

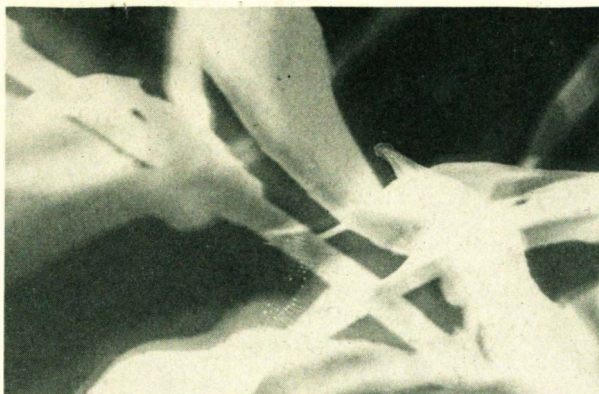


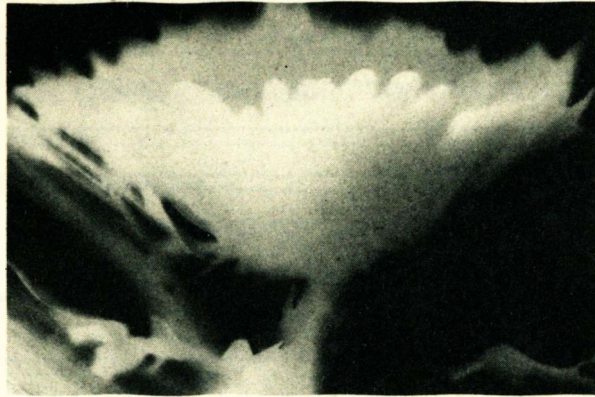
Oakwood



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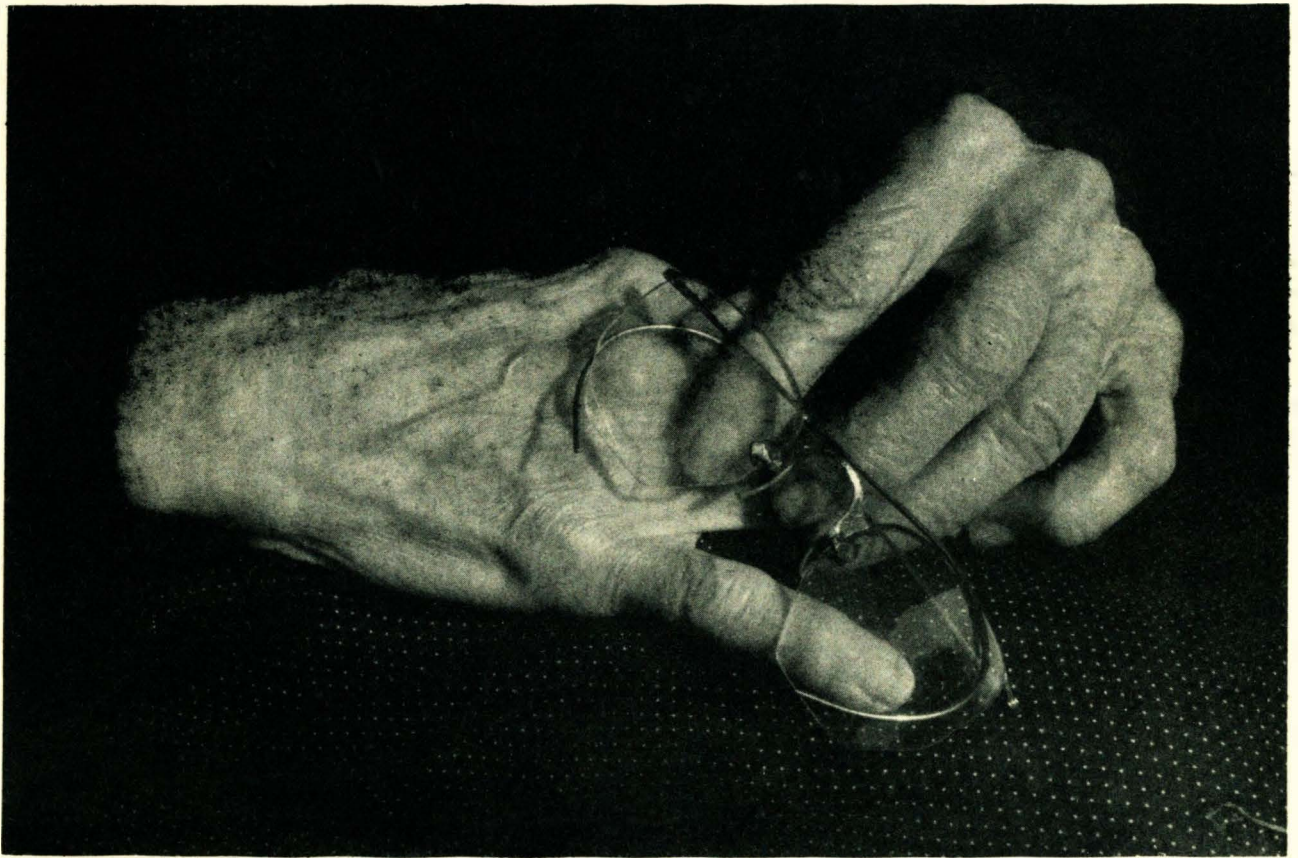
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Table of Contents

Hands Josh Spies	7
Poet/Upon Reading Whitman Tami Plummer.....	8
Untitled Josh Spies	9
My Grandmother Remembers Paperboys Erik Johnson	10
Untitled Brad Bunkers.....	11
Windmill Dan Udseth	12
Untitled Shawnette Lidel	13
The Simian Reader Shon Qualseth.....	14 - 16
Mandy Mary Buelow	17
Like Nothing On Earth J. "Slim" Schneider	18
Untitled Mark Wagner	19
Medicine Cloud Scott Bredehoeft	20
Untitled Josh Spies	21
Soft-What Might Cory Allen Heidelberger	22
Untitled Laura Sullivan.....	23
"In Respect of Caesar" Speech Variation #7	
Sarah Thompson, First Place High School Poetry	24
Beware Stacia Legner.....	25
During A Harmless Drive On A Highway East Of Blue Dog Lake, South Dakota	
Erik Johnson	26
Untitled Josh Spies	27
Telemachus And His Adventures With Odysseus And Crew	
Sarah Tupa, First Place High School Prose	28 - 32
Childs Play Stacia Legner	33
How To Watch A Single Fan Blade Turn	
Doni Schwalm, Second Place High School Prose	34
Shoe Box Experiment Brad Bunkers.....	35
Breaking Dakota Tami Plummer	36 - 37
Fire Through A Child's Prism Catherine Brugger	38

Untitled Mark Wagner	<i>Oakwood, Vol. 2, Iss. 3 [1984], Art. 1</i>	39
Elusive Horses		
Erin Wipf, Second Place High School Poetry		40
Eagle Dancer Mark Wagner		41
Indonesian River Kristi Hoekman		42
Picasso Studies Mary Bjerke		43
Teachers Day Off Cory Allen Heidelberger		44
Beware Barbara Donelan		45
Ummm, Art, Are You Imitating Life Again? Derric Miller		46 - 48
Untitled Brad Bunkers		49
Untitled Christine M. Hoftiezer		50
The Gods Among Us Kristopher Steege		51 - 53



Josh Spies
Hands

Poet

Upon Reading Whitman

Tami Plummer

"It is time to explain myself--"
Let me stand up.
I am Nature's mistress
Tasting his wind and holding the swallow's cry
I feel spring wheat thrust its head through unbroken soil
My throat moans the stillness of a September dawn
As I melt into the earth while Rain thunders through my veins
Claiming me as his lover and voice
Like Zeus planting the seed of life in Leda's womb
Words come in a hot frenzy
With a stick of aspen on a sand slate
I will compose until rivers wash my senses away
The union of master and lover completed
Returning to him
"I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love."



Josh Spies

Untitled

My Grandmother Remembers Paperboys

Erik Johnson

Things have grown soft for the newspaper men
since the reign of the electric media.

My grandmother remembers the papers coming out
during any time of day or night, paperboys yelling
in the streets. Not like today, she
said.

