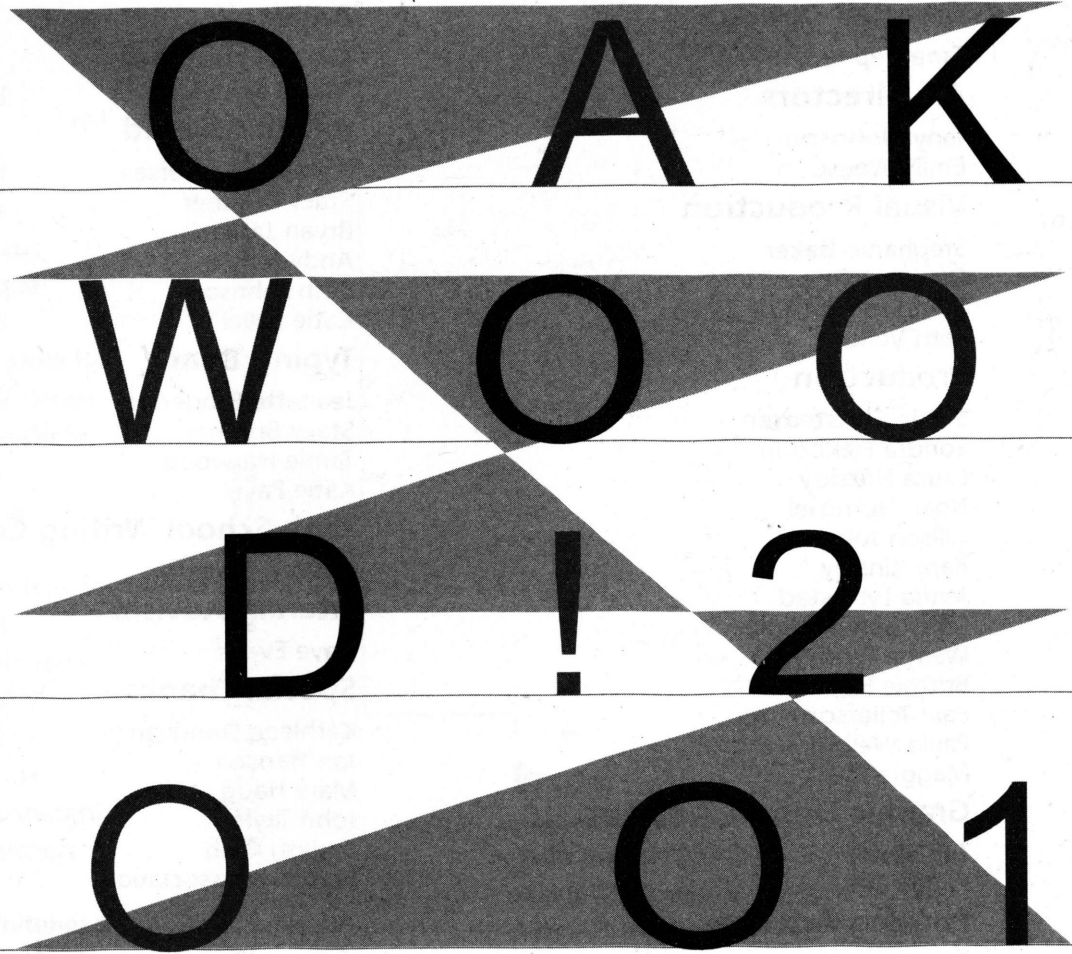


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Volume II Number 10



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Students Association

Oakwood is a South Dakota State University production of creative arts and literature. Oakwood is funded by the SDSU Student Association Senate and printed by the SDSU Print Lab.

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P O
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R Y

Epilogue

Jessica Pikul

The sun, an over-ripe peach, tumbles from the hands
of clumsy child-gods in the clouds.
Clouds, thunder hills of gleaming cloud-forest
stand against the sunset-fire
Light, bruised and brilliant, cascades through the air,
sanctifying all, sweetly as hymns.
Birds trill sweet sadness across the fields
to the drying hay that rustles.
Breeze, cool with foretelling, ebbs across my skin
to tell me of mortality.
My soul flies into the dying summer to hold it warm,
against the long cold's implacable coming.

The Acrobat

Katie Pavel

Standing

High on a tree limb,

He bows to the audience of leaves

And steps out.

With care he makes his way forward

Towards his destination.

His tail curls over his back for balance,

And his ears perk up with each sway of the branch.

Cautiously, he continues on,

Then pauses . . .

With a giant leap

He springs to the tree trunk

And turns proudly, awaiting applause.

Dover Decision

Laurie Troth

Balancing on the Dover Cliffs
Eyes gazing over the ledge
Following the disappearing memory
Moving closer to the edge
Getting lost among the fog
Clinging to her moistened skin
If she jumps, does she lose?
If she doesn't, does he win?
In protest to her danger
The seagulls call her name
Trying to persuade her
She holds none of the blame
The jagged rocks cut her feet
Urging a jump or fall
Waves below invite her down
Is anything left for her at all?
Standing on the edge
Curls dancing in the morning breeze
A few small pebbles tumble down
Someone catch her please

Debra

Laurie Troth

Fifteen years old and careless,
pregnant too soon.
Disowned by your mother,
Condemned by your teachers,
Ashamed of your actions.

Married in a shot-gun wedding,
your mother forced you to wear a dress of purple,
so that everyone would know your sin.
Oh, how you cried for a white wedding dress.

But you had the courage to keep going,
Even though you weren't allowed to attend your prom
or receive your diploma at graduation.
You sat in the audience when you should have been the star.

You became a loving wife
and later, a mother of two children.
You wanted so badly to have more,
but on your fifth miscarriage, you gave up hope.

One hot, sticky June day,
you drove home too fast on a gravel road.
Your Bronco crushed your breath.
Twenty-seven years old and careless,
dead too soon.

Buried in a white wedding dress.

Blue Sister

Kelly Quamen



An Addiction to Tradition

Dustin Jahraus

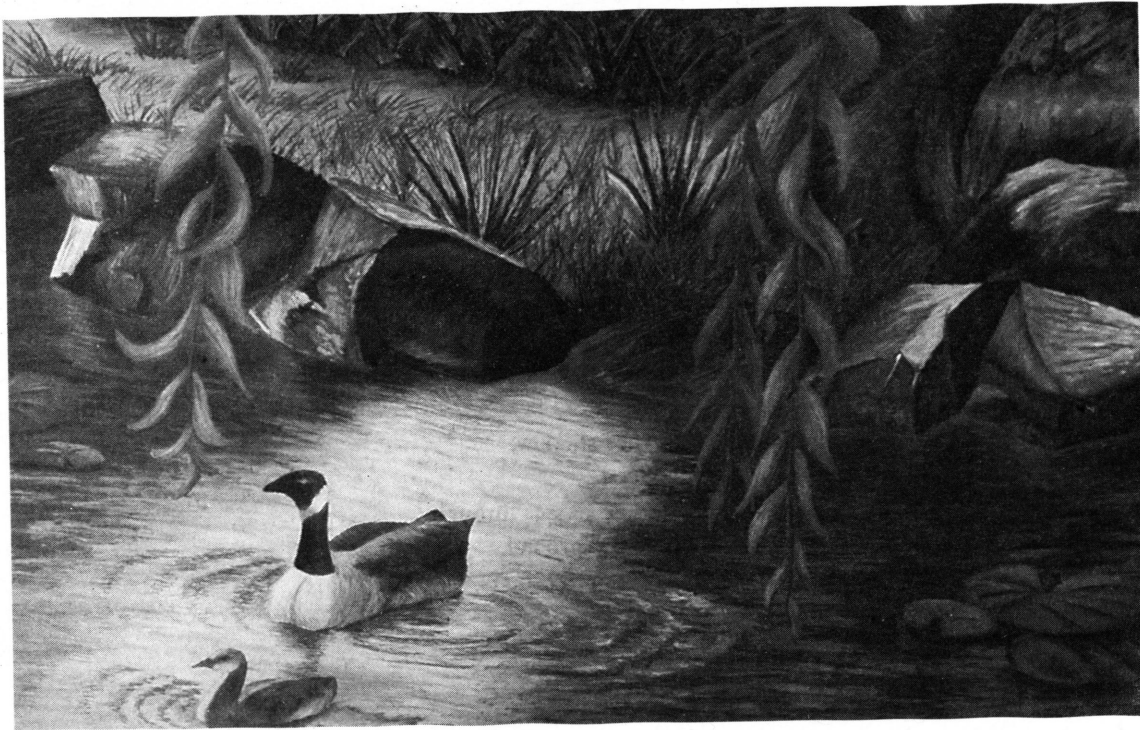
I see straight through you; I know your addiction.
Intentions may be true, but you're trapped in tradition.
You adopt what you want to, whatever fits your tastes;
You tell me to do it too, but I see the Truth erased.
You have a narrow view, just like a Pharisee.
You want me to follow you, but I've been set free.
I'm breaking the world's chains, breaking free from tradition;
You're creating hurts and pains; tell me why won't you listen?
Look what you're addicted to; you're an addict of tradition,
Believing in things untrue, building your road to perdition.
Rid yourself of your affliction; escape the cage and constriction;
Free yourself from your addiction; stop being a slave of tradition.

Dollface

Melinda Jaqua

A display of fragility
As she sets upon a shelf.
A delicate feature of porcelain
So beautiful; So pure.
Ready to fall . . . and break
Into millions of tiny glistening pieces.
Although she already is . . .
 Inside.
Her mind worn out with worry.
Her body aching of exhaustion.
Her soul yearning to break
 Free.
So she sets in her shadow,
Unnoticed.
And when a gypsy breeze passes through,
Knocking her to the ground,
We will *see* how shattered she is.

Untitled
Paula Welbig

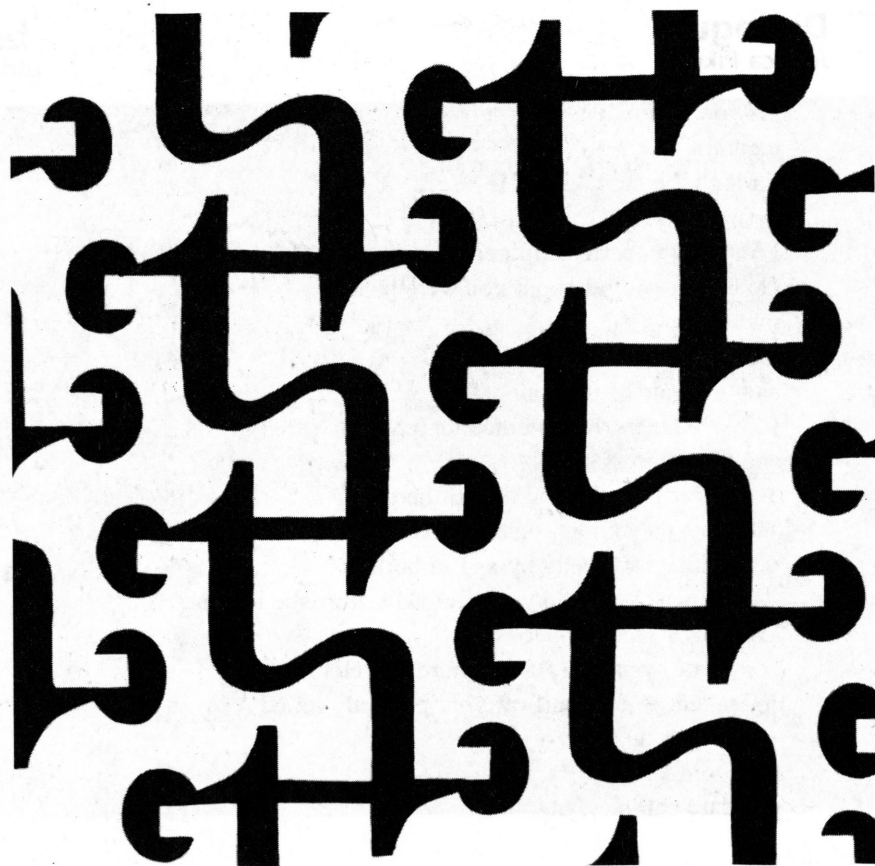


Dialogue

Jessica Pikul

As you swept that perfectly rolled
cigarette
through the hard, close air
between us,
I felt how imperious, impervious, impossible you'd become.
Goddamn you I thought you were better
than
that.
and the waiter asks you,
 "Where's your woman tonight?"
and the waitress stares
 as if I have no right to sit here
and now, they know something is wrong
 and pass quietly by as I'm boiled
 down to an empty sack of skin, from the inside.
and you sit, self-righteous
 with your acceptable future and clenched jaw
and take a perfect puff off your perfectly rolled
cigarette.
And you dare call me . . .
you dare call me that.

