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Archives

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Fall

*... steeply the flakes, silver
... lamplight. The time has
... journey westward. Yes
... all over Ireland
... dark central
... the
... farther
... than
... of the
... lay buried*

THE VEHICLE

FALL 82

L.P. No 52

VEHICLE

Editor

John Stockman

Editorial Advisor

Dr. Evelyn Haught

Production Advisor

David Reed

Editorial Staff

Geoff Andres
Jane Anthony
Chuck Bumbales
Brenda Davidson
Robin Dunahee
Monica Dunn
Sara Farris
Scott Gray
Janet Kensil
Pam Knorr
Keila Tooley
Darcy Waters

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Winter Surveillance

B.L. Davidson

January. The mud that thawed
this afternoon, cold and wet beneath my feet
when I took the clothes out to the dryer,
has crystallized brown again.

From the kitchen window I watch sparrows
picking through snow on the picnic table
eating the seeds I bought on sale
at the Standard Hatchery yesterday.

Rock salt and shovels
lined the aisles of the store.
The man ahead of me at the cash register
wore overshoes and smelled of wet wool

Through the slush on El Dorado Street
I walked, stopping only once
in front of Frank's Sport Shop
to stare back at the wooden mallards on display.

I spy the neighbor's cat bellying
across the frozen stubble of the lawn.
Leaning out the back door, I holler at him,
watch sparks of ice fly in his scampering wake.

The Invitation

Becky Lawson

My Great Aunt Elizabeth died yesterday.
She died in her big, bouncy feather bed
with a smile on her face.

They said she died because she was old
and tired, but I know better.

She didn't leave us because she was old
or tired, but because yesterday
the young boys in knickers and young girls
with bows in their hair and kittens in their
arms called.

They called for her
as she had known they would,
and being the polite lady my great aunt was,
she couldn't refuse the invitation.

Check In, Check Out

Steve Sandstrom

Taking a shower with Janet Leigh
Is like boarding the Titanic
On its maiden voyage,
A Night to Remember.
Letting the water wash your troubles
Down the drain,
Out to sea
Spray hitting your face.
Nothing to fear,
Unsinkable
Until the curtain's pulled back
Unexpectedly
To reveal cold death
Bearing down on you.
Icy steel
Cutting blindly, tilting wildly.

You sink down into the porcelain
Watching the lifeboats leave without you.

On The Front Porch Step

Keila Tooley

Old man
face wrinkled
pitted and dried:
a sun-bleached prune.
Blue eyes
cataract glaze like
cloudy skies.
Sunken lips hang atop
sparse, yellowed teeth
pin-striped brown.
Chew sandwiched between
teeth and cheek—
like a penny dropped in a wishing well,
spit into a tarnished spittoon.

Old Greek Man

Devon Flesor

Green-skinned Greek,
The memory of your copper bracelets
Gives me rheumatism
Today
In the university
Far away from the candy shop.
Still drip drip dripping
Chocolate into sensible shoes.
Working woman wildly wondering.
Sinister southpaw silently suffering.
Goat man,
You left us to fight an affliction
Greater than Achilles'.
Standing on your shepherd's legs,
I spit ancient curses
On motionless sheep.

Exotic Passions

Becky Lawson

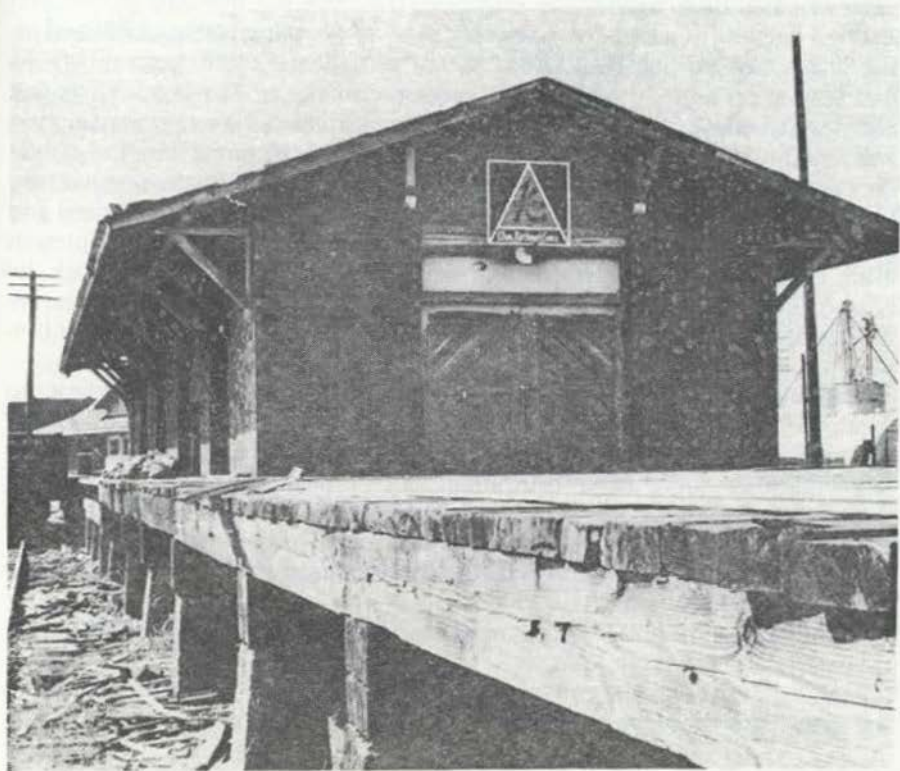
I
hadn't been
there
for a very, very
long time.
When I opened
the door,
it was as if
I stepped back
in time,
seeing my
past
and feeling
past emotions.
The once delicate
but tenacious
wallpaper
hung like
tattered swatches
of delicate silk
from the
warped, wooden
walls.
The carpet
that had once rivalled
the soft springyness of
spongy moss
now lay beneath my feet
like a subdued mass of
wet, stringy weeds.
I think the smell of the place
had changed the most.
No more flowers,
no more baking bread,
no more tobacco for grandpa's pipe,
no more blue wash for grannie's hair,
and no more smell of Exotic Passions
because I wasn't there trying to grow up.
It wasn't the same.
The house will never recapture
the lively essence it possessed
so long ago when I came there
to find out about life and
myself.