Now the paper comes at the same time every day no matter
what the world is like. Those big word factories roll
the same during threats of war or threats of peace,
peace.

My grandmother remembers going to the Ascension
Lutheran Church in Milwaukee. She settled down into
the big pew, and church became a word that was as loving as
mom and as comfortable as home. This was God's home,
and the message of the Christmas season was celebrated here.
They always had such good children's programs, she
said.

My grandmother knew God even then, and she knew
the peace of that message. She felt her heart was lifted,
pushing through the stained glass building. The service
came to her in waves of comfort and joy and peace,
peace on earth.

Meanwhile, outside the paperboys are aroused
from their rightful innocence to stumble through the winter
air. They position themselves so that you might hear
two or three calling you to come out in the streets
to read a different kind of tiding: "War declared!"
"War declared!"

As she stepped onto the steps of the church, the air
was colder and bitter. The city looked gray and every
house was somber and her heart fell to earth where
it slipped into sinister cracks in the pavement. She
could hear the city groan in the calls of the
newspaperboys. That was December seventh, she
said.

She knows: When Armageddon
comes, men will be saying "Peace,
Peace."



Brad Bunkers
Untitled

Dan Udseth

At the edge
Of a field,
Silhouetted by sunlight,
Silver
Face to face with gold.

Through its blades
The wind whispers:
Nobody lives here anymore.



Shawnette Lidel
Untitled

Shon Qualseth

Carnival freaks don't get the respect we used to. I was a celebrity in 147 countries, four provinces, and most of the thirty-seven states in the Union.
(she left me)

Now look at me since they've stopped coming for two bucks a shot. People aren't shocked anymore; nothing surprises them. Movies and television and drugs have desensitized the American public to the point of apathy when it comes to the real important things.

(was that her shadow?)

Humans have seen so much death and destruction and man-made wonders that the question is, can anyone be truly shocked?

They billed me as "The Monkey Man - Straight From the Deepest Jungles of the Congo!" I am not really from the Congo, but it made for good publicity. Who would want to see "The Monkey Man - A Real Hairy Guy From the Woods of Oregon?"

You can go home again. After her, I escaped back here. The forest is good cover, enough helpful friends around, solace when I want it, freedom to run.

(but men come around sometimes, they come with rifles or chain saws or hiking boots, then I run, but silent, yes, keep quiet because a bullet in the brain is all there is to it and then I'd be on display again so I run and hide and then hide even better)

I enjoyed the carnival for the first four years. Growing up in isolation left me at a loss for dealing with people, and the carny people were my first and only friends. They took me in--it was easy because we were all outcasts--and she was especially nice. She never actually meant what she did. But she did. It happened.

(oh, I loved her, yes, that was love, wasn't it?)

She was the Bearded Snake Lady. She had a fake beard and she only handled the snake. I always laughed when people talked in whispers of how some government laboratory had genetically fused humans with pythons to make Glenda.

(Amy was her real name, knots in my stomach)

Before I really knew her, I'd sneak glimpses of her through the back curtain. She would be chatting with the onlookers, petting her snake, and aching to rip that pasted beard off.

In the trailer one night, she knocked on my door.

(light taps, a soft drumming, don't open it!)

"I wanted to meet the person behind the eyes that keep staring at me," she said. Not mad, but inviting.

(run!)

"I'm sorry about that," I smiled. "I guess you'll have to charge me admission like the rest."

She laughed, not hearty, but easy.

(shake this trance, she's hypnotic, turn away, you can't, you can't escape)

And I was hooked. We talked about everything—our pasts, the job, the aspirations we had left, the Warren Commission's lone gunman theory, the sexual possibilities involved with the cast of "Three's Company."

(and I was hooked, falling, grasping for anything to stop it, to quit, to run)

Amy left me that night with a warm handshake, and my hand still feels it.

(she's still there, still with me, still talking that ethereal language that suspends me in nothingness)

I wasn't the same after that. Her looks were longer on me, the smile a little wider when directed my way.

(her hands petted the snake sweeter when she thought of me, yes, I was there in her hands, writhing)

The smells of the carnival were closer when she was near, the dirt softer, the bark of the Dog Boy more melodic.

There had been a certain continuity to the carnival until the end came. Happiness was shattered by what I reacted to on that cloudless night outside Amy's trailer. I had been following her at a distance, admiring her like I always did as she walked through the tents and cart and trailers on her way home. I could always find enough cover and keep quiet to evade detection, yet remained fixed on my love.

She stepped over a rope tethered to a stake, came around the corner of a tent, and stopped short. There was a heavy voice rasping through the night air, but from where I was tracking, I couldn't see the source. Amy replied back cheerily in her unsuspecting angel's voice. A large hand gripped her shoulder firmly.

(I can't see!)

I eased my way to the left, circling around so I had my back to a cotton candy booth, and strained to see the owner of the heavy hand over Amy's shoulder.

It was unmistakable—Atlan's wide frame was outlined in the moonlight. Atlan, the Strongest Man in America, was a new addition to the carnival. He put on weight-lifting exhibitions, hoisting automobiles and out-pulling horses. And now, thinking no one was watching, Atlan pulled Amy closer to him.

I swallowed the bile that had worked its way into my throat. She wasn't kicking or fighting back, but I could tell she wanted to pull away from him. Amy was resisting his advance, yet he kept pulling her towards him. Didn't he know that she wanted me, that she was mine?

(wasn't she?)

I continued circling in the shadows, keeping my steps light and my breathing steady. I slipped away from a tent and stood directly behind Atlan.

(his forceful voice had to be stopped)

I tried to speak, but nothing came out, so I tried harder till a grunt broke through, interrupting Atlan in mid-sentence. He turned quickly to face me as Amy's eyes widened; his eyes narrowed.

"Well, there's the monkey boy now," he sneered. "We were just talking about how you should stay away from Amy."

His words were a slow hammer to me. Me? Stay away from her? What

It wasn't right; he wasn't right. It was the other way around, he should stay away from her, not me. He was bad, not me. And he was grabbing her right now against her will, not me.

"What's wrong?" Atlan jeered. "They didn't teach you to talk in the Congo? I hope you can understand English, at least when I tell you to get the hell out of here!" He took two steps toward me and I could smell his next words. "Or I'll crush your hairy ass!"

I flicked my eyes to Amy and saw that she was scared. Atlan was threatening, a menace, and he couldn't be allowed near Amy. Yet he was pushing me away from her.

"Got it!?" Atlan shouted, and shoved me with his huge arms.

(a surge, power, protection of her, of me, unconscious, uncoiling, leaping for the throat, hands uncontrolled, squeezing, cracking, toppling, and blood, blood taste, again and again and again until the meat stopped shaking.)

I stared down at Atlan on his back, his mouth open in an unfinished scream. I looked at Amy, who only stared at what was left of Atlan's torn throat. We stared until Atlan's wheezing stopped; I at Amy, Amy staring at him. When she switched her gaze to me, her look of horror was deeper than the one permanently etched on Atlan's face. Amy's mouth twisted in disgust and it was only then that I knew something was wrong. Her disgust at the sight of Atlan was nothing compared to her disgust at the sight of me.

(but I had done good, right? I protected her, didn't I?)

On the long line of evolution, humans have not come very far. People are not surprised by anything at the carnival. As humans move farther away from the animal frontier, they search harder and harder for animal and wilderness refuges. Maybe animals don't fit in the scheme anymore. As humans distance themselves from animals, where is the link that made humans evolve from "lower" creatures? As humans continue to evolve, where does it end? What is left behind?

Love is. . . you can't finish the sentence.

(savage, bestial, guttural, Amy, do I need her, yes, need)

Then I was gone. I had to run, to run from Amy's final gaze, to escape. The hurt began, the hurt that comes from somewhere between the pancreas and the liver, pressing hard upon the spleen. It could almost be classified as a sickness, a disease, but a self-inflicted one.

(whoever said "Nothing ventured, nothing gained" should have his limbs slowly removed and his head cut off)

Love is.

I knew where acceptance came from, not humans, but from those lucky enough to avoid the touch of humans. I knew where inbred and honed instincts would serve me best. The forest was my home, first and final. Home.

(someone's there, smell, listen, head turned to see, move away from the feeling of someone, watch out, keep going slow, they won't see me if I move slow.

