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# dicta

The University of Michigan Law School Literary Journal

Volume Three

Spring 1997

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# dicta

**The University of Michigan Law School Literary Journal**

**Volume Three**

**Spring 1997**

## From the Editors:

This is the third year of Dicta, the law school's literary journal and a child of the vision of two 1996 graduates, Miles Yanick and Matt Morris. We hope that this creative forum will continue to grow and to flourish, enriching the law school community by offering a spectrum of poetry, fiction, essays, photography, and artwork. The editors faced a difficult task again this year as we again received more material than we could publish. We continued the policy of considering all submissions anonymously. This final product reflects the often conflicting views of the editors who tried to select a variety of compelling pieces for the Spring 1997 issue.

We extend our thanks to the many people who have helped Dicta to become a reality. Thanks to the Law School Student Senate, who have pledged another year of financial support to this journal. Thanks also to the community who has given its creative work, its enthusiasm, and its compliments since the first year of this project. Thanks to those editors who have pledged to continue Dicta another year. Finally, thanks to the people from the classes of 1995 and 1996 who first made this journal a reality.

We invite each member of the law school community to become involved with Dicta. Please consider contributing your time and your energy to keep this journal vital and to maintain a forum for the creativity of the University of Michigan Law School's students, faculty and staff. In the words of Miles Yanick and Matt Morris, "don't let a good thing die."

Enjoy!

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                  "Letting Go"  
                  Spring 1995

Production    Shannon E. Conaty  
                  Rebecca G. Pontikes

## FIELD OF DREAMS

Nathanial D. Webb

While a student-athlete at Clover Park H.S., I had dreams of being the coveted blue chip football recruit. I constantly daydreamed about receiving calls from famous coaches, taking flights to South Bend or Ann Arbor, and finally, accepting an athletic scholarship to a major university. Unfortunately, a 5' 10 frame and a dislocated shoulder shattered my dreams of football glory. Instead of calls from Lou Holtz and Notre Dame, I received mail from Coach John Doe at "We Aren't Anyone" College. Thus all through undergrad, I continued to daze at my high school letterman jacket, bitter, and wondering,.....what if? Little did I know that during the summer job interviewing process at Michigan Law School, my dream of being treated like a highly recruited football star would happen.

It was a lazy summer day (See no firm summer job after first year) and I was anxious to read my lone letter in the mail. "Mr. Webb, you should be proud of your accomplishments at Michigan Law School. We would love to hear from you...". This was the first line of a "recruiting letter" I received from Mayer, Brown, & Platt, a D.C. law firm with a great reputation. Despite the fact that every breathing 2L in the nation received the exact same form letter, I could barely hold my excitement. I read the letter constantly, but after my 50th reading, my eyes began to glaze, and strange thoughts entered my mind. Soon words like partner, office, and associates, began to look like coach, stadium, and players. I began to think of myself as that superstar jock, being recruited by the major universities. Instead of receiving a letter from David Jones, Recruiting Partner, I convinced myself I was reading a letter from David "Woody Hayes" Jones, Head Coach. Mayer Brown & Platt was no longer a law partnership, but a team, and that team was the Ohio State Buckeyes. I realized that if my 5 second 40 yard dash time and hands of concrete won't get me recruited, then my LSAT and G.P.A. would. No longer was I a drab nerdy 2L looking for a summer job. Now I was a high stepping running back, playing for Michigan Law High School, entertaining offers from the major universities. The recruiting season had just began, and now the first line of that same letter read: "Mr. Webb, you should be proud of your 1000 yard rushing season at Michigan Law High School, we would love for you to join our team..."

Inspired by my first recruiting letter (and totally detached from reality), I, like any blue chip football recruit, had to assess my options. I was no All-American (See Law Review, c.f. 4.0 g.p.a.), and I probably wasn't all-state. I considered myself an all-league running back, with respectable first year grades, a 4.6 40 yard time, and one letter of recommendation. Thus I had to narrow my options. I soon consulted the USA Today Top 25 coaches poll, or in laymen terms, the mid-level associate survey. Katten Muchin Zavis was highly ranked, but it just got off probation (See lost discrimination suit by African American associate), and it seemed like the players at Skadden Arps were running a bit too many wind sprints. Big schools (more than 200 associates) and big cities attracted me. I also stood by my golden rule, never to enter a state that flies a confederate flag over their capitals. Teams in South Carolina and Georgia would see none of my services.

After narrowing the field down to about 20 teams, I participated in the college football combine, located in room 200 of Hutchins Hall. The combine was crucial for catching on with a team. They assessed you height, weight, g.p.a., and bullcrap speech skills. Seeing all the other blue chip recruits at the combine was unnerving. How could I compete with David “Crazy Legs” Simmons. This 6’1 200 lb. stud was big and strong, had a 3.8 g.p.a. and was Note Editor for Law Review. Then there was Lisa “The Glove” Haynes. This Phi Beta Kappa phenom from Philadelphia had soft hands, quick feet, and a #3 class rank. How could I, a 5’10 160 pounder from Seattle compete with these big city superpreps. I soon composed myself, determined to convince the participating teams that I could carry the ball 40 times a game and bill 2300 hours a years.

Just two days after the combine began, I received my first call. It was Linda “Lloyd Carr” Stevens, Head Coach at Schiff Hardin & Waite, a heavy hitting Chicago team noted for its “run and shoot offense”. (See also aggressive client solicitation).

“Hi Nate” Coach Stevens said, “We would like to bring you to our campus and let you mingle with some of the players.” (real sentence omitted)

“I accepted immediately and soon found myself on an all expenses paid trip to the Michigan Avenue Marriot in Chicago. I’d always heard that the first campus visit is the most impressionable, and that was definitely the case with me. The team had excellent facilities and a beautiful stadium (See Sears Tower offices). I was wined and dined, and too my excitement, I was able to meet the teams start player, linebacker Gary Mowder, a 6’3 240 pounder that I read about in Sports Illustrated (c.f. National Law Journal). Mowder had a reputation of being an aggressive hard hitter who could finalize a merger in 4.2 seconds flat. He was also known to be the “Deion Sanders” of law partners.

What’s the best thing you like about playing for this team?” I asked Mr. Mowder.

“The money” he replied, as he admired his gold rings. (true sentence NOT omitted!).

Deion Sanders might be an understatement I thought.

I departed from the Schiff Hardin & Waite campus convinced I would go there if they offered me a scholarship, which they eventually did. However, five weeks and four paid recruiting visits later I was in a state of confusion. I had narrowed down my options to Schiff Hardin in Chicago, and Perkins Coie in Seattle. Perkins had a fine reputation and was ranked nationally. Their Head Coach, Dave “Bobby Bowden” Andrews was revered in the football community. Both Schiff Hardin and Perkins Coie had their pro’s and cons. Schiff Hardin’s scholarship package included more money, but a Perkins Coie booster promised me a loaner car during my stay in Seattle, stating emphatically that it wasn’t against NCAA rules. Perkins Coie also promised me more playing time (See more substantive summer assignments) while Schiff Hardin promised fame and



fortune in the large Chicago market. The letter of intent signing deadline was soon approaching, and I knew I had to make a decision.

“What should I do?” I asked my mom.

“Go with your heart...” my mother said, tears rolling down her eyes.

After hearing those words from my mother I knew where I had to go. “Should I hold a press conference?” I thought. Nah, only bigwigs like Lisa “The Glove” Haynes announce their signings to everyone in Hutchins Hall. I simply made a phone call to Coach Andrews, telling him I would be proud to wear the colors of Perkins Coie.

The end of the recruiting season brought both joy and sorrow. Joy because I knew I would carry the ball for Perkins Coie, sorrow in that now I had to concentrate on finals, for fear of being declared academically ineligible and unable to compete. I never really returned to reality after that lazy summer day, and even today, I still look at law school affairs through the eyes of a football player. I should stop however, because the recruiting partner at Perkins Coie is getting tired of me calling him “Coach Andrews”.

## IN LOVE OF STANDING IN SALAD DAYS

G. B. Cohen

Clarance, with your green flu eyes  
and pearled slack hair,

standing before me, grinching as you gesture--  
The curl of grace and stern.

Your pause, and respir, deep of standing.  
We had no teal blue truck stop

manifestos. Perhaps, if we'd had blasts of back-  
strapped crumbling, freedom calls, in the dark and february

of parking lots that line the cars heading south  
to jersey, I could have fucked the merry constitu.

