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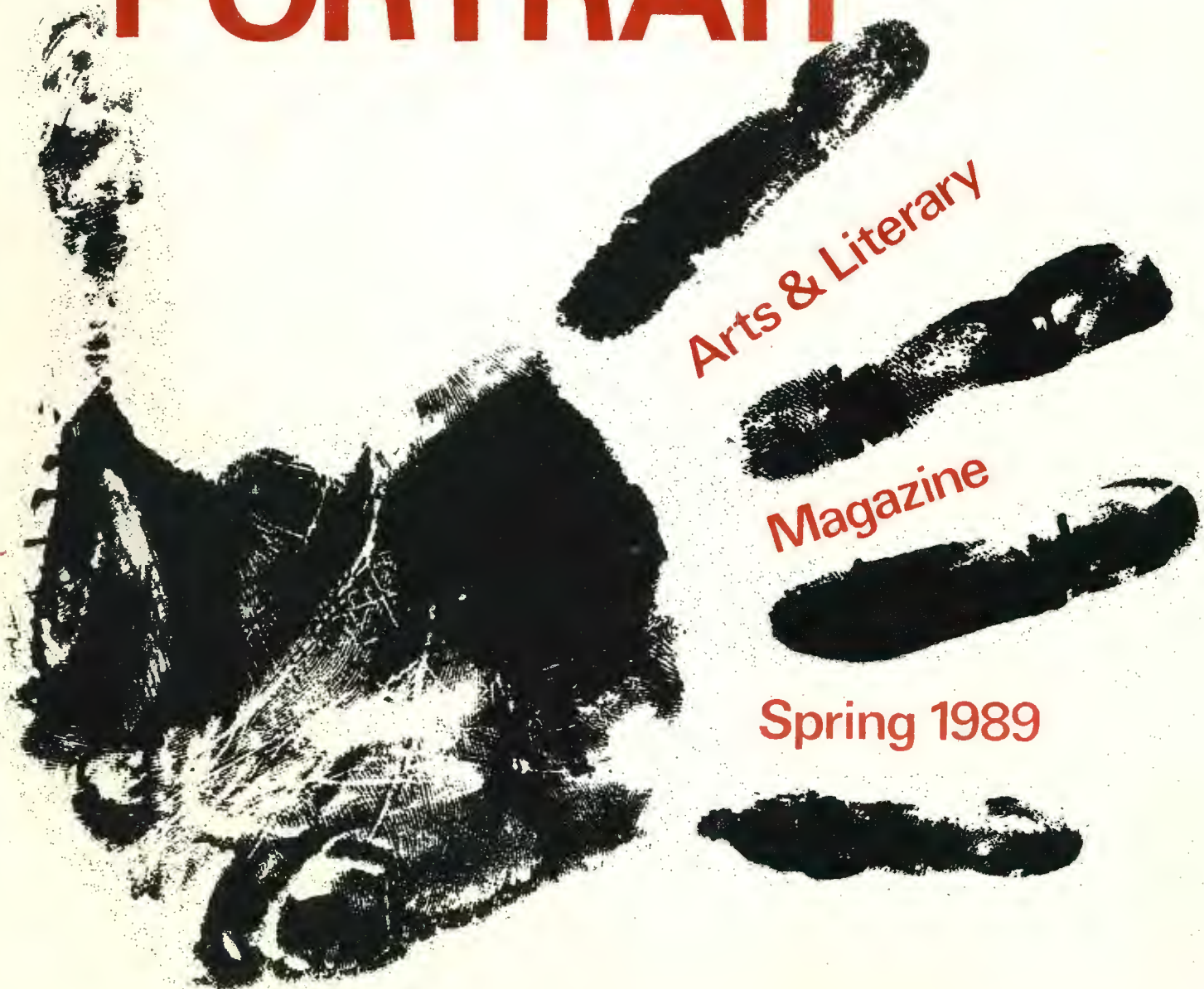
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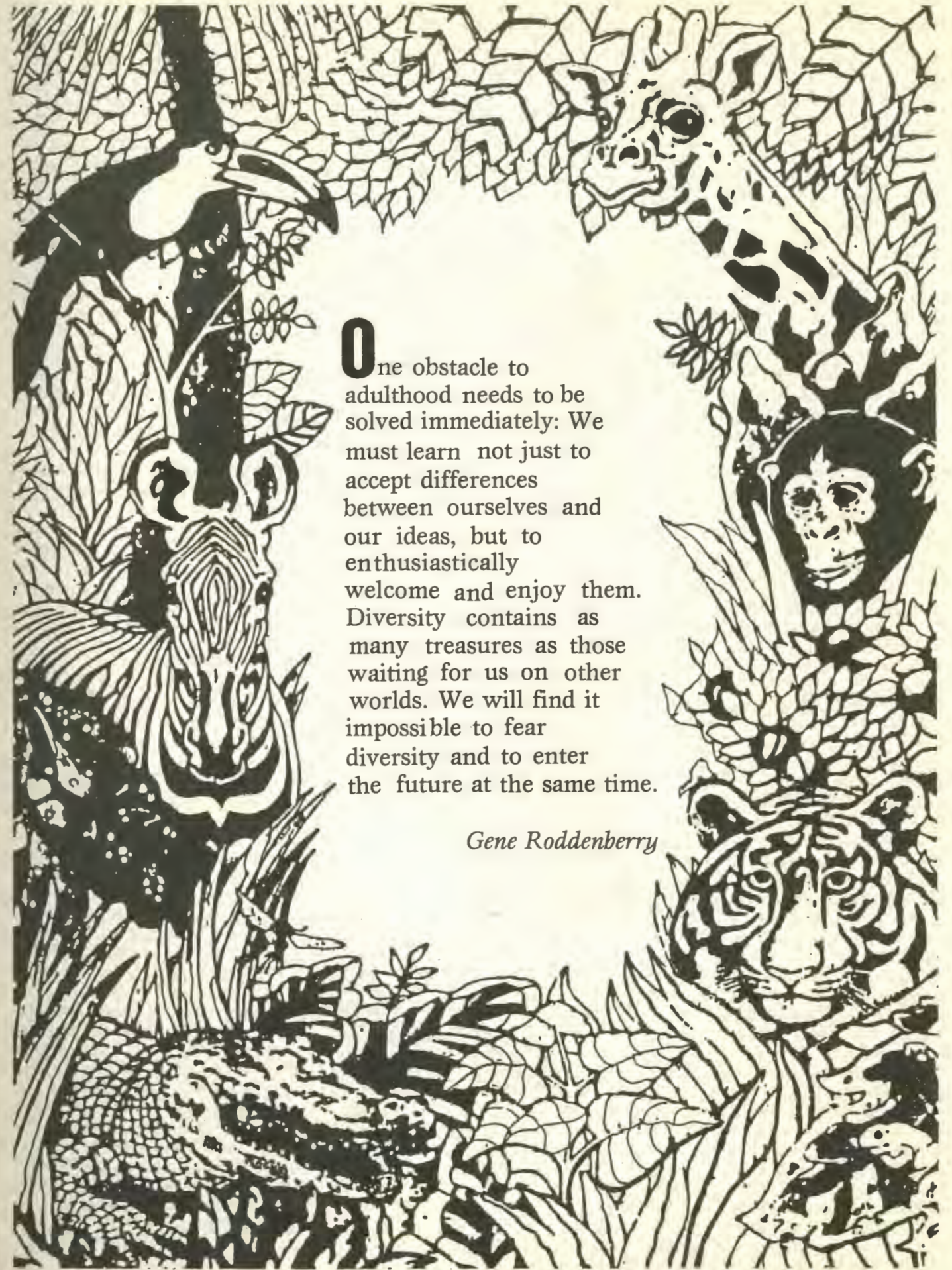
# PORTRAIT

Arts & Literary

Magazine

Spring 1989





**O**ne obstacle to adulthood needs to be solved immediately: We must learn not just to accept differences between ourselves and our ideas, but to enthusiastically welcome and enjoy them. Diversity contains as many treasures as those waiting for us on other worlds. We will find it impossible to fear diversity and to enter the future at the same time.

*Gene Roddenberry*

The Wizard of Oz is one of the most beloved stories of our time. What is it about the trip down the yellow brick road that is so fascinating that it has endured through several generations? Tastes have changed radically since Judy Garland made the journey in 1919. The world of the late eighties is as different from the late thirties as Oz is from Kansas, yet Frank L. Baum's story still resonates in new hearts every time it is shown.

The reason may be that we are all on the yellow brick road. What Dorothy and her friends are searching for is what every human reaches for. Let's take the Scarecrow first. He wants a brain. But we all want a brain. We all want to know. Without knowledge, life is not life at all. One important form of knowledge is self-knowledge; but what can be termed "wit." We need to see ourselves as we are. Persons who say, "I don't photograph well," are probably incapable of seeing themselves the way others see them. Those without "wit" may take themselves too seriously. They may be self-righteous, ostentatious, pedantic, or on a power trip. There are many manifestations of this lack of wit to see ourselves as we are. But before one becomes too humble, a sense of the possible grandeur of mankind is also necessary. Wit will help to give a good balance.

Knowledge also enriches our world. F. Scott Fitzgerald said that splendor is in the heart. It is our own sense of wonder that makes the world wonderful, and our sense of wonder is fueled by knowledge. If we look up at night and see only generic stars, the sky is not as wonderful as it is to someone who looks up and sees the constellation Orion, or the dog star Sirius, or even the galaxy called Andromeda (2 million light years away; therefore, seen that very night as it was 2 million years ago). We enrich our lives through knowledge. As a spectator at a hockey game, Wayne Gretzky sees much more than the average hockey fan. His knowledge makes the game more wonderful.

Another fruit of knowledge is professional skill. The more we know about what we do, the better we will do it. What person doesn't want to be thought of as skillful at what he or she does? One of the highest compliments one can be given is to be called a teacher's teacher, a musician's musician, a lawyer's lawyer, etc. With the scarecrow we are all on the road to the Emerald City in search of a brain.

## Follow the Yellow Brick Road



The Tin Man wants a heart. He, like us, wants to feel, to understand others, to love. The fox tells the Little Prince, "It is only with the heart that one sees rightly, what is essential is invisible to the eye." The Tin Man feels a deep need for that kind of understanding that comes, not through the brain, but through the heart.

Mark Twain thought of Huck Finn as having a "sound heart." Huck knew, even though the society was practicing it, that slavery was wrong. He could tell the difference between humbug and truth by the exercise of his heart.

We all use the phrase "to make a friend." Friends are made by us when we are willing to go out of our way for someone. If we love, we inevitably will be loved back. "Remember, my sentimental friend, a heart is not judged by how much it loves, but by how much it is loved by others." Perhaps the Wizard will make our lives infinitely more meaningful by giving us a heart.