I closed my eyes for just a moment
the other day as I washed the dishes
in the sink of my brand new apartment,
and I smelled blue wash, Grandpa's tobacco
and flowers.

I stepped back in time
into the wallpaper, tenacious as ever,
but not faded.

Its bright little flowers smiling
at me as I dabbed Exotic Passions
on my wrists.

Lisa Owens



Beyond the Thorns

Brook Wilson

For September the weather had been cool and dry, and already there were subtle hints that fall had secretly slipped in and stolen summer's waning hours. In the secure darkness of the lengthening night the fields and woods were changing from summer's lush costume into fall's majestic and mystifying wardrobe. Soon however, the glorious apparel would shred away with the least breath of wind, carpeting the earth with gold, but forsaking the trees and leaving them naked. A change was at hand, a change that charged the air with electricity and sent currents of anxiety into the heart of the land, quickening it's pulse as death approached, Prematurely summer was dying, and a young death is the saddest death of all.

It had been ten years since Nathan Welty had been home, yet he retained impeccable visions of his childhood home and the town in which he was raised. The memories that he could revive were for the most part warm and glowing, but lurking in the opaque corridors loomed cold, ghostlike recollections that tasted bitter and were tinged with pain and remorse. He had avoided these thoughts and his home for too long, but as time was running out he knew that it was now time he faced and accepted them. There was nothing nor anyone to go home to, but the desire to return and reexamine the ghosts of his past burned too strongly within him to keep him away.

His wife had been against the idea from the start, but then she prided and justified herself by taking the opposing view of anything Nathan believed in. She was a city girl that hated the country with all the small, ignorant towns that sprung up and writhed like maggots on a carcass. She liked things fast and developed, yet tired of them quickly once she had them. Perpetually she was in some discontented state and strove valiantly to precipitate her condition onto someone else. Her efforts had been extremely effective on Nathan, for no longer were his shoulders straight or his walk light. He looked tired and sallow, and his movements resembled the totterings of an old man. Through it all, however, there remained something animal. It was not so much his coarse, untamed hair, but rather a wounded and hungry flash of his eyes. He had the eyes of an animal that had been hunted for a very long time—or better yet the eyes of a starved animal on a continual and fruitless hunt.

Whether the hunted or the hunter, Nathan returned home in time to welcome the death of warmth and sunshine of summer. The balmy days had ended and now was the transition between the brightest and the blackest. Dappled dead maple leaves brushed across the pavement as he and his wife pulled into the small town of Copper Springs. From his initial observation he could perceive absolutely no changes in the stately old village. The old stores and cafes were still there and only one new custard stand marked a change and disrupted his memory.

"Well, Bea, the old place is still the same," he remarked as he pulled into the only motel the town offered.

"Whadya expect?" she snapped. "It's still the same old pile it used to be—only it smells worse."

"It doesn't either! You can surely stand it for just one week, can't you?"

"No I can't. I hate it, and I'll be damned if I stay a whole blessed week in this god-forsaken town!"

"That's tough—one week won't kill you. And I'm telling you right now that this week I'm not putting up with your bitching—so can it!"

Never had Nathan been so forceful before, and this suppressed bravado not only shocked, but stifled his melancholy wife. so subdued was she that even the tiny, musty motel room could not provoke her usual outrage. For the first time during their unhappy marriage, Nathan felt the confidence and self-respect that had for too long been denied him. This reign of superiority was transient, however, for on the third day of their stay he allowed her the use of the car to "run to the store." After the third hour of her absence, he decided to walk to his old home and perhaps do some hunting on the bottoms nearby.

Medium-sized oaks canopied the walk that stretched northward towards the edge of the village, while naked hickories and walnuts offered a bleaker and more desolate scene that attenuated the pomp and grandeur of autumn. There were a few more cracks in the sidewalks, but the houses that rested snugly along the concrete path remained unchanged. For some obscure reason he found a comfort in this. Though the world and his life had altered so drastically, there remained something solid and constant that had withstood the tumultuous tempest of a modifiable world. Lost virtue like logs in a stream choked his veins and squeezed the life from him, but here the ancient sidewalk flowed serenely homeward, stretching its arms luxuriously into his thirsty soul.

Little escaped his attention, and for once in his life, time fled hurriedly by so that in what seemed the blink of an eye he had reached his destination. Years had he travelled this same path, yet but in a single moment were those years relived. So much had changed, and so much had passed, yet a solitary promenade could substitute for a lifetime of weary trudgings. How strange it is that a man's life can be condensed into one small page—and even stranger is the truth that most men are denied that simple page.

