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Archives  
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2003  
Spring

**"the vehicle"**

**\* \* \***

**(spring 2003)**

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# Knowledge of Self

by Greg Baptiste

As these things transport me from here to there, my mind travels in-between the realm of black righteousness and failure. Leaving a populated city of alcoholics, and drug addicts to receive a form of higher education, it is now a dorm room full of books I have left behind. Such things they say will educate my mind. Failing a course but a semester not failed. Repeatedly miscalculating conversions of meters while the true measurements of intelligence are going unmeasured for. Therefore, I guess the measure of success for this semester is seen through the education of Solomon Northup. You cannot win all fifteen. Lost three but gained more sense from a black man whose non-existence is now existing in me.

On my way to being advised by someone, I would like to advise, the hot sun extending, grazing the melanin sufficient in me. I rewind time where we were not free. They say the shackles since then have been removed, but I still feel the coldness of the dungeon floor. Beat until "A free man I am from the south" was said no more. Sliding down to the corner of my lips, the salt taste I taste.

Our mind frames continue to change, from once being owned from owner to owner, till the earlier 1920s crept in and led us to a mental state where dis-ownment of our skin was in. Often 'passing,' to get a taste of the great race. We lost a sense of self. Light skin, dark skin complex. House nigger, field nigger, mind trapped. I realize, a wise man was Willie Lynch. Powerful we would be if for centuries, we sung, "our race the superior." Often taught, "Thou shall not kill," I learned. But a sin I would commit, if for years, I would see my race, beat and torn. What a wonderful thing, being able to write and read. What a wonderful thing, to learn my history.

# Coleman 3371

by Amanda Beard

Behind the stacks of papers  
Under the glow of fluorescent bulbs  
He sits.

I want to ask him  
where he got that green sweatshirt.  
The one with the white letters,  
proclaiming his love for books.

I want to ask him  
where he got that never ending bag of candy.  
The one he brings to class,  
showing his love for students.

I want to ask him  
how long he's been here.  
How long has he been laughing,  
brightening up Tuesday afternoons?

I want to tell him  
The mountains of paper,  
The fountains of chocolate,  
The chuckling from Coleman 3371

It was great.

# Mixed Messages (after Stephen Dunn)

by Collette Beausoleil

What starts things

are the purposes within the heart,  
begun maybe by the cracked tooth  
of a shy girl who yearned to smile

it is realizing  
your dreams  
have already been acted out, or the sly tricks  
your eyes play, with the danger  
of mixed messages, or something  
you could tell everyone but yourself

there is no beginning or end

people pause between moments and wait for a lifetime  
what ends things briefly  
are the stories you've lost in the tails of time  
you wish you had

# Returning to Rhythm

by Aubrey Bonanno

Even pain is beautiful sensation:  
the baby banging his skull against the ribs  
of his cribbage, grown up to succumb to the constant  
dull wanting of tap tapping a syringe, the numb  
after a binge - beautiful sensation.

Something is there, hidden along  
nerve endings, swimming between synapses -  
a longing for the heart when it could be heard  
lub dubbing, muffled through liquid, a gentle wave of  
motion,  
maternal ocean - the tides internalized.

Perhaps that is why she paces figure eights in the sand,  
passes the razor across her skin, then wades



## Returning to Rhythm

into her stinging baptismal basin.  
Renewal lasts only until her skin  
begins to shiver.

Rhythm becomes hymn, and we pant  
and chant its name. Cyclical sin,  
ever slapping out feet on the pavement, looking for that  
beat  
that will save us - beautiful sensation  
- pain salvation.

## **Pecan Grove**

### by Natalie Esposito

Darla had been pacing from the desk to the window all morning. She hated the way the carpet felt, like a piece of brown paper cushioning her feet from concrete. The morning had been fine, the house neat and quiet until Roger came home.

Around noon she heard the gravel crunching and hitting the side of the house. The sound of Roger's truck made her head ache. The room was hot, but she sat up at once and closed the door.

The past three hours she had managed to avoid Roger with the door closed, but the heat was getting to her. There was nowhere for the warm air to go and with only a slight breeze from one window the bedroom swelled. The air was so thick in the room she had to peel her legs off the chair. The whole state had not seen an inch of rain in months and the last week of August had been dry and hot as hell. Every window in the house was open; shades down in an attempt to keep the rooms cool.

"When the hell are we gonna fix the air?" she yelled at her closed bedroom door.

"If you're hot take a cold shower," he answered.

"Take a shower!" her voice squeaked. "Roger, you promised me at the beginning of the summer that you would fix the air; when you gonna do it!"

"Listen honey, I get to it when I get to it, you know these things can wait."

"Don't honey me," she yelled.

## Pecan Grove

Nothing. She listened to the buzz of the T.V. and Roger shifting on the couch. The silence burned and she felt like picking up the lamp on the desk, a cheap shower gift from her mother-in-law, and throwing it against the wall. That would make him listen, and move his ass off the couch. She could see the t-shirt Roger had left on the floor. Her foot found the shirt and dug in hard, scrunching the fabric and warping the pocket of the t-shirt into a swirl. It was too hot not to be angry.

