she was even a real person, thinking she might be an angel or something. Her blonde hair fell in shiny tresses across her soft oval face, and her nightgown, whatever its color and design, was always prettier than anything else I'd ever seen. And she smelled wonderful, always. She wore perfumes no one else ever wore. I would not have believed, had someone told me, that those aromas were made by the hand of man. I'd just sit there and look at her and wonder and wait, and I guess in a way she was the first woman I ever truly loved.

Invariably, although I was quiet as a spider, something would tell her I was there, and she'd open her eyes and look at me, just like that. All on her own.

Her dark eyes were wide and soft and always smiling, and when they were opened upon me, G. Edward might as well have been a million miles away. For a glorious eternity, while she gazed at me, no one else was in that room but she and I: A five-year-old and a goddess.

"I've got something for you, Stranger," she'd whisper with a smile, driving me nearly crazy. I'd leap across the gulf between us and pile onto her in unabashed joy. She'd hug me tight against her warm soft breasts, kiss me, and say, "Hush now, don't you wake up your Uncle Ed." I was her slave. I would not have made another sound if I'd been dying.

True to her word, one of the suitcases at the foot of the bed was invariably full of good things. Toys galore: Cars, guns, tanks, and always soldiers. Soldiers crouched for attack, soldiers leaping

into battle, soldiers standing tall and proud. Some had painted-on uniforms just like Uncle G. Edward's; others wore fatigues and carried bazookas or flame throwers or strange devices I didn't know.

There were other gifts besides soldiers, or course. Once she hid a rocking horse at the foot of the bed, a magnificent white-footed sorrel frozen forever in a deathless prance, covered by one of Grandma's spare blankets to surprise me. And sometimes there were puzzles, or a bow and arrow, or even stuffed animals. But she was particularly fond of giving me soldiers. I got all kinds of them, boxes and sacks full, and by the time I was six I could assemble whole armies. At last there were so many they cluttered up our house and sometimes got in the way.

One evening my dad came in from the mill, tired and dirty, and stumbled over one of my battalions in combat along the Western Front (a place more commonly known as the living room). Beneath his weary feet my warriors went flying, and when I raised a boyish howl he let me have the back of his hand across my face. It addled me. My mother saw it all and fell screaming to my side, grabbing me and doing the three-minute dash up the trail to Grandma's. There, after awhile, her rage subsided, but the fallout from that episode was a long time passing.

Probably due to it more than anything else, Grandma cleaned out an attic room at her house and instructed me in the future to mobilize my Armies up there. I did, secretly; my dad never knew. From then on, when Aunt Crystal brought me toys I carried them up the stairs and left them there, taking home

continued

only the clothes. This kept peace that otherwise might have been broken.

Grandma's house had a system of flues running through it, little chimneys with head-high holes for stovepipes, when electricity came to Tomotla Creek just before the war, one concession Grandma made to progress was to install newfangled electric heaters in all her rooms. She was a widow, as she often mentioned, and had no strength to chop firewood for the rest of her life. Aunt Crystal brought them to her from Butler Brothers, and all the cast iron, wood-burning, Warm Morning stoves were taken out of her house, the electric heaters were installed, and she no longer needed wood. As plugs over the flue-holes in each room she fastened reversed paper plates.

There was a stovepipe hole, too, in the flue that passed upwards through my attic room. I learned one day that if I was quiet I could hear almost any word spoken anywhere else in the house. The paper plates were very thin.

For instance, from time to time Grandma would tell Aunt Crystal about my dad's fits of anger, his poor pay, his occasional drunks, and especially his gross mistreatment of my mother. I came to see, even at seven, that here my dad always got the short end of the balance-pole. He never was as awful as those two women said he was, although they seemed to truly believe all they said. And the subject obsessed them.

"It was a mistake for her to marry into that trash," Aunt Crystal would say in her soft velvety voice, making me wonder what she meant by "trash." "You know, Mama, I told her as much before she did it, but she wouldn't

listen. Now she's paying."

"Shush, Child!" Grandma would say, even though she had stirred the whole thing up

"Well, it's true, and it doesn't matter if the truth is put into words."

"Then, too, Gus doesn't like you giving so much to Donnie like they don't have nothing," Grandma would say in a sort of half-hearted defense of my father "It only causes more fighting between them when you do."

"Well, it ought to cause something," Aunt Crystal, would say sourly. "Maybe it will wake her up to the awful mess she's in."

"Shush!" Grandma would say, but Aunt Crystal would know she didn't mean it, and would go on and on.

One time during the war when Uncle G. Edward was in Germany or someplace, Aunt Crystal came home alone and stayed several weeks. I received my usual rewards upon her arrival, and afterwards spent my days playing alone in the attic room. One particularly boring day, when all the battles were fought and all the wars were won, a strange new voice floated to me through the flue, a man's voice I'd never heard before.