Untitled
David Niemiec

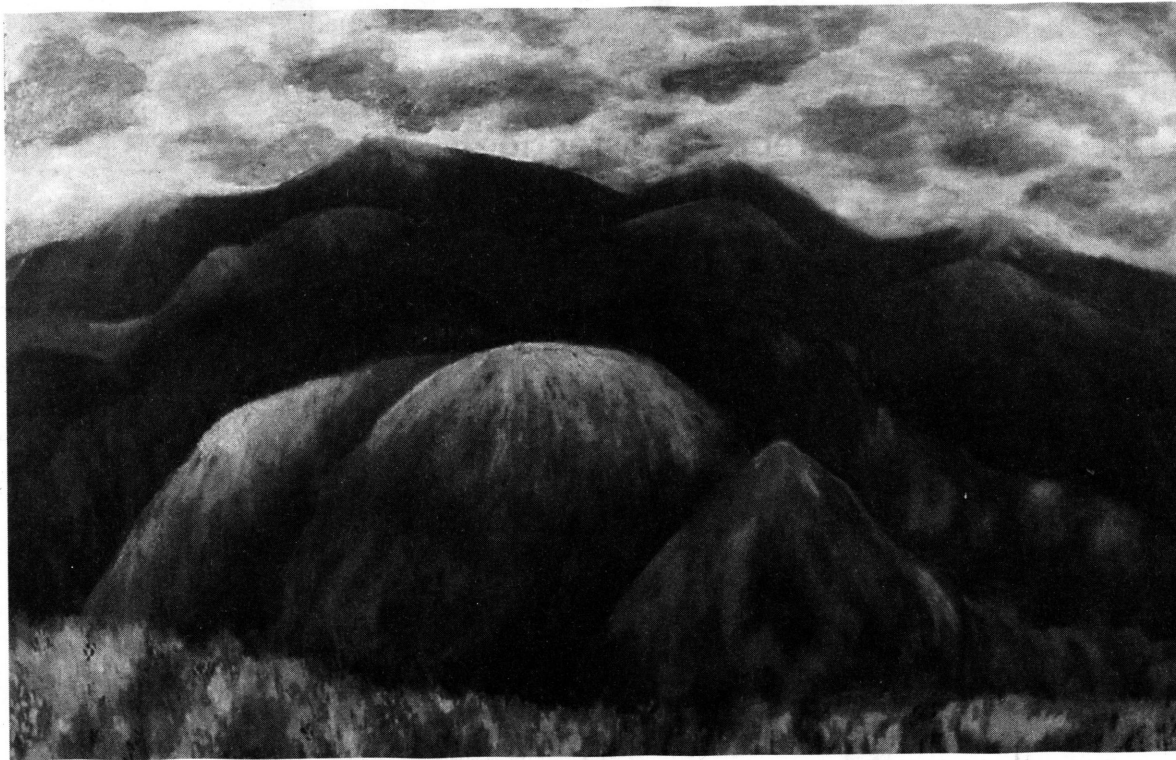


Cerebral Satisfaction

Rebecca Opstedahl

I hear the tings
music swaying in my ear
your body moving next to mine
I hear your breath
hot on my ear
deep rhythms
Cerebral satisfaction

Untitled
Jenni Sprenkle



Compliments, Contrast, Compromise, and Create

Jason Currie-Olson

Light meets Dark

Creates a Dusk

White invades Black

Blurs a Grey

Love confronts Hate

Provokes a Trust

Good combats Evil

Bears a Religion

Man confronts Man

Invents a Culture

Life replaces Death

Develops a Hope

Missing the Stars

Jason Currie-Olson

Step out into a cold, clear night
Looking for a sign of peace
Searching for a spot of light
To help make these doubting voices cease

Forever changing but always the same
Coasting across the endless sky
Most anonymous and without name
Watching people's lives go by

As many as the sands on a shore
Each the same but not alike
Never seen as the time before
Always missed when time is not right

Living in this quaint little town
I miss the quiet silence of the night
When perched on hill or crown
Pondering the stars and their quiet light

My China Heart

Katie Pavel

My heart falls
Like china to the floor
And shatters into pieces
When I see you now.

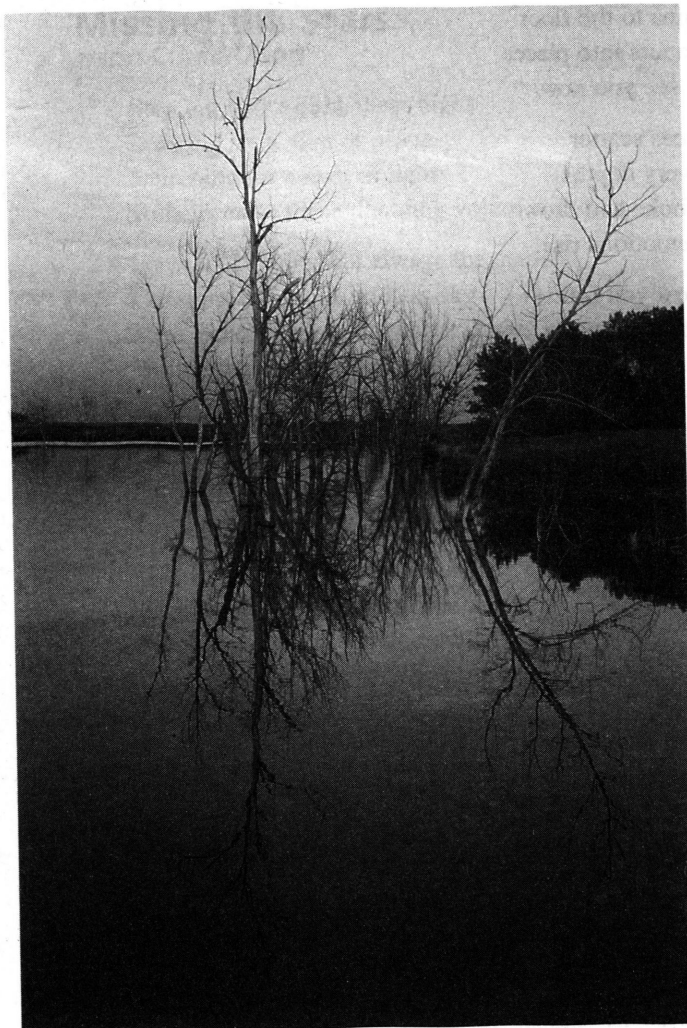
The pieces scatter
To my very depths
And I choke and drown
As my emotions rise.

I have lost you forever--
Somewhere between
 Friend and lover,
Somewhere between
 Trust and betrayal,
Somewhere between
 Joy and pain.
I won't ever find you again.

So I turn and run
From you, from me,
From what we had,
From what we lost.

And when I am alone,
I let all hope go
And tears endlessly fall
Down to my china heart.

Untitled
Joseph Ness



The Relentless Storm

Missy Menke

When do the shelters of the world stop holding up?
When does the torrential rain finally rip through the outer frame
and crush the softness of inside?
When does your soul break?
How much can one heart take?
How many hurricanes and storms until you completely was away,
'til you feel completely worn?
How much time do you have before you drown?
Time to realize you're slowly sinking,
Time to stop yourself,
Time for thinking?
What do you do?
How do you keep afloat?
Where do you find your life's hope?
How deep inside do you have to search,
Before the truth becomes unearthed?
How many times can you cry
Before all your tears just run dry?
What's the distance you can walk,
When you walk alone?
How far can you go without the *Lord* to call your own?
Without *Jesus* by your side with *His* loving arms as your guide
You'll search forever, far and wide.
With *Him* at last you can cast your fears aside,
Because *He* will calm the relentless tide.

The Hidden Truth

Misty Heemeyer



Revenge

Seth Volk

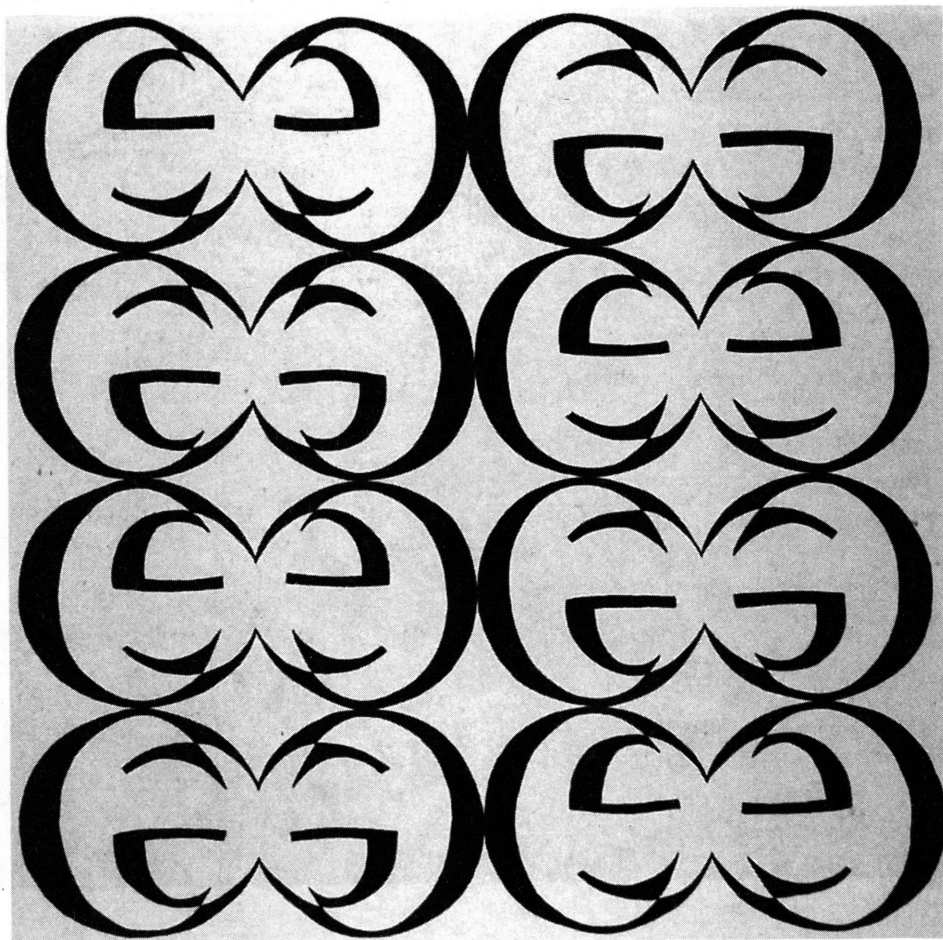
Of all the words in the dictionary
None could be quite as ugly as
Revenge
Sweet revenge.
Of all the motives of a man
Spend all the time that we have on
Revenge
Sweet revenge.
It takes two
To carry it through,
And when it's over one is standing
High
As a bead
Of rain
In the sky

That crashes

To the ground

Anyway.

Untitled
Austin Cragoe

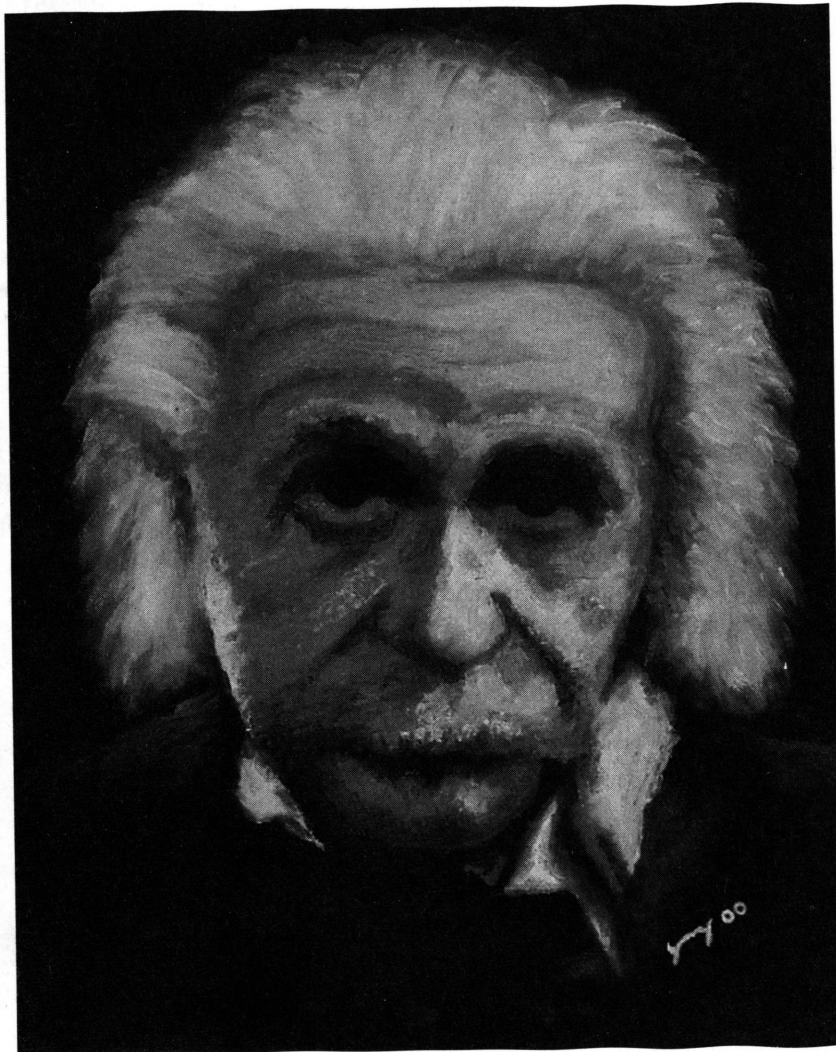


Sanctuary

Louis G. Whitehead

A ribbon
Winding through the shroud of foggy daybreak
The world, still cloaked in darkness
Passes unnoticed, yet unforsaken
Cocooned in steel, rubber, and glass
Anonymity is assured in a world where all know
No invasion of privacy, no interruptions
Deafening silence or rapturous melody, the choice is mine
Solitude or the comfort of company, also my choice
For a few fleeting moments
I am free to do and think as I wish
To compose myself and to plan ahead
Before the rat race beckons once again

Untitled
Bob Young



Shane's Room

April Myrick

His bed lies empty and made;
He hasn't slept there for two weeks.
His guitar sits lonely in a corner
of his room.

His aquarium bubbles loudly;
The fish have barely eaten in two weeks.
I sprinkle a handful of food across
the water's surface.

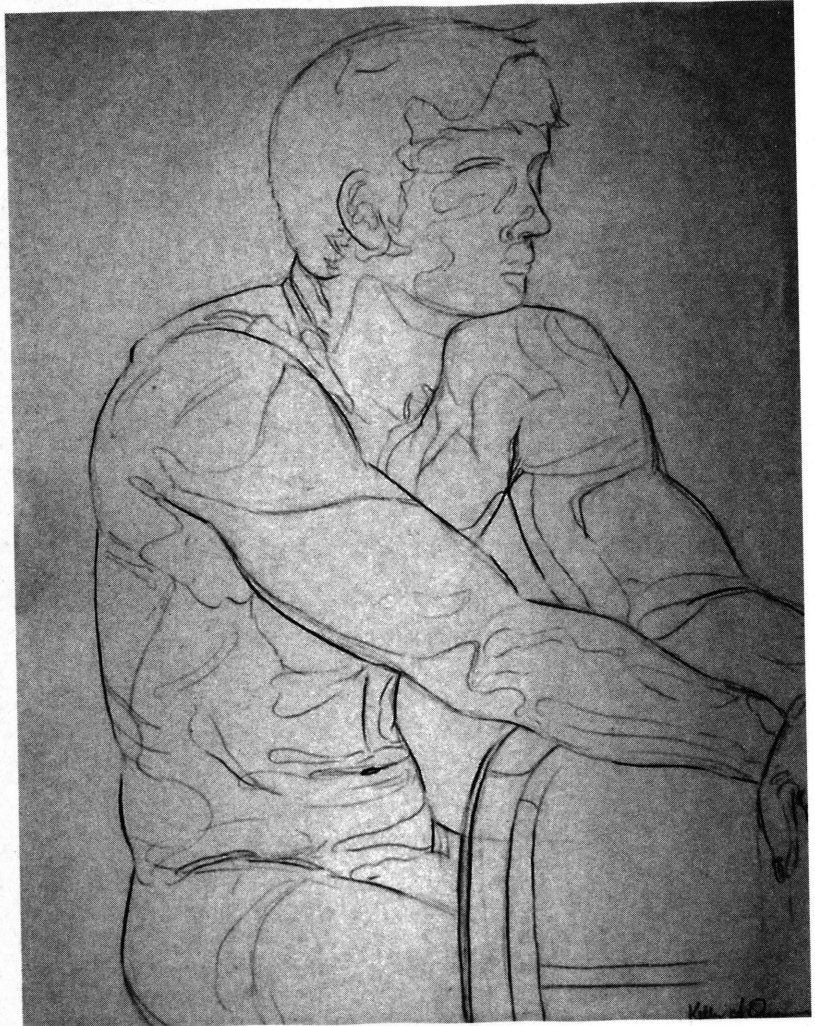
His beeper rests beside a box
of Camels and a mixture of loose change.
The spicy scent of his cologne lingers
in the air.