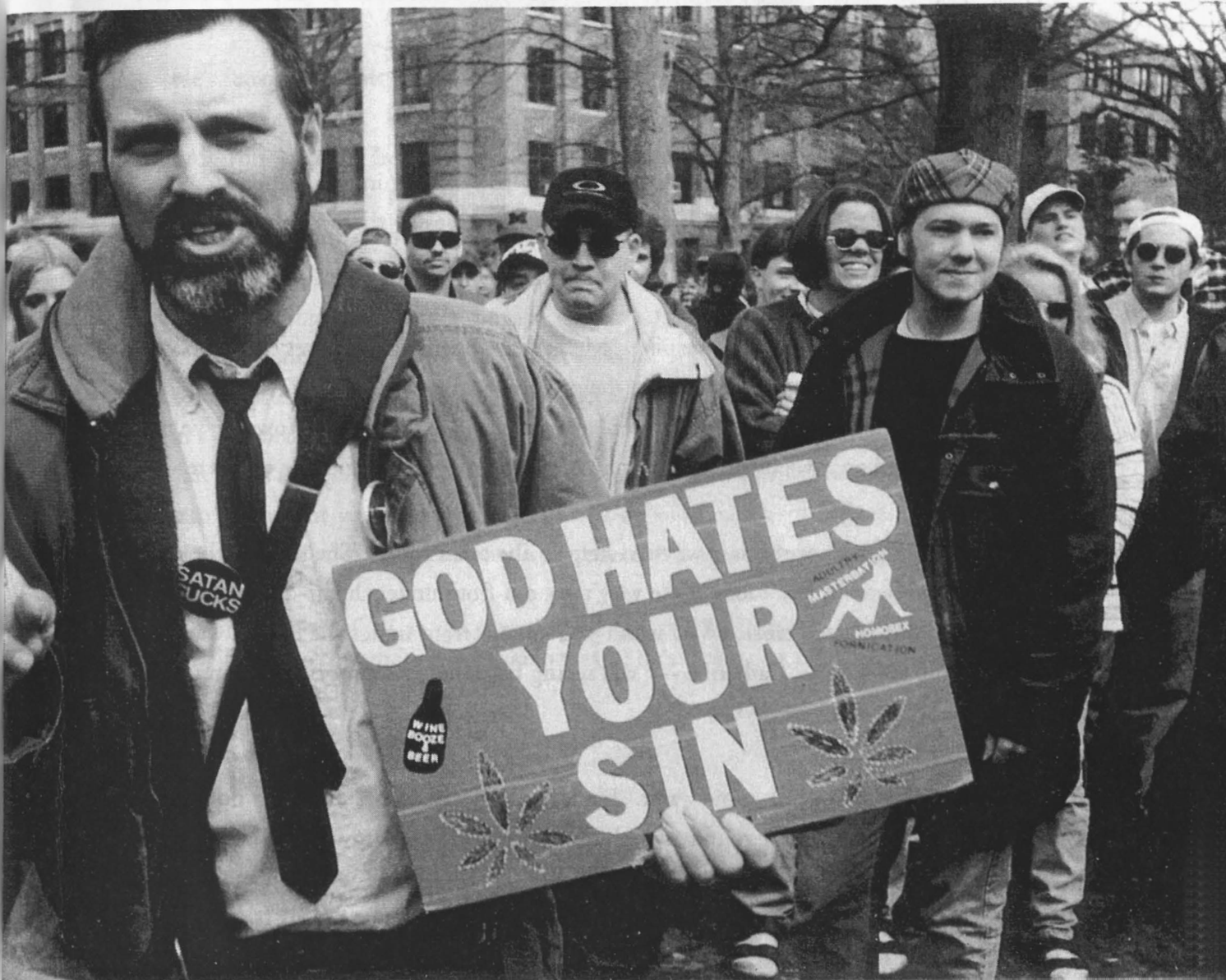
ideal right back into you. Congenital  
Erections these. But now, me below this browning lecturn,

With the parched dun of fingers, wrapping tymapni  
of white and eper necture. The other

preening up to tangle with  
the pear and fester, prickling strands

of hair and necture. What strange grace  
you muster, Handbellow, still and clarity

as these lips nestle through the trails  
of bottom, carresses of truth and tender.



"Hash Bash '96 (With Love from Holland)"

Photo by David J. Camp

## THE LAST TIME

Joel B. Kalodner

He's drifting in and out of consciousness. Dan, are you drifting in and out of consciousness? Stop drifting in the fuck and out of consciousness -- there's no time for that now -- we need your help here.

He's opening his eyes, but it isn't helping. My eyes are open, okay? Does that help you out? It doesn't -- the colors are still bright in the patterned white wall. They're shifting, moving, threatening maybe to burst. Now you've done it, he says. Look. Now you've made it all start happening here. Right in front of me. It's happening in the fucking concrete wall.

He's going into the other room -- we need help in the other room. She's under the covers; in the other room; here, in this room -- she won't get out from under them. He's asking her, leaning over her, but not too close. Why won't you get out from under the covers, Catherine? I see worms. You see worms, Catherine -- I was seeing bugs; now I see worms. I don't want to come out. She sees worms, he says.

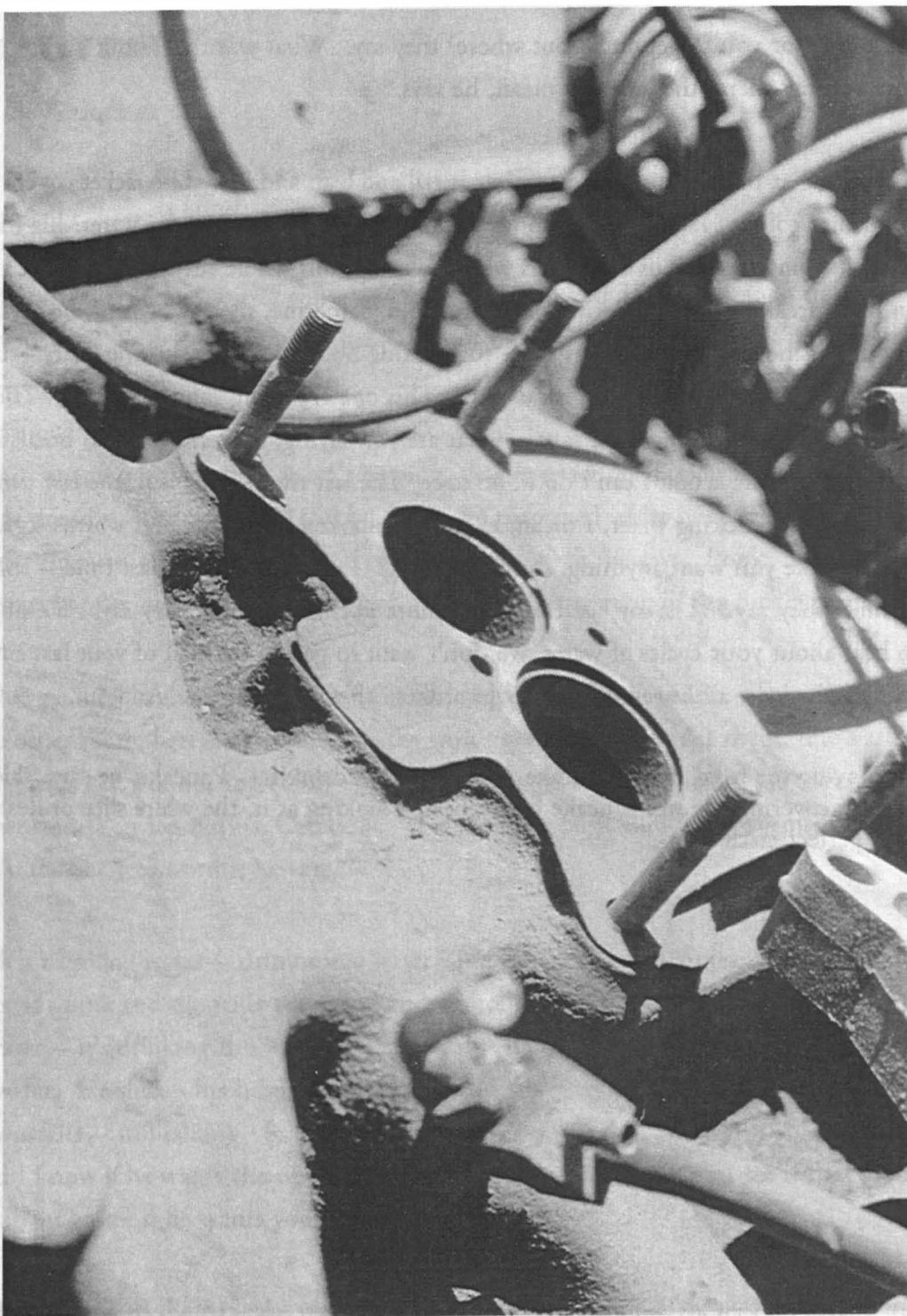
He's drinking water -- drink some water. He waits. A hand comes out from under the covers; it's pink and the nails are round and white; they're wide and growing. The hand takes the water -- it's drinking the water, somehow, this hand is. It's quieter under there with all that water. He shakes his head. He looks around for everything, looks for his friends. Eddie is downstairs -- still talking. Still talking, he says. Do you think he wants some water? -- How would I know if he wants the water? Water. He's there -- you go; you see if that's what he wants; you go see if he wants your water.