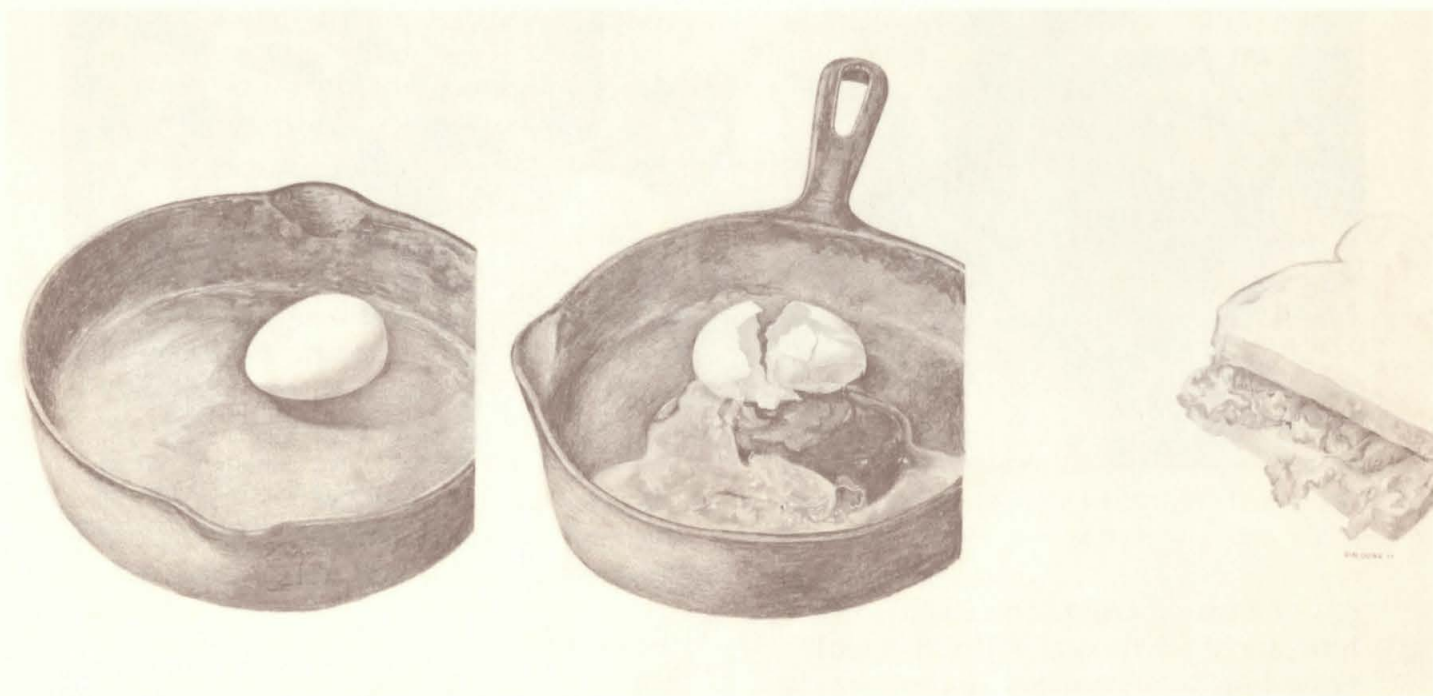
I played on, but listened, for this was something different, a sop to my boredom. Grandma soon said her goodbyes, and even at my age I thought that odd, for she never left when visitors were on the place.

The voices continued to drift to me through the flue, questions from Aunt about the war, his travelling, and other things I did not understand. Then they made a big ceremony over some sort of drink, glasses clinked, and gradually both of them became very friendly and

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PAULA ANDERSON
Second Place Photograph



KIM GUINN
First Place Drawing

quick to laugh.

"There aren't many as sweet as you," he said once. (I agreed wholeheartedly, and liked him.)

"Hush," I heard her admonish, between giggles. "My sister's kid is upstairs and he'll hear you."

"Who?" sudden caution.

"My nephew. But he's only six--no, seven."

"Oh, a kid. Well, he won't understand even if he does hear."

"Yes he will. He's very bright." She made me feel proud, although I did not, for a fact, understand any of it.

"Would he tell?"

"Tell what?"

"We'll see."

She giggled again. "I don't think the little booger would. He's on my side. Ed says--oh, sorry."

"Don't be sorry. Good ole Ed," the man said, and laughed loudly. "To Ed."

Again the glasses clinked.

"Reckon where he is?" she said, with a snicker.

"Probably some whorehouse on the Rhine," he said.

More snickers.

"Quiet!" he ordered. "Major G. Edward Whitemore wouldn't do a thing like that."

"The Hell he wouldn't," she said. "Kiss me."

Silence. Then, from him: "Crystal, Honey. . ."

A pause. Then from her, softly: "Bolt the door first."

The bolt slid home.

More silence. Then funny sounds, like sort of whispering and groaning, and rhythmic noises from the bed in the upper room.

After awhile they talked again, so

softly I could barely hear them, and presently the man left. Grandma came home later and I kept on playing, vowing never to tell. Besides, I asked myself, what did I have to tell? Only that she might've kissed someone, which wasn't bad, for she often kissed me. But of course I knew there was something more, something strange and wrong, and whatever it was I vowed no one, no one, would ever hear it from me.

Awhile after that, I don't recall how long, my cousin Eddie was born. By then I was well past seven. From the time Eddie first came to Tomotla Creek with her, an infant in blankets, I knew something peculiar had gone wrong between us. She did not ever again seem so loving and happy with me, or so caring of my expectations. Now it was always Eddie. For awhile she continued to bring me toys when she came, and clothes, but I noticed they were more often little kids' toys, cracked rattles and broken guns, pull-ducks with broken strings, puzzles with the pieces missing. There were no more soldiers, and the shirts no longer fit.

I couldn't have fun with those things the way I always had with the soldiers and the rocking horse, but I played with them anyway, slavishly, faithfully, in the attic room. I wanted desperately to please her and make her again the way she'd always been. But those days grew long for me, and just didn't work out. She often became irritated if I touched little Eddie, or tumbled with him on the floor, and once she spanked me soundly and sent me home for no other reason than that I woke him. And one autumn day when she and G. Edward were home I heard her tell Grandma that little Eddie was so much more ad-

continued

vanced for his age than I was, whatever that meant; and, she went on, he had already stopped wetting the bed, while that still was not true of me. (I had to agree, with an awful sense of failure.)