The notebooks I bought him for school
Remain unopened; untouched.

I am surrounded by a most deafening silence.

Figure Sitting

Kelly Quamen

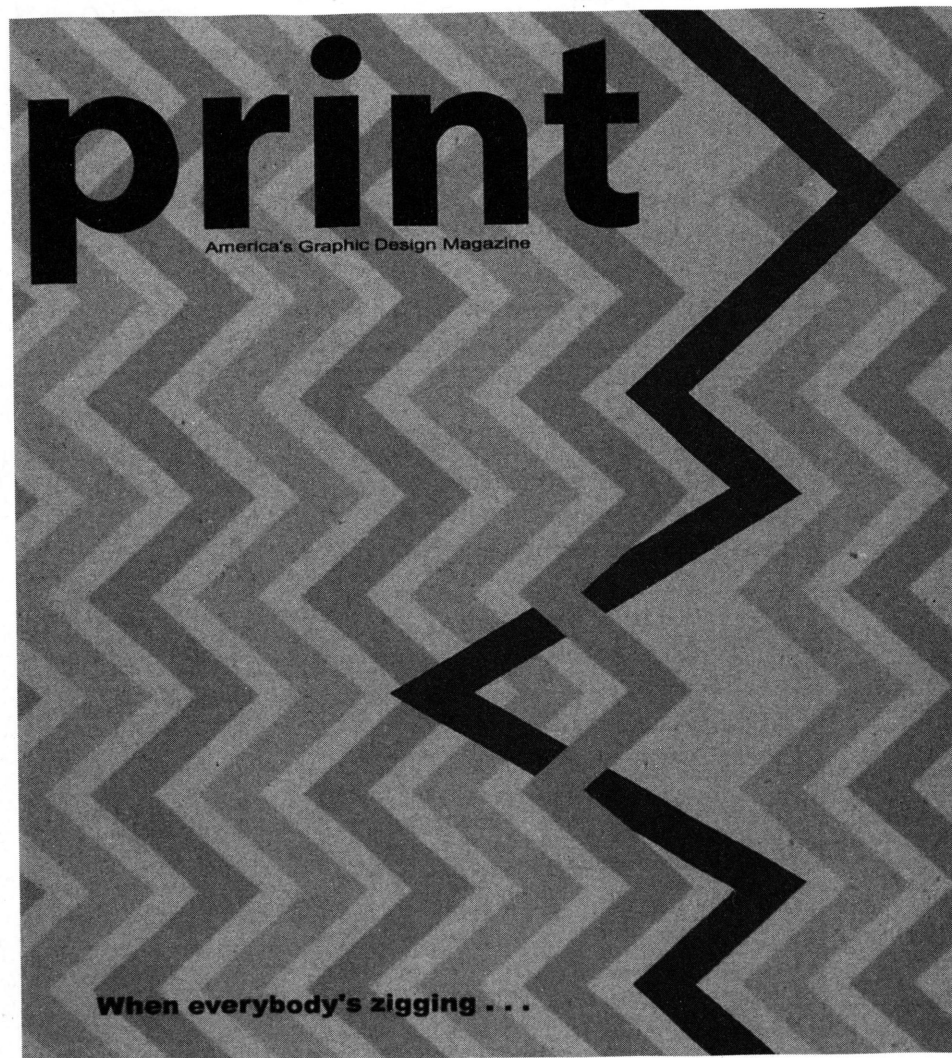


Skinny Girl

Michelle Selchert

She has no swing to her step.
skinny girl
Nothing swishes when she saunters.
skinny girl
She starves and works
for the "perfect body."
She thinks that she is such a
hottie.
skinny girl
Now she has it
and wants to work it.
But, there's nothing there to use.
Bony hips jerk clumsily
back and forth
skinny girl
Legs like a flamingo,
thin and spare.
Her arms no bigger
than a hair.
Her belly isn't a belly,
but so sunken that it's a bowl.
skinny girl
And the size 12 watches her
skinny girl
trying to saunter across the room.
skinny girl
And she curses her own
Womanly
Beautiful
Body.
What's wrong with this world
skinny girl?

Untitled
Justin Huyck



Snoworry

Sandy Buelow

Flittering

Fluttering

Sideways and down

Pure in its whiteness

Colored in its intentions

Will it be a blanket

To cover the brown dried grass

Will it be a hood

To disguise the tainted slippery ice

Impatience

Anxiety

Up and down

Burning in its fury

Knotting in its fear

Will she make it

Alive and solid

Will she never come

Dead and transparent

The Burning of Harold's Elevator

Nicole Lang



The Burning of Harold's Elevator

Nicole Lang



The Forgetful, Dead Rooster

Darin Halvorsen

I once saw a rooster with no head
named Rodriguez
at a circus sideshow in Mazatlan.
Farmer Luis tried to eat it once,
But he made thirty pesos more each month with it now,
not quite dead.
Rodriguez waltzed to a scritch-scratchy record of
"If I Only Had a Brain"
and Farmer Luis shoved a bit of maize
down it's throat
as a reward.
The crowd gaped and gasped and cheered,
awfully amazed.
I sat in silent wonder, neglecting to clap.
Rodriguez would never cock-a-doodle to the sun,
let alone see it,
again.
Oh, he might instinctively try,
but all he could manage would be a spluttering hiss
like a white balloon,
let go of before being tied.
Father's clinical explanation
of brain stems and nerve endings and unfeeling words
was wrong.
Rodriguez forgot to die.
He remembered years later, when he got diarrhea.
I didn't want the same thing to happen to me,
so I tied a white string around my finger,
just in case.

Today

Bonnie Phelps

I have you to stand beside me
Not to fix me or to hide me
Not to control me or to shame me
But just to gently guide me.

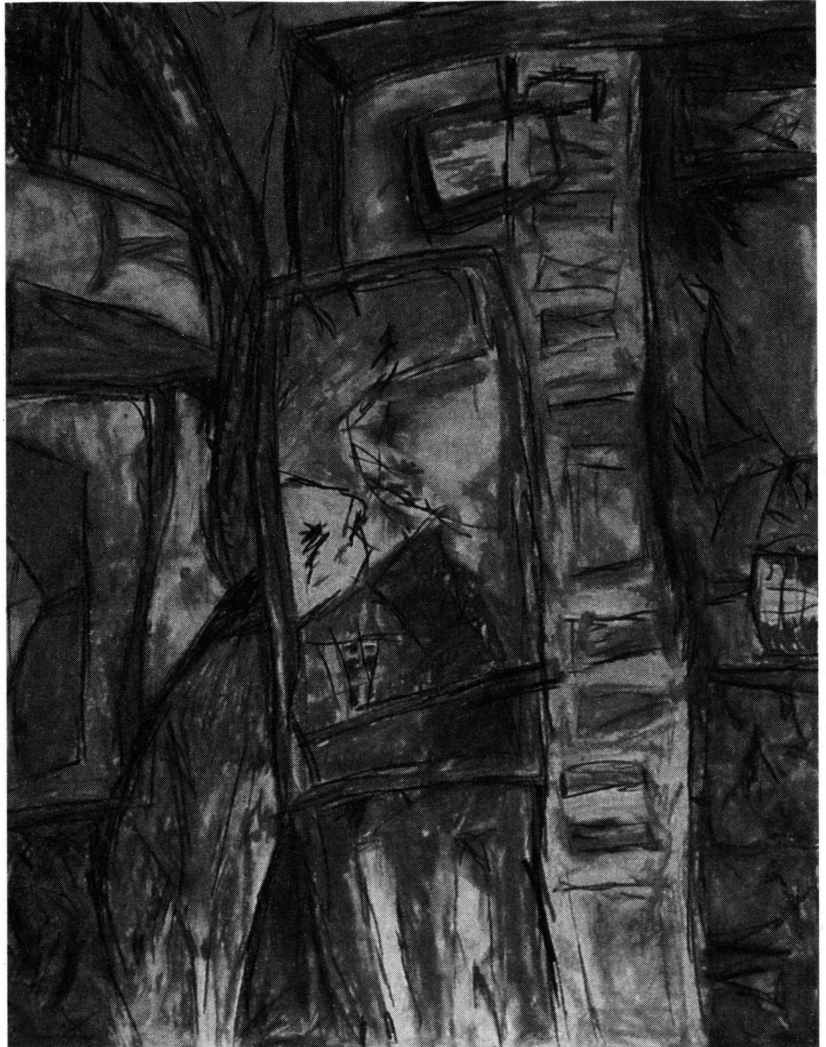
I have you to share my thoughts
To show my happy and my sad
To see my confusion and my glory
And rarely do you get mad.

I have you to hear my dreams
To divulge my deepest fears
To experience my sense of me
And to help dry the painful tears.

I have you to hold my hand
To lean on when I'm weak
To remind when I forget
And bring sunshine when I'm bleak.

I have you, but just for today,
Tomorrow may never come to be
Yesterday is already behind us
Today I have you, totally free.

Untitled
Jenni Sprenkle



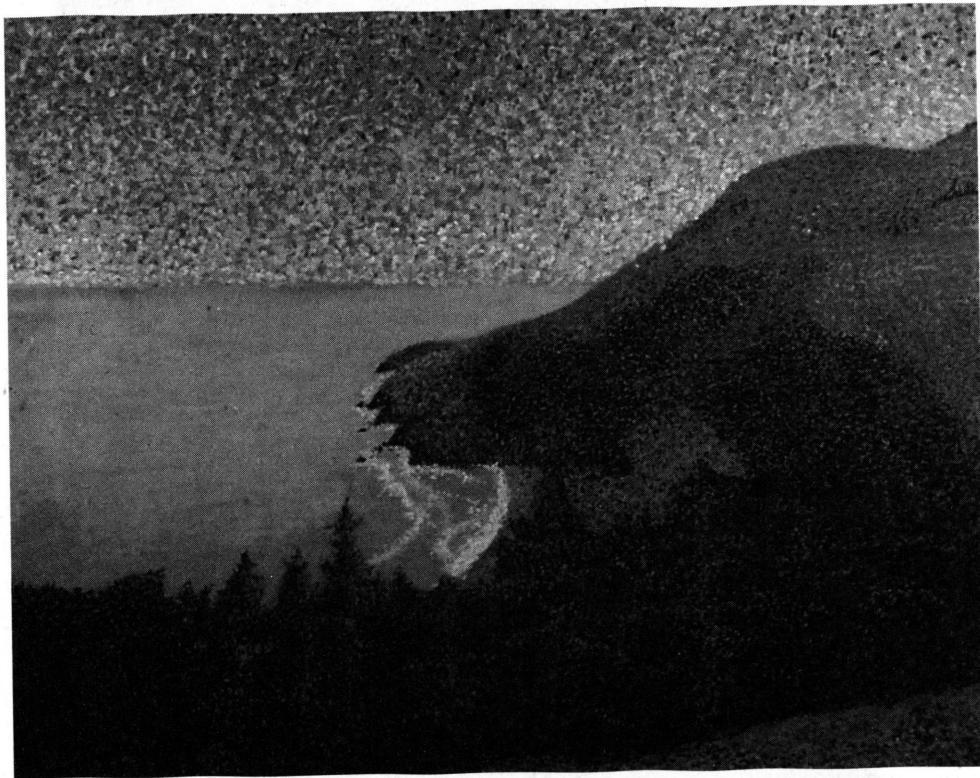
Storm

Rebecca Opstedahl

The waves crash upon the shore
Beach birds on the salty air soar
Black clouds to the west rise
Spelling for someone a certain demise
Across the expanse streaks of light
Air thick with fuel for a fight
Thunderous words sear the sandy soul
Everything and nothing given for the toll.

Untitled

Noah Hummel



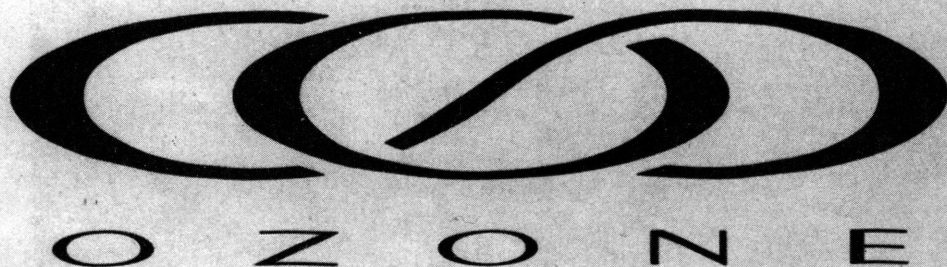
Two Minus One

Michelle Selchert

I was in the company of myself
again last night.
You probably don't remember,
but you were there.
I said, "I love you,"-
and reached to touch you,
but you weren't where you were.
Your face appeared, now
behind me.
I felt the pressure of your right arm on my body.
I rolled over to embrace you,
but you must've leapt out of bed.
For you weren't where you were.
You must've been chilled
for the sheets made me shiver.
Were you cold my dear?
You seemed a bit quiet and distant,
almost as if you weren't where you were
but somewhere far away.
What a laughable thought!
You were probably quenching a thirst,
or grabbing some warmth.
So I turned to my left
and there was your
embrace again.
Afraid to wake you
I did succumb to slumber.
I can't believe you
still don't remember.

Ozone Logo

Justin Huyck



Two Words

Katie Pavel

We're standing by my door.
Silence falls around us
As we realize two words
Are all that's left to say.
You give a little laugh,
And finally our gazes meet.
Your eyes get soft, gentle.
You move closer.
Your breath gently blows
The hair from my face.
I sway from your cologne;
I feel like I'm falling.
Then your arms wrap around me,
Supporting me, giving me strength.
I rest my head on your shoulder
As your chin moves so very close
To my forehead,
Brushes against my hair.
A still moment passes,
Although it seems like forever,
But not long enough
Before you step away.
Your hand lingers against my back,
And my voice catches in my throat.
Then you smile ever so sweetly,
Softly whisper those two words,
And quietly move away,
Into the night, the shadows,
Leaving only your memory behind.