He's driving to the pancake place. He's going to see a waiter, there; he's driving to see the pancake waiter. I'm losing myself in the circles, he says. They listen to him -- everything is going slow, but I can't seem to get the connections. I won't even be able to understand the waiter -- the waiter, they say. What waiter? The water waiter, he says. He says, things like this, like being here, it's like drifting, it's like a kind of conscious drifting -- no, he says, things like this, like when they're repeating themselves, like when the cycles get longer and longer

and take longer for you to get out -- out where? they say. What was that about a water waiter? The more you say them, the less they mean, he says.

He's looking at their waiter. Their waiter is tall and lean and his white jacket covers pants of no particular colors. He's ordering some water -- did you have to order water? his friends ask. Are you trying to freak us out? This whole evening, this whole fucking night -- it's been, it's been like a freaking, sweating kind of thing. And Catherine, she saw worms, he says. That's nothing, they say -- Eddie was there for fucking hours -- whole fucking years -- cycles, he says. What? Are you trying to freak us out? This one is getting longer, he says. The way out is getting longer and longer, he says -- what are you saying, they say -- try to break it, he says; just try and wait it out; I can't do it, he says. The last time. This is it, the last time; I can't even taste my fucking water, I mean, everything looked like white and worms to her, doesn't that make you want anything, think anything? I'm stopping; the last time -- this isn't any last time, they say. It is; my last time. No more of this last time, they say. We don't want to hear about your cycles of water, we don't want to get on with all of your last time. My pancakes, he says; all I need now is my pancakes; they're here now. And out.

He's moving the fork, in the pancake and out. He's drinking. Pancake, he says. He's moving it, uncovering the wet pancake beneath; he's looking at it, the white slice of flesh; the white, perfect circle.



"15426375"  
Summer 1995

Photo by Jonathan J. Brennan

## I LIKE TO SEE GUYS

Laura M. Ricketts

I like to see guys,  
Standing in lines,  
Tall and big or short and slim.  
Muscular, light or dark,  
Blond, red, brunette,  
Silly or serious, crazy or sane:  
In jeans and in leather or suits and ties.  
In uniforms, in overalls,  
In canoes--But I Digress.  
I like to see guys,  
Standing in lines,  
Waiting, waiting, waiting,  
For the Men's Room.  
It doesn't happen very often. But when it does...  
Well, that's what *I* like to see.

# MAGAZINES

Anonymous

Standing in the checkout line at the supermarket fills me with disgust. I have to stare at the endless rows of women's magazines with models on the covers demonstrating how I should look. I used to love those magazines--I would look at the pictures for hours, absorbing the wisdom they imparted, and think that I could be like the models in the pictures. I have long since become disillusioned.

My little sister still buys those magazines. Since becoming a feminist, I have refused to patronize what I call the "engines of my oppression." When she brings them home, I take them away and throw them in the garbage.

"MOM!!! Make her *stop*."

"Why do you want to feed the engines of your oppression?"

"I just want to read the magazine. Would you please cut that out?"

But I have a secret. I throw those magazines away because if I look at those pictures, I still believe in what they say. I want to be thin like those models in the pictures. My intellectual self tells me that they are half-starved, probably drugged, women who are presented to the public with camera tricks. My gut, the part of me that has been well-trained since age eleven, still immediately measures how close I am to looking like the picture. Because I still want to look like the pictures. And if I look at the pictures too long, I will stop eating again in an effort to manipulate my body into looking like the pictures in *Elle* and *Cosmopolitan*. Feminist conversion or not, I am still trying to do what those magazines taught me to do.

But it's more than that. More than just pure indoctrination. It's a power. A force that takes hold of me. It's the all powerful feeling, the rush I still get when I can stare food in the face and not eat it even though I'm *starving*. There's a sick satisfaction I get from seeing my stomach



completely flat because all I ate for dinner last night was a baked potato and a bagel. I can be anything--strong, beautiful, powerful--I can achieve anything as long as I'm hungry while I'm doing it. I feel so guilty--how can I call myself a feminist while I starve myself? How can I stand up to everything I hate and scream "NO!!!!!" when at the same time I deny myself food so that I can look like Kate Moss?

But my hypocrisy drives me to continue fighting--*I will not let others become like me.* Women heavier than myself look at me with envy--if only they knew how carefully I count every piece of food that enters my mouth. I am extremely good at counting--I count calories, the number of foods I consume every day. Thinking about what I eat and how much and what type of food consumes hours of my existence.

*I will not let others become like me.* I cannot let others fall into the sick cycle I perform every day of my life. The cycle I have learned to combat, though I really don't want to. You see, I *like* to be thin. I *want* to be thin. I *crave* it.

I know the health results--hair falls off your head and grows on your body; amenorrhea; increased likelihood of premature heart attacks; electrolyte imbalance. They sound horrible--but I *don't care*. I keep doing it. I could die. But I do it. I *want* to do it.

My kind are celebrated in this culture--I see the celebration in the magazines and feel ill. We should be pitied. Understood. Helped. But not celebrated. There are eighteen million of us, but we do not know each other. We keep these things private. Eighteen million American women with eating disorders--it means I have sisters. But I have never sought out the sisterhood--it would mean that I have to identify with them and admit that I have a disease. Admitting my disease means giving it up. And my disease is a source of my strength.

Even if I won't identify with them, I can spot them. They are here at law school. They sit next to me in class. They are famous--Courtney Cox has anorexia and makes headlines. And men call her sexy--she's starving herself, she's playing deadly games with her body, but she's sexy. Women have to starve themselves to be sexy.

NO!! *I will not let others become like me.* “You’re not fat,” I tell my friends and acquaintances. “Don’t lose weight. You’re fine.” Though my words sound hollow to myself because I won’t abide by them. I won’t cure myself--why? My friends who know always ask that question. I can give flip answers--the beta endorphin high, nothing like it; it’s a control thing and I’m a perfectionist; I’m the first born child; I’m an upper middle class white woman and we tend to get this disease. But the real reason is. . .I don’t know.

I continue to live with my hypocrisy--I *am* a feminist and I *hate* those magazines. I defy anyone to try to tell me differently. I still throw them away when my little sister brings them home. But I also do it to deny my secret desires--even though it doesn’t work. I’m like the preacher who rails against adultery only to sleep with his neighbor’s wife.

There are eighteen million women in America who have eating disorders.

I am one of them.

But I am also a feminist.

That may make me a hypocrite.

*But I will not let others become like me.*

*The author is a 3L who has just tipped the scales at 105 lbs. and is resisting the urge to lose another five pounds.*



"Still"  
Winter 1995

Photo by Jonathan J. Brennan

# THE ODYSSEY OF WHITECOATS

Shannon E. Conaty

doctors walk quickly from death to death  
they scurry they slide from room to room and play with the dials on the big gray machines  
that pump and sip and sing like those sirens on that rock in the middle of the Aegean  
they skip in white jackets on very soft soles and decide that the tubes should be snatched from  
his mouth as big gray machines whisper and scream  
he is gone  
they pull the stained sheets over the sunken and sail on to the call of their sirens

## **MARRIED....**

Beth Colaner-Kenney

I am enclosing a poem that I found recently when moving my 92-year old father out of his home into a retirement village. It was written by my mother (Hazel E. Landin) probably in the late 20s or early 30s.

### Married One Year

The meringue is scorched again  
The coffee is like mud  
The steak is overdone  
And the salad is a dud  
But my nose is powdered  
My hair is brushed and bright  
I've donned a fresh gown  
So everything's all right.