That poor coward, the lion, wants what is necessary for all of us: courage. Courage, for one thing, will enable us to be self-determining. We won't have to wear Reeboks (like everyone else) unless we really want to. We won't have to follow anyone or any ideology unless we truly want to. Courage is a basic necessity of life.

There are many examples of courage in our society. Terry Fox ran two-thirds of the way across Canada after losing a leg to cancer. Helen Keller did more with three impaired senses than most of us do with five normal ones. Franklin Delano Roosevelt became president after losing the use of his legs to polio. I was not aware of how debilitating his condition was, nor of the extent of his courage, until I visited his home at Hyde Park and saw the wheel-chairs that were an essential part of his life. The lion only wants to be king of the jungle, but even for that he needs courage.

Perhaps Dorothy's quest is the most poignant. She wants to go home. She wants to be in a place where she is loved, valued and understood. It is our most basic need. We all want a home where we can share values and dreams, where we are loved unconditionally, and where we can use our human capacity for loving.

The Wizard is a lucky man. He can give to these wonderful characters what they want so badly. I guess every teacher and parent would like to do the same. But there is one encouraging aspect of the story--the characters have down deep within themselves the capacity to fulfill their desires. It is the trip down the yellow brick road with all its challenges, disasters, and triumphs that helps them to their goal as much as it is the wise Wizard at the end.

By Marvin J. LaHood

# Whistling

# Whistling

# Whistling

Hands shoved in my pockets, I shaped my mouth an "O" and blew. Air whooshed out along with a little spit, but no sound. Rats, I thought, it didn't work again.

I had been outside playing alone. I don't know where my sister was; we usually played together, sometimes with my brother, who was two years older than me. We lived in the country, about a mile from town, which seemed far to us. We weren't allowed to ride bikes on the road: I don't even remember whether or not we had bikes at this point. So our play was with each other or alone.

The sky was grey and it was a bit cool. That's probably why my sister was not out. I liked cool, rainy days; she didn't. I was out there in a blue jean jacket and long pants, running and dancing around in swirls. I could run fast, always beating my sister, and I dreamed of being a dancer like Fred Astaire. But there was one thing I couldn't do, and that was the

sophisticated art of whistling.

I stopped twirling, my brow furrowed. I shaped my mouth in an "O" again and blew. Whooshing, whooshing, no other sound.

My brow furrowed deeper, I took my hands out of my pockets and clenched them. I blew as hard as I could; nothing happened. I adjusted the "O" and tried again, this time with a "tweet" noise. No, I thought, that's not a whistle noise like I'd heard in Bing Crosby movies. Bing Crosby style whistling was my goal. Yet, I guessed I was on the right track; I adjusted the "O" further. A note floated out, a little strangled and weak, but definitely a note. I did it again: a long one and several short ones. I couldn't change the tone of the note but I was able to keep doing it.

After this three seconds of practice, I felt it safe to proclaim my success to all kinsmen within the white walls of the house. That is, I would tell Mom,

Kelly and Emil. I certainly didn't want to go in with the fantastic news that I could whistle and not be able to produce. My brother would surely call me on it.

I raced toward the house yelling as I want. "Mommy! Mommy! I can whistle! I can whistle, Mom!"

I burst into the house as my alarmed mother got to the door. Before she could ask what was wrong, I yelled it again. She looked relieved and smiled.

I said, "Listen." I formed an "O" in the correct manner and blew at the correct rate; a nice long note came out. The first public whistle was a success. My sister had come to see what was going on; she looked openly impressed. I noticed this but said, generously, "Hey, Kelly, I kin whistle and I'll teach ya if ya wanna learn." She looked properly grateful, so we raced off for her first lesson.

by J.K. Smith

## Regret

by Melissa Messina

i stared easily  
into the accepting eyes of death  
and laughed  
for i had already died  
ten thousand times before.

i avoided  
the accusing gaze of life  
and wept  
for i had never had the chance  
to truly live...

## Untitled

by Joni Edelson

6 months is a long time  
To grieve over some one  
Who hasn't died  
6 months is a long time  
To live  
Without the one you love  
It's as if they've died  
In your soul  
Anyway

## The Embrace

by Kathleen Carney  
trees arms  
surround me

i nest  
entangled in sweet  
moist foliage  
rock in windwhispers  
until  
the bough breaks

## Poor Birds

In Fall - the Golden Days  
The playgrounds small - peopled child  
passage dreams unformed  
Flights of birds swoop and wheel  
Their cries with the children's joined

A quick blood red toadstool bloom  
Strikes - the children upwards gaze  
Witness to the rain of dead birds  
Before the death laden wind  
Their last eyes forever shuts - poor  
birds

Robert Fox

## One Last Musing

Faded petals  
(one bright)  
Remind me of you...  
As they drift through my  
Fingertips your lips echo, soft  
On my skin  
(whispering)  
Unshed tears form an oasis...  
The sweet water ripples  
In my soul  
(Quietly)

With the horizon my  
Memories color the sky  
With vivid hues...  
Lending muses of  
Passion to tender  
reverie

by Gaelin Kelly

## I Prefer Starry Nights

by Christopher M. Arcara

Sharp words  
deal indirect blows—  
blows nonetheless.  
Sharp, clever words  
top the charts;  
I prefer starry nights

Pointed lines, born of betweens,  
poke and scrutinize.  
Sharp, clever, pointed lines  
reign classic;  
I prefer starry nights

Nasty, ruthless, crude:  
Jack is no angel

He is no angel,  
no eggman;  
he does not waltz backstage  
—ah, and these last have both seen the eighth mile  
on the way up...and the latter even  
once sought the daughter of the devil himself.  
Admittedly, no angel,  
he is no more cohort of the flame  
than Don was matchmaker  
or John  
a Barabbas backer.  
Sharp words deal blows;  
I prefer starry nights

Jack has let pink carnations be.  
I prefer starry, starry nights

Between can be misleading;  
Jack was not born in Hell.  
He has shed tears—in his most foolish moments,  
Satan does not cry.  
He has bled,  
sometimes blood,  
has taken hits,  
and, at times, has stood in doorways  
waiting on a little help.  
He has played the part,  
but he is no devil

Eight and twenty-eight sixtieths:  
Seven fifty-six remarkably classic  
and thirty-two seconds of  
sharp, pointed judgements.  
I much prefer starry nights.  
Too bad Vincent  
did not sing

**R**ight after what they used to call the war I found Mr. MacClellan down on his hands and knees, cleaning the men's room. When he saw me he looked up at me and let me see by his eyes I might as well go sit myself behind his desk in his big leather swivel chair and run his empire, be the boss, tell him what to do. Somebody had to. And it's like that everywhere. Seems like nobody wants to be in charge anymore. Down at the bank this girl who just finished high school last June is the one you want to see for loans. Nobody cares about loans anymore. They just get them for the hell of it, just to light their cigarettes with hundred dollar bills. Money don't mean anything anymore anyway.

But bad as it is here in Coalton, it's not near as bad as it is in the cities. All our industry--the dye works, the paper mill, the match factory--was gone long before the world ended, and all the smarter, more ambitious people, they say, are the ones who miss the world the most, which almost makes me glad I'm slow. This psychology student from the community college came on

cars anymore. I sit in Mr. MacClellan's office. I figure I might as well.

Still, being slow don't mean I don't have my moments of doubt. Everybody does. It's like what the President said on TV the night he killed himself: "Who could have known the worst the Soviets would do was fire one single unarmed warhead half way around the world to sink a dentist's Chris Craft on the Potomac," he asked. "Who could have known their military was so corrupt or inept it would fail to deliver even one nuclear payload, especially after the embarrassment of having that West German boy in a civilian Cessna buzz Red Square a few years ago? We would have changed things if something like that happened here. Who could have known they didn't clean house? Who could have foreseen that in World War III the Soviets would be responsible for the deaths of four Americans from Bethesda, and the nation that holds peace most dear would be directly responsible for the deaths of untold millions? Who could have guessed that the attack was nothing, that the counter-attack, launched to protect this country we love, would destroy the world?"

dos running loose. The ones who didn't say they were the second coming of Christ said the whole aftermath business was a media trick to get control of the world. They said the spy satellite pictures of the Russian missiles snug in their silos that the television showed were lies, and anyway, it wasn't America's fault the communists chickened out of the big one at the last minute. They flat insisted America was at risk, that the invaders were at the border, and for a while people were killing each other left and right, taking each other for Russians or rival Sons of God.

People've calmed down a bit in the months since what they used to call the war. People realize that if the Messiah was here somewhere things'd be getting better instead of worse and if the media was trying to take over they'd make it easier to understand; they'd keep the cameras focused and the news readers talking, they'd print the newspapers so you could actually read them, and they wouldn't turn over their radio stations to community college psychology students. Besides, people started getting hungry, and bullets scarce. People are careful with

phone now. I was getting nightmares.

My wife Louise thinks we should take the baby and go to Washington. Mrs. Mascia in the trailer three doors down from us used to clean for our congressman and she says he's home now, wasted on the drugs he used to rail about all the time, and wouldn't notice if we went and lived it up in his fancy Georgetown apartment. She says she'd go herself if she didn't have cataracts so bad. Louise says if I wanted to I could probably take over the congressman's office, maybe even make laws in his place. She don't know they've given up on making laws because they can never find enough congressmen.

Louise don't understand how hard it would be to get to Washington, either. She hasn't been out to the Interstate like me. There're trucks all over the highway, abandoned, some of them wrecked, not a trucker in sight. They just walked away. I had to take down Mr. MacClellan's big road map of the United States with the blue lights in it showing where all the Subaru dealerships were because my eyes kept getting caught on the red Interstate lines and I keep seeing them clogged up with trucks loaded with all kinds of stuff,

all that science stuff. Now I spin Mr. MacClellan's big old globe and all the Taiwan and Japan and China that's left is what I can put my fingers on. There's no Europe. The islands of the Caribbean are just so many cinders scattered in the water and South America's just as bad. For the first time in the history of the world, I heard somebody say on the radio, it's possible for someone to be truly world famous if 'world famous' means known to every living person in the world. Everybody's here in America. A lot of times whole days go by with me swinging back and forth in Mr. MacClellan's chair wondering how it came about that that man in Taiwan who made toy cars had to die for me to live my American-way-of-life life on the other side of the globe. Before they disappeared the generals said they'd had to destroy the resources of our friends as well as those of our enemies so the Russians couldn't capture them and use them against us, which is supposed to mean, I guess, that the poor naked Africa bush people were somehow a threat to us because, who knows, there might be plutonium or something way down in the ground under where they lived.

on Mr. MacClellan's radio and says different. When you get to laying the blame, it seems so hard not to lay it right on Mr. MacClellan's big desk, right in front of me. The very first time me and Louise ever voted we voted for the President who ended up ending the world. We never paid a whole lot because we never made a whole lot, but we paid our share of the taxes that bought missiles that plunged the world into darkness. At the same time, I look around Mr. MacClellan's office and I want to say it was all his fault, all his and his friends' fault. They're smarter than Louise and me, they were smart enough to build businesses and have conventions and win awards to hang on their office walls beside pictures of themselves shaking hands with senators and TV stars and other important people. It's easy to think Mr. MacClellan and his buddies should have known how to avoid what they used to call the war, and if they didn't avoid it, then they must have wanted all that death. Only I know Mr. MacClellan and he only *talked* hateful, he didn't *really* want the bomb anybody back to the stone age. So I end up back at the Russians. They launched the first missile. They took the first shot.