The last five years of their marriage had been spent in the one bedroom house on 102 Michigan. At first she had complained about the house's size and need for repair, but she gave in when Roger mentioned it was just the fixer-upper he wanted.

The thought of renovating and creating a place with Roger was romantic. The one bedroom house was too small for a family, but Roger promised to purchase a larger home in the future. After two years and some landscaping, the thrill of remodeling left Roger. Painting and improving became too expensive and time consuming. Roger saw no need for extra bedrooms, and after three years of hinting about children Darla had given up. Now she was stuck with the yellowing walls, covered in chipped paint and tape marks. She had to live with the thin brown carpeting and all the other problems Roger was too lazy and too cheap to fix.

Darla's attraction for Roger had dwindled with the lack of home improvement. At first there was sexual frustration, and then Darla just lost interest. She could not decide if it was the beer belly or the receding hair that did it, but it was done. Roger coped with the lack of sex by buying various magazines featuring big-breasted women and Darla got a job at the fabric store.

"Darla, what you doin' in there?" Roger's voice was distracted with football.

"Nothing, just workin' on stuff," she said picking at the chipping paint.

"Why is the door closed?"

"Because I don't want to look at you," she listened as he laughed and shifted position on the couch.

## Pecan Grove

"Well I love you too Darlin'."

The morning had been hot and quiet after Roger finished banging around the kitchen and roared out of the driveway at around 7 a.m. Roger would go off with his friends and help them with home improvement projects like fences, patios, and things. Thinking about it made her hands clench. He could go spend his Saturday drinking beer and helping his buddies with things, but he hadn't done a damn thing for his own home in over a year.

Since he came home Roger had spent the last three hours spread out on the couch. His face dirty and clothes sweaty, he refused to wear shorts and sandals. He would work all day in the sun with a t-shirt and work boots. He explained it as some sort of manly thing, but she just figured he was too stupid to keep cool.

She yanked at the mini blinds and the room lit up. She waited for a breeze, but there was none to be had. The air was still and dry, like someone had left the oven on outside. The romance novel lay next to her on the desk; corners bent marking the juiciest parts.

She grabbed the back cover and flipped through the pages of the book "maybe you could get one of your friends to help you with the air conditioner," she sighed. "You know like all the stuff you do for them, maybe you all could do somethin' around here for a change."

Silence, just a faint hum of the T.V. in the next room. He pretended not to hear her. Roger had not moved in over an hour except to go to the bathroom. She was used to his leaning, pants unbuttoned, so his belly could breathe on the couch; in between heavy breaths and sips of *Old Style*.

She needed to open the door to get the stale air to move. After a couple of tries her legs peeled from the chair. She tugged at the ceiling fan three times to get it going. The fan started off slow and got to about medium. It was old so it did not go very fast. On a good day the fan felt like someone blowing air lightly through pinched lips.

"Is that what you plan to do all day, waste away

## Pecan Grove

on the couch?" Her voice was high and short as she opened the door.

"Yep," he answered clearing his throat.

The rest of the house was still. The hot air seemed stuck in the tiny one bedroom house. She looked at her husband. He sat sprawled out in front of the T.V. She did not know if it was the sun or the beer that had aged him. This was not the man she married, the football star from high school. He was a whale sunbathing on a brown couch.

"Why don't you come out here and watch the game?" his voice was dull, preoccupied with football. "There's some great commercials."

Silence. From the doorway she could see the thin swirl of brown hair peaking over the couch. Darla's foot nudged the door and it creaked open. From the doorway she watched his shoulders move up, slightly hunched as he breathed squeaking in and out. She was sick of the countless nights of snoring and the half-empty beer cans he left all over the counter tops. She could not stand the man hair he left, all over the bed sheets and soap bars. Was anything truly appealing about a man, especially the one she had been married to for eight years?

There were seven romance novels that she had read in the last year from the checkout rack at Walgreen's. The first had been an impulse buy; there was something about the muscular man with the yellow hair on the cover. How the illustration had resembled the Assistant Manager at Walgreen's.

The first time Darla saw him was at a quick stop on her way to work. The Walgreen's was in the same little shopping center as Joanne's fabric. Darla had made a quick stop for tampons before work. There had been a line at both registers that morning, so she had time to look at the racks. He had stood there patiently ringing customers. When Darla handed him the box of Playtex she saw "Bill Assistant Manager" in bold lettering on his tag. Bill struck her as such an ordinary name for a man with such a smile. Bill seemed out of place in such a town, his hands were too soft. Bill had not spoken a word to her except to ask if she needed a sack or not,

## Pecan Grove

but somehow she was changed.

Darla made regular stops at the Walgreen's on her way to work for gum and candy. She came during morning shifts, and two weeks into her regular visits a romance novel caught her eye, the cover held a man who reminded her of Bill. The character had the same brown hair, straight smile, and bright eyes.

"Doing some readin'?" Bill smiled as he glanced at the cover.