Oakwood 2001

Rain Street

Paul Tollefson



So It Begins

Louis G. Whitehead

Summer rain,
Falling on the broad, white valley
Killing heat
Agony that won't let him stand, let alone walk
So it begins

Journey across town
As the sirens blare
Heart is beating, but to what drum?
Pain that won't subside
"Do something, please"

It's not the heart, but the elixir of life
Therein lies the problem
A little stick, a warm rush
On the way to another plane of consciousness, free-fall
Delirium

Time is running out,
And now it's up to him
Help, home or abroad
24 hours to go
Yet another corner has he turned

Wheelchair, van, wheelchair, plane
Hurling through the darkness at subsonic speed
What awaits on the other side?
Touchdown in the heartland
"Please, just get me there"

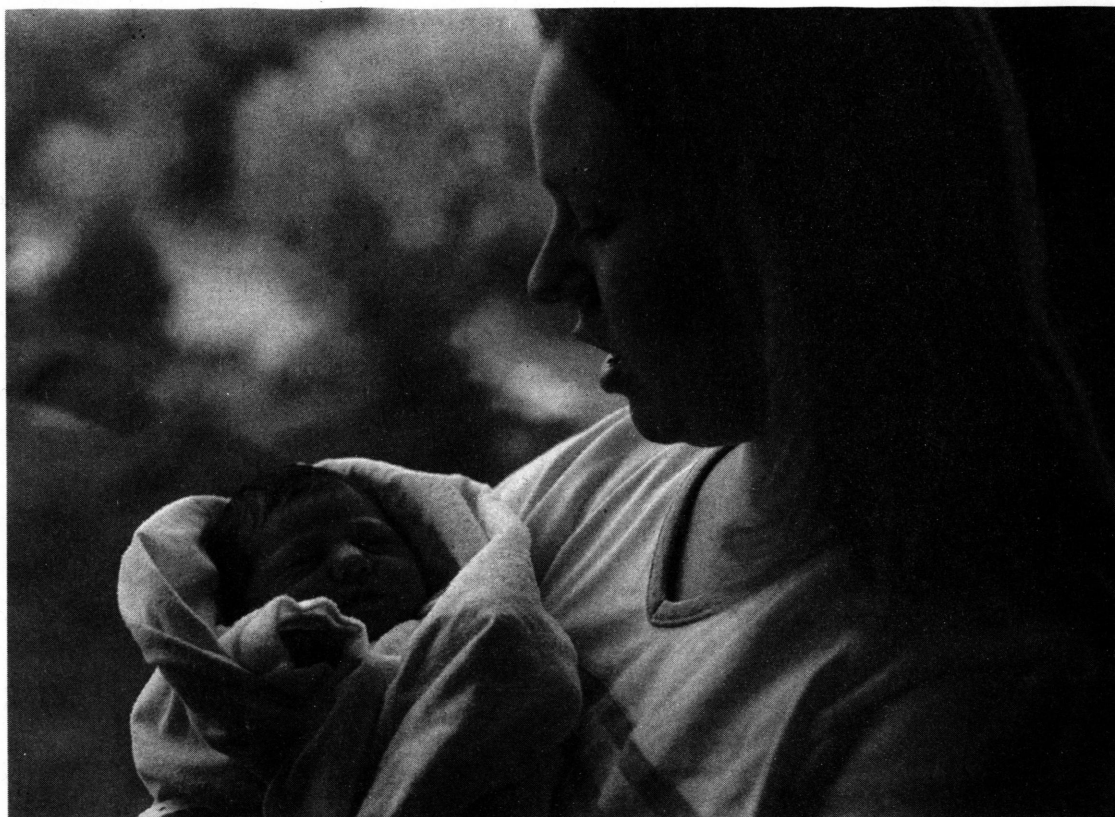
Destination reached, at last
That much he knows
Middle of the night
Voyage into a barren alien world
There won't be much sleep tonight

Awaken in a strange place
Still, the situation remains the same
They seek a specimen of his skeleton
Sewing machine precision and pain
He could have crushed the nurse's hand

Hours later, the truth unfurls
A week of poison, two fold
Is the only solution
If it must be, then it must be
Just get it over with

Second Chance

Sondra Fickbohm



Agnus Dei

Todd VanDerWerff

There are midgets on Maury Povich.

My life is falling apart.

My paper is falling apart.

My bed is falling apart

after I bounced it to pieces in a vain attempt to relieve the stress.

And there are MIDGETS playing the FIDDLE on Maury Povich.

The audience oohs and aahs

as if these midgets could save the world

from its inevitability

with their ultra jolly fiddle music.

This week has been such a bitch.

Maury claps a midget on the back

and talks about overcoming adversity.

I'm guessing he never attended my high school.

There's something so refreshing about being called

"faggot" first thing every morning.

Like the extra pick-me-up.

Who the hell needs Folger's when you're the laughing
stock of America?

Damn these midgets are talented.

Oh . . . one is SINGING now . . .

Maury is so impressed.

The audience claps and cheers, possibly forgetting the fact
that life is mundane

and a crap shoot

and everything is past our control anyway.

Or something like that.

We've built ourselves a beautiful cesspool of a world here,
haven't we?

Agnus Dei,

qui tollis peccata mundi,

miserere nobis.

Please.

Falling

Todd VanDerWerff

Lips burn skin.
Hair brushed into a pattern
of interrupted dreams.
My fingers dance across your cheek,
sweeping a bossa nova over your skin.
Falling . . .

Some things are inevitable

Snow outside my window.
Two figures trapped
fight the burning.
We are always falling into our private
incandescent snow globes.

The shadows of the flakes
caress the white softness.
The snow is hardening.

I can't get home to you . . .
Can't get home . . .
The ice is falling . . .
It's all metaphorical anyway.

Walking alone
I hear the geese in the sky
but cannot see.
They are trapped inside the clouds,
fighting to get home
before the cold can halt their beating wings.

Crucified

Missy Menke

One Tear

A tiny flood

A million sins cast away in blood

A single man amongst a crowd

An entire Nation corrupt and proud

A beating heart for all to see

One that was filled with purity

A cutting pain

A stabbing knife

A crown of thorns as his strife

A single nail inside his palm

How could the world have gone so wrong?

A dark sky

A thunderous roar

Love and hatred were at war.

In My Dreams

Kathy Troth

In my dreams there is a place where no pain or heartache is known
Rose petals with the feel of silk float on top of water
Which flows on top of sand which slowly sinks between my toes

In my dreams I am wearing a dress that floats around my body
Like a cloud of smoke, circling and swirling
My hair is long and changes direction with the wind
Engulfing each breeze, then returning to embrace my face

In my dreams the air is clean and fresh
My whole body takes it in deep to my soul, cleansing, renewing
The only sound is the soft sound of the waves hitting my legs, the sand, each other

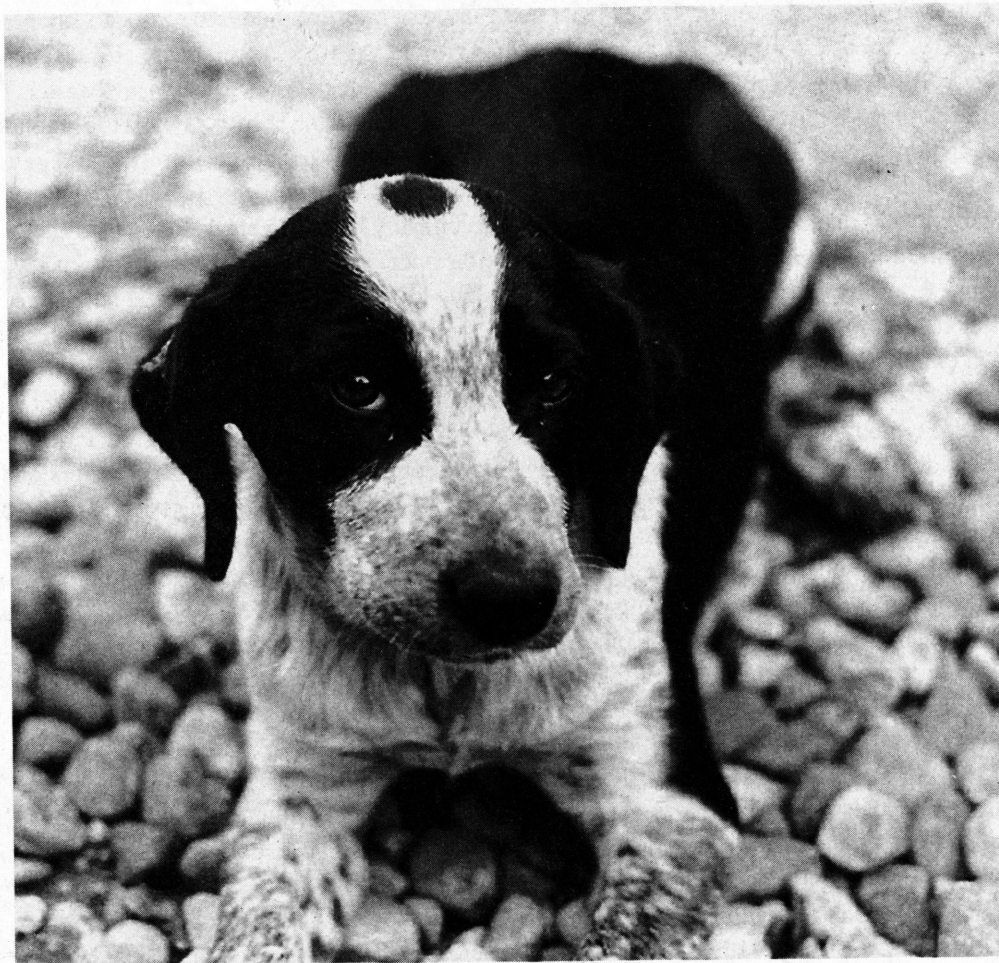
In my dreams he comes into view like a gentle wave
Slowly coming toward me yet flowing right through me
With eyes of love and compassion like mirror of his soul

In my dreams his arms are wide open like shields of armor
Arms that protect me from the outside harm and heartache
Hands that so softly touch my face and pull it to his chest
Hands that bring my body to his and hold me there for eternity

In my dreams we walk together in the sand
We make love on the rose petals
We become one with the water
Flowing together
Knowing each other
Now and forever

Cher

Stephanie Baker



A Ride in the Night . . . More than a Moment in Time

Abigail Sandbulte

Crunch. Crunch. The glistening leaves twist and shuffle, whimsically dancing beneath my horse's hooves. The air lies as still as a morning's frost upon a restful ground. As we near the patch of trees, peace floods my entire body. Soft glowing reds, oranges, and yellows consume the grove, and leaves dangle from the barren trees. As the strands snap, the leaves drape and swirl across the sunset sky. I settle into a cozy position upon the warm, fuzzy blanket beneath me. My horse and I breathe a deep sigh and pause in the tranquility of the atmosphere.

Only the small creatures of the woods and fields accompany us. Squirrels scurry across the ground, gathering food for the approaching winter. Off in the distance, a white-tailed deer stares with watchful eyes. Birds brush from tree to tree, nourishing the serene sky with playful chirps and sweet songs. Even as the sun departs to sleep for the night, the creatures rustle. I journey through the sublime grove of trees encompassing myself in the fantasy of the scenery.

My horse tiptoes through the grove over broken, moldy branches. Squeezing her belly tight with my legs, I maneuver my body under and along the stretching tree limbs. We weave like a basket. Patches of trees separate gradually as we reach a clearing in the grove. Through the aperture, stalks of corn stand withered and frail. Smells of work and must saturate the field. A lowly red combine rests patiently, awaiting the next harvest of heaping kernels of corn.

The shimmering sunset peaks above the edge of the stalks now. Shadows fall upon the trees, and leaves blanket the deep, dark dirt. My body falls backwards upon my horse and I lie watching the sky transform itself. The ocean blues and lilac violets intermingle the sunset sky. In the east, little nightlights slowly take their place; soft glows of light begin filling the night air. Small creatures still rustle through the leaves, but the pervading silence remains eerie and fascinating. Even a nearby train sends a faint whistle through the grove to awaken the tiring day.

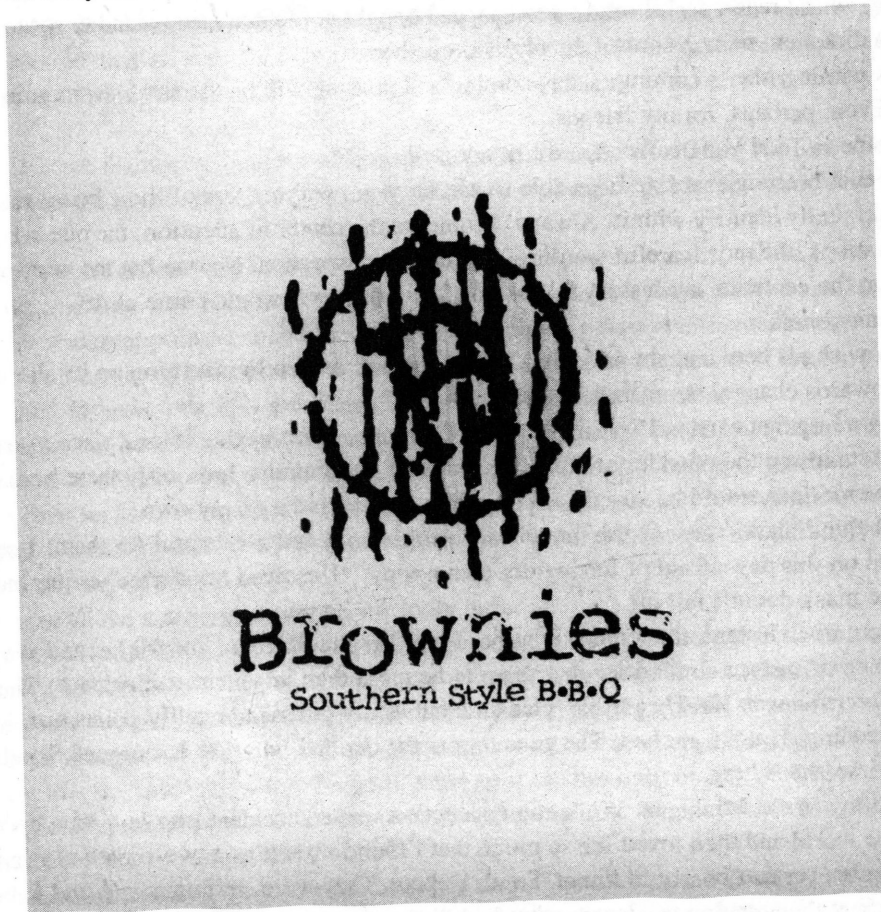
As if longing for dwellers, the remnants of an old, decrepit house still stand among the grove. I guide my horse around any shattered glass and rusted tin cans. My farm lurks behind the hills and valleys; a well-beaten path twists and winds towards the comforting abode. Before departing, I settle back into my seat and relax in the array of the refreshing fall night.