## After What They Used To Call The

the stereo in Mr. MacClellan's office the other day and said all these go-getters in the city just sit in traffic, not knowing where to go or what to do. All the bigger cities, she said, and I've heard other people say it too, have been paralyzed since about three days after what they used to call the nuclear exchange. All their fired-up ambition don't do them a damn bit of good. They can't find any direction, is what she said.

Even us in Coalton know about that. MacClellan's Chevrolet/Subaru Motors don't have a salesman left. I don't know where they went, they just disappeared. You can still get a hamburger at McDonald's if they have any meat left, but you can't complain to the manager if it's cold. There's no manager there. Myself, I don't wash

I ain't smart, but I personally think if he hadn't put that little pistol to the side of his head and blowed his brains out right there on TV in front of God and everybody things wouldn't have gone all to hell so fast. If he could've hung on until somebody figured out what it meant for us to be alone in the world we might have been okay. Not that I blame the President. After all, he had ordered the destruction of the whole world, and that's got to eat at you no matter how good your intentions. I probably would have done exactly like he did, I think all the time as I sit behind Mr. MacClellan's big walnut desk playing with his electronic big shot's toys. Any sane man would, probably.

Sanity wasn't too common in those first weeks. There were a lot of weir-

their guns now and when you hear one go off it's a pretty good bet it's killed a rabbit, not a red.

One day about a week after I first took over in Mr. MacClellan's big chair I spent the morning calling our distributors. They used to send representatives around--I used to see six or seven a week troop into Mr. MacClellan's office--but nobody'd come to see me and I guess I was lonely. I called all the numbers in Mr. MacClellan's book and reached offices of the district sales and service managers and talked to people who didn't speak English. Janitors or lot boys like me, I guess. One time I talked to a little kid who asked me what was the matter with her daddy, why was he hanging from the light fixtures, why wouldn't he talk to her. I stay away from the

cows and vegetables, everything imaginable, all of it rotting under the sun.

Sometimes fooling with Mr. MacClellan's promotional model cars I catch myself wondering about the size of the world, how vast it used to be. I get some little thing in my hand, some give-away Matchbox Corvette or something, and it'd say 'Made in Taiwan' or somewhere, and I get stuck not playing with it for wondering who made it and how the world got arranged so somebody I'd never know, in a place I'd never see, would spend his life making toys for some dummy he'd never know in some little dying town he'd probably never even heard of. That, to me, was the kind of thing that showed how big the world was, not the teacher-talk about miles and different countries and the Earth's rotation and

But I can't make myself believe that, just like I can't make myself believe people like the friendly-looking coffee growers in Columbia and the peasant farmers in the Ukraine and the goat herders in Sri Lanka that were on the front of my old geography book ever got together to plot against the United States. They probably didn't give any more of a damn about America than Americans gave about them. But if you thought like that you had to come up thinking those goat herders and those farmers and those coffee bean pickers were innocent victims of...

That's where I get stuck. That's where everybody get's stuck, probably, even people who are smart and went to college. And that's why the world stopped, I've decided to believe unless that girl from the community college comes

Only I can't make myself sure of that either, since there was only one missile and it didn't have a bomb in it. I can't see their generals letting their boss push the button if they were ripping off missile parts. I spend hours and hours debating it in my mind, wishing I was smart. Sometimes I call in Mr. MacClellan and try to force him to tell me what he knows. "Did the Russians know their warhead was empty," I yell at him. "Or not?" He stands there on his carpet in front of his desk, sweating and silent, squirming like a little boy who needs to pee. I can't even look at him and the only thing I'm sure of is why he gave up his office and all his electronic toys and business awards and trophies to stay day after day in the men's room with his mop and his bucket.

By Mike Bartlett

# The Dinner Party



She is as cool as china rain  
all morning arranging lillies in the hall  
laying her mother's lace cloth  
her light step staccatto after the servants'  
sturdy heels that bruise the shining floors.  
Smooth porcelain kisses  
absently send the children to bed  
in the waning afternoon  
and her eyes  
pass over me in cursory inspection  
no more than the silver candlesticks  
or the tray of delicate hos d'oeuvres  
in the sitting room.  
At the first ring  
she transforms;  
she is the warm speckles of light  
in a mottled Renoir --

you have to step back  
to call her lovely.

*by Jennifer Kusmierczyk*



# Zeitgeist

Dove descends  
like the Spirit  
of God  
in flight  
toward a  
sea  
of tide-swept  
hearts  
but finding  
no place  
fit for its  
glory to alight  
departs...

*Tim Boebel*



## Untitled

Walking away from  
the blue plains of sanctuary,  
in mornings, looking out  
the window past  
broken fences, embroidering  
mind's eye  
in empty streets with  
Christmas echoes...

Shaking our heads --  
we're here again.  
Do you see how I want you  
to fix, even a part  
of the fence?  
And make the voices  
stop  
accusing.

You, are my only sin...  
sharing secret secrets  
behind the fence,  
heads bowed as children  
in lover's arms.

Now as I stand alone  
I ask  
"Was it always..."  
one  
?

*By Kim K. Rodgers*

## Untitled

my ego is a fragile thing...  
just when i toughen it up - you  
come back to me

why bother?

am i a pilgrimage you take  
every few years?  
or a  
poison  
you take to purge yourself  
of abuse by  
sparkling eyes & cool voices  
that don't belong  
to me.

i make it easy  
for you to use me...don't I?


*by Kim K. Rodgers*





**WOMEN**

With a long and crippling touch  
They light my lamp (they read too much)  
From cat mouths they breathe  
And claw at my spine  
I'm fusing - confused  
Which moment is mine?  
*by M. Eodice*



**MINIATURE  
MEN**

Last night I slept naked  
On no bed at all  
Watched each of them  
Turn their heads to the wall  
And laugh how they laugh  
With bastardly glee  
I wonder  
Who next will devour me?



# TO BRAVELY BE A COWARD

It was an act of humility that forced Smith to look at himself in the mirror every morning. If not humility then at least the compulsion was caused by the desire to find something different from what he was used to seeing. Unfortunately, Smith never saw a change - except of course that his head kept growing bald and his eyes seemed slightly duller.

These things were irrelevant though. It was a deeper change he looked for. So, he made sure to take a good long hard look every morning in the hopes of seeing himself differently. Day after day, however, his mirror simply stared back at him with tired eyes and a double chin and a red birthmark just over the left eye that became purple whenever Smith was pressured. He supposed he would see a change, eventually, as long as he kept looking.

After a cold shower and a smooth shave - the smoothest said the inscription on the shaver box - he made himself a light breakfast. Smith didn't like to take in too much cholesterol. His 38 year old heart had rejected his diet once already and once was quite enough for Smith.

Having finished his pleasant breakfast and after a slow walk in the cool morning air, Smith was pleased to discover that the downtown bus was practically empty. It was good to take a nice easy ride once in a while. He had his license, of course, but there was no reason to use it. Aside from having no car, Smith enjoyed using a bus in his travels to the library. All the problems with insurance and money were unnecessary. Besides, with no car of his

own, he sometimes got a ride from Helen. This made him smile. Helen worked at the library with him and it was Helen that made Smith look in the mirror so often. Smith knew his desire to be someone else was caused by Helen, but he was sure he was supposed to be someone else and this certainly allowed him to overlook his fault. At any rate, he felt particularly good that morning and eagerly awaited seeing Helen.

He remembered the first time he met Helen. Smith was only a page at the library then, but he was older than most of the pages at the time - 25 to be exact. All of the pages Smith used to work with had long since left the library, but not Smith. He had worked hard and had impressed many important people. It took him only six years to attain the position of head librarian at Long View Library in Long View, Maine and he had been there ever since. Smith was terribly proud of his work.

Helen was not as upwardly status conscious as Smith, but she earned more money. She had been the library's secretary for quite some time. As such, she had the opportunity to earn more and more money per hour as her years of service increased. Smith liked her regardless of how much money she earned. This attitude, Smith felt, was a very magnanimous way to approach an otherwise delicate situation.

Smith thought about these things as the bus streamed its way down Long View's main street toward the town's center circle. The library was right in the heart of downtown Long View.

Smith had always been pleased that his work was in the center of town and close to just about everything. He often relished stopping next door at Apollo's Eatery for a nice quick Greek snack. Yes, it was a good life for Smith. He closed his eyes and thought about Helen and in a few moments Smith found himself half asleep and feeling generally good.

The library was rather slow that morning and this made Smith frown. The library was only 900 books away from setting a new monthly distribution record and Smith had hoped that today was going to be the day.

"Morning Mr. Smith!" a voice called out cheerfully.

Smith turned and looked up at Ned, one of the pages under Smith's employ. Ned was up on a ladder in the top stacks balancing unsteadily on one foot.

"Be careful up there Ned," Smith whispered, "and don't shout."

Ned's smile dropped as Smith turned away without even saying hello. Smith had always felt that Ned was a careless boy. In fact, Smith wasn't sure whether Ned could be trusted. The boy had come from a broken home and Smith didn't enjoy the responsibility of seeing that Ned was set on the straight and narrow. It was Ned's first job after all, and Smith knew it was important to start life on the right foot. One could never get anywhere without role models and Smith felt obliged to be Ned's.

Smith quickened his pace. Now that his good mood was spoiled, he wanted to find some work to do. Immersing himself in some cataloging or inven-

tory would make him feel better. Smith walked with authority through the library feeling as if he knew every tile and every brick. Long View Library was really a very small library, perhaps the size of an average house, but to Smith it encompassed his life.

He strode swiftly through the door with the "Employees Only" sign on it and ran headlong into Helen.

"Be careful," said Helen curtly.

Smith watched her turn the corner and walk to her desk. Her golden hair poured loosely over her wide shoulders. Her heels clicked solidly on the hard tile floor reminding Smith of the sound horses made on Long View's cobblestone roads during the annual Easter parade. She wore a white blouse with a black skirt - a skirt that hugged her hips rather nicely, thought Smith. He sighed.

"Good morning Helen!" Smith called out.

"Hi Alex," said Helen, her monotone voice drifting to Smith's ears like the sound of orchestra on a quiet spring night. Smith loved hearing Helen pronounce his name.

"How was your weekend?" Smith asked still standing in the spot where he ran into her.

"Fine."

This satisfied Smith. He was happy when Helen was happy.

"Well," Smith said, "have a good day then."