"A little," she said, outlining the edge of the book with her fingers.

"Let me know if it's any good."

It had taken her a week to get through the first novel. She read it mostly at night after supper or while she waited for the dryer. The men in the novels made her want romance. She needed moonlit walks, candlelight dinners, an affair. Darla began to talk to Bill during her trips to Walgreen's and in between shifts at the fabric store. The brief conversations made her feel incredible. She would meet Bill in the food court at least twice a week. The cafeteria was usually crowded, so she would talk mainly about the weather and work. The weather started to clear up near the end of April and she saw an opportunity to get Bill alone.

"I need some air," she said.

"Are you gonna be sick or something?"

"No, I think we should eat outside."

"It still looks a little chilly out there to me," he said, buttoning his coat.

She smiled as Bill flung the tray on the yellow picnic table. The air was crisp and made her cheeks pink, but she loved the way the cold felt, like something fresh. Bill had his flannel buttoned and his hands tucked into his sleeves. He looked warm from across the picnic table.

"You all right?" he smiled, "You don't look that warm."

"I'm fine, the cold air doesn't bother me much," she said.

"You know, I think I like you better up close," he said. "Some people can only look good from far away, but

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not you, this is nice. Besides the yellow picnic table really brings out something in your eyes that the food court never has," he said laughing.

She picked at the corners of the sandwich while the wind blew and rattled some leaves under the table. He looked so far on the other side, brown hair slightly matted with hands tucked into both pockets.

"So why would you go and move here anyway?" she asked putting her elbows on the table and leaning in.

"I needed to slow things down."

"Well you picked the right place; there isn't any other speed here but slow."

She watched him tear at the stack of napkins on the plastic tray. He made a little pile and then started to twist a piece around his index finger.

"Yeah I didn't really care where I went, just needed to go," he said, twisting his napkin around two fingers.

"Was she pretty," she said, flicking at the soda tab.

"Yep."

The weather continued to be cold and wet so they talked without any privacy in the food court until a rainy day in April. Darla left work as usual around 4 p.m. and on the way home, she saw Bill walking. It was the first time she had seen him out of the shopping center. Maybe it had been the sound of the rain on the car, how they had to lean in to hear over the gasps of the heater.

The kisses were fumbled in the tiny blue car in front of Bill's house. Their mouths found each other shyly at first, then hungrily. Everything seemed to dissolve, the plastic name tags, the little house on 102 Michigan, even the little town. There was just the sweetness of him, a smell of fabric softener and something wonderful like peppermint ice cream. There was a newness in kissing him, something that tickled her stomach. Touching him felt dizzy and exciting. He was not the harshness she had known since high school, the rough calloused hands and paint thinner. The kisses helped her forget Roger, the man she had put her life on hold for,

## Pecan Grove

passing on college and children.

It was the rain that brought them back, the sound of it beating against the metal roof. The rain was a reminder of the tiny blue car and cramped front seats. Bill's face was slightly pink and Darla's hair was slightly tossed from the encounter, as he reached for the door handle.

Since the necking in the car Darla had only seen Bill during his shifts at Walgreen's. Conversations went on as usual before shifts and during lunch, but they stood closer. She felt like the lunch hours and the conversations were not enough. It seemed the little house of Michigan would swallow her. At the age of twenty-nine life was on repeat. She had a marriage and a job at the fabric store. She worked the day shift, made dinner, and went to bed. She did laundry on Sundays and cleaned when she could. She was going to be thirty and needed something more. Something new and exciting, something more than a one bedroom house without air.

"He scores," he roared from the living room.

"Darla, you should get in here."

"I really got some stuff to do," she said quietly.

"Well, while you're up grab me a beer."

She felt nothing on her way to the kitchen. The hall had the same yellowing walls and the carpeting was still brown. As Darla entered the kitchen she was greeted with the usual clutter. There were glasses, plates, and a knife with peanut butter left on the counter. The peanut butter and left-over crumbs were attracting flies. There were slight sounds of buzzing as the flies moved from one crumb to the next. The back screen had several small holes large enough for bugs to move in and out of. During the day the flies were attracted to the food, during the night the moths were attracted to the light.

"Darla, the beer," he yelled from the living room.

"Yeah, I heard you, why do you think I'm in here!"

"Well what the hell is taking so long," he said, clearing his throat.

With one push Darla cleared all the clutter on the counter into the sink. The water and left over food

## Pecan Grove

chunks splashed under the movement of the dishes. The metal pans clanked together and somewhere underneath the cloudy water a glass broke, maybe Roger would offer to do the dishes and his fingers would find the glass.

Darla gripped the warm handle of the fridge and pulled hard. The door, swollen from the heat, unstuck and a cool breeze leaked out of the fridge. The cold air felt good against her sweaty shirt. Darla reached into the cardboard box and found two short of a twelve pack. In the past year Roger had been able to finish off several cases of beer a week. Darla grabbed a can and made her way back toward the brown carpeting.