Like a frozen river the sidewalk abruptly halted and deposited Nathan before his childhood home. He stood gazing at the structure while a thousand scenes were replayed, each bringing light and understanding to his person. The simple ghosts of his past issued forth and tickled his fancy while the demons of his present life pierced and tortured him the more. What had happened? Was there a key or clue to this enigma? He started up the hill that overlooked the bottoms.

At the top, a fine new home had been built where once stood the dilapidated and crumbling home of a ruined family. For all its contemporary uniqueness, the present structure was mocked and debased by a weedy graveyard that rested some forty yards to the east. This plot was the resting place of the Hubbards, an infamous family whose notorious deeds were amplified throughout the entire southern Illinois region. So dastardly were their ways that even the churches refused them to bury their dead in any public cemetery. Though the last of the Hubbards were virtuous and respectable, the weight of their ancestors' wickedness forced them to seek new

locations in which to start afresh. All that remained of the Hubbards was that rank plot that infested the land on which the new home was built.

Nathan could not restrain from strolling through the forsaken plot and rereading the stones that were the only surviving symbols of lives once lived. As a child he had been fascinated with this piece of ground, and oftentimes while passing through it at dusk he imagined hearing the wailing laments of the damned and crying souls lying there. Though there was nothing pleasant or agreeable about the place he had always found some consolation there. The plot was mysterious and haunted, and only the wildest of plants could grow there. Briars and thistles and cut grass festered the earth's surface while rough vines wrapped their gnarled tendrils around the decayed stones, caressing and imbibing the coldness of the rocks. In several places the ground was pocked and hollowed with the depressions of sunken graves. These cavities were hidden by the dense undergrowth and were usually filled with scummy water. Nathan, in his preoccupation with the tombstones, forgot about these pitfalls and blundered into one, soaking his foot above the ankle.

Leaning his gun against the fence that constrained the enclosure, he removed his shoe and wrung his sock. The fence was perhaps the most intriguing object in the entire morbid setting, for it was at this fence that the life of his closest childhood friend was taken in a hunting accident. The fence itself was a most disturbing sight, its black iron skeleton fleshed with a synthesis of vines, thorns, and multiflora roses. Just opposite this thorny barrier, however, lay an oval-shaped garden filled with the sweetest wildflowers and roses imaginable. In his youth Nathan would come to this garden and compose lines, imagining himself to be a young Thoreau or a miniature Wordsworth. In his child's eyes the garden was as magical as a grove of eglantine. Beyond the garden the world seemed to empty into endless hollow bottomland. Many nights had he sat gazing into its far-reaching depths thinking that some men had mountains to offer the world while he had only this. If he had had anything he would gladly have given, but as it was he had only himself to sacrifice—but to whom was this sacrifice intended?

He slipped the shotgun from its case and inserted one shell into the chamber. He had felt somewhat ridiculous carrying the gun across town, but now he was glad he had done it. A smile crossed his lips as he recalled the oaths and protestations his wife had uttered the day he bought the firearm. He had beaten her again. Gazing steadfastly at a decayed gap in the fence he walked toward it and proceeded to worm his way through it with neither hand near the trigger of the gun. Just a foot of brambles and he would enter into the garden—just beyond the thorns was a better world full of breathtaking beauty and intoxicating smells. It was a paradise free from the incorrigible cares that infiltrated the rest of the world, and so totally heterogeneous from the graveyard, yet only a foot of thorns served as a barrier between the two.

The briars pierced his flesh and tore at his clothing, yet he pushed on. When his left foot broke through and touched the promised land the gun went off too near his head and emptied the contents of his skull onto the dying roses. The blast of the shotgun disrupted a mockingbird from its repose, and it circled the cemetery twice before alighting atop the tallest of the tombstones. There he sang a farewell song to the day and the season and the man. The

waning sun receded into the west, turning first lavender, then pink, then terminated into the color of bloody water. The autumn air grew crisp and chill as darkness engulfed the night. A pale moon grinned owlishly upon the world as it made its ascent to the heavens, while tiny twinkling stars assured the earth and all its creatures that all was in place.

Ritual Of Heat

B.L. Davidson

Tucked against scrub alder brush,
a rough wooden sauna;
rich birch smoke curls
from its rusted stovepipe.

In steamy semi-darkness,
glistening white flesh.
Breasts, thighs are sluiced, soaped, rinsed
in the glow of the oil barrel stove.

Moist heat builds with each assault
of water on hot rocks.
It is the older women who lean back,
heat unballing clenched muscles.

One woman reaches for a tin can ladle,
dips, drinks the metallic water.
Black hair, top-knot twisted,
clings in wet strands to her shoulder.

She escapes into chill evening air,
her skin steaming faintly.
Goose-fleshed, nipples hardened,
she submits to the wind.

The Gamer

Becky Lawson

Illegitimate
child of the streets
hawking heroin
while spinning tales
which would shadow
Eddie Poe.
Shouting obscenities,
jiving with the punks,
the *kid* plans
to do his thing
over on 49th Street
tonight at 12:30.
Sirens blare,
eyes glazed, white
stare at flashing
cherries while
hands are cuffed
during the real game
of Cops and Robbers.
Jive Child in the
slammer plays games
now, but for keeps.