"Um-hmm." was Helen's quiet reply.

Smith waited for a moment, listening to the sound of Helen's thick fingers against the typewriter. He listened, hypnotized, to the smooth rhythmic beating for several minutes. She's a good secretary, he thought. The well-being of the library depended upon Helen's diligence and experience. Smith had absolute faith in her. He would never dream of firing her.

"Alex... Alexander, are you listening to me?"

A small, gentle voice tugged his thoughts away from Helen. It was Maria, Smith's assistant at Long View. Smith looked down at her sternly, obviously unhappy with this interruption of his reverie. The small girl immediately turned away her eyes.

"What is it Maria?"

"I just wanted to say hello," she meekly replied, "and see how your weekend was."

"Fine, thank you. Now if you'll excuse me, I have some work to do. And by the way Maria, I'd appreciate it if you addressed me as 'Mr. Smith'. I

don't want any of the pages to get the wrong idea."

Smith turned abruptly and made his way toward his office, leaving the girl alone in the hall. Smith never was able to understand Maria. She seemed so clinging. She was always asking about Smith's weekends and the symphonies he'd see and the places he'd eat. Smith sighed. Maria was a whole five years younger than Smith. Besides, Maria was a little too smart for her own good. All those years in school and then as a teacher had made her quite intelligent. Smith hated to be intimidated. Maria was nothing like Helen, who Smith thought of as perfectly harmless. Perhaps that was another reason why Smith liked Helen so much - because Helen didn't fish about in Smith's business. Helen never asked Smith about his doings. Helen made Smith more comfortable.

Before reaching his office, Smith stopped at the restroom. He locked the door behind him and leaned against the sink. The red birthmark above his eye began to swell and turn purple and his hands became cold and wet. Maria always made him feel like this. As if his day wasn't already complicated enough, Maria had now made it worse. He wondered why she wouldn't leave him alone. He wondered why that slim, red haired girl always made him upset. He wondered if, perhaps, he should fire her.

Smith avoided Maria as best he could for the remainder of the day. Instead, he thought about Helen. She worked busily in her small office, never causing a problem. Every so often the scent of Helen's perfume would drift by Smith and he would recall the days of his youth and the distinct smell of his mother as she prepared to go out in the evening. Helen made him feel better. She reminded Smith of a time long ago when life wasn't so complicated.

The day crawled by and as closing time approached Smith began to look forward to the ride home with Helen. She would seldom talk, but Smith simply enjoyed her company. Besides, after a difficult day, Smith would always look forward to going home and relaxing with a quiet concerto. Beethoven always calmed his nerves.

The door to Smith's office crashed open suddenly and Maria practically fell into the room.

"Alexander! I have the most wonderful news!"

"What in heavens name do you

think you're doing Maria?" He stood up ready to toss the girl out physically if he had to. "Why I have a good mind to fi-

"I just received this message over the computer terminal," she shouted deliriously, "We've been promoted!"

Smith grabbed the message out of her hand and studied the paper carefully. Smith and Maria had been given the opportunity to transfer to the New York Public Library where they would receive a bonus in both money as well as positions. The memo went on to list increased patronage and years of experience and seniority as reasons for the move.

"New York, Alex! Just think of the possibilities!"

"This promotion is just for the two of us?" Alex asked, already knowing the answer.

Maria nodded eagerly.

"And I suppose you're going?"

Maria nodded again, her smile lighting up the room. Smith looked at the girl's joy and for a moment was caught up in it himself. His soul reached out briefly and had almost grasped Maria's happiness. Then, Helen walked in and any joy he might've felt left him completely and totally.

"I'm leaving Alex," Helen said loudly, "You need a ride?"

Smith looked from Maria to Helen. Maria's soft eyes looked at him with hope, calling him to a life of chance and change. Helen waited motionless, her expression certain and safe. Inside Smith, a fire burned. His need for security consumed any hope of leaving. He was not prepared to leave all those quiet evenings and easy mornings. The small town, the simple food, his small library and Helen was the only life he knew. Smith had looked for change through Helen instead of himself. Every attempt to find a different man in the mirror had produced a more bitter and hopeless soul. Now, as the paper in his hand became damp with sweat and Maria stood helplessly by, he turned to Helen.

"Yes Helen," Smith said softly, "I need a ride."

Later that evening, a small red haired girl cried softly to herself as she packed her suitcases for a trip that she would be taking alone. Across town a balding man with a red birthmark over his eye watched his mirror intently, knowing that he would never again see himself change.

By Dan Sczesny

## Religion

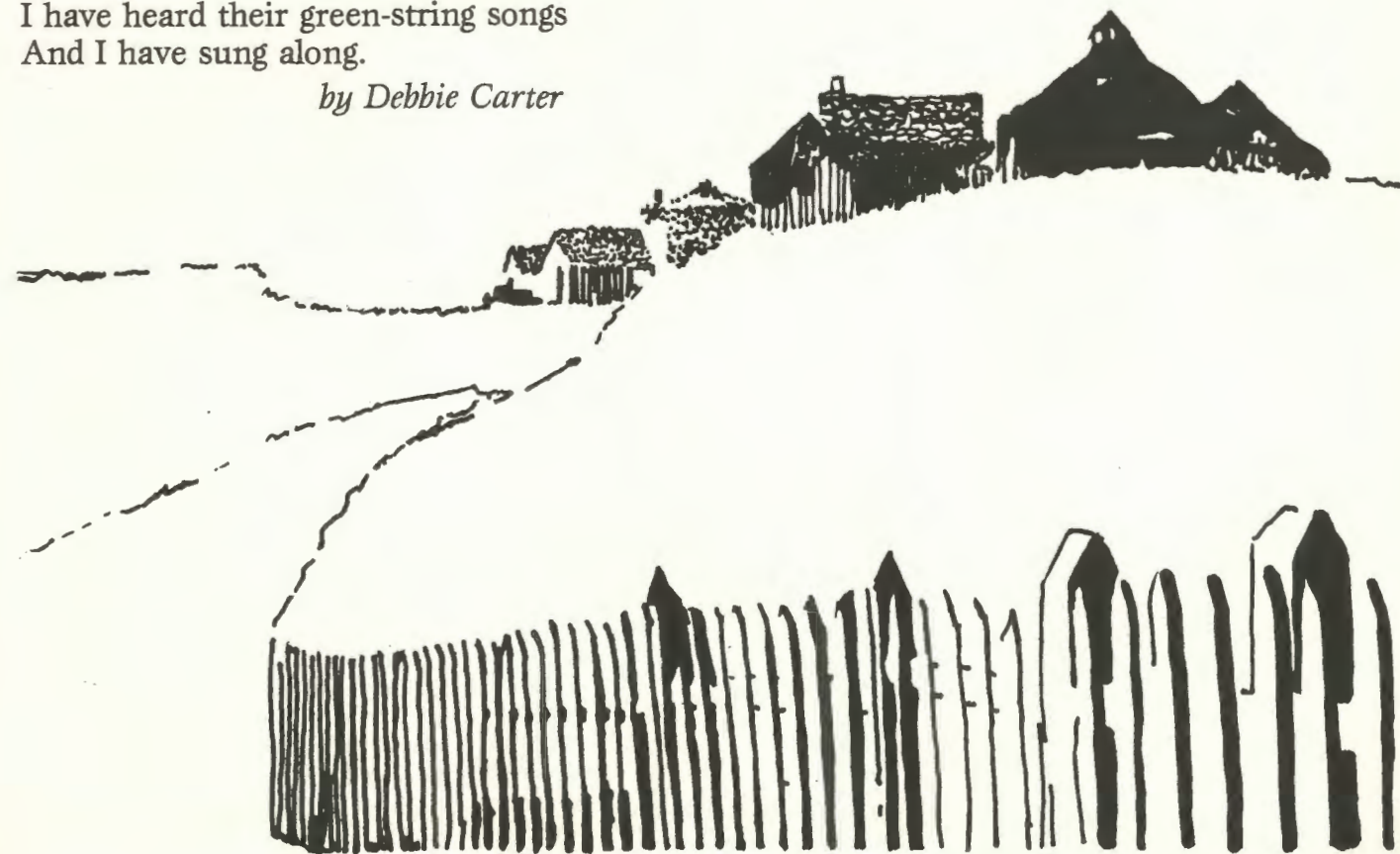
the blind man  
leaves his post  
hoping to know  
the full elephant  
but finds only the back  
of another blind man

*by Rosemarie Ventura*

## Song of the Trees

There are places where they grow  
trees  
Where the wind blows through  
their leaves chiming songs of love  
The bark does not pinch nor wrinkle  
The leaves are not deciduous,  
but are perennial  
I know this because I have seen  
these leaves  
these trees  
I have heard their green-string songs  
And I have sung along.

*by Debbie Carter*



## Sonnet For A Future Farm

No father, grand or otherwise was known  
To hold in heart the pride of owning land;  
Yet birthed in me a spirit of my own-  
To long possess the earth on which I stand.  
I'll lean against a fence that I have made  
Next to a brook where my stone house was built  
I'll feel as tall as any tree or blade,  
And night will warm me under heavy quilt.  
The summer-light of sunshine through a leaf  
Or flickering reflections of wood fire,  
Are seen as moments deep, however brief,  
Filling me with blazing fierce desire  
To bend and hold within my hand and eye-  
All thicket, timber, foothills and the sky.

*by M. Eodice*

## The Sleeper's Moon



**T**here's an ocean behind the eyes  
where images foam at the crest  
and fall back to black cold  
and the star point reflections  
of events we have shared  
ripple limp and distorted  
tides of re-creation controlled by  
the sleeper's moon.

*by Rosemarie Ventura*

# Sara



**T**he whole trouble started when Miss Grimes caught me passing a note to Celia. "Sara, is that a note I see in your hand?" asked Miss Grimes. She was standing very erect with her hands on her hips and I could tell she was perturbed.

I was unable to answer. I had never been yelled at by a teacher before, and I felt my face turn a flaming shade of red.

"You know that I don't allow note passing during class time," and then she added, "you are aware of the consequence. Please come to the front of the room."

I would rather have gone to the principal's office, but that wasn't the consequence. My knees were trembling as I shuffled to the front of the class. I could feel everyone's eyes staring at me.

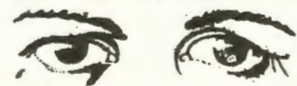
The tears were welling up in my eyes as I started to read the note aloud. "Dear Celia, I can hardly wait for Miss Grimes to stop talking...."

"Speak up, Sara, some of us in the back can't hear you." Miss Grimes interrupted.

"I can hardly wait for math class, to see Mike Hunter." I continued, with a lump in my throat, "I think he is so gorgeous." The tears in my eyes were blurring the note, and my whole face burned as the class started to laugh.

"We've heard quite enough, Sara. Please go stand out in the hall for the rest of the class time.