### Married Ten Years

Here's that man again  
And my hair is a mess  
My nose is shiny  
And I need a clean dress  
But the pie is a picture  
The roast--Ah! heavenly smell!  
The potatoes are a fluffy dream  
So all is well!

It was interesting to me to see what was important to my mom. I have written an updated version ...

### Married--1996

Caught in a gridlock  
I'll never get home  
Better call my husband  
On the cellular phone  
He won't be there, he's jogging the track  
But I'll leave a voice mail for when he gets back  
"Honey, what do you want to eat tonight?  
I'll fax an order to Take-out Delight."



"Chicago"

Photo by Pryce G. Tucker

## THE RAFTING TRIP

John C. Ford

My father gave me one invaluable piece of advice when I was in high school. My mother had flown to Denver for the weekend, and my Dad was on his way to one of the many political functions he attended without her. The advice was this: "Don't bitch about what I haven't taught you about life -- teach yourself." One week later my father had a massive heart attack at an Italian restaurant, going face down into a full plate of meat lasagna and upsetting the good night's sleep of his dinner companion, a County Commissioner. His advice served me well, especially when I realized he hadn't taught me very much. Most people, of course, are under the mistaken impression that their parents have provided them moral guidance as complete as the new Catechism.

As a parent, the advice still serves me well -- what I don't teach my son, you see, he can learn on his own. And I admit that it may be why last week I was running two hours late to pick him up at my ex-wife's house, where he lived, without feeling any remorse whatsoever. I was, in fact, on my way to my girlfriend's house. Dan could wait a few more minutes.

My girlfriend Melanie lives in Royal Oak, a suburb with a lot of screen doors and American flags and a general urgency to trade the two of them in for French doors and microbreweries. I suppose I am a good boyfriend to have in Royal Oak. When you say your boyfriend writes for that glossy national magazine, it projects the right image of intellectualism, and, if said casually, an attractive disdain for all things local. She walked out to the porch to meet me, barefoot, in a sundress that was a purple-died handkerchief. She had that haircut, the one worn by the popular television actresses and every conscionable woman aged 15-45, but she wore it well. It fell in soft brown icicles around her face. She looked very much her part, the daughter of Michigan aristocrats and a nurse in a small, prohibitively expensive hospital. That is, very attractive and slightly needy.

"Have you told Dan?" she asked me, first thing.

"No." I had planned a rafting trip for Dan and me, but Dan did not know that I was using the trip as the subject for my next peice in Metropolitan. Melanie said I should tell him right away, "to be fair." Mid-western values intact there, despite the microbreweries.

"I'll tell him first thing."

We went inside her rented house, where two distinct elements dominated the atmosphere: the delicious central air and Melanie's melodramatic anxiety over spending our first weekend apart

in two months. Her emotional investment in the affair was the larger, and it was getting to that familiar point where I start feeling guilty. We had passionless sex -- Melanie had these episodes planned days in advance but tried to play them off as being spur-of-the-moment, rapturous affairs. I played along, and then showered up. I really did not want to leave that air -- the kind that makes you think Edison might have had something on Mother Nature -- but I had the responsibility to Dan. And so I told Melanie that I was three hours late. She began picking dissapointedly at her cuticles, and said I should go. She paid a professional an obscene amount of money to paint her fingernails maroon once a week.

"He's probably dying to see you, and you're here with me not saying a thing about it. God, sometimes I think you do everything for yourself," she said. This last part seemed to be more about her than Dan, but I didn't have the time to get into it. "He's not just something you put on a list of things to do and then check it off at the end of the weekend," she continued.

"Well, I certainly don't think of him like that," I said. Before she could get in another word, I said "I gotta go, he's waiting," forgoing a good-bye kiss and hopping right into my car and out to my ex-wife's house.

Dan, a freshman in high school, was eating a BLT and nearing the end of a paperback with a soft-brush male model painted on the cover. This struck me because the Dan I knew read only classics and the occasional civil war book. He was quite at home in the kitchen -- portable phone in easy reach, leg up on the other kitchen chair, not moving it for me to sit down. Our greetings are awkward now. Last Christmas Dan had tried to hug me. I flinched, he must have felt it, and he hasn't done it since.

"What's with the romance book?" I could read the title when he moved -- The Morrocan Affair.

"I started it," he said simply. Dan is both stubborn and slightly masochistic, which explained it all.

"You shouldn't have eaten without me," I said.

"I couldn't rely on you, could I. Remember last week?" Last week there had been some miscommunication over whether I was supposed to spend the weekend with Dan. Often, conversations with Dan remind me of a lawnmower I once owned which had an emphatic way of not starting when you pulled the line. He was growing his thin blonde hair long in front; it fell like a drape across his eyes and closed us off all the more.

"It's a good drive to the Ohio River," I said. "Eat up and I'll get your stuff."

He told me he could get his bags himself and autodialed what sounded like a girlfriend. Another first for Dan. The kitchen was getting crowded with the three of us in there, so I went to get his bags, slightly disturbed when I heard Dan's completely unembarrassed salutation: "I love



you, Jenny." I could only believe he meant it. Dan's brand of honesty, like him, was unflagging -- even self-righteous. It was not for him to tell a white lie for the sake of warming a teenage heart over a weekend, or for lack of a better way to get off the phone. In fairness to his mother, I should note that he got this honesty from her, though in fairness to myself I should also note that it is not always the best policy. One of the many things I learned on my own, that.

"I have something to tell you," Dan said after we had gotten a fair way down I-75. The inside of the car smelled of our sweat and, because we were in Ohio now, cow manure. My air conditioner was broken, making it a devil's choice.

"What's up?" I said, figuring that sounded appropriately fatherly.

"I'll tell you when we get down there," he said, "it's pretty important." Dan's mother wouldn't have been able to let a comment like that sit, but I certainly could. A good Eric Clapton program was on the radio and I really didn't feel like hearing anything important. This is an instinct I think a lot of people have and never admit to. Dan went to sleep with the paperback open on his lap. I leaned over and opened his window a crack, making a mental note that I should tell Dan that I was writing a story on our trip as soon as we arrived at camp.

We reached the white-water-rafting enterprise -- the kind of place that sounds romantic from vantage of the suburbs but much less so up close, when canned chili gets involved and the insects bite at the sweat on the back of your neck -- just before dark. Dan took to setting up our tent with his usual resolution. It was a job to be done, and for Dan that meant you started doing and didn't stop until you finished. His spirits seemed to rise with each complication -- the ground too soft for this stake, the pole meant to hold up our roof refusing to extend the way it did in the sporting goods store. We finished putting it together, and Dan turned to me with a smile. He wiped some of his hair away and smiled at our good job. I noticed for the first time that he didn't have freckles anymore, but I didn't ask him about it for fear that he had outgrown them years ago. In their place he had a mole on the left side of his chin, which was being pulled upward by his grin. The lawnmower had just turned over, I could see we were all set to have a good time of things, when a gregariously fat man with red hair walked toward us.

He had two large cameras with him, one strung from each meaty shoulder.

"Frank?" he asked, in a booming way that made me think this might be an old friend.

"That's me," I said, confused that this man knew me.

By the way, he said, make sure you don't get in the raft with the female instructor in the red bathing suit. "She must be training," he said, "because that boat of hers was reelin' all over the stream today."

"I'm sorry," I said politely, "but . . ."

"Look at me," he said shaking his head self-reproachingly. "I'm the photog from the Metropolitan. Didn't they tell you I was comin'? C'mon over to my campfire. You must be Dan," he said, reaching a paw out to my son. Sullen, Dan said yes he was.

"What is this?" Dan asked on our way over, the two of us lagging slightly back of the photographer.

"I thought I'd memorialize our trip by writing a story about it. Guess somebody thought it was a good enough idea to send a photogapher," I said, on the go. I was proud of my comment -- never for a moment did it sound as though the story was more important than our Father-son trip, which it wasn't -- but Dan thought he had caught me red-handed. His anger was as large as the photographer's legs. He did not say anything, however. He felt I wasn't worth getting upset over.

The fire had burned to a whisper by the time we got there. It kept away the bugs, though, and wasn't too hot.

"Smell the mesquite?" the photographer asked. "That's mesquite wood. Cooked some chicken on it before you got here. Damn good, damn good. I'd offer you all some, but I don't think its gonna last long enough to get a chicken breast hot."