Movement! Run!

Dodge left, jump the stream, run run run dive into the cave, breathe, rest, they can't see me, safe, Amy where are you, Amy, hunger, food, berries, Amy, leave and roots and fish maybe, Amy)



Mary Buelow
Mandy

J. "Slim" Schneider

Beast of burden, dumb brute,
a tool for the cowboy
to use, some might say.
True? The cowboy knows better.

The horse is a wondrous composition of
muscle, beauty, grace, and fire;
a living creature with a mind of his own;
a companion and trusted friend.

If he chooses
he can be fury incarnate
or gentle as a fawn.

If he decides to bend
to the will of man,
he can enter the mind
of his rider
and react to his rider's thoughts
before the command is given.

There is nothing on earth that
can equal the feeling of unity between
a horse and rider flying through the trees
in pursuit of a flighty heifer,
swerving around stumps,
dropping to the side of your horse
to duck a low hanging branch,
jumping a deadfall,
stopping and changing directions,
only to repeat the process in reverse.

And then to sit,
breathing hard and sweating
in unison,
watching for a chance
to do it all over again.



Mark Wagner
Untitled

Medicine Cloud

Scott Bredehoeft

The cloud passes over
leaving in its wake
swimming trees
drowning cars

I'm standing on a stone
as the water washes around
ebbing and ripping
rising
above itself

The cloud marches on
stepping on the arid soil
uprooting houses
and lives

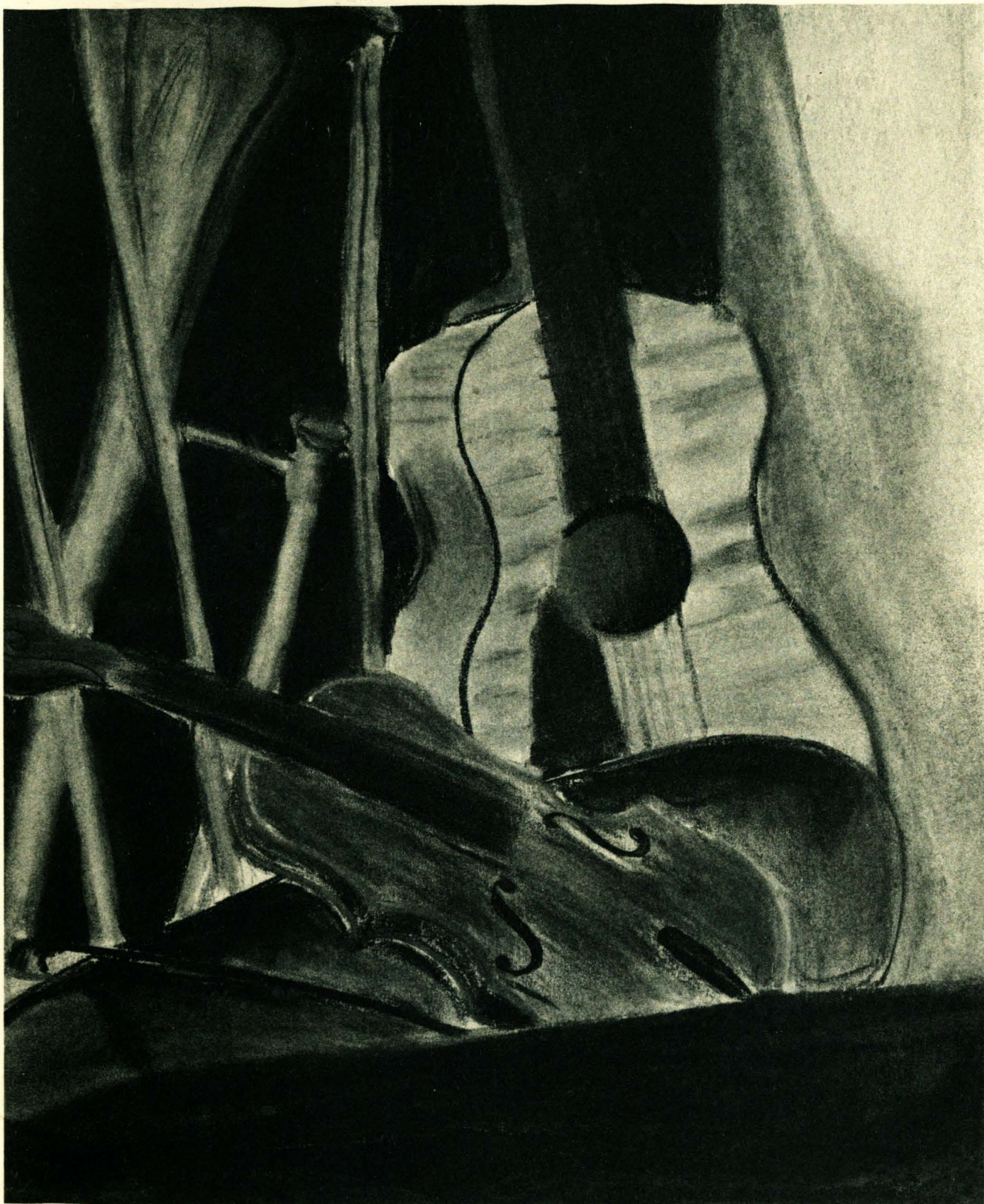
In the shelter
the sun melts the stones
and me
boiling and dripping
dragging me down
into the land



Josh Spies

Cory Allen Heidelberg

Resting at the footbridge during our hike through morning fog,
Bridgette held the opened fluff of a cattail in her hand.
She stroked the pelt-like seed with a slim finger
And invited me to do the same.
I leaned close,
Reached gently
To glide my fingertips
Over the out-turned inside,
And it was all I could do not to touch her flesh.
Her silky fingers lay ungloved for the first time that morning,
Caressed cool by mist.
She held before me
That foreign softness,
Pulling with the same soft strength she'd used
To free the seeds from their long tan stalk.
But I denied another inside-out turn.
I dared say only,
Softly, "Yes,
Quite soft."



"In Respect of Caesar"

Speech Variation #7

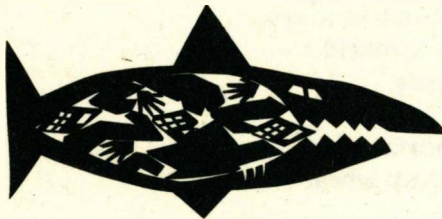
Oakwood, Vol. 2, Iss. 3 [1994], Art. 1

Sara Thompson, First Place High School Poetry

Friends, strangers, associates,
Lend me your hearts.
My creator (or Sculptor?)
neglected to give me one.
Tell me of the feelings,
How emotions start to burn,
Does passion come like fire?
Or do you all take turns?
How must it feel
To care so deeply for another,
Is it joy or pain I miss?
It can't be both, one or the other.
You with hearts do not show logic,
Remember how to think?
Between the heart and the mind
I believe you've lost a link.

Peers, colleagues, authorities,
Lend me your strength.
Mine shall soon be thin.
The world insists on weathering
These walls I thought were firm.
Somehow, stones have cracked
But they are easily replaced.
I can still maintain my privacy,
A mask to hide my face.
I need my strength to go on living,
The meek shall inherit the earth
But only the hardened continue surviving.

Child, infant, little ones,
Lend me your youth.
I gave mine away
For the vision of reality.
Remind me of the games,
Jumps from stone to stone,
And playing in the rain.
Take my hand and lead me
Down the path of innocence,
Show me all your thoughts,
Take all that I've learned since.
Where has my life gone?
Where is yours still going?



**Stacia Legner
Beware**

On A Highway East of Blue Dog Lake, South Dakota

Erik Johnson

The blanket of last week's fall
has settled. Even the trees become
fuzzy snowflakes, soft and wispy
and adorned with frost. This is
the white of eternal Christmas cards.

This day the land
knows no shadows.
Dull light washes all white.
Without recesses of light, all is
naked before its own perspective.
There is only snow to hide under.