As I stood in the hall, the tears flowed freely down my cheeks, and I had started to shake. How could I have been caught? Now the whole class knew that I liked Mike Hunter. It could have been worse. Mike could have been in the class, and then he would have heard me read the note. Mike was sure to find out anyway. His best friend, Larry, was sitting in the front row and he would tell Mike.



Rrrriing! Class was finally over. Now I had to go back in there, to all those laughing faces, to get my books. As I walked in the door, I came face to face with Larry.

"Just wait 'til I tell Mike that YOU like him. Ha ha ha!" he shouted in my face.

Mr. Simmons' math class. Mike Hunter was already in his seat and he didn't notice me as I took my seat. Since he wasn't laughing, I figured that Larry had not seen him yet to tell him about the note.

The day seemed to drag. When I got home I ran up to my room and slammed the door. I looked at myself in the full length mirror on the back of my door. What boy would like me I wondered. I'm so tall and thin. My clothes hang on me with no shape, sort of like a scarecrow. And that's what I do, I scare boys away. The first thing that anyone notices about me are my thick glasses, even my mother calls me "Coke bottle bottom eyes." My braces are the second thing that attract atten-

tion; "Tinsel teeth," "Metal mouth," "Tin grin." You name it, I've heard them all!

The telephone interrupted my depressing thoughts about myself. It was Celia.

"Hi, Sara. I'm really sorry that you got caught and had to read that note in class."

"I was so embarrassed. Did anyone notice that I was crying?"

"I don't know about that, but I heard Larry telling Mike about it after 8th period. I couldn't see the reaction on Mike's face. He had his back to me."

"What am I going to do, Celia? I can't go back to Miss Grimes' class tomorrow. I'll never be able to go back to school at all, and then I'll fail 8th grade!" I whined.

"Maybe you should go away for awhile, that's what they do on soap operas." Celia suggested.

"I don't have any money to do that." "My mom's callin' me, I gotta go. See ya tomorrow. Bye."

"Bye, Celia."

I wished that I could fall asleep for a hundred years and when I woke up nobody would even remember me or what I had done.

I couldn't tell my parents the whole story. They couldn't handle being told that their daughter did something wrong in school. I just told them that someone had told this boy that I liked at school that I liked him. Mom and Dad both said that the best way to get over the embarrassment is to just face up to it.

# Smile



At 6:30 Celia called again.

"My mom and I are going to the mall. Do you want to go with us? Maybe it will cheer you up."

"Sure" I said, "maybe it will do some good."

"We'll pick you up in 15 minutes. Bye."

"O.K. Bye."

I put on my coat and got out my wallet to see how much money I had; \$3.75, plenty to buy a new book. My favorite author is M.E. Kerr. I just found out that she wrote an autobiography called *Me, Me, Me, Me, Not a Novel*, and I really wanted to read it.

Celia and her mom pulled into the driveway. I yelled good-bye to my dad and I was out the door.

"I'll meet you girls back here in front of J.C. Penney at 8:00 sharp. Remember don't talk to strangers, and don't spend all your money in one place!" Celia's mother said.



The first store that we went into was Teen Town. Anybody who's anybody at school gets their clothes there. Celia picked out two sweaters that I thought were just horrible; thank goodness she didn't have enough money to buy them. I didn't see anything that I liked. I guess my mind was still on what happened in Miss Grimes' class.

The book store, Books Abound, was all the way down at the far end of the mall. By the time that we got there,

Celia had bought two different shades of eye shadow, one bottle of lip gloss, and a hot pretzel. I hadn't bought anything, because I was saving my money to get that book. I hoped that the bookstore had a copy.

Celia had to stay outside Books Abound until she finished eating her hot pretzel since no food or drinks are allowed in the store. I told her what I would be looking for and she said that she would be perusing the pages of the latest issue of Seventeen. I don't know why she reads that; we're only thirteen! I wound my way through the aisles to the young adult section, at the very back of the store. I turned past the last shelf of books and instead of M.E. Kerr, I found Mike Hunter! I spun around so quickly that my purse knocked three books on the display stand to the floor. I tried to run out of the store hoping that Mike wouldn't recognize me, but no such luck.

"Sara, wait!" Mike called after me. I remembered what Mom and Dad had said about facing up to embarrassment. I didn't want to stop and face him, but I did. I studied the carpet on the floor of Books Abound as Mike came closer. My eyes just couldn't look at that mocking grin he must have on his face.

"Hi Sara."

"Uh, hi." I managed to utter.

"I heard what happened in Miss Grimes' class, and I feel really sorry that she made you read that note. I have a note here that I was going to give to Larry, but when he told me

what happened and was laughing so hard, I couldn't give it to him, because I was afraid he'd make fun of me."

"Don't give me a note to read just because you feel sorry for me. It's none of my business what you tell your friends.

"Please read it. I want you to." He said.

"O.K."

I unfolded the note and began to read: "Yo, Larry, I was wondering what you know about that girl, Sara, in your English class. I saw her carrying an M.E. Kerr book into math class that I hadn't read yet. Do you think that she'd let me borrow it? I'm kinda scared to ask her. Later, Mike."

I stared at Mike with disbelief as I fumbled trying to refold the note.

"You read M.E. Kerr?" I practically shouted at him.

"Well, I read the summary of *Gentlehands* in Miss Grimes's copy of *Books for You*, and it sounded good. That's what I was looking for here. Would you mind if I borrowed it?" He asked rather sheepishly.

"I'll bring it for you tomorrow."

"Thanks, Bye."

"Bye." I said with a big smile on my face, showing every inch of silver.

As I turned to go, he said, "Sara?" I turned, "Yea?"

"You've got a nice smile."

## Untitled

How in the fall you tossed brittle leaves  
like butterflies to perch in my tangled hair.  
Never have I passed your house without  
looking for your lit room behind the branches  
if you were there            maybe could I visit.

We stood at that bus stop all the way through Winter.  
Sometimes I wasn't paying attention  
to what you were saying I was watching  
your charcoal hair with snowflakes  
like bits of cotton lying as to sleep.  
Death stayed at your house for that Winter  
even imposed itself on Christmas day  
hung its heavy coat in every room  
and was waiting at the bottom of the stairs.  
I watched you make your last angel-in-the-snow  
before you emptied and filled the tall bookshelves  
with your inheritance.

I stood next to purposelessness  
among the black garments  
among your remaining family  
in the front pew,            do you need a ride home?  
I recall you slouched on the blue upholstery  
leaning against the door on the passenger's side  
too sad to ride maybe hoping that door  
would pop open at forty miles per hour  
down South Park. Your hair washed and dried  
hung straight over one eye. Everything was clean  
as the cold air that weaved between our fingers.  
Remember that big house on the corner...  
we thought we would live together there.  
By Spring Death had filled every crevice  
I saw it following you, finding you  
in every hallway your bowed head wandered,  
Death over the announcements; everywhere  
at once. It hung dark around your lips  
and we met each other's wide eyes, bent brows  
collided with our fears we met our bodies.

Notes,  
poems,  
pages upon pages flipping in your hands.

Spring brought you up and the sun  
which melted that Winter into  
street puddles and thin streams  
drives your childhood into  
mud and brown grass,  
into photographs.  
Your last spin in roller skates  
scratched the bare wooden floors  
can you still hear the echoes?  
Summer came  
and you held  
in your soft lap  
my wailing head of hair  
when on my door knocked  
Death with its luggage.

by Donald P. Jackson

## Initiation

tears are  
red and sticky  
the cervical eye  
scans curling darkness  
parted by promise  
of strength, substance  
and receiving white blindness  
in exchange for trusting shelter  
mistakes it for divine revelation

by Rose Marie Ventura

## State Fair

I keep remembering the horse  
barns, the girls there twelve  
or thirteen, I think, or maybe  
it was the smell of clean  
straw and the linament, the  
braided mane and tails and  
the girls' vaguely British  
outfits in my city eyes that  
made virgins of them all  
again so proud with ribbons.

by Mike Bartlett

## Born Again

The brook of smiles and leaping glances  
and words tumbling unattached  
sparkle in the muted and diffused sun  
Your breath gurgles through hollow reeds  
and shocked stares emerge in random bubbles  
as you throw yourselves merrily against the stones

by Rosemarie Ventura

I first rode the train when I was  
about seven years old. My family had  
just moved. In order for me to get to  
school I had to take a train. The night  
before I went to school my mother  
drilled me on the ten rules of taking  
the train: 1) Never talk to strangers. 2)  
Don't stare at anybody. 3) Stay close  
to the door. 4) Keep an eye out for  
your stop. 5) Keep a quarter and a  
whistle in case of emergency. 6) If  
anyone bothers you, kick him in the  
kneecap and run for help. 7) No  
reading of comic books on the train. 8)  
Get on and off as quickly as possible.  
9) Try not to look lost. 10) Be very  
careful.

The next morning, with my pass in  
hand, I proceeded to the door--only to  
find my mother waiting with my lun-  
chbox and a tear in her eye. She bent  
down, gave me a kiss, and said, "My  
baby is growing up." The way she was  
acting, you'd think I was going off to  
war instead of to Public School 258.  
Finally, I got through the door. I made  
my way down the street with my

mother watching me every step of the  
way.

Suddenly there it was. It looked like  
a giant mouth with stairs inside that  
seemed to go on forever. As people  
went inside the mouth it appeared as  
though it was swallowing them. For  
the first time since it all began I was  
scared. It had all seemed like an adven-  
ture before. I had to grab hold of  
myself or I would never have gotten to  
school, so I ran down the stairs as fast  
as I could, flashed my pass, and went  
inside the gate. I sat on the bench and  
waited. At that moment it felt as  
though the very Earth was trembling  
beneath my feet and I saw a light com-  
ing out of a gigantic hole in the wall. I  
turned and saw people moving toward  
me trying to get to the edge of the plat-  
form. I held my ears as the noise  
became louder; it was like the roar of a  
dragon about to attack. The head of  
this great silvery monster burst  
through the hole in the wall and came  
to a resounding stop. Everyone on the  
platform rushed on to the monster,