"That's all right," Dan said. Then he turned to me and said, "you didn't have to take me out here just to make up for last week. You could have done the dumb story by yourself." A silent tension fell upon us -- mocked by the loud grasshopper call in the nearby brush -- of a kind only a disaffected youth can create. It was Christmas all over. After five quiet minutes the photographer began to get visibly nervous -- when I describe him as gregarious, I mean he liked talking about mesquite wood and the Tiger's shitty fielding and that damn Congress, not that he wanted to get to know us. He did not know what to do with just the silence and the stars and this family scene. We had upset his beer commercial.

The fire was dying, leaving Dan and I with a familiar nothingness between us. Then Dan broke out with it.

"I'm going to marry her, Dad," he said. He eyed me defiantly, not kidding. To look at him, he was nothing more than a thin blonde Michigan kid with a farmer's tan, too-thin eyebrows, and gangly appendages. But he had a strength about him -- he would have made a fine weed or investigative reporter. And he had not a single ounce of bullshit in him, which, incidentally, made me pity him a little. Even the photographer could sense Dan was a literal child.

"The girl on the phone?" I asked.

"Jenny, yeah. Mom's not gonna stop us and you're not gonna stop us either."

It was slightly unpleasant, this, because I knew Dan would do it, and, as I say, he was only fifteen. So what if he did, though? Sure, the neighbors might not like it, but people take marriage

too seriously; your life isn't over if you make a mistake. He could learn from this, and if it was a perfect match, wouldn't we all look stupid in fifty years for trying to stop them. Dan got up and walked away on long, thin legs.

"You gotta talk to him," the photographer said, quite sure this was the only rational course.

"I can't do anything now," I said. And in fact, I couldn't. I had lost my chance when I flinched last Christmas, or maybe last weekend, or maybe way back when we got divorced. Whenever, I had lost it. Its easy to be an authority on the merits of river rafting to a 150,000 circulation, but your son is an entirely different matter.

The photographer did not compute. He placed hands on thighs and pushed himself up heavily; things had gotten much too far afield from mesquite wood. He didn't realize how good we had it. Being unattached. We could tell a cab driver in Cincinnati or Seattle about our problems, but nobody had to or wanted to know anything about them. There were no repercussions to our failures.

Dan heard my footfalls coming towards him at the bank of the river. We stood there awhile, both of us adjusting to whatever was happening. There had never been any animosity after the divorce between us, only apathy. I had to feel something about him now, but I didn't know quite how that went and it had me off-balance.

"It's going to be December twentieth, at Queen of Martyrs. Maybe you'll come." He sat down on the damp ground, leaving me to feel like I did in his kitchen, wondering uncomfortably whether I would ever be able to sit down with him and feel right about it.

In our tent, we could hear only the shrill chant of the grasshoppers. Incessant creatures, grasshoppers. It sounded to me like a message of impending doom, though they probably sounded sugary to Dan, perhaps a reminder of Jenny's soft, high voice.

He probably resented the fact that I was writing some notes for the story on a looseleaf pad I had brought with me. In twenty minutes, he was sleeping deeply. Within an hour -- after I had writtten 300 words or so and thus, I figured, turned in a good day's work -- we both were.

The next day we went to the riverbank and assembled with a group of six other vacationer-types rafters wearing plastic visors, sloganed T-shirts, and open-toed plastic footwear. I was not quite sure whether we all looked funnier before or after we put on our wetsuits.

"The water's a little cold today," said our female guide, who had worked outdoors for years; you could tell by the in-fashion sunglasses strung about her neck, leather-toned skin, and unstylish sandals which looked more comfortable than anything I had seen all day. "After all the rain last week the river's running pretty rough. We should have a great run. You all look like you're in for a great time." She would tell the next fifty groups that they looked like they were in

for a great time; she was the kind of person who wanted to say nice things to people, and wasn't going to let anything get in the way of that.

"She's the one the photographer told us about," Dan said. "Remember? He said she had a red bathing suit."

"You're right," I said. This was the guide-in-training to look out for. "Too late now."

Our guide -- we should call her Lizzie, she said, confirmed by the paint-pen appellation on her waterproof visor -- gave us some instructions on how to paddle and such. Everyone but myself was paying close attention to her disquisition, especially Dan. When he did something, he liked to do it right. I was too concious of the wetsuit grabbing at my skin, the precious warmth of the sun, and the anticipation of going from dry to wet and cold.

Entering the large raft was not difficult -- Dan and I sat on the rear corners, with Lizzie between us in the middle. The first rapids gave the sensation of a roller coaster's final few hills, those easy bumps that send a pleasant, non-threatening twinge up your spine. I had to concentrate, I said to myself, for the sake of having something to write. I had to fear the river now, or memorize the way Lizzie tried to whip us into shape (for an opening quote), but it was beyond me. I had always had a problem concentrating at the times I most needed to. I could see Dan paddling, stern and mathematical.

"Are you really going to do it?" I yelled spontaneously after we had gone through a rough patch and the sound of the rapids began to subside. He looked at Lizzie and the two people in front of us, embarrassed, and then at me, furious. It may in fact have been an inappropriate time to bring up the subject of marriage.

"Hard on the left side," Lizzie yelled as we approached a turn. This trip was now some ridiculous fatherly send-off, one of those family events with nothing of the genuine about them, like the family reunion whose longest-lived memory is the t-shirt. I put my mind to the article to make the time go by.

The river lay in a crevese of beige, lined rock which turned to a deep forest green of brush above. We obscured the beauty with artificially scented sunscreen, flourescent fanny packs, and inflatable rubber games. I thought like this for some time, keeping an eye out for the photographer in the foilage. Once, I had to grab the raft for safety, but the rapids were not as strong as advertised and Lizzie did quite a nice job of keeping us in the middle of the river.

"Keep it up, Dan" Lizzie said some hours later, bringing me out of a haze with her sacharrine encouragement. Then she told our side of the boat to backpaddle as we approached our last series of rapids which, Lizzie told us gleefully, people in the know called the "Seven Steps." The rapids ahead, though not loud, did in fact sound extremely powerful. It is not the low growl of a lion that scares, it is the depth of the throat. Lizzie told Dan's side to paddle fast. Our boat slid freely

across the river at an angle. It made me think of an article I wrote on the U.S. speed skater who always lost his traction at the Olympics and skidded into the wall, leaving hundreds of Iowans in some European city with nothing to wave the flag or get drunk over.

Lizzie began yelling almost irrationally. The members of the boat had been lulled by the easy ride thus far, and apparently did not realize the importance of getting in the right position for our ride down the seven steps. The water began to take us on its own course. "Here's the first step!" Lizzie called out, rattled and full of adrenaline. The cheerleader almost completely vanished -- her world had stopped being all sunny and peaches.

"Backpaddle -- left side!" she yelled. We drifted with great speed, easing towards the rock-wall. We were thirty feet away from the wall yet, but Lizzie looked at it anxiously, as if it were an angry boss. I felt myself succumbing to the fear that now enveloped the entire boat except Dan. He kept stroking fiercely, confident that he alone could right our course.

Then the rapids eased a bit and people in the front of the boat cheered, believing that we had escaped the worst of it. In return, Lizzie only said "Hard on the right! Hard on the right! Second step coming!" Our raft was no longer heaving for the rocks, but Lizzie was anticipating the fact that the river turned hard to the left just ahead. I took this as a sign that she did in fact know what she was doing. We raced for the turn, and I kept paddling as a way to keep my balance. Dan kept at it like a champ. He began directing the two other people on his side of the raft; Lizzie looked on approvingly -- I suppose she wished she had half the effort from me. The river began to turn.

"Hard right" Lizzie yelled to Dan's side. We raced into the curve, and as we did a large boulder in the middle of the river came into view.

"No -- backpaddle!" Dan yelled. We did not slow down at all before we hit the massive, brown rock. The left side of the boat went under for a moment; I had a good amount of water up my nose. The woman in front of me grabbed my arm; her artificial nails dug into my arm and broke skin. The boat righted itself instead of going over -- an observer might have laid even odds -- and the raft kept flowing down the river, phased only by the considerable amount of water now soaking our feet.

"Bail!" Lizzie yelled angrily. She was a complete mess now, and her true colors were nowhere near as nice as she had held them out to be.

It was only then, looking for inspiration from Dan, that I realized he had flown out of the raft when we hit the boulder. His body was flowing behind us -- all the easier to see it because a portion of his head had turned blood red.