It's Over

Keila Tooley

The last meet of the winter:
we all have our events,
the swimmers in the pen
stretching muscles
tight as watches.
On their coach's hands
still the smell of Ben Gay.
I stand in lycra,
watching the crowd
and as their echo stills
the starter's gun*
racing body against the water,
the quickest meet of the year.

The last meet of winter:
we collect our things,
the swimmers on the bus
amid the junk
their tired bodies.
My coach next to me.
Bouncing with the road,
I pillow the window
and smell chlorine sweat,
feel as I watch him
in the draining of our win
a hand wrapped, five fingers,
around my fist.

Dream

John Stockman

I dream I see someone
and someone else
under a white sun.

He offers one of his bones,
a rib I think.
Her spade-shaped hands
put it in a burlap sack,
gesture for more.

He gives her another.
And another.

The intestines she gets herself,
reaching into his mouth,
scooping them out.

I see her
gouge his eyes,
put them in a jar.

The sack of him
on her back, she is leaving
my father's hollow skin
a home for the wind.

Silver Dollar

Gina J. Grillo

Covering my guilt with a nylon stocking,
I stole the silver dollar

The one my father kept in his
wooden coin box.

I tiptoed for days, unable to keep my head
from bobbing around to catch a glimpse of the path behind me.

The wooden chimes startled my fear as I opened
the door to Mr. McGeary's Candy Shop.

I stumbled over my arm, snatching up all
the greens, the reds, the striped and the speckled.

I gorged the brown paper bag that grasped my hand tightly,
feeling the heavy circle in my pocket urge me to go on

I watched as Mr. McGeary shut the silver demon
into the bottom drawer of the cash register

I blinked a tear away and waited for the sweetness
to fill my mouth, and choked on the poison.

The Dancer

Jessica Lewis

Tittering robin toes
Leave first position footprints
As the dancer flutters across the stage.
Stopping, precisely as a bird's blink,
She perches, flamingo pink,
Upon one invisible strand leg,
Ready to fly.

Snapshots Of Rural Illinois

Isabel M. Parrott

The September sun sat on the horizon
as the rose-tipped tassels of tall corn
waved from the opposite, fenced-in fields.

As I drove through the Gumbo Plains of Illinois
the red rusted tractor stared^a
it waited
to be driven back home.

The corn bin stood up in the field,
light caught in its slats,
as broken and blistered boards fell
from its walls.

Whiffs of someone's smashed possum
filled my car
along with the cows' dung-blossoms,
and the confined hog's sweat...

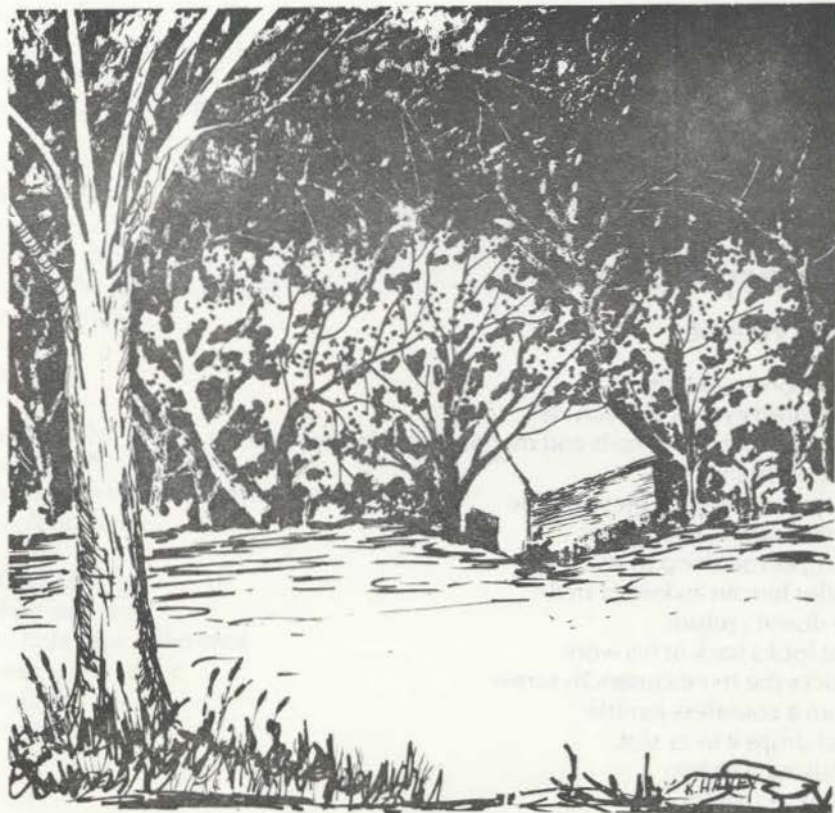
One afternoon—
I caught a glimpse of my old Saturdays.

The Last Season

Theresa Whiteside

On a quiet country road,
the crops harvested,
totally engrossed and partially deaf,
the squirrel gathers fallen corn
as she had for many autumns.

Karen Haney



At Shedd Aquarium

Linda Fraembs

The silver-shingled fish
slips easily through the water,
swimming in incessant circles,
inspecting the boundaries
of the world that holds him captive.

Strong swishes of his tail
zig-zag him up and down each panel,
his thin nose poking at rocks and then air,
looking for an escape, a hole in the glass.

A giant Oscar hangs suspended below.
Tarnished silver eyes tilt in their sockets
to watch the frantic search silently.