The beer felt cold in her hand, but did not help the sweat already formed along her hairline. Roger had not moved from the couch in over an hour. He sat there with legs spread watching the football game. A cough moved up his belly and afterwards Roger cleared his throat. He was beached, arms spread across the back of the chair, perspiration beading on his forehead and rings of yellow sweat outlining the white t-shirt. She stood there picturing the two of them resting on the couch. She could rest her head on fat, sweaty arms, and smell his beer breath as he cleared his throat. But her legs did not move that way.

Instead she walked back toward the kitchen, shook the beer real good, and placed the can on the warm counter.

"The beer is on the counter, honey," she said, banging the screen door shut.

The tiny blue car sat by the curb. The breeze seemed to be short lived. She looked out the passenger window, past the withered grass, in the direction of the front door. The hottest part of the day was over, but the sun had not let up. The rear-view mirror was cocked slightly so she could examine her hair. She brushed a few strands behind her ear and wiped the sweat from the corners of her nose and forehead. The day was hot as hell.



# Childhood's End

by Rachael Harzinski

In my mother's house, childhood does not exist  
Photo albums gather dust on bookshelves  
Forgotten, unwanted, and unused  
Toys and all imagination the color of galactic prisms  
Huddle together around barrel fires long dead  
Oppressed by daddy long legs and dust  
In the dark, forgotten, corners of the attic  
Happy animated characters which once danced on the walls  
Mourn silently under the the new paint coat of  
sophisticated ecru  
Cries lost under the scowls of grown-up paintings  
No more silly unicorn dreams  
No more gnomes lurking under the stairs  
No more fairies to dance with under the moon

Kool-Aid to Gatorade to Bacardi  
Fruit snacks to granola bars to *Slim-Fast*  
Meals no longer happy, but a value  
Rated M for mature  
R for restricted  
No G rating is worth the time  
We want gore, we want booms  
We want sex, we want death  
And in my mother's house  
The mourning for childhood's end  
Is cruelly locked away from the sun  
Childhood never existed, my mother says

# Unknown Infant

by Amanda Beard and Andy Koch



## Never

by Rachael Harzinski

They didn't listen  
Didn't care  
Didn't want to  
Never will

She spoke today of daffodils and moonbeams  
They burned her like a Salem witch  
With her poetry all around her  
He spoke today of grinding stones and infernos  
They crown him like a long lost hero  
With his smart bombs all around him  
No one but the flowers wept  
The ancient flute forgotten  
Replaced by war drums and war chants  
Over the flames she spoke again  
"Everyone is patriotic when there's someone else to  
blame"  
They didn't listen  
Didn't care

# Never

Didn't want to  
Never will  
I watched the city walls fall  
From my eyes in the sun  
I wept for those who did not know  
Exactly what they did  
As the scent of beauty was taken over  
By the odor of panic and fear  
I heard her words but could not weep  
The warrior wouldn't let me  
They didn't listen  
Didn't care  
Didn't want to  
Never will  
And so the flowers now are gone  
Never to return  
Burn to ash and then to glass  
Then shattered all over again  
Like glowing lava needles I feel the pain  
Digging deep into my eyes  
Poking at my brain  
Do not weep you must be strong  
The warrior whispered to me  
You must be strong for those who are weak  
Who need the calm I can help you bring  
They didn't listen  
Didn't care  
Didn't want to  
Never will

# alone she sits

by Krystal Hering

alone she sits on a stool,  
a table for two.  
hands laced around coffee mug,  
eyes shut, she takes a sip.

she opens her spent eyes,  
lowers the mug,  
takes a deep breath,  
and watches the clock make a 45.

head erect, she studies  
couples entering with cold cheeks  
and warm hands entwined.  
*he'll come. he'll come.*

now 180,  
the door opens.  
the wind follows a young man.  
*no, not him.*  
she pushes her cold brew aside  
360.  
a table of one.  
she picks up the day's column,  
counts the divorce agreements,  
chuckles at her want of a man,  
shuts her eyes,  
and sighs.

# A Sketch of Grandma

by Krystal Hering

Forehead wrinkled like an old rag  
Veins - mole hills - tracing up and down your arms  
Sparse winter white twigs nested on your head  
Watch rotates around your wrist - too big to stay put  
Sitting there writing the days activities in old-school  
scribble  
Just so you can grasp the present before it becomes past  
And you forget

to brush your dentures,  
comb your hair,  
eat dinner,

But you always remember  
where the old ceramic Christmas tree is,  
where the old homestead stood erect,  
where I dropped ice cream on your new carpet,  
how Grandpa burnt a hole in the chair with his  
cigar,