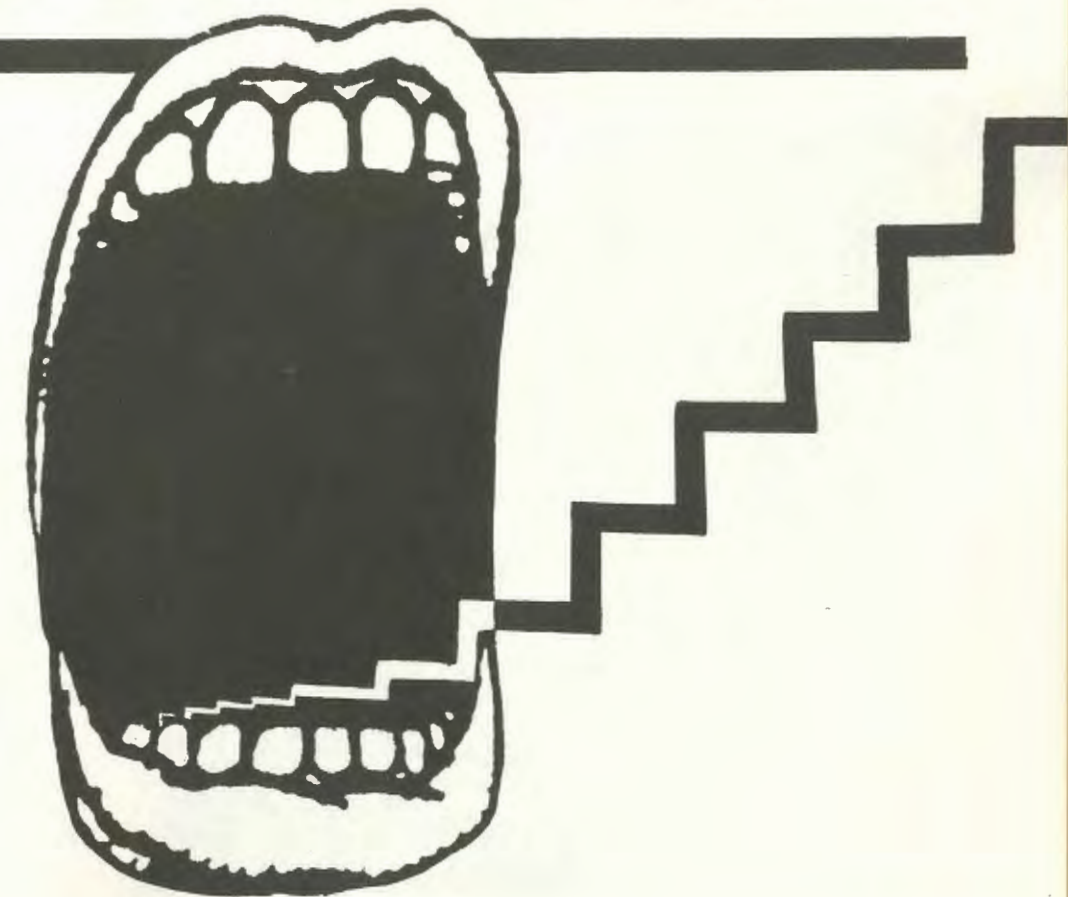
carrying me with them. I thought,  
could this be the train? I was in awe of  
the people around me. Everyone look-  
ed like they were in such a rush. Some  
people looked like they were about to  
drop from fatigue. I remember saying  
to myself, "So this is what it's like to be  
grown up."

At the next stop I heard a voice say-  
ing, "Smith Street next." Mine was the  
stop after that. Remembering what my  
mother told me, I watched everyone  
while looking straight ahead. I clutch-  
ed my whistle tightly and kept my feet  
ready in case I had to turn into Bruce  
Lee. When my stop came up I ran  
through the people getting off the train  
and started to climb the long stairs. As  
I looked back, it seemed as though the  
monster was laughing at me. I ran the  
rest of the way to school.

To my surprise my mother picked  
me up after school. We went out for  
some ice cream. She asked me how was  
the train ride. "Piece of cake," I said.

By Anthony Paul

# RIDING THE 'TRANSIT' SYSTEM IN BROOKLYN



I live in a room that is straight and bare,  
With rings on my hands and thorns in my hair,  
And I hear all night against my door  
The pounding hands of the day before.  
I dare not look from my window ledge,  
There are faces at the pane, fingers at the edge,  
And all night long,  
And all day through,  
The hands beat hard  
In a weird tattoo:  
"Let us in-let us in...  
Let us in-let us in...  
We are sibs to your brothers,  
Kin of your kin.  
We are starlight and sunlight,  
and whispers of wind.  
We are leaves that are stirred,  
We are trees that are thinned,  
We are ferns in the rain,  
We are drops on the grass,  
We are thistles and saffron  
And silver & white.  
We are April and autumn,  
And daybreak and night.  
We are moments that dare you to live and forget,  
We are shadows and crystal  
And cheeks that are wet,  
We are silence

And stillness of shimmering seas,  
We are teardrops  
And songs from the tops of trees.  
We are willows atoss on the breast of a storm,  
And quiet  
And darkness  
And lips that are warm.  
We are yours if you want us...  
The soul of you calls,  
We will creep in the chinks,  
We will break down the walls,  
We will slip down the windows and pour down the flue.  
We will rise in your heart...we are coming to you."  
And I in my place and tremble within  
"We are sibs of your brothers,  
Kin of your kin,  
We are violets and cattails  
And ribbons and lace.  
We are thorns to your fingers, and silk to your face,  
We are moments...your moments,  
Your glimpses of red,  
We are arms that are dust, and  
Lips that are dead."  
And I in my room that is empty and bare  
Strip rings from my fingers, thorns from my hair,  
Sink to my knees with an anguish that cries,  
"Deafen your ears, put out your eyes!  
Words that are silent, words that are dear,

You must not see...you must not hear!  
Oh, and I tremble,  
Oh, and I fall,  
Stuff up the cracks,  
Build up the wall.  
Labor and labor with fingers that bleed.  
Let the drops fall, pay them no heed.  
Put out the lights, pull in the shutters.  
Oh, but they are coming  
Oh, they are calling,  
Down from the roof  
They are tumbling,  
Falling  
Down  
Down.  
Keep up your control,  
Stop up your heart,  
Damn up your soul!  
Let us forget,  
Let us remember,  
Breezes are March,  
Snow is November,  
Flowers are April,  
Leaves are in fall...  
Oh, does it matter  
At all, at all  
Let me be calm, let me be still,  
Oh, let me rest on the breast of a hill.

A moment...one moment,  
A minute of quiet,  
Then I will answer  
This mob...this riot.  
No, but they beat,  
No, but they scream,  
Give me my rest,  
Give me my dream.  
Let me be silent,  
Give me my task.  
No, but they crush.  
No, but they call;  
Let the roof break,  
Let the house fall,  
Let the planes crash.  
Let in the song.  
I have been silent  
Too long. too long.  
I have been still  
Now, let me speak.  
I have been quiet.  
I have been weak.  
Break down the door,  
Burst in the bars:  
I would chant to the moon,  
I would shriek to the stars!

*By Marsha Mann*

# Deliria

# Spider

You  
lured me;  
a fluttering, fragile moth  
into  
your treacherous web.  
I was flying towards  
what I thought was  
the Light:  
the crystalline gleam of your blue eyes.

With your voice like falling silk,  
you invited me into your parlor  
where  
you drugged me  
with rose petal wine,  
and haunting music: The Best of Bread,  
and teasing kisses  
brushing past my lips,  
to my ears,  
down my throat.  
You were really  
tasting me  
to make sure I was worth devouring.  
Gently,  
your fingertips massaged my neck and shoulders,  
exploring  
the flesh you would consume.

"Relax."  
"Have some more wine."  
you whispered,  
words tingling in my ear.  
Then you drew me closer,  
the hot sweetness  
of your voice, your touch  
paralyzing me.  
"Relax."

When the realization of my  
ensnarement  
welled up in me  
and spilled out of  
my eyes,  
you kissed it away,  
wrapped my numb body  
in the glistening, silken wonder  
of you.  
And here I remain,  
snug in my death cocoon;  
warm, intoxicated,  
awaiting your return.  
Awaiting your lips on mine  
draining my essence from me,  
merging with your own.  
Then will you cast my empty shell  
to the wind,  
for we both know  
I'll no longer need  
it.

by Rin V. Groff



## Evening Trilogy

An eternal searing flame cries out in the night,  
desperately trying to break it's self-imposed silence.  
True to the rose, Purest white.

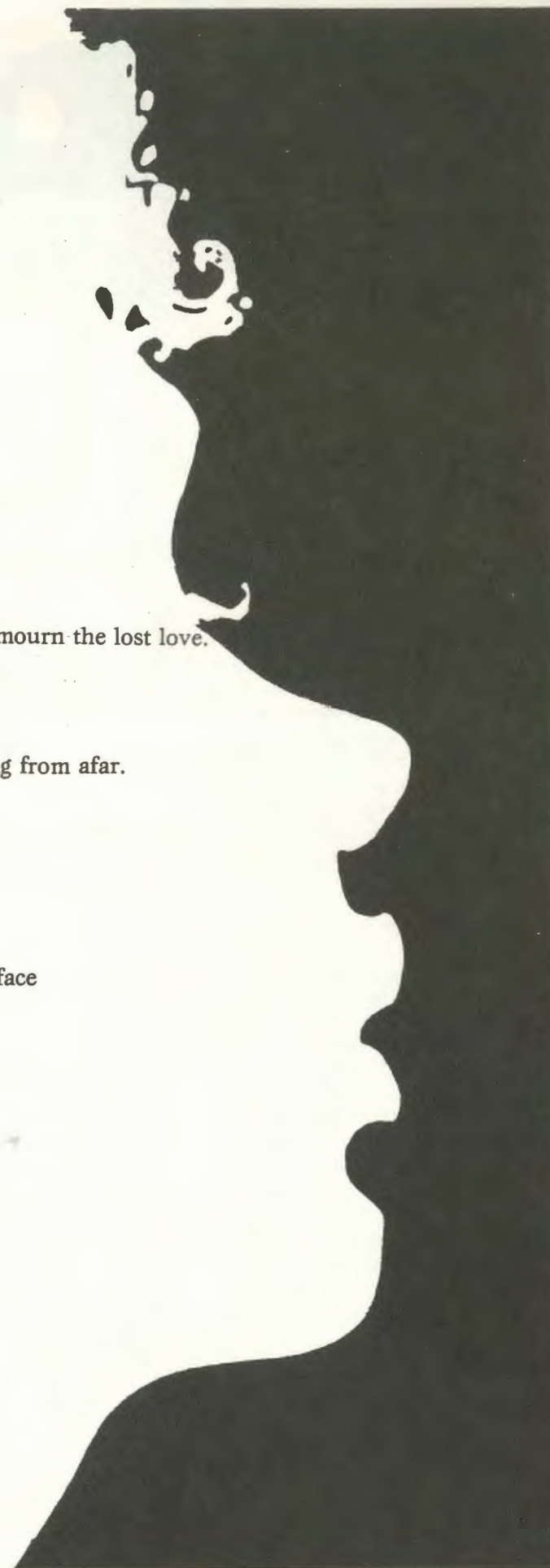
A lady stands weeping on the desolate streetcorner  
in the diffused grey light  
Enveloped in luminous black, she opens her arms to mourn the lost love.  
Dead to the world but still alive in her eyes.  
Silence standing in solitude....Eternally waiting.