He sees himself in the glass,
his reflection living in the other world
where fish flop on the dry floor,
gasping.

The Guardian

Becky Lawson

His face bore the furrows
of a mud-baked field
scorched by summer's sun.
Deep within the cracked crevices,
his two eyes peered out,
taking in the world with their
misty innocence.
Slowly, gnarled, tree-branch hands
reached out as he strained to grasp
something that was just a little beyond
his tangible perception.
He felt its warmth, its downy softness,
and though he could not see the small creature
of yellow fluff or hear proud peeping,
he held it with the tenderness of a rainbow
whispering secrets to turning sky.

Digital Life

Everett Tackett

Electronic pulse,
A micro-chip heart,
Modulated breathing,
Real life from the start.

Analog emotion,
Transistorized thought,
Oscillating feelings,
Do they show it or not?

All these little things,
Are creations of man,
Computers and games,
Digital life is at hand.

Voltage is the will,
Amperage is the soul,
A circuit society,
We try to control.

Full Service

Scott Gray

Midnight.

Cherry 'vette
at the
unleaded pump.

Water droplets
roll
slowly over
the
steamy engine.

Sultry voice
from
inner depths
whispers
"Fill me up."

Attendant
guides nozzle
g e n t l y
into place.
Pulls
the
trigger.

The Aftermath.
Orange glow
from
a Salem
flickers
from within.

"That'll be twenty-five dollars."
He felt so
cheap.

Dust Show

Linda A. Brown

Dust fills the air as
I pound on the old chair,
stinging my eyes,
making me sneeze.
The light through
the broken window,
is a spotlight reaching
down to the floor.
There the specks
of dust gather
using it as their stage.
In the limelight
they perform for me.
Catching and reflecting
pieces of sparkling glitter
with their tiny bodies.
Entering and disappearing
from my sight,
and with my clapping
returning for encores,
dancing a whirl.
Tiring, they settle
on the floor
or on the nearest object
they can find.
They wait undisturbed
for me to return,
stirring up their energy
as I watch them
from my dirt-ridden chair
in the garage theater.

At Six

Maureen Foertsch

Because I'm six,
I learn by standing back,
watching the world without questions.
Every star I'm lucky enough to see
looks as though it's close enough
to hold in my hands—
especially when the crickets
sing to me.

But mom says when I'm older
I'll know stars are too far away
and that the cricket was just
rubbing his hind legs together
when I heard him singing,
"don't grow up,
don't grow up."

Jean Imherr



Reflection

Maggie Kennedy

Closing the medicine cabinet door
I am greeted by an old friend.

I smile. It doesn't,
then looks me straight in the eye.

I look again and it laughs;
a private joke.

Through skeptical eyes,
it notes each blemish, each wrinkle is revealed,

then laughing, waves goodbye,
and walks away.

Brushing my teeth, I look up
to see my sister standing in its place.

Tugging at my conscience,
she begins to cry

like the time at seven
when I stole Raggedy Ann.

Cat Defining

Becky Lawson

Dawn:
the time of
day
when the sun
emits its
whiskers like a
curious cat
trying to
discover why the
world
is.
Dusk:
curiosity killed
the
cat.

Ode To An Unread Newspaper

Linda Fraembs

The morning paper sits in the wastebasket
coiled into the contours of cold green metal.
A crimped Coke can rubs shoulders
with the latest Falkland Islands crisis
as a tooth-marked, waxy Hardee's cup
crowns a picture of the president.
A stray bead of dark liquid
meanders down the front page,
as if to read.

Gum

Steve Sandstrom

What horrible deaths lie in wait for a stick of gum.
Gnashed to an unrecognizable blob
And spat into an ashtray where old tobacco
Sticks like feathers on the wet tar.
Or welded underneath a drug store counter,
A squat stalactite in a cavern of old rubber.

The Dancer

Chrystal Clark

A little girl practices the dance
In the long dark corridor
She is not alone
But she feels so special
That in the magical instance
She imagines that there is no one else.

It was so simple then
How many years later
 the half-woman-half-child dances again
Always with a fear that someone might see
As she watches herself in the mirrors
She analyzes her face
Somehow it is hard to accept
She remembers the holes in her tights when she was small
Now, she wears new ones
But they feel dirty on her old, used body
She is twenty years old.
It's funny
Both times she does not remember
What made her stop dancing.

D.L. Lewis

Wet clothes
hung from the curtain rod
to dry
drip silently
onto the pile of papers and folders
that coat the electric Smith-Corona

Calculus book—open faced,
dead where it landed
next to the john bucket overloaded
with Agree, Noxzema
Secret, Colgate
Safeguard and
Vaseline Intensive Care

The open make-up mirror reflects
the ten a.m. south rays onto
the six empty Tab cans perched
above the unmade bed

"Tracy
where the hell
did I put
my Stats book?!"
I trip over
the garbage can

She shrugs,
rescuing Raggedy Ann
and Andy
from a pile of clothes
at the foot of the bed
as the phone screams softly
from under a pillow

For Lucy

Stacey Flannigan

I caught her in the garden this morning,
Hair all ruffled from the heat,
A musky film dewed on her throat,
And one breast exposed
Like a generous dip of
Neapolitan ice cream—compliments
Of the August sun.
Never had a woman
Been so real or so pretty,
With engorged stomach
And stately gracelessness,
Her womb
Ripe with child.

