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1.00

This may be the final issue of *Aldebaran*. The magazine is the direct offspring of Roger Williams College's Creative Writing Program. The College's administrators are planning to eliminate this rare and valuable program. If this transpires, *Aldebaran* would be but one of many casualties.

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Kim L. Horton

ERNIE'S VISION

“I fell asleep watching TV on the couch
last night ya know. And my wife came down
from upstairs and woke me up.
So I asked her why the hell she did that,
I was enjoying the program.
I fall asleep with my eyes open alot ya see.
Always have. And I don't miss a thing.
Do something in front of me and when I wake up,
I'll tell ya what cha did.
And like with TV. When I wake up
I'll tell ya about what was just on.
I'm not shittin ya. I told my wife
one time, that when I die I'm gonna die
with my eyes open. And that's okay with me.
Cause I wanna see where the fuck I'm goin.”

VerKuilen Ager

SUBIC BAY NAVY BASE, REPUBLIC OF THE PHILLIPPINES, 1967

OUTSIDE

It was after midnight when the boatswain mate came out of the bar. He was so drunk he fell down in the rain. His Filipino whore came downstairs and helped him into the back of the jeepney cab. Before she went back upstairs she talked a long time in Tagalog and finally gave the driver two pesos fare back to the Navy base and all the while the boatswain sat with his head between his legs and was sick.

The driver went two blocks toward the base before turning into a sidestreet. When he stopped another Filipino came from a doorway and climbed into the back of the jeepney. The sailor groaned when the driver grabbed him by the head and just groaned again when the other man stabbed him in the stomach with a screwdriver. They took his wallet and the military ID card from his shirt pocket. They rolled him out into the rain.

In the morning the boatswain mate's ship shoved off for Yankee Station and he was placed on report for not returning to duty.

* * * *

INSIDE

Humidity in the men's room of the China Fleet Club made all the walls and toilet seats sticky and wet. It smelled of pine oil disinfectant and many kinds of aftershave and gas passed after drinking green beer. The drunk Australian sailor asked the drunk American sailor if he was on that pussy boat the Whippoorwill down at the piers, and weren't the Americans, after all mate, pussies for getting their bloody bums kicked in Viet Nam?

When the American tried to hit the Australian he fell in a puddle of urine and banged his head on the tile floor. The Aussie kicked him in the face and broke his jaw. As the Australian washed his hands it was very quiet except for the sound of the water running and the gasping of the sailor on the floor and the hum of the exhaust fan. Then the Aussie went out to play soccer with his shipmates in the empty field behind the miniature golf course. In the field the grass needed mowing and all the Aussies were drunk and it was almost too hot for soccer.

Lisa DuBois

STAR'S RETREAT

Daddy, where are you now?
At the tavern, speaking with a dead Hemingway?
Directing your questions and answers downward?
Sailing new blue waters of the Aegean?

Open us up Dad.
Unite us with your worthless meanderings.
Tribal warriors want your blood.

Odious wings flapping . . .
Fucking the angels again?

Isthmuses break too.
There is no way back Dad.



Roselyn L. Wimbish

HUSTLE

Holding

the stick

with

such tenderness

and force

He smashes the egg.

Creating

a burst of scrambled colors,

all

screaming

for their identity:

This dark pocket.

AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES TATE

The following is an excerpt from an interview conducted by Lou Papineau and Cliff Saunders at Mr. Tate's home in Amherst, Mass. on March 1. The complete interview will be published elsewhere later this year.

INT: In 1966, you were the youngest to receive the Yale Younger Poet award. How did that affect your writing? What pressures, if any, were put upon you?

TATE: I wanted to take it very seriously at first and thought it was supposed to mean something profound. It shook me out of something; even if you're totally dedicated to your writing you don't necessarily imagine it actually affecting anyone. So I had to consider the possibility of an audience, which was probably a phony consideration — it was a waste of time. But I thought I had to.

It had a muddled affect on my life that lasted over several years, and I never knew when I solved it or what it was exactly I had ever solved. It involved such things as giving poetry readings and receiving little strange clippings in the mail that insulted you all the way from London. But then it just once again felt natural writing poems without having to think that somebody expected something from me.

INT: How do you view your progression from *The Lost Pilot* to *Hottentot Ossuary*? There's an obvious shift from book to book, and I was wondering if your approach to each group of poems reflected a conscious change, or just something you found yourself doing differently.

TATE: First of all, I guess it isn't true of other poets I can think of, but for me I almost never thought I was writing a book. I never knew what the outcome was going to be. You start getting a sense of something much later. It's turned out almost in all of my writing time except for *The Lost Pilot* that in my mind if I thought of books at all I thought there were two books going at the same time. So the times that I've finally gotten around to bringing out a book it doesn't really mean much in terms of exact progression.

For example, *Hints To Pilgrims* and *Absences* were more or less written simultaneously over a 3½ year period. It's the same way with *Hottentot Ossuary* and another, unpublished volume called *Viper Jazz*;

both were written simultaneously and I didn't even know they were separate books for a long time and then suddenly it started occurring to me. So I can't give a very precise answer. As for the way the poetry evolves, it must have something to do with bio-rhythms, metabolism, things beyond our control.

I seem to explore — more or less exhaust, write myself into a corner — a kind of poem or particular obsession. It's not an arbitrary or artificial thing, it's what is truly obsessing every part of my self. But then after maybe three years of being troubled and obsessed with certain things both poetic and personal and philosophical — it comes sort of naturally. I need to be reborn a little bit, and start moving into something else. I've almost never been able to put my finger down and say — “Ah, this marks a change.”

INT: Irony and wit play an important part in your poetry. There's a line in “Shadowboxing” which reads, “how come you never take your life/seriously?” Are you afraid of getting too serious?

TATE: I do believe in some kind of humility which I think keeps you from being morbidly serious about your own fate, and for better or worse either taking the good parts seriously or the bad parts too seriously, and I don't think I have a right to do that. (muses) Irony — well, I like to be able to look at things from more than one direction at once, but it's not as flat as serious and humorous. It's just trying to see the richness of the situation.

INT: What do you see as your common themes?

TATE: I don't want to write poems about incidents particularly unless they lend themselves to a larger expression of a viewpoint. Love poems are always just accidents for me. It's fine if somebody says, “You wrote some of the nicer love poems,” but it's not something that I think of as a theme.

My theme is just to try to express how I see the world at the time. Rimbaud says something about the poet's mission is to measure the amount of unknown present at any time and that's part of it.

INT: Many writers have seen themselves as social historians — would you accept that tag?

TATE: I wouldn't mind that particularly, but I think it happens to you unwittingly. If one succeeds in being spoken through by one's times, then you're bound to reflect it. I don't know where the individual talent or genius comes in there but it does, obviously, you don't escape yourself entirely.

INT: Do you revise a lot? How long does it generally take you to finish a poem?

TATE: That's one thing that definitely seems to change all the time, or at least every few years. It started out with *The Lost Pilot*, and like a lot of young poets, I had this obsession that a poem had to be completed in a day or two, and therefore I had a lot of very short poems. But that doesn't mean the poem wouldn't go through 14 or 16 revisions. It was just an obsession and a terrible fear that I would lose the poems because they were conceived in a more complete fashion and something about their whole outline was suggested to me.

But now I really feel I work without as many expectations. I'm more open to exploring where it will go. To be precise about the time aspect, poems for me now take literally about nine months to write, and during that time I'll work on about 15 poems at once. It seems that they work in cycles like that. I'll work through 20 or 30 full revisions and then they seem to come to a completion at the same time. So revision now plays a much larger part for me than it did back then. It always did, but now it's the whole thing. I have very little interest in a poem I can write in a sitting. It'd be a miracle for me if I could write a poem that could please me in one sitting. I think part of this is staying away from certain kinds of poems. I don't want to write poems that are direct responses to incidents – I don't want to write a 31st birthday poem, or a New Years' Eve poem. So each poem for me – you asked about the world-view – is, I can honestly say, a very open search to articulate and further express that view. And I don't mean to make that sound too heavy, because, again, there can sometimes be humor involved. Usually the poems I've been writing for the last few years are not directly humorous. One line is humorous and the next is tragic – manic-depressive from line to line.

INT: Do you ever have two or three ideas for different poems in mind at the same time and you don't know which to pursue first?

TATE: No, because I put them all together immediately, to see if I can get all three in the same poem.

I have no qualms about *anything* I put down on paper. Over a period of, say, four nights, I may fill up ten sheets of paper and I'm quite happy if I have one line out of that. And that's the way I tend to work. I may have some fairly good first draft that won't get completed for nine months, but it may turn out that 2/3 of the lines have been useful and the other third I've had to work with all that time. It may not turn out that way, but a lot of the time it's slow inchwork.