A man  
A phantom shadow of his former self, stands watching from afar.  
Another street, Another town  
the sameness remains  
To hide his emotions from the world  
Whilst crying himself to sleep.  
Salty puddles drain into the sewer  
as the rain streaks sorrow filled eyes.  
Zebra lightning through the sky  
The wind unmercifully strikes and contorts his aged face  
lashing again  
and again  
again.

The far off lover watches in secrecy,  
holding the key to the fabled third.  
Like a snake in a theological garden,  
tempting the past.  
Shrouding himself in darkest shadows,  
blending into hazy ever clouding memories,  
of a time they loved him,  
Watching.  
Waiting,  
for the inevitable night when they  
can hide no more.  
Waiting,  
to throw the ace  
he had up his sleeve all the while

Have Mercy on the criminal.

by Warwick Todd Warfield



# THE DRONE

I drive because it helps me forget. The constant, monotonous drone of the engine, the hum of the tires against asphalt, and the ka-thunk of first the front and then the rear wheels passing over some defect in the road are hypnotic sounds. And there's the radio too. I'll hear Deep Purple's *Highway Star* or Stepenwolf's *Born To Be Wild* and I forget about everything but the road. But sometimes a song comes on that makes me remember. A song that was "our song" or a song like the one that's on now: Chicago's *You're The Inspiration*. I hear:  
"You're the meaning in my life,  
You're the inspiration."

And I remember.  
I remember Karen's cold, pale body lying naked on our bed. I remember policemen - plain clothes detectives, blue uniforms dusting for fingerprints and rumaging through our belongings.  
So I change the station and turn down another road.

I'm in the city now. I hate driving in the city. Too many cars, too many traffic signals, too many one-way streets going the wrong way. Too many people. And all the women I see have Karen's face. A pale, bloodless, fishbelly face. The way she looked when they found her that night, dead, tied to the bed, the blood drained from her body.

There's a thruway on-ramp ahead, so I take it. I'm out of the stifling city, and on the open road. I can just drive now and forget. The speed helps. White dashes zip by on the left, and my headlight beams bounce back off of the little post-mounted reflector squares that mark the right edge of the road. It's very rhythmic and soothing. The pattern of the markers is broken periodically by a larger green marker with a number on it. This lets me

know I've put another mile behind me, and also adds a new rhythm to the old: little, little, little, little, little, big, little, little, little, little, big, little...And I forget.

And then two white circles come up behind me and shine in my eyes through the rear-view mirror, move left, shine through the side mirror and then they're gone. What's left are red lights receding in the distance, like blood being drained from a body.

I pass a sign that says REST AREA 10 MILES. This is welcome information. I just have to count ten *big*s between the *littles* and I'll be there. But before I get there, just past the fourth *big*, my headlights spot a lump in the road. As I get closer, I can see it's an animal lying in a pool of its own blood. At least it died quickly, probably on impact. Karen died slowly, bleeding to death. The killer stuck a syringe in her arm and pulled out the plunger. The blood must have clotted several times before it finished draining, because there were seven holes in her arm.

Lucky number seven. But unlike the animal steeped in its own blood, hers was gone. There was no trace of it. The body holds 12 to 16 pints of blood. About one half of that would have drained before the heart stopped pumping, but there were only a couple of drops on the sheets. The killer took it.

....little, little, big (that was nine)

I turned into the rest area, parked the car, and went inside. I felt better after going to the bathroom, and went and ordered a cup of coffee. As I sat drinking, I watched a young girl wiping off the tables. She turned my way, and I saw her name tag - Karen. Suddenly the color ran from her face and she was pale as a corpse. I hurried out to my car. I inserted the key into the lock and opened the door. When the dome light came on, I, as always, checked the back seat. Relief. The leather case which holds the syringes and the three one-quart milk cartons were still there. I started the car, got back on the thruway and drove. Driving helps me forget.

Donald P. Willard

## Old Woman

A small yellow butterfly  
escaping the rain  
flutters in the window  
of an old folks home  
and softly lands  
on the folded hands  
upon an old lady's lap.

She watches it  
with old sad eyes  
making sure to sit very still.

Moments later  
it flutters away  
into the ceasing rain  
outside the window.

The old woman watches  
with joy in her heart  
and for the first time  
in many, many years  
her old cracked lips  
smile.

by Rebecca L. Gustafson

She wants me to tell her why  
Why the walls close in  
boys are so stupid yet cute  
Why she has to understand,  
and feel like a whirlpool in the  
Atlantic being sucked into nothingness  
And for all the effort and love  
She gets this

And I just smile and say  
for all the shit it still  
can be real good too.

## She and I

And those blue eyes say  
Thanks, I guess it's O.K.  
and I'm left wondering  
is it? When the walls close in  
on me every day and I'm starving  
on Wednesday and I don't get paid  
'til Friday and I'm so numb  
I never feel happy or sad  
just dead.

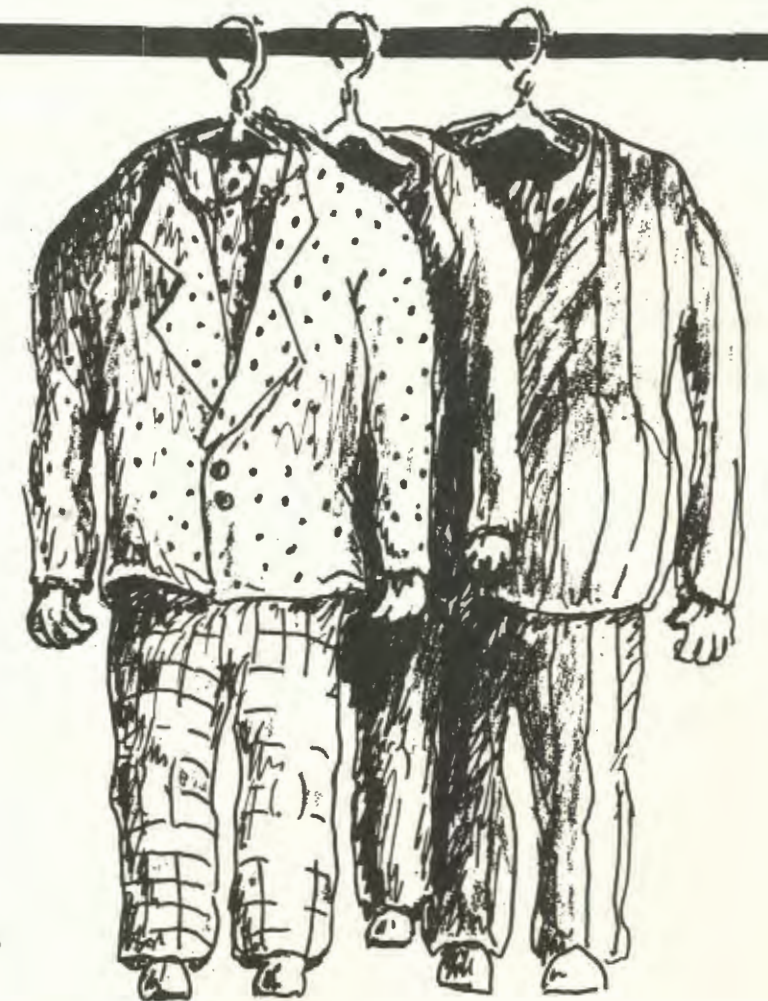
I gave her the gift and it's killing her  
I don't have it anymore and it's killing me  
She cries and I just stare  
We never could connect. by Rosemarie Ventura

## Off-

## The-

## Rack

I wants me an off-the-rack lover  
not some tailor-made man  
'cause I'm a constantly changing thing  
and I needs me some room to breathe  
deep and get fat and comfy  
so I be shopping around  
for a man to hang loose off my sides  
a machine washable man  
who'll let his permapress self  
sit on the laundry heap awhile  
'cause I ain't taking no man to the cleaners  
by Jeff Jacques



# Be all my sins

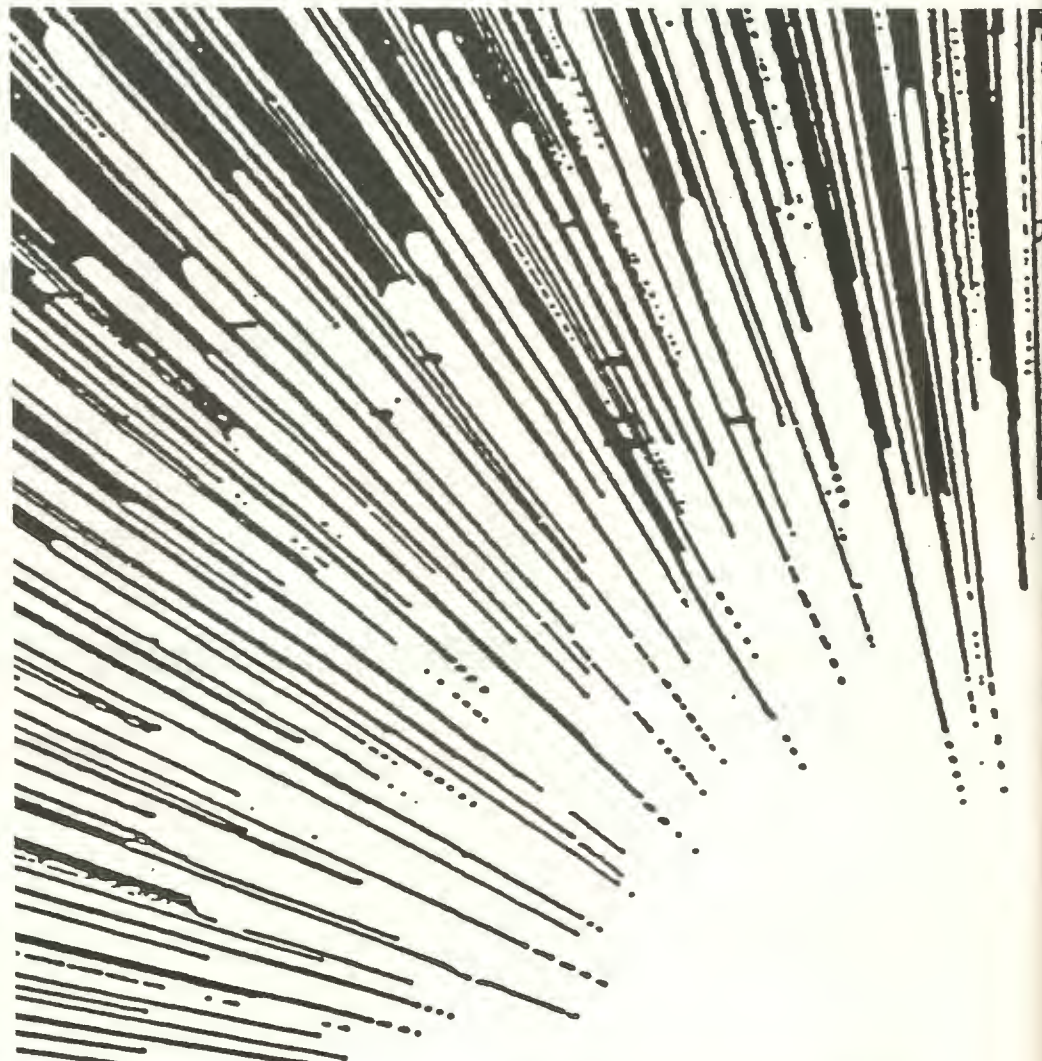
Darkness came early one summer evening as angry black clouds swarmed to consume the last of the day's sunlight. The air became thick with moisture while, far off, bright streaks of vicious white lightening scarred the grey horizon. The featureless, brown landscape on which the old motel stood seemed to tremble as thunder warned of an approaching storm.