An Abortion

Devon Flesor

The fourth month melts away
Vanilla ice-cream in
Hot black coffee
Shapeless, vanished sweetness.

A prince is born
Out of some forgotten playmate
And I write a poem
Drink a whiskey.

The ink is wet statistics
Income low, like a show
Students: Beyond Morality
No cabbages, no fairies.

Reveries

Keila Tooley

"Tilt your head slightly."

"There?"

"No. Wait a minute, the light isn't right. Get your hair out of your eyes. OK, go. No, left. Chin up."

"How's this?"

"Not quite—just a bit more. No, no, no. Stop. Enough. Damn it, Cesile."

"Auh, Christ, Marc—give me a break. Didn't anyone ever tell you that a horse is only as good as its trainer?"

A forced half-smile dulled the sharp glare Cesile passed to Marc just before she bolted through the studio door and down the marble steps.

"God, that kid's a squirrel," Marc murmured under his breath. "Get back here with those clothes. Off with the shoes—Now!"

Without looking back Cesile nonchalantly bent down and removed the stringy, white Givenchy sandals from her neatly pedicured feet. Turning toward Marc in one unbroken motion, Cesile flashed a superficial grin, lowered a haughty curtsy, and blew a facetious kiss.

"Je-sus Christ! Hams, every last one of them. Christ," said Marc as he stood in the doorway shaking his head. A faint laugh and a true smile carried Cesile home.

Once home, Cesile ran across the newly sprinkled, but still brownish lawn and bounded over a short hedge onto the front porch. The brass door opened to a long corridor carpeted sculptured white. Damp dirty footprints trailed behind Cesile as she headed toward her room. But frustrated pen scratches called her to her father's den.

She silently peered through the jarred door. A lone lamp shone over her father's left shoulder. As he wrote, pen shadows danced through low hanging clouds of sweet fruited pipe smoke, still keeping time with the rhythmic whole and half strokes which were sporadically interrupted by the methodical tapping of ball point against oak.

The front wall was paneled by dusty shelved books; with the exception of a few, most remained unopened for years. Old semi-smoked cigarette butts populated half-empty glasses and spilled ashtrays. Remnants of days of discarded effort carpeted the floor: the trash can brimming—wasted paper and wasted thoughts—some crumpled, some torn, others smooth, all forgotten: hopeless.

Sensing her presence, Drew looked, smiled, and motioned for Cesile to come and sit on his lap.

"Hey kiddo, what's up?" he said as he bounced her upon his knee.

"Be serious—who's a kid? Not much."

"Oh, that's right. I forgot—sorry. How was work, young lady?"

"Uh, you know."

"Still that bad? Did you ask Mom about cutting your hair yet?"

"Not yet, I wasn't in the mood for one of her 'you have everything and why do you want to ruin it' speeches."

"I see, you chickened out."

"Yeh, I'm a chicken—but I'll ask her today. You'll see."

"Sure ya will kiddo—see ya later." He slapped her bottom as she reached for the door.

I'm going to be like him, thought Cesile as she crossed the hallway and entered her room. A carnival of stuffed animals welcomed her presence.

Cesile balanced her catcher's mitt upon the head of a long orange giraffe, and kicked the baseball into the paws of a dirty white cat, as she sauntered to her closet.

Cesile effortlessly slipped out of her flouncy Sasson dress, and hung it carefully on the work side of her closet. She then quickly rummaged through her dirty clothes until she found her favorite pair of red-tag Levi's: faded and worn—vented at the knees. As she walked over to get her shirt, the left pocket, only half attached, flopped like a collie's ear.

When the kelly and blue jockey jersey pulled free, the hanger leaped up and popped the shelf above. Cesile saw the mirror's reflection on her silken blonde hair and her long thin body as she tucked the over-sized jersey into snug jeans.

Without bending down, Cesile worked her feet, dirty and unsocked, into a pair of new, neon-white Nikes laced with unicorn and rainbow printed ties. Already their ends were frayed from just a few days tromping.

Bending at the waist, Cesile made an awkward, but proficient attempt at tying her shoes while walking or rather stumbling over to her large, seldom-used vanity. She picked up and raised to her brow a yellowed ivory brush—hesitated—only to set it back down unused.

Instead, she spun and twisted her long hair atop her head and covered it with her father's Yankees' cap. Her face still heavily made-up, shadow and contour from the morning's shooting, opposed the afternoon's attire.

Just as Cesile was ready to go out to the barn, in stormed her mother. Her own dreams of years past unfulfilled, she willed them to Cesile.

"Marc called me at work."

"Marc's a jerk."

"He's a professional, and you should be too. You have everything—looks, talent, connections—but your attitude, my dear, has got to change. You hear?"

"My attitude sucks, because the job sucks."

"You know what will happen if your attitude doesn't change, don't you? And this time I mean it."

"I want to cut my hair. Real short like Kinski's."

"Don't be silly. I refuse to even discuss it. You've got to grow up Cesile. This is reality. Anyway, dreams always hurt."

"And reality doesn't." No answer.

"Just make sure you are back in time for your four o'clock shooting."

Desperate to escape, Cesile ran the full three-quarters of a mile to the barn.