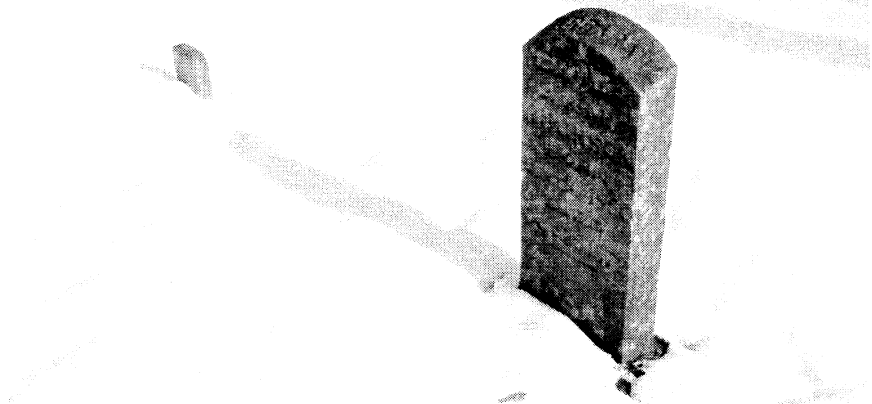
But, "Darn it, where did I put my shoes?"

You worry about  
the war,  
me away from home,  
and those darn ladybugs in the windows.

You give me wet smooches on the mouth  
And take my hand going down the stairs.

# Two Headstones

by Amanda Beard and Andy Koch



# Shattuc, Summer 1995

by Andy Koch

The town was born  
at the intersection of  
three rail lines and  
a muddy, meandering creek.

Fewer and fewer  
trains come  
each year and

the town has become  
stray cats  
broken windows  
discarded bottles  
sagging roofs  
rusted automobiles

but the rails still gleam  
bright in the summer sun.

We were fifteen, Dub, William, and I,  
and every day we spent walking  
the empty gravel streets of Shattuc,  
following the rails out of town  
until we at last had to turn back  
defeated, not knowing where to go  
More often, then, we took the same  
familiar path between my friends' two homes,  
a trailer and a renovated school house,  
always passing beneath the lone church steeple.

I remember a cold  
air-conditioned night  
in the Evan's trailer  
when the room was  
lit only by the soft  
glow of naked women  
cast off the television.

## Shattuc, Summer 1995

A cross-eyed Siamese cat named Asia  
would rest in my lap, let me pet her to sleep,  
and I always watched as her eyes slowly closed,  
watched as they died soft little deaths  
like all our possible futures.

## **Sky Poem**

by Andy Koch

Lying on my back

with soft green grass beneath me  
and a cloud-streaked sky overhead,

I gaze upward  
and imagine that I am instead

hanging over the sky.

I reach my hands towards  
the sky stretched out below me

and let the blue infinity frame my arms.

## **Wild Years**

**For: Tom**

by Scott E. Lutz

I wear my wild years  
Like a long, black,  
Wool coat.  
At least I have for some time now.  
Stained with whiskey, blood,  
And vomit.  
Reeking of smoke.  
Torn pockets that can't be trusted.

The stitching is coming apart,  
The bottom frayed, the lining  
Long gone.

# Wild Years

For: Tom

And I know  
Soon  
I will have to hang it up  
On a nail  
Driven into my head.

## All Air, No Net!

by Lora Ann Neihart





# The Evil Apostle

by Janet McGrath

"Okay, what's this one?"

"Red? And... like a square or a rectangle?"

My sister's eyes widened and she turned the card towards me to show a red rectangle outlined in black. I looked at the card and giggled.

"That's four right in a row. Am I a fortune-teller?" I giggled again, curling my toes in my footy pajamas as I knelt on a dining room chair.

"I don't know." Jackie drew her eyebrows together. "Maybe."

My ten-year-old sister tested me for ESP for a school project when I was six. We sat at the dining room table in the old Midlothian House and she held up cards with different colored shapes that only she could see. I had to guess, or divine, the color or the shape on the card she held up.

Three years ago, at Gettysburg, we drove around and through the battlefields because they were so large. A two-laned road curved over expansive fields of verdant grass and through small forests. The road curved past old houses with bullet holes and plaques commemorating the bloodiest skirmishes of the battle. I sat sunk down in the back of the black Toyota Camry with my headphones, listening to Dave Matthews, while my mother and sister sat in the front. They listened to a tour tape and took pictures of trees under which teenagers once shoved bayonets through each other's stomachs and rocky hills over which starving, middle aged soldiers surprised other starving, middle aged soldiers and shot them to death at close range.

In the town we saw people on every corner dressed up as authentic Union or Rebel soldiers with authentic moustaches and authentic guns. Women walked the streets in Civil War-era dresses, fanning themselves and not smiling. I hated Gettysburg for the empty feeling in my stomach and the sweaty tourists who kept taking pictures while standing where 51,000 human beings murdered each other in July of 1863.

On a recent trip to the Florida Panhandle I experienced the same feeling of hatred for a place. Mom and

## The Evil Apostle

Dad were checking out possible retirement sites and were considering several different Gulf towns. As we traveled along the coast looking for a marina where Dad could rent a boat, the same empty and uneasy Gettysburg feeling arose in me.

"You can't live here, it's awful."

"Why not?"

"Every town feels like it was built on a graveyard. It's eerie."

Later that day my sister read in a visitor's guide that during the 1900s Florida had the highest lynching rate in the nation. The most notorious lynchings occurred in the Panhandle towns.