INT: Do you think the writing of prose poems has become a fad? Is it an easier poem to write, not having to worry about line breaks and other technical matters?

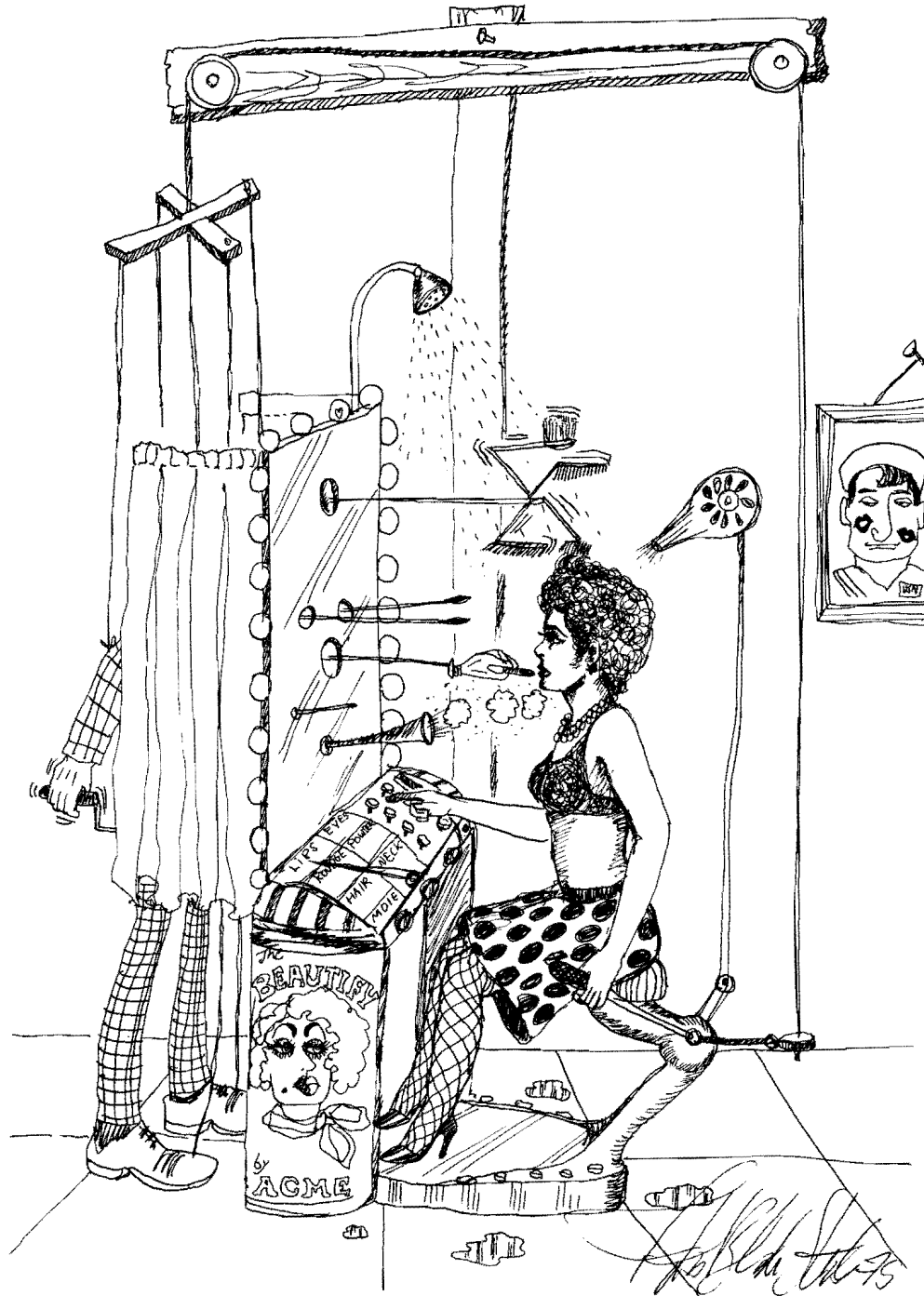
TATE: No, I don't think it's at all easier; I think that would be a false thing to say. As you know, there are so many of them around now — suddenly — and some you read and say, “Yeah, these are legitimate prose poems,” and others you read and say, “This person doesn't know what a prose poem is,” or “This person's faking it” or “This poem isn't best suited for this form.” So some people are trying to pass off dull prose as prose poems, and I think a prose poem should have the same tension and formal sculpture as verse poems. There's no reason to suddenly relax all the rules.

INT: Your poetry has gone through considerable changes, in both technique and subject matter, over the years. Do you feel another change coming on?

TATE: Wouldn't it look just wonderful in print if I said, “Yes, I'm totally satisfied”? Again, the answer is so obvious: nobody is ever satisfied. I'm always trying to tear myself away from the past and move onto something new but as I say, it's a slow process.

I really feel, in one sense, insecure, because I do work in solitude as all poets do, and I don't have anybody to show poems to; so nobody sees poems of mine until they're in print. Therefore, I've been living with the poem for a year and a lot of kinds of uncertainty because — hopefully — I am trying something that's new that I don't fully understand yet. I always feel restless and very uncertain, and I'm pleased when finally, if it should appear in a book, I can pick it up and say, “Yes, see, it looks as though I knew what I was doing all along.” So that uncertainty, finally you have to face up to it and commit yourself.

I always feel that I'm not writing. I always feel like it's a difficult time and then only looking back a couple of years later I might say, “Oh, there were some truly good moments then. In fact, maybe some of the best moments I ever came close to poetry.”



James Tate

LIKE A SAINT

Should I leap from the balcony
and back up again
like a great big Saint!
If I pulled all these daggers
out of my firehead
I could breathe like a jet
in an exemplory way like a sergeant,
like a bean. O Heroes,
I'll always need you from this time on:
I'm an old bag with a potato-brain.
How will this effect the children,
an arm to span the ages
with a sperm-bank inbetween.
I will unplug the freezer
when the suffering is over —
grip flung loose of the popsicle —
it was not a real party.
No, Lord, I masturbated on the desk
then crossed the Great Sandy.
This is my iron, that your fuzzy.
It must come as a big surprise
I am appealing to Zanzibar.
I will never move to Beacon Hill,
dust the cameo with a crowbar.
Some kind of rare fungus
is taking a bite of our diamond.
Does it have any extra-marital rhinos?
Only a few satin diving-units
which never refer to the sky,
whose lips appear willfully removed.



James Tate

IN NEW YORK

The cosmopolis leans up against the light
and tries to start a conversation
where one is terribly serious
and the other is a gigantic raging oscilloscope
hearing nothing and swimming on
like you smartiepants.
I'm parched, my notebooks are parched & so
with my eggs, everything is coming up pencils
and I come home to a chaotic celebration
really shocked me out of my whirlpool to find
the mightly surging tribulet budding with ants
counting their blessings after the pillage
of every living cell on the banks
now all is bald, O get on your evil horse, ride down
loose spheres of blacklight across the border
I give into my seashells
they're still something to bounce off
who are sure they exist
very humble and self-assured.

An old man in the cosmopolis
must divorce himself, his home in the far TV
the false hope at the end
it would be propitious to die though
the standards of gulp into the gulping
the big Mexico burst upon the solitary stone
and be glad
and know what that old person feels like:
broken aquariums
bugging everyone.

Always aware that we are dying
at a meaningful pace for a real experience
that stab was meant for everyone
the fat sages
down the ages
their elliptical hearts are an excuse for holidays
mating stupor and drinking song

by reason of the effort and its tradition
of the utterly hopeless
celebrating “remote exquisite Beauties.”
You can purchase something to keep you sane
such as a bigger and bigger slab of the madness
navigating uptown like a crumpled fish
through Buddha’s nightgown
you sometimes know the secret, if anything,
not asking for anyone to take you home
you are, for one second,
the only one that’s not alone and
like Jesus you can’t lift your arm
to stop a taxi, you tear yourself up
because it feels so damned good.

James Tate

TWO FOR CHARLES SIMIC

1. *The Sky*

What is the sky?
A week later
I reply: I don't know

why don't you ask
your only friend.
Another week passes.
He doesn't call.

He must be up to something,
he must know
what the hell it is.

I look at my bankbook,
it's forty-seven below.
Can you give me a clue?

I blurt at him.
Those few shining masterpieces
are lost, electric piercing

bouquets
lost in a fantastic fire.
What is the sky?