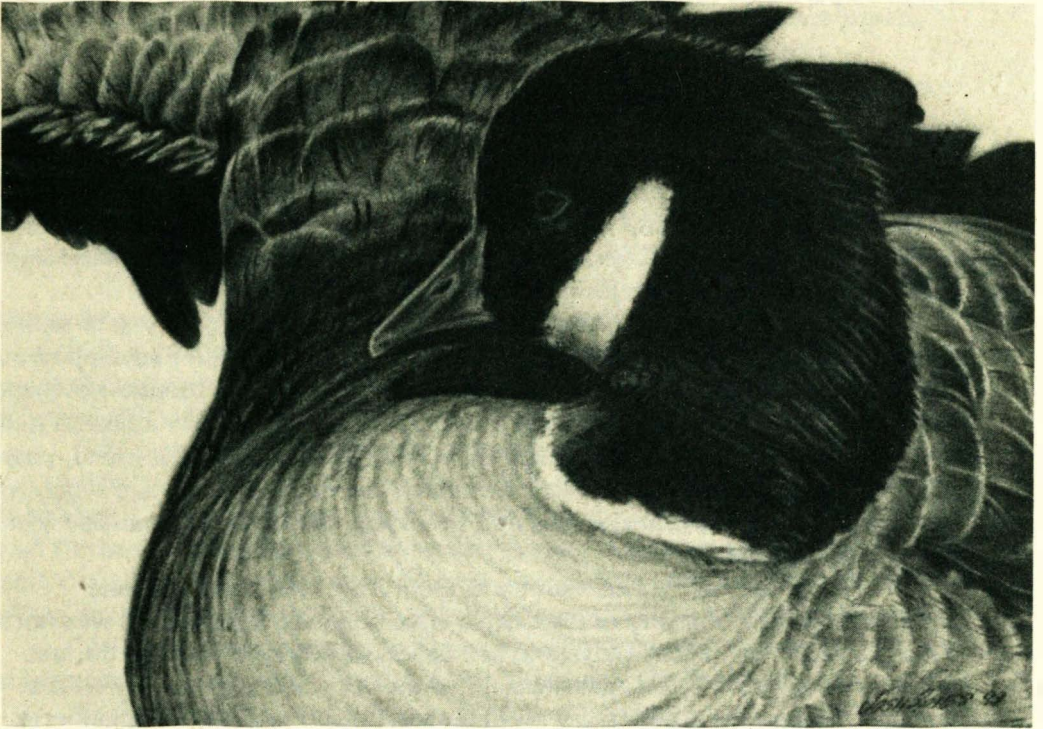
This highway runs parallel
to the border of the Dakotas
and cuts through the blanket.
Use has banished its snow.
The sky ahead is cotton pure
and thick. It drops until it hangs
around my car, spilling over the land.

Suddenly, I'm mountain height
and the earth must have dropped
away. Only the road remains
to bisect and tunnel the coagulated
atmosphere. The sky has crept
up to the edge of the road. Perhaps
the sky will force the road down, too.
I wonder will I float then?

Patches of black earth become holes
in the floor of sky, the earth below in
blackest night. Some farmer will look
up from his mashed potatoes to see
the stalks of this fall's cornfield
planted in stratus clouds.

I search for nervous horizons or
fences or trees or used up wheat
or anything
to limit the impression
of space growing larger than my mind.

There is only white.
Only white.



Josh Spies
Untitled

Telemachus and His Adventures with Odysseus and Crew

Sarah Tupa, First Place High School Prose

The ship rolled and heaved as a wave crest threatened to overturn it, and Odysseus smiled for the first time since he had left his native land of Ithaca and his wife Penelope. He had been unwilling at first to leave his faithful wife; he recalled the last time he had he'd not gotten back for twenty years, and when he finally did, it was to find his newborn son grown up. The fact that he had missed the first and possibly most important part of his son's life troubled him greatly. There was no help for it now, though.

Drawing himself back to the present with some effort, Odysseus smiled again as he noticed his son's form straining to fasten a rope that had slipped out of its mooring. The *Penelope* had been at sail for nearly three months now, and had encountered many such storms. Luckily his boy had quickly adjusted to the uncertain footing during a storm; the swineherd, who was his best friend, nearly hadn't. Odysseus chuckled as he remembered the way his friend had staggered on the ship as it pitched and rolled, and how more than once the man had lost his hardtack breakfast.

Being an experienced seaman himself, Odysseus was not a mite worried about the intensity of the storm. Unfortunately, Telemachus was not so easy-hearted. The mighty Odysseus had observed plenty of times in the last three months where Telemachus had noted the very clouds in the sky with a shudder, and he knew that every night his son prayed to Zeus Cloudgatherer just to stay all his stormy temper until the voyage was ended. Odysseus doubted that this would happen.

As his thoughts turned to storms, so did they to the most horrible one all season. Thunder had crashed and lightning bolts had screamed across the sky, seeming to meet others in midair and exploding on contact. That had been the unhappy day when Odysseus' father had met his demise. He had died peacefully in his slumber with the full knowledge his beloved son was home and well after so many years of absence. At the very moment his father perished, a light drizzle started. It had held on for three days as they mourned him and buried him.

Sighing, Odysseus rubbed a weary hand over his forehead. Penelope herself had recommended a vacation for all his father's old friends. He had tried to beg off, but Penelope was insistent. Practically ordering him to leave, she nearly shoved him out the door. She, he found, had even obtained a seaworthy ship for him.

Rubbing his hand over the mast of the ship, Odysseus watched his crew in action. Telemachus still struggled with the rigging. Atriedmos, a powerful and giant man, climbed to the crow's nest. It was a brave or foolish man who took that job in a storm. In fact, Odysseus decided to call him down. Raising his hand to his mouth, he filled his lungs and bellowed, "Say, up there. Down with you now! A crow's nest is no place for anyone but a fool crow in this weather!"



Telemachus, seeing that his father was worried about the man, figured that if his father was worried, he should be too. Cowering, he stared up at the yellow sky and shuddered, having never seen a sky like that before. He wanted to call out to his father that they had better find a port before the worst squalls hit, but he didn't wish to seem cowardly before his father's old friends.

The swineherd drew near. Telemachus whispered to him, "What are we doing out here in this weather? Why don't we find a safe haven?"

The other replied calmly, "Say, an' don't I know it!-but your father is a wise and hearty man. I believe he will find us a port if he feels it necessary. I'm a simple man, but I think that your father will protect us if need be. Just trust in him and we'll be getting home sooner than you can imagine."

"All right, good friend, I will trust him. I can't help thinking that we're making the gods angry with our foolish ways of flaunting the storm, though. Please don't tell father. He wishes me to be a seaworthy man. I just don't believe I can earn the mightiest seaman's approval if I can't ship with the best of them. You're my oldest friend and companion. Please tell me what to do!"

"I'll do my best. You see, you have too little confidence in yoursel'. You think that thi' is the only way to prove yoursel'. I think not. After all, you are great in battle. You have that. If you truly want my advice, though, I sugges' you try all the harder to do that what he wishes you to. And above all, my own friend, do not forget that if you really can't do somethin', then if you tried you bes', an' are truthful, then your father can't do anythin' than love ya all the more."

"All right, I'll do as you say. I guess you're right. If I try hard, then I may just impress him by myself. Thank you for your help, my friend."

The swineherd left, nodding to the son of Odysseus, who was so eager to impress his father with his talents in sailing. "Poor boy," he mused thoughtfully, "So eager to imprint his talents on his father's mind, he loses sight of the fact that he is here for pleasure."

Meanwhile, Odysseus had noted the exchange, and guessed the meaning of it. He pushed it out of his head; if Telemachus wanted to impress him that much, then he'd let it sway him if he wished. He watched as Orinoos slipped on the poop deck as water washed aboard.

"Batten down the hatches, Orinoos! Better to slip than slide overboard, I say! Be careful, Handiros; that sail won't stay there forever!"

What a sight the brave warrior made as he waved his hands and shouted! It was enough to make the men stay their hands when they worked and stare as the man ordered, his hair whipping in the gale-force wind, his cloak snapping, his eyes glowing. He seemed to command the very heavens with the force of his voice. Even Zeus himself seemed to hold back the storm's fury to listen to his call.

Then the sky split, and the heavy rain began to pelt their necks and backs. Some men, less brave than their leader, might have called out in terror and hid themselves below decks; these men merely straightened their backs and resolved to face the winds with courage. Even poor Telemachus stopped his shuddering to listen to his father's voice and the raw energy that threatened to explode if any one of them were put in too much danger.