\* \* \*

During the summer of 1986, my father built a house in the middle of the Chequamegon National Forest. Both of my parents are teachers and have summers off so, until I started college, I spent all summer, every summer, in the woods, on a lake - catching fish, frogs and tadpoles, getting bitten by mosquitoes, building sandcastles for Barbies, smelling like sun block, Muskol, and lake water. Long weeks are abated by day-trips to bigger towns like Hayward (Home of the Big Musky), Minocqua (which actually had a K-Mart), and Madeline Island (an Apostle Island).

As the European settlers conquered the Atlantic Coast in the fifteenth century, the Ojibwa Indians migrated west to Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin. One of the Ojibwa bands settled into what are now known as the Apostle Islands on Lake Superior near the small town of Bayfield, Wisconsin. They fished, hunted, loved, ate, died, and lived before white people ever saw Madeline Island or any of the other Apostles.

During our summer day-trips, after taking the car from Bayfield across Lake Superior on a ferry, the five McGraths would drive another fifteen miles to the free public beach on Madeline Island. Micheal, my older brother, would inspect a map of the island while my sister and I annoyed each other and complained to Mom while Dad looked for parking.

"Mom, Jackie's looking at me!" I would whine.

# The Evil Apostle

Mom would ignore us and Jackie would elbow me as we parked at a wooded campground. I would run ahead, while the rest of the family grabbed blankets and coolers, to the forest path that led to the wooden bridge that led to the beach on the coldest lake in the Midwest. You can imagine the perfect sky and the perfect sand that set the scene for a perfect day at the beach. Only when the sun loomed low on the horizon did we pack up and leave to make the last ferry back to Bayfield.

Bayfield is situated on the side of a hill that plunges into Lake Superior at what seems to be a 90-degree angle. Summer mansions sit on the top of the hill leaning over the lake with empty windows. Empty restaurants and cafes alternate with smaller houses, all of them slide down the hill toward the harbor where five or six ferries load mini-vans and four-doors. I have always hated Bayfield, even when I was six years old. The vacant windows of the leaning houses reflect on the lake and look like open graves - waiting for someone to fall off the hill.

Because of his desire to get closer to the land on which he built our summer home, my father, an English professor and writer, studied Ojibway writing, folklore, and culture. Through his work with the Ojibwa Indians, my father befriended Jerry Smith, an Indian medicine man from the Lac Court Oreilles reservation in Wisconsin. Jerry told my father a story about the band of Indians that inhabited Madeline Island, and my father told it to me over the phone yesterday:

"Jerry said that the Ojibway people lived on Madeline Island a long time before white people lived there."

"Why just Madeline Island?" I asked.

"It's the most habitable of the Apostles. Anyway, they, um, started practicing bad medicine and caused a draught... no, a famine. They started starving."

"What do you mean, bad medicine?"

"Jerry said the people started practicing 'bad medicine.' I guess they were doing something against nature, he didn't say. But the people were starving and dying because of the famine. They had to eat each

# The Evil Apostle

other."

"Oh my God."

"Yeah. They were actually driven from Madeline Island because eating each other caused even more bad medicine and they had to go to the mainland - the future site of Bayfield."

Maybe they buried what was left of the dead on the mainland. Maybe they carried the evil away from Madeline Island and brought it to Bayfield. That would explain the uneasy feeling I get when driving down the hill, away from the empty mansions. That would explain my compulsion to look behind me on the sunniest day, with the bluest skies, and the most perfect waves. That would explain why no one was there.

*"Do another one. Hold up another card."*

*"It's time for bed, Janet," Mom instructed as she passed by the test-site.*

*"One more, okay?" Jackie picked another card from the middle of the deck and held it up. I tilted my chin and uncurled my toes in my footy pajamas.*

*"Purple... Circle?"*

*Jackie flipped the card. Purple. Circle.*

# Different

by Rachel Sefton

The two black sheep are the ones who know.  
They look awkward, think strange,  
And always walk the opposite way.

The shepherds don't understand them;  
The rest of the herd ignores them.  
And they're left to a solitary corner.

One cries when no one can hear,  
Longing to belong someday, somewhere.  
He hunches over and refuses to eat.

The other stands peering above the rest,  
Eyes scanning the crowd, shaking his head,  
Watching them follow each other

Straight off the cliff's edge.

# Dear Insurance Executive

by Patti Smith

It's me, policy number 5275425  
I am dying here. Weak, bald  
and dependent on my mom.  
She does my laundry and tries  
to entice me to eat. Pot roast,  
lasagna, Pop Tarts, ice cream.  
She drives me from lodging  
to the clinic each day, sits  
with me in the hospital while  
I burn with fever.

I am fighting, plodding through  
each day. One foot in front  
of the other, a plow horse.  
I just want to see the next sunrise.  
I let them draw gallons of crimson  
blood, infuse poison, recycle stem cells  
and give them back so I can grow  
a new garden of bone marrow.

## **Dear Insurance Executive**

You sit in your corner office, starched  
shirt and blue suit, don't scuff your shoes,  
and study the bottom line.