What is the sky.
The sky is a door,
a very small door

that opens for an inchworm
an inch above his rock,
and keeps his heart from flying off.

James Tate

2. *Nothing*

It is a tiny obscure lighthouse
for serious travellers of the night
whose only vocation
is to gradually discover a spot
to root their lonely wardrobes.

It is a dignified fifth columnist
inspiring unheard of wind
slightly ajar:
if you haven't got any you'll die.

It's not going to improve your posture.
Take an overdose and you won't even faint.
It helps you make it through the day.
You can take it with you and that's all.

James Tate

RISING ABSENTEEISM

I keep stalling in the middle
of these sprawling decades.
The first few minutes are all that matter.

Then a big fizzle,
I'm out of wind for centuries
like a dead husky,
a dejected opera house,
really just pizzling down
the slopes
into a tub of pink wine.
Does anybody remember *Yoko*?

person dont live here anymore

"You don't do me justice!"

That where you want to get slain?
Port of Scorn, you want to escape
not from, not into, your center is off
and you move sideways,

you allow yourself to move
always with fear and deep defeat.

You will make it —
for you the sea will not open.

You have this love written on you:
stern failure to negotiate
or giving-in to the flood.

"Yes, poor Snake gave her life for you,
pushed you away from that speeding car . . ."

A certain head-on collision didn't happen
at a fortuitous time, is that what
you're braying? That we're inviolable?
I hope you had more enthusiasm as a child
than to say after the rollercoaster

"It was uneven,
The Hall of Mirrors was uneven;
and surely my days are uneven
as the world is uneven."

James Tate

No two days are alike.
I guess they are glued.
I am still digesting
my miles per gallon.
It's not meant to look like anybody else.
This is definitely an aberration.
I could get to like yours.
This is my political punching bag, my cell.
Make me happy and I'll be your slave
boogie boogie dumb dumb . . .
It moves from despair to despair
to despair to slapstick to despair
to slapstick despair despair and so on.
My self had died,
sits up and yawns:
it must be melancholy for someone.
In a world so rich no wonder
the insane own most of it.
It exists; refutes all attempts
to destroy it,
twitters in the night.
I have no vision, only a lasting gaze, *bam!*
Off with your head.
There are moments — most of them
have committed murder — and many
have everlasting monuments.
Who are the people, you may ask.
Gazing over the torn flesh you spot yourself.
It's that kind of day,
I guess I feel like killing you.
I said spit over your shoulder,
this place is getting creepy.
I have always disapproved of higher education.
Really? Isn't that fascinating.
He ought to get his head capped,

James Tate

get one of those starheads.
Adios sixteen Japanese ricebirds
that couldn't accommodate
more up-to-date habits.

I have been given ideas
for which I am not always grateful.
Earn a fortune overnight,
blow your brains out for the enchantment
of science and a wealth for all.

I look like a pile of people,
I can't say too much about it.
I have this raging distraction:
the case of rising absenteeism.
I am alive beside you in hot type.

Cliff Saunders

POKER NIGHT IN NEWPORT

for Lou Papineau

5 a.m. shadows crawl out
from underneath the furniture
and greet us like dark hands,
slipping between the countless
beer bottles and poker chips
shuffling across the kitchen table.
Suddenly I notice the canvas
of sunlight displayed on the wall,
and looking out the window, I see
pink clouds draining the liquid night
like mouths poised over dark glasses.
Lately the stacks of poker chips
piled beside me have increased,
but now the game is secondary.
Now I know that the dark cricket
flexing his wings for one more song
no longer holds any importance.
The birds plunging their tireless beaks
through the dew-crusting grass know this.
The lights left glowing on mansion
porches, those myopic lights, know this.
The milkwagon in an old millionaire's dream,
with its clumping hoofs, knows this.
The fishermen whirling their lines
through the stubborn, clinging fog
of the green bay know this. And so:
somewhere a snoring teacher sleeps,
huddled beside his wife in the lighthouse.
Somewhere a copy editor sleeps,
dreaming of headlines and midnight basketball.
Somewhere a young poetess sleeps,
dreaming of visits to the university.
Somewhere two students, their pockets empty,

Cliff Saunders

sleep inside the songs of a radio.
Somewhere a young man, his pockets full,
sleeps beneath the pages of a comic book.
And now the cricket sleeps, folding
his wings around him like a blanket,
the cricket who sleeps under my pillow.



Steven Christenson

FOUR WIND-TURQUOISE SERPENT

Howard Hale Haverfield, Associate Professor of Anthropology from the American University in Oaxaca, scraped his knife at the clay behind the headdress of the Zapotec urn which Don Amado offered for sale. He gathered the rusty colored grains on typing paper and glanced at them through his magnifying glass. He poked his pencil into the dreamy golden dust and whispered, "It's impossible, absolutely impossible."

But Jeanette didn't hear him. She was sweeping the linoleum floor of their spacious American made camper, and as she stepped through the narrow hallway Haverfield could hear the truck springs squeak beneath him as though cockroaches had nested in the coils. Jeanette picked up a sealed postmarked envelope for the fourth time in as many weeks and tried once more to rub away the muddy footprint stamped over the address. She laid the envelope by the typing paper which held Haverfield's attention like a hillside reaching for rain.

"Really, Howie, won't you ever write Jack?"

"Hm-m-m?"

"He's your son, Howie."

Haverfield felt the excitement burn like the prairie fire that consumed his father's cattle forty years before in eastern Montana. He peered into the shadowed eyes of the urn and knew this was as excellent an artifact from the Fine Orange as he had seen. Its face revealed an old man with drooping lips and strained eyebrows whose removable headdress depicted a tiger adorned in feathers. The breast plate bore the inscription, Four Wind, relating to none of the scholarship except as another date. Leaves trimmed the figure's arms, a rare feature in Fine Orange. The torso merged with the base which

Steven Christenson

lacked the typical crossed legs, more in the style of the distant Teotihuacano than the Zapotec. The work looked fresh, suspiciously so, though extraordinary examples of preservation had been found before. If it had been discovered in the corn fields like Don Amado Mendoza said, its condition should be poor. Haverfield wanted to believe that such a perfect example of Zapotec pottery could only have come from a grave. It was as silly as the Seven Cities of Gold, but Haverfield remembered the legendary tomb of Turquoise Serpent, the King who went mad, a stranger to the scholarship, yet frequently mentioned by the natives of these remote villages in the mountains above Oaxaca. It has been said that the tomb held the secret of immortality.

“Howie?”

“What?”

“You haven’t even read the letter.”

Haverfield looked beyond Jeanette to the doorway where the little man Don Amado stared into the rain forest with astonishing patience. Farther off Haverfield saw the stone well in the center of the town where his two young daughters played games with nude Indian boys beneath the glare of the noonday sun. San Andres Nochixtlan surrounded them like the poems Haverfield forgot to memorize in grammar school. The thatch and adobe huts opened their doors to the wind. The dogs slept in the doorways, waiting for the night and the jaguars which still slip from the trees for open moonlight. Haverfield remembered how Doctor Manuel Vargas Rubin died after a sudden succession of strokes in one of these mountain side villages while pursuing the tomb of Turquoise Serpent. It would be so easy to die here. It had taken two days to travel the fifty kilometers over the rugged mule trail from the district capital. It would only take two minutes to die. It took Manuel Vargas Rubin a full week gazing, mindless, into the eyes of the *curandero* who told him the meaning of the dream. It might take a full year in the city. Even forever.

Steven Christenson

“Won’t you ever remember?” Jeanette said slamming her broom into the closet.

“Remember?” Haverfield replied. “Why remember anything?”

Haverfield rose from the bench and bumped pass his wife and leaned on the door frame. “I am sorry,” he said in Spanish, “I cannot give you four thousand pesos for the urn.”

The wrinkles in Don Amado’s eyebrows curled like those of the old man in the urn. He touched the rim of his straw hat and grinned. The whiteness of his teeth made Haverfield bite his dentures into his tongue. Don Amado’s Spanish was as careful and deliberate as Haverfield’s. In the mountains it is always the second language.

“Of course, it is very old. There is much work.”

“Yes, it is very old.”

“It’s a fake, Howie,” Jeanette said in English.

“It’s Fine Orange,” he replied.

“It’s fresh from the oven.”

“No one has made Fine Orange for a thousand years.”

“But four thousand pesos.”

“It is definitely Fine Orange.”

Don Amado tipped his hat to the American woman. Haverfield glanced at the man’s bare feet. The skin looked like parchment stretched over bones digging into the soil. Haverfield breathed deeply. This man was barely alive.