Glancing back upon my serene hideout, I take a deep breath. Scents of musty leaves and stale corn tickle my nose and throat. Slowly, I turn for home. With a gentle breeze, the grove seems to say its farewell. Leaves dance around my horse's hooves and the path winds farther and farther away. The diminishing grove becomes the background of a painting. Even as the fall and harvest come to a close, my night ride will last more than a moment in time.

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Brownies Logo

Wendy Rialson



Partings

Todd VanDerWerff

Anticipation grips me. I wait for the airplane in tightly clenched nervousness, my actions never betraying what I really feel. I read a newspaper I bought at the magazine stand to route the jitters in a different direction, perhaps out of the brain altogether.

She is coming, she is coming, she is coming and nothing will be the same ever again for me. For my family. Even, perhaps, for my friends.

My name is Todd VanDerWerff and I'm adopted.

It's been a greeting that I've been able to use for years without fear of there being many other people who could really identify with it. Always, I could be the center of attention, the one who received the most questions, the most careful wording, the most introspection. No one but me knew exactly what the hole at the center of my history felt like and very few ever would come close.

I had a uniqueness.

And now she is here and she is saying "hi" to me and the world is turning on its shoulder, spinning forever towards change, never to be the same.

We hug a hug that carries 19 years worth of emotions, all climaxing in one place at one time. My girlfriend stands on the outside, orbiting the center of our tentative love, only there because I was afraid the emotions would be simply too much for me to handle on my own.

I hide behind masks most of the time. Many people do it and it's natural for them. I can't help but put one up on this day, afraid of having my own weepy- "Unsolved Mysteries"-esque moment. I don't crack. The mask doesn't fall off.

And then, in an instant, the tension is gone. I give her the flowers I got for her and we share a sudden spate of surface similarities that seem to be more than just mere coincidence. She considers reading *Entertainment Weekly* a guilty pleasure, but as my girlfriend readily points out, I consider it required reading. Laughs are had. She goes to rent the car that will take her around South Dakota for the short time she is here.

I started my life in Michigan. While my conception was an accident, she loved me enough to bring me into the world and then loved me so much that I found myself as a two-month-old in the arms of people I had never met before in armor, South Dakota. They were smiling at me, and I, being a baby, smiled back at them, trying to discern what had thrown us together.

Thanks to all of this, it has become very difficult for me to believe that our lives are not guided by forces beyond our control. I like to believe that it's God, but you may believe what you like. For me, however, the coincidences stack up too mightily, the things that had to go RIGHT for me to even exist

are too myriad. There, perhaps, is a design to all things.

But on this day, when she is right here, chatting with me as the Sioux Falls roll on gracefully in the background, that all seems far from the center of my brain. None of it seems particularly important at this immediate point in time. It's all a far-off dream, a lost country, barely shrouded in mist.

Facts obscure themselves and we all engage in polite conversation when she meets my family. We tiptoe around the issues, my sister getting bored, only wishing to go shopping for shoes on this, my day of days.

Finally, we are on our way to armor, the town where I spent my youth, where I learned the lessons about love and hope and faith that make the world go round. The town where I saw my first heartbreak and disappointment and the town where I saw my first ebullience. It takes some time, the Interstate rolling along beneath us, the flat prairies disappearing to our sides. We have time to talk of things that happened long ago and where I came from. How I came to be.

My origins, as it turns out, are less rosy than I had hoped they would be. When I was four and I first learned of my adoption, my mother told me that some people had just been too busy to keep a baby, so they sent me to my family. As a four-year-old, this made perfect sense. But as my age increased, I found myself questioning everything and wondering what REALLY happened on that night in February of 1980.

And here all the answers are staring me in the face.

I have trouble asking her what happened. I can't find it in myself to confront this most basic question of human nature. I'm scared to know where I came from. I'm afraid that it's a lonely place, that somehow my humanity may be invalidated by how it all began.

She was young, only 20 years old and she simply couldn't see herself taking care of this baby, but she knew that she must allow it to be born, must let it see the light of day. And so, I came into this world. And after three days in it, I went to an adoption agency. Within two months, I was in another state entirely and I remember none of this.

My father had little effect on her life after my birth. The odds of me finding him are dim. His name is too common and he doesn't live where he lived when I was adopted. He had wanted to keep me. I don't know if this was an admission of latent love or latent guilt. I don't want to find out. I don't want to know anymore. The past can be too painful, can cut too deep for some people and I wonder if it may be this way for him.

As it is, I find myself wondering if I am truly a good person. If the facts of my conception somehow invalidate my life, somehow make me less than what I am. I question everything. I question whether what happened was meant to happen or whether it was just a happy accident. Whether it's actually worth it.

My girlfriend holds me tightly. She has stared into my soul enough to know how important this is to me and I can only bear my emotions nakedly to her. I can only take off the mask in front of her. I ask her to tell me I'm good. I ask her to re-affirm my belief in myself. But even her words of comfort are not good enough this time because this is a question I can only answer for myself. Have I truly risen above my roots?

And yet, as armor fades into the distance behind me, the asphalt lengths of highway growing between my car and it, the sun lowers on the horizon, catching the water tower for just a second, glinting beautifully. And I know. I know that the measure of a man is not in where he comes from or the circumstances of his life, but in how he lived it. And I'm happy with what I've done. I'm happy with where I've been. I'm happy with the friends I've made in my years in both armor and Brookings. I'm happy. I'm happy. I'm happy. It may be the first time in my life I can say that mean it completely.

She goes to the airport again to get on the plane to leave. To fly away back to her home and her children and her other life. And I look at her with wonder in both of our eyes, thinking of other things I should ask.

Suddenly, the emotions threaten, the mask clamping on tighter than ever and all I want to do is bawl over and over and over for a life I never had and the life I did have. I want to hold her and I want her to hold me and I want to never again have to answer the question "Are you mad that she gave you up?"

I'm not mad. I'm not mad. I'm not mad. This was the best. This worked out just fine. I'm glad for what I do have and hopeful for what I will get. It has been good and if you focus on the "what-ifs" they will bury you.

And she is boarding the plane, walking out of my life again, so I can resume living normally. I wave to her and watch the plane begin to taxi and join the mess of Sioux Falls traffic pressing for the Interstate, for Brookings.

I have many miles to cover and a lot of work to do tonight.

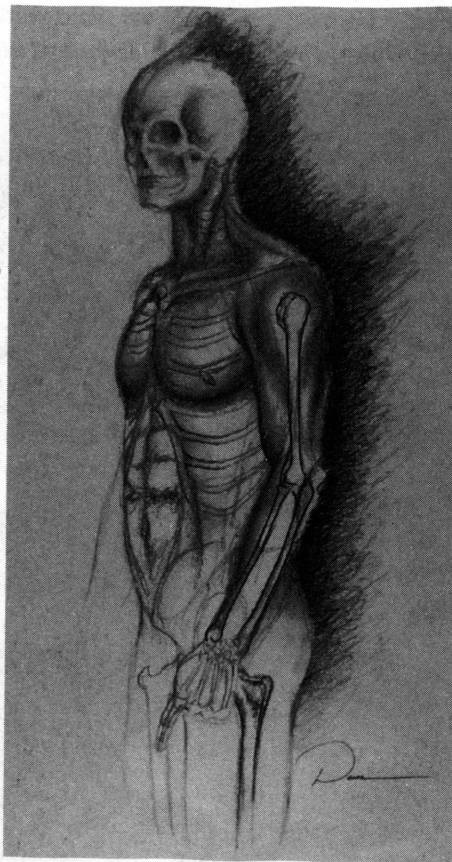
King Kong

Seth Volk



Tony Diess

Skeletal Figure



She stepped out into the rain with a sigh. At least it wasn't cold. She felt the warmth of her body, and the coolness of the rain was refreshing, instead of biting like she feared. The hood went easily over her head, but she struggled to zip her jacket. She was afraid she might breathe the cold into her bones and get that chill that never seems to want to go away.

She glanced up looking for her car. She could never seem to remember exactly where she parked. The light behind the clock of the Alumni Center stuck out in the night like a full moon that still has the orange color of the sun in its reflection. She didn't notice the time. It didn't really matter to her. It was probably getting late, but she figured it was still early enough for her to get some homework done when she arrived home. The only thing that caught her attention was the round, illuminating color.

She zipped up her jacket and a brilliant flash of an almost translucent image made her look up again. The web caught her attention. The rain seemed trapped on the barren branches of the tree and spun a mist-like web made of water that was dizzily circular. The street light made this web's invisibility apparent. The picture reminded her of a spider web designed on a bush, caught in the early morning. The sun shines behind the dew and the spider's secret lair is made brilliant in its natural surroundings. The thought of spiders usually abhorred her and always seized her with a paralyzing fear. She had once broken a radio trying to kill one.

No one was around to help her so it was up to her. She clung to the music with one hand while the other held the shoe poised for descent. "Hangin' Tough" by New Kids on the Block thumped in the background, but she no longer heard it. Just as she was ready to pounce, the gigantic spider jumped off the air conditioner. She snapped back in fear. All she heard was a crack and felt a lightness. She looked down at her left hand, still holding the radio handle, and then down where the radio was lying, almost whole, on the floor.

Even though this was not a genuine web, it was real. The brilliance dazzled her, and she set off slowly to her car. She wanted the image to last forever. There was a mystic quality to this unnatural web that brightened her path beyond what the street light alone could have done.

As she drove home the picture started to blur, and she became preoccupied with her search for the right song to sing her way home. She found Reba McEntire singing "I'll Be" and a vague emptiness filled her. "Some day," she thought as she hurried once more to play with the radio.

The bright orange headlight in the rearview mirror grabbed her attention. She tried to block it out by adjusting the mirror. Suddenly she saw glass refracting the dimmer lights ahead and explode in a crystallized web surrounding her. She snapped back, seized with fear. All she heard was a crack and then felt a lightness.

She gasped for air. The dark chill seeped into her bones and sucked the life out of them.

Stuck Between Sunshine and Snowdrifts

Abigail Sandbulte

The glistening morning light peeks through the tiny slits of the blinds lingering upon my body as if whispering "Get up. Get up. Share in my sunlight the essence of the new day." Grumbling and moaning, I lazily roll back over trying to block out the invitation and recollect my fanciful dream; however, the dream subsides and my tasks of the day persuade me to awaken.

I hesitantly crawl out of bed, straining to open my matted eyes to the overpowering sunlight. The nippy morning air sends chills through my body like a freshly plucked goose. Smoke-like puffs hover from my breath as I slowly and clumsily meander down the creaking stairs. The overwhelming sight of snow piled high, caressing our kitchen window, causes my mouth to drop in awe.

"Did I actually sleep through this?" I mutter to myself.

Although the night had foreshadowed the mountainous heaps of heavy snow and gusting winds, my deep, fanciful dream and warm, cozy bed soothed my body; I left peacefully, totally unaware of the severity of the storm. Just yesterday the sun had shone brightly across the Midwest, caressing the ground with its warm touch, no flake of snow in sight. Yet, the weather came as no surprise to me. As grandpa says, "You can never trust the weather in this part of the country. Oh, it will be warm and cozy to you one moment, but the next moment, it will slap you right in the face! Almost reminds me of a woman, always changing her mind." Nevertheless, into the closet I dig, scraping up any pieces of clothing that will prepare me to enter the silent, but disturbing cold.

After layers upon layers of protection, the frosty outdoors seem like a refreshing comfort from the hot furnace presently burning my entire body. Oblivious to the snow holding the door tightly shut, I naively run right into it. Several times I heave at the door like a battering ram, only budging the drift a few inches at a time. Finally the drift collapses enough to squeeze my plump layers through the petite opening. With one last grunt, I drop onto the heaping drift, noticing only the slight rip in my coat from the tight squeeze.

The air brisk and cold, I trudge through the drifts and climb over a dome of the more tightly packed mounds of snow. My hands and feet already sting from the bite of the air. Only fifty more feet until I can rest in the warmth of the old wooden barn before attempting to climb over the ferocious drifts with heaping buckets of grain. The sliding door cowers behind the drift towering over my small five foot three inch body

"Dig, dig, dig," I repeat aloud. "Come on Abby. You can dig faster than this!"

Yet I grow weary as only half the pile scoots away and the other half looms beneath me. The

time seems so long, tiresome, and chilling. Icicles form upon my eyelashes and nose hairs, freezing the sweat seeping from my pores.

Why did mom and dad leave for vacation, only to leave me alone battling the fierce weather by myself? Couldn't they have hired help? I sourly think to myself.

Thoughts of anger, frustration, and the need for warmth race through my mind, urging me to dig faster and faster. With one swift jerk and tug, the door finally breaks loose; I breathe a sigh of relief as the warm air hits my face and I scamper onto a bale to catch my breath. My body feels numb and weak. Should I go back to the house for a short while, or do I stay here and get right to the task at hand? I decide to rest, warm my body, and make a game plan to get chores done swiftly.

First things first, the horses need water. My numb fingertips grasp the bucket, and I let the water slowly trickle from the icy hydrant into the five-gallon pail. Knowing I could not possibly carry a full bucket up and down the drifts and over fences, I fill two buckets each half full. I struggle up the drift with only one of the buckets, realizing I need the other arm for balance. A drift's peak zips me down the other side on my bottom. The wind swirls among the drifts and blows loose powdery snow underneath my hood into my eyes. Flustered, I wipe away the droplets. Luckily, the bucket stays upright upon my lap and my neck warmer protects the rest of my face from the cold, wet snow.

"Come boys. Come boys," I call out like usual. Except this time my voice seems muffled from the agony of the cool air and my neck warmer.

As I near the pen, the figures rise above me, their hooves only just below the top strand of fencing. Recognizing they could easily escape at any moment, my heart pounds and I stand in awe. Still, their soft eyes warm me and a sense of sorrow passes through me as I stare at their snowy, icicle-covered bodies shivering; escaping does not concern them at all.

Barely managing to get the bucket upon the drift for them to drink, I stare watching their cold little noses sip the brisk water. I move from pen to pen, then back to the hydrant, then from pen to pen once again. They all get a chance to drink, and I hurry back to the barn to warm my freezing body and numb limbs.

Oh, how I wish I lived in California or Florida! The weather would sing like a sweet church

bell, never abruptly changing its sweet sound nor having an extreme motion in its swing. Only in the Midwest would the weather be so kind and then so harsh within twenty-four hours. Yet, Midwesterners depend on it so much. The sun gleamed and not one tiny snowflake fell upon the ground two days ago.

I sigh as I struggle to find the energy to finish chores, but remind myself only the grain remains. Up and down the drifts I go, stumbling and trudging through the snow. The drift topples me down its side again, and this time the bucket tips sideways and the grain scatters everywhere. Frustration and rage consume my body.