Bitted and saddled, Revere stood fast for the mount. Sandy dust swirled over, across, around the sculptured and cracked clay ground. With each step, the dirt mushroomed about Revere's bare hooves. Increased speed stirred a tornadous tail that marked their trail like the smoke behind a jet. The sound of Revere's single-footed gait, each step so fast, blurred to a single roll. Dewy

breezes licked Cesile's face as they rode high under the low sweeping trees. Her makeup smeared beneath her eyes and down her cheeks, but she didn't care. Makeup is so false; it's no more real than a daydream.

Cesile rode the rolling fields as if she were sailing on the ocean, gently rocking, flowing with the tide. She remembered her mother rocking her to sleep after a scary dream, and wished she would hold her now.

As they wandered, they saw a panoramic view: leafy grey-green trees together at top, alone at bottom stood like an isle of fresh summer broccoli from grandma's garden; Brussels sprouts bushes like cat's-eye marbles speckled and swirled; broken white fences, like flowers to the sun leaned; a house like an island stood alone.

Across the horizon, mountains, huge grey animals slept, content, as the moon peered over their heads guarding Plato's ideal plane. The moon, in afternoon's prime, shone twice bigger than at night. Its rays dissipated down through the clouds onto sparkling bare branches remembering yesterday's forgotten trees.

As they passed the mountain, their shadow etched a faint silhouette in its side.

They stopped to play, floated and splashed in a cool stream-filled pool. Then they rested, flopped out upon the down-soft grass. Above, the clouds, bunched and plotted, made suburbs in the sky: a child's oasis where virgin white unicorns, horns and wings golden, tipped in red, danced to echo's songs of Tchaikovsky's violins; and stuffed animals grew as large and soft as clouds. A single glowing cloud pierced the day's dying sun like Cupid's arrow through the heart.

Suddenly aware that the day had gone, they rode the last rainbow home. Totally involved in her reveries, Cesile's four o'clock shooting had long passed without notice. When she came in from the barn, her mother and father were waiting.

"I warned you, Cesile," her mother said coldly.

"I'm sorry, I lost track of the time. It will never happen again. I swear."

"Too late now, you should have thought of that before. I did it—I sold Revere."

Somehow her mother looked triumphant; her father looked down at the ground.

"It's final; the truck will be here first thing in the morning."

"Ya but, you can't sell her—she's mine!"

"You are just lucky I didn't sell her to the Alpo man. She'll have a good home."

"I hate you, Mom!" whispered Cesile.

"You left me no choice. I couldn't control you."

"You just wait—just wait!"

In her eye welled a silent tear. Cesile turned away and walked into her room, pulled a large pair of shears from her dresser drawer and carefully snipped her long golden curls above the nape of her trembling neck. She gathered and arranged the fallen locks and wrapped them in a ribbon like a bouquet, which she placed on the nightstand beside her bed.

Not that she thought she would be able to sleep, but she set her alarm early

just in case. Five-thirty a.m. and the hum jarred her from a death-like daze. Still clothed, Cesile stood up and grabbed her bouquet of locks. She crossed the hall and entered her mother's bedroom—paused, then gently placed her only weapon upon her mother's sleeping breast.

Cesile paid her mother a short expressionless stare then walked the full three-quarters of a mile to the barn.

Sunday Morning After Tequila With Lemon

Scott Gray

He teeters slightly
as he rises from bed,
the floor meeting his feet.
an ache pounds his head
and his stomach dances,
calypso style.

His mouth tastes
like the green persimmon his
brother made him eat
back in the third grade.
He hadn't liked it then,
either.

His hands jump like
paint shakers as he
lights the filtered end
of a Marlboro. He smokes it
anyway.

On the table,
the bottle stands, void.
He looks at it slowly,
then runs to pay homage
to the porcelain
God.

He spits up the worm,
like a robin feeding her
young, then the citrus follows.
The persimmon tasted
better.

Staging A Living Jewel Box

Michelle Mitchell

I curse the feet, so wide,
I was born with; unlike
the porcelain doll's.

She's a fillet, a nude.
All bones in ribbons
whirling the dusty floor,

which turns the crank
at the side, and strikes
the chord. The pink ice

ballerina, melted already
by the music, dances first
in silence; then a mate

makes two on satin skates,
on a wooden rink with
a mirror behind and sonatas.

When the lid closes and
the audience goes home,
are they lovers?

The Other Woman

Stacey Flannigan

You made me feel like
A glass—
Unfilled and dry,
Left upside down too long
On the dish rack;
Water spots colored me
In delicate constellations.

If only you had been thirsty...
I think
No crystal cup would have mattered.

The Natural Look

Michelle Mitchell

First, the soaping up and off.
Frothy warmth trickles down in between.
Between my toes, I lift my razor
for the fifth time...

Getting pretty good.
Swimming in steam, my blouse
ghostlike in the spray
relaxes. Pretty good trick.

My face stares at me from
a bottle on the dressing table.
My eyes from a tube,
my lips from a stick.

I'm scrubbed and sculpted,
steadily limped and faded
in an evening and then,
the soaping up and off.

Poem To A Girl Named Sandals

John Stockman

In a land we've never seen
we sit under a lattice of slats
and morning glories, waiting
for a train. Dust rises.

The waiter brings a small,
fat watermelon and a butcher knife,
the blade curved like grass.

He splits the green shell easily,
then halves each half.