The sailors scurried around decks tidying the ships and battening down

the hatches. A few hurried below and noted the water level was fine. Telemachus finally managed to secure the rope with another man's help.

"Look at me," he thought. "See me cower here and unable to even help myself. I can't fasten even a simple rope by myself. I ought to have just stayed home. Mother said I'd have time to get to know my father better. But no; he hasn't said one word to me all this trip. I suppose he hates me. After all, I am his coward son. I'd be better off just to go below. But I can't go down there; I'll only seem more stupid and helpless if I do."

That was his dilemma: how to make himself appear more courageous? He didn't know how to prove himself to his father.

How furiously the storm shrieked! Even the strongest of the men shivered as they heard the ferocity of the storm. Telemachus grasped a rigging that had worked itself loose again. Tugging and pulling, he finally managed to pull it into place. It worked loose again.

Perhaps it was the will of the gods, perhaps only fate. Whichever it was, the rope swung out far over the starboard side of the ship. The heavy boom swung, and Telemachus ducked. Luckily, it missed him. Unluckily for Telemachus, he missed the side of the ship. As a huge wave swelled before him, Telemachus lost his footing and slipped over the side of the ship. The wave sealed over his head. Telemachus gasped and inhaled a large mouthful of seawater. Faintly he heard the cries of the men as they tried to see his bobbing head. By now the storm had carried him far from them.

Struggling to stay afloat, Telemachus choked on cold seawater. It was fortunate that he had learned to swim well as a boy or he would not have survived.

The ocean roared in his ears. It seemed to engulf his world. It swelled until all he could see was an endless expanse of blue-green that would swallow him whole as a snake does a mouse.

Telemachus gave one last, quiet cry. His throat was raw and coated with salt. He was thirsty enough to die, and probably would.

"Oh mighty Poseidon, grant me the courage to live through this ordeal. I am but a humble lad, and I wish only to live. Please find me here and help me keep my head above water and find me some gentle shore to sleep on. This I pray, oh Seashaker!"

The mighty sea god heard his pleas. The boy cried out once again, fainting from the water he had swallowed and the ordeal of the storm he had lived through. Poseidon lifted him gently in his huge blue hands and carried him into a calmer part of the ocean, where he set him down. Then a most extraordinary thing happened, a foam-white horse gently nudged him onto his back and carried him on silver wings to the shore of an island that had magically appeared. Upon gaining the land, the wonderful apparition slid onto shore and knelt in the sand to let Telemachus off his back.

The unconscious Greek lay unmoving and the horse nudged him gently with his tender nose. The magical creature even lay on the sand next to the boy to protect him from night predators.

Next morning, a lovely sight drew near. "My!" she cried. "What is this I see here? Can it be a tiny boy that has wandered onto my island?"

At her voice, animals stirred and moved restlessly. Every animal that inhabited the island seemed to fear her. No wonder she kept each one under her spell, eating those she chose, poisoning others.

It was Circe, the spellmistress who had changed Odysseus' men to pigs at their first, most eventful meeting. She didn't realize that the boy was Telemachus; he normally looked much like his father, but in this dim light and with his face to the sand, he was unrecognizable.

She decided to take her prize home. Uttering a spell, she picked him up quite easily. "Hhmmm, there's a lot of meat on his bones. I won't be hungry for man-meat for some time after him," she murmured.

As they neared her hut, several wild animals cried out at the sight of her taking some other poor beast home for dinner. Circe muttered a spell to keep their voices down so her meal would not awake and fight her.

Inside her hut, pots bubbled and boiled and test tubes filled with obnoxious chemicals writhed on their racks. She tossed him on her bed like some dead fish and went to check on her kettle.

When she came back, she turned him over carefully to peer at his face. To her, it looked familiar, she seemed to recall someone very much like him visiting the island before.

"Oh well," she thought. "I shall wait till breakfast, at least; then I'll remember who he looks like. Yes, that's what I'll do."

So she readied herself for bed, which was a horrible process most nights, but more so this one. She checked her traps for new animals, set out new traps, and did a few horrible spells that made the hut shake. Then she ate an animal that had been caught in a trap, raw.

After that she crawled into bed.

The next morning, she realized the events of the past day and crawled out of bed, walking into the guest room so she could see him—she had moved him during the night.

As soon as she gazed upon his face, she fell madly in love. She knew at once that he must be the son of Odysseus.

"Oh most just Gods of Olympus! How I swore never to let myself worship you, only my savage gods! Now I shall rejoice in you forever!" So she swore and it was a terrible sight to see her dance madly around the bed, weaving spells to make him stay.

At the moment, Telemachus awoke to find the horrible sight. He gasped and raised his pounding head. "Who are you?" he demanded. "What do you want with me, who has never harmed a soul! How did I get here?"

"Patience, young sir. You are the son of Odysseus, that I know. You have come a long way and most of it unwillingly. Do not widen your eyes at me, young fellow. I know you because your father once stayed here with me."

"You witch! How darest you speak in that manner to me. I am no fool; I know witches and their ways, and you are one. Release me from your spells, and I shall not kill you."

"Impetuous youth, how dare you! I do you no harm; I merely wish to serve you. I loved your father but I could not have him, so I will have you. This I swear." She spoke with rage trembling on her face, and her brow lowered.

Telemachus wanted to escape but he realized that he had fallen in love.

Meanwhile, Odysseus had asked Poseidon Seashaker where he had put his son, and the *Penelope* was speeding to his rescue. Soon they reached Circe's Island.

"If she has done anything to harm him, then I shall kill that woman. Infernal woman, I shall kill her, yes I shall. This I swear."

They all looked at his face and knew it to be true. his brow darkened like some thunderstorm in rage. He led the way to the hut of Circe, whom anyone of them could have found alone such was the power of her will and spells on the island animals.

The woman herself came to the door. "Ah, Odysseus. I have expected you for several days. Come in, every one of you. I shall make you feel at home; you have no cause to worry."

She bade them enter. A few trustworthy men stayed outside to guard the hut, not even the bravest man wished entrance.

Telemachus jumped to his feet. "Father," he cried. "I have been waiting here for you! I am so glad you came!"

"Now that you are here, I want to get right to the business." Circe interrupted. "I claim Telemachus as my husband. What do you say, Odysseus?"

"I say he is far too young. He cannot stay."

"But father, I wish it," Telemachus cried. "She has been kind and wonderful to me. I love her."

"Do you realize what you are getting yourself into? She would rather kill you than love you."

"I know I love her. Surely it can be no spell. She is kind and good to me, and does not do anything to offend me. Besides, it is high time I learn to think for myself. Do not worry, my father. I can choose for myself. Please give us your blessing."

Odysseus walked over to Circe and grasped her arms. "Do you swear to take care of him?" he asked. "I swear, I will kill you if you don't care for him as a loving wife would."

She gazed at him steadily and responded, "Oh, with all my heart I adore him. I swear to treat him as a prince. I will love him until eternity ends."

He took her vow, and Telemachus and Circe were married. They lived on the island, associating with no one. They were self-sufficient and Circe never hurt an animal or a human again, although she still sometimes would be prone to passing some witchcraft. No matter, Telemachus loved her all the more.



Stacia Legner
Childs Play

How To Watch A Single Fan Blade Turn

Doni Schwalm, Second Place High School Prose

Allow yourself to become deaf to the droning of your science teacher.

Lean back into the comfortable wedge where the blue chair meets the white podium against the baby-blue wall.

Rest on lazy arm on the table behind you while letting your feet hang over the near corner of the chair opposite you.

Carry on an imaginary conversation with yourself about cause and effect on life. If your alarm hadn't broken that morning, would you have snapped at that friend? Could that person in turn growl at some lost soul who would take the insult as a final straw, going on to live life alone and unloved? Or who might go crazy and run down some little girl's pet kitty? And what effect would this have on the girl? Would she grow up bitter and angry at the world?

Now stop and wonder how you got to this stage of the conversation.

Begin to retrace every sentence, word by word, until you reach the beginning again.

Sigh heavily. Your mind should now be as totally void as a starless vacuum in space.

Look up at the ceiling fan out of the corner of your eye. The one on your far left side.