"I can't do this!" I scream.

Then I think back to the conversation with my dad.

"You can handle all the chores by yourself . . . even with the weather coming?" Dad hesitantly asks.

"Don't worry, Dad! I can handle all of the chores. It'll be a piece of cake!" I reply confidently.

Yah right! I regretted saying it. I wished my dad was doing the chores and I was merely helping him. Even so, my overconfidence revitalized and humbled me. I valued the hard work of my dad, my family, and of this community and region, the Midwest. Yes, the weather may seem so abrupt and harsh at times, but it always changes. The weather helps shape the identity of the Midwest, for the people remain thankful and continue working hard through all the circumstances.

I cleaned up the spilled grain as best I could and then shuffled through the rest of the pens. A smile cracked beneath my face warmer as I watched the horses eat their grain with satisfaction. Through my frozen body, I felt warmth. I had conquered the heaps of snow and nourished the hungry. Now just what did that weatherman say about an upcoming heat wave?

Lingering Chords

Kelly E. Ranvik

In the midst of buildings old and new, sprawling greens decorated with a variety of foliage, and students galore hides my favorite place in South Dakota. Located in the center of Lincoln Music Hall, the Peterson Recital Hall retains a rich musical and aesthetic heritage. Beneath the superficial details lie the features that make the Peterson a treasury of sensation and emotion.

Immediately I notice the scent of the Peterson Recital Hall. The vast room emanates the essence of history, nervousness, talent, and awe. Using this sense alone all but takes me back to past performances held here. The musty smell of aging instruments and worn sheet music hovers in the air. Residual auras of floral corsages as well as intermingling musky colognes and floral perfumes cling to my nostrils, tempting and teasing them. Unwavering beneath all of the other scents remains that of aging wood and tapestry, emphasizing the hall's longevity.

Once I become accustomed to these distinctive aromas, the feel of the room takes control. Inevitably, the contained air strikes skin in a tepid gust. Regardless of the building's central heating, the Peterson always seems considerably warmer than any other hallway or room. It is as though the spirits of past musicians continue to move and warm the room, even when left empty. Plush carpeting cushions and silences each step I take deeper into the hall. Dropping into one of numerous chairs in the audience, I feel at once relaxed in the soft upholstery.

Opening my ears to the assumed silence of this empty recital hall, incredulity follows. Every sound I create echoes and reverberates in perfect acoustical balance. The choppy, staccato ticking of a wrist watch resonates in tiny spurts of sound. The legato swishing of loose clothing or fine flowing hair float upward like mist in the moonlight sky. Concentrating within and ignoring the noises of modern everyday life, the lingering chords of musical performances past will begin to float into the ear and mind. The internal metronome of the human heart sets the tempo for each note. The music is held inside the walls, ceiling, and floor of the Peterson, showing itself reluctantly at first and eagerly over time. Building note by note, and instrument by instrument as Ravel's Bolero does, the lavish sounds of harmony and crescendos overtake every other dissonance. Hearing such complex composition and creation dizzies all other sensation, bringing into being the feeling of euphoria. As subtly as the music becomes apparent, it diminishes to nothing. Predicting precisely when the breathy sound will cease mystifies even the most fastidious listener.

Ornate architecture and interior decoration enhances the historic and spiritual feel of the Peterson Recital Hall, which parallels the electricity of the music made within. Crown molding so delicate it could have been carved by the tiny hands of infants frames the high ceiling. Simple banisters surround the choir loft, a feature rarely seen in performance halls of more recent architecture. Glancing skyward, soft light filters through a collage of stained glass. Each ray of light is dyed by tiny shards of glass in every hue, scattering around flecks of light like the tiny rainbows made by prisms. Combined with the pale saffron and milky azure of the walls and the multicolored ceiling, the hall takes on a surreal appearance.

Taking a broader look at my surroundings in the Peterson Recital Hall and combining the effects of each sensation, the seemingly eclectic mix morphs into a masterpiece of smell, touch, sound, and sight. The warm, arid air, faint aroma of decaying flowers, along with the vintage architecture make me feel like a member of past audiences for recitals and concerts. Perfect acoustics and walls holding onto lingering chords create a fantastic historical feel comparable only to the rush of actually performing. A profound aesthetic and spiritual experience washes over me as the minute details of the Peterson Recital Hall, and the legends they tell, enter my mind and body note by note.

Night Whispers

Rebecca Opstedahl

Lacy walked faster. There was someone behind her, she knew it. She could hear his heavy footsteps quicken on the rain slicked street. Looking around, she saw nothing but an empty street and empty buildings staring back at her. Lights were few and far between on this secondary street; Lacy kicked herself mentally for taking this short cut. Suddenly, the street was quiet except for the sounds of her panicked footsteps. She stopped hesitantly and looked behind her to face her pursuer. Expecting to see a haggard face smiling devilishly at her young flesh, Lacy saw nothing. Small glimmers of lights shone on the lonely street as trees waved at her with their green fingers teasing her imagination. Perhaps I imagined all this, she reassured herself. There's nothing there, there never was. Lacy turned to continue on her way only to find a hulking figure in her way.

"Lose your way miss?" a gruff, sexy voice asked.

"Um, no, um, I'm fine. I'm almost home actually." Lacy stuttered in surprise at the stranger's sudden appearance.

"Let me walk you the rest of the way. There are some real wackos out at this time of night."

"Well . . ."

"Look, I understand. You're uncomfortable with a stranger walking you home but if it were to make you feel better, I'll walk a ways behind you just to make sure you make it home okay."

"Why are you offering to do this?" Lacy quizzed, puzzled.

"I'll admit it. I think you're beautiful and it would be a shame if your pretty face ended up on a missing poster or in some second rate dumpster."

"As opposed to a first rate dumpster?" Lacy could see a rather dazzling smile break out on those sexy lips of this dark-haired stranger. Perhaps she could let him follow her home. She'd have her keys ready in case he tried to barge in on her. And besides, she was flattered he thought her beautiful. It wasn't everyday a stranger came up to her and told her that.

"Ok, just stay behind me at least 200 feet. I have pepper spray and I'm not afraid to use it."

The stranger chuckled as Lacy turned to go. He really did think she was good-looking and boy, did he love the way her leather pants curved and caressed her ass.

Lacy could see the light above her apartment door entrance. Her feet quickened with the anticipation of locking herself safe in her apartment. She turned to thank the stranger to find that he had stopped at a lamppost. He waved and she turned back around to unlock the front door. Shutting

the door behind her tight and racing up the stairs, she scrambled to find the key to unlock her apartment door. Once inside, she immediately secured the door and turned on a light. Lacy moved stealthily towards the window to check if her dark-haired stranger had left. He hadn't. He was still standing underneath the lamppost almost looking forlorn towards Lacy's window. His feet shuffled and he turned to walk down the deserted street where he picked a straying leaf off the sidewalk bush and preceded to shred it into little pieces as he made his way down the street.

Lacy turned to face her apartment and sighed. Hmmpf, what a night, she mused as a slight smile eased her tensions. He was rather attractive and it was nice of him to walk me home though," Lacy had been muttering to the rising steam from her bathtub when the phone rang, startling her. Stepping out the bathroom, chilled air swirled around her bare legs as she reached for the phone.

"Hello?"

No answer.

"Hello?"

Still no answer.

"Who is this?"

"Just making sure you're safely home."

My Fairy Tale

Catherine Schmidt

Fairy tales are stories that we read to children. They depict a life of grandeur, lessons, and everlasting happiness. My sister used to read these fairy tales to me and I wonder how they truly affected my life. Yet everyone's life is a fairy tale, in its own sort. My tale is just as colorful as Cinderella's, yet we do not read it to children. Fairy tales gradually expose children to the harshness of the world. Mine would only throw them into the icy depths to drown.

Even now, I look back on those years, and truly I wondered if it ever really happened. I know it did; I have those precious memories and mementos of that time. I know who I am today and that it is a direct result of those bittersweet years. Yet it seems so fuzzy at times. I try to remember that period of my life, the bliss our special friendship bloomed. My eyes cloud over, the tears I cannot contain. I hate that feminine part of me, that side of emotional weakness; yet, that was what he loved. I had such a hard exterior and still cherished those simple things in life that so few do. The smell of the Russian olives in the spring, the color of sunsets, the individual smells and sounds of everything in this life, I loved it all. Yet, I am getting ahead of myself, and I suppose I should start from the beginning. Forgive me for not using 'once upon a time.' It just doesn't seem to fit.

It was May 16, so many years ago, and I was ten. I was attending a birthday party at the roller rink. I loved to skate. I was such an outcast, though. I was a homely little farm girl with coke-bottle glasses and hand-me-downs. When the couple's skating would come on, I would continue to skate on alone, working on my form. I got quite good this way, turning axles and performing little jumps. Yet I was not content with this. I so wanted to skate with a boy. Sometimes, I would pretend that one would ask me, and we would skate so well that everyone stops to look on in awe. It was during one of these such daydreams that Jacob approached me. He was like me-Alone, with glasses and hand-me-downs. He couldn't speak, he was so nervous. He just held out his hand and said

"P-please?" I smiled at him and took his hand. It took courage, more than what I had, to ask such a thing. We took to the floor, and as we skated, conversation became easier. Jacob was a farm kid, like me. His birthday was on Valentine's Day, and he was almost exactly two years older than I. We talked about skating, and he complimented me on my skill. I squeezed his hand and smiled. Suddenly he pulled me to a stop.

"Ya' know what? I never even asked your name!"

"My name's Katrina. What's yours?" I giggled; it was funny we hadn't even thought of each other's names.

"That's a pretty name. My name is Jacob Mueller." Suddenly the color rose in Jacob's cheeks and he looked down at his skates. That's when I got the chance to look at him closely for the first time. He had shiny dark hair, and deep bluish-green eyes. I thought that maybe, without his square-framed glasses, he might be the cutest boy I had ever met. I squeezed his hand again. He was so nice and friendly! I glanced back at my friend's table. They were taking their skates off so they could go home. I had to leave.

"Jacob? I have to go now; my ride's leaving. Thank you very much for asking me to skate with you." I turned to leave.

"Hey, wait . . . why don't we write to each other, like pen pals?"

"Okay? Do you have any paper?"

"Well, no . . . but I can get some!" he darted off and left me standing at the side of the rink. He returned shortly with a couple of napkins and a pen. "Sorry, no paper, but this will work, right?" Jacob carefully printed his name, address and phone number on a napkin, and then handed the pen to me to do the same. We exchanged the napkins, and he left.

On the way home that evening, I sat in the backseat of the car awake as the other girls slept. I thought about that day, and reached into my coat pocket where the napkin was. Jacob Mueller—I smiled. I had made a friend today. Yet that was just the beginning and I had no idea what that first meeting was to bring.

The years flew by. Jacob and I wrote to each other at least twice a week. Soon the box that I kept his letters in was much too small. We met every year, around May 16, to visit and see how each other had changed. When I was a seventh grader, he took me for a walk in my family's pasture. He had contacts now, and he was beautiful. He had the gentlest heart of anyone I knew. As we would walk, he would pause to pick a flower or a leaf, and press it into a small book that he carried. He said it was a hobby, yet that it just might be what he wanted to do with the rest of his life. Grow gardens and such things. (I later learned that the proper word was 'horticulturist.') I had always been a bookworm, and had begun writing poetry. Oftentimes, we would lie on our backs in the cool grass, head to head, and look up at the clouds. Jacob would pick an ordinary thing, like a cloud, and I would make up a verse about it right there. After we had finished with this game, he would always squeeze my hand, and say, "Someday Katrina, you will be more famous than your beloved Walt Whitman." He always knew just what to say to make me smile. Especially when I was sad because it was time for him to go.

Another year soon passed, and I too blossomed. I traded my own glasses in for contacts, and Jacob was amazed. He would tell me that I was more beautiful than any other girl in the world. I could never

see it. When I looked in the mirror, I still saw that homely girl with the dishwater blonde hair and tin-gray eyes. I was becoming aware of my sexual self, and when the next summer arrived, I would find out if Jacob wanted to take the next step.

The summer I was fifteen, Jacob came to my house. He had a wild look in his eyes; he was so excited. He said we were going to pick out a car. He took me to a salvage yard, where we found a beat up '68 Chevelle Malibu Hardtop two-door. It needed a lot of tender care and a whole lot more work. Jacob was a good mechanic and welder; I could upholster. We had high hopes. For two months straight we worked night and day on that car. The Chevelle began to take shape. Jacob showed me firsthand how to tear apart a transmission, and how to tinker with that 327 until she purred. We cut out the rusted quarter panels and replaced them. We pounded out the dents, and ground down the new welds. It was quite an undertaking, and when I finally finished reupholstering the seats, I breathed a sigh of relief. Together we carefully painted on streamer-style pin striping in silver, white, and at Jacob's request, a bluish gray that matched the color of my eyes. I painted our names on the back of the car in script-Jacob & Katrina-then together we applied three clear coats. How that car shined, with the chrome rims and the light glinting off that new paint job. It was beautiful. Jacob smiled and said he had a surprise. He opened up a box that had been collecting dust on the shelf, and pulled out a set of personalized plates. JKSBABY the plates read. It dawned on me what it meant. Jacob and Katrina's baby was the Chevelle. It was a beautiful car.

"Katrina, if anything ever happens to me whereas I can't keep her, the Chevelle is yours." Even though he said it with such tenderness, it still hurt to think that anything could ever happen to him.

The night it was finally safe to drive the Chevelle without damaging the paint job, we took her out. We parked on a grassy approach, and lay together on the hood. I mustered my courage and asked him.

"Jacob, we've been together so long. Should we, um...?" I didn't quite know how to say it. Jacob kissed me softly and said,

"Sssh . . . , I've known for years that I'm going to marry you, and we can wait till then." He smiled and pulled me close. And with that, I was content.

Jacob always persisted me to date other guys during our times apart. I did, yet I always seemed to match myself up with guys that treated me badly. When Jacob went off to college in Brookings, I missed him so much. I knew there were lots of older girls up there, much prettier than I; and I was worried. Sometimes in the early fall, I would travel up to Brookings to see him. He would take me to

McCrory Gardens, just a few blocks from his dorm. We would take off our shoes and socks, and walk barefoot hand in hand. With the cool grass under our feet, he would show me the different rose, iris, and perennial gardens. He enjoyed his classes and liked to share his newfound knowledge with me. Oftentimes, we'd curl up in the crook of a certain weeping willow, and I would recite a poem or story to him. Once, as we sat in the shaded benches of the hummingbird gardens, he planned our wedding out loud.