“Don Amado, I will give you fifteen hundred pesos for the urn.”

“My friend, it is a sacred urn.”

Steven Christenson

Haverfield resisted the rash desire to ask, then why sell it at all. He returned to the table where the urn rested and touched the nose of the tiger. An honest fake in a curio shop would cost a thousand pesos, but this, he was certain, was real. It would pass the most sophisticated testing in the national laboratories, there could be no question, though its odd style would baffle his colleagues and stir controversies. Haverfield knew Don Amado was poor, that his wife Josepha was bearing a child, was nursing twins, that six older children tended the family corn plot on the hillside. These were not people who needed money. The Sunday market day sees trading with beans and corn for other goods, sometimes for one's services. The peso's hold is still tenuous, something one saves in an open *olla* for the annual trip to the city to purchase manufactured clothing and rare cooking supplies.

“Howie?”

The urn felt warm to Haverfield's touch. He knew that a distant ancestor to the Mendozas may have ground the stone to form the clay here fashioned so delightfully. If Haverfield thought of his son, it was because that envelope cast light like a mirror to his eyes. It was already too late the last time Jack asked for money, when all Haverfield could say was, work will fatten your bones, can't you see the obvious, I'm too old to care. Haverfield was certain forgetting came easy for the little man standing beyond the doorway, waiting, already immersed in eternity. He remembered the night Manuel Vargas Rubin related the tale about Dona Rufina, the alcoholic witch, who continues to guard the tomb of Turquoise Serpent by infecting the dreams of intruders with the very venom that drove the ancient king mad one thousand years before. Haverfield returned the urn to the man at the door.

“I am sorry, Don Amado, I cannot pay for this.”

“I understand.” Don Amado took the urn into his small hands and bowed. Haverfield watched the man hobble to his hut in the vicinity of the well from where the voice of Josepha scattered pigs and

Steven Christenson

chickens through the doorway past the growling dogs. Certainly this little man would return in the morning and offer the urn for three thousand pesos and Haverfield would propose two thousand.

“Howie?” Jeanette rubbed her hands.

“Just shutup.”

“Senora Villanfana says Don Amado is a sorcerer.”

Haverfield tightened his fist. “Look, I’m a scientist, not a superstitious peasant. Who’s Senora Villafana?”

“The tortilla lady.”

“Nonsense. Jesus, Jean.” Haverfield wondered what the children were doing at the well since they were sitting in the shade of the rocks and appeared to be doing nothing. It was supposed to be easy to forget, that envelope was supposed to turn to stone. He fingered the shavings from the urn and Fine Orange sounded like Jack Haverfield. When Haverfield was a graduate student performing menial reconstruction on earthen mounds in Missouri, the Big War broke out, and Haverfield was terrified into marrying the only woman who would have him, the only woman he hated, his only chance for a child. Born two years later, when Haverfield grew bored waiting for the enemy attack that would kill him, that woman named the child Jack without consulting him, Jack, the name of that older brother he most despised. The undisciplined scrawl spelling the family name on the envelope seared Haverfield’s eyes. He would never be permitted to forget. Haverfield flipped the envelope at the screened window and opened the cabinet across the hall and took the unlabeled bottle of mezcal from Sola de Vega. He swallowed a mouthful of the rare mellow tasting alcohol without lemon or salt and feasted his eyes on the shavings of Fine Orange. Certainly he was no more than a stone’s throw away from one of the great archeological discoveries in Mesoamerica.

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Haverfield expected to see more strain in the face of Dorotea as she pulled the black pottery *olla* brimming with water from the well. The beautiful young daughter of Senora Villafana worked as though in company with only the wind. Haverfield sat on the edge of the stone wall. He even offered help. The woman did not say no, she merely set the *olla* on the ground and tied the rope from the wooden yoke around the neck of the vase. Was it true, Haverfield asked, that Don Amado was *un brujo*, a sorcerer? The question made him feel little like an anthropologist, especially after the long restless night recalling images of Manuel Vargas Rubin solid in his coffin. Haverfield had to repeat the question as Dorotea stooped to rest the yoke on the back of her neck. Don Amado gathers herbs, she said in improper Spanish. A *curandero* then, a healer? *Si*. She rose steady beneath the weight of the yoke while the two *ollas* at each end balanced like dancers. It was only as she walked away that Haverfield noticed her limp and how her left foot was swollen at the heel.

Haverfield smiled. Dorotea reminded him of the whore in Caxaca he had enjoyed during his first term at the university, a slick Indian woman he met at a cheap American movie, who stuck out her tongue as he slipped her the torn fifty peso note, and laughed as she brushed cockroaches off the bed. Dorotea was blunt enough to make Haverfield feel like an invader. Now, after years in Mexico, he had grown to suspect gestures of welcome. He remembered assisting the noted anthropologist, Doctor Manuel Vargas Rubin, when they stood before the stone grave concealed for centuries in the church yard in the small valley town of Ticua. He could still feel the stone that struck his shoulder, he could still see the soldiers in combat fatigues aiming their rifles at the angry crowd, he could still recall Rubin's cynical smile as he revved the jeep to pull the slab from a grave choked with dead air since before the conquest. In one moment Howard Hale Haverfield was swept with shame, he wanted to throw his pick at the jeep and denounce anthropology forever, only he knew how to do nothing else, save wash dishes or operate a cannon on a ship at sea. He felt the hollowness in his chest wrestle with the pain. He did not see the red rubber ball his older daughter Denny threw at him.

“Catch, daddy, catch.”

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Haverfield poured mezcal for the headache that raced through his temples like that prairie fire he would never be able to forget. He watched Jeanette scrub his underwear on the washing stone the natives had set up beside the truck. He dribbled his fingers on the formica table top. Haverfield waited. He poured more mezcal. He visualized the urn and indulged in the great praise he knew his colleagues would lavish on him upon his return. Of course, there would be skeptics. That's what science is all about. There would be those who would mutter *fake* because of its freshness and odd style. Some would even laugh behind his back at the faculty parties, like they did after Manuel Vargas Rubin first related stories about Turquoise Serpent. Once again, Haverfield remembered the Mexican soldier firing his automatic rifle above the crowd as Rubin lit the Coleman lantern before descending into the grave. It's our grave now, Rubin laughed, and like Jesus we will raise the dead. That round of rifle fire sounded more convincing than all the explosions he had heard in the Big War.

"You look pale," Jeanette said.

"I feel fine," Haverfield replied.

Jeanette was reaching into a drawer for the clothespins. "No word from Don Amado?"

"None."

"You're certain it's genuine?"

"Positive."

Haverfield watched his wife bite her lip before backing out from the camper with the clothespins. Haverfield poured another mezcal. He pounded his fist on the table and watched the woman through the window as she hung the clothes on the line stretching from the truck to a pole he had set up two days before. There were times when she disgusted him with her calm opinions and her unyielding

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faithfulness. He was sure this woman who had fine dinners on the table each evening at six had never betrayed him. He doubted she much considered the temptation, though he had spent weeks at a time without her on excavations and layed with Indian whores in the district centers on weekends. He wondered if she ever suspected, even if she knew. More he wondered if he could ever forgive her for adultery. It must be the faithfulness he found so distressing, that symptom that the imagination had fallen like sterile seed to the ground. So she should keep her damn opinion to herself, stupid amateur. Haverfield poured another mezcal. The headache would not go away.

Like a massive green creature, the rain forest crept down the hillsides to the last row of huts that mark the outskirts of San Andres Nochixtlan. Haverfield aimed the binoculars into the trees and scanned the few cleared spots choking with corn. Throughout the afternoon Haverfield waited for the small man to return from the hills. He was determined to spot him through these lenses, to forewarn himself that all was ready. All afternoon Don Amado was as invisible as the spirits that clog the native mythologies like the wind. The sun had rolled behind the hills before Don Amado walked from the trees. The shade swept through the village like clouds. Haverfield bit his tongue.

“Daddy?”

Haverfield glanced at the younger daughter. She was the only child the woman allowed him to name. He named her Sophia, because his mother wanted to name a daughter of her own Sophia. Even after twenty years of bearing twelve sons, of which Howard was the last, she never had the girl.

“Do kittens have claws when they’re born?”

Haverfield gripped the binoculars. “I guess they do,” he said. “Yes.” He looked through the window to Don Amado’s hut. Don

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Amado stood dressed in white shorts, by the wash basin outside pouring an *olla* of water over his back. The first bright stars pierced the sky. The magpie jays called from the hills like exiles. Candle and kerosene flames slithered through the stick walls of the hut. Haverfield watched the man dress. Haverfield waited. Still Don Amado would not return with the urn.