And, too, it seemed when I was near her she always found qualities in tow-headed, fat-faced Eddie to boast about. I began to get the distinct feeling that I'd better not ever find anything I could do better than he could, or else I'd pay. Somehow, I'd pay.

"Blood always tells," she said once to Grandma, puzzling me. When I asked my mother about it at the dinner table that night my dad jumped up and yelled that Crystal was the most selfish, most one-sided person he'd ever met.

"Don't let me catch you near her again!" he yelled at me. But of course he couldn't make that stick, not even for two minutes. My mother took him to task then and there, right across the pinto beans and the mashed potatoes.

"There's never been a sweeter person on the face of this earth than my

sister!" she screamed. "Or smarter, either! You could do better to look at your own self, Gus McCoy, than say things like that in front of this child! Go somewhere and get a decent job instead of always being a trashy mountain sawmiller like you are!"

Burbling. Tears. More rage

"My sister told me I'd be sorry I ever married McCoy trash!" she wept for perhaps the millionth time. "All my people have said that! God, God. . ."

I quivered in her arms as she began to jeer: "Ain't got nothing, cain't get nothing, don't want nothing. trash, trash, trash!"

With that, clutching me to her heaving breast, she flung herself out of his house and ran all the way home to Mother, and Sister, and noble G Edward, to tell her sodden tale. Going away, I saw dad standing mute in the doorway, watching us with a sort of pain and sadness in his eyes.

Things went on that way forever

Murray plaid on the bedspread
my mother bought for me
and a map of Scottish clans
on the peeling wall
cinder blocks surround me
and Celtic ghosts and karma;
Sears boots unlaced and clumsy
on the littered, rented floor
broken weather-stripping rattles
against the thin door;
the heroes and the saints never sang
of Gaelic trivialities. . . .
I think we left the loftiness in port
with the bad potatoes
and the passage money.

AMY TIPTON

LILLY REMEMBERED
(FROM A NIGHT IN NORFOLK
APPROXIMATELY 9:30 p.m.)

“Ladies and gentlemen!
Tonight, for your pleasure,
we present--Lilly!”

Lila-like--paleskinned as moonsilver--
in a hairless body
with blonde head that drenches
long and pale
like pouring cream

Lilly hangs her buckskin bodysuit
on a beam above the bar
(a token to the lech-filled eyes
peering through the beer amber
like waiting stars watching
their maker form new
universes for them to light on)

and Lilly lifts her arms elliptic
to her lovedance

Music heat fills the room
semen rich and sticky as galaxy milk.

Lilly loosens
her body to the music
tilting her breasts
like flagons above the sea
gyrating her pelvis
a ship tossed on the waves
loving loving loving

the music
the liquid body of Lilly
lifting the music
between her hips
balancing it there
on her thighs
mating with music
the rhythm of her body
lovemaking a melody.

As the light strikes
her night posture into shocks

against the starsockets of our eyes
she moves down and down
on an old dependency
of ambiguous undulations
grinding down on its unseen force
on and on
inside the ring of music and eyes
music light and Lilly
strobing now
strobing light
music and Lilly

past death
past those eternal waiting
stargazed eyes

outside the eyering
to where stars
(imagination bursting the crying collective
gases of their fires)

heat lilies
in the icy fields of dead worlds

(seedo
what
stars do

light do
what
lilies do

Lilly do
wedo wedo wedo)

Lilly! Heavens! but you are beautiful!
even sterile
even icy worlds away
you mind fucker!

VAN PERRY ROSE

GO CHASE BIRDS YOU SILLY DOGS

Go chase birds, you silly dogs,
Go run and try to catch them
You know they can and will fly, dogs,
And you keep running for them

Not always birds though, eh, you dogs?
Cats and rabbits, rodents all
Have fled ahead of glistening fangs,
Seldom by those fangs they fall

Why is this, then, you queer old dogs?
For if you chose, you'd win the race
I think you chose your fate, dear dogs -
Does catching end the chase?

The silly one stands here, wise dogs,
My wants have flown like birds from hand
O, if I could want only wanting!
You go chase birds - I understand

GARY KELLAR

FUNNY

The mist is heavy this morning.
It's muffled the pulse of the traffic and trapped
The smells of cheap fish and diesel fuel.
The moon has called me from my book and bed.
I find him at my window
Offering what remains of the dark morning hours.
From my porch I can see the veiled lights of the city
And hear some promise of life from a distant highway.
The rain has stopped.
The street dogs are asleep.
In the strange and welcome calm there is a voice that says
Sorry it has to be this way. . . .
Funny how that comes back to me,
How it had to be that way.
Trucks on the main street.
Everything passing through.
Sooner or later, everything passing.

MARY L. FOXX



BOB PALMER
First Place Photograph



CONNIE MORRISON
Honorable Mention Print

THE NAME GAME

BONNY STANLEY

Second Place Essay

The first thing I learned when I entered St. Mary's School was that the use of nicknames has a firm place on the list of sins that cry out to heaven for vengeance, at least according to grammar school nuns. Names like John, Margaret, and Catherine are to be found on the Calendar of Saints, but never Buddy, Sissy, or Cathy. I have been called Bonny all of my life to distinguish me from my mother who is also named Isabel, but at St. Mary's I had to be Isabel or risk celestial ostracism. This bothered me greatly because I am a birth certificate Isabel but a real Bonny. The nuns urged me to cultivate a devotion to St. Isabel, but it obviously did not take because I do not have the foggiest notion of who St. Isabel is to this day. It might be safe to style her a virgin/martyr though, because most feminine saints in the Catholic Church fall into this rather narrow category. It has always been hard for me to understand why the Church expects its women to identify with virgin/martyrs when most of the female faithful are not virgins and probably find the Church harder to live in than to die for.