At that moment I had a vision of his wedding. And suddenly, it seemed like an incredibly embarrassing prospect. I would be there, I supposed, cringing at the thought that he would ask me to stand up for him -- either out of spite or some love I didn't know about. I thought of

standing there and exactly how embarrassing that would be for my ex-wife. I saw her crying in the first row, having insisted on coming and wearing a nice dress and and crying miserably and trying to ignore the fact that things weren't just beautiful and normal as hell. Ignoring the fact that she would be exiled from her doubles tennis game at the Knollwood country club and suffer all kinds of other horrible suburban treatment on account of her son's activity.

And I admit that I had this next thought: I thought of turning my head right around and bailing water with the rest of the group. They -- in their panic -- would not realize Dan was gone until too late.

Darwin would have been proud of our boat. The passengers battled, quite literally, for safe positions inside. I gained a new respect for Lizzie, perhaps the only one with a contrary instinct, when she yelled at me: "Bail, Pop, the water's still coming in." I passed the bucket to my left, yelled "Bail!" to the woman who may or may not have heard me over the heavy, blanketing sound of the water crashing over us, and jumped out of the back of the boat towards Dan.

Retrieving him was much easier than I thought it would be. I found a spot in the river where the current did not move so fast and waited for my son. His body came down the "second step" much like a log, towards me, and when I moved my body into the current I caught his waist easily. I moved my grip up to his shoulders, remembering some lifesaving tactic from high school that my memory hadn't yet cleaned out.

We floated down the river to the boat. I held him around the shoulders. His body was bony and horribly unfamiliar. It should have been this way last Christmas, but I had flinched from the intimacy we now shared by necessity. People in the boat had found a calm spot in the water and paddled backwards, staying in place for us. I held Dan's bloody head with my left hand. As I raised it -- a head is much heavier than it looks -- I could see his eyes shining lucently.

By the time we camped that evening, Dan had completely recovered. The woman sitting in front of me in the raft, it turned out, was a nurse. She wrapped his head and assured Dan that he would be "peachy ."

We sat by the photographer's fire again. He, of course, could not stop talking about the accident and the great pictures he had gotten of it. I couldn't pay attention again. Dan sat on my left, feeling his bandage, and, I think, a small amount of satisfaction at having survived the incident. We ate chicken breast sandwiches made by the photographer, and the fire warmed us, and when Dan smiled at me the whole scene tasted of something great and American.

"Thanks, Dad," he said.

"No sweat." I sat there awhile thinking silently about Dan -- wondering if his stubbornness would lead him to do great or stupid things, regretting the fact that I had no sense for the answer.

"Do you have the ring yet?"

"Yeah," he said happily. "I gave it to her a couple months ago."

As he told me about his trip to the jewellers, and the day he asked her, down on his knee in the public library, I felt myself starting to cry, and wishing fiercely that I hadn't lost the chance to talk him out of it.



"Open Mike Night at Manny's Car Wash, N.Y.C."  
August 1994

Photo by Stephen F. Ross



# THE YOUNG URBAN MISANTHROPE WATCHES TELEVISION

Kristen A. Harris

The cruelty assailed her in those late winter months.

The holidays were over. And all had retreated. The tired-out cold turned the twentysomethings as gray as the sidewalks that they could no longer see clearly. Significant others became domestic liabilities. Landlords became irascible despots. And romantic flings had long since become annoyances.

One morning, with nostrils desiccated by the merciless heater, she realized that she did not want to move. She did not want to force a series of “good mornings” through her arid throat. She did not want to split her cracked lips into smiles, however terse, towards no apparent end, towards anyone and everyone. With something brinking on resolve, she vowed to participate no longer in the making of the gray. In accordance with this newfound principle, she telephoned the office with an amended truth.

What to do next? or rather, how not to do anything, next? She re-nested in her bed to await the immanent crescendo and decrescendo of the others’ readyings. Awkwardly and loudly, the liabilities awoke, stumbled, screamed, searched and pounded for a malsynchronous while. After the last one slammed shut the apartment for a second time, she opened her bedroom door slowly. No one. VICTORY! She had reached the point of NO ONE! She flicked on the television.

What was ON at this time of day? Who was watching? Then she corrected herself--she didn’t care--it didn’t matter anyway since she didn’t have to deal with them. Tre-la-la as she clicked the remote over the channels. She clicked back. That was Barry White--beneath the slick black leather. He sauntered his weight left to right. The female backups followed in their weightlessness.

Meanwhile, she became vaguely aware of other shapes in the background, moving at another direction and speed. She put on her glasses. The specters became/were white rectangles proclaiming “Down with CBS!”, moving up and down. People in winter gear were holding them behind a black tint behind Barry and Friends. She found the volume. No. The strains of “practicice what you preach” oozed over her without any shouts from the choreographed discontent. She focused again, the squares were multiplying, growing, quickening. Allegretto. Allegretto-presto. Presto. Her eyes danced with delight between periphery and center, between bouncing geometry of protest and the anorexic swoops and overweight sways.

She didn't make gray. She didn't make anything. She just watched the shapes float by.

# ON THE LACK OF WARM WATER IN HEAVEN

Shannon E. Conaty

Heaven hath no aqueducts  
to slosh about its golden springs  
and plumbers, of course,  
for the rates they extract  
are one and all sent south  
parcel post  
to that other place with no  
pipes.

In recent years, the housing boon  
has cluttered well the fluffy clouds  
rows and rows of flim-flam condos  
with names like Gab's Trumpet  
and Pearly Gates Too  
Wing traffic now epic  
most angels stay home  
with Celestial Cable  
and the home hymning show.  
There is talk of developing southward.

## SIREN SEEKING

William E. Dornbos

### *Away*

The silvered rim of dusk blackens with night's tarnish.  
He stands staring in the snow  
while her footprints walk with his --  
pause where he had spoken --  
then angle away, alone, into the dark.