“You’ve got to eat something, Howie,” Jeanette said.

“I’m not hungry,” he replied.

“Then lie down, you don’t look well.”

“I feel fine.” Though he felt the pain in his chest, Haverfield looked away and knew he would survive, that he would probably live long enough to denounce his son once more, that he would obtain the urn and survive all the ordinary curses.

“Howie?”

“Will you shutup.”

Haverfield opened the drawer across the hallway and withdrew a small manila envelope. He tore it open and let the green one hundred peso notes scatter over the table top. Four thousand pesos! Forty bills. There were fifty altogether. He stacked the bills together. He knew the Instituto would never reimburse him for the purchase, yet the Instituto would demand the urn as a matter of law. Haverfield stuffed the bills in his shirt pocket. It was like a sacrifice to science to buy nuggets of legend so as to turn them into facts. When Haverfield walked to the door, his children scattered like chickens.

“I’ll be back shortly,” he said.

“Howie?”

“I said shutup.”

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Though he would survive, Haverfield was certain the sun would not rise again. The stars became jewels that would turn forever colder as the earth withdrew from the solar system. The gods would finally mock the superstitious who would rather die than plunder the graves of ancestors and enjoy riches. Then the gods would vanish, more mortal than the men. The soft dirt would turn to rock in the cold. Meteors would pock the flats where dreams always failed. The dogs would be the last to die, still barking through the night, still protecting the cities of the dead from the dead, and the moon would dim as the tides turn to ice.

No one mentioned money. Haverfield spread forty bills across the table in the glow of two candles standing in Coca Cola bottles. Don Amado's friendly gesture warmed the breeze sneaking through the walls. Josepha knelt on the floor weaving from the loom tied behind her back and stretched to the post in the corner. Four of the children sat by watching. Don Amado set the urn on top of the bills. The headache would never go away.

"The urn will be under the safe protection of the government," Haverfield said.

"Of course, I have no doubt." Don Amado smiled.

Haverfield asked about the ancient mountain top community, the legendary Nochixtlan from which this village derived its name, where Turquoise Serpent was said to have gone crazy resisting Popoloca women captured during raids in the valleys. Don Amado sighed. Turquoise Serpent lived such a long time ago, the little man said, and Josepha intoned the musical words of the native language. "Did this urn come from a tomb?" Haverfield asked.

"From the corn field," Don Amado replied.

"It's condition is superb, it's not possible."

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“From the corn field.”

“There was no dirt.”

“But of course, I cleaned it.”

“It would have broken up, the features would have eroded.”

“I found the urn in the corn field.”

“I don’t believe you.”

Don Amado folded his hands. The face of the urn looked alive in the candle light. If it proved to be fake, Haverfield was astonished at the energy this culture continued to express, resisting for centuries the final thrust of Spanish conquest. He laid the other ten bills beside the urn where they looked like play money before Don Amado’s disinterested eyes. “These are yours if you take me to the tomb.”

“There is no tomb,” Don Amado said.

“I have more money.”

“There is no tomb.”

“I simply don’t believe you.” Haverfield tried to hide his shaking hand by slipping it under the table. He knew he had spoken in a manner so unprofessional that his colleagues would reprimand, even shun him. He merely wanted to preserve the dying culture. As his head throbbed, he wanted to tell Don Amado that no one would be living here one hundred years from now. Everything would be shovelled away by superhighways and power lines, new towns and airports. Everything would be governed from glass buildings in the big cities no longer so far away. No one could survive without the peso. But Haverfield restrained. It was rude enough to call someone a liar, but not even Haverfield was callous enough to threaten an end to this simple man’s culture. Haverfield watched the wax drip from the candle and wondered what Rubin would have said.

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“I’m sorry.”

“And I,” Don Amado replied. “There is no tomb.”

Haverfield left the additional bills on the table. He held the urn of Fine Orange in his arms. On a night when everything had felt so cold, the urn felt warm, alive as though his very child. “We will be leaving in the morning,” Haverfield said.

“Farewell,” Don Amado said extending his hand. Josepha grunted and kept weaving as though Haverfield had never entered the cottage. Don Amado’s hand felt like fire as Haverfield gripped it. Don Amado bowed as Haverfield stepped through the open doorway. The dogs barked. The moon was high and the street was brighter than the table top in Don Amado’s home. The only electric lights in town came from his camper parked at the end of the road beyond the well. Haverfield felt the urn should be crying, that something about the entire exchange was not right, even as he felt the prick in his arm. It felt like his son pinching him years before when he was home on leave from the Big War. Haverfield saw the scorpion crawl toward the elbow in the icy moonlight. As he reached to swat it off, the scorpion stung him again. The urn shattered like brittle glass on the soft ground. Haverfield saw the old man’s stone face sliced in two with horror more painful than any he felt in the war. He fell to the ground picking up pieces before its soul could escape. He felt frozen in the moon. The wind whipped his face like ghosts in anger and Haverfield rolled through the broken bits of pottery and lay on his back to look into the deepest midnight of his life. He felt the moon shining directly above pull him away. “I do not believe it, I cannot believe it.” Haverfield whimpered to the restraining hold of the woman whom he saw with frightening clarity to be his wife.

“Howie?”

“Scorpion, goddam scorpion.”

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“It’ll be okay.”

“Leave me alone.” Haverfield tried to roll from her arms but she held him as firmly as the earth had held the urn until this fateful moment beneath the moon.

“What happened, mommy, what happened?”

Haverfield mumbled to his children to save what they could. Dizziness raced through his eyes and he remembered the words, Amado was a *brujo*. But no, he would not believe, even now as incredible waves of sweat were sweeping down his face, he would never believe. He tried to mutter defiance through his tears. He must have been at the bottom of the sea. So far away. It would only take two minutes to die. All Haverfield could see was fire. All he could feel was the earth hard like slabs of steel.

Howard Hale Haverfield knew that at this moment he should not be alive, and it had nothing to do with an annoying scorpion sting. The delirium revived everything. The Japanese Zero was still performing acrobatics around the gun turret Haverfield commanded. But he turned his gaze to the endless reaches of orange ocean where the horizon was trimmed with the red clouds of sunset. He did not believe the whining sound was as real as the waves slapping against the ship, even as the kamikaze dove toward him, as he turned the cannon and fired, as he watched the streaks of ammunition speed toward the plane. Haverfield felt bored like he was trying to win teddy bears at the ocean front carnival for his pickup whore. He kept firing and missing the plane while those around him jumped under deck and buried themselves with their arms. He might have been in a balloon swept senseless by turbulent winds. The first thing that looked real was the fire. The men around him were screaming. The cannon had jammed. He did not look to see if he had a scratch. He saw a man run through the turret voiceless and engulfed in flames. It was not the kind of thing one believed in. It took Haverfield seven more years to realize, when he divorced his first wife, that he should not have been alive in the first place.

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“Everything will be fine,” she said.

Haverfield saw Jeanette lean over him. “Wash your face,” he said.

Jeanette was crying.

“Is he awake, mommy?”

It was his older daughter Denny, the child who made him happiest. Haverfield looked into the large blue eyes in that small head, they looked so old, like the eyes he saw glaring from his son the last time they met, the time Haverfield told him, never ask me for money again. In ancient times the scorpion brought forth the autumn. How could such a tiny creature be so venomous? Why must survival be so embarrassing?

“I saved the pieces, daddy.”

It was his younger daughter Sophie, the child who screamed throughout her infancy, the child he regretted before the others.

“I’ll glue them together,” she said.

“Good girl,” he whispered, though he could not see her, though he wanted to say, don’t glue it together, give it back to Amado, if I have to go to hell, I want to go to an Anglo-European hell. But his mouth was dry as sand, all the moisture in his body dripped down his forehead and burned his eyes. His belly felt like sulfur springs, as though it already belonged to the earth. The only consoling memory was of the time he first killed a scorpion, years before, when he took a machete and chopped the creature to pieces on the stone floor of the kitchen in Oaxaca. For ten minutes that amputated tail poked its stinger into the rock, trying to kill the earth before returning to it. Haverfield hoped Jeanette saw him smile, and he hoped his legs would kick the ground ten minutes after the doctor or witch doctor or whoever pronounced him dead.

“Relax, Howie, relax.”