Become hypnotized by the back and forth motion of the frantic little motor.

Tilt your head back and watch the spinning motion of the fan blades.

Adapt the motion into the deepest corner of your brain, right between your eyes and your ears.

Allow your eyes to begin to turn rapidly in the same direction as the fan.

A freeze-frame view of a woven-centered blade stops in your vision. Latch onto it and follow it, your eyes rolling wildly in your head as your mind begins to spin with the fan, unraveling your precious thoughts.



Tami Plummer

The wilting couple stands alone in their yard
Not looking at the farm or each other, just looking.
Their hands do not touch, but their shared life
Pumps the blood from one heart to the other.

Her blizzard-white hair has turned brittle and coarse.
Too many hot summers and baths with homemade lye soap.
The skin on her face is wind-tanned and wrinkled.
Once young cheeks are now caved in
Like her hopes and dreams of fifty years ago.
Her midnight blue blouse hangs loosely on shoulders
That pulled the plow before they could afford the horse.
Its starched white collar is drawn tight
Against veins whose blood has slowed down.
The full, rounded hips give the illusion of an earth Mother.
But her eyes explain the emptiness of the illusion.
They tell of a new mother's shattered life.

Baby never woke up on Christmas Morning, 1908.

Years of hard work, cooking, and sex in the lamplight
Have worn her down.
Her eyes are forever lost in the sadness of
Life lived and life lost.

His old brown straw hat used to be for
Goin' to town on Saturday nights.
Now, it is a farming hat full of holes and grease stains.
No one goes to town on Saturday nights anymore.
The hat didn't protect his ears or nose from
Sunburn or wind chapping.
His cheekbones are chiseled by wind
And his skin is eroded from rivers of sweat and tears.

He loved the baby, too.

His hair is gray like the new plow bought in 1910.
His eyes are lost in a gaze toward the horizon.
Always thinking of West. New land. New dreams.
But it's too late. No time left for him.
He wears a white cotton shirt and faded denim overalls
Covering muscles that still strain to lift feed sacks.

His frame leans on the trusted pitchfork et al.: Oakwood
That gives him a splinter every day.
Limber hands that once plowed the earth, chopped wood,
And stroked a young wife's breasts are now
Crippled and nearly useless.

The air is calm and still like the moments just before death
Rages in and drives their breath away.
Behind the tired pair,
Late summer storm clouds roll in
Faster than the last years of life.
The white house stands as a symbol of all they have worked for.
Its windows are eyes to the soul of a pioneering family.
Those same eyes have seen meals, prayers, and childbirth.
And were the only ones to witness baby's last gasping breath
That came and went like an April blizzard.
Prairie grass bends and sways in the wind
Like the couple has done for so many years.
Two souls fought to break the land.
Now, the land has broken them.
They lived their hard lives on the wild prairie
And will soon die with a gust of wind taking them

To their little baby who died on Christmas Morning, 1908.

Fire Through A Child's Prism

Oakwood, Vol. 2, Iss. 3 [1994], Art. 1

Catherine Brugger

It's a bad dream,
Where nursery rhyme Nancy
Burns slowly to death
In the blaze
From the street light.

It's a nightmare:
You crawl down the hall,
But the hall is a desert,
And the desert's on fire.
It's too hot to breathe.

It's apprehension.
You plan: If you have time,
You'll grab Teddy first.
If you don't have time,
You'll drop down and roll.

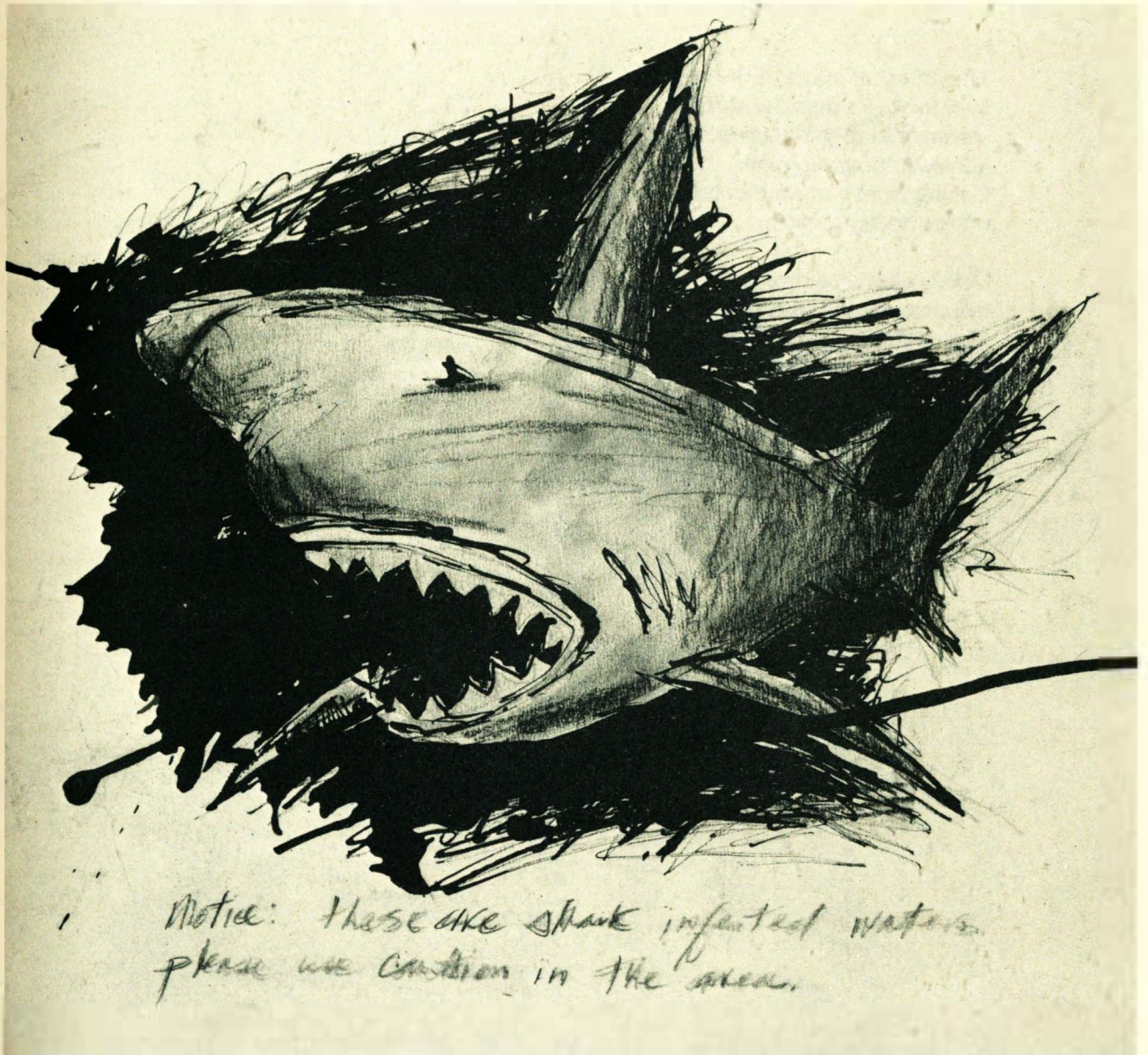
It's for real.
You have time, but you're scared.
You forget Teddy. You feel
Guilty, and you think of Teddy
Burning to death, left on the bed.

It's before your eyes.
Curtains burn at the window.
The glass breaks on the patio.
You run away to find Mommy.
Is she running to find you?

It's finally over.
The red trucks leave.
They'll never be exciting again.
Tucked in on the neighbor's couch,
You smell smoke on your nightgown.

It's ghost dances
In the shadows, on the sooty walls.
The phone melted in the black heat.
An aerosol rocket shot through the ceiling.
Popcorn popped in the bag.

It's a bad memory.
You know about plans, but you plan.
At night, you check, and check again.
You clutch Teddy tighter, but the
Sooty smell never, ever, comes out.