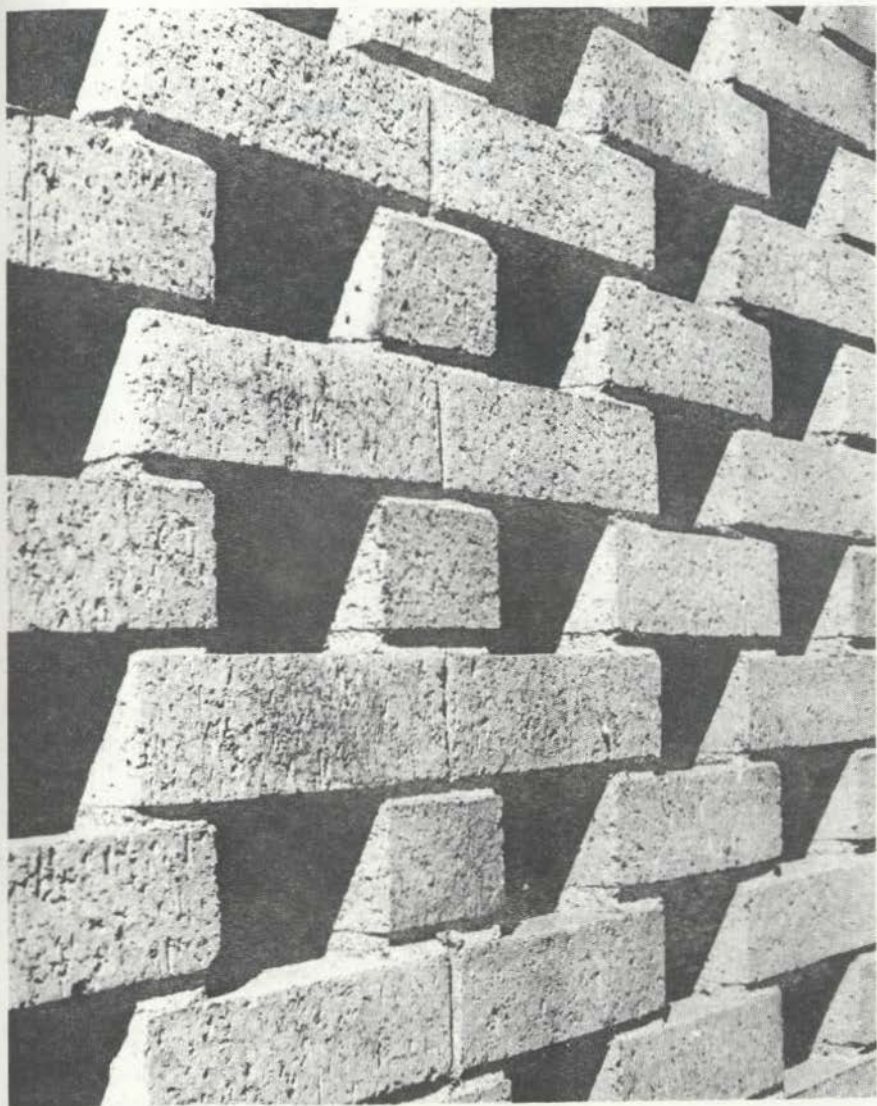
We eat it like that, the juice
sticky on our chins.

Spitting seeds—a contest of distance.

They fall on the dirt like small,
black petals. You win. It is spring
and I say *I love you*.

It is spring, so you smile
and wipe the juice from my chin.

Lisa Owens



In The Balcony Of The Bijou On A Saturday Night

Scott Gray

Young Girl
ecstatic cling
to
lint covered sweater.
Lust
tumbles
through
her mind.

Bounce nervously
in her
seat.

Young Boy
Caress Downy
Woolite
sweater
over Ivory shoulder.
Quells Lava
building in
his body.
Safeguard
from
trouble.

Good Clean Fun.

The Canadian Soccer Player

Becky Lawson

Things are different now.
I'm no longer so afraid of men
and I'm not really afraid of you.
I like to watch your lithe body
moving with the spontaneous grace
of a seagull in flight.
I love your lines.
Your curving muscles, flexing,
and drawing my eyes to your
powerful body.
You make me think of things.
Things that good girls
just dream about but never
experience.
So I dream about experiencing
them with you, strong and gentle,
protective and aggressive.
I dream of rippling, bronzed muscles
flexing and drawing me to their vortex.
I dream of you.

The Healing

John Stockman

Sometimes, at dusk,
the mountains in the west
are a slumbering lion.

Today, it rains
and in the mountains
the rain falling fast,

taking the small soil
into the valley,
into spring.

I think of love,
the something in it that wounds
and the something that heals.

The sound of rain,
the sound of a million buds
bursting.

Appeased

Devon Flesor

Laughing girl
Conceived near a dandelion
Ate a bowl of words
With a silver spoon,

And belched up a poem.

Dancing girl
Born in a blizzard
Drank the juice of philosophers
From a golden chalice,

And spilled into the sea.

Coda

John Stockman

Finally, there is only the word.
Nail, star, bone, or another.
It is the seed and rocks

in the juice
in the cradle of flesh
you fashion

to make your poem
the perfect fruit,
a heavenly globe.

When the sun has risen
in the heavenly globe,
when the perfect fruit ripens,

then the poem is a gift,
a cherry tomato
your friends will pop

in their mouths,
biting, not knowing
which way it will squirt.

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had begun to snow again. The
ark, falling obliquely again
for him to set out on his
ere right: snow was general
lling on every part of the
hills, falling softly upon
ly falling into the dark m
alling, too, upon every part
he hill where Michael Furr