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The loose dentures felt like marble as Haverfield tried to spit them up. He remembered what horrors he wanted to remember. He divorced his first wife six months after she drunkenly confessed balling the Congregationalist minister, but she won the child in the courts while he paid all the bills and sent the growing boy through school until he was expelled for masturbating in the lounge of the girls' dormitory, decently called indecent exposure. Then the ex-wife fell dead on the seventh hole of the miniature golf course appropriately called "Seventh Heaven." Jack said, not even her boy friend, who watched her die, stayed for the funeral. And Jack whimpered, sure, I've goofed up some, sure. So Haverfield took the boy, nearly a man, and gave him a second chance. At a faculty party Haverfield handed his son a whiskey sour and introduced him to the lovely daughter of his closest colleague, and Haverfield was astonished at the liking his son took to this young woman, an honor roll student and Military Ball Queen, who was later diagnosed pregnant at the hospital while under treatment for lacerations and a broken leg following that horrible accident which left Haverfield's big red Lincoln in the junk yard and a ninety year old pedestrian in his grave and a lovely oak tree to the pessimism of the tree surgeons.

"I wish there was a doctor."

Haverfield cherished Jeanette's words, he did not want to remember all the disasters only heroes were supposed to survive. He had come to Mexico to escape the hells that kill more fortunate people. He had managed to bury himself in ancient Indian tombs, speaking with the noble dead, joking as he emptied the graves of gold and vases and jade and bones. In the moment of his greatest pain, when he imagined kamikazes diving into his belly, Haverfield knew he would survive this like he had survived everything else, and he cried enough to anguish the moon.

"Da le este copa."

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Haverfield puked air into Amado's words. He strained to see the small man's jagged face for the first time in the illumination of an electric light bulb, and the *curandero* looked as mortal as the be-headed marijuana farmer he had seen while excavating in the southern valley three years before. Amado's white, childish teeth were amusing and Haverfield grinned, convinced the pottery cup Amado held contained the curse that would finally kill him.

"*Salud,*" Haverfield joked. He sipped from the small vessel he immediately recognized as Fine Orange. The fluid tasted like rotten banana leaves, just awful enough for Haverfield to laugh louder and drop the cup to the floor. The break sounded like a light bulb shattering and Howard Hale Haverfield fell asleep to dream the same dream Manuel Vargas Rubin dreamt about Dona Rufina, the alcoholic witch, who made her victims die laughing after infecting them with *chizo*. Dona Rufina chuckled and she drank clouded mezcal from petroleum bottles full of dead worms while she counted her old Spanish coins. The fat woman with large black eyes drew ellipses around the coins with a flaming stick and lizards picked at her toes. The ellipse turned bright blue and slithered along Dona Rufina's dress until a head resembling the ancient glyph for Wind rested on the woman's breast, spitting its orange tongue at the dreamer contorted in painful laughter. The snake swirled around Dona Rufina's neck and disappeared through her stone dry lips. Even in his dream, when he felt his body convulse, Haverfield knew the pain was too great to let him die.

The sobering thought that this small man offering a *Delicado* cigarette was five thousand pesos richer for fooling him so skillfully reminded Haverfield of the colorful sunsets he saw daily on the Pacific, more consistent than the Japanese. Though he felt warm, the nausea had passed, and he could sit up in bed and watch his children play around the well. There was an ordinary twist in Jeanette's smile that made Haverfield feel secure. He felt perfectly at home in spite of the young students at the university who ridiculed him for hiding away in the American luxury of a pickup

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camper with running water and electricity in the middle of primitive Indian villages. Haverfield noticed how Don Amado looked no less at ease while sitting on the vinyl seat cushion. Don Amado explained that there were many stories concerning Turquoise Serpent. Many versions were told by the neighboring tribes — the Mixtec, the Popoloca, the Cuicateco — as jokes derogatory to the Zapotec. Bad jokes foul the air like vultures waiting for a man to die. There was no tomb, only the wind. Dona Rufina? The wind. Haverfield knew it would be the luck of other anthropologists to discover the rich tombs of the mythic heroes, and he would hate them as much as he hated his son, for daring to dream as madly as he had dreamt.

“Jean?”

“Yes, Howie.”

“Where’s Jack’s letter?”

“I’ll find it.”

He had been such a fool, but Don Amado did nothing to make Haverfield feel stupid. Not even the ruined urn disturbed Amado though it still laid on the table in full view. Haverfield thanked the slender man who bowed backward out of the camper. There was work in the fields. Haverfield would let Sophie glue the pieces together. It might make a nice planter for the bathroom. It was obvious he would report this venture to the Instituto as another fruitless effort, and on his own he would make an even deeper investigation into the constituents of Fine Orange.

“I can’t find it,” Jeanette said.

“Wasn’t it on the table?”

“Not now. I’ve looked all over the floor.”

Howard Hale Haverfield remembered that afternoon on his

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father's ranch forty years before when he was still too young to help his brothers in the fields, when his mother found him a perfect nuisance in the kitchen, especially since he was a boy. Haverfield knew the luck that held his veins together was not typical. No one knew how the fire was started. It swept over the land like a hawk, hungry and vicious. Eighty head of cattle never made it to the river, though Howard did, since Jake, the brother he hated most, had called him a punk, not worth his weight in balls, that he better get out of there before he became like the calf in that dead cow's belly. Howard skipped rocks on the water and watched the smoke spread like a plague over the sky. Haverfield looked for the rock that would skip across the river when he found his first arrowhead. He dug with his hands and found large bones and more arrowheads. He looked behind, suspicious of the wind whipping dust in his eyes, already feeling like an intruder, already knowing he should never have been there in the first place. But fascination drove him on. Already Howard foresaw the day Manuel Vargas Rubin aimed the lantern into the grave at Ticua and exclaimed, Great Caesar's Ghost!

"I can't find it anywhere, Howie."

"Well, look goddammit."

"I am looking."

After everything he had survived, Haverfield doubted he would ever die. At least Jeanette gave him the girls neither of his parents lived long enough to see. If he hadn't married Jack's mother he might have been happily dead now, there would have been no one to be grateful to, no one to resent, no one to feel apologetic for. After all, it was only a scorpion, not witchcraft, just the luck he was born with, and he knew psychiatrists could trace the dream to Rubin's widow who spilled it out along with her rum at the party following the burial.

"You didn't throw it away?"

Steven Christenson

“Of course not, Howie.”

“Well, where in hell is it?”

“I just can’t find it.”

“Goddam blue snakes.”

In two weeks Haverfield would be preparing awkward lectures in Spanish to deliver to those stupid students who carve graffiti on their desk tops while sweltering from the Oaxacan afternoons. And Haverfield would fart to signal the bell and assign two hundred pages to be read by next class and he would quiz them and cut all the imbeciles. It amused him that the only curse he could not escape was the curse of life itself. Through the window Haverfield saw Dorotea draw water from the well while his daughters played tag with naked Indian boys. Haverfield sighed for everything was in the wind.



Adrienne Maber

LOVER'S LANE

It all started at the church dinner. She, utterly charming with her cheeks burning from too much wine and He, quite dandy and constantly refilling her glass and making polite talk that touched on similarities and their glazed eyes met and locked as both had sensed they would and the cherries jubilee slid off their spoons and his prick said "she is the one" and her thighs quivered and he hinted about his game for Friday and she said "call me sometime" while he was buying six packs in his mind. And next Friday night they parked by the expressway and sipped beer in the car and she put the stars in her eyes and he made his first move and she was glad he was so smooth.

Both agreed it was love at first sight and it took time but they poured out their guts and lay down the lines and they fucked in the car and on the beach and in their parents' beds and they wore fancy clothes and played aristocrat games and drank scotch and got their rain-bonnet door prizes and slow-danced to old forty tunes and they were the church mascots and their names rang together like ding and dong and everyone waited for the word.

But he was already sold to the ivy league and she was going to be famous and that last night they cried themselves inside out and ached their lips with too many kisses and he gave her a ring and they made their vows and their days pivoted around canned letters and lousy meals and they both fell in love many times over but the plans were all made and the inlaws already had their gowns so they only made love in their dreams while their friends went off to grow and she played cards with fat girls who couldn't find dates and he hit all the stripper bars

and when Christmas came around it was all smiles and reassurances and dinners and theatre only they didn't fuck in the car any more and she didn't bother putting in her stars and he didn't bother being smooth and three years later they got married as everyone knew they would.

Kim L. Horton

THE BLUE-COLD DOMINION

I

Snow falls in the unemployment line.
The people huddle together.
Nobody says anything.
Except one wisecracker who suggests the checks
be made into a community fire.
The line moves forward like a line.
A new line forms at the cashier's window.
There is the smell of damp wool, hair grease,
perfume and aftershave and that paper smell
of places that work with paper.
The shoes and boots shuffle.
I have come with a confession.
A confession like a laugh.

I feel I can no longer save myself.