In time I resigned myself to Isabel, but I did not reckon with having to take on Elizabeth. One day the principal, Sister Baptista, posted a list of children to do some project on the bulletin board. I was the only Bonnyman in the school; so I asked her if that was supposed to be me. When she said that it was, I told her that my name was Isabel not Elizabeth. The principal informed me that Elizabeth was the Biblical root name for all such names as Elspeth, Eliza, and

Isabel; therefore Elizabeth was my real name. I reiterated, quite politely I thought, considering the absurdity of arguing over one's own name, that Elizabeth was not my name. Sister Baptista said that she did not like impertinent, smart-aleck children and that I could write one hundred times "I will not be an impertinent smark aleck." My mother finally entered the fray and wrote the principal a note stating that Isabel was indeed my name regardless of its Biblical root. I have often wondered if Sister Baptista made all of the Annes in the school Hannah and every James a Jacob in her name purge. She certainly pegged me as a troublemaker, an opinion which would have been re-enforced if she had realized that the real Biblical root of Isabel is probably Jezebel.

I was finally able to checkmate the Sisters of Mercy in the name game, but it was necessarily a silent coup. When Catholic children are confirmed, they take an extra saint's name in honor of the occasion. The nuns tried to direct the choices of the confirmands towards old favorites like Joseph, Mary, and Bernardette; but I had no intention of being stuck with a name as worthy as Mary or one as syrupy as Bernadette. I settled on Veronica. I really wanted Veronique, but I decided that this might be pushing the nuns too far. My parents did not take Confirmation names very seriously and were not a bit surprised by the oddness of my choice. Sister Celestine, my teacher, was quite touched by my presumed devotion to St. Veronica, the woman who wiped

continued

THE GHOST GRASS

Walking home in the shallow lights of this winter's day
I found a piece of last summer's grass clinging to my leg,
held fast with a dab of mud--
a pale stalk,
the kind my brother would call
the ghost grass.

There were November afternoons
we sat in the den reading,
trying not to look out of the picture window
that looked too largely on the brown world outside,
trying not to watch the limp stalks
standing outside the fence at the back of the yard--
tall, listless straws,
drunk in the wind:
reeling at every touch of that vagrant draft
which pressed its fingertips against the glass,
testing, measuring.
We read
hoping to keep our eyes away from the shivering weeds,
knowing instinctively
somewhere below those ragged tops
the roots lie buried
living somehow.

I remembered that now
turning the dead stalk in my hand
looking into its empty center.
And I wonder where the roots are hidden,
waiting under the cracked, frozen ground,
waiting for a touch of warmth
to resurrect themselves jeeringly
with a green smirk.

RICK A. DAVIES
Honorable Mention

They sit on white
painted porches
talking of their
children, death, and
most importantly,
the weather-----
saying the kids
have grown so
fast, isn't it a shame
that so and so died
and predicting what
the skies will bring
tomorrow.
They never think to
question politics,
war, or religion
but accept only
the simple things
that happen to
people who sit
on white painted
porches.

KAREN LAWS

WINTER'S END

MARLANE AGRIESTI

Second Place Short Fiction

Maura looked out of her fourth floor window at the huge, bare trees against the grey winter sky. Staring at her from across the lawns and the walk and the expanse of cold empty space between them, poking out of the roof of the building opposite, was the top of the elevator shaft and the empty black window that rested in it.

Her eyes shifted slowly from the trees to the window, and finally to the letter she was writing at her desk. It was to her sister:

Dear Chris,

What is the proper way of opening a letter? I would like to know.

Living here at Ellingham is going smoothly. I don't enjoy it the way Mom says she did when she was here, but it's such a good school and it is enriching, you know. Studying classical music and great literature and all.

One day I can be a wealthy alcoholic wife and crack intellectual jokes at cocktail parties.

Do you know that it's been two months since I have felt emotion? For two months I have not been angry, depressed, or happy.

Detachment.

Maura looked again at the blank window facing her. With the horizontal line across the center of it, the window had the look of a half-closed eye. Winking, blinking, nodding off to sleep.

The sky was darkening. The wind was blowing and a chill came in through a crack under the window. Maura got up and walked across the

brown tiled floor in stockinged feet. As she passed the mirror she glanced at the passing figure--noticing the lifeless brown hair that hung around her pale, expressionless face, the way her shoulders hunched with her arms folded across her stomach, and the absurdity of the orange-red sweater against the cool, celery green floor-length skirt--then quickly looked away.

"Detachment," Maura said to herself and chuckled. "You've certainly become detached from the way you look."

Then quickly, like a secretary at a filing drawer, she ran her fingers across the tops of her album covers and pulled out Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata. Holding the record by its edges she placed it on the turntable and switched the stereo on. Turning away now, she pulled a cigarette out of her sweater pocket. Slowly putting it to her mouth, she lifted her lighter with the other hand, and hearing the first notes of the piano on the black disc, lit the cigarette.

Standing in the center of her room--with printed reproductions of classical to modern paintings, India-print spreads on the bed and the couch, a yellow wicker lamp which cast a web of shadows across the floor, the furniture, the walls, the ceiling--she looked now up at the ceiling, and fixing her eyes on the shadows, listened to the sounds of the music rise and fall.