It's more cost effective to let me die.  
Denied. Appealed. Denied.

You tell me to give it up. I've been  
reviewed and refused, no recourse now.

But I survived. Despite you.  
Maybe to spite you.

I made some noise, but I was a lone  
flute. I wish I were the whole damn  
marching band. Wind, brass  
and clashing symbols. I would drive  
you into your corner office, cowering  
dog, hiding under your desk,  
begging for mercy.  
Denied.

## **Dancing Music**

**by Josh Sopiartz**

Something like jazz  
with lips like slot machine cherries;  
tight,  
pursed against a horn and blowing,

dances silhouetted as a nubile  
woman  
with the form of a liquor bottle  
put out overnight and painted  
by an oily alleyway;

dryly-drained by piano  
players and dark young men  
with pin-striped indigo suits,  
and enough dough

to buy fine red  
high-heeled dancing shoes  
and the best girls  
brown, morality-loosening hits

## **Dancing Music**

from hidden oak barrels.

This dancing music  
inspires like her sax man  
who, with the flip of his lip  
can drive young women wild enough

to burn themselves  
with passion  
on the bourbon handled oven door;  
left open just enough for them  
to fit their dizzy heads inside.

## **The Picnic**

*For Lisa*

**by Josh Sopiartz**

She set the blanket,  
her mother's,  
a quilt from her mother-in-law  
in anticipation of a picnic  
for herself and her father.

"How's your tea, dad?" She asked.  
And the tombstone said no words.

"How's the muffin, dad?" She asked.  
And the tombstone said no thing.

Still, cups refilled,  
basket emptied,  
her dimple never full,  
her head she rested on the stone  
to share her father's sleep.

"How is dying dad?" She asked.  
And felt the tombstone hold its breath.

## **Today (an unusually warm and sunny winter by Josh Sopiarz**

I'd say a lot of poems  
were written today.  
A lot of living put into lines.

Roofers roofed and the public walked  
unimpeded by slippery spots  
now that the water is liquid again.

I'd say that few books  
were so much as even opened today,  
but that a lot of love was made.

Not the selfish winter love  
half in it for the warmth,  
but the lusty springtime love  
with the windows up  
and all the outside rushing in.

Laughter rushing in. Bird noises,  
dull thumping swooshes,  
racing bikes, spokes and breezes  
all a tangle rushing in.

So many joggers, bike-riders, all rushing in  
now that the water is liquid again.

## **Silver and Neon by Stanley (Buck) Weiss**

"The man said two lefts and then a right."

"Two lefts. Damn! Are you sure?"

"Hey! You're the one that sent me in there."

James mumbled under his breath as he turned the right hand corner. He felt like a rat in a maze, no bearing and no horizon, just an instinctive need to escape. His eyes darted right to left searching for a possible avenue back to rolling hills and open fields.

"What was that?" asked Ruthie.

"Nothing."

"Damn it, James! How did I have time to even get directions from that guy, you were blowing the horn so



# Silver and Neon

loud?"

"Whatever!" James pushed the gas pedal down kicking the car up a little faster. Ruthie just sat back and rolled her eyes. This was turning out to be one hell of a trip to the city.

"Listen," Ruthie said, trying to put some caring in her voice. "Screw this restaurant. Let's just hit the mall and food court it." She wanted a real dinner in a real place, but the tension in the car was turning her stomach.

"No! It's obvious that I don't take you to nice restaurants or buy you expensive enough things."

The rain slid off the windshield of the car as they slowed down to check the storefronts. Ruthie rested her hand on her boyfriend's leg. She concentrated hard on looking out the glass of the passenger side taking in every street name, every shop window, and the frantic running of people hurrying through the wash of spring.

"You're sweet, James," she said to the corner of 4th and Chestnut. "I know you're more of a hamburger and fries kind of guy. I knew that when I signed on."

The rain sounded like the ocean on the roof of the car and James wondered if he'd ever have to hear it like that again, stopping when the car drove under a railway bridge and then falling even harder on the other side. He had a job waiting for him at his uncle's body shop. Just one more year of vo-tech college and he'd be able to buy a trailer and ask Ruthie to move in to the bliss of small town life.

"It's just... I don't know if we're ever going to find this restaurant, Ruthie."

"That's okay, sweetie," Ruthie said lifting her hand from Jim's leg and turning back to the window. "At least we're together."

There were fewer people out on the sidewalks as they drove further away from downtown. Ruthie missed the tall buildings, the strong broad silver and glass structures that seemed to guard the entrance to a whole new world. In those buildings people lived and worked surrounded by culture and convenience. Elevators took you home and subways took you to work. All you had to do was

## **Silver and Neon**

look out and enjoy the view.

James slid his hand onto Ruthie's leg as they started to see signs of fast food and mall stores. There was something comforting about neon. It just made him feel like he was actually away from home and the place he was visiting was both exotic and familiar. This was as far as he liked to go into the urban landscape. Clearance racks and samples of sweet and sour chicken gave all the new experience he needed to relish Wal-Marts and hometown groceries.