"Here, Katrina is where we'll have our wedding. We'll come through the trees on opposite sides of the perennial gardens, and meet in the little archway. The priest will be sitting in one of those little side benches, and as we walk through, he will follow. There we will be married, with all our family and friends sitting in the clearing to the south. Katrina? Do you even realize that I love you so?"

"Jacob, be rational. We're so young. I'm only sixteen. It will be so long before I even am able to consider marriage. Aren't you getting ahead of yourself?"

"But Katrina, I know things. I know that there is only one girl in this entire world for me, and that it is you. You are the only one who appreciates those little things that I do. You're the only one in the entire world who acts so boyish and tough yet I know in your heart that you are so very kind and gentle. Please, if you date some other guys, you will see it as I do. Then you'll know."

Sometimes I didn't understand his path of thinking at all. High school life was hard for me. I didn't drink or party hard. Rather, I chose to write poetry and stories. There were no guys in my high school that I would consider dating. I began making friends in other towns, and I did date then. It was with one of these guys, that I made a terrible mistake.

I started seeing Levi in December. In ways, he reminded me a lot of Jacob. He looked a bit like him, and he was quiet and romantic. he drove a '78 Chevelle, which was terribly ugly compared to Jacob's. He was nice though, and I dated him casually, at first. I didn't want to get too serious, and I certainly didn't want to fall in love with Levi and hurt Jacob.

For a couple of months, I didn't hear from Jacob. He was very busy with his new classes and I began to see more of Levi. I really started to like him, and since I hadn't talked to Jacob in quite a while, I started to believe that I was falling in love with Levi.

February blew in on a blizzard and Valentine's Day arrived. Jacob showed up out of nowhere and dropped a bombshell.

"Katrina, you know that you mean more to me than my whole life. I love you more than the air I

breathe. I want to marry you. You don't have to say yes now, but take the ring, and when you're ready, put it on and call me." He closed my hand around the ring and I could feel the cool metal against my skin. He kissed me on the cheek, and I just stood there. I didn't, I couldn't, speak. Tears spilled out of my eyes. Jacob walked over to the Chevell, and opened up the door. He looked back at me, rubbed the back of his head with his cap, and sighed.

"You know Katrina, I'll always wait for you. I'll be there when you're ready. I love you."

I was torn apart. The loyalty and deep friendship I felt towards Jacob made me want to go with him; yet my stubbornness and my infatuation with Levi raced through my blood. I slipped the ring into my pocket. I would carry it with me until I knew. Yet I had no idea what I wanted to do.

After that, things started to heat up between Levi and I. He constantly asked me to have sex with him, yet I said no. He became extremely jealous. He didn't want me to talk to any guys, especially Jacob. I lost touch with my friends. It was always just us two. He made us inseparable, and it took its toll. I began to notice how much he really drank. He always had alcohol, and when he drank, he got mean. I don't know why, but when the beatings started, I didn't leave him. When we would hang out with his friends, he would accuse me of flirting with them, and later on that evening I would be punished. He was always so sorry when he sobered up. He never hit me so people could tell, either. I realize now that part of me thought I deserved it for being disloyal to Jacob. Maybe another reason was that if I had loved Levi enough, he would have stopped. Yet I couldn't, and he didn't. All in all, it didn't matter. I still stayed.

The reason why I left Levi is still a cause for nightmares to this day. March is a lion, Jacob always said, an icky month for some people. That it certainly was for me. Levi had been pressuring me for sex again. I said no, but he was drunk, and wouldn't take that for an answer this time. He hit me really hard and began tugging at my shirt. I said no again, and he slapped me. I tried to get out of the car, but the door was locked. He hit me so many times, and so hard, my head spun. I lost consciousness, and I can only believe that was a blessing. For when my thoughts went dark, I could no longer fight, or feel, and he raped me.

I woke up in my car. He had thrown me, and my clothes in the front seat of my car and left. I tried to survey the damage in the mirror. I could see I had a split lip, and I could see bruises forming. I was terribly sore; there wasn't a part of me that didn't hurt. I went home, and cried. After all this, how could Jacob still love me? I tried to pick up the phone, but I couldn't. I couldn't tell him, or anybody else. I just cried myself to sleep. I was a whore. God I was ugly, and I didn't deserve to be happy.

March ended, and April rolled in, cold and gloomy. I felt miserable. I hated Levi, and missed Jacob terribly. Yet after all I'd done, how awful I'd been, I couldn't call him. I had too much pride.

As April came to a close, a terrible realization came to me. I was late. I was never late. I took a pregnancy test, and it was positive. Fear flashed through my bones. My life was over. I didn't have options. I'd never go to school; I wouldn't be able to write . . . how was I going to do this? I felt so alone. It was Friday, so I called up Levi. I told him I needed to return some things of his and that we needed to talk. I asked if his parents were going to be around, and he said yes. I told him I'd be there in an hour. With his parents there, I'd be safe. He wouldn't dare hit me.

I arrived at his house a little before six. The garage door was open, and his parent's car was gone.

There is a little voice inside of us that tells us not to do stupid, dangerous things. This little voice was very loud and urgent as I rang the doorbell. I ignored it and waited for Levi to come to the door anyway.

Levi came to the door and let me in. I went into the living room and sat down on the sofa. I gave him back his letter jacket and his class ring. He grumbled a thank you, and that's when it began.

"What the hell do you want from me now? Want to come back, you realize you miss me?" I suddenly became aware of the smell of Jack Daniels. It permeated my nostrils as he came across the room. *Oh my God, he's drunk.* The voice came back into my thoughts. *Leave! You have to leave! This is dangerous! You know what he's like when he's drunk.* I ignored the voice and pushed the frightening memories to the back of my mind.

"Levi, something has happened that I think you should know about . . . I'm pregnant."

"What the— You're gonna try to feed me that crap? It's obviously not mine, you little whore. That one time wouldn't be enough. You screwed your wonderful Jacob, and he won't have anything to do with you because you're a little slut and so you've come crawling back to me. Is that it?"

"No Levi, you're definitely the father. There was no one else. You raped me and now I'm pregnant with your child. What are you going to do? Be a man and help me, or are you going to act like a child and throw a tantrum?" My eyes flashed. I let my anger and my hate get the best of me. Suddenly I realized that I had made a terrible mistake. I had given him a reason to get mad. Jack Daniels became pungent in the air as he stepped closer. My heart stopped, I knew I was in trouble. I looked towards the door, and felt the blood rush to my feet. He had locked it!

"I'll help you, sweet Katrina." His words were slurred, and he looked possessed. "I would love nothing else than to help you in this difficult time." With that he leapt at me. I made a dash for the

door. He tackled me and I crashed into the brick floor of the foyer. I felt the Jack Daniels bottle crashing down on my head. It all happened so fast. All the anger inside of him found a focal point, me, my baby. He threw me against the door. I screamed and he laughed insanely. He began hitting, kicking and hurting me in every way possible. He molested me with the broken neck of the bottle. My nose was bleeding, my head pulsating and every part of me ached. He was kicking me in the abdomen when I reached up and turned the deadbolt. I fumbled for the doorknob and thanked God when the door swung open. Somehow I made it to my car. As I tore out of the drive, I could hear him screaming.

"That's what whores get, Katrina! That's what you get because you're the worst of them all! I hope you die!"

On April 30, at approximately 7:35 p.m., Katrina Mueller was admitted to the Emergency Room. When asked whom to contact, I gave them Jacob's name. There was no one to turn to but him. I was lying in bed when he rushed into the room.

"Katrina! Oh my God! Who did this to you?" I knew the damage. I looked terrible. My face was swollen, and I had twelve stitches on my head from the liquor bottle. I was bruised all over. I had four broken ribs. Yet, there was more, I was cut all over; Levi had done unspeakable things. My eyes filled up with tears as I saw the pain in his face. "My sweet Katrina. My love, why didn't you come to me?" He took my left hand in his; my other one was bruised and swollen because Levi had ground his foot atop it. "They said you lost the baby . . . What baby, Katrina?" He looked so sad, so betrayed.

I started to sob. All my life he had been there. I had pushed him away, yet here he was now. I told him the story, all of it, and he cried with me. My heart broke; I had hurt him so.

"Jacob, in my coat pocket." He went over to where my coat was slung across a chair, and reached into the pocket. There was his ring, in a little twist of tissue. I had carried it with me always. "I'm sorry, Jacob. I know now that I love you, with all my heart. I've made so many mistakes. Jacob, I can't have children now, because of him. He stole everything from me, and because of him, I've lost you." I started to cry again.

"Katrina. You never lost me. I love you with all my heart. I'm not taking this ring back, I'm putting it right back where it's always belonged." He slipped the ring on my finger, and kissed my bruised forehead. He looked into my eyes, and I knew exactly what to say.

"Yes, Jacob, I'll marry you. May 16, one year after I graduate."

"Oh Katrina, I've prayed to hear those words for such a long time." He smiled and laid his head on

my hand. He stayed all night.

For the first time, in such a long time, I was truly content.

May arrived and life was wonderful. I was healing. Jacob had given to me his precious book of pressed things for my birthday. Soon he would be coming home from school to see me! It would be the beginning of our seventh year together. The date was Friday, May 15. Saturday we were going to go skating, like that first time, seven years ago. I had never been happier.

It was almost nine o'clock at night when I got the call. It was Jacob's mother. Jacob had been driving home from Brookings, and had been passing through a blind intersection. As the Chevelle neared the middle, a car came shooting through from the east. A young teenage girl was late for curfew and was speeding home. She didn't stop at the signal, and Jacob didn't see her until it was too late. Her car struck the driver's side of the Chevelle, killing Jacob instantly. The airbag saved her. The Chevelle was totaled, and my life was over. I had nothing left, not my love, or the beautiful car that we had built together. My memory turned to Swiss cheese and the world came to a halt. It just stopped when I started to scream.

For a long time after that, I dreaded Valentine's Day. When Jacob's birthday rolled around that first year, I mourned. I skipped school and spent the day in my room. When Jacob died, I had taken his ring off and put it away. I had long since forgotten where I had put it. I was going through his letters, looking through his pressed plant books, crying and mourning my love. There was a pasque flower that he had picked five years ago with me. I came across a letter that I had never opened. He had given it to me, the year we rebuilt the Chevelle, and told me never to open it, unless something had happened to him. I ripped the envelope open. I started to shake when I smelled his cologne on the letter. I pressed the paper to my nose. The memories flooded back so vibrantly that I barely heard a small object fall to the floor. I shook as I began to read his sweet handwriting.

My dear Katrina-

My beautiful poet-If you are reading this then it means that our time has come to an end for now. I am writing this so that in such an event, you will be comforted.

Please know that I have always loved you so-Nothing could ever change that. I never meant to cause you any pain or heartache, yet we both know that it is a part of life we have to deal with. I hate to think that I have left you for a while, but that could never really be true. From that first day I

met you, I knew you were going to be that special something in my life. I love you so, nothing could ever really keep us apart. I suppose you see that now. Please don't be sad, my beautiful girl. I am so proud of you You are my poet; I am your muse. Think of me when you write. Write something for me. There's nothing in this world that you cannot do. I truly believe that with all my heart. Never, ever stop trying, my Katrina.

I will never truly leave you. There will always be a part of me in you. Please remember that!

I will wait forever for you, as I always have. You are my one soul mate. Someday we will be together without the complications of the past. In that you can hope and believe—

Always My Heart, Soul, and Love,

Jacob Karl Mueller

My eyes overflowed with tears, and I struggled with all the pain and grief in my heart. I went to lie on the floor, yet something poked into my side. I sat up, and looked down at the annoying little object.

There it was, Jacob's ring, as beautiful as ever. I slipped it onto my finger. Even though I felt so lost and empty, I was happy.

Jacob was with me still.

- Even now, I wear that ring faithfully. It is a constant reminder that somewhere, there is someone who loves me for whom I truly am. It is again the early fall, and I write this nestled in the crook of a weeping willow in McCrory Gardens. I'm sure I must look quite absurd to those passing by, scribbling in my notebook, and talking to myself. I have to smile, and laugh a bit, because I know he would. Sometimes I sit and watch, and in the evening, there comes a peace.

My memory slips back, and my eyes cloud over. I slip off my shoes and walk through the cool grass. And sometimes, if I open up my heart and listen carefully, I hear him yet. Through the weeping willows, in the hummingbird garden, he whispers:

“My beautiful Katrina. I am always with you, and I love you still . . . “

And there, is where this ends. I am content to live happily ever after, by all rights. Even though not all fairytales end the same way, and I might be lonely; I am content. Someday I shall see my prince again.

The Bathroom Mirror

Amy Dangel

First Place Poetry

Freeman Jr/Sr High School

Positioned in front
Of the mirror
In the bathroom,
My grandmother
Fixes her hair.
Her two aged,
Wrinkled hands
Tug on the small,
Pale blue comb.
The snug curls bounce
Back into place,
Like a frog's tongue
Capturing a fly.
Strands of gray, white,
And a hint of dark brown
Merge with the comb
Of every curl.
One last stroke and the
Comb is placed on the edge
Of the porcelain sink.
Her fingers run through the style,
And a fine mist of spray
Lies gently on top as
A loose curl is patted
Back into place.
She smiles at her reflection
And walks gaily
Into the kitchen.

H I
G H
S C H
O O L

Ziggy

Kathy Waltner

Second Place Poetry

Freeman Jr/Sr High School

Built by Grandpa Waltner,
our new zebra swing hung,
suspended by three yellow ropes.
A thin, wooden board supported your animal-like head.
Handles extended for ears,
and with eyes glancing downward,
patchy sprouts of hair flaunted your modesty.
Black and white zebra-striped paint brought you to life.

As the youngest,
my brothers had broken you in . . .
made you comfortable.
The seat, now conformed to a child's body, dangled.
Satiny . . .
smooth . . .
Slivers and splinters-
not a concern.
You had aged well.

You unleashed my imagination,
transforming me.
In the summer,
to the jockey of the greatest racehorse . . .
In the winter . . .
to the rider of the wildest bucking bronco . . .
the snow cushioned my falls.

Then . . .
as I mounted your wooden seat,
your back end fell from my tiny body . . .
falling . . .
falling . . .
and that was the end of you,
Ziggy.

Paint

Louisa Dominguez

Third Place Poetry

Douglas High School

Paint me a face that looks pretty and clean

A tidy angel polite and pristine.

Paint me a mouth that speaks what you want to hear.

Paint me selfless and concerned on my two little ears.

Paint me eyes that are two little stars

That slide out of view

When they are not focused on you

But please understand that

I am not you.

Doll

Heidi Jo Mayer

First Place Prose

Doland High School

There are bars of white light burning through the gaping fissures between the splintered and warped boards. The strips of light stretch across the dimness creating contrasting stripes of light and dark across the huddled mass. We are a strange group, ranging from merchants to doctors, from the young to the old . . . all proof that hatred is blind and not meticulous in choosing its victims.