Maura was not thinking about music. She was not thinking about anything.

A pain jabbed the fingers of her right hand. Jolted, she dropped the cigarette butt in an ashtray and put the two burnt fingers in her mouth.

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BEV YOKLEY
Honorable Mention Print



JON BUCHANAN
Honorable Mention Photograph

Someone was knocking at the door. "Come in," Maura said. Tracy strolled in smiling. "Moonlight Sonata again, huh? I guess everyone's got to have a vice."

"Ha, yeah, I guess so. What's new?"

"Nothing's new. Everything's old. Work work work work and more work. But I had a neat dream last night. I dreamed I played Mozart's fifth violin concerto from start to finish without a single error. I was in a huge concert hall, and every seat was filled--it was packed. When I finished, I bowed and the audience stood up and applauded for half an hour, roaring and throwing roses onto the stage. Then I awoke and remembered Mozart never wrote a fifth violin concerto. He only wrote four." Maura was grinning. "Ha! I like that. I really like that. How long did it take you to remember you play cello, not violin?"

"Look--anyone who's good enough to write Mozart's fifth violin concerto can surely play violin."

"True. Would you like some tea?"

"Yeah, I would," Tracy said. She settled down on the low couch made from two mattresses stacked together against the wall, her slouched body propped up by the elbows. Her eyes swept the room in a half-circle as though she was scanning an imaginary arch in the room. "This is a neat room. Spooky. But neat. You lucky dog."

"Not so lucky. I had to destroy three roommates in five months to get it. They gave it to me cause they didn't want to risk another emotional trauma in the dorm. Face it. I earned this room." Maura looked over at the dormer windows jutting out of the slanting walls into the black winter sky. "I might go

to Florida for Spring break."

"No kidding! I might commit a murder. I'll be in dark ole dusty Sandusky. What a thrill."

Tracy was looking at the thick book on the bed. "What are you reading?"

"*Nostromo*, by Joseph Conrad. It's a great book. Conrad was Polish but he wrote his books in English and his English was pretty awkward, so it reads like someone did a lousy job of translating it. But it's good. Really good. My god, there are about twenty main characters, all interesting, complete characters--and though there is one big plot that encompasses them all, there is a different angle for each character." Maura was shaking her head in admiration. "My god, what an achievement," she mumbled through the cigarette she was lighting.

The tea was ready, and Maura was pouring.

"I'd like to borrow it when you're through, if it's that good."

"Great. I'd be interested in knowing what an intelligent person thinks of it." Maura handed Tracy her tea.

Tracy noticed the smooth swiftness of Maura's movements. She was like a ballet dancer, always ready, always on her toes, barely seeming to touch the ground at all. And yet she was so pale, like a ghost. The dancing ghost, she thought.

"The character I find most interesting," Maura was saying, "is a little French journalist named Decoud. He's mid-thirties, intelligent as hell, and detached. He finds all the tragic life-and-death goings-on in the story amusing, nothing more. When all the other characters are going on about virtue and disgrace, Decoud is saying the only

continued

virtue is intelligence--of course, that's a laugh on him because everyone has his own definite ideas about what intelligence is--but, anyway, Decoud fancies himself to be intelligent and I agree he was and he was very virtuous about his detachment. I have to admire him for this, what I call the ultimate detachment--he rowed himself out to sea in a little rowboat and, standing in the boat at the proper angle, shot himself out of existence and fell into the sea with the gun. The only evidence he left behind was the empty boat." She took a huge slug of tea. "Admirable as hell."

"Uh, admirable?" Tracy had her eyes fixed on the floor. Her elf's face with the curly hair around it lay stiffly back from the shoulders of her small, thin body which had stopped moving--she looked like a statue in repose. "The guy kills himself and you find it admirable?"

"But don't you see, he didn't leave a trace of evidence. He did it for his own amusement. He didn't give a damn about life, he was bored with it. . . and this was his final laugh. Well, skip it. I guess I shouldn't have brought it up."

"Remember last semester, Dr. Paderewski's class, the giggle fits we used to get into? His long skinny nose and the hair that stood straight up and his long thoughtful pauses?"

Maura was pouring herself more tea.

"And the time he told the class 'In a minute now, they're going to start snorting,' and you wet your pants and had to leave the room? Maura, do you remember last semester?"

"Do you have any cigarettes, I seem to be out." Maura looked blankly at her friend.

"Sure, Maura, here. What was it Dr. Heinz wanted to see you about yesterday?"

"That nosy shrink. The school pays her to snoop into our lives and ask rhetorical questions like, 'Why do you keep running away from yourself?' Do I appear to be running away? That was a rhetorical question. I'm not running away, I'm right here at school, doing well in my courses. It seems someone told her that I didn't appear to be happy at Ellingham. What does she want in this dry hole of a place? Last quarter I was unhappy. An all-girl's school in the middle of nowhere, no social life, me a girl who had all the friends anyone could want in high school. I've adjusted. I've learned to get along, to get out of this school what it has to offer. I do well enough." Maura was leaning with her back against the brown formica-topped dresser, turning her cup around in her hands, thinking how fortunate she was to be rid of the pain.