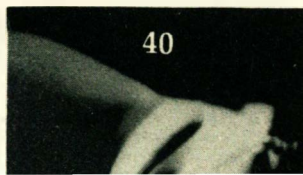


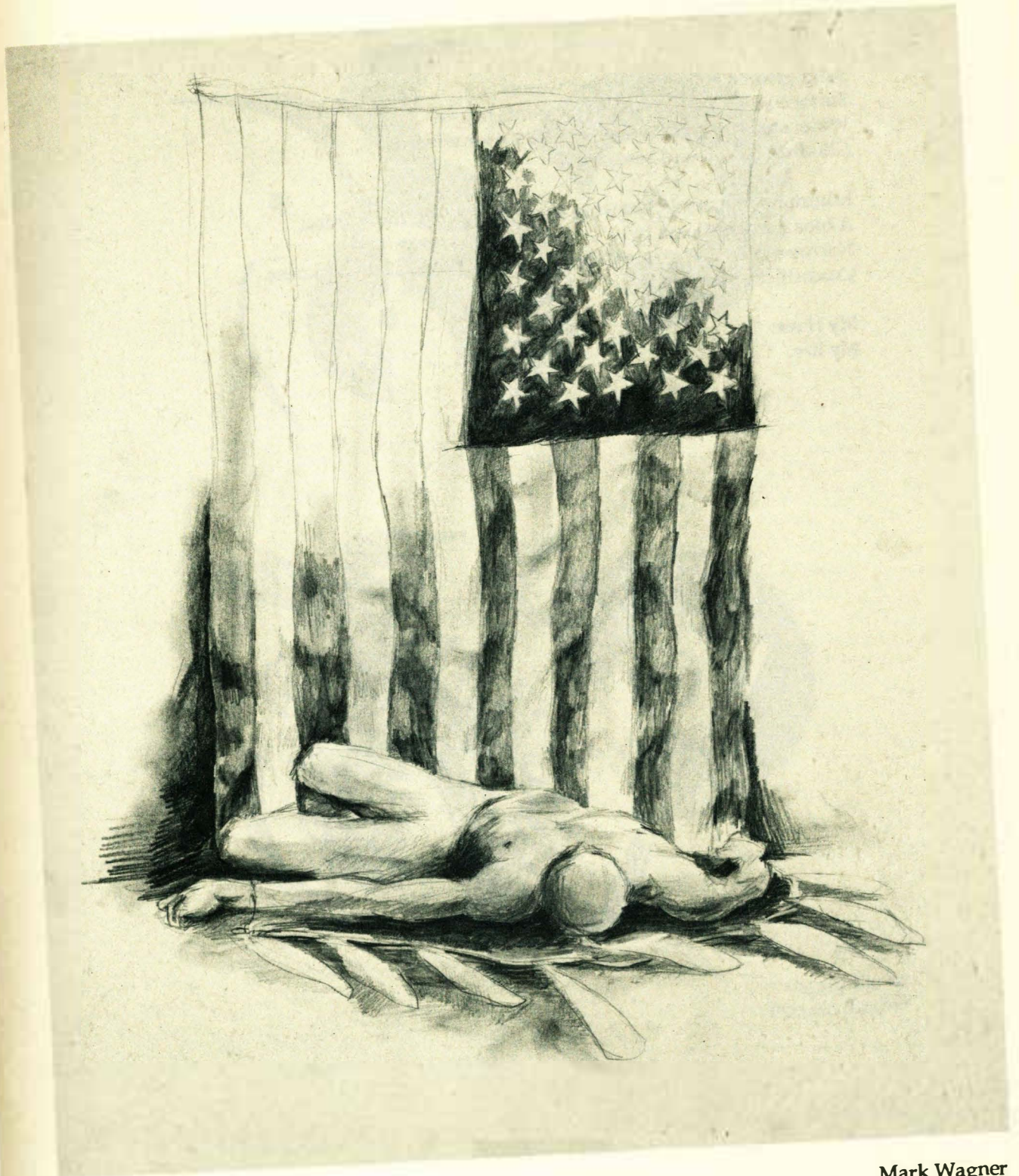
Mark Wagner
Untitled

Erin Wipf, Second Place High School Poetry

The untamed spirit of the west,
powerful as a thunder storm.
Nature's beauty at its best,
a mass of flowing form.
Gazing from a mountain crest,
upon a valley's dorm.

Open prairie, void of trees,
dancing shadows on the shore.
The river echoes on the breeze,
hear their voices like a roar.
If they're lost, all hope flees,
as to never see the eagles soar.





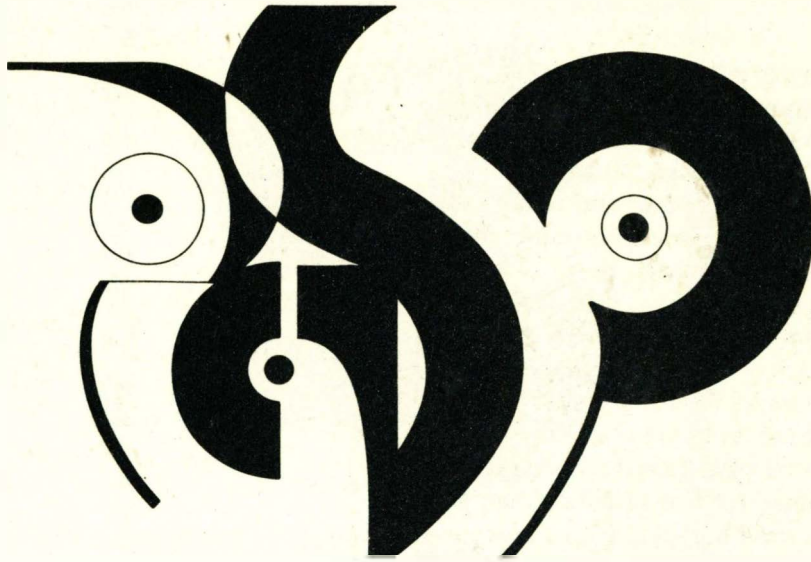
Mark Wagner
Eagle Dancer

Kristi Hoekman

Sand gleams gold under clear water;
Surface ripples create diamond glints below.
Wide, shallow turns; water sparkles over white clay.
Children splash and scream.

Muddy water swirls, drawing tree limbs down the current;
A bloated deer floats by.
Narrow, deep and straight; branches trail fingers into darkness.
Crocodiles strike silently.

My river.
My life.



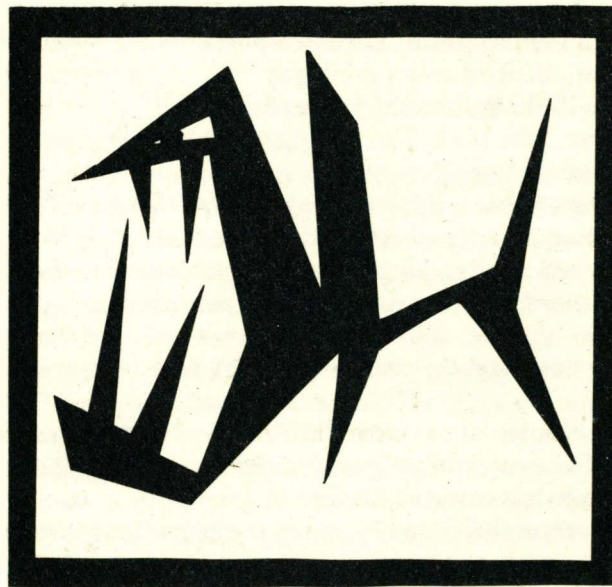
Mary Bjerke
Picasso Studies

Teacher's Day Off

Oakwood, Vol. 2, Iss. 3 [1994], Art. 1

Cory Allen Heidelberger

Nothing to prove
Nothing to explain
I climb a mossy tree
Limbs soft and slick
With yesterday's rain and today's fog
Legs and spine braced on different branches
I munch a bagel half
A trail mix bar
Sip from my green canteen
I lay back
Hands tucked in my rain pants
My gloves hang to maybe dry
On a cord strung between branches
Ears tuned for leaf-shuffling deer hooves
Eyes turned half-closed to a near gray heaven
I rest
My gloves do not dry
The wind only carries more chill and mist
I hear no deer
But a man tromps through calling loons
Heaven remains gray
Crossed by dark sopped leaves
But I rest
Nothing to prove
Nothing to explain



Barbara Donelan
Beware

Ummm, Art, Are You Imitating Life Again?

Oakwood, Vol. 2, Iss. 3 [1994], Art

Derric Miller

"You know, Scott, you are a really nice guy. I didn't think they made those anymore." She smiled.

Scott blushed. He reached out, letting his fingers whisper across her hand. "Your chariot awaits, my lady. A '73 Catalina Safari. Four door wagon. Tinted windows. At your beck and call."

Terra stepped up and kissed him not too gently. Holding hands like a perfect little couple, they left her apartment.

Upon arriving at the restaurant, Scott asked the maitre'd for a romantic corner. They were placed next to a table with two couples who looked as if they were celebrating. The couples were drunk.

"Sorry about this, Terra," Scott said. "we can tell them we're lepers and try to pet them. . ."

Terra choked out a laugh and Scott was again amazed at how she liked his stupid jokes. "Like it'd make a difference," she said.

They made small talk and when the waiter came, Scott- -with a lisp and a wink- -ordered veal for both of them. Terra slapped his hand. They laughed at the effeminate waiter and Scott wondered if Terra know the sadistic means of producing veal, the sad and inhumane way the calf is tortured into becoming food. The look in her face didn't show disgust, after all, it still tastes good.

And after all, Scott was a good guy.

"Are you looking forward to the play?"

"Of course," she said. "I'm the one that had to fool you into going. Should we have some wine?"

Scott didn't know a thing about wine so he said, "Sure. I'm no oenophile, why don't you choose. I'd probably order Kool-Aid."

They shared another laugh and at the table next to them, one of the males raised his glass. He was wearing an expensive suit- -Armani or Oscar Meyer- -and a too-tight tie, and his braying toast was: "I'd like to propose a boast. I not only deserved the promotion, but I deserve every woman in this damn place!"

The two women at the table didn't smile, but the other male roared with glee, his blood-shot eyes squinting and widening, looking like they would explode or implode but couldn't decide.

Ha, Scott thought, didn't I just say the same thing last week? He dimly remembered spewing the same lewd comment at a party, "I'd like to propose a boast," about how potent he was. Luckily, he blacked-out after that and his memory of the party ended there.

"What a sweetheart," Terra said, "Don't you just want to club him like a baby seal?"

"A baby seal? Ha!" Scott ejaculated his voice cracking. He looked at Terra in a new light. "Wow. What a fun and violent little saying."

"Thanks."

et al.: Oakwood

When the meal came, she ordered the wine and they ate their meal in a comfortable silence.

The play was an adaptation of Harlan Ellison's, "The Cheese Stands Alone." An eccentric underground troupe was attempting the impossible with Ellison's work, but Scott figured Terra was smart enough to know what he liked. They *had* been dating for almost two weeks.

Outside the little theater stood a homeless man. People walking by sent him comments like, "Hey, homeless Joe," and "Nice future, buddy," and "Job's are overrated anyway." Just yesterday a guy had come up to Scott and asked for money. Scott had laughed at him and handed him a condom.

"Can you believe him," Scott whispered to Terra. She just nodded.

By the time they got to the man Scott had a five dollar bill in his hand. "Sorry, pal," Scott said. "It's all I can afford."

Homeless grinned. "Good, because that's all I can accept."

Terra and Scott exchanged a glance and entered the teater.

Because they figured only weirdos would go to this play, they sat in the back-corner of the theater, as far away from everyone as possible. As people entered, moving through the fluid grayness of the half-lit room, Scott noticed most of them came in pairs.

"Do you have any idea what this play is about?"

"No," Terra answered. "But this Harlan guy has won a lot of awards so he must be good."

"Is he on the top ten list?" Scott asked and added in his head, because if he isn't, how good can he really be?

Suddenly, a guy across the audience stood up and started yelling at his date. "You bitch! Why didn't you tell me that before I took you out tonight!?" He reached down and shook her shoulders. The woman kicked him between the legs, got up out of her seat, and left. The guy sat mewling for a few minutes then hobbled out of the theater crying.

"Do you think she forgot to set the VCR?" Scott smirked.

"Probably," Terra said solemnly. "MEATBALLS 4 is on tonight."

Then the play started.

The main cahraction, a man about Scott's age, quietly got up from a bed. A yound woman was sleeping in the bed, but the actor quickly got dressed and left without waking her. Scott caught himself before whispering, "Boy, that's something new!"

And that was just scene one.

Terra said something to him, but Scott was nodding off, so he grunted some non-word, beginning to wish he could ditch her.

In the next scene, the actor stood in a bookstore, looking bewildered. The crowd was so quiet Scott found himself staring intently on the stage. Other characters in the bookstore had their eyes

buried in various books and Scott wondered why there was so much fear in their postures. They would not look up from their books, hypnotized, hopeless. None of them turned the pages. The owner, an old woman, tried to get the main character to look into a book.

Scott found himself responding to the play, mouthing the words, "No, no, no," and moving his head back and forth.

He heard Terra say, "She wants him to examine her wares," but Scott didn't answer.

The play seemed darker now, like some purpose, once spread out and vague, was congealing. Scott felt like he wasn't watching the play anymore, the play was watching him.

The old woman tried to get the main character to take a book and they started yelling at each other. For some reason, the man gave in and accepted the book. Scott was so cold he imagined he could see his breath.

"Now he's trapped too," Scott said, shivering. Trapped.

As the character opened the book, it became apparent that the spell of the bookstore was working on him. The book held some secret, some curse or some hope so strong that for eternity the book was all the readers could see. The character looked into the book. The old woman smiled contentedly and scanned the crowd. Her gaze whisked the audience, then locked on Scott. She stared knowingly and Scott almost fled, aching to run pell-mell from the theater.

"Where do you think you're going?" the woman asked.

Scott almost screamed. But she was yelling at the main character. He was walking towards the front door of the store. Somehow he had broken the spell that had enslaved the other readers.

He turned to the old woman, his visage exuding such torment, pain, and sadness that Scott put his head down and tried to cancel the rest of the play out of his mind.

Suddenly, a narrative voice broke into the still theater, spouting the only sentence it had to: "Then he walked off into the fog, crying; but trying to whistle."

When the lights came back on, some of the audience rose from their seats and cheered, some awoke from naps, Scott just stood up and grunted, "Let's go." There was no conversation on the way home.

He dropped Terra off at her apartment. "Well, I had a really good time."

When she leaned in for a kiss, Scott moved back a step.

"Aren't you coming in?" she asked, injured.

He couldn't. "Not tonight. I'll call you." He didn't say when

The next day Scott didn't go to work. He didn't eat. He didn't shower. He didn't answer the phone when it rang. He did only one thing.

He walked around his house, mostly in circles, whistling; but trying to cry.



Brad Bunkers
Untitled

Christine M. Hoftiezer

As the river of life

Flows through the mountains

of time,

You and I are the tiny pebbles

That make the water sing.



Kristopher Steege
The Gods Among Us





As you paged through the poetry, prose, and artwork of the 1993-1994 *Oakwood*, we hope you captured a glimpse of the students of South Dakota State University. Those published in the magazine come from various academic majors, each adding one more necessary ingredient to make a successful *Oakwood*. However, the contents of the magazine would not have reached their audience if the graphic design and production team hadn't given so much time and effort to the project. For them and their dedication, we are grateful. We would also like to thank the SDSU print lab for all of their time and effort spent on this project.

The staff is proud of the 1993-1994 *Oakwood* not only because of the works inside, but also for its place in SDSU history. The immediate purpose of *Oakwood* is to be an outlet whereby students can express both their thoughts and creativity. But when we have all graduated, *Oakwood* will remain to serve as a literary and artistic reminder of our presence at SDSU.

We have learned a great deal while serving as editors of *Oakwood*. Most importantly, we have learned how a team working together can create a work of art. Until everyone involved contributed his or her ideas, the poems, stories, and pictures were all individual artwork. Now, they are joined together to become one lasting work of art.

Now that we are finished with the 1993-1994 *Oakwood*, it means even more to us than it did last September. We started with one poster announcing the deadline for submissions and ended with a magazine containing the best part of SDSU: the ideas of the students. We hope you enjoy *Oakwood* as much as we enjoyed bringing it to you.

**Sincerely,
Michael Jones and
Tami Plummer
Editors**

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Oakwood, Vol. 2, Iss. 3 [1994], Art. 1

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