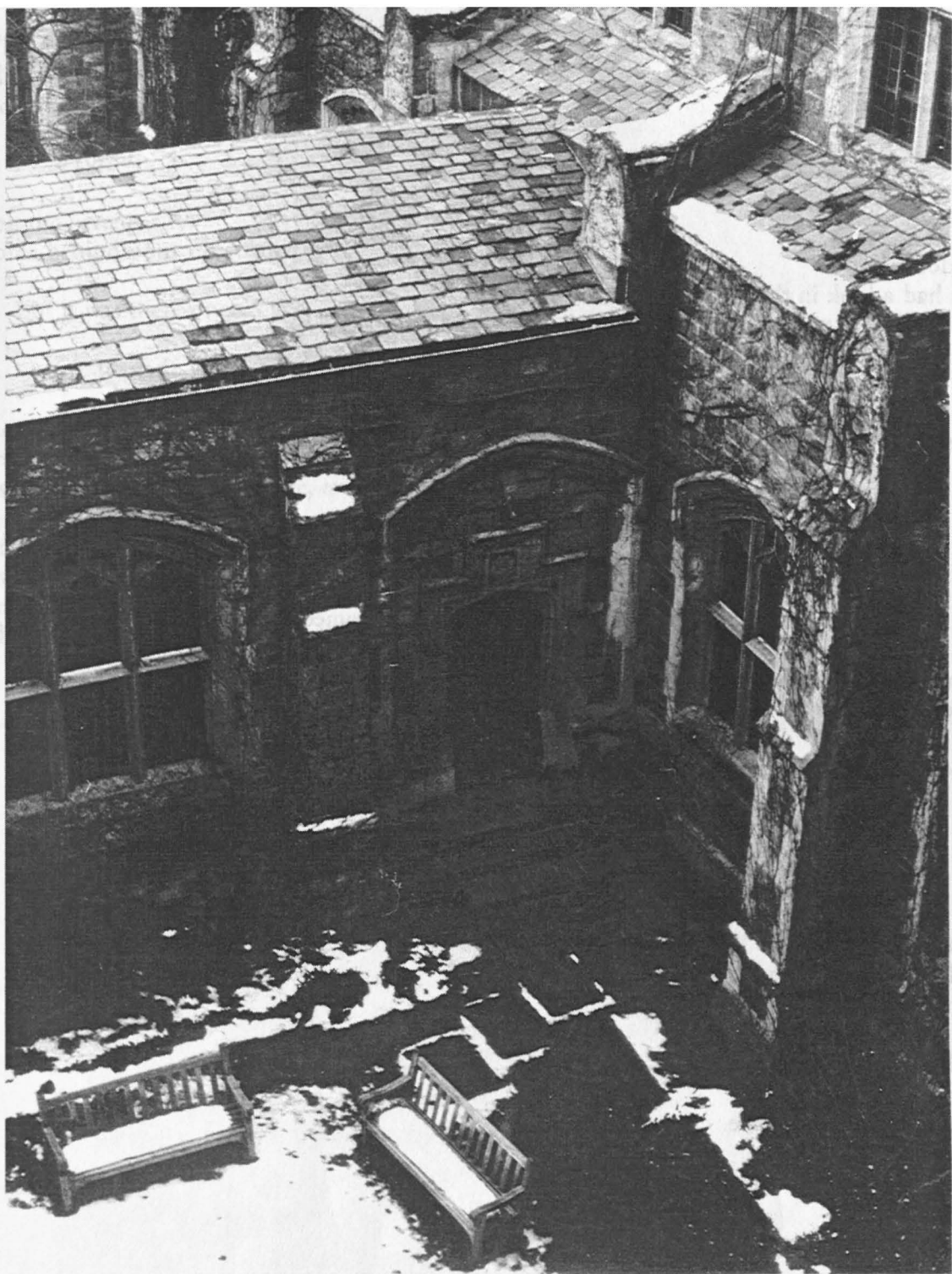
### *After, Thought*

He throws sharp stones quickly, one by one, into the water,  
shattering the smooth together sheen of its skin.  
The ripples roll, crash, mingle:  
such a tangled topography of messy consequence, this.  
Of course, she is more yes than any other woman he knows --  
but there is still the lesser no.

### *Again Another*

This one sleeps in his bed  
with lips slightly parted, like she is gathering  
the breath to speak, maybe sing.  
Through a window he watches  
hungry moths bang fatally fast and hard against a moon mistaken,  
a siren flower street lamp flaunting sweet halogen heroin.

To that sight, he shuts his ever seeking eyes.



"Three Stories Up"  
Winter 1995

Photo by Jonathan J. Brennan

## EYES

Rebecca G. Pontikes

Eyes don't lie.  
Yours had a look in them that I can't forget.  
I saw it there as you held my face in your hands, and said,

*I can't let you go.*

It doesn't matter about what happened later.

The lies (mine and yours),  
the secrecy,  
the fact that your heart belonged to someone else.

All that doesn't matter because I saw that look in your eyes.  
And eyes don't lie.

No actor on earth,

No liar in the world,

Not even the best player,

Can fake that look,  
And have it shine through his eyes  
Like that look shined through yours.  
Eyes don't lie.  
Not like that.

You can say what you like.

Tell me it never happened,

Tell me that it wasn't true.

Call me naive,

inexperienced,

childlike.

Those words won't even touch me.

And I'll never believe you when you say you didn't care.  
Eyes don't lie.  
And yours had that look, and you said,

*I can't let you go.*

But you did, eventually.  
The force behind your eyes faded.

But it was there once.

It made you human to me

And not just a player.  
It's why I cared.  
Because I don't believe eyes can lie, even though you did.

But I forgive you.  
Because I know.  
Your eyes told me.  
They had that look.

*Like you loved me.*

## THE THRILL OF THE GAME

Joshua W. Leichter

We all excitedly anticipated Jimmy Arnett's 11th birthday party. It wasn't that Jimmy, himself, was particularly well-liked, but his party promised to be. His family had a home in Connecticut, where they were going to have the party. Getting out to "the country" was reason enough for a bunch of New York City pre-pubescent boys to get excited, but this party promised something even better. The party would be a baseball party, and we would play a game on the Arnett's own baseball field. Owning your own baseball field was something a bunch of apartment-dwelling kids could only dream about. Jimmy had invited enough kids so we could play a real baseball game. Not stickball in the street, dodging cars; not a make-shift diamond in a cramped city park; but a real wide-open field and two full teams.

At school, for weeks preceding the party, debates raged over what the teams would be, who would hit a home run, who would strike out whom. The joy of the anticipation could only be surpassed by the big game itself. When the week of the party came, even more than most weeks in fifth grade, no one could wait for Saturday. Except for me.

Personally, I didn't want Friday, itself, to pass by too quickly. You see, I was doubly blessed this week, and, what was more, doubly blessed by baseball. On Friday night my dad was taking me to see the defending world champ New York Yankees play. It was the Fall of 1978 and the Yankees were making a momentous drive trying to catch the league-leading Boston Red Sox for the championship of the American League East. I didn't know which event to be more excited about. All I knew was that this was going to be one of the greatest weekends of my life, and I didn't want anything to go wrong.

I even thought of a great tie-in for the two events. Somehow, growing up in New York in the 1970s, Jimmy Arnett was an avid Boston Red Sox fan. This was about as unlikely as a young Roman boy growing up to root for the Christians, but that was Jimmy. Although I looked upon the Red Sox with the same derision as the normal red-blooded New Yorkers, I was able to take pity on them, and on Jimmy, since the Yankees had topped the Red Sox in the American League East for the last two years. Even as a kid, I loved to figure out the perfect gifts to give to people, and for Jimmy I had it nailed. I would buy him a Boston Red Sox helmet from the vendors outside of Yankee Stadium. He could wear it at his baseball game on Saturday and always remember me and my great gift.



Friday night came and off to Yankee Stadium I went with my dad. The trip to the Stadium could be almost as exciting as a Yankee game itself. We would take a subway up into the South Bronx, and although the train was always packed with people, for a ten year-old, it seemed a daring journey to venture into one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in the world on the infamous New York subway. I counted down the stops, as we approached 161st Street and River Avenue, the stop which stands right next to the glorious House that Ruth Built. As we descended from the elevated train platform, we entered the wonderful sea of baseball fans decked out in Yankees gear, scalpers pushing tickets, and vendors hawking baseball paraphernalia. It was from the latter that I planned on buying Jimmy's gift. I was so eager to get the gift, and somehow under the impression that Red Sox helmets would sell out at Yankee Stadium, that I told my dad that I wanted to buy the helmet now, before the game.

"You sure you want to carry that around the whole game?" my dad joked, "these Yankee fans might take unkindly to someone holding a Red Sox helmet."

Like most humor, my dad's probably had some truth to it, and I had to contemplate the risk I would be taking. No, I thought, although the neighborhood around Yankee Stadium was dangerous, once you were inside things were safe. Sure, there was usually a fight or two in the crowd during the game, but it was usually limited to a couple of drunks in the bleachers. Also, there were security guards to protect the peaceful fans like us, and, if all else failed, I had my dad there to protect me. Plus, the Yankees weren't even playing the Red Sox tonight. Who would care? I bought the helmet, and thinking of a further safety measure, asked for a bag.

"Sorry, kid. No bags," replied the man as he added my ten bucks to the wad in his hand.

It was too late to turn back. I grabbed the helmet and stoically walked with my dad into the Stadium. I eyed every one of the thousands of people we passed on the way to our section, checking to see their reaction to me and my Red Sox helmet. We made it to our seats and I sat down, thinking I would be safe, at least till the end of the game when we had to leave. I placed the helmet on my lap and exhaled the breath I had been holding since the purchase. A strange voice shook me out of my nervous silence.

"You a Red Sox fan?"

It was the man sitting next to me, motioning to the helmet. He looked friendly and not a threat, but I was still rattled by his suggestion.

"N-no," I stammered as emphatically as I could, "I'm a Yankee fan. It's for a friend."

He seemed convinced, but I now realize that I wasn't safe at all in my seat. There were hundreds of die-hard Yankee fans in the near vicinity, who might tear me to shreds if they got the wrong idea. I put the helmet under my seat and hoped no one else would notice.

The game started and progressed slowly. It was a boring, low-scoring game, with the Yankees holding a small but comfortable lead over some inconsequential team I can't now recall. Who could care about the game? I just wanted it to end so I could get out of there as quickly as possible. Because the game was uneventful, the fans in the stands were calm. This was good, because I was afraid any sort of excitement could turn the crowd into a raging mob, ready to sacrifice anyone who was against their beloved Yankees.

"You're looking pretty quiet," my dad commented, "You need to get to the bathroom?"

"No."

"Well, I'm going to go. You wanna come?"