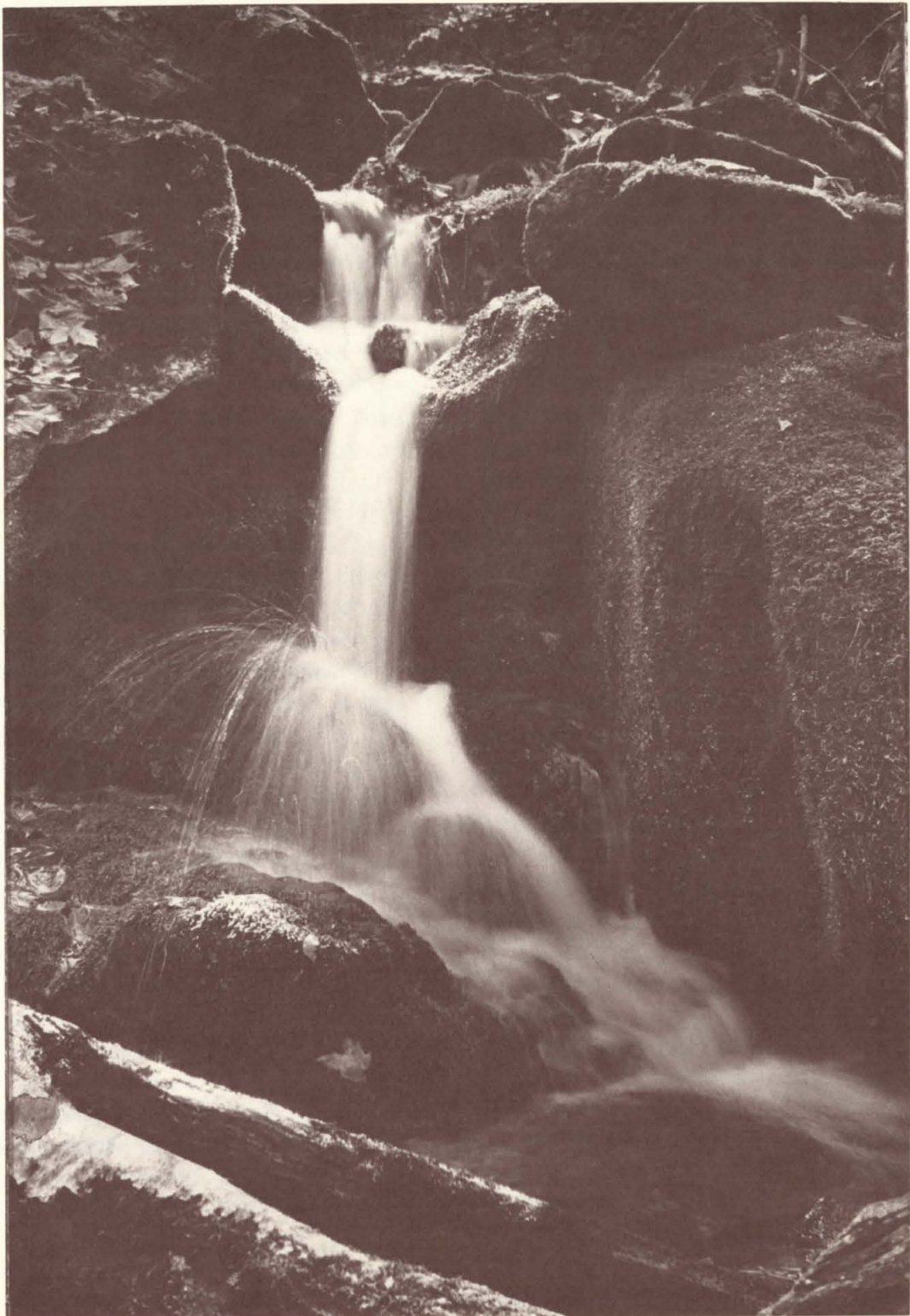
Her memory circled in on her last visit home, and the friends who had betrayed her, or had they? At any rate, the people I thought were so wonderful who turned out to be jerks. The jerks who still thought it was neat to sit around a dark room in a circle with the stereo on so loud you couldn't begin to hold a conversation, and pass joints around and whoever's the neatest gets to change the records all the time and whoever doesn't smoke dope is an insult to everyone who does. That not a single one of her friends had proven loyal to her, not one.

And how she'd cried for two days straight, and when she'd stopped, her face had been swollen and red from the pain. But she had stopped. She had

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TOM LAWHON
Second Place Drawing



PETER MONTANTI

made herself stop. Nobody had helped her. And she hadn't cried since.

Before that, there was the boy she had loved. The boy who had told her he loved her, and one day he had quit coming to see her and she had played piano by the front door all day for a month, waiting for him to come to the door and one day she had quit playing piano and gone down to the basement and stared at the furnace until she fell asleep on the cold cement.

And she had learned not to cast her pearls to the swine and had hidden her pearls in a very safe place so that now even she could not find them.

Maura shook herself. "Would you like some more tea?"

"Nah, I'd better not. I've got to go practice cello now." Tracy stood up and stretched. "Are you going over to practice tonight?"

"I should, but I've got a few other things I want to get done tonight, so I guess I'll just sleaze out on piano."

"See you later, kid."

"Yeah, get to work on your cello. Maybe you can remember some of that concerto you wrote in your sleep last night. But here's hoping you don't".

"Thanks a bunch. Bye." Tracy stepped out the door and shut it behind her.

"What was I doing, now? Oh, yeah." Maura went over to her desk and sat down. She wadded up the letter to her sister and started a new one.