As they pulled into the mall parking lot the rain stopped and the sun started to peak out from behind the clouds. James gave her a comforting smile as they walked toward the entrance talking of what store to hit first. Ruthie stopped him for a moment and looked back at the sea of silver and glass behind. She felt the tug of his arm on hers and walked on into the neon of the mall.

**About the sacredness of dandruff, of peoples' essences; or why I feared cleaning my father's room.**

**by Levi Woollen-Danner**

The shelves stayed dirty for a while to let our dusts mix on the books, amongst old photos and glass, softening, as it fell, the edges of framed family portraits;  
pushing everything a little out of focus;  
de-articulating old letters and gifts under a slow dry rain.

I'd trace a line, map a path or spell out a little homage with my fingertip-

FINK or FRIEND

or some other phrase written on a shelf or desktop to help explain a love, exploding like a cancer; identifying evidence, pointing drawing circles and arrows in the dust towards, around memento mori.

**About the sacredness of dandruff, of  
peoples' essences; or why I feared  
cleaning my father's room.**

---

An enacteme:  
this dusty-fingered  
evidence.  
Outlining a life;  
A medium

with a voice, singing ringing melodies  
about exit signs about leaded, sagging windows  
about glass that tells a story;  
catholicism (in color)  
about closed boxes  
ashes.

**In Boulder on a blustery day that  
reminded me I wasn't running away from  
by Levi Woollen-Danner**

---

I looked across from me.  
The fabric of the street,  
hanging outside shop windows  
greeting passersby  
with reds, greenblues  
open hands and patterned eyes,  
snapped, then stretched,  
then breathed  
in a fickle wind  
that seemed to inspire  
the hair of old men  
and fancy women  
with an indefinable urge,  
the same urge that shyed  
the panhandlers  
into hiding their eyes  
in their empty cups of coffee

Eyes tired of dust  
"I's tired of dust."

Along the road I saw a girl,

**In Boulder on a blustery day that  
reminded me I wasn't running away from**

---

slowly strolling parallel  
where the shadows fell  
under the shop awnings,  
the building blocking  
the sun and funneling  
the same wind  
that brought warm air  
into the Flatirons  
to warm the junkies sleeping  
under a hedge, or in a depression;  
and made her seem  
beautifully stumble-drunk  
on a Tuesday morning.

She looked up  
So I looked up.

We saw a large bird  
buoyed atop a column  
Of hot air, clutching space  
and dropping its shadow  
over the city, into a wind,  
that blew it all across  
Colorado

# Biographies

**Greg Baptiste** - I have been writing for some time now and my motivation for writing is life and love. Also, I dedicate my work to the women that have stood by my side through thick and thin, and with God in our hearts we will win.

**Amanda Beard** - No biography information

**Colette Beausoleil** - I am a sophomore physical education major. I like to listen to a variety of music because different genres help me write different styles of poems.

**Aubrey Bonanno** - is a sociology major, creative writing minor. She aspires to change the world one poem at a time and believes art is the true vehicle for social change.

**Natalie Esposito** - is a senior English major with a double minor in professional and creative writing. She will be graduating in Spring 2003, and is currently applying to graduate programs.

**Rachael Harzinski** - *Commentary on "Childhood's End"*: My mother never understood why I insisted on holding on to my childhood memories. I guess this is something of an eulogy to *My Little Ponies*, *She-Ra*, *Care Bears*, and all the other things we leave behind. *Commentary on "Never"*: This is what happens when *Beowulf* becomes too boring and I feel like protesting the treatment of Arab-Americans after 9-11.

**Krystal Hering** - is a junior English Ed. major and creative writing minor seeking ways to delay her entrance into the "real world" - possibly graduate school.

**Andy Koch** - No biography information

# Biographies

**Scott E. Lutz** - is a junior English major.

**Janet McGrath** - enjoys writing creative non-fiction, loves studying Victorian and Contemporary literature, and has a weakness for historical romance novels. She is a senior English major and professional writing minor who will graduate from EIU on May 10, 2003.

**Lora Ann Neihart** - I am a 32 year old single mom. I am attending EIU to become a teacher and make a difference in the lives of children, especially my own.

**Rachel Sefton** - I write so I can say all the things that people would be shocked to hear if it came out of my mouth. The world listens more when it's written.

**Patti Smith** - is a part-time student.

**Josh Sopiartz** - is a first semester graduate student of the English Department. He has an essay, "Learning About War," forthcoming in the literary journal War, Literature and the Arts. Also, he really enjoys the Beatles.

**Stanley (Buck) Weiss** - is a graduate student in English. He likes long walks on the beach and runs his own cult. Check out his website:  
[www.pen.eiu.edu/~cusew9/](http://www.pen.eiu.edu/~cusew9/)

**Levi Woollen-Danner** - is a graduate student in the English Department.

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"They'd map  
out roads  
through Hell  
with  
their crackpot  
theories."

The Dragon in  
John Gardner's  
*Grendel*