It is cold here upon the rails. Somewhere beyond the rumble of the engine, I can hear the wind. Somehow in this lightless catacomb where only the dust dances—I have lost all sense of direction. I close my eyes and listen for the wind. It is out there—out in some snowy valley or icy plain sculpting the clouds into transparent figures in the Heavens. There is a small girl huddled in a corner against the wall. Clutching her knees to her chest, her small hands grasp at the hem of her worn skirt. I wish I had a doll to give her. A beautiful doll with golden curls and a painted china face. The girl rests her forehead on her knees and long strands of dull, brown, matted hair hang down past her cheeks. I bet a few months ago she had beautiful hair. I cannot see her face; she is looking downward, her figure limp and anemic. Perhaps she is dreaming. I hope her dreams are beautiful. Perhaps she is, in her heart at least, out there in the wind helping to paint the clouds. I pray so. “Give her a doll, Wind,” I whisper almost inaudible into the shadows. My words make little white clouds in the chilled air. Painting clouds.

There are many people in this cursed train, an assorted crowd of every age and occupation. It makes little difference here in this land of Venom. Venom is named Nazi. The Venom stings. It poisons dreams and steals spirits. We once had names and faces. The names have been forgotten and replaced with numbers. Horror has only one face and that face has replaced many individual features. Many things have been replaced. Our cities have been replaced with concentration camps and our families with empty arms. The fiery golden stars of night have been replaced with dull yellow patches on every article of clothing we own. And dirty hems have filled the hands of little girls where golden-haired dolls should have been placed.

The train slows and we brace our legs against its jolts. It stops with a sickening screech. We grope at each other, clutching hands and shoulders and memories. There is still some fire here, still some spirit that has not yet been stifled by gas chambers and agony. That spirit surfaces in our eyes and from that fire tears flow. When we all have grown hard as stone and our hearts beat with bitter repulsion, it is the tears that keep us human. The doors open and we squint into the gray light. Two dark-eyed soldiers stand enthroned

in a background of bleakness and barbed wire. They clutch cold, black guns as if the weak malnourished population before them could fight—how does one fight when he is struggling to walk?

I am at the end of the line. I turn to see the little girl still huddled in the corner. I duck back into the shadows and make my way back to her. I look at her a moment. She has tiny hands and tiny wrists . . . her skin is so pale . . . so very pale . . . almost white . . . like china. China doll. Painted china doll. I inch to her silently and brush the hair from her face. Her face is cold. Cold like death. Venom's cold death. I kiss the top of her head and shuffle back into the line. I watch as a soldier yells at her to stand and then kicks her when she does not move. She crumbles to the floor. The soldier tosses her over his shoulder and carries her to a spot by the fence and lets her fall to the frozen ground. The wind is sculpting the clouds, painting the Heavens . . . I pray someone up there gives her a doll.

Fake

Jacki Schaffer

Second Place Prose

Redfield Public School

Captain Mikayla Lusky entered the conference room and took her place at the head of the table. She looked at each of her subordinate officers and tried to analyze their thoughts. Lieutenant Rockeneimer fidgeted in his chair as he felt the heat of her gaze. *He's nervous about something*, Mikayla thought to herself, *I wonder what's going on*. The captain's gaze shifted to the person to Rockeneimer's right, the engineer, Pelphi. Pelphi fit the Old Age description of an alien to a T. He stood at about 5'2" tall, large head, almond shaped eyes, and green scaly skin. *I remember the day he came onboard*, she thought, *everyone called him The Little Green Man*. We picked him up at the Pinturo Station, one of my first encounters with the Pinturo people. Pelphi, too, was beginning to look quite uncomfortable.

"Ok, boys, enough sittin' on our thumbs, what's up?" Mikayla asked impatiently.

The two men exchanged uneasy glances with each other. Rockeneimer cleared his throat, "Um, Captain . . . there seems to be a problem."

"Well I figured that much by watchin' you two squirm in your chairs. Now, exactly what IS the problem?"

It was Pelphi's turn to speak. "We have com into contact with an unknown energy source attached to the hull of the ship. We've already done numerous tests and have yet to determine what the source is, and how it penetrated our shields to attach itself to our hull. So far, it has done no damage, or caused any benefits. It seems to have established a symbiotic relationship with the ship, but what exchanges are going on, we have no clue. There seems to be no atmospheric alterations in the forward cabins, or any electricity shortages or abundances. Our conclusion is—"

"Your conclusion is that you have no conclusion," the captain interrupted, "All you know is that there is some foreign object attached to our ship that you THINK is an energy source, but you really don't know, do you?"

Rockeneimer mumbled, "We-ell, Ma-am . . . from what we have ma-anaged to observe uh-of our specimen, w-we th-think—"

"Stop your stuttering, and just say what it is you're trying to say! Wait, nevermind, don't even try to

finish, neither of you know what you're talking about anyway. I'm going back to my bunk, and before you call me again, you had better make very sure that you have some useful information. Don't just tell me that we have a problem, tell me what exactly the problem is, and how we rid ourselves of this problem. Thank you gentlemen, for ruining my evening. Goodnight." With that, Captain Lusky spun on her heel and moved toward the door. Just as she was about to pass through the doorway, the captain was thrown violently across the room.

Rockeneimer and Pelphi watched in stupor as their captain struck the window wall and fell to the ground near the conference table. The two officers rushed to her aid, but stopped dead in their tracks when her face came into view. Carved across her forehead in a crude handwriting was the word *fake*. Not only was this weird because of the fact that no one had touched her since she came into the room, but also because they had seen her face not ten seconds before, and there was no word spelled out on her forehead. The letters were not written with any kind of writing utensil though; they were carved directly into her skin!

The men exchanged hurried glances and continued to Mikayla's side. "Captain! Are you alright?" Pelphi asked urgently.

The woman grunted as she struggled to sit up, "Do I look alright, you imbecile? I was just violently propelled across the room, hit a window, and fell to the ground. Would you be 'alright'?"

The Pinturo looked puzzled, but replied, "Well, Captain, I can see how you would be upset, but I was only worried about your welfare . . . I don't see the need for abrasive remarks."

Rockeneimer helped the captain struggle to her feet and watched her as she tested each bone for bruises or breaks. After finishing her self-examination, Mikayla collapsed into the nearest chair. After a weary sigh, Captain Mikayla Lusky turned to her two companions. "Ok boys, what just happened?"

"I d-don't r-r-really kn-know, C-c-c-captian. I-i-luh-hooks like y-you h-hit s-some k-k-k-kind uh-of f-force fuh-heild," Rockeneimer managed to force out of his fumbling mouth.

"I would have to agree with our stuttering lieutenant, M'am. It would appear that you struck a force field that then flung you across the room. This, of course, is only a hypothesis because we have done no tests to verify our logic."

"Is there any way to determine exactly what caused my flight across the room?" The captain inquired.

The Pinturo seemingly dismissed Lusky's last question and changed the subject, "Captain, when you landed, did you hit your head at all?"

Mikayla was visibly agitated, "Well I don't quite remember, Pelphi, it happened pretty fast, maybe you could answer that question for me? Why did you feel the need to ask me that anyway? I asked you a question, isn't it your job to answer me?"

"Yes, Captain, but I felt there was a more urgent matter at hand."

"And what would that be?" There was a very noticeable bite to the captain's words.

"Well, M'am, there is the question of how the word "fake" became to be drawn into your forehead."

"What! What are you talking about?" As she was saying this, Captain Lusky moved her hand up to touch her forehead. She brought her hand back down and stared at the blood on her fingers.

"What the—"

"SILENCE!" an omnipresent voice boomed. "YOUR INSIGNIFICANT TALK IS MAKING ME ANGRY!"

The three in the room looked at each other in amazement. Even the captain was speechless. After approximately thirty seconds of dead silence, Captain Lusky finally found her voice. "Wh-who a-are you?"

"I AM THE LIGHT, I AM THE DARK, I AM THE WHALE, I AM THE SHARK, I AM THE MOUSE, I AM THE SNAKE, BUT ONE THING I AM NOT IS A FAKE!"

Mikayla was stunned. "What do you mean by 'fake'?"

"I SAY WHAT I SAY AND I MEAN WHAT I MEAN. FAKE IS AS FAKE AS A FEMALE DRAKE."

Again, it was Mikayla that spoke up, "What do you speak in rhymes and riddles? You still haven't answered any of my questions. Who are you, and what do you mean by 'fake'?"

"WHY DO YOU SPEAK IN QUESTIONS? ALL YOU HAVE DONE SO FAR IS QUESTION ME. WHY BE A CREATURE OF QUESTIONS WHEN YOU CAN BE A CREATURE OF PUZZLES?"

"A creature of puzzles? Is that how you see yourself, as some great mystery? You are a coward if you can't even show yourself to me. Maybe you see yourself as a puzzle because you cannot explain yourself. Is THAT why you talk in riddles? To cover up the fact that you don't really know what you're talking about?"

"I PITY YOU AND YOUR SIMPLE POINT OF VIEW. IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO SEE HOW THINGS ARE *SUPPOSED* TO BE. SAY YOUR GOODBYES AND CLOSE YOUR EYES. YOUR JOURNEY IS ABOUT TO BEGIN, THE TRUTH LIES THEREIN."

The captain was visibly shaken, and trembled as she spoke, "What truth? What journey? WHO ARE YOU?"

Pelphi and Rockeneimer watched in disbelief as the body of their captain slowly disappeared. It seemed to evaporate, there was no physical sign of Mikayla Lusky left in that room; however, the two men could still hear her voice and the voice of her captor.

"YOU ARE A TRUE FAKE, YOU DO NOT DESERVE YOUR HIGH STAKE. YOU TOOK A LIFE TO END YOUR STRIFE; NOW YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS IS JUDGEMENT DAY."

Captain Lusky was fighting the most strenuous battle of her life. It wasn't physical, but a battle of emotions, intellect, and mentality. No matter how hard she fought, she was always one step behind her enemy. After what seemed like a lifetime of fighting, Mikayla just gave up. She could stand no more. "Enough! You win, you're right, I killed a man. He was the only thing standing between me and my career. I had to do what I did; there was no other way. No one knows, I did a good job; I disposed of the body well, and covered my tracks. How do you know?"

"I KNOW BECAUSE I KNOW. THERE IS NO RHYME OR REASON, NOT UNLIKE YOUR ACT OF TREASON. THERE IS NO REASON TO KILL, BUT YOU DID SO OF YOUR OWN FREE WILL. NOW YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS IS JUDGEMENT DAY."

After these last words faded away, Rockeneimer and Pelphi saw a brilliant flash of light and then everything changed.

Rockeneimer was captain of his own ship, and Pelphi was still living on his home planet. Neither had ever heard of Mikayla Lusky, or each other.

One day while Rockeneimer was in his bunk, he received a call from his lieutenant asking him to report to the conference room. Lieutenant Morgan shifted uncomfortably in his seat and said, "Captain, we seem to have a problem . . ."

My Snow Angel

Danielle Troske

Third Place Prose

Doland School

One day in school this winter, my attention had begun to drift while in class, and my distracted eyes wandered over to a window. As I peered out into the blustery, snowy day, I realized that I missed being a kid. Now don't get me wrong, I enjoy being in sports and having responsibilities not bestowed upon children, but wouldn't it be nice to go home one day on the bus after school, bundle up in ten layers of clothing, and just go outside and PLAY?

It would, wouldn't it? At least I thought so.

My diverted mind began to reminiscence down 'memory lane', with past Christmases and other holidays playing in my mind like a psychological slide show. These recollections stirred up feelings that had been hibernating since I entered into the world of extra-curricular activities, socializing and responsibilities. A sort of disappointment settled within me as it occurred to me that I hadn't made a snow angel in over five years! In order to subdue my avalanche of emotions, I promised myself that when I got home from practice that day, I would go outside and make a snow angel.

The rest of the day passed without any other disturbances from my frenzied mind, and at practice I eagerly awaited my chance to carry out my vow. When I got home, I inhaled my dinner, cleared the table, and then scurried off to the foyer closet. The tedious task of clothing myself in adequate apparel took longer than anticipated, but the drawback did not dishearten me in the least.

Venturing out in the cold, dark night, I scrutinized my front and back yards for the perfect spot to house my celestial snow figure. Much to my disappointment, I see that my high-strung dog had carelessly trampled all of the fresh precipitation. Her paw prints covered the expanse, destroying the beautiful, serene landscape. Discouraged, I unhappily started to trudge back to my house. Suddenly, a brightly-lit fluorescent light grabbed my attention, and I turned to observe the spectacle. My heart soared at what I saw. Under the effulgent light, was an exquisite patch of fresh, immaculate snow basking under the glow of the streetlight.

Overjoyed, I skipped merrily over to my discovery, careful not to obliterate the smooth patch of snow. Carefully positioning myself, I fell backwards, landing in the snow with a soft thud. My arms and legs began to move back and forth in a swishing motion, creating a perfect angel configuration.

Very carefully, I eased my way out of the blanket of snow and stepped away to inspect my creation. It was perfect!! Everything about it was impeccable, everything. Satisfied, I hurried back to my house, sudden warmth spreading through out my entire body.

Later that night, for no particular reason at all, I glanced out my bedroom window in the direction of my creation. And there, under that beautiful light, lay a superb, flawless snow angel.

Feminine Satisfaction: The Perfect Day

Dionne Wallace

Honorable Mention

Douglas High School

I roll from the confines of my bed
And my toes retain the warmth of the blanket,
Rather than the stoic frigidity of the floor.

I find the pair of jeans that make my butt look good,
And I unearth the sweater I'd melodramatically resigned myself to as
Lost forever

AND

My hooker blue eye shadow reveals itself from behind the murky depths of the Listerine bottle,
After weeks of hiding.
Utter bliss.

I arrive in a frenzy to finish my math homework,
Only to discover my teacher is GONE today
I now have 40 minutes to kill . . .
When NATE pulls up
With all the cocky arrogance men seem to acquire
When they own a loud pick-up

He gives me a smirk

And with sudden poise, I stalk away

I DON'T stumble

I meander to the lunchroom and savor a lightly toasted blueberry bagel until I am
Late to class.

It doesn't matter; the sub doesn't speak English and smiles vacantly

as we talk all period.

Justin refrains from his usual verbal abuse and doesn't once call me
"wallass"

I spout pearls of wisdom in AP

With a certain smugness that's irrelevant

As I am able to blend it with a tactful humor

The quality of my words leaves my teachers in awe.

For practice, we glide by the football field with the smooth efficiency of distance
runners

Who have just been told by their coach,

"Only 2 miles today."

When I go to my car,

Nate and I once again exchange smirks,

AND numbers.