Dear Chris,

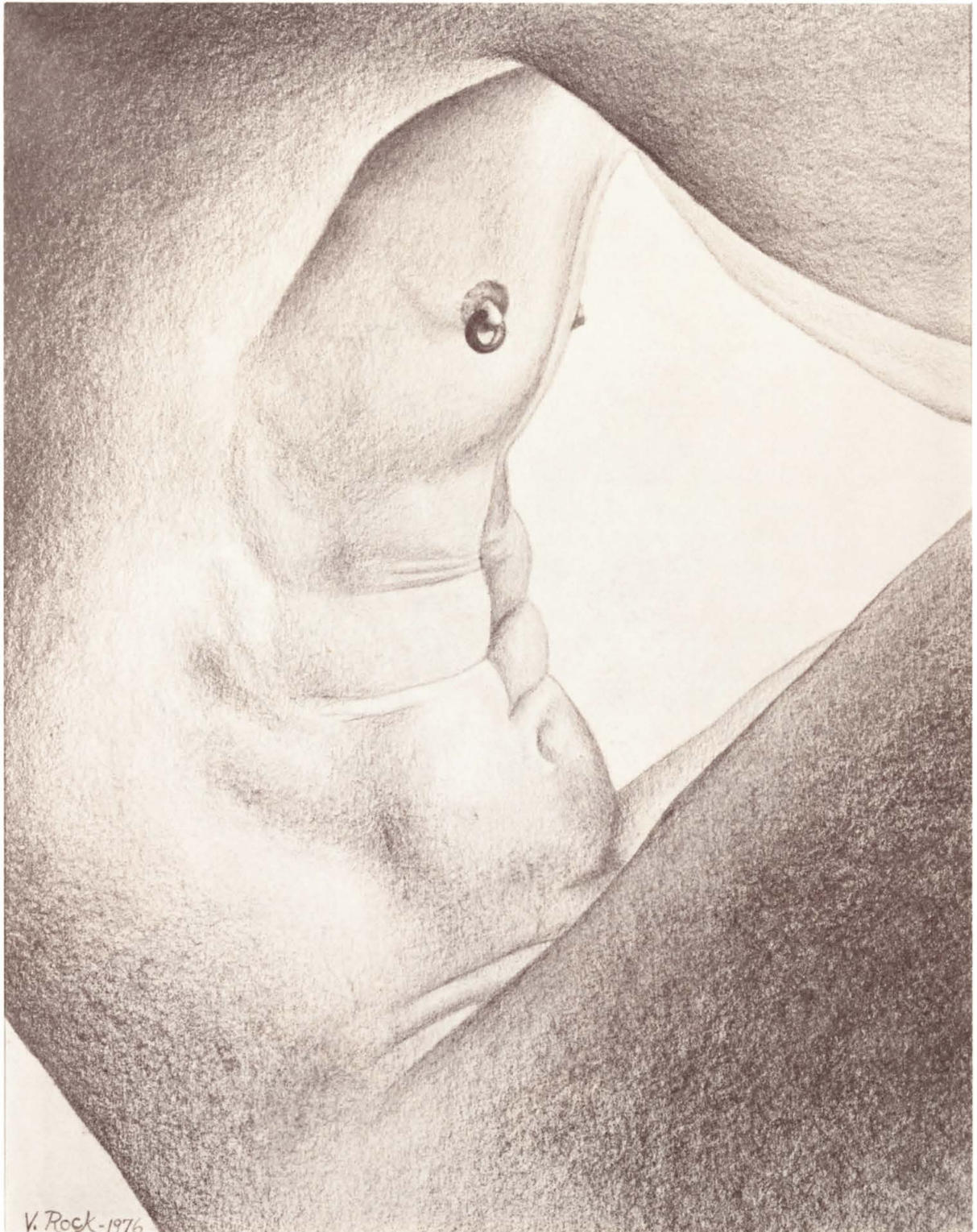
I'm looking forward to seeing you next week. I can't wait to feel the warm sand between my toes and the water around my legs. And to get some sun--you ought to see me, I'm white as a ghost.

It's been a long, cold winter.