No lights were on in Room 16, but the flashing neon sign outside of John's open window cast waves of crimson light which rhythmically illuminated his naked body. He sat up on the noisy double bed and swallowed from the bottle of bourbon on the night stand. Then, he fumbled for his pack of Pall Malls and put one in his mouth. They were unfiltered and he liked them that way because no matter how drunk he was, he would always light the right end. Just as he raised the amber flame of his lighter to the cigarette, he was startled by a sharp volley of rings from the telephone. He did not answer it though, but instead drank more bourbon and tried to remember what day it was.

Marlene knew he was there, and as her call went on, unanswered, it reminded her of a time when she would call just to say she loved him. It reminded her of a time when she wanted to be with him forever. But she could not feel those things anymore, she could only feel the hurt he had caused her. Then her thoughts turned to all of those cold October nights she spent alone in bed, wondering who he was screwing between cheap motel sheets. She would wonder if that slut made him feel as good as she used to make him feel when they made love. While outside, she could hear the cold wind whipping dead leaves against their bedroom window, in answer to her question.

John finally picked up the receiver. "Hello," he said in a deep, raspy voice. "John, is that you?" Marlene asked. "Why are you calling me here!" he boomed.

"I called because I want you to come home so we can work this out. I know



it is hard," she said softly.

"What do I have to come home to? What? Do you still want to be my wife? Do you?" he shouted.

"We've been through this before. I know it's hard, but it will be better for both of us if..."

"Do you!" he interrupted.

"No," she whispered, then signed audibly. "You can begin again," she patronized.

"Goddamn it! I have no wife and no job...I —"

"That's your fault," she cut in. "Nobody forced you to sleep with the boss's wife, you bastard." Marlene now fought to hold back the tears.

There was a period of silence then; a gap of nothingness between these two distant people. The narrow telephone

wire which carried their voices spanned an ever growing abyss filled with mistakes and resentment. And as the tension grew between them, so did the intensity of the storm outside. The lightening bolts ripped through the sky with more frequency, and the crashing thunder followed at closer intervals.

John lifted something from the night stand and began tapping it on the receiver to shatter the eternity of quiet.

"What are you doing? Can't we talk?" Marlene asked impatiently.

"Guess what this is," John said arrogantly.

"I don't know...can't we talk about this?"

"It's a gun. I bought it today." His deep voice trembled.

"A what? Why, John?" she asked,

# remembered



although she knew what the horrible reason was.

"I'm going..." he swallowed, "I'm going to kill myself." A flash of lightening illuminated the room.

"Please, John. If you ever loved me..." Tears ran down from her soft blue eyes to her quivering chin.

"You don't love me!" he shouted as thunder exploded in his ears.

"Yes, John, I do love you. I do," she pleaded.

"The hell you do! I want you to hear this, bitch!" he screamed.

"What?" Marlene uttered.

"Just listen." John spoke mor calmly now as he raised the heavy pistol to his sweating forehead.

"John, I'll come there right now and we can be happy again. I love you,

please..." She tried to say more, but sobs choked her words. She could only cringe, as if the gun were pointed at her head.

"Good bye," he gasped. John slowly pulled the trigger and closed his eyes. He jerked as he heard the sound of the hammer striking the firing pin, but no shot was fired.

John slowly opened his eyes, the eyes he thought he had closed for the last time, and drew the gun away from his head. He let it and the phone fall from his hands to the uncarpeted floor. From far away, he could hear Marlene's soft voice call his name. He reached over and turned a small lamp on. The light burned his eyes as he lay back down on the bed. On the dresser across the room, he could see the small

red box of bullets he had forgotten to load.

Outside, the first few drops of heavy rain began to crash into the earth. Some of them hit the sill of his open window and splashed onto his hot, sweaty skin. He turned and looked out into the night. The storm had begun at last, but the cool, falling rain which soaked his face and body felt wonderful to him. The gentle breeze, which carried the fresh smells of the summer evening, tenderly caressed his moist body. The lightening that flashed looked beautiful against the backdrop of the dark summer sky, and the thunder, which roared and crashed, sounded of nothing but life.

By Michael C. Russo





## Whole the Moon Rolled

Whole  
the moon rolled  
out of blue fields

The lovers on  
earth  
caught him  
sailing  
in their nets  
of warm night-words,  
needing  
a timeless keepsake  
of their love

And they found him  
pale shimmering fish  
out of sky  
as empty  
as the chill blank face  
*by Jennifer Kismiereczik*

## Early Morning at River Front Inn

small boat  
slices through  
still St. Lawrence waters

waves ooze  
toward shore  
to stain dandelioned banks

Green arms reach up  
grasp at sunbeams  
shaded branches touch purple lilacs

As HALCO barge passes in the growing light  
*By Kathleen Cerny*

## View From A Passing Gallery

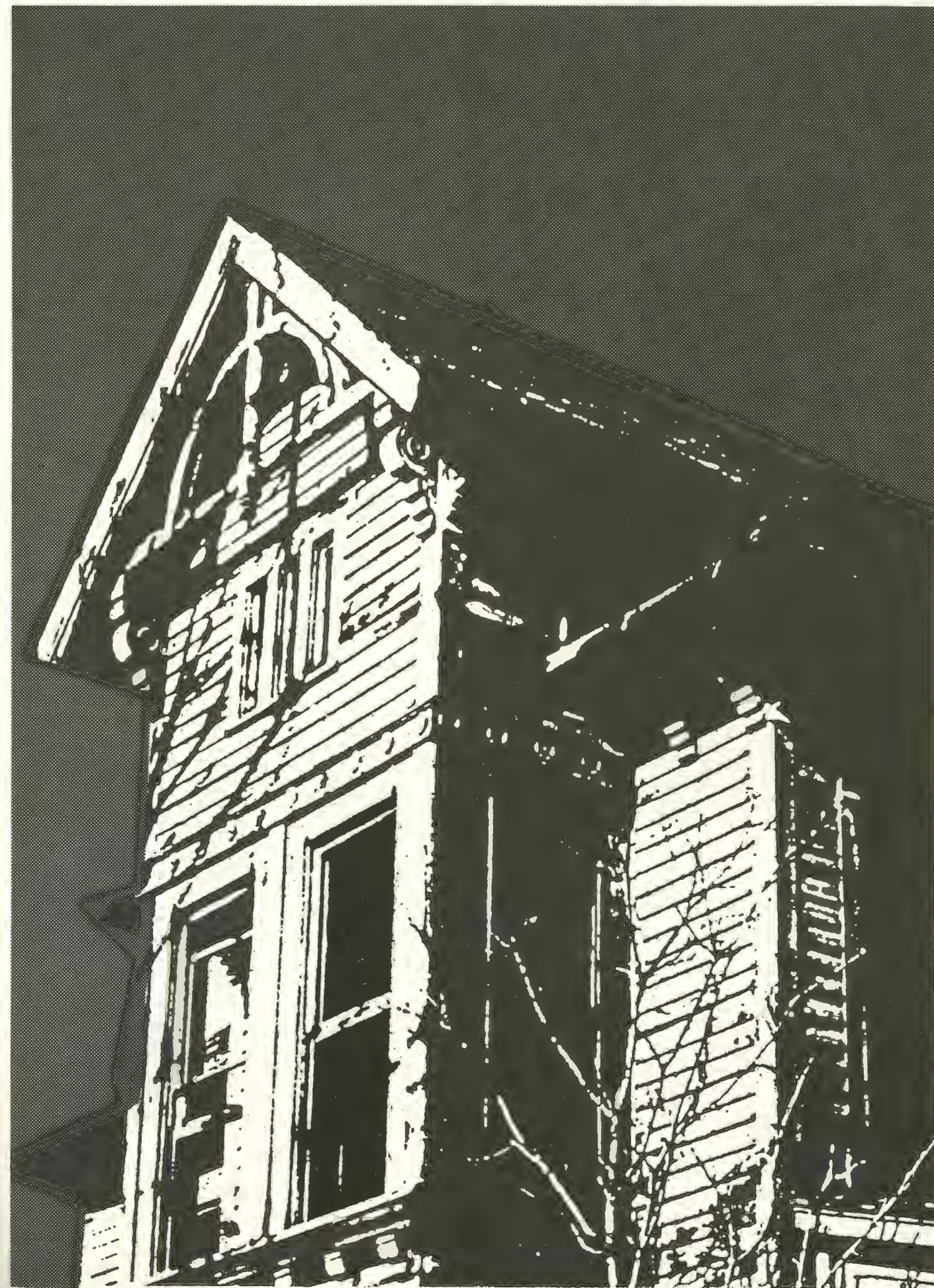
Eyes intent, tail twitching,  
charcoal is poised,  
gently rubbing. Then  
streaking across canvas,  
parts dry, rusting strokes of ochre  
and sienna,  
reveals fragrant smudges of crimson,  
plum and gamboge  
smears decaying umbra and sepia  
in its path.  
Charcoal stops,  
pounces,  
and in a flurry of strokes,  
blends to grey.

Framed for a fleeting moment  
(as the bus rumbles by)  
"Black Cat Hunting in an Autumn  
Field"  
*by Peter V. Grotz*

## witching hour

near valleys  
rolling hills  
I perch in suspicion  
of plants and bees  
(these mandrake apple  
roots of insanity  
scream in dream only  
I will not tug at their  
muscular tendril)

witch craft  
witching waters  
in which direction does the sun set  
long between branches  
now thick and luscious  
as jam and bread  
at midnight  
the moon ever-rising  
*by M. L. L. L.*





## Purple Darkness

walls crawl with callous evening  
faded room, blue low-lighted  
haggard, staggered, angry man  
stark and stung and slighted

thoughts caught all in a tangle  
of what, not who, and thus not what  
sameness, lameness: one and equal  
silent answers fester cut

sweat begets honest dollar  
romance yields but time  
salty, faulty teardrops fall  
begotten of sad rhyme

clock ticks in purple darkness  
freedom hides and changes hue  
drafty, crafty window pane  
offers only reflected view

weary, bleary, blood-shot eyes  
blue and sunken, wet face worn  
hard, scarred, limit-drawn  
drift and dream and meet the morn

by Christopher Arcara

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# PORTRAIT

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