What a choice. Venture with my dad through the potentially hostile crowd with the helmet (I couldn't leave it by my seat, unguarded, only to return to an ambush), or remain in my seat, alone, with the time-bomb ticking below me. I decided it was safest to stay put, and I watched my dad slip away into the interior of the stadium. Again, my eyes scanned the crowd, looking for danger. Not seeing anything, I closed my eyes, maybe hoping, like a little kid, that if my eyes were closed no one could see me. Then I heard something odd. In the section behind my seat, a group of fans were cheering wildly, completely unsynchronized with the action, or lack thereof, on the field. I turned my head to see a group of surly men, holding beer cups and huddled around a small group of seats. I faintly heard a radio playing the broadcast of a baseball game. I turned back and wondered why someone would be listening to the game on the radio when they were right there watching it live. Whatever the reason, the abnormal activity made me nervous. As my father returned from the men's room another inappropriate roar erupted from the group behind us. My dad cleared up my puzzlement, but only to my despair.

"There's a bunch of people listening to the Red Sox game on the radio. This game is dull, but it's still important what happens to the Sox."

Great. This was all I needed. A group of belligerent drunks right behind me rooting ruthlessly against the Red Sox, while I sat with the enemy's battle gear burning a hole underneath me. If they saw me and my helmet, it'd be certain death. What could I do? I prayed that the Yankee game or the Red Sox game would end, or that the radio signal, or maybe I, could just fade away...

Nearly the entire section behind us was now engrossed in the radio broadcast or what they could deduce about it from the hoots and cheers from those close to the radio. What was worse, the venomous excitement was slowly spilling into our section. If the mob got much closer, there'd be no escape.

"What inning is it?" I plaintively asked my dad.

He answered with what he thought I would want to hear: "The sixth. We've still got plenty of baseball left."

In my eyes the game shifted into an interminable low gear. The batters cleaned every piece of dirt off their cleats. The pitchers massaged the resin bag like careful bakers kneading the dough for a soufflé. I thought they must know the seriousness of my situation and were stalling just to make my suffering worse. A fan jumped out of the left field stands and onto the field which caused a delay while the hefty cops chased him down and escorted him out. It took ten minutes for the suddenly aroused fans to calm down from this excitement and play could resume. The whole stadium was against me.

The jingoistic fever now nearly surrounded us. As the beer flowed, the tone and language of the rowdy Red Sox-haters grew worse and worse. Someone yelled out the familiar call of Yankee fans: "Boston Sucks!" Others echoed.

"Boston Sucks! Boston Sucks!"

I knew I was doomed. We would have to leave our seats eventually. I would either have to carry the helmet into the angry mob, or, when I got up off of my seat without it, the displacement of my weight would cause the seat to spring up and expose my Scarlet Letter. I couldn't believe I had thought that buying the helmet was a great idea. I began to hate Jimmy Arnett.

The "Boston Sucks!" epithet became the rallying mantra of the mob. No one paid any attention to the Yankee game, but every pitch broadcast from the tiny source of my despair brought the roar of a hundred voices: "Boston Sucks!" Even when the mob was quiet, the words rang in my ears.

"Boston Sucks! Boston Sucks!"

I was terrified. If I was discovered, there was no way I would have time to explain my true loyalties to the teeming, loyalist throng before they struck. My dad would certainly be no help against such a crowd. They would eat me alive.

"It's the Seventh Inning Stretch," my dad announced. "Come on, stand up and sing."

"No. I'm not feeling well." I lied, not wanting to tip my dad off to my fears. I had to remain seated. Like I said, standing up would be taking a dangerous risk of revealing the helmet.

"Not feeling well enough to sing 'Take Me Out to the Ballgame,'" my dad kidded, "that's plain old un-American."

My dad's wry sense of humor notwithstanding, risking being unpatriotic compared little to risking treason towards New York sports fans. I sat while 60,000 others stood and sang the longest rendition ever of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame."

I hoped that the interlude of song might bring an end to the raucous vitriol of the mob. No such luck. Moments after the thousands harmonized "at the old ball gaaaaaaame..." the familiar refrain resumed.

"Boston Sucks! Boston Sucks! Boston Sucks!"

This was getting too much for me. The nerves of a ten year-old are ill-equipped for such prolonged anxiety. I turned to my dad.

“Can we go? I’m not feeling well.”

“Go? I’ve never know you to leave a baseball game early. You *must* be sick. Maybe you shouldn’t go to Jimmy’s party tomorrow.”

“Boston Sucks! Boston Sucks!”

“No. Just let’s get home. I’ll be okay tomorrow.”

“All right. We’ll beat the crowd this way.”

That’s right, beat the crowd. Sounds much better than the crowd beating me. All right. My dad was with me. Now I just needed to execute our escape so as not to lead to my own execution. I took a deep breath, checked to see if anyone was looking, and swiftly lifted the helmet from under my seat and slipped it under my shirt. So far so good. I nervously shuffled behind my dad, pushing him to go faster. He turned back and saw the protruding shirt and what must have been a horribly strained look of fear on my face. He seemed to finally connect with what was going on and began to hustle us past the nearby seats and into the aisle stairway. As we mounted the stairs and walked right in front of the core of the mob my heart pounded like a flurry of Mike Tyson uppercuts. Had I yet seen the film of Jack Ruby emerging from the crowd to personally execute Lee Harvey Oswald, I probably would have fainted from picturing a similar fate for myself. To my amazement and relief we made it safely to the exit and out of the Stadium. I closed my eyes and experienced the rush of life that comes after escaping certain death.

My dad and I still had one more hurdle to over come before reaching home safely. Having left early, our ride home on the subway wasn’t buffeted by hundreds of other Yankee fans. We rode through the South Bronx and Harlem on a nearly-deserted car with only the plastic souvenir helmet to protect us. It didn’t phase me. I could never again be as scared as I was facing the danger of a beer-buffeted, pennant-fevered, blood-thirsty mob of Yankee fans.

\* \* \*

On Saturday, we all boarded vans outside of Jimmy’s apartment building which shuttled us off to Connecticut and our field of dreams. The ride and the preliminary party festivities were fun, but, then again, anything would have been enjoyable after what I had been through. Jimmy opened his presents and, to my surprise and disappointment, acted only as excited about the Red Sox helmet as he did about the sweaters, music records and the other less inventive gifts he got. After the gifts, Jimmy’s parents canvassed for preferred pizza toppings so the pies would arrive after the baseball game.

Now it was game time.

Eighteen boys sprinted joyously out to the Arnett's baseball field. It wasn't quite what we had imagined, but, then again, nothing could live up to the major-league, astro-turfed image we had conjured up. There was a back-stop and crude base paths, but no bases. Jimmy's dad took off his sweatshirt for first base and a couple of other kids donated jackets for second and third. We still needed a home plate.

"This'll do," Jimmy called out. As I turned to look, I nearly collapsed in shock and dismay, seeing him holding aloft my helmet. How could he denigrate this prize I had risked my life for by putting it in danger of getting scuffed and dirty in the hustle and bustle of wild pitches and plays at the plate. He was the birthday boy, though, and I, nor anyone else, could dispute his choice. Just like the night before, the details of Saturday's game don't come to my mind readily today. Again, I fought to just stay present as other emotions dominated my perception and memory. As fear had ruled on Friday night, this time disbelief and anger controlled me. I repeatedly asked myself the seeming unanswerable question, "how could Jimmy do this?"

I do remember one vivid detail of the big game. Jimmy Arnett hit a home run. I don't remember if it was a clean shot, or an error-riddled single, perhaps aided by some kindly fifth graders who wanted Jimmy to have a happy birthday. Nevertheless, I do remember Jimmy's home run trot. Once there was no concern that he would be thrown out, he rounded third and galloped home. He headed closer and closer to the plate, with a wide grin and a high-stepping, elated trot. He raised his leg in a last triumphant step and, with all the adrenaline that a home run on one's eleventh birthday could produce, he cleated foot came down smack on the Red Sox helmet, cracking it nearly in two. I shuddered and now truly felt terribly ill. The greatest weekend of my life had become a great tragedy. One thought came vividly to my mind.

Boston Sucks.

*The author, a native of New York City will begin working next year as an associate at a law firm in Boston.*

# PURITY

Shannon E. Conaty

The images that lurk  
in the thin, glazed backs of  
glass, reflective of the feelings  
that love like the blind do  
dependent not on light  
but on their own slow pace  
to slide over faces  
that are only contours  
beneath their smooth fingertips.  
Better not that seeing  
would bring the images too quickly  
flushed and potent with the secret  
of a dozen dark-edged nights  
better that the eyes that see  
are blind in day  
as glazed as the backs of mirrors  
reflective of the world  
offering only clear  
empty color  
an iris a shade lighter than pain  
and the purity of a soul  
never shared,  
but often  
borrowed.