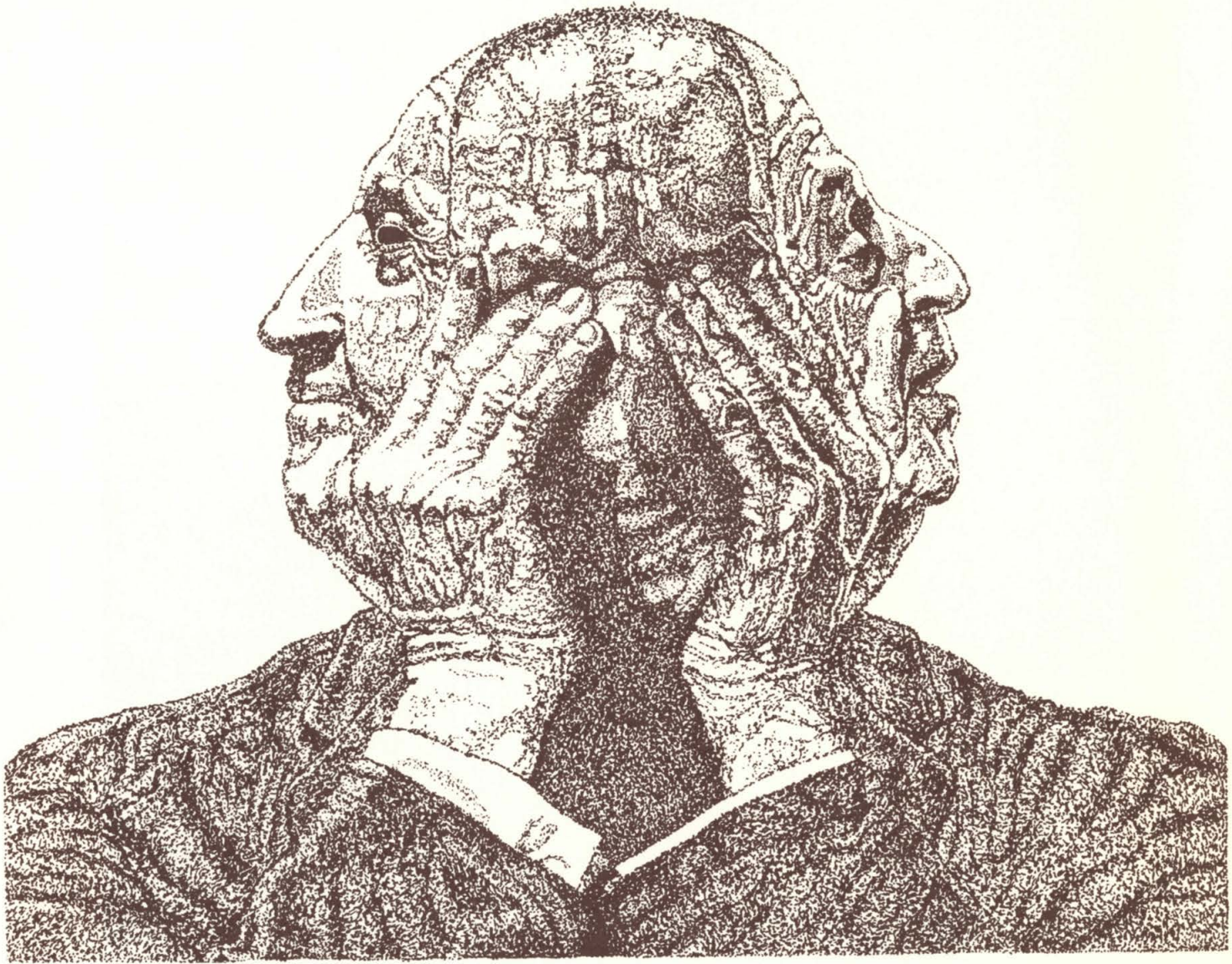
Maura looked up and out through her window. Barely visible in the faint light from a distant street lamp, the window in the elevator shaft winked at her. Maura winked back, then reached up and pulled the shade.

Somewhere in this dark,
I feel sure,
this breakwater that was solid and stone
the instant before the light drained down into the west
has melted into the sea.
I know it is still there;
I know rationally that it is solid out to the very end.
I am assured by a wooden crate--
half buried
its corners, splintered and definite,
its paint, peeled and unmistakable.
That is enough to confirm a continuity.
Without that,
I am not sure.
There seems to be only one vast mass of sea and sky.
Not simply black sky joined to black sea
by an invisible horizon,
but one flowing senselessly into the other--
a solution of salt-sea-air less solid than mist.
But, there is distinction.
The sand juts distinctly against the water at my feet. The water
travels in a straight line to the horizon where the sea and the
sky are concretely joined. The sky spreads thin and sure over
my head touching the other horizon where it meets exactly with
the earth. From the earth's horizon it is simply a direct line
to the heel of my shoe. . . I think.
Could the waves which I hear in front of me,
stuttering along the shore,
be a whisper--
some echo from some tidal star?
Is the black sky filled to its fathomless depths
with floating things?
Somewhere farther along the beach
someone with his heels dug into the sand
flicks his flashlight,
on and off,
willfully into the face of Andromeda.

RICK A. DAVIES
Honorable Mention



VELMER ROCK



DENNIS WATSON

CARRIED AWAY

I rub the butterfly from the
windshield.
Your neck jerked
on the moment of impact.

I smell sunlight, wild
flowers on torn wings.

You blame me coldly.
You want to study the
grillwork. Butterflies
in macabre patterns
pasted with the glue of
their bodies.

I cannot stop this slaughter.
Driving slower does not help
and
we have too far to go
to walk.

CATHRYN BLALACK

ON SCHOLARSHIP

Lover

fortified in all the dreams of your youth
You seduce the silver princess.
Worldly charms embrace your head
as you strut on to the fable.

High school boy

who showed his stuff
and fantasized the ultimate affair
with basketball in hand. . .

Envy of all short skirted beauties. . .

Locker rooms of obscene gestures
and exaggerations of last night's triumphs. . .

You became the stag king

and envisioned the rape of your next queen
at eighteen.

Yield gently sweet boy

you can't make love to an angel in the mind.

Touch skin and know that I touch back.

High school proms and basketball sweethearts
are nothing more than images of smells.

At twenty you can dance the dance

and no one will even care.

So lie beside a warm one

and feel that ache inside.

It's real and so am I

sweeter than you ever dreamed
at eighteen.

JACKIE GRINDSTAFF

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The **Mockingbird**, as East Tennessee State University's only recurring forum for the student's literary and artistic creativity, is always seeking ways to encourage more students to exercise their self-expression.

Although the **Mockingbird** has achieved national recognition in every year of its existence, an accomplishment in which the entire University community can take pride, the segment of the student body involved, either as contributors or as staff members, is a miniscule part of the student body. This is, of course, a distressing situation to all of us who feel that there is a sizable body of untapped artistic talent at East Tennessee State University.

It is our fervent wish that all those students who are interested in the development of a viable, lasting avenue for the University's literary and artistic abilities will support the **Mockingbird** enthusiastically.

Weldon P. Barker

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