II

A tree grows in a convertible
parked on Main Street.
I'm thinking of something called
the last succulent morsel.
A hot shower. Then the cold razor.
Bathrobe on. Sipping coffee
on the living room floor.
Did you know the amputee
carries an image, a total image
of himself wherever he goes?

Kim L. Horton

Well he does, says the one-armed man.
You will be asked not to worry.
An APB will soon be put out
on the missing clock.
I won't tire you with details.
Like it's disguised as a harvester
in Kansas.
A punch to the breadbasket of the world!
A dirty purple shirt with only one button
exposes a lean hungry chest.
The tattoo of the Grim Reaper
graces the forearm of a suicidal
young man. (He tried once and lived.)
The skeleton, the robe, the scythe.
And underneath this,
the name of his hometown.
It's amazing, I tell you.
The distance that's here.

III

The stars and the canyons of the city.
The gleaming icicle length of a knifeblade.
The hysterical cries of the farthest-flung
astronaut on the beach radio.
Three black women ride by on one bicycle.
And you think you're strange.
Here's a dime bag of boredom.
So you believe man without violence

Kim L. Horton

is like a flea on an anus. Fine.
Here's a dime bag of fear.
O the curve of the luscious back,
says the editor-in-chief.
I couldn't agree more.
Truly. The sight is an infection.
And by the way, I'm having problems
with my urinary tract.
Burning, no discharge.
And I'm terrified of having my head
ripped off.
A guy at work said if it happened
he'd just laugh.
And that's the point.
We love by the numbers.
The set-up. A few drinks. Mood.
I must think of myself as important.
I must feel good as much as I can.
Here's my hands and your hands.
My lips and your lips.
My hands and you. God.
The dashboard Mary has lost her magnets.
I want to get off this subject now.
I want my dreams realized on the 3rd floor
and come splashing down.
A minah bird in a cage on East 75th Street,
New York City, repeats over and over,
"Hello. Hello. Hello . . ."
And that's what I'd like to say.
A penny for my thoughts.

Kim L. Horton

I've just given you my thoughts.
Now give me the penny
and I'll give you your change.
Hello.



Adrienne Maher

LAMENT FOR AN UNFOUND POET

Your grape koolaid lips were sealed
like varnished gourds
Children were not heard
except to sing
America the Beautiful
A bird inside you was
let out on the notes
then clasped in your hands on the desktop

Your overall straps never fell down
You did your penmanship
and gathered in stars
while others played hooky
and sucked their bloody knuckles
Children had it hard
but you were climbing
purple mountains majesty

Summer was best
Too small to hay or plough
feet were unharnessed
and you were lured by stagnant sunlight
and mosquito hum to crawl the forest's stomach
There your bird snuck off to fairy lands
'til you emerged, pineneedles stuck to your knees
to run home and set the table

The forest puked up model homes
while your first love sang
like stolen wine in your canteen
licking your pulse like fire
Her kiss trickled plum juice
Your bird thrived in her soft nest
But pop pruned your wings
Afraid the ladies' circle might swastika his name

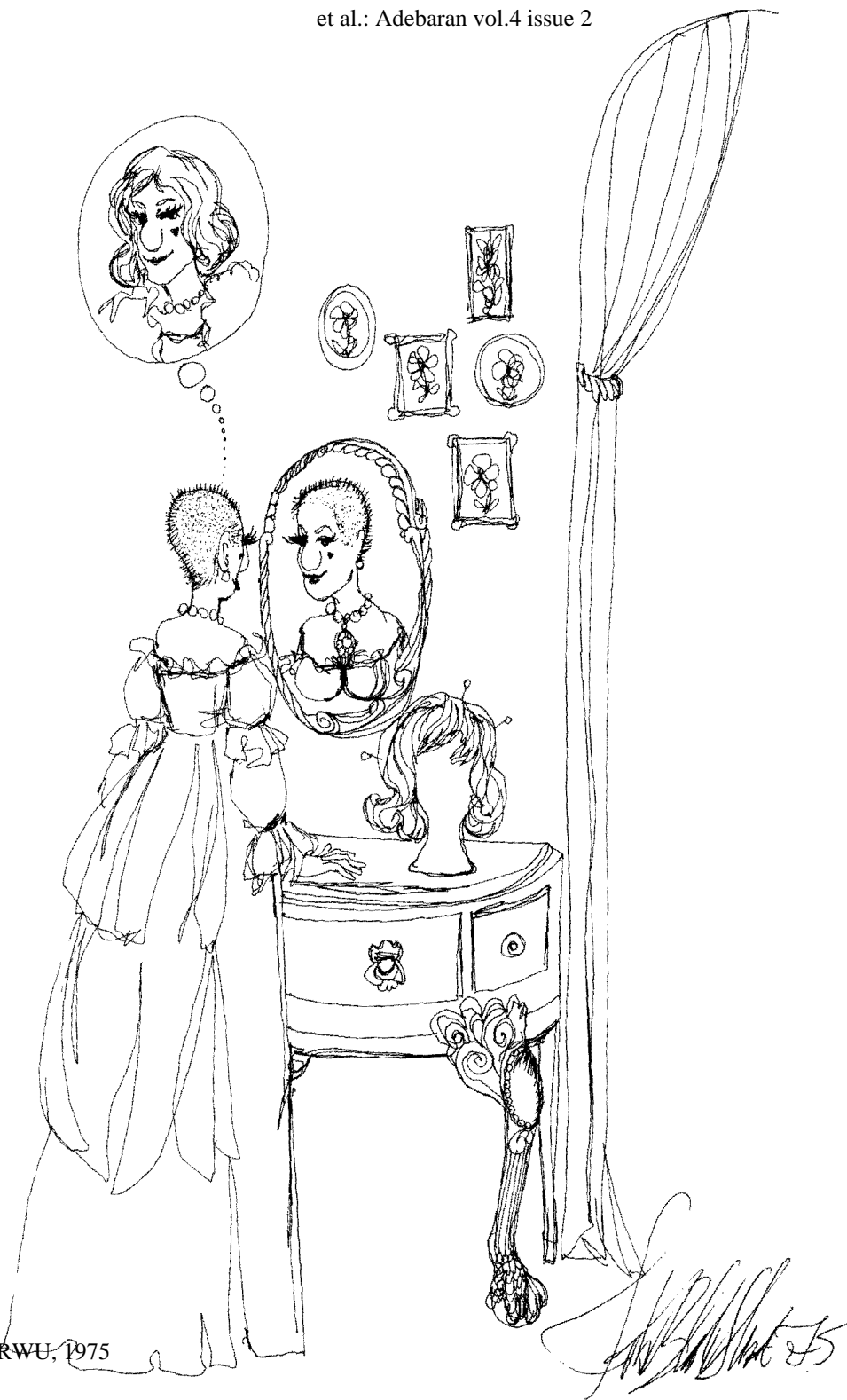
A diploma meant
no more masturbating in the john
no more free grape koolaid

Adrienne Maher

You had a universe of stars
But universities towered on mountains of dimes
and uncle sam could show you how to climb
So you rested your head on Vietnamese breasts
and dreamed the American dream

Your bird slept while you wore green
Then you left an egg with a woman
The shell could have endured
years of peanutbutter sandwiches
and a nest of loans woven with thighs
But your dad taught you responsibility
way back when
And one lame wing swept the egg to the floor

Up to now you've stood on the dimes
The bird has stewed in your beer
and staggered from your pen
But the purple mountains melt
from high off uncle's third finger
Last night the sour yoke trickled from your eyes
This morning I found your wings
tacked to a note on the door



Cliff Saunders

SONG: THE TATTOO OF CONSENT

Brought me here, left me here.
Outside this pavilion of blue shadows
the boulevard where you abandoned me
becomes a carnival of golden fog,
an opium den of singing cradles.
Orchestral applause, think where it begins:
in the arcade of olive sunlight
I observe the dancer's tarot card,
a steamboat churning inside it.
Never locate yourself in my smile,
fish goddess, don't even adopt my shadow.
Instead, show me your latest scar
and give me the privilege of kissing its flavor.

Worship the waterfall,
it's the only thing worth admiring.
Temptation begins with the swan's grace,
ends with the wiggling black intestine
of women slaves marching through a rainbow.

Someone lost a crucifix which fell
inside a whirlpool, stabbing
a woman's thigh. The dripping blood
harvested spiders which crawled into the eyelids
of a mocking buddha. The fabric
of incest slipped into the museum
where my hatred of your sculpture
was first baptized. Dust-budget
of a blazing skull dwindled overnight,
thought to myself: it's better this way.

When I play the flute, comets begin
swishing through its keyholes. Clitoris
on a trapeze, hideous to think of it.
Moths sleep inside my prayers.
Fish goddess lugging a bucket
of prayers, none for the begging angels?

Cliff Saunders

Here I come, sipping your dream's milk.
Here I come, pulling behind me
a rickshaw filled with glowing earrings.

O butterfly theatre! O retroactive womb!
Brought me here, left me here.
Marionettes lick the insides of my wounds,
they have my permission. What's this?
No more flowers in the hanging gardens?
Again the zodiac has abandoned our needs.

Poems hatching from eggs, lightning
embracing omens of the first fatal word,
could I stuff a poem in your sarcophagus?

The stars blink out like birthday candles
from a child's breath. Might I
have wished for a nest of wrinkles
instead of this balcony of puddles?

Green dawn enters the boulevard
where you abandoned me. Last night
I returned there, fist enclosing a cricket,
wearing only the moon's tattoo of consent.



Elizabeth Hanson

THE HUNTER

You imagined me a crowd at first
parading with torches past your windows.
Then you took a closer look and there were only three
wielding knives.

One night a pair stormed in
leading a pack of wolves.

You were intrigued, I think
'cause I refused to show my face.
Yet I'd send you telegrams
threatening death by fire . . .

You should have listened. Why'd you feel
compelled to meet me? I'd call you
on the phone, disguise my voice and breathe
"I'm a victim of circumstance; do you think
I like who I am? Like what I do?"

It was enough for me at night, while you were searching
to peek in your windows, sneak into your closet
or duck behind your bureau. Hidden as always,
haunting your dreams with this blind revenge.

Finally one day you caught me,
shuddering under your bed.
It took you years to track
and force me into this corner
where I'm counting my cold, sober selves:

Deja vu, broken mirror,
open book, I was all that . . .
The end, like your recognition
was swift: As I leaped up at you, hair on end,
my teeth bared
you called me the name no one had in years;
I faltered for a minute
dropping my torches, my knives, my wolves . . .

Raymond Ronci

POEM

Tonight at no change I am
I seem terribly afraid of all my old house noises
All through what I can remember
From the stairs in the basement up
In my room I awake as I fall and spill
From my lips broken
From what like a summer's thirst, that suitable
Warm air and restless untidy nights
I still stare and squeeze the screaming from the awful
Hot weather
 And as the radiator shivers with sighs
 My boy innocence through a tunnel like a bell
 Follows behind in my red lovely suits
 From dark to dark at usual
 My seat at my table
As I sag like Jesus upward
Toes on their tips putt by me waving
Hands simultaneously from side to side
And all my old lover's daughters walk
Into my room behind me like shrines to virgin births
To have been conceived by a hug
To have been hucked
To have been me
To what might have been you
From auditorium to auditorium I lecture to countless
Hollow
Watch from the piano, talk to it
Listen from the backdrop and judge
With humor from the stage
In rage of wit like witches at breakfast
The humors add taste to the hunger
But the taste takes its time and slays away mind leaving
Me a Columbus content
In the being of a loss

Raymond Ronci

And in the stirring I find
From the stairs in the basement up to the various
Walkings on from ear to ear the clapping
Of the cracked and nearly broken
Lingering in the sub-current chill

Raymond Ronci

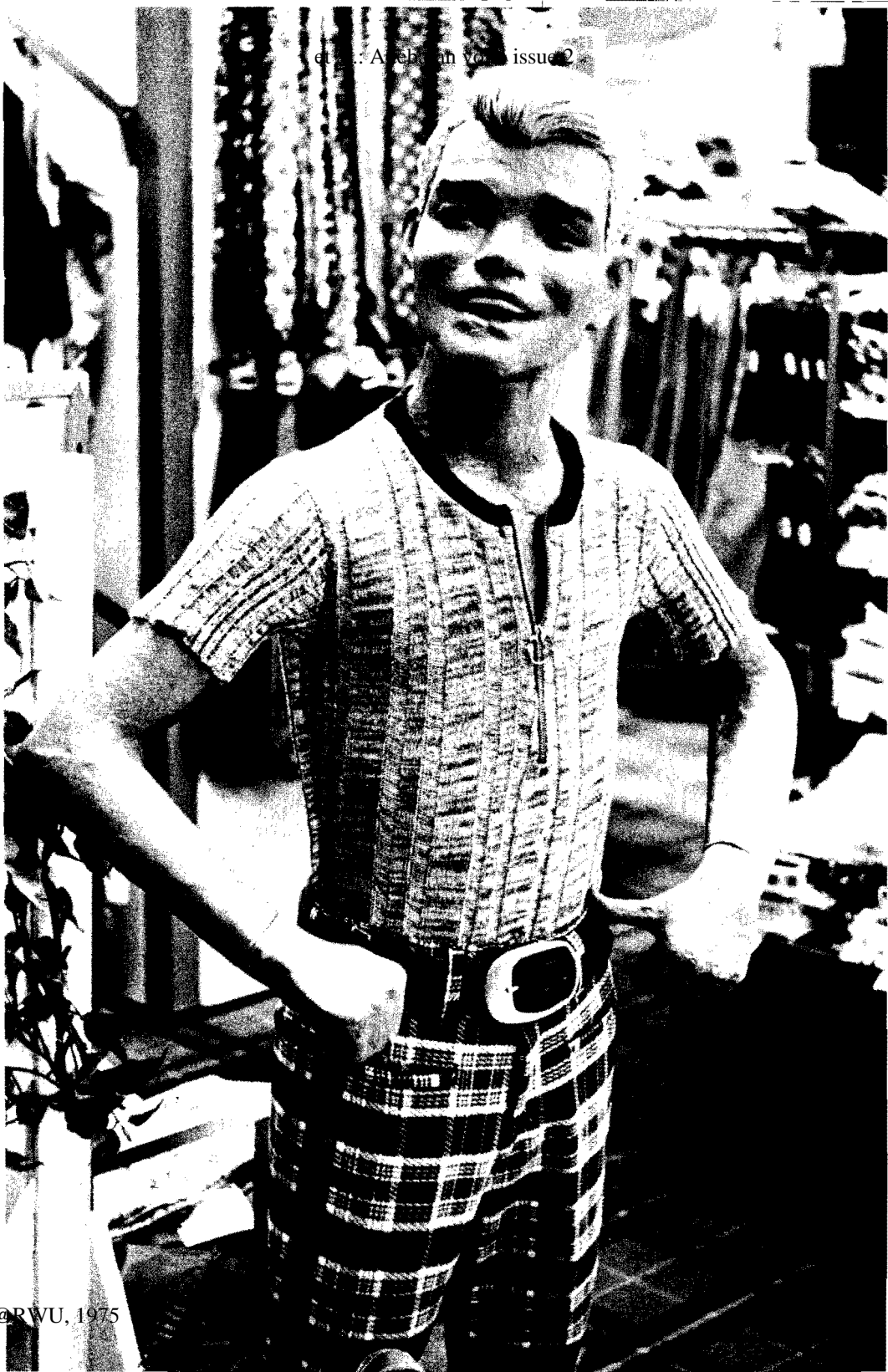
MINE ACCIDENT, OURS

So we waltz where the man drops

things from his window playing
cigarette with our fingers and cooling
like milk spilt on the knees

Tearing our hearts like sneezing
and pumping the drain till all the hair comes
back and switches from there

to the ambulance



CONTRIBUTORS NOTES

Kim Horton lives and works in Newport.

VerKuilen Ager is a student at Roger Williams College. His poem "sac city" will appear in *Intro 7*.

Lisa DuBois is an expatriate of The Lincoln Lodge, Cape Cod.

Kelli Wicke Davis (portraits) teaches at RWC. She lives in Barrington.

Roselyn L. Wimbish is an up-and-coming sophomore writer at RWC.

James Tate's latest, *Viper Jazz*, is presently looking for a publisher.

Titus Blade Steele's ink drawings also appeared in the last issue of *Aldebaran*. Titus is considering a career as a medical artist.

Cliff Saunders has a white rose sizzling in the membrane of his mirror, which he cherishes like a talisman. He lives in Seekonk, Mass. and is a graduating Creative Writing major at RWC. Some of his poems will be appearing in *Bartleby's Review*, *Big Moon*, *Happiness Holding Tank* and *Intro 7*.

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Tina Yelle Jennings will graduate from Wheaton College this spring and will pursue graduate studies in art at Cape Town University in South Africa. Her interests are feminism, art and music. Tina is from a Norton, Mass. family of artists.

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Interview